

Still Going Strong—Billy Bunter, the Fat Boy of Greyfriars!

GREYFRIARS TO THE RESCUE!



The
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Own Paper* 2^d

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STOP
PRESS
NEWS

THE BARBERS OF ST. SAM'S!

A Screamingly-Funny Tale of Jack Jolly & Co. and their amazing head-master Dr. Birchermall.

By DICKY NUGENT.

"Seen a diamond skarfpin, boys?" Jack Jolly & Co. jumped.

They were perched on a travelling cradle, half-way up the outside of the St. Sam's School House, when the question floated up from the quad below. The Head had promised them the rest of the day free if they would repaint the woodwork of his study winder for him, and the heroes of the Fourth were wielding their brushes with grate gusto to get the job finished quickly. But they stopped work at once and looked downwards in amazement as they heard that startling question.

It was Dr. Birchermall himself who made the inquiry. He was standing on the gravel path, and he wore a very worried look on his skollarly face as he gazed at Jack Jolly & Co.

"Seen a diamond skarfpin, boys?" he repeated.

"No such luck, sir!" grinned Jolly. "But if we happen to spot any diamond skarfpins or pearl necklaces among the ivy, we'll drop you a postcard."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dr. Birchermall frowned.

"This is no larking matter, boys, I can assure you. Sir Frederick Funguss has just tellyphoned me to say he missed his diamond skarfpin after his interview with me in my study half an hour ago. He is coming back almost immejately, and he says if I don't find it by the time he returns there is going to be a row!"

"My hat! I hope he duszent think you've had it, sir!" eggsclaimed Merry. "Surely he would never suspect you of theiving?"

Dr. Birchermall stroked his beard nervusly.

"As a matter of fact, Merry, I'm afraid he does. People are so dashed suspicious, you know. But I sware I never took it. I wouldn't dream of doing such a thing, unless, of course, it could be done without fear of detection."

"Then what has happened to it, sir?"

"That's just where I hoped you boys would help me," said the Head. "You were outside the winder all the time he was in my study, and it struck me that you mite have seen him drop it."

"Nothing doing, sir!" grinned Frank Fearless. "You had your backs to us all the time, and your heads were glued together as though

you were looking at something awfully intreeging."

"Quite true, Fearless," nodded Dr. Birchermall. "I was showing Sir Frederick my collection of cigarette-cards. You're quite certain you haven't seen the missing diamond skarfpin?"

"Absolutely positive, sir!"

"Then, failing that, can you do anything, when I plead not guilty, that will lend culler to— Yaroooo!"

PLOP!

As if in answer to Dr. Birchermall's request, a pot of paint that Jolly had been using slid off the cradle and hertled down on the Head's napper. The next moment Dr. Birchermall had all the culler he could possibly have needed, for a stream of red paint shot over his mortar-board and flowed jenniferously over the top!



"Just a trim, sir?"

The Head had asked the Co. to lend culler, and they had done so; but he didn't seem at all grateful to them for doing it! The old fogey simply danced with rage as red paint flowed in grate blobs on to his venerable beard.

"You careless young villains!" he roared. "Look what you've done to my whiskers! Come down at once to be birched black-and-blue!"

"But we haven't finished the winder, sir!"

"You won't feel like finishing it, either, by the time I've finished with you!" hooted the Head, flinging away his gaily cullered mortar-board. "Look at my beard!"

The Head's face-fungus certainly looked a site. The Fourth Formers could hardly deny that, as they lowered themselves down into the quad. The borders of it were dyed a brilliant red and the straggly ends were simply oozing paint. Jack Jolly & Co. looked awfully rueful as they stood on the path and gazed at Dr. Birchermall's beard. They had planned to go to a cinema after finishing the Head's winder; but that was vanishing like a bewtiful drem now that this had happened!

The Head pointed to the door of the School House.

"Hop up to my study and await me there!" he barked. "Your hollerday is cancelled and you will be flogged till you shriek for the mersy you will never get! But first I must pop down

to the village barber's to have my damaged beard trimmed. I only hoap I get back before Sir Frederick arrives!"

"Why not save time and let us do it for you, sir?" venchered Jolly. "We can do it as well as the village barber, sir, I'll warrant!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's all very well; but how am I to know what sort of a job you will make of it?" grumbled the Head. "None of you have had the slitest eggperience of beard-trimming."

"True, sir," admitted Fearless. "But we're jolly good at trimming hedges, and there's not much difference, is there?"

Dr. Birchermall grunted and glanced at his watch. He started when he saw how late it was getting.

"Bless my sole! Sir Frederick will be here any minnit!" he cried. "Perhaps your wheeze is not a bad one, after all, Jolly. On reconsidering the matter, I will allow you to snip off the affected portions of my whiskers. But it is understood, of course, that I shall whop you afterwards and that you will lose your hollerday!"

Jack Jolly & Co. pulled rye faces at that, for they had been hoaping the Head would show his gratitude for Jolly's branewave by dealing more leaniently with them. But it was useless to argue the toas with the Head in his present state, so they followed the old fogey up to his study—pawsing on the way to borrow a pair of garden shears, a bottle of shampoo mixture, and some towels.

When they reached the Head's sanktum, they dragged an armchair into the middle of the room. Jolly snapped his shears, Merry took up the shampoo mixture, and Bright spread out the towels.

"Next gentleman, please!" cried Fearless, and the juniors chuckled.

But the Head was not feeling in the mood for joaks.

"A nice bizzness this is!" he moaned. "It's all right for you young shavers—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But it's not so funny for me! That skarfpin's missing and my beard's—"

"We'll soon fix your beard, sir, anyway!" grinned Jolly. "Hold his head!"

"Ow-ow! Help!" roared the Head, as Fearless seized him by the ears and jerked back his napper. "Leggo my ears!"

But the juniors were deff to his pleas and, while Merry and Bright held his arms and Fearless his head, Jolly snipped merrily away with his shears.

Jolly was just beginning to think he was progressing nicely when a hevvy footstep was heard in the passage. The Head jumped.

"Sir Frederick Funguss!" he groaned. "This puts the kybosh on it!"

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OLD FAVOURITES HARRY WHARTON & CO. IN NEW ADVENTURES UP-RIVER!

GREYFRIARS *to the* RESCUE!



By FRANK RICHARDS

Buck Up!

"WHAT about a walk?" asked Billy Bunter.

"A what?" ejaculated five astonished voices.

"A walk!" said Bunter. "I'd like it, if you fellows would!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Billy Bunter.

The Greyfriars Water-Lily was drifting slowly up the Thames. The sail was up, and there was just about enough wind to beat the draw of the current. But progress was slow—as slow as when Billy Bunter was towing!

But nobody was in a hurry. Past Reading, and getting on towards Mapledurham, the surroundings were beautiful; especially on a gorgeous August day.

Coaxing as much speed as possible out of the boat, and enjoying the lovely scenery, the Famous Five of Greyfriars found life well worth living.

They were, in fact, thinking of tying up and going for a ramble in the sweet-scented woods, when Bunter made the suggestion.

Naturally, it astonished them.

Not once since the Greyfriars party had started on that holiday up the Thames had Billy Bunter wanted a walk.

He would not even walk on the towpath and take his turn at towing, if he could help it. Only the boat-hook persuaded him to do so.

As for putting in an unnecessary walk, without a boat-hook to jab him

The punt pole caught Bunter in the waistcoat and the fat junior landed on his back in the Water-Lily!

into exertion, Bunter had never dreamed of it.

Now he suggested it!

"I mean to say, look at those lovely woods," said the fat Owl of the Remove, blinking at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. "You've been slacking and loafing about the boat all day.. Why not a walk?"

"Is that a joke?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"How many yards do you want to walk?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Look at those lovely hills coming right down to the river!" said Bunter. "Don't they make you want to stretch your legs a bit, after a day in the boat?"

"You don't want to stretch yours, you spoofing oyster!" said Frank Nugent.

"I'd walk you fellows off your legs, and chance it!" retorted Bunter. "You're a lazy lot!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You don't want to mind the boat while we're gone for a walk?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five chuckled. They thought they could guess the answer to the problem.

There had been considerable shopping at Reading. Among other articles, a big cake had been added

to the stores, slices from which were to grace the tea-table for two or three days to come.

Without being fearfully suspicious, the crew of the Water-Lily fancied that they could guess what would become of that big cake if Billy Bunter minded the boat while they were gone for a walk.

On the other hand, Billy Bunter had not suggested minding the boat while they were gone. Perhaps he realised that that would be a little too palpable. He suggested going for a walk also!

"Sure you want to come?" asked Bob, grinning.

"Keen on it!" declared Bunter.

"You're not going to change your mind at the last minute and decide to stay in the boat after all?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No!" roared Bunter. "I'm ready for a ten-mile walk——"

"Do you mean a ten-inch walk?"

"Look here, you silly chump, are you coming for a walk or not?" demanded Bunter. "I can tell you it jolly well makes me tired to see you fellows loafing and lounging about, as if you found it too much trouble to keep alive at all. For goodness' sake get a spot of energy from somewhere!"

"You fat, lazy, loafing larrikin!"

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said Johnny Bull. "You haven't moved since you parked your lunch!"

"Well, I'm ready to move now, if you fellows ain't too jolly lazy!" jeered Bunter. "If you get tired out, Bull, I'll help you home."

Johnny Bull gave the fat Owl a withering glare. Johnny, sturdy and stocky, was probably the toughest member of the Famous Five. The idea of Billy Bunter, the fattest and laziest blacker that ever was, helping him home after a walk made Johnny snort.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"The old order changeth, giving place to the new!" he quoted. "Here's Bunter bucking us up! Let's be bucked."

"Sure you can carry your lunch, if you get up, Bunter?" asked Frank Nugent. "It must have added three or four stone to your weight."

"Yah!"

"Let us proceed walkfully, if the absurd Bunter desires to travel on the pony of honourable Shanks!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"It's a go!" said Harry. "Safe enough to leave the boat tied up in a spot like this, I think."

"Safe as houses!" said Bob.

The Water-Lily was drifting on the Oxfordshire side, the towpath at that point being over the water in Berkshire. Magnificent woods, climbing to the blue hills, clothed the bank, here and there a footpath or a shady lane opening among them.

All the Famous Five were keen to stretch their legs, after a day in the boat. They wondered whether even Billy Bunter, for once, was keen to do the same. Certainly, he seemed very much in earnest about that walk.

That walk, anyhow, was decided upon; the sail was dropped and the Water-Lily nosed into the bank. Other craft were to be seen out on the broad river; but the bank where the Greyfriars juniors tied on was very quiet and solitary. Generally, when the Famous Five went ashore, Bunter was only too glad to remain on board and dodge exertion. This time he was keenest of all on a walk.

Bob Cherry opened the hamper in which the cake was packed.

Billy Bunter gave quite a start as he saw that action.

"I say, you fellows, you ain't taking the cake with you, surely?" he exclaimed. "It will be safe enough in the boat. I say, it will be a fearful lot of trouble to carry that cake about."

"Catch us carrying it about!" said Bob. "I'm going to park it in the locker—safe there, if anybody comes along."

"Oh!" Bunter seemed relieved. "All right, then."

The roomy stern locker of the Water-Lily was largely filled with canned goods. But there was room for the big cake, and Bob transferred it to the locker.

The other four members of the Co. stepped ashore.

Billy Bunter heaved up his weight and rolled after them.

He panted and puffed as he did

so. It was a hot afternoon. Bunter had lunched not wisely, but too well. Really, he did not look like a fellow who was keen on a long ramble, even in delightful scenery. He gurgled for breath when he had got ashore.

"Come on, Bob!" called out Nugent.

"Coming!" called back Bob. "Don't wait—I'll catch you up! I want to pack these things in safe."

"Oh, all right!"
The juniors turned their backs on the river, sauntering away by a deep shady lane walled with green woodland. Billy Bunter proceeded at a snail's pace—and four other fellows accommodated their pace to his.

Packing the locker seemed to delay Bob Cherry rather unexpectedly. It was ten minutes before there was a patter of feet behind the walkers, and Bob came up at a run and joined them.

"Now put it on a bit!" said Johnny Bull.

"I'm not going to race!" grunted Billy Bunter. "If you fellows want to race, you can jolly well race, and be blowed to you! I'm not going to."

"Are we going to walk or crawl?" snorted Johnny.

"You can leave me behind, if you like!" grunted Bunter. "If you think I'm keen on your company you're jolly well mistaken!"

"Done!" said Johnny Bull. "Leave him behind, you fellows, and come on!"

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"Can't desert Bunter," he said. "This is really Bunter's walk—he proposed it! Let's stick to Bunter."

"You needn't trouble!" yapped Bunter.

"No trouble at all!" answered Bob affably. "Pleasure!"

"Why, you fat villain——" began Johnny Bull.

It dawned on him why Bunter was willing to be left behind in that walk!

He was not only willing, but eager. Having dropped behind the walkers, what was easier than to turn back and walk to the boat? There was no lock on the locker in which Bob had stowed the cake!

Johnny Bull gave up the idea of a vigorous walk on the spot! Billy Bunter was not getting away so easily as all that with his astute scheme for sending the Famous Five wandering while he went back and devoured the cake!

Bunter crawled on like a lazy snail! Harry Wharton & Co. also crawled on like lazy snails! And when a quarter of a mile had been covered the whole party were still understudying lazy snails!

Getting By With It!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

A quarter of a mile seemed enough for Billy Bunter. He came to a halt.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Enjoying the walk, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I'm tired!"

Billy Bunter looked tired. He was

red and perspiring, and he seemed to breathe with difficulty. He blinked round him through his spectacles, spotted a log by the wayside, and sat on it.

Five fellows halted also.

They exchanged smiles as they halted. All the members of the Famous Five were wise to Billy Bunter's little game and considerably amused thereby. They were quite interested in the fat Owl's dodge to get out of sight of the rest of the party.

"Like a rest for a few minutes, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton cheerily.

"More than a few minutes!" grunted Bunter.

"Oh, all right! We'll rest, too."

"The restfulness will be a beautiful blessing!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

The five leaned on trees—to rest! Really, they were hardly in need of a rest yet, but if they did not want a rest they wanted to see the next development of Billy Bunter's artful scheming.

Bunter blinked at them rather morosely. He did not seem so pleased as he ought to have been by the unquestioning willingness of the whole party to stop and rest when he stopped and rested.

"I say, you fellows, you needn't hang about!" he squeaked. "The fact is, I'm a bit tired, and, if you like, you can walk on and find me here when you come back."

Bob Cherry winked at his chums.

"But we should lose your company if we did that, old bean!" he said. "Couldn't think of such a thing!"

"Not at all!" said Frank Nugent, shaking his head. "We're not going to desert you, Bunter."

"Stick to you like glue!" said Johnny Bull.

"The sickfulness will be terrific!"

Billy Bunter breathed hard and deep. This attachment to his society was flattering, though rather unusual. But the fat Owl had no use for flattery just then. He was thinking of a cake.

Five minutes passed: Bunter sat on the log and grunted. The Famous Five leaned on the trees and admired the scenery—which was well worth looking at. It was Bunter who made the first move.

He heaved his weight up from the log and blinked at the other fellows.

"Oh, come on!" he grunted. "Are you going to stick there slacking till night?"

"Only waiting for you, old tulip!" said Bob mildly.

Grunt, from Bunter.

Like the deep and dark blue ocean in the poem he rolled on.

The Famous Five walked, on their lowest gear, as it were. If Bunter walked more slowly, they walked more slowly. If he stopped, they stopped. The fat Owl had no chance at all of lagging behind.

This was not the way that five strenuous youths would have chosen for an afternoon ramble. But they found it quite amusing to put paid to Billy Bunter's astute little game.

"Ow!" exclaimed Bunter suddenly.

He slipped, stumbled, and sat down.

Once more the Famous Five came to a halt! They gathered round Bunter as he sat on the grass verge by the shady lane.

"Tired again?" asked Bob.

"I've sprained my ankle!"

"Oh!"

"I'm afraid I can't go on any farther!" said Bunter. "I can't go back, either. It's a bit awkward."

"More than a bit!" agreed Bob. "Frightfully awkward!"

"We'd better help you back to the boat, Bunter," said Harry Wharton gravely.

"Oh! No! I—I can't move! I—I've got a fearful pain!" said Bunter hastily. "The only thing for it is for you fellows to get on and leave me here. If you come back this way in, say, an hour, I may be able to get going again."

Bob Cherry bestowed another wink on his friends.

"Well, if you really wouldn't mind, Bunter—" he said thoughtfully.

"No fear!" said Bunter promptly. "I—I mean, what I'm thinking of is that I don't want to spoil your pleasure. That's what worries me, really."

"It would!" agreed Bob.

"That's like Bunter," said Nugent solemnly. "Always, thinking of others!"

"Well, I never was selfish," said Bunter. "I can say that! I've often thought that, mixing with you fellows, I might pick it up. But I never have."

"Oh crikey!"

"Keep on," said Bunter. "Have a jolly nice walk! I can bear this pain—I'm not the fellow to make a fuss about a spot of pain! You'll find me here when—when you come back. Don't waste time!"

"Come on, then!" said Bob.

His comrades looked at him. Hitherto, they had lingered when Bunter lingered. However, they let Bob have his way, and the party walked on and disappeared round a bend in the winding lane, Billy Bunter grinning after them with great satisfaction.

"Look here, what's the game?" demanded Johnny, when the five were round the bend, and out of sight of Bunter. "You know that fat blighter's game just as well as I do." "Just!" agreed Bob. "Look back from here."

The Famous Five pushed through the trees beside the lane, where it wound, and so were able to get a view of the spot where they had left Bunter without revealing themselves.

Billy Bunter's sprained ankle was evidently no longer giving him any trouble.

He had risen to his feet and was blinking in the direction the Famous Five had taken, with a fat grin on his podgy features, happily unaware that five pairs of eyes were on him from the trees.

Then he revolved on his axis and rolled away on the home trail. Bunter was heading back to the boat as fast as his little fat legs would carry him.

"What a sudden recovery!" murmured Bob Cherry. "You don't often get over a sprained ankle as quick as that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The spoofing fat slug!" growled Johnny Bull. "Look here, we'd better get after him if we want to see that cake at tea-time."

"We're going for a walk, old man!" answered Bob. "We can get on a bit quicker now Bunter's gone back."

Johnny stared at him.

"You silly ass, you know he's after the cake!" he hooted. "Are we going to let him get away with it, after all his trickery?"

"Not in your jolly old lifetime!" chuckled Bob. "Didn't you fellows notice that I was rather a long time starting after you?"

"Yes, what about it?" asked Harry.

"I was packing that cake safe in the locker—"

"There's no lock!" said Johnny Bull. "Bunter will hook it out of the locker fast enough."

"Think he can draw a screw with his teeth?"

"What?"

"You see, what I stayed behind for was to put a screw in the locker," explained Bob. "If Bunter can get it open he's welcome to the cake."

"Oh!" gasped Johnny.

"The screwdriver's on my pocket-knife, in my pocket. There isn't one on the boat. Think Bunter will get the cake?"

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

"Dear old Bunter can sit in the boat and look at that locker, like a jolly old Peri at the gate of Paradise!" said Bob. "He won't get at the cake! That cake's as safe as if it was in the Bank of England! Of course, if he isn't after the cake it's all right. If he is, I'm afraid he's going to get a spot of disappointment."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five walked on their way, chuckling.

It was quite an enjoyable walk—not the less so because they had lost the fascinating company of William George Bunter!

Blow for Bunter!

"O OOOOOH!" gasped Billy Bunter.

He was hot. He was tired. He was perspiring. He had walked a quarter of a mile, and, naturally, the same distance back. He had covered a total of half a mile! That was three and a half furlongs too much to suit Bunter.

The cake was worth it! Also, it was a satisfaction to the fat and fatuous Owl to have pulled the wool over the eyes of the Famous Five in that masterly way! He had begun to wonder whether they suspected his game, from the way they stuck to him! But he had got away with it at last; and now, once more, the Water-Lily was in sight.

But Bunter was hot and tired and peevish. He had hoped to get away with his great scheme in half a fur-

long, not half a mile. He gasped for breath, dabbed at perspiration, and smacked at flies as he rolled down to the bank, where the Water-Lily was tied on.

She rocked gently by the rushes, with the water rippling past, under the shade of green leafy branches, with sunlight glinting through.

Billy Bunter was not very susceptible to scenery, but even Bunter thought that it was a lovely spot, and he could have sat there contentedly for hours and hours—eating cake! But the cake, of course, far outweighed the blue skies, the rippling waters, the green bushes, and the shady foliage.

Bunter plumped into the boat. He sat down to rest for a few minutes—he needed it after half a mile. But he was not inactive long. That half-mile's walk had made him hungry.

His first proceeding, however, when he heaved up, was to open the hamper, in which many eatables and drinkables were kept. Ginger-beer came even before cake on a hot afternoon in August after a walk.

He stared into that hamper.

It was empty.

"The silly chump!" hissed Bunter. Bob, apparently, had packed the ginger-beer and other things, as well as the cake, into the stern locker.

Possibly, they were safer there, in case of wandering tramps. Still, a tramp could hardly have taken long to root them out. The locker had a catch, but no lock; it was easy enough to open.

To a hot and thirsty Owl, delay was irritating.

Bunter banged the lid of the hamper shut and turned aft to the locker.

Mr. Spooner, the original owner of the Water-Lily, who had had it built, had been very particular about his stern locker. It was a roomy locker, and it had a floor of sheet zinc which made it specially suitable for parking foodstuffs.

Possibly Mr. Spooner had used it for that purpose, for the Greyfriars-fellows had heard that he had done a lot of cruising in that boat before he was so unfortunate as to be snapped up by the police for a little mistake in mixing other people's property with his own.

The locker, when shut, made a rather roomy extra seat—useful in a boat that had a crew of six. Part of the top opened as a lid, and was fastened down by a catch.

Bunter unhooked the catch, grabbed at the lid, and started to raise it. To his surprise, however, it did not lift.

It was jammed somehow.

"Blow!" hissed Bunter.

This was more and more irritating—as that idiot, Bob Cherry, had parked the ginger-beer as well as the cake inside.

The fat Owl wrenched at that locker-lid.

He wrenched and wrenched.

He grew redder, hotter, more and more peevish and irritated. But the locker remained obstinately shut. If it had been locked with a Yale lock, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,646.

it could not have remained more firmly shut.

"Blow the thing!" howled Bunter. "What the dickens is the matter with it? How on earth has that beast jammed it?"

Closer examination revealed how the beast had jammed it. Bunter's eyes, and spectacles, discerned at last the head of a screw, deep in the wood. He gazed at that screw almost speechlessly.

The locker was screwed shut.

It was the first time it had ever been secured. That unspeakable beast, Cherry, had certainly not done that to guard the stores against the fighting fingers of some wandering tramp!

The dreadful truth dawned on Bunter.

They had known his game all the time. He had fancied that he was pulling their legs—and they had been pulling his. They had walked him till he was almost dropping, they had stopped his dodges to get away, they had at long last allowed him to escape—and it was for this, because the locker was screwed up and he could not get at the cake.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

A man in a punt, passing farther out on the Thames, gave quite a little jump and stared round at Bunter.

"Beast! Rotter! Cad!" spluttered the enraged fat Owl.

The man in the punt poled nearer, with a very disagreeable expression on his face. He did not like being called names like this.

Bunter, certainly, was not calling him names, and did not even notice him at all. But the punter's mistake was a natural one—Bunter was alone in his boat, and must be supposed to be talking to somebody—and the man in the punt was the only man near at hand.

"Cad! Rotten worm! Oh, beast—rotter—worm!" howled Bunter. He was alluding to the absent Bob, who had played this awful and unspeakable trick on him.

The man in the punt did not know that, of course.

"Hi!" he called out, poling nearer.

"Beast! Rotter! Blighter! Brute! Cad! Tick! Swab! Rotten brute!" howled Bunter, going through quite a list of compliments due—in the circumstances—to Bob Cherry. "Sneaking beast—cad—worm! Yaroooooh!"

Bunter finished up with a loud, startled roar as a dripping puntpole was suddenly jammed into his fat ribs.

He rocked, and the Water-Lily rocked. He glared round in angry astonishment, for the first time becoming aware of the existence of the punt and the punter.

"You silly idiot! Wharrer you up to?" he roared.

The man in the punt glared.

"Nice names you're calling a man, ain't you?" he exclaimed. "What have I done, I'd like to know? Want all the river?"

"You silly chump!" hooted Bunter, rubbing his fat ribs. "I never—Yarooooop!"

Another poke from the punt pole caught Bunter where he had parked

his lunch, and had planned to park the cake.

He rocked and rolled.

The Water-Lily almost bounded as Bunter's weight was suddenly deposited on the floorboards.

"Urrggh!" spluttered Bunter.

"That'll teach you to keep a civil tongue, young feller-me-lad!" exclaimed the indignant man in the punt. "You say any more and I'll give you some more and you can bet on that, young bladder o' lard!"

"Urrrrggh!"

And the man in the punt poled away with a glare and an indignant sniff, leaving Billy Bunter sitting in the Water-Lily and spluttering.

"Ooooooh! Urrggh! Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. He rubbed the intended parking-place of the cake tenderly and staggered up. "The silly idiot! Ooooooh!"

He gave his attention to the locker again.

With a faint hope—a very faint one—he banged it with the boathook. Damage to the boat was not a matter for Bunter to worry about—it was not his boat! Harry Wharton & Co. had hired it from old Baker, the boat builder at Friardale, near Greyfriars School, and if any damage was done they were responsible. Had it been possible to burgle that locker with the boathook Bunter would have burgled it regardless of damage.

But it did not prove possible.

He hurled down the boathook and hunted for a screwdriver. There was only one screwdriver in the outfit of the Water-Lily, and that was attached to Bob Cherry's pocket-knife. So Bunter did not find it.

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

He gave it up at last. It was now tea-time, and but for that beastly walk, proposed by Bunter himself, there would have been tea in the boat and some slices of that cake, at least, for Bunter. Now all he could do was to wait for the return of the walkers from that walk which he had so unfortunately suggested.

Billy Bunter sat down to wait with feelings inexpressible in words. No words in any known language could have done justice to such a situation.

Pon is Playful!

"THE other jolly old Water-Lily!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"That lot!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton & Co. had followed that winding lane for some distance, and a turning of it had led them back to the Thames, about a mile below the spot where the Greyfriars boat was tied up. Here for a little distance the lane followed the bank, the shining river stretching out before their eyes, dotted with all sorts of craft.

Their eyes fell on a boat pulling close in, and they recognised it at once and the three fellows in it. It was, like their own, named the Water-Lily, and the three fellows in it were Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson, of Highcliffe School.

Pon & Co., like the Famous Five,

were doing the Thames that vacation, and as they had started up the river about the same time, there had been quite a number of encounters between the two parties.

Little as they liked Pon & Co., the Famous Five would have been willing to bar rows in the holidays. But as Pon had declared war at once, they had carried on hostilities with cheerful energy, and the nuts of Highcliffe certainly had not had the best of it.

Now, as they observed the boat pulling in, they could see that Pon & Co. had spotted them on the bank.

Gadsby and Monson were pulling, Cecil Ponsonby steering, with his eyes on the fellows ashore. Perhaps, had the Famous Five been afloat, Pon would not have ventured to close quarters, but as they were on land he was safe out of reach, and the malicious grin on his face looked as if he meant mischief.

The chums of Greyfriars had stopped under the shade of a big beech-tree that extended great branches over the water, dappling it with shadow. They had been watching the river, the passing craft, and the hills of Berkshire in the distance, when they noticed the Highcliffe Water-Lily, and now they watched Pon & Co. as they came.

If Pon was hunting trouble again, it was ready for him; and they certainly did not feel in the least disposed to retreat from it.

The Highcliffe boat slowed, keeping ten feet or so out from the bank. Pon was not coming near enough for a jump.

"Lost your boat, you fellows?" called out Ponsonby.

"No!" answered Harry Wharton, rather surprised by a civil remark from the dandy of Highcliffe. "We've tied it up to take a walk."

"Oh! I don't see it!" said Pon, glancing up and down the bank.

"We've tied it up, to take a walk." river!"

"Oh, I see! Then you can take that!" said Ponsonby cheerfully, and his hand came up with an orange in it.

Whiz!

Before the captain of the Greyfriars Remove knew what was coming, the orange crashed on his nose and squashed there.

He gave a roar of wrath.

"Ha, ha, ha!" pealed from the Highcliffe boat.

"You — you — you —" gasped Harry Wharton.

He realised, rather too late, why Ponsonby had asked those civil questions. He had wanted to be sure that the Greyfriars fellows had no craft at hand and could not get at him!

Bob Cherry clutched up the orange, as Wharton clapped a hand to his nose. It went back promptly to the Highcliffe boat.

But the Highcliffe crew were watchful. A twist of an oar was enough, and the missile flew yards from the boat and splashed into the Thames.

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Wharton. "Step ashore, and I'll



Waiting his opportunity, Hurree Singh let go his hold on the branch and dropped!

push your face through the back of your cheeky head!"

"The Greyfriars cad's a bit shirty!" remarked Pon to his friends. "I'll give them a few more! Watch them scuttle!"

He dipped his hand into a bag and picked out another orange. It was a ripe orange—over-ripe!

If Pon & Co. had intended to eat those oranges, they were not very particular about the condition of their supplies of fruit. But the Greyfriars fellows could guess that that bag of squashy oranges had not been taken on board the Highcliffe Water-Lily for eating. It had been taken on board for ammunition—next time they came in contact with the enemy! Pon, in a previous encounter, had been plastered with tomatoes from the Greyfriars boat; and he had made preparations for returning the compliment when occasion offered. It offered now—with all the advantage on the Highcliffe side.

Whiz!

The Famous Five, knowing what was coming now, dodged!

The squashy orange missed them and burst on the trunk of the beech. But the artful Pon had another in his hand, and he whizzed it after the first so swiftly that the juniors ashore had no time to dodge again.

Frank Nugent got it, fairly in the neck, and it squashed there horribly, juice running down his neck.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pon & Co., in great glee.

It was in vain that the fellows

ashore grabbed up the oranges to return them. They were so soft that one knock burst them to pieces, and they were of little use as missiles; and it was easy for the watchful crew afloat to shift the boat and dodge.

"Run for it!" shouted Pon. "Let's see you run, you cads!"

Not for their very lives would the Greyfriars fellows have run from the Highcliffe enemy. But facing a fire they could not return was distinctly disagreeable. Pon would have been delighted to see them run—but he was not going to see anything of the kind. But the genial Pon was almost as delighted to see them stand there and be pelted with rotten oranges.

The juniors stared round for something in the way of missiles to return the fire, but there was nothing at hand.

Johnny Bull stooped to loosen a chunk of turf, and got a squashy orange in his ear as he did so. Bob Cherry made a rush to the water's edge, with a rather wild idea of swimming out to the enemy—and one, two, three rotten oranges squashed and splashed all over him.

And Gadsby and Monson sat ready to pull away if he took to the water.

"Run for it!" chortled Ponsonby. "Here's one coming for you, nigger!"

Hurree Janset Ram Singh dodged behind the trunk of the big beech. "That's one of them running!" chuckled Pon. "We'll soon have the rest on the run! Hook it, you Greyfriars cads! Let's see your heels!"

Whiz! Squash! Splash!

Four fellows, in the open, dodged the best they could. But Hurree Janset Ram Singh, behind that big beech, was not hunting cover, as the Highcliffe crew naturally supposed. Hidden from their eyes by the massive old trunk, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur was climbing up the tree.

"You rotters!" roared Bob Cherry. "If a fellow could get at you—"

"Swim for it!" chuckled Monson

"Oh, do!" grinned Gadsby.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pon. "We've got the cads on toast this time!" He whizzed oranges, and the juniors ashore, breathing fury, dodged—not very successfully.

They were not going to retreat. Neither did they think that Pon would keep up this game long. They could see what the Highcliffians could not see—that the nimble nabob had climbed into the beech-tree, and was crawling along a long branch that extended over the water and shadowed the Highcliffe boat.

Pon & Co. supposed that he was in cover behind the trunk. Had they looked up, they would not have spotted the wary nabob through the thick foliage. He disappeared from the eyes of his friends ashore; but they knew what his game was, and waited—while they dodged the mouldy oranges. If Pon & Co. did not take the alarm and push out into the river, another minute would be

enough for Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh—and Pon & Co. saw no reason for alarm!

Crash! Smash! Squash! Plop! came Pon's unpleasant fusillade.

Half his missiles were dodged! The other half were not. Four fellows on the bank were getting into a very disagreeably juicy and sticky state.

The three Highcliffians howled with merriment.

"Why don't you run?" chortled Pon. "Run, you Greyfriars cads—run!"

The Co. did not run! They did not even return the squashed fragments of orange! They did not want Pon & Co. to shift the boat! They dodged the fire as best they could—till suddenly that long branch sagged as a nimble figure swung by its hands at the end.

Then Pon looked up suddenly—but he looked up too late.

Even as he spotted the Nabob of Bhanipur dangling above, the nabob dropped and landed on his feet in the boat!

Under the heavy impact, the Highcliffe Water-Lily rocked wildly and shipped water over both gunwales.

Pon and Gadsby and Monson yelled with alarm, and held on as if for their lives.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, grabbing up the oar Monson dropped, used it as a pole, and with a single push punted the boat in to the bank, rocking and almost capsizing as it went. And four fellows, rushing down the bank, leaped at it—Frank Nugent grabbing the painter to hold it in, while Wharton, Bob, and Johnny Bull jumped into it before Pon & Co. knew what was happening. It was quite a sudden and dramatic turning of the tables.

The Boat-Thief!

"SUFFERING snakes!"

Billy Bunter blinked round as he heard that ejaculation.

The fat Owl was sitting in the Greyfriars boat, regarding the locker as Bob Cherry had said, like a jolly old Peri at the gate of Paradise.

The cake and the ginger-beer—so near and yet so far—tantalised Bunter, really quite like the fabled tortures of Tantalus. But as he heard that ejaculation from the bank the fat Owl shifted his gaze from the screwed-up locker to the man who had appeared from the path in the wood.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He knew that foxy face with its sharp, shifty eyes!

It was Mr. Spooner—Shifty Spooner—once the owner of the Water-Lily, which had been sold while he was in chokey, and had passed into the possession of old Mr. Baker, at Friardale. Why Shifty Spooner, when he came out of quod, was so anxious to get back his old boat nobody knew; but he had tried to raid it two or three times. And now here was the pertinacious Mr. Spooner again!

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The last the Greyfriars crew had seen of him, Shifty had been in a stolen dinghy, trailing them up the Thames. They had bagged that dinghy and handed it in at Caversham—leaving Mr. Spooner on foot on the Berkshire side. Now, miles up the river on the Oxfordshire side, they really hoped they were done with Shifty! Evidently they were not!

Billy Bunter gave him a very uneasy blink! He forgot even the cake and the ginger-beer at the sight of Shifty Spooner.

Once before, when Bunter had been alone on the boat, Shifty had barged in and cleared out the stern locker—apparently to pinch the contents, so far as Bunter could make out. But that had been in a public place, and a yell for help had drawn a crowd, and Shifty had departed quickly. Here it was solitary—there was nobody within sound of a yell for help—so the sudden appearance of Shifty alarmed the fat Owl.

But if that unexpected meeting dismayed Billy Bunter, it was wholly satisfactory to Mr. Spooner.

Really, he could hardly believe in his good luck in dropping on the Water-Lily with its crew absent and nobody to stop him but the fat Owl.

"Suffering snakes!" repeated Mr. Spooner, in tones of happy satisfaction. "This 'ere is a spot of luck!"

He jumped into the boat.

"Here, you clear off, you know!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "I say, my friends are just coming—I—I think I can hear them now!"

"You got sharper ears than I 'ave!" said Mr. Spooner agreeably.

"I—I can see them coming—"

"And sharper eyes, too, though you don't look at!" said Mr. Spooner. "I ain't seen anyone about, I ain't heard anybody! Sharp lad, you are, ain't you?"

He glanced round with his keen, shifty eyes.

Nobody was at hand—it was clear that the crew of the Water-Lily, wherever they were, were at a distance. Craft were passing on the river, but well out on the Thames; and as Billy Bunter cast a blink in that direction, Mr. Spooner clapped a hand on a fat shoulder.

"You going to 'owl out?" he inquired.

"I—I shall jolly well shout for help, if you don't clear!" stammered Bunter.

"Do!" said Mr. Spooner. "You'll be in the water the next tick! Good swimmer?"

Billy Bunter decided not to shout for help!

"Squat down there!" added Mr. Spooner, pointing to the bows. "Now, then, sharp! Want a ower in the eye?"

Bunter did not want a ower in the eye! He squatted down in the bows at Mr. Spooner's order.

The shifty man threw a couple of rugs over him. Why, Bunter could not guess. He jerked his fat head out of that unexpected cover.

"I say—" he squeaked in protest. Mr. Spooner grabbed the boathook.

"You want this 'ere in your face—"

what you call a face?" he asked. "You give another peep and you'll get it, you can lay to that!"

Billy Bunter's fat head disappeared under the rugs like that of a tortoise into a shell.

Leaving him thus screened and unable to watch his actions, Mr. Spooner stepped aft to the locker.

Bunter perspired under his coverings! But he realised now what the man's game was! He was not wanted to see what Shifty did in the boat! Why, was a mystery. Shifty, he supposed, could only be there to pinch something—and what could it matter whether he was seen or not, when Bunter knew?

Mr. Spooner stooped over the stern locker.

The next moment there was a howl of rage in the Greyfriars Water-Lily. Mr. Spooner had made the discovery that Bunter had made nearly an hour ago. The locker did not open!

"Suffering snakes!" howled Mr. Spooner.

Bunter grinned under the rugs! He had no doubt that Shifty was after the stores in the locker—as on the previous occasion! Bob Cherry's screw saved them from Shifty, as it had saved them from Bunter.

The rugs were suddenly dragged off the fat Owl! He blinked up at the enraged and exasperated face of Mr. Spooner.

"Blow you!" roared Shifty. "What's this game? 'Ow's that there locker fastened up like that there?"

"It's screwed up!" gasped Bunter. "Cherry did it before he went—"

"Blow him!" howled Mr. Spooner. "Where's the screwdriver, blow you?"

"He's got it in his pocket."

"In his pocket! Suffering snakes and cats!" howled the exasperated Shifty. "Suffering centipedes! This is a go!"

Shifty had not, it seemed, wanted Bunter to see him rooting in the locker. But it was no secret that that locker was his game. He glared at Bunter and then glared at the locker; and finally opened a pocket-knife to try his luck at using the blade as a screwdriver!

Snap!

He had the luck he might have expected! The tip of the blade snapped off in the slot of the screw.

Shifty stood breathing rage.

Twice, at least, had Shifty tried to pinch that boat. But, oddly enough, it seemed that if he could have got at the contents of the locker, he would not have bothered about the boat itself. Stealing the boat, certainly, would have brought the police on his track, and Shifty was not anxious to see the inside of the stone jug again. Still, if his object was only to loot the locker, it was very extraordinary. He was running risks for the sake, so far as Bunter could see, of a couple of pounds' worth of grub.

Certainly it did not occur to Bunter, or to any other member of the Greyfriars crew, that there was anything in that locker other than what they had packed there! Per-

haps Shifty knew more on that subject than the Greyfriars crew did!

One thing was certain, Shifty, without a screwdriver, could not get that locker open! Whatever it was he wanted to extract from it, he could not extract it without carting off the boat to some spot where a screwdriver was to be obtained. Shifty had to make up his mind to that—unwilling as he was to make off with a stolen boat on a crowded river in broad daylight.

"Hook it!" he snapped.

And, as Billy Bunter only blinked at him, he grabbed the fat junior by the back of a fat neck and spun him out of the boat to the shore.

Bump!

"Yoo-hoop!" roared Bunter.

He sat up, and blinked at Shifty! Being unable to open the locker, the rascal was going to make off with the boat itself! He cast loose the painter and grabbed a pair of oars.

Bunter blinked at him in dismay. He could not stop Mr. Spooner—even if it had occurred to him to try; which it did not. He could only give him dismayed blinks as Shifty pushed off from the bank and sat down to the oars.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

It was rather a heavy boat for one man to pull, with the outfit of the Greyfriars campers packed on board. Shifty went down with the current, which gave him some assistance. He was a good oarsman, and he got speed out of the Water-Lily. And Billy Bunter, in utter dismay, watched him through his big spectacles as he went—till he disappeared among the innumerable other craft on the river!

Putting Paid to Pon & Co.!

"GOT 'em!" roared Johnny Bull.

There was no doubt about that! They had got them—Pon & Co. were got about as thoroughly as fellows could be got! The Thames was washing into the Highcliff Water-Lily—and Pon & Co. had been chiefly occupied by the danger of capsizing.

Now, however, they had something else to occupy their minds. Johnny Bull had hold of Pon by the neck, hooking him out of the boat to the bank. That was enough for Pon to think of!

Gadsby and Monson followed him, hooked out by grasping hands. Frank Nugent held the boat in by the painter—but there was water under the bank for Pon & Co. to sprawl in as they were hooked out—and their legs were dragged through it.

Never had there been so sudden and complete a turning of the tables. Only a minute ago Pon & Co. had been safe out of reach, chuckling with glee as mouldy oranges pelted the fellows on the bank.

Now they were in the grasp of those fellows; and the outlook was anything but gleeful.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned after them from the boat, his dusky

face wreathed in smiles. Frank Nugent still held on to the painter. Wharton, Bob, and Johnny did not need any help in dealing with three! It was Pon & Co. who were in need of help!

Pon struggled furiously in Johnny's grip! But he did not hit out! If Pon had hit, Johnny would have hit; and Johnny was a terribly hard hitter. At close quarters, Pon did not want to begin that game! But he struggled fiercely to drag himself loose.

Johnny held on to him like a bulldog! Wharton held on to Monson, and Bob to Gadsby! The latter two did not struggle. They were not looking for a scrap.

"Here, chuck it!" gasped Gadsby. "Look here, chuck it and let's get back into our boat!"

"Yes; look here—" panted Monson.

"Too fond of you to part with you yet!" grinned Bob Cherry. "You've had all the fun so far! Now it's our turn!"

"Will you let go, you ruffian?" shrieked Ponsonby, wriggling and wrenching in Johnny Bull's grasp.

"Hardly!" answered Johnny stolidly. "Inky, old man, see if there are any of those rotten oranges left in that bag."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh chuckled and groped in the bag from which Pon had been drawing his supply of ammunition.

"There are four of the execrable mouldy oranges, my esteemed Johnny," he answered.

"Bring them here, will you?"

"What - ho!" chuckled the nabob.

He stepped out of the boat with the bag in his hand. Pon & Co. eyed that bag apprehensively.

The Greyfriars fellows had stopped more than a dozen juicy fruits from that bag! It seemed that the owners

were going to have the few that were left. They did not want them!

"Four!" said Bob. "That's two for Pon, and one each for the others."

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "Hand them out, Inky."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh handed them out.

Ponsonby struggled and kicked and yelled and howled as a dusky hand holding a squashy orange approached the back of his neck! He shuddered with horror at what was coming. He resisted desperately.

But it booted not. Johnny Bull held him in a grip of iron, and the dusky hand reached the back of his neck and shoved the orange down!

(Continued on next page.)



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It slid and slithered and squashed down Ponsonby's back, and he gave a gurgle of horror as it went.

"Next!" grinned Johnny.

The next orange followed the first. Ponsonby wriggled horribly as it went down and joined the first in the middle of his back.

"This way now!" chuckled Bob.

Johnny Bull heaved Ponsonby over, laying him with a bump on his back. Then he sat on his chest, to keep him there while Gadsby and Monson had their whack. Thus flattened down, with Johnny's weight on his chest, the hapless Pon felt those two over-ripe oranges squash and squash and squash in a horribly clammy and sticky way.

"I—I say, chuck it, you know!" gasped Gadsby. "I say— Oh gum! Oh crikey! Oooooch!" He spluttered as over-ripe fruit went squashing down his back.

"Sauce for the gander!" grinned Bob. "Now one for Monson!"

"Look here——" howled Monson. "You—ooooogh!"

The last of the oranges went down Monson's back. Three Highcliffians wriggled with horror.

It had seemed to Ponsonby quite a bright idea to pack that bag of rich, ripe oranges in the Highcliffe boat, ready for the next encounter with the Greyfriars crew. Now, however, Pon wished from the bottom of his heart that he had not laid in that supply of ammunition. Fortunately for Pon & Co., only four of the oranges had been left—but those four were more than they wanted.

"And now," said Harry Wharton, "let's see you run! You wanted us to run, and we wouldn't; but I dare say you'll be more obliging. Johnny, old man, let that wriggling worm get up, and boot him."

"Good egg!" agreed Johnny.

Ponsonby staggered to his feet, wriggling and squirming from clammy, squashed orange down his back.

"Run!" grinned Bob.

"You fool!" howled Ponsonby.

"We're going in our boat!"

"Didn't you tell us to run?" chuckled Bob. "Well, now we're telling you! Please yourself, of course—but you're going to be booted till you do."

"The bootfulness will be terrific."

"Oh, you fool, Pon!" groaned Gadsby. "You must always be hunting for a row! Oh, you silly ass!"

"Shut up, Gaddy, you fool! Look here, you Greyfriars cads, I'm going in my boat, and you're not going to stop me!" yelled Pon.

"Tie that boat up, Franky! They can come back for it later!" said the captain of the Remove. "Just at present, they're going to run—and they're going to be booted till they do!"

Ponsonby, with a furious face, made a rush towards the boat. Johnny Bull grasped him again, and spun him round. Then his boot thudded on Pon's trousers.

Tud! Thud! sounded as Gadsby and Monson received the same.

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Gaddy and Monson did not wait for more! They flew! They cut along the riverside lane as if they were on the cinder-path. Ponsonby turned on the Greyfriars juniors—but only for a moment. Johnny Bull came at him with his fists up—and Pon did not like the look of them. He turned again, promptly, and cut after his comrades. And as he went Johnny Bull's boot landed once, twice, thrice, speeding him on his way.

Pon & Co. disappeared in a cloud of dust. They had to abandon their boat—but that could not be helped; they were thinking at the moment of boots, not boats. A roar of laughter from the Greyfriars juniors followed them.

"Lucky, old man, you're a gilt-edged prize-packet!" said Bob Cherry. "Those swabs would have got away with it if you hadn't done your Tarzan stunt! I don't think Pon's really enjoyed this game, after all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And——" Bob Cherry broke off, with a sudden yell. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look!"

"What——"

"Look!" yelled Bob. He pointed out across the shining water.

His comrades looked—and saw what had suddenly caught Bob's eye. It was the Greyfriars Water-Lily, their own boat, going downstream, with a foxy-featured, shifty-eyed man pulling at a pair of oars.

They gazed at it almost dumb-founded.

"Our boat!" gasped Nugent.

"That villain Spooner!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"He's got the Water-Lily!" yelled Johnny Bull.

Twice before had Shifty Spooner tried to pinch that boat, under cover of darkness. It was a case of third time lucky—this time he had pinched it, and in broad daylight! And there he was, going downstream with his prize, a mile below the spot where the boat had been tied up.

Harry Wharton pointed to the Highcliffe boat! It was sheer luck that that row with the Highcliffians had happened, after all! Without a craft, the Famous Five could only have watched their boat disappear, in the hands of the boat-thief. Now they had a craft at their service—Pon's!

"Jump in!" rapped the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, my hat! Pon's boat——" exclaimed Bob.

"We're going to borrow it and get after that thief! Buck up!"

The Famous Five crowded in and pushed off. Four of them took an oar each, and Frank Nugent steered. Under four oars, in sturdy hands, the Highcliffe boat shot out into the river like an arrow.

Run Down!

SHIFTY SPOONER grinned as he pulled.

Shifty was in a happy mood. It was rather a risky business,

walking off with a boat in the daylight, with plenty of people about. But Shifty had got away with it all right. He was making pretty good speed, well-laden as the Water-Lily was, and heavy boat as it was for a single oarsman.

In the old days, when that boat had belonged to Shifty; he had generally run it under sail; still, sometimes he had pulled it, and he was pulling it now, putting all his beef into the pull.

It looked all clear to Shifty!

He was a good mile from the spot where he had pinched the boat! That fat schoolboy he had left behind could do nothing but report to his friends, when they rejoined him, that Shifty had got away with the boat. Pursuit was well behind, even if they could get hold of a craft in a hurry to pursue him in. Shifty was feeling safe!

So, hard as the pull was, Shifty grinned as he pulled, keeping his eyes on the river behind the boat lest pursuit should crop up, but not in the least expecting it to do so.

But that cheery grin suddenly vanished from Shifty's face as if wiped away clear with a duster.

"Suffering snakes!" he ejaculated.

He could scarcely believe his eyes for a moment at what he saw—a boat that came shooting down the stream with five fellows in it—fellows that Shifty knew only too well.

He gazed at them! He stared at them! He goggled at them! Where they had suddenly cropped up from Shifty did not know. But there they were—hot on his track, making the Highcliffe boat fairly rip up the Thames.

"Suffering tadpoles!" gasped Shifty.

Shifty Spooner was a wary man—as cunning as a fox, and wary as a badger. But even the cunning, wary Shifty could not possibly have foreseen that the crew of the Water-Lily would be on the river-bank, in the direction in which he was fleeing, and that they would have another boat at their immediate disposal! No boat-thief, really, could have foreseen that!

The Greyfriars crew's luck was in, and Shifty's was out! There they were—coming after him as fast as four oars could pull!

Nugent's eyes were on him, as he sat steering the Highcliffe boat. Wharton, Bob Cherry, Johnny, and the nabob tugged at the oars. They made the Highcliffe boat move, as its owners had never dreamed of making it move. It would really have made Pon & Co. feel tired to look at them.

Shifty Spooner bent to his oars, in a desperate effort to pull clear. For a time, with strenuous efforts, he kept his distance.

But, good rowing-man as Mr. Spooner was, he could hardly hope to pull a heavy boat single-handed away from a lighter craft manned by four oarsmen.

He sweated at the oars, but the pursuers overhauled him, hand over hand. Nearer and nearer they drew; and a good many voices from other craft hailed Shifty as he careered on.



Leaving Bunter stranded on the bank, Shifty Spooner rowed off in the stolen boat!

asking him if he wanted all the river, and calling him uncomplimentary names. Shifty had no leisure to bother about other craft or to think about the rules of the river—he was thinking only of escaping—if he could!

But he had to realise that he couldn't!

The pursuers were gaining; but had they only kept him in sight, it would have put paid to Shifty, as he would have been stopped at the next lock.

But he was nowhere near a lock, when he realised that the game was up; and that, if he succeeded in escaping, it would be without the Water-Lily.

When that conclusion was forced into Mr. Spooner's reluctant mind, he swerved and shot towards the bank.

He chose the Oxfordshire side. On the Berkshire side was the towpath, with plenty of people to be seen on it, and boats towing up. Shifty had no time for dodging towlines—neither did he want to be collared by people on the bank, if the Greyfriars fellows shouted to them.

He headed for Oxfordshire, and he headed rapidly. He grazed a canoe, and left the occupant rocking and yelling after him in a perfectly frantic manner. He just shaved a punt, and the man in the punt, who had been standing with his pole, sat down suddenly. When he got up, he hurled remarks after Shifty that almost turned the atmosphere blue.

Shifty did not heed! He was going all out for the bank—the pursuing boat coming on fast astern.

"Put it on, you fellows!" breathed Nugent. "He's making for the bank—put your muscle into it."

Four oarsmen put every ounce into it. Shifty had no chance now of getting the Water-Lily away; but they did not want Shifty to get away himself. They were fed-up with being trailed up the Thames by Shifty Spooner.

The Highcliffe Water-Lily was not three fathoms behind the Greyfriars Water-Lily when Shifty bumped on a steep bank, lined by a wood that grew down to the water. Among the trees were five or six notice-boards, warning trespassers that they would be prosecuted!

But Shifty was in no condition to heed notice-boards! He grabbed at the bank as the Water-Lily bumped, and scrambled out.

Whatever it was he wanted from the Water-Lily, it had to be left over till some more promising occasion. At the present moment, Shifty's sole object was to save his own precious person!

The bank at that point was steep, but Shifty could not help that. He had to run ashore or be collared. He grabbed at the steep bank, and the Water-Lily shot away from under his feet, leaving him hanging.

He clambered.

Earth crumbled in his grasp and grass-roots came out in his clutch. He slipped back, his feet in the water, then desperately grabbed and clambered again, panting for breath.

The Highcliffe Water-Lily came on with a rush, bumping on the Greyfriars boat as it rocked off the shore.

Frank Nugent promptly hooked it with the boathook, the pursuing boat slipping between it and the bank.

Bob Cherry whirled up his oar.

Mr. Spooner, clambering desperately, was at the top of the steep bank, just getting over the top. He was out of reach of a grab. But he was not out of reach of an oar! And he was remarkably well placed for whopping!

Whop!

The yell that Mr. Spooner gave, as Bob Cherry's oar whopped on his trousers, woke almost all the echoes between Reading and Mapledurham.

"Yooo-hooo-hoop!" roared Mr. Spooner.

Whop!

"Yarooooop!"

Mr. Spooner's legs disappeared over the top of the bank. He roared, and yelled, and yelled, and roared, as he went. Those two terrific whops seemed to have hurt Mr. Spooner!

Over the bank he disappeared into the wood, regardless of notice-boards! His howls of anguish died away in the distance.

And the Greyfriars fellows, with great satisfaction, boarded their recaptured craft. While Mr. Spooner, howling, disappeared among trees and notice-boards, they pulled back cheerily up the river, with the Highcliffe boat in tow.

"Lucky thing for us we bumped into Ponsonby & Co., and were able to capture their boat!" said Harry Wharton. "We'd have been in the cart otherwise!"

Bunter the Fighting Man!

"THANKS!" said Harry Wharton politely.

And the Co. chuckled.

Pon & Co. had come back, and were standing on the bank in a dismal, disconsolate group when the Greyfriars crew arrived, towing their boat.

The Highcliffians were glad enough to see it again. Pon had fancied that they had set the Highcliffe Water-Lily adrift—as, in their place, Pon himself certainly would have done.

So it was a relief to see their craft coming back at the tail of the Greyfriars Water-Lily.

"I say, you're going to let us have our boat back!" called out Gadsby.

"Here you are!" answered Harry. "We borrowed it to get after a blighter who had pinched ours. Thanks for lending it to us!"

"The thankfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Catch!" said Harry.

He untied the Highcliffe boat's painter and tossed it to Gadsby. Then the Greyfriars fellows pulled on up the river, leaving Gadsby and Monson looking relieved, and Ponsonby scowling like a demon in a pantomime.

The Famous Five were rather wondering what had become of Billy Bunter. They had no doubt that he had got back to the Water-Lily after the cake, and had been there when Shifty Spooner pinched the boat.

Bunter was not likely to have given the boat-thief any trouble, and it was not likely that he had been damaged. Still, they were rather anxious to see him and ascertain what had happened to him.

But nothing was to be seen of a fat figure on the bank when they drew near the spot where the Water-Lily had been tied up.

They scanned the bank as they pushed in, but they scanned it in vain. Billy Bunter was not to be seen.

"What on earth's become of the fat frump?" asked Bob Cherry. "Spooner can't have done anything to him! Bunter wouldn't have put up a scrap for the boat."

"The scrapfulness was probably not terrific!"

"Bolted, I suppose!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Still, he can't have carried his weight very far."

The Water-Lily pushed in, and the juniors made fast and jumped ashore. They looked this way, and that way, like Moses of old; and, like Moses again, they saw no man!

"Hark!" murmured Bob Cherry.

A low whirring rumble, at a little distance from the bank, reached their ears. It might have been the rumble of distant thunder; but it was a familiar sound to the ears of the juniors; they had heard it often enough in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars. It was the rumble of Billy Bunter's snore!

Guided by their ears, instead of their eyes, they soon found Bunter! He was lying in the grass under a shady tree, with his straw hat over his fat face to keep off the flies, slumbering, and snoring.

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"Oh, listen to the band!" murmured Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wake up, Bunter!"

Snore!

Bob gently stirred the fat ribs with his foot. Billy Bunter wriggled and grunted—and went on snoring!

"Talk about Rip Van Winkle!" remarked Bob. "He was a fool, to Bunter! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wake up, Rip van Bunter!"

Snore!

Bob Cherry stooped, jerked the hat off Bunter's face, and gently tweaked the fat little nose that was then revealed.

That woke Bunter! His eyes opened, blinking behind his spectacles.

"Urrggh!" he gasped. "Was that a wasp? Something bit my nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" snorted Bunter. He sat up, leaning on the tree, and blinked at Harry Wharton & Co. "You'll cackle on the other side of your mouths when I tell you what's happened while you've been gallivanting about."

"What's happened?" asked Bob.

"Guess!" said Bunter bitterly.

The Famous Five grinned. Evidently, Bunter did not know that they had come back in the Water-Lily. The boat was tied under the bank, out of Billy Bunter's range of vision; and the fat Owl, as he saw them, took it for granted that they had now returned from their walk! And he had crushing news for them—news that would jolly soon wipe those grins off their faces—and serve them jolly well right!

"Snigger!" said Bunter. "I fancy you won't snigger when you hear that that man Spooner's been here and pinched the boat!"

"Is the boat gone?" asked Bob.

"Yes, it jolly well is!" said Bunter. "I did all I could—fought like a lion, but he was too strong for me. He got off with the boat—while you've been trapesing about like a lot of silly asses looking at silly scenery! Serve you jolly well right for playing rotten tricks on a chap! Your own fault entirely!"

The Famous Five did not seem so dismayed by the news as Bunter naturally expected.

Fellows coming back from a walk and finding that their boat had been pinched in their absence might have been expected to sit up and take notice. But the Famous Five only smiled, just as if it was quite amusing to hear that the boat was gone—as, indeed, in the circumstances, it was!

"If you don't believe me, you can look!" yapped Bunter. "The boat's gone! That man Spooner was too hefty for me! I admit it! I put up a tussle—and jolly well gave him a black eye—"

"You gave Spooner a black eye!" yelled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Co.

Mr. Spooner had not had a black eye when the Famous Five had run him down in the boat. If Bunter had given him one, it must have got cured with unusual and remarkable rapidity.

"Oh, doubt a fellow's word, as usual!" sneered Bunter. "I can jolly well tell you that you wouldn't have put up the fight I did! I gave him a black eye—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you should have seen his nose—fairly smashed in!" said Bunter. "I gave him my left! His nose was swollen about twice the size it was, the last I saw of him!"

"The swelling must have gone down awfully quick!" murmured Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But he got the best of it!" said Bunter. "I couldn't help that! I fought him to a finish, but he was too tough for me! He got away with the boat! He's got a swollen nose and a black eye, if that's any comfort to you! But you'll never see that boat again. It's all Bob Cherry's fault!"

"Mine!" ejaculated Bob.

"He only wanted to loot the locker!" said Bunter. "That was his game, same as before! As he couldn't get it open, he cleared off with the boat. Your fault entirely!"

Bunter's fat lip curled in a tremendous sneer.

"You saved that cake!" he said contemptuously. "Not that I was after the cake, of course! I might have had a slice or two. It's not much I eat, as you fellows know! Well, you've saved a slice or two of cake—and lost the boat and the cake as well! And I must say that it serves you jolly well right!"

Billy Bunter heaved himself to his feet.

"And now what are we going to do?" he demanded. "Here we are, stranded, with nothing to eat! If you fellows think I'm going to walk miles and miles and miles, you're jolly well mistaken! And if you think I'm going without my tea—"

"About time we had tea!" remarked Bob Cherry. "We're a bit late. Ready for tea, Bunter?"

"I'm fearfully hungry!" yapped Bunter. "Starving! I was trying to get a spot of sleep, being so hungry—but, of course, I couldn't sleep!"

"Do you snore when you're awake?"

"I don't snore at all! I wasn't asleep when you fellows woke me up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" roared Bunter. "Look here, what are we going to do for tea? That's what I want to know! Where are we going to get some grub for tea?"

"Lots on the boat!" said Bob cheerily. "It won't take me long to get out that screw. There wouldn't have been much, though, if I hadn't put that screw in!"

"I tell you the boat's gone!" roared Bunter. "I tell you that man Spooner walked it off! I gave him two black eyes, but that didn't stop him!"

"Two!" gasped Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, two! He looked a regular wreck when he got away! But he got away with the boat, and I tell you it's gone. And—"

Billy Bunter broke off suddenly. Now that he was standing up, he could see the Water-Lily when he glanced towards the bank. He jumped almost clear of the ground in his amazement at the sight of the Greyfriars boat rocking against the rushes. It seemed for a moment that his eyes would pop through his spectacles.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped. "I—I—I say, you fellows, there's the—the—the bib-bob-boat!" Bunter fairly stuttered.

"There's the bib-bob-boat," agreed Bob, "and the gig-gob-grub is on the bib-bob-boat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"B-b-but I say, you fellows, that man Spooner did bag it!" howled Bunter. "I tell you he bagged it!"

"And we got it back!" chuckled Bob. "You see, we spotted him with it, and got it back from him. We came back in the boat, old fat man! And don't you worry about Spooner—he's got over the brutal way you handled him! He hadn't any black eyes or any swollen noses when we saw him an hour ago!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "You—you—you gig-gig-got it bub-bub-back?"

"We gig-gig-got it bub-bub-back, and now we're going to have tut-tut-tea! Think you'd like some kick-kick-cake? You need something after that fearful struggle with Spooner, and giving him all those black eyes and swollen noses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter wasted no more time in words. There was the boat—and there was food on the boat. Bunter rolled down to the Water-Lily and rolled on board—and when Bob had unwound the screw from the locker, there was cake at last for the hungry Owl! Life, once more, was worth living!

Rain on the River!

"RAIN!" said Harry Wharton. "And wet rain!" added Bob Cherry sadly.

The rain was wet, there was no mistake about that.

The Greyfriars voyagers had spent several days in the region of Mapledurham, enjoying fine weather and glorious scenery, sailing about the Thames and rambling on delightful shores. Likewise, they had attended to more practical matters in the way of renewing supplies and getting a whole collection of washing done ashore. Then, on a gorgeous August morning, they had resumed their voyage, towing on towards beautiful Pangbourne.

But beautiful Pangbourne was still well ahead of them when there came a change in the weather.

Really, they could not grumble. August, so far, had been gorgeous. A spot of rain was due—or overdue—so the Famous Five did not grumble. Besides, grumbling on their part was quite unnecessary; Billy Bunter put in enough grumbling for the whole party, if grumbling was any use.

Bright sunshine had given place to drifting clouds. Fresh green woods were weeping with water. Rain came down on the river, pattering and splashing. It came down on the Water-Lily—and the Water-Lily's crew.

And instead of getting better, it got worse!

The river, delightful in sunny weather, was not so delightful in heavy rain. Crowded craft skimmed away for shelter. As the Water-Lily tugged on, the Greyfriars fellows almost had the Thames to themselves.

So they gave up towing and pulled. Towing in heavy rain was neither grateful nor comforting. It was yet early in the afternoon when the rain became really bad, and they decided to look for a camp without delay. The tent, if they could have got it up in some sequestered spot, would have been a boon and a blessing.

Now they were looking along the Oxfordshire side, where there was no towpath, and plenty of places for convenient camping, but for the presence of prominent notice-boards, which warned off campers.

Of all the scenery in the Thames valley, that which leaps most to the eye is the legend: "Trespassers will be Prosecuted." Really, the Greyfriars crew were getting rather fed up with these inhospitable intimations.

Indeed, Bob Cherry had once proposed to camp where the notice-boards were thickest and utilise them for a camp-fire!

But something was due to law and order, and, after all, private property was private property.

So the Greyfriars trippers carefully respected such notices, awkward and irritating as they were when fellows were looking for a camp.

But pulling in the rain really made a fellow feel exasperated with notice-board after notice-board, especially fellows who were very careful campers, and never left a sign of damage behind them when they broke camp and went on their way. But careful campers had to pay scot and lot, as it were, for careless campers who left paper bags and broken bottles and jagged tins behind them. There are campers who will fling old bottles and disused tins into the water, without giving a thought to danger to bathers, and campers who will build camp-fires in the middle of a lawn with firewood jerked off a fence. Such campers can hardly expect to be welcomed on the best-tempered man's land.

But rain was rain—and pulling a heavy boat in a downpour was distinctly uncomfortable. They had to get shelter.

Billy Bunter sat in the stern with the only umbrella over him and a waterproof wrapped round him. From under the umbrella came a continuous stream of grousing—not delightful to the ears of the fellows who were pulling.

"Call this a holiday!" came from Bunter. "Yah! You wouldn't have got me in this boat if I'd known it was going to be like this! Filthy

rain! Nice sort of a holiday! Oh crumbs! Listen to the rain!"

The rain pattered heavily on the only umbrella. As Bunter was under the only umbrella, he really had the least cause for complaint. Still, Bunter was not enjoying life!

When Bunter was not enjoying life, he did not keep that fact a secret. Rather he told the world about it!

The truth was that nobody mattered but Bunter, though other fellows often did not realise this so clearly as Bunter did.

"Shut up!" said Johnny Bull for the umpteenth time.

"I'm getting damp all over!" said Billy Bunter, in a voice thrilling with indignation.

"We're getting rather more than damp, old fat man!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"That's right!" said Bunter, with bitter sarcasm. "Think of yourself first, and last, and all the time! I don't expect anything but beastly selfishness from you fellows!"

"You've got the only umbrella!" remarked Nugent.

"Perhaps you'd like it!" sneered Bunter. "It would be like you, I must say!"

"Shut up!" said Johnny Bull.

"Beast! You fellows may like this sort of thing—I don't! Why don't you find shelter somewhere? Afraid of being prosecuted if you land?" snorted Bunter. "You'd rather I caught my death of cold, I dare say! This is what I get, after all I've done for you fellows! I might have expected it, I know!"

Johnny Bull, who was steering, was getting a stream of drips from Bunter's umbrella, as well as his share of the rain. Now he suddenly gave that umbrella a thump, which squashed it down over Bunter's head. This seemed to indicate that Johnny was getting impatient.

There was a roar from Bunter as the umbrella went inside out! Rain poured on Bunter as it was already pouring on everybody else.

"Oh! Beast! Ow! Oh crikey! I'm getting wet!" roared Bunter. "Why, you awful beast—look at me! I'm getting soaked!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Such unfeeling selfishness was almost incredible to Billy Bunter! But there it was—the whole lot of beasts were laughing, just as if there were something funny in Bunter getting wet in the rain like the rest!

Bunter struggled with the umbrella. But there was wind as well as rain on the river, and it was not easy to get that umbrella right again. In the meantime, the rain came down on Billy Bunter.

When he got that umbrella right at last and huddled under it once more, the Owl of the Remove was rather more than damp!

But his grousing ceased for a time. Perhaps he was speechless with indignation—but more likely he apprehended another thump on the brolly from Johnny Bull. Anyhow,

he gave his fat chin a rest, which was a relief all round.

"We've got to get out of this," said Bob Cherry. "No good thinking of pulling up to Pangbourne in this! Look here, what about that show?"

He pointed to the bank.

The first object that met the eye, naturally, was a board, announcing that trespassers would be prosecuted. More interesting to the eyes of the wet and weary juniors was a summer-house on a lawn facing the river.

It was a wooden building with an open front, quite a pleasant place for sitting and watching the river in fine weather. In a downpour of rain it was, of course, untenanted. Rain splashed and lashed all over it; but the interior was well sheltered.

"Um! Look at that dashed notice-board!" said Nugent.

"Blow the notice-board!" growled Bob. "We can't camp here, but what's the harm in sitting under a roof till this blows over? It won't last for ever. We don't want another row, like that one at Loder's place, but—"

"Let's!" said Harry Wharton decidedly. "Why should anybody mind? Chance it, anyhow."

The boat swerved in to the bank. The lawn came down to the water's edge, and there was a post for tying-up. The juniors tied up and stepped out of the Water-Lily.

"Getting out, Bunter?" asked Bob.

"I think one of you fellows might hold this umbrella over me while I get out!" snorted Bunter. "Perhaps you'd rather I got wet?"

"Much rather!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

Billy Bunter breathed indignation and strove to land with the umbrella up. It caught in an overhanging branch—and quite a flood of water swamped down from rainy foliage.

"Oooogh!" spluttered Bunter.

He scrambled hurriedly ashore, stumbling over on fat hands and knees. The umbrella dropped into the boat.

With the almost unbelievable selfishness to which Bunter was sadly accustomed, nobody took the trouble to field that umbrella and get it up again over Bunter! It disappeared under the tarpaulin the juniors stretched over the boat.

Regardless of Bunter, the Famous Five attended to that little matter and then cut across to shelter.

Billy Bunter rolled into the summer-house, dripping, and snorting.

There was a wooden seat along the back of it and Bunter sat down, and the Famous Five, a few moments later, sat down also.

They were now out of the rain, at all events.

It pattered and splashed on the tarpaulin over the boat; it pattered and splashed on the slanting roof over their heads; but it no longer pattered and splashed on the Greyfriars crew, which was a comfort.

"After all, it can't last long," said Bob. "I dare say it will be over in

half an hour. Nobody on the river now."

Looking across, the juniors could see no craft, only rolling river and weeping rain, and the misty hills of Berkshire in the distance. The rain seemed to have cleared the Thames.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's one sportsman who likes getting wet!" remarked Bob, a few minutes later.

A canoe appeared in sight on the rainy river. The man in it was handling a double-bladed paddle deftly and swiftly.

Something familiar about that man struck the juniors' eyes; and as he drew nearer, they recognised him.

"Dear old Spooner!" grinned Bob.

"Oh, my hat! That blighter again!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Still after the Water-Lily, I suppose."

"He's coming here," said Nugent.

The canoe had appeared from down the river. Now it was swerving across to the bank where the juniors sat in the summer-house.

They watched Shifty Spooner curiously.

It was several days since they had seen him; but they were not surprised to see him on the trail again. They had learned by this time that Shifty was a sticker.

Nobody was very keen on getting into the rain again; but if Shifty had designs on the boat they were all prepared to step out and handle Shifty—with promptness and dispatch.

But the man in the canoe was not looking towards them. In the thick rain, probably he did not observe the boat tied up under the bank—and it dawned on the juniors that Shifty, whether he was after them or not, did not know that they were there.

He was swerving in to the bank, but heading for a spot some fifty yards farther up the river, where a wood grew to the water's edge and heavy branches stretched out over the Thames.

In a few more minutes, Shifty, without a glance in their direction, disappeared up the bank, under those overhanging trees. Whether he stopped there or went on, they could not see.

"Not after us this time, after all!" said Bob.

"Looking for us, I expect!" grunted Johnny Bull. "But he doesn't know we've landed! I

expect he's pinched that canoe, like he did the dinghy we copped him in down below Caversham."

Nothing more was seen of Shifty, whether he had gone on, or whether he was sheltering under the trees farther up.

The juniors watched the rain, hoping to see it ease off.

Instead of easing off, however, it came down harder. Obviously, it was not going to stop yet awhile. The Greyfriars crew could only wait.

They were, at least, under shelter,



"Get off my estate, before I telepho

and in such a downpour it was unlikely that they would be disturbed by the owners of the property. They had glimpsed a rather large house behind the trees, back from the river, to which the lawn and the summer-house evidently belonged; but in such weather it seemed improbable that any of the inhabitants would come out for a walk.

But it was the improbable that happened. A little later, there was a sound of footsteps, and a deep, throaty voice reached their ears.

"Are you sure, Pickings? You're sure you saw them?"

"Yes, Sir George," answered another voice.

"Good gad! In this weather, too! This must be the twentieth lot—or the thirtieth, by Jove! I'll deal with them!"

EVERY SATURDAY

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged dismal glances.

They could not doubt that these remarks referred to their worthy selves. Somebody had seen them land and reported the circumstance to Sir George—whenever Sir George might happen to be. Sir George, it seemed, was coming to look into the matter, in spite of the rain.

"No rest for the wicked!" sighed Bob Cherry.

"I'm not going out in this rain!" hissed Billy Bunter. "If that old

macintosh from head to foot, the collar turned up round a plump neck. His hat was pulled low against rain and wind. Little more of his face was to be seen than a beaky nose, a white moustache, and a pair of red eyes under grizzled brows. He carried an umbrella in his left hand, and a stick in his right, stumping along with the stick as if a little uncertain of his ancient legs.

Behind him came a man who was evidently in his service. He had no umbrella, but he had a stick under his arm, and a grim expression on his face. Possibly that inviting green lawn by the river had tempted other river parties, and Sir George was fed-up with them.

"Huh!" grunted Sir George. "Another gang! Huh!" His fierce little red eyes glinted at the Greyfriars party.

"Please excuse us, sir!" said Harry Wharton, in his very politest tones. "We have only landed for shelter from the rain, and are going on immediately it stops."

The soft answer often turns away wrath! But it did not turn away Sir George's wrath.

He pointed to the Water-Lily with his stick.

"Is that your boat?" he barked.

"Yes, that's ours."

"Get into it, and go!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter, for goodness' sake—"

"I'm not going out in this rain!" yelled Bunter.

"Quiet, you ass!"

"If you will permit us to sit here till the rain stops," said Bob Cherry, with elaborate politeness, "we're not thinking of camping here—only just sitting out of the rain!"

"Pickings!"

"Yes, Sir George!"

"Is this the same gang that stole the dog?"

"No, Sir George."

"Huh! If it is the same gang, I will telephone for the police, and give them all in charge! You are sure it is not the same gang, Pickings?"

"Quite sure, Sir George."

"Is anything missing—gardening implements were missed the other day. Is anything missing to-day?"

"We have caught them in time, then!" said Sir George.

The Greyfriars fellows exchanged looks. Really and truly they flattered themselves that they did not look like a gang who would steal a dog or make off with gardening implements. But Sir George, evidently, was not disposed to make fine distinctions. Neither was he disposed to run risks with his remaining dogs and gardening implements!

Sir George, on Sir George's riverside estate, was monarch of all he surveyed, his right there was none to dispute! Sir George was having no trespassers on his land.

"I cannot give you in charge if you have as yet taken nothing!" he barked. "Go at once, before I telephone for the police."

"Oh, don't be a silly goat!" exclaimed Johnny Bull; rather spoiling the effect—if any—of the politeness displayed so far. "Haven't you sense enough to see that we're decent and your silly dogs and spades and trowels and things are in no danger?"

Sir George gave him a glare. Behind Sir George, Pickings grinned faintly.

"Good gad!" exclaimed Sir George. "Impudence from these tramps!"

"We're not tramps, sir!" explained Harry Wharton, with polite patience. "We're schoolboys on a river trip! Surely there is no harm in sitting here out of the rain for half an hour or so?"

"Pickings!"

"Yes, Sir George."

"Turn those tramps off!"

"Yes, Sir George."

"I say, you fellows, I'm not going!" roared Billy Bunter. "Tell that old idiot you'll tip him into the river if he doesn't shut up his silly mouth!"

"What!" roared Sir George. What could be seen of Sir George's face became purple in hue!

It was improbable that politeness would have been effective. But his last chance was gone now! Billy Bunter had torn it!

Sir George gurgled with wrath.

"Did you hear that, Pickings?" he gasped, apparently not quite able to believe his own ears. "Did you hear your master called an old idiot, Pickings?"

"Yes, Sir George."

"Turn them off! Good gad! Kick them out! Thrash them if they do not go this instant! By Jove! I will let these trippers learn whether I keep up a riverside estate for their convenience. This is very likely the same gang that pulled down the fence last week and pilfered the apples from the orchard! Do you think it is the same gang, Pickings?"

"I cannot say, Sir George, as I never saw them—"

"You should have seen them, Pickings!"

"Yes, Sir George."

"I do not employ you to keep your eyes shut while my apples are pilfered from the orchard, Pickings."

"No, Sir George!"



"one for the police!" barked Sir George.

fool barges in, tip him into the river! I'm not leaving this, I jolly well know that!"

"Shut up, ass!"

Snort from Bunter! He snorted and he grunted, while the Famous Five, hoping that politeness might see them through, rose to their feet and raised damp hats to the old gentleman who came stumping, with a stick, round the summer-house.

Inhospitable!

"GOOD gad!" That was Sir George's remark or rather snort, as he stared into his summer-house and found it thickly populated.

He was a rather fierce-looking old gentleman. He was wrapped in a

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"Quite sure, Sir George."

"Is anything missing—gardening implements were missed the other day. Is anything missing to-day?"

"Turn them off at once! If they resist, thrash them with your stick! I will assist you, by Jove!"

Sir George gripped his stick in quite a businesslike manner. Pickings stepped into the summer-house.

"You can keep your stick where it is, Pickings!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "If you try to handle it here, you'll go into the water, head-first." The captain of the Greyfriars Remove had given up politeness as a chicken that would not fight!

"You'd better go, sir!" said Pickings quite civilly. Probably Pickings could see a difference between the schoolboy crew and the gang who had stolen the dog, and the other gang who had pilfered the apples. It was also probable that Pickings saw some difficulty ahead in thrashing five sturdy fellows all at once.

"We're going!" said Harry. "We shall not stay here without leave——"

"We're not going!" yelled Bunter. "Look at the rain!"

"Can't be helped, old fat man!" said Bob. "Let's thank Sir George nicely for his hospitality and cut."

Pickings grinned again—with his back to Sir George! It was clear that he did not dare to let Sir George see him grin!

"I tell you I ain't going out in the rain!" howled Bunter. "Who's that dot-and-carry-one old donkey to order us off?"

"Good gad!" gasped Sir George. "Do my ears deceive me! Did you hear that, Pickings?"

"Yes, Sir George!" gasped Pickings. He gurgled.

"Good gad! Are you laughing, Pickings? Did I hear you laugh, Pickings?"

"No, Sir George! Certainly not!"

"Turn them off instantly!"

"Come on, Bunter!"

"Shan't!" roared Bunter. "Think I'm going to get soaked to the skin to please that old dummy?"

"Look here, you fat chump, we can't stay here!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Come on at once, you Owl!"

"Beast!"

"And if you've still got that twopence-ha'penny you started the holidays with, give it to Sir George!" said Bob Cherry. "We owe him something for sitting in his summer-house."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Greyfriars party. Pickings clapped his hand over his mouth, just in time to repress another gurgle.

"I don't know what your charges are, Sir George," added Bob, looking at the purple old gentleman. "If twopence-ha'penny isn't enough, name your figure! We'll make it up to sixpence, if you like."

Sir George did not reply to that generous offer. He was past speech! He made frantic gestures to Pickings to get on with it. He seemed in danger of an apoplectic fit.

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton, laughing, and he led the way back to the boat, through the pouring rain.

"Beasts!" howled Bunter.

He rolled after them. He was prepared to sit in shelter, while the

Famous Five tipped Sir George and his man into the water; but he was not, it seemed, prepared to do any tipping personally! He rolled after the five, and they clambered into the boat.

Sir George brandished his stick after them. Pickings, behind Sir George, grinned. And the Water-Lily pushed off, leaving Sir George brandishing and Pickings grinning.

Any Port in a Storm!

"KEEP in!" said Harry.

He pointed to the trees, a little up the river. Great masses of branches, thick with foliage, extended over the water.

It was not a good shelter; but it was better than nothing, with the rain beating down thick and heavy on the river.

"Good egg!" agreed Bob.

Pulling out into that downpour was not to be thought of, if it could be avoided. And it could—by keeping under that thick arch of branches, through which the rain dripped, but did not pour.

Those trees, no doubt, stood on the irate Sir George's land. No doubt the branches belonged to him, as well as the trunks! But the river, at all events, was national property, free to all the loyal subjects of King George the Sixth. Even an excitable old gentleman, irritated by trippers who had stolen his dog and pinched his apples, could scarcely object to the boat holding on under the branches.

If he did, the Greyfriars crew were prepared to tell him precisely where he got off!

On the land, Sir George was in the right! On the water, they were in the right! Sir George's objections—if any—were going to be passed by like the idle wind, which they regarded not.

The juniors punted the boat along, a few yards off the bank. Rain came down in torrents on them as they did so.

They were glad to slip under those arched branches. Over them was a roof of foliage, barring off all the wet.

"Not so bad!" gasped Bob Cherry, shaking off raindrops, rather like a Newfoundland dog. "Not so good as the summer-house, but what's the odds, so long as you're 'appy?"

"The happiness is not truly terrific, at the present esteemed moment," mumbled Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, I'm wet!"

Bob, who was holding on to a low branch to keep the boat steady under the trees, looked round at Bunter with an air of astonishment.

"Wet?" he repeated. "Did you say wet, Bunter?"

"Yes!" howled Bunter. "Wet!"

"Sit up, you fellows, and take notice of this!" said Bob. "Bunter's wet! How did you get wet, Bunter?"

"You silly chump——"

"Must have been the rain!" exclaimed Bob, as if struck by a sud-

den explanation. "That was it! Bet you it was the rain, Bunter!"

"You blithering idiot!" howled Bunter.

"This is rather thick, you fellows," said Bob. "Rain is all very well—good for the crops, and all that—I believe farmers like it! And it doesn't matter if we get wet. But Bunter's wet! What's going to be done? Think it's any good telling the rain to stop?"

"You howling fathead!" shrieked Bunter, while the other fellows chuckled.

Bob Cherry began to chant the old nursery rhyme:

"Rain, rain!
Go to Spain!
Go, and don't come back again!"

Billy Bunter glared at him as if he could have bitten him. He did not seem to expect much benefit from that invocation to the rain!

"Notice any difference, you fellows?" asked Bob, glancing round.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"I'll try again," said Bob cheerfully, and he chanted once more:

"Rain, rain, cease to splash!
Bunter doesn't like a wash!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Co., greatly entertained by the expression on Billy Bunter's fat countenance.

"You silly beast!" howled Bunter. "I tell you I'm wet!"

"Well, I've done all I can," said Bob. "Something seems a bit wonky with the universe to-day. The rain's going on, although Bunter doesn't like it! Nature is a cheeky old dame. But I'll tell you what, Bunter! What about having a spot of soap along with the water? You'll have to wash at least once, before you go back to Greyfriars next term. Seize this opportunity!"

"Beast!" howled Bunter.

Clearly, soap along with the water would be no comfort to him.

"Look here, this isn't so jolly bad," said Harry Wharton, looking out from under the leafy room at a watery sunset over the river. "We could do worse than tie up here for the night. This isn't the weather for hunting for a camp—and I suppose nobody wants to pull a mile or two at the present moment——"

"Hardly!" agreed Bob Cherry. "We should be jolly well drowned a good way this side of Pangbourne Lock."

"The drownfulness would be terrific," shivered Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "Let us stick to this, my esteemed chums. What cannot be cured must go longest to the well, as the English proverb remarks."

"I don't believe it will stop before dark!" agreed Nugent. "This isn't one of our lucky days! Let's make the best of it here."

"I'm wet!" wailed Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you could pull up to Pangbourne, and we could get into an inn for the night! I don't think you fellows ought to be afraid of a spot of rain. Look here, if

you'll pull up to Pangbourne I'll manage all right under the umbrella. There!"

"I suppose we can't chuck him overboard!" said Johnny Bull. "But look here, Bunter, if you don't jolly well shut up, I'll dip your head over the side."

"Beast!" moaned Bunter.

Life seemed to Billy Bunter weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable. He was not so wet as the others; still, he was wet. Even worse than that was the prospect of supper. Bunter wanted a nice, hot, ample supper and a nice, warm, comfortable bed. He did not seem likely to get either in the dripping boat tied up under the dripping trees.

But the Famous Five, if they were not exactly enjoying the situation, at least took it cheerfully, as all in the day's work.

Reasonable fellows did not expect the weather to be specially arranged for them from the beginning to the end of a river trip.

And there was a certain zest in making the best of a bad job.

The boat was almost sheltered from the heavy rain. The dark, weeping wood ashore kept off most of the wind. The juniors towelled themselves as dry as they could.

Hurricanes and tornadoes would hardly have damped Bob Cherry's exuberant spirits. And the other fellows could keep smiling in adverse circumstances.

It was evidently judicious to make the best of what they had instead of faring forth to look for better, with the greater chance of finding worse. They decided to remain tied up under Sir George's trees.

Under a very big, very thick, and very wide-spreading oak they settled the Water-Lily, with the painter tied to a branch. Then, as the dark was evidently going to settle in early, they began to sort out supper.

Cooking was out of the question; but there was plenty of cold grub, and it was possible to boil the kettle on the spirit stove for hot cocoa to wash it down.

Billy Bunter watched these proceedings, hunched under the umbrella, with a jaundiced eye.

Nobody seemed to care whether he was wet or not. Nobody even cared whether he had a hot, substantial supper. It was a selfish world!

"Call that supper?" said Bunter bitterly.

"Don't you like it?" asked Bob sadly.

"No," yapped Bunter, "I don't!"

"Then I'll tell you what you'd better do," said Bob thoughtfully.

"Eh? What?" asked Bunter, blinking at him suspiciously.

"Don't have any."

That suggestion seemed no use to Bunter. He did have some—indeed, he had almost as much as the other five put together. The juniors sat about the boat and ate their supper and listened to the heavy rain splashing on the Thames and pattering on the trees.

After supper Bob Cherry stood up and looked about him. It was dusky and misty on the river and deeply

gloomy under the trees. The juniors had noticed a ditch—it was too small to be called a backwater—from which a little stream poured out into the Thames between two big trees. It was completely arched over with branches and thick foliage, rather like a dark tunnel. Bob pointed to it.

"What about pushing in there for the night?" he asked.

"That's Sir George's," grinned Nugent.

"Think the old boy will come wandering down through that wood after dark?" asked Bob. "It's really a cosy corner."

Bob cast off the painter and punted the boat closer in. But as it drew close to the opening of the little stream under the trees he uttered an ejaculation of surprise.

"Oh, my only hat!"

"What—"

"We're not the only ones here! Look!"

Close to the opening in the bank the juniors could see something that they had not noticed before.

A short distance up the runlet, under a bunch of willows, was a canoe.

It was quite hidden from sight from the land side—almost invisible from the water. But with the boat nosing into the mouth of the runlet, they could see it.

"Spooner's canoe!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Must be!" said Bob. "We saw him paddle under these trees. He never went farther on—he tied up here and landed. Pal of Sir George's—perhaps!"

"Not likely!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "More likely the man who pinched the dog and the apples."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was quite surprising to see Shifty Spooner's canoe tied up there.

The canoe was empty, and clearly Shifty had landed and was now somewhere on Sir George's estate.

What might be his object, the Greyfriars fellows could not guess; though they thought it quite probable that another dog might be missing after Shifty's visit.

"He's not after us this time!" remarked Bob. "He jolly well doesn't know we're around. We shall see the dear man when he comes back to his canoe. I daresay Bunter would like to give him some more black eyes and swollen noses."

"Yah!"

"He won't be able to get that canoe, out, if we push in!" said Harry. "There's barely room to wedge the Water-Lily in."

"We'll shift and let him pass if he asks us nicely—unless he comes back to the canoe with a bow-wow under his arm!" chuckled Bob. "We're not going to let him walk off Sir George's bow-wows, after George has been so nice and hospitable—fine old English gentleman, and all that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Greyfriars fellows punted the Water-Lily in.

There was just about enough depth to take the boat—and just about enough width. It was, as Bob had

said, a cosy corner, almost completely screened from wind and rain.

The Water-Lily, moored in that cosy corner, blocked the way for the canoe getting out. But—knowing Mr. Spooner as they did—the juniors thought it more likely than not that when he returned to his canoe, he would return with something that did not belong to him. So that did not matter at all.

Having moored, the Greyfriars crew began their preparations for settling down for the night. The dusk was deepening to dark now.

But a sound of footsteps on some unseen path in the wood interrupted them.

"Spooner!" murmured Bob.

But it was not Mr. Spooner—as the sound of a loud, throaty, angry voice soon apprised them.

"I repeat, Pickings, that they have not gone. I repeat that they are still hanging about. I tell you I saw a light under the trees—do you hear me, Pickings?"

"Yes, Sir George!"

"Oh, holy smoke!" murmured Bob. "Must have spotted us lighting the stove to make the cocoa. I'll tell you what, you fellows—I'm getting fed up with old George."

"Have you the light, Pickings? I directed you to bring a light. If you have forgotten to bring a light—Oh! Turn it on, then! I am absolutely certain that that gang of young scoundrels are still here. Did you hear me tell you to turn on that light, Pickings, or did you not hear me tell you to turn on that light?"

"Yes, Sir George."

The bright beam of an electric torch streamed from the shadows on the bank of the little stream. It shone full on the Greyfriars boat and the Greyfriars faces, and there was a roar on the bank.

"There they are! What did I tell you, Pickings? There they are!"

"Adsum!" said Bob Cherry, as if he were answering at roll-call at school.

And there was a chortle in the Greyfriars boat.

"Get Out!"

SIR GEORGE did not chortle. Sir George glared at the juniors in the boat. Pickings stood holding the light.

It revealed the Greyfriars boat blocking the little stream on Sir George's stream—from bank to bank. It did not reveal the canoe, which was farther up, and hidden under the willows.

Sir George's attention was concentrated on the boat. His macintosh streamed rain; his umbrella dripped water, a good deal of it over Pickings. He shook his stick at the Greyfriars crew.

"So you are still here!" he roared.

"Quite still!" answered Bob.

"What? What?"

"Can't help being still here," explained Bob. "We're fairly jammed in, and it keeps us still!"

Sir George gurgled wrath. Clearly, he was not there to listen to little jokes from Bob Cherry.

"I knew they were here, Pickings! I told you you were a fool to think they were gone. You heard me call you a fool, Pickings?"

"Yes, Sir George!"

"I presume that you acknowledge that they are still here, Pickings, now that you can see them with your own eyes?"

"Yes, Sir George."

"Turn them out at once!"

"My dear old bean," said Bob, "we're not on your jolly old estate here. We haven't set foot ashore. We're not going to."

"Did you not hear someone in the wood, Pickings?"

"Yes, Sir George."

"Not one of us!" said Harry. "We haven't been ashore!"

"Pah! You are trespassing here. You knew it, without my telling you. That backwater is on my estate. You know it!" barked Sir George. "That backwater is part and parcel of Tipton Lodge. You know it!"

"Is this place Tipton Lodge?" asked Bob

"What? Yes! Certainly it is Tipton Lodge!" barked Sir George.

"And are you one of the lodgers?"

"Wha-a-t?"

"I suppose a Lodge is a place where there are lodgers!" said Bob innocently. "If you're only a lodger—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Greyfriars crew, quite entertained by the expression on Sir George's face.

"A—a—a lodger!" gasped Sir George. "Good gad! Did you hear that insolence, Pickings?"

"Yes, Sir George!" gurgled Pickings.

"Turn them out! Lodger, by gad! Take that!" Sir George apparently feeling fearfully insulted by the suggestion that he was a lodger at Tipton Lodge, made a lick at Bob with his stick.

Bob dodged it promptly. The bank was well above the boat, and Sir George, as his swipe met with no resistance, toppled forward. Only Pickings' prompt clutch saved him from toppling headlong into the Greyfriars boat.

"Ooogh!" gasped Sir George, as his man dragged him back from disaster. "Grooogh! Oooh!"

"Keep out of our boat, George!" said Bob Cherry warningly. "This boat is private property! Trespassers will be prosecuted!"

"With the utmost rigour of the law!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"You'd better look after George, Pickings!" went on Bob. "If he trespasses in this boat, he will break the law. He might break his neck, too, if he does a nose-dive into it!"

"Boy! Rascal! Insolent knave!" gasped Sir George. "Pickings, will you turn that gang off my estate, or will you not turn that gang off my estate?"

"Yes, Sir George."

"Give me the light! I will hold the light, while you turn those young scoundrels off!"

Sir George held the torch, and Pickings stepped nearer the boat, in a rather gingerly manner. Johnny Bull picked up the boathook and eyed him like a bulldog. Pickings paused.

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He did not like the look of that boathook, or the bulldog face over it. And there were four other fellows to deal with.

There was a pause.

Billy Bunter weighed in, in the pause. There were some tomatoes left over from supper. Bunter selected the ripest, and whizzed it from behind the cover of the Famous Five. Harry Wharton, fortunately, spotted his action in time and knocked his fat hand aside. Sir George was an irritating old gentleman, but he was far too venerable to have tomatoes buzzed at him.

But every bullet has its billet. The tomato, deflected from Sir George, caught Pickings in the eye.

Pickings gave a wild howl as it burst there.

He tottered back, scraping tomato out of his eye.

"You silly ass!" howled Bunter indignantly. "I meant that for the old fogey!"

"Chuck it, you fat chump!" hissed the captain of the Remove.

"The silly old ass isn't going to turn us out of here!" bawled Bunter.

"Pickings!" roared Sir George.

"Ow! Ooogh! Ow! Oh corks!" gasped Pickings, grabbing wildly at his eye. "Oh blow! Oh dash! My eye's bunged up!"

"Never mind that! Turn those young scoundrels off! Will you turn those young scoundrels off, or will you not turn those young scoundrels off?" roared Sir George.

"Ow's a man to turn them off when his blooming eye is bunged up with a blooming tomato?" howled Pickings, goaded into rebellion. "Can't you wait till I've scraped this blinking tomato out of my blinking eye?"

"What—what? You are insolent, Pickings! I shall discharge you, Pickings! I will turn them off with my own hands!" thundered Sir George.

He pitched down his umbrella, grasped his stick, and advanced to the attack. Sir George, evidently, was game, in spite of his venerable years.

But the Famous Five, though quite ready to handle Pickings—who was a youngish man—were not prepared to lay hands on a gentleman of Sir George's years! They were, indeed, rather afraid that he might break if they did. On the other hand, they could not let him get busy with that stick.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton hastily. "We'll push out of this!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"What are you afraid of?" howled Bunter. "Why, I could handle that tottering old crock with one hand!"

"Kick him!"

"Yarook! Why, you beasts—"

roared Bunter.

The juniors hastily cast off the moorings. They were, after all, within the precincts of Tipton Lodge. That ditch, which Sir George called a backwater, was doubtless part of the old gentleman's estate. So they pushed out. It was only a few yards to the river—where all the Sir

Georges in the Knightage and Baronetage could not worry them.

Sir George flourished his stick as they went. Then suddenly, to their surprise, he uttered a loud howl.

"Ow!"

He ceased to flourish the stick, and leaned on it.

The juniors looked back at him, wondering what was the matter. Nobody had touched him—they would rather have pulled up to Pangbourne in the rain than have hurt that venerable old sportsman.

"Ow!" repeated Sir George. "Good gad! My leg!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob. "Rheumatism or gout, sir? You shouldn't wander about in the rain like this! Pickings! Take Sir George in at once and put him to bed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the crew of the Water-Lily. There was a gurgle from Pickings, still scraping tomato out of his eye.

"Ow!" repeated Sir George! "Impudent young rascal! My leg! Ow! Ruffians! Oh, my leg! Pickings, I must—wow!—go in at once! The rain has—oogh!—brought on my—wow!—rheumatism again! Yow-ow! Pickings, I leave you here to—Ow! Wow! Oh gad! Wow!"

"Yes, Sir George!"

"I leave you here to see that they—wow! Ow! That they go! Take care that they do, Pickings, or I shall certainly—yow-ow-ow! My leg! Wow!"

Sir George stumped away.

The light disappeared. As soon as the light disappeared Pickings disappeared also! No doubt he had had enough of the Greyfriars crew, and more than enough of their supply of tomatoes!

The Greyfriars crew punted to their anchorage under the big oak-tree.

It was only a few yards up the bank of the river. There they tied on, and as they were now on the Thames even Sir George, perhaps, would have realised that he had no power to shift them farther. But it was probable that Sir George was fully occupied now with his suffering leg. Anyhow, they had no intention of going farther for all the Sir Georges in the United Kingdom, and that was that!

An Alarm in the Night!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

No answer.

The Famous Five were asleep in the boat.

For once, Billy Bunter was not sleeping so soundly as the rest of the Water-Lily's crew. Generally, Billy Bunter could have taken on all comers in that line and beaten them easily. But the fat Owl was suffering from all sorts of discomforts now.

The Water-Lily was roomy, but there was not a lot of room for six fellows to camp in it, especially when one of the fellows was double-width.

Rolled in blankets, with the boat's tarpaulin over them, the Famous Five made shift to sleep, and as they had done a good deal of hard pulling that day, and wanted a rest, they

were rather more in need of repose than Bunter.

Bunter had got wet, though not so wet as the others. Having been too lazy to towel and change, he was still uncomfortably damp.

A tickling in his little fat nose made him grunt and grumble in his sleep, and finally a sneeze woke him up. He sat up and, being awake, naturally saw no reason whatever why anyone else should go on sleeping.

"I say, you fellows!" he hooted. "Snoring like a lot of pigs when a fellow can't get a wink!"

The Famous Five were not snoring—though Bunter had been, up to a minute ago. But they were fast asleep.

Billy Bunter blinked round from the boat. He did not know what the time was, but he knew that it was late.

The rain had at last ceased, and there was a pale glimmer of starlight from a watery sky, reflected on the broad, rolling river.

It seemed horribly lonely and dismal to Bunter—as the only fellow awake! He did not mean to be the only fellow awake!

He reached out and shook the nearest sleeper. There was a gasp from Bob Cherry.

"Oh! What's that? Wharrer marrer?"

"I say, wake up!" hooted Bunter.

Bob sat up, blinking.

"What the thump! What have you woke me up for?" he hooted.

"I sneezed!" explained Bunter.

"What?"

"Sneezed!"

"You blithering, burbling bloater! Have you woke me up in the middle of the night to tell me that?" hissed Bob.

"I may be catching a cold!" hooted Bunter. "Fat lot you'd care if I did, I dare say. But if you think I'm going to perish of pneumonia to please you, you're jolly well mistaken."

"You'll perish of drowning if you don't shut up! I'll tip you out of the boat! Now shut up, you perishing idiot!"

Bob settled down again.

"Didn't you hear me say I'd sneezed?" asked Bunter. "Look here, the rain's stopped, if you're so frightened of a spot of rain. What about pulling on and looking for an inn?"

No answer from Bob. He was sleepy, and was settling down to sleep again.

Billy Bunter breathed hard. He was accustomed to selfishness, but this was really the limit. He reached over and shook Bob again.

"Will you listen to a chap——" he began.

Bob did not sit up again. He reached out in his turn and thumped Bunter. He thumped him hard.

"Now shut up!" he hissed.

"Yarrah!"

"Hallo! What's up?" came Harry Wharton's voice, as the captain of the Remore started out of slumber. "That man Spooner turned up?"

"Old George butting in again?" yawned Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Only Bunter!" hissed Bob. "He woke me up to tell me he sneezed. He fancied I'd like to know! I'm going to tip him over the side if he doesn't shut up!"

"Beast!"

"Go to sleep, you fat chump!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I can't sleep!" hooted Bunter. "There ain't room for a fellow to breathe, with all you louts sprawling about the boat. I sneezed! That silly idiot Cherry doesn't seem to understand that I may be catching a cold! Something hot to drink may stop it! Will one of you fellows get up and make me some hot cocoa?"

"Kill him, somebody!" said Johnny Bull.

"Will you pull up the river and look for an inn?"

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Johnny Bull. "If you say another word we'll turn out and dip your head in the Thames! Now shut up!"

Five fellows settled down again. Billy Bunter blinked at them with unspeakable indignation.

In face of such selfishness as this, there was nothing for Bunter to do, but to settle down to sleep again, if he could

(Continued on next page.)

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He was about to do so when a sudden loud report rang from the distance, and the fat Owl gave a startled jump!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He started up, and the boat rocked. It was past midnight, and a shot, ringing through the silence of the night, was startling enough.

Bunter blinked towards the bank.

Through the trees there was a glimmer of distant lights. The sound of shouting voices came on the night wind.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter.

No answer.

The fat Owl grabbed at Bob Cherry and shook him. It was rather unfortunate that, in the gloom, it was Bob's nose that he grabbed! Bob Cherry woke up, with a howl, as his nose was almost pulled off!

"Yoo-hoop! What—wow! What—"

"I say—" gasped Bunter.

"You again!" yelled Bob. "You fat scoundrel, I'll teach you to lug my nose off! I'll jolly well—"

He scrambled to his feet.

"Duck his head!" hissed Johnny Bull. All the Famous Five had woke up.

"I'm going to!" hissed Bob.

"I say—don't play the goat—I say, listen!" gasped Bunter. "I heard a shot—somebody's been shot—I say—listen—"

"You blithering idiot—"

"I tell you I heard it—" shrieked Bunter. "Somebody's firing something—I say, stand between me and the bank—suppose he shoots this way—"

"I'll jolly well—"

Bob, about to grasp the fat Owl and duck his fat head in the water, paused. Sharp and clear from the land came the report of a firearm.

Bang!

Harry Wharton & Co. on Hand!

BANG! It was a revolver-shot; in the silent night it sounded loud and sharp. Harry Wharton & Co. were all on their feet now.

Bunter, on the other hand, wasn't! If lead was flying, Bunter preferred to lie low and leave it to other fellows to investigate. Bunter plumped down in the bottom of the boat. He yelled when he was trodden on, but he did not get up.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Harry Wharton in amazement.

"That was a shot—" gasped Nugent.

"That fat ass said he heard one—" said Bob. "That's another, if he did! Who the thump is blazing away at this time of night?"

"Listen!"

Shouting voices came from the distance. Lights flashed and twinkled from the direction of Tipton Lodge. The juniors could glimpse them, through the trees on the bank, though nothing could be seen clearly.

"Something going on at George's place!" said Johnny Bull. "Sounds

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as if the whole house has turned out."

"Burglary!" said Harry.

"Oh!"

The juniors realised that it could hardly be anything else—a household suddenly breaking into wild excitement at one in the morning, and somebody banging away with a revolver.

"Spooner!" ejaculated Bob.

"Oh! That's it!" As soon as Spooner was mentioned, Harry Wharton had no doubt!

That was why Shifty had hidden his canoe in the creek and gone ashore and remained there! Shifty Spooner was on Sir George Tipton's estate—and there was an alarm in the middle of the night! It was only a matter of putting two and two together!

"We're on this!" said Bob, his eyes gleaming. "Old Tipton is a silly old donkey and an offensive old ass, but if that man has robbed him—"

"Looks as if they may have copped him, from the shindy they're kicking up yonder!" said Johnny Bull.

"If he gets away, he will cut back to that canoe, of course!" said Harry; "That's why he came by water. Let's get ashore—"

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter from the bottom of the boat. "Don't you leave me alone here."

"Come on then, ass!"

"Shan't!" howled Bunter. "Think I'm going to get my brains blown out to please you? Stay here with me, you beasts—suppose that villain comes this way—"

"Fathead!"

Unheeding the alarmed fat Owl, the juniors pushed the Water-Lily closer to the bank and scrambled ashore.

Who had fired the shots, they could not tell—but they were sure that it was not Shifty Spooner. He was not that sort of man at all—they could not picture the cunning, sly, shifty rascal in the role of armed bandit! Somebody in a state of excitement at the house had banged off the revolver—most likely old Sir George! But even had they supposed that Shifty carried the gun, it would have made no difference. If the rascal came fleeing down to the canoe with his loot, they were going to stop him.

That was easy enough, too. From the bank, they scrambled through wet trees and foliage into the path by which Sir George and Pickings had come along that evening.

That path led through the river-side wood, down to the little stream where Shifty's canoe was parked. If he came fleeing in that direction, he had to pass them. And they were not going to let him pass!

Since the rain had stopped, the stars had come out in a clearing sky. There was a glimmer of starlight on the path in the wood, and they could pick their way.

They pushed up the path as soon as they had entered it, in the direction of the house, and stopped where it ended at a lawn, which lay open before them, the wet grass glimmering in the stars.

A sound of running feet reached them.

At the house, which they could see now, every window was flashing with lights. A great door stood open, and light streamed out from it, revealing three or four excited men-servants, among them Pickings—and a figure in a dressing-gown and nightcap—Sir George!

Sir George was brandishing something in his hand—no doubt the revolver that had barked out the shots—and shouting, though only the sound of his voice reached the juniors, and they could not make out the words.

Closer at hand were the running footsteps. Dim on the glimmering lawn was a shadowy figure, running—towards them!

"Keep close!" whispered Harry.

They kept close in the shadow of the trees, at the opening of the path through the wood to the stream.

The running man was heading for the exact spot where they stood—and though they could see nothing but a darting shadow, they had no doubt that it was Shifty, making off to his canoe!

He was not going to reach that canoe if they could stop him!

Behind him, still at a distance, men were shouting, or waving lights—obviously unaware of the direction the escaping man had taken. Unaware that he had a craft hidden at hand, probably they did not guess for a moment that he was heading for the river.

Anyhow, it was plain that there was no pursuit on his track! Only that single swift figure was flitting across the wet grass.

The juniors waited! Shifty—if it was Shifty—had left Sir George & Co. safely behind, and had no doubt that he had a clear run in front of him. He could see nothing of the school-boys as he came in the dark shadow of the trees, and evidently had not the faintest suspicion that anyone was there.

In another minute or two they could hear his panting breath, as well as the rapid thudding of his running feet.

Then as he came close they saw his face in the starlight—the face of Shifty Spooner, red with exertion, the mouth open and panting for breath.

A moment more and Shifty had darted into the path—and was uttering a yell of amazement and terror as shadowy figures closed round him and grasped him.

Grasping hands were his first intimation that the Greyfriars fellows were there!

Shifty's startled yell rang through the wood.

"Got him!" panted Bob.

"Hold him!"

In an instant Shifty Spooner was struggling and fighting like a wild-cat. Something in his hand went with a plop into the grass and was trodden underfoot as the struggle went on in the dark.

Shifty had no chance in a struggle, if the Famous Five all got hold of him at once. But he seemed as slippery as an eel, and as nimble as



"We grabbed the burglar and got this!" explained Wharton, thrusting a wallet almost under Sir George's beaky nose!

a cat. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry both had hold of him—and they rolled over together on the ground.

Nugent, Johnny Bull, and the nabob grasped at him. But if they got hold, he seemed to slip through their fingers.

Bob Cherry had an iron grip on the collar of his coat. Rolling over blindly, he did not let go that grip—he held on like a bulldog.

But suddenly he felt his grip loose, and before he could realise that the slippery Shifty had somehow wriggled out of the coat, Mr. Spooner had wrenched himself loose from Wharton and leaped up.

Bob was left with a coat in his hands.

Shifty bounded away.

Three fellows were jumping at him—but only Johnny Bull got a grasp. But the desperate Shifty tripped him the next moment, tore loose, and flew.

"After him!" panted Bob.

"Don't let him get away!"

The whole party tore down the dim path after the fleeing Shifty. What he had dropped when the struggle started remained unheeded in the grass. Shifty was thinking only of escape—the Famous Five were thinking only of collaring him. He had got through them—at the cost of losing his loot!—but he had not got away yet!

They careered down the shadowy path in pursuit.

But Shifty ran like a startled

rabbit. There was a crash ahead of them in the dark—as he leaped into the canoe.

"Quick!" panted Bob.

They tore on. But as they came out of the trees on the edge of the stream, it was to see Shifty in the canoe, clear of the willows, wielding his double-bladed paddle with frantic energy.

The canoe shot like an arrow at the river.

"That old fool!" panted Bob.

Had the Water-Lily still been in that creek, there would have been no escape for Shifty! The narrow way would have been blocked from side to side. The canoe would have been hopelessly bottled up.

Now the way was clear! Sir George's own action had cleared it. The canoe, shooting like an arrow, whipped out into the river and vanished. Shifty, with whatever loot he may have had in his pockets, was gone!

"That old ass——" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Well, he's gone," said Harry. "But he dropped something on the path. Let's go back and see what it was. Ten to one it was his loot!"

The juniors tramped back up the path through the wood. Bob flashed on a pocket-torch at the scene of the struggle.

"Here!" said Harry, and he picked up a large, well-packed leather wallet.

"That's what he dropped!" said Bob.

"Not his own!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The wallet, perhaps—not what's in it!" said Harry. He jerked open the wallet, and the juniors stared at a bundle of thick documents inside, folded.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

There were a dozen of those thick documents. On each of them could be seen the figures "£500." They were bonds, and the total value was £6,000. Shifty, evidently, had struck luck at the safe at Tipton Lodge!

"Bonds!" said Bob. "Four—five—six thousand pounds! Think old George will be glad, after all, that we put up here for the night?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By gum!" said Harry Wharton slowly. "We know Spooner's trade now! He was sent to prison for a robbery at Popper Court, old Baker told us at Friardale. He used to sail that Water-Lily on the Sark and other rivers—and we can guess now what his sailing excursions were for! Now he's playing the same game with a canoe! But I'll bet that that boat of ours was used for this sort of game when it belonged to Spooner!"

"Pretty clear!" agreed Bob. "Better get rid of that bag as soon as we can! Think Sir George will excuse us for making a late call if we walk in with his giddy bonds?"

"We'll chance it!" said Harry, laughing.

He put the fat wallet under his

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arm, and the Famous Five, leaving the wood, walked up to the house.

An Invitation to Stay!

"PICKINGS!"

"Yes, Sir George?"

"Why are you standing there like a fool? Stenson!"

"Yes, Sir George?"

"Will you do nothing, or will you do something? Do you think it is a butler's duty to stand perfectly still while his master is robbed?"

"Oh, no, Sir George!"

"William—Henry—Thomas—will you, or will you not, catch that villain who has broken open my safe and robbed me?" roared Sir George.

Sir George was in a state of terrific excitement. He brandished his revolver.

Pickings, Stenson, William, Henry, and Thomas had rather uneasy eyes on that revolver.

It had gone off twice, fortunately without doing any damage. They seemed to dread that it might go off again, and do some damage.

"I have been robbed!" roared Sir George. "My whole household slept while I was robbed! Had I not been kept awake by rheumatism, I should have heard nothing, and the thief might have cleared out the whole house. As it is, he has robbed my safe—he had it open, when I came down! I tell you that he has taken my bonds! He has robbed me of six thousand pounds' worth of easily negotiable bearer bonds! Do you bear me, Stenson?"

"Yes, Sir George!"

"He has taken a pocketful of cash—but that is a trifle! He has robbed me of six thousand pounds!" roared Sir George. "I fired at him at the safe and missed. I fired again as he jumped from the window—and missed. I tell you, he is unhurt and escaping—escaping with his plunder! Will you, or will you not, seize him before he escapes with six thousand pounds' worth of easily negotiable bearer bonds?"

"Which way has he gone, Sir George?"

"Are you a fool, Stenson?"

"I—I hope not, Sir George!"

"Then what is the use of asking me which way he has gone, when I have not seen him since he jumped from the library window?" roared Sir George. "No doubt he is making for the road—probably he has a car waiting! These thieves always have a car in attendance!"

"Nobody's on the road, Sir George—I've been on the road—"

"Then he was gone before you got there, Pickings. You have let him slip through your fingers! Six thousand pounds," roared Sir George, "and my whole household stand round like a flock of geese—gaping!"

"Here's somebody—"

"Those tramps again!" roared Sir George, as the Famous Five came up. "Those young tramps—"

Harry Wharton & Co. had heard Sir George's voice from quite a distance as they came. Now they had

arrived, Sir George met them with a glare of absolute ferocity.

"Pickings!" he roared.

"Yes, Sir George?"

"See that these tramps do not get away! They may have had a hand in it!"

"Oh' erikay! I—I mean, yes, Sir George!"

"You silly old ass!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Impudent young rascal! Stenson, go in and telephone for the police! If you can do nothing else, you can at least use the telephone, I presume?"

"Yes, Sir George!"

"These young rascals—"

Harry Wharton held out the wallet. Explanation in words was hardly possible to the explosive old gentleman. But actions were plainer than words. He shoved the leather wallet open almost under Sir George's beaky nose.

The old baronet stared at it.

Then he took it, and blinked into it. Then he jumped.

"Mum-mum-mum-my bonds!" he stammered.

"We grabbed the burglar when he was getting away and got this off him!" explained Harry.

"Good gad!"

Pickings, Stenson, William, Henry, and Thomas all stared at the Greyfriars juniors. Sir George, like a man in a dream, gazed at his recovered bonds—and counted them.

"Good gad!" he repeated.

He blinked at the chums of Greyfriars.

"What—" he gasped. "How—"

"We heard the shot, and came ashore from our boat," explained Harry. "We collared the thief, and he dropped that wallet in the struggle. He got away in a canoe he had in your ditch—I mean back-water—"

"And if you hadn't shifted our boat out, he couldn't have got away!" granted Johnny Bull.

"If he had anything in his trousers' pocket, he's gone off with it," said Bob Cherry. "But here's his coat—he slipped out of it to get away!"

"Pickings!"

"Yes, Sir George?"

"Examine that coat!"

"Yes, Sir George!"

Pickings examined the coat; and from an inside pocket turned out a bundle of three or four dozen currency notes. From another inside pocket he turned out a gold cigarette-case, and another bundle of notes.

"Good gad!" said Sir George, as Pickings handed them to him. He blinked at the various articles. "By Jove! This—this is all that was taken! Good gad! These boys—these excellent and courageous boys—have recovered the whole of that villain's plunder while my household were standing round like a flock of geese! Pickings!"

"Yes, Sir George!"

"How dare you describe these boys—these dutiful and courageous boys—as tramps?"

"Eh?"

"Are you a fool, Pickings?"

"Oh! Yes! No, Sir George,"

gasped the unfortunate Pickings. "I—I—I didn't call them tramps, Sir George! You called them tramps, Sir George."

"If you are insolent, I shall discharge you, Pickings!"

"Yes, Sir George."

"On another occasion, have a little sense, Pickings! Cannot you distinguish between a party of respectable boys such as these, and a gang of tramps? Are you blind, Pickings?"

"Oh! Yes! No, Sir George!"

"My dear boys," said Sir George, "I am infinitely obliged to you! You have rendered me a great service—a very great service. I should be glad to reward you for saving me from this great loss—"

"Not at all, sir!" answered Harry Wharton. "Please don't think of anything of the kind."

"Then I can only beg you," said Sir George, "to look over the stupidity, the crass stupidity of my man, Pickings! Why he supposed you were tramps, I cannot imagine—but he is a fool—he means well, but he is a fool! You are a fool, Pickings!"

"Yes, Sir George!"

"Please excuse him!" said Sir George. "And I beg you to camp on my land, if you so desire, and to stay as long as you please. I shall take it as a favour! I shall be delighted! I will not take no for an answer."

Evidently the Greyfriars crew had risen very much in Sir George's estimation. He fairly beamed on the Greyfriars party—about whom, only a few hours ago, he had been so anxious to lay his stick!

"You're very kind, sir—" said Harry.

"Not at all! A favour—I beg you to camp on my land—my servants shall do everything to make you comfortable! Pickings!"

"Yes, Sir George."

"You will place yourself entirely at the orders of these young gentlemen, while they remain at Tipton Lodge."

"Yes, Sir George."

"Thank you very much, sir!" said Harry. "But we're going on at dawn—"

"You are not going on at dawn!" said Sir George. "You desired to camp on my land, and you shall camp on my land! I will not take no for an answer! Who are you? You have not told me who you are, or what you are!"

"We belong to Greyfriars School, sir," answered Harry. "We're a holiday party doing the Thames—"

"Greyfriars! Upon my word! My nephew is a Greyfriars boy—he will be here to-morrow—you shall meet him! Pickings!"

"Yes, Sir George!"

"Do you hear this, Pickings? These boys, whom you have taken for tramps, are schoolfellows of my nephew, Stephen, Pickings!"

"Yes, Sir George!"

"You will certainly remain, and—Ow!" howled Sir George suddenly. "The damp—the night air, have—wow!—brought on my rheumatism again! Ooogh! Stea—"

son, give me your arm into the house! Wow! Are you deaf, Stenson? Will you give me your arm into the house or will you not give me your arm into the house? Wow!"

Sir George, leaning on the butler's arm, limped into the house. And Harry Wharton & Co. walked back to their boat—to finish their interrupted night's rest—and once out of Sir George's sight and hearing they chuckled as they went. They found Sir George rather amusing—much more, probably, than his household did!

Safety First!

GLORIOUS sunshine greeted the Greyfriars juniors when they turned out in the morning—rather later than usual. Five fellows had a dip in the Thames, while Billy Bunter snored in the boat—and the fat Owl was still snoring, when they consulted on the day's programme.

The original idea had been to snatch a cold breakfast in the boat and push on at dawn. But the happenings of the eventful night had made a difference. Sir George had now made them welcome to his estate; and had been so emphatic about it that it seemed a little uncivil to decline. And it was a really delightful spot to hang up for a day or so. While they were discussing it, Pickings came through the wood and called to them, touching his hat and grinned.

"Good-morning, young gentlemen!" he called.

"Good-morning, Pickings!" answered Bob cheerily. "How's George?"

"Sir George is down with his roomticks, sir!" answered Pickings. "Turning out on a damp night don't do his roomticks no good. But he's sent me down special to say that he hopes you will stay as long as you like, and I'm to do everything I can! He ain't a bad sort, sir, though a bit peppery—he's a good master to me, though he do bite a man's head off occasional!"

"He did," agreed Bob. "Tell George it's a go! I mean, give Sir George Tipton our best respects, and say that we shall be happy to avail ourselves of his kind invitation for a day or two! That sounds better!"

"Yes, sir!" grinned Pickings.

And he went to convey that message to Sir George.

"Jolly place for a camp," said Harry Wharton. "And I don't see why we shouldn't, now Sir George is so nice! I wonder who that Greyfriars nephew of his may be—some chap we know, perhaps. Anyway, we stick on to-day—we'll be careful not to outstay our welcome."

And that being decided, the Famous Five pushed the Water-Lily into the ditch, or creek, which Sir George dignified by the name of backwater, and landed their belongings.

It was a glorious morning—and they were all feeling merry and bright. There was an excellent spot

for a camp on the bank of the little stream, under the trees; and Pickings brought them a supply of fresh water and a basket of new-laid eggs and another of ripe apples—presents from the house.

The scent of frying bacon seemed to awaken Billy Bunter! He sat up and blinked ashore.

"I say, you fellows, are we camping here?" he squeaked.

"We are—we is!" answered Bob Cherry.

"I think I'll have my brekker in the boat in case that old donkey comes fooling around again!" said Bunter. "Pass mine this way, will you? Six rashers will do for me, if you've got plenty of eggs."

The Famous Five chuckled.

They had found Billy Bunter fast asleep in the boat when they returned in the night! He had not awakened—till now! So the fat Owl was unaware of the change that had taken place in the fortunes of the campers.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter, blinking at them. "It's a bit risky camping there. That old goat was talking yesterday about phoning for the police. Nice set of asses you'd look if a bobby walked in."

"I shouldn't wonder if a bobby walked in!" agreed Bob, with a chuckle.

That was, indeed, quite probable! The burglary at Tipton Lodge must have been reported to the police, and it was very probable that the officials of the law would want to see the schoolboys who had bagged the burglar if they were still on the spot.

"Well, what are you going to say, if a bobby walks in?" demanded Bunter.

"I shall say 'Good-morning, Robert!'" answered Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chump!" howled Bunter.

"It's all right, fathead!" said Harry Wharton. "We bagged a burglar for Sir George last night, and got back tons of loot—and he's given us permission to camp."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter. "Fat lot of burglars you bagged! Look here, gimme my brekker—I said I'd have it in the boat. I can jolly well tell you that if I see a bobby, I shall push off. Will you gimme my brekker?"

"Who's going to wait on Bunter this morning?" asked Bob. "Don't all speak at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you mean that you're not going to bring me my brekker here, Bob Cherry—"

"What a brain!" said Bob. "He's guessed it!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the boat. He blinked uneasily up and down and round about. But breakfast called, with a call that was not to be resisted; and, uneasy as he was, the fat junior joined the campers.

"I say, these are jolly good eggs!" said Bunter, after his fifth. "Where did you get them?"

"Present from Sir George!" grinned Nugent.

"Oh, don't talk rot! Where did you get those apples?"

"Present from Sir George."

"Will you leave off talking rot?" howled Bunter. "Look here, if you've been sneaking the old boy's eggs and apples, it's jolly risky! Much better shove them straight in the boat and hook it!"

"Why, you fat villain!" gasped Harry.

Evidently Bunter's idea was that the Famous Five had been robbing hen-roosts and raiding the orchard.

"Well, if you get run in I shall expect you to own up that I had nothing to do with it!" said Bunter, starting on his sixth egg.

"Nothing except wolfing the plunder?" asked Bob. "You howling ass, we bagged that man Spooner last night, making off with old George's valuables, and got it all back—and George has asked us to stop—"

"He, he, he!"

"We're camping here on George's invitation, fathead!"

"He, he, he! Pile it on!" grinned Bunter. "You can't expect to pull my leg like that! I can see you copping a burglar! I say, you fellows, that canoe's gone—Spooner must have left in the night—"

"He left in a hurry, with us at his heels—"

"He, he, he!"

"You fat, frabjous, frumptious freak—"

"He, he, he!"

Bunter, evidently, did not believe a word of it. His belief that the eggs and apples had been pinched did not prevent him from scoffing the lion's share of both! But he was not going to believe in that exploit of the Famous Five in the night! Not Bunter! Very likely there had been a burglary—there had certainly been a disturbance in the middle of the night—but the Famous Five had not copped any burglar. Billy Bunter was not going to be taken in by a yarn like that!

Bunter grinned as he parked rich, ripe, red apples.

"I say, you fellows, if you got away safe with this lot, you might bag some more!" he suggested. "I'll stay in the boat, ready to push off—"

"Oh, kill him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Serve that old donkey right for being so jolly uncivil!" said Bunter. "They're topping good apples! Look here, though, it might be safer to get off at once, before they find out that you pinched them. You needn't worry about me—I can cat in that boat; that's all right."

"Is anybody worrying about Bunter?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Breakfast over, the Famous Five left Billy Bunter still eating, and got ready for a walk. Tipton Lodge, on the other side, fronted the road between Mapledurham and Whitchurch, and a morning's walk in delightful scenery was attractive.

Billy Bunter, still demolishing apples, watched them through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, where are you going?" he squeaked.

"For a walk!" answered Harry.

"Coming?"

"No fear! I say, you'll have to pass the house to get to the road!" exclaimed Bunter. "Suppose they cop you?"

"Fathead!"

"Well, look here, suppose a bobby comes while you're gone!" howled Bunter. "I can tell you I'm not going to stick here to be run in. They may think I helped to pinch the apples—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

A figure in official uniform appeared on the path through the wood. It was a police-inspector. He was coming towards the Greyfriars camp.

Billy Bunter gave him one startled blink and bounded to his feet. With another bound, he was on board the Water-Lily. The next second he vanished!

Harry Wharton & Co. stared into the boat. Blankets and rugs lay there, not having been put away for the day. Bunter had scrambled under them and was completely hidden from sight.

For a moment the Famous Five stared blankly at the hillock of blankets. Then they burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sight of a police-inspector was

enough for Bunter! Bunter was not going to be run in for pinching eggs and stealing apples! Bunter had taken cover!

"Come on!" chortled Bob. "Better leave him to it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And leaving him to it the juniors walked up the path to meet the police-inspector.

As they expected, he had been to the house and wanted to see them in connection with the burglary. And he was extremely pleased to find that they were able to give him the name and description of the man who had cracked Sir George's safe.

The interview lasted a quarter of an hour, during which the inspector made many notes in his notebook. Finally, he complimented the juniors on the part they had played and went back to the house.

When he was gone they looked back at the boat. There was still a hillock of blankets and rugs amidships in the Water-Lily. Billy Bunter was banking on safety first.

Cheerfully leaving him to it, the Famous Five sauntered away, wondering how long the fat Owl would remain in cover, and whether he would still be parked under the blankets in the bottom of the boat when they came back.

No Luck for Loder!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Know that lot?" grinned Bob Cherry.

Five cheerful juniors were saunter-

ing along the road in the direction of Mapledurham. A good many cars had passed them—unheeded! But they heeded an open car that came along with four familiar faces in it.

Four Greyfriars seniors were in that car! A week or two ago the Famous Five had encountered that party, lower down the Thames.

Loder and Walker of the Sixth Form, Hilton and Price of the Fifth Form, stared at them from the car.

Bob Cherry politely waved his hat.

Three fellows scowled at him in return; Hilton grinned. Loder of the Sixth gave the juniors the blackest of black looks.

He spoke to the chauffeur and the car slowed down.

"Dear old Loder!" said Bob. "He can't forget the little shindy we had down the river! He doesn't seem pleased to see us!"

"Silly ass!" grunted Johnny Bull. "He can't forget that he's a prefect at school, and he fancies he can come the prefect in the hole!"

"Keep clear!" said Harry. "We don't want another row!"

"Looks as if Loder docs!" said Bob.

The car came to a halt before reaching the Famous Five. So they had to pass it at a halt as they went on their way. Gerald Loder threw open the door and stepped out.

"Hold on!" said Loder, in a very disagreeable tone.

He stepped in front of the juniors. There was a walking-stick in his hand. The Famous Five stopped, eyeing Loder warily.

James Walker and Stephen Price stepped from the car. Hilton sat where he was, looking bored.

"Chuck it, Loder!" he called out. "Don't play the goat here on a public road!"

"You can shut up, Hilton!" retorted Loder. "I'm not likely to let those young scoundrels get away without a licking now we've dropped on them again, after what they did!"

"Oh, don't be a goat!" said Hilton. "The kids never did any harm! They were taken in that time they camped at your place, and they'd have explained if you hadn't started by kicking up a row. And—"

"I said you can shut up!" said Loder.

Hilton shrugged his shoulders and sat looking on.

"Now, you young rotters!" said Loder, eyeing the Famous Five. "You trespassed at Thames Nook and put up a fight when I ordered you off. Now you're going to be sorry for it! You first, Wharton! Bend over!"

"Eh?"

"Bend over!" rapped Loder.

Harry Wharton laughed.

At Greyfriars School, that order from a Sixth Form prefect with whopping privs had to be obeyed by a junior. But in the holidays, on a road by the River Thames, it hadn't! No member of the Famous Five was likely to bend over on the Mapledurham road at Loder's command!

"Tell us another funny story, Loder!" suggested Bob Cherry.

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"I've told you to bend over, Wharton!" said Loder grimly.

"And I tell you not to be a fool!" retorted the captain of the Remove.

"Will you bend over?"

"Hardly!"

"Collar him, Steve, and bend him over!" said Loder.

Price hesitated. He was a Fifth Form man, much bigger than a Remove fellow. But he did not like the look of the captain of the Remove. It was clear that there was going to be some hard hitting before Wharton was bent over.

"Do you hear?" snapped Loder. "Collar him, I say!"

Price made up his mind to it. He advanced on the captain of the Remove and grabbed him by the shoulder.

Harry Wharton's fist came out rather like a hammer. It crashed on Price's nose and Stephen Price went over backwards in the grass verge beside the road as if a cannon-ball had hit him! He roared as he landed on his back.

"Man down!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Ow!" roared Price. He sat up in the grass with his hand to his nose, crimson trickling between his fingers. "Ow! My nose! Oh! Ow!"

"By gum!" gasped Loder.

He made a movement towards the Famous Five, Walker following him. Loder shouted to Cedric Hilton, who was still sitting in the car, looking on with a frowning brow.

"Back up, Hilton, you slackin' ass! Come here, will you?"

"Comin'!" answered Hilton.

He stepped from the car.

"Back up, Price!" exclaimed Walker.

Stephen Price staggered to his feet. His nose was streaming red and his eyes were glinting. Price was not much of a fighting-man, but that jolt on his nose seemed to have roused his fighting blood, such as it was.

The Famous Five drew together, backing away.

They were full of pluck, and full of beans, but good men as they were, they had no chance in a hand-to-hand tussle with four big seniors. Loder, evidently, had been nursing his vengeance ever since that row down the river, and now he had a chance of letting it rip. That unexpected meeting on the Mapledurham road was rather unfortunate for the Famous Five. They were unwilling to take to their heels, but had they been willing, there was no chance. Loder had them now!

"Now collar them!" said Gerald Loder grimly. "I'll give them six each, all round, with this stick! Now——"

"Very entertainin' for the public!" drawled Hilton. "Don't you think you'd better keep it for Greysfriars, Loder?"

"I'll please myself about that. Come on and collar the young cads!" snarled Loder.

"You rotten bully!" said Bob Cherry, his eyes gleaming. "We'll give you a tussle before you get busy with that stick! You're a rotter, Hilton, to back up that bully!"

"Who's backin' him up?" drawled Hilton.

"Oh! Aren't you?" asked Bob.

"Not at all!"

"Don't you be a fool, Cedric!" exclaimed Price. "Look at my nose! If those cheeky young scoundrels have the cheek to put up a scrap you're going to lend a hand—see?"

"Quite!" assented Hilton. "I'm goin' to lend them a hand!"

"What?" roared Loder.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob.

The two parties were facing one another on the grass verge by the road. The chauffeur, from the car, stared on in surprised interest. People passing in other cars glanced at the scene. It was, as Hilton remarked, entertaining for the public. Loder of the Sixth did not, it seemed, care a boiled bean about that!

Hilton coolly passed over to the juniors' party and ranged himself along with them. He pushed back his cuffs.

Loder, Walker, and Price glared at him in rage and astonishment. Hilton, with all his dandified ways, was the best man of the four when it came to scrapping. The odds were very altered now. Four big seniors against five juniors were overwhelming; but three seniors against five juniors backed up by a senior was a very different proposition.

"Come on, Loder, if you insist!" drawled Hilton.

"Look here, Cedric——" howled Price.

The Famous Five grinned. Hilton's action was unexpected on both sides; but it was a windfall to the juniors.

"Good man!" said Bob, with a chuckle. "Come on, Loder! Come on, Walker! Come on, Price—if you think your boko will stand any more."

But the enemy did not come on. Loder would have come on if Walker and Price would have backed him up. But it was clear that they were not going to.

"Why not call it a day?" suggested Hilton, with a grin. "You can whop these young sweeps next term at Greysfriars, Loder."

"You cheeky fool!" roared Loder.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Walker.

"What's the good of rowin'? We don't want to get to Price's place with prize noses all round!"

Price went back to the car and sat in it with his handkerchief to his nose. James Walker followed him. That settled it! Loder, with a glare of rage at the chums of the Remove, put the stick under his arm and followed them.

"Much obliged, Hilton!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Oh, don't mench!" yawned Hilton.

And he walked over to the car. Three faces there scowled at him.

"Like me to come on, Steve?" drawled Hilton. "If you're tired of my company——"

"Get in, you ass!" grunted Price.

Hilton got into the car. Loder gave the Famous Five a final glare.

"I'll see you again, some time!" he growled.

"Always a pleasure to see your

bonny face, Loder!" answered Bob Cherry affably.

The bully of the Sixth made no reply to that.

He snarled to the chauffeur and the car got into motion, Hilton waving a hand to the Famous Five as it went. The five watched it disappear in the distance towards Whitechurch, in which direction lay Tipton Lodge.

"We're well out of that!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Let's hope that's the last we shall see of Loder!"

And the Famous Five went on their way, dismissing Loder & Co. from their minds—and little guessing where, and when, they were to see them again.

Quite a Surprise!

"BEASTS!"

That was Billy Bunter's cheery greeting when the Famous Five came back from their walk.

Bunter was sitting in the boat, having apparently emerged from cover during their absence. Probably he had found an August morning hot under so many blankets and rugs. He blinked at the chums of the Remove with a withering and devastating blink, as they arrived at the camp.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Not run in?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"I jolly well kept out of sight while that bobby was around!" said Bunter. "How did you fellows dodge him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here, let's get out, now you've come back!" howled Bunter. "Don't even stop to bag any more apples! That bobby may come back any minute——"

"You piffing prize porker!" roared Bob Cherry. "Don't we keep on telling you that we're here on old George's special invitation?"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass! Are you going, or not?" roared Bunter.

"Not, fathead!"

And the Famous Five, hungry after their walk, began to make preparations for lunch. There was a sudden yell of alarm from Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, look out! Here comes that man Pickings!"

The Famous Five did not share Bunter's alarm at the sight of the man Pickings. They gave him cheery nods as he came up. He had a large rush basket in his hand.

"Sir George's compliments, and perhaps you'd accept some cold chickens," said Pickings, touching his hat.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"And Sir George will come down and see you—if his roomatiz will let him," added Pickings.

"We'll be jolly glad to see his nibs and give him our best thanks for the chickens," said Bob.

"Yes, sir! Certainly!"

And Pickings touched his hat again and departed, Billy Bunter blinking after him in wonder.

"I—I—I say, you fellows, you—you don't mean to say that that old
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donkey really has asked us to stay?" gasped the amazed fat Owl.

"He's asked us," grinned Bob. "I dare say you can push in with the rest. Like cold chicken, Bunter?"

"Oh crikey!" said Bunter.

He fairly bounded ashore.

It was a very cheery lunch. Sir George, evidently, was going to be hospitable—which, really, was up to him, considering what the Greyfriars crew had done. No doubt the old gentleman's bark was worse than his bite, and he improved on acquaintance.

The Greyfriars crew rather congratulated themselves on having hit upon what was, after all, a hospitable spot as a centre for excursions up and down and round about for the next day or two.

But lunch was barely over when a change, as the poet remarks, came o'er the spirit of their dream! There were footsteps on the path in the riverside wood, and a startled voice suddenly exclaimed:

"Great gad! That crew—here!"

The Famous Five jumped to their feet. They knew that voice—the dulcet tones of Gerald Loder of the Greyfriars Sixth!

Four fellows were coming through the wood. They had been sauntering, but at the sight of the Greyfriars camp on the edge of the stream, three of them came running—Hilton strolling after them with a grin on his face.

Loder, Walker, and Price stared at the campers—or, rather, glared at them! Harry Wharton & Co. stared back, equally surprised by the unexpected meeting.

"You—here!" roared Loder.

"Us—here!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"Fancy meeting you, Loder! You keep on turning up like a bad penny!"

"What are you doing here?" shouted Price.

"Camping," answered Harry Wharton. "What are you doing here?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob, as it suddenly flashed into his mind. "Old George said his Greyfriars nephew was coming to-day—and his name was Stephen!"

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

"What do you mean?" snarled Price. "You've not seen my uncle! You'd have been booted off if he'd known you were here! He's pretty fierce on trespassers and river hooligans!"

"Oh crumbs!" said Nugent blankly.

It dawned on the Famous Five! Sir George's nephew Stephen was Stephen Price, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars. That party in the car on the Mapledurham—Whitchurch road had been heading for Tipton Lodge when Loder stopped for a shindy!

"Well, my only hat!" said Bob. "Who'd have thought it?"

"You cheeky young scoundrel!" said Price. He rubbed his nose, which was red and raw from Wharton's punch. "My uncle can't know you're here—you'd have been kicked out, or run in—"

"He does know!" said Harry.

"Don't tell lies, you young rotter! You're trespassing here, the same as you were at Loder's place down the river! Chuck their rubbish into the boat, you fellows, and chuck them after it!" exclaimed Price. He turned his head and shouted to Hilton, lounging in the rear. "Lend us a hand here, Cedric, to turn these trespassing young rotters off!"

"Any old thing!" drawled Hilton. He gave the Famous Five a grin. "Hadn't you better cut? You can't keep on playin' this game, you know!"

Get out while the goin's good—what?"

The Famous Five stood in a bunch, rather uncertain how to act.

Now that they learned that Sir George's Greyfriars nephew was Stephen Price, they were not keen to stay. On the other hand, they were there by invitation of the owner of the property, and did not like being ordered off. It was an unexpected and rather knotty problem. But they were given no time to solve it. Loder of the Sixth was too impatient to go into action.

Loder opened the ball by landing a hefty kick at the spirit-stove, which would have lifted it into the boat had not Billy Bunter been in the way. As it was, it landed on Bunter's fat circumference, and the Owl of the Remove sat down with a loud yell.

"Stop that, Loder, you bully!" shouted Bob.

Loder's answer was a smack that made Bob's head ring.

"That did it!"

Loder was following up his smack when Johnny Bull grabbed up the frying-pan that had been used in the cooking for lunch and landed it on Loder's head with a bang that dented the frying-pan! Loder's frantic roar seemed to hint that Loder's head had been dented, too!

"Back up!" roared Bob.

"Give the cads beans!" yelled Johnny.

Both parties went into vigorous action. Hilton, who was the best fighting-man in the senior party, tackled Nugent and the nabob and drove them both before him, grinning as he punched. Loder grappled with Johnny Bull, and Walker with Harry Wharton. Price tackled Bob Cherry—but he gave ground, Bob following him up.

But Bob was the only one of the combatants on whom fortune smiled. The others were full of pluck and full of fight, but big seniors were too big and heavy for them. And Price, though he put up a poor scrap, kept Bob too busy to go to the help of his friends.

Johnny Bull, resisting fiercely, went crashing into the Water-Lily, hurled there by Loder. Harry Wharton, fighting to the last, followed him, pitched in by Walker. Nugent and the nabob had fastened on Hilton, and were beginning to get rather the better of it; but the dandy of the Fifth gave them plenty to do.

Loder and Walker rushed back to collar Bob, who was pressing Price of the Fifth hard.

"Back up!" gasped Johnny. He rubbed his head, which had banged on a thwart as he was pitched in, and scrambled out of the boat again. Harry Wharton, gasping, was after him like a shot.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Bunter had bundled into the boat. He sat there watching that Homeric combat through his big spectacles. It did not seem to occur to Bunter to take a hand in it—not that his fat hand would have been of much use!

(Continued on page 28.)

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The GREYFRIARS HERALD

(Continued from page 2.)

"Half-a-mo', sir!" yelled Jolly. "I believe I can see—"

Before he could finish his sentence the tall, distinguished figger of Sir Frederick Funguss appeared.

"By Jove! What's goin' on heah, Birchmall!" he cried, blinking in astonishment through his monocle. "More important still, have you found my diamond skarfpin?"

"Yes, sir! Here it is!"

Everybody stared in amazement at Jolly. The kaptin of the Fourth was holding aloft a glittering diamond skarfpin!

Sir Frederick stalked into the study and eggsamined the piece of jewellery closely. Then a delited grin spread over his face.

"By Jove! It's mine! How toppin'!" he cried. "Wheah did you find the bally thing, youngstah?"

"In the Head's beard!" grinned Jolly. "It must have got caught up in his whiskers when you and he were looking at the cigarette-cards!"

"Grate pip!"

Sir Frederick simply beamed.

"Thanks awfully!" he cried. "You can all go to the tuckshop for this, boys, and have a wackin' grate feed. Tell the tuckshop dame to put it on my account!"

"Hooray!" cheered Jack Jolly & Co.

"Sorry to have trubbled you, Birchmall, deah man," concludod Sir Frederick, as he turned to go. "But all's well that ends well, what, what!"

"Yes, rather, Sir Frederick!" grinned the Head.

And when Dr. Birchmall cancelled their whoppings and restored their hollerday, Jack Jolly & Co. felt they had really done rather well in their role as the Barbers of St. Sam's!

GOURMET'S GUIDE TO GREYFRIARS!

By PETER TODD.

(Editor's note:—We chose Toddy to write this article in preference to Bunter, because a "gourmet" is defined in the dictionary as a "discriminating judge of food." Bunter doesn't discriminate. He thinks all tuck is good and lets it go at that!)

Does your taste, dear reader, run to caviare or *pete de foi gras*? If it does, you cannot do better than drop in for a snack on Lord Mauleverer of the Remove, or Hilton of the Fifth.

On the other hand, you may feel a preference for snails in aspic or fried frogs' legs. In this, you will be well advised to gate-crash on Monsieur Charpentier or on Napoleon Dupont, in Study No. 10.

For sheer perfection in slabs of household bread, delicately flavoured with the lightest scraps of butter, you simply must try tea in Hall. A special feature of this *table d'hote* is the intriguing liquor they serve with it, in quaintly cracked mugs, bearing on them innumerable scars that proclaim their great antiquity. The liquor is humorously dubbed "tea," but what it really is remains a closely-guarded secret.

The gourmet who is seeking a new sensation in fish should make his way to the Second Form-room and try herrings fried on penholders. The peculiar aroma accompanying this delicacy is one that he will not easily forget, nor will he fail to be amused by the fascinating experience of eating the herring without the aid of either knife, fork, or plate.

Seniors' toast prepared by fags is another speciality which connoisseurs of exciting new dishes should not overlook. This unique toast bears a striking resemblance to a slice of coke, and the similarity is emphasised by the flavour which is very much akin to that of half-consumed coal.

Do you feel like sampling sausages cooked really differently? Then don't leave Greyfriars without paying a visit to Study No. 13 for sosses a la Cherry. How Cherry manages to do them so that one half remains raw while the other half is fried to a deep shade of black is a mystery. But he does—and the result must be chewed to be believed!

I should like to enlarge on the queer tuckshop buns that break into pieces when you bounce them—to speculate on the secrets of House Irish stew—and to describe many other rare and thrilling surprises that await the gourmet when he visits Greyfriars; but, alas, there is no room for more!

DERIDED DUCK SAVED COKER A DUCKING!

Says GEORGE POTTER.

When Coker found Greene and I in the big bathing pool near our seaside hotel before brekker one morning, undisguised scorn and contempt flooded into his rugged face.

"My hat! So you've come down to this!" he shouted from the terrace. "And you call yourselves swimmers! Ye gods!"

"What's wrong with it?" I bawled back from the tilted turntable which was just projecting me into the water.

"What's wrong with it?" hooted Coker, after I had dived and come up again.

"Everything, of course, to anybody but a blessed softy! The right place for a man who can swim is the sea—not a glorified duckpond full of rubber toys! Look at it!"

"Looks good to me!" I yelled, as I floated towards a big coloured buoy for a spot of acrobatics.

"Same here!" concurred Greene, from the side of the buoy.

It did look good, too, with the early-morning sunshine lighting up the freshly cleaned terraces and the brightly hued sunshades over the tables at the sides breaking up the scene with patches of shades. Person-

ally, I thought that at that hour of the day, before the regular crowd of patrons had descended on it, the swimming pool looked its best.

Coker seemed to think that there wasn't a best. He glared down at us belligerently.

"Pah!" he said. "May be all right for namby-pamby kids or for girls who don't like getting their swimming costumes wet. But for chaps like you and Greeney, it's absolutely futile! Fancy swimming about amongst a collection of kids' toys! Look at that dashed duck!"

He pointed a scornful finger at a big inflated rubber duck that was floating by underneath the chute. Greene and I grinned.

"Jolly good duck, I think!" Greene said. "We're not all strong swimmers, you know, and a thing like that provides a bit of fun for beginners."

"Good sport, Coker, sitting on that and paddling round the pool," I remarked. "Why don't you try it?"

"Me! I'd watch it! My hat! I wouldn't be seen sitting astride that object for a fortune! I'd sooner drown! I'd—"

What else Coker would have done remained unsaid, for at that moment an unlooked-for thing happened. Coker had drawn very near to the top of the chute in his excitement. Now he suddenly lost his footing and slid over the side!

Yelling and clawing wildly at the sides in an effort to stay his progress, Coker shot down the chute.

Greene and I waited for the big splash when he hit the water.

But it never came! By a stroke of amazing luck, he landed right on the back of the floating duck, and the duck was just good enough to break his fall. And instead of the big splash we had expected from Coker's bulky carcass, we got just a few insignificant drops from Coker's feet. The next thing we knew was that Coker was seated astride the duck he had just been deriding, floating gently across the despised bathing pool and yelling for help!

"Come and get me out of this, you idiots!" he roared. "Swim over here and push this dashed thing to the side before I lose my balance and fall in!"

"But isn't that what you want to do?"

"Eh?" Coker glared fiendishly. "My shoes, socks, and bags are soaked already. Think I want the same to happen to my hat and the rest of my clobber?"

"Better that, I suppose, than being seen floating on a kid's toy in a silly bathing pool!" I sang out.

"What-ho!" grinned Greene. "You said yourself you'd sooner drown and you wouldn't do it for a fortune. You won't do it for a few

wretched togs, old chap! Not you!"

Coker gasped. Then he over-balanced and fell in. He swam to the side unaided and went back to the hotel to change without a word.

At the moment we do not know whether he fell in from choice or because he couldn't help it.

When his feelings calm down sufficiently, we shall hear all about it.



The feel of the pool!

GREYFRIARS to the RESCUE!

(Continued from page 26)

It was a tremendous relief to Stephen Price when Loder and Walker rushed up and grabbed Bob Cherry. Price had had two more on his already damaged nose—and it was spurting red.

"Rescue!" yelled Bob, as he struggled with the two Sixth Formers.

"Coming!" panted Wharton.

And he came with a breathless rush with Johnny, and they hurled themselves into the fray again. Three juniors and three seniors mixed in a wild and whirling mix-up. Size and weight were against the juniors—but they put every ounce into it! And Nugent and the nabob, having at last downed Hilton, came racing to their aid and mixed in the mix-up. But Hilton, scrambling up, came racing after them, and he also mixed in.

It was a battle royal now, Billy Bunter watching it with popping eyes. There was a sudden squeak from the fat junior.

"I say, you fellows, here comes that old donkey and his man!"

Nobody heard or heeded him.

Sir George Tipton, stumping up the path with his stick, gazed at the wild and whirling scene in great astonishment, and then came stumping on more rapidly.

"Good gad!" he roared. "What is this? What does this mean? Stephen—stop this at once! Do you hear me, Stephen? Will you stop this at once, or will you not stop this at once? Pickings!"

"Yes, Sir George?"

"Stop them at once, Pickings!"

"Yes, Sir George!"

Pickings grabbed and grasped at the excited combatants. Sir George poked at them all impartially with his stick.

They separated.

Both parties stood panting and

gasping, wildly dishevelled and untidy. Sir George glared at his nephew.

"What does this mean, Stephen?" he roared. "Will you tell me what this means, Stephen, or will you not tell me what this means?"

Price panted and gurgled, with his hand to his nose.

"A gang of trespassers, uncle—we were turning them off—a gang of disreputable young rascals—"

"What?" roared Sir George. "These boys are here by my invitation—my special invitation! These boys saved me from a heavy loss last night when my whole household stood round like a flock of geese, gaping! How dare you lay a hand upon them, Stephen? Will you tell

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me how you dare to lay a hand on them, or will you not tell me how you dare to lay a hand on them?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Price.

"It's all right, sir!" gasped Bob Cherry, dabbing a streaming nose. "Price didn't quite understand how the matter stood. It's all right!"

"I—I thought—" gasped Price. "I—I mean, I—I—I didn't think— Oh crumbs!"

"It's all right!" gasped Harry Wharton. "We're clearing off directly—"

"You are not clearing off!" roared Sir George. "I forbid you to clear off! If it was a misunderstanding, never mind! You are a fool, Stephen!"

"Oh!" gasped Price.

Loder and Walker stood gasping

and scowling. Hilton stood gasping and grinning. Price stood with a face as red as his nose, evidently longing to tell his Uncle George what he thought of him, but not venturing so to do!

"These boys are my guests—my welcome guests!" barked Sir George. "You will make them welcome, Stephen, as my nephew! Do you hear me, Stephen, or do you not hear me? You will tell them that you are sorry for this unfortunate misunderstanding!"

"Yes, uncle!" gasped Price.

He gave the Famous Five an expressive look. But it was evident that he dared not disregard his fierce old avuncular relative. He gasped and stuttered:

"I—I—sorry—I—I—awfully sorry—really sorry—oh crikey!"

His voice seemed to fail him, and he moved off, speechless. Loder and Walker followed him, speechless also, but with expressive faces. Hilton followed on, but he bestowed a wink on the Famous Five as he went, and they grinned.

"Huh!" grunted Sir George. "My dear boys, I am sorry that this has happened! You shall certainly not go away. I will not allow you to go away. You shall stay! Do you hear me, or do you not hear me?"

"Yes, Sir George!" said the Famous Five.

And Sir George stumped away, followed by Pickings—leaving the Famous Five rubbing and dabbing an almost infinite number of damages, but grinning as they rubbed and dabbed them.

"Old George is a brick," said Bob. "And we're jolly well staying on here as long as we jolly well like! And if Loder don't like it, Loder can lump it—see?"

And Loder had to lump it!

THE END.

(The chums of Greyfriars meet with more fun and adventure on Old Father Thames next week. You'll laugh loud and long when you read: "COKER TAKES COMMAND!" the next yarn in this grand holiday series.)

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