

**THE
MAGNET**

FUN and ENTERTAINMENT with BILLY BUNTER—Inside!

MYSTERY ON THE THAMES!

by **FRANK
RICHARDS**



The
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*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper* **2^D**

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STOP
PRESS
NEWS

TUBBY'S SLIMMING CURE!

A Screamingly-Funny School Tale of Jack Jolly & Co., of St. Sam's, and their Amazing Headmaster—Dr. Birchmall

By DICKY NUGENT

Bang! Crash! Wallop!
"Trot in, fathead!" bawled Dr. Birchmall, as that timmid nock sounded on his door.

It was Tubby Barrell who rolled into the Head's study. The fattest fellow in the St. Sam's Fourth was looking a trifle nervous.

"You sent for me, sir?" he mermured.

Dr. Birchmall frowned. He seized his birchrod and rose to his feet.

"Bend over, Barrell!" he commanded sternly.

"But—but what for, sir?" stammered Tubby. "I haven't done anything!"

"Oh, yes you have, Barrell!" leered the Head. "On your own admission, you have been smitten by the charms of my dawter Molly. So I have decided that you shall be smitten till her charms no longer appeal to you."

"Impossible, sir!" said Tubby. "However much you whop me, you can never eggstinguish the tender feelings I have for Miss Molly!"

"That remains to be seen, Barrell!" snorted the Head. "I am going to have a jolly good try, anyway, and I propose to birch you every day till you are cured—from now till the end of the term, if necessary! Bend over!"

Tubby palled a rye face and bent over. The next moment the Head's birch was descending on the tightest trowsis at St. Sam's!

Swish, swish, swish!
"Ow-ow-ow!" yelled Tubby Barrell. "Are you cured yet, Barrell?" asked Dr. Birchmall grimly.

"Ow! No! Wooooop!"

Swish, swish, swish!
"Still no change, Barrell?"

"Yow! No! Ow!"

The Head dropped his birchrod, puffing and blowing like a grampus.

"That will be suffisnant for to-day, Barrell," he grunted. "But understand this—I simply refuse to permit this preposterous pashun to persist, and I shall have no qualms in quashing it. So you had better mind your p's and q's. You may go!"

"Ow! Yes, sir!"

Tubby rolled out of Dr. Birchmall's study, groaning. But the dawntless spirit he had shown since he had fallen for Miss Molly's charms was by no means conkered yet; and there was a look of grim determination on his face

as he rolled out of the School House and made his way to the tuckshop.

Jack Jolly & Co., of the Fourth, were in the tuckshop, discussing ginger-pop and Tubby Barrell, when Tubby arrived. Frank Fearless had just been advancing the theory that Tubby's sentimental streak was india-gestion, following on overeating during the summer vack.

"After all, you fellows," he was saying, "you can't deny that the first symptom Tubby displayed was loss of appetite; and my opinion is that the only thing that would make Tubby lose his appetite is india-gestion!"

"I say, you fellows!" broke in Tubby himself, at that moment. "What do you think of the Head for a beast? He says he's going to whop me every day till I stop thinking about Miss Molly! But I'm going to stand up to him!"

"Good old Tubby!" chuckled Fearless. "It sounds as if you'll find it hard to sit down, anyway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dashed if I see anything to cackle at!" snorted Tubby. "Look here, Jolly, I came here to see you about footer. I want to play for the Form against St. Bill's this afternoon!"

"What!" yelled Jack Jolly & Co.

"Miss Molly has told me she'd like me better if I were slim and more athlettick," eggsplained Tubby. "So I want to go in for footer!"

"But what about the game, you fat ass?" yelled Jolly. "You can't play footer for toffee! With you in the team, we may lose!"

"Ratts!" said Tubby. "With a spiffing player like me in the team, we can't possibly help winning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The kaptin of the Fourth rubbed his chin in perplexity. He didn't want to

discurridge Tubby. Nor, on the other hand, did he want to risk losing the match.

"Why not give Tubby a trial?" grinned Fearless, as Jolly hesitated. "We ought to be able to beat St. Bill's, even with a passenger in the team!"

"You could drop Bootham," put in Bright. "He lost sixpence in the quad and caught housemaid's knee looking for it yesterday!"

Jack Jolly larfed.

"All right, then. I'll drop Bootham and play Tubby inside-left. All I hoap, Tubby, is that you do nothing to make me wish you'd been left outside!"

The news that Tubby was to play for the Fourth against St. Bill's spread far and wide. A grate crowd turned up on Little Side that afternoon to see the match. Even Dr. Birchmall and Miss Molly came to watch the fun.

Fceeecept!

The ref's wisale shrilled, and the St. Bill's centre-forward kicked off.

The next moment there was a roar of larfter as Tubby Barrell took a mitey kick, missed by miles, and landed on the terf on the back of his neck!

But Tubby was not down for long. He bounced up as though he was made of indiarubber, and charged madly towards the St. Sam's goal, which the visitors were attacking. But the St. Sam's defenders cleared, and play serged down to the other end of the field. Then there was another roar of larfter as Tubby found his bootlace undone, and bent over to tie it up again.

The larfter suddenly changed to a mermer of alarm. With litening speed the ball had returned, and Loylo, the St. Sam's goalie, was rushing out to meet the advancing St. Bill's forward. The St. Bill's forward fainted and beat him.

"Shoot!" yelled the St. Bill's supporters.

With an open goal before him, it seemed that nothing could stop the St. Bill's forward scoring. The ball came flying straight at the net.

"Goal!" shrieked the visitors' following.

But they were a little too quick! Instead of smashing into the goal, the ball had smashed into Tubby, as he bent over to tie up his bootlace. Instantly the leather rebounded half-way down the field!

"Saved!" roared the home supporters.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Saved! Good old Tubby!"

Tubby rubbed his trowsis rewfully and returned to midfield. And after that insident there was no stopping him. He was here, there, and everywhere, and if his play was not eggssactly helpful at times, it was at least eggssiting to watch, and the crowd roared their encurridgement.

Everybody eggsspected Tubby to collapse completely at half-time. But Molly Birchmall's presence must have inspired Tubby, for he showed no signs of fateeg, and came back for the second half full of vim and vigger!

It was a stern tussle in the second half. With five minnits to go, the score stood at 2-2. A draw seemed inevitable. Suddenly, however, a fat figger was seen to leap out of the fray and dribble the ball towards the St. Bill's goal. Player after player herled himself at Tubby, but the fat Fourth Former seemed to bear a charmed life. Somehow he survived till he had only the goalie to beat.

One last smashing kick Tubby took at the ball, and it beat the goalie all hands down! The ball thudded into the net! Tubby had scored!

Goal! Goal!

"St. Sam's wins! Hurrah!"

"Good old Tubby!"

Tubby Barrell had won the game for St. Sam's! The crowd farely swarmed round him as he staggered off the field, cheering madly.

The first to greet him was Molly Birchmall.

"Tubby! My hero!" she trilled.

"You were simply marvellous!"

The crowd grinned. Dr. Birchmall

(Continued on page 27.)



HIGHWAY ROBBERY IN BROAD DAYLIGHT! [THRILLS AND EXCITING HOLIDAY ADVENTURES FOR HARRY WHARTON & Co., OF GREYFRIARS, ON OLD FATHER THAMES!]

MYSTERY ON THE THAMES! By FRANK RICHARDS



The Invisible Owl!

BUNTER!"

"Bunty!"
"Bunt!"

"Where's that fat ass?"

"Bunter!"

Five voices were calling in tones of exasperation. The bank of the River Thames echoed to the name of Bunter.

The Greyfriars Water-Lily was tied up by the towpath on the Berkshire side.

Harry Wharton & Co. had lunched on the boat. Billy Bunter, for reasons best known to himself, had taken his lunch ashore.

It was probable that, having scoffed the same under a shady tree in the wood that bordered the towpath, Billy Bunter had gone to sleep in the shade. It was a warm September afternoon, and the Owl of Greyfriars liked a nap after a meal.

Now it was time to push on, and Billy Bunter was invisible.

The Famous Five of Greyfriars shouted; but they shouted in vain.

Whether Billy Bunter was asleep, or whether he was awake, no answer came from Bunter; neither did he appear in sight.

Bob Cherry stood in the boat and bawled. Johnny Bull stood on the bank and roared. Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Singh crossed the towpath to a little shady

"It's a hold-up!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Come onfully!"

lane that ran through the wood to the road beyond and stood there, shouting.

But answer there came none!

Billy Bunter was invisible—and he stayed invisible!

"Bunter!"

"You fat chump!"

"You pernicious porpoise!"

"Bunter, you bloated bloater!"

"You terrific ass, Bunter!"

People passing in various crafts on the river looked round. Other people, on the Wallingford road beyond the wood, were startled by the roar. Plenty of ears heard the name of Bunter! But not, it seemed, Billy Bunter's fat ears! For there came no sound from Bunter.

Johnny Bull was holding the tow-rope of the Water-Lily, all ready to hand it to Bunter—when he appeared.

Between Cleeve and Wallingford there was a very long stretch without a lock. All the members of the Greyfriars holiday party had taken a turn at towing—excepting Bunter! Now it was Bunter's turn. Perhaps that was the reason why William George Bunter was invisible. Johnny strongly suspected that it was.

"Bunter!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wake up, you sleepy snail!"

Johnny Bull snorted.

"He's not asleep! If he was asleep within a mile we should hear him snoring! He's dodging!"

"I shouldn't wonder!" agreed Bob. "All your fault, old man!"

"How is it my fault?" hooted Johnny.

"You trying to make Bunter work! It can't be done! You've tried and tried and tried ever since we pushed out from Kingston. It's easier to do a job oneself than to make Bunter do it!"

"I'm going to boot him if he doesn't tow!" roared Johnny.

"You can't boot an invisible Bunter!" grinned Bob.

Johnny snorted again. He had the towline ready! He had a boot ready! But he hadn't Bunter! And without Bunter neither the towline nor the boot could come into action.

Wharton and Nugent and Hurree Singh came back across the towpath to the boat.

"That blithering ass has wandered off somewhere!" said Harry Wharton.

"He hasn't!" snorted Johnny. "I tell you he's dodging!"

"We can't make him hear!" said Frank Nugent.

"I'll bet he can hear all the time!"

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"Very likely!" said Bob. "But I——"

"The likeliness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But——"

"Well, let's push on!" said Johnny. "If Bunter doesn't choose to turn up, let him rip and be blowed to him!"

"Um!" said Harry doubtfully.

"If we were sure——" said Nugent.

"I'm sure!" growled Johnny. "Don't I know him! That's why he took his grub ashore. He went to look for cover. He didn't mean to turn up. We can stick here all the afternoon and he won't turn up. He's too jolly lazy. Well, then, push on—and let him go and eat coke!"

But four members of the Famous Five looked dubious.

It was probable enough that Billy Bunter was simply dodging a spot of work. Bunter's dodges for dodging a spot of work were innumerable. Bunter would take ten times as much trouble to dodge a spot of work as he needed to take to get it done. Quite likely he was within sound of those exasperated voices all the time—lying low and grinning in his sleeve. In which case it would serve him right if the Greyfriars crew pushed on in the Water-Lily and left him on his own. But——

There was a "but."

He might be fast asleep in some shady nook; and when Billy Bunter was asleep Rip van Winkle had nothing on Bunter. He might have wandered out into the Wallingford road. He might even have lost his way in the wood—for if it was barely possible anywhere for a fellow to lose his way, Bunter was the fellow to do it. In which case it would be rather hard cheese on Bunter to be left behind.

"Look here, are we going on?" hooted Johnny.

Bull, at least, had no doubts on the subject.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"We can't, old man!" he said. "Bunter can't help being a blithering idiot and it may not be his fault——"

"Rubbish!"

"After all, we're not in a hurry," said Frank. "We can wait-a bit!"

"That's the idea!" snorted Johnny. "We shall have to wait till it's too late to push on to-day! Bunter won't come back till he's hungry."

"I shouldn't wonder! But——"

"Oh, let's wait a bit!" said Harry. "If that fat chump has lost himself we can't go on and leave him to it. Give him the benefit of the doubt!"

"You're an ass——"

"Thanks!"

"Well, I'm not going to squat down doing nothing!" growled Johnny Bull. "If we're going to waste the afternoon I'm going to look for Bunter! And when I find him I'll see that he doesn't do any more dodging—I'll lead him back on the towline—after laying it round him."

"But——"

"Oh rats!"

Johnny Bull unhooked the towline, coiled it, and hung it over his arm. Then, with a grim face, he tramped into the lane through the riverside

wood, and turned into a path under the trees. He had very little doubt of rooting the fat Owl out not very far off.

The other fellows grinned and sat down in the boat to wait for him. They had little doubt that Johnny was right; still, they could not feel sure, and Bunter had to have the benefit of the doubt—such as it was. They quite expected Johnny to emerge from the wood before long—with the fat Owl wriggling and spluttering at the end of the towline.

Meanwhile, they sat in the boat and watched the passing craft on the river in the golden September afternoon; which was a very pleasant way of spending an hour or so. And as a boat came along, with a crew of four, Bob Cherry suddenly ejaculated:

"That lot again!"

"Highcliffe cads!" said Nugent.

From the other boat came a drawling voice:

"That Greyfriars gang! We're always runnin' across that mouldy crew!"

The remark was followed by a whizzing orange, which caught Bob Cherry under the ear and caused him to jump to his feet with a roar of wrath.

— — —

A Row on the River!

CECIL PONSONBY, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, grinned.

Gadsby and Monson, who were pulling, grinned also.

Pon sat in the stern of the Highcliffe boat. A man who sat beside him was steering. Pon had a basket of fruit at his feet, and at the sight of his old enemies of Greyfriars he had picked out an orange and whizzed it at once.

Harry Wharton & Co. were all on their feet in the Greyfriars boat. It was the umpteenth time they had encountered the Highcliffe crew during that trip up the Thames—and they never encountered them without a row.

The cheery Pon was generally looking for trouble!

"The cheeky cad!" gasped Bob Cherry. He groped in the potato-bag for a missile to return to Ponsonby.

"Hold on, old man!" Harry Wharton touched his arm. "There's a chap we don't know in their boat, and——"

"He got me with that orange!" howled Bob.

"Yes, but——"

"Oh rats!" grunted Bob.

However, he did not hurl the potato. He gripped one in either hand, ready for use.

The Highcliffe boat pulled by, well out in the river.

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced rather curiously at the man who sat beside Pon in the stern seat.

He was a man about thirty, well-dressed in a rather flashy style, and racing man was written all over him. It looked as if Pon & Co. had picked up a dubious sort of acquaintance in their holiday on the Thames—which

was quite the kind of thing that Pon was likely to do.

The man, whoever he was, was evidently surprised at Pon's action in whizzing the orange at the other boat.

He stared at the Greyfriars fellows, stared at Pon, and ejaculated:

"Gad!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were quite ready for another row with their old foes of Highcliffe, if Pon & Co. wanted one. But they did not want to get mixed up in a row with a stranger who had given no offence, if they could really help it. Whizzing missiles, from boat to boat, were no respecters of persons.

"What the dooce is this game, Ponsonby?" asked the racing man. "What the dooce are you up to?"

"Oh, we know those cads, Captain Oakshott!" answered Pon, with a wary eye on the Greyfriars boat, ready to dodge return fire. "I mean, we don't know them. They're not the sort of fellows we should know—but we've come across them. A cheeky crew of hooligans!"

"Hadn't I better let him have a spud?" asked Bob, as the Greyfriars crew heard that.

"What does Pon matter?" answered Harry. "Keep out of a row if we can, with a stranger in their boat."

The racing man, whom Pon addressed as Captain Oakshott, stared at the Greyfriars crew again. He had very keen, sharp black eyes, under dark, bushy brows. Those eyes were more than sharp enough to see that the Greyfriars fellows were not a crew of hooligans.

"Here, drop it!" he said quickly, as Pon's hand came out of the basket with an apple in it. "What's the good of a shindy?"

"Oh, we always rag those cads when we come across them!" answered Pon; and the apple flew.

But the Greyfriars crew were watching, and they dodged the missile, and the apple flew past and landed on the towpath.

That was enough for Bob Cherry!

"Look here, we're not going to be a cockshy for that Highcliffe cad!" he hooted. "I'm giving him something back!"

And a potato whizzed at the Highcliffe boat.

Pon ducked behind the man who sat beside him. It was Captain Oakshott who got the potato! It caught him fairly on the nose; and the racing man started up with a loud, startled howl.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

He was sorry at once that he had whizzed that spud. He had meant it for Pon, but the captain had got it! Certainly, the Greyfriars crew could not be expected to play the part of a cockshy, simply because Pon & Co. had a stranger in their boat. Still, it was rather unfortunate.

"Oh! Oh gad!" roared the racing man, clapping a hand to his nose. "You young rascal! Oh!"

"Sorry!" called out Bob. "It was meant for that cad Ponsonby——"

The captain's movement left Pon without cover. Bob whizzed the other potato, and before Pon could dodge

again it caught him, with a crash, in the middle of his features.

Pon gave a yell that was louder than his racing friend's.

"Ow!"

"Well hit!" chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd better chuck it, Pon!" called out Harry Wharton. "You'll get as good as you give, and a little over!"

"You cheeky young rascal!" roared the racing man. He rubbed his nose, his black eyes glittering under his bushy brows. "I'll give you a hiding for that! Here, push in to that boat, you two!"

Captain Oakshott caught up a Malacca cane. He gripped it, glaring at the Greyfriars crew as Gadsby and Monson pushed in alongside.

"Go it!" said Pon, between his teeth. "Give them some all round!"

"Keep that boat off!" rapped Harry Wharton. "Sorry you got that spud, sir, but you saw that Ponsonby started the row! Keep that stick away or you'll get hurt!"

Bob Cherry grabbed up an oar.

The Highcliffe boat pushed alongside, and Captain Oakshott, standing up, handled the Malacca. But he did not have time to swipe!

The end of Bob's oar clumped on his chest, and he went over backwards.

The Greyfriars crew were sorry that he had captured the potato; but they certainly were not going to let him handle that cane on the Water-Lily.

"Oh gad!" yelled the captain, as he went.

He crashed on his back on the starboard-gunwale of the Highcliffe boat, dipping it to the water. There was a surge of the Thames over the gunwale and over the captain's shoulders. The Highcliffe boat rocked wildly and Gadsby, dropping his oar, grasped the captain to pull him back. Monson, also dropping his oar, held on as if for his life.

"Look out!" he howled.

"Oh gad!"

The Highcliffe boat fairly danced.

Captain Oakshott sat up in the bottom of it, blinking, drenched with water. The Malacca cane had disappeared into the Thames.

"Oh!" gasped the racing man. "Oh gad! Ooooooh!"

Ponsonby shoved hastily away from the Greyfriars boat.

As often happened, Pon was as anxious to get out of a row as he was quick to get into one! The Highcliffe crew were getting the worst of it, and Pon had had enough.

Gadsby pulled again, and the Highcliffe Water-Lily rocked on up the river.

Captain Oakshott wriggled back to his seat in the stern, giving the Greyfriars crew an angry glare; but he did not seem to want to come to close quarters again. No doubt he had expected to lay that Malacca round Bob Cherry without any trouble—but trouble had accrued, and he did not want any more.

The Highcliffe boat pulled on. A turn of the bank hid it in a few minutes.

"Good riddance to bad rubbish!" grunted Bob.

And the four juniors sat down again in the Greyfriars Water-Lily, to wait and to watch the bright and cheery scene on the sunny river while they waited.

But, bright and cheery as the scene was, and pleasant as it was to sit there watching it in the sunshine, they began to get impatient as the time wore on and neither Billy Bunter nor Johnny Bull emerged into view from the wood by the towpath.

Three to One!

JOHNNY BULL gave a grunt. He had put in nearly half an hour hunting Bunter. With every minute of that half-hour, Johnny's feelings grew deeper and deeper.

Convinced that the fat Owl of the Remove was simply keeping out of sight in order to dodge his turn at towing, Johnny was wrathful to begin with. He grew wrathier and wrathier.

The wood, deep and shady, extended for some distance along the bank; the towpath and the river on one side, the high road on the other.

On the side towards the towpath it was fenced in; but a lane ran through it from the towpath to the high road, farther back, and there was no fence along the lane.

But, though it was thus easy to enter, there was little doubt that it was private property; and it was quite possible that somebody might turn up, any minute, and ask Johnny what he was doing there.

That made it all the more annoying.

But Johnny was a determined fellow. If he set himself to a task, he got his teeth into it, and stuck to it—like the tyke of his native county, guaranteed to bite, alive or dead! He had started to look for Bunter, and he was going to look for Bunter; he was going to find him, he was going to whop him with the towrope, and he was going to march him back to the boat at the end of that rope, thus cutting off any further attempts at dodging.

Up one shady glade and down another, up one path and down another, the exasperated Johnny looked for Billy Bunter; and, when he heard a sound of footsteps at last, he fancied he had got him!

He glared round; and then voices came to his ears—voices he knew, and certainly did not want to hear.

Just ahead of him at the moment was a bend in the path he was following, turning away towards the river.

The speakers were coming up that path, and when they passed the corner they would come on Johnny, where he stood.

At the moment the intervening trees hid them, but their voices, only a few yards away, came clearly enough to his ears.

"The cads! Look at my nose!" It was the voice of Cecil Ponsonby, of

Highcliffe School. "That ruffian landed the potato right on it."

"Well, you got him under the ear with an orange," said Gadsby.

"Oh, shut up!"

"Captain Oakshott got it pretty tough," said Monson. "That brute's oar fairly crashed on his chest."

"Did he think Cherry was going to let him whop him with that cane?" asked Gadsby.

"Oh, shut up, Gaddy!"

Johnny Bull gave a grunt. All this, floating to his ears through the trees, told him not only that the Highcliffe enemy were at hand, but that they had had a shindy with the fellows he had left in the boat.

"I fancy the captain's got his back up," said Gadsby. "It was a fool trick to start a row with him in the boat with us. There's a limit, Pon."

"He's not got his back up, you ass. Why should he?"

"Well, he's gone off in the boat by himself. I thought he was coming back to the chalet with us—"

"Well, he wasn't!" grunted Ponsonby. "The fact is, I gave him a hint to steer clear while Monson's father is there this afternoon. Monson's pater will be in to tea, and I don't want Oakshott around for him to see."

"Much better not," agreed Monson. "The pater isn't what you'd call strict, but I fancy he would draw the line at Jimmy Oakshott. And he will be along in an hour's time."

"Pity he won't see him!" grunted Gadsby.

"And why?" snarled Pon.

"Well, I think you're a fool to ask such a man to stay in the house," said Gadsby. "A racing man—and a rorty one, too."

"No bizney of yours—it's Monson's place, and he can ask whom he likes. Think Oakshott will teach us anythin' we don't know?" sneered Pon.

"Well, you won't learn from him to deal from the bottom of the pack—you know that already!" retorted Gadsby.

"Look here—"

Ponsonby broke off suddenly. While they were talking, coming up from the river, the Highcliffians had been approaching the corner where the path turned. Now they came round that corner and saw Johnny Bull.

"Seen Bunter?" asked Johnny.

"What?"

"Bunter."

"What do you mean, you fool?" snarled Ponsonby.

"Only what I say," answered Johnny calmly. "We've lost Bunter, and I'm looking for him. If you've seen him anywhere you can say so, I suppose?"

"We've not seen him," said Gadsby. "We've only just come off the river."

"Hold on!" said Ponsonby. He came to a halt. "What are you doing here, Bull?"

"I've told you—looking for Bunter."

"You're trespassing here."

"Am I? Then I suppose you are, too," said Johnny cheerfully.

"That's where you make a mistake," said Ponsonby. "This wood belongs to Mr. Monson—Monson's
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1644

pater—and we're staying at his chalet here. It's not open to the public, and you're trespassing!"

"That's so," said Monson. "You'd better clear!"

Johnny Bull looked at the three rather like a bulldog. He did not doubt the statement—he had no doubt that Pon & Co. had landed from a boat to walk through the wood to a building on the other side, facing the road. They had a right there, and he hadn't. But he did not like taking orders from Highcliffians.

Still, law was law, and the rights of property were the rights of property.

Johnny did not act hastily; he always considered before he acted. But after a moment or two of reflection, he decided to walk back to the riverside lane, and he turned to do so.

Ponsonby's eyes gleamed at him as he turned. The dandy of Highcliffe whispered to his comrades.

Monson grinned and nodded; Gadsby gave a discontented grunt. But as Pon suddenly rushed down the path after Johnny Bull they both followed him at a run.

Johnny turned his head at the pattering footsteps behind him.

Ponsonby jumped at him at the same moment and grasped him.

"Hands off!" roared Johnny.

"Back up!" panted Pon.

Johnny Bull grasped at Ponsonby in a grasp that was much too hefty for Pon.

In a few moments the dandy of Highcliffe would have been pitched off headlong. But Monson rushed to his aid, and Gaddy followed.

"Pin him!" panted Ponsonby.

"Hands off!" roared Johnny. "You rotten funks—"

"Collar him!"

Three pairs of hands grasped Johnny Bull and dragged him over. He was twice a match for any one of the Highcliffians, but the three together were too many for him. The towrope he had been carrying dropped in the grass and was trampled on as they surged to and fro, struggling. Heavy as the odds were, Johnny gave Pon & Co. plenty to do for two or three minutes.

Then he went down with a bump, still struggling.

"Hold the brute!" panted Pon. "By gad! I'll give him something back for what I got from his pal in the boat! Squash him down!"

Gadsby and Monson squashed Johnny down in the grass.

Ponsonby clutched up the towrope.

"I don't know what he's carrying this about for," he panted, "but I know I'm going to give him a jolly good hiding with it!"

Johnny Bull made a desperate effort.

Monson and Gadsby rocked.

"Lend a hand, Pon!" panted Monson. "The brute's as strong as a horse!"

Ponsonby grasped at Johnny again.

But Johnny had a hand loose, and he clenched his fist and met Pon with a drive which landed fairly in the Highcliffian's eye.

Pon went over backwards as if he had been shot.

He sprawled in the grassy path, roaring.

Monson and Gadsby exerted themselves to the utmost. Neither of them wanted to stop a punch like that. With a combined effort, they got Johnny down again. Gadsby knelt on him, pinning him down, while Monson grasped his wrists and dragged his hands over his head, holding them helpless.

Johnny struggled and wriggled in vain, while Cecil Ponsonby sat up, dizzily, with his hand to his eye.

Rough Luck!

PONSONBY staggered to his feet.

He was stuttering with almost uncontrollable rage.

The eye that had caught that sudden jolt was blackening—fast! Pon was going to have a black eye!

No fellow ever deserved one more—but that was no comfort to Pon. Pon was fearfully particular about his appearance. A black eye was the limit. Pon had an evil temper, but he had seldom or never been in such a state of uncontrollable fury.

He hurled himself at Johnny Bull.

There was a yell from Gadsby.

"Stop that, Pon!"

"You fool!" roared Pon. "Look at my eye! I'm going to give him one to match, and if you meddle I'll give you one, too!"

"If you hit that chap while we're holding him I'll let him loose!" said Gadsby. "You can give him all the black eyes you like while he's standing up to take them!"

He pushed the enraged Pon back.

Pon looked for a moment as if he would hit out at him, but as that meant letting Johnny Bull loose he refrained, though with difficulty. But even Monson uttered a word in support of Gaddy.

"Dash it all, hold on, Pon—there's a limit!" muttered Monson. "You can't hit a fellow when he's down and two fellows holding him. Draw it mild!"

"Look at my eye!" shrieked Pon. "It's going to be black—I can feel it! Look at it!" He almost foamed.

"I'll give you another, you cur, if these fellows will let go!" panted Johnny Bull. "Three to one—is that Highcliffe style, you rotters?"

"You shut up!" snapped Gadsby. "He's not going to punch you while I'm here—he can scrap with you if he likes!"

"Catch him!" snorted Johnny Bull.

Ponsonby stood caressing his eye. He was boiling with rage, but he did not want a scrap. He had no desire to have another eye to match. He picked up the towline again at last.

"You're not going to touch him with that, either," said Gadsby—"not while I've got a hand on him! If you don't know that there's a limit, Pon, it's time you learned."

"Shut up, you fool!" snarled Pon.

He looped the end of the rope over Johnny's wrists, as Monson held them

together. He knotted the loop, hard and fast.

Then, with his pocket-knife, he cut the rope and put another knot round the Greyfriars junior's ankles.

Monson and Gadsby released him then. Johnny lay in the grass, unable to stir hand or foot. In that unenviable position, he glared defiance at Ponsonby.

"You can clear, Gaddy!" snarled Pon.

"Not till you do!" retorted Gadsby.

"If you barge in, I'll smash you!" said Ponsonby, between his teeth.

"I'll barge in fast enough if you lay a finger on him while he's tied up like that!" said Gadsby.

"Oh, don't rag, you two!" said Monson. "What's the good of rowing over a Greyfriars cad? Look here, what's the big idea, Pon?"

"I'm not goin' to touch him!" snarled Pon. "Think I'd hit a fellow with his hands tied, you fool?"

Perhaps even Pon had his limit. Or perhaps he was influenced by the fact that both his friends would have stopped him. Anyhow, he had now given up the idea of handing Johnny an eye to match.

"He's chosen to come here, trespassing in this wood—your father's property!" said Ponsonby. "Well, he can stick here! He says he's looking for that fat freak, Bunter—well, his pals can look for him, too! Roll him off the path, and let them have a good hunt!"

Monson laughed.

"O.K.!" he said.

Gadsby raised no objection to that. He stood with his hands in his pockets, while Pon and Monson rolled Johnny off the grassy path into a thicket, where he was completely hidden from sight.

Johnny wriggled and wrenched, but he was safely tied, and he could offer no resistance. For a dozen yards or more, he was dragged and rolled along into the heart of the thick underwood.

"Now stick there!" said Ponsonby, glaring down at him. "I fancy it will take your pals some time to find you, you ruffian!"

Johnny glared up at him.

"You rotter! If you think of leaving me here like this, I'll yell for help—people will hear me on the road!" he panted.

"Will you?" sneered Pon.

He bent over the bound junior, and drew the handkerchief from his pocket.

Johnny, seeing what was coming, closed his jaws hard.

But that did not avail him. A twist of chin and nose forced him to open his mouth with a gasp of pain.

Ponsonby rammed the handkerchief in.

Not content with that, he cut another length from the towline and knotted it round Johnny's head, securing the handkerchief in his jaws.

"Going to yell now?" grinned Pon.

Johnny could not answer. So far from yelling, he could not even utter the faintest whisper.



Biff! Johnny Bull's loose fist landed full in Ponsonby's eye!

"Look here——" muttered Gadsby.

"Shut up!" snapped Pon.

Even yet the dandy of Highcliffe was not satisfied. That blackened eye had to be paid for. With the remainder of the towline, he proceeded to tie the hapless prisoner to two or three saplings that grew close by him. Johnny was to have no chance of wriggling away through the thickets. Pon, with all his supercilious ways, was a sheer hooligan at heart; but even Pon was rather excelling himself this time.

"Look here, suppose they don't find him?" muttered Gadsby.

"They'll find him all right, if they look for him long enough!" grinned Monson. "It will take them some time, I dare say!"

"If they don't——"

"Well, if they don't, you can come out and let him loose, about bed-time!" sneered Ponsonby. "Not before that, unless you want a fight on your hands, Gaddy! If I can't handle that brute, I can handle you; and if you meddle in this, look out for trouble!"

"You always were a rotter, Pon!" said Gadsby. "I've known you ever since we went to Highcliffe in the same term, and I've never once known you to act like a decent chap. Not just once, have you, Monson?"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Monson. "What's the good of raggin'? Look here, it's time we got in! We've got to see the pater when he comes. Goodness knows how you'll explain that eye to him, Pon! Accident with a punchball—what?"

"The sooner you get in and do somethin' for it, the better!" said

Gadsby. "It's goin' to look a pretty picture!"

"Oh, shut up!"

The three Highcliffians tramped back to the path.

From there, Johnny Bull heard them walk away, doubtless in the direction of the building that was out of sight beyond the trees. Footsteps and quarrelsome voices died away, and Johnny was left in solitude and silence.

He could not stir a finger or utter a sound. He could only wait till his friends searched for him and found him. He had only one consolation—the fact that Cecil Ponsonby had taken a black eye away with him.

The Man in the Raincoat!

"**B**LOW!" said Bob Cherry.

"The blowfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin.

"Looks as if we're going to stick here for ever and a day!" sighed Nugent.

Harry Wharton rose to his feet.

He stared across the towpath at the wood and the lane. There had been no sign of Billy Bunter, and no sign of Johnny Bull. And it was two hours since Johnny had started on his quest. What was keeping him so long was quite a puzzle to his friends.

They might have been tempted to push on without Bunter. But they could not push on without Johnny. Whether he had found Bunter or not, it was amazing that he should have remained away so long. The

wood was not a very extensive one, and he had had time to search it from end to end.

"Blessed if I can make it out!" said the captain of the Greyfriars Remove. "Bunter may be lost, or sticking out of sight. But what on earth is Johnny doing all this time?"

"Goodness knows!"

"That fat chump may have wandered somewhere, and Johnny may have got the tip and gone after him!" said Bob. "But——"

"Well, we can't sit here for ever," said Harry. "Let's go and have a look along the road and see if anybody's coming!"

The view on the sunny Thames was quite pleasant and cheery, but after a couple of hours the Greyfriars fellows had had enough of it. They landed from the boat and crossed the shady lane through the wood.

Hunting in the wood did not seem much use. Johnny Bull had had more than ample time for all the hunting that was needed there. They walked on to the high road which, at that point, was not more than three hundred yards from the river.

Coming out into the road, they looked up and down and round about. It was a country road, which led, as they knew, up to Wallingford, a mile or two farther up the Thames. There did not seem to be much traffic on it. Not a vehicle was in sight—and only one person was to be seen.

At a little distance from the end of the lane a man was leaning on the fence that shut in the wood from the road.

The juniors glanced at him.

He was smoking a cigarette, and several stumps and burnt matches lay about him on the ground, which looked as if he had been there some time.

"Might ask that chap if he's seen anything of them," said Bob.

"Might as well," agreed Harry.

The four juniors turned in the direction of the stranger. They noticed that he was looking at them through a pair of gold-rimmed gassels. He wore a raincoat, which rather struck their attention on a hot afternoon with no sign of rain. A soft Homburg hat shaded his face, the gold-rimmed glasses gleaming under the brim. A thick moustache covered his upper lip and mouth, and there was a large patch of sticking-plaster on his chin, which looked as if he had been in the wars lately.

He eyed them so intently as they came along the fence that it gave them the impression that he had seen them before. That, of course, was quite possible, though to their eyes he was an utter stranger.

Harry Wharton raised his straw hat politely.

"Excuse me," he said. "We're looking for a fellow. Perhaps you've seen him, if you've been here some time?"

The man paused a moment before replying. He gave a quick glance along the road, in the direction of distant London. It struck the juniors that he was expecting somebody, or something, to appear on the road, and that was why he was waiting there.

"What was he like?" asked the man in the raincoat.

"A schoolboy like ourselves—a rather stocky chap," answered Harry. "Straw hat with a blue and white band."

The man nodded.

"Yes, I saw him a little while ago. He went up the road towards Wallingford," he answered.

"What the dickens has he gone to Wallingford for?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Bunter can't have gone there—catch him walking the distance!"

"Thank you very much!" said Harry; and the man in the raincoat nodded without speaking again. "Come on, you chaps! We know which way he's gone, at any rate!"

The juniors walked on, much puzzled. Johnny Bull had certainly gone into the wood, when he left them, to search for Bunter. According to this information, he had come out of the wood and walked off towards Wallingford—which was quite inexplicable.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh cast a backward glance at the man in the raincoat.

The man was leaning on the fence again, his back partly turned towards the juniors—his eyes on the London road.

There was a slightly suspicious expression on the nabob's dusky face.

"Blessed if I make it out!" said Nugent. "It doesn't look as if we shall get much farther up the river to-day."

"It doesn't!" said Bob. "Bless Bunter! But I can't make out why Johnny's hiked off to Wallingford—without a word to us, too. It wouldn't have taken him two or three minutes to cut back to the boat before he started."

"Has he, my esteemed Bob?" asked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh quietly.

"Eh?" Bob stared at the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Didn't that man say so?"

"Quitefully so—but——"

"I suppose he saw Johnny, if he said so!" said Harry. "What are you driving at, Inky?"

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh did not reply for a moment. The Indian junior was a good deal keener of observation than the other fellows, and there was something about that man in the raincoat that made him doubtful.

"Perhapsfully he was pulling our leg, my esteemed chums!" he said quietly.

"Why should he?" asked Bob, in wonder.

"I do not think that he was pleased when he saw us come up that lane from the river!" said the nabob. "I had a sort of impression that the disconcertfulness was terrific. If he desires to have that spot to himself, for some reason, he may have thought it a wheezy good idea to send us walking off to esteemed Wallingford."

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. He came to a halt. "I—I can't think so, Inky, but, by gum, we don't want to go hiking off to Wallingford for nothing."

"No fear!" agreed Bob. "But——"

"It will be terrifically easy to make sure!" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "Let us go backfully and ask him another question. Ask him whether the esteemed chap he saw was wearing a blue serge suit!"

"Eh? Johnny wasn't wearing a blue serge suit!" said Bob blankly.

"Exactfully so; and if that esteemed sportsman says he was——"

"Oh!"

"Either he is lying, or the person he saw was not the esteemed Johnny at all; and in either absurd case we save a walk to Wallingford."

"Ain't he deep?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Come on, and let's. If that sportsman was pulling our leg, we don't want to walk miles to amuse him."

The four juniors turned back.

The man in the raincoat was watching the London-ward road, heedless of them; but at the sound of footsteps, he turned his head. An extremely disagreeable look came over his face at the sight of the juniors again. Now that Inky had put the idea into their heads, they could see that the man, for whatsoever reason, did not want company in that solitary spot.

"Excuse me," said Harry, quite politely, "we don't want a walk up to Wallingford for nothing! We'd like to be sure about the chap you saw! Was he wearing a blue serge suit?"

"Yes!" snapped the man in the raincoat.

"You're quite sure you noticed that?" asked Harry.

"Yes, quite."

"Thank you!" said Harry Wharton.

The juniors did not start up the road again. They all knew now that Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh was right. If that man in the raincoat had seen anyone at all, it certainly was not Johnny Bull, who was not wearing a blue serge suit.

But they did not believe now that he had seen any schoolboy pass him at all; they were pretty certain that he wanted to be alone there for some mysterious reason, and only wanted to get shut of them.

The man in the raincoat gave them a stare.

"Aren't you going after your friend?" he asked.

"No, that's all right," said Bob cheerfully. "The chap you saw isn't the chap we're looking for."

"Not at all!" said Nugent, shaking his head.

They saw the man in the raincoat draw a deep, hard breath.

His angry annoyance was easy to see. It leaped to the eye.

It rather amused the juniors. Why he wanted to clear them off, they could not begin to guess; but they could see easily enough now that he did, and would have told them anything to start them going.

Leaving him with angrily compressed lips, and eyes gleaming through his gold-rimmed glasses, they walked past him to the end of the riverside lane. There they came to a halt, to discuss what they were going to do.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob, a few minutes later. "He's going!"

The man in the raincoat left the fence, where he had leaned so long. He passed the juniors, walking quickly up the road, his back to Wallingford, where he had wished to send the Greyfriars fellows on a wild-goose chase. From the other direction, towards which he had started, a car had appeared in sight—the first vehicle which the juniors had seen since they had been on the road.

"Oh! That's what he was waiting for!" said Bob, as the man in the raincoat, standing in the middle of the road, held up his hand, as a sign to the driver of the car to stop.

The car drew up, only twenty yards from the spot where Harry Wharton & Co. were standing.

The Hold-Up!

"MY esteemed chums——" murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

Three of the juniors were discussing, in irritated perplexity, the strange absence of Johnny Bull, and what was to be done about it.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh was not joining in that discussion; he was standing with his dark eyes fixed on the halted car at a little distance.

There was a strange, startled expression on the dusky face of the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"What?" asked Harry, glancing at him.

"Look at that car, my esteemed and idiotic chums, and that sportsman in the raincoat!" murmured the nabob. "Something is terrifically up."

"What the dickens——"

"Look!"

The juniors, in surprise, looked. They were not interested in the car or its driver, or the man in the raincoat; but in Johnny Bull and his inexplicable disappearance.

But, as the nabob drew their attention to the little scene only twenty yards away, they became interested.

The car was a small two-seater, with only one occupant—the man who was driving. He was a stout gentleman with a florid face, and looked like a prosperous City man.

The man in the raincoat was leaning over the car, quite close to him, speaking to him, and his right hand seemed to touch the stout gentleman.

On the stout one's face was an expression of startled amazement and rage, mingled with alarm, that struck the juniors the moment they turned their eyes on him.

"What the dickens!" said Frank Nugent. "Are they having a row, or what?"

"It is a hold-up!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur quietly.

"Wha-at?" stuttered Bob.

"Inky!" gasped Wharton.

The idea of a hold-up in broad daylight, on a public road, was altogether too startling for the juniors to believe it easily.

"My dear chap——" said Nugent.

"Come onfully!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, and he started at a run towards the car.

His comrades, amazed and incredulous, followed him. It seemed to them too utterly steep to be possible.

But, as they approached, they saw the stout man slip a hand inside his coat, and take out a fat pocket-book, which he passed to the man leaning over the car.

The man in the raincoat took it in his left hand, and slipped it into a pocket of his coat, his right hand remaining where it was, touching the driver of the car.

The stout, florid face of the man in the two-seater was pale; there was more fear than rage in it, though it was angry enough.

In spite of their incredulity, the juniors realised that the nabob was right—there was a weapon in the hand they could not see, and it was under threat of that weapon that the man in the two-seater had handed over his pocket-book.

That was why the man in the raincoat had been waiting there; evidently he had known that the car was coming, and was watching for it—with this object in view! That was why he had sought to send the juniors on a wild-goose chase to Wallingford—he did not want witnesses on the spot.

But for the wary nabob, they would have been out of sight long ago. But, as they were not gone, he was carrying on, all the same, though so

quietly was the scene passing that only the keen-eyed nabob had noticed that anything was amiss.

But they could all see it now.

"My hat!" gasped Bob. "Come on, and collar the brute!"

They scudded towards the car.

The man in the raincoat stepped back.

That pocket-book, evidently, was what he had wanted. With extraordinary nerve and coolness he had carried out that highway robbery—heedless of the four schoolboys only twenty yards away.

But at their pattering footsteps he turned towards them, stepping back quickly from the car.

Then they saw what was in his right hand, and if they had had any doubt it would have been banished. It was a small, wicked-looking automatic pistol that was grasped in his hand—and it was the automatic that had been pressed to the ribs of the stout man in the car.

"At him!" shouted Bob.

The stout gentleman, noticing the schoolboys for the first time, called to them hastily:

"Take care—the villain is armed!"

"Stand back!" The man in the raincoat threw up his hand with the automatic in it levelled at the juniors. "I will fire—stand back!"

And as they came on he fired, the bullet kicking up a spurt of dust from the road at Harry Wharton's feet.

They came to a halt.

They were plucky enough and eager to lay hands on the rascal who had stopped a car and robbed the driver under their very eyes! But to rush on a desperate man armed with a deadly weapon was rather too foolhardy.

He had fired to warn them off; but the next shot would have struck, and they knew it! They had no means of dealing with a firearm in a desperate hand.

Harry Wharton clenched his hands.

There was not even a stick in the party; they had only their bare hands and they were powerless.

Keeping the automatic at a level, his eyes gleaming over it under the brim of the Homburg hat, the man in the raincoat passed them. They eyed him as he passed—but that he would fire if they attacked him was only too clear—and he had the whip-hand. The stout man in the car had submitted when the automatic was jammed in his ribs—and the Greyfriars fellows were equally powerless.

Having passed the group, the man suddenly broke into a run.

He dashed down the road, turned into the little riverside lane, and disappeared from sight.

"He's making for the towpath!" breathed Bob. "A boat there, very likely——"

"The scoundrel!" The stout man in the car, evidently relieved now that the man with the automatic was out of sight, was spluttering with rage. "The villain! A hold-up on a public road—in the middle of the afternoon—who ever heard of such a

thing? A hundred pounds—— By Jove! The scoundrel!"

"Sorry we couldn't help, sir," said Harry Wharton. "If there had been the ghost of a chance——"

"You could do nothing—I could do nothing—he would have used that automatic, the desperate villain!" exclaimed the stout man in the car. "By Jove! Highway robbery in broad daylight—— By Jove! And if he has a boat——"

"We can get after him, sir, and see whether he has a boat!" said Harry. "It may be some use to the police to know! If you drive straight on to Wallingford, it's only a couple of miles or so——"

"I know! I know! If you can see where the villain goes it will help, but take care not to approach him—do not think of running into danger! I will get on to Wallingford instantly. Will one of you go to my house and tell my son not to expect me yet—it is hardly a quarter of a mile from this spot—down the road——"

"Certainly, sir!"

"My name is Monson——"

"Monson!" repeated Harry.

"Yes, yes—Monson. The house is Monson Chalet—on this road by the river. My son is there with some friends from his school—he is expecting me. Will you tell him what has happened, and that I must go straight to Wallingford without stopping at the house?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"Thank you!"

The next moment the stout gentleman was stamping on the gas and the two-seater fairly flew down the road towards Wallingford.

The four Greyfriars fellows stared at one another.

"Monson!" murmured Bob. "That must be young Monson's pater!"

"Then that gang are staying about here!" said Nugent. "It's only a couple of hours since we saw them on the river."

"Well, we shall have to go and tell Monson, as he asked us to," said Harry. "But first let's see if we can spot that scoundrel getting a boat. If he does, we may be able to keep him in sight in the Water-Lily."

The car vanished in a cloud of dust. Mr. Monson was losing no time in getting in touch with the police to report that audacious hold-up.

The four juniors ran back to the riverside lane by which the man in the raincoat had disappeared.

They cut down the lane towards the river.

It was possible that the rascal had dodged into the wood; but it seemed to them much more likely that he had headed for the towpath. The wood was small and enclosed, and obviously he could not hope to remain hidden there long. So far as they could see his cue was to get out of the vicinity as fast as he could—and the towpath was the quickest way, especially if he had a boat tied up there.

Nothing, at all events, was to be seen of him in the lane, and they came out on the towpath with a rush. And the first object that met their

eyes as they reached the towpath and saw the Water-Lily was a fat figure sitting in the Greyfriars boat—with a cake on its fat knees and a slice of the same in a fat hand. Billy Bunter had turned up!

Jam for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows—" squeaked Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not for the moment heed him.

They had forgotten all about Billy Bunter; and now that they were reminded of him they were not interested.

Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles. No doubt he had expected them to be interested. However, he went on contentedly with the cake.

The juniors glanced quickly up and down the towpath.

Five or six pedestrians were to be seen; but not one of them was the man in the raincoat. Six or seven craft were visible on the river, but the man in the raincoat was not visible in any of them.

He had had little time to get out of sight if he had run down to the towpath at all! But he was not to be seen.

"That fat ass—" exclaimed Nugent.

"Oh, bother him!" said Bob.

"Never mind Bunter now—"

"I mean he may have seen him—"

"Oh! So he may! Come on!"

The juniors ran across to the boat.

Billy Bunter eyed them warily through his big spectacles. Having remained out of sight till tea-time and caused the party to hang about all the afternoon doing nothing, possibly Bunter was apprehensive of a spot of trouble.

"I say, you fellows," he squeaked, "I lost my way—"

"Did you see a man come out of that lane—a man in a raincoat—not five minutes ago?" asked Harry, interrupting the fat Owl.

"Eh? No!"

"Has anybody come on the towpath from that lane?" asked Bob.

"No—not till you fellows came," answered Bunter, blinking at him. "I should have seen him if he had—I've been keeping my eye open for you fellows—"

"Even that blind Owl would have seen him!" said Nugent. "Sure nobody ran down and cut along the towpath, Bunter?"

"Yes, of course!" answered Bunter.

"Have you been here five minutes?"

"I've been here half an hour. I came back as soon as I saw you fellows clear—"

"What?" roared Bob.

"I—I—I mean, I—I came back as—as soon as I found my way!" stammered Bunter. "I haven't been in a tree all the time."

"In a tree!" gasped Nugent.

"Of course not," said Bunter hastily. "Catch me climbing trees in this hot weather! I never stayed away because that beast Bull was

going to make me tow the boat! I'm not lazy, I hope!"

"You got into a tree—" howled Wharton.

"No! Nothing of the kind! I wasn't up a tree when I saw Bull start looking for me, and he never passed underneath, and I never wondered what he was taking the tow-ropes for! I never saw him at all!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The fact is, I—I went for a walk and—and lost my way!" explained Bunter. "I certainly never kept out of sight till you fellows cleared off! I wasn't waiting till tea-time, or—or anything! I—I lost my way—I've had a fearfully long walk."

"You fat villain!"

"Oh really, Wharton—"

"You terrific toad!"

"Oh really, Inky—"

"Johnny was right," said Bob.

"That fat villain was hiding all the time, to get out of his spell of towing."

"I wasn't!" howled Bunter. "I've been miles and miles and miles. Walked my legs off nearly. Think I'd stick up in a tree just to get out of towing the boat? Besides, you shouldn't expect me to do all the work. I'm jolly well not going to tow a lazy lot sprawling in a boat—"

"You pernicious porpoise," said Bob. "Johnny's gone off looking for you, and he hasn't come back yet—goodness knows where he's got to!"

"He, he, he!"

"You bloated bloater—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"That man never came down to the towpath here, after all," said Harry Wharton. "He must have dodged into the wood. I suppose he will get out on the towpath at some other spot. He's got away all right."

"Chap's got some nerve!" said Bob. "No wonder he wanted to send us walking off to Wallingford—when he was waiting for a car to come along, to hold it up with a giddy automatic—"

"The terrific rascal knew that that car was coming!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "He was waiting for the esteemed pater of execrable Monson."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Looks like it," he said. "There seems precious little traffic on that road—he was waiting for that car, not for chance traffic. That may help the police to find him—it looks as if he's a man who knows something about Mr. Monson's movements—knew that he was expected down here this afternoon."

"The knowfulness was terrific."

"Well, there's plenty of us to identify him, if we see him again," said Bob. "He will chuck away that raincoat, I dare say; but I'd know that chivvy with the gilt-edged goggles and the sticking-plaster, anywhere. He didn't want any witnesses—but he got quite a lot."

"I say, you fellows, what are you talking about?" asked Billy Bunter, blinking at the Co. in astonishment. "I say, has anything happened?"

"Yes—you've happened!" said Bob. "Now you're going to be slaughtered for wasting the afternoon for us!"

"The slaughterfulness is going to be terrific."

"I—I say, you fellows, I couldn't help losing my way, you know," urged Bunter. "I've walked miles and miles and miles—"

"While you were up that tree?" asked Bob. "Was it a very big tree?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"We'd better go and look for that chalet, and take Mr. Monson's message," said Harry. "Blessed if I like butting in on those Highcliffe cads—but we're bound to do as he asked us."

"We may see something of Johnny on the way," said Nugent. "I can't imagine where he's got to."

"Wait a minute!" said Bob.

"Bunter's nearly finished that cake. I'll get out some jam for him—Bunter likes jam."

"You silly ass!" said Nugent. "Bunter can get the jam for himself, can't he? Let's get off."

"You shut up, Nugent!" said Billy Bunter warmly. "Why shouldn't Bob get out the jam for me? I'm sitting down!"

"You lazy fat ass—"

"Yah!"

"Look here, Bob—"

"My dear chap, Bunter likes jam—and I'm going to get him some jam," said Bob. "I think he deserves it, after dodging his spell of towing, and making us hang about here all the afternoon wasting time."

"Oh!" Nugent grinned. "All right—go it!"

Bob Cherry hooked a pot of jam out of the locker.

Billy Bunter bolted the last slice of cake. He was ready for jam.

The jam was ready for him.

Bob Cherry grasped a fat neck with one hand, and jerked a fat head back. With the other hand he inverted the jar of jam over a fat face.

There was a wild roar from Bunter.

"I say—leggo! I say, wharrer you at? I say, if you spill that jam on me, I'll—Gerrogh! Oooogh! Yooogh!"

Jam streamed over Billy Bunter's fat face.

Bunter liked jam. He liked it in large quantities. But he did not like it administered like this. He disliked it intensely.

But he had to have it. He wriggled and roared, and spluttered and yelled, and writhed and squirmed. He had escaped his spell of towing. But this was worse than a spell of towing.

"Urrgh Stoppit! Gurrgh! Will you stoppit? I never—Urrgh! I didn't—Gurrgh! I wasn't—Yurrrrgh! Oh crikey! Oooch! I'm all sticky! Woogh! Will you keep that—ooch!—jam away, you beast! Woogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have another jar?" asked Bob.

"Urrgh! Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's to go on with!" said Bob. "You'll get something more when Johnny turns up, after hunting you for hours. I expect Johnny will take your skin off with the tow-ropes."



Harry Wharton & Co. rushed out on the towpath to find Billy Bunter, seated in the Water-Lily, eating cake and feeling quite contented!

"Wurrgh! Beast! Urrgh!"

"You can sit here and wait for Johnny. Look out for squalls when he turns up. You've got it coming."

"Urrgh!"

Leaving the fat Owl sticky and jammy and wriggling, Harry Wharton & Co. went up the lane again to the road, and turned in the direction of Wallingford, to look for the Monson Chalet.

Billy Bunter was left in the boat—squirming. With deep feelings, the fat Owl washed jam off in the river. For once Billy Bunter was anxious for a wash.

For some reason—Bunter did not know why—the juniors did not believe that he had lost his way, and walked miles and miles and miles. They knew that he had been dodging, and had hung them up all the afternoon to dodge a spot of work. And there was, it seemed, more to come when Johnny Bull turned up. If he had been hunting for Bunter all this time, it was hardly to be expected that he would turn up in a good temper.

It dawned on Billy Bunter's fat intellect that he would have been well-advised, after all, not to have dodged that spot of work.

What Johnny Saw!

JOHNNY BULL pricked up his ears at a sound in the dense thickets that surrounded him. How long he had lain there, utterly

helpless to stir a limb or to utter a sound, Johnny did not know—but it seemed like ages to him.

Pon's black eye was some consolation—and a still greater comfort was the idea of looking for Pon, when at last he got loose, and giving him another.

But that, comforting as it was to think of, was no present aid.

Johnny was stiff, and cramped; insects were crawling over him, and he was wondering dismally whether his friends would ever find him—whether, indeed, they would think of searching for him in the wood at all.

If they did not he was booked for this till nightfall—and that prospect was really appalling.

So a sound of brushing and rustling in the thickets was joyful to his ears. Someone was coming—perhaps his friends searching for him, perhaps Gadsby—somebody, at any rate.

Whoever was coming was coming in a hurry.

Johnny heard panting breath, as the unseen one turned off the path where he had been running, and plunged into that dense thicket of underwoods.

Branches swayed and rustled quite near the bound junior, and the panting breath came closer; but the newcomer did not reach him.

He stopped, hardly more than three or four feet from the schoolboy who lay helpless among roots and grass and fallen leaves.

Through the thickets Johnny had a

glimpse of a pair of legs and a raincoat; he could see no more of the newcomer.

But he knew that it was not one of his friends, or Gadsby, and that it was not anyone in search of him.

It was a man wearing a raincoat, who had plunged into that thicket, and stopped there, panting for breath.

Johnny's heart beat rather fast.

The man's strange action had only one meaning, and he realised it. Whoever it was that had dodged into that thicket had been running—and had hunted cover. Unaware, naturally, that a schoolboy lay bound hand and foot in the dense underwood, he had picked that thickly grown spot for a hide-out. A man who feared pursuit—that was evident.

For a long minute there was silence, broken only by that hurried panting, which gradually calmed.

Johnny could not have drawn the stranger's attention, if he had wanted to—but he was not sure now that he wanted to. A man who ran into the wood and hunted a hiding-place in deep cover was not a man he wanted to establish contact with when he was bound and helpless. If it was some sneak-thief who had been pinching on the towpath, or from some boat on the river, he was better kept at a safe distance. Such a character was more likely to go through the schoolboy's pockets than to release him—indeed, if he had some serious reason for seeking a hide-

out, it might be dangerous to let him know that anyone was there.

On the other hand, Johnny did not want to let a chance slip of getting out of his extremely uncomfortable scrape.

He contrived to move his head a little, so that he could take a squint through the interstices of the thick bushes that blanketed him.

Then he had a back view of a man in a raincoat and a Homburg hat. He knew by the man's attitude that he was listening intently—obviously for possible sounds of pursuit, facing towards the path from which he had run.

The man turned at last, breathing deeply, as if satisfied that there was no one following him, and threw off the raincoat.

Johnny had a glimpse of his face now — moustache, gold-rimmed glasses, and a big patch of sticking-plaster on the chin.

To his astonishment, the man put his hand to his face and removed the moustache!

It was an artificial one, and adopted for disguise. Then he took off the gold-rimmed glasses, and then removed the sticking-plaster.

There was no mark of damage under that sticking-plaster! Like the glasses and the moustache, it was part of a disguise.

Johnny Bull was careful to remain perfectly still.

He realised now that it was not merely to dodge pursuit, but to remove his disguise, that the man had hidden himself there.

His look was utterly changed now, without the moustache, the glasses, and the sticking-plaster.

Johnny could see his face—that of a man about thirty, clean-shaven, rather hard-featured, with bushy brows and keen, glinting black eyes.

It was a face he would have known again at a single glance—but which he would never have associated with the man's face as he had first seen it.

Johnny's heart was beating quite unpleasantly now.

It was clear that the man was some crook, who had been guilty of some lawless act in his disguise; and what he was likely to do, if he found that there was a witness to his real identity, was not agreeable to think of—in Johnny's present helpless position.

But it was clear that the man had not the slightest suspicion that there was anyone but himself at hand. He did not once glance towards the direction of the bound schoolboy, whom he could not have seen, even if he had looked, without pushing deeper into the thicket. Johnny could only hope that he would go without discovering him.

The man had dropped the raincoat on removing it. Now he picked it up, and jerked something from the pocket—a fat leather pocket-book. This he slipped into the inside pocket of his lounge jacket. Into the same pocket he crammed the moustache, the glasses, and the sticking-plaster.

The raincoat he folded up as small as possible; and it seemed to Johnny that he was scanning the thicket for

some place to hide it. Then a mutter reached Johnny's ears.

"The river!"

Johnny could guess what that meant. The Thames was close at hand, and the man had decided that the safest place for the raincoat was in the Thames. No doubt he had been seen in it, and was anxious to dispose of it in the safest possible place.

Having squeezed it as small as he could, he tucked it out of sight under his jacket.

Then, to Johnny's intense relief, he moved away.

Any pursuer who had been after him, seeing him now, could never have dreamed that he was the same man who, five minutes ago, had dodged into the thicket. His appearance was totally different. It was quite safe for him to meet his pursuers, if any, face to face, without the risk of drawing a second glance from them.

He moved away, and Johnny heard him walk away down the path—at a leisurely pace, quite different from the rapid run with which he had arrived.

His footsteps died away.

Johnny Bull was left alone again. In the circumstances, he was glad to be left alone—deeply thankful that those glinting black eyes had not fallen on him. What the man had done seemed to be indicated by that fat pocket-book he had taken out of the raincoat pocket. Johnny could guess easily enough that it was plunder. The man was a thief, fresh from a recent robbery; there was no doubt on that point.

But, startling as the incident had been, Johnny Bull soon dismissed it from his mind as the long, weary minutes passed; and he heard no sound in the wood, save the buzz of insects.

No one was coming—his friends did not dream what had happened to him; and Gadsby, who had a spot of decency in him, was keeping away—afraid to interfere with Pon's vengeance on the fellow who had blacked his eye!

Tied as he was, Johnny could hardly even wriggle—and more and more tiny denizens of the wood found him, and crawled over him, and bit him. It was getting worse and worse and worse—and Johnny's feelings grew deeper and deeper!

Not a Polite Reception!

"THOSE cads!" said Ponsonby, between his teeth.

"What the dooce do they want here?" said Monson, in astonishment. "They can't have come here for a row—even that lot!"

"Rot!" said Gadsby.

The three Highcliffians were sitting in the veranda, in Mr. Monson's riverside chalet. Ponsonby was bathing his eye—which, in spite of his careful attentions, was getting blacker and blacker.

The house, built in the style of a Swiss chalet, lay far back from the road, between the road and the river.

It faced the road; and there was a long curving drive down to the gate.

At the gate, four figures appeared in the golden sunshine; and the three Highcliffians stared at Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Why the Greyfriars fellows had come there was quite a mystery. There had been a row on the river, but the Greyfriars crew had had rather the best of it—and, in any case, it was hardly to be supposed that they had paid a visit to the house for another row.

But there they were, coming in at the gate, and coming up the drive towards the chalet, where Pon & Co. sat in the veranda.

Ponsonby's eyes glittered at them. It was their pal, Johnny Bull, who had given him his black eye; but Pon's bitter malice was bestowed impartially on the whole party. For whatever reason they had come, they were walking into the lion's den.

"Oakshott hasn't come in yet, I suppose!" muttered Ponsonby.

"No! Didn't you give him a hint to keep clear while my pater was here?" answered Monson. "He won't be back till late, if he's got tact enough to take your hint."

Ponsonby gave an angry grunt. It was only prudent to keep such an acquaintance as Captain Oakshott from coming under the eyes of Mr. Monson. The rich City man allowed his son, and his son's friends, a very loose rein at the riverside chalet; but there was little doubt that he would have drawn the line at entertaining a racing man there.

But at the moment Pon would have been glad for the captain to be available. The racing man would have been useful in dealing with the four juniors who were walking into the lions' den!

"Well, call some of the servants, Monson!" said Ponsonby. "That gang are going out on their necks!"

Monson hesitated. "I say, my pater may blow in any minute," he said. "He's late already! We don't want him to run down from London to find a scrap going on here."

"I suppose your pater doesn't expect you to let any gang of river roughs wander into the place, just as they choose!" snarled Pon.

"I say, if they've found out what you did to Bull—" mumbled Monson uneasily. "That might bring them here for a row!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Gadsby. "Is that it? It's two or three hours since you left Bull tied up—well, serve you jolly well right, Pon, if they're after you! It was a rotten trick!"

Pon gave him an evil look. "I don't think it's that!" said Monson, eyeing the Greyfriars fellows as they came up the long drive. "They don't look as if they're on the warpath! Bet you they haven't found Bull yet."

"Will you call the servants to chuck them out, you dummy?"

"Yes, if they kick up a row!" said Monson. "But—"

"What else do you think they're after, you fool?"

"Well, let's see first!" said Monson. "I'd rather not have a row goin' on when the pater blows in."

Ponsonby, with a black and bitter look, stretched out his hand to a soda-siphon that stood on a table near him. Whether the Greyfriars Co. had come for a row or not, Pon was not going to let them escape without one—with plenty of assistance to be called on in dealing with them.

Harry Wharton & Co. came to the steps up to the veranda. They stood there, looking up at the Highcliffians, who looked down over the rail.

It was scarcely possible for the juniors to have refused Mr. Monson's request. But it was awkward and unpleasant to butt in at the quarters of their old enemies.

Finding Pon & Co. in the veranda, they were saved from the necessity of knocking at the door to be admitted, so they stopped where they were.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob. "Pon's picked up a fancy eye since we saw him last!"

"Want anything?" Monson called down.

"A message from your father, Monson!" answered Harry Wharton from below. "He asked us to call in and bring it."

Monson stared at him.

"What the thump do you mean?" he demanded. "You don't know my pater, and he wouldn't be likely to have anything to do with a gang like you!"

Wharton's cheeks burned.

That was the kind of reception he had to expect from the Highcliffians. But he had not come there to punch Mr. Monson's son—which was rather fortunate for Monson. He controlled his anger, and answered quietly:

"Your father has driven on to Wallingford, and he asked us to come and tell you so, as he will be late."

"And what's he driven on to Wallingford for?" asked Monson, staring. "He must have passed this place without stopping, if he has."

"His car was stopped on the road by a man who robbed him of his pocket-book," answered Harry. "He's gone to the police about it."

"Oh, my hat! That sounds jolly steep!" said Monson.

"That's his message!" said Harry curtly. "We came to give it because he asked us—that's all! If you want to know the details, you can ask him when you see him! Come on, you fellows—let's get out of this."

"Hold on!" Ponsonby leaned over the rail. "Hold on a minute! Did you say that Mr. Monson's pocket-book has been pinched?"

"Yes," answered Harry, glancing up.

"And you fellows were on the spot?"

"Yes—we weren't able to help, or we should have done so."

"Was it one of you pinched it?"

"Wha-a-t?" gasped Harry.

"You cheeky cad!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I'm only askin' the question," said Pon coolly, while his comrades grinned. "If Mr. Monson has lost his pocket-book, with Greyfriars cads on the spot, it looks jolly suspicious to me."

The four juniors stared up at Ponsonby. They had not come there for a row—they were only anxious to be gone, after having delivered the message. But this kind of thing was hard to tolerate.

"Don't go!" added Pon. "If you take my advice, Monson, you'll call the servants, and have them searched before they're allowed to go."

"I'm not standing this, if you fellows are!" said Bob Cherry between his teeth; and, with a red and furious face, Bob ran up the steps of the veranda.

The soda-siphon was in Pon's hands below the rail. He lifted it, took aim, and greeted Bob as he came with a sizzling squirt of soda, which caught him full in the face.

Squish! Slooosh!

That sudden jet of soda-water took Bob quite by surprise. He staggered back, lost his footing, and rolled headlong down the steps. He landed on the gravel, with a bump and a roar.

"You rotten cad!" roared Harry Wharton. "Oh! Oooogh!" he added, as the soda-siphon turned on him, drenching him.

"You terrific toad!" shouted the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Bob Cherry staggered up.

"Go for the cads!" he roared.

He plunged up the steps again, and this time his three comrades followed him.

But Pon & Co. did not wait!

They backed swiftly through the french windows at the back of the veranda into the room within.

"Porritt!" shouted Ponsonby.

He slammed the french window, and shut the catch just in time as the Greyfriars fellows came with a rush across the veranda. They came to an exasperated halt.

There was only glass between; but it was scarcely possible to proceed farther, enraged as they were. Unwillingly, to oblige Monson's father, they had come there to deliver the message, and two of them had been drenched with soda-water, and Bob had a whole collection of bumps. Bob was tempted to drive his elbow through the pane and open the catch, but he restrained himself.

Pon grinned at him mockingly from the safe side of the french window. Monson grinned also; Gadsby looked sullen. All three of them knew perfectly well that the Greyfriars fellows had come in good faith to deliver a message from Monson's father; and Gaddy, at least, had grace enough to be a little ashamed of the reception they had met with.

From another door, at the end of the veranda, a plump manservant emerged. That, no doubt, was Porritt. He came along to the four juniors.

"Get out of this, please!" he said. "You can't come here making a row! Go away at once!"

"Mind your own business, bother you!" snapped Bob. He was not in a good temper, and he was anxious to get at Ponsonby.

"I am Mr. Monson's butler——"

"I don't care a rap who you are—keep your distance!"

Porritt did not keep his distance. He came nearer the juniors, with a grim look on his podgy face.

As he approached, a faint scent of spirits was noticeable, evidence that Porritt was anything but a teetotaler. He was, in fact, the sort of butler that would be found at a rowdy riverside place.

"Now then, out of it!" he snapped, and he dropped a large, flabby hand on Bob Cherry's shoulder and jerked at him.

"Stop that, my man!" rapped Harry Wharton. "We came here with a message from Mr. Monson——"

"That will do! Get out of it!"

Porritt gave Bob another jerk.

The next moment, four pairs of hands grasped the beery butler, of Monson Chalet, and he bumped down on the planks with a bump that shook the veranda.

"Oooh!" he gasped, as he bumped.

"Keep your paws to yourself!" roared Bob.

Porritt sat up, gasping.

"James!" he spluttered. "George! William!"

"We'd better go, I think," said Harry. "Pon will keep! Get out of this, for goodness' sake!"

"That cheeky cad——" hooted Bob.

"He will keep, old man! We can't get into a scrap with Mr. Monson's household brigade."

Evidently, Pon was staying out of reach, and it was hardly judicious to enter into a battle-royal with James and George and William! The four juniors went down the steps from the veranda, leaving Porritt spluttering, and walked down the drive to the gate.

Trailing Bunter!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"That fat ass!"

The four juniors had returned to the Water-Lily after their not very agreeable visit to Monson Chalet. They were in hopes of finding Johnny Bull there when they got back; his continued absence was inexplicable, and was beginning to be a worry.

But Johnny was not there—and neither was Bunter! The fat Owl had departed during their absence. Empty ginger-beer bottles and an ocean of crumbs hinted that he had stayed long enough to put away a good tea. But he was gone—and fastened to a thwart in the boat by a pin was a paper, containing a message from the departed Owl, which caught the eyes of the four at once.

They gazed at it.

It was written in pencil, in Billy Bunter's well-known scrawl, and in his well-known spelling. They could gather from that epistle that the fat Owl had taken to heart Bob's warning that he had something more to expect when the missing Johnny turned up. It ran:

"BEESTS!

"If you think I'm gowing to stop hear f~~at~~ shindey with that broot Bull, you're mistaken, see? I lost my way, just as I toled you, and I
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,648.

certainly never climbed a tree, and never had my eye on you all the while. I'm gowing!

"I shall stop away till you agree to make it packs. I can kampf out in this fine weather; but if it comes on to rane, and I catch noomonia, it will be your fault. I am taking the grub with me, as I shall knead it. When you want me to kum back, you can put up a wite hanky on the mast and I shall see it and take it to meen that you make it packs.

"Yours with kontempt,
"W. G. BUNTER."

"What does the burbling bloater mean by packs?" asked Bob. "Oh, pax! We've got to make it pax if we want Bunter back."

"And fly a white flag in sign of pax!" grinned Nugent.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"The howling ass! Let him rip!"

"But I say, if he's bagged the grub what about tea—and supper?" asked Bob. "We're a jolly long way from any shops here! And I suppose we can't drop in at the chalet for supper."

"He can't have taken the lot!"

"Can't he?" said Bob. "That depends on whether he could carry the lot. If Bunter's going to camp out, he ain't the man to run the risk of a food shortage."

Bob opened the hamper and found nothing therein. He opened the locker and found some tins of beef and sardines—but nothing that was not of a tinned or canned nature.

The four juniors looked round the boat.

A sack that was used on shopping excursions was missing. Evidently, Billy Bunter had used it to carry off the provisions.

There had been a considerable amount of stores in the boat, as the juniors had lately done some rather extensive shopping. No doubt Bunter had made a fairly deep inroad at tea-time—they had seen him scoffing a cake, and they knew that he had had a pot of jam.

The rest was gone.

Except the few tins in the stern locker, which perhaps Bunter had not had room for in the sack, there was nothing of an edible nature left on the Water-Lily.

As it was now long past tea-time, the juniors were more than ready for their tea. But there was no tea—and there was going to be no supper—unless they could tea on corned beef, and sup on sardines without any trimmings.

Bob Cherry breathed hard.

"He's gone off loaded," he said. "By gum, he's taken a groundsheet and blankets, too—so the fat idiot means to camp out."

"Looks like tea!" grunted Nugent.

"The lookfulness is not terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "If the esteemed Johnny was here we could run on to Wallingford. But we cannot leave our absurd chum behindfully."

"Where the thump can Johnny be?" said Bob. "I shall begin to think soon that something's happened to him."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,648.

"What could have happened?"

"Nothing, I suppose. But it's jolly queer. He can't possibly be hunting Bunter all this time—that's rot."

"I can't make it out," said Harry. "He will come in sooner or later—and he will come in hungry. We'd better have something for tea when he blows in. Bunter can't be far away—he's too lazy. Let's look for him."

Johnny Bull's absence was getting more and more perplexing. It was hardly imaginable that he was still hunting for Bunter—and it was impossible that he could have lost himself. It was difficult to think of any accident that could have happened to him, but it was certainly very odd if he had walked off somewhere without a word.

One thing, however, was certain—he would come in hungry when he did come in. And the other fellows were all hungry. So, getting hold of that sack of foodstuffs carried off by the fat Owl was rather urgent.

They landed from the boat and went up the lane again. As Bunter had to get out of sight, they had no doubt that he had gone into the wood.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" chuckled Bob. "Sign!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were hungry and exasperated, but they burst into a laugh as they spotted sign of the missing Owl. Just off the lane, in the wood, lay a paper bag with jam smeared on it. Evidently, Billy Bunter had stopped there a minute or two to dispose of tarts.

Billy Bunter's intention, it seemed, was to lie low till the Famous Five agreed to make it pax, in sign of which they were to hoist a white flag at the masthead. But it did not seem that it would be very difficult to follow Bunter's trail—when he was carrying foodstuffs.

The juniors went up the path in the wood—and a few minutes later another jammy paper bag greeted their eyes. It was Bunter's way to leave litter about, and it had not occurred to his fat brain that he was leaving a sign for trailers.

An ocean of crumbs, scattered on the grass a little farther on, showed where a cake had been devoured. The trail of crumbs led off the path into the wood—Bunter, clearly, having munched that cake as he marched.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob suddenly. "Look!"

Through an opening of the thickets they suddenly sighted Bunter.

But for the trail he had left, certainly, he would not have been so easy to find. But they had found him now.

He was sitting under a beech-tree, on a couple of folded blankets laid on a groundsheet. The sack was by his side. He was leaning back against the trunk of the beech, taking a rest—which, no doubt, he needed, after walking about three hundred yards.

He gave a startled blink at the sound of Bob's voice.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Tracked down!" grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gave them one blink. Then he bounded up. Grasping the sack—even at that moment Bunter did not forget the foodstuffs—he rushed away into the wood as fast as his fat little legs could go.

"You fat ass, stop!" roared Bob.

"Stop, you potty porpoise!" shouted Nugent.

"Bunter, you chump—"

The junior rushed on.

Bunter did not stop. Perhaps he fancied that Johnny was now with his comrades. Or perhaps he expected stern justice for bagging the whole



Jerking Bunter's fat head back, Bob Cherry in

of the food supply. Anyhow, he did not stop—he flew!

After him flew the four.

Bunter charged through the thickets, panting and gasping for breath. He had a start—but the pursuers gained. The sack was rather heavy, and Bunter was very heavy indeed. He had really no chance in a foot-race. But he charged on desperately like an excited rhinoceros.

Suddenly, as he plunged through a dense mass of thickets, a wild yell floated back.

Bunter had fallen over something.

"Yaroooooh!" came echoing back.

"Got him now!" chuckled Bob.

They rushed on. But they had not got Bunter. The fat Owl scrambled up, and without even a glance at the sprawling object he had stumbled over, flew on.

The four juniors came bursting

through the thicket after him—and Bob stumbled over the same object that Bunter had stumbled over.

The next moment the four juniors forgot Bunter's existence—as they stared, with eyes popping with amazement, at the object over which Bob had stumbled. And four voices gasped together:

"Johnny!"

Rescue at Last!

JOHNNY BULL stared up at his dumbfounded comrades.

He could not speak—he could not stir. He could only look at them—but his look was expressive.

Bunter, bursting through the thickets, had caught his feet in the



threw the jar of jam over the fat junior's face!

bound junior and gone headlong over him. But the fat Owl, as he scrambled up, grabbed the sack and flew on, without looking round, and vanished. Then came the pursuers—Bob stumbling over Johnny as Bunter had done—the other three stopping just in time.

Two fellows coming down, wallop, one after another, had not added to Johnny's comfort. But it was sheer joy to him to see the faces of his friends.

They stared at him, too dumbfounded to do anything else, for some moments.

In all their surmises as to what had become of Johnny, they had never dreamed of anything like this. The sight of him, bound hand and foot and gagged, in that dense thicket, made them wonder whether they were dreaming.

But they were quick to come to his aid. Harry Wharton dealt with the gag, Bob and Nugent and the nabob started on the ropes that bound him.

In a couple of minutes Johnny Bull was free, and they helped him to his feet. He compressed his lips to keep back a gasp of pain. His limbs were cramped by the bonds that had been on them so long.

"How on earth did this happen, old chap?" asked Harry blankly. "Who the dickens tied you up like that?"

Johnny mumbled. His mouth was numbed and aching from the gag. In the distance, the sounds of Billy Bunter's flight died away unheeded. The amazing discovery of Johnny Bull had saved the fat Owl from capture. None of the juniors was wasting a thought on Bunter now.

"Johnny, old man——" said Bob.

"My esteemed Johnny——" Johnny gasped for breath.

"I've been through it," he said, getting his voice at last. "I'm aching all over. I thought you fellows would never find me. You never thought of looking, I suppose?"

"How could we?" said Harry. "We shouldn't have found you now if we hadn't been after that ass Bunter! Who could have dreamed——"

"But who——" exclaimed Bob.

Johnny gritted his teeth. "You've seen Ponsonby, from what I heard the cads saying!" he answered. "Can't you guess?"

"Pon!" exclaimed Harry.

"That cur!" said Johnny. "The three of them were too many for me! But, by gum, I'll make Pon sorry for this!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Nugent. "Was it you gave Pon that eye?"

"You've seen it, then?" said Johnny. "Yes, I gave him that eye. And I'm going to give him another to match, and a nose to match both, and then some over!

From what they said, they're staying about here. It's Monson's father's place, from what I can make out——"

"Yes, that's it!" said Harry. "They rowed with us in the boat, just after you started to look for Bunter after lunch. But we never dreamed—— I suppose they came on you here after they landed——"

"The awful rotters!" said Nugent. "Was that man Oakshott with them? Surely he wouldn't have allowed——"

"Nobody was with them," answered Johnny. "I heard them mention a man of that name—some blackguard they've picked up—and Pon tipped him to keep out of sight while Monson's father was about, from what they said. The three of them—Pon and Monson and Gadsby! But I should have had it worse but for Gaddy—he's got a limit! I don't want any row with Gadsby!

But I'm going to smash Pon into little pieces!"

"Well, this is the limit, and no mistake!" said Bob. "Who'd have thought that even Pon——"

"They left you like that—hours ago?" exclaimed Harry.

"Yes—three or four hours, I suppose it must have been! And if you fellows hadn't dropped on me, I was booked till dark!" said Johnny, between his teeth. "Gaddy said he would come back for me then. But he's too frightened of Pon to come sooner, though he'd like to have. Come on! Let's get back to the boat!"

Johnny Bull stumbled a good deal on the way back to the Water-Lily. Strong and sturdy as he was, he was exhausted by what he had been through.

His friends went with him with deep feelings. This sample of what Pon could do when Pon's back was up surprised them, even in the malicious cad of Highcliffe. They fully agreed that Pon had to be made to suffer severely for his sins. But that had to wait!

Several times, his friends had to lend him a hand getting back to the Water-Lily. But he stumbled into the boat at last and sat down.

"Hungry?" asked Bob.

"Famished! And dry——"

"I'll make some tea. That fat idiot Bunter has walked off with all the grub!"

"Never mind; water will do. We can get tea at Wallingford. Shove the boat off—no time to lose!"

"Eh? Why——"

"That ass Bunter——"

"Blow Bunter!" snapped Johnny irritably. "I tell you I've got to get to Wallingford, as it's the nearest town. I've got something to report at the police station. I believe there's been a robbery about here!"

"Oh, my hat! There jolly well has!" said Bob, staring at him. "But I don't see how you heard about it, tied up there——"

"Oh! You've heard of it, then?"

"We saw it," said Harry. "A man stopped Mr. Monson—that Highcliffe cad's father—in his car, and took his pocket-book off him, at the end of a gun!"

"A pocket-book!" exclaimed Johnny. "Man in a raincoat?"

"How on earth do you know?" roared Bob. "Haven't you been tied up in that wood all the time?"

"Yes! Man in a raincoat with a moustache, and sticking-plaster on his chin, and gold-rimmed specs?" asked Johnny.

"Yes! How the thump——"

"Well, if the police want him, they'll have to look for a man without specs, a moustache, or any sticking-plaster, or a raincoat," said Johnny. "I saw him take the lot off. Get the boat going, and I'll tell you while you pull."

In utter amazement, the juniors pushed off.

Johnny did not feel equal to pulling an oar, but he sat and stared while his friends took the oars.

The Famous Five had intended to tow up to Wallingford when they

got going at last. But the towrope was in sections now; neither was there time for towing. They pushed off, and sat down to the oars.

While they pulled, Johnny told them what he had seen while he was tied up in the thicket.

"By gum!" said Bob. "It's the same man all right! We thought he had cut off by the river—but he dodged into the wood to get rid of his outfit!"

"Plain enough," agreed Harry. "And the description Mr. Monson's given of him will simply keep the police wide of the mark—if he was in disguise all the time!"

"I can give his real description all right," said Johnny. "I saw his face, and I'd know it again anywhere. When we get in at Wallingford, I'll go to the police station and tell them—and you fellows can do some shopping. By gum, I shall be glad when I get my supper!"

"Row, brothers, row!" said Bob.

And the four juniors bent to the oars and almost made the Water-Lily fly up the two or three miles to Wallingford.

Left!

BILLY BUNTER sat up, yawned, and grinned.

It was a gorgeous September morning.

The night had been fine and warm; the morning had dawned fine and sunny. Bunter was feeling quite pleased.

Why the pursuit the evening before had stopped so suddenly, Bunter did not know. But it had—so that was all right!

Satisfied that the beasts had given up the chase at last, Billy Bunter went back for his camping outfit, transferred it to another spot—in case of another hunt—and camped.

Having made a deep inroad into the contents of the sack, the fat Owl rolled himself in the blankets, extended his fat person on the groundsheet, slept, and snored. That he was on private property, where trespassers were liable to be prosecuted, did not worry Bunter—so long as he was not found there! And nobody turned up to bother him.

So there he was, in the bright morning, sitting up and grinning.

The hour was not early. Bunter did not turn out early in holiday-time. But he was, of course, in no hurry. He had raided that sack a good many times, but there was plenty left. And so long as the grub lasted, the fat Owl was prepared to keep up this peculiar game.

He had slept quite as comfortably in his camp as he had ever slept in the tent of the Greyfriars crew. More comfortably, in fact, as there was plenty of room—which was rather lacking in a tent with six fellows in it. Not once had his eyes opened till they opened in the morning.

Bunter shoved a fat paw into that well-stocked sack, and started on his breakfast.

He had no outfit for making tea.

But what was the matter with ginger-beer? He could not cook bacon or eggs. But ham and cold beef were all right—right as rain! There was a supply of cake. There were still some jam-tarts left. There were pounds and pounds of biscuits, and two or three pots of jam. Bunter had made a clean sweep in the Water-Lily. Forethought was not Bunter's long suit. But in matters connected with grub he could look ahead!

He breakfasted cheerfully.

This was all right. There was nobody to say "Scoffing all the jam?"—or "Shove that cake this way!"

How the Famous Five had managed about tea and supper the previous day, Bunter did not know—neither did he care! Probably they had managed somehow. It was not an important matter—to Bunter.

The fat Owl had not thought of packing any soap in that sack. Neither were there any facilities for washing in the little wood belonging to Monson Chalet. That did not worry Bunter. The amount of washing that Bunter could do without was infinite.

If the grub was all right, everything was all right! And the grub was all right. And there was lots!

Bunter gobbled, and was satisfied.

Not till he had finished gobbling—which was after a rather considerable time—did the fat junior think of taking a squint at the Water-Lily to see whether the crew had hoisted, as it were, the white flag.

Unless they made it pax, and signified the same in the manner enjoined by Bunter, he was not going back. They could jolly well hang on there till they made up their minds to it!

The jamming he had had from Bob Cherry was more than Bunter wanted. A booting or a whopping from Johnny Bull he did not want at all. He was jolly well going to keep them hanging about till they made it pax; and he did not think that he would have to wait long, either, for they would be keen to get on with the trip up the river.

It seemed quite masterly to Bunter.

And there was another important point. After all this worry and trouble, due to expecting Bunter to take his turn at towing, were they likely to worry Bunter to tow again, or would they get it into their fat heads that it was more trouble than it was worth? The latter, Bunter thought, was probable!

So it was in quite a satisfied mood that the fat Owl of the Greyfriars Remove broke camp that bright morning.

He rolled the sack in the blankets, and the blankets in the groundsheet, and shoved the whole lot out of sight in a thick bush.

Then he rolled away in the direction of the lane that led down to the towpath.

He was not going to show himself. He was not going to give those beasts a chance of collaring him! He was going to give the boat the once-over from a safe distance and ascertain whether the signal of

pax was flying. If it was, he was prepared to join up again! If not, he was going to keep doggo—and keep them jolly well waiting as long as they jolly well liked!

Grinning, the astute fat Owl blinked from the wood through his big spectacles towards the spot where the Water-Lily had been tied up by the towpath the previous day.

"Beasts!" breathed Bunter.

If the mast had been standing, he would have seen it over the towpath. They could not fly the specified signal without stepping the mast. There was neither mast nor white hanky to be seen.

"All right!" said Bunter grimly. "Wait! Wait till you're tired of hanging about, you cads! Yah!"

But as he blinked at the former mooring-place of the Water-Lily, it dawned on Bunter that it was rather odd that he could see nothing of any of the Greyfriars crew.

The boat would be under the level of the bank; but some of the crew should have been in sight, unless they were all lying down, which was rather improbable.

They must, Bunter supposed, have passed the night in the boat as they did when no camping ground was available. But they were much earlier birds than Bunter—it was highly improbable that they were still asleep after Bunter was up!

A misgiving smote the fat junior.

He crept down the lane, a little nearer to the towpath. His eyes and spectacles were fixed on the edge of the bank!

He was prepared to bolt at the sight of a head lifting into view!

But no head lifted into view.

With his misgiving sinking deeper, the fat Owl crept nearer, till he reached the towpath and could look over the bank.

Then his worst misgivings were realised.

The Water-Lily was not there!

The spot where she had tied up the day before was vacant. The river rippled in the rushes where the Greyfriars boat once had been!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He gazed at that empty space in consternation.

Never once had it occurred to his fat brain that the Water-Lily might be gone. How could it possibly go on without Bunter?

He had been prepared to keep the Greyfriars crew hanging about, wasting time, all that day, all the next day, if necessary, till they came round. They could like it, or they could lump it—that was what William George Bunter was going to do!

And instead of playing up, as it were, they had gone on in the boat and left him to carry on ashore on his own.

"Oh lor'!" gasped the fat Owl in utter dismay.

It had seemed to Bunter that he had them in a cleft stick. And they had simply walked off and left him to it!

It was a crushing blow!

Billy Bunter stood on the towpath and blinked at the sunny river. A

good many craft were in sight—none of them the Water-Lily. Not that he expected to see the Greyfriars boat. As it was gone, no doubt it had gone the previous day—probably they had camped miles up the river—perhaps past Wallingford! It was awful to think of.

Billy Bunter sat down on the towpath, and all the happy satisfaction departed from his face. They had gone on—miles and miles very likely—it was not much use for Bunter to think of following them by the towpath! They might even be on the other side of the river!

The fat Owl had laid his plans astutely! But he had planned not wisely, but too well. He had not kept those beasts hanging about! And how he was to hook on again was quite a mystery to Bunter.

Boat after boat passed him as he sat there blinking dismally at the river.

Suddenly the fat Owl's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. A man pulling up the river in a small skiff met his view.

Bunter knew that man by sight—with his foxy face and his narrow, shifty eyes!

It was Shifty Spooner, once the owner of the Water-Lily; the man who had trailed the Greyfriars crew up the Thames, attempting again and again to pinch their boat!

Bunter's fat face brightened.

He rose to his feet, waved a fat hand, and shouted:

"Hi!"

Shifty Spooner stared round, gave a start at the sight of the fat school-boy, and pulled in.

That he was still on the hunt for the Water-Lily, Bunter knew without being told. On a previous occasion, when Bunter had been made to walk because he declined to tow, he had got a lift from Mr. Spooner, pulling that gentleman's leg with an artful pretence of guiding him to the Greyfriars camp. Having got his lift, he had cheerfully left Mr. Spooner in the lurch!

That was Bunter's bright idea now—he was going to play that game again!

The beasts were somewhere up the river! All he had to do was to pull Shifty Spooner's leg again as he had pulled it before and get a lift in Shifty's boat!

Mr. Spooner sculled in to the bank, eyeing Bunter. Mr. Spooner was about the last man in the wide world to have his shifty leg pulled twice in the same way, but Bunter was happily unaware of that.

"Oh! You!" said Mr. Spooner. "Where's the rest, Fatty?"

"My friends have gone on up the river," said Bunter breezily. "If you'd like to see their camp, I'll point it out to you if you'll give me a lift."

Shifty Spooner looked at him. His look was quite expressive. Bunter had caught him like this once—twice was once too often!

"Oh!" said Mr. Spooner sarcastically. "You're a-walking it, same as you was that time down by Boveney,

and you'll take me straight to their camp if I row you up the river?"

"Yes, that's it!" assented Bunter. "Pull in for me, will you?"

It was quite a cheery prospect to Bunter to sit in Mr. Spooner's boat and let Mr. Spooner row him up the Thames, while he kept a bright look-out for the Water-Lily.

Shifty pushed in a little nearer.

"And you won't play no tricks this time and leave a bloke in the lurch?" asked Mr. Spooner disagreeably. "I'll see that you don't, you bladder o' lard! Take that there!"

Mr. Spooner lifted one of his sculls and thrust.

The blade of the scull banged on the spot where Billy Bunter had packed away an extremely substantial breakfast. It banged hard. Mr. Spooner, it seemed, was annoyed with Bunter. He put all his annoyance into that bang!

"Urrgh!" gurgled Bunter.

He sat down on the towpath with a heavy bump and an expiring gurgle.

"Goooooh! Ooooh! Goooooh!" gurgled Bunter.

Mr. Spooner grinned.

"Ketch a weasel asleep!" he remarked.

And he pushed off and sculled away up the Thames, leaving Billy Bunter sitting on the towpath, pressing both hands to the widest section of his circumference and gurgling horribly. Evidently, Mr. Spooner's leg was not to be pulled twice!

Boot for Bunter!

MR. MONSON stepped into his car at the gate of the chalet by the Thames.

Monson, Ponsonby, and Gadsby had come out to see him off in the morning, and were very careful not to let their faces reveal how pleased they were to see him off. Pon & Co. preferred the riverside chalet without any elders about.

The stout gentleman was not in the best of tempers. The episode of the previous day had ruffled him very considerably.

Mr. Monson was a busy man in the City. He did not often find time to run down to his riverside place. His visit, on this occasion, had been far from enjoyable.

It had, in fact, cost him over a hundred pounds—the contents of the pocket-book the hold-up man had taken from him.

The police had taken up the matter; but Mr. Monson had little hope of ever seeing his pocket-book or its contents again, or of having the satisfaction of seeing the hold-up man sentenced for that audacious robbery.

He had been somewhat disgruntled in the evening, and Pon & Co. had not enjoyed his company. Worse than that was the fact that his presence kept away the company they did enjoy—that of the racing man Captain Jimmy Oakshott. So they were glad enough to see Mr. Monson off to town in the morning, and glad that he was unlikely to find time to run down again in the near future!

Mr. Monson frowned as he got into his car.

Monson, perhaps, was a little concerned about his pater's loss; Pon and Gaddy were quite unconcerned, and were only waiting, as politely as they could, for him to go.

He went; and they watched the car disappear up the road, with considerable satisfaction.

"The pater's rather shirty!" remarked Monson, as he stood looking after the car.

"I noticed that!" said Ponsonby dryly; and Gadsby grinned.

"Well, it's no joke to lose more than a hundred pounds," granted Monson, "and the pater's suspicious about it, too. He thinks that that man in the raincoat was waiting for him specially—watching for his car yesterday—"

"Rot!" said Ponsonby. "Just some rascally motor-bandit hanging about lookin' for a chance on a lonely road."

"The pater doesn't think so, and I don't!" retorted Monson. "It jolly well does look as if he knew the pater was due at that time yesterday, and was on the look-out for him. It jolly well looks as if he knew that a man with money in his pockets was coming along."

"How could he?" grunted Pon.

"Only by picking up information at the house—and that's what the pater's got into his head," said Monson. "I shouldn't wonder if the police think the same, too. Everybody here knew that my father was coming, and that thief may have got the tip from somebody here—"

"One of the servants, do you mean?"

"I suppose so. Porritt drinks, I jolly well know that, and I noticed my pater eyeing him pretty sharply last night," said Monson. "He may have let something out, without meaning to, I dare say, to some acquaintance who stood him a whisky. The pater believes that that rascal knew he was coming, and knew he was in the habit of carrying a good sum of money in his pockets—and if he knew all that, he must have picked it up here. I shouldn't wonder if he got it from Porritt."

"Or perhaps Captain Oakshott may have been talking too much in some pub!" remarked Gadsby sarcastically. "The man may have got it from him."

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Ponsonby.

"Oh! My hat!" exclaimed Monson. "Think that's possible? Jimmy Oakshott knew all about the pater, of course, and if he has been chattering in some billiards-room—"

"Rubbish!" said Ponsonby. "Oakshott's not the man to gabble in a billiards-room about things that don't concern him."

"I'll bet he's got some jolly shady acquaintances!" said Gadsby. "You don't know anything about him, Pon, except that he plays a good game of billiards and knows all about the races. I told you you were a fool to ask him here."

Pon gave Gadsby a very unpleasant look. He was not at all pleased by the suggestion that his sporting

friend might have acquaintances among the motor-bandit fraternity!

"Shut up, you silly ass!" he snapped.

Gadsby shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I'm glad we never mentioned Jimmy Oakshott to the pater, and that he steered clear while my father was here," said Monson. "I fancy the pater might think the same as Gaddy, if he saw him. If he's been gabbling about our affairs in a pub, I——"

"He hasn't, you ass!" snapped Ponsonby. "Why should he?"

"Well, that footpad got the information from somewhere," said Monson. "My pater's sure of that! It would be pretty rotten if they got that man and he turned out to be an acquaintance of the man we asked here."

"Rot! Better ask Jimmy Oakshott if he knows a man with a moustache and gilt-edged goggles!" sneered Ponsonby. "Don't be an ass, Monson!"

"Oh, let it drop!" said Monson. "All the same, I'm sorry we asked the man here, after what Gaddy's suggested."

"If Gaddy talks any more rot, I'll punch his silly head!" said Ponsonby. "That footpad was simply a rogue hanging about looking for a chance, and he knew no more about your pater than about Adam. And if you're sorry we had Jimmy Oakshott here, does that mean that you're not coming to the races in his car to-day?"

"Oh, no!"

"I thought not!" sneered Ponsonby. "Come on, then—I told him I'd pick him up on the towpath when the coast was clear."

"Nice sort of man to be willing to keep out of sight when a fellow's pater is about!" said Gadsby.

"Will you shut up, Gaddy?" snarled Pon.

Gadsby shrugged his shoulders again, and shut up.

The three went through the gardens of the chalet to the wood. They followed the path through the little wood to reach a gate that opened on the towpath.

"Great gad!" ejaculated Ponsonby suddenly. "Look at that!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Monson. Gadsby chuckled.

The three Highcliffians stared at an unexpected scene. Seated under a shady tree, at a distance from the path, but visible through an opening of the trees, was a fat figure, well known to them.

"That fat ass from Greyfriars!" said Gadsby. "He wasn't in the boat with that gang yesterday. I remember he was with them when we saw them down the river last week. Is the fat idiot camping out, or what?"

Billy Bunter was sitting on blankets folded on a groundsheet as he leaned back against a tree, and at intervals—brief intervals—dipped a fat hand into a sack beside him.

After his painful interview with Mr. Spooner, and when he had recovered his breath, Bunter had rolled back to his camp in the wood. What he was going to do in his present stranded position, with the Greyfriars

boat vanished into parts unknown, Bunter did not know. But, awkward as the position was, there was still balm in Gilead, so to speak—and Bunter had rolled back to the sack of provisions like a homing pigeon. There was comfort in an early lunch! Busy with foodstuffs, the fat Owl of the Remove did not observe the three Highcliffians staring at him through the trees.

"Well, of all the neck!" said Monson. "Camping out on my pater's property. Come on, we'll jolly well soon shift him!"

"And give him something to remember us by!" said Ponsonby.

"Mind his pals ain't about before you begin!" suggested Gadsby satirically. "You've got one eye that doesn't look very pretty, Pon. It will get a lot of attention if we go to the races with Jimmy Oakshott. If I had an eye like that, I'd keep it at home."

"You'll have an eye like that pretty soon, if you don't shut up!" snarled Ponsonby.

"The other cads are gone," said Monson. "Bull was gone when Gaddy looked for him last night—they must have found him. I know their boat's gone. That fat slug seems to have stayed here on his own! We'll jolly soon send him after the others."

The three left the path, and made their way towards the tree under which Billy Bunter sat.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter, as his eyes fell on the Highcliffians.

A slice of cake, half-way to his mouth, stopped in transit! The fat Owl blinked over it at Pon & Co. in alarm.

He jumped to his feet! Billy Bunter did not need telling what to expect from Pon & Co. He grabbed up the sack and fled, shedding some of the contents of the sack as he did so.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

The fat Owl had simply no chance! Before he had covered a dozen yards, Ponsonby had reached him.

Pon's foot shot out and thudded on the tightest trousers in the Thames valley!

Billy Bunter fairly bounded.

"Yaroooh!" he roared.

The sack flew from his hand.

Monson, coming on at a run, gave it a kick, which scattered its contents far and wide.

But with Pon's boot so close behind, Bunter forgot even the sack of provender. He ran as if for his fat life.

Behind him came three grinning Highcliffians, booting him in turn. At every thud, Bunter roared and bounded.

How many kicks he captured before he got out of the wood into the lane, Bunter never knew! They seemed beyond computation. He got out at last, and charged down the lane to the towpath.

After him went Pon & Co. They were quite enjoying this! Captain Oakshott was waiting for them somewhere on the towpath; but this was too good to miss. Grinning with glee, they chased Bunter down the lane, booting often and booting hard! "Ow! Beasts! Yaroooh! High-

cliffe cads! Yoo-hoop! Oh crikey!" roared Bunter. "Stoppit! Yarooop! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fat Owl flew wildly on, and reached the towpath. He did not stop there. He turned up the towpath and flew frantically on.

A man who was lounging on the towpath, smoking a cigarette, stared at him. He had time for only a brief stare.

Bunter did not even see him before he crashed.

"Oh gad!" roared Captain Oakshott, as he went over backwards as if a cannon-shot had struck him.

"Orrggh!" gurgled Bunter, as he reeled from the shock.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Ponsonby, coming round the corner from the lane the next moment. "Jimmy Oakshott is——"

"Oooogh! Oh! Ah! Great gad! What—— Ooooh!" spluttered the captain, sprawling dizzily on his back. "What—— Ooogh!"

Bunter tore on.

Pon & Co. came to a halt, gathering round the winded captain to render first-aid.

Bunter, unpursued farther, charged on. Unaware that he was unpursued, the fat Owl did the towpath as if it were the cinder path—charging on frantically like a runaway lorry.

Bunter All Over!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Is that Bunter?"

"Or a hippopotamus escaped from the Zoo?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Five fellows in the Greyfriars boat stared at a fat figure on the towpath. Other people were staring at him also. There were plenty of people up and down the river that sunny September morning, and quite a lot of them seemed to be interested in Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. had put up for the night at an inn at Wallingford. In the morning, they were coming down the river again. The voyage up the Thames had to be halted—for two reasons.

First and foremost, was Johnny Bull's grim determination to deal with Ponsonby. In that his comrades heartily agreed. Pon had gone over the limit—so far over the limit that no member of the Famous Five thought for a moment of letting him get by with it.

The other reason was Bunter. Nobody in the Water-Lily was anxious to see William George Bunter again before next term at Greyfriars. And as the fat Owl had chosen to walk off it was not to be denied that there was a strong temptation to leave him to it. But they could not quite make up their minds to that, so Bunter was to be given a chance of joining up again. If he decided not to do so, there were going to be dry eyes in the Greyfriars crew. But he was going to have the chance.

Now, unexpectedly, they sighted him at a considerable distance up the

rive from the Monson Chalet and the wood.

Why Bunter was charging up the towpath at such a speed was rather a mystery. Looking past him, they could see no sign of pursuit. Judging by his aspect, there might have been a mad bull loose on the towpath. But no mad bull was to be seen. If Bunter had had any pursuers, they seemed to have given up the chase long ago. He charged on regardless, his hat on the back of his head, his fat face streaming with perspiration, his spectacles slipping down his podgy nose, his fat little legs going like machinery.

"What the thump's the matter with him?" asked Nugent, in wonder.

"Nobody's after him that I can see," remarked Harry Wharton. "He can't be merely following us up to Wallingford—at that pace!"

"Ha, ha! Not likely!"

"Those Highcliffe cads may have dropped on him," remarked Johnny Bull.

"Can't see anything of them!"

"Better pull in," said Harry. "Bunter will burst a boiler at this rate. Looks as if he doesn't mean to stop this side of Oxford."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Water-Lily pushed in to the bank. Bob Cherry waved his hat to the charging Owl.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he roared. "Bunter! Bunt! Bunt!"

Bunter charged on.

"Bunter!" roared all the Famous Five together, uniting their vocal efforts.

The fat Owl gave a blink towards the river.

"Oh!" he gasped at the sight of the Water-Lily and its crew. He slowed down that desperate race. "I say, you fellows, pull in, quick! I can't jump that distance! Quick! Quick!"

"What's the hurry?"

"Quick!" shrieked Bunter. "Before they get me, you beast! Quick!"

"Who?" roared Bob.

"Can't you see them, you idiot? Quick!" yelled Bunter.

The boat pushed in, and Bunter made a bound. He landed in the Water-Lily, setting it rocking, stumbled over, and measured his length.

"Ow!" he roared.

"Good!" said Bob. "Fine! Do that again, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey!" Bunter sat up, streaming with perspiration and spluttering for breath. "I say, you fellows, keep them off! I say, where's the boathook? Gimme the boathook! I'll let that cad Ponsonby have it in the waistcoat! Gimme the boathook!"

"But—"

"Will you gimme the boathook?" yelled Bunter.

"Pon's not here!" roared Bob. "There's nobody after you, you howling ass!"

"Don't be a silly idiot! They were just behind me, kicking me like anything!" gasped Bunter. "Gimme that boathook—quick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was clear that Bunter had been pursued by the Highcliffians. But it

was equally clear that he was no longer pursued, as there was no Highcliffian in sight so far as the juniors could see along the towpath. The guilty flee when no man pursueth—and the same, evidently, applied to the funky.

The Greyfriars crew pushed off from the bank.

Bunter clambered to a thwart and sat down, blinking anxiously ashore. Then he had to realise that there was no enemy within range of his spectacles.

"Oh!" he gasped. "They were just behind me, you know!"

"They may have been once!" grinned Bob. "But we've seen nothing of them—and we can see about a quarter of a mile down the towpath."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I dare say they knew they'd better chuck it!" said Bunter. "I fancy they knew what they'd get if they did catch up with me. I wasn't running away from those Highcliffe cads, you fellows."

"Appearances are deceptive then," remarked Bob. "Did you fellows think that Bunter was running away from somebody?"

"Sort of!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it seems that he was only doing a morning sprint, after all," said Bob. "Sorry we interrupted, Bunter! Like to step ashore and carry on with that sprint?"

"Beast! I—I was coming up the river to look for you," said Bunter. "I was hurrying a bit—"

"You were," agreed Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you see, I was rather in a hurry because I've seen that man Spooner, and he's after this boat again," said Bunter. "You fellows haven't treated me well—but I was going to give you the tip."

"Spooner!" exclaimed Harry. "Where is he now?"

"He went on up the river—more than two hours ago—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "If that's right, he must have passed Wallingford before we started back—and he's missed us. The dear man's welcome to search the river above Wallingford while we're below. I wish him joy of it!"

The Famous Five chuckled. It was rather amusing to think of Shifty Spooner hunting for the Water-Lily in the upper reaches of the Thames, while they were pulling back below Wallingford.

Billy Bunter mopped a perspiring fat face. He fanned himself with his straw hat. Bunter had had the run of his life, and he was greatly relieved

(Continued on next page.)



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at finding himself on board the Water-Lily again.

Johnny Bull was giving him rather a fixed look. There was a new tow-rope in the boat now, and Johnny was considering whether to give Bunter the benefit of it.

But Bunter, as he mopped his fat face and recovered his breath, grinned.

He realised that he had not, after all, been stranded and left. The Water-Lily had come back for him. The beasts had only been gammoning. They jolly well knew that they could not do without him—and Bunter was jolly well aware of it now.

"I say, you fellows, I jolly well knew you'd come back for me!" he said.

"Oh, you jolly well knew that, did you?" grunted Johnny.

"He, he, he! If you fancy I thought you'd gone for good, you're jolly well mistaken," said Bunter disdainfully. "And I can tell you that if you want me to keep on with this trip I shall expect you to be decent. You shoved a jar of jam over me yesterday, Bob Cherry."

"Guilty, my lord!" admitted Bob. "Well, if anything of that kind happens again I step ashore and I don't come back—see!" said Bunter grimly.

"Mean that?" asked Bob.

"Every word!" declared Bunter.

"Get a jar of jam out of the locker, Franky!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And that's not all," said Bunter. "I've had a lot of cheek from Bull. I don't want any more. There was a lot of trouble yesterday about towing. Well, if I'm keeping on with this party it's got to be understood from the start that I don't do any towing!"

The Famous Five looked at Bunter. Four of them grinned. Johnny Bull's face was growing grimmer and grimmer.

This was, of course, Bunter all over!

They had come back for him. He was not aware that they had any other reason for coming back. They had come back for him, William George Bunter—after pretending to clear off and leave him behind. That meant one thing, and one thing only, to Bunter—he was wanted! If he was wanted, Bunter was the man to make his value understood. He was the man to show them who was who and what was what!

"And that's that, see?" wound up Bunter.

"That's that, is it?" asked Bob.

"Yes. No more rot—no more silly ragging—no more trying to pack all the work on me!" said Bunter firmly. "I'm not keen on this trip. I'd just as soon join Smithy in London, or old Mauly down in Hampshire. Still, I'm willing to stick to you fellows. But if I do, you understand the conditions—and I don't want any more rot—no rot at all!"

"Now, we know where we stand!"

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grinned Bob. "If we want Bunter, you men—if we pine for him and feel that life ain't worth living without him—we know what we've got to do."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I hope I've made it plain," said Bunter. "And now, why don't you get the boat round? No need to go any farther down the river, now I'm on board again. Get it round and look for a place to lunch. I'm getting ready for lunch."

Johnny Bull breathed hard and deep.

"Pull in to the bank, you fellows," he said. "We're going to tow down to the chalet."

"O.K.!" grinned Bob.

The boat pushed in.

Johnny Bull stood up, with the new towline in his hand, and fixed his grim eyes on Bunter.

"Step out!" he said.

"Eh? Wharrer you mean?" demanded Bunter.

"You're going to tow."

"You heard what I said!" roared Bunter. "You say tow again, and I step out of this boat and chuck the lot of you!"

"You step out, anyhow! I'm going to boot you till you do!"

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter bounded out.

"Take that line!" Johnny tossed him the end of the towrope. "We're going down to Monson's place—now tow!"

"Shan't!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, all right! Push off!" said Johnny.

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter, standing on the towpath, glared at the boat's crew.

Bob Cherry planted his oar against the bank to push off. The towrope trailed at Bunter's feet. Slowly, sadly, but surely, it dawned upon the Owl's fat brain that he had made some sort of a miscalculation!

The boat was going! He was left on the bank. The towrope was whisking away at his feet!

He clutched.

"I—I say, you fellows——" gasped Bunter.

"Good-bye!"

"Beasts! I mean, I say, old chaps, you take it a bit easy, after all that pulling! You must be tired, you know! Leave it to me!"

"Let go that rope!"

"Eh? I can't let go the rope when I'm going to tow, Bull! Don't be an ass, old chap! The fact is, a spot of exercise is just what I want! Leave it to me, old fellows! I'll tow you with pleasure, you beasts—I mean, you dear old fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bunter—whether with pleasure or not—towed!

Unexpected!

"THAT gang again!" ejaculated Monson.

"Oh!" exclaimed Ponsonby, with a scowl on his face.

"They've come back!" remarked Gadsby.

It was rather late in the evening. Pon & Co. had had their day out with Jimmy Oakshott in his car and returned to the chalet in time for dinner. After dinner they left the captain smoking a cigar in the veranda of the chalet, while they strolled through the wood down to the river.

Three elegant youths, with light coats thrown on over their elegant evening clothes, sauntered down the towpath from the gate in the fence, smoking cigarettes and discussing the rorty day they had had and the sums they would have made had their selected gees come in first instead of tenth or eleventh.

The sight of a boat tied up by the towpath near the end of the little lane through the wood drew their attention, and at the first glance they recognised the Greyfriars Water-Lily.

They stared at it.

The Greyfriars boat had gone on the night before, and it had not occurred to Pon & Co. that they would see it anywhere near the Monson Chalet again. But there it was, tied up, apparently for the night.

The Greyfriars crew were not camping ashore, as was their custom when a camp was available. No camp was available on the Monson property. They were going to camp in the boat for the night.

"That crew!" said Ponsonby between his teeth. "What the dooce have they turned up here again for?"

"Want to see you, perhaps!" grinned Gadsby. "Don't you fancy that fellow Bull feels a bit shirty about what you did?"

Pon rubbed his darkened eye. Only too painfully was Pon aware how that darkened eye detracted from the elegance of his appearance. He was very far from regretting the way he had dealt with the fellow who had darkened that eye; indeed, every time he saw it in the glass, or felt a twinge in it, he wished that he had given Johnny Bull a little more!

Still, his dealing with Johnny had been uncommonly drastic, and he realised that it was very probable that Johnny was on the trail of vengeance. In fact, he could see no other reason why the Greyfriars crew had returned to the spot.

"You'd better send out the servants to clear that crew off, Dick!" he said to Monson.

Monson shook his head.

"They can't be cleared off," he answered. "Anybody can tie up to the towpath. If they land on my father's property, I'll have them turned off fast enough! Nobody can stop them from sticking where they are."

"There's such a thing as law in the land!" remarked Gadsby.

"Porritt would play up for a tip, and Captain Oakshott would lend a hand," said Ponsonby. "One of the ruffians lashed him in the face with a potato yesterday—and that fat



Raising his head, the bound schoolboy watched the man removing his disguise!

fool Bunter floored him this morning—he would be glad to use a walking-stick on that crew—”

“Um!” said Monson doubtfully.

“Don’t be a goat, Pon!” said Gadsby. “There’s five of them, and they’d scrap—and if we used sticks, they’ve got oars and boathooks. I’m not looking for a pitched battle, if you are—and I fancy Jimmy Oakshott would think twice, too! The Thames doesn’t belong to you, does it?”

Ponsonby scowled and did not answer.

He would gladly have used any means that came to hand to put paid to the Greyfriars party. But a pitched battle was rather a big order.

The three had come to a halt and were looking at the boat from a little distance. They were not keen to get too near it.

Five fellows in the boat seemed to be making preparations in the gathering dusk for turning in. One fellow sat and watched through a big pair of spectacles. The Greyfriars crew kept early hours—their evening was ending when Pon & Co.’s was about to begin!

After that stroll Pon & Co. were going in for billiards and banker up to midnight. Mr. Monson being safely off the scene, Pon & Co. were going to make the fur fly in their usual style.

“Hallo, hallo, hallo!” It was a sudden exclamation from the boat as the three fellows on the bank were sighted. “Here they are!”

Johnny Bull stared round.

“That cad!” he said, and he leaped ashore

“Better trot, I think!” grinned Gadsby. “Or do you want to see that chap, Pon?”

Ponsonby gave him an evil look, turned, and walked quickly back up the bank to get to the gate in the fence that gave access to the wood.

Johnny Bull came up the towpath after him at a rush.

Four other fellows leaped ashore in a hurry and cut after Johnny.

Billy Bunter was left blinking after them from the boat.

Pon gave a hasty glance back and broke into a run. His idea of a pitched battle with the Greyfriars crew seemed to have vanished from his mind. The sight of Johnny Bull’s grim face as he came cutting up the towpath was enough for Pon. One black eye was all he wanted. He ran.

“You rotten funk!” roared Johnny. “Stop! I’ve come back to thrash you, you rotten worm! Stop!”

Ponsonby tore on, Monson and Gadsby keeping pace. Unaware that the Greyfriars crew had returned, they had very nearly walked into the hands that were so anxious to receive them. Now, like the guests in “Macbeth,” they stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once. They fairly flew!

They reached the gate, rushed in, and banged the gate after them, with Johnny Bull hardly two yards behind.

“Lock the gate!” panted Pon. Monson, unheeding, tore on up the

path under the trees, Gadsby at his heels.

Ponsonby turned back, a desperate gleam in his eyes. He had a walking-stick in his hand, and he gripped it hard as he turned back to the gate. Johnny was at the gate, and he knew that he would be grabbed from behind before he had covered half a dozen yards.

Johnny’s hand was shoving the gate open when Pon’s hand went up, the stick in it, and he brought down with a crash.

Only sheer desperation could have caused even Pon to deal such a blow. It crashed on Johnny’s straw hat, crunching it, and half-stunning the Greyfriars junior. Johnny gave a gasp, and stumbled over on the towpath.

Pon turned and ran after his friends.

In a Hornets’ Nest!

“JOHNNY!” panted Harry Wharton.

“Johnny, old man!” gasped Nugent.

Johnny Bull was sprawling dizzily. His hat, smashed by the blow, rolled in the grass. He lay with his hand to his head, dazed and dizzy.

Wharton and Nugent and Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh ran to him at once. They helped him to sit up, and held him. He could not speak. He could only lean on them, his hand to his head, mumbling.

Bob Cherry was the only one who did not stop.

The sight of his chum falling
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under that savage blow was too much for Bob. He put his hand on the gate, vaulted over it, and tore up the path through the wood after Ponsonby. Seldom or never did Bob let his temper rip. But now his eyes were like blue flame as he rushed after the cad of Highcliffe.

Three figures were running ahead. Bob did not care at the moment whether they were three or thirty-three! He ran as he had never run on the cinder path—only anxious to get hold of Ponsonby and give him what he deserved for that brutal blow.

Ahead of him, the three Highcliffians cut out of the wood into the chalet garden. There they slowed down for breath.

Then, as Monson looked back, he gave an alarmed howl.

"Here they come!"

Pon & Co. rushed on again to the house.

"Stop, you rotten funks!" bawled Bob. "Stop, Pon, you worm! I'm going to smash you, you cur! Stop, you rat!"

"Oh gad!" gasped Monson. "Cut on!"

"Oakshott!" yelled Pon. "Jimmy Oakshott!"

In the veranda at the side of the chalet, Captain Oakshott was standing, staring at the three as they came running, his cigar in his mouth and astonishment in his face.

"What the dooce—" he called out.

"Lend a hand here, will you?" yelled Pon.

"But what—"

"Will you come down, confound you?" shrieked Pon.

He yelled as he ran; but pounding footsteps were close behind him. There was a grab at his shoulders. Bob Cherry, in the excitement of the moment, was quite heedless of the

fact that he was invading the private garden of the chalet. He was only thinking of getting hold of Ponsonby—and now he had got hold of him!

"Now, you rotter—" he panted.

"Oh gad!" ejaculated the racing man in the veranda.

He jumped down and ran to the spot.

Bob, as he grasped Ponsonby, was grasped in his turn. Captain Oakshott dragged him by sheer force off the dandy of Highcliffe.

Pon staggered away, panting. Not till that moment did he realize that only one pursuer was after him. He had fancied the whole Greyfriars party whooping in pursuit. He came to a breathless halt.

"Let go, will you?" roared Bob, struggling in the racing man's grip.

"Let me get at that cur! Mind your own business, will you?"

"Hold him, Jimmy!" panted Pon.

"I've got him!" grinned Jimmy.

"Kick him out, Oakshott!" gasped Monson.

"Hold him!" repeated Pon. "I'll give the hooligan a lesson before he's kicked out! By gum, I'll make you sorry you barged in here, you ruffian! Stick him over on those steps, Jimmy!"

"Any old thing!" said Jimmy.

He jammed Bob down on the veranda steps.

Bob struggled fiercely. He had forgotten all about Pon's sporting friend when he pursued the dandy of Highcliffe into the enemy's country. The champion fighting-man of the Greyfriars Remove would not have hesitated to tackle Pon & Co. all at once. But Captain Oakshott was a different proposition. In the racing man's sinewy hands, he was jammed down on the steps, and Pon swung up the walking-stick. It came down on Bob's flannel trousers with a terrific swipe.

"Oh!" roared Bob.

"Look here, stop that, Pon!" exclaimed Gadsby.

"Pon, old man—" gasped Monson.

Ponsonby did not heed them. Up went the stick again, and down it came with another swipe!

Bob Cherry made a terrific effort. He twisted round in the captain's grip and drove his clenched fist full in the racing man's hard-featured face.

"Oh gad!" gasped Jimmy Oakshott.

His grasp relaxed under that jolt, and Bob tore himself away. He leaped clear of the captain.

Jimmy Oakshott stood for a moment, his hand to his nose, the red trickling through his fingers. Then, with a roar of rage, he rushed at Bob and grasped him.

Bob was strong, and he was sturdy, but he crumpled up in the enraged man's grip.

"Give me that stick, Ponsonby!" shouted the captain.

He grabbed the stick from Ponsonby. Grasping Bob in his left hand, he laid on the stick with his right.

Swipe, swipe, swipe! rang on flannel bags—a poor defence against such hefty swipes.

Pon looked on, grinning. Monson looked on, frowning. Gadsby looked on with a contemptuous sneer on his face.

Jimmy Oakshott called himself a captain—regiment unknown! But at that moment, in his savage temper, he revealed himself for what he really was—a racing rough. That jolt on the nose had caused the captain to drop his superficial affectation of gentility. He laid on swipe after swipe with savage, venomous force.

Gadsby ran forward.

"Stop that!" he shouted; and as the captain did not heed, he grasped the ruffian's arm and dragged the stick down.

"Get out of it, you!" snarled Oakshott.

"Leave him alone, Gaddy, you fool!" snapped Pon.

"I tell you he's going to stop!" shouted Gadsby. "You touch that chap again, Jimmy Oakshott, and I'll hack your shins, you brute!"

"Dash it all, he's had enough!" muttered Monson. "For goodness' sake, let him clear! All the servants are staring from the windows!"

"Give him some more, Jimmy!" said Ponsonby.

"Look here, shut up, Pon!" snapped Monson. "You're not boss here, though you seem to fancy you are! Let that fellow go, Jimmy Oakshott!"

The racing man was evidently disposed to heed Ponsonby, not the other two. But he had to heed Monson, and Gadsby was hanging on his arm. He released Bob Cherry.

"Get out, you young rascal!" he snarled. "Let me catch you here again, and I'll give you a few more!"

"You rotten cowardly brute!" panted Bob.

"Get out, for goodness' sake!" said Gadsby. "You shouldn't have come in here, Cherry, and you jolly

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well know it! Get out, and don't be a fool!"

Bob did not answer, but he got out. He was aching all over from that terrific swiping, and the racing man was barely restrained from beginning on him again. He had, in fact, recklessly put his head into a hornets' nest, and there were too many hornets for him to deal with! He stumbled and limped away by the path through the wood to the river.

Strategic!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. lifted Johnny Bull into the boat.

They had helped him along the bank, and now they got him into the Water-Lily.

Johnny was in a dizzy state, hardly able to help himself for the time.

Frank Nugent held him steady as he sat, with his hand to his bruised head. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh dipped a sponge in cold water to bathe the bruise. That crack of the head had hurt Johnny and left a bruise under his hair. But for his straw hat, which had been smashed, it would have hurt him a good deal more.

The three juniors, in their anxiety for Johnny Bull, had hardly noticed that Bob had rushed on into the wood. But now Harry Wharton looked back up the bank rather anxiously, and, as Bob was not in sight, ran up the towpath to the gate again.

He was not alarmed for Bob, even if he was tackling the three High-cliffians all at once. Still, if that was what was happening, he was eager to go to his help, and he left Nugent and Hurree Singh to look after Johnny and ran hard back to the gate in the fence.

But it opened as he reached it, and Bob came through.

Bob was stumbling a little as he came, and his face was white.

"What——" began Harry. At a glance he could see that Bob had been through it severely. "You've been scrapping?"

Bob gritted his teeth.

"That racecourse tough, Oakshott," he muttered. "Those cads couldn't have hurt me. But that ruffian——"

He broke off, and tramped down the towpath in silence. His feelings were almost too deep for words.

It was not a happy party that gathered in the Water-Lily in the thickening dusk. Johnny Bull had a big bruise on his head; Bob was aching from head to foot. Neither of them was feeling at the moment equal to more trouble. But both of them were determined that there was more trouble to come. Ponsonby and his racing pal were going to be called to account—that was settled without discussion.

It was nearly dark when a figure was seen coming along the towpath from the gate.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh picked up the boathook with a grim expression on his dusky face.

But as the man drew nearer, the

juniors who had visited the chalet the previous day recognised Porritt.

He came to the edge of the bank, peering at the boat, and they caught a whiff of spirits as he leaned over to look at the Water-Lily.

"Well, what do you want?" rapped Harry Wharton. "If you're looking for trouble, there's plenty ready."

Porritt, probably, could see that for himself. He gave rather an uneasy glance at the boathook in Hurree Singh's dusky hands. His manner was quite civil as he replied:

"Not at all, sir. I merely came to see if your boat was still here. May I suggest that you should find some other spot to tie up?"

"We shall please ourselves about that," said Nugent curtly.

Porritt coughed.

"Oh, certainly, sir; but it might be advisable to avoid more disputes. The towpath, of course, does not belong to my master's estate, but surely it is injudicious to choose a spot so close at hand when you have the whole river to choose from."

"That's our business!"

"Oh, quite, sir," said Porritt; "but——"

"But Ponsonby wants to know whether it's safe to get outside the house, or whether he's got to skulk indoors? Is that it?" asked Bob Cherry. "Well, you can tell him that he's going to be thrashed for acting like the rotten hooligan he is! And you can tell that racing black-guard, Oakshott, that he's got it coming, too. Is that all you want to know?"

Porritt grinned for a moment.

"I should advise you to seek some other anchorage," he said. "It may save you from an unpleasant handling, perhaps. I hope you will think it over and decide to go. That is all, sir."

"Enough, too," said Bob. "You can cut!"

Porritt disappeared up the bank.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter when he was gone. "I say, you'd better let the matter drop, and clear! That's my advice!"

"Keep it to yourself, you fat funky frog!"

"Beast! I can jolly well tell you that I don't want that lot pitching into us!" exclaimed the fat Owl indignantly. "Nice to have them dropping in and mopping us up in the middle of the night!"

"I wish they'd try it on!" grunted Bob.

"Well, I don't," said Bunter. "You can whop Ponsonby next term, when we're back at Greyfriars! And I jolly well think——"

"Shut up!"

"Shan't! I jolly well think——"

"Puncture him with that boathook, Inky, if he doesn't shut up!"

Bunter, with an indignant snort, shut up.

Harry Wharton sat silent for a minute or two with a thoughtful face.

Then he spoke quietly:

"I think we'll clear, all the same, you fellows."

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Bob hotly. "That boozey butler has been sent down to frighten us off, and if

we go they'll think we've been scared away."

"Exactly," said Harry. "And if they think we've been scared away they won't think that we shall turn up again to-morrow."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"The more they think we've been scared away, the better," said the captain of the Remove. "We can't get at Pon so long as he skulks indoors—and you can bet that he won't show a nose while we're around. Let him think we're frightened away as much as he likes—till he sees us again."

"Jolly old strategist," said Bob.

"We'll be frightened off—but only as far as a quarter of a mile up the river," said Harry. "And next time Pon sends somebody to spy on us he will find we're gone, and can take the good news back to Pon. To-morrow we can leave the boat up the river, and walk back by the towpath."

"Right!" agreed Bob.

And the painter was untied, and the Greyfriars crew pulled away up the Thames to a new anchorage a quarter of a mile or so above the Monson Chalet, where they tied up for the night.

And when, in the sunny morning, Porritt came down to the river again, he grinned at the empty space where the Water-Lily had been, and then went back to the chalet to report all clear.

Brought to Book!

"**T**HANK goodness they went!" said Monson.

Ponsonby sneered, and shrugged his shoulders.

"We'd have made it pretty hot for them if they hadn't," he said. "The rowdy cads had enough, and a little over, I think."

"Or perhaps they gave up the idea of ever having the pleasure of meeting you, Pon, if they waited for a month of Sundays," suggested Gadsby.

"You're asking for a thick ear Gaddy!"

"Keep it for Bull," said Gadsby. "I don't believe you've seen the last of him. If he doesn't make you sit up for leaving him tied up like a turkey the other day, he's a howling funk—and you know whether he is or not."

"They're gone," sneered Pon.

It was late in the morning. A boat was tied up near where the Water-Lily had been tied the day before. Pon & Co. were going out on the river with their sporting friend, Captain Oakshott, but it was quite certain that that trip on the Thames would never have been mooted had the Greyfriars crew been on the spot.

Pon had no doubt that the happenings of the previous evening, and the prospect of more to come, had scared away the crew of the Water-Lily. Nevertheless, he had been extremely relieved to hear from Porritt that they had gone. So long as they were on the spot, Pon preferred to stay within the walls of the chalet; and he was not spending a holiday up the

river to stay indoors if he could help it.

Anyhow, the Greyfriars boat had cleared off, and he had no doubt that it was miles up the river by that time, and that he would see no more of its crew.

The three Highcliffians had come out at the gate in the fence by the towpath, and Pon's first glance had been directed at the former anchorage of the Water-Lily. His sneers and his shrugs did not disguise from his friends the fact that he was relieved to see the last of it, or the other fact that he would not have ventured out but for Porritt's good news.

"I wonder," said Gadsby, glancing up and down the river.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" snapped Ponsonby irritably.

At the same time, he glanced over the shining river with a searching eye. He was sure that the Greyfriars crew had gone on their way, and that they were done with. Still, he scanned all the craft that were in sight, going up or down. None of them, however, was the Greyfriars Water-Lily.

"They're gone," said Monson. "We know they're doing the Thames, and I'm blessed if I know why they hung about here so long as they did. Anyhow, they're gone now, and I dare say they're past Benson Lock long ago."

"Jimmy will be with us if they happened to show up," said Ponsonby. "But they've been frightened off, and you know it as well as I do, Gaddy."

The three were waiting for Captain Oakshott, who had not yet come down from the chalet. It did not occur to any of the three that eyes were fixed on them at that very moment.

Gadsby doubted whether the Greyfriars crew were done with for good. But he did not suspect that the Greyfriars crew, at that very moment, were within ten yards of the spot.

But they were, though they were out of sight in the wood by the river. And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, sitting on the branch of a tree that overtopped the fence, had an eye on the Highcliffians and a grin on his dusky face.

It was a sound of rustling and brushing, as of fellows clambering over a fence, that apprised the Highcliffians that they were not alone on the spot.

Ponsonby glanced round.

Then he jumped.

From the fence that enclosed the wood by the river, Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry dropped. Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh dropped a moment later.

"Oh gad!" gasped Monson.

Ponsonby's eyes fairly popped at the Famous Five.

The Greyfriars boat was not there—it was nowhere to be seen on the river. But the Greyfriars crew were there! And as they dropped from the fence they separated—two on one side, three on the other, cutting off escape in either direction.

Ponsonby gave them one look, and made a single bound into his boat.

He did not wait for his friends—he grabbed at the painter!

But he had no time to deal with the painter.

Johnny Bull was in the boat only a second after Pon! And Pon, grasped in strong hands, was pitched headlong out again, to sprawl on the towpath.

And as he sprawled there, panting, Johnny coolly unhooked the painter; and, as he jumped back to the bank, the boat floated out into the river! That hope of escape was cut off for the enemy.

Ponsonby staggered to his feet.

Monson and Gadsby drew together, with very uneasy looks. They were fairly in the hands of the enemy now; and they realised, too late, that they had been waited for, and that they had walked into an ambush.

"You rotters!" breathed Pon. "You—"

"Better take off your jacket!" said Johnny Bull grimly. "You've got it coming! We're not going to handle you three to one, as you did me—man to man is fair play! Ready!"

Pon did not seem ready.

"You haven't got a stick in your paw now!" said Johnny sarcastically. "If you had, it wouldn't help you much! Ready?"

"Look here—" began Monson.

"Are you fellows joining in this?" asked Harry Wharton politely. "We're here for Pon—you know what he did, as you helped him. Never mind that—you can steer clear if you like, or if you choose you can pick your men. The others will stand round and see fair play!"

"The fair-playfulness will be terrific!" assured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The whopfulness will also be great!"

"Thanks!" drawled Gadsby. "You can leave me out! Pon's welcome to all the trouble he chooses to dig up, so far as I'm concerned. If you're going to give him a fair fight, I've got nothing to say about it."

"If it's man to man, I don't see why I should chip in!" said Monson. "Pon can stand up for himself, if it's man to man."

Pon breathed hard.

His friends could not have helped him, if they had wanted to. Pon had only one hope of eluding what he had asked for. Captain Oakshott was coming, and at any moment he might emerge from the gate. Pon's game was to gain time till the racing man appeared on the scene.

"Ready?" repeated Johnny Bull.

"Oh, all right!" said Ponsonby. "I'll thrash you if you like, you Greyfriars cad! Wait till I get my jacket off!"

Gadsby winked at Monson. He was well aware of what Ponsonby expected, and that he counted on aid from the racing man when he arrived.

Pon began to remove his jacket. It came off very slowly—perhaps on account of its excellent fit.

Johnny Bull watched him rather like an impatient bulldog. He was eager to get going.

But his eagerness was far from shared by the dandy of Highcliffe, and that elegant jacket came off very slowly indeed.

Enjoy a Laugh at the Expense of—

The GREAT GRUNDY!

Martin Clifford's Great Yarn is No. 383 of the SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY

4d



George Alfred Grundy, the fool of the school, has always been a source of great amusement at St. Jim's, but never was he so funny as in this sparkling long story. His antics are enough to make a cat smile! Treat yourself to this grand number and have a good laugh at the great Grundy's expense!

Pon hung it on the fence; and, as he did so, he caught the sound of approaching footsteps, coming down the path through the wood to the gate! The racing man was coming—in a few moments more he would be on the towpath!

"How long are you going to keep me waiting, Ponsonby?" asked Johnny Bull, in a deep growl.

"In a hurry to be thrashed!" sneered Ponsonby.

"I'm waiting!"

Ponsonby turned back his cuffs—slowly.

Bob Cherry uttered an ejaculation as the gate in the fence was pulled open.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that Pon's sporting pal?"

"All the better if it is!" said Harry Wharton. "We've got to settle with that rotter, too!"

"You bet!" said Bob, with a glint in his eyes.

Captain Oakshott came out on the towpath. He stared at the group of juniors, and his brows knitted.

"That gang again!" he grunted.

"Yes, this gang again," said Bob Cherry. "And now you're here, you rotten rascal, you're going to get a spot of what you gave me yesterday!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Johnny Bull.

Johnny's eyes had been on Ponsonby. Now they were fixed on the captain, almost starting from his head with astonishment.

His friends looked at him. The Highcliffians stared at him. His amazed face took them all by surprise. Johnny had not been with his friends when they had encountered the captain, and, so far as any of the party knew, Johnny had never seen him before! But Johnny had!

"That man!" gasped Johnny.

"You've not seen Captain Oakshott before, have you?" asked Harry. "What—"

"Captain Oakshott! Is that Pon's sporting pal that you've mentioned?" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Yes. What—"

"Oh, my hat! That's the man!" roared Johnny.

"Eh?"

"The man I saw when I was tied up in the wood—taking off his specs and moustache and sticking-plaster!" roared Johnny. "I'd know him again anywhere!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"That's the man who robbed Monson's father, the man in the raincoat!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Collar him!" shouted Johnny. "That's the footpad—collar him!"

And, forgetting Pon, who stood looking quite dazed at this sudden revelation, Johnny Bull rushed at the captain, and his friends, amazed as they were, rushed after him; and Captain Oakshott, mixed up with the Famous Five in a desperate struggle, rolled on the towpath.

Getting the Hold-Up Man!

CAPTAIN OAKSHOTT—otherwise the man in the raincoat—struggled frantically.

He had no chance, with five fellows grabbing and grasping him, and he

went down on the towpath with a crash, dragged down before he could think of flight, or anything else.

Johnny Bull's recognition of him was a dumbfounding surprise to the hold-up man! He had never even seen Johnny Bull before; and for a fellow he had never seen to recognise him as the footpad and denounce him, was a staggering and overwhelming shock.

He could not begin to understand how Johnny Bull knew; but he realised that his liberty was at stake, and he fought like a wildcat.

Monson and Gadaby stood staring on, as if bemused. Ponsonby, equally astounded, was the first to make a movement.

"Lend him a hand, you fellows!" he panted. "Come on!"

Gadsby grasped him by the arm.

"You fool!" he exclaimed shrilly. "Keep clear! You heard what that fellow said—"

"Lies!" snarled Ponsonby. "If it was true, how could he know?"

"Don't be a mad idiot! Do you want to go to prison as his accomplice?" hissed Gadsby. "I don't know how he knows—but he does know! Are you going to help the thief who robbed Monson's father?"

"It can't be true!"

"It can't!" gasped Monson, his face white. "Good gad, if Jimmy Oakshott's the man, what will the pater say? You brought him here, Pon, and—"

"Pon all over!" said Gadsby bitterly. "He picks up a racing rotter, and he turns out to be a hold-up man! That's how he knew all about Monson's pater—he got it from us!"

"Oh!" gasped Ponsonby.

He did not think of interfering further. It was borne in upon his mind that it was true—and it was borne in upon his mind, too, the position he had placed himself in by bringing such a character to Mr. Monson's house.

"They've got him all right!" said Gadsby. "I'd jolly well help, if they wanted help!"

But the Famous Five did not need help. They had the desperate man down, and they kept him down.

Captain Oakshott was making desperate efforts to get at his hip-pocket.

The juniors who had seen the man in the raincoat hold up Mr. Monson's car knew what he had in that hip-pocket, and they were not likely to let him get at it. In that moment of desperation the ruffian would have used his automatic without scruple. With that deadly weapon in his hand, the odds against him would not have counted for much.

But the juniors did not give him a chance. Bob Cherry had hold of his wrist, and he twisted it without mercy, keeping it away from the dangerous weapon the ruffian was seeking to grasp.

Johnny Bull got a knee on the rascal's waistcoat. Harry Wharton had his other wrist—Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had a strong grasp on his collar—Nugent had him round the neck.

Savagely, desperately as he

resisted, the hold-up man had no chance, and his strength was spent in futile efforts.

Then, as his mad efforts weakened, Bob and Harry Wharton dragged his wrists together, and Nugent jerked off the man's necktie to secure them.

Then Johnny Bull twisted a handkerchief and knotted that also round the captain's wrists.

The rascal was helpless now.

The juniors, panting from the struggle, rose, leaving him lying in the grass, his hands bound, gurgling spasmodically for breath.

Johnny Bull, as he rose, grabbed something from the hip-pocket the rascal had been trying to reach. He held it up. It was an automatic pistol—the same, undoubtedly, that had been pressed to Mr. Monson's ribs a couple of days ago.

"That's safer in our hands," remarked Johnny.

"Oh gad!" gasped Monson. The sight of the automatic settled all doubt if there had been any doubt. "Look at that, Pon!"

But there was no answer from Pon.

Pon, taking advantage of the fact that the Famous Five were too busy to heed him, had cut across to the gate and started through the wood at a run. Pon was off the scene—and getting farther off as fast as his legs could go.

"That tears it!" said Gadsby. "He's the man! What the thump are you going to say to your pater, Monson?"

"I—I don't know! It was Pon brought the brute here. It's all Pon's fault," muttered Monson.

Harry Wharton, still breathless, looked round at them. He noticed that Ponsonby was gone—but he was not bothering about Pon now.

"Monson," he called out, "this is the man who robbed your father the day before yesterday. We're going to hand him over to the police!"

"How the dooce did you know?" asked Gadsby.

"Johnny Bull saw him when he was tied up in the wood—he got out of sight there to take off his disguise," answered Harry. "We went to the police station at Wallingford the same night to give the information—but we never dreamed—"

"Never dreamed that you had a jolly old hold-up man as a guest, Monson," grinned Bob Cherry.

Monson shivered.

"I can identify him all right," said Johnny Bull grimly. "I'd swear to him anywhere. I dare say he's got your father's banknotes in his pockets now—along with his automatic. We've got him all right!"

The captain sat up, panting.

"It's false," he muttered thickly. "I— Let me go at once! I—"

"False, is it?" said Johnny. "Well, if it's false, you've only got to tell the police so—and tell them at the same time what you carry an automatic for! I'm sure they'd like to know."

"I suppose we can use the telephone at your house, Monson—in the circumstances?" asked Harry Wharton politely. "We can't walk this sports—"

man two or three miles—the police will have to call for him.”

Monson nodded without speaking. He was overwhelmed with dismay.

Pon had landed his friends in a good many unsavoury scrapes at various times, but never anything quite so bad as this.

Monson fairly shivered at the prospect of his next interview with his father.

“Bring him along!” said Bob.

“That cad Pon’s gone!” grunted Johnny Bull.

“Never mind, Pon—he will keep,” said Bob. “We’ve got to take care of this bird—he’s too valuable to lose.”

Jimmy Oakshott attempted another struggle as he was jerked to his feet. But, with his hands securely bound, it was not much use to resist. The Famous Five walked him in at the gate, keeping round him, and walked him through the wood and through the garden, and up to the chalet, Monson and Gadsby following.

Porritt almost fell down when he opened the door to a loud knock.

“What—” gasped Porritt. “What—”

“Hold-up man!” explained Bob affably. “Man who stopped your governor’s car the other day and pinched his pocket-book! We catch hold-up men in our spare time, Porritt!”

Porritt blinked at Monson, who nodded.

The Famous Five marched the rascal in, an elegant figure disappearing quickly up the staircase as they entered. Pon did not seem to want company.

Four of the Co. sat round Captain Oakshott, who looked at them with the expression of a captured tiger, while Harry Wharton used the telephone. And the five of them sat round him till a police inspector and a constable arrived, and he passed into official hands.

Monson's Request!

“I SAY, you fellows!”

“Missed us, old fat man?”

“Keeping a fellow hanging about here all day!” exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly. “I can jolly well tell you that if there hadn’t been plenty of grub I should jolly well have cleared off!”

“Our mistake!” said Bob Cherry. “We shouldn’t have done all that shopping at Wallingford!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

It was late in the afternoon when the Famous Five came back to the Water-Lily.

Billy Bunter, naturally, was indignant; but his fat, shiny, and sticky look hinted that he had found consolation for solitude. The Famous Five were likely to have some more shopping to do in Wallingford.

“What have you been up to?” demanded Bunter.

“Snaffing hold-up men.”

“You silly ass!” howled Bunter.

“At least, one hold-up man,” said Harry Wharton, laughing. “Pon’s sporting pal was the hold-up man, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,648.

Bunter, and they’ve found nearly all Mr. Monson’s money in his pockets.”

“Blow Mr. Monson!” answered Bunter. “Did you wallop that cad Ponsonby?”

“No; he went while the going was good.”

“Just like you silly owls,” said Bunter. “He wouldn’t have got away if I’d been there!”

“We’ll get Pon all right!” grunted Johnny Bull. “We’ve put paid to his sporting pal, and we’ll get Pon all right.”

But Johnny Bull proved mistaken on that point!

Ponsonby, after that discovery of the true character of his sporting pal—for whose presence at the chalet he was responsible, felt altogether too shy to meet Mr. Monson again.

Monson had no choice in the matter—but Pon had—and Pon departed promptly, before Mr. Monson got the news and arrived at the riverside chalet.

Mr. Monson wanted to see the Famous Five, and they went to the chalet to see him—Porritt very respectful indeed as he let them in! Monson was there, but they learned that Pon and Gaddy had gone on up the river.

Monson was awkwardly civil, Mr. Monson full of effusive acknowledgments. He had reason to be pleased—seventy-five pounds out of his

hundred had been recovered, and the hold-up man was in the grip of the law. So he talked to the Famous Five, as Bob described it afterwards, like a Dutch uncle, and they parted with mutual esteem.

When they left, Monson followed them down to the gate.

“I suppose you’re going on up the river?” he asked.

“Yes,” answered Harry.

“Pon’s gone, as I told you. You may meet him.”

“We’re going to, somehow,” said Johnny Bull grimly.

“I’ve had an awful time with the pater,” said Monson. “I’ve got some more to come. If you meet Pon—” He paused.

“Well?” asked Harry.

“Smash him!” said Monson.

“Eh?”

“Smash him—just smash him!”

And Monson went in, leaving the Greyfriars fellows staring.

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned as they walked back to the Water-Lily.

“Can’t say I like Monson much,” remarked Bob Cherry. “But we’ll jolly well oblige him in this if we meet Pon!”

“What-ho!” said Johnny Bull.

And when the Water-Lily rolled on up the Thames, the Greyfriars crew had a wary eye open for Pon, more than willing—indeed, eager—to oblige Monson.

THE END.

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.

THE first letter this week comes from Charles Munday, of Windsor, who informs me that in his opinion the MAGNET is better than ever. He winds up his cheery communication by saying that my weekly mail must be “something tremendous!”

It certainly is, Charles. Letters reach me from all corners of the earth. Only yesterday I heard from Albar H. Fazelbhoj, who lives in far-away Mahim, in India. And, would you believe it, my Indian chum informs me that a pickpocket stole his copy of the MAGNET in the crowded Crawford Market? I am forwarding Albar another copy by the next mail.

As I have a number of letters from readers who ask for the replies to appear in print, I’ll get busy on ’em right away.

Jeanette DUNN (Glasgow).—Write to Warner Brothers, First National, Burbank, California, U.S.A., if you want a photograph of the film star, Errol Flynn.

B. GREEN (London).—Brian Valentine is not at Greyfriars now. Harry Wharton is 5 ft. 5 in. tall, and Peter Todd 5 ft. 6½ in. Lord Mauleverer is richer than Vernon-Smith. Mr. Quelch’s age is his own secret.

Robert WARDLAW.—(1) In size, perhaps, but not in price. (2) I really

cannot say; he’s not sure himself. (3) No. (4) Larger than it is now. Cost of production was not so heavy in those days.

Bryan SOWTER (Wanstead).—It would be far too costly to supply enamel badges with Billy Bunter’s fat face on ’em. Sorry, and all that!

C. L. BOOTH (Lanes).—May continue “My Own Page” again later. Fish’s full name is Fisher Tarleton Fish.

“TWO HOPEFUL MAGNET-ITES” (Shepherd’s Bush), and Sidney BLUNT (Stamford Hill).—Thanks for your suggestions, all of which I will bear in mind.

Phew! That’s enough of “Replies in Brief” for this week.

Now for a word or two about next week’s smashing story of the Greyfriars chums, entitled:

“BUNTER ON THE SPOT!”

By Frank Richards.

Still holiday-making on Old Father Thames, Harry Wharton & Co. meet with thrills and excitement at every bend of the river. When the chums of Greyfriars first set out for a holiday trip on the Water-Lily, the last person they wanted to join them was Billy Bunter. Next week, however, they have reason to be glad that the fat Owl is one of the party. It isn’t often Bunter comes in useful, but he certainly does next week, as you will learn when you read this spanking fine yarn.

Dr. Birchmall and his boys at St. Sam’s are still going strong in our next “Herald,” in which you will find more interesting pieces of news written by the Greyfriars boys themselves. Take my tip and order next week’s MAGNET early.

YOUR EDITOR.

The GREYFRIARS HERALD

(Continued from page 2.)

frowned and fingered his birchrod. Tubby's success as a footballer looked like making things awkward. With Miss Molly's eyes looking on him more favourably, Tubby would surely be more hoaplessly ensnared by her charm than ever!

But, to the surprize of the crowd, Tubby Barrell did not seem unduly thrilled by Miss Molly's admiration, after all. His eyes had become fixed on the distant tuckshop.

"Thanks, Miss Molly!" he said absently. "I say, you fellows, I feel hungry!"

"Eh?"
"I'm absolutely famished!" said Tubby. "I've simply got to have something to eat soon! What about all of us sellybrating in the tuckshop?"

"But I thought you were slimming!" yelled Fearless.

"Look here, Fearless, I don't want to be a skinny scarecrow like you!"

"Does this mean, Barrell," asked Dr. Birchmall, "that the sentimental thoughts you entertained for my dawter are now dismissed?"

"Oh, really, sir, I hoap I should never be sentimental!" said Tubby. "But I'm jolly hungry!"

The crowd roared. Miss Molly smiled. The Head grinned.

"I was right all the time, you chaps," said Fearless. "What Tubby was suffering from was not love. It was india-gestion—and the game has cured it!"

And so it proved to be. Tubby showed no more signs of having lost his hart to Miss Molly. And nothing more was heard of his ambitions to be slim and athlettick. Tubby's sentimental spasm was a thing of the past!

CHASED RUNAWAY HORSE ON MOTOR-BIKE!

Coker's Latest—Embarrassing Sequel

Coker's big trouble is that he's too impetuous. He acts first, and thinks afterwards—if he thinks at all!

Take the incident that happened this week. Coker was seated on his motor-bike at the side of a horse drive near the coast resort where he has been staying, talking to Potter and Greene, when Gatty of the Third, who has also been spending part of his vac at the same place, rushed up in a state of great excitement.

"Coker!" he yelled. "Did you see that runaway horse along there—"

Coker waited for no more. With a deafening roar, he was riding away on his motor-bike in the direction indicated by Gatty. He might have waited for just a little more information about it; but he didn't. He just went all out after that runaway horse!

He soon came in sight of it—a big chestnut mare, galloping along with a smart-looking gentleman of the "county" class on its back. Coker

accelerated and drew level with the runaway.

"Hold tight!" he yelled, above the roar of his engine. "I'll soon stop her for you!"

Strictly speaking, motor-bikes were not allowed on the horse drive; but that consideration did not, of course, deter Coker. He raced alongside the chestnut-mare for a second or two, then reached out with his right hand, while continuing to steer with his left, and grabbed the mare's tail.

Then there was a most frightful mix-up. The mare reared up on her hind legs, and Coker skidded, and, finally, both riders came to grief, and landed beside each other in the dust, with Coker's motor-bike lying across the drive and the chestnut mare ambling off quietly to the nearest patch of edible grass!

Coker sat up, grinning cheerfully. "Saved!" he chortled. "Nice work, what?"

The next moment, however, the triumphant grin vanished from his face, and his chortles changed to yells of pain. To his utter amazement, the horseman, whom he had expected to be full of gratitude, had started lashing him with his riding-crop! Coker jumped up, roaring.

"Ow! Chuck it! What the thump do you think you're doing? Is this what I get for saving your beastly life? Ow!"

The horseman lowered his riding-crop and stared.

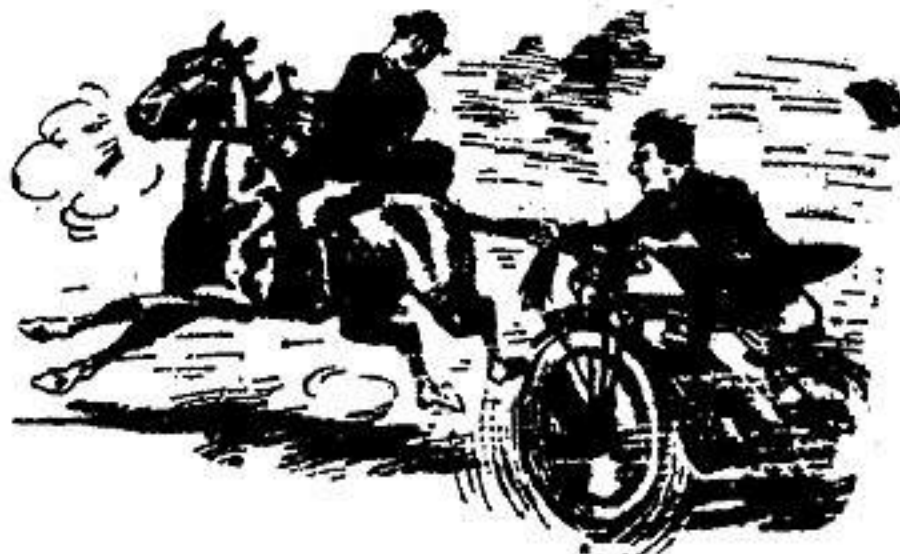
"Saving my life? What on earth are you talking about?"

"That's what I've probably done if only you knew it!" hooted Coker. "Riding on a runaway like you were, you might easily have been thrown under a car or against a tree, and—"

"Runaway?" gasped the horseman. "Do you seriously imagine I was on a runaway?"

"Of course! Why else should I have raced after you and pulled her up?" demanded Coker. "Someone told me you were on a runaway, and—"

"Someone has been pulling your leg, young man!" snapped the horseman. "The mare is perfectly docile, as you



can see for yourself. I was certainly galloping, but I had her entirely under control."

"And you mean to say there isn't a runaway anywhere down the horse drive?"

"I've seen none—and I've been riding here for half an hour. There was a runaway yesterday, I believe, but I'm perfectly certain there has been none to-day!"

"Oh! Well, I'm sorry, then!" growled Coker.

He mounted his motor-bike and raced back to Potter and Greene. Gatty was nowhere to be seen. Coker eyed his henchmen with a thunderous brow.

"Where's that cheeky fag? I'm going to slay him!"

"I don't think you'll be able to, old bean," grinned Potter. "His pater just came up and collected him in a car, and I understand they're going home to-day. Why do you want to slay him, anyway?"

"Because the cheeky young brat had the nerve to jape me—me, you know!" said Coker impressively. "He told me there was a runaway horse down the drive, when there was nothing of the kind, and—"

"Well, you're wrong there, old man," said Greene. "He told us all about it. It happened yesterday. You didn't wait to hear. What made you dash off in such a hurry?"

Potter and Greene roared when Coker explained. They roared on a different note when Coker knocked their heads together!

All in all, it seems that the only person who can feel chirpy over the affair is Gatty.

Coker has decided not to slay Gatty after all—because it was his own fault for not stopping to listen to the end of Gatty's story.

So far, it has not occurred to Coker's powerful brain that that was exactly what Gatty intended!

BOLSOVER HAS GONE ALL CONTINENTAL!

Says HAROLD SKINNER

Keep an eye out for Bolsover major when the new term starts, chaps! You should find him worth watching.

I ran into him yesterday. I noticed the difference at once. His straw boater was set on his head at a jauntier angle than usual, and he was wearing striped orlean flannel trousers. There was a sparkle and dash about him that was not there last term.

"Ah, bon jour, mon ami!" he roared, when he spotted me.

I jumped.

"What did you say?" I asked. "Bon jour, mon ami! But, of course, you don't speak French very well, Skinner. I should have said good-day to you. Comment vous portez-vous—I mean, how are you, old chap?"

"Not bad, thanks!" I gasped. "But what's biting you? Are you all right?"

"Oui, oui; je me porte tres bien, merci—oh, there I go again! I mean, yes, I'm as fit as a fiddle, thanks!" said Bolsover major cheerfully. "It's a change for me to be back in the old atmosphere again, you know, Skinny. Reminds me of that poem about 'Breathes there a man with soul so dead, that never to himself hath said, "This is my own, my native land," and so on."

"Oh, I see," I grinned. "So you've been abroad, eh?"

"Ah oui. Je me—I should say, yes. To France, you know," explained Bolsover. "Paris and all that. Ah, mon ami, c'est magnifique, c'est—oh, dash it, it seems quite an effort to speak English again. You soon get out of the habit over there."

"Got it!" I said suddenly. "You share a study with young Dupont. I suppose you've been over there with him."

"Mais oui—I mean, yes, I did see him in Paris. It was Dupont who got me to go over, as a matter of fact," said Bolsover. "I was a slow starter, Skinny—usual stick-in-the-mud Englishman, you know. Didn't want to go at all. But now it's all over, I wouldn't have missed it for worlds. There's nothing like foreign travel for broadening a chap's mind. You see things from a new angle and all that."

"M, yes, I suppose you do. But it doesn't always affect chaps quite so badly as it has you," I remarked. "You know, Bolsy, you've gone all continental. How long did you spend over there? I suppose you've been there most of the vac?"

Bolsover shook his head.

"Well, not quite. Only a comparatively short visit, Skinny."

"Wonderful what a fortnight can do, all the same," I grinned. "Some people can get as much out of a fortnight's holiday as others get out of a couple of months."

"Vous avez raison—I mean, you're quite right, Skinny! And some get as much out of a week, or even less than that!"

"How long did you say you were there?" I asked.

I could see the reply coming!

"Matter of fact, it was just a cheap excursion," Bolsy explained carelessly. "Just a day, you know—that's all!"

If he'd been in France a week, Bolsy would probably have come back with a beard and an insatiable appetite for frogs. But even after a day he's worth watching. Don't miss him when the new term starts, chaps!

NEW IDEAS WANTED AT GREYFRIARS!

Declares TOM BROWN

We're right behind the times at Greyfriars. While we're churning out Latin prose and pottering about with French irregular verbs, other schools are train-

ing fellows for their careers. Why shouldn't they do the same at Greyfriars?

It stands to reason that the campaigns of Julius Cæsar are of no use whatever to a chap who is going in for sheep-farming in Australia when he grows up. Nor are French irregular verbs of the slightest practical importance to a chap who is going to design engines or buildings! What we want is lessons in something we shall need after we leave school!

For instance, Billy Bunter, who is practically certain to go into the catering trade when he grows up, should have lessons in cooking and catering. It's pretty obvious that he gains no advantage from the classical lore that Quelch tries to drum into his fat brain; but cookery is a subject at which he might well prove a genius. Give him his chance, I say!

Similarly, our tame actor, Wibley, should be allowed to concentrate on Shakespeare. Wharton, a great soldier of the future, should study military strategy. Kipps, an illusionist in the making, would profit from work that would make his hands more supple and cunning. Redwing ought to be preparing for his intended life on the ocean waves. Mark Linley should be studying machinery in readiness for the time when he becomes a big noise in the cotton industry.

I admit there are difficulties. But difficulties are made to be overcome. I look forward, anyway, to a Remove Form-room that will present a very different picture from the one we know to-day.

There will be a group in one corner, taking a motor-bike to pieces. In another corner, budding mariners will be taking turns at a ship's helm. In front of the class, amateur actors will be reciting yards of Shakespeare, while others are busy cooking at the Form-room fire, repairing desks, working out methods of attack with toy soldiers, and so on.

Can you imagine it?

(No, we jolly well can't!—Ed.)

Answers to Correspondents

"Indignant" (Fifth).—"Last term, for instance, I saw Potter on the prefects' phone for half an hour without saying anything at all."

He must have been talking to Coker!

"Novice" (Third).—"What do you think of a Remove chap who wants me to invest my savings in a scheme that will bring me a fortune?"

We think it's obviously "Fishy."

"Young Hero" (Remove).—"The chap had swallowed gallons of seawater before I saved him from drowning. He praised me highly."

We should say he must have been simply "gushing"!

"SIMPLE SENIOR."—"Wingate is practically always silent."

Yes; and yet he's the biggest noise in the Sixth!

STRANGE BUT TRUE THAT—

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Hobson loves the limelight, yet has never come out of his "Shell."

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