

THE
MAGNET

Billy Bunter, of Greyfriars, in the Limelight!

BUNTER ON THE SPOT!

by FRANK RICHARDS



The
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Billy Bunter's
Own Paper

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STOP
PRESS
NEWS

DOCTOR BIRCHEMALL'S DINNER!

A Scream of a School Yarn, Starring JACK JOLLY & CO., the Cherry Chums of St. Sam's.

By DICKY NUGENT

"Have you seen the cook's cat, boys?"

Molly Birchemall pawed by the notice-board in Big Hall at St. Sam's and asked that question; and at the sound of her tinkling, bell-like voice Jack Jolly & Co. wheeled round in a trice. St. Sam's fellows, in most cases, simply doated on the Head's bewitching dawter, and the heroes of the Fourth were no exception.

"Nothing doing, Miss Molly, I'm afraid," grinned Jolly. "But if you're looking for the cat, we'll help you!"

"Yes, rather!" corussed Merry and Bright. At the same moment Frank Fearless held up his hand for silence.

"Half a jiffy, you fellows!" he said. "I think I can bear it!"

They all listened. From somewhere on the other side of Big Hall came sounds eggsactly like a cat wailing.

"Oh, I do hoap it's the cook's cat!" trilled Miss Molly. "It's been missing since last nite, and Mrs. Brownwell is awfully worried about it. Let's see where the sounds are coming from."

The Head's dawter led the way across Big Hall, followed by Jack Jolly & Co.

To their grate surprize they found, on reaching the other side, that the noises were coming from the Head's study.

"Fussy if the cat's in there!" mer-nered Jolly. "The Head simply can't stand cats necking about the place."

"Quite true, Jolly," tinkled Molly Birchemall. "Pop has a rooted objection to cats, I know."

With a thoughtful pucker on her brow, Miss Molly opened the door of her father's study and looked for the cat. Peering over her sholders, the Fourth Formers followed her eggsample. But they looked in vain; and the reason was very simple.

The noises they had thought to be coming from the missing cat were, in actual fact, coming from the Head himself!

Dr. Birchemall was staggering about his study with his hands on his waist-coat and an aggermised look on his face, emitting the weerddest wailings you could ever imagine!

"Ye-ow! Ow-ow! Yowooooo!" he wailed.

Jack Jolly & Co. stared blankly.

Miss Molly tripped into the study with a look of consern on her pretty face.

"Pop! Pop! What ever are you doing?" she trilled. "Are you practising ventriloquism, or is it a new Boy Scout call?"

"Yee-ow! Ow! Neither, my dear!" gasped Dr. Birchemall. "It's indigestion! Ow!"

"Goodness, grashus!"

"It's Mrs. Brownwell's cooking again!" went on the Head, with a groan. "The way that woman cooks is simply awful! Wow!"

Molly Birchemall's fare brow pucker-ed up into a frown.

"Really, pop, I think you mite make a little less fuss about it! We all thought it was Mrs. Brownwell's missing cat!"

"Well, it isn't—it's Mrs. Brownwell's cooking!" groaned Dr. Birchemall.

"The breakfast she gave me this morning would have upset the digestion of an ostrich. Yee-ow!"

"I suppose you haven't seen Mrs. Brownwell's cat, pop?"

"Yooooop! No—and I wish I hadn't seen her cooking, either!" moaned the

Head. "There's one thing on which I am determined — she is not going to cook my dinner to-day after this!"

Molly Birchemall's dainty lips parted in a smile that stretched from ear to ear.

"If Mrs. Brownwell is not going to cook your dinner, pop, who is?"

"I have already made up my mind on that point, my dear," answered Dr. Birchemall. "I am going to cook it myself!"

Miss Molly started. The Fourth Formers blinked.

"You—you're going to do what, sir?" stutered Jolly.

"Cook it myself!"

"Gammion, sir!"

"No—not gammion, Jolly. I shall have rabbit for preference," said the Head. "Boiled rabbit is one of my favourite dishes; but I am not going to have a good rabbit spoiled by Mrs. Brownwell's cooking. I shall cook it myself, and then it's bound to be good!"

"Grate pip!"

"Kindly go now, boys; I am in no condition to receive visitors," groaned Dr. Birchemall. "Molly, my dear, be a good girl and run and fetch me a dose of indigestion mixture!"

"Oh, all right, pop!" smiled Miss Molly; and she tripped away in search of indigestion mixture, while Jack Jolly & Co. retreated to their Form-room for morning classes.

The chums of the Fourth could hardly believe that Dr. Birchemall was really serious over this cooking stunt. But after classes they learned differently. Spotting Binding, the page, on the stairs, berried, as usual, in a penny

dreadful, they asked him if he knew the Head's whereabouts. And, much to the Co.'s serprize, Binding grinned all over his face and told them he was in the kitchen, cooking his dinner.

"We must go down and have a look, you fellows," grinned Jack Jolly, when they left Binding. "This is too good to be missed!"

"What-ho!"

And Merry and Bright and Fearless followed their leader downstairs to see how the Head was getting on.

It was a commical site that greeted them in the kitchen. Dr. Birchemall, in a tall white chef's hat, was standing over a steaming saucepan, stirring away for all he was worth. As they entered he fished out a steaming rabbit on the end of a long fork and held it up before his somewhat prominent nose with evident approval.

"Ah! Nearly done, Mrs. Brownwell!" he said to the cook. "When I sit down to dinner with this in front of me I shall be the envy of the whole school!"

"I wish I could find my cat, sir!" was Mrs. Brownwell's tearful retort. To which the Head replied with an unsimperthesick sniff, as he dropped the rabbit back into the pot and started stirring again!

Dr. Birchemall made the most of his dinner that day. While the rest of the school chewed away at tuff boiled salt beef and underdone carrots, the Head had a feast of juicy, tender rabbit.

"Ha, ha! Don't you wish you were in my place, boys?" he chortled, as he naved away at the last bone on his plate.

Jack Jolly winked at his comrades. The kaptin of the Fourth, who had a particularly tuff helping of beef, was just in the right mood to take it out of the chortling Head.

"I say, sir, that's not a rabbit!" he ejaculated suddenly. "You've surely made a garstly mistake!"

Dr. Birchemall went suddenly pail. He pawed with the bone half-way to his mouth.

"What do you mean, Jolly—that's not a rabbit? If it's not a rabbit, what is it?"

"I was wondering if it's a cat, sir," grinned Jolly. "That bone you've got bears a mark that reminds me of the scar the cook's cat used to have on its sholder!"

"Wha-a-at?" gasped the Head.

"My hat—I believe you're right!" eggsclaimed Fearless, with the air of one making a discovery. "I suppose it was Binding that skinned it, and he wouldn't notice whether it was a cat or a rabbit. He never sees what he's doing, sir, because he reads blud-and-thunders while he's working!"

Dr. Birchemall's bone dropped into his plate, unpicked. His face went suddenly deadly white.

"I—I—I feel ill! Yarooooo! Grooooo!" he yelled, starting to his feet. "Send for a doctor quick! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

(Continued on page 27.)



BILLY BUNTER'S ROOM IS USUALLY BETTER THAN HIS COMPANY, BUT THIS WEEK HARRY WHARTON & CO., CRUISING ON OLD FATHER THAMES, HAVE EVERY REASON TO BE PLEASED THAT THEY HAVE—

BUNTER *on the* **SPOT!**



By
FRANK RICHARDS

A Bath for Bunter!

"PULL!"
"Beast!"
"Tug!"
"Rotter!"
"Get on with it!"
"Yah!"

Those remarks were exchanged between Johnny Bull, in the Greyfriars Water-Lily, and Bunter on the tow-path.

Harry Wharton & Co., doing the Thames in the summer holidays, were going up that historic river—slowly.

They were going up so slowly that the motion was almost imperceptible. That was because Bunter was towing.

On that bright September morning the Greyfriars boat was somewhere between Wallingford and Oxford. Five fellows had taken turns with the towrope. Now it was Bunter's turn.

Four members of the famous Co. would gladly have excused Bunter from his turn. They were energetic fellows enough. But making Billy Bunter work was a task requiring more energy than they had to spare.

Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, or Hurree Singh, would gladly have taken Bunter's turn. It was less trouble.

But Johnny Bull was adamant. It was a matter of principle with Johnny.

Why shouldn't Bunter take his turn, Johnny wanted to know? And

While Shifty Spooner's back was turned, Billy Bunter clambered into the Water-Lily and pushed off!

there really was no answer, except that he was too jolly lazy.

So Bunter was towing. With a fat face red with wrath, and little round eyes that gleamed with indignation behind his big, round spectacles, Bunter marched with the towrope—slowly.

Twice he had dropped the towline—by accident, of course. Johnny Bull had stopped those accidents by stepping ashore and knotting the end of the line round Bunter's plump shoulders. After that, Bunter could not drop it again. So he towed onward—at a pace which any ordinary snail could easily have beaten.

"Wake me up when we begin to move," sighed Bob Cherry.

"The movefulness is not terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, we're moving!" said Frank Nugent. "We've done six inches at least, since Bunter began to tow."

"Look here, Johnny, chuck it!"

**HARRY WHARTON & CO.,
of GREYFRIARS, in Further
Exciting Holiday Adventures
Aboard the Water-Lily.**

said Harry Wharton. "We're not in a hurry to get on to Oxford; but we want to get there before the end of the hols."

"Bunter's going to take his turn!" grunted Johnny.

"Don't be an ass, old chap! Nobody's ever been able to make Bunter work. Even Quelch, at Greyfriars, can't make him work. What's the good of wasting time?"

Snort, from Johnny Bull.

Johnny was a determined fellow. But perhaps it was dawning on him that he had attempted the impossible in setting out to make Bunter work. There are tasks that are beyond human powers, and that, certainly, looked like one of them.

"Bunter, you lazy fat ass!" roared Johnny. "Will you pull on that line?"

"Beast!"
"Any spuds left in that sack?" asked Johnny.

Bob Cherry grinned, and groped in the potato-bag. There was one spud left, and he hooked it out and handed it to Johnny.

Whiz!
Bunter ducked.

The potato landed somewhere in Berkshire.

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Bunter crawled on. The Water-Lily crawled on. Johnny Bull breathed hard and deep.

"Will you get a move on, Bunter?" he hooted.

"I'm tired."

"You haven't done twenty yards yet."

"I've done miles and miles." Bunter's progress, such as it was, came to a dead stop, as he blinked round at the boat. "I was a fool to join up with you fellows for the hols. I might have known you'd want me to do all the work. I might have expected it, knowing you as I do. Sitting round loafing in that boat while I do all the work! Yah!"

"Get on!"

"Beast!"

Bunter got on again—at the same pace as before.

Towing, at that rate, was not hard work; and Bunter could hardly have been tired; but he certainly hoped that the other fellows were getting tired of it.

They were—there was no doubt about that. They did not want to do the Thames at a rush; but they did not want to understudy a party of holiday-making snails! The Greyfriars crew were getting restive.

Johnny was steering. Now he handed the lines to Nugent, and stepped into the bows.

"Bunter, you lazy fat slug!" he said, in a deep growl.

"Yah!" came over a fat shoulder.

"If you don't pull, I shall pull," said Johnny.

Bunter grinned.

That was what he wanted. He had fancied that the crew of the Water-Lily would get fed up with this. He was right.

Four fellows in the boat smiled at one another. Johnny had had to realise that it couldn't be done. It had been bound to come.

The fat Owl of the Remove came to a halt on the bank.

"All right!" he said. "You can pull. I've done my whack—more than my whack, as I always do. Pull, and be blowed!"

"I'll give you one more chance!" said Johnny. "Will you pull or not?"

"Beast!"

"If you don't, I'm going to."

"Well, don't jaw—do it!" said Bunter.

Johnny did it.

He grasped the towline, and pulled. There was a roar from Bunter, as he came tottering to the edge of the bank, under the pull on the rope.

"Ow! I say, leggo! Don't drag me into the river, you fathead!" he roared. "Oh crikey! I shall be over in a minute!"

"I warned you that I should pull if you didn't!" answered Johnny grimly—and he pulled.

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from the rest of the crew.

They had supposed—as Bunter did—that Johnny meant that he would step out on the towpath and pull. But that was not what Johnny meant. This was what Johnny meant.

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He pulled, and put his beef into the pull.

Bunter made a frantic effort to throw off the towline. But he could not throw off a line that was knotted round his fat shoulders.

"Oh!" roared Bunter. "Stoppit! I say, you fellows, stoppim! I say—Yaroooh!"

Splash!

There was a foot of water close under the bank.

Billy Bunter splashed into that foot of water. He splashed with a mighty splash, sending up quite a waterspout. Then Johnny ceased to pull.

Billy Bunter sat up—in the Thames! He sat with the river flowing round him, and water running down his fat face; getting an unexpected bath.

"Urrgh!" he gurgled. "I'm drowned—gurrgh!—I mean nearly drowned—Wurrgh! I'm all wet! Yurrrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the crew of the Water-Lily.

"Gurrgh! I say, you fellows—Wurrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter scrambled to his feet, splashing the Thames right and left. He scrambled into the boat, and sat down in a pool of water.

Harry Wharton, laughing, unhooked the towrope, and jumped ashore with it.

"Urrgh!" spluttered Bunter. "I'm soaked!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm drenched!" yelled Bunter.

"I told you I should pull, if you didn't!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Beast! Urrgh!" howled Bunter. "Look at me!"

The Greyfriars crew looked at him and roared. The Water-Lily rolled on—more rapidly than before. Billy Bunter sat in the portion of the Thames he had brought on board with him, and spluttered. He had got out of his turn at towing. But, really, his last state was worse than his first!

Caught Bending!

"THIS looks jolly!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"It do—it does!" agreed Frank Nugent.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh declared that the jolliffulness was terrific! And, really, it was!

The Greyfriars boat floated under the shady branches of a vast beech that grew close to the water. There was a landing-place at the bank. Quite near the river was a little ancient inn, with a garden, an orchard, old red tiles, and diamond-paned windows—a picture in itself. It had an inviting and hospitable look.

"What about lunch on shore?" asked Bob.

"Good egg!" agreed Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows, that's a jolly good idea!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "That place looks as if you can get good grub there!"

Billy Bunter's fat face, since his unexpected bath in the Thames, had been morose. But now the clouds

rolled away. The prospect of a meal was always cheering to Bunter. And that little riverside inn had a very promising look. Its very aspect seemed to speak of fresh butter, new-laid eggs, genuine beef, fruit and cream!

"Push in!" said Johnny Bull.

The Water-Lily pushed in, under the shady tree. A boat was already tied up to a post on the bank. It was a small skiff, with the sculls laid in it.

Bob Cherry glanced at it curiously as the Greyfriars boat pushed close by it.

Skiffs are much alike, but Bob had an idea, on close inspection, that he had seen that particular craft before.

It had a name on it—the Daisy. That name had been newly painted.

"Hold on a minute, you men!" said Bob. "Notice anything about that skiff?"

"Nothing special," answered Harry. "What—"

"A new name's been painted on it," said Bob.

"Well, what about that?"

"The last time we saw that boat-thief, Shifty Spooner, he was in a skiff exactly like that!" answered Bob.

"Oh!" said all the crew of the Water-Lily together! And they all looked at the skiff.

They had almost forgotten Shifty Spooner, the man who had once owned the Water-Lily, and who had trailed them up the Thames, ever since they had started out from Kingston. But they had seen him in a skiff that looked undoubtedly very like that skiff.

"I suppose he would paint the name out!" said Harry Wharton slowly. "We know how he gets hold of a craft when he wants one! He's tried to pinch the Water-Lily three or four times, and we know he pinched that dinghy we found him in once and made him hand over. I shouldn't wonder—"

"I say, you fellows, don't waste time!" said Billy Bunter. "I'm hungry!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Beast!"

"I'll bet that man Spooner is still after us!" said Bob. "He's sticking to us like a giddy bloodhound. I'm blessed if I know why he wants his old boat back so much—but he does."

"No doubt about that!" said Harry. "And from what we've seen of the rascal, I've no doubt that he used to sail the Water-Lily for pinching at riverside places. That was what he was sent to chokey for. Though I'm blessed if I know why any other boat wouldn't serve his turn just as well! But he seems quite potty on getting the Water-Lily back."

"I say, you fellows, never mind that skiff!" urged Billy Bunter peevishly. "For goodness' sake push on! I keep on telling you I'm hungry!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Look!"

He pointed towards the path up to the riverside inn.

A man had come out of the inn, and he was coming down that path

to the water. All the Famous Five knew at a glance the foxy features and the shifty eyes of the former owner of the Water-Lily.

"Spoooner!" ejaculated Nugent.

"The esteemed and execrable Spoooner!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh crikey!" said Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, don't you get into a row with that beast now! I'm hungry!"

With the selfishness to which Bunter was accustomed, not one of the Famous Five took heed of the fact that the fat Owl was hungry and eager to get going on lunch.

They fixed their eyes on Mr. Spoooner as he came down to the landing-place to his skiff.

They grinned as they watched him.

Obviously Mr. Spoooner was still hunting the Water-Lily! Probably he had been inquiring about the party at that inn! He had not found the Greyfriars crew—but they had found him. If he noticed a boat floating under the shady branches of the beech by the water, he did not notice that it was the boat he had so long been hunting. His eyes were on his skiff.

That that skiff belonged to Mr. Spoooner, the juniors were not likely to believe. Long ago, they had found him in a stolen dinghy, and made him hand it over. Evidently he had found that skiff somewhere along the Thames and taken possession of it, which accounted for the newly painted name on it.

The same thought was in the minds of all the Famous Five of Greyfriars! Mr. Spoooner was going to give up that skiff, as he had given up the dinghy. They were, in fact, very much inclined to collar Mr. Spoooner as well as the dinghy, for Mr. Spoooner was wanted by the police for an attempted burglary at a riverside residence.

"He's not going off in that skiff!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"No fear!" said Bob. "He seems pretty handy at pinching boats—but he will have to pinch another, if he wants to follow us up the Thames."

Shifty Spoooner reached the skiff and stooped to untie the painter.

Bob Cherry picked up the boathook in the Water-Lily. Johnny Bull punted the boat closer in. Bob reached out with the boathook and poked—at Mr. Spoooner!

There was a terrific yell from Mr. Spoooner, thus unexpectedly caught bending! The sharp end of the boathook made Mr. Spoooner bound!

He leaped almost clear of Berkshire, yelling.

He spun round in the direction from which that unexpected poke had proceeded, glaring with rage.

"Suffering snakes!" howled Mr. Spoooner. "If I don't—Oh!" He broke off as he saw the Greyfriars crew.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry affably. "Here we are again, Spoooner! Have another?"

Mr. Spoooner bounded back! He did not want another.

"Keep that 'ook away from my trowsers!" he roared.

"Keep your trousers away from this hook!" said Bob. "You'll get it again if you touch that painter!"

"I got to get in my boat, blow yer!" howled Mr. Spoooner.

"No objection at all to your getting into your boat—if you've got a boat!" agreed Bob. "But you're not getting into that one! Didn't you pinch it?"

"No," roared Mr. Spoooner, "I didn't!"

"Changed your manners and customs all of a sudden?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young 'ound!" said Shifty Spoooner. "I'd like to meet you on a dark night with a stick in my 'and!"

"Ever so much nicer than meeting me by daylight with a boathook in mine!" grinned Bob.

"Look here," said Johnny Bull, "that rascal's wanted for thieving, as well as pinching boats! Let's get out and collar him!"

Mr. Spoooner was eyeing the party savagely, evidently in an extremely peeved frame of mind. But, as he heard Johnny Bull's suggestion, he backed farther away, turned, and cut along the bank.

So rapid was Mr. Spoooner's retreat that he was out of sight among the trees almost by the time Johnny had finished speaking.

Bob Cherry winked at his chums.

"After him!" he roared.

The Greyfriars crew had no idea whatever of hunting Mr. Spoooner along the Berkshire bank. But that roar from Bob's powerful voice reached the shifty man's ears—they heard a patter of running feet that died away rapidly in the distance. Mr. Spoooner had put on speed!

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Come on," he said, "mustn't keep Bunter waiting for his lunch any longer—"

"I should jolly well think not!" said Billy Bunter, in tones thrilling with indignation. "I've told you I'm hungry."

The juniors landed from the Water-Lily and tied up, taking care to padlock the boat in case Mr. Spoooner should reappear.

Then they walked cheerily up to the inn, where Billy Bunter, at last, was able to surround an extensive and excellent lunch and where, as it transpired, fruit and cream were to be obtained—fresh fruit and rich cream—which brought a smile to Billy Bunter's fat visage that looked as if it would never come off!

Billy Bunter's Big Idea!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Coming?" asked Bob, with a grin.

Bunter gave a snort of contempt.

The Famous Five were going for a stroll round, after lunch at the Golden Trout. Bunter was not! Bunter had planted himself in a seat under a shady oak that stood before the inn. The idea of a walk made him snort! Bunter needed a rest after lunch—not a walk!

"I say, I've got an idea!" squeaked Bunter.

"Oh! Halt!" called out Bob Cherry.

"What rot!" grunted Johnny Bull. "We're going on in an hour's time. Let's get a trot round! May come on that chap Spoooner, and we can boot him!"

"Bunter says he's got an idea—"

"Bother Bunter!"

"My dear chap, if Bunter's got an idea it's time to sit up and take notice. It's a thing that's never happened before. Bunter's got an idea—positively for one occasion only! How did you do it, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I've been thinking—"

"Great pip! Wonders will never cease!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Do you fellows hear that? Bunter's been thinking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "If you had as much brains in your head as I've got in my little finger you'd be ten times as clever as you are! Look here, you fellows, I've got a jolly good idea! What about staying on at this place for, say, a week?"

"What?"

"The grub's good," said Bunter. "You must have noticed that. The grub's not merely good—it's splendid. A bit different from the meals we cook on the stove in camp! And all the washing-up saved. If we stay on here we save all that trouble! See?"

The Famous Five looked at William George Bunter, and grinned.

They were spending that summer holiday voyaging up the Thames, certainly not looking for a spot where the grub was good with a view of sticking there permanently.

The chums of the Remove had healthy youthful appetites, and open-air life improved them; but grub did not loom quite so large on their horizon as it did on Bunter's. They could consider other things—Bunter couldn't.

"I'm only thinking of you fellows, really," added Bunter. "All that fag of towing the boat, and all that. Of course, I do most of the work, but you fellows have to do some—"

"Oh crikey!"

"We've done a good bit of the Thames," went on Bunter, "right up from Kingston, past Wallingford. Well, what's the good of keeping on to Oxford? And past Oxford it's shallow—lots of trouble—"

"Oh, we'll make you walk past Oxford!" said Bob. "That will lighten the boat of two-thirds of the weight—see?"

"You blithering idiot!" roared Bunter. "Look here, have a little sense! Let's stick here for the rest of the hols! I tell you the grub at this inn is absolutely splendid."

"Is that the big idea?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing.

"That's it," said Bunter.

"Take it away and bury it!"

"If you're worrying about the expenses, that's all right," said Bunter, with a sneer. "It costs more to put up at an inn than to camp out—I know that! I expect you to be mean! Well, I'll pay."

"Still got that three-ha'pence?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a go if Bunter can fix it," said Bob.

"You silly ass!" roared Johnny Bull. "Think we're hanging on here because Bunter wants to stuff prog, and he's too lazy to lend a hand towing or washing-up?"

"I said if Bunter could fix it," said Bob. "While we're going for this walk, you speak to the landlord, Bunter—"

"Yes, rather," said Bunter eagerly.

"And ask him how long he'll put up the whole party for three ha'pence—"

"Wha-a-at!"

"And we'll stay just as long as he'll do it," said Bob.

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

"You—you—you silly idiot!" stammered Bunter. "Of course, you'd have to lend me some money! I'm willing to pay every penny for the whole stay—all I need is somebody to lend me the money—"

"We're not going to take advantage of your generosity like that," said Bob, shaking his head. "We can't afford it, old fat man."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You needn't be afraid I shan't square," said Bunter scornfully. "I'm expecting a postal order—"

"Help!"

"Fooling about the river for weeks, like this, I've had no letters. But when I get that postal order—I say, you fellows, don't walk off while a fellow's talking to you!" roared Bunter.

The Famous Five did, however, walk off. They seemed to have had all they were able to enjoy of Bunter's conversation.

Bunter snorted wrathfully.

Good as his idea was—Bunter had never thought of a better one—he could see that the chums of the Remove were not going to act on it. They were going grubbing on in that beastly boat, making Bunter tow, and making him do his whack in the washing-up, instead of sticking at this delightful spot, where they could live on the fat of the land and sit under a shady tree from one meal to another, eating fruit and cream between meals.

How any fellows could be such silly asses was beyond Bunter's comprehension. But there it was! Bunter was the only fellow in the party who had any sense!

In an hour's time they were going on.

That unspeakable beast, Bull, was going to make Bunter do his spot of towing, which he had escaped in the morning; and Bunter did not see how he was going to dodge it as he had a strong objection to another bath in the Thames.

Tugging a beastly boat up a beastly river, instead of sitting in the shade eating. If that was what Harry Wharton & Co. called a holiday, Bunter did not agree.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,649.

Indeed, Billy Bunter would have chucked the river party there and then if the landlord of the Golden Trout would have put him up for the rest of the hols for the consideration of the moderate sum of three-half-pence! That was the total of Bunter's wealth! He had spent nothing, so far, on this trip—so he still had all the money he had started with!

The landlord of the Golden Trout was a red-cheeked, good-natured-looking man. But Bunter could not expect the most good-natured landlord to put him up very long for that small sum. Either those beasts had to stay, or Bunter couldn't! Even one day at the Golden Trout would have been something. Every day that Bunter dodged a spot of work was, of course, a clear gain.

Billy Bunter had intended to go to sleep under that shady tree, while those utter fatheads were walking about, like the silly asses they were.

Now, however, instead of shutting his little round eyes behind his big round spectacles, and waking the echoes of Berkshire with a resounding snore, Billy Bunter sat and pondered.

Somehow or other, if he could, he was going to hang on at the Golden Trout. The question was—how?

"Oh scissors!" ejaculated Bunter suddenly.

He sat up, his eyes twinkling behind his spectacles! He grinned—an expansive and extensive grin that stretched from one fat ear to the other.

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter.

The fat Owl heaved himself up from the rustic seat. He was reluctant to stir, but he had to stir to carry out the big idea that had flashed into his powerful brain.

He rolled down to the landing-place.

The skiff in which Shifty Spooner had arrived there had been taken into the inn boathouse, the landlord having been informed that it was stolen property and having undertaken to hand it over to the authorities. The Greyfriars Water-Lily was tied up under the beech-tree.

Billy Bunter hooked the empty potato sack out of the boat.

His next proceedings might have mystified the Famous Five, had they been at hand to witness the same.

Bunter proceeded to stack that potato sack full of anything that came to hand. Apparently, he wanted to give it weight. He sorted tins of foodstuffs out of the stern locker. Considering what he meant to do with that sack when it was full, this might have been regarded as rather a waste; but the tins of foodstuff did not belong to Bunter, so that was all right.

He added a number of stones that he industriously collected along the bank, and several large chunks of turf that he dragged up by the roots.

The bag filled, he tied the cord at its neck.

All was ready now, and the fat Owl sat in the boat to wait for the sound of the Greyfriars crew's return. They had gone off by a path through the orchard at the side of the inn, and he

expected them to return the same way—and listened for footsteps and voices.

Close by the boat was a low branch of the beech, which it was necessary to duck under if the boat moved beneath it. By getting hold of that branch it was easy, even for the fat Owl, to clamber into the tree. Once up in the tree, the foliage would hide him. There were fellows in the Greyfriars Remove who declared that Billy Bunter couldn't think—that he hadn't anything to do it with. But Bunter had been thinking now to some purpose! He had it all cut and dried!

His preparations for that master-stroke had taken a considerable time.

The Famous Five were due now. He had not long to wait.

He heard a sound of footsteps from the orchard. A powerful voice reached his ears!

The Famous Five, no doubt, supposed that Bunter had gone to sleep under a shady tree in the inn garden!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wake up, Bunter!" came a roar.

Bunter grinned.

He was wide awake—little as the Famous Five guessed it.

He acted promptly, now that he knew they were coming—before they came in sight! Now was the time for action!

Standing in the boat, he heaved the weighty potato-sack over the side, with a heavy splash, into the river! Splash!

"Help!" yelled Bunter.

And he clambered up into the beech and disappeared.

Not As Per Programme.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. jumped.

They were sauntering back to the inn garden, through the orchard, supposing as a matter of course that Bunter would be asleep in the shade, and would have to be roused out to join up.

Then came that sudden splash in the river, and Bunter's yell for help!

It worked like a charm!

"Bunter!" gasped Bob.

He leaped into rapid motion. In a second he was tearing down to the landing place, as fast as his legs could go. After him rushed his comrades.

If Bunter had fallen into the river there was no time to be lost. Bunter was no swimmer!

Billy Bunter was not, perhaps, fearfully popular in the boating party. He was, perhaps, more trouble than he was worth. If Bunter had departed, there would have been dry eyes in the Greyfriars crew—if he departed in any direction but downward.

But if Bunter was in danger, as certainly he was if he had fallen into the Thames, every member of the Famous Five were ready to go all out to the rescue!

They fairly raced down to the Water-Lily!

Nothing was to be seen of Bunter!



“Ow!” roared Billy Bunter, making a frantic effort to throw off the tow-line. “I say, you fellows, I’m falling—yarrooh!”

Bob leaped breathlessly into the boat.

“Bunter!” he shouted.

Up in the leafy branches overhead Bunter grinned. Crammed in a forked branch amid the foliage, Bunter heard, but he heeded not!

Bunter was going to be missing, for the present!

If that did not make Harry Wharton & Co. hang on at the Golden Trout, nothing would! As for the anxious alarm caused by such a trick, Bunter did not think of that! He was thinking of taking it easy at the Golden Trout and getting away with vast quantities of excellent provender. That was enough for Bunter to think of! A fellow could not think of everything!

“Bunter!” gasped Harry Wharton. “Can you see him, Bob?”

“No!”

Harry Wharton snatched up the boathook, ready to hook at Bunter in the water.

All the juniors scanned the Thames anxiously.

Close in to the landing place the water was shallow, and the bottom of it could be seen. Bunter was the fellow to be in difficulties in eighteen inches of water—but no fellow could be invisible at that depth. What had become of Bunter was quite a mystery. It seemed almost impossible that he could have rolled into deep water and disappeared in so very brief a space of time.

“Oh, my hat!” gasped Bob

suddenly. “Gimme that boathook!”

“Can you see him?”

Bob did not answer. He grabbed the boathook and hooked up an object that lay submerged close to the Water-Lily.

It was the potato sack—crammed to the neck!

The juniors stared at it, almost in stupefaction. They knew now what had caused the splash.

“What——” gasped Harry.

“That fat villain!” breathed Bob.

“But what——”

“Pulling our leg——”

“But——”

“Look!” hissed Bob. He pointed upward with the boathook.

The Co. stared up into the shady beech-tree.

Bunter was in pretty good cover! He was safe from a casual glance! But when he was looked for, a considerable section of striped trousering was visible in the interstices of the foliage.

The Famous Five gazed up at that trousering!

They could not see Bunter’s fat face, or his fat head! But they could see his trousers!

Obviously, those trousers had not climbed the beech-tree on their own! Bunter was inside!

“Oh!” gasped Harry Wharton.

“The fat scoundrel!” breathed Johnny Bull.

“The terrific toad!” exclaimed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

It was all clear to the Famous Five now!

That potato sack had been heaved overboard to make the splash! Bunter was in the beech over their heads! Bunter was not in the Thames! He was in the tree. He had made them jump almost out of their skins, and the reason was clear—it was to make them hang on at the Golden Trout!

“Give me that boathook, Bob!” said Johnny Bull. “I can reach him from here!”

“Jab him!” hissed Nugent.

“Puncture him!” said Harry.

Even Bob Cherry was angry for a moment or two. He gripped the boathook, with a deadly glare at those trousers!

Bunter, for the moment, was in danger of a bad puncture!

But Bob lowered the boathook! Instead of jabbing Bunter, he winked at his comrades!

“He’s gone!” he said.

“What——”

“We’ve lost Bunter!” said Bob, speaking loudly enough for his voice to reach two fat ears up in the beech-tree. “Ain’t it sad?”

His comrades stared at him for a moment. As a considerable section of Bunter was visible to their eyes, amid the foliage of the beech, they evidently had not lost him. But they caught on at once!

“The sadness is terrific!” said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh sorrowfully. “The esteemed fat Bunter is gone from our gaze like a beautiful dream.”

“Poor old Bunter!” said Bob. “Of

course, he hadn't a chance with all that lunch he packed away! It must have weighed him down!"

"About half a ton!" said Johnny Bull. "No fellow could swim with that cargo inside him."

"No good looking for him farther!" said Frank Nugent. "We may as well push on! Poor old Bunter!"

"Yes, poor old Bunter!" said Bob sadly. "He wasn't a bad chap, except that he was a lying worm, and a greedy pig, and a lazy toad!"

"Beast!" breathed Billy Bunter inaudibly, up in the tree! This was not the sort of remark he had expected to hear—in the sad circumstances.

"After all, he couldn't help being a pig, any more than he could help telling whoppers!" remarked Harry Wharton.

"He had his good points!" said Bob. "I can't remember any of them at the moment, but I dare say he had."

"They wanted some looking for!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"Well, it's no good hanging about," said Bob. "Cast off the painter! We shall have to go without Bunter after all. He will get out of his turn at towing!"

"Yes, let's clear!"

Harry Wharton cast loose the painter. Bob Cherry pushed off with the boathook! The Water-Lily floated out of the shade of the beech.

Billy Bunter, in the foliage above, heard it all; but really he could hardly believe his fat ears.

Not for a moment had he doubted that, if the Famous Five believed that he had gone overboard, they would hang on at the Golden Trout. He was prepared to stay in the tree while an alarmed and anxious search went on. When it was too late to push on that day, he was prepared to turn up and have another go at the excellent provender of the Golden Trout! But that the crew of the Water-Lily would push on, leaving it at that, had never occurred to his fat brain for a moment!

But they did!

The Water-Lily floated out into the river and came into Bunter's view as he blinked out in consternation from the branches.

Nugent was steering. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull were pulling. All the crew were grinning. Grinning—at such a moment. It was hard for Billy Bunter to believe his eyes, or his spectacles!

But really, the Greyfriars crew could not help grinning. For as the boat floated out on the Thames, they could see a fat face staring from the tree, with a pair of big spectacles flashing back the rays of the sun.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He realised that they were going. He realised that if he remained undiscovered, he was going to be left behind—on his own. There was only one thing to be done, and Bunter did it. He yelled:

"I say, you fellows!"

That yell reached every ear in the Greyfriars boat. But it seemed that

the Greyfriars crew were deaf. They did not heed.

"I say!" yelled Bunter. "Come back for me! I ain't drowned, you silly idiots—I'm up this tree!"

The boat pulled on, regardless.

"I say, you fellows!" shrieked Bunter.

But answer there came none.

The Water-Lily pulled on up the river, and Billy Bunter, in the beech-tree, was left staring after it—in a state of utter dismay and consternation.

Shadowed:

"THAT gang!" said Cecil Ponsonby, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, between his teeth.

"Better hunt cover!" grinned Gadsby.

Ponsonby gave his companion a glare, but he acted promptly on his advice. Pon did not want to meet the eyes of the Greyfriars crew. Since his last meeting with his old foes of Greyfriars, down below Wallingford, the dandy of Highcliffe had been very anxious to avoid another meeting.

One of Pon's eyes still had a shady ring round it. He had reason to suspect that it might become black again, if he established contact with Johnny Bull of the Greyfriars Remove.

It was about a mile above the Golden Trout that the two Highcliffe fellows spotted the Water-Lily. Pon and Gaddy were sitting under the trees at the back of the towpath, smoking cigarettes. A good many craft passed in their view, going up and down the river, and then they noticed a boat pulling in to the bank, and recognised it and its crew.

Pon rose to his feet and stepped out of sight behind a tree.

Gadsby lounged after him.

"Better cut!" he remarked.

"Hold on!" muttered Ponsonby. "They look as if they're going to tie up here. They're making for this very spot!"

"Want them to find us here?" asked Gadsby sarcastically.

"Hold on, I tell you!"

From behind a tree, Ponsonby watched the Greyfriars boat curiously and keenly.

Harry Wharton & Co. were pulling in, possibly with an eye on the wood by the river for camping. It was early for camping, certainly; still, there was no doubt that they were coming to the bank.

"Look here, don't be a fool, Pon!" muttered Gadsby. "If that fellow Bull gets an eye on you, your number's up! Think he's forgotten how you tied him up like a turkey at Monson's place down the river and left him for hours—"

"I'll do it again if I get the chance!" said Pon, rubbing his shady eye. "Don't be a fool, Gaddy! This may be our chance of getting back at them!"

"Oh, forget it!" grunted Gadsby. "What luck have you had so far? They'd have left you alone if you'd have left them alone. You had to

keep on hunting for trouble, and get vicious when you got the worst of it. Leave them alone now, and get out while the goin's good!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"You've mucked this trip up with your rowing and ragging!" yapped Gadsby sulkily. "Now we've had a row with Monson, and had to drop him—and I can jolly well tell you I like Monson's company better than yours!"

"Go back and join him, then!" sneered Pon.

"I jolly well would, only his father as good as told us to get out!" grunted Gadsby. "No wonder, either, after your silly games there! What's the good of stickin' here watchin' that crew? You can't touch them! There's five in that gang, and you'd jolly well funk any one of them! Think you can fool me?"

"Quiet, you fool, or they'll hear you!"

Gadsby snorted, and was silent. Gaddy had no love for the Greyfriars crew, but he was fed up with Pon's carrying on the feud in the holidays. As he had said, it had mucked up the Highcliffe trip on the Thames. There had been a good many encounters between the rival river parties, and Pon & Co. had undoubtedly had the worst of them. And Gaddy had little doubt that Pon was going to get the worst of the next if he asked for more!

"Lucky we haven't got the boat with us!" muttered Pon. "They'd spot us if the boat was tied up here!"

"They'll spot us, anyhow, if we stick here!"

"Quiet!"

Voices from the Greyfriars boat floated ashore to the ears of the Highcliffians. They heard the emphatic tones of Johnny Bull.

"Rot!"

"My dear chap—" said Bob Cherry.

"Rot!" repeated Johnny. "We could do miles before it's time to camp! What's the good of wasting half the afternoon?"

"Bunter—"

"Blow Bunter!"

"Well, the fat foozling frump deserves a jolly good lesson, and he's going to have one!" said Bob. "But we don't want to leave him stranded!"

"We do!" answered Johnny grimly. Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Well, perhaps we do, but we're not going to, old chap!"

"After that rotten trick—" hooted Johnny.

"Bunter hasn't sense enough to think how rotten it was! He was only thinking of lazing and grubbing! Give him a chance, old man!"

"Rot!"

"He will get a lesson!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "He's got a good mile to walk if he comes after us! A mile is enough for Bunter, Johnny, old bean!"

"He will crawl in on his hands and knees!" said Nugent.

"Rot!" said Johnny. "We thought for a minute that he'd really gone overboard. I'm fed up with him!"

Let's keep on and let him take his chance and be blowed to him!"

"Put it to the vote," said Bob. "This Co. always goes by the majority. Johnny, old man, you're in a minority of one!"

"Majorities never have any sense!" said Johnny Bull. "Majorities are always in the wrong!"

"My dear chap, the House of Commons is elected by majorities!"

"Well, ain't that proof?"

"Oh, my hat, perhaps it is!" grinned Bob. "But there's four votes for giving Bunter a chance, so just smile and look pleasant!"

Grunt from Johnny Bull.

However, he yielded the point.

The Greyfriars boat pushed in to the bank and tied on.

Five fellows stepped out on the towpath.

They looked at the shady wood that bordered the river at that point. There was no fence, and it was easy enough to enter. Neither was there a notice-board to be seen, warning off trespassers. Little shady glades under the spreading trees looked very inviting.

"Jolly place for a camp, if some disgruntled sportsman doesn't turn up and shift us!" remarked Bob Cherry. "There doesn't seem anybody about!"

"I shouldn't wonder if that man Spooner is keeping an eye on us!" said Johnny. "He knows where we are now, and he won't lose a chance of pinching the Water-Lily, if he can help it!"

"I dare say Spooner's miles away by this time!" said Bob. "He was going pretty fast, last we heard of him. This is a jolly place for a camp—and I vote for putting up the tent under those jolly old trees and chancing it! Bet you Bunter will come rolling along before dark!"

"Let's!" agreed Harry Wharton.

And the Famous Five began to sort the camping outfit out of the boat—little guessing that they were watched from a distance of little more than a dozen feet, and that every word they uttered reached the ears of their old enemies of Highcliffe.

Gadsby nudged Pon's arm.

"I'm jolly well goin'!" he whispered. "They'll be comin' into the wood in a few minutes—they'll spot us! You silly ass, do you want to get another eye like the one you got down by Wallingford?"

"Cut!" muttered Pon. "Don't make a row! Now we know they're camping here, it's all right. They seem to have left that fat fool Bunter behind, and they're goin' to wait for him here! This is our chance!"

Gadsby grunted, but he did not answer.

The two Highcliffians backed quietly among the trees, Ponsonby a good deal more anxious than Gaddy to escape discovery. In a few minutes they were deep in the wood, unseen and unsuspected by the Greyfriars crew.

"We can get out on the towpath again, farther on!" said Ponsonby.

"They don't know we've seen them—and they won't know—till to-night."

"What about to-night?" grunted Gadsby.

"They're going to lose their boat to-night!" said Pon, between his teeth. "We're putting up only half a mile from here. Easy as falling off a form to walk off with their boat and leave them stranded."

"It's always easy, the way you map it out!" said Gadsby sarcastically. "But it never works out easy! Better forget all about it!"

"Don't be a fool, Gaddy!"

"I won't!" said Gaddy. "Not such a fool, at any rate, as to turn out to-night to let you land me in another scrape! When I go to bed to-night, I stay in bed."

"If you funk those Greyfriars cads—" said Pon.

"Not so much as you do, at any rate!" retorted Gadsby. "I'll walk back now and say good-afternoon to them, if you will!"

Pon's reply to that was a savage scowl. And there was a grumble and growl of quarrelsome voices, all the way back to the riverside inn where the two Highcliffians were staying.

And when, that night, Pon prepared to go on the warpath, Gadsby was as good as his word—he went to bed and stayed there!

Bunter on His Own!

"**B**EASTS!" moaned Bunter.

Bunter had descended from the beech after watching the Water-Lily out of sight. Hours had passed since then. The fat Owl of the Remove sat on the bank, watching the Thames through his big spectacles—but not the Water-Lily. Big boats and little boats, sailing-boats and rowing-boats, skiffs and punts and dinghies, steam-launches and motor-launches—all sorts and conditions of craft, but not the Water-Lily.

And now, as the poet has remarked, the shades of night were falling fast, and the weary watcher was growing as tired of his vigil as Sister Anne.

It was borne in on his fat brain that the Water-Lily was not coming back!

Before this, it had dawned on Bunter that his little game had been spotted by the Greyfriars crew. He had calculated, as an absolute certainty, that if the juniors believed that he had gone overboard, they would hang on at the Golden Trout till they learned what had become of him. That calculation had been well founded; and Bunter had to realise that, somehow or other, they knew that he hadn't gone overboard!

(Continued on next page.)

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The unutterable beasts had pretended to be taken in, and had gone off without him; the fat Owl knew that now.

Evidently their idea was to give him a lesson not to play such tricks! Still, it was difficult for Bunter to realise that fellows who were honoured and blessed with his fascinating society could lightly part with it. They were bound to come back for him!

Only—they didn't!

When, at last, the September dusk deepened on the river and its banks, the helpless fat Owl had to make up his mind to it. They weren't coming back! If he wanted to rejoin the crew of the Water-Lily, he had to trail the Water-Lily up the Thames, like Mr. Spooner!

That meant walking!

And they might have gone miles and miles! And it was already getting dark!

Billy Bunter wished that he had made up his fat mind sooner, and started sooner; or alternatively, as the lawyers say, that he hadn't thought of that big idea at all!

These sad reflections came too late to be of any use.

Billy Bunter decided, at last, to start. There was, in fact, nothing else to be done.

It was a more attractive idea to put up at the Golden Trout for the night and hire a boat in the morning to trail the Water-Lily. But financial considerations stood like a lion in the path! Obviously that could not be done on three-halfpence!

But one thing was indispensable before Bunter started.

That was supper!

He was hungry again by this time!

Good as the prog was at the Golden Trout, it was not expensive. Five shillings would have seen Bunter through. But he knew that it was futile to offer the landlord three-halfpence and request him to await a remittance, at some indefinite date in the future, of the balance of four and tenpence-halfpenny! It was a matter, therefore, that required some diplomacy.

Bunter rolled up to the inn at last.

The rubicund landlord was smoking a pipe in his porch. He seemed rather surprised to see Bunter.

"My friends haven't come in yet?" asked Bunter, just as if he expected them.

"Are they coming back?" asked the landlord of the Golden Trout.

"Oh, yes; to supper!" said Bunter breezily.

"They ain't come in yet! It's getting late."

"I don't think I'll wait supper for them any longer!" remarked Bunter. "No good waiting, if they're going to be longer."

And Bunter went in and had supper.

He had a good supper! He was by no means sure of rejoining the Greyfriars crew in time for his next meal. It was only prudent to lay in supplies to last as long as possible.

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Exactly what the bill came to for that extensive supper, Bunter did not know! He was not, in fact, interested! Supper over, the fat Owl's fat thoughts were concentrated on getting clear without exciting the suspicions of the landlord.

Not that Bunter meant to be dishonest! Such a thought never crossed his mind. He would have scorned the idea.

But he had to have that supper on tick, and as he doubted whether the landlord of the Golden Trout would have given him tick, he had to give himself tick! Later, when he received a postal order he was expecting, he was going to pay that bill!

He would willingly have explained that to the landlord, only he knew, by sad experience, that people had a prejudice in favour of cash down!

It was more judicious to say nothing!

Having taken on board all the provisions that even his ample cargo space could accommodate, the fat junior rolled out into the honey-suckle-clad porch in a casual sort of way.

The landlord was still smoking his pipe there.

"Seen anything of them yet?" asked Bunter.

"No, sir."

"They're jolly late!"

"They are!" agreed the landlord.

"We shall be closing soon."

"I'd better see if they're coming!" remarked Bunter.

He had an inward tremor as he passed the red-cheeked gentleman in the porch. But the landlord was not suspicious. Bunter got by safely!

He rolled down to the landing-place.

But he did not bother about seeing whether they were coming. He knew that they were not coming! He turned up the towpath and walked quickly.

In a few minutes he was safe away from the Golden Trout!

Then he slackened to a slower pace.

It was a fine, starry September night! There was still a glimmer of sunset on the rolling river. Occasionally a boat passed. Many fellows would have enjoyed a walk up the towpath.

Bunter did not! Very soon after he had started he realised that, prudent as it had been to take aboard all the provisions he could carry, that extensive cargo did not make him feel like exerting himself.

For a quarter of a mile he kept going fairly well—urged on by the possibility of somebody belonging to the Golden Trout walking after him, with awkward questions about the payment of a little bill!

But he slowed more and more—he panted and puffed, he gasped, and he blew! After that gargantuan supper, Bunter did not want a walk—he wanted to go to bed!

No bed was available, unless, like the unhappy gentleman in the song, he found his lodging on the cold, cold ground!

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

He plugged on slowly and yet more

slowly. After another quarter of a mile, he was walking about as fast as when he had been towing the Water-Lily that morning.

At that hour nobody was about—Bunter had the towpath all to himself! He did not like shadows and solitude, all on his lonely own! Suppose, for instance, he met some ferocious tramp?

He halted at last!

The Greyfriars crew might be miles away! He was tired to the bone! He had to stop! He decided on taking a rest.

He sat down under a tree and rested his weary fat back against the trunk. His reflections were bitter. This was how those beasts treated him, after all he had done for them!

By this time, they would all be fast asleep in their tent, and here was he, sitting under a tree, with nowhere else to lay his weary head!

The solitude made him feel very uneasy. But the sound of a footstep on the lonely towpath made him feel more uneasy still.

He did not want to meet strangers at that hour of the night in a lonely spot. He pictured a huge, hulking tramp, and shivered.

The footsteps were coming along from the direction which Bunter had come.

The fat junior crammed himself close in the dark shade of the tree by the towpath, hoping to be passed unseen.

A man came in sight in the starlight. He passed along, without a glance in Bunter's direction, much to the fat Owl's relief. For, as the man passed, Bunter glimpsed his face in the bright starlight outside the shadow of the tree—and saw the foxy features and shifty eyes of Mr. Spooner.

His fat heart almost ceased to beat, till Shifty Spooner had passed on and disappeared up the river.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter when he was gone.

Billy Bunter had thought of going on, after he had had a rest. But the longer he rested the more disinclined he felt for going on. And the thought of running into Mr. Spooner made him shiver.

He remained where he was.

In the circumstances there was only one thing for Billy Bunter to do, and he did it.

He went to sleep.

No Luck For Pon!

PONSONBY grinned—a malicious grin.

The hour was late.

Half a mile away Gadsby was fast asleep in bed. But Pon was not thinking of sleep.

As Gaddy declined to take part in his nocturnal enterprise, Pon had set out by himself. After all, he did not need Gaddy's aid. There was not going to be any scrapping—Pon was going to take care of that.

He was going to get into the Water-Lily, cast it loose, and float away on the current—without a sound. When he was safe out of hearing of the Greyfriars camp, he was going to take to the oars, and



“I say, you fellows!” yelled Bunter. “Come back for me! I ain’t drowned, you silly idiots—I’m up this tree!”

pull up the river. Then he was going to hide the boat in a certain spot where there were thick willows, and walk home. And he was going to put in an extra half-hour ragging the boat—as destructively as he could, leaving everything in it that was breakable in a smashed-up state.

On the morrow Harry Wharton & Co. could hunt for their boat. If they thought it had drifted loose they would hunt for it down the river. If they guessed that it had been walked off, they could choose which direction in which to hunt for it—they would not be likely to find it again very easily.

It seemed good, to Pon.

And it seemed all plain sailing. Standing on the towpath by the wood he looked towards the Greyfriars camp. The tent glimmered under the trees. They were in the tent, sleeping. Pon was not likely to wake them.

The boat was tucked under the bank, a mere dark shadow among the rushes and half-hidden by a straggling bush. Had he not known that it was there, Pon might have passed it unnoticed.

It had been real luck, to have been on the spot when the Greyfriars crew landed to camp. For whatever reason that fat fool Bunter had stayed behind, it had turned out well for the revengeful dandy of Highcliffe.

For two or three minutes Ponsonby stood there gazing at the tent under the trees and listening, with a malicious grin on his face. Then he crept down the bank to the boat.

He scanned it carefully before he stepped in. From what he had heard the Greyfriars fellows saying that afternoon, they thought that some boat-thief was after the Water-Lily—a man they called Spooner. Pon had a misgiving one of them might be sleeping in the boat on guard. If that was the case, Pon had to make new plans—under difficulties.

But he was soon reassured on that point.

The Water-Lily was vacant, and he stepped quietly into it. It rocked slightly, with a faint wash of water on the rushes. But he trod very carefully and cautiously.

He looked about him for the oars to place in readiness for pushing off. Then he gritted his teeth.

Neither oars nor boathook were to be seen. Evidently they had been taken out of the boat and were out of Pon’s reach, unless he was prepared to run the risk of awakening the campers.

Pon had to give up his idea of pulling the Water-Lily up the river and hiding it in those willows.

He would willingly have kicked Spooner, whoever Spooner was. No doubt it was because of Spooner that the Greyfriars crew had taken this precaution.

But if he could not get the Water-Lily up the river he could get it down the river on the current. It was not what he had planned; but it was the next best. He could steer it down on the current and shove it into some backwater. And at that point the current was hard and fast. Then, as

he groped for the painter, he caught his breath as he heard a clink.

He had taken it for granted that the boat was tied up by the ordinary painter. But as he groped at that painter in the shadows, there was a faint clink of metal. It was a chain that he grasped.

The rage in Pon’s heart at that discovery could not have been expressed in words.

The boat was not tied up by a rope. It was secured by a chain, and the chain was padlocked round the root of the bush on the bank.

No doubt this also was on account of the unknown Spooner.

Spooner, whoever he was, had put paid to Pon’s whole scheme.

He could have cut a rope. He could not cut a chain. He could have unfastened a knot. He could not unfasten a padlock.

He dreaded for some moments that that single faint clink might have reached a wary ear in the tent. But from the tent there was no sound of alarm.

Pon crouched in the boat; the bank, which was high at that point, hiding him, if a glance had been turned in his direction.

He breathed hard and deep with rage.

How was he going to deal with this? The chain was thin, but it was strong; one end was securely riveted, the other padlocked. He could no more have shifted the Water-Lily from its moorings than he could have

shifted the solid bank of the Thames itself.

Gadsby had told him that it was always easy the way he mapped it out, but that it did not work out as mapped. Gaddy had been right. Pon had to realise that he had had his night-walk and all his trouble for nothing.

Nothing was left but to do as much damage as he could to the boat before he sneaked away defeated. And that would have to be done very quietly.

There seemed to be nothing that he could drop overboard. Everything seemed to have been taken out of the boat.

He dared make no attempt on the chain or padlock. It was useless—and the sound of the chain clinking was very likely to awaken sleepers—they were not very far away. As for the key of the padlock that was in some pocket inside the tent—it was no use thinking of that.

For quite a long time Ponsonby stayed where he was, bitterly chagrined, but realising savagely that there was nothing doing.

But to sneak away defeated, having done nothing at all, was too bitter a pill for him to swallow. He stood up in the boat and looked towards the tent. It would be something to cut the ropes and leave the tent tumbling down on the Greyfriars juniors when he scuttled off.

But Ponsonby gave only one glance towards the tent—and then ducked swiftly out of sight. For that glance showed him a moving figure.

Pon's heart beat quite unpleasantly as he ducked. There had not been a sound—not the slightest sound—but someone was moving between the tent and the towpath. If they found him—

He crouched low in the boat, hoping that, whoever it was, he would not come across the towpath to look into the Water-Lily. There was no escape for Pon; he could not get out of the boat without revealing himself fully in the starlight.

He heard a faint sound, a rustle in the rushes. Then a shadow loomed over the boat.

Pon's eyes fixed on a face on which the stars gleamed; a foxy, shifty, cunning face; not the face of one of the Greyfriars party.

It dawned on his mind that it was not one of the Greyfriars party who was up, it was some stealthy pilferer lurking about the camp—a boat-thief, most likely.

But he had no time to think about it. For as he saw that shifty face the man saw him, and in a second he was in the boat and grasping Ponsonby with a fierce and savage grip.

"Why—what—who—?" Ponsonby struggled in the grip of his captor.

"Keep quiet!" came a husky, whispering voice. "You make a sound to wake the rest—jest a sound—and you go into the water. Suffering snakes! I'd drowned yer as soon as look at yer. Keep mum!"

And Ponsonby, choking for breath, frightened almost out of his wits in the ruffian's sinewy grasp, kept mum—mum as an oyster!

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A Precious Pair!

SHIFTY SPOONER gripped the dandy of Highcliffe by the neck, and he gripped hard.

Pon could not have called out if he had wanted to.

For a moment or two, indeed, he did want to! In that sudden, savage grip, he would have been glad to call even the Greyfriars fellows to his aid. He was scared, to the marrow of his bones.

But Shifty's savage grip kept him quiet.

The boat rocked gently, sending a wash of water in the rushes. Ponsonby lay helpless under the grip of the ruffian, staring up in terror at the savage, threatening face. On his own face, upturned, the stars gleamed; and Shifty Spooner, as he glared at him, gave a start of surprise.

Finding Pon in the boat, he had taken it for granted that one of the Greyfriars crew was sleeping on board the Water-Lily. Now he saw that this was not one of the Greyfriars crew.

He stared down at Ponsonby in astonishment.

"Suffering tadpoles!" His voice came in a whisper. "You ain't one of that lot? What?"

Pon moved his head to signify that he was not.

"Friend joined up with them?"

Pon made that negative sign again.

"Suffering centipedes!" breathed Shifty Spooner. "You arter this here boat, same as me?"

Pon made an affirmative sign this time.

His spasm of terror had passed. He realised that he was—in a double sense—in the same boat with this unknown pilferer of the night! They were both at the same game!

Indeed, remembering what he had heard that afternoon, he could guess who the man was—the man they had called Spooner.

Shifty's grip on him relaxed a little.

"Keep quiet!" he whispered. "You wake 'em and in you go! You can speak in a whisper! You ain't one of them! You're 'ere boat-pinching, the same as me!"

"Yes!" breathed Pon.

"My eye!" said Shifty. "You're young for that game—and well-dressed, too! I've seen all sorts—but I shouldn't have took you for a boat-pincher!"

Pon crimsoned. It was true that he had been going to make off with the Water-Lily; but he was not going to pinch it in the manner of Mr. Spooner.

"Let me go!" he muttered.

"Ketch me!" said Mr. Spooner.

"I'll help you, you fool!" said Ponsonby, in a fierce whisper. "I came here to get away with this boat, to pay them out! I owe that gang a grudge, and I was going to take the boat away and hide it. Do you think I was going to steal it, you idiot?"

"Oh!" said Mr. Spooner.

Pon certainly did not look the part of a boat-thief! Mr. Spooner could understand, easily enough, that he

had not been going to steal the boat, but to play a malicious trick.

"I get you!" said Shifty. "Well, if you want that gang to lose their boat, you're all right. They're going to lose it, and you can lay to that! You can sit there and keep mum! Mind," added Mr. Spooner, with a return of suspicion and threatening, "you let out one yelp and you go into deep water!"

"I'll help you all I can!" muttered Ponsonby. "Don't make a row and wake up the rotters! The boat's fastened on a chain. Mind it doesn't clink!"

Shifty grinned.

"Ho! That's why you ain't got away with it yet, I s'pose!" he remarked. "You wasn't wise to that! Well, I was—I've been 'ere before, you see."

"Can you get the padlock unfastened?" breathed Ponsonby.

"Can a duck swim?" answered Mr. Spooner.

Ponsonby sat up, his eyes gleaming. He had had a fright, and he had an ache in his neck where Shifty had gripped him. But he was glad of the encounter now! He did not care what became of the boat, so long as it was taken far out of reach of its owners. In the hands of a boat-thief it was likely to be taken far enough.

"Good!" he muttered. "But, I say, they've taken the oars ashore."

"I can see that! There's a current in the river!" answered Mr. Spooner.

"If I get clear afore they wake up, O.K. It runs strong on this reach."

"Then I'll get out—"

"You won't!" said Mr. Spooner. "You'll sit there and keep mum! I ain't taking chances! I'll put you on the bank as soon as it's safe—you don't fancy I want to pinch you along of the boat, do you? But I ain't taking no chances 'ere! Keep quiet!"

Ponsonby sat quiet.

Shifty gave the tent a keen, suspicious glance, and then moved into the bows of the Water-Lily, stealthy as a cat.

Ponsonby watched him in silence.

He was still feeling uneasy; but he knew that he had nothing to fear from this man. He was very keen to see the Water-Lily drift away from the bank. He was powerless to deal with the padlock—but he could guess that the shifty man had come prepared to deal with it. There was no sound, either, from the padlock or the chain; but suddenly he felt that the boat was in motion. With a hand on the bank, Shifty Spooner pushed it out into the river.

Ponsonby's eyes gleamed.

The Water-Lily was floating away from the bank.

Shifty gave him a glance and made a gesture—and Ponsonby nodded and sat in the stern seat to steer.

He steered out, and the current caught the boat and pushed it on, slanting out into the river. The current was strong, and it went fast.

The distance from the shore increased. Pon looked back—and the wood where the Greyfriars tent stood under the trees was only a dark blur in the starlight. The boat gathered speed.

Pon gave a low chuckle.

"All right now!" he said

"I believe you!" said Mr. Spooner, grinning. "I've been arter this boat long enough—now I got it, and you can lay to that, young feller-me-lad!"

"You're Spooner?" asked Pon, staring at him curiously.

Shifty gave him a sharp, suspicious look.

"What do you know about a covey?" he demanded.

"I've heard those Greyfriars rotters mention your name, that's all. I'm glad you've got away with it. It's nothing to do with me what you do with the boat—but if they lose it for good, all the better!" said Ponsonby viciously.

"You're a nice, kind-hearted young covey, you are!" said Mr. Spooner, staring at him.

"I've got it up against that crew!" said Ponsonby. He passed a hand over his shady eye. "One of them gave me this!"

Mr. Spooner chuckled.

"They're 'andy at 'andling a bloke!" he agreed. "Well, I done with 'em now, and good riddance, too!"

"You won't make much speed without oars!" said Ponsonby.

"I'll get fur enough, and you can lay to that!" said Mr. Spooner.

Shifty did not explain to Pon—what Pon certainly did not think of guessing—that his interest was not in the boat itself, but in a certain secret he knew about that boat which no one else knew.

Pon took it for granted that Shifty was going to make off with the boat for its value. But Shifty's object was to search the stern locker—for a secret reason known only to Shifty himself!

Whether Shifty kept possession of the Water-Lily depended on whether Shifty had time, and opportunity, for changing its appearance, so that it could not be recognised when watched for. Once he had got at what he wanted, Shifty did not care very much what became of the boat itself.

That, of course, Ponsonby did not dream of guessing—he did not even know that Mr. Spooner had once been the owner of the Water-Lily in the days before the stone-jug had claimed him.

The Water-Lily drifted on, getting farther and farther away from the camp where the unsuspecting Greyfriars party slept.

"'Arf a mile will do it!" said Mr. Spooner, watching the bank. "If they wake up and miss their boat, that'll see it safe. You can steer in, I reckon." He pointed to the bank down the river, where a mass of trees at the back of the towpath cast a deep shadow over the water. "That's a spot that'll suit us—I ain't looking for publicity, I ain't, if anybody's about."

Ponsonby nodded, and steered for the bank.

The Water-Lily slanted in.

Glad as he was to see his own scheme carried out by other hands, Pon was rather anxious to see the last of Mr. Spooner. He was not very particular; but the company of a boat-thief, liable to be run in by

the police, was not the sort of company he wanted.

The boat bumped into the bank, in deep shadow under the branches on the shore.

Ponsonby jumped out.

To his surprise, Mr. Spooner stepped out after him and made the boat's painter fast to a root on the bank.

Pon had supposed that the boat-thief, after landing him, would get away as fast as he could.

Unaware that Mr. Spooner's main object was to search in the stern locker of the Water-Lily, without loss of time, for something that only Mr. Spooner knew was there, he was puzzled.

"Aren't you going on?" he asked. "They'll be after the boat the minute they miss it—and they'll know it came down the river——"

"I'm seeing you off first!" said Mr. Spooner. "Get going!"

Pon could only stare at him. He saw no reason whatever why Mr. Spooner should want to see him clear of that spot!

It looked as if Spooner intended to remain there for a time and did not want any eyes on him!

Pon could not guess why; and Shifty certainly did not intend to tell him! Shifty had a strong objection to any eyes seeing what he was going to disinter from a secret hiding-place in the Water-Lily's locker! Shifty intended to be sure that he was alone and unobserved when he started operations on that locker.

"I'm going!" said Ponsonby. "But I——"

"Beat it!" said Mr. Spooner briefly; and the look on his face became so extremely disagreeable that Ponsonby started up the towpath without another word.

At a short distance Ponsonby looked back, curious to see what Mr. Spooner was up to.

He gave a jump as he saw that Spooner had followed him up the towpath.

"Spying on a covey, what?" asked Mr. Spooner.

He came towards Ponsonby with an expression so threatening that Pon took to his heels and ran up the towpath.

Mr. Spooner stood watching him till he disappeared, and then turned to walk back to the boat.

Beaten Again!

BILLY BUNTER blinked.

He made no sound.

He hardly breathed.

Sitting against the tree in the black darkness under the branches, Bunter had slept uneasily for an hour or two. But he had wakened. There was a cold wind on the river; the grass on which he sat was chilly; and a variety of insects were crawling over him.

Bunter was pretty good when it came to sleeping; even Rip Van Winkle had little on Bunter in that line. But chilly earth, a cold wind, and nips from crawling insects, made

slumber impossible for long, even to the fat Owl of the Remove.

Again and again he nodded off, only to wake again; and he sat dismally blinking at the river and longing for morning.

The chilly earth being altogether too chilly for comfort, Bunter rose to his feet at last, and stood leaning on the tree, debating in his fat mind whether to tramp on up the towpath or wait for dawn. The knowledge that Shifty Spooner was somewhere ahead of him on the towpath made him more inclined to wait for daylight. And then suddenly he saw Mr. Spooner!

Under the trees it was as black as a hat! But out on the river, the starlight gleamed clearly.

Billy Bunter could hardly believe his eyes, or his spectacles, at the sight of a boat—a boat he knew—slanting in to the bank towards the mass of dark trees under which he stood, with Mr. Spooner sitting in it, and Ponsonby of Highcliffe steering.

It was not so surprising to see Shifty in the Water-Lily—he knew that Shifty was after his old boat, like a dog after a bone. And this time he had got away with it. But it was amazing to see the dandy of Highcliffe in such company.

With his eyes popping through his spectacles, the amazed fat Owl watched the boat bump on the bank and saw Shifty and Ponsonby land, and Shifty tie the painter.

He tried to suppress his breathing. Shifty Spooner was standing in the starlight not a dozen feet from him—the least sound might have alarmed him.

What he might have done, if he had seen Bunter there, the fat Owl did not know; but he had no doubt that it would have been something very unpleasant. And his dread of Ponsonby was only a little less than his dread of Mr. Spooner.

The scared fat Owl was as silent as a mouse with a couple of cats at hand.

The voices, as Spooner and Ponsonby spoke, came clearly to his ears. Amazing as it was to see a Highcliffe man in such company, he realised that Pon had had a hand in pinching the Greyfriars boat.

Silent, hardly breathing, he watched Ponsonby walk away up the towpath—with Spooner following him till he looked back.

He gasped with relief when they went.

But he knew, from what he had heard, that Shifty would be coming back; he was only seeing Pon safely off the scene; why, Bunter knew no more than Ponsonby did.

The fat Owl of the Remove blinked after them.

He saw Mr. Spooner standing watching Pon as he scuttled off about a dozen yards up the towpath. His back, of course, was to Bunter.

Billy Bunter's fat heart beat.

Had Shifty been close at hand, the fat Owl would have hugged cover, only hoping that the shifty eyes would not fall on him.

But Shifty was a dozen yards

away, his back to Bunter, and obviously utterly unaware that anyone was at hand in that lonely place, and at that late hour.

This was a chance too good to be lost!

Getting off in the boat and rowing up river was rather more attractive than foot-slogging! And the idea of recapturing the stolen boat, and thus proving to Harry Wharton & Co. beyond cavil that they could not possibly do without him, was also attractive.

Still more attractive than either was the knowledge that there was grub on the boat, solving the problem of brekker!

Bunter crept across the towpath to the Water-Lily.

He reached it almost in a moment. In another moment, the painter was jerked loose.

He gave a cautious blink up the towpath.

In the distance he glimpsed a running figure. Nearer at hand stood Shifty, his back to Bunter, happily unconscious that anything was going on behind him.

Bunter pushed the boat's nose out into the current, holding it by the stern! Then he clambered in, kicking at the bank as he plunged into the boat.

The Water-Lily shot out into the river, slanting away from the shore.

Bunter sat up, gasping. The boat was going at a rush.

He cast an almost anguished blink in the direction of Mr. Spooner. That gentleman, still blissfully oblivious of Bunter, was watching Ponsonby out of sight.

The boat, already twenty feet out, caught in the current, was drifting down the Thames.

Bunter groped for oars.

He made the happy discovery that there were none aboard, and blinked round the Water-Lily in dismay.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He had intended to pull up-stream. In point of fact, he could not have pulled against that current.

He gave Mr. Spooner another blink. Still he had a view only of the shifty man's back!

He plumped in the stern and took the lines. With his fat heart palpitating, he steered out into the river.

The distance from the bank widened and widened.

The current carried the Water-Lily along at quite a good rate—all the time slanting across towards the Oxfordshire shore! The pace was, indeed, as fast as Bunter could have rowed.

Again the fat Owl blinked back. He had covered a good distance.

The figure on the bank was hardly visible now. But he made it out and saw that Mr. Spooner, at last, was turning round.

His fat heart jumped.

But he was now nearer to Oxfordshire than to Berkshire. From Berkshire, distant as it was getting, came a sudden roar of rage that sounded to the fat Owl's startled ears like the bellow of an enraged bull.

Mr. Spooner had sighted him! Shifty had turned to walk back,

after seeing Ponsonby out of sight. But at the sight of the Water-Lily, far out on the river, with Billy Bunter on board, he started to run.

How that fat schoolboy could have turned up in that solitary spot in the middle of the night, was a startling and exasperating mystery to Shifty! Indeed, he almost wondered whether he was dreaming this, when he spotted Bunter in the boat in the starlight far out on the river.

The roar of rage that Shifty uttered, as he saw his prize slipping from his grasp woke the echoes far and wide.

He raced down the towpath.

"Bring that boat back!" Shifty fairly raved. "You 'ear me? I'll drown yer! Bring that there boat back, you bladder o' lard!"

The Water-Lily slanted on towards Oxfordshire.

Billy Bunter would not have dared to get within clutch of Shifty Spooner, if he had wanted to steer the boat back to the Berkshire bank. And certainly he did not want to.

Bunter was feeling better now.

In fact, he grinned when he blinked back at the dim figure on the distant bank.

He did not think that he had much to fear from Mr. Spooner, even if Shifty tried the desperate expedient of swimming after the boat. The Water-Lily was going fast; and Bunter had a long start.

Mr. Spooner stood on the towpath, staring after the disappearing boat, with an expression on his face that was positively homicidal. And, as he stared, the boat slanted under the branches of trees on the Oxford bank, and disappeared from Mr. Spooner's sight.

Whether the Water-Lily drifted on, under the shadow of those trees, or whether Bunter ran it into the bank, or into a backwater, Shifty could not see—and did not know.

He did not feel equal to swimming the width of the Thames to investigate.

Mr. Spooner was beaten once again—beaten fairly at the post—and he began to wonder whether he ever would get hold of the Water-Lily long enough to get at that secret hideout under the stern locker.

Mr. Spooner's feelings as he trailed wearily away were hardly to be expressed in words, though he tried to express them in very expressive words.

Bumps for Johnny Bull!

I TOLD you so!" Johnny Bull of the Greyfriars Remove had many good qualities. He had strong common sense, and plenty of it. But if there

was one quality in which Johnny Bull did not shine it was tact.

True that he had told his comrades so. But it was not a judicious moment for mentioning the fact, much less rubbing it in.

It was a clear September dawn.

In that clear September dawn five fellows stood on the Berkshire towpath, gazing at the spot where the Water-Lily had been tied up overnight.

They gazed with deep feelings at an empty space.



"Keep quiet!" whispered the ruffian, grasping Bunter and you go into the water.

"Spooner!" said Harry.

There was no doubt about that. Other pilferers might haunt the banks of the river, looking for a chance at a camping party's boat. But they were not likely to be provided with implements for dealing with padlocks. The padlock had been picked. It was the handiwork of that shiftiest of shifty individuals, Mr. Spooner!

"Then he was after us!" said Bob blankly.

"Pretty plain now," said Frank Nugent. "I fancied he had cleared off at the Golden Trout as fast as he could go. But—"

"I told you so," remarked Johnny Bull placidly.

"Don't be an ass!" said Bob.

"Lost your memory?" inquired Johnny. "Forgotten I told you that Spooner was keeping an eye on us, and that he wouldn't lose a chance of getting hold of the Water-Lily?"

"Dry up, old chap!"

"It was simply asking for it, to tie up only a mile from the place where we saw him last," said Johnny stolidly. "And I told you so, too. If we hadn't camped here to wait for Bunter—"

"We did!" snapped Harry Wharton.

"I know we did, and we shouldn't have! Bunter never turned up, after all. I expect he's fast asleep now in bed at the Golden Trout."

"He hadn't any money."



sonsonby with a savage grip. "Make a sound, to the water!"

"That wouldn't worry Bunter, unless they asked him to pay first."

"Oh, rot!" said Bob. "I expect Bunter came after us. I don't see what else he could have done. If he left it late, he's blithering idiot enough to pass the camp without seeing it, and we shall find him a mile or two farther up."

"Very likely," agreed Wharton. "But—"

"But we can't go up without the Water-Lily," said Nugent. "We've got to look for the Water-Lily—not for Bunter."

"If we hadn't camped here," said Johnny Bull.

"But we did!" roared Bob.

"I know we did. But if we hadn't we—"

"Is he wound up?" asked Bob.

"No good getting sbirty," said Johnny. "I told you so, and—"

"My esteemed Johnny," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "speech-

fulness is silvery, but silence is the cracked pitcher that goes longest to a bird in the bush."

"The question is—what are we going to do?" said Harry Wharton. "Whether you told us so, fathead, or whether you didn't, we've got to get our boat back. That rascal can't have got it very far without oars! Lucky we took the oars and the sail out."

"The luckiness was terrific!"

"I don't know." Bob stared out at the flowing river. "There's a pretty good current here. He can't have got it up the river, but he could have got it down at a pretty good rate!"

"Miles, at least," said Johnny Bull. "And he would pinch some oars from the first spot where he could pinch them. May have bagged somebody's mast and sail by this time. Miles below Benson Lock, very likely."

Johnny seemed to favour the role of Job's comforter. His four comrades looked at him very expressively.

"There's only one thing to be done," said Bob, "and that's to go after the boat without losing a minute's time. Let's get off."

"That's the programme!" agreed Harry. "If we can't find the boat, we shall have to report it to the police, and they'll get it back for us, sooner or later!"

"More likely later than sooner," remarked Johnny Bull.

"The lateness is better than the neverfulness, as the English proverb remarks," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the early bird catches the early worm, so let us proceed promptly."

"But if we go down the river—" said Johnny.

"Spooner must have gone down-stream, as he had nothing to move the boat

with, unless you think he came along with a pair of oars under his arm, or a towline coiled round his neck!" hooted Bob. "Our oars and mast and sail and towline are parked ashore."

"He may have gone up since, if he's got hold of some oars. He would, as he will guess that we shall go downstream after him."

Bob Cherry breathed rather hard.

"He must have gone down to begin with, anyhow. Come on, and don't jaw! You jaw too much, Johnny!"

"Well, I told—"

"Shut up!" shrieked Bob.

Johnny Bull shrugged his shoulders.

The five juniors started down the towpath.

The tent had to be left to take care of itself for the present. They could only hope that no pilfering tramp would come along while they were gone. The juniors were too

anxious about their missing boat to give very much thought to the tent and its contents.

They walked quickly down the towpath.

At that early hour few people were about, and few craft on the river. They scanned the shining Thames anxiously as they went; but they hardly expected to see anything of the Water-Lily, and they did not.

Their camp had been barely a mile above the Golden Trout, so it was not very long before they reached that hostelry.

The inn was opening when they reached it, and they found the red-cheeked landlord in the inn garden.

He eyed them in surprise. He did not seem so genial as on the previous day, and they soon discovered the cause.

"Where's the fat young gent?" he asked. "I see he ain't come along with you. P'r'aps you've looked in to pay for his supper."

"His supper," repeated Harry.

"Eight-and-six," said the red-cheeked innkeeper. "Walked off after supper, he did, without paying, and I ain't seen him since."

From which the Famous Five were able to guess that Bunter had started up the river after them, that he had started late, and that he had not forgotten supper before he started. They could only conclude that he had passed their camp without seeing it, and was now somewhere up the river.

Eight shillings and sixpence was sorted out to pay Bunter's little bill. Then the juniors explained the situation to the innkeeper, and inquired if anything had been seen of the Water-Lily.

Nothing, however, had been seen of it at the Golden Trout.

"Well, what's the orders, skipper?" asked Bob.

"We can hire a boat here," said Harry. "We'd better get a spot of breakfast, then get a boat and start searching down the river. If we don't have any luck, we must report the loss to the police—but we'll see what we can do ourselves first."

"I can do with some brekker," agreed Bob. "Ten-to-one we'll pick up some news of the Water-Lily along the river when we get going."

"Perhaps," said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, blow your perhapses, fathead! Can you think of anything better to be done?" demanded Bob.

"Oh, no! But if we hadn't as good as invited Spooner to walk in and pinch the boat—"

"Give us a rest!"

"Camping where we did was just asking for it—"

"Ring off!"

"Well, I told you so!" said Johnny.

Temper in the usually good-tempered Co. were not quite so equable as usual that morning! They had lost their boat—they had left their tent and other property unguarded, they had walked a mile before breakfast, and now Johnny, for the umpteenth time,

mentioned, that he had told them so. This time he mentioned it once too often!

The four did not speak; they acted, as if moved by the same spring, all at once! They collared Johnny Bull and sat him down in the inn garden, with a bump.

"Oh!" roared Johnny.

"Give him another!" said Bob.

Bump!

"Oh, you silly asses!" roared Johnny, struggling. "Ow! Are you getting shirty because a fellow had sense enough to tell you—yaroooh!"

Bump!

"I did tell you so, didn't I?"

Bump!

"I told you——"

Bump!

"Yow—ow! Oh!"

Then the four went in to the inn to breakfast.

Johnny, when he had got his second wind, followed them, and over breakfast he refrained from mentioning again that he had told them so!

All Right For Bunter!

"**H**I!" Snore!
"Hi! You!"

Snore!

"You with the specs!"

Snore!

"You with the barnacles!"

Snore!

"You with the gig-lamps!"

Snore!

Billy Bunter was fast asleep. Billy Bunter had not awakened and turned out early, like the Famous Five. Bunter had lost a lot of sleep the night before, and if he was dreaming, as he snored in the boat, he was not dreaming of early rising.

The Water-Lily was tied up on the Oxfordshire side. There was no towpath there, and a thick wood, belonging to some riverside estate, grew down to the water's edge.

Bunter, having escaped from Mr. Spooner, had not felt disposed to continue on his voyage down the Thames. The Water-Lily had drifted some distance under the jutting branches from the bank in black darkness till a low-hanging bough had banged on Bunter's head! Bunter had grabbed at that bough and tied the painter to it. After which, as there was nothing else to be done, he had gone to sleep in the boat.

He was still fast asleep when the sun rose over the Thames. He snored on as the sun rose higher in a blue sky.

Had he awakened and sat up and looked across the river he might have seen a familiar sight on the Berkshire side—the red tiles and chimney-pots of the Golden Trout, a little lower down the river.

But he did not awaken, and he did not sit up or look across the river. He slept, and he snored!

He might have continued to do so for hours had he not been interrupted. But interruption was at hand.

From the trees on the bank a man

in gaiters stared at him and at the boat, and hailed him, in rising tones.

Floating under the branch to which it was tied, the Water-Lily was out of reach of the man on the bank. So he could only shout at Bunter. He shouted, and shouted, and shouted!

Shouts had no effect on Billy Bunter when he was fast asleep! To each remark of the man in gaiters he answered only with a rumbling snore.

"My eye!" said the man in gaiters. "Here, you!" he roared. "You can't tie up your boat here! This is private property. Get out of it! You with the specs! You with the gig-lamps! You bladder of lard! You fat trout! You! Get out of it!"

Snore!

The man in gaiters breathed hard. He could not reach Bunter and he his voice had no effect. He looked round for something to throw.

He loosened a grassy turf from the bank, took careful aim, and dropped it neatly on the fat face in the boat.

That awakened Billy Bunter!

He started out of slumber with a bound and a startled splutter.

"Ooooooogh!"

Bunter sat up, blinking. He set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose and blinked round dizzily.

"Here! You! Woke up at last!" roared the man in gaiters. "Get out of it! You're trespassing here! You'll get run in! Hear that?"

"Did you chuck something at me?" howled Bunter, rubbing earth from his fat features. "Beast!"

"Get out!"

"Shan't!"

The man glared threats.

Bunter, seeing that he was out of reach of the man in gaiters, glared defiance. Bunter did not like being awakened early in the morning, especially by a turf dropping on his features.

"You can't tie up your old tub here!" shouted the man in gaiters.

"Yah!"

"I'd give you yah if I could get at you!" said the man in gaiters. "If I have to fetch a boat and come round to you you'll know it!"

"Beast!" retorted Bunter. "Mind your own business! I shall stay here as long as I jolly well like. Have you bought the Thames? Take your silly face away! It worries me!"

Bunter, out of reach of the man in gaiters, was bold as a lion! He hurled defiance at him.

"My eye!" said the man in gaiters. "If I could get at you——"

"I'd tip you into the water if you could!" retorted Bunter. "Yah! Take your ugly mug away, for goodness' sake!"

The man in gaiters gurgled.

"All right!" he gasped. "You just wait till I get a boat! You hang on till I come along! That's all—just wait!"

He disappeared into the wood.

Billy Bunter reached at the painter. How long that man in gaiters might be getting a boat, Bunter did not know, but he knew

that he did not want to wait for his arrival.

He untied the painter, gave a shove at the bough, and sent the Water-Lily rocking out into the Thames. In a moment he was out of the shade of the branches, in the sunshine.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

Far away across the river he glimpsed red roofs and chimney-pots that had a familiar aspect.

How far he had drifted down the river after getting away from Shifty Spooner, Bunter had no idea, but he could see now that he had drifted nearly as far as the Golden Trout.

He gave that distant but hospitable spot a longing blink.

Breakfast at the Golden Trout was an attractive thought. In the daylight, with craft appearing on the river every few moments, Bunter was not afraid of Shifty Spooner, even if he was still about.

But he was rather afraid of the landlord of the Golden Trout. He realised that there might be some awkwardness over that little matter of the bill for his supper the previous evening.

But a moment's reflection reassured him. He had the boat with him now. In case of any difficulty the landlord could—and would—keep that boat in security for payment! So that was all right!

Bunter grinned.

He was going to the Golden Trout! He was going to wait there—with the Water-Lily—till the Greyfriars crew turned up. When they searched for their boat they would find it at the Golden Trout—and Bunter with it! That was rather a better programme than hunting for them up the river. If he ran up a bill while he waited for them they could settle it—little enough, too, after all he had done for them! The Golden Trout was Bunter's destination!

A boat came by, and a young man in it stared at Bunter in the Water-Lily, probably surprised to see him adrift without oars. He pulled closer.

"Want a hand?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. Thanks!" gasped Bunter. "The silly fools took the oars out of the boat, you know! I say, could you give me a tow across to that inn?"

"Chuck over your painter!" said the young man.

Bunter chucked over the painter. The Good Samaritan secured it, and pulled across to the other bank.

There he cast off, gave Bunter a nod, and went on his way.

Billy Bunter tied on the post where the Water-Lily had tied on the previous day! He rolled into the inn garden with a cheery fat face. Breakfast was the next item on the programme for Bunter.

Where the other fellows were, and what they were doing about their missing boat, Bunter did not know—neither did he worry about that! It was all right for Bunter—which, fortunately, was all that mattered.

Seeing Is Believing.

"**B**LOW that man Spooner!" said Bob Cherry.

"Blow that ass Bunter!" said Frank Nugent.

"Blow the luck!" said Harry Wharton.

"The blowfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Johnny Bull opened his lips—and closed them again! Mercifully he refrained from mentioning once more that he had told them so.

There was some comfort in a good breakfast. Harry Wharton & Co. were getting a good breakfast at the Golden Trout to start the day on—before they began the difficult and dubious search for the missing Water-Lily.

Several times, since Shifty Spooner had started trailing them up the Thames, they had had narrow escapes of losing their boat! But luck had always befriended them—till now! Now it was gone—and they could not help realising that, in all probability, it was gone for good. It was a disastrous ending to their trip up the Thames—and their feelings towards Mr. Spooner were very deep.

"I wonder where on earth Bunter is now?" remarked Bob Cherry. "From what the landlord said, he must have started after us pretty late. He must have missed our camp and gone on."

"Goodness knows!" said Harry. "But we can't bother about Bunter now! We've got to find the Water-Lily—if we can!"

"Well, if we don't see Bunter again for a day or two, we may be able to bear it!" remarked Johnny Bull. "Shouldn't wonder if we don't see him again at all till next term at Greyfriars."

"I say, you fellows!"

The Famous Five jumped all together. They stared round at the doorway, from which direction that fat, familiar squeak proceeded.

Bunter rolled in.

"Bunter!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"The esteemed and idiotic Bunter!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Turning up like a bad penny!"

"I say, you fellows, fancy seeing you here!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, blinking at the juniors at the breakfast-table. "How did you get here? Never mind that, though—I'm hungry! I say, order some more coffee—and a dozen eggs or so—half a dozen rashers will do! I say, I'm rather sharp set!"

"So you've come back, you fat frog!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"So you didn't keep on up the river?" asked Bob. "Why didn't you? Too bad to let us think we'd lost you, and then to turn up like this!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"And we were just thinking that we mightn't see you again till next term!" sighed Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Now let's boot him for that rotten trick he played yesterday!" said Johnny Bull. "We've lost the boat, you fat, fozzling, frowsy frog!"

"He, he, he!"

"Do you think that's funny, you gurgling gargoyle?" howled Johnny.

"Well, what did you expect?" said Bunter. "You left me behind! You jolly well knew I was in that tree, and you left me behind! Spooner wouldn't have got that boat away if I'd been there! Your own fault entirely! You fancy you can manage without me? Well, can you?"

Billy Bunter blinked round.

"Waiter! I say, waiter! I'm waiting. I say, you fellows, I can tell you I'm jolly hungry! I say, as you're here, you'd better see the landlord about my supper last night—"

"We've seen him about that, you fat bilker!" said Bob. "Come on, you fellows, we'd better get going!"

"Eh? Where are you going?" asked Bunter.

"To look for the Water-Lily, ass!"

"He, he, he! You won't have to look very far!" chuckled Bunter. "It's tied up at the landing-place here."

"What?"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"You blithering owl, what do you mean?" roared Johnny Bull.

"Eh? Just what I say!" answered Bunter. "Think I'm pulling your leg?"

The Famous Five stared at Bunter! His statement was so extraordinary and so incredible that they could hardly doubt that he was leg-pulling.

"If it's there, who put it there?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I did!"

"You did!" yelled the Famous Five.

"Little me!" answered Bunter. "You see, I caught Spooner with it last night, and took it away from him."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked fixedly at Bunter. If they had been prepared to believe that the missing boat was tied up at the Golden Trout, certainly they were not prepared to believe that Billy Bunter had caught Spooner with it and taken it away from him!

"Boot him!" said Johnny Bull. "If he keeps on asking for it, why shouldn't he be booted?"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Can that fat fool have seen anything of it, while he's been wandering about?" asked Harry Wharton.

"If you've seen it, Bunter—"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.

"Rather!"

"Where did you see it, then?"

"Up the towpath, last night! Spooner and Ponsonby were in it—"

"Ponsonby!" howled the Famous Five.

"Yes; that Higheliffe cad! He helped Spooner pinch the boat, from what I could see!"

"What utter rot!" said Bob.

"Well, he was in the boat with Spooner, and they landed together," said Bunter. "I had my eye on them! I wasn't scared when I saw Spooner! Hardly! You fellows might have been—"

"You fat, fozzling, blithering owl, tell us the truth, if there's a spot of truth in you at all!" hissed Bob.

"Have you seen anything of the Water-Lily or not?"

"I say, I wish that waiter would buck up—I'm hungry! I'm telling you as fast as I can, ain't I? Spooner thought Pon was spying on him, and went after him up the towpath, and I got hold of the boat—" Bunter paused. "I mean to say, Spooner didn't follow Pon up the towpath—he was standing there by the boat, and I rushed at him—"

"You rushed at Spooner?" gasped Bob.

"Right at him!" said Bunter breezily. "I gave him my left! It was enough for him! Whether he was stunned or not, I can't say—but—"

"You frowsy, funky, fat frog, you'd be scared out of your wits, such as they are, if Spooner lifted his little finger!" howled Bob.

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter scornfully. "Perhaps I didn't get the boat away from him! Perhaps it isn't tied up to the post here now! All right!"

"Does that priceless idiot think we're going to believe that he's tied the Water-Lily up here, when we've only got to look out of the window to see that he hasn't?" gasped Nugent.

"Well, look!" said Bunter.

Johnny Bull breathed hard.

"I'll look!" he said. "I shan't see the Water-Lily, and if I don't, I'll give you something to tell whippersnappers for! I'll boot you all over Berkshire!"

"Yah!"

Johnny Bull walked across to the window, from which there was a view of the garden down to the towpath and the river beyond. He stared from the window at the Thames. Then he jumped!

"Oh crikey!" he ejaculated.

"See it?" grinned Bob.

"Yes!"

"What?" yelled Bob Cherry.

Four juniors rushed to join Johnny at the window. They stared at the river—and at a well-known craft that floated there, tied on the post near the big beach. They stared at it dumbfounded.

"The Water-Lily!" stuttered Harry Wharton.

"Our boat!" gasped Nugent.

"Or its giddy ghost!" gurgled Bob. "Do I sleep, do I dream, do I wonder and doubt—are things what they seem, or are visions about?"

"Well this tears it!" said Nugent. "It's the Water-Lily! We haven't got to hunt for it—there it is!"

"But how—" gasped Johnny Bull.

"The howfulness is terrific."

Harry Wharton & Co. turned back to Bunter.

The waiter had brought supplies, and Bunter was getting busy. With his capacious mouth filled to capacity, he grinned at the five amazed juniors.

"I say, you fellows—groogh!—seen it—urrgh! Perhaps you believe me now—unugh!"

"How did you get that boat?" gasped Bob.

"I've told you! I fought with

that man Spooner, and—and Ponsonby! Grooogh!" Bunter's voice came muffled through a large mouthful of provender. "I tackled the two of them together—uugh! I gave Spooner my left, and Pon my right! They had enough! I say, you fellows, this bacon is spiffing—tell the waiter to bring some more!"

Harry Wharton & Co. hurried down to the Water-Lily—leaving Bunter busy. How Bunter had managed to get hold of the Water-Lily and recapture it, and bring it to where it was now tied up, was an amazing mystery to them—a mystery that was not in the least elucidated by any of Bunter's statements on the subject.

But Bunter, somehow, had done it—for there it was! It was an immense relief to see the Water-Lily again—to be able to resume their voyage up the Thames, instead of spending that fine September day hunting for a missing boat! They could hardly believe that Billy Bunter had recaptured the stolen

craft. But seeing was believing—and they had to!

Quite a Surprise for Pon!

"GONE!" grinned Ponsonby. "Looks like it!" agreed Gadsby.

The two Highcliffians stood looking at the Greyfriars camp.

They had approached that camp very cautiously, not by the towpath, but coming through the wood behind. Pon had little doubt that the campers would be gone in search of their boat; but he was not taking chances.

But as soon as they came near the tent, they could see that it was deserted. Evidently the Greyfriars crew had cleared off in a hurry, leaving all standing.

"I fancy they've been gone a good time, too!" said Ponsonby. "They turn out pretty early—that gang! And as soon as they missed the boat, they'd go after it!" He chuckled. "I wish them joy of the hunt! That man Spooner's got it ten miles away by this time—I'll bet it wouldn't take him long to pinch oars from somewhere. He's passed half a dozen locks by this time."

"Nice sort of a man for a Highcliffe fellow to get mixed up with!" said Gadsby. "A boat-thief—"

"I don't care what he is—no bizney of mine!" Ponsonby shrugged his shoulders. "He's dished that crew—that's all I care about. And while they're hunting down the Thames for their boat, we'll attend to their tent."

He chuckled.

"You said that I shouldn't get by with it, Gaddy! Have I or not? Have we dished that gang to the wide, or haven't we?"

To which Gaddy had no reply to make! Really, it looked as if Pon had scored all along the line this time! Somewhere or other down the Thames, the Greyfriars crew were hunting for a boat they were not likely to find; and while they were absent, their camp was at Pon's mercy—and he was not going to be merciful! The dandy of Highcliffe had triumphed at last.

"Have the tent down first!" said Pon. "We'll roll all their things up in the tent, and slip the whole lot into the river!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Gadsby uneasily. "You can't destroy property like that!"

"Can't I?" grinned Pon. "You'll see! They can hunt for these things after they're tired of hunting for the boat!" He passed his hand over his shady eye. "By gad! I'll make the cads sorry for themselves! Get going!"

"If we're seen—"

"Oh, don't be a silly funk! Anybody who passes will think it's our camp, if they notice us at all. We can hardly be seen from the river at all! Get going!"

Gadsby cast an uneasy glance round.

The Greyfriars fellows had camped well back from the towpath. The

tent under the trees was not a conspicuous object. From out on the river, it could hardly been seen. Anyone passing on the towpath could see it—but, after all, anyone passing was not likely to guess that two young rascals were dealing with other people's property. It was safe enough.

"Get goin', I tell you!" snapped Pon; and he got going himself, opening a pocket-knife, and cutting tent-ropes, leaving the pegs in the ground.

Gaddy lent a hand.

The tent soon came tumbling down. Ponsonby spread out the canvas, and piled on it various articles—the outfit of the campers.

The whole heap was rolled up into a bundle. The bundle was tied up in the tent-ropes.

"Now drag it across the towpath and tip it in the river!" said Ponsonby. "I can shove it out with the boathook—they're not getting it back again if I can stop them! Lend a hand!"

"Look here—"

"Lend a hand, you fool! I don't suppose they'll be coming back, but we don't want to hang about here for ever!" snapped Ponsonby. "After this we'll get off up the river—we'll keep clear of the cads after this! But we're goin' to sink this lot in the river before we go! Will you lend a hand?"

"No, I won't!" said Gadsby sulkily. "It's too thick! You can rag their things as much as you like—but chucking them in the river is too thick! Don't be such a dashed hooligan, Pon!"

"You chicken-hearted nincompoop."

"Oh, shut up!"

"I tell you we're going to chuck the whole lot into the river!" roared Pon.

"Better not tell the world!" said Gadsby sarcastically. "I can hear somebody on the towpath—there's a boat coming up!"

"Wait till they've passed, then!" said Ponsonby, lowering his voice. "But when they've passed, this lot is goin' into the river, and you're goin' to lend a hand, you soft noodle, or I'm goin' to punch your head!"

There was a sound of tramping feet on the towpath. A boat was towing up, approaching the spot.

Even Ponsonby did not care to let eyes fall on him while he was pitching other people's property into the river. He waited impatiently for the boat to tow by.

What boat it was, Pon neither knew nor cared; assured that it could not be the Greyfriars boat with the Greyfriars crew!

That, of course, was impossible!

Pon had seen nothing of Billy Bunter the previous night; but, had he seen him, he certainly would not have guessed that the fat Owl of Greyfriars had recaptured the Water-Lily from Mr. Spooner! It was not likely to occur to him that Harry Wharton & Co., in possession of their craft once more, were towing the same up to their camp.

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That, however, was the case, little as Pon guessed it.

They had waited only for Billy Bunter to park his breakfast at the Golden Trout, and then, having obtained a rope, they started. Anxious to get back to their unguarded camp as soon as possible, they towed at a good speed, three fellows pulling on the rope.

The tramp of feet on the towpath came nearer.

"Oh gad!" breathed Gadsby suddenly.

He stared through the trees and glimpsed the boat and the three fellows who were pulling on the rope. His eyes popped as he saw them.

"What——" snapped Pon, glancing at him.

"Look!" gasped Gadsby.

Ponsonby looked!

Then he fairly bounded!

He looked—and looked again. He almost doubted his eyesight. Really it was hard to believe that it was the Water-Lily floating there on the sunny Thames, with Frank Nugent steering, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sitting beside him, and Billy Bunter squatting with a bag of pears on his fat knees.

"Oh!" gasped Ponsonby.

Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, and Bob Cherry were pulling on the tow-rope. They were coming on fast, and in another minute or two would be level with the camp.

"They—they—they've got the—the—the boat back!" stuttered Ponsonby. "They—they— Oh gad! Oh!"

"Goin' to chuck their things into the river now?" asked Gadsby sarcastically.

Pon did not answer that question! He was not likely to linger on that spot for that reason, or any other reason whatsoever.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a roar from the towpath. Bob Cherry had sighted the two figures at the camp. "Highcliffe cads!"

Ponsonby spun round and raced. After him raced Gadsby! They cut off through the wood helter-skelter.

"Pon!" roared Johnny Bull.

He caught a glimpse of Ponsonby as he fled. Immediately he let go the towline, and rushed into the trees.

"That gang here!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "I suppose Bunter did see Pon last night, then. We've only got back in time!"

"By gum! Look at our tent!" exclaimed Bob.

Johnny Bull was charging at full speed through the wood. He did not give the wrecked tent a glance. Johnny wanted Pon—and he wanted him badly. Ever since the day when Pon & Co. had left him tied up in the thicket down the river, Johnny had wanted to see Pon—and this was the first time he had seen him. He fairly whizzed in pursuit.

Ahead of him, Pon and Gadsby were running as if for their lives.

Johnny Bull glimpsed a straw hat among the trees, put on a spurt, and hurled himself at the wearer thereof. They went to the ground together.

"Now, you worm!" panted Johnny.

Thump, thump, thump!

"Pon!" yelled Gadsby. "Help me, you rotter! Come back, you cad! Pon—— Yarook!"

But Pon did not stop.

"Oh!" gasped Johnny. "You!" He did not want Gadsby.

He bounded up, leaving Gadsby sprawling and roaring, and rushed on again.

But that little delay had been enough for Pon. Pon had vanished! And Johnny, with an angry snort, gave up the chase, and tramped back to the camp.

Bunter all Over!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Say on, old fat man!" said Bob Cherry.

"We'll camp here," said Billy Bunter.

There was a wind on the river the next day, and the Water-Lily was under sail.

Owing to their fortunate return in time, the Greyfriars crew had found their outfit intact, though considerably rumpled and ruffled. And that—there was no denying it—was due to Billy Bunter and his happy recapture of the Water-Lily.

Billy Bunter was not one of those fellows who hide their light under a bushel. There was nothing of the shy violet about Bunter. Modest reticence was not Bunter's long suit.

But for Bunter, the Water-Lily might have been, probably would have been, hopelessly lost. But for Bunter, again, the Greyfriars crew would never have returned to their camp when they did—and they could guess what Pon had been going to do with the outfit he had bundled up in the tent canvas. But for Bunter, the Water-Lily wouldn't have been under sail now—the sail would have been dragging somewhere in the Thames. But for Bunter, in fact, everything would have been at sixes and sevens—if not at sixteens and seventeens.

Bunter told the Greyfriars crew this, not once, but many times.

It was Bunter's favourite topic.

It seemed likely to last him till the end of the holidays. It seemed likely to last longer than the patience of the Greyfriars crew. But they tried to be patient.

The Famous Five were not fellows to disregard a service rendered—especially such a tremendous service. It was true, as Bunter said umpteen times, that they had left him behind, and Bunter, in return, had saved their boat for them—heaping coals of fire on their heads. They had fancied that they could get on all right without Bunter. Well, could they?

Really, they rather fancied that they could. Nevertheless, but for Bunter, there would have been disaster all round. It was undeniable.

Bunter had his reward. Even Johnny Bull had given up the idea now of making Bunter do any work. Perhaps he was not sorry to retire

gracefully from so very difficult a task.

Anyhow, there was no longer any question of Bunter towing. If any fellow suggested Bunter towing, Bunter had only to point out that, but for him, there would have been no boat to tow. There were no longer any arguments on the subject of washing-up. A camping trip often seems like a long series of washings-up. Washing-up is, perhaps, the least enjoyable part of camping. Bunter cut that out entirely now, and nobody said him nay.

It was like Bunter, given a chance, to swell. All the Famous Five agreed that the only way to tolerate Bunter was to boot Bunter. But they could not boot the fellow who had recaptured the Water-Lily for them. Really they couldn't!

So the next day Billy Bunter basked in an unaccustomed atmosphere of polite tolerance.

Only when a fellow forgot for a minute did he say "Shut up, Bunter!" Any fellow who lifted a foot in a forgetful moment immediately put it down again. Bunter's wishes were regarded. And when Billy Bunter's wishes were regarded, Bunter was not the man to do his wishing on a moderate scale.

Now the Water-Lily was sailing merrily on a wind, when Bunter espied a spot ashore that he fancied for a camp. So he announced that they would camp there.

"Rot?" said Johnny Bull. "We're not losing this wind!"

Billy Bunter fixed his eyes and his spectacles on Johnny Bull. He looked him up, and he looked him down.

"Oh, all right!" he said crushingly. "Don't take any notice of what I want. I don't matter; I'm nobody. I'm only the fellow who got the boat back when you lost it—that's all."

"It's rather early to camp, Bunter," said Harry Wharton mildly. "If you're hungry, have a feed on board to go on with."

"That's like you," said Bunter. "Always making out that a fellow wants to eat. It's not much I eat at any time, as you fellows know."

"We're getting on fine, old fat bean," said Frank Nugent.

"You wouldn't be if Spooner had got away with the boat," said Bunter. "Who stopped him?"

"Oh dear!"

"But carry on," said Bunter sarcastically. "Don't mind me. Please don't mind me. I don't matter. You left me behind the other day—and what did I do? Got your boat back for you. But don't mind me."

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances.

Johnny Bull made a motion with his foot, but dropped it again at once.

"All right, we'll camp," said Harry.

"I should jolly well think so, when I've found a jolly good place," said Bunter. "I don't expect much from you fellows, but you might say

"Thank you!" when a fellow keeps on doing things for you. I must say that!"

"Bunter saved the boat for us," said Johnny Bull thoughtfully.

"I jolly well did!" said Bunter.

"But was it worth saving with Bunter in it?" asked Johnny.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Oh, let's camp!" said Bob. "After all, it looks a jolly spot—if somebody doesn't come and shift us off."

It did look a jolly spot as the juniors dropped the sail, and pushed in to the bank. It was a little meadow, rich and green, with a clump of willows round a pond on the farther side, and several tall and shady trees. The towpath was on the other side of the river, and that rich green meadow extended to the water's edge, with hawthorn-bushes growing along the river's margin.

Far in the distance a curl of smoke rose against the blue sky, doubtless from some farmhouse. No doubt that meadow belonged to the farm, and was used for grazing. But no sheep or cattle could be seen in it.

"If we could see anybody, we could ask leave," said Bob, standing up in the boat, and scanning the shore. "I dare say a few bob would fix it."

But there was nobody to be seen.

"Chance it," said Bunter. "We've chanced it before."

"We don't want a row," grunted Johnny Bull.

"Who's afraid of a row?"

"Well, you are, for one."

"Beast!"

"Well, if a man comes along, we can pay for permission," said Harry. "We've done that before, and no harm done."

"If there's a row——"

"If there's a row, you'll say you told us so," jeered Bunter. "We know all that. Speech may be taken as read."

Johnny Bull made an almost convulsive movement with his foot. But again he checked it. He was not going to kick Bunter—not, at all events, so long as he could possibly help it.

"Oh, it will be all right!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "Ten-to-one nobody will come along; and if anybody does, we'll square it all right."

"You can leave that to me," said Bunter. "I've got rather better manners than you fellows. Leave it to me to talk to them."

"Oh!"

"And if they want paying, we'll pay them. After all, we're on holiday. And what's the good of being stingy?" said Bunter. "I'd rather hand out all I've got than haggle about money."

"Think the farmer would let us camp here for three-ha'pence?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Look here——" roared Bunter.

"Oh, don't rag!" said Harry. "We're going to camp here. I dare say it will be all right. If we get shifted, we'll shift, that's all. Bunter in."

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The Water-Lily was brought to the bank, and tied on to a bush.

The Greyfriars crew landed in that attractive meadow.

All the crew, excepting Bunter, would have been glad to keep on while the wind held. Still, it certainly was a very pleasant spot for camping, and there were many little things that had to be done when the juniors had time to spare for doing them.

"You fellows get the tent up," said Bunter. "I'll have a stroll round while you're doing it. I want to stretch my legs a bit."

"You don't feel inclined to lend a hand with the tent?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull, where would that tent be now, but for me?"

"That's all right," said Harry Wharton hastily. "You go for a stroll, Bunter—we'll handle the tent."

"I should jolly well think so," said Bunter, with an indignant sniff. "I say, you fellows, when you've got that tent up, you can get supper. Don't be too long about it!"

Billy Bunter rolled off, leaving the Famous Five busy with the tent. They looked at one another. Frank Nugent grinned. Bob Cherry chuckled. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled a dusky smile. Johnny Bull snorted.

"That frowsy fat frog——" he said, in a deep voice.

"Well, after all, he did get the boat back!" said Harry, laughing. "Never mind the fat ass—up goes the tent!"

And up went the tent, and then the cooking-stove was set up, and the Famous Five busied themselves with getting supper—all ready for Bunter when it pleased that youth to come back from his stroll round the meadow.

Bunter in the Bullrushes!

"BULL!"

"Eh?"

"Bull!"

"I'm not Bull!"

"What?"

"I'm Bunter!"

"Bull!" roared the man in the smock-frock. "Bull!"

Billy Bunter simply stared at him. He had strolled round that green meadow. Billy Bunter was not much given to taking exercise, but after a day in the boat even Bunter was glad to stretch his little fat legs on land. He strolled round the meadow with his hands in his pockets in quite a cheery frame of mind—sagely keeping clear of the camp till all the work was done.

Not that Bunter would have done any. But fellows might have said "Pass those tent-pegs," or "Hand me that mallet," or something of the sort. Bunter preferred to give work a wide berth while it was going on.

On the farther side of the field was a gate. Having reached that gate, Bunter leaned on it. In the next field, he spotted a man.

The man was a farmer's man, in

a smock-frock. He stared at Bunter and seemed astonished, and indeed alarmed, to see him there.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

The man shouted to him, and waved his hand. He was at some little distance, and was leading a horse. He did not seem to want to leave the horse, but he came to a halt, staring at Bunter, waving and shouting.

"Bull!" he shouted. "Bull!"

Bunter wondered whether he was dotty.

Bull—Johnny Bull—was at the camp, helping get the stove going. If this man knew Bull, he could hardly be mistaking Bunter for him; besides, the fat Owl had told him that he was not Bull, but Bunter.

Nevertheless, the man went on shouting at him in the most excited manner.

"Bull!" he roared.

"He can't hear you from here!" howled Bunter. "If you want Bull, you'd better come across the field!"

"Eh—what? He's under those willows!" the man in the smock yelled. "You get out of it sharp!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him, and then blinked round across the meadow.

Bunter's vision was limited, even with the aid of his big spectacles. But he could see five figures at the camp by the tent, so he knew that Bull was there, and certainly not under the willows by the pond in the corner.

"Do you hear me?" shouted the man in the next field.

"I'm not deaf!" retorted Bunter.

"Get out of it sharp, then!"

"We're camping here!" called back Bunter. "It's all right—we're willing to pay! Ask your guv'nor how much he wants!"

"Bull!" roared the man in the smock.

"I tell you Bull can't hear you!" howled Bunter. "And there's no need to call him, anyhow!"

"You young idiot!" shrieked the man with the horse. "You'll see him in a minute if you don't clear!"

"Eh? I can see him now when I look round!" answered Bunter. "If you want him, I'll tell him, if you like!"

"You daft young idiot, if he gets after you——"

"Eh? Why should he get after me?" asked Bunter blankly. "He's a friend of mine! I'm going to camp here with him!"

"You're going to camp there with him!" yelled the man. "Do you know what you're talking about? Get out of that field while you're safe!"

Bunter could only blink at him. It was true that Bull was the least patient member of the Co. in dealing with Bunter. Still, Bunter certainly did not expect Bull to get after him, and he felt quite safe.

The man in the smock waved frantically.

"Run!" he roared.

"What for?" yelled Bunter.

"If you've got a boat, get back to



Assisted by the bull, Mr. Spooner cleared the gate in a flying leap!

it—or get over that gate, and I'll let you through this field! Haven't you any sense?"

"Wharrer you mean?"

"Bull!", yelled the man.

"If you want Bull, I'll go and tell him!" snapped Bunter; and he turned away from the gate and started to walk back across the meadow.

The man was so fearfully excited, and his gestures were so frantic, and his remarks so incomprehensible, that Bunter really wondered whether he was quite in his right mind. He walked quite quickly across the meadow—glad to get away from the vicinity of that extraordinary man in the smock-frock.

The man, leaving the horse at last, ran to the gate. He stood at it, and shouted after Bunter.

"Run!"

"Shan't!" squeaked Bunter over his shoulder. "Catch me running! Why should I?"

"Bull!" shrieked the man.

"Oh, chuck it!" snapped Bunter. "I'll tell Bull you want him as soon as I get back, but I'm jolly well not going to run! What's the hurry?"

And Bunter rolled on across the meadow at quite a leisurely pace.

From the camp, Harry Wharton & Co. were looking towards him.

They had heard shouting from the distance, though they were too far off to hear what was said. But across the meadow they could see a wildly excited man waving and shouting over a gate.

"What the dickens is up?" asked Bob. "That sportsman seems upset about something—doesn't like

campers, perhaps! But why the dickens can't he come along and say so, instead of yelling across a field?"

"He's pointing to those willows!" said Nugent. "Anything there that worries him?"

The man at the field gate, realising that his voice did not reach the camp by the river, was pointing, now that he could see that the juniors' eyes were upon him. His excitement was almost frantic.

The Greyfriars fellows, looking in the direction indicated by his pointing finger, could only see a clump of drooping willows by a pond.

"What's up, Bunter?" called out Bob.

Bunter was half-way back across the meadow now, and within range of a voice.

"Some lunatic, I think!" howled back Bunter. "He wants you, Bull."

"Me!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Yes, he said so. Blessed if I know what he wants you for, but he keeps on shouting out your name!" bawled Bunter.

"I've never seen the man before, that I know of," said Johnny Bull, staring across the meadow at the excited face over the distant gate.

"Look here, something's wrong!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "That man looks as if he's going to have a fit! There must be something in those willows—"

"Oh, look!" yelled Bob suddenly. There was a stirring in the willows by the pond. A huge head and shoulders loomed out into view.

Bunter, having his back to the spot, saw nothing, but all the Famous Five, looking past Bunter,

could see. They fairly jumped at the sight of a gigantic bull emerging from the willows that had hitherto hidden him from sight.

"A bull!" gasped Bob.

"Bunter!" roared Harry Wharton. "Run!"

The bull emerged into full view, lashing his tail.

The man at the field gate was positively frantic now. He waved, he roared, he yelled. His meaning was clear enough now to the Famous Five. He was trying to warn them that a dangerous bull was in the meadow. Now that they saw the huge beast, the juniors did not need telling that he was dangerous. They could see that at the first glance.

"Run, Bunter, run!" they all roared together.

"Shan't!" howled back Bunter.

Running was not in Bunter's line. He saw no reason for running—not having eyes in the back of his head—and he jolly well wasn't going to run!

"Bull!" shrieked Harry Wharton, almost as excited as the man in the smock-frock now as the bull, spotting Bunter in the meadow, started towards him.

"What?" howled Bunter.

"Bull—behind you!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, don't be an idiot!" yapped Bunter. "There's Bull, standing beside you! What the thump do you mean?"

"Run, you dummy!"

"Run, you idiot!"

Billy Bunter was still about ten yards away, the bull about fifty

yards. But the bull, heading for Bunter, was moving a great deal faster than the fat Owl!

With his head down, that bull made a straight line for Bunter—charging!

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry rushed at Bunter.

They did not want to get nearer the bull! But they had to take the risk. What would happen to Bunter when the bull reached him hardly bore thinking of! And it was certain that if Bunter did not put on speed the bull would reach him before he reached the river.

"I say, you fellows, what on earth's up?" hooted the fat Owl, coming to a halt as the two juniors rushed at him.

There was no time for speech.

Wharton grabbed him by one fat arm, Bob the other, and they rushed him headlong towards the camp on the bank.

Bunter roared protest.

"Ow! Leggo! Wharrer you up to? Beasts! Wharrer you dragging me about for, you silly idiots? You're pulling my arms out! Leggo! Yaroo!"

Unheeding, they rushed him on.

Behind them came the bull, going all out. That bull was accustomed to having that meadow to himself. Nobody, who knew that he was there, ever wanted to share it with him. Like other inhabitants of the Thames valley, that bull objected to trespassers in his domain. And if he got at those trespassers it was clear that they were going to be sorry that they had trespassed.

"Run!" panted Bob.

Johnny Bull, Nugent, and the nabob had started after their friends. Now they turned back! They could not help with Bunter; he had only two arms to be grabbed!

Johnny Bull pulled the Water-Lily

close in, ready for the other fellows to jump in when they reached it. Nobody was going to dispute the possession of that meadow with the bull! The Famous Five would have been in the boat already, but for Bunter! Johnny Bull dragged the painter loose.

"Will you stopit?" spluttered Bunter, hardly knowing whether he was on his fat head or his heels as he was rushed breathlessly on. "I say, you fellows, leggo! Gone mad, or what? Will you leggo? Will you leave off dragging a fellow about? You silly idiots, leggo!"

"Quick!" panted Nugent. "Oh, quick!" His eyes were fixed in anguish on the bull careering behind the three, drawing terribly nearer every second.

"Put it on!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Oh, quick—quick!"

They reached the bank.

At the water's edge Billy Bunter was pitched headlong into the boat. There was no time for ceremony. The bull was not a dozen feet away and coming on at a charge!

Bunter rolled and roared in the Water-Lily. After him leaped the Famous Five, landing in the boat anywhere and anyhow.

Johnny Bull had the boathook ready, and he shoved at the bank and the Water-Lily, with its crew sprawling fore and aft, rocked out on the river!

Bellow!

It seemed for a moment as if the charging bull would plunge into the water. But no doubt he knew his way about. He came to a halt and bellowed!

Rather a Wreck!

BELLOW!

"Oh crumbs!"

Bellow, bellow!

That bull seemed to have borrowed

his voice from the Bull of Bashán of ancient times, who was celebrated for his roaring! His bellow, fairly thundered across the meadow and the river.

The juniors scrambled up in the rocking boat. They were glad that there was an expanse of about a dozen feet of water between them and the bank. That bull, at close view, was simply terrifying to look at. It was a gigantic animal. Its red eyes gleamed with evil temper, and it was plainly disappointed by the escape of its victims. It stood and bellowed with rage.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "If that brute could get at us—Phew!"

"Nice spot for a camp!" panted Nugent.

"And everything's on shore!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "The tent and—"

"Anybody like to go back for the tent?" grinned Bob.

"The likefulness is not terrific!"

Billy Bunter sat up in a state of such confusion that he was quite dizzy. He jammed his spectacles straight on his fat little nose and blinked round him with an enraged blink.

"Beasts!" he roared.

"Oh, you fathead!" hooted Bob. "You blithering idiot! You pie-faced cuckoo! You potty porpoise! You—"

"Beast! Wharrer you mean by chucking me into the boat?" shrieked Bunter. "I'm bumped all over! What are you afraid of, I'd like to know? Gone mad?"

Bunter was still happily unconscious of the bull!

"You balmy bloater!" roared Bob.

"You silly dummy!" roared back Bunter. "Are you afraid of that man at the gate? He only wanted to speak to Bull—"

"What?"

"Bull! He kept on shouting out 'Bull!' That was all he wanted—Bull! Nothing to be afraid of!"

"Oh crikey!"

Bellow, bellow, bellow—from the bank.

"Look here, get this boat back!" hooted Bunter. "I want to get into the tent. It's going to rain!"

"Rain?" gasped Bob.

"Can't you hear the thunder?" howled Bunter.

"Oh scissors!"

"Deaf!" hooted the fat Owl. "There's going to be a thunderstorm! Get back at once, you silly idiots!" Bunter scrambled up and plumped on a thwart. "Now get back to the bank, do you hear?"

Bob Cherry grasped the fat Owl by the back of a fat neck and forcibly turned his spectacles towards the raging animal on the bank.

"Look, idiot!" he hooted. "Look, fathead! Look, chump! Look, dummy! Look, dunderhead! See?"

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter saw the bull at last. "That's the bull the man was shouting about, you potty porpoise! Not this Bull—that bull!"

"Oh crumbs!"

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Billy Bunter gazed at the bull in horror.

He realised that the roar he heard was not thunder; it was the roar of a bull that had been chasing him across that meadow! He shuddered from head to foot. His eyes bulged through his spectacles at the fearful-looking animal on the bank.

"It—it—it—it's a bib-bob-bub-bull!" stuttered Bunter.

"He's got it at last!" said Bob.

"Oh crikey! It—it was in that meadow all the time, and I—I was walking about— Oh crikey! I say, you fellows, get hold of the oars. Get away!" yelled Bunter. "Get away quick! Suppose he jumps!"

"Fathead!"

"The jumpfulness will not be terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bellow, bellow, bellow!

The bull careered up and down the bank, roaring.

The Greyfriars fellows watched him from the boat; the man in the smock watched him from the safe side of the gate across the meadow.

Nobody was in danger now, and the Famous Five were not likely to row away and abandon their property on shore. What was going to become of that property was rather a worry. Certainly they could not go back for it so long as the bull was in the offing.

"There he goes!" breathed Bob.

The bull turned his attention to the tent. It was not agreeable to the campers to see the bull charge their tent; but they were deeply thankful that they were not inside it.

Crash! went the tent, piling over under the bull's rush. The bull stumbled over among ropes and canvas, and poles and pegs, roaring with fury.

Scrambling up, in a state of frantic excitement, the animal wreaked its fury on the tent, tossing it again and again on its horns and trampling wildly on the wreckage.

The juniors could only watch that destruction of their property. It was impossible to do anything else. For ten minutes or more the bull raged amid the wreckage of the camp.

"We'll let Bunter pick out a camp for us again—I don't think!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"I told you—" began Johnny Bull; but he left the remark unfinished as Bob picked up the boat-hook.

Having tossed and gored and trampled everything that could be tossed, or gored, or trampled, the bull seemed to get tired of that amusement at last and rolled away across the meadow.

The juniors were thankful to see him go.

Bob punted the boat in. There was a howl from Bunter.

"What are you up to, you fat-head? We're not going ashore! Suppose he comes back?"

"We've got to get our things on board, ass—"

"Rot! howled Bunter. "Leave them there! Suppose he comes back? Suppose he jumps into the boat? Suppose—"

Heedless of Bunter's suppositions, the juniors pushed the boat in to the bank.

Bob Cherry jumped ashore.

"Look out!" yelled Nugent.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Quick, Bob!"

There was a bellow across the meadow.

Bob Cherry jumped back into the boat.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"There he comes! I say, you fellows, push off! I say— Oh crikey!"

The Water-Lily pushed off fast enough for even Bunter.

Once more the bull paraded the bank, bellowing.

The Greyfriars crew looked at one another in dismay. Almost everything was on shore—and they could not go on without almost everything. But it was clear that it was not going to be easy to recover their property.

"This means waiting," said Bob. "Push along the bank and tie up. We've got to wait till that brute goes."

Evidently there was nothing else to be done. The bull was in possession, and the bull was not to be argued with.

The Greyfriars crew punted along the bank, past the border of that attractive little meadow.

Farther on was a high fence at the river's edge, over-topped by branches. The painter was tied to a drooping branch, and the crew of the Water-Lily sat down to wait, while the sunset died away on the Thames, and the shades of evening fell; and a sound every now and then of snorting and trampling told them that the bull was still prowling round their abandoned camp.

The Limit!

"SUFFERING snakes!" murmured Mr. Spooner.

He beamed with great satisfaction.

Mr. Spooner was walking down the towpath in the sunset, with his eyes on the river.

Mr. Spooner at that moment was badly in need of a craft of some kind. He was in hope of seeing a boat tied up and left unguarded, in which case Mr. Spooner was prepared to take possession.

But nobody seemed to have left his craft about just to oblige Mr. Spooner. Shifty's hands had no chance of picking and stealing.

But as his eyes fell on a boat pulling up the river, and he recognised one of the two fellows who sat in it, his shifty face brightened. He came to a halt, and hailed the boat:

"Hi!"

Ponsonby and Gadsby glanced round.

The latter stared at Spooner. He had never seen the man before, and wondered why he was hailing and waving. But Pon knew him at once.

"Hi! Pull in, will you?" called out Mr. Spooner anxiously. "Give a covey a lift in that boat, matey!"

"Who the deuce is he?" asked Gadsby. "He seems to know you, Pon."

Ponsonby eyed Mr. Spooner rather uncertainly. If there was any use to be made of Spooner in his campaign against the Greyfriars crew, Pon was ready and willing to make use of the shifty man. Otherwise, he certainly did not desire to cultivate Mr. Spooner's acquaintance.

Shifty probably read Pon's dubious thoughts easily enough.

"I'm arter that lot, sir!" he explained. "I jest want a lift over the water. They're camped on the other side."

"Oh!" said Pon. "Pull in, Gaddy!"

"Is that the man—" began Gadsby.

He guessed now who the man on the towpath was.

"Yes, pull in, and see what he's got to say."

"Look here, Pon, if you want to chum up with crooks, I don't!" exclaimed Gadsby. "That man's a boat-thief—from what you said yourself. Keep clear of him!"

"No harm in hearin' what he's got to say," answered Pon. "Don't be a soft ninny, Gaddy!"

Pon gave a twist of his oar, and the boat slid to the towpath.

Gadsby grunted angrily, and sat with a sullen face as Pon threw the painter to Mr. Spooner, who caught it in a grubby hand.

Shifty gave Gadsby's frowning face a sharp look.

"Friend o' yourn, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, that's all right," said Ponsonby. "We're both up against those Greyfriars cads. What do you want?"

Mr. Spooner pointed up the river to the farther bank.

"I got 'em tabbed," he said. "About a mile up on the other side they've camped in a medder. I watched 'em from this side with a field-glass—see?"

"Where did you pinch the field-glass?" asked Gaddy unpleasantly.

Mr. Spooner took no heed of that question.

"I watched 'em landing their things, and putting up their tent. And then I hiked along to see if there was a chance of borrowing a boat."

"Borrowing it?" said Gadsby.

"A bloke what's down to his uppers can't be too particular, sir," said Mr. Spooner. "That gang's camped in a medder over the water a mile up. All I want is to step ashore on that medder. Once I get there, I can 'elp myself to a boat."

Gadsby's face crimsoned. Ponsonby, for his own reasons, might pal on with a man who made no secret of the fact that he was planning to steal a boat. It was not quite good enough for Gaddy. Indeed, it would have been hardly good enough for Pon, but for the fact that he forgot every other consideration in his bitter malice.

"That's enough," said Gadsby. "Push off, Pon!"

"Don't be a fool, Gaddy!"

"Do you mean to say that you're goin' to join up with a thief?" exclaimed Gadsby, his voice rising shrilly. "Why, you fool, you might be run in along with him! Do you want to finish these hols in a police court?"

"I've asked you not to be a fool! I shan't have a hand in anything of the kind! I don't see why I shouldn't give this man a lift if he wants one."

"Will you push off?"

"No, you dummy!"

"That's the limit, then!" said Gadsby, between his teeth. "You got us into an awful scrape down at Monson's place by chumming up with a racing man who turned out to be a crook! We were as good as kicked out by Monson's father. Now you're doing worse. You're not taken in this time. You're doing it with your eyes open. I'm not having a hand in it!"

"You can step in, Spooner," said Ponsonby, with a cool, contemptuous disregard of Gadsby.

Mr. Spooner gave Gadsby a sour look. He made a movement to step into the boat.

Gadsby rose to his feet.

Generally, he was too much under Ponsonby's domineering influence to kick. But this was, as he had said, the limit. He was, in fact, alarmed, as well as enraged and disgusted. Company like Mr. Spooner's was dangerous. And if Pon, in his revengeful malice, chose to disregard that

fact, Gadsby did not feel disposed to disregard it.

"If that man steps into this boat, I step out, Pon!" said Gadsby thickly.

"Don't be a fool, Gaddy! We're simply going to land him where he wants to go. Nothing to do with us what he does when he gets there. We land him and push off."

"That does it, then!" said Gadsby. He jumped to the towpath.

Shifty Spooner, unheeding, sat in the seat he had vacated. Shifty did not want Gaddy—he wanted a boat. But Ponsonby gave his pal a menacing look.

"Get back into the boat, Gaddy, and don't play the giddy ox!" he snapped.

"I'm goin'!" said Gaddy.

"You fool!" hissed Pon. "I'm only goin' to give the man a lift!"

"That's enough. I'm through with this!" said Gadsby.

Ponsonby compressed his lips.

"Get back to the inn, then, and wait for me!" he snarled.

"I'm goin' back to the inn," said Gadsby. "I'm goin' for my bag, and then I'm goin' to the railway station—for home. I've had enough of your holiday on the river, Cecil Ponsonby. I'm gettin' clear before we run up against the police!"

And with that, and without waiting for an answer, Gadsby tramped away up the towpath.

Ponsonby cast an evil and uneasy glance after him, and seemed to hesitate. And Mr. Spooner, taking

the matter into his own hands, pushed off from the bank.

Ponsonby shrugged his shoulders. Both his pals had chucked him now, and he was left on his own. But that counted for little, in comparison with carrying on his feud with the Greyfriars crew.

Mr. Spooner eyed him rather curiously. He hardly knew what to make of Ponsonby—a well-dressed, and evidently well-off fellow, who was ready to join up with any sort of rogue or rascal, to pay off grudges against fellows he disliked. But Pon served Mr. Spooner's turn, as Spooner served Pon's, and that was all that Shifty wanted.

"Sure you know where to spot that gang?" asked Ponsonby, dismissing Gadsby from his mind.

"I got 'em tabbed," said Mr. Spooner. "Watched 'em through a field-glass like I said. It'll be dark in an hour now. No good going along afore that, sir. A bloke don't want to be seen—"

"You can find the place after dark?"

"Easy! Nice little medder on the Berkshire side—I watched them across the river, tying up their boat and putting up their tent!" said Shifty. "They're there for the night all right! I saw 'em safe, and then came down the river looking for a boat! Once it's dark, O.K.!"

Ponsonby nodded, his eyes gleaming.

Gaddy, packing his bag and making for the railway station, was forgotten. Revenge is said to be sweet—though, had Pon only known it, it was not going to prove quite so sweet as he anticipated.

After Dark!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Give us a rest!"

"We can't stick here!"

"Fathead!"

"After all I've done for you!" hooted Billy Bunter. "Where would this boat be, I'd like to know, if I hadn't—yarroop!"

Johnny Bull had done it, at last!

Billy Bunter roared as a boat landed.

The Famous Five had fully intended to be patient with Bunter, to bear with Bunter, to be quite nice to Bunter, and not even to think of booting Bunter, howsoever often and earnestly he asked for it.

But there was a limit! Bunter had reached it!

Bunter had insisted on that camp in the meadow, and they had given in. A fierce bull had chased them off it—and was keeping them off it! Almost everything they had was still ashore—in a state of wreckage. It had to be recovered before they went on their way! There was nothing for it, but to wait. And as the fat Owl was the cause of the whole trouble, the least he could do, in the opinion of five fellows, was to shut up! And he did not shut up! So a boat came into action at last!

"Ow! Beast!" roared Bunter.

The Toughest Skipper on the Seven Seas—that's Ocean Jones!

Meet the commander of Mystery Ships, who offers his services in any scheme which means danger. Young Dick Shaw signs on with him—and gets all the excitement he wants! Don't miss this terrific yarn!



"Have another?" asked Johnny ferociously.

"Ow! Rotter! Wow!"

"For goodness' sake don't be such a silly ass, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "Everything's in that meadow and we've got to get it back! We can't camp anywhere without tent, or blankets, or anything else."

"We can go on till we find an inn!" howled Bunter.

"And leave all our things behind?" hooted Bob.

"Yes!"

"You blithering owl!"

"Beast!"

"We've got to wait till the coast is clear, and then get the things back somehow!" said Harry Wharton. "That blighter of a bull will go to sleep at night—I hope, and then we shall have a chance. Anyhow, we can't go on as we are."

"After all I've done——"

"Shut up!" roared Bob.

"Getting the boat back for you—yaroo! If you kick me again, Bull, you beast, I'll— Yoo-hooooop!"

Billy Bunter relapsed into indignant silence. Only too evidently, the Greyfriars crew had no more patience to waste!

If Bunter could have reached an inn, a supper, a comfortable bed, he would have been prepared to dismiss all other matters from his fat mind. But the owners of the property sprawling about the meadow naturally did not see eye to eye with Bunter on that point.

They had no doubt that, sooner or later, that bull would retire to rest, and then there would be a chance of stepping quietly ashore on the meadow and getting the outfit on board.

They had had a rather scrappy supper on the boat. Now darkness had fallen, and they were waiting and on the watch.

The Water-Lily was tied up near enough for them to hear sounds from the meadow. Once, when a long period of silence encouraged them to believe that the bull had retired to rest, the silence was broken by a sudden sound of trampling and snorting, which indicated that the animal had paid another visit to the dismantled tent.

So they could only go on waiting.

Billy Bunter, in a state of indignation to which no words could have done justice, wrapped himself in the only rug in the boat, and tried to go to sleep.

The other fellows sat about the boat and waited. Now that it was quite dark, they had every hope that that unattractive denizen of the attractive meadow would seek repose—sooner or later!

Nobody, just then, was in the best of tempers. It really was a very disastrous disaster.

Even when they got their outfit back, it would want a lot of sorting out and repairing. And they had not got it back yet—and seemed like to have to wait an indefinite time before they could risk a landing.

"I say, you fellows!" came a squeak from the gloom.

It was bright starlight on the river and the meadow, but under the thick branches of the tree by the fence, to which the Water-Lily was tied, all was dark.

"Do be quiet, Bunter!" sighed Bob.

"I can't go to sleep! It's too jolly uncomfortable."

"Stay awake, then!"

"Beast! I'm sleepy! I'm hungry, too! Lot you care—after I got the boat back for you, too, and——"

"Where's the boathook?" hissed Johnny Bull. "Another word from you, you fat frog, and you get a jab!"

Billy Bunter did not utter another word! He gave a snort instead, hugged himself in the only rug, and resumed his vain efforts to woo slumber.

The Famous Five listened for sounds from the meadow. Again they heard a sound of trampling. Then there was silence—a long silence.

"I wonder——" said Nugent, at last.

"Hark!" breathed Bob. "Is that that blessed bull? I heard something."

"Sounded more like a boat, I think!" said Harry. "But I can't hear any oars."

"They can't be towing on this side of the river!" said Bob. "But there's something coming along."

Harry Wharton stood up in the Water-Lily and stared along the bank.

The tree under which the Greyfriars boat floated was only a few yards from the end of the bull's meadow. It was densely dark under the branches, but beyond, the river gleamed in the bright stars.

No boat was to be seen out on the water. But close in by the bank of the meadow, Wharton made out the shape of a boat snuggling close in to the hawthorn bushes that lined the bank.

It was not more than a dozen yards from the Water-Lily, but it had approached so stealthily that only now had the juniors heard a sound.

It was not rowing—it was being cautiously punted along the river's margin. Now that Wharton spotted it, it was partly hidden by the hawthorns on the shore.

"Quiet, you fellows!" whispered Harry.

That stealthy, cautious approach to the meadow where the Greyfriars crew had camped—before the bull had shifted them—was more than suspicious.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Bob.

"Spooner—after us again!"

"I fancy so!"

"Listen!" whispered Bob.

A low voice reached the ears of the Greyfriars crew from the boat edging into the bushes on the meadow.

"Sure this is the place?"

"Pon!" breathed Bob. He knew that voice; it was the dandy of Highcliffe in the half-seen boat.

"You can lay to that!" came another mutter. "I tell you, I watched 'em across the river with a field-glass—this 'ere is the place! They're camped 'ere—and their boat's

tied up somewhere among these bushes."

"Spooner!" murmured Bob.

In the darkness under the overhanging tree, the Greyfriars crew grinned.

Evidently it was Mr. Spooner and Ponsonby again—after the Water-Lily—in a stealthy attempt to take the campers by surprise; an attempt which, in the circumstances, was not likely to succeed.

Johnny Bull clenched his hands! Ponsonby was at hand—and this time he was not going to get away—not if Johnny could help it!

"Quiet, you fellows, till I get the painter untied!" whispered Johnny. "We'll bag the pair of them!"

Johnny Bull groped at the painter tied to the branch above. The other fellows stood ready to push out.

"O.K., then!" They heard Ponsonby's low voice, and saw the Highcliffe boat pushing along by the bushes.

Mr. Spooner had stepped ashore. The hawthorns hid him from the eyes of the Greyfriars fellows—they had only heard his voice. The moment he was out of the boat Ponsonby pushed off.

At the same moment Johnny Bull loosened the Water-Lily's painter, and the Greyfriars crew, grinning, pushed out from the shadow of the tree. And, as they pushed out and shot towards Pon's boat, there came a loud, reverberating bellow from the bull in the meadow.

Another Lift for Mr. Spooner!

BELLOW!

Shifty Spooner jumped clear of Berkshire!

Bellow!

"Suffering sardines!" gasped Mr. Spooner.

Mr. Spooner had intended to make no sound. Stealthy caution was Mr. Spooner's cue. But he forgot caution at the bellow of the bull!

The bull came as a surprise to Mr. Spooner!

He was in the right spot, and knew that! He had marked that meadow from across the river with a field-glass, and departed in search of a boat before the episode of the bull.

Having seen the Greyfriars crew put up their tent in that meadow, how could Mr. Spooner doubt that they were camping there for the night? How could Mr. Spooner guess that a bull had transpired and driven off the campers?

Mr. Spooner, of course, couldn't.

Not a doubt had crossed his mind. All he wanted was a lift to that meadow—then a stealthy search along the bank for the Water-Lily was all that remained.

Pon had given him the necessary lift. Then, after landing him, he had pushed off immediately. Even Pon did not want, if he could help it, to have a hand in actual theft! He preferred to get off the scene, and leave Mr. Spooner to do his stealing on his own.

It was rather unfortunate for

Shifty; for at the bellow of the bull, and the terrifying sight of a huge form looming up in the gloom, he cast a wild glance round for Pon's boat—but that was gone!

The next moment Shifty was dodging and running for his life!

Pon was pulling up the river. But as Pon sat and pulled, the Greyfriars boat pushed out from under the dark shadow of the tree a little beyond the meadow—and there was a sudden bump as the two boats collided and rocked.

Ponsonby gave a startled gasp.

Bellow, came from the bull in the meadow! The bull had spotted Mr. Spooner. He started for Mr. Spooner. "Collar that Highcliffe cad!" came a roar from Johnny Bull.

He grabbed at the gunwale of Pon's boat.

Ponsonby fairly gibbered at the Greyfriars crew in the starlight. Their sudden appearance dumfounded the dandy of Highcliffe.

They were not ashore in their tent, as Pon, like Mr. Spooner, had taken for granted. Their boat was not tied up under the bank of the meadow. They were afloat in the Water-Lily—and they had him!

"Got them!" chirruped Bob. "Got the pair of them! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's the other rat? That's Pon—where's Spooner?"

"Oh crumbs!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Has he gone ashore?"

"Great pip! If he has—"

"The bull!" exclaimed Nugent.

The Greyfriars crew had not seen Shifty Spooner land. They heard the bellow of the bull, but did not know that it was caused by Mr. Spooner. But, as they grasped Pon's boat, and saw that he was alone in it, they realised that Shifty must have landed in the meadow, the bushes screening him from their sight.

"The bull!" exclaimed Harry. "Come on—never mind that cad—if that bull gets Spooner—"

"Quick!" exclaimed Bob.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter. "Don't you get near that bull! Don't you take this boat near that meadow! I say— Oh crikey!"

The Famous Five did not heed Bunter or Ponsonby further. As soon as they realised that Spooner was in the meadow with the bull, they pushed hurriedly to the rescue.

They did not feel kindly towards Mr. Spooner. They would willingly have lent a hand to put him back in the stone jug where he belonged. But they could not leave even that shifty rascal at the mercy of the bull if they could possibly help him.

They rushed the boat back to the bank of the meadow heedless of the terrified squeaks of the Owl of the Remove.

Bellow! resounded through the shadows on shore!

Pon stared after the Greyfriars boat for a moment like a fellow in a dream. Then he dashed his oars into the water and rowed.

Pon was not worrying about what might be happening to Mr. Spooner. If the Greyfriars fellows were, it gave Pon a chance to get away—and

Pon was not the fellow to lose that chance. He pulled as if for his life, and fairly flew up the starlit Thames.

But Harry Wharton & Co. forgot Pon. The Water-Lily rocked back to the meadow bank, and they stared ashore anxiously for Shifty—they would have gladly given him a chance of jumping into the boat.

But Shifty had no chance of jumping into the Water-Lily.

Shifty was already half-way across the meadow, with the bull careering on his track.

He was making for the gate at the back of the meadow. And he was putting on a remarkable turn of speed. The bellow of the bull behind him spurred on Mr. Spooner to unheard-of efforts.

Harry Wharton & Co. scrambled ashore. They stood and watched the

The bull reached Shifty. Shifty had no time to dream of climbing the gate! He had to jump it—neck or nothing! He jumped!

A lowered head lifted behind Mr. Spooner as he jumped. The yell that Mr. Spooner gave as contact was established reached the juniors on the bank, and echoed over the Thames. Assisted by the bull, Mr. Spooner cleared the gate, and disappeared on the other side. It was another lift for Mr. Spooner!

"Oh scissors!" gasped Bob Cherry. Bellow, bellow, bellow! echoed over the meadow.

Shifty, on the safe side of the gate, sprawled and panted.

The bull remained at the gate, roaring. Evidently he still wanted Mr. Spooner. He expressed his disappointment with tremendous vigour.

"I say, you fellows—" howled Bunter from the boat.

"Chance for us, while his nibs is out of the way!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Get those things into the boat—quick!"

"Good egg!"

It was the juniors' chance at last—while the bull was on the other side of the meadow—roaring for Mr. Spooner!

Hurriedly they gathered up the dismantled tent, groundsheets, and rugs and blankets, and the rest of the outfit, and pitched them into the Water-Lily—anywhere and anyhow. Indignant yells from the Water-Lily indicated that some of them landed on Bunter! But there was no time to bother about Bunter—it was a matter of minutes.

"Here he comes!" gasped Bob.

There was a trampling in the meadow. Luckily, the last of the outfit was in; and the Famous Five followed it, jumping as the bull came careering back again.

The Water-Lily pushed off promptly, and once more a disappointed bull stood on the bank and woke the echoes.

"Row, brothers, row!" said Bob Cherry. "I'm getting fed-up with that bull!"

And the Greyfriars crew pulled, and the dulcet tones of the disappointed bull died away astern.

A WORN and weary Mr. Spooner limped painfully away by field paths and hedges, wondering dismally whether he ever would get hold of the Water-Lily, and whether, perhaps, after all, honesty might not be the best policy.

The Greyfriars crew, a day or two later, reached Oxford, without having seen anything more of Mr. Spooner; and when they left that historic city behind, and pushed on on the last lap of their trip up the Thames, they hoped that they were done with the shifty man.

But that remained to be seen!

THE END.

(The final yarn in this grand holiday series: "THE SECRET OF THE WATER-LILY" is better than ever. Watch out for it in next Saturday's MAGNET, chums.)

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wild chase in the starlight in the meadow—bright and clear!

It was a thrilling chase!

Shifty ran—he leaped—he bounded—he flew! Shifty was not thinking of pinching a boat now—or of rooting in secret hiding-places under stern lockers! Shifty concentrated on getting away from that bull! He panted, he gasped, he gurgled, he streamed with perspiration, he puffed and he blew—but he covered the ground at an amazing rate. His hat flew off—Shifty did not think of stopping for it! Hatless, he careered on, and after him careered the bull, gaining on him in spite of Shifty's frantic efforts!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob, straining his eyes to watch the chase.

"He's got him!" breathed Nugent.

"No, he hasn't!"

"Oh crumbs! Look!"

Shifty Spooner reached the gate,

The GREYFRIARS HERALD

(Continued from page 2.)

The fellows simply roared. They couldn't help seeing the funny side of it. The Head had had the lark of them while he thought he was eating rabbit. But now he thought he had eaten a cat the boot was on the other foot with a vengeance! The mere idea that he had eaten boiled cat was sufficient to turn the Head's face green!

Gergering horribly, Dr. Birchmell made a dash for the eggit, in search of the nearest bath-room. He was followed by shrieks of larfter from the Fourth.

Later in the day, when Mrs. Brown-well's cat turned up alive and kicking, Dr. Birchmell realised that he had acted like a complete idjut, and that Jack Jolly and Frank Fearless had only been pulling his skollarly leg.

But it was too late by that time to do anything about it. St. Sam's chuckled over it for hours; and Dr. Birchmell spent the remainder of the afternoon kicking himself round his study at the thought of the disastrous ending to the Head's dinner!

GIRLS BEAT BOYS AT RINK HOCKEY!

"Blow Rollers!"—
Remove Tough Eggs.

Bolsover, Bulstrode, and Brown, who recently found themselves staying simultaneously at a South Coast resort which boasted a roller-skating rink, have taken up rink hockey with great enthusiasm.

They spent every morning for a week practising with other holiday-makers, and when Brown suggested their making up a team to challenge one of the local teams, the proposal was adopted with acclamation.

Bolsover, Bulstrode, and Brown were all included in the selected team. As three of the toughest eggs in the Remove, they naturally would be!

They consulted one of the rink officials about the proposed challenge. Most of the teams were only available in the evenings, he told them; and the rink could not be let for an amateur game except in the morning. If they cared to play the Amazons, however, he had no doubt he could arrange for them to send along a reserve team one morning.

The cheery novices accepted the offer gratefully, and the game was arranged for a morning two days later.

Somehow, the obvious thought that the title of the team betokened members of the opposite sex never occurred to anybody. So when the morning came, and the challengers turned up at the rink to find a team of girls already on the floor, they had the surprise of their lives.

"The—the Amazons!" stammered Brown. "We might have known they were girls! Oh, my hat!"

"We can't play blessed girls!" growled Bulstrode. "Take all the fun out of the game. Shan't be able to use our weight."

"Excuse me, but we're not objecting," said a cool, feminine voice beside him. "All we ask is that you play according to the rules of the game. So long as you do that you can make it as rough as you like. We don't mind."

The cool young lady then introduced herself as Alice Lammingham, the captain of the Amazons.

After such an introduction, of course, there was nothing for it but to play the girls, and a few minutes later the two teams lined up for the game.

The male team smiled somewhat superior smiles as they rolled into position for the face-off. Privately they had decided, in spite of Miss Alice Lammingham, to let the young ladies off lightly. There would be none of the rough stuff they were used to in their practice games.

The ref's whistle shrilled and they were off. Brown's men (Brown, we forgot to tell you, was captain) swept down the rink, expecting to put the girls in their place by scoring in the first minute.



But an extraordinary thing happened. They didn't score. But the girls did! And it all happened in the space of a minute!

In a state of great astonishment, Brown's boys lined up again. You can imagine their amazement when precisely the same thing happened again. The Amazons were two up in two minutes!

Obviously something had to be done about it. Brown sent round a whisper: "Not so gentle. No need to be rough, of course, but don't think of them as girls."

Brown was giving his team the lead they were waiting for. With grim determination writ large on their faces, they lined up for the third time. There was going to be no mistake about it now! Girls or not, their opponents were going to sample some of the swift, bustling play they had acquired from a week of hard practice.

Mistaken notions of chivalry were abandoned, and Brown and his merry men went all out for goals. Fast and furious was the play that ensued.

But the goals were remarkably slow in coming.

Five minutes went by—ten, and fifteen. The score still stood at 2—nil in the ladies' favour. Another remarkable thing was that while their fair opponents all looked as fresh as paint, Brown and his team were beginning to look a little the worse for wear. Bolsover and Bulstrode, and even Brown himself, had all had bad tumbles in their anxiety to score, and most of the others bore plain signs of

the desperate nature of their efforts to draw level.

We should like to give a detailed description of the exciting game that followed that first thrilling fifteen minutes, but space considerations forbid, and we must leave it at the final score, which was:

THE AMAZONS 5
TOM BROWN'S TEAM 2

The Amazons roller-skated off the rink, looking almost as cool and calm as when they had started. Tom Brown's boys were puffing and blowing and mopping their faces, and caressing their bumps and bruises!

"Feel like a race on rollers!" the "Greyfriars Herald" asked them in their dressing-room.

The answer was prompt and unanimous:

"BLOW ROLLERS!"

We can't say we blame them!

IT PAYS TO LOOK OLDER!

Says HAROLD SKINNER

Chaps of our age are severely handicapped by looking too young. We can't smoke in public; we can't attend "adults only" shows at the pictures; we can't join the Air Force; we have to put up with being patted on the head and called "my little chap" by patronising relatives. Well, you can think of plenty of drawbacks yourselves, so there is no need to give you a list of them.

So the best thing to do, it seems to me, is to make ourselves look as old as possible.

If you are the sort of chap who always does the crude and obvious thing, you will presumably buy a false beard, and perhaps a cardboard nose of antique design.

A more subtle method of achieving the same result is to talk casually about some football match you saw in 1910, or thereabouts. So long as the person you are impressing is good at mental arithmetic, you at once convey the suggestion that you are quite a lot older than he thought you were.

Another way to look old is to smoke a big pipe or a long cigar. This little wheeze rarely fails, especially if you can make smoke come out of your ears. "Obviously a sportsman of fine old vintage," people will at once decide.

Then, of course, you can cultivate a deep bass voice. The easiest way of doing this is to catch a bad cold.

Yet another idea is to increase your height. This can be done quite simply by strapping stilts to your feet and wearing approximately lengthy trousers.

I could describe many other brainy notions for making oneself look older, but perhaps this is enough to go on with. Take my tip now chaps, and adopt one or other of my brilliant suggestions for advancing your years. Look older now, and enjoy yourself while you're young!

FUNNY WAYS THE FELLOWS GO TO SLEEP!

By MARK LINLEY

I read recently of a chap who can never go to sleep unless he can hear rain drizzling, and has therefore had a rain machine fixed up on the roof over his bed-room. We have nobody at Greyfriars quite like that, but many fellows I know have peculiar tricks of their own for being carried quickly into the Land of Nod.

Treluce, for example, gazes fixedly at a spot on the ceiling with his eyes wide open, and is soon fast asleep. If he ever does try closing his eyes first, it wakes him up so that he can't sleep for hours!

Bob Cherry simply must do something violent before getting into bed—have a pillow-fighting duel with somebody, or run all round the dorm, having a hurdle race over the beds, or something equally vigorous!

Alonzo Todd, when he was in the Remove, invariably went off to sleep clutching the long wisp of hair that used to fall over his forehead.

Lord Mauleverer says that the best preparation for sleep is getting into a thoroughly sleepy mood. So before retiring he usually has a snooze in an armchair in the Rag!

Bunter believes in having a good solid foundation for sleep. So before turning in, the Owl has a good hefty feed—or, at least, as good and hefty a feed as he can find in Remove studies whose tenants happen to be somewhere else when Bunter calls.

Hoskins of the Fifth, naturally, must play the piano as a preliminary to wooing Morpheus. Coker, naturally, too, is not ready for sleep till he has conversed with friends for half an hour or so. The more one-sided the conversation, the more soundly does Coker sleep!

Mr. Quelch, I believe, finds that writing a chapter of his "History of Greyfriars" is the best preparation for bed. Mr. Prout falls asleep over blood-curdling thrillers. Mr. Twigg lies on the pillow, working out crossword puzzles.

As for myself, I never sleep so soundly as when I have just finished an hour or so of extra work.

Believe it or not!

MORGAN'S MECHANICAL MIND!

By DICK RAKE.

The chaps who heard I'd invited Morgan to my place for a week all told me what a mechanically minded chap he was.

"Just the fellow to put things right at home for you," Trevor told me. "Sort of chap who'll mend all your broken locks, defective blinds, and so on. Put all your clocks right for you."

This idea about Morgan is quite correct. I never knew it before, but Morgan simply cannot resist having a shot at mending things that don't work properly.

We never had so many things mended in our house before in all history. He mended a side gate, a wireless set, an electric bell, a bicycle, and a bed-room clock!

Mind you, I'm not going to say he made a perfect job of everything he tackled. I suppose Morgan himself would hardly claim that.

The side gate, which only opened half-way before he started on it, would not open at all after he had finished.

The wireless set, which previously had a habit of fading out occasionally, stopped working entirely when he had mended it.

The electric bell had a spasmodic action before Morgan started on it; sometimes it rang and sometimes it didn't. It never rang once after Morgan had seen to it.

The bicycle brakes worked unreliably till Morgan tackled them. Then they stopped working altogether.

But I should be doing Morgan a serious injustice if I left you to assume he can't make things work again. He can. He proved it when he mended the bed-room clock.

The clock had not gone for a year, to my knowledge. Morgan certainly made it go again.

When he brought it down for my inspection, it was ticking away merrily, and it still ticks as I write this by my bed-room window.

The only drawback is, that although it goes, it is not quite the same as it was in its early days.

The parts seemed to have got mixed up in their functions. The second hand moves only once in five seconds, the hour hand goes right round the dial in an hour, and the minute hand only once in twelve hours!

But the clock does go, and Morgan is undoubtedly the man who made it go. And I can quite see what the fellows meant when they told me how lucky I was to have Morgan staying with me—the chap with the mechanical mind!

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.

LETTERS from disgruntled readers are few and far between, and when I receive one I like to publish its contents in my Chat.

The complaint to hand this week comes from Tommy Skittlewich, of Carshalton, who states that too much space is taken up by my Chat. Tommy, apparently, wants one long complete Greyfriars yarn and nothing more. He even goes so far as to say that he will stop reading the MAGNET unless I comply with his wishes.

Well, my Carshalton chum, I certainly do not wish you to give up reading the Old Paper, but to leave out the Chat—which has always been one of the most popular features in the paper—would probably satisfy you, but upset countless other readers. Sorry, chum, but it just can't be done!

Here are two "Rapid Fire" replies: Alexander LAPSLEY (Scotland).—"Can I have photographs of the

Answers to Correspondents

G. P. (Fifth).—"Coker won the coconut, yet he couldn't eat more than a fraction of it."

We, too, have noticed that Coker is occasionally "off his nut"!

R. D. O. (Remove).—"Russell trod in a wasps' nest; but if I were you I wouldn't ask him if it hurt."

Evidently you think we should receive a stinging retort.

G. T. (Third).—"There was a big handbell going cheap, so I bought it—I thought it might come in useful when I'm supporting the First Eleven in the coming season."

We presume the season will now produce plenty of ding-dong struggles!

"CHURCH MOUSE" (Fifth).—"When I met Hilton at Brighton he showed me his cheque-book. Hilton with a banking account, you know! What a picture!"

We think it is probably "overdrawn"!

DICK PENFOLD (Friardale).—"At the Courtfield fire brigade display one team had no hose."

We take it for granted that the others promptly gave them socks!"

DON'T MISUNDERSTAND HIM!

Bunter tells us he has missed his "Holiday Annual."

He means a book—not a bath!

IT'S NO MEAN "FEET," EITHER!

"Fisher T. Fish makes a regular profit out of his Form fellows," writes a reader, "because he is high-handed, light-fingered, and close-fisted."

In a word, you've got to "hand" it to Fishy!

Famous Fivo and Billy Bunter?" Sorry, chum, but I have no such photographs to send you.

S. BUXTON.—Your "Places of Interest" idea has already been dealt with by our Greyfriars Rhymester. Thanks for kind wishes!

Harry Wharton & Co. are on the last lap of their holiday on the Thames. Another week remains, after which comes the new term at Greyfriars. The final yarn:

"THE SECRET OF THE WATER-LILY!"

is a thrilling wind-up to this great river-holiday series. It has proved a rather unexpectedly exciting trip, what with Pon & Co., of Highcliffe, constantly in the offing, and Shifty Spooner trailing the Water-Lily, and looking for a chance to "pinch" it! Next week, Shifty's activities come to a sudden full-stop. How and why, I will leave you to find out for yourselves.

A final word! Don't forget to get

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