

**THE
MAGNET**

Thrilling Adventure Yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. Inside!

THE SECRET OF THE "WATER-LILY!"

By **FRANK RICHARDS**



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

The GREYFRIARS HERALD

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STOP
PRESS
NEWS

A LESSON FOR LICKHAM!

Here's Another St. Sam's "Shocker"
Starring the World's Greatest Laugh-
ter-Merchants—Jack Jolly & Co.,
and their Amazing Headmaster,
Doctor Birchmell

By DICKY NUGENT

"Impossible!"

Mr. E. Jolliwall Lickham spoke emphatically; but there was a nervous apologetic look in his face, all the same, as he glanced up from his desk at the junior standing before him.

Jack Jolly faced him fearlessly. The kaptin of the St. Sam's Fourth was by no means soft, and he breathed hard as he heard his Form-master's decision.

"All I want, sir, is justice!" he cried boldly. "You say it's impossible to cancel my detention this afternoon, and yet I've done nothing to deserve detention. Fair's fare, sir! I am only asking you to do what is right."

"And I'm afraid, Jolly, that you are going to get left," said Mr. Lickham, with a sigh. "The—the fact is, the Head gave special orders that you were to be detained this afternoon."

"What for, sir?" demanded Jolly, in amazement.

Mr. Lickham coughed.

"A hem! He noticed there was nobody on the Fourth Form detention list in Hall this morning, Jolly, and he came to the conclusion I must be getting slack in my old age. Your name happened to be the first he thought of, so he ordered me to put you down for an afternoon indoors."

"Between you and me and the gatepost, Jolly, I hadn't the slightest wish to detain you for the afternoon,"

confessed Mr. Lickham. "But I simply dare not risk incurring Mr. Birchmell's displeasure. What you ask, therefore, is absolutely impossible!"

The kaptin of the Fourth frowned fiercely.

"All I can say, sir, is that it's a beastly shame! You give way to the Head too much. What you ought to do is to stand up to him. It's only making him worse to take a thing like this lying down."

The Fourth Form-master's face turned white with fear. He trembled like a man sick of the Paul C.

"Stand up to the Head, Jolly?" he stammered. "But that's out of the question. You know what a tyrant Dr. Birchmell is. If I started to argue the toss with him, he'd simply slaughter me!"

"Well, you could look after yourself, sir, couldn't you?" cried Jolly. "If I were in your place, I'd soon give the old fogey one on the boko!"

"Yes; but you're not in my place, so what's the good of talking?" retorted Mr. Lickham, with a shrug of his shoulders. "The best advice I can give you, Jolly, is to grin and bear it. Next time it happens, Dr. Birchmell will probably pick on someone else. In the meantime, I'm afraid there is no option, but to remain indoors all the afternoon."

It was pretty clear that Jolly was not going to get any change out of Mr. Lickham, so, with a final snort, he quitted the Form-master's study.

"No luck, you chaps!" he announced to Merry and Bright and Fearless, who were waiting for him outside; and their faces fell, forchunitly without doing any damage.

"Then we shan't be able to go to the pictures!" eggsclaimed Fearless.

"Shame!"

Jolly's brow wrinkled.

"We mite manage it, you chaps, if I could get out of gates without being reckernised."

"Can't be done, I'm afraid, old chap," said Fearless, with a rewful larf. "Your name's on the detention list, and that means all the prefects will be looking out for you. You'll soon be marched back by the ear if you show your face in the quad."

"True," nodded Jolly.

"But suppose I show somebody else's face instead of my own? I mite get through then, niten't I?"

Fearless grinned.

"My hat! That's a good wheeze! We've got all the theatrical props for our dorm show upstairs, and you can rig yourself up as Lickham himself, like you do in the play."

"Oh crums!" gasped Merry and Bright.

But Jolly only beamed.

"That's eggsactly what I'm thinking of doing, old chap," he said. "This way!"

Five minutes later the one or two stray prefects who happened to be out in the quad saw three Fourth Formers marching down to the gates with a gentleman who, to all outward appearances, was Mr. Lickham.

But appearances were deceptive. Mr. Lickham's distinctive nose, had they known it, consisted mostly of putty, painted red. His untidy hair was a wig. His advantage in bite over Fearless and Merry and Bright was dew to high-heeled shoes!

The reason why Jolly happened to have these props by him was that the Fourth were going to do a midnite dormitory play shortly in which he was going to impersonate Mr. Lickham.

The heroes of the Fourth felt awfully glad they had gone to a lot of trubble over this production now, for Jolly looked the living image of the master of the Fourth!

Burleigh and Tallboy passed the little crowd near the gates, and Merry and Bright and Fearless grinned all over their faces, when the two seniors raised their caps, and said: "Good-afternoon, sir!" But Jolly looked as sollem as an owl as he replied: "Good-afternoon, boys!" in a lifelike imitation of Mr. Lickham's voice.

"Good biz!" chortled Fearless. "If you can pull the wool over Burleigh's eyes, there shouldn't be the slightest danger of—"

"Lickham, what do you think you're doing of?"

"Oh crums!" gasped Fearless, in dismay.

It was Dr. Birchmell himself. The Head of St. Sam's planted himself right in the path of the bogus Form-master:

"What is the meaning of this here, Lickham?" he cried sternly. "Did I not order you to remain within gates all the afternoon to see that Jolly did not break away from detention? I did, yet here you are gallivanting about as though you know nothing about it. What have you to say in your defence?"

"Ratts!" replied Jack Jolly, in such a marvellous imitation of Mr. Lickham's voice that even his pals had to pinch themselves to make sure they were not dreaming.

Dr. Birchmell gave a violent, spasmodic start.

"W-w-what did you say?" he gasped.

"Ratts, and many of 'em!" said the bogus Form-master cheerfully. "I shall do just as I like about it. Think I care tuppence about an old fogey like you? Not likely!"

"Bless my sole!" eggsclaimed the amazed Head, blinking in blank astonishment at this remarkable new Lickham. "What the merry dickens next?"

"Jolly never ought to have been detained. And, on thinking it over, I have decided that I'm not jolly well going to detain Jolly," went on the disguised kaptin of the Fourth, who was farly revelling in this uneggspected chance to tell Dr. Birchmell what he thought of him. "So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, you beastly, boolying codd!"

"You—you—why, I'll slawter you!" hooted Dr. Birchmell. "I'll pulverise you! I'll—"

The Head wanted no further time in words, but went to deeds. Bounding forward, he made a swipe at the supposed Lickham with his birchrod.

The real Lickham, of course, would have wimpered and wined for mercy. Not so the Lickham that Dr. Birchmell was swiping at now. This Lickham was made of much sterner stuff. As the Head swiped, he hopped out of the way. The result was that the birchrod travelled on, and finished up, with a resounding thwack, against the Head's own legs.

(Continued on page 27.)



HARRY WHARTON & CO., OF GREYFRIARS, HAVE HAD SOME EXCITING TIMES HOLIDAY-MAKING ON OLD FATHER THAMES, BUT THIS WEEK'S THRILLING ADVENTURES BEAT 'EM ALL!

The SECRET of the "WATER-LILY!"



By
FRANK RICHARDS

JUST LIKE BUNTER!

"THE last jar!" said Bob Cherry.

"The last?" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Look again, ass!" said Johnny Bull. "There's two more."

"There were three this morning!" said Frank Nugent.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh did not speak—he grinned a dusky grin. Perhaps he guessed what had become of the two jars of jam that seemed to be invisible in the locker of the Greyfriars Water-Lily.

Neither did Billy Bunter speak.

Billy Bunter sat gazing at the sunset on the River Thames as if for once deeply interested in sunsets.

The Greyfriars boat was tied up to the bank, a few miles above Oxford. Harry Wharton & Co. were on the last lap of their holiday on the Thames. Only another week remained of the holidays; after which came the new term at Greyfriars School. They had done the Thames from Kingston to Oxford—and now they were exploring what some poet has called the "stripling Thames" above that historic city.

At the present moment they had tied up for tea in the boat. Supplies were running a little short, and another shopping excursion was due. Bob was sorting out all the odds and ends that remained in the locker. But he sorted out only one pot of jam.

And it was only a small pot—a pound jar—not a lot among six fellows—especially when one of those fellows was named W. G. Bunter.

"Camping on my land right under my notice-board!" roared the man in gaiters. "Can't you read?"

Bob went through the locker again. "That's the last!" he said.

"Know anything about the others, Bunter?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"I say, you fellows, Oxford's a fine sight from here!" said Billy Bunter, still interested in the scenery. "Ye distant spires—ye antique towers, you know—"

"Fine!" said Bob. "Especially as we can't see it from here."

"Oh! Can't you?" ejaculated Bunter. Apparently the fat Owl's spectacles had deceived him. "Ain't that an Oxford college—look!"

"No, you owl—that's a beech-tree! Where are those jars of jam?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You fat villain!" said Harry Wharton. "Have you been raiding the locker, when we're nearly out of grub?"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Blessed if I ever knew such fellows for thinking about grub!" said Bunter peevishly. "You must jaw about grub when I'm

looking at Oxford—I mean, at the sunset! This beautiful scenery—"

"Never mind the scenery now—where's the jam?"

"If you fellows think I've had the jam, it only shows what a suspicious lot you are!" retorted Bunter. "As if I'd bag the jam! Besides, I left one jar for tea."

"Oh, my hat!"

"If there's anything missing, I dare say it was that man Spooner!" said Bunter. "You know he's been following us ever since we started up the Thames. I caught him at that locker once. He may have sneaked it."

"You footling fat frump!" roared Johnny Bull. "You've scoffed the jam!"

"I haven't!" roared back Bunter. "I never knew there was any jam in the locker, and I never got it out when you fellows went ashore this afternoon, and I never ate it with a tablespoon, and the tablespoon ain't in that hamper now. I know nothing whatever about it! How could I?"

"Oh crikey!"

"It's pretty thick, I think, the way you fellows put it down to me if there's any grub missing!" exclaimed Bunter warmly. "I dare say Bob Cherry had it! I noticed him nosing about that locker in a very syrupstigious way."

"I!" roared Bob.

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"It's no good yelling at me, if there's a jar or two of jam gone!" hooted Bunter. "Besides, there's a pound jar left. That's enough for me."

What?"

"I'm not greedy, I hope!" said Bunter. "I like plenty—but I can go short, if the grub's short. I can do with that. Unless," added Bunter, with withering sarcasm, "unless you fellows are going to grab it, when we've only got one small jar, and you know I like jam! I shouldn't be surprised! Greedy pigs all round!"

The Famous Five of Greyfriars looked at William George Bunter. They looked at him quite expressively.

Billy Bunter's fat lip curled with scorn.

He would not have been surprised, as he declared, if some of those greedy fellows claimed some of the jam, though there was so little of it, and though they knew that Bunter liked jam! He was used to selfishness!

"What about chucking him overboard?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

Bob Cherry opened that small jar of jam.

Billy Bunter's eyes, and spectacles, fixed on it.

Having opened it, Bob placed it on the locker ready to wind up tea with! Bread and butter—the former thick and the latter thin—formed the staple diet; with a few sardines and a few odd slices of ham, and a slice or two of cold beef. There was not much ham or beef—but there was plenty of mustard, so far as that went. Every little helped.

Billy Bunter's spectacles lingered on that jam.

A pound of jam wasn't much—but it was something. But whacked out among six fellows it was hardly more than a smear each!

Five of the fellows did not matter; but a mere smear of jam for Bunter was pretty serious.

"I say, you fellows!" exclaimed Bunter suddenly. He started up, turning his spectacles on the bushes that lined the back of the towpath. "Look—"

"What—"

The Famous Five looked to the shore. It was a rather solitary spot. No one was in sight.

"That man Spooner!" said Bunter.

"Spooner!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

He jumped up and picked up the boathook.

The Greyfriars crew had seen nothing of Shifty Spooner since they had left the reaches below Oxford. But if the shifty man was at hand they were more than ready to deal with him promptly and efficiently.

"I never saw anybody!" grunted Johnny Bull, with a suspicious glare at the Owl of the Remove.

"Lurking!" said Bunter. "Lurking in those bushes! He's after the boat again, like he was before! I say, you fellows, let's jolly well

collar him! I'll mind the boat while you fellows get after him!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" exclaimed Bunter. "Don't you want to collar that shifty brute Spooner? He's lurking about to pinch this boat when we camp—same as he did before. I ain't pulling your leg, you know," added Bunter with great astuteness. "I ain't just trying to get you off the boat! Why should I?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Famous Five.

Billy Bunter was no end of a deep schemer! But his schemes had the disadvantages of being as transparent as the water on which the Greyfriars boat floated.

He did not tell the Famous Five that he wanted them to turn their back while he scooped the last solitary jar of jam! But they did not need telling! They guessed that one!

"Oh, fan me!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Sure you saw him, Bunter?"

"Oh! Yes! Sneaking slyly in those bushes!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, don't lose this chance of collaring him. Don't let him get away! I'll mind the boat while you're gone."

"Will you mind the jam, too?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Eh? Oh! Yes! Rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, come on, you men!" said Bob, rising. "I'll just put the mustard away—then let's get after that man Spooner."

"You silly ass!" roared Johnny Bull. "That fat fozzling fibber never saw Spooner at all—"

"You're not doubting Bunter's word, Johnny?"

"What?" gasped Johnny.

"Bunter says he saw Spooner! He says he'll mind the boat while we go after Spooner! Well, let's!"

Johnny Bull opened his tips—and shut them again as he saw how Bob was occupied as he leaned over the locker.

With his back to Bunter, shutting off Bunter's view, Bob was putting the mustard away. He was putting it away by ladling it into the jam-jar after spooning out a quantity of jam.

That big spoonful of jam he replaced in the jar—on the mustard!

"Oh!" gasped Johnny.

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

All of them—excepting Bunter—could see what Bob was doing! Bunter only had a view of Bob's back as he bent over the locker.

"Now let's get after Spooner!" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes—let's!" gasped Nugent.

"You'll mind the boat, Bunter?"

"Oh, yes! Rather! Rely on me, old chap!"

"And the jam?"

"Oh, yes! Of course! Leave it to me!"

"O.K., then! Come on, you men, and let's get after that sweep Spooner!" exclaimed Bob.

And the Famous Five jumped ashore and plunged into the bushes

at the back of the towpath—to look for an imaginary Spooner and leave Billy Bunter alone with the jam!

A NASTY JAR FOR BUNTER!

BILLY BUNTER grinned.

This was luck.

Whether Shifty Spooner, the rascal who had trailed the Greyfriars crew up the Thames, was near at hand, or miles away, Billy Bunter did not know! Neither did he care.

The whole crew of the Water-Lily had trooped ashore. They had disappeared into the bushes!

Bunter was left alone with the jam! That was what Bunter wanted.

He rose from the thwart where he was seated, and moved along to the locker at the stern of the Water-Lily. From a hamper, he extracted a tablespoon—already sticky! Bunter liked a tablespoon with jam!

His little round eyes danced behind his big round spectacles! While those silly asses were rooting through those thickets for a man who was not there, Bunter was going to get busy with that tablespoon. His capacious mouth watered at the prospect.

With the tablespoon in his right grubby paw, he reached out to the jam-jar with his left grubby paw.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a sudden yell from the bank.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Just in time, he jerked back that grubby paw, leaving the jar untouched. He blinked round through his spectacles at a ruddy face looking out of the bushes ashore.

"Where did you see him exactly, Bunter?" called out Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter breathed hard.

It was intensely irritating to be interrupted like this! He could not scoff that jam under watching eyes!

"Oh! Just there!" he snapped. "I—I dare say he's gone farther off—you go farther off, old chap, and you'll get him all right!"

"Right-ho!" said Bob, and he disappeared.

Bunter reached out a fat paw again. But before it could grab the jam-jar, Frank Nugent looked out of the bushes and called:

"Bunter!"

"Beast! I—I—I mean, yes, old chap!"

"Which way do you think Spooner went?" asked Nugent.

"Oh! Straight on, I—I think!" said Bunter. "You go right through those bushes and you'll see him all right!"

Frank Nugent disappeared.

Bunter grabbed at the jam-jar. He was about to delve into it with the tablespoon when a dusky face looked out of the bushes.

"My esteemed Bunter—" called out Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Billy Bunter glared round in the boat with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. This was the third irritating interruption.

It did not occur to Billy Bunter that the Famous Five, aware of his deep laid scheme, were taking it in turns to pull his fat leg!

"Look here, Inky, you get after

that man Spooner!" squeaked Bunter angrily. "He will get away at this rate!"

"What are you doing with that jam-jar, my esteemed Bunter?"

"It—it fell down! I've just picked it up! I say, you're losing time, Inky!"

Inky disappeared into the bushes again.

Billy Bunter delved deep into the jam with the tablespoon.

"Bunter!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter, at the sound of Harry Wharton's voice and the sight of the face of the captain of the Remove looking out of the bushes. This was getting altogether too exasperating to Bunter.

"Eh? What's the matter?" asked Harry.

"Oh, nothing! But you're letting that man Spooner get away all this time——" stammered Bunter.

"What have you stuck that spoon in the jam for?"

"Oh! Just to get it ready for you fellows! I say, Harry, old chap, do buck up and get after that villain Spooner! I—I think I can hear Bob calling for help!"

"Then I'd better cut off!" said the captain of the Remove, and his face vanished from sight once more.

Bunter gasped with relief. He gave his attention to the jam! A moment later came a roar from the shore:

"Bunter!"

The fat Owl jumped, and nearly dropped the jam. He glared round at Johnny Bull, looking out of the bushes by the towpath. If glares could have slain, Johnny would really have been in dire danger at that moment!

"You scoffing that jam?" called out Johnny.

"No, you beast!" howled Bunter. "I haven't tasted it yet—I mean, I ain't going to taste it! Look here——"

"Oh, all right!"

Johnny disappeared.

Billy Bunter, blinked, with a ferocious blink, at those bushes. At this rate he seemed never likely to have a free moment to get going on the jam. But to his relief no more faces looked out and no more voices called. He hoped that the Famous Five were at a safe distance, hunting for that shifty man Spooner!

As a matter of fact they were not far away.

They were quite close to the towpath, looking at Bunter from the cover of a high hawthorn, with grinning faces.

"Now watch!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Think that after so many interruptions Bunter will bolt that jam quickly?"

"Probably!" chuckled Harry Wharton.

"The quickfulness will be terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Famous Five suppressed their chuckles as they watched Bunter.

The fat Owl gave a last suspicious blink ashore, and then drew out a tablespoon of jam thickly piled, and

transformed the same to his large mouth.

In momentary dread of another interruption, Bunter was a quick worker!

Nearly half that pot of jam was ladled into the largest mouth 'at Greyfriars School at one fell swoop!

That capacious mouth closed on it, the fat face wearing a grin of happy satisfaction and anticipated delight.

For a split second Bunter was happy as he tasted jam! After that brief space of time, his happiness departed as he tasted mustard.

There was a sudden, fearful yell from the Owl of the Remove.

"Yurrrroooooop!"

Crash went the jam-jar on the floorboards of the Water-Lily! Crash went the tablespoon after it!

Billy Bunter clasped both fat hands to his wide mouth and spluttered.

"Gurrrrgh! Urrrgh! Oh crikey! Oh lor'!"

The Water-Lily rocked as the fat Owl staggered, spluttering with anguish. Bunter sat down suddenly.

"Oh!" he roared. "Wow! I'm burnt! Yow-ow! My tongue's burnt off! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a shriek across the towpath.

"Urrgh! Wurrgh! Oh crumbs! Oh lor'! Woooooooh!"

Billy Bunter sat in the rocking boat, clasped his mouth, spluttered and spattered, and roared and howled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Five fellows came across the towpath.

Billy Bunter did not even blink at them! He was too busily occupied with mustard.

"We haven't found Spooner, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton.

"Gurrrrgh!"

"Anything the matter?" asked Bob.

"Yurrrrgh!"

"What have you been doing with that jam?"

"Wurrrrgh!"

"Had a nasty jar?" asked Bob.

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

"Grrrrroooooh!"

Bunter had had a nasty jar, there was no mistake about that! It was the first time in history that William George Bunter had not liked jam! This time he did not like it! He hated it.

"Ooogh! I say, you fellows—grooogh! I say, there was something wrong with that jig-jig-jam!" gasped Bunter. "You ought to take it back to the shop! There was mumm-mum-mustard or something in it——"

"Not really?" gasped Bob.

"Ow! Yes! Wow! I'm all burnt—wow! Gimme some water to wash out my mouth!" howled Bunter.

"Lots in the river!" said Johnny Bull. "Take hold of his legs and dip his head in——"

"Beast!"

Bunter grabbed a tin mug and swamped the cooling water of the Thames into his mouth.

Bob Cherry picked up the jam-jar. "Bunter hash't had a mouthful of this!" he remarked. "There's only half a pound gone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can have the rest, Bunter!"

"Ow! I—I don't want it! You fellows can have it!" gasped Bunter. "I—I don't care much for jam! Ow! Wow! I say, you fellows, people ought to be jolly well prosecuted for mixing up mustard with jam in shops."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gave a sudden jump. It dawned on him. It only required sufficient time for anything that was absolutely obvious to dawn on Billy Bunter's powerful intellect.

"Why, you beast, you did it!" he roared. "You said you were going to put the mustard away! You put it in the jam!"

"What a brain!" gasped Bob. "He's guessed it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "Rotter! I suppose you thought I was after the jam! It's like you, I must say! Grooogh! I wasn't going to—Grooogh! Ooogh! Wurrgh! Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Bunter's done his song and dance, we may as well push on!" remarked Bob.

And the Greyfriars crew pushed on up the "stripling Thames" to an accompaniment from Bunter of:

"Urrgh! Wurrgh! Yurrrgh! Gurrrgh!"

"STOP THIEF!"

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

Five fellows stood on a bridge, looking down the river. It was called the New Bridge because, no doubt, once upon a time it had been new; but it was a very old bridge by the time Harry Wharton & Co. arrived on it.

The five had been shopping ashore—and now they had stopped for a look at the river from the bridge. The river and the bridge were both worth looking at; and Frank Nugent, who had historical tastes, was telling his comrades about an ancient scrap between Cavaliers and Roundheads on that very spot, when Bob Cherry suddenly ejaculated and pointed downstream.

The Water-Lily had been left tied up at a considerable distance. It was just about in sight from the bridge.

Billy Bunter had been left on board—to mind the boat, according to Bunter; because he was too jolly lazy to stir his stumps according to the rest of the crew.

Far distant, a pair of big spectacles flashed in the sun.

But something else had caught Bob Cherry's keen eyes. He spotted a figure on the towpath that seemed familiar.

It was a rather elegant figure, in white flannels and a straw hat. And, distant as it was, the Famous Five all knew it.

"Ponsonby!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"That Highcliff cad!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Haunting us all the way up the Thames!" said Frank Nugent. "I

wonder if he's got an eye open for our boat now?"

"He will spot it!" said Bob. "And if—"

The juniors watched the distant figure on the towpath rather uneasily.

Time and again they had had trouble with their old enemy of Highcliffe School, on their way up the river. It had been a rather unexpectedly exciting trip, what with Pon & Co. in the offing and Shifty Spooner trailing the Water-Lily and looking for a chance to pinch it.

Monson and Gadsby seemed to have deserted their leader. Pon was alone now, sauntering elegantly up the towpath, with an eye on the river.

That Pon was still on the warpath—or that, at all events, he would get on the warpath immediately he spotted the Greyfriars boat—the Famous Five did not doubt.

And they were too far off to intervene, if he did.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows. "That cad will spot the boat!" he said. "He can't help spotting it when he passes it! Bunter can't do anything, the fat ass. That cad joined up with Spooner last week to lose our boat for us! We can guess what he will do now."

"Look!" muttered Bob.

The Highcliffe fellow had come to a sudden halt, his eyes fixed on the tied-up Water-Lily.

Evidently, he had spotted the boat, and Bunter in it! Distant as he was, the Famous Five could discern the grin of malicious satisfaction that came over Pon's face.

They saw him stare at the boat and then glance up and down the towpath. Obviously, he was looking round to see whether any others of the crew were at hand. Pon was no fighting-man, if he could help it; but Billy Bunter was nothing to him. Had any others of the crew been in the offing, Pon would have walked on as peaceful as a dove.

But he very quickly ascertained that Bunter was on his own in the boat.

He stepped to the edge of the bank and looked into the Water-Lily.

The Greyfriars fellows saw Bunter give a sudden jump at the sight of him.

The fat Owl of the Remove scrambled to his feet.

He blinked at the Highcliffe fellow in alarm.

Pon jumped into the boat.

The next moment Billy Bunter was wriggling in his grasp! And in one moment more Billy Bunter was tipped over the gunwale, into a foot of water under the towpath.

Bunter sat in mud, and roared—though the juniors on the bridge were too far away to hear his roar.

Ponsonby grabbed at the painter, to cast off.

This was Pon's chance! The Greyfriars crew, when they returned, were going to find their boat missing!

Harry Wharton clenched his hands.

Billy Bunter was scrambling out of the mud, yelling. Ponsonby was pushing the boat off. It was like Pon to tip the fat Owl into the water. Pon

had a heavy hand with a fellow who could not put up a scrap.

"Come on!" said Harry, between his teeth.

The five ran down from the bridge.

Ponsonby had pushed out, and picked up a pair of oars! He was rowing downstream. But the Water-Lily was a big and heavy boat for one fellow to pull, though Pon had the help of the current. Had not the Famous Five spotted him from the bridge, no doubt he would have got safely away, and got the Water-Lily past the next lock below. But they had spotted him, and they were racing in pursuit as fast as they had ever run on the cinder-path.

They ran, and ran!

Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton were in the lead, with Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and Frank Nugent behind, and Johnny Bull bringing up the rear.

Johnny Bull's face was as grim as a bulldog. Ever since the day when Pon & Co. had left him tied up like a turkey in the wood below Wallingford Johnny had had a grim eye open for Pon. The licking of his life was coming to Pon, if Johnny got near enough.

There was distance to be covered; but the Greyfriars crew covered it fast. In quite a short time they were passing a dismal, draggled figure that was scraping off mud on the bank.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

The juniors did not heed. They raced on past Bunter, heedless of the fat Owl's squeak.

"I say!" roared Bunter. "I say, stop, will you? I'm all muddy! I'm all wet! I say—Beasts!"

The Famous Five were already out of hearing.

They raced on, breathless, leaving the indignant Owl grunting and scraping mud.

The Greyfriars boat was out of sight, round the bend of the river. But it came in sight again, as they raced round the bend. Passers-by, on the towpath, stared at them as they flew past.

"There he is!" panted Bob.

They saw the Water-Lily again—with Ponsonby pulling. He was not unduly exerting himself; unaware, so far, that pursuit was close at hand.

But, looking back as he pulled, he sighted the five breathless figures on the towpath and gave a start. Immediately he bent hard to the oars, and the Water-Lily moved faster, at the same time swerving off towards the Berkshire side—the towpath below Newbridge being on the Oxfordshire bank.

"Oh, the rotter!" breathed Bob.

"We'll get him!" muttered Johnny. "We'll get him, if we have to swim the Thames for him!"

The juniors ran on, but slackening speed now. They were level with the boat and could easily keep pace. But the Thames rolled between, and getting at Pon was a problem.

"Stop thief!" roared Bob suddenly.

Coming up-stream, and ahead of Pon as he pulled, was a small dinghy, with a man in it pulling a pair of oars.

He was a middle-aged man, with a square chin, and a clean-shaven face that looked as hard as if it had been carved in wood. He was moving at a very moderate speed, and his eyes, which looked like bright beads in his wooden face, were turned rather curiously on the juniors.

"Stop him!" roared Bob.

"Stop thief!" shouted all the Co., waving to the man in the dinghy, and pointing to the Water-Lily.

Pon was not, in point of fact, stealing the boat—his game was to hide it somewhere, or take it below the lock and send it adrift. He was playing a malicious trick, not pinching the boat. Pon had joined up with Shifty Spooner once, but certainly on his own the dandy of Highcliffe would never have dreamed of pinching a boat or anything else. But "Stop thief!" was the way to get him stopped. If Pon walked off with a boat that did not belong to him, he could not complain of the cry of "Stop thief!" being raised.

And it had its effect.

The man in the dinghy gave the juniors a keen look, then another keen look at the Water-Lily, and then, with a twist of his oars, shot alongside as Pon pulled past him. He laid in his oars, and grasped the gunwale of the Water-Lily, and Ponsonby was effectually stopped.

A FRIEND IN NEED!

"Oh! Good!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Hurrah!" panted Bob Cherry, coming to a halt.

"Got him!" breathed Johnny Bull.

Ponsonby, in the Water-Lily, was yelling at the wooden-faced man who had grasped the gunwale.

The two boats rocked together. Pon could not pull, so long as the stranger held on, and he yelled at him savagely to let go, and, as he did not do so, lunged fiercely at him with an oar.

"Oh!" gasped Bob, as he saw that action.

But the man with the wooden features and the square chin seemed to be very wary and active.

He dodged that lunge of the oar, and it passed him, and Pon, who had put plenty of force into the lunge, tipped over in the Water-Lily.

The boat rocked violently, and a wash on the Thames came over the side, splashing the dandy of Highcliffe from head to foot.

The square-chinned man released one hand from the gunwale, and reached into the Water-Lily with it. He grasped Ponsonby by the collar as he sprawled.

From across the river the Famous Five watched him.

Who the man was they had not the faintest idea; they had never seen him before. But he was a friend in need at the present moment. He seemed to have joined in on the side of the Famous Five as a matter of course, and they wondered whether he had seen them on the river and knew that the Water-Lily was their boat.

He dragged Pon up with an iron



“Yurrrrooop!” There was a sudden fearful yell from Bunter, as he tasted mustard.

grip on his collar, and shook him, rather like a rat in a terrier's grip.

Pon's furious yell reached the juniors on the Oxfordshire bank.

“Let go! Will you let go, you ruffian? Oh gad! I tell you to let go! I'll punch your face!”

Shake, shake, shake!

Pon sagged like a sack in the grasp of the wooden-faced man. He howled and spluttered.

Shake, shake, shake!

“Oh! Oh gad! Let go! Ow!” shrieked Pon.

“You young rascal!” The juniors heard a hard, clear voice. “Now pull across to that bank, and we'll see whom this boat belongs to.”

“Mind your own business!” yelled Pon.

Shake, shake, shake!

“Ow! Oogh! Ow!”

“Now will you pull across?”

“Oh! Ow! Yes!” gasped Pon.

He sat to the oars again, panting and gasping.

The Famous Five knew that he was going to get away, if he could. But he was not given a chance. The man in the little dinghy tied his painter on to the Water-Lily, and Pon was given the task of towing him across.

Pon's look at him as he pulled was positively demoniac. But the dandy of Higheliffe had had enough shaking. He pulled across the river like a lamb.

“Oh, good egg!” exclaimed Bob Cherry.

“The goodfulness of the egg is terrific!” grinned Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh.

The Famous Five stood ready to grasp the Water-Lily, as soon as it came within reach.

The bows nosed into the rushes and they all grasped together, and brought it to the bank.

Ponsonby made a movement to scramble out. He was fairly caught—and his one idea was to get away.

But Pon was not allowed to scramble out of the Water-Lily. As he started, Johnny Bull gave him a shove, that landed him on his back in the boat.

“Stick there, you Higheliffe cad!” growled Johnny. “We're not done with you yet!”

“Not by long chalks!” said Bob Cherry.

Pon scrambled up, panting with rage and alarm.

“You Greyfriars rotters! Let me get out of your rotten boat!”

“You got in of your own accord!” grinned Bob. “You can stay there for a bit. You got in to please yourself, old bean—stay in to please us.”

Ponsonby had no choice about staying in. Johnny Bull stood ready to shove him back if he attempted to get on the bank.

Harry Wharton turned to the man in the dinghy, who was casting loose his painter.

“We're very much obliged to you, sir,” he said. “That is our boat, of course, and that sweep was walking off with it!”

“Stealing it, do you mean?” asked the man in the dinghy.

“Well, no; even that rat wouldn't steal it; but he was going to lose it

for us, and he would have cared little enough what happened to it while it was lost!” answered Harry. “He knows there's a boat-thief looking for it, too, and he would give him a chance to pinch it, if he could. Isn't that so, Ponsonby?”

“Find out!” snarled Ponsonby.

“We might have had no end of trouble, getting it back, and might never have got it back at all,” said Harry. “We're all very grateful, sir.”

“Many thanks!” said Nugent.

“The thankfulness is terrific, esteemed sahib!” said Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh; a remark that made the man in the dinghy start a little and glance curiously at the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Then he smiled.

“I knew it was your boat, young gentlemen!” he said. “You are very welcome to my assistance in getting it back. You are going up the river?”

“Yes; we're on a holiday trip, and we're going up past Lechlade before we finish,” said Harry. “Many thanks, sir!”

“Not at all!” said the man in the dinghy.

His sharp, keen eyes scanned the Greyfriars crew for a moment, then, with a nod he pushed off, and pulled on up the river at the same leisurely pace as when the juniors had first sighted him.

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced after him rather curiously as he went.

The man, whoever he was, knew

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the Water-Lily and its crew, and they could only conclude that he had seen them somewhere in the river, though they had never seen him. But, apart from that, he seemed to be interested in them, somehow, they could hardly imagine why.

At all events, he had recovered their boat for them, and the Water-Lily was their own again.

Johnny Bull uncoiled the towrope. "You fellows get in," he said, "and see that that Highcliffe cad doesn't get out!"

"Do you think you can keep me in this boat?" yelled Ponsonby.

Johnny looked at him grimly. "Yes," he answered. "Just as long as we like. You're lucky not to be handed over to a policeman for stealing the boat."

"You rotter!" howled Pon. "You jolly well know—"

"I know you're sticking in that boat," said Johnny. "Knock him over and sit on him, if he tries to get out."

"You bet!" said Bob.

Four of the Co. got into the Water-Lily and pushed off from the bank. Nugent sat to the lines; Wharton, Bob, and Hurree Singh sat with their eyes on the dandy of Highcliffe ready to grab him if needed. Johnny Bull towed the boat up, for the spot where Billy Bunter had been left.

Ponsonby sat breathing hard. He was in the hands of the Philistines now. And remembering what Johnny Bull had in store for him, Pon was feeling rather desperate. For some distance he sat quiet—with a longing eye on the bank.

Then suddenly he leaped up and made a spring. It was worth even a plunge in the water to get out of the hands of the enemy.

But the three juniors were watchful. Ponsonby was grasped, as he sprang, and tumbled over backwards into the boat again.

He yelled as he bumped on the bottom of the Water-Lily.

Johnny Bull glanced round over his shoulder from the towpath.

"Sit on him!" he snorted.

"We'll sit on him all right!" chuckled Bob; and, as Pon sprawled breathlessly in the boat Bob took a seat on his chest.

"The sitfulness will be terrific," chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Make room for a chap, my esteemed Bob."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oooooogh!" came in a splutter from Ponsonby, as he was sat on. "Gerroff! Will you gerroff?"

"You shouldn't ask for what you don't want," said Bob.

"Urrggh!"

And the Greyfriars boat towed up the Thames with two of the crew sitting on Pon, effectually putting paid to any further attempt to escape.

PON PAYS THE PIPER!

"I SAY, you fellows!" A damp and muddy Owl greeted the Greyfriars crew as they arrived.

Billy Bunter was not looking his

bonniest. He blinked through his big spectacles at the Water-Lily as it came with a dismal blink.

"You've got it back!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, you fat ass!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Why did you let that Highcliffe cad walk off with it?"

"Oh, really, Bull—" Bunter gave him an indignant blink. "How could I help it, with the whole gang of them on me?"

"The what?" ejaculated Johnny.

"The whole gang!" said Bunter warmly. "I did my best! I could have handled a couple of them—"

"A couple of Ponsonby!" howled Bob Cherry. "Is there more than one of him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you the whole gang set on me!" roared Bunter. "I could have handled a couple! But three were too many for me!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Bunter could see that the Water-Lily had been recaptured. But he could not see that Ponsonby had been captured with it.

Pon was flattened out in the boat, and was invisible to the short-sighted fat Owl as the Water-Lily rocked to the bank. With two fellows sitting on him, there was not a lot of Pon to be seen.

Bunter was also evidently unaware that the Famous Five had witnessed the whole transaction from the New Bridge up the river.

In their earlier encounters with Pon, his pals Monson and Gadsby had been with him. So Bunter calmly added them now, to account for the fact that he had surrendered the Water-Lily to the enemy. Bunter was not going to admit that Pon had slung him out of the boat like a sack of potatoes.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at, you fellows!" exclaimed the fat Owl. "I put up a fight! What fellow could do more? You cleared off and left me to it—three to one! I can't handle three chaps at once—I admit it! I've got plenty of pluck, I hope—"

"Plenty of whatter?" gasped Bob.

"Phuck!" roared Bunter. "About as much as you lot have got among the lot of you, and a little over. But they got the upper hand—after a scrap. They got the boat away—"

"They—" gurgled Harry Wharton. "They did!"

"Yes, they did! I say, did you fellows find it adrift?" asked Bunter. "I thought that beast—I mean, those beasts—was—I mean were—going to stick it out of sight somewhere! Jolly lucky you found it! Might have gone over a weir or something! He—I mean they—would have liked that!"

"You fat, fibbing, fozzling frump!" roared Johnny Bull. "There was only one of them, and you let him chuck you out of the boat like a side of bacon!"

"Perhaps you know better than I do!" retorted Bunter. "Pity you weren't here to see the scrap! I knocked that cad Ponsonby into the river—"

"Oh crikey!"

"I got Gadsby in the eye!" went on Bunter. "As for Monson, I landed him right across the towpath with one punch! Fairly lifted him off his feet! You should have seen him come down cosh!"

"The coshfulness must have been terrific!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"But they beat me to it," added Bunter. "The three of them—piling in all together. They got the boat away. If you'd seen it—"

"You fat, fibbing frump!" roared Johnny Bull. "We did see it."

"Eh?"

"We were watching all the time from the bridge—"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"And Pon's got dry since you knocked him into the river, Bunter!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Eh? How do you know he's got dry?"

"Because I shouldn't be sitting on him if he was wet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry rose from Ponsonby's chest, as the boat bumped on the bank.

Pon sat up, spluttering.

Then Bunter saw him.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Pip-pip-pip-Pon!"

"Pip-pip-pip-Pon!" agreed Bob. "And he's got did-did-did-dry since you knocked him into the Tut-tut-Thames!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! I—I never knew you had him there!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, chuck him into the water! He chucked me in! Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander! Chuck him in!"

"What do you think, Pon?" asked Bob. "You've been saucy to our fat goose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Will you let me go, you rotters!" panted Pon. "Five to one, you cads—"

"That's all right!" said Johnny Bull, as he made fast the towrope. "Don't you worry about that, Ponsonby. You're only going to deal with one chap, and the other four are going to stand round and see fair play. Chuck him out of that boat!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm jolly well going to pitch him in!" squeaked Bunter indignantly. "Look at me!"

"Gerroff of the way, fathead! Pon's going to get something worse than a ducking!" said Johnny. "Kick him out of that boat, will you?"

Johnny Bull threw off his jacket. His face was grim and determined. This was the first chance he had had since Pon & Co., weeks ago, had tied him up in the wood below Wallingford and left him to wriggle. It was now Pon's turn to wriggle.

Ponsonby had been very eager to get out of the boat. But he did not seem so eager now, with Johnny Bull waiting for him on the bank.

However, assistance was not lacking. Bob Cherry took one of his arms, Hurree Singh took the other, and he was helped ashore. Harry

Wharton and Frank Nugent followed.

The dandy of Highcliffe stood with a set face and glinting eyes. He had asked for it, and he was for it now. At the back of the towpath was a quiet, shady spot, under the trees. Johnny pointed to it.

"That will suit us," he said. "Ready, Pon?"

"I'm not goin' to scrap with you, you hooligan!" said Pon sullenly.

"I've asked you if you're ready," said Johnny Bull, in a deep, growling voice.

"Go and cat coke!" Pon shoved his hands into the pockets of his flannel trousers. "I'm not scrappin' with every hooligan I meet on the river."

"You weren't so particular down by Wallingford, with Monson and Gadsby to lend you a hand," growled Johnny. "You scrapped fast enough then, you rotten funk! Will you take your hands out of your pockets, you worm?"

"No!" said Pon. "Bunter!" roared Johnny. "Tip him into the water, if you want to."

"What-ho!" grinned Bunter. There was no doubt that he wanted to! Bunter was damp, and he was muddy. He was simply longing to see Pon in the same state.

He rolled over to the dandy of Highcliffe.

Pon's hands came out of his pockets very quickly then, and Bunter jumped back. He jumped back just in time to save his nose. The next moment there was a loud smack as Johnny Bull's hand landed on Pon's nose.

"Now come on, you rat!" said Johnny.

The smack seemed enough to spur Pon on to combat. He came on with a rush, with blazing eyes and lashing fists.

So fierce was his rush that Johnny gave ground for two or three paces and blinked as Highcliffe knuckles came home on his features.

But he rallied at once, and came at Ponsonby with left and right.

The Co. stood round and looked on. It was man to man, and if Pon got the better of it he was free to depart in peace after his victory.

But Pon did not get the better of it. For three or four minutes the dandy of Highcliffe put up a strenuous scrap, and there was some tough punishment given and taken on both sides. Then he gave ground and backed away, Johnny Bull following him up like a bulldog.

Johnny was hitting hard, and he was hitting often, and there was a sudden crash as Pon went down on his back.

He remained there, gasping for breath.

"Take your time!" said Johnny Bull, sarcastically.

"I'm done!" gasped Pon. "Call that a scrap!" snorted Johnny. "You measly funk, Bunter could put up a better scrap than that!"

Pon did not answer. He remained in the grass, scowling savagely, his

hand to his nose, which was streaming crimson.

"I say, you fellows, tip him into the water!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "Look at me—muddy all over!"

"Are you getting up, Ponsonby?" roared Johnny Bull.

"No!" hissed Pon. "Pon ain't greedy!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Pon knows when he's had enough!"

"Then you're going to sit in the Thames, where you sat Bunter!" said Johnny Bull grimly.

He grasped the dandy of Highcliffe and hooked him across the towpath to the water. There was a tremendous splash as Ponsonby sat suddenly in the Thames, where Bunter had sat.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "I say, you beast, how do you like it yourself? Getting wet? He, he, he!"

Pon, evidently, did not like it at all. He sat in a foot of water and six inches of mud, spluttering. The Thames rippled round him. He had put Billy Bunter through that unpleasant experience, with a grinning face. But there was no vestige of a grin on his face now.

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You'd better steer clear after this, Pon! Get going, you men!"

Johnny Bull sat in the boat, dabbing a rather damaged nose. Bob Cherry took the towline and towed on.

Ponsonby crawled out of the Thames, squelching. The last the Greyfriars crew saw of him he was standing on the towpath squeezing mud and water out of what had once been elegant flannels.

FIVE BOB FIXES IT!

"WHAT about this?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Looks all right!"

"But—" said Harry Wharton.

"Blow that board!" grunted Bob.

It was a sunny afternoon a day or

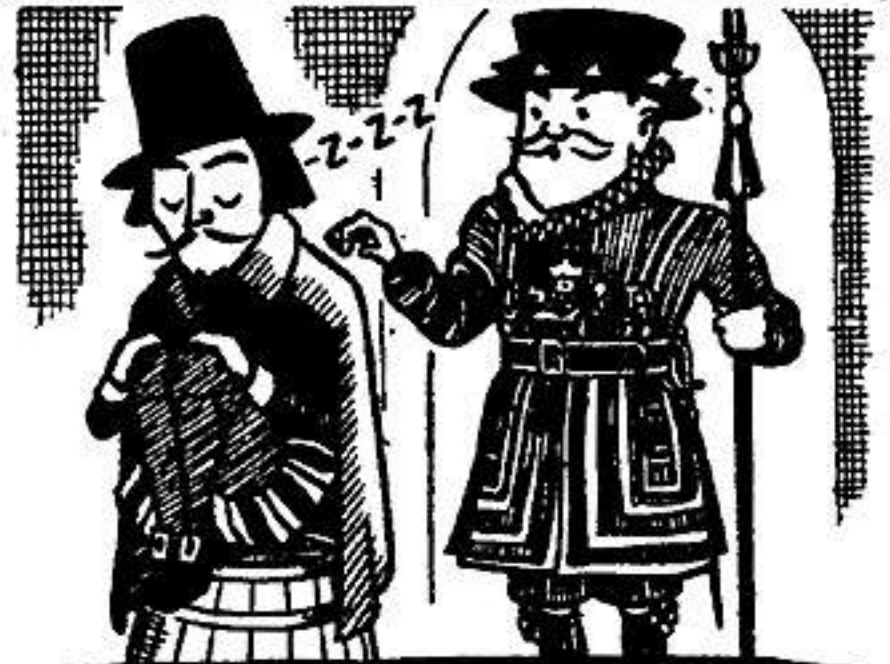
two after the Greyfriars crew had towed up from Newbridge. They were looking for a camp

And, that sweet little meadow looked an ideal spot. It was green, it was enclosed by hedges, it was shaded here and there by old oaks, and there was a little bubbling stream that flashed in the sunshine.

There was only one blot on the landscape; and that was a board which announced that trespassers would be prosecuted. And the juniors, as they spotted that board, realised that they had better push on—with one exception. Billy Bunter did not want to push on.

Bunter wanted his supper. Besides,

(Continued on next page.)



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he was tired! Bunter was easily tired! Sitting in a boat, being towed along, seemed to tire Bunter more than towing the boat tired other fellows.

"Look here, chance it!" said Bunter. "There's nobody about!" To the Owl of the Remove there was nobody about—but the other five members of the crew of the Water-Lily could see a man in the meadow leaning on one of the oaks and smoking a cigarette.

"Fathead!" said Bob.

"Beast!" said Bunter. "Blow that silly board! There's more of those boards along the Thames than there are trees! I don't believe in taking any notice of them! Look here, let's lug it down and use it for a camp-fire!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Bunter evidently was the man for drastic measures. Notice-boards along the Thames irritated Bunter. They were, in fact, rather irritating to everybody. Still, private property was private property.

"It's a jolly place!" said Bunter, blinking ashore. "I say, you fellows, let's land here. Nobody being about—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" snorted Bunter. "If anybody turns up we can pay him for camping, same as we've done before—but I don't suppose anybody will—can't see a soul!"

"You howling owl, there's a man standing in the meadow, not a dozen yards away!" hooted Bob. "Are you ready to lug his notice-board down under his nose?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

He blinked at the man smoking the cigarette under the tree, discerning him at last.

"Push on!" said Frank Nugent. "When they put up a notice-board, it means that they don't want visitors."

"The meanfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Rot!" said Bunter. "Look here, let's go and ask the man! He looks pretty shabby, and I dare say five bob will do it. I'll stand the five bob, if you're fearfully particular about that!" added Bunter, with a touch of scorn.

"Anybody got five bob to lend Bunter?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here——" roared Bunter.

"Well, after all, no harm in asking the chap!" said Bob Cherry. "It's a jolly spot, and he can't do more than say no."

"I'd better ask him," said Bunter. "If he sees me first, he'll see that we're a respectable party and not a lot of trippers."

"Oh crumbs! Mightn't he think it was a bunch escaped from the Zoo, if he sees you first?" asked Bob.

"Yah!" retorted Bunter. "Just let me step ashore and I'll put it to him. And don't waste any more time jawing."

"Might as well!" agreed Harry Wharton.

The Greyfriars boat pushed in to

the bank and Billy Bunter stepped out on the towpath.

The fat Owl rolled into the meadow and headed for the man leaning on the oak.

The man glanced at him and then at the boat, and then at Bunter again. The juniors, looking at him, could see that he was rather shabbily dressed and looked as if a small sum of money might be useful to him. So they hoped for the best.

The fat ambassador reached the oak, and the crew of the Water-Lily watched him enter into talk with the young man with the cigarette. That young man nodded, evidently in assent to Bunter's remarks.

Bunter came rolling back to the towpath with a satisfied expression on his fat face.

"All right!" he announced. "He says that five bob will do it. It's worth that! One of you lend me five bob——"

"Here he comes!" said Bob.

The young man detached himself from the oak and came down to the towpath. He touched a shabby bowler hat very civilly to the Greyfriars crew.

"It's all right," he said. "You can camp here if you don't leave any litter about or pull the hedges to make a camp-fire. Five shillings wouldn't go very far to pay for damage, as I dare say you understand."

"Oh, quite!" said Harry. "We shan't do any damage."

"Not a spot!" assured Bob Cherry.

"O.K., then!" said the young man with the cigarette; and five shillings having changed hands the Greyfriars crew made the boat fast and landed.

The shabby young man went back into the field, sauntered across it, and disappeared by a gate on the farther side—which led, the juniors concluded, to his residence. There was a glimpse of a red roof and chimney-pots beyond the trees.

The camping outfit was taken ashore. A little distance from the towpath, and near the purling stream, the juniors erected the tent—Billy Bunter watching that process.

Bunter's contribution to the work of camping was a series of remarks urging speed—Bunter being in need of his supper. He stood with his hands in his pockets and spurred the other fellows on!

"I say, you fellows, don't be all night about it!" urged Bunter. "Get a move on, you know! We've got to cook supper yet!"

"Get the stove going!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"And cook the sosses——"

"Same old tale!" said Bunter bitterly. "Ever since we started from Kingston, the same old tale! All the work put on me!"

"Where's that mallet?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I've got it," answered Bob.

"What do you want the mallet for?"

"Lend it to me a minute."

Bob ceased to knock in tent pegs and handed the mallet to Johnny Bull.

Johnny stepped to Bunter.

"I say, you're wasting time, Bull!" said the fat Owl. "What the thump are you walking about with that mallet for? I say—— Yaroop!"

Billy Bunter discovered the next moment why Johnny was walking about with the mallet. There was a loud thump as the mallet banged on the tightest trousers in Oxfordshire.

"Wow!" roared Bunter. He bounded. "You mad ass, wharrer you up to? Keep that mallet away, will you, you dunderhead! Ow!"

"Are you going to cook the sosses?" asked Johnny Bull.

"If you think I'm going to do all the work on this trip——"

Bang!

"Oh crikey! Stoppit!" roared Bunter.

"Cooking those sosses?"

"Beast!"

Bang!

"Ow! Oh! Yes! Where's the frying-pan?" yelled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, where's that frying-pan? Stoppit, you beast! Where's the frying-pan?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Johnny handed the mallet back to Bob. It was not needed again for anything but tent-pegging. Billy Bunter did not want the mallet any more. By the time the Famous Five had finished putting up the tent, there was an appetising scent of frying sausages in the camp, and the Greyfriars crew sat down to supper.

TEN BOB FIXES IT!

"THAT sportsman seems interested!" remarked Bob Cherry.

He did!

Supper was going on—and, under the mollifying influence of unlimited sosses, fat contentment had returned to the podgy countenance of William George Bunter.

It was very pleasant, in fact, delightful, in that pretty little meadow, eating a good supper after a day on the river, watching the river rippling by, and an occasional craft gliding on the water.

But it was from the other direction that the sportsman alluded to by Bob appeared. From some region farther inland, he appeared at the gate in the hedge by which the shabby young man had departed half an hour ago.

He was a rather stout man, in gaiters. He stood at the gate, and stared across it at the camp. For several minutes he stood there, staring, till the attention of all the campers was drawn to him.

Then, at last, he came through the gate and approached the camp, with a thunderous frown on his face.

"Looks shirty!" remarked Bob. "Ought to be pleased to see such a nice party! What the dickens is the matter with him?"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, struck by a sudden mis-giving.

"What——"

"That fellow who gave us leave to



“Half-a-crown to tow you up to Rushy Lock, sir,” said Mr. Jobling, “and you’ll be doing a good turn to a poor man.” “It’s a go!” said Bunter.

camp here——” said Harry. “I supposed he belonged to the place, as he was here——”

“Well, he did!” said Bob.

“Well, did he?” asked Harry. “Remember how we were done once before down below Mapledurham——”

“Oh!” exclaimed Bob.

“But this chap was here—loafing about the meadow!” said Frank Nugent. “Dash it all, we can’t have been done again in the same way!”

“That stout lad looks as if there’s something amiss, at any rate!” said the captain of the Remove.

The stout lad certainly did. His face was quite like thunder as he tramped towards the Greyfriars camp, and the juniors could not help being dismayed.

Early in their trip up the Thames, they had been diddled by a rogue who gave them leave to camp, without being entitled so to do. It had led to a row! Now they wondered whether they had been diddled by another rogue, and whether it was going to lead to another row.

“I say, you fellows, we jolly well ain’t going!” exclaimed Billy Bunter. “I haven’t finished supper.”

And Bunter accelerated—alarmed at the possibility of having to suspend-taking on cargo.

The other fellows rose to their feet. They had taken it for granted, without a single suspicion, that the young man they had seen in the meadow belonged to the place, or the place

belonged to him. But the thunderous look on the face of the stout sportsman filled them with misgivings.

He arrived at last.

“What the dickens are you doing here?” he demanded, in a powerful voice.

“Camping!” answered Bob.

The stout man had a stick under his arm. He pointed to the notice-board—which was noticeable enough.

“Can’t you read?” he roared.

“Just a few!” agreed Bob.

“Well, if you can read, you can read that board, and you know that you’re not allowed to land and camp here!” roared the man in gaiters. “Why, I’ve never heard of such a thing! Camping on my land right under my notice-board! This is the limit, this is!”

“Your land!” repeated Harry Wharton.

“My medder!” hooted the man in gaiters. “I came down to see that it’s ready to turn my cows into, and I find a lot of trippers camping in it! My word! You’d like to camp among my cows, perhaps?”

“Not a lot!” said Bob. “You see——”

“I see that you’re camping here! Not so much as coming up to the house to ask!” hooted the man in gaiters. “It ain’t three hundred yards away, but you couldn’t walk up and ask leave—not you!”

“Please let us explain!” said Harry Wharton hastily. “We’ve been taken

in! A man gave us leave to camp here. We paid him five shillings——”

“What? One of my men, do you mean?”

“We don’t know who he was, but he made out that he had a right to let us camp here, and we paid him five shillings!” said Harry.

Snort, from the stout man in gaiters.

“Well, you must be a young noodle!” he said. “Didn’t you ask him whether he belonged to the place before you handed him money?”

“Well, no—we—we thought——”

“Lot of good asking him!” grunted Johnny Bull. “A fellow who would swindle wouldn’t mind telling a lie or two as well!”

“Well, that’s all very well!” said the man in gaiters, his frowning brow clearing a little. “If you’ve been taken in, you mayn’t be so much to blame; but that board is plain enough, ain’t it? Does it say trespassers will be prosecuted, or doesn’t it?”

“Yes; but——”

“Well, what it says it means!” grunted the man in gaiters. “I’ve got to turn cows into this field!”

“Well, we shan’t hurt your cows, and I don’t suppose they’ll hurt us!” said Bob. “Lots of room for your cows—and we shan’t eat any of their grass! Can’t we pay for camping here?”

Another snort from the man in gaiters.

"Five shillings is no use to me, young man!" he answered.

"I say, you fellows, make it ten!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I don't see being stingy when we're on a holiday."

"All right, let Bunter make it ten!" said Johnny Bull, in a deep growl. "Trot out the ten, you fat ass!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"We'll make it ten, sir, if that will satisfy you!" said Harry Wharton. "We'd rather not shift now we've settled down here! If you'll give us leave to camp here for ten shillings——"

The man in gaiters seemed to consider.

"Well, I got to turn the cows in," he said. "But I'll see that they keep to the other end of the medder. Don't you start worrying my cows!"

"I say, you fellows, we don't want cows here!" howled Bunter. "Suppose one of them was a bull!"

"You fat chump——"

"The cows won't worry you if you don't worry them!" said the man in gaiters, seemingly in a much better temper now. "If I spoke rough, I'm sorry; but finding you camping here so free and easy, and the house only a few hundred yards away, and no leave asked or given——"

"We thought we had leave."

"Well, I understand; but I advise you to find out another time whether a man owns the land he lets you camp on!" said the man in gaiters. "I suppose you're a party of schoolboys, from your looks—and I may tell you that there's plenty of rogues along this river, looking for mugs!"

"We've found that out!" said Bob ruefully.

"Well, ten bob will fix it!" said the man in gaiters. "I'll tell my man you're here, and to keep the cows at the other end of the medder. They'll let you alone if you let them alone."

"Right-ho!" said Bob.

And a ten-shilling note was sorted out, and passed over to the man in gaiters.

He seemed quite amiable as he tucked it away.

"Good-night, young gentlemen!" said the man in gaiters civilly.

"Good-night!"

The man in gaiters, no longer looking thunderous, walked away the way he had come, and disappeared beyond the gate and the hedge.

Harry Wharton & Co. sat down again, to finish their supper, greatly relieved in their minds. That camp was a very pleasant and agreeable one, and certainly they did not want to shift, with the dusk beginning to fall. But it was undoubtedly proving rather expensive.

However, the matter was settled satisfactorily at last, and they finished their supper, and watched the glowing sunset over the Thames, in quite a cheerful frame of mind.



FIXED AGAIN!

"THIS is pretty cool, isn't it?"

"Eh?"

"What?"

Harry Wharton & Co. all looked at the speaker.

Billy Bunter, slowly masticating the last sausage, blinked at him.

He had entered the meadow by the gate at the upper end, and strolled across the field towards the Greyfriars camp. He was a man with a beaky nose, a sharp eye, and he wore an old velveteen jacket, and carried a rod under his arm.

The juniors, when they sighted him, supposed that he was going down to the river to fish. But he did not go down to the river—he stopped at the camp, stared at the schoolboys, and finally remarked that it was pretty cool!

"You haven't bought this place, I suppose?" he asked.

"Not quite!" said Bob Cherry, staring at him.

"I thought not," said the man in the velveteen jacket. "I fancy I should have been there when you did it! If you have, I don't remember the transaction."

That remark made all the Famous Five sit up and take notice. It smote them with new misgivings.

"Look here," exclaimed Harry Wharton hotly. "I suppose you're not going to tell us that you're the owner of this place?"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob. "How many owners has this jolly old meadow got?"

"I say, you fellows, that fat man said he was the owner!" exclaimed Billy Bunter.

"So did the first man!" said Bob. "Look here, will you tell us what you mean?"

"I'll tell you fast enough," answered the man in velveteens, "and I'll tell you at the same time that if you fancy you can get away with this, you're making a big size in mistakes! Do you think I'm hiring this place for the fishing or to let a gang of trippers camp here?"

"You're hiring this place for the fishing!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Just that—and paying for it—and if you fancy I'm paying for it to let strangers camp on it, you've got another guess coming! And the sooner you pack up and clear, the

better! I've come across some cool customers in my time—but I must say that this beats it!"

The juniors all rose—with the exception of Billy Bunter.

Bunter had done too well at supper to be willing to lift that supper, if he could help it.

The Famous Five looked hard at the beaky-nosed man in velveteens. His claim to be the proprietor of that meadow was not going to be admitted without an argument. That meadow seemed to have altogether too many proprietors.

"You say you've hired this place!" said Harry Wharton. "Did you hire it of a stout old sportsman in gaiters—the owner? If you did, you can settle it with him, as we've paid him for permission to camp here."

"I hired this place of the estate-agents," answered the angler. "Jones & Smith, of Radcot. Anything more you want to know, before you pack up and clear?"

"Then who's the man we've paid for permission to camp here?" demanded Bob.

"You've paid for permission to camp here?"

"Yes, we have—twice over, too!"

"Tell me another funny story!" suggested the man in velveteens. "That one doesn't make me laugh!"

"If you mean that you don't believe us——" growled Johnny Bull.

The fisherman laughed.

"Well, if you paid any stout old sportsman for permission to camp on the property I'm hiring and paying for, you must be bigger fools than you look—that's all: and that's saying a lot!" he retorted. "I've never heard of the man you mention. What name did he give?"

"He never gave his name," said Bob. "We supposed that he was a farmer or something—he said he was going to turn cows into the field."

The man in velveteens looked round.

"I don't see any cows!" he remarked.

"He hasn't turned them in, after all—not yet, at any rate!" said Bob. "But that's what he said—and we paid him ten bob to camp here."

"Fools and their money are soon parted, if you did!" said the man in velveteens. "I've heard of such things happening along the river—but I'm dashed if I've ever come on a set of mugs before that actually had been done like that! You ought to have brought your nurse along with you on this trip!"

The chums of the Remove coloured with vexation.

The shabby young man, in the first place, had done them brown. But the second man, the stout sportsman in gaiters, had undoubtedly seemed the genuine article. Not a doubt had crossed their minds about the man in gaiters. If he had been a spoofer, he had played his part well.

On the other hand, there was no sign of the cows he had stated that he was going to turn into the field. And, after all, there was only his word for it that he was the owner of the place.

"Well, I'm waiting to see you off," said the angler. "I can't have you

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here. I'm sorry, if you're really the set of mugs you make out—but I'm not paying for this place for other people to use it. I don't carry philanthropy to that extent. If I want to sub-let, I shall sub-let on my own, and take the money. I don't want to. So be off with you, and the sooner the better!"

The juniors exchanged glances.

"I say, you fellows, we can't go!" squeaked Bunter. "I'm getting sleepy. Look here, we've paid to camp here——"

"You haven't paid me!" said the man in velveteens. "And if you prefer to be turned off, I'll go back to the house and telephone for a constable."

"Oh crikey!"

"Look here, this is all very well!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "If this place is really yours, I suppose we've no right here—but we've been told that tale twice already, and we want some proof."

"Do you?" asked the man in velveteens disagreeably. "Well, I'll give you all the proof you want! If you're not packing and going by the time I reach that gate, I'm going to phone for a constable. You can argue it out with him—not with me!"

"But——"

"Cut it out!" said the man in velveteens. "You camp in a man's meadow, and call him a liar when he raises objections! You can leave it at that! I must say that for cool, unadulterated cheek, you take the cake! You needn't say any more! That does it!"

He turned to walk back to the gate.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bob Cherry hastily. "Look here, we've been taken in twice since we landed here——"

"More fool you!" said the man in velveteens. "Nothing to do with me, is it? It's not my job to look after a set of mugs."

"We've paid twice over——"

"Then you're twice the fool you look!"

"Look here!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I'm jolly well not going!" hooted Bunter. "I dare say five bob will fix it."

"That's your mistake!" jeered the man in velveteens. "Five bob won't fix it, my stout young friend, after calling a man a liar."

"No need to get your hair off!" said Bob. "Nobody's called you a liar—but after being swindled twice we want to know where we stand."

"I'll tell you where you stand—you're standing in my meadow," said the man in velveteens, "and if you're still standing here when I get to that gate, look out for trouble, that's all!"

"I say, you fellows, give him ten bob——"

"You can keep your ten bob in your trousers pocket!" said the man in velveteens. "If you'd asked leave and offered to pay, fair and square, it would be a different matter. But if you can't think of anything better than checking a man who finds you camped in his field——" He gave a

snort. "I'm dashed if I ever heard of such a thing—ever!"

The juniors looked at one another—at the darkening sky and the darkening river. They certainly did not want to shift camp.

"Well, look here," said Bob Cherry at last, "can we fix it? We've told you how we've been done!"

"If that's the truth——" said the man in velveteens.

"Look here——" roared Johnny Bull.

"Well, dash it all, it's a tall story, isn't it?" exclaimed the man in velveteens. "I don't say I don't believe you—but you know yourselves that it sounds pretty steep!"

"Perhaps it does!" said Harry. "But it's the fact! Will you take five bob to give us leave to camp here?"

"No, I won't!" said the man in velveteens. "I'm paying two pounds a week for this place, and it's not good enough!"

"What about ten, then?" asked Bob.

The man in velveteens paused. He seemed angry and indignant at having had his word doubted, which, perhaps, was natural enough if he was the proprietor of the place, coming suddenly on a party camping without leave asked or given. But he seemed to relax at the offer of ten shillings.

"Well," he said at length, "we'll let it go at that, if you like. I hardly know what to make of you—telling me that you've paid two perfect strangers for leave to camp in my meadow. You might as well pay any tramp that came up the towpath! I've never heard of such a thing. I've seen some mugs in my time, but really——"

"Never mind that," said Harry. "If ten bob will fix it, here you are."

"Oh, all right!"

The angler accepted the ten-shilling note. He walked away across the meadow to the gate, leaving the Famous Five looking ruefully at one another. It was a very nice camp, but certainly they would never have selected that meadow had they foreseen that it was going to cost them a sum-total of twenty-five shillings to camp there. It was the most expensive camp they had struck since the Water-Lily had pushed out of Kingston.

MYSTERIOUS MR. JONES!

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

A boat pushed in from the river to the towpath by the meadow. A man stepped ashore and made the boat fast.

The light was growing dim now. Billy Bunter had rolled into the tent, from which his snore echoed and re-echoed. The Famous Five were thinking of turning in, when the man landed from his boat.

"Is that another?" asked Bob.

"Another what?" inquired Harry.

"Another man that this meadow belongs to."

"Oh, say hat!"

"Never heard of a field with so

many owners!" said Bob. "I suppose the last man was all right—but I'm blessed if I should be surprised to see another jolly old proprietor turn up. But I'll tell you what—if this meadow belongs to that chap, as well as the other three, we're not going to pay him anything! We've paid enough for this camp."

"Oh gum!" said Johnny Bull.

It was rather a dismaying idea. But really, after their extraordinary experiences in that meadow, the chums of the Remove would hardly have been surprised had a fourth man turned up and claimed to be the owner.

And it was rather an odd place for a man to land at nightfall, unless the place belonged to him.

They watched the shadowy figure from the boat curiously and rather uneasily. All their minds were made up on one point—they were not going to pay anybody anything more for camping in that meadow! It was getting altogether too thick.

The man crossed the towpath and entered the meadow. He seemed about to cross the field towards the distant gate; but, perceiving the Greyfriars tent, he came towards the camp instead.

"Now for it!" murmured Bob. "He's going to tell us that this meadow belongs to him, you bet."

"I believe I've seen that chap before," said Harry, looking hard at the approaching stranger. "By gum, it's the man——"

"That chap in the dinghy!" exclaimed Bob.

As the man came nearer in the dusk, the juniors recognised him. It was the man with the square chin and the wooden-looking face who had saved their boat from Pousoby a few days ago.

He gave them a nod.

"Camping here, I see!" he remarked.

"That's it!" said Bob cheerfully. "Does this meadow belong to you, by any chance?"

The man stared at him.

"Eh? No!" he answered.

"It doesn't!" exclaimed Bob.

"Of course it doesn't! What do you mean?"

"You're the first man we've seen here that it doesn't belong to!" explained Bob. "It seems to belong to nearly everybody else in Oxfordshire."

"Is that a joke?" asked the wooden-faced man, staring.

"Yes—a joke on us!" said Bob. "We've paid three times over for permission to camp here—and we're not quite sure that the last man was the real goods, either. When we saw you, we thought that another owner had come along. I'm awfully glad to hear that you don't own the place."

The wooden-featured man laughed.

"It seems that you've been done!" he remarked. "You want to be on your guard, camping out. Didn't you ask at that inn?"

"The inn!" repeated Bob. "Is there an inn hereabouts?"

"You must have seen it from here, in the daylight!" The man pointed

to the gate at the back of the field, now hardly visible in the dusk.

"Oh my hat! We saw a red roof and chimney-pots over the trees—wasn't that a farmhouse?" asked Bob.

"No; there's a lane at the other side of that gate; that building is the Plough Inn; that's where I'm going," said the man with the wooden face. "This meadow belongs to the innkeeper—he is the man you should have asked for permission to camp."

"Done again!" groaned Bob. "Then that sportsman in the velvet-jacket was a spoofer, too! Done three times!"

"He certainly wasn't an innkeeper!" said Harry blankly.

"Tell me exactly how it happened," said the man with the wooden face. "I may be able to set it right."

He listened—his wooden features relaxing in a grin as the juniors told him of their variety of dealings with the shabby young man with the cigarette, the stout sportsman in gaiters, and the man in the velvet-jacket.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he roared. "This is the best story I have heard on the river—the very best! Once—or twice—but three times! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I dare say it seems funny to you!" said Bob. "It's not so funny to us, with twenty-five bob gone and the innkeeper to pay in the morning."

"The funfulness does not strike us as terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"They all went the same way, I suppose?" asked the wooden-faced man, with a nod towards the distant gate.

"Yes, they all left by that gate!" said Nugent.

"They would!" agreed the man from the dinghy. "They went to the inn to spend your money, I've no doubt."

"Blow 'em!" said Bob. "But it's jolly odd, you know, three swindlers turning up, one after another, in the same spot."

"Not very!" said the wooden-faced man, grinning. "The first man you saw no doubt told his pals in the public-house, and they took it in turns to walk across the meadow and diddle you."

"Oh crikey!"

The juniors exchanged eloquent glances! They saw it all now!

That shabby young man with the cigarette, no doubt, had strolled out of the inn to smoke his cigarette by the river, when they had arrived there. Having touched them for five shillings so easily, he had told his friends at the Plough—and the stout sportsman in gaiters had come out to try it on—and as he had walked back with ten shillings in his pocket, it had encouraged the man in the velvet-jacket to try on the same game.

There was nothing surprising in it, now that they knew there was an inn on the other side of that gate, not a farmhouse! Three unscrupulous public-house loafers had diddled them, one after another; that was all!

"I suppose it's funny, in a way!" said Bob. "But I'd jolly well like to punch their heads, all the same!"

"They could be given into custody!" said the man with the wooden face.

"I'd rather punch their noses!"

"Probably you would still rather see them come back and return the money!" suggested the man with the wooden face.

"Oh! Yes, rather! That doesn't seem fearfully likely!"

"Probably they are still at the inn! I imagine they are the kind not to leave before closing-time. I am going there! I shall recognise them from your description."

"Well, they won't walk back with the money if you ask them, will they?" exclaimed Bob, in astonishment.

"I think so! I have rather a persuasive way with me!" said the man with the wooden face—his wooden face taking on quite a grim look as he spoke. "I have no doubt that they will come back at once, when I speak to them. Wait up another ten minutes and you will see."

He gave the juniors a nod, and walked away across the field, disappearing in the dusk towards the gate.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared after him.

"Is that johnny pulling our leg, or what?" asked Bob blankly.

"Blessed if I know!" said Harry, quite puzzled. "I don't see why those three rascals, if they are still there, should take any notice of him."

"Same here! He seems a decent sort!" said Johnny Bull. "He knows us all right—though we don't know him. He knew it was our boat, that day Pon got off with it. But if he makes those three rotters walk back with our cash—"

"How the dickens could he?" said Frank Nugent.

"Well, we shall soon see!" remarked Bob. "I'll believe it when I see it! He seems a decent sort of merchant but I fancy he was talking out of his hat! Those three rogues wouldn't cough up the cash unless a policeman asked them to."

Harry Wharton & Co. waited, quite curious to see whether anything would come of the wooden-faced man's surprising offer. They kept their eyes on the distant gate.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob suddenly.

Three shadowy figures loomed up in the dusk.

The juniors rose to their feet, and watched them approaching, in great astonishment! As they drew nearer, the three were recognisable—the shabby young man, the stout sportsman in gaiters, and the man in the velvet-jacket.

The juniors watched them, in

amazed silence, as they approached. Evidently, the wooden-faced man had been as good as his word. He had picked out the three loafers at the inn; and here they were! But why they were obeying his orders was a puzzling mystery.

The three came up sheepishly. "Glad to see you again!" said Bob Cherry. "The whole happy family all together this time, what?"

The shabby young man scowled. The stout sportsman coloured. The man in the velvet-jacket grinned.

"You asked for it!" he said. "Don't say you didn't ask for it! You did!"

He held out a ten-shilling note! The stout sportsman, in silence, held out another ten-shilling note. The shabby young man held out five



"You silly idiot!" spluttered Bunter. "W

shillings. The Greyfriars crew were glad enough to see their money again. But they were quite puzzled.

"You've been told to do this, of course!" said Bob. "Very nice of you to do as you're told—but—why?"

The shabby young man grunted. The stout sportsman in gaiters snorted. The man in the velvet-jacket grinned.

"Mr. Jones asked us so nicely," he answered. "I never argue with a man like Mr. Jones! It don't pay!"

And the three turned away and walked off to the gate.

"Well, this beats it!" said Bob Cherry. "This beats it to a frazzle! Who the thump is Mr. Jones to make those rogues and rascals dance to his tune?"

"Goodness knows!"

It was quite a puzzle to the Famous Five. However, the affair

had ended very satisfactorily; the three rascals had disgorged their plunder, owing to the intervention of the mysterious Mr. Jones, and it was a very cheery crew that turned into the tent to be lulled to sleep by Billy Bunter's rumbling snore.

BRACELETS FOR PONSONBY!

CECIL PONSONBY paused and listened.

It was a dark night.

Hardly a light glimmered in the dark vault of the dim September sky. The river rolled with a faint gleam in the gloom.

Had any fellow in the Greyfriars

Pon's eyes glinted.

The Famous Five had almost forgotten Ponsonby. So far as they thought of him at all, they fancied that a licking from Johnny Bull, followed by a ducking in the Thames, had been enough for Pon—and that he would steer clear of them afterwards—especially as his pals, Monson and Gadsby, had left him to carry on by himself.

But they were not done with Pon yet! That licking had made Pon sore in a double sense! Hunting the Greyfriars party, watching for a chance to do them an ill turn, was not, perhaps, much in the way of a holiday—but Pon did not care about that! Pon wanted vengeance—and wanted it bad! And now, at last, it was within his grasp!

He stood listening for some moments. Then he turned to the bank, and peered into the gloom by the river.

Pon had been on the watch that day. He had spotted the Greyfriars camp—though he had been very careful not to approach it. Not till it was nearly midnight and all was safe!

The Greyfriars Water-Lily was tied up under the bank. In the rushes and under the shadow of a bush at the water's edge it was almost invisible—and no doubt the campers supposed that it was safe.

If so, it was not so safe as they supposed.

Pon's eye glittered at the shadowy shape of the boat as he peered! There it was—within his reach.

But he was very careful. Leaning over the bank, he turned on, for a moment, a gleam of light, to make sure that no one was sleeping in the boat. That was likely enough, if the juniors still had Shifty Spooner in their minds.

But apparently they hadn't! In fact, not having seen anything of the persistent Mr. Spooner since they had passed Oxford, the

Famous Five had rather dismissed Shifty from mind. All his many attempts on the Water-Lily having failed, they had an impression that Mr. Spooner was fed-up and was seeking fresh woods and pastures new for his pinching activities.

No one was in the boat.

Satisfied on that point, Ponsonby shut off the light. Quietly, softly, he stepped down into the Water-Lily.

He knew that the juniors fastened it at night with a padlock. But he was prepared for that padlock this time!

Pon had provided himself with a tool for wrenching open that padlock. He had profited by his brief association with Shifty Spooner!

And this time Pon was not merely going to set the Water-Lily adrift! He was not merely going to hide it in some backwater. With a swollen

nose, a darkened eye, and a series of defeats to avenge, Pon was going to hit hard this time—he was going to hit very hard!

First of all, he was going to get the Water-Lily away from its moorings—and float it down the river to a safe distance from the camp. Then he was going to drill holes in the timbers. Then he was going to land, leaving the Water-Lily to sink.

That was Pon's programme this time!

After which, Pon was going to be done with his old enemies! When the Greyfriars crew missed their boat in the morning they could hunt for it as long as they liked—they were not likely to find it, sunk in the middle of the Thames!

That this was breaking the law, that it was the kind of thing for which he might be sent to Borstal, mattered not a whit to Pon! Pon was thinking only of vengeance—of giving the Greyfriars crew a final hard knock before he turned his back on them for good.

In the darkness in the boat he groped at the chain—taking great care not to let it clink! Then, feeling that it was safe under cover of the bank, he turned on a gleam of light. Over the edge of the bank a shadowy figure loomed, and Ponsonby gave a violent start as he discerned it.

He had not heard a sound!

He was assured that the Greyfriars crew were asleep in the tent. Even if they had turned out, they would not have turned out so silently as this! That shadowy figure was as silent as a spectre.

Utterly startled, Pon crouched in the boat and his light, for a second, shone on the face of the man ashore.

The man could not see Pon, except as a dark shadow in the boat behind the light! But Pon could see the man.

He knew him at once!

It was the square-chinned man who had intervened two or three days ago, below New Bridge, to stop him getting away with the boat! He knew that square chin and those wooden features instantly. How, and why, that stranger had turned up here was an amazing mystery to Pon! It was a mystery that he had no time to think out! For even as the spot of light gleamed on the wooden face the man leaped into the boat and Ponsonby sprawled under him.

The Water-Lily rocked violently, the gunwales dipping alternately to the water, shipping heavy splashes. Ponsonby struggled frantically.

Who the man was, why he was there, he did not know—but he knew that he was pinned down in the bottom of the boat in an iron grasp. He struggled madly to free himself.

He was dealing with a man—a strong and sinewy man—but so desperate was his struggle that for a long breathless minute the wooden-faced man had his hands full.

But he was twice as strong as Ponsonby, if not thrice as strong; and he had him down and kept him down!

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harrer you dabbing treacle on me for?"

camp been on the watch, it would not have been easy to see the shadowy figure on the towpath.

But Ponsonby was very cautious. He trod lightly and he listened intently. There was a cold wind on the river; but that was not the chief reason why Pon had a coat-collar turned up round his neck and a thick cap pulled low over his forehead. He did not want to be recognised if a Greyfriars eye fell on him.

No Greyfriars eye, however, fell on the slinking figure on the towpath. In the tent in the meadow the Famous Five slept soundly enough. If they were dreaming, they certainly were not dreaming of their old enemy of Highcliffe.

Standing there in the gloom, Pon caught a faint sound from the direction of the tent. It was the rumble of a snore!

Grasping Pon's wrists, he dragged them together. Why, Pon did not know; but he wrestled fiercely and furiously to release them.

It was in vain! A knee was on him now, pinning him down—his wrists were bunched together, and held together in one sinewy hand. The man's other hand was groping under his coat. Something cold, chilly, touched Pon's wrists suddenly.

It was the contact of cold metal! There was a click!

A cry broke from Pon—a cry of amazement, horror, and terror. His brain fairly swam as he realised what had happened.

The knee was removed from his chest. The wooden-faced man rose from his prisoner, breathing hard after the struggle.

And Ponsonby, the dandy of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, lay in the bottom of the boat, shivering with horror, with the handcuffs locked on his wrists!

ENOUGH FOR PON!

"MR JONES" bent over the sprawling, panting dandy of Highcliffe.

It was too dark for Pon to see his face, or for him to see Pon's. Pon caught only a glint of keen eyes from a shadow.

"Lagged—at last!" said the man with the wooden face quietly. "You've tried this game on once too often. This lets you out, my man!"

Pon almost whimpered.

"Let me go! Take these things off! For mercy's sake—for mercy's sake! I'm no thief—I wouldn't have stolen the boat! Take these things off!"

The shadowy figure over him gave a violent start.

"Who are you?" came a snapping voice. "Who the dooce—what—what—who the dooce are you?"

There was amazement, mingled with sudden anger, in the tones.

It dawned on Ponsonby that the man did not want him—that he had mistaken him for someone else in the dark—and the sound of his voice had enlightened the man who could not see his face.

He panted and panted with relief.

The man evidently was connected with the police, or he would not have been carrying handcuffs. For a long and dreadful moment, Pon had seen himself arrested, taken into official custody, charged with theft, covered with undying disgrace. For, whatever he might say or not say, he was caught making off in the middle of the night with a boat that did not belong to him, and any police officer would have needed a lot of convincing that he had not intended to steal it.

But he understood now that it was a mistake. The man, whoever he was, was after somebody else—and Pon's voice had apprised him of his error and caused him angry astonishment. He groped in his pocket. A beam of light flashed out and shone on

Pon's face, as his own had shone on that wooden-looking face a few minutes ago. Then the man, in his turn, recognised the Highcliffe junior.

"You!" he snapped, or rather snarled.

"Let me go!" breathed Pon. "Do you think I'm a thief?"

"I think you're little better!" snapped the man, and he shut off the light at once and returned the torch to his pocket. "You young rascal! You were making off with this boat when I caught you before—"

"It was only a joke on those Greyfriars cads! Ask them—they'll tell you I'm no thief!" panted Pon.

In his fear he was willing to call for aid on the fellows he loathed, on whom he had intended to play a base and miserable trick.

"You were going to take the boat! Whether you kept it or not, those lads would have lost it! You young scoundrel!"

"Take these handcuffs off, for mercy's sake!"

"Keep them on!" snapped the square-chinned man. "The contact may do you good! It will warn you of what you may come to some day if you do not mend your ways. This is the last time you will lay hands on this boat—I shall take care of that! Get up!"

"If—if you'll only let me go!" groaned Pon.

"Get up!" snapped Mr. Jones contemptuously.

Pon staggered to his feet in the rocking boat. The sinewy hand grasped him by the collar and hooked him ashore.

He staggered on the towpath, with the shadowy figure of the mysterious Mr. Jones beside him.

The latter looked towards the Greyfriars tent, and listened. Then he glanced sharply up and down the dim towpath. It seemed to Pon that he was anxious that there should be no alarm.

But there was no alarm from the tent. The faint sounds in the boat had not reached the sleepers ashore.

"Come!" muttered Mr. Jones.

He grasped Pon's arm and led him away down the towpath, the handcuffs still on his wrists, the cold contact of the metal sending chills of horror through the wretched dandy of Highcliffe.

He was sure that the wooden-faced man had been after somebody else—that he had fancied that Pon, in the dark, was that somebody else. But the awful thought haunted him that perhaps he was being led away in custody, to be handed over at a police station.

Pon was not thinking of vengeance now. He was not thinking of his bitter grudge against the chums of Greyfriars. He was only longing to get away—to get away as fast and as far as he could, and never again, if he could help it, to come within fifty miles of the Water-Lily. If only he got out of this—

With his wrists bunched together before him, he tottered along the towpath.

Then Mr. Jones came to a halt.

"Stand there, you young scoundrel!" he grunted.

Leaving Ponsonby on the towpath, he disappeared into a thicket.

Pon stood staring after him helplessly. He could have cut and run, but he dared not with the handcuffs on his wrists. Surely the man could not intend to leave him there, handcuffed as he was! The sweat was thick on his brow as he waited in an anguish of anxiety.

But the man did not keep him waiting long. He reappeared in a few minutes, and now there was a stick in his hand. He had cut it in the thicket.

Pon could guess why he had cut that stick. But anything was better than handcuffs and a police station!

He gasped with relief when the handcuffs were snapped off and disappeared into Mr. Jones' pocket. Once they were off, he would gladly have taken to his heels. But an iron grip was on his collar.

"Now, you young rascal," said the man with the wooden face, "I could take you into custody! You deserve it, and I dare say you have sense enough to guess that I have authority to do so. This time I will let you off with a thrashing. Let me see you again in the valley of the Thames and I will hand you over to the law to be dealt with!"

Wasting no more words on Ponsonby, he laid on the stick.

Pon was glad that he was wearing an overcoat, and that that series of swipes did not land directly on his trousers.

But they landed hard.

Swipe, swipe, swipe, swipe!

Cracks like pistol-shots echoed along the towpath, and Ponsonby wriggled and howled.

"That," said Mr. Jones, "will be a lesson to you, I hope. Let me see you again after that boat and you know what to expect! Now go!"

Ponsonby did not need telling twice!

He fairly flew down the towpath.

The man with the wooden face watched him out of sight, grunted, turned, and walked back to the Greyfriars camp.

A VERY USEFUL MAN!

"LIKE a tow, sir?"

Billy Bunter blinked at the man who asked that question.

It was a bright morning. Breakfast was over in the Greyfriars camp, and the Famous Five were striking the tent.

Billy Bunter sat on a campstool on the towpath near the boat, keeping a safe distance from the work that was going on in the camp. Bunter had started that trip up the Thames with a strong distaste for work, and he had not got over it yet.

But Bunter was not called upon to lend a hand. Even Johnny Bull had learned by this time that the hardest of tasks was getting any work out of Bunter. Bunter, if called upon, would have tangled the ropes, lost the tent-pegs, and dropped the

srockery—making it clear to the most obtuse mind that he was more trouble than he was worth.

So there sat Bunter, while the other fellows worked, adorning the landscape. But he was not feeling quite at ease in his fat mind.

They were going to tow up to Rushy Lock. And Bunter suspected that they were going to make him tow. This was disquieting and irritating. At any other job, he could make it clear that he was more trouble than he was worth. But if he had to tow, he had to tow, with an unfeeling beast like Johnny Bull prepared to pelt him with potatoes, or prod him with a boathook, or even to duck him in the water.

Pondering over this problem, the fat Owl blinked up as a man came along the towpath, stopped, and addressed him, touching an old hat very civilly.

Bunter did not like his looks much. He was shabby and dusty. He had bandages tied over half his face, as if he had received an injury there. Over one eye was a black patch, as if the eye also had sustained damage. What the man looked like without the bandages it would have been difficult to say. With those ornamentations, he looked as if he had been in the wars.

But if Bunter did not like his looks he liked his offer! Towing that boat was the problem on Bunter's fat mind. Here was the answer to the problem—ready-made!

"Oh!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "Looking for a job?"

"Yes, sir! Name of Jobling, sir," said the man. "If you ask folks at Radcot, where I'm well known, they'll tell you I'm an honest and 'ard-working man! Lost my job in the munitions factory, sir, since the accident."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

Billy Bunter was not much given to considering any person in the universe but W. G. Bunter. But even Bunter could feel a spot of sympathy for a man who had been knocked out in an accident in a munitions factory.

"Half-a-crown up to Rushy Lock, sir," said Mr. Jobling, "and you'll be doing a good turn to a poor and honest man."

"It's a go!" said Bunter. "Hang on till we're ready!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Mr. Jobling gratefully. "You're a kind-hearted young gentleman, sir, you are, as I can see in your face."

Bunter nodded, and gave him a patronising smile. He liked being considered a kind-hearted young gentleman, and, indeed, Bunter was kind-hearted enough. He would have done anything for anybody that could have been done without the slightest trouble or exertion, and he would have given away any amount of money that did not belong to him.

"Right-ho!" he said genially; and he got off the campstool and moved out of the way as the juniors brought the outfit down to the boat, uneasy lest he should be called upon to lend a hand in putting something on board.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked

Bunter. "This man—his name's Jobling—is going to tow us up to Rusky."

"Rot!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! I think you might be a bit civil to a chap who's had his face knocked in in an accident in a munitions factory!" said Bunter. "There's such a thing as being kind to a man down on his luck."

"No offence, sir, I 'ope!" said Mr. Jobling, touching his old hat to the juniors. "I've had a 'ard time, sir, since the explosion. A man has to earn a shilling or two where and how he can."

"That lazy fat worm is crawling out of towing!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I don't mind towing!" said Bunter. "In fact, I was rather looking forward to a spot of exercise, on a nice fresh morning like this. I'd tow the boat with pleasure—I'm not a slacker like some fellows! But why shouldn't an honest man have a job?"

"The whyfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I'm paying him half-a-crown," said Bunter. "That's not too much, for a tow up to Rusky."

"How's he going to give you your change when you pay him?" asked Johnny Bull. "What's the change out of three-ha'pence when you pay him half-a-crown?"

"If you're too jolly mean to lend a chap half-a-crown!" hooted Bunter.

"Make it eighteenpence, sir!" said Mr. Jobling. "These are 'ard times."

"It's all right!" said Harry Wharton. "You shall have your half-crown! Somebody kick Bunter!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter hastily withdrew out of reach of a boot.

It was settled that Mr. Jobling was to tow the boat. The camping outfit was packed in, and the fat Owl rolled contentedly on board. Half-a-crown, as he had said, was not much for a tow up to Rushy Lock, but even if it had been, it would not have mattered, as it was not going to be Bunter's half-crown. But the other fellows were quite willing to stump up that moderate sum to help a man on his way who seemed to have suffered severely in an accident.

Bob Cherry cast a last glance over the meadow.

The juniors had wondered whether they would see anything more of the mysterious Mr. Jones before they left. He had, they supposed, put up at the Plough over night.

But his dinghy was gone, so it was probable that Mr. Jones was gone, too. Nothing, at all events, was to be seen of him, and though the juniors would have liked to render thanks for the service he had done them, he was not available to receive the same. As for another service he had done them during the night, they were quite unaware of it—never even dreaming that Pon had been anywhere near their camp.

They went on board the Water-Lily, and pushed off; and Mr. Jobling tucked the towline under his arm and towed.

He towed at quite a good rate, like a man willing to earn his money. He

did not look round once, keeping on at a steady pace.

Bob Cherry glanced at him, once or twice, in a rather puzzled way. He had only a back view of Mr. Jobling, as he towed, but it struck him that there was something more or less familiar about the man.

"I say, you fellows, this is a jolly good idea!" remarked Billy Bunter. "What about keeping that man on to tow? He seems willing to work! I believe in being kind to people who are willing to work! I can't stand lazy slackers!"

"Eh?"

"But when a man's willing to work he ought to be encouraged, I think," said Hunter. "There's a lot of slacking these days. Nobody seems to want to do any work, so far as I can see! Laziness all round!"

"Well, you know what you're talking about!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Quite an authority on the subject!" agreed Nugent.

"It's no good being stingy on a holiday, either!" went on Bunter, deaf and blind to sarcasm. "We could spring another half-crown up to Radcot. Dash it all, what's money for? Spend it! I'll jolly well stand him another half-crown for another tow after Rusky!"

"Whose half-crown?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

At Rushy, the towpath passed over to the Berkshire side. After passing the lock, the Greyfriars crew smiled as they spotted a man with a patched eye and a bandaged face on the edge of Berkshire.

"Make it another bob up to Radcot, sir?" asked Mr. Jobling. "I'm in 'ope of getting a job at Radcot, where I'm pretty well known."

"We're going to tie up for lunch pretty soon!" answered Harry.

"Tow you to a good place if you like, sir! Know this river, sir—lived on it forty years, man and boy."

"O.K. Carry on, then!"

And Mr. Jobling carried on. Above that pretty spot, Rushy, the river was very winding.

Mr. Jobling tugged on industriously by the winding bank.

If the man knew a good spot for camping for lunch, he was a useful man, and his further service was well worth the extra bob. And it seemed that he did—for about half an hour later he came to a halt on the towpath and glanced round at the Greyfriars crew.

"What about this, sir?" he asked.

"I say, you fellows, that looks ripping!" declared Billy Bunter. "I told you the man was worth his money."

"Looks jolly, and no mistake!" agreed Bob Cherry.

Off the towpath was a pleasant shady wood. Green glades, with sunlight filtering into them through leafy branches, met the eyes of the Greyfriars crew as they stood up in the boat and looked ashore.

"Looks all right," said Harry Wharton. "If you're sure that people are allowed to camp in that wood, Jobling—"

"I've sometimes seen as many as six or seven parties, sir, in August," answered Mr. Jobling. "There ain't so many now. But in August it's fair thick!"

"Well, if we could camp in August, we can camp in September!" said Bob. "Shove the boat in."

And the Water-Lily was pushed to the bank, and the obliging and industrious Mr. Jobling held it, while the crew landed.

Leaving Mr. Jobling holding the boat to the bank, the juniors crossed the towpath, and stepped under the pleasant shady trees, picking a spot for a camp.

Billy Bunter stopped and leaned on the first tree—perhaps crossing the towpath had made him tired! The other fellows moved on a little into the wood.

"Topping place!" said Bob Cherry. "This lovely little glade will suit us down to the ground—what?"

"Right as rain!"

"I say, you fellows——" squeaked Billy Bunter, from the tree by the towpath.

"Give us a rest, Bunter!"

"But I say——"

"Oh, dry up!" roared Johnny Bull. "We know you're hungry! Don't tell us!"

"Fat lot you care if a fellow's hungry!" hooted Bunter. "I am jolly hungry, but that isn't what I was going to say. I say, you fellows, what has Jobling gone off in the boat for?"

"What!"

"He's gone off——"

"Gone off!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Yes! I say——"

"What the dickens!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Come on!"

The Famous Five rushed back to the towpath.

They staid at the river. Far out on the water, going down-stream, was the Water-Lily, with Mr. Jobling sitting to a pair of oars, and rowing as if he were pulling in a boat-race!

They stared almost in stupefaction at the bandaged, patched face that looked back at them from the boat as Mr. Jobling pulled.

But it was only in sight of their amazed eyes for a minute or two. Then the Water-Lily, going strong, swept round a bend of the winding river, and, with Mr. Jobling, vanished from their sight, leaving the Greyfriars crew dumbfounded.

'TWIXT CUP AND LIP!

MR. SHIFTY SPOONER was feeling good.

He had got by, at last!

For weeks had Mr. Spooner trailed that boat up the Thames. Again and again had luck been against him—to such an extent that Mr. Spooner had almost begun to doubt whether roguery was a paying game, after all, and whether honesty might not be the best policy.

But he had done it at last!

A bandaged face and a patched eye had completely hidden the identity of Mr. Spooner from eyes that knew his

foxy face quite well. Bob Cherry had fancied that he noticed something vaguely familiar about Mr. Jobling. But not one of the Greyfriars crew had dreamed for a moment that Mr. Jobling was their old acquaintance, Shifty Spooner, turning up again like a bad penny.

Shifty grinned happily as he pulled.

This time it was all right! Every other time it had been all wrong. But this was all right—right as rain. Once more Mr. Spooner's shaken faith in roguery was restored. He had actually gone so far as thinking of chucking up rascality and looking for a job of work! So no wonder he grinned as he pulled the Water-Lily rapidly away down the winding river.

Shifty had given the Greyfriars crew a long rest. He had given them a chance to forget all about him—as indeed they nearly had. Instead of trailing them up the Thames any more, Shifty had gone on ahead and waited for them. And it had proved a winner.

Mr. Jobling had towed that boat, looking for a chance. It had been bound to come, in the circumstances. It had come—and Shifty had jumped at it.

And here he was—pulling as if for his life, leaving the amazed juniors standing on the edge of Berkshire, going downstream as fast as he could pull, and swerving towards the Oxfordshire side as he went.

The winding course of the Thames above Rushy hid him from the eyes of the owners of the Water-Lily. They could chase along the towpath if they liked. Mr. Spooner did not mind.

He was going to get that boat away as fast as he could, and bump ashore on Oxfordshire. Then there was a certain secret in the stern locker to which Mr. Spooner was going to attend without loss of time—a secret of which the Greyfriars crew knew nothing, but of which Shifty knew quite a lot.

After that, he was going to stick to the Water-Lily, if it seemed safe so to do—otherwise, he was going to abandon it and cut across country.

Shifty pulled hard.

"Hi! Look out!" came a shout from a man in a dinghy, coming up the river.

Shifty, having no eyes in the back of his head, had not seen that dinghy—and in his hot haste, he was a little regardless of other craft on the river.

But at that shout he swerved, to keep clear of the boat coming up.

The dinghy passed him within a few yards.

The man in the dinghy—a man with a square chin and a wooden-looking face—stared at him.

Then, with a swift twist of his oars, he spun the dinghy round in the river, and shot after Mr. Spooner.

The eyes in that wooden-looking face was very keen; but they could not penetrate a bandage and an eye-patch. If the man, in the dinghy knew Shifty Spooner he did not recognise Mr. Jobling. But he recognised the Water-Lily.

"Suffering tadpoles!" murmured Shifty, as he stared at that sudden and unexpected manœuvre of the man in the dinghy.

He stared at him; he glared at him as he shot in pursuit of the Greyfriars boat. He had a view of a stocky back, that was all. Why the man had suddenly turned round and started downstream mystified Shifty for a moment.

But only for a moment.

The man was after him. That meant that he was some person who knew the Greyfriars boat by sight. The Water-Lily was easily enough recognised by anyone acquainted with it. This was some man who knew the Greyfriars fellows, and

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knew their boat—and he was after the stolen boat.

Shifty gritted his teeth with rage. It was unexpected. It was disconcerting. It was cruel luck. He had got off with the Greyfriars boat, only to run into somebody who knew it by sight, hardly half a mile from the spot where he had left the crew stranded.

Shifty had been pulling hard before. Now he pulled almost frantically. But the Water-Lily was at least twice as large and twice as heavy as the little dinghy pulled by the man with the wooden face. Shifty simply hadn't a look in.

He measured the man in the dinghy with a savage eye. The man looked a rather powerful fellow—that he was strong was plain from the way he made the dinghy fly. Shifty gave up the idea of a combat, which was his first thought. That man was at least a match for him—probably a little over—and in the middle of the day there were altogether too many people about for a boat-thief to venture to put up a fight in defence of the stolen goods.

It was a hard knock for Shifty. In the very hour of triumph the cup was once more dashed from his lips.

The man in the dinghy glanced round at him. Shifty saw a hard, wooden-looking face, and glinting sharp eyes. It was not the face of a man that Shifty wanted hand-to-hand trouble with.

Bitter as the blow was, Mr. Spooner realised that the game was up—that all he had to hope for was to cut his luck, as he would have expressed it—to escape, leaving the Water-Lily behind, without even groping in that stern locker.

And he had no time to lose. The dinghy was coming after him, hand over fist. It was a matter of minutes before he was run down, if he kept on in his flight.

Shifty pulled and pulled, and cast an eye round at the Oxfordshire shore. He picked a spot where a thick wood grew down to the water.

The Greyfriars boat crashed suddenly on the bank, and Mr. Spooner made a flying leap to land.

The Water-Lily rocked away off the shore, bumping into the dinghy. Mr. Spooner vanished among trees.

Less than a minute later the wooden-faced man was standing up, holding to a low branch over the water, and staring intently ashore. But he did not land. He wanted that man who had been pinching the Greyfriars boat, and wanted him badly—but he knew that there was no chance—Shifty had made good his escape.

The wooden-faced man shrugged his shoulders. Taking the Water-Lily in tow, he sat to his oars again, and pulled across the Thames—towards the distant towpath where, far away, five running figures could be seen.

TOED UP THE RIVER!

"JONES!" gasped Bob Cherry.
"The esteemed Jones?"
"Oh, what luck!"
"What ripping luck!"

Five fellows came to a breathless halt.

After the first minute of spell-bound amazement the Famous Five had done the only thing possible—pelting down the towpath in pursuit of Mr. Jobling and the Water-Lily; leaving Billy Bunter blinking where he had landed.

The juniors were not thinking of Mr. Spooner. They supposed that they had been taken in by an artful boat-stealer. They got after Mr. Jobling as fast as they could.

And then they beheld that mysterious man, Mr. Jones. They stopped, and stared at him blankly but joyfully.

They had first made Mr. Jones' useful acquaintance when Pon had been getting away with the Water-Lily, and he had saved their boat for them. That he would turn up a second time to save the boat again was such a stroke of luck that they could hardly have ventured to dream of it. Really they could hardly believe it now that it had happened.

But there was Mr. Jones—pulling in his dinghy, with the Water-Lily in tow. And they waited on the bank for him to arrive.

"Is this luck?" gasped Bob.

"Is it not?" grinned Nugent. "That man Jones seems to be starting in business as a guardian angel."

"The luckfulness is truly terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "As the English proverb remarks, a friend in need is a bird in hand that goes longest to the bush!"

"Blessed if I make it out!" said Harry Wharton. "It's tremendous luck—but really, it looks as if that chap Jones is keeping an eye on this party! He can't keep on cropping up like this by sheer coincidence."

"More power to his elbow, if he is!" said Johnny Bull. "We looked like losing the boat this time. And we've had some narrow escapes—what with Pon and Spooner—"

"Well, here it comes!"

Mr. Jones pulled in to the bank. His expressionless wooden face relaxed in a smile as he glanced at the schoolboys ashore.

"I say, this is awfully good of you, sir!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "I suppose you saw that rogue Jobling, and knew the boat—"

"Exactly!" said Mr. Jones. "Did you call him Jobling?"

"Yes—some rotter who took us in!" said Harry. He laughed. "I suppose you'll think we're always being taken in, from what you've seen of us. But, you see, we gave the man a few shillings to tow the boat, and we never thought—"

"And he cut off with it when we landed to look at a camp!" said Bob.

"Stranger to you?" asked Mr. Jones.

"Yes—we'd never seen him before."

"Sure of that?"

"Eh? Yes! I suppose so!" said Bob, staring. "I thought for a minute there was something familiar about the cut of his jib—but I've never seen him before that I know of."

Mr. Jones smiled.

"Next time you hire a man to tow

your boat, better see his face!" he suggested. "A bandaged face may imply an accident—or it may imply that a man prefers not to have his face seen. I fancy that you might have found it familiar."

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "Spooner!"

"Great pip!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "Why, we're a lot of asses! Spooner all the time, you bet, with his face camouflaged—"

The Famous Five looked at one another. It only needed the suggestion to be made; they guessed the truth at once. They had not, as they had supposed, seen the last of Shifty Spooner.

"The ridiculous Spooner, of course!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"And we never guessed!" said Harry Wharton. "We'd almost forgotten Spooner—and Jobling didn't look anything like him! He won't take us in like that again! It must have been that rascal, of course!"

"Very probably!" said Mr. Jones dryly.

With a nod to the juniors, Mr. Jones pulled away.

The Greyfriars crew looked after him curiously. They had been considerably puzzled by Mr. Jones already. Now they were still more puzzled. They could see that Mr. Jones had heard of Spooner—but how he knew anything about the man was a puzzle!

"Well, we've got the boat, thanks to jolly old Jones!" said Bob Cherry. "Thank goodness for that! We should have a thumping bill to pay old Baker at Friardale if we lost it! All aboard, my infants!"

The Famous Five clambered into the Water-Lily, and pulled up the river to the spot where the artful Mr. Jobling had induced them to land for a camp.

Mr. Jones in his dinghy was soon out of sight.

Billy Bunter was found where they had left him. The fat Owl of the Remove was still leaning on the tree by the towpath, and apparently had not shifted during their absence. He blinked at them through his big spectacles as they landed.

"I say, you fellows, where's Jobling?" he asked.

"Hitting the horizon somewhere in Oxfordshire!" answered Bob Cherry. "Jobling was that man Spooner with his face tied up!"

"Rot!" said Bunter.

"He was pinching the boat, fat-head!"

"I say, isn't he coming back?"

"I wish he was! I'd like to alter a few of his features for him! But he won't come back to get them altered!"

"Well, that's all very well!" grunted Bunter. "But who's going to tow the boat?"

"You are!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

The hamper was taken ashore, and the Greyfriars crew lunched. It was quite a nice lunch in the green glade under the shady trees, but Billy Bunter's fat brow wore a cloud of

troubled thought as he demolished the foodstuffs.

The worry on his fat mind did not affect his appetite. It was not so bad as that. But it was clear that the fat Owl was worried.

The loss of the useful Mr. Jobling was a blow to Bunter. It looked as if that spot of work was coming, after all.

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Bunter, when lunch was over and the crew of the Water-Lily packing to depart. "I say, I've got a pain! I think it's a touch of plumbago in my leg! I'm afraid I shan't be able to walk!"

"A touch of whatter?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Plumbago! It might be pneumonia, though!" added Bunter. "There's a lot of pneumonia in our family. My uncle was lame with it!"

"Oh crikey!"

"I suppose you wouldn't mind towing, Nugent, as I've got a fearful pain in my leg?"

"Suppose a gain!" suggested Nugent.

"You wouldn't mind, would you, Inky?" asked Bunter.

"The mindfulness would be terrific, my esteemed fat lazy Bunter!"

"I say, Harry, old chap——"

"No good calling me old chap!" said the captain of the Remove, with a shake of the head. "It's a sheer waste!"

"Eh—wharrer you mean?"

"I mean that I'm going to sit in the boat while you tow."

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, it's a bit heartless to cackle, when a fellow's got pneumonia in his leg——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five. The idea of Billy Bunter having pneumonia in his fat leg seemed to make them cackle all the more.

"I shall have to sit in the boat!" said Bunter. "I say, Bob, you're not a beast like the other beasts! Besides, you like work! You won't mind towing——"

"Well," said Bob thoughtfully, "if you've really got a pain——"

"Fearful!" said Bunter impressively. "Like burning daggers!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bob. "If you've really got a pain like burning daggers, old chap—I've never had a pain like burning daggers, but it sounds pretty grim!—I'm the fellow to help you out!"

"You silly ass!" said Johnny Bull. "It's all gammon!"

"You shut up, Bull!" roared Bunter. "I ain't asking you to tow me up the river—I'm asking Bob!"

"I'm going to toe Bunter up the river!" said Bob. "If he can't get going without it, I'm going to toe him! Chuck out that towline!"

Billy Bunter grinned with satisfaction.

Four members of the crew went on board the Water-Lily. Bob caught the towrope and handed it to Bunter.

Bunter, about to roll on board, stared at him.

"Eh—I don't want that!" he said.

"You're going to tow me up the river—you said so!"

"Quite," agreed Bob. "I'm going to toe you up the river, just as long as you want me to toe you up the river. I fancy you'll get tired before I do! Here you are, old lazybones!"

Bob hooked the towline over Bunter's fat shoulder. Then he lifted his foot and there was a thud.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter. Thud!

"Wow! You silly beast! Wharrer you up to?" shrieked Bunter.

"Toeing you up the river! Didn't you ask me to?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell from the Water-Lily.

"Why, you silly idiot!" howled Bunter. "Wharrer you mean? Will you stop kicking me, you mad fat-head?"

Thud!

"Yoo-hoop!"

Billy Bunter started up the river. The Water-Lily got into motion. Behind Bunter walked Bob Cherry.

Thud!

"Whoop! Will you stop it?"

roared Bunter. "Stop it, you blithering clump! You dangerous maniac, stop it!"

"Don't you want me to toe you up the river?" demanded Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly idiot, I didn't mean that!"

"I did!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fancied you'd get tired first!" said Bob. "If you want any more, sing out! I'll toe you all the way to Radcot, if you like!"

Bob Cherry jumped into the boat.

Billy Bunter, with feelings too deep for words, towed on. He did not want to walk. He did not want to tow. He wanted to laze while somebody else towed him. But he did walk—and he did tow. Lazy as he was, he did not want Bob Cherry to toe him up the river!

THE MAN IN THE DARK!

"KEEP watch to-night!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

"Keep it in turns!" said Harry Wharton.

"If you fellows think I'm going to sit up at night——"

"Kill Bunter, somebody!"

"Yah!"

Some distance above Radcot the Water-Lily was moored, and the Greyfriars crew camped for the night.

It was a fine September evening, with a crescent of moon peeping over the treetops and the sun setting in a blaze of crimson and gold. The following day, the juniors expected to arrive at Lechlade. They were camped in a field off the towpath—which, above Radcot, was on the Oxfordshire side again—having obtained leave from a hospitable farmer. It was a nice little field, surrounded by high hawthorn hedges, with no buildings anywhere at hand.

The tent was up, and the Greyfriars crew at supper. The Water-Lily, moored to a stump, lay in the

rushes. The padlock was on. But the juniors knew that padlocks did not give Mr. Spooner a lot of trouble. And since that awfully narrow escape of losing the boat they had sagely decided on taking no chances.

It was clear now that Spooner, whom they had shaken off below Oxford, was on hand again, determined to get hold of the Water-Lily if he could—probably getting a little desperate, now that the schoolboys were nearing the end of their holiday trip.

When that trip was over, the boat was to be sent back by railway to old Baker's boat-yard at Friardale, after which Mr. Spooner's chances of getting hold of it again would be much slimmer. In the neighbourhood of Friardale, near Greyfriars School, policemen were looking for Mr. Spooner. And Mr. Spooner loathed policemen!

So it was decided that, every night for the remainder of the trip, watch should be kept—at least until there was a chance of getting hold of the persistent Mr. Spooner, and handing him over to the care of the law.

"But it's weird, you know!" said Bob. "That man Spooner tried to get hold of the boat before we started—and he's trailed us up the Thames after it! But why the thump does he so specially want the Water-Lily? I know it used to be his boat—and it's a good boat—but he could pinch a whole fleet of boats with less trouble than he's put into trying to pinch the Water-Lily!"

"Can't make that out!" said Harry Wharton. "But one thing's certain—he's after that boat, like a dog after a bone—and if he gets half a chance, he will snaffle it!"

"We won't give him half a chance!" said Johnny Bull. "Take it in turns to sit up and watch, now we know he's hanging about."

"I say, you fellows!"

"You can turn in, you fat owl!" said Bob. "Think we'd trust you to keep your eyes open?"

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter. "It's not a bad idea to keep watch. Only don't make a row. A fellow wants to sleep!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the tent, and his snore was soon mingling with the ripple of the river and the murmur of the wind in the trees.

The Famous Five sat outside the tent, their eyes on the river glowing in the sunset, as the dusk deepened and night closed in.

The tall hawthorn hedges that shut in the field were a mass of dark shadow; and they could not help wondering whether, perhaps, those dark shadows hid the lurking form of Shifty Spooner, watching the camp and waiting for them to turn in.

If he was there, he was not, at all events, going to take them off their guard again. The oars had been taken out of the boat; and the boat-hook was kept handy for dealing with Mr. Spooner if he turned up.

"My esteemed chums!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Spotted Spooner, old black bean?" asked Bob, with a grin.

"No! But the heartfulness is terrific!" answered the nabob.



Billy Bunter gasped for breath and perspired as he mopped and mopped and mopped. There was to be no breakfast for him until after the job was finished!

"Eh? I never noticed anything!" said Johnny Bull. "Only some birds twittering in those bushes by the river."

"Exactly!" agreed the nabob. "And when the esteemed birds have gone to bed roostfully, they do not usually twitter any more, unless there is disturbfulness."

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. He rose to his feet and peered through the thickening shadows towards the bushes near the river. "Somebody prowling, do you think, Inky?"

"The thinkfulness is preposterous." "Might be only some jolly old cow rooting about!" said Nugent. "We don't want to collar a cow in the dark!"

"We'll jolly well see, anyhow!" said Bob. "I'd rather bag that man Spooner, and hand him over to a bobby, than sit up every night keeping an eye open for him!"

"Yes, rather!" agreed Nugent. "They want him for pinching Mauly's banknote at Greyfriars and for burgling at Tipton Lodge, down by Mapledurham!" said Bob. "If we make them a present of him, he will leave the Water-Lily alone. Let's go and look, anyhow!"

"Let's!" said Harry.

Leaving the tent, and William George Bunter snoring therein, the Famous Five moved across the dusky field.

The darkness was thickening, now that the sun was gone; and there was as yet only a glimmer of moon over

the trees. The mass of bushes by the river were black as a hat.

Apart from black shadows, there was nothing to be seen. But as the juniors reached the bushes they heard a sound.

It was a very distinct sound of rustling, obviously made by some hidden person moving stealthily in the thicket.

"Hear that?" whispered Bob.

"Spooner!" breathed Harry.

"We'll jolly well get him this time!"

That there was somebody hidden in the bushes, stealthily retreating as they advanced, the juniors could not doubt—their ears told them as much. And they could hardly doubt that it was Shifty Spooner.

It might, of course, be some wandering tramp, looking for a chance to pilfer from the camp. But the chances were that it was Mr. Spooner, after the Water-Lily again; and, whoever it was, they were going to collar him and see for themselves.

They plunged into the thicket, following the sound. That thicket separated the field from the towpath—and the stealthy sound of retreat led towards the river.

It was clear enough that the unseen man had come by the towpath—that he had been lurking there watching the Greyfriars camp; and that he was now seeking to escape being seen. But the Famous Five were determined that he was not going to escape.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob suddenly. "This way!"

He glimpsed a shadowy form emerging from the thicket on to the open towpath. He was after it with a bound, and grasping it.

The shadowy figure staggered in his grasp. The next moment it was over and Bob sprawling across it.

"Back up!" he panted. "I've got him!"

"Hold on to him!"

"Pin him!"

The Co. rushed to Bob's aid.

The man sprawling on the towpath heaved up, and Bob, sturdy as he was, would have been flung off. But his comrades piled in fast to help him.

They grasped that shadowy figure on all sides, and fairly jammed it down on the towpath. Five pairs of hands fastened on it, holding it helpless.

"Got him!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"By gum, what luck!" exclaimed Harry Wharton breathlessly. "We've got the rotter all right! This puts paid to Shifty Spooner!"

"The paidfulness is preposterous!" chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"You can keep quiet, you rotter!" said Bob. "We've got you all right, and you're not getting away again! You've tried this game on once too often, Mr. Spooner! This is where you get it in the neck!"

The man wriggling in the grasp of many hands gasped for breath. There was no escape for him—he could not possibly get out of that grasp. If it

was Shifty Spooner, as the Juniors did not doubt for a moment, they had him! But—

"Will you be kind enough to release me?" came a voice from the shadowy figure. "You are causing me very considerable discomfort."

Five fellows jumped, all at once! They let go that shadowy figure, as if it had become red-hot! They knew that voice.

"Oh!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"You!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

The shadowy figure sat up, panting for breath, and the Famous Five gazed in astonishment at Mr. Jones!

MR. JONES EXPLAINS!

"JIG-JIG-JIG-JONES!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"Jones!" breathed Harry Wharton with a gasp.

"The esteemed Jones!"

"But what the thump—" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

It was Jones—the mysterious Mr. Jones! He had undoubtedly been lurking in that thicket, watching the camp! But it was Jones—Mr. Jones! Really, it seemed to the Greyfriars fellows that Mr. Jones was haunting them!

It was quite an amazing discovery. They could not regard the man who had twice recovered their boat for them with suspicion. But what on earth his game was, was a mystery to them. Certainly he had been acting in a way that they would only have expected of Shifty Spooner.

"Well, this beats it!" said Frank

Nugent. "Sorry we handled you, Mr. Jones—but you couldn't expect us to know you in the dark."

Grunt from the wooden-faced man. He picked himself up, put his collar straight, and breathed rather hard. The juniors could only stare at him. It was clear that he was annoyed by having been discovered; but why he was there at all was difficult for them to understand.

"Sorry!" said Harry Wharton. "We never dreamed—"

Grunt!
"The sorrowfulness is really and truly terrific, esteemed sahib!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Mr. Jones smiled.
"Well, there's no harm done!" he said. "You young fellows seem rather more sharply on the watch than usual."

"We think that rascal Spooner is somewhere about," answered Harry. "We thought you were Spooner when we collared you."

"Like to step to our camp and have a spot of coffee?" asked Bob Cherry politely. "We've got lots."

Mr. Jones stared at him for a moment. Then, rather to the relief of the juniors, he nodded good-humouredly. It was a relief, for although they could not blame themselves for what had happened, they certainly did not want to offend the man who had twice rendered them so signal a service.

"Quite a good idea!" said Mr. Jones.

"This way, then!" said Bob cheerfully.

Mr. Jones walked with the juniors

back to the tent—from which rumbled the uninterrupted snore of William George Bunter.

The Greyfriars fellows were curious about Mr. Jones. They were puzzled about him. They could not imagine why he had been lurking about their camp in a way which was, to say the least, stealthy. But they were full of polite hospitality to the man who had twice saved the Water-Lily for them—thrice, if they had known it.

Mr. Jones was accommodated with the best camp-stool. The best cup was produced, and filled with hot coffee. Cake was sorted out of the hamper, but Mr. Jones declined cake.

He sat and sipped his coffee, with his wooden face as expressionless as usual. But his sharp eyes, gleaming like beads in the glimmer of the moon, scanned the faces of the juniors.

His wooden face relaxed suddenly into a smile.

"You are curious, I suppose?" he said.

"Well, not exactly, Mr. Jones," said Harry. "But you've rather surprised us, you know. You pop up in the most extraordinary way."

"The popfulness is terrifically queer, esteemed Mr. Jones," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Mr. Jones grinned.
"It may not be quite so extraordinary as you suppose!" he remarked.

"Well, it's been lucky for us, more than once, but it's rather weird," said Bob Cherry. "You seem to know all about us, and all about that man Spooner—and I'm blessed if I know how, unless you're a jolly old magician."

"Yes, I think I am fairly well posted!" assented Mr. Jones. "Spooner was originally the owner of your boat, I think?"

"That's so, but I'm blessed if I see how you know."

"He was sent to prison for two years, and his boat was sold, with other property, while he was serving his sentence for a robbery at Popper Court, near your school, Greyfriars!"

The Famous Five gazed at Mr. Jones. It was quite correct, but how Mr. Jones knew all this, beat them.

"He used to sail the Water-Lily on various rivers," went on Mr. Jones, "and when he was caught, after the robbery at the house on the banks of the Sark, it was fairly clear how he had been occupied during all those cruises."

"Well, we guessed something of that kind," said Harry, "and I suppose that's why he wants his old boat back again—to carry on his old game."

"No doubt! He came out of prison about the time you engaged the boat for your summer trip on the Thames, and was unable to get possession of it. So he started trailing you on the river to get it away by stealth."

"Yes; he's been after us ever since we started."

"And when you were camped at Tipton Lodge, near Mapledurham, he put in a spot of his old business—burgling riverside houses—and you

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boys stopped him from getting away with Sir George Tipton's bonds."

"He's a magician!" said Bob, while his comrades stared. "Only a jolly old magician could know all that about us."

"The affair at Tipton Lodge was reported to the police, who complimented you on the part you had played in the matter."

"They said some nice things," said Harry. "Perhaps you'll tell us presently how the dickens you know all this, Mr. Jones."

"Perhaps. In your statement to the police, you explained all you knew of Mr. Spooner, and among other things, mentioned that he had followed you all through your cruise, trying to steal your boat!"

"We did! But how—"

Mr. Jones paused.

"You are going to keep watch to-night?" he asked, with an abrupt change of subject that made the juniors jump.

"Yes; we feel sure that Spooner isn't far away, after what happened to-day," answered Harry.

"Well," said Mr. Jones, "don't!"

"Eh?"

"Don't!"

"And why not?" demanded Johnny Bull, rather gruffly.

"Because, my boy, if you keep watch, Spooner, who is as sharp as a lynx, will not come anywhere near your boat!"

The juniors blinked at Mr. Jones.

"Well, that's what we want!" said Frank Nugent. "Think we want him to pinch the boat, Mr. Jones?"

There was another pause. Mr. Jones spoke again at last, slowly.

"You seem sensible lads," he said, "and I think I can trust you. You can help me, if you choose to do so. It seems to you very extraordinary that I know all about you, and about Shifty Spooner."

"It does—rather!" said Harry.

"It may seem less extraordinary," said Mr. Jones quietly, "when I mention that I am Detective-Inspector Jones, and that the case of Mr. Shifty Spooner has been placed in my hands."

"Oh!" gasped the Famous Five, all together.

"It was your statement that Spooner had been following you, to steal your boat, that led me to take to pushing a dinghy on the river!" said Mr. Jones, with a smile. "When the case was placed in my hands, I decided to follow you up the river, and, when I had picked you up, keep an eye on you. I have had an eye on you ever since you passed Oxford—though doubtless you were unaware of the fact."

"Never had a suspish," said Bob. "Never saw you till the day you stopped that Highcliffe cad getting away with the Water-Lily."

"Quite!" assented Mr. Jones. "I did not intend to establish contact—but I could not, of course, let you lose your boat!"

"A jolly old police detective—so that's why those sweeps at the Plough shelled out when you told them to!" exclaimed Bob. "I—I suppose we

might have guessed something of the sort—but we didn't!"

"Now," said Mr. Jones, "I have told you this—to be kept to yourselves, of course—because you can make things easier for me. You understand now that I am after Mr. Spooner, with a warrant for his arrest. He is about the most slippery customer I have ever trailed, but if he keeps on after your boat, that is where I come in. If you keep watch to-night, it is ten to one that he will get wise to it, and keep clear! I don't want him to keep clear! You can trust me to keep watch for you."

"Oh, my hat! That was what you were doing when we bagged you!" exclaimed Bob. "We fancied it was Spooner."

"Leave the matter in my hands, and I guarantee that you will not lose the boat!" said Mr. Jones. "If Mr. Spooner turns up to-night, you will lose Mr. Spooner!"

"Of course!" said Harry. "Now we understand, we'll play up—you've only to tell us what you'd like us to do."

"Give your orders, skipper!" said Bob.

"Then turn into your tent and don't stir till morning!" said Mr. Jones, rising from the camp-stool. "Is that agreed?"

"Yes, rather—anything you like!"

"Thank you," said Mr. Jones.

"Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!"

With a nod to the schoolboys, Mr. Jones—no longer so mysterious—disappeared across the dusky field.

"Well," said Bob, with a deep breath, "who'd have thought it?"

"Shan't be sorry to turn in, and leave the sentry-go to Jones!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"And let's hope Spooner will turn up!" said Nugent.

"Yes, rather!"

And the Famous Five turned into the tent, more than content to leave the task of watching the Water-Lily in the capable hands of the no longer mysterious Mr. Jones.

STICKY!

"OOOOUGH!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"What's up?"

"Bring Bunter here!" roared Bob.

"What on earth for?"

"I'm going to drown him in the Thames!"

Bob Cherry seemed rather excited.

It was a sunny morning; and the Famous Five, when they turned out of the tent, found the Water-Lily safe and sound.

There had been no alarm in the night, and seemingly Mr. Spooner had not paid the camp a visit during the dark hours.

Of Mr. Jones nothing was to be seen. But they did not expect to see anything of Mr. Jones. They understood now that it was Mr. Jones' cue to play the part of the shy violet—till he had a chance of pouncing on the man he wanted.

Bunter had not yet turned out. He was still snoring in the tent. There

was no reason—so far as Billy Bunter knew—why he should turn out till breakfast was ready.

Bob had gone on the boat to get something out of the stern locker. That locker, which was tightly made, and had a flooring of sheet zinc, was used as a larder by the Greyfriars crew. There were tins of various foodstuffs in the locker—among them, some tins of golden syrup.

Bob had suddenly discovered golden syrup, as he groped in the locker!

But it was not in a tin!

A tin, with a tablespoon still sticking in it, lay on its side, lidless. The contents had streamed out all over the locker and the other goods packed therein.

Bob lifted a hand from the locker—streaming with treacle!

"Upset a tin?" asked Harry Wharnton from the bank.

"No, ass!"

"You look sticky!"

"The stickiness is terrific."

"I'm going to slaughter Bunter!" roared Bob. "The fat villain has been scoffing treacle—and he was too jolly lazy even to put the lid on the tin again! It's all over the shop! Look at me!"

Bob held up a fistful of treacle!

Really, it was exasperating!

Billy Bunter had a sweet tooth! It was practically impossible to keep condensed milk on the boat—Bunter always travelled through it with a tablespoon. When condensed milk was not available the jam was in equal danger. When jam ran out, golden syrup was the next best thing. Nobody expected Billy Bunter to leave anything uneaten if he had room for it in his extensive interior. But really, even Billy Bunter might have taken the trouble to jam the lid back on a tin of treacle, on a boat which might rock at any moment, and where anything might be tipped over.

Bunter hadn't! Bunter had left a tin full of treacle with the spoon sticking in it—with the natural result that the tin had rolled over with the motion of the Water-Lily; and the interior of the locker was now in a fearfully sticky state.

Treacle smeared all over the zinc floor. Treacle smeared all over tins of corned beef and sardines. Treacle soaked into a loaf and oozed into a bag of biscuits! And treacle smeared and stuck all over the hand with which Bob had groped in the locker.

It was not nice! It was unpleasant! And Bob Cherry, with a red face of wrath, stepped out of the boat and strode towards the tent.

"Aren't you going to wash that sticky paw?" asked Harry.

"Not till I've roused Bunter out!" answered Bob.

"Oh, my hat!"

Bob tramped into the tent!

Billy Bunter was snoring! He ceased to snore as a sticky hand grasped a fat chin and jerked him into wakefulness.

"Urrgh!" gurgled Bunter. "Gerraway! 'Tain't rising-bell!"

"Roll out, you fat frog!" roared Bob.

"Shan't! Urrgh—wharrer you grabbing at my face for?" yelled Bunter. "I say, I'm all sticky! You're making my face sticky! Beast! Oooogh!"

There was plenty of treacle on Bob Cherry's hand. Most of it was now transferred to Billy Bunter's features.

Bunter sat up and spluttered. He dabbed at a sticky face.

"You silly idiot!" he bawled. "Wharrer you dabbing treacle on me for?"

"That's the treacle you upset in the locker, you fat grampus!" roared Bob. "Now turn out—"

"Beast!"

"You're going to clean out that locker to the last spot before you have any brekker! And if you haven't finished when we're ready to start, you start without brekker!"

"I'm not getting up yet!" roared Bunter. "If you fancy I'm going to clean out that locker, I can jolly well say plainly—Whooop! Leave off kicking me, will you, you beast!"

Bob did not leave off!

Bunter turned out!

"Five minutes!" said Bob. "If you're not out in five minutes, I'll come back for you and bring the boathook!"

Bunter was out in five minutes!

He came out of the tent in a state of rage and wrath and indignation, inexpressible in words. However, he tried to express it in words.

"Beasts!" he roared. "Where's my brekker? I ain't going to clean out that locker! Blow the locker! Of all the cheeky rotters—"

"No brekker till you've finished!" said Bob Cherry. "Get going!"

"Shan't!" roared Bunter.

"Where's that boathook?"

Billy Bunter gave Bob Cherry the deadliest blink of which his

spectacles were capable and rolled across to the Water-Lily.

"We start in an hour, Bunter!" called out Harry Wharton. "Put your beef into it!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled on board the boat. He blinked into the stern locker.

That locker was a seat when it was shut; but part of the top opened as a lid. It was open now; and Bunter blinked into it in dismay.

Laziness, as is often the case, caused more instead of less trouble in the long run. Jamming a lid back on a tin really was not a lot of trouble. But cleaning out that sticky locker was a job to contemplate.

Billy Bunter blinked ashore at the camp. Breakfast was cooking over the stove, and there was an appetising scent from the same.

"I say, you fellows—" squeaked Bunter.

"Get down to it, you lazy, fat frog!" hooted Bob.

"Look here, we shall be at Lechlade to-day!" roared Bunter. "We'll get a man to clean it out! I'll pay him!"

"Think you could get a man to do that job for three-ha'pence?"

"Beast!"

"Time's going!" said Bob. "If there's a spot of treacle left in that locker, you don't get any brekker!"

Billy Bunter breathed hard, and he breathed deep. But there was no help for it—and he began work!

Wearily he sorted out sticky tins, washed them in the river, and laid them about the boat! That was trouble enough! But the locker itself was worse!

With a bucket of water and a mop used for swabbing out the boat the fat Owl got to work on the locker.

He mopped and mopped!

Meanwhile, the Famous Five ate their breakfast. Bunter's was laid aside—a reward of industry if he finished his job in time! If he did not, it was going to be a hungry Owl who started up the river that morning.

Bunter laboured. He gasped for breath! He perspired. During half an hour Bunter probably did more work than he had done during the whole trip since the Greyfriars crew had pushed out of Kingston.

He mopped, and mopped, and mopped! He banged that mop about the locker as if bent on scuttling the Water-Lily.

Gradually the spilt treacle disappeared under his labours.

Suddenly there came a howl from Bunter.

"Oh crikey!"

He ceased to bang the mop about.

"Finished?" called out Bob. "If there's a single spot—"

"Beast! It's your fault!" roared back Bunter. "The bottom of the locker's knocked in—"

"Fathead!"

"I tell you it is, and it's your fault!" howled Bunter. "Serve you jolly well right if you have to pay for it! Old Baker at Friardale will jolly well charge you for the damage, and serve you jolly well right, see?"

"Is the fat chump dreaming?" asked Harry Wharton. "The bottom of that locker is solid zinc—he can't have damaged it with that mop. Tell us an easier one, Bunter."

"I tell you the bottom's knocked in!" roared Bunter. He scrambled out of the boat. "You can jolly well mend it, if you want to use that locker again, so yah!"

Bob Cherry stepped on the Water-Lily. He glanced into the stern locker—and then he gave a shout!

"Oh, my hat! Come and look at this, you fellows!"

And the Co., in astonishment, left their breakfast unfinished and crowded on the Water-Lily to look.

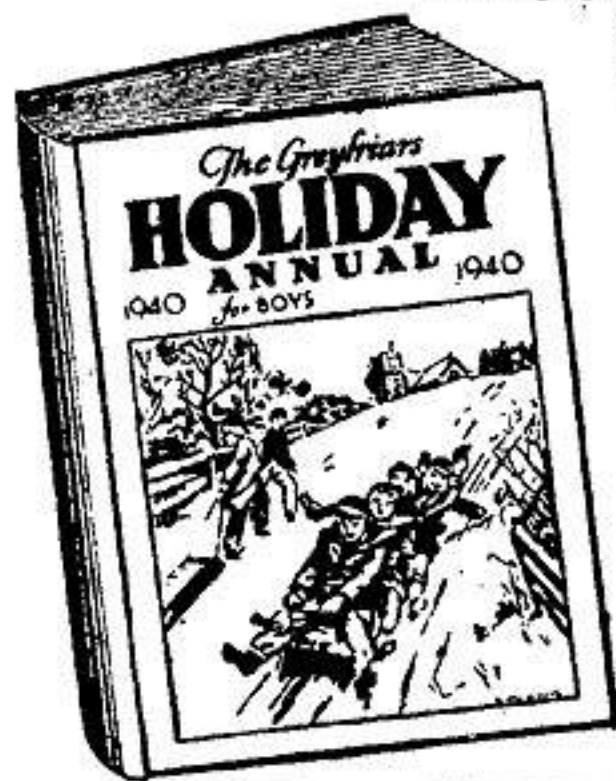
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The Greyfriars
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HIDDEN LOOT!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. stared into the stern locker of the Water-Lily.

What they saw there amazed them. The bottom of the locker was not knocked in, as the fat Owl had supposed and declared. But there was quite a surprising change in it.

The zinc floor of the locker, which had looked like a fixture and which they had taken for granted had been built into the boat, was tilted.

Evidently, though it had been tightly fitted, it was not a fixture. A bang of Bunter's mop had dislodged it. That locker had been wiped out a good many times. But this was the first time that an exasperated fat Owl had banged a mop about in it! That had done it!

"Well, this beats it!" said Harry Wharton in amazement. "That's a false bottom to the locker—it can be lifted."

"It's busted!" snorted Bunter from

the bank. "And it's jolly well all your fault—"

"It's not busted, you fat chump—it's shifted!" said Bob Cherry. "Look here, there's a space underneath—it couldn't tilt on solid wood. My only hat! See what that means?"

"Not quite!" said Nugent. "What—"

"That sheet of zinc is the floor of the locker—but it's the lid of something else!" said Bob. "Look here."

He grasped the edge of the tilted sheet of thick zinc and pulled it up farther.

Then the astonished juniors could see how it was contrived.

There was a pivot through the centre. By depressing one end the other could be raised.

There was no fastening of any kind. A fastening, of course, would have had to be unfastened from above, and would have been visible. Nothing was visible to show that the zinc was movable.

But it fitted so tightly that there was no danger of its shifting, unless a very heavy pressure was exerted on one end—which, of course, never happened—until now it had happened by sheer chance, from an angry and exasperated bang from a mop.

Dozens of times, if not hundreds of times, the juniors had dropped things into the locker, and lifted them out, and they had always supposed the zinc floor to be as solidly fixed as the timbers of the boat. Evidently, however, it was not.

"Well, if that isn't weird!" said Johnny Bull staring. "Spooner had this boat built himself—and I suppose he had that secret place put in, to keep his valuables when he was cruising."

"He had it put in to keep valuables!" said Bob. "Bet on that! But I fancy they weren't his own valuables."

"Oh!" ejaculated Johnny.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Right on the wicket!" he said. "We jolly well know what Spooner's game was when he used to cruise in this boat. He used to park his plunder there, after cracking cribs at riverside houses."

"That's it!" said Bob. "Safe as houses, if he was suspected, and the boat searched! I'll bet there's been a lot of other people's property parked under that false floor. And— Oh, my hat!" Bob gave a sudden yell.

"What's biting you now?" asked Harry.

Bob almost spluttered.

"Why, look here, why has the man been so keen on getting back this boat?" he gasped. "No other boat would do for him to pinch—only this one. He wanted his old boat back—his own old special boat! Suppose something was left in that hide-out when he was run in—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"He was nabbed suddenly after a robbery at Popper Court, from what we heard!" exclaimed Bob excitedly. "The boat was sold while he was in chokey. When he came out he wanted it back—wanted it so badly that he's

trailed us up the Thames to pinch it."

"By gum!" exclaimed Nugent. "You remember that day Bunter saw him in the boat—the fat ass fancied that he was sneaking our grub—he was at the locker—when he was interrupted—"

"Something's there!" said Bob, with conviction.

He stooped over the locker, forced up the false floor as far as it would go, and groped underneath.

His groping hand came in contact with something. He drew it out—it was a large leather case.

"Look!" he gasped.

"Oh, my hat! Loot!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Let's see what's in it!"

Bob opened the leather case. It was packed full. He rolled the contents out on the locker.

There were a number of thick printed documents, which the juniors knew to be bonds—with various sums from £100 to £500 barked on them. There were half a dozen gold watches and a number of pieces of gold plate with crests engraved on them. Something else was wrapped in cotton wool—and, unwrapped, it proved to be a pearl necklace.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Johnny Bull. "What a collection! We know now why Spooner wanted this boat back so badly."

"The knowfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "That is what the esteemed rascal was after."

"Thousands of pounds' worth!" said Harry Wharton, with a whistle. "We've tripped up the Thames with thousands of pounds parked under the floor of that locker! No wonder Spooner wanted to get hold of this boat."

"See if there's anything else!" said Nugent.

Bob groped in the locker again.

Another leather case came to light. Opened, it revealed a set of steel tools—the use of which the juniors could easily guess.

Nothing else was found. The two leather cases were the total contents of the secret hide-out under the locker.

"Hard luck on Spooner!" grinned Bob. "When they nabbed him, they got him so quick that he never had time to pay his boat a visit. And it was sold with this cargo on board—and nobody ever knew. Old Baker never guessed what he was letting us in for, when he hired us this boat at Friardale. My only hat—thousands of pounds, and that rogue after us to get it back."

The juniors gazed at that pile of loot—the fruits of cracked cribs of which Shifty Spooner probably had never been suspected.

"Bunter can have his brekker now!" grinned Bob. "He's earned it. Bunter!"

There was no answer from Bunter. Bunter was already breakfasting.

The Famous Five's investigation in the locker did not interest Bunter—except that it kept them busy while he snaffled the foodstuffs.

While the Famous Five were disinterring Shifty Spooner's hidden loot,

Bunter was travelling through eggs and bacon and sosses—and, in dread of interruption, he was exceeding the speed limit!

But Bunter was not interrupted. For the first time in his fat career Billy Bunter had earned his breakfast—or, rather, his breakfasts. And he packed them away, one after another, with happy satisfaction.

THE SLEEPER AWAKES!

"LIKE a tow, sir?"

"Thanks—no!"

"I'd be glad of a job, sir—tow you up to Lechlade."

"Not to-day, thanks!"

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter from the boat, "give the man a job! Don't be stingy! If you think I'm going to tow—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Yah!"

The boat was packed, Bunter was in it, and the juniors had the tow-rope in hand; all was ready to start when a man appeared on the towpath. He wore an old straw hat, a shaggy beard, and a smock-frock, and looked a respectable old countryman—certainly nothing at all like the deceptive Mr. Jobling! But the Famous Five did not want a tow—after their experience of the previous day.

"Name of Jones, sir!" said the man in the smock-frock.

The juniors started a little, and looked at him again. There were plenty of people about who bore the good old name of Jones, it was true; but naturally it struck them.

"By gum!" said Bob Cherry, looking more intently at the bearded face. "Is it—it can't be—"

"You've guessed it!" said Mr. Jones quietly. "Please let me tow your boat!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Nugent

They stared at him. Only on a close inspection could they recognise the wooden-faced man. But it was he.

"No luck in the night?" asked Harry.

Mr. Jones shook his head.

"No. But I've a strong suspicion that my bird is not far off. Please let me tow your boat—and, about a mile up, I'd like you to go for a walk, and leave me in charge for an hour or so, if you don't mind."

"Any old thing!" said Bob. "But we've got something on the boat we'd like you to see before we start—"

"Never mind that now, sir, if you don't mind—if there's any eye on us, I'd rather be taken for a man you've tipped to tow your boat—"

"Right-ho! But—"

"Thank you, sir!" said Mr. Jones, in quite a loud voice, which gave the juniors the impression that he suspected that Mr. Spooner might be within hearing, though not in sight. "'Arf-a-crown, sir, up to Lechlade."

"Yes—but—"

"Ready, sir, if you'll step in!" said Mr. Jones.

The juniors stepped in. They had something on the boat which they wanted Mr. Jones to see, and which

they were assured would interest him immensely. But Mr. Jones, of course, had no knowledge of that, and he was anxious to get going with the towline, in case a pair of shifty eyes were on him, and a pair of shifty ears at hand.

The Water-Lily pushed off, and the man in the smock-frock towed. Once more the Greyfriars boat rolled on up the Thames, the Famous Five extremely interested to know what Mr. Jones' plans might be—and Billy Bunter extremely satisfied to see a man hired to tow—which made it improbable that the fat Owl would be called on for another spot of work.

For about an hour the man in the smock-frock towed on, without a single glance round.

He came to a stop at a point where a shady wood sloped up from the towpath.

"This here is the place, sir!" he called out.

"Right-ho! Pull in!" answered Harry.

The boat bumped on the bank.

"I say, you fellows, what are we stopping for?" asked Bunter. "We're nowhere near Lechlade yet. I say, I've heard that there's a good inn at Lechlade where you can get a jolly good lunch!"

"We're going for a bit of a walk," said Bob.

"Are you? I'm not!"

"My dear old porpoise, think we could part with you?" asked Bob. "You don't know how nice your company is, if you think that! Come on!"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "I'm not jolly well walking, I know that! I'll sit in the boat while you're gone, if you're such silly asses as to go trapesing about when you might be sitting down!"

"Come on, Bunter!"

"Shan't!"

"You needn't go far!" said Bob soothingly. "Only a little trot into the wood, old fat man! I've got a packet of butterscotch in my pocket, too!"

"Oh! I don't mind coming for a walk, of course!" said Bunter. "Mind, I ain't going far! I'm not going to walk my legs off! Still, I'll come!"

The crew of the Water-Lily landed.

"Back in an hour!" called out Harry Wharton to the man with the towline. "Look after the boat while we're gone, will you?"

"Yes, sir! I'll be glad of a rest, sir! I'll look after your boat all right, sir!"

Harry Wharton & Co. turned from the towpath into a shady track that led up into the wood.

In a few minutes they were out of sight from the river.

"Like a rest, Bunter?" asked Bob affably.

"Yes, rather!" Bunter had covered thirty yards, so no doubt he was tired. "Where's that butterscotch?"

Bob handed over a packet of butterscotch and the fat Owl sat down contentedly at the foot of a tree to masticate the same.

The Famous Five moved a little farther on. Then Bob halted at the

foot of a big beech that towered over the other trees.

"Anybody coming up?" he asked.

"What for?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Bird's-eye view of a boat, a bobby, and a blighter!" grinned Bob. "What do you think Jones has sent us for a walk for, fathead? He jolly well knows that Spooner is around, and he's giving him his chance!"

"Oh, all right, then!"

And the chums of the Remove clambered into the beech.

From the high branches they had a view over the lower trees and could watch the towpath, the boat, and the man in the smock-frock.

They were very keen to see what was going to happen—having no doubt that something was. Mr. Spooner had not turned up in the night, perhaps not having located the Greyfriars camp. But that Mr. Jones was assured that Shifty was on the watch, and would spot the boat on the river, they were sure.

"Look!" grinned Bob. "Looks like looking after the boat—what?"

And the juniors smiled as they saw the man in the smock-frock.

He had sat down on the towpath, at a little distance from the moored boat. As they watched him, he stretched himself in the grass, and pillowed his head on his arm, with his hat over his face—perhaps to keep off the sun, or perhaps to conceal the fact that his eyes were keenly open!

He looked as if he had gone to sleep. But the five fellows watching from the top of the tall beech were quite aware that there was nobody in the Thames valley wider awake!

Ten minutes passed—a quarter of an hour. Three or four people passed on the towpath, and then came a man who did not pass.

That man came to a halt, eyeing the moored Water-Lily and the rural-looking man who lay in the grass, with the end of the towline round his arm.

"Spooner!" breathed Bob

"I wonder?"

"Look!"

For a long minute the newcomer stood eyeing the recumbent form of the man in the smock-frock. Then he turned his head, casting a swift and searching glance round. The juniors from the treetop saw his face—the foxy features and shifty eyes of Shifty Spooner!

Satisfied with that rapid survey, Mr. Spooner stepped softly into the Water-Lily.

This, to Mr. Spooner, probably seemed like pie.

He had reached the Water-Lily to find her moored, the whole crew absent, and only an old countryman left in charge, who had apparently gone to sleep in the grass while minding the boat.

If this was not pie, Shifty Spooner did not know what pie was!

In the Water-Lily, Mr. Spooner reached to the towrope to unship it—and float off the boat, leaving the rope to the man in the smock-frock.

Harry Wharton & Co. watched rather anxiously.

Shifty did not need more than a

minute. And the man in the smock certainly looked fast asleep.

But suddenly the sleeper awakened.

With a single bound, Mr. Jones was on his feet and leaping into the Water-Lily.

The juniors heard the roar of enraged surprise from Shifty Spooner as he went sprawling over under the man in the smock.

"Oh!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Got him!"

The juniors could not see Mr. Jones snap the handcuffs on. But when, a few moments later, he jerked Shifty up and sat him on a thwart, Shifty's hands were bunched together in front of him and it was plain that the bracelets were on.

"Come on!" exclaimed Bob.

He slithered down the tree, followed fast by his chums.

"I say, you fellows!" came a fat squeak. "I say, got any more butterscotch?"

Harry Wharton & Co. did not stop to answer that question, urgent as it was. They flew back towards the towpath, and Bunter, grunting, rolled after them.

THE END OF THE TRIP!

"SUFFERING sardines!" groaned Mr. Spooner.

He sat in the boat, with the handcuffs on, as the Greyfriars juniors arrived breathlessly.

Mr. Jones, in his calm methodic way, was taking off the smock-frock and the shaggy beard—Shifty watching him with an expressive expression.

"Blow you!" said Mr. Spooner. "If I'd known you was a cop——"

"I say, you fellows, what's up?" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, who's that? I say, there's Spooner!"

"O.K. what?" grinned Bob Cherry breathlessly.

Mr. Jones glanced at the school-boys, his wooden face breaking into a smile.

"O.K.," he agreed. "I am much obliged, my boys! This man will give you no further trouble. And if you will oblige me with a lift to Lechlade——"

"Hold on a minute!" said Bob. "We told you we had something that we wanted you to see."

"Oh, yes!"

"It's something we found parked on the Water-Lily, hidden under a false floor in the stern locker!" said Harry.

"What?" gasped Mr. Spooner.

His jaw dropped.

"What——" began Mr. Jones.

"This little lot!" said Bob.

He held out a leather case. Harry Wharton held out another.

Mr. Jones gazed at them for a moment, then took them and opened them.

"Suffering snakes!" moaned Mr. Spooner.

Mr. Jones jumped.

The wooden expression entirely left his face. His eyes fairly popped at the contents of those two leather cases.

"You found these!" he gasped.

(Continued on page 28.)

The GREYFRIARS HERALD

(Continued from page 2.)

"Yaroo!" shrieked Dr. Birchmall. He dropped the birchrod and started hopping about like a cat on hot bricks. And as he hopped the bogus Lickham leaned forward and seized his beard and gave it a trooly terrific tug, causing the Head to lose his balance and sit down suddenly, yelling harder than ever!

Then Fearless hist a warning "Cave!"

He had suddenly spotted the real Mr. Lickham strolling across the quad.

That site was quite enuff for the bogus Form-master and his followers. While the Head rolled on the gravel path, bellowing at the top of his voice, Jack Jolly & Co. scuttled into hiding behind the bushes near Fossil's Lodge.

When the real Mr. Lickham arrived on the scene a minnit later, they had vanished just as though the earth had opened and swallowed them up. But the Head had been too dizzy to notice the departure of the bogus Form-master, and when he looked up again and saw the genuine article, he had no idea it was a different person.

"Pax!" he cried. "Lemme alone!"

"Eh?" yelled Mr. Lickham.

"Forgive me, Lickham, my dear old chap!" cried Dr. Birchmall. "I didn't mean it! I was only joking when I told you to detain Jolly—honner bright! The detention is cancelled!"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" ejaculated Jolly, sotto vocey. "I've always heard that the biggest boodies are the biggest cowherds—and this proves it!"

It was really amazing to see the change that had come over Dr. Birchmall. Just because Jolly had stood up to the old fogey, he was grovelling and fawning at Lickham's feet in the most remarkable manner. Lickham was simply staggered at first; but when the Head kept it up, and he saw that for some reason he was apologising for what he had done, the Fourth Form master cheerfully forgave him, and allowed him to depart in peace.

Lickham looked completely nonplussed as he stood staring after the retreating Head.

He looked more nonplussed still when Jack Jolly & Co. came out of hiding, and he saw the living image of himself emerging from Fossil's bushes.

"What the merry thump—" he gasped.

Then Jack Jolly eggsplained.

Mr. Lickham's eyes almost popped out of their sockits when he heard what had happened.

"Well, this beats the band!" he gasped, at the finish. "And do you really mean to say the Head was so polite to me because he thought I'd assaulted him?"

"That's it, sir," grinned Jolly.

"In that case, I shall always know what to do after this," said Mr. Lickham. "Whenever Dr. Birchmall starts any of his nonsense again, I shall start pulling his whiskers, and have him eating out of my hand in no time!"

And he went on his way rejoicing.

HARRY WHARTON

CALLING ALL CHUMS!

All good things must come to an end—and that applies to the holidays that are now concluding. We have had a

marvellous vap, crowded with interest and excitement—one which many of you will no doubt have envied us. But, naturally, it could not go on for ever, and now we must prepare to get down to Latin and maths, and all that again.

Ears, long unaccustomed to the sounds of the school, will hear again the clang of the rising-bell, the clatter of the desks, and the shuffle of feet in class, the buzz of talk in the tuckshop, the crash of the school gate as Gosling carries out his nightly ritual of locking-up, the din of the Rag at eventide, terminated by the prefect's "Bed-time, you kids!"

Does the prospect fill me with dismay, chums? Not likely! The hols have been simply great; but the coming term, too, will be simply great if our little crowd have a say in the matter.

See if I don't prove right!

HARRY WHARTON.

FOURTH FORM ANGLERS THINK BIG!

Says DICK RAKE

When I go fishing, I take a five-bob fishing-rod and a basket.

When Temple of the Fourth goes fishing, he takes— But it's no good my writing it all down when Wharton won't give me all that space, so I'll just give you my general impressions of Temple & Co. on a fishing expedition last week.

I bumped into their outfit while out fishing myself. They arrived in a Rolls. There was a uniformed



chauffeur driving, and a footman in attendance. Attached to the back of the car was a collection of fishing tackle, waders, bait, baskets, and what not, large enough to stock a retail store.

Temple and his pals, Dabney and Fry, were dressed in the nattiest of sports-clobber, and crowned by the most devastating little tweed anglers' hats. They raised their eyebrows a little when they spotted me.

"Somethin' familiar about the kid, I fancy," Temple remarked to the air.

"Have an idea I've seen him myself somewhere," bleated Dabney. "Name of Spade or Trowel or somethin'—what?"

"I've got it—Rake!" drawled Fry. "A fag from the school, y'know."

"Oh, gad, yess! How do, Rake?"

"How do, cads—I mean lads, of course!" I corrected, as Temple & Co.

glared. "Been burgling a fishing-shop?"

"Young ruffian's tryin' to be funny, apparently," Dabney sighed. "Better turf him out, Temple—what?"

"Oh, leave the kid alone!" yawned Temple. "One doesn't come out to brawl with infants."

"Safer not to, too," I grinned. "But what's the idea of all the rods and nets and things? Got a permit to empty the river?"

"Ignore the young ragamuffin," advised Fry. "Let's get busy, you men!"

"Oh, rather!"

Temple & Co got busy. Assisted by the chauffeur and the footman, they put rods together and baited hooks. The faithful retainers produced folding chairs and cushions for them to sit on, handed them rods, and stood aside with fresh rods and nets all ready to pass over at a moment's notice.

Temple & Co, spent the next hour fishing, leavening out fishing with intelligent conversation consisting mostly of remarks like "Haw!" and "Gad!" and "Oomph!" and "Oh, rather!"

I caught a medium roach and a fine perch in that period.

Temple & Co., assisted by chauffeur and footman, half a dozen rods worth a fiver apiece, a couple of landing-nets, and some frightfully posh baskets, caught one stickleback, and an old boot!

But don't think I'm chortling over them. Not a bit of it! As an angler's haul, their total catch was not really impressive, but I believe in encouraging these amateurs myself.

Temple & Co. may not have actually done a lot. But there's one thing nobody can deny—as anglers, they certainly think big.

The BEAUTIES of AUTUMN!

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!" wrote the poet, referring to autumn. Personally, we see nothing

to rave about in mists, and fruitfulness only reminds us of Inky's weird English. Still, it seems that this season is regarded favourably by connoisseurs of seasons, so we have gone to the trouble of writing a number of Greyfriars people to ask them what's the most beautiful thing about autumn. Don't thank us; it's a pleasure. Here are the replies:

BOB CHERRY.—The biggest attraction about autumn obviously is the

fact that it begins the footer season.

W. G. BUNTER.—The best thing about it is the new kids you always get in the Oughtum Term. The site of these young innersents, so fresh and ingenious, compared with the other suspicious beasts, is a tonic to me. And if anyone says that's because they change postal orders for me in advance, my reply will be a dignified, but contemptuous "Yah!"

MR. QUELCH.—The most beautiful thing about autumn is the noticeable increase in my pupils' intelligence and responsiveness.

MICKY BHEMOND.—Sure and it's myself that will be delighted to tell you what is the most beautiful thing about autumn if you don't mind me changing it to spring.

CERRIC HILTON.—The big thing about this delightful season, of course, is that it gets dark earlier, and enables

a chap to go out on the tiles after lights-out, with less risk of getting wobbled.

WILLIAM GOSLING.—What I says is this here: Autumn seems beautiful to me—because why? Because you young rips start spending your evenings indoors agin, instead of plaguing a man down at a man's lodge. Ho, yes!

WILLIAM WIBLEY.—The real beauty of autumn, naturally, is that it's the time when we get down to serious amateur theatricals again.

DICKY NUGENT.—What I like most about it is the rumburs of-ghosts that go round the school as the nites draw in. Weerd tales of headless spooks seen in the quad, of fearful fantoms found gliding through Hall, of hair-raising speckters heard shrieking in the crypt.

(That will be all for this week, Dicky. You've finished your funny story already, you know.—ED.)

FOOTBALL LEAVES ME BREATHLESS!

Says Miss **PENELOPE PRIMROSE**

Marjorie Hazeldene has asked me to write an account of the football match which I attended at Greyfriars last week. I fear that she has not chosen the most competent person to describe the game, for, truth to tell, it is the first football match I have ever witnessed. But though the technical details of the play may be a little beyond me, I am quite happy to give readers my impressions of it.

The game was contested between a junior team representing Greyfriars, and another representing St. James' College, and I must say that the enthusiasm displayed by both players and spectators was little short of remarkable.

Loud hurrahs greeted the arrival of the players, and the play throughout was punctuated by shouts of a bewildering and sometimes incomprehensible nature. At intervals the crowd roared out something which sounded to me like "Coal!" I saw no evidence of this useful commodity, however, though on one occasion I heard a juvenile spectator mysteriously order another to "Go and eat coke!"

At other times the crowd cried: "Shoot!" and I hastily put up my umbrella, thinking that a rain of bullets was about to descend on us. Thank goodness there appeared to be no need for that precaution, for no rifles or pistols were to be seen at any time during the game. At the same time, I must regretfully observe that I had more than mere visual evidence of the presence amongst the younger spectators of instruments of tin, through which peas were ejected. One

hit me on the nose, giving me quite a start.

I am afraid that I never quite discovered the precise objects of the game, and, but for the assistance of a very kind young man named Skinner, I should have been quite at a loss to understand any of the moves. Fortunately, Skinner was able to enlighten me at intervals, and, with his assistance, I made several notes with a view to writing this article.

Looking back at my notes, I find that in the first innings Greyfriars scored three sets and a try against the two runs scored by their opponents. How they scored them I am really unable to say, but I can assure my readers that the players expended an enormous amount of energy in doing it.

After the interval the excitement was tremendous. First St. James' equalised with a converted try, then Greyfriars scored a half-nelson (I am relying on Skinner for the technical phrases), and then St. James' brought off a "brilliant home run." What all this means I do not quite know, but it is just as the helpful Skinner described it to me.

Towards the end there were frequent breaches of the rules, and several players, I understand, were warned for holding and hitting below the belt, and for another strange infringement known as L.b.w.—leg before winning-post, so Skinner informed me.

The game ended with a win for Greyfriars on a last-minute knock-out, the final score being as follows:

GREYFRIARS: 3 sets, 1 try, 2 half-nelsons, 1 knock-out.

ST. JAMES': 2 runs, 1 dropped kick, 2 homo runs.

I cannot help remarking that I felt glad it was all over with so few casualties. Football may be an excellent pastime, but the pace at which it was played at Greyfriars was a little too swift for me. It left me completely breathless.

(That's how Skinner leaves me)—
M. H.)

HINTS FOR GARDENERS!

P. Hazeldene (Remove) would like fellow-gardeners to know that an excellent and inexpensive substitute for crazy paving can be obtained from the Cliff House School junior cookery class. Ask for home-made muffins.

NOT WHAT HE WANTED!

During a talk in the Rag on how nice it would be to be as wealthy as some fellows, Stott remarked, with a sigh, that he'd like to be inky.

Of course, a dozen fellows hastened to gratify his wish by squirting the contents of their fountain-pens over him, and it was not till Stott's yells stopped them that they realised he meant "Inky"—not "inky."

P.-c. Tozer nearly reported a case of murder on Courtfield Common last Wednesday afternoon, after discovering pieces of human ears, tufts of hair, and bloodstains over an extensive area of grass in the middle of the common. In the nick of time, however, he realised that the gruesome relics were on the pitch that had just been used by the Greyfriars Third and the Courtfield Council School juniors for their annual footer match. So he put away his notebook, and decided that there was nothing to report, after all.

WHEEL, WHEEL!

Billy Bunter's bike has suffered so many punctures that he would like to have it retired.

The general opinion is that it would be much better to have it retired!

The SECRET of the "WATER-LILY!"

(Continued from page 26.)

"Hidden on the Water-Lily!" said Harry. "That's why Spooner has been after us all the way up the Thames, Mr. Jones!"

"Suffering snails!" moaned Mr. Spooner. "Done! Diddled! Dished! This 'ere lets me out! Suffering tadpoles!"

"By Jove!" said Mr. Jones.

It was nearly a minute before his features composed themselves into their usual wooden expression. Wooden as it was, it indicated satisfaction—quite a contrast to Mr. Spooner's—when the Greyfriars boat pulled up to Lechlade.

Harry Wharton & Co. finished that trip on the Thames without seeing anything more of Shifty Spooner. Shifty was in safe hands—so was his loot!

Mr. Spooner, it was probable, was not wholly satisfied with the outcome of that trip up the Thames. But the chums of the Remove agreed that it had been ripping when the time came to say good-bye to holidays and roll back to Greyfriars School for the new term.

THE END.

(Harry Wharton & Co. are back at Greyfriars next week. Meet them again in: "CONDEMNED WITHOUT EVIDENCE!" It's a Frank Richards' special!)



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