



# Pon's Little Mistake

By Mark Linley.

*Ponsonby & Co., the knuts of Highcliffe, hit on a bright idea for raidin' their rivals, Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars . . . . But the best-laid schemes "gang oft agley" . . . . and so does this wheeze of the Highcliffe knuts!*

Pon. chuckled.

"Up there in the tree, readin' a book. One of Wharton's pals, too—I forgot his name. This will help us no end, my pippins!"

"Dashed if I see how a Greyfriars cad up a tree can help us in raidin' Wharton's campin'-out stunt!" remarked Vav, warmly. "What's the idea, Pon?"

"Just this, ol' bean: to pretend we haven't noticed him an' discuss plans under his tree—cod plans!"

"Oh!"

"What we want to do is get Wharton an' his pals out of the way while we wreck their charm-in' little Boy Scout camp," went on Pon. "Well, suppose we stroll over to that tree an' talk as though we're goin' to raid a Greyfriars picnic-party on the river."

"Oh, gad!"

"Then it's a stone cert that the Greyfriars lout who's listenin' from above'll make a dash for dear ol' Wharton an' Co. the moment we've gone an' tell them to gó to the rescue!"

"Ha, ha! Oh, rather!"

Vav. and the rest grinned. They began to see the idea.

"They do these things at Greyfriars," smiled Pon. "Stickin' together

"**G**REYFRIARS cad!"

Ponsonby, of the knuts brigade at Highcliffe, made that exclamation.

Vavasour and Monson and Gadsby, who were walking through the Friardale Woods with their leader, looked surprised.

"Where?" asked Vav. "Can't see him!"

through thick an' thin—l'esprit de corps an' all that rot, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This chap'll fall for it like a lamb! Soon as we push off, he'll rush over to Wharton's tent. An' in a matter of seconds they'll all be chasin' down to the river, leavin' us plenty of time to make a thorough mess of what they've left behind 'em! Good wheeze, what?"

"Oh, gad! Rippin'!"

Vav. & Co. were enthusiastic. They didn't enthuse over many things; but the prospect of getting Wharton & Co. out of the way while they carried out a wrecking programme roused them completely out of their customary languor.

"We'll try it on," said Pon. "This way!"

He led the knuts across the glade, talking loudly as he neared the tree, in whose branches the unsuspecting Greyfriars Removite was reading his book.

"It'll be as easy as rollin' off a log, I tell you," he said, for that junior's benefit. "There are just three of 'em—Greyfriars Remove chaps, you know—an' they're picnickin' about half-a-mile beyond the bathin'-pool. If we break in on 'em unexpectedly, they won't stand an earthly!"

"Jolly good idea!" said Gadsby, taking his cue from Pon. "We'll pay off a few scores while we're about it—give 'em a duckin', perhaps. I suppose Wharton an' his mob aren't likely to chip in?"

"No danger from them," said Monson, in the same loud voice that his companions were using. "They're campin' out in the woods somewhere. They'll be nowhere near."

"Good biz!" grinned Pon. "Well, then, if you men are ready—"

"We're ready, ol' bean!"

"Good! Then march!"

They marched—until they were out of sight of the fellow in the tree, when

they promptly took cover in some bushes and waited to see what he would do.

They hadn't long to wait. Almost immediately the Greyfriars man climbed down from his vantage-place, pocketed his book and set off briskly through the woods in the direction of Wharton's tent.

"Swallowed it whole, you see!" chuckled Pon. "We'll give 'em five minutes to get away; then we'll step in an' do our stuff!"

"Oh, rather!"

The knuts waited just five minutes. Then, at a signal from Pon., they rose and tramped off in the same direction as the Greyfriars man had taken.

Wharton's tent was pitched in a sunny little clearing at the Greyfriars end of the woods. Pon. & Co. approached it with caution. But caution appeared to be unnecessary. There was no sign of the Famous Five.

"The birds have flown, methinks!" grinned Pon. "Leavin' their traps behind 'em! How awfully careless some people are!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fairly askin' for trouble!" chuckled Vav. "They can hardly blame members of the public who kick down their tent—like this!"

"Nor others who—woop!"

Monson broke off, with a sudden yell. As if by magic, six Greyfriars juniors had appeared in the clearing—the Famous Five and the other Removite whom Pon. & Co. had previously seen in the tree.

"What the thunder—" gasped Vavasour.

"Oh, gad! They're still here, after all!"

"Run for it!" yelled Gadsby.

Before the knuts could escape, however, Harry Wharton & Co. had surrounded them, grinning.

Pon. & Co. were not grinning. They were glaring—Pon. at the



Ponsonby & Co. were tied together in a chain with stout cord, and, to the laughter of the Removites, sent uncomfortably back to Highcliffe.

Greyfriars men and Pon.'s followers at Pon.

"Fat lot of good your bright wheeze turned out to be!" said Vav. furiously. "The rotters are here in full force!"

"Blamin' me, then?" asked Pon., turning his glare to Vav.

Vav. snorted.

"It was your idea to talk about raidin' a river-party so that this Greyfriars rotter'd send 'em chasin' off, wasn't it?"

"What's that?" yelled Bob Cherry. "Oh, my hat! Then they must have stood under the tree talkin' cod-stuff to get us out of the way! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Harry Wharton & Co.—with the solitary exception of the fellow from the tree, who seemed, for some reason, to have missed the point of the joke.

"No wonder they strolled up here so boldly!" grinned Wharton. "They thought we'd be half-way down to

the river, leaving the coast clear for 'em. Will it surprise you, Pon., to know that this is the first we've heard of it?"

"What?"

"The chap who was up the tree simply came along to warn us that you were about," explained the grinning leader of the Friars. "That was why we made an ambush for you. He saw you all right, and he thought you intended some mischief. But he didn't hear what you were saying for his benefit!"

"D-d-didn't hear—" stuttered Pon.

"Not a word, old bean! Not a syllable! You see, he happens to be Tom Dutton; and as you don't appear to know it, we'd better tell you that he's as deaf as a doorpost. That's right, isn't it, Dutton?"

Tom Dutton looked surprised.

"I'm as tight as mutton? What the thump do you mean?"

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

Pon. & Co. looked at each other. Then they looked at Dutton. And if looks could have killed, the deaf junior of Greyfriars would have perished on the spot.

"Well, of all the luck—" muttered Pon.

"Of all the so-called leaders—" sneered Vav.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites roared—roared without restraint. And when they had finished roaring they tied Pon. & Co. together in a chain with stout cord, and sent them hopping uncomfortably and furiously back to Highcliffe.

And if one thing was more certain than anything else after that, it was that Pon. & Co. would never again lay "cod" plans for an eavesdropper to hear if there was the remotest chance of that eavesdropper turning out to be Tom Dutton!

THE END