

It may be here mentioned, that the "River Swan" was the only steam vessel of any kind on the river above Woburn, as the stream above that place was in many parts shallow and full of weeds, and would so be unnavigable for larger steamers. Consequently as soon as the boys heard the puffing of an engine they knew it must be the "River Swan."

"I don't believe everything is all right," said Dick Norton. "Father would never be out himself at this time of the morning. I move we hide in these rushes here till they pass us, and we can see who is on board." This plan was quickly agreed upon and carried out, the two boats were noiselessly drawn into the rushes at the side of the river and the boys eagerly waited to see who the occupants of the launch might be. They had not long to wait, for the little craft soon appeared in view, and sure enough it was Mr. Norton's yacht. The occupants were soon clear enough to be distinguished, and were seen to be three men, all strangers to the boys, and also they appeared to the boys to have a rather seedy appearance.

To say that the boys were surprised would be to but feebly express their feelings; they were astounded. It was quite clear now to them that the yacht was being stolen, and it also seemed quite beyond their power to in any way save it. "If we could only warn the people at that farm house, which we passed about three miles back," said Douglas Pierson. "That is not possible," said Frank Kennet, "for the yacht is going at a rate of at least six miles an hour, and would be away past it before we could get there." "I am going to try anyhow," cried Harry Norton. "Who will come with me? I will land and follow on foot." "I'm with you," said Dick, his brother. "Let us out, even if you won't come with us." "We will all go," said Frank; "but first we must land and hide the boats, and then we will follow with you."

In a few minutes all were landed and the whole eight boys started on a trot after the yacht, which could now be seen nearly half-a-mile ahead, steaming steadily down stream. How long the boys would have held out it is impossible to say. Perhaps not much longer, for a couple of them were already lagging behind and threaten-

ed continually to stop altogether; but after they had followed the yacht for nearly two miles, they perceived that its speed was slackening and soon they saw her turning towards the shore.

They took up a position near where the yacht was, in a grove of trees, but why she had stopped they could not perceive; they supposed something must have gone wrong with the machinery, or else that the coal supply had given out. This latter supposition was seemingly verified a few minutes later, by seeing the men go ashore and begin to chop up wood and gather sticks.

The boys then held a hurried consultation, in which five were for going ahead, and trying to get the farmer at the house, which was now only about a mile away, to try and stop the yacht as it passed; but the two Nortons and Kennet pointed out to them that it would be perhaps very difficult to get the farmer to interfere, as they had annoyed him in going down in the first part of the excursion, and that it would be better to try the rescue themselves. This decision having been agreed upon, the Norton boys who appeared exceedingly nervous, not without cause, asked Frank to lead them. It was a very trying situation for the latter, but he soon showed himself equal to the occasion. He divided his forces into two parties of six and two, and in so doing his plan was this: He meant to have the six appear before the men engaged at work, and attract their attention from the yacht. Then he himself and Harry Norton would creep up close to the yacht, and as soon as they saw their chance, make a rush, endeavor to get on board and push away from the bank, trusting to what steam was still left in the boiler to enable them to get across the river out of reach of the thieves, and where they would be able to collect enough fuel to get back to where they had left the boats, and where they arranged for the other boys to assemble. These latter to scatter if they saw their friends get safely on board, but if not, and they should be intercepted, to all rush forward and give them their aid.

It was indeed a daring venture, for while the boys had the majority by eight to three, still the men were armed with hatchets, with which they might seriously injure the boys. The latter