

FREE GIFTS in "GEM" and "MODERN BOY" **THIS WEEK!**

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The Maonet 2^d

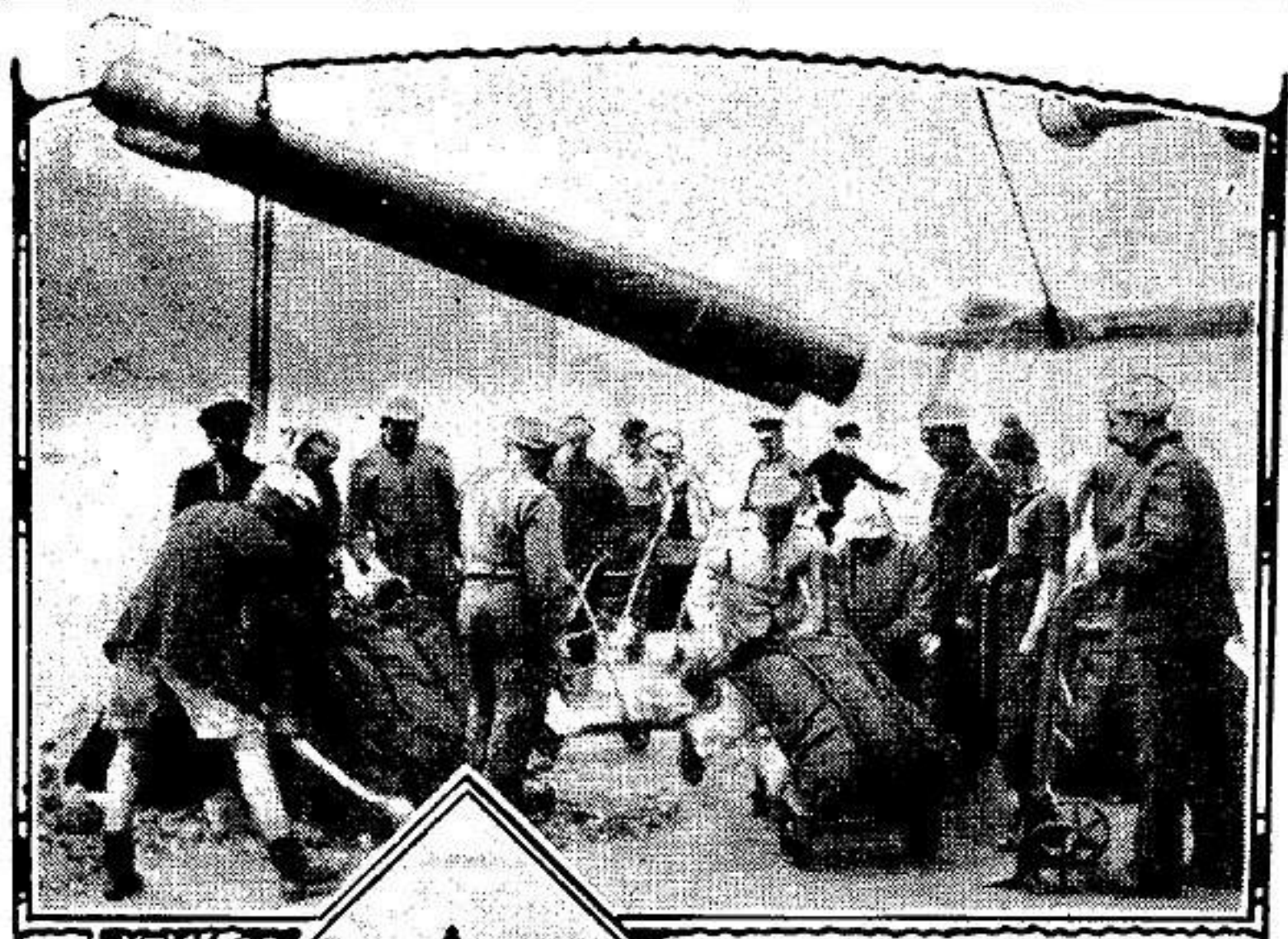
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EVERY SATURDAY.



A "RISE" FOR GOSLING, THE SCHOOL PORTER!

(An amusing incident from this week's rousing long yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.)



THE DARKER SIDE OF THE NAVY!

Coaling-day aboard a battleship not oil driven, is a murky business. The band's job is to "keep up the morale" with lively tunes and shanties. This photo shows men working under the grim muzzles of the 13-inch guns of H.M.S. Marlborough, one of the last battleships now using this kind of fuel. Coaling is carried out at the rate of 200 tons per hour!



WOOF-WOOF! CLUCK-CLUCK!

Could anything be more incongruous? A big Alsatian wolfdog making pals with a small chicken! Yet these extraordinary things happen; and, as in this case, the results are often delightful. In the picture on the left we see Betty, the Alsatian, playing with Molly, the chicken.

WHAT IS IT?

One of the most remarkable sights to be seen during the winter sports in Switzerland is the ski-ing contest, where competitors leap off hillsides and fly through the air, to land in the valley some hundreds of feet below. It must be a most exhilarating sensation for the competitor himself! Photo shows one just "taking off" during the Morven Cup contest, at Olympia Leap, St. Moritz. You will gain an idea of the tremendous distance he has to fall if you look at the tiny figures in the right-hand corner of the picture!



BILLY BUNTER'S BOLT! Barging a Form-master over, and then bolting from detention under his very nose, is almost as bad as twisting the tail of a particularly ferocious lion—when that Form-master happens to be Mr. Quelch! Yet Bunter is guilty of these offences, and as a result, he finds himself blundering into further entanglements that are destined to provide him with the adventure of his life!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Enter Mr. Whiffles!

THUMP, thump, thump!
Ta-ra-ra-ra!
Thump, thump!
Bang!

"What the merry dickens——" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

Thump! Bang!

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Billy Bunter. "It's a circus!"

"Sounds more like an earthquake!" remarked Bob Cherry.

Thump, thump! Bang, bang! Toot, toot! Ta-ra-ra-ra!

It was quite an unaccustomed sound in the old quadrangle of Greyfriars.

The thumping of a big drum mingled with the strains of a cornet and a trumpet, and the trampling of many hoofs, the rolling of many wheels.

It was morning break at Greyfriars, and all the fellows were out of the Form-rooms.

There was a rush to the gates at once.

Remove fellows rushed, and Third and Second Form fags rushed, and Shell fellows rushed. Seniors of the

Fifth and Sixth did not rush to see the circus passing the school. They were too dignified to appear to take much interest in circuses. Still, they strolled in the same direction. That terrific uproar, growing louder and louder as it came up the road from Friardale, awoke every echo of the ancient buildings of Greyfriars. Had classes been on, classes undoubtedly would have been interrupted. Had examinations been on, certainly many fellows would have lost marks. To the Lower School, at least, a circus was more attractive than classes or exams. Fortunately the school was at leisure now; and the fellows were able to swarm down to the gates.

Thump, thump, thump! Bang, bang! Rat-a-tat!

A gigantic elephant lumbered up, with a clown seated on his back, beating the drum. For a great distance down the road, behind the big elephant, the procession extended. There were caravans, men on horseback, and men on foot, gay banners and streamers, elephants and camels. The gateway of Greyfriars was crammed with fellows, deeply interested.

"I say, you fellows, it's Whiffles' Circus!" said Billy Bunter. "I've seen their posters up. They're going to give a show at Courtfield."

"Halt!"

The word ran along the line.

A large caravan, gaily painted and adorned with streamers, halted opposite the gateway of Greyfriars.

With a buzzing and a trampling and a crowding, the long procession came to a stop.

"They're calling here," remarked Bob Cherry. "What price asking the Head to let them give a show in the quad?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors chuckled at the idea of a circus performance in the school quad. Such a suggestion appealed strongly to the Lower School; but it was not likely to appeal to the Head.

But it was evident that the circus had some business at Greyfriars. From

the big, painted caravan a fat gentleman alighted, and came towards the gateway, over the wide stretch of grass that separated it from the highway.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at that gentleman with interest. They could guess that he was the circus proprietor, and wondered what he was coming to the school for.

The circus gentleman was worth a second glance.

He was a short man—remarkably short—but what he lacked in the perpendicular he made up in the horizontal. His circumference was generous—rather resembling that of Billy Bunter of the Remove.

His plump little nose, in the middle of a fat, smiling face, was adorned by a pair of gold-rimmed pince-nez. His clothes were of a light grey, with a well-marked vertical blue stripe, no doubt to give an effect of the height that Nature had denied him. Those clothes were cut on generous lines; but the plump person of the circus gentleman filled them to their fullest limits.

He wore his hair rather long and curly—almost a mane of nut-brown hair. A silk hat, with an unusually wide and curly brim, was set on those ample locks. His fat chin was adorned with a little pointed beard; and a long moustache, with the ends waxed upwards, adorned his upper lip.

Arriving at the school gates, the fat gentleman swept off his silk hat, with a stately bow, to the smiling crowd there.

The fellows could not help smiling.

The fat gentleman's manner was most impressive; but he was not so tall as some of the juniors, and so his impressiveness had a rather droll effect.

"Gentlemen," said the circus proprietor, "this is, I think, Greyfriars?"

"Right on the wicket, sir!" said Harry Wharton.

"Allow me to introduce myself—Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, proprietor of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus! I have called to see the Headmaster. Take me to your headmaster."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"I—I say, is Dr. Locke expecting you, sir?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Probably not," said Mr. Whiffles. "But I have brought my circus this way, on purpose to call upon the headmaster of this scholastic establishment. I desire to call the attention of the young gentlemen of this—this academy of learning, to the attractions of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus! Every afternoon and evening for a week we give regular performances on Court-field Common. The show is unrivalled, the prices of admission moderate. Owing to the crush of business wherever we go, the free list is entirely suspended. I desire to see your headmaster. Take me to him!"

Mr. Whiffles rolled onward. Mr. Whiffles being almost as broad as he was long, his motions rather resembled those of a barrel.

The crowd in the gateway parted to admit Mr. Whiffles.

There were grinning faces on all sides.

The juniors hoped that the Head would come out to see Mr. Whiffles. They were intensely interested to behold a meeting between that remarkable gentleman and the headmaster of Greyfriars.

Mr. Whiffles rolled in.

On either side of him, and behind him, the Greyfriars fellows crowded, accompanying him towards the House. Gosling, the porter, stared at him from his lodge. Gosling had an impression that it was his duty to turn back such a remarkable visitor as this. But Gosling had no chance; the crowd was too thick for him. He stared in disapproval.

Mr. Whiffles blinked round through his gold-rimmed glasses.

"This way, sir!" chortled the Bounder.

"Come right in, Mr. Whiffles!"

"Jolly glad to see you at Greyfriars, sir."

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows, the Head will be waxy—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Come on, Mr. Whiffles!"

"Quelch's staring out of his study window!" chuckled Frank Nugent. "He looks surprised."

"And not pleased!" murmured Wharton.

"The pleasantness in his esteemed ludicrous countenance does not appear to be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, did not look pleased, that was a fact. He looked astonished, and he looked horrified. The din of the circus at the gates fell inharmoniously upon Mr. Quelch's scholastic ears. The sight of the resplendent Mr. Whiffles rolling across the quad gave him a shock. Mr. Quelch stared—or rather glared—from his study window at this amazing apparition, and then disappeared. A moment more, and he was whisking down the steps of the house.

"What—what—what—" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

And he fairly blinked at Mr. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, as that gentleman reached him, halted, and took off his silk hat with a sweeping bow.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Exit Mr. Whiffles!

"SIR, I am honoured to meet you!" said Mr. Whiffles.

"What—what—"

Mr. Whiffles looked up amiably at Mr. Quelch.

Mr. Quelch looked down blankly at Mr. Whiffles.

Never had the angular Remove master looked so tall and angular as he did now, facing the circus gentleman. It was rather like a meeting between a tortoise and a giraffe.

"What—what—" repeated Mr. Quelch helplessly.

"I am honoured to meet the Headmaster of this—this scholastic establishment!" said Mr. Whiffles.

"I am not the headmaster!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I am a Form master! Kindly tell me at once what this means."

"I should like to see the headmaster, sir!" said Mr. Whiffles. "My business, sir, is with the proprietor of this academy."

"The—the what?"

"The proprietor, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Apparently Mr. Whiffles was under the impression that the headmaster was the proprietor of Greyfriars School, as Mr. Whiffles was of the World-Famous Circus.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch. "You—you cannot see Dr. Locke. Dr. Locke, I am sure, does not desire to see you. Kindly explain at once who you are, and what you want here."

Mr. Whiffles produced a morocco card case, and extracted therefrom a card, which he presented to the Remove master.

Mr. Quelch gazed at it.

It bore the style and title of Mr. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, Proprietor of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch.

"That is my card, sir," said Mr. Whiffles. "No doubt you have heard of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus! We have performed, sir, to every crowned head in Europe, and innumerable uncrowned heads. Wherever we pitch our tents, sir, we do business to capacity. Our attractions include—"

"My dear sir—"

"Mumbo, the performing elephant—"

"Sir—"

"Nobby Nobbs, the funniest clown in the universe—"

"Sir—"

"Texas Bill, the celebrated broncho buster—"

"Upon my word!"

"Tomasso Tomsonio, the King of the Trapeze—"

"Mr. Whiffles—"

"And numerous other attractions. See small bills. The free list, sir, is entirely suspended. But special cards of invitation will be sent to the master, sir, of this scholastic establishment. The young gentlemen will be heartily welcome, at the usual prices of admission."

"Really, Mr. Whiffles—"

"In order, sir, that the boys of this—this learned academy may see for themselves what the World-Famous Circus is like, I propose to process round this play-ground—"

"This—this what?"

"This play-ground," said Mr. Whiffles. "With your permission, sir, I will now instruct my procession to enter at the gates. Nobby Nobbs leads the procession, upon Mumbo, the performing elephant. If you desire, sir, I will allow Mumbo to lift you in his trunk—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"A very agreeable and entertaining experience, sir, and absolutely safe. Accidents rarely happen."

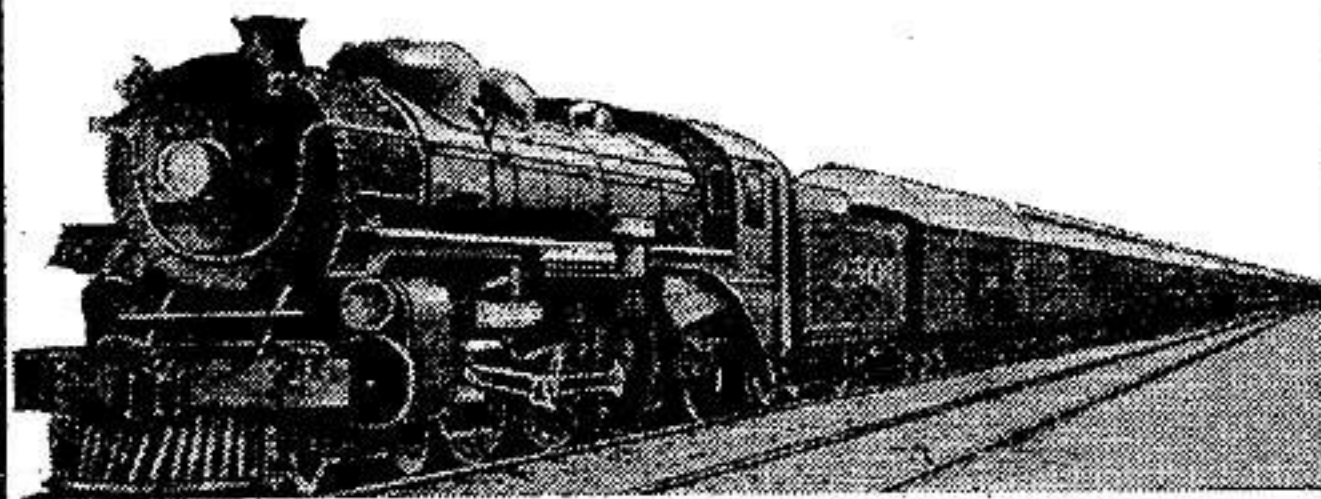
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "This—this is—is—is most extraordinary! Sir, you must not introduce your—your procession into the precincts of this school! Such a proceeding is unheard-of. Absolutely unheard-of, sir. Nothing of the kind can be allowed. Bless my soul!"

"And why not, sir?" asked Mr. Whiffles warmly. "Why should not the procession, sir, process round this play-

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"Sir, I am honoured to meet the headmaster of this—this scholastic establishment!" said Mr. Whiffles. "What—what—" Mr. Quelch looked down blankly at Mr. Whiffles, while the circus-gentleman looked up amiably at the Remove master. "I am not the headmaster!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I am a Form master! Kindly tell me at once what this means!" (See Chapter 2.)

ground, in order to display the attractions of the World-Famous to the young gentlemen of this scholastic establishment, sir?"

"Impossible, sir! Kindly leave at once—kindly do nothing of the sort! Upon my word!"

Mr. Whiffles sniffed.

"I take it, sir, that you are not the proprietor of this academy," he said. "Kindly call the proprietor."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here comes the Head!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Here comes the giddy proprietor."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dr. Locke came out of the big doorway of the House, with a startled and shocked expression on his face. Mr. Quelch turned to him. Perhaps he was relieved to turn over Mr. Whiffles to the headmaster.

"What—what—what is all this, Mr. Quelch?" exclaimed the Head. "What is all this dreadful uproar? Who is this person?"

Mr. Whiffles answered for himself.

"Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, sir, proprietor of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus, sir! Delighted to make your acquaintance, sir! I take it that you are the proprietor of this scholastic academy."

"I—I am the headmaster, certainly," gasped Dr. Locke. "But what—what—"

"Then you are cordially invited, sir, to witness the first performance of the World-Famous, this evening, sir, on Courtfield Common," said Mr. Whiffles. "The Royal Box, sir, will be placed at your disposal. No charge, sir, for the admission of so distinguished a scholastic gentleman."

"Dear me!" said the Head. "I—I—I thank you, sir, but—but I fear, sir, that I have reached an age when a circus performance no longer appeals to me. G-g-good-morning, sir."

"It is my desire, sir, to process round this play-ground, in order to display the attractions of Whiffles' World-Famous to the youths of this celebrated academy—"

The Head gasped.

"Impossible!"

"But, sir—"

"Impossible! I—I—I am much obliged to you, Mr. Whiffles! But it is quite out of the question! Good-morning, sir."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Whiffles. "But if you do not desire the whole procession, sir, no doubt you would like to see Mumbo, the performing elephant—"

"No, sir! Not in the least. Pray retire immediately, sir."

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

"I say, you fellows, he's coming in!" shrieked Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Without waiting for the instructions from Mr. Whiffles, Nobby Nobbs had turned the elephant in at the gates.

With a tramp that almost shook the quadrangle, Mumbo came thudding in. The Head and Mr. Quelch gazed at him in horror.

"Take—that—take that dreadful animal away at once, sir," stuttered the Head.

Gosling, in great indignation, rushed to oppose the entrance of Nobby Nobbs. He planted himself in the path of the elephant, and brandished an indignant fist at the grinning clown on the great animal's back.

"'Ere, you!" roared Gosling. "Take your 'ook! You 'ear me! Wot I says is this 'ere, you ain't allowed in 'ere, you ain't! You 'ook it."

The next moment there was a fearful yell from the school porter. The long trunk of Mumbo whipped out, and curled round the horrified Gosling. He jumped away too late.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, in horror.

Gosling's voice could be heard all over Greyfriars School, as he was swept off his feet in the elephant's trunk.

"Yaroo! 'Elp! Police! 'Elp!"

"Release that man at once, sir!" shouted Mr. Quelch, in consternation.

"He won't hurt him, sir," said Mr. Whiffles, reassuringly. "Mumbo thinks this here is part of the show, sir, that's all. Accidents hardly ever happen when Mumbo takes a man up in his trunk, sir. He hardly ever forgets to put him down safe, sir."

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

Gosling, with earth and sky spinning before his dizzy eyes, yelled and roared and wriggled.

"'Elp! Stop him! Call him off! 'Elp!"

Mr. Whiffles rolled back to the gates. "Now, then, no larks, Mumbo!" he said chidingly. "You put the man down. Don't you tread on him!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Gosling.

He seemed quite alarmed at the suggestion of being trodden on by the elephant.

Mumbo obediently lowered the dizzy porter, and set him safely on his feet.

Gosling stood for a moment spluttering. Then he bolted into his lodge.

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door slammed, and a bolt was heard to shoot home. Gosling had had enough of the elephant at close quarters.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen—" said Mr. Whiffles, turning to the convulsed crowd of Greyfriars fellows.

"Sir—sir! I insist upon your taking your immediate departure!" hooted Mr. Quelch, who had followed the circus gentleman down to the gates. "You hear me, sir! Immediate!"

"Keep your hair on, sir!" said Mr. Whiffles genially. "We're going on! Get going, Nobby."

The big elephant lumbered out of the gateway, much to Mr. Quelch's relief. He had a strong objection to elephants at close quarters, even though Mr. Whiffles had assured him that accidents were rare!

"Gentlemen," repeated Mr. Whiffles, "I hope I shall see you all at the circus, afternoon and evening, gentlemen! All are welcome! Bring your sisters and your cousins and your aunts! Whiffles' World-Famous, gentlemen, is a 'high-toned performance, to which any young gentleman could bring his father and his grandfather! Gentlemen, good-morning!"

"Bravo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Three cheers for Whiffles!"

"Hurrah!"

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "Gosling, close the gates! Where is Gosling? Wingate—Gwynne, kindly close the gates! Bless my soul!"

Bang, bang! Rat-a-tat-tat! Thump! Blare! With a burst of emphatic music Whiffles' World-Famous Circus wound up the road, on its way to Courtfield, leaving the Greyfriars fellows yelling with merriment.

There were smiling faces in third lesson that morning. Mr. Whiffles' visit had been enjoyed by all the Lower School, at least, even if Mr. Quelch and the Head had not shared their enjoyment. And there was hardly a fellow at Greyfriars who did not make up his mind to visit Whiffles' Circus during its stay at Courtfield.

Whether Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles had planned it or not, his visit to Greyfriars had been extremely effective in the way of advertisement.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter's Bob!

"I'm going!"

"And I!"

"Same here!"

"The samefulness is terrific!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm going! I say, I'm going to take a box! They've got boxes, you know—cheap! Ten-and-six! Box for four! Now, which three of you chaps would like to whack out that box with me?"

That question was addressed by William George Bunter, seemingly to deaf ears.

Nobody answered Bunter.

The fellows in the Rag were discussing Whiffles' Circus, and almost every fellow expressed his intention of visiting it.

Mr. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles had succeeded in attracting the attention of all Greyfriars by his remarkable visit to the school. The little fat gentleman with the long, curly hair, the waxed moustache, the pointed beard, the striped checks, and the bell-brimmed silk hat, had made the fellows chuckle; but he had impressed himself upon their minds, which, doubtless, was his astute object. Everybody, or nearly

everybody, was going to the circus at Courtfield, at the earliest possible opportunity.

"I say, you fellows, who's whacking out a box with me?" asked Bunter. "Don't all speak at once!"

The Removites did not all speak at once. They did not speak at all, so far as Bunter was concerned.

"I say, you fellows—" roared Bunter.

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Peter Todd.

"I'm going to have a box—"

"On the ear?" asked Toddy. "That's where you'll get one if you keep on yelling, fathead!"

"I'm going to have a box at the circus!" hooted the Owl of the Remove indignantly. "You ungrateful beast, I'm inviting you to share my box with me! Talk about gratitude!"

"Booked the box yet?" asked Peter sarcastically.

"Not exactly booked it," said Bunter. "I've been disappointed about a postal-order. But I suppose it will come to the same thing if you book the box and I square afterwards."

"Cheese it!" roared Peter Todd.

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"We'll make up a party to-morrow," said Bob Cherry. "Last half-holiday of the term; jolly lucky the circus came along this week. Old Whiffles is worth looking at, without the rest of the show."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will be terrifically entertaining to watch the esteemed Whiffles whiffing!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, you won't see Whiffles if you go in the afternoon," said Bunter. "Old Whiffles only shows up in the evening performances. It's another manager in the afternoons. It says so on the bills."

"Well, we can't go in the evening, that's a cert," said Harry Wharton. "It's the matinee, or nothing. We shall have to give Whiffles a miss if he's only a night-bird. Bob places will do us for to-morrow, you chaps."

"The bobfulness will be good enough," agreed Hurree Singh.

Billy Bunter sniffed.

"I'd rather do the thing in decent style," he said. "If my postal-order comes to-morrow morning, you fellows, I shall have a box."

"Echo answers 'if'!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"And if it doesn't come," hooted Bunter, "I shall expect one of my pals to lend me ten-and-six!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oyez, oyez, oyez!" roared Peter Todd, in the manner of a town-crier making a public announcement. "Chance for Bunter's pals, if any! Any of Bunter's pals here present are requested to stand forward."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter in the Rag, but nobody stood forward to claim the distinction of being Bunter's pal—at the trifling cost of ten-and-six.

"Where's that pal?" roared Peter.

"The wherefulness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if you fellows are going to be mean," said Bunter, "I can only say I'm disgusted at you; and I can jolly well tell you, Peter Todd, that when my postal-order comes I shan't lend you anything."

"That's all right; I shall be getting my Old-Age Pension by that time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Peast!"

"You'll have to be satisfied with a bob seat, just like a common mortal, Bunter," said Frank Nugent, laughing.

"Thanks, old chap!"

"Eh?"

"Jolly decent of you to offer to stand me a bob seat, Nugent. You're not so mean as these other fellows," said Bunter. "Much obliged!"

Nugent stared at him.

"Eh! I wasn't offering—"

"Oh, really, Nugent! I hope you're not going to back out, after offering to stand me a bob seat at the circus!" said Bunter reproachfully. "The fact is, I'm rather short of money, and I can do with it. You may as well hand over the bob now, in case you forget." And William George Bunter extended a fat paw.

Nugent gasped.

"Well, my hat! You deserve it for your cheek!" he said, and he tossed a shilling into the fat paw.

"Thanks, old chap," said Bunter. "If my postal-order comes in time, I'll let you have a seat in my box. One good turn deserves another, you know. I say, you fellows, are you having a taxi to Courtfield to-morrow? I don't mind telephoning for it for you."

"Would you mind settling with the driver, too?" asked Bob. "If so, we'll have the taxi. If not, not!"

"I think the notfulness will be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a chuckle.

"Well, it's a jolly long walk, in this hot weather," said Bunter. "I heard Temple of the Fourth say he was going in a taxi. If you fellows are walking it, you needn't expect me to come with you. I shall go with Temple."

"You won't come with us!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in dismay.

"Not if you walk," said Bunter firmly.

"Oh! Unsay those cruel words!" implored Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass—"

"Well, it's going to be warm to-morrow," said Harry Wharton. "But I think I'd rather walk than ride, in the circumstances. That is, if Bunter's quite sure we shan't have his company if we walk."

"The walkfulness will be an esteemed boon and blessing, in the ridiculous circumstances," chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yah!"

With that elegant rejoinder, Billy Bunter rolled away. He left the crowd of juniors discussing the circus, and looking over some of the "small bills" describing the same, which some of the fellows had brought in. All the neighbourhood was being circularised by the enterprising Mr. Whiffles, and every circular bore a picture of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles himself, in full war-paint, as it were. Mr. Whiffles obviously was a gentleman who was extremely pleased with his own appearance; which undoubtedly was a rather remarkable one.

Billy Bunter rolled out into the quad with a satisfied grin on his fat face.

Bunter had been determined to visit the circus, like most of the other fellows. But there had been a difficulty in the way. Bunter's celebrated postal-order, long expected, had not yet arrived. Bunter was in a state that was not new to him, but disagreeable all the same; he was stony. The lowest price of admission to the circus was one shilling. Now Bunter had succeeded in "touching" Nugent for a shilling! So all was calm and bright!

But alas for Bunter!

As if by instinct, his footsteps led him across to the school shop! At the school shop there were ice creams.

Ice creams, on a hot summer's afternoon, were grateful and comforting. On the threshold of Mrs. Mimble's little establishment, Bunter hesitated long. But the attractions of ice creams were too much for him. After all, it was not till the next day that he wanted to go to the circus. By that time something might turn up. Other fellows might be "touched" for bobs. His postal-order might come! Anyhow, Bunter was not the fellow to meet troubles half-way.

He rolled into the school shop. Two sixpenny ices disposed of Nugent's shilling.

After which Bunter rolled back to the House in a thoughtful mood. He found the Famous Five in the Remove passage.

"I say, you fellows," he said. "I say, I'm not asking you to lend me another bob—"

"Good!" said Nugent. "It wouldn't be any use."

"But it looks as if I shan't be able to go to the circus after all," said Bunter sorrowfully. "I—I gave that bob to a blind beggar, you fellows. The poor chap looked so pathetic, I couldn't resist it. Of course, if you cared to lend me another bob, it would be all right."

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was short-sighted, and his big spectacles did not seem to make much difference. No doubt that was the reason why he was unaware that several of the juniors had seen him devouring the ices in the school shop.

"You—you—you gave that bob to a blind beggar!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, at last.

"Yes, old chap! Can't help being generous and charitable," said Bunter. "It's my way, you know! If I have to suffer for it, I must, that's all! Still, if you care to lend me another bob—"

"Well, my hat!" said Bob.

"I daresay it was reckless of me," confessed Bunter. "I'm always doing these generous things. You see, the poor man asked for help. Directly he saw me he came up and asked me—he knew I was the sort of chap to make self-sacrifices, you know."

"Directly he saw you!" howled Johnny Bull.

"Yes, old chap! He could see in my face that I was the man he wanted—generous and all that—"

"A blind man could see all that in your face!" ejaculated Nugent. "Some blind man!"

"Oh! Ah! I—I—I mean—" stammered Bunter.

"You fat fibber—"

"I—I mean, he wasn't blind, he—he—he was dumb!" gasped Bunter. "I

meant to say dumb! I—I wonder what made me say blind? I really meant to say he was dumb! A poor dumb beggar, you fellows—awfully pathetic! He thanked me with tears in his eyes for that shilling."

"Thanked you!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "Did the shock restore his speech?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I mean—" Bunter realised that he had done it again. "I—I mean—"

"You mean that he was deaf, perhaps," suggested Bob Cherry, "or do you mean that you blew the bob on ices—as I saw you doing ten minutes ago?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump him!"

"Here, I say, you fellows—yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

Bump!

The Famous Five strolled away, leaving William George Bunter sitting in the Remove passage, struggling for his second wind.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

'Ware Beaks!

MR. QUELCH, the next morning, glanced over his Form with approval.

He was pleased with them.

Not a fellow in the Remove was late; all were there before Mr. Quelch himself arrived. But that was not all. Every fellow was quiet, orderly, attentive, and hung on his Form master's words, as if they were pearls of wisdom falling from the lips of Henry Samuel Quelch. Every fellow who was called on to construe, showed up an unusually good "con."

There were fellows in the Remove, such as Mark Linley, who were always keen on the acquisition of knowledge. Now all the Lower Fourth seemed to be equally keen. This was a state of affairs that pleased and gratified Mr. Quelch. It was exactly as it should have been—but as it seldom was! Mr. Quelch was a keen and wary gentleman; often described by his Form as a downy old bird. But he was not a suspicious gentleman, and so he did not suspect that this remarkably uniform good behaviour on the part of the Remove was due to the proximity of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus.

Detention that afternoon would have been a terrible blow to any Remove man. The bare possibility of detention was unnerving. Fellows who loathed Latin, and would have been glad to begin the study of history at the reign of George the Fifth, now took the deepest possible interest in the classic tongue of Horace and Caesar, and were

absorbed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Had Quelch been in one of his tantrums—not uncommon—he would have had no excuse for detaining a fellow that afternoon.

So far from being in a tantrum, however, Mr. Quelch was very genial. A well-behaved and attentive class like this was enough to make any Form master genial.

Bunter had a narrow escape in the history class. Bunter's knowledge of history was dim. He did not hate history as he hated Latin, or loathe it as he loathed maths. He had only a mild dislike for it. On the present occasion, however, Bunter was prepared to be interested. Anything, even instruction and the absorption of knowledge, was better than the risk of being detained that afternoon. When Mr. Quelch asked Bunter who succeeded Queen Elizabeth, he did not doubt that even Bunter would be able to reply. Fellows were supposed to know their "kings and queens" before they got into the Lower Fourth at all. But Bunter—though willing to do his best, hesitated.

"Come, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch genially. "You can tell me what monarch came after Queen Elizabeth?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Bunter confidently.

"Well, who was it, Bunter?"

"Philip of Spain, sir."

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"But she wouldn't have him, sir!" added Bunter.

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

Mr. Quelch gazed at Bunter. The Remove yelled; they could not help it.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "Silence—silence!"

The merriment died away quite suddenly. Fortunately, the outburst did not make Quelch cut up rusty. He was smiling.

"You misunderstand me, Bunter," said the Remove master. Bunter's evident desire to please placated the Form master. "I did not mean 'came after' in that absurd sense of the expression. Give me the name of the monarch who succeeded Queen Elizabeth on the throne."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

Here he was at a loss. Any fag in the Second Form could have told him, but no fag of the Second was there to do so. Skinner, from behind Bunter, could not resist the opportunity. In a whisper heard only by Bunter and fellows close at hand, he gave Bunter the information.

"Solomon!"

Had Bunter paused to reflect, even Bunter would have realised that that was not quite right. But Bunter did

(Continued on next page.)

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not pause to reflect. He was too anxious to get on the right side of Quelch that morning.

"Solomon, sir!" he said promptly.

Mr. Quelch jumped.

"What?" he hooted.

"Sus-sus-sus-Solomon, sir!" gasped Bunter, realising that something was wrong, but sticking to his guns.

"You absurd boy!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Your crass ignorance is really astounding, Bunter. You will write out from your book the names of all the queens and kings of England from the Norman Conquest."

"Ow!"

"I shall expect that imposition tomorrow, Bunter."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter, in great relief.

So long as Mr. Quelch did not expect it that afternoon it was all right. Tomorrow could take care of itself.

Second lesson passed off peacefully, and the Remove went out for break. Only third lesson remained before they were free for the day, and the Lower Fourth meant to be an exemplary Form in third lesson. It was worth it, to make sure of getting off for the circus that afternoon. It was, as Bob Cherry remarked, a bit of a strain, but it was safer to give Quelch his head.

"You beast, Skinner!" said Bunter, when the juniors were out of the Form-room. "You might have got me detained. The least you can do now is to lend me a bob to go to the circus."

"My dear chap," said Skinner, "I'd lend you my last farthing rather than let you miss the show."

"Skinner, old chap, I always liked you," said Bunter, beaming. "Hand it over, old fellow."

Skinner groped in his pocket, placed a coin in Bunter's fat hand, and turned away. Bunter blinked at the coin. It was a very small one.

"Here, you silly ass!" yelled Bunter. "What's this?"

"What I said I'd lend you," answered Skinner, over his shoulder. "My last farthing, old fat bean!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

Skinner walked away, chuckling. Apparently his last farthing was all that he intended to lend Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove blinked round for the Famous Five. They saw him coming, and started to walk very quickly. Bunter accelerated, and the chums of the Remove put on speed. Bunter ran, and the Famous Five trotted. They went round the quad at quite a good speed.

"Here we go round the mulberry-bush!" sang Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—" yelled Bunter.

Five pairs of deaf ears were turned to him. Bunter put on a spurt, and the Famous Five sprinted. Bunter had too much weight to carry for a footrace, and he had to give it up. He stopped, gasping for breath, and shook a fat fist after the hilarious five.

"Beasts!" he roared.

The bell rang for third lesson, and the Remove trooped in. Again the Remove hung with deep attention upon the pearls of wisdom that fell from the lips of Henry Samuel Quelch. Again Mr. Quelch was highly pleased with his Form, and never realised in the least that he owed their good behaviour to Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. At the end of the term, with the strain of a term's work behind them, and examinations on hand, Form masters were liable to be touchy and irritable. Mr. Quelch was no exception. But the

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touchiest Form master could not have failed to be pleased with such a Form as the Remove in their present state. When the time came for dismissal, Mr. Quelch dismissed his class with the utmost geniality. And the Remove breathed more freely once out of the Form-room. The strain was beginning to tell on them.

"Thank goodness that's over!" said Bob Cherry.

"The thankfulness is terrific!"

"I say, you fellows—" squeaked Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Run for it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" yelled Billy Bunter, as the Famous Five ran for it.

And when the Remove went in to dinner, Bunter was still in a bob-less state, so to speak, and getting worried about it. Fortunately, the worry did not affect his appetite, and he ate enough for three or four, as usual.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Findings Keepings!

"TEMPLE, old chap!"

Cecil Reginald Temple, of the Fourth Form, regarded Bunter of the Remove with a lofty, superb, and supercilious stare.

Temple of the Fourth did not like "old chap" from Bunter.

Temple of the Fourth was a lofty youth. The best-dressed fellow in the Fourth—the fellow who knew, as few fellows did, how to tie a necktie, and an authority upon the correct shade of silk socks. Temple affected to ignore the existence of the Remove, and of all that Form, Billy Bunter was the least worthy of Temple's lofty notice. So

FREE GIFTS!

Turn to Page 11

Cecil Reginald Temple looked at Bunter as if he were looking through him, just as if Bunter were not there.

"I say, old fellow—"

Apparently deaf, Temple turned to walk away. Bunter, apparently, did not exist for him.

Bunter rolled after him.

Bunter was not easily discouraged. He was aware that Temple, who did everything in style, had booked seats for the circus that afternoon. Temple, Dabney & Co. were going into the half-crown reserved seats, and they were going in a taxi. Bunter was prepared to swallow any amount of supercilious swank from Temple on the off-chance of getting a seat in that taxi, and admission to the circus at Temple's expense.

"I say, old chap, don't walk away when a fellow's speaking to you, you know," urged Bunter. "Look here—"

"Hook it!" said Temple laconically.

"Oh, really, Temple—"

"Shut up!"

"The fact is, old fellow—"

"Roll away, barrel!"

"I say, you know—"

Bunter grabbed at Temple's sleeve.

Cecil Reginald Temple shook off Bunter's hand. Then he deliberately took out his handkerchief and wiped his sleeve where Bunter's fat fingers had grabbed. It was true that Bunter's fat fingers were grubby, but they were not so bad as all that.

"You silly chump!" hooted Bunter. "Think a fellow wants a seat in your rotten taxi! Go and eat coke! I wouldn't be found dead in your cheap taxi! I'm going in a car. I dare say you'll bilk the driver, too!"

Cecil Reginald frowned.

"Cut off," he snapped, "before I kick you!"

But Bunter, realising that there was nothing doing in the way of a lift and a cheap seat, felt that there was nothing to be lost by telling Cecil Reginald what he thought of him.

"You take care, if you're going to the circus," he hooted. "You may get collared there! They mayn't let you get away. If you get mixed up with the monkeys, they mayn't be able to sort you out!"

"Why, you cheeky fat sweep!" exclaimed Temple, in great wrath, and he smote Bunter in righteous indignation.

"Yarooogh!"

Temple turned to walk away in stately dignity. It was Temple's ill-luck that the Famous Five were walking close at hand. Bunter sat down under Temple's indignant smite, with a terrific roar.

"Yow-ow-ow! I say, you fellows, rescue! Yarooogh! I say—"

The Famous Five were not deaf to that call. Fourth Form fellows were not allowed to smite Removites at their own sweet will. With one accord, the chums of the Remove collared Temple, and sat him down beside Bunter, with a terrific concussion. It was Temple's turn to roar.

"Yoop!"

"I say, you fellows, rag him!" howled Bunter. "Bump him! Scrag him! Rag him! Jump on him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky cads!" yelled Temple, scrambling up, and he hurled himself in towering wrath at the Removites. "Back up, you men!"

Dabney, and Fry, Scott, and Wilkinson, of the Fourth, rushed to their leader's aid. For some minutes, there was quite a lively scrap. But the Famous Five were hefty fighting-men, and they drove the Fourth-Formers back. Billy Bunter was left alone, sitting and gasping.

"Cave!" yelled Bob Cherry, suddenly, as Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth, appeared in the offing.

And the scrap suddenly ceased, and the Removites fled in one direction, while the Fourth-Formers scudded off in another.

Billy Bunter picked himself up. He also picked up a small oblong card from the ground where Temple had sat down a few minutes before. There was a fat grin on Bunter's face.

That card bore the inscription:

Whiffles' World-Famous Circus.
Row 1. No. 25.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bunter.

William George Bunter thrust that card into his pocket, and departed from the spot at a good speed.

His problem was solved.

There was no need to "touch" any unwilling lender for a humble "bob." Bunter had a reserved seat for the circus now.

True, that ticket belonged to Cecil Reginald Temple. That, however, was a trifle light as air to William George Bunter.

A meticulous regard for the rights of property had never been one of Bunter's weaknesses.

Besides, this was a capture from the enemy, in a sense. Temple had floored him. Bunter felt that he was entitled to spoil the Egyptians, as it were. A fellow who floored Bunter could not expect Bunter to pick up his circus tickets and mind them for him. That



"So you're the funniest clown in the universe, are you?" said Coker, pausing to address a remark to the clown beating the drum at the circus entrance. "Sure you don't mean the funniest ass?" "No, sir," answered Nobby Nobbs cheerily. "The funniest ass in the universe is just going in. Keep right on!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "One for you, Coker!" (See Chapter 7.)

was asking rather too much. Findings were keepings; and a capture from the enemy was justifiable; and Temple was a cheeky beast—and above all, Bunter wanted to go to the circus, and had not the wherewithal to pay for admission. For all these reasons, Bunter's conscience was easy on the subject of annexing that ticket. On that subject, his fat conscience gave him no trouble whatever. As a matter of fact, Bunter's conscience was seldom troublesome. He kept it in remarkably good order. Like an elastic band, it would always stretch a little if required.

Bunter's fat face was bright and cheery as he rolled into the House. He gave the Famous Five a cheery blink.

"I say, you fellows——"
"Just off," said Bob Cherry. "Look here, Bunter, if you're really stony, we'll see if we can scrape up a bob for you."

Ten minutes ago, that offer would have come to Billy Bunter as a boon and a blessing. Now matters were different. Bunter had a half-crown ticket in his pocket, and could afford to despise shilling seats.

He promptly turned up his fat little nose.

"Thanks," he said loftily. "But I shouldn't care to go into the bob seats."

"Eh?"
"I prefer a reserved seat. I could scarcely stand at the entrance, pushing in with a crowd of common people," said Bunter.

"My esteemed fatheaded Bunter——"

"All very well for you fellows," said Bunter, in the same lofty tone. "You may like it! I don't!"

"Please yourself, you fat chump!" said Bob Cherry.

"I am going into the reserved seats, you fellows. I happen to have a ticket," said Bunter. "If you're going in with the bob crowd, I'd rather you didn't recognise me if you see me there. A fellow has to draw the line."

"Oh, my hat!"

"But, I'll have the bob, all the same," added Bunter, hastily, rather late. "I don't mind——"

"You jolly well won't, you fat frump!" said Bob Cherry. "Go and eat coke."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Rats!"

The famous Five walked away, leaving William George Bunter regretting his haste. Undoubtedly, it would have been more judicious to annex the "bob" before turning on his lofty disdain. But it was too late for that now. Harry Wharton & Co. walked cheerily down to the gates, and started for Courtfield common and the circus. A good many other Greyfriars fellows were already taking the same route.

"I say, Toddy," called out Bunter, as Peter Todd came down with Russell and Ogilvy, "what about a taxi?"

"Nothing about a taxi, old fat bean," answered Peter. "If you don't want to walk, I'll roll you along like a barrel, if you like."

"Beast!"

Peter Todd and his friends went out, just as Temple and Dabney of the Fourth came in. Temple looked round with a ferocious eye, and spotted Bunter.

"Here he is!"

"Oh, rather!"

"Now hand over that ticket, you fat rotter!" roared Temple.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Alas for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER jumped.

He was quite unaware that anyone had seen him, from a distance, picking up that circus ticket. Once more the limited range of the Owl's vision had been his undoing.

"I—I say——!" he stammered.

"Hand over that ticket!" hooted Temple. "Don't say you've not got it—Dabney saw you pick it up."

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

"I—I never—I didn't—I—I wasn't——" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you're mistaken! You can't expect me to give you my ticket, Temple."

"Your ticket!" hooted Temple.

"Yes, rather," said Bunter warmly. "Why, I know it's my ticket by the number. Row One, Seat 25. See?"

"That settles it, you fat burglar! That's the number of my seat."

"Oh, really, Temple——"

"Hand it over, or I'll up-end you and shake it out of you!" roared the captain of the Fourth.

Bunter backed away warily.

"I say, you fellows, no larks," he said. "If you've lost a ticket, Temple, you can't expect me to give you mine. Perhaps you haven't lost it! Feel in your pockets."

"You fat chump——"

"It's no good calling a fellow names, Temple, because you've lost a ticket. Look here, you fellows clear off! I've got no time to waste. It's time I started for the circus."

"Give me that ticket!" raved Temple.

"I—I haven't any ticket, you know. I—I'm going to pay for admission when I get there."

"You've just told us the number!" hooted Dabney.

"Collar him, Dab!"

"I—I—I mean——"

"Oh, rather!"

"Here, leggo!" roared Bunter, as the two Fourth-Formers collared him. "I say, you fellows—yaroooh—help—rescue! Yooop!"

"What! What is this disturbance!" Mr. Quelch, with frowning brow, whisked upon the scene. "Temple! Dabney! Bunter!"

"Oh!" gasped Temple.

The two Fourth-Formers released Bunter as if he had suddenly become red-hot. Bunter staggered away spluttering.

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

"Silence!" snapped the Remove master. "What does this mean? I heard what you said, Temple. Do you mean to say that Bunter has something belonging to you?"

"My ticket for the circus, sir!" gasped Temple. "I dropped it in the quad, and that fat villain—I—I mean Bunter—picked it up, sir."

"Bunter, if you have picked up Temple's ticket give it to him instantly!" rapped out the Remove master.

"It's mine, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"It's mine!" roared Temple.

"I saw him pick it up!" hooted Dabney.

Mr. Quelch frowned portentously.

"Silence! Bunter, hand me the ticket in question, and I will decide the matter. At once!"

Bunter unwillingly drew forth the circus ticket. Still more unwillingly he handed it to Mr. Quelch. Bunter had a feeling that that beast, Quelch, would decide against him. He felt bitterly that he never did get justice from his Form master.

"Now, Temple, what was the number of your ticket?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Number twenty-five, row one, sir," said Temple. "It's next to Dab's. Dabney's got the next seat, sir."

"What was the number of your ticket, Bunter?"

"Row one, seat twenty-five, sir," replied Bunter promptly.

Mr. Quelch looked perplexed.

"These people can scarcely have issued two tickets bearing the same number," he said. "This is very extraordinary. It would appear that one of you boys is claiming a ticket that does not belong to him. I must investigate this matter very thoroughly. Where did you obtain your ticket, Temple?"

"I got it yesterday, sir, after class—three tickets, for Dabney, and Fry, and me. Twenty-four, twenty-five, and twenty-six," said Temple.

"Where did you obtain this ticket, Bunter?"

"I—I—I——"

"Answer me!"

"He picked it up in the quad!" said Temple wrathfully. "I dropped it, and Dabney saw him pick it up."

"Is that the case, Bunter?" asked Mr. Quelch, his brow growing very grim.

"I—I—I may have picked it up, sir," stammered Bunter. "But—but that doesn't make out that it's Temple's, sir. Findings keepings, sir!"

"What?" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Fuf-fuf-findings keepings!" gasped Bunter, quite dismayed by the expression on his Form master's face. That expression did not indicate that Henry

Samuel Quelch agreed with Bunter that findings were keepings.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "You young rascal!"

"Oh, lor'!"

"You are an unscrupulous boy, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, sir——"

"Take your ticket, Temple!"

Mr. Quelch handed the disputed property to Cecil Reginald, who thanked him very politely and walked away with Dabney.

"I—I say, sir, I—I want that ticket to go to the circus, sir!" stuttered Bunter, in dismay.

"Bunter! How dare you? It was Temple's property. Bunter, you are a most unscrupulous boy! If I did not believe that you are as stupid as unscrupulous I should cane you."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He was rather glad that his Form master believed that he was as stupid as unscrupulous.

"What you have done, Bunter—or, rather, attempted to do—amounts to actual dishonesty!" boomed the Remove master.

"Oh, really, sir——"

"As you have acted in this unscrupulous manner for the purpose of visiting the circus at Courtfield, Bunter, I forbid you to go to the circus at all!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Oh, lor'!"

"You will be detained for the afternoon, Bunter——"

"Ow!"

"And I trust, Bunter, that this will be a warning to you!" said the Remove master.

"I—I say, sir——"

"Enough! Follow me!"

"But—but I can't be detained this afternoon, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"You—you see, sir, I want to go to the circus."

"Silence!" said Mr. Quelch, in a formidable voice. "Follow me to the Form-room immediately, Bunter!"

Bunter quaked, and followed the Remove master in the lowest of spirits. It was not the first time that that bad old maxim, findings keepings, had landed the Owl of the Remove into trouble.

"You will be detained until six o'clock, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I shall set you a detention task, in order that your time may not be wasted."

"Oh, dear!"

"If your task is not completed by six o'clock, Bunter, I shall cane you."

"Wow!"

"Silence!"

Mr. Quelch proceeded to prepare a detention task for Bunter. The Owl of the Remove watched him with lacklustre eyes. This awful misfortune was overwhelming. All his good behaviour of the morning was sheer waste, as matters had turned out. He was not to go to the circus. He was to sit in the Form-room grinding out a detention task! It was no more than he deserved—in fact, it was less. But that knowledge was no comfort to Bunter.

"There! You will now set to work, Bunter. I shall expect that task to be completed by six o'clock. If you leave the Form-room before I return to release you from detention, Bunter, I shall cane you with the greatest severity. Bear that in mind."

And Mr. Quelch, frowning darkly, swept out of the Form-room.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bunter.

"Beast!" Bunter did not intend to let his Form

master hear that. But in the stress of emotion he spoke rather too soon. He jumped as the Remove master whisked back into the doorway.

"Bunter! What did you say?"

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I didn't call you a beast, sir! I—I wouldn't, sir! I'm too respectful to tell a Form master what I think of him, sir. I—I am, really, sir!"

Mr. Quelch picked up the cane from his desk.

"Bend over that form, Bunter!"

"Oh, crikey!"

Swish!

"Yaroooh!"

Mr. Quelch left the Form-room again, leaving the Owl of the Remove wriggling.

"Beast!"

Bunter had to say it, but this time he whispered it.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

One for Coker!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! It's the Whiffles bird!"

Bob Cherry made that remark as the chums of the Remove turned from the road into the path across Courtfield Common.

In the distance they could see the great circus tent, with a banner over it streaming in the summer breeze. Near it were camped many caravans and other vehicles, and horses were tethered on the common, and dogs ran about and barked. From the direction of the circus proceeded the strains of music, wafted on the wind, announcing to all whom it might concern that Whiffles' World-Famous Circus was just going to begin. From all directions across the grassy common, people were heading for the big circus tent—from Courtfield, and Friardale, and Woodend, and Pegg, and Redclyffe, and other quarters. Judging by appearances, the World-Famous Circus was going to do good business.

The Whiffles bird, as Bob rather irreverently called Mr. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, came quite suddenly on the chums of the Remove as they sauntered towards the circus. Mr. Whiffles recognised them at once; it was his business to have a good memory for faces. He halted, swept off his silk hat from his curly locks, and gave the juniors a bow. Everything about Mr. Whiffles was a little exaggerated, doubtless from the habit of continually sounding the loud timbrel, so to speak, in booming the attractions of his show.

"Good-afternoon, young gentlemen!" said Mr. Whiffles, with great affability. "I take it that you are going to visit the circus, what?"

"Right on the wicket," assented Bob.

"You will have a good time, young gentlemen," said Mr. Whiffles. "I will not say I hope you will have a good time. I know you will have a good time. A visit to the World-Famous Circus is an education in itself. Nobby Nobbs, the funniest clown in the universe, will make you roar. Samson, the strong man, will make you gasp. Tomasso Tomsonio, the acrobat, will make you stare. You will enjoy yourselves."

"The roarfulness and the gaspfulness and the starefulness will be terrifically enjoyable," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Mr. Whiffles stared. Mr. Whiffles had had many strange and varied experiences, but he had not come across a flow of English like Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's before.

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Exactly!" he gasped.

"But you won't be there this afternoon, Mr. Whiffles," said Nugent.

"No, sir," said Mr. Whiffles. "I take the evening performance; in the afternoons my place is taken by my subordinate, Mr. Dance. By the way, you young gentlemen are no doubt well acquainted with this neighbourhood? You can probably direct me the nearest way to the river Sark?"

"Easily!" said Harry Wharton. "Keep on by the footpath over there and follow it through the wood and it will take you on to the towpath. Less than half a mile."

"Thank you, sir," said Mr. Whiffles. "I am told that there is a secluded spot where one may swim. Swimming is my favourite diversion and exercise. To

revealing his ample nut-brown locks to the sunshine, bowed, and rolled on his way.

The chums of the Remove smiled as they resumed their walk across the common. They rather liked Mr. Whiffles, though they could not help smiling a little at that exuberant gentleman.

Bang, bang, bang!

Nobby Nobbs was beating the big drum outside the circus tent. His voice reached the schoolboys as they came up.

"Walk up, gents! Walk up! Whiffles' World-Famous Circus is about to begin! Walk up! Walk up!"

Bang, bang, bang!

People were already crowding in. From the interior of the big tent came a blare of music. Crowds of Greyfriars fellows had arrived, and among them

row here, Coker!" And he grabbed Horace Coker's arm.

"I've a jolly good mind—" hooted Coker.

"Come on!" said Greene of the Fifth, catching Coker's other arm.

"Look here—"

"Lend a hand, you fellows!" said Bob Cherry. "Charge!"

The Famous Five were directly behind Coker & Co. They charged; and Coker, as he received that charge, went headlong into the tent. There was a roar from Horace as he landed.

Leaving Coker of the Fifth sprawling, the Famous Five paid their shillings and passed in and went along the seats. They were gone by the time Coker of the Fifth scrambled up, breathing vengeance.

The big tent was filling fast. Horses

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that, I believe, I owe my splendid physique."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton. "Ah! I—I see!" He had not noticed Mr. Whiffles' splendid physique. If it was splendid, it was undoubtedly on a very small scale. "You'll have the place all to yourself this afternoon, I think; everybody seems to be going to the circus."

"That is usual, sir," said Mr. Whiffles. "We draw the whole neighbourhood wherever we pitch our tents."

"You can get sea-bathing if you go on to Pegg," said Bob Cherry. "It's only a couple of miles."

Mr. Whiffles shook his head.

"Sea-bathing I do not care for," he answered. "A quiet, secluded spot on the river, under the shade of the trees, far from the madding crowd—what? That is my taste. Young gentlemen, I bid you good-afternoon!"

Mr. Whiffles swept off his hat again,

were Coker & Co. of the Fifth. Horace Coker paused to address a remark to the clown beating the drum at the entrance.

"So you're the funniest clown in the universe, are you?" said Coker.

Nobby Nobbs looked at him.

"Yes, sir! That's me! Walk up!"

"Well, you look it!" said Coker. "Sure you don't mean the funniest ass?" Horace Coker was pleased to be humorous.

"No, sir," answered Nobby Nobbs cheerily. "The funniest ass in the universe is just going in. Keep right on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "One for you, Coker!"

"Why, the fellow's cheeky!" exclaimed Coker, greatly incensed by that reply from Mr. Nobbs. "I've a jolly good mind—"

"Here, you come on!" exclaimed Potter of the Fifth. "Don't get into a

galloped round the arena, as a preliminary to the performance. Coker looked round for the Removites when he got in with a vengeful eye. Fortunately Coker & Co. were in the half-crown seats, at a distance from the juniors. Bob Cherry waved a cheery hand to him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Coker!" he bawled.

"You cheeky young sweep!" roared Coker.

"For goodness' sake, don't kick up a shindy here, Coker!" implored Potter.

"Shut up, Potter!"

"Look here—" urged Greene.

"Shut up, Greene!"

Potter and Greene shut up. Coker was standing the seats that afternoon, so Potter and Greene had to stand Coker.

"I say, Coker!" roared Bob. Bob Cherry was in exuberant spirits—not an uncommon state for Bob to be in.

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"Shut up, you cheeky fag!"

"Have an apple, Coker?" asked Bob, taking one from his pocket.

Coker disdained to answer that. Coker was not the fellow to munch an apple at a circus.

"Silence gives consent, doesn't it?" said Bob to his comrades. "I'll let Coker have this apple."

Whiz!

There was a roar from Horace Coker as he caught the apple with his nose.

"Oh! Ow! Wh-what—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Potter and Greene involuntarily.

"Why, I'll—I'll—I'll—"

Words failed Coker. He fielded the apple and hurled it back at Bob Cherry with an infuriated hurl.

Coker was not good at these things. The apple missed Bob by a yard or more.

But every bullet has its billet. That apple had. It flew over the juniors in the shilling seats and whizzed over the arena and landed on the chin of a man in evening clothes with a long whip under his arm—evidently the manager who was taking Mr. Whiffles' place in the afternoon performance. There was a startled yelp from Mr. Dance.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob. "Coker's done it now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Dance glared round for the aggressor. The professional smile had faded from his face as the apple smote him, and he had quite a savage and ill-tempered look. Coker, with a very red face, sat tight; and, fortunately, Mr. Dance did not spot him as the fellow who had hurled the apple. He really looked as if he might have used the whip under his arm had he discovered the offender.

There was a buzz in the big tent as the elephant, Mumbo, lumbered in. The performance was beginning.

"Have another apple, Coker?" called out Bob Cherry.

Coker of the Fifth elaborately took no notice, though mentally he promised Robert Cherry all sorts of things later at Greyfriars. Failing to draw Coker, Bob sat down.

"Don't see Bunter here," he remarked. "He's big enough to be seen—sideways, at least. Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Wibley! Seen Bunter, Wib?"

Wibley grinned.

"He's detained! Quelch got after him for something and herded him into the Form-room. I fancy he bagged another fellow's ticket and had to shell out."

"Just like Bunter!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob. "He will miss the circus, after all."

The chums of the Remove settled down to watch the circus. Apparently Billy Bunter was to miss the show. But, as a matter of fact, the Owl of the Remove was destined to arrive at the circus—though in circumstances of which Harry Wharton & Co. never dreamed.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Bolt!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER groaned.

It was a deep and dismal groan.

Life was not looking bright to William George Bunter. He sat in the Remove Form-room, with a clouded fat face, and groaned.

Really, it was too bad! It was not only too bad, but it was intolerable.

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Bunter made up his fat mind that he was not going to stand it.

Almost all Greyfriars had gone to the circus that sunny half-holiday. Bunter wanted to be at the circus, too. Sheer tyranny was keeping him away. Bagging another fellow's ticket was a trifle to Bunter; but it was just like that beast, Quelch, to make a fuss about a trifle.

Bunter had not touched his detention task. Latin verbs did not appeal to him. He loathed them at the best of times. On a half-holiday, he simply hated them. He could not and he would not touch that task. Instead of settling down to work, Bunter thought it out.

As he was not going to do his task, there would be trouble, anyway, when Quelch came to release him from detention. As there was going to be trouble anyway, he might as well "hook it"—on the principle that it is no worse to be hung for a sheep than for a lamb.

Sitting through that hot afternoon in a stuffy Form-room was impossible. Bunter was not going to stand it. Quelch might not find out that he had hooked it. Even if he did, there was a licking coming to Bunter for leaving his task undone, and Quelch couldn't give him two licks at once. He couldn't be gated for half-holidays, because this afternoon was the last half-holiday of the term. In a few more days the vacation would begin, and he would be quit of Quelch for quite a long time, so it didn't matter whether he was in Quelch's black books or not.

Bunter thought it out, and made up his mind—such as it was. He was going to break detention.

Having allowed a quarter of an hour to elapse to give Quelch time to settle down in his study, Bunter left his seat, and tiptoed cautiously to the door of the Remove-room. Mr. Quelch had shut that door behind him, and Bunter listened intently for some minutes before he opened it. There was no sound in the corridor outside.

Most likely Quelch was in his study. True, he might wander along to see that Bunter was still there. But that was a chance that had to be taken, if Bunter was going to the circus. And he was going.

The fat junior opened the door at last, and blinked out into the passage. It was deserted, and he stepped out.

Bunter drew a deep breath. He was going to the circus. He still lacked the price of admission. But that was not an insuperable difficulty. By that time the performance would be beginning. An astute fellow might be able to creep round the tent, and insinuate himself inside under the edge of the canvas. That was not a new experience for Bunter. He had patronised a circus before this in that inexpensive manner. His difficulty was to get clear of the school, and he resolved to make a rush for it. Scudding swiftly down the corridor, scudding out of the House, scudding down to the gates—he would be gone in a minute or a little more. Bunter breathed hard. The way was open—and one rapid rush would do it.

He started.

Like a charging hippopotamus, the Owl of the Remove raced down the corridor.

Crash!

He had realised that there was a chance that Quelch would come back to see if he was getting on with his task. That chance materialised.

Bunter reached the corner of the passage from the Form-room just as Mr. Quelch reached it from the other direction, from his study.

Mr. Quelch suspected that Bunter intended to bolt. But he did not suspect that the fat junior would be charging round that corner like a bull.

He discovered that all of a sudden.

Crash! Bump!

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh!" spluttered Mr. Quelch.

Bunter reeled against the wall. Mr. Quelch sprawled. A charge with Billy Bunter's weight behind it was something like that of a battering-ram. The Remove master fairly crumpled up under it.

"Ow! Oh, goodness gracious!" spluttered Mr. Quelch. "What—what—what—"

Goodness gracious, what—"

He sprawled dizzily.

Bunter gazed at him in horror. Breaking detention was a serious matter. Knocking over a Form master was a much more serious matter. Bunter's eyes almost bulged through his big glasses in horror at what he had done. He leaned on the wall and gasped helplessly.

Mr. Quelch sat up. His gimlet eyes turned on Bunter. There was a deadly gleam in those gimlet eyes, a gleam that made Bunter quake.

"Bunter," gasped Mr. Quelch—"Bunter, you—"

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

What would happen to him when Mr. Quelch got his second wind he knew only too well. Terror lent the fat junior wings. He dodged round the Form master and fled for his life.

Mr. Quelch staggered up.

"Bunter, stop at once! Bunter, do you hear? I command you to stop! You young rascal, stop! Bunter, I am going to chastise you with the utmost severity! Stop!"

Bunter was not a bright youth, but he was too bright to stop at that moment. Mere prudence would have urged him to give Quelch time to cool down, even if he had thought of stopping. But he did not think of stopping. He did not think at all. He tore on.

Footsteps sounded behind him. Dignity, in ordinary circumstances, would have restrained Mr. Quelch from giving chase to a fleeing junior. But the circumstances were not ordinary. Mr. Quelch was hurt. He was sore. He had reached a time of life when it was impossible to be butted over headlong without feeling the effects severely. He was hurt, and he was more enraged than hurt. He was very nearly foaming at the mouth. Dignity was thrown to the winds. Bunter tore on, and after him rushed the Remove master. Bunter darted out of the House and rushed for the gates. After him darted his Form master. They flew across the quad, both going strong.

"Gosling!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

William Gosling, sunning himself outside his lodge, turned his ancient head in a leisurely way. Bunter flew past him and vanished out of gates. It was too late for Gosling to stop him.

Mr. Quelch did not stop to tell Gosling what he thought of him and his leisurely movements. There was no time. He rushed out of gates after Bunter.

"Bunter! Stop!"

The fat junior had been about to stop and take breath. That infuriated voice behind him urged him to fresh efforts.

He flew up the road.

"Loder!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

Sauntering along the road was Loder of the Sixth—ahead of Bunter. Loder stared.

Never had Loder beheld such a sight—a hatless, crimson-faced junior fleeing, a crimson-faced Form master rushing on his track with his gown sailing out



"Bunter! Stop!" shrieked Mr. Quelch. That infuriated voice behind the fat junior urged him to fresh efforts, and he fairly flew up the road. "Loder!" The Sixth-Former sauntering along the road ahead of Bunter, stopped, turned round, and stared in astonishment at the strange sight. (See Chapter 8.)

behind him in the wind. Loder blinked. But he understood that he was to stop Bunter.

"Ow! Oh, lor!"

Bunter halted for a moment. The road ahead was closed—the road that was the way to the circus, though even Bunter would hardly have thought of going to the circus while Mr. Quelch was sprinting close behind. Bunter was not quick on the uptake; but Bunter could act quickly at times—such times as this!

With Loder in front, and Quelch in the rear, Bunter had little choice. He turned from the road and darted into a footpath that led down to the river. Loder rushed and grabbed too late. Bunter, panting and puffing and blowing, flew on, turned into the tow-path, and raced on desperately up the bank of the Sark.

Mr. Quelch stopped, reeled against a tree, and panted. His scholarly face streamed with perspiration.

"Loder! Groooh! Loder!" he spluttered.

"Yes, sir?" said Loder, concealing a grin. He was making mental notes, for a description of this remarkable scene in the Sixth Form studies later.

"Loder, that young rascal—that—that Bunter, has broken detention—groooh! Loder, kindly follow him and bring him back to the school. Use force! Bring him back! Do not let him escape you! Go at once! Ooooh!"

"Oh!" said Loder.

It had been Loder's intention to drop in at the circus that afternoon. Loder did not relish the task set him. Loder was not a dutiful prefect; but he desired to stand well with the masters, and it was scarcely possible to refuse.

"Very well, sir," he answered. "I'll get him!"

"Thank you, Loder! Groooh!"

Lose no time! I—I will follow when—when I have—oooh!—recovered my breath a little! Go at once! Ooooh!"

And Loder of the Sixth sprinted along the tow-path to take up the chase.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Lucky Find!

BILLY BUNTER blinked back over his shoulder.

On his left was the shining river, rippling and murmuring through the reeds and rushes. On his right was the wood, deep and shady, with many little grassy paths running up from the tow-path to be lost among the trees and ferns. Behind him, on the tow-path, was the figure of Gerald Loder, running; and further back, the angular form of Mr. Quelch, following at a more moderate pace. Bunter gasped.

"Ow! That beast Loder! Wow!"

Bunter was not much of a sprinter, but no doubt he could have distanced a middle-aged gentleman not accustomed to athletics. But he had no chance of distancing Loder. The Sixth-Former was certain to run him down—absolutely certain. Bunter had a start; but Loder of the Sixth was coming up hand over fist.

"Oh dear!"

Bunter rolled on, puffing and blowing. He was not thinking of the circus now. He was thinking only of escape. The expression on Loder's face was not engaging. The bully of the Sixth did not like chasing about on a hot afternoon; and he looked as if he intended to indemnify himself as soon as his grasp closed on the fugitive Owl. And after Loder had done with him, there was Quelch, who also had strong emotions to express. The prospect was appalling.

Bunter dodged into a woodland path, and ran.

He left the path, and dodged through thickets and ferns and brambles, in hot and breathless haste. Escape was his only thought. Somehow or other he had to get away from that beast, Loder, and that other beast, Quelch. Nothing else mattered at present.

Speed could not save him—but in the wood it was easy to dodge. Loder was no scout to pick up a trail.

Bunter, breathless and fagged out, dropped at last into a thicket, and rested. He screened himself from sight, and lay palpitating.

There were footsteps close at hand.

Bunter crouched lower.

Footsteps and voices! The beasts were at hand—though evidently they did not see him.

"Have you found him, Loder?"

"No, sir."

"He cannot be far away."

"Hiding somewhere, I think, sir."

"Search for him, Loder—search for him! The wretched boy, I am sure, is planning to go to the circus, against my express orders. Kindly search for him without losing time, Loder."

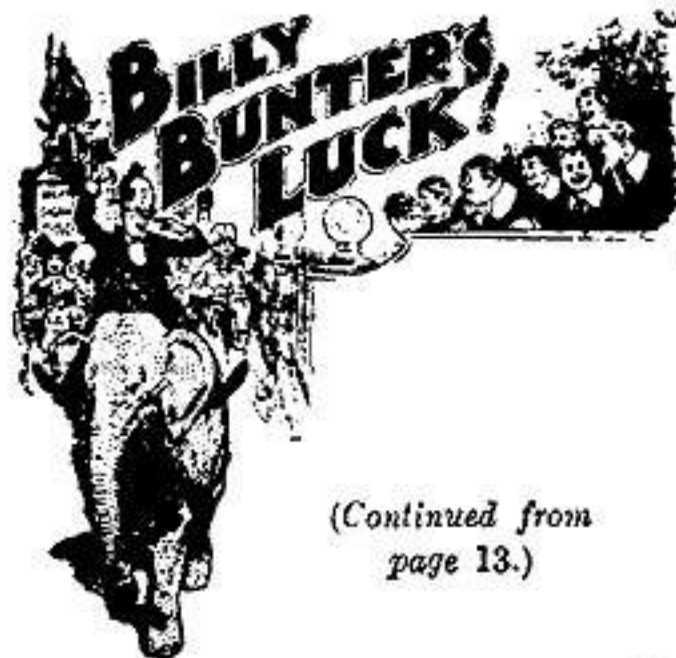
"Yes, sir!"

Bunter, as he crouched in cover, heard a rustling and stirring in the wood. He breathed more freely as the sound drew farther away.

He ventured to rise to his feet at last, and blink round him. Through the openings of the trees he could see the shining river. Out on the river was a shining spot that reflected the rays of the sun. Bunter blinked at it, puzzled to know what it was, for some moments. Then he realised that it was a bald head. There was a swimmer in the water, and his head was as bare of hair as a billiard ball. Loder's voice came

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(Continued from
page 13.)

suddenly to Bunter's ears; he was hailing the swimmer.

"Hallo! You there! Have you seen a boy along the tow-path?"

There was no reply from the swimmer.

He struck out for the further side of the river, as if desirous of avoiding observation.

Loder grunted, and tramped on, still searching for Bunter, his temper growing worse every moment, as Bunter could easily guess.

"Oh, lor'!" groaned Bunter.

He rather wished that he had remained in the Form-room. Detention was not so bad as this! But it was too late to think of that now.

There was silence round him in the wood, there was a chance of getting away along the tow-path. He knew where to strike the footpath that led from the river to Courtfield Common, if only the way was clear. The circus might be a possibility after all.

He crept cautiously towards the stream. But before emerging into the tow-path, Bunter put his head out, like a tortoise putting its head out of its shell, and blinked cautiously to and fro. He drew his head back quickly. In the distance an angular figure was visible.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter, as he popped back into cover.

Mr. Quelch, apparently, was watching the tow-path, while Loder searched the wood along the path. Bunter quaked. Escape was cut off; and at any moment the Sixth-Form prefect might fall upon him. He groaned dismally.

There was nothing for it but to keep in cover; and Billy Bunter plunged into a thicket. He stumbled over something, and grunted.

Then he stared.

It was a silk hat he had stumbled over.

Bunter blinked.

In that little thicket, the swimmer in the Sark had evidently deposited his clothes, when he changed into a bathing-costume, out of sight of passers-by. A bell-brimmed silk hat, a suit of checks with vertical blue stripes, a fancy waistcoat, lay there—and they seemed vaguely familiar to Bunter. He was sure that he had seen those clothes before somewhere. He remembered all of a sudden. These were the striking garments of Mr. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, proprietor of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus.

Bunter was perplexed for some moments.

These clothes, beyond a doubt, belonged to Mr. Whiffles. But the swimmer in the Sark was bald-headed; his head reflected the rays of the sun from an absolutely bare surface. And Mr. Whiffles wore his hair long.

But the mystery was explained the next moment, as Bunter's blink fell on

some articles that had tumbled out of the silk hat when he stumbled on it. "Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He grinned.

An ample wig, of nut-brown curly hair, lay there; and in it, a little pointed beard, and a moustache with curled-up waxed ends.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

He forgot, for a moment, his danger, in his interest in this remarkable discovery.

Evidently, Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was not the natural owner of that ample head of hair he sported.

No doubt he was the legal owner. He had bought it and paid for it. Mr. Whiffles' ample locks were a wig!

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bunter.

Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles fancied himself as a man with an ample head of hair, a moustache, and a beard! But he happened to be one of those men whose natural crop is sparse.

Neither beard nor moustache would grow on Mr. Whiffles' smooth face. But where nature had failed, Art had come to the rescue.

No doubt Mr. Whiffles had once had hair on his head, though nature denied it to him on his chin and upper lip. But it had gone; and its place had been supplied by the skill of the hair-dresser.

Probably this accounted for the fact that Mr. Whiffles did not care for sea-bathing, and preferred a quiet and secluded spot, far from the maddening crowd! He could not bathe in his artificial hirsute adornments, that was certain. Once the adhesive gum was wetted, wig and moustache and beard would have floated off. It was rather hard on Mr. Whiffles, who was keen on swimming. But there was no help for it; only in quiet and secluded spots, such as this, did Mr. Whiffles venture to disport himself in the water.

Billy Bunter blinked out of the thicket, across the stream. Far across, close to the opposite bank, he caught a glitter from the water, and knew that it was the bald pate of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. Mr. Whiffles was keeping as far away as he could, until these unwelcome intruders had cleared off from the solitary tow-path.

Bunter sat down, and eyed the possessions of Mr. Whiffles.

The swimmer's clothes were at his mercy! And the idea germinated in Bunter's fat brain of changing his Etons for Mr. Whiffles' clothes, and thus escaping.

His eyes glimmered behind his big spectacles at the thought.

Mr. Whiffles was scarcely half an inch taller than Bunter. Sideways, he was about the same. His clothes would fit Bunter almost perfectly. And if the beasts who were watching for Bunter saw him emerge in such garb, surely they would not know he was Bunter, and he would be able to walk away in security. He debated it in his fat mind. If he could cover up his face somehow, it was as safe as houses. He might hold a handkerchief to his face, like a man with a cold. But—

Then he suddenly chuckled.

Wig and beard and moustache were all there! He had only to stick them on, to be Mr. Whiffles to the life.

"He, he, he!"

Bunter heard a distant rustling in the wood. Loder was searching the footpaths for him. Bunter could imagine with what feelings. He remained as quiet as a startled rabbit till the rustling died away again. Mr. Quelch was still on the towpath. Mr. Whiffles—unwilling to display his shiny scalp to the

public gaze—was still on the other side of the river. Billy Bunter made up his mind to it. Any other fellow, whatever his own difficulties, might have hesitated to deprive a swimmer of his clothes, and so leave him in an extremely uncomfortable and unevitable position. But considerations of that kind did not trouble the Owl of the Remove. All his thoughts were concentrated on one individual—W. G. Bunter.

He grabbed up the striped trousers and started. But, ample as were Mr. Whiffles' garments, Bunter found that he could not get them on over his own. In circumference he ran Mr. Whiffles very close. He had to change his own clothes for those of Mr. Whiffles; and that he proceeded to do.

Some fellows, bagging a bather's clothes in this way, would have been quite pleased to leave their own in exchange. Not so Bunter. He had no desire whatever to part with a suit of Etons. Certainly, Mr. Whiffles would have looked very remarkable in Etons. They would have fitted him, no doubt; but the contrast between the school-boy's clothes and Mr. Whiffles' bald head would have been very striking. Still, it was probable that Mr. Whiffles would have been glad of them, when he found his own clothes gone.

Bunter, however, was not bothering about Mr. Whiffles. He had his bathing costume, anyhow. And, fortunately, it was a very warm day. It was probable that the loss of his wig would trouble Mr. Whiffles even more than the loss of his clothes. But, again, Bunter had no time to worry about that. This discovery was a stroke of the purest luck for him, whatever it might be for Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

In a few minutes, William George Bunter was attired in Mr. Whiffles' clothes, and his own were rolled up in a bundle. That bundle he crammed into a little attache-case that lay in the grass, and in which, as he guessed, Mr. Whiffles had brought along his bathing costume. In that attache-case was a hand-mirror, which Mr. Whiffles would have needed for the proper adjusting of his hirsute adornments. Bunter stuck it in a forked bough, and proceeded with his further disguise, with the aid of the mirror.

On the wig and the moustache and the beard were little adhesive patches, which had only to be damped to make them stick. Bunter knew all about this; he had come across such things as a member of the Remove Dramatic Society. He fitted the ample wig on his head, and his own crop of hair completely disappeared under it. He fixed the waxed moustache on his upper lip, and the little, pointed beard on his chin.

He almost jumped at his reflection in the glass when he had finished.

It was not the face of Billy Bunter that looked back at him; it was the face of the proprietor of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus.

The only difference was that Mr. Whiffles wore gold-rimmed glasses and Bunter's had rims of steel. He could not, of course, adopt the circus gentleman's glasses, as he could not see through the lenses. But that was only a detail. In all other respects he was Mr. Whiffles' twin. His fat cheeks and podgy little nose were very like those of Mr. Whiffles, and the wig, the beard, and the moustache did the rest. Bunter himself could hardly believe that it was not Mr. Whiffles who was blinking at him from the looking-glass.

He grinned cheerily.

He had not the slightest doubt of getting clear in this rig. Once safe at a

distance, he could change back. Then he could go to the circus. By the time he returned to Greyfriars he hoped Mr. Quelch would have cooled down. Anyhow, Loder would be done with. Bunter was beginning to think that he was in luck, after all, that afternoon.

He put Mr. Whiffles' silk hat on the curly wig; it fitted him almost to a hair. Then he blinked out of the thickets to the river again. Mr. Quelch was pacing at a distance. The bald scalp still gleamed from the water on the other side of the Sark. From behind Bunter came a rustling, and a muttering, angry voice. Loder was not far off. Billy Bunter drew a deep breath. His fat heart palpitated with funk; but that rustle in the wood decided him. Loder was close at hand, and it was neck or nothing.

Taking his courage in both hands, as it were, Billy Bunter stepped out of the thickets into the open towpath, and into the full view of Henry Samuel Quelch.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Getting Away With It!

MR. QUELCH frowned. Glancing along the towpath as he observed a movement in the thickets that bordered it, he had expected, or at least hoped, to see Billy Bunter emerge—to fall into the hands of vengeance.

Instead of which, he saw a little, fat, bearded man in striped checks—a man he had seen once before, or believed he had, and did not like or approve of.

He frowned, and sniffed impatiently. He wanted Bunter, and he had no use for Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

Certainly it did not occur to him that the striped suit, the fancy waistcoat, the silk hat, the nut-brown wig, the moustache and the beard of Mr. Whiffles concealed the Owl of the Remove.

Had he known that the bald-headed swimmer across the river was Mr. Whiffles, even then he would not have suspected that this was Bunter. But he did not, of course, know that the swimmer was Mr. Whiffles. He had last seen Mr. Whiffles with a thick head of hair. The billiards-ball scalp that shone from the Sark bore no resemblance whatever to that.

Bunter hesitated on the towpath. He was ready to bolt back into the wood at a sign of suspicion from Mr. Quelch, though it would very likely have been to bolt into the arms of Loder of the Sixth.

But there was no sign of suspicion from Mr. Quelch.

All Mr. Quelch saw was a fat circus man, with an attache-case in his hand, and there was nothing suspicious in that.

He frowned, he sniffed, and he turned aside, to stare up one of the little grassy paths in the wood, and to call out to Loder.

Bunter breathed hard and deep.

He had to pass Mr. Quelch, to get along to Courtyard common, and he had thought of retreating in the other direction, back towards the school. But he felt that it was not necessary now to waste time. Boldly he rolled on up the river.

"Sir! Excuse me!" Mr. Quelch, struck by a sudden thought, turned back from the wood, and addressed the fat gentleman as he came by. "Will you be kind enough to tell me if you have seen a schoolboy lurking in the wood or along the towpath?"

Bunter stopped, almost gasping for breath. He did not trust himself to

speak. He pointed back along the towpath.

"You have seen him?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Bunter nodded.

"In that direction?"

Another nod.

"A schoolboy—a very fat and somewhat clumsy and unwieldy boy," said Mr. Quelch, in order to leave no room for a mistake. "A short, fat, clumsy, unwieldy boy in spectacles?"

The fat gentleman glared at him through the very spectacles to which Mr. Quelch was alluding. The description Mr. Quelch gave of Bunter might have enabled anyone to recognise him—except Bunter. The Owl of the Remove did not recognise the description at all. To describe a well-set-up, good-looking, sturdy, distinguished fellow like Bunter as a fat, unwieldy, clumsy schoolboy was manifestly absurd. It was annoying, too. Bunter did not like it. Billy Bunter turned his back on Mr. Quelch and marched off.

Mr. Quelch stared after him. He had not approved of Mr. Whiffles at Greyfriars, and he approved of him still less now. He thought his manners shocking.

However, he had learned what he desired to know—where Bunter had been seen. He hurried down the towpath in the direction pointed out by the fat gentleman. He called to Loder as he went; but the tired and exasperated Loder was still beating the wood for Bunter, and did not hear—at least, did not answer. Loder was yearning, by this time, to get his hands on Bunter. Had he succeeded in collaring the fat junior, little of Bunter would have been left for Mr. Quelch.

But Bunter was safe from being collared now. He hurried up the towpath, with a fat grin displayed between Mr. Whiffles' beard and Mr. Whiffles' waxed moustache.

"Hi!"

Bunter started.

"Hi! Stop! You!"

It was a shout, or, rather, a frantic yell, from the river. Bunter blinked across the water.

He had forgotten Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. But he was rolling up the towpath in full view of that gentleman; and the feelings of Mr. Whiffles, when he suddenly sighted his clothes, his hat, his hair, and his beard and moustache, walking

away up the river on another person, may be better imagined than described.

Treading water, Mr. Whiffles shouted frantically.

"Hi! Stop! Thief! Villain! Blighter! Stop!"

Bunter did not stop.

An anxious blink behind showed that Mr. Quelch had disappeared round a curve in the towpath, where the winding river turned. Loder was still swallowed up by the woods. Mr. Whiffles came swimming back across the river with long strokes. On land, Mr. Whiffles resembled a barrel in his motions, but he was very active in the water, and he came swiftly. Bunter broke into a run. A bald head and two fiery eyes glittered from the river, as Mr. Whiffles swam furiously across. But the Sark was wide at that point, and the current fairly strong and, good

(Continued on next page.)

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swimmer as Mr. Whiffles was, he was some time getting across, and then the current had carried him down, while Bunter was going up.

By the time the circus gentleman had dragged himself, dripping and panting, through the rushes to the towpath, Bunter had vanished into the footpath that led to Courtfield Common, and was going at a trot.

Mr. Whiffles stood on the bank, streaming with water, gesticulating and almost raving.

The sound of a footstep startled him. It was only Loder rooting about in the bush. But it was enough for Mr. Whiffles. He wore quite a nice bathing-costume, but the top of his head reflected back the rays of the sun like a mirror and, in that state of beauty unadorned, as a poet would say, Mr. Whiffles objected to being seen.

Nobody at the circus—so far as he knew—even suspected that his hair was false—not a member of the public dreamed of it—so far as he knew. To be seen hairless was the greatest blow that could have befallen Mr. Whiffles. Vanity was his little weakness. He turned towards the river and dived in. Anyhow, it was impossible to overtake the thief, the villain, the blighter who had annexed his clothes.

The thief, the villain, the blighter might have taken any of a dozen paths up from the bank through the woods, all of them equally unknown to Mr. Whiffles. All Mr. Whiffles could do was to keep his shining scalp out of the public view; and that he did. He plunged into the river and swam away. Seen from a distance, he could not be recognised as Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, and his bald head might be supposed to be anybody's bald head.

With feelings too deep to be expressed in any known language, Mr. Whiffles swam.

His first thought—naturally the first thought of any bald gentleman whose wig had been feloniously abstracted—was to keep out of sight, till he could think what to do.

But when Mr. Whiffles tried to think out what to do, he was at a loss. There was nothing to do.

He could not remain in the river for ever. It was impossible for him to begin his career again, in middle life, as an amphibian. He could not, on the other hand, leave the river. Even if he could have walked abroad in a bathing-costume, he could not walk abroad minus his hair. That was impossible.

As it was impossible to remain permanently in the river, and impossible to leave it, Mr. Whiffles was hemmed in between two impossibilities; a most unenviable situation for any gentleman.

Bunter might have felt rather concerned and worried about the hapless position in which he had left Mr. Whiffles, had he been accustomed to wasting his valuable thoughts on others.

Fortunately, he wasn't.

Bunter trotted along the footpath, blinking over his shoulder several times. No fat gentleman with shining scalp was to be seen in pursuit. There was no sign of Mr. Quelch or Loder. It was all right for Bunter! As it was all right for Bunter there was, of course, nothing to worry about. Dismissing Mr. Whiffles wholly from his mind, Billy Bunter rolled on, his spirits rising at every step, and rolled out at last on Courtfield Common in quite a cheery mood.

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THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter at the Circus!

"GUV'NOR!"

Billy Bunter started. He had come to a halt on the wide, grassy common. In the far distance he could see the banner that floated over the summit of the big circus tent, and strains of more or less harmonious music reached his ears on the summer breeze. Bunter was considering where to look for a place of concealment, in which he could change back into his own clothes and resume his own identity. He had adopted Mr. Whiffles' outward aspect to escape pursuit, and now he had left pursuit far behind. To change into his proper person again, and get to the circus, was the next item on the programme. The performance, probably, was half over by this time, but that made it all the easier to sneak into the big tent under the canvas flap. That was what Bunter was thinking of, when a man leading two horses came in sight round a clump of hawthorns, and touched his hat and addressed him as guv'nor.

Bunter drew a hurried breath.

Obviously, this was a circus man. Obviously, too, he took Bunter for Mr. Whiffles, as indeed, he could hardly fail to do.

To keep up the game was imperative.

The circus man looked rather a rough fellow. But the nicest and best-mannered circus man would certainly have collared Bunter without ceremony had he known that the person before him was a schoolboy who had bagged his employer's clothes. It suddenly rushed into Bunter's mind that he might be accused of stealing those clothes! He had not thought of that before! He might be run in! Bunter felt a cold thrill down his spine at the thought.

The circus man had stopped, with the two horses. There were many horses attached to the circus and these two, apparently, were being led farther off to pasture. Bunter would have been pleased to see an earthquake engulf the circus man and his horses. But no such cataclysm was likely to occur on Courtfield Common, and Bunter had to face it out.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Yes! What?"

"Ad a good swim, guv'nor?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes. Fine!"

Bunter noticed that the man looked at him, and wondered for an awful instant whether he was spotted.

But there was no suspicion in the circus man's face. No doubt he had noted that his guv'nor's voice was a little different from usual. The rest of him was quite the same as usual.

"I've been wanting to speak to you, sir, if you'll allow me," said the man, in a very civil tone.

"Oh! Yes!"

"I never meant to give Mr. Dance no offence, sir!"

"Oh! Didn't you?" gasped Bunter, wondering who Mr. Dance might possibly be. No doubt someone connected with the circus.

"No, sir! Mr. Dance is rather a 'ard man, sir!"

"Ah! Yes! Quite!"

"If you'd ask 'im to look over it, sir, I'd take it kindly."

"Oh!"

"Tain't that I can't get another job, sir," said the man. "But I don't like leaving you, guv'nor. That's what it is! There ain't a man in the circus willing to leave a guv'nor like you, sir!"

Bunter grinned.

Evidently Mr. Dance was someone in authority in the circus, and he had given this chap the sack. And this chap knew what was Mr. Whiffles' little weakness, and was flattering him as he supposed—to get the order of the sack rescinded.

That grin on the fat face encouraged the circus man. He did not know its cause.

"P'raps you'll kindly ask Mr. Dance to look over it, sir," said the man. "I'd take it very kindly, guv'nor."

"Certainly!" said Bunter. "I'll ask him—I mean, I'll tell him. That's all right!"

"Thank you kindly, sir! There ain't a gentleman like you in the business, sir, in the 'ole kingdom!" said the circus man. "It's a pleasure to work for you, sir, if you don't mind my saying so, guv'nor!"

"Not at all," said Bunter. He was quite confident now, and his manner was genial and patronising. Bunter liked civility and flattery, even if they were intended for somebody else. "I'll see to it! Rely on me! Let's see, what's your name, my man?"

The man blinked at him.

"You've forgot my name, guv'nor?" he ejaculated involuntarily.

Bunter breathed hard. It was a slip, but Bunter carried it off with an air of fat importance, very like that of the genuine Mr. Whiffles.

"My good man, you can't expect me to remember the names of all the hands I employ," he said loftily.

"Very good, sir! Name of Slaney, sir."

"Oh! Yes! I recall it now," said Bunter calmly. "I'll speak to Mr. Dance, Slaney! That's all right."

"Thank you kindly, sir."

"Not at all, my good fellow, not at all!" said Bunter. And he rolled on, glad to escape.

He rolled towards the circus, realising that Slaney would be surprised if he proceeded in any other direction. He stopped at a clump of bushes, that looked like a favourable spot for changing, out of sight. He blinked round, and jumped as he saw the circus man in the distance following him. For a second, Bunter's fat heart stood still. He saw himself suspected, discovered, denounced, run in for stealing clothes from a bather—and his blood turned cold.

The next moment he recovered, as he saw that Slaney was not hurrying, and not looking in the least suspicious. The man was simply walking back to the circus after placing the horses to graze, and naturally he had taken the same direction as Bunter.

The fat Owl of Greyfriars rolled on.

Slaney was not suspicious, but he would have become extremely suspicious, it was certain, had Mr. Whiffles disappeared into a clump of bushes, and a schoolboy in Etons emerged instead of him.

There was nothing for it but to keep on, and Bunter kept on, slowly, with the result that the circus man drew nearer and nearer.

Bunter was on open ground now, past the last of the bushes, and there was no cover to dodge into, unless he changed his direction entirely, and walked away from the circus altogether.

Three or four hands belonging to the show were loafing about, while the performance was on in the big tent, and they all touched their hats very respectfully to the new Mr. Whiffles—evidently seeing no difference whatever between the new Mr. Whiffles and the old.

Bunter acknowledged the salutes in

a lofty way, quite like Mr. Whiffles' own. When it came to swanking, Bunter did not need to play a part, he had only to be his natural self.

More and more encouraged at passing muster in this way, Bunter rolled on, no longer thinking of changing back into Etons. Why should he not enter the circus as he was? Half a dozen men who knew Mr. Whiffles had seen him, and obviously taken him for Montgomery St. Leger himself. He realised that it would be quite safe to walk into the tent as the circus boss; indeed, much safer than attempting to creep in under the canvas flap, with so many eyes about to spot him.

Bunter grinned at the idea.

It was risky, perhaps! But one of Bunter's missions in life was to exemplify the truth of the ancient proverb, that fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Besides, it was only a choice of risks that he had. If he was spotted changing out of Mr. Whiffles' clothes into his own, there was trouble to be looked for. If he was spotted sneaking in under the tent flap, he could expect trouble. Matters having gone so far, it really was safer to keep on as Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, than as William George Bunter.

Bunter rolled on, and reached the caravans camped at a little distance from the big tent. He easily picked out the gorgeously-painted van from which he had seen Mr. Whiffles alight at the gates of Greyfriars the previous day. That, undoubtedly, was Mr. Whiffles' van—Bunter's van now. The caravan was painted in a rather striking scheme of blue and red and gold, doubtless to catch the public eye when Mr. Whiffles was "processing." Bunter glanced round and beckoned to Slaney.

"Here, my man!"

"Yes, guv'nor."

Slaney hurried up. Being under the order of the sack from Mr. Dance, he was very anxious to propitiate Mr. Whiffles.

"Put that attache case in my van."

"Suttingly, sir."

Slaney took the attache case from Bunter, and carried it into the blue and red van, as Bunter expected. Bunter was tired of the weight of that attache case. The circus performance could not last more than another hour or so, and Bunter considered it unlikely that the real Mr. Whiffles would, in that short space of time, obtain a suit of clothes from anywhere, to enable him to return. Bunter had plenty of time to see the rest of the show, and leave, before there was any likelihood of the circus proprietor showing up.

Bunter rolled round to the entrance of the tent.

It did not occur to him, for the moment, that the circus boss would be more likely to enter from the back, where the performers went in.

But, as a matter of fact, Mr. Whiffles sometimes went "in front" in order to sit with the audience, and see how they were "taking" it. So there was nothing unusual in his present proceedings.

The man in the ticket box saluted Bunter respectfully. Bunter gave him a patronising nod.

"Er—how's business going?" he asked. He was feeling quite equal to playing his part now, and making a venture.

"Nearly full, sir," said the man. "Lot of schoolboys 'ere from the big school near Friardale, sir."

There was a burst of hand-clapping from within the tent.

"Thompson's getting the 'ands, sir," said the ticket man.



Having attired himself in Mr. Whiffles' clothes, Billy Bunter fixed the wax moustache on his upper lip, and the little pointed beard on his chin. He almost jumped at his reflection in the glass, when he had finished. (See Chapter 9.)

But Bunter did not know what "getting the hands" meant, neither was he aware that Signor Tomasso Tomsonio was, in private life, Tommy Thompson.

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" Bunter assented.

He rolled in.

An attendant touched his hat to him. Bunter remembered that Mr. Whiffles had mentioned a Royal Box in speaking to Dr. Locke.

"Here, my man!" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Anybody in the Royal Box?"

"No, sir; vacant to-day."

"Take me there!" commanded Bunter.

The attendant blinked at him. Perhaps he expected Mr. Whiffles to know his way to his own Royal Box.

Bunter realised that he had made another slip. A fellow couldn't think of everything at once. At all events, Bunter couldn't. Again he resorted to the high hand, and again he got away with it.

"Don't stand gaping there!" he snapped. "Do as you're told!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped the attendant.

He led the way to the Royal Box. That box, when Bunter reached it, did not appear wholly worthy of its grandiloquent title. Still, it was the best box in the tent, though its walls were only of canvas. There was a comfortable chair, and that was what Bunter wanted, after his many exertions that warm afternoon. He sank into the chair with a gasp of relief.

"I suppose you can get refreshments in here!" he said.

"Eh?"

The attendant quite jumped. Undoubtedly, he expected Mr. Whiffles to know whether he could get refreshments in his own circus.

Bunter breathed hard. He seemed to put his foot in it.

"I—I mean—" he stammered. "I—I mean—look here, I want a lemon squash! Trot it along! If you want the sack, say so."

"Oh, sir! Yes, sir!" gasped the man. "Less'n a minute, Mr. Whiffles."

"Hurry up, then," growled Bunter. "I'm jolly thirsty after—after—after that swim."

"Yes, sir."

The attendant hurried away. From behind a canvas wall Bunter heard an agitated whisper; the attendant had doubtless forgotten that canvas walls were thin.

"The old covey's come back in a blinking bad temper, Bill."

"'Umour him, George," said another voice. "He ain't a bad sort when he's yumoured."

Bunter grinned.

In less than the promised minute, George was back with the lemon squash.

"Anything else, sir?"

"No, George." Bunter knew the man's name now. "You can hook it."

"Oh! Yes, sir."

George hooked it. And Bunter settled down luxuriously in the comfort—
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able chair in the Royal Box, sipped his lemon squash, and watched the show.

He was at the circus after all! And he was seeing the circus in very distinguished and comfortable circumstances. Mr. Quelch might rage at Greyfriars—Mr. Whiffles might rave in the River Sark. Bunter dismissed both of them from his fat mind. The present was enough for him, and the future could take care of itself. Billy Bunter sipped lemon squash, watched the show, and felt very satisfied with himself and things generally.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Going Strong!

"WHIFFLES has come in!" remarked Bob Cherry.

He glanced at the canvas compartment which was dignified by the name of the Royal Box. Wharton followed his glance.

Lolling in a comfortable, if not elegant, attitude in the armchair in the Royal Box, was a short, fat figure that was very familiar.

In Etons it would have resembled Billy Bunter of the Remove. In checks and fancy waistcoat, pointed beard and moustache and curly wig, it stood forth as Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

"He's smiling at us," said Nugent, and he gave a cheery grin back at the fat gentleman in the box.

That fat gentleman certainly was smiling.

Bunter had spotted the Famous Five, and was looking towards them, and he grinned as he wondered what they would have thought had they guessed that he was William George Bunter.

Obviously they did not guess anything of the kind. To them, as to everyone else, he was Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

The last turn was on now. Samson, the Strong Man of the circus, was lifting terrific weights, and performing other feats of strength to astonish the natives.

Billy Bunter drew Mr. Whiffles' big gold watch from Mr. Whiffles' waistcoat pocket, and glanced at it. It was nearly five o'clock. For a moment Bunter wondered what had become of Mr. Whiffles, and whether he was possibly on his way back to the circus. But he dismissed the idea. He had left Mr. Whiffles nothing but a bathing-towel. Wrapped in that towel, it was unlikely that Mr. Whiffles would walk home. It was much more likely that he would wait till dark, at least, before he ventured to walk abroad in the light attire of a bathing-suit and a bathing-towel. On the beach at Margate such attire might pass muster; but in the rural region of Courtfield, a gentleman so attired ran great risk of being "run in" by the police. Bunter considered that Mr. Whiffles was safe till dark. That gave Bunter plenty of time. He was so satisfied with his success in playing the part of the circus boss that he was in no hurry to part with his borrowed plumes. Like the ass in the lion's den, Bunter wanted to play lion as long as he could.

Moreover, he was getting hungry.

This was a serious matter—much more serious than the unknown fate of Mr. Whiffles.

Bunter had bagged a lemon-squash simply by giving the order for it to an obsequious attendant. Now that he had had time for reflection, he realised that he could spread himself much more extensively than that. All that was required was nerve. Bunter had plenty of nerve when there was no danger, and

now there seemed no danger. Changing back into his own proper person, and getting away, was a problem he had not yet solved. Now he dismissed that problem. He was going to continue as Whiffles, and make the most of it. The very least it would be worth to him was a feed in Mr. Whiffles' van. Bunter grinned cheerily at the prospect.

The last turn over, the band began to discourse sweet music, to play the people out. Seats began to empty, and crowds filed along towards the exits. Bunter remained where he was. He considered it wiser to avoid coming into contact with Greyfriars fellows, of whom there were dozens present. Harry Wharton & Co., on their way out, passed before the Royal Box, and stopped to speak to Mr. Whiffles. Billy Bunter caught his breath.

"Had a good swim this afternoon, Mr. Whiffles?" asked Bob.

"Oh, yes!" gasped Bunter.

"Ripping show," said Wharton. "We've enjoyed it no end, Mr. Whiffles."

"Fine!" said Bunter.

He grinned. There was not the slightest suspicion on the part of the Famous Five, as indeed there could not possibly be. And it occurred to Bunter that here was a good opportunity of telling these beasts what he thought of them.

"I say, you fellows—"

The juniors looked at him. That style of address was so like Billy Bunter that it rather surprised them from Mr. Whiffles.

"Look here, I'm going to make you an offer," said the fat man in the Royal Box.

"Eh?"

"I'm thinking of putting on a new turn," said Bunter calmly, "I'm going to call it the Queer Quintette, or the Famous Five Freaks."

"Wha-a-at?"

"You fellows would fill the bill splendidly. You with your features, Cherry—"

"What?"

"And your feet, you know—"

Bob Cherry stared blankly.

"And Inky, with his grate-polish complexion," pursued Bunter.

"My esteemed Whiffles—"

"And Nugent, with his milksop face—"

"My—my—my milksop face!" stuttered Frank.

"Yes, and Bull, with his face like a bulldog—"

"What's that?" gasped Johnny Bull.

"And Wharton, with his swanking airs, you know—"

"Mr. Whiffles!"

"I never saw such a queer gang, you know," said Bunter. "You'd fairly bring down the house as the Five Freaks. You'd simply have to walk on! It would make them yell—what!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the circus boss in surprise, almost in stupefaction. Hitherto, when they had spoken with Mr. Whiffles, the circus boss had been courteous—exuberantly polite and courteous. Now he seemed to have changed all of a sudden. They surmised that he must have been drinking. That was the only way to account for his present remarks.

"Take the offer," said Bunter. "I'll put you on as a star turn, as the Five Frabjous Freaks. You wouldn't have to make up for the part. You look it."

"You cheeky old ass!" exclaimed Bob Cherry breathlessly, with wrath. "What the thump do you mean?"

"Shut up!" retorted Bunter.

"Why, you—you—"

"Shut up, I tell you! You talk too much! This isn't the Remove passage at Greyfriars, Cherry! You have to behave yourself here! Another word, and I'll have you kicked out!"

"What?" roared Bob.

"Here, you!" shouted Bunter to Slaney, who had come into the ring with several other hands to clear up after the departing audience.

"Yes, guv'nor?" said Slaney, coming up to the box.

"Turn these young hooligans out!"

"Suttingly, sir!"

"Kick them out!" said Bunter, warming to the work, as it were. It was the first time he had been able to deal with the Famous Five as he considered they deserved. Only yesterday, these beasts had bumped him in the Remove passage. Only this morning they had led him a dance round the quad when he wanted to borrow a miserable shilling. It was Bunter's turn now.

"Outside, you!" said Slaney gruffly, beginning to hustle the juniors. He had no idea what the trouble was about, but his guv'nor's orders were his guv'nor's orders.

"Hands off!" snapped Wharton. "We're going! As for you, Mr. Whiffles—"

"Shut up!"

"Here, outside!" exclaimed Slaney. "Here, Bill, George, Tom, lend a hand 'ere! These blokes are cheeking the guv'nor!"

"Kick them out!" roared Bunter, standing up in the box as the circus hands hustled the astonished and enraged juniors. "Handle them! Never mind if you hurt them! Just chuck them out!"

"You cheeky old chump!" roared Johnny Bull. "If you weren't old enough to be my grandfather I'd jolly well punch your silly nose!"

"He, he, he!"

"Ere, enough of that!" exclaimed Slaney. "Outside! Shove 'em out, chaps! Cheeking the boss! Outside with them!"

Five or six rough fellows were hustling the Famous Five now. Naturally, the chums of the Remove were getting a little excited. As Slaney grabbed Wharton's shoulder to shove him along, the captain of the Remove hit out, and Slaney went spinning along the seats.

"Kick them out!" yelled Bunter.

There was a breathless tussle, and the Famous Five, in quite an infuriated frame of mind, were hustled and hustled along, and reached the nearest exit. There they were bundled out, the circus hands grinning after them as they went headlong.

Billy Bunter rolled after the bustling group, grinning with glee. He was tasting the sweets of power and authority now.

He chortled as the dismayed, dishevelled, and infuriated juniors were bundled headlong out of the tent.

"He, he, he!"

Harry Wharton & Co. picked themselves up dizzily. This was a very unexpected and unpleasant ending to a happy afternoon at the circus. In breathless wrath and indignation, they glared back at the circus hands who had bundled them forth, and at the fat gentleman grinning behind them. They were as astonished as enraged; but there was no doubt they were enraged. And round the exit gathered an interested crowd, among whom were two or three dozen Greyfriars fellows.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Gets His Own Back!

CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE, of the Fourth, grinned.

"Remove fag, kickin' up a shindy!" he remarked.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"What a crew!" remarked Fry.

"Back up, you men!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Let's get back and mop them up!"

"The mopfulness is the proper caper!" gasped Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "Let us make a terrific example of the ludicrous rotters."

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"Hold on!" gasped Wharton. "We don't want to start scrapping here. That old donkey Whiffles must be tipsy. Let's get out."

"Look here—"

"Come on, old chap! Let's get out, for goodness' sake!" urged the captain of the Remove. "We can't get mixed up in a shindy here."

"Horrid bad form kickin' up a row at the circus," remarked Temple to his friends. "Just like Remove fags."

"Oh, just!" said Wilkinson.

"Look here! I'm going to mop up those cheeky rotters!" roared Bob Cherry.

"He, he, he!"

"Look out—here comes a giddy prefect!"

Loder of the Sixth strode upon the spot. Seeing Greyfriars juniors mixed up in a row with circus hands, it was Loder's duty to intervene, as a Sixth Form prefect. And he was quite pleased to intervene. Loder had had a rather profitless afternoon. A whole hour that he had intended to put in at the circus had been spent rooting through the thickets along the Sark for Billy Bunter.

Probably the prefect would have been rooting there still, had he heeded Mr. Quelch. But Loder had disappeared into the wood, leaving the Remove master on the tow-path, and by devious ways had walked off to the circus—leaving Mr. Quelch to hunt longer for Bunter if he liked. And so Loder had only seen the last few turns at the circus, and he was annoyed, and in a bad temper. So he bore down on the Famous Five in a mood to deal with them faithfully.

"Here, what's this?" exclaimed Loder in his most bullying tone. "Kicking up a row here, you young swoops!"

"No!" roared Bob angrily. "Those cheeky rotters—"

"That's enough! Get out of it!"

"Look here—"

"Go back to the school at once!" snapped Loder. "I shall report you to your Form master!"

"We haven't kicked up a row, Loder!" gasped Frank Nugent. "Those beastly roughs set on us—"

"Rubbish!"

"Look here, Loder—" exclaimed Wharton.

"Nonsense! Go back to Greyfriars at once! Now, then!" rapped out Loder. "Sharp's the word!"

With inexpressible feelings, the Famous Five moved off, the whole crowd grinning at them as they went. As a matter of fact, it was the best thing they could do, for they had no chance in a scrap with a crowd of rough circus hands, and a report of such a shindy would have caused them serious trouble later at Greyfriars.

They moved off in a towering rage. Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his

spectacles at Gerald Loder. Loder had given Bunter a lively time that afternoon. Now was the time to give Loder a lively time in return—the only chance Bunter was ever likely to have of dealing with a Sixth Form prefect.

He grabbed Slaney by the arm.

"See that chap?" he gasped.

"Yes, sir," said Slaney.

"Turn him off the ground."

Slaney stared.

"He ain't done nothing, guv'nor."

"He's a bad character," said Bunter—"a—a—a pickpocket! I—I know him by sight! Turn him off the ground, and kick him if he won't go! Hustle him! Kick him hard! Make an example of him!"

"Just as you say, guv'nor!" answered Slaney, and he called to his comrades, and they started for Loder.

Loder of the Sixth was about to walk away, when the circus hands surrounded him and began to hustle him.

Loder stared at them angrily and haughtily.

"Here, keep your distance!" he snapped. "What the thump do you mean? Keep your distance, you ruffians!"

"Shove him along, boys!" said Slaney. "The guv'nor says he's a pickpocket."

"What?" roared Loder.

"Off you go, you young rascal! 'You ain't picking any pockets' ere!" said Slaney. "Now, then, off with you!"

Loder, hustled and hustled by half a dozen hefty fellows, hit out angrily, and the next moment he was grasped in half a dozen pairs of hands, and was being jerked and hooked along, with arms and legs flying.

"Oh! Ow! Leggo! Help! Police!" roared Loder breathlessly.

Bob Cherry looked back.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! They're handling Loder now!" he exclaimed. "Have they all gone potty, or what?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Serves him jolly well right!" said Johnny Bull. "I hope they'll give him all he deserves—and that's a lot."

"Ow! Help! Help!" roared Loder, struggling frantically.

His hat was gone, his necktie streaming out, his collar hanging by a single stud, his coat split up the back. Slaney & Co. were not gentle in handling him. They had had to act as "chuckers-out" before, and they knew the business. Loder went along in a sprawling, struggling bundle.

"Wharton! Cherry!" shrieked Loder, as he sighted the Famous Five. "Here—help—help!"

"I don't think!" grinned Bob.

"Can't get kicking up a row here!" chuckled Nugent. "Loder told us so himself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five walked on, somewhat comforted.

Loder was hustled as far as the road, where Slaney & Co. dropped him, and, having warned him to clear off, left him. The hapless prefect sprawled in the grass, gasping for breath. Harry Wharton & Co. passed him and grinned, but gave him no other attention.

Loder was still sprawling and gasping and spluttering, when Wingate and Gwynne, of the Sixth, came along the road. They stopped to stare at Gerald Loder.

"What on earth's this?" asked Wingate. "Loder! What the merry dickens have you been up to, Loder?"

"Ow! Wow!" Loder sat up in the grass. "Ow! A mob of those circus roughs set on me! Ow!"

Wingate stared at him, and Gwynne smiled.

"What have you done, then?" asked the captain of Greyfriars.

"Nothing!" gasped Loder.

"Eh! They set on you for nothing!" exclaimed Wingate.

"Nothing at all! Suddenly rushed on me, like a gang of hooligans, and—and assaulted me!"

"Likely story!" commented Wingate.

"Look here, Loder, it's rotten bad form for a Greyfriars prefect to get mixed up in a row at a circus. You ought to know better."

"I tell you they set on me for nothing!" shrieked Loder.

"Rubbish!"

Wingate and Gwynne walked on, lofty and contemptuous. Loder staggered to his feet, breathless with rage. As a matter of fact, his explanation was true, though it sounded highly improbable; but Wingate rather naturally believed him no more than Loder had believed the Famous Five. In a dusty and dishevelled state, Loder started for Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. stopped on the common, to make themselves a little tidy, after the scrimmage, before going on to the school. They were about to resume their way, when there was a sound of hurried footsteps behind them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's Temple."

Cecil Reginald Temple, of the Fourth, came panting up. The Famous Five stared at him and grinned. Cecil Reginald no longer presented his usual elegant appearance. His beautiful silk hat was crushed in, and looked like a concertina, his collar was hanging loose, and he was covered with dust from head to foot. His face was crimson, and streaming with perspiration.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You been through it, too!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ow!" gasped Temple. "Oh! I say, they set on me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Old Whiffles—that fat fool, you know—came out of the tent," gasped Temple. "I think he must be squiffy—he came up to me—grooogh—ow! Came up to me, and called me a pickpocket—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And told some of his roughs to clear me off the common," gasped Temple. "They pitched into me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"'Tain't a laughing matter," yelled Temple. "Look at me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Johnny Bull.

"If you could only see yourself, old bean, you'd think it was a laughing matter."

"The man must be mad," gasped Temple. "He seems to have a down on Greyfriars chaps—I can't understand it! He won't get any more from Greyfriars to his rotten circus, after this. Ow! Pitched into me, you know, and chased me off like a stray dog—ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've a jolly good mind to go to the police-station! But I—I suppose they wouldn't believe that the brutes set on me for nothing."

"Not likely—any more than you believed that they set on us for nothing!" chuckled Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That old fool Whiffles must be off his rocker," groaned Temple.

"Looks like it!" agreed Bob.

In the Rag at Greyfriars, after tea, there was a great deal of excited dis-

cussion of the happenings at the circus. The Famous Five declared, and Cecil Reginald declared, that they had been set upon by the circus people for nothing—absolutely nothing. The other fellows only chuckled and shook their heads. It really sounded very improbable. As Skinner said, was it likely? Loder was telling the same story in the prefects' room, and meeting with the same incredulity from the Sixth. The general opinion was that it takes two to make a quarrel, and that it was a case of six of one, and half a dozen of the other, so to speak.

Harry Wharton & Co. had rather liked Mr. Whiffles. Now they disliked him extremely. But probably they would have pitied him, had they known the situation of the genuine gentleman of that name—wrapped in a bathing-towel, skulking in the wood by the river, and longing for darkness to fall to cover his retreat!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Pig in Clover!

BILLY BUNTER was enjoying life. It was like William George Bunter to pass, at a bound, from uneasy doubt to over-weening confidence. If he was not in a funk, he was sure to be indulging in swank.

So it was with Bunter now. Finding that the circus men—much to his surprise—obeyed his orders without question—Bunter naturally spread himself, and gave orders right and left. It was his nature to, as it were.

Various beasts had given Bunter trouble that day. Bunter had got his own back on those beasts. The Famous Five, who had bumped him; Temple of the Fourth, who had made him shell out the ticket that did not belong to him; even Loder, a prefect of the Sixth, who had hunted him like a fat rabbit; all of them had been brought to book. Had Mr. Quelch dropped in, in search of Bunter, the fat Owl might even have ordered his retainers to kick out the Remove master—Bunter was capable of anything when his head was swelled—and it was swelled now to an alarming extent.

Treated on all sides with great respect as Mr. Whiffles, the Owl of the Remove almost began to believe that he really was Mr. Whiffles.

For all practical purposes, at present, he was Mr. Whiffles, anyhow, and that was enough for Bunter.

He was in no hurry to part with his new greatness. So long as the absence of the genuine Whiffles left him in command at the circus, Bunter intended to exercise his powers to the full.

He had always believed that he was a fellow designed by nature to hold authority; that he had, like Hamlet's father, an eye like Mars, to threaten and command. Now that he was in a position of authority, Bunter felt that things were exactly as they ought to be, but as they had never hitherto been. It was like the king coming into his own!

From the big tent, Bunter rolled away to the blue and red caravan. He mounted the steps of that caravan with the air of a proprietor. For the present, at least, he was the proprietor.

He was quite interested in the interior of Mr. Whiffles' van.

It was a very large van, and luxuriously fitted up. Mr. Whiffles, who did well in the show business, did himself very well, too, in his quarters. There was a comfortable-looking bed in the van, and a little table and chair, and a desk, and several other things. Bunter sat down in the chair, and stretched his fat limbs in comfort there.

He was feeling quite at his ease. Mr. Whiffles' ample curly wig made his head feel rather warm, in the hot weather. But that was a trifle. Bunter would have stood more than that, for the sake of what it was worth to him. He felt sure that Mr. Whiffles would not, and could not, return till dark. He had plenty of time on his hands. It was not Bunter's way to look ahead. He was booked for a terrific reckoning at Greyfriars. But that was not at hand yet. It was unpleasant to think of, so Bunter did not think of it. The fat Owl had a wonderful way of disregarding unpleasant things, just as if they were not there.

There was a brass hand-bell on the table in the caravan. Bunter could easily guess that this was used by Mr. Whiffles to summon an attendant when he wanted one.

Bunter smote on the bell.

A sonorous jangle rang and echoed for quite a considerable distance round the caravan.

The man George, who served the refreshments in the Royal Box, put his head in at the door the next moment.

"Sir!" said George. "You rang, sir?"

"I did," answered Bunter. "Tea!"

"Very good, sir," said George.

"Mind, I want a decent tea," said Bunter. "If you haven't got the stuff on hand, get it. Get me a bag of jam-tarts—"

"Jam-tarts, sir!" said George.

Bunter guessed that Mr. Whiffles was not accustomed to having jam-tarts for tea. As far as possible, it was Bunter's cue to act in accordance with Mr. Whiffles' customs. But there had to be exceptions. This was one of the exceptions. Bunter knew what he wanted to eat. Mr. Whiffles had sandwiches and beer for his tea. Bunter did not know that; but, certainly he did not want sandwiches and beer.

"Not less than a dozen, George," said Bunter.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"And a dozen cream puffs."

"Oh! Ah! Yes."

"A four-pound Madeira cake, and a four-pound sultana cake. A dozen Meringues, and mind the cream is fresh. Six pounds of strawberries. Lots of cream, and a jar of ginger. Pot of

jam, strawberry, raspberry, plum and apricot. Fresh rolls! Best fresh butter. Box of preserved fruits. I think that will do—for the present."

"That—that—that will do, sir, will it?" babbled George.

"Yes. If you haven't got the stuff here, send into Courtfield for it. Tell the man that if he's more than ten minutes, I'll sack him."

"Oh! Ah! Yes, sir!"

"And bring me something to go on with," said Bunter. "I know you've got ices and cake here. Bring me a dozen ices, and a cake. I'm hungry. And send for those things at Courtfield. Sharp."

"They—they will have to be paid for at Courtfield, sir," gasped George.

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Pay for them and tell me what they come to, later," said Bunter carelessly.

"Shall I ask Mr. Dance for the money, sir?"

"Certainly," said Bunter, wondering again who Mr. Dance was. He did not care much who he was, or what he was, so long as he provided the ready cash for that extensive feed. That was the important point.

George retired from the van, in a dazed state. A minute later, a rather slim, dark man, whose face expressed surprise and irritation, stepped up to the door of the van. Bunter had seen him in the ring, with a whip under his arm, acting as circus master, and he guessed that he was Mr. Whiffles' manager.

"Mr. Whiffles!" exclaimed the manager.

"Well, what do you want?"

"George Mix has asked me for money to send into Courtfield for some extraordinary things," said the manager. "I suppose he has been drinking. Jam-tarts, and cream puffs, and—and—"

"Oh! Are you—" Bunter stopped just in time. He had been about to ask the dark-complexioned man if he was Dance. He recollected in time that Mr. Whiffles was supposed to know these things. "Look here! It's all right! I've told George—George Mix, what I want. Send for the things at once! Never mind the cost! Pay for them! That's enough."

"But, sir—" gasped Mr. Dance, wondering whether his employer had taken leave of his senses.

Bunter thumped the table with a fat fist.

"Who's boss here?" he demanded.

"Eh? You are, sir!"

"Well, then, do as you're told! I pay my men to do as they're told," snorted Bunter. "I don't like back-chat. Make a note of that."

"Oh yes. Very well. Certainly! But—"

"Cheese it!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Cheese it! Ring off! Send for those things at once. Mind, if I'm kept waiting you'll hear of it."

"Oh, yes. Right!"

In a dazed state Mr. Dance tottered away from the caravan. Bunter grinned with triumph. There was no doubt that he was in authority here. And he was going to make his authority felt. There was no doubt of that, either.

In a couple of minutes George Mix brought in a well-laden tray, and Bunter started on ices and cake. He had enough ices and enough cake to make a fairly substantial meal. But it was only a snack to Bunter.

"I—I've sent Slaney into Courtfield to get the—the other things, guv'nor," said George. "He won't be long, sir!"

"He'd better not be," said Bunter,

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"Kick them out!" yelled Bunter. There was a breathless tussle, and the Famous Five were hustled and bustled along by the circus hands to the nearest exit. There they were bundled out. The Owl of the Remove, in the role of Mr. Whiffles, was tasting the sweets of power and authority now! (See Chapter 12.)

"He's gone in the trap, sir. I—I thought he'd want the trap to get—to get all that stuff—"

"That's right, George! Here's half a crown for you!"

Bunter shoved his hand into his trousers pocket, where he had already discovered that a fairly large number of coins were stored. He tossed George half a crown quite magnificently. Bunter could be quite open-handed—on some occasions. There was nothing mean about Bunter, when it came to giving another person's property away.

"Thank you, sir!" gasped George.

He retired, leaving Bunter to the cakes and ices. A slice of cake, then an ice; then another slice of cake; then another ice, and so on, till the tray was cleared. It took the raw edge off his appetite, too, though he was quite ready for the consignment from Courtfield, when it came.

Having finished his snack, Bunter stood and gazed cheerily out of the open door of the caravan. He noticed that a number of circus men were looking towards the van. Their faces wore surprised and curious expressions. They were accustomed to somewhat unusual manners and customs on the part of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. But he had never surprised them so much as this before. Mr. Dance was hovering about, looking astonished, perplexed, and more irritable than ever. As he sighted the fat Owl at the door of the van he came up.

"Mr. Whiffles—"

"That man back from Courtfield yet?" snapped Bunter.

"N-no. But—"

"The slacker! I'm hungry! There's too much slacking here," said Bunter darkly. "I'm going to make a change. Look out!"

"Oh, yes. Very good, sir! But—but that man, Slaney. I sacked him for

cheek, sir, as you know and he says you have told him he can stay on."

"Have I? Oh, yes; I remember. That's all right! Give the man another chance."

"He's no good, sir."

"Isn't he?" said Bunter warmly. "I can tell you that man Slaney has been jolly useful to-day."

Bunter spoke with feeling. But for the man Slaney having met him on the common Bunter would never have arrived at the circus in the character of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. He would have arrived as a fat schoolboy trying to sneak under the tent flap to see the circus "on the nod." Bunter felt that he owed a great deal to the man Slaney. One good turn deserved another—if the other did not cost Bunter anything.

"You keep that man on," he said. "I like that man. One of the best in my employ. Very useful man indeed! That is, if he gets back quick with that grub from Courtfield. If he keeps me waiting I'll sack him myself."

Mr. Dance's eyes glinted.

"Mr. Whiffles, sir, if you interfere between me and the hands I don't see how I'm going to carry on," he said sulkily.

"Don't you?" sneered Bunter.

"Well, you can take it from me that I know how to manage my own circus. You do as you're told—that's your job. Keep that man Slaney on. Double his wages—there!"

"But—but—but—"

"That's enough! Hook it!"

"Mr. Whiffles—"

"Hook it!"—roared Bunter.

And Mr. Dance, looking absolutely dazed, hooked it. He almost tottered away from the blue and red caravan.

There was a grin among the circus hands, looking on from a little distance. Mr. Dance was not popular, having a

sharp tongue, which he used freely. Mr. Whiffles was liked—and liked more than ever now. The second edition of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was liked more than the first edition now that he had set down the manager before the grinning hands.

There was a rattle of hoofs and wheels; the trap had returned from Courtfield. Bunter sat down in Mr. Whiffles' chair with great dignity. George brought in the supplies. There was not room on Mr. Whiffles' table for all of them. But the supply rapidly diminished as Billy Bunter attacked the good things. Jam tarts went down like oysters. Cream puffs vanished as if by magic. Meringues disappeared faster than the eye could follow them. Bunter used a table-spoon for the jam. Goods of this kind he liked to take on board in bulk. Preserved fruits went down after the jam, and strawberries and cream followed in pursuit, and preserved ginger followed close in the wake of the strawberries. But there were still many things left when Bunter felt he could do no more. He was toying with cake when he rang the bell for George. But he could only toy with it. For once Bunter had had enough, and actually left something uneaten on the table. It was a day of wonders.

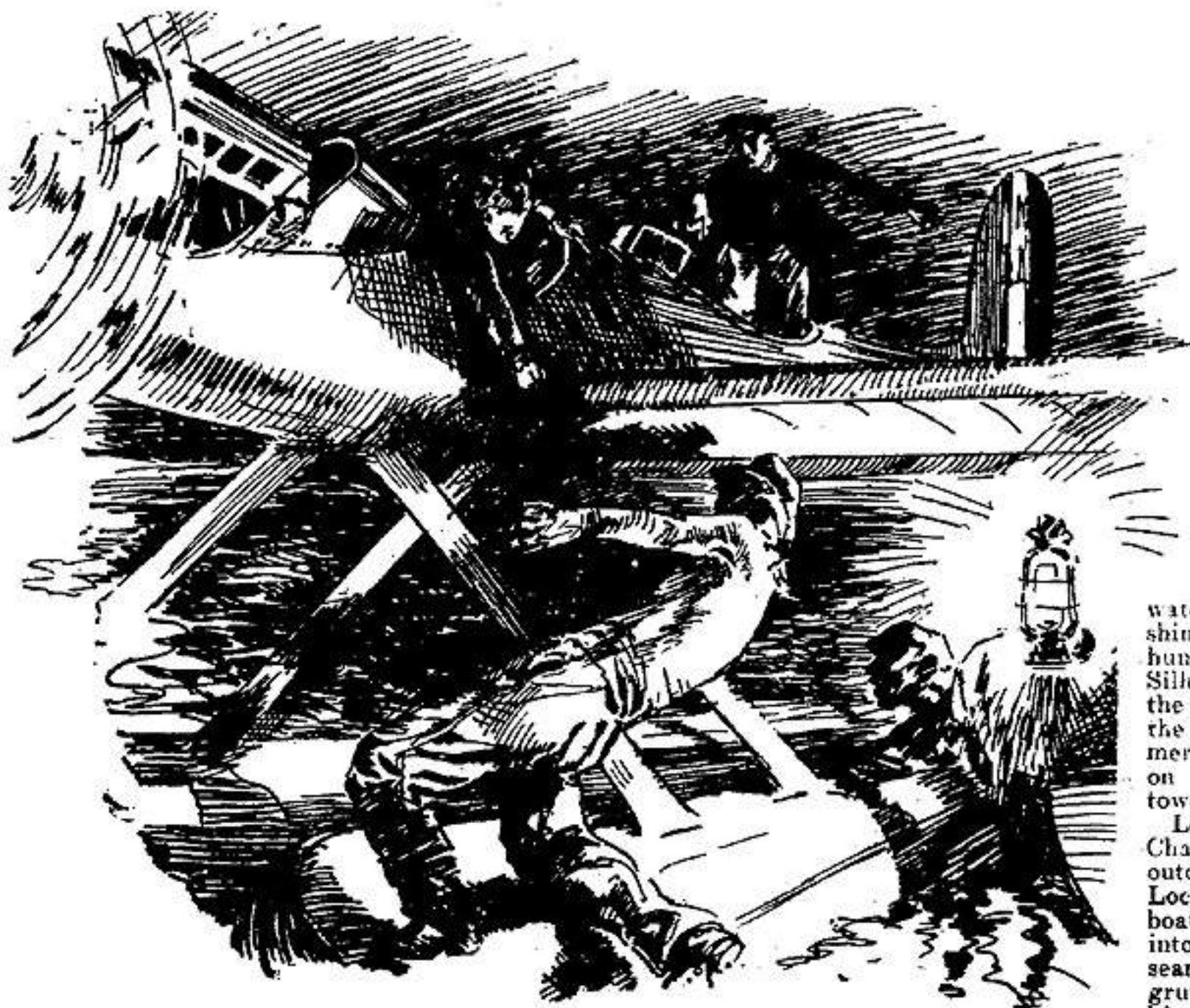
The eyes of George Mix almost bulged from his head as he witnessed the havoc Bunter had wrought in the supplies. Where Mr. Whiffles had put it all perplexed George. Mr. Whiffles always had a good appetite, to which, no doubt, he largely owed his circumference. But Mr. Whiffles had never performed a Gargantuan feat like this before. George Mix almost expected to see the guv'nor burst, all over the caravan. Bunter had unfastened a couple of the buttons of Mr. Whiffles' waistcoat. His

(Continued on page 26.)

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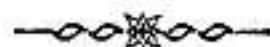
THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE JOB! Ferrers Locke let himself in for a mighty big task when he undertook the job of running Black Michael to earth. But his bold plans have succeeded so far, and loud will be the cheers when he eventually brings his "man" to justice!

THE LORD OF LOST ISLAND!



A
Thrilling Story
of Detective
Adventure,
featuring
Ferrers Locke,
and his boy
assistant,
Jack Drake.

(Introduction on
next page.)



water's edge, he saw lights shining in a large cave a few hundred yards to his left. Silhouetted in their glow were the long, sleek black forms of the submarines, half submerged. Men were climbing on their decks and conning towers.

Leaving the limp form of Chalmers hidden behind an outcropping of rock, Ferrers Locke went in search of a boat. Once he almost bumped into a couple of hurrying seamen; but, beyond a surly grunt, they took no notice of him.

They were not suspicious, those men of Lost Island. Why should they be, when theirs was as snug and as impregnable a retreat as one could well imagine?

Ferrers Locke found one of the Sea-gull's boats moored by the natural, rock jetty, and, quietly slipping the mooring-rope from the staple to which it was fastened, he retraced his steps, towing the boat behind him.

He had a dozen plausible excuses should anyone question him, but he was thankful indeed for the black shadows of the overhanging cliffs which made him indistinguishable from any range outside a yard or so.

Reaching the spot near where Chalmers lay he whistled softly. There was no response. His brow puckered. Inwardly afraid of what might have happened to Jack Drake, he pulled the boat inshore and transferred Chalmers to it, laying the prone form in the stern sheets. He knew he still had a few minutes' grace before either Von Mauser or Red Pete would go in search of their chief, wondering what was delaying him. When that happened—

Ferrers Locke's lips twisted into a fleeting smile. His bold plan had succeeded well, so far. By its very boldness lay the chance of ultimate success, for the pirates would little suspect treachery right in the very heart of their stronghold.

Again Ferrers Locke whistled softly. Out of the darkness came a faint, sibilant reply. The next moment Jack Drake glided up.

"Good lad!" whispered the detective.

"Did you get it?"

"Yes, guv'nor."

"Excellent! We've got no time to lose! Let's get it into the boat!"

On the Lagoon!

"**S**AY, my mate here?" Ferrers Locke thrust his head round the door of the room which served the men of Chalmers' gang as bunkhouse and living quarters.

"Beddin' right here, ain't he?" he drawled.

Not ten minutes had elapsed since he had switched the light out in Chalmers' room, but none would have guessed that he was on anything but a casual mission.

"Yes, mate." Jack sat up on the bunk where he had been lounging, fully dressed. "You wantin' me?"

"Yes." The detective's boy assistant swung his feet to the floor, and a few moments later joined his guv'nor outside in the darkness.

"Glad you were standing by, lad, as I told you," whispered Ferrers Locke urgently. "I've got Chalmers. There's not a second to lose. Listen! Have you located the ammunition dump?"

"Yes, guv'nor."

"Good! Can you get a few sticks of dynamite or some high explosive?"

"Easy! They don't mount a guard over the place at nights. Reckon there's no need here. It's just a disused hut, although there's a lot more stored in the caves."

"Then get enough to shift a few hundred tons of rock!" replied the detective crisply. "Chalmers has ordered the subs out, and we've got to stop 'em. Get the explosive, and meet me at the jetty as soon as you can. Keep under cover, and I will give you the signal."

"Right-ho, guv'nor!"

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Jack glided away into the darkness, and, turning, Ferrers Locke ran towards Federkiel's hut. He flung open the door without ceremony, and, switching on the light, crossed to the pilot's bed and shook the man roughly.

"What is it—what is the matter?" demanded Federkiel, starting into instant wakefulness.

"The boss has sent this note," said the detective breathlessly. "Says you've gotta get down to your machine, right now!"

Federkiel snatched the note and read it.

"Verfluchen und blud!" he rapped. "What has happened? Where is he?"

"He ain't in his room," replied the detective sharply. "He's cleared!"

The last thing Ferrers Locke wanted in the world at that moment was for Federkiel to go searching for Chalmers. But the pilot was not one to question orders, and, in that, the Baker Street detective had read him aright.

Federkiel struggled into his flying kit, and shoving the detective out of the room, slammed and locked the door behind him. Then he hurried away towards the jetty. Ferrers Locke followed him quietly, till he was assured that Federkiel was making for the seaplane. Then he made tracks for the rear of Chalmers' hut.

The only lighting of the encampment was from the windows of the huts. Chalmers was lying in the black shadow of the building, handcuffed and gagged.

Hoisting the pirate chief across his shoulders, Ferrers Locke set off for the jetty, making a detour which took him well away from the beaten track. He knew Red Pete and Von Mauser were busy, and as he cautiously neared the

Jack Drake was at a loss to understand what was happening. But he knew that the moment was not one for questions. His guv'nor would explain in his own good time. He led the way to where he had dumped a small pile of dynamite sticks.

"Any trouble?" asked Ferrers Locke, as he and Jack Drake placed the stuff in the bows of the boat.

"None! I forced the lock on the door. It was a good enough lock, but set in rotten woodwork."

"Well, step in, lad! Mind how you tread. Black Michael is curled up in the stern sheets!" said the detective grimly.

He pushed lustily with an oar, and the boat shot out from the rocky shore.

The Explosion!

CLEARLY across the dark waters of the lagoon came metallic clangs from the cave wherein the submarines were docked, and an occasional voice raised to give an order.

Then suddenly the stillness was broken by the shattering roar of the seaplane's engine.

"Thank goodness!" murmured Ferrers Locke fervently. "I was wondering if he had obeyed orders!"

The Baker Street detective bent to his oars with renewed gusto, knowing that the creaking rowlocks would not be heard now above the thunder of the powerful aero engine.

"We're making for the entrance channel, Jack!" he said. "We'll blow up the cliffs on each side of it. Enough broken rock will fall into the channel effectively to block it. That will keep the submarines and the Seagull bottled up!"

"But what about us?" demanded Jack. "We've got Chalmers—as a matter of fact I believe my boot's been resting on the blighter's ear since we left the shore—but what are we going to do with him, guv'nor?"

"Take him with us, when we leave the island on Federkiel's seaplane!" replied the detective grimly. "Put your back into it, lad. They'll know something is amiss when they fail to find Chalmers!"

Jack Drake bent to his oars, and the boat skimmed forward across the still waters. Both the detective and Jack were wonderfully fit and as hard as nails, but both were heartily glad when there loomed up ahead of them the dark cliffs of the entrance channel.

"Phew!"

Jack raised his blistered hands from the oars and turned to Ferrers Locke.

"Some pull that, guv'nor!" he said ruefully. "I—"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Three shots in rapid succession came from the further shore, audible above the humming engine of the seaplane.

"The alarm signal!" snapped Ferrers Locke. "They've discovered Chalmers is missing! Quick, lad! Hold the boat!"

Picking up a bundle of the sticks of dynamite Ferrers Locke stepped ashore and vanished into the darkness. In a minute he was back.

"The other side, Jack!" he said tersely, and Jack propelled the boat across to the opposite cliff.

Here foothold was difficult, but Ferrers Locke, up to his waist in water, rammed the remaining sticks of dynamite into a cleft in the base of the cliff. The moments dragged slowly past whilst he busied himself with the fuse. Across the lagoon came shouts, and the

drone of Federkiel's engine running with throttle almost closed.

A match flared in the detective's cupped hands. Next instant he scrambled back into the boat.

"That fuse will give us ten minutes!" he said quickly. "The other side again, Jack! I'll light that fuse—then we'll pull like blazes!"

Again the boat shot across the narrow channel. The detective leapt ashore, a match flared; then he literally threw himself into the boat and snatched at the oars.

"Along the side of the cliffs, lad!" he snapped. "We'll have cover there—pull for your life!"

Forgotten then was the pain of Jack Drake's torn and blistered hands. He pulled on the oars as though his very life depended on it—as indeed it did, for hurtling rocks might easily strike the boat. If they could get far enough away before the explosion occurred, the cliffs would afford them shelter.

Chalmers, in the stern sheets, moaned faintly and stirred, but neither Ferrers Locke nor Jack Drake heeded him. They were bending to their oars like demons.

Then came a terrific roar. The darkness was split by a vivid flash of blood red flame. For an instant the narrow entrance channel was lit up, and Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake had a vision of huge rocks and boulders soaring skywards.

Then darkness descended again, with the rapidity of a camera shutter. The boat rocked wildly on the waves caused by the concussion, while, dying slowly away inland, were the reverberating echoes of the explosion mingled with the crash of falling rocks.

The Meeting with Red Pete!

"**A**LL right, lad?"

"Yes, guv'nor!"

"The seaplane, then, quick! We must make a detour! Bear off to starboard—the gang will be coming to investigate!"

Again Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake bent to their oars. The seaplane was easily located by the still-running engine. Federkiel was obeying his orders. What had the note from Black Michael said: "No matter what happens, do not leave the machine—under no circumstances must you leave your machine!"

Suddenly Ferrers Locke stopped rowing, and he and Jack Drake rested on their oars. A cable's length or more to port came the voices of men and the creak of oars in rowlocks.

The detective leant forward.

INTRODUCTION.

Ferrers Locke, the Baker Street detective, is called in to investigate the mysterious disappearance of several large vessels lost with all hands in the South Pacific. Suspecting a man known as Professor Chalmers, who answers in every way to the description of Black Michael, a pirate who has been terrorising the western seaboard of South America, Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake, his clever boy assistant, disguise themselves and set sail for Buenos Aires. Arriving at their destination they scrape an acquaintance with Frisco Sam, proprietor of Black Michael's old haunt, succeed in getting aboard the Seagull, and eventually reach Lost Island, Black Michael's stronghold. Here, by a clever piece of strategy, Ferrers Locke is instrumental in bearding his quarry in his den. Covering him with his gun, Locke forces Chalmers to pen a letter to Federkiel, his seaplane pilot, ordering him to fill up with petrol, keep his engine running, and be ready for instant take-off. After slipping the note into his pocket, the Baker Street detective manacles the pirate chief's wrists, claps a chloroformed-soaked handkerchief over his mouth, and then leaves him lying helpless on the floor of his room.

(Now read on.)

"You have your gun, Jack!" he whispered.

"Yes, guv'nor!"

"Then, if necessary, do not hesitate to use it! You understand? We will get the machine and make Federkiel take off at the point of the gun! You go aboard first. I must leave Federkiel to you!"

"I understand!"

"We won't fail now, Jack, after having got so far! Let's get on!"

Quietly the oars bit the water again and the boat commenced to forge ahead. Lights were bobbing up and down on the shore, and excited voices were shouting wildly. The black hulk of the Seagull, deserted and riding at anchor, loomed up in the darkness and slid past.

The seaplane was very close now. Jack Drake's blood tingled. He felt somehow that it was the last lap. It would be rotten to fail now.

Resolutely he put the thought from him. They would not fail—could not fail.

"Where are you going, curse you?" bellowed an angry voice, and a boat loomed up ahead in the darkness.

It was full of men, but the running engine of the seaplane had prevented Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake hearing its approach. The man at the tiller pulled hard on his lines, narrowly avoiding a collision.

"Look where you're goin' yourself!" snarled Locke. "You boatload o' faro-joint sweepin's!"

He pulled on, and Jack Drake quickly picked up the stroke.

"Hold on, there!" shouted a voice from the other boat. "Who the blazes are you?"

It was the voice of Red Pete.

"Hank Peters an' his pard!" shouted Ferrers Locke in reply. Then, in a low, urgent voice: "Pull, Jack!"

"Stop, will you!" bellowed Red Pete. "What are you headin' that way for? Where've you bin?"

Ferrers Locke did not reply. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw the wings and fuselage of the seaplane, grey and ghostly in the darkness.

"Stop! By hokey, I'll drill you if you don't stop!"

Red Pete's boat had merged in the blackness, but his voice came clearly above the noise of the seaplane engine.

"After them, men!" he shouted.

"Quick, Drake!" snapped Ferrers Locke, as his boat bumped against one of the seaplane's floats. "Up with you! I'll bring Chalmers!"

Jack Drake scrambled up the under-carriage and, grasping the fuselage, swung himself up to the front cockpit. Federkiel was standing in the cockpit.

"Who are you? What is the matter? What has happened?" he snapped, as Jack Drake clambered over the edge of the cockpit. "Where is Black Michael?"

"He's coming up now!" replied Jack grimly.

He could feel the machine swaying as Ferrers Locke clambered up with Chalmers slung across one shoulder.

Crack! Crack!

Red Pete's gun barked viciously.

"I do not understand this!" shouted Federkiel. "I do not—"

"Then understand this!" snapped Jack Drake, and he whipped his gun to the pit of Federkiel's stomach.

"Struggle, and I'll kill you!" he warned grimly.

"Right, Jack!" shouted Ferrers Locke. "Chalmers is safe!"

He leant forward from the rear cockpit where he had dropped his prisoner.

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and pressed the muzzle of his gun against Federkiel's temple.

"Take off!" he shouted. "At once, or you're a dead man! We're desperate!"

It would have taken a braver man than Federkiel to have withstood the pressure of those two guns.

Federkiel slumped into the pilot's seat, and his hand closed on the throttle. Red Pete's boat bumped against the float of the seaplane, and the machine swayed violently as he leapt on to it.

"Attend to him, Jack! I'll watch the pilot!" shouted Ferrers Locke.

With the detective's gun against the back of his head, Federkiel opened the throttle. The roar of the engine rose to a high, pulsating note, and the machine commenced to move across the still waters of the lagoon. Jack Drake wheeled to ward off Red Pete's attack.

A hand clawed at the edge of the cockpit, and the bearded face of Red Pete came into view. He grabbed at the boy's reefer jacket. Jack snapped out his fist, flush to the snarling face of the man. He felt it connect with nose and lips, and Red Pete gave a howl of rage.

He loosened his hold on the boy's jacket and grabbed for his gun. It was no time for half measures. Jack Drake raised his arm and crashed the butt of his own weapon down on Red Pete's skull.

The nerveless hand of the man released its hold on the edge of the cockpit, and he fell downwards into the darkness.

With the muzzle of Ferrers Locke's gun again pressing against the back of his head, Federkiel pulled on the control stick. The greyish blur of the water seemed to drop away from the machine; and in a steep, upward climb the seaplane took the air.

The Trader!

AT two thousand feet Federkiel swung the machine towards the west. He had his orders from Ferrers Locke. He was to hold that course for fifteen minutes, then circle widely.

Ferrers Locke wished, if possible, to pick up the four Chilean battleships. He had discovered a Verrey pistol and cartridges in the rear cockpit, and for an hour, whilst the seaplane circled, brilliantly coloured magnesium cartridges dropped flaring downwards into the night.

But there was no response from the grey waste of waters below. Either the battleships had altered their course, or, if they were in the vicinity, they were ignoring the signals.

At length Ferrers Locke thrust the Verrey pistol back into its rack and gave Federkiel the order to fly northwards. Through the short remaining hours of the night the seaplane roared on its new course. Federkiel sat gripping the control, rigid and motionless in his seat. His eyes, protected by goggles, stared straight ahead, and his face was expressionless.

Chalmers, in the rear cockpit, was conscious. Helpless in his bonds, he had long since ceased to struggle. Leaning against the side of the cockpit, there was a look of grim satisfaction in the eyes of Ferrers Locke.

This, then, was the end. The evidence against Chalmers was complete. When daylight came they would land on the water near some large

vessel fitted with wireless. The story would be flashed to the mainland, and battleships despatched to round up the trapped pirates on Lost Island.

Chalmers would complete the journey to the mainland in irons, and there stand his trial for murder and piracy on the high seas.

Dawn came creeping out of the eastward. The air had become appreciably warmer during the flight northwards. The sun peeped up above the horizon, tracing a path of shimmering gold across a sea which changed in an instant from murky grey to deepest blue.

It was then that Federkiel turned in his seat. He did not speak, but his gloved hand pointed to the temperature gauge on his dashboard. The pointer was creeping up past the danger point. The engine was heating up.

Ferrers Locke's eyes narrowed. He knew too well the danger of fire. With anxious eyes he scanned the horizon and the stretch of sea. But nothing was in sight, not even a tiny wisp of smoke from some distant ship's funnel.

"Keep going!" he ordered curtly; and Federkiel nodded.

The minutes passed. Two men and a boy watched that creeping pointer on the temperature gauge; now raising their eyes to sweep the sea ahead; now grimly gazing at that creeping pointer which might well be heralding the approach of disaster.

"I must go down!"

Federkiel shouted the words, audible above the roar of the engine. The pointer could move no further.

"Look, guv'nor!"

Jack Drake gripped Ferrers Locke by the arm and pointed away to starboard. Tiny, faint, almost indistinguishable, was the hull of a small ship.

"Can you make it?" Ferrers Locke demanded of Federkiel.

The pilot shook his head.

"No," he said: "I do not think so!"

"You must try, then," said Ferrers Locke. "Do not cut your engine off till I give the order."

Federkiel pushed on the rudder bar, and the seaplane swung towards the distant ship. A tiny wisp of smoke curled up from beneath the engine cowlings.

"Switch off!" shouted the detective; and the thunder of the engine was suddenly stilled as Federkiel switched off and closed the throttle.

He pushed forward the control-stick, and the machine dived. Not a sound broke the stillness save the whine of the wind in struts and flying-wires.

Federkiel made a perfect landing on the water, and slowly the machine lost way and lay heaving on the swell.

"You'd better repair the trouble—and do it quickly!" said Ferrers Locke curtly.

The pilot stood up in the cockpit. Slowly he pulled off his gloves and removed his goggles.

"I would like an explanation of this!" he said, in cold, even tones. "Who are you?"

"I am Ferrers Locke," replied the detective. "Both you and Chalmers are under arrest for piracy!"

(Ferrers Locke's luck has held good so far, hasn't it, chums? But the fight is not over yet? Don't miss next week's powerful instalment.)

BILLY BUNTER'S LUCK!

(Continued from page 23.)

breathing was rather hard and laboured. Otherwise, he showed no sign of damage. There were some things that Billy Bunter could do really well. Disposing of a spread was one of them. In that line Bunter was always an easy first, and the rest nowhere.

"You can clear the table, George," said Bunter.

George cleared the table and departed like a man in a dream. Bunter leaned back in his chair and breathed hard. He had done himself well—remarkably well. Indeed, he almost felt as if he had overdone it.

Certainly, he was disinclined for exertion. He gazed out of the doorway of the van at the summer sun, sinking behind Friardale woods in the distance. It was lock-up at Greyfriars now. Bunter, added to his many other sins, was missing calling-over. But the thought of getting back to Greyfriars was too unpleasant. Trouble awaited him there. Trouble could not be put off too late. His exploits that afternoon had earned him, at the very least, a Head's flogging. A Head's flogging did not attract Bunter back to the school.

Bunter sighed, partly with repletion, partly at the thought of how ripping it would be if he could keep this game up. Life at Greyfriars was nothing to this!

If only that beast Whiffles, would keep away for good!

Bunter blinked at the setting sun. It would not be dark for a couple of hours yet, and he had quite made up his mind that Mr. Whiffles could not return before dark. In fact, if he could have done so, he would have been at the circus before this—and he had not come! There was plenty of time yet. Bunter was tired; the stowing away of the cargo he had disposed of would have tired any man. He rose from the chair, rolled over to Mr. Whiffles' bed, and stretched himself luxuriously there.

His idea was to take a little nap for an hour or so. After that he would consider his future plans.

His eyes closed in slumber.

People who came near the caravan while Bunter was taking his nap started and listened. Some of them fancied, for a moment, that that deep rumbling sound was a warning of a thunderstorm. But it was not. It was only Bunter's snore.

The sun descended lower and lower, and disappeared behind the horizon. Darkness spread over Courtfield Common. Lights twinkled from the tents and the caravans. Lights flared in the big tent, strains of music were heard, men moved busily to and fro, preparing for the evening performance. Those sounds did not reach Bunter's ears.

Bunter was deep in the arms of Morpheus, sleeping as soundly as he had ever slept in the Remove dormitory.

Bunter had intended to wake before dark. He expected Mr. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles to return at dark. Now it was dark, and Bunter, fast asleep, still snored in Mr. Whiffles' van.

If Mr. Whiffles was now on his way back to the circus—

It was to be hoped, for Billy Bunter's sake, that he wasn't!

THE END.

(Now look out for the next magnificent yarn in this grand series, entitled: "BUNTER, THE BOSS!" It's a winner, chums, so make a point of ordering your copy WELL IN ADVANCE!)

News Pars and Pictures!

□ □ □

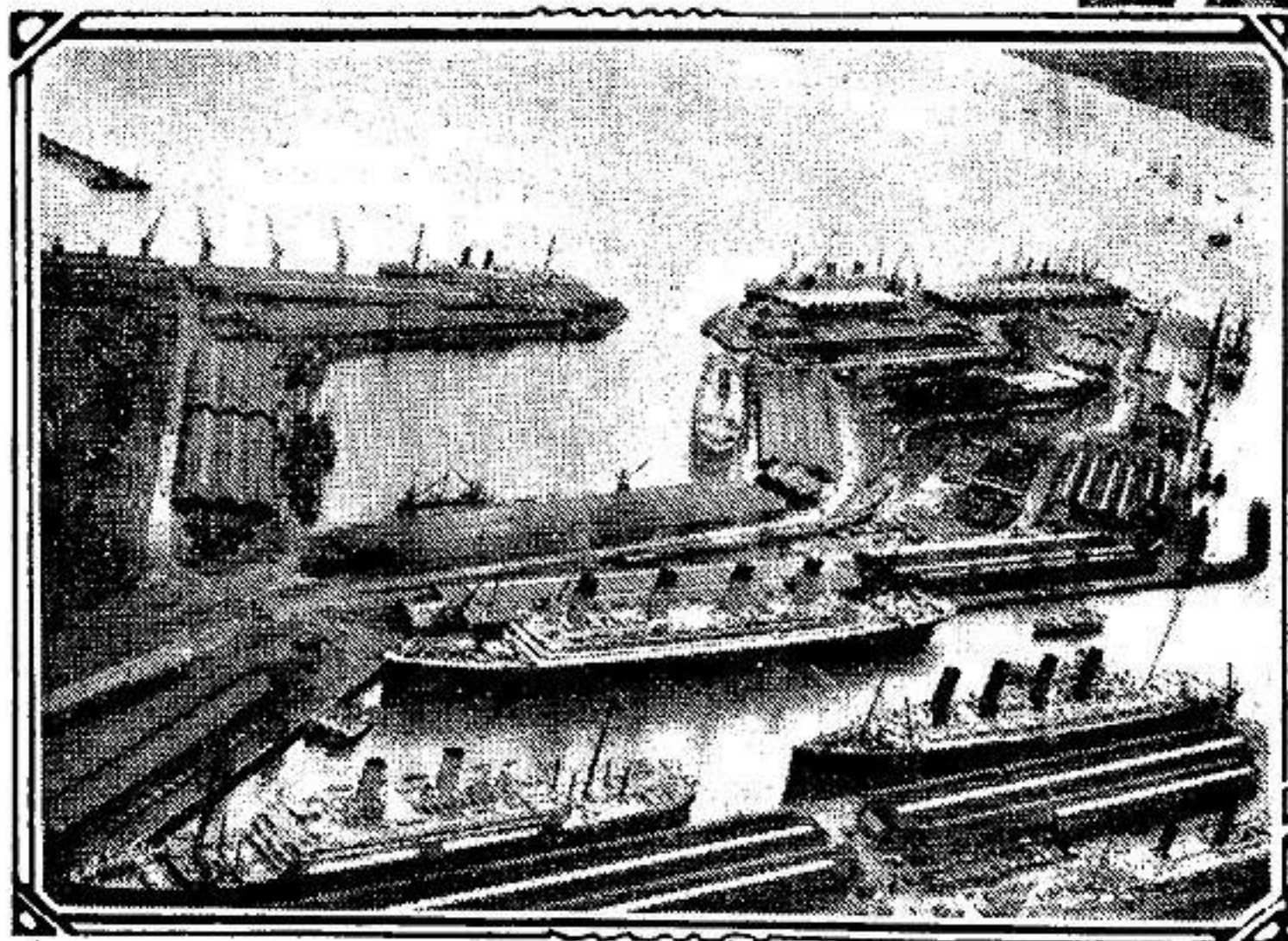
THE FIRST PLANE!

When we compare the aeroplanes of say, ten years ago, with those monsters of the present day, we realise what strides have been made. We realise, too, what a debt we owe to the Wright Brothers, who were the pioneers of the aeroplane. Their original plane, which was built in 1903, and which is shown in the photograph, is now to be seen in the South Kensington Science Museum, where it has been sent as the result of a dispute with the National Museum Authorities in Washington.



MAN'S HARDIHOOD!

We have all heard of the Ancient Spartans, who were able to endure any amount of pain; we have heard of the Fakirs of India, who are able to stand or lie upon nails. Here we have a native from Natal, South Africa, who walks across a thirty-foot pit of burning charcoal, and then, not content, insists upon having pins inserted into his flesh! Photo shows him after the pin-pricking process. Note, also, the skewer through his tongue!

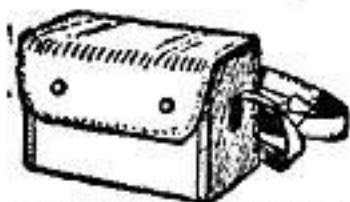


BRITAIN'S LARGEST PORT!

As the years have rolled on, so has the shipping trade at Southampton increased; increased enormously until it was found that the docks could no longer expediently cope with the traffic. And so the docks were extended. Now they are the largest in Britain, capable of accommodating seven large Atlantic steamers at once. Picture shows an aerial view of the huge port.

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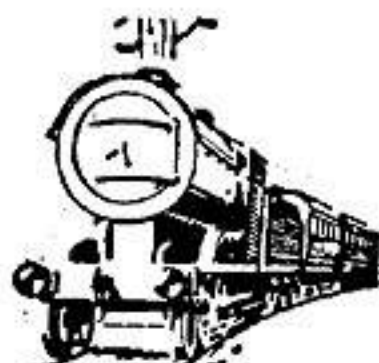
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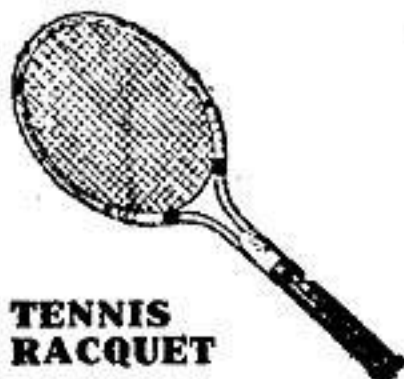
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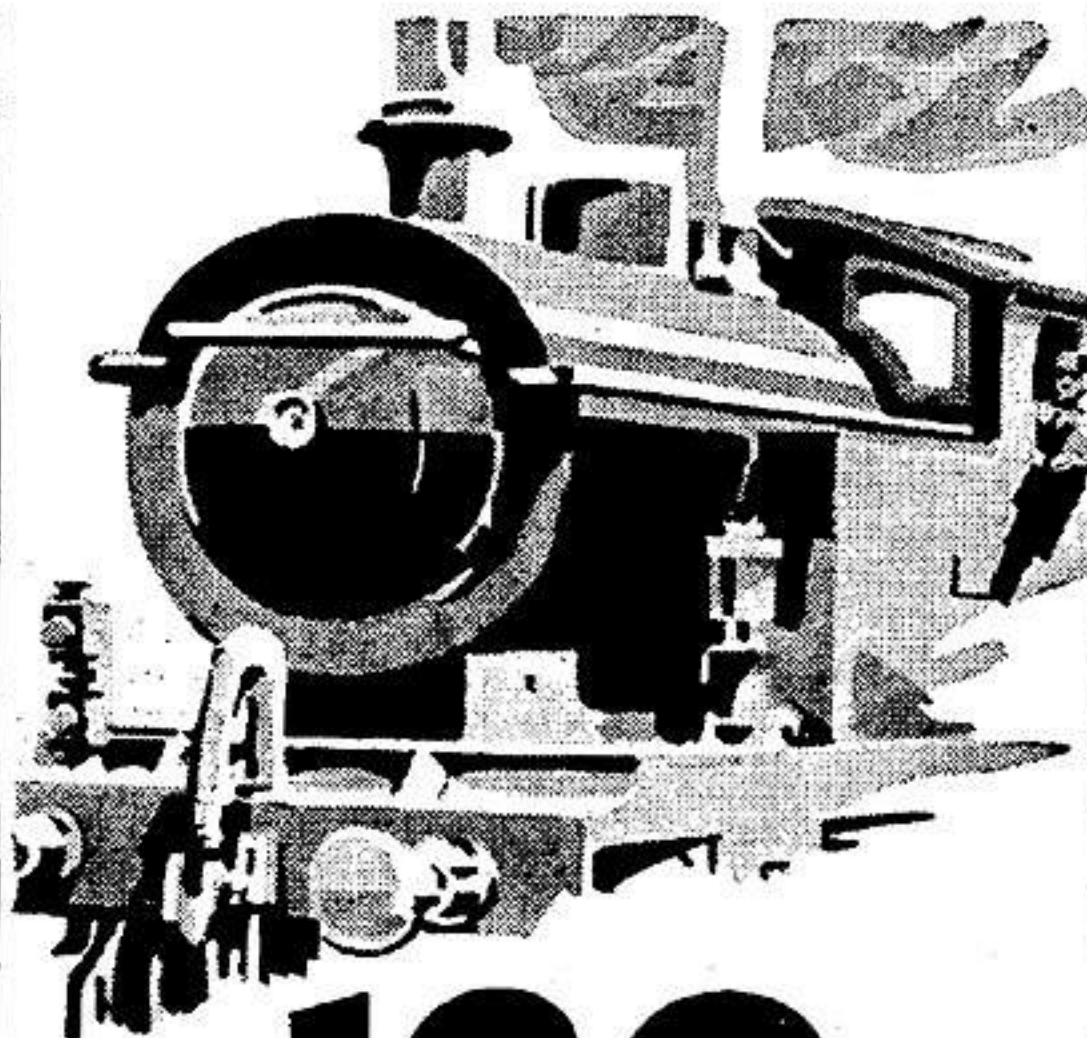
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THE TOILS!

DICKY NUGENT

Mr. Lickham randed over Jack Jolly's shilling, and Kaplin Snooker put it between his teeth, and bit it savagely.

"Feel like a good one," he remarked. "Well, thanks very much! Ioodle-oo."

Mr. Lickham's die turned a sickly pale. "Altho you don't deserve it, sir, we've come to help you out of your pit," he wound up Jack Jolly. "If you'll just tell your uncles all about it we'll see what we can do for you, sir."

The hostile expression died out of Mr. Lickham's eyes.

"That's jolly good of you, boys, I'm dashed if it ain't," he murmured.

In a few graphic sentences he told them of his visit to the Jolly Sailor and of his yielding to the fascination of playing snakes-and-ladders. After that, he painted a vivid picture of the deplorable gamble that ended in the loss of his fortune.

"Grate pip, sir," exclaimed Jack Jolly, when the master of the Fourth had finished. "You've been having a ruff time of it, and no error."

"You're right, Jolly. It's been too giddy limminy!" groaned Mr. Lickham.

"Now, tell me, what would you chap's do if you were in my place?"

"I should go to the Head!" said Jolly.

"What! Are you potty?" he gasped.

"Surely, Jolly, by this time you are aware that Dr. Birchmell is a man with a heart of stone. If I go to him I shall undoubtedly get it where the chicken got the chopper!"

"Don't you be too sure, sir," said Jack. "If you go to him and confess everything, you may be pleasantly surprised to find him quite sympathetic."

"Oh, my giddy aunt! I must confess that such a possibility didn't occur to me," said Mr. Lickham, scratching his head reflectively. "Look here, then! If I go and see the Head, will you boys come along to keep up my spirits?"

"Certainly, sir!" chorused the chums of the Fourth.

With Jack Jolly & Co. following in his wake, Mr. Lickham made a bee-line for Dr. Birchmell's sankum!

On the way, however, the master of the Fourth feared that the Head of St. Sam's would go off the deep end when he heard his story.

THE END.

(You can prepare yourself for another long laugh when you read the amusing sequel to this yarn, entitled: "MR. LICKHAM'S DEFEATANCE!" in next week's MAGNET, chums.)

Another stirring story of St. Sam's, written by the budding genius, Dicky Nugent, of the Second Form at Greyfriars.

RASH!

That timid tap sounded on the door of Dr. Birchmell's study at St. Sam's.

"Trot in, farhead!" yelled the Head, in his deep, cultured accents.

The door opened, revealing Mr. Lickham.

"I beg your pardon for intruding, sir, I'm sure," said the master of the Fourth form apologetically. "If I might intrude for a second or two—"

"Certainly, Licky! Come right in!" said the Head genially.

Mr. Lickham looked a little suspicious. It was unusual for Dr. Birchmell to wait politeness on a poor junior master.

"Well, sir, I have come upon a somewhat delicate mission—"

Mr. Lickham. "To get down to brass tax, I want to know whether you can advance me the sum of one shilling from my next week's wages."

The genial look left Dr. Birchmell's face with surprising suddenness. A ferocious glare took its place.

"Lend you a bob?" he barked. "From your next week's wages? And how do you know you're going to get any wages next week, may I ask?"

"I—I thought—" stammered the master of the Fourth.

"Well, don't think then! Never try to do a thing that's beyond your powers," shouted Dr. Birchmell.

"Lend you a bob, indeed! What the devil Dickens do you take me for? A petty financial magnet?"

"Nunno, sir!" gasped the unhappy Mr. Lickham. "I didn't mean any—"

Well, you nite have known that such a request was the surest way of giving an offence!" hooted the traitor headmaster. "Now, buzz off! Your race gives me a pain, Licky!"

With despair eating into his vitals Mr. Lickham buzzed off.

As he walked back to his study, the Fourth Form master groaned aloud. He dared not think what would happen

if he couldn't sling somebody for a bob pretty soon. His pile would certainly be despoiled.

Mr. Lickham's troubles were dew to the fact that he had recently been travelling on the downward path. For some little time the master of the Fourth had been shining as a bold bad blade and a gay dog. He had finished up by playing the giddy ox at the Jolly Sailor in Muggleton, in spite of the Head's warning that that notorious inn was out of bounds. A wild game of snakes-and-ladders had led to Mr. Lickham losing his life's savings—no less a sum than three shillings and fourpence. Not content with that, he had given his I O U for one shilling to Kaplin Snooker, one of the worst card-bickers in Muggleton. Hence his efforts to raise the wind.

Bought down with the wail of his troubles, Mr. Lickham entered his study. As he did so, a sinister-looking fellow, with glittering eyes and a black mustash, rose from the armchair.

"Good-morning, sir!" cried the occupant of the study, blowing a cloud of cigar smoke into Mr. Lickham's face.

"Kaplin Snooker!" gasped the master of the Fourth, with a shudder.

"Then you have come to demand your pound of flesh?"

"Eggsactly!" agreed the kaplin, bearing his teeth in a cruel grin. "As you probably recollected, Mr. Lickham, I hold your I O U for the sum of one shilling. It will pay you to pay me, too, sweet! Shall out?"

"And what happens if I don't?" whispered Mr. Lickham, licking his dry lips.

"In that case," said Kaplin Snooker, a very nasty expression coming into his face, "I shall take this I O U to your headmaster, and see what he has to say about it!"

"Mercy me!" howled Mr. Lickham. "Give me time."

"I expect the judge will give you that, in dew course," said Kaplin Snooker, with a sinister laugh. "In the meantime, I'll give you five minutes to find the bob!"

Having imparted these words, Kaplin Snooker resumed his seat in the armchair, picked up a comic paper from the table, and made himself at home.

With a hopeless shrug, Mr. Lickham dashed wildly out of the study, to run right into Jack Jolly's head, who was passing.

"Yaroooooh!" yelled the master of the Fourth, as his chin met the top of Jack Jolly's head with a terrific bang.

"Whooooop!" cried Jack Jolly, in anguish. "Where the thump do you think you're going, you idiot?"

"Grooooooooh!" groaned Mr. Lickham. "Look here, Jolly, that's not the way to speak to your Form master! Take a thousand lines! I—I mean—"

Mr. Lickham stopped rubbing his injured chin, as a sudden brane wave struck him.

"I mean, don't take a thousand lines at all," he resumed in much friendlier accents. "What I really mean, Jolly, was that I wouldn't dream of giving you lines. It would be most unjust to give lines to such a clever chap as you!"

"Grate pip!" murmured Jack Jolly in astonishment. "What's the giddy idea, sir?"

"Ideas?" echoed Mr. Lickham, with a sickly grin. "Oh, nothing, Jolly! As you're clever, it's only right that I should tell you. I'll tell you something else, too. You're a fine, upright, generous-hearted lad, as well as a clever one!"

"Am I really, sir?" gasped Jack.

"You are indeed!" said Mr. Lickham enthusiastically. "And now, Jolly, before I forget it, can you lend me a bob till the weather breaks?"

"Oh, erkey! Well, if you put it like that, I suppose I'd better," said Jack Jolly, with a roofoo grin. "Here you are, sir! Catch!"

Mr. Lickham deftly caught the coin, and breathed a grate sigh of relief.

"Thank goodness!" he gasped. "Now you can book it, Jolly! I'm going back to my study!"

Leaving the somewhat dazed skipper of the Fourth to look it, Mr. Lickham returned to his study.

"Ala! You've got the dibs, then!" cried Kaplin Snooker, eyeing the Fourth Form master hungrily. "Hand over!"

"Nite after nite fortunes are lost and won at snakes and ladders."

"Grate pip, I believe you've hit it!" exclaimed Jack Jolly. "We know it would break Lickham's heart to lose ruppence-he penny. If he lost more than that, then I can understand why he has become such a body and a tyrant. He's venting his feelings on us!"

"Fow!" whistled Bright. "What a rank outsider!"

But Jack Jolly shook his head thoughtfully.

"Licky's not an outsider at all," he said. "He's weak and easily led, that's all. To tell you the truth, chap's, I feel rather sorry for him. In fact, I should like to help him."

"Rats!" said Merry. "We did our best to keep him straight last week, and what was the result? He sneered at us."

"Trew enuff. Nevertheless, I still feel like helping him," said Jack.

"After all, he's master of the Fourth, and it's up to us to look after our own Form master, isn't it? Think of the honor of the Form! Think of the jecs we shall get from the rest of the school if he's chucked out on his neck, with shame and ignominy!"

Merry and Bright looked grave. Their leader was putting a new aspect on the situation.

"Well, I hadn't thought of that," confessed Bright. "P'raps we'd better do something, then."

"Eggsactly!" nodded Jack Jolly. "I suggest we beard the lion in his den. In other words, we'll go and ask Lickham just what's the matter and offer him the benefit of our advice."

"That's the ticket!" said Merry enthusiastically.

The master of the Fourth was sitting at his desk buried in thought when Jack Jolly & Co. rolled into his study.

"Well, and what do you boys want?" asked Mr. Lickham, in a quiet voice.

"We want to know what's the matter, sir," replied the kaplin of the Fourth boldly. "During the last few days we've noticed that you've become a bullying cad and a tyrant."

"What?" yelled Mr. Lickham feebly.

"And we've guessed that it's got something to do with your visit to the Jolly Sailor," went on Jack fearlessly.

(You can prepare yourself for another long laugh when you read the amusing sequel to this yarn, entitled: "MR. LICKHAM'S DEFEATANCE!" in next week's MAGNET, chums.)

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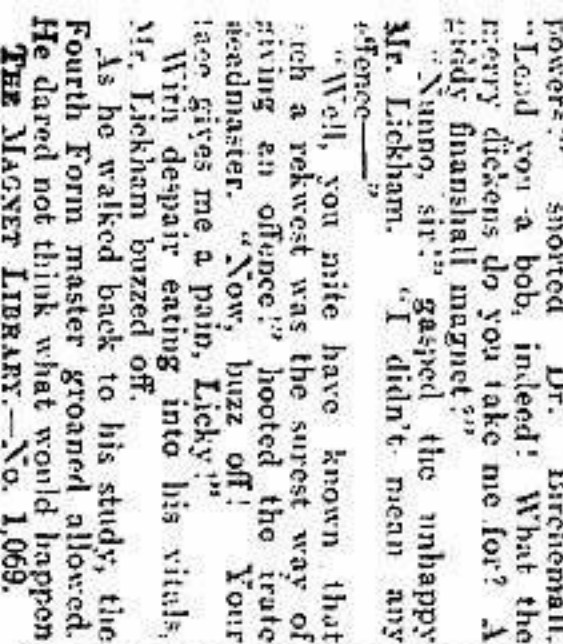
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