

OUT THIS WEEK: THE NEW "HOLIDAY" & "HOBBY" ANNUALS!

No. 1,072. Vol. XXXIV.

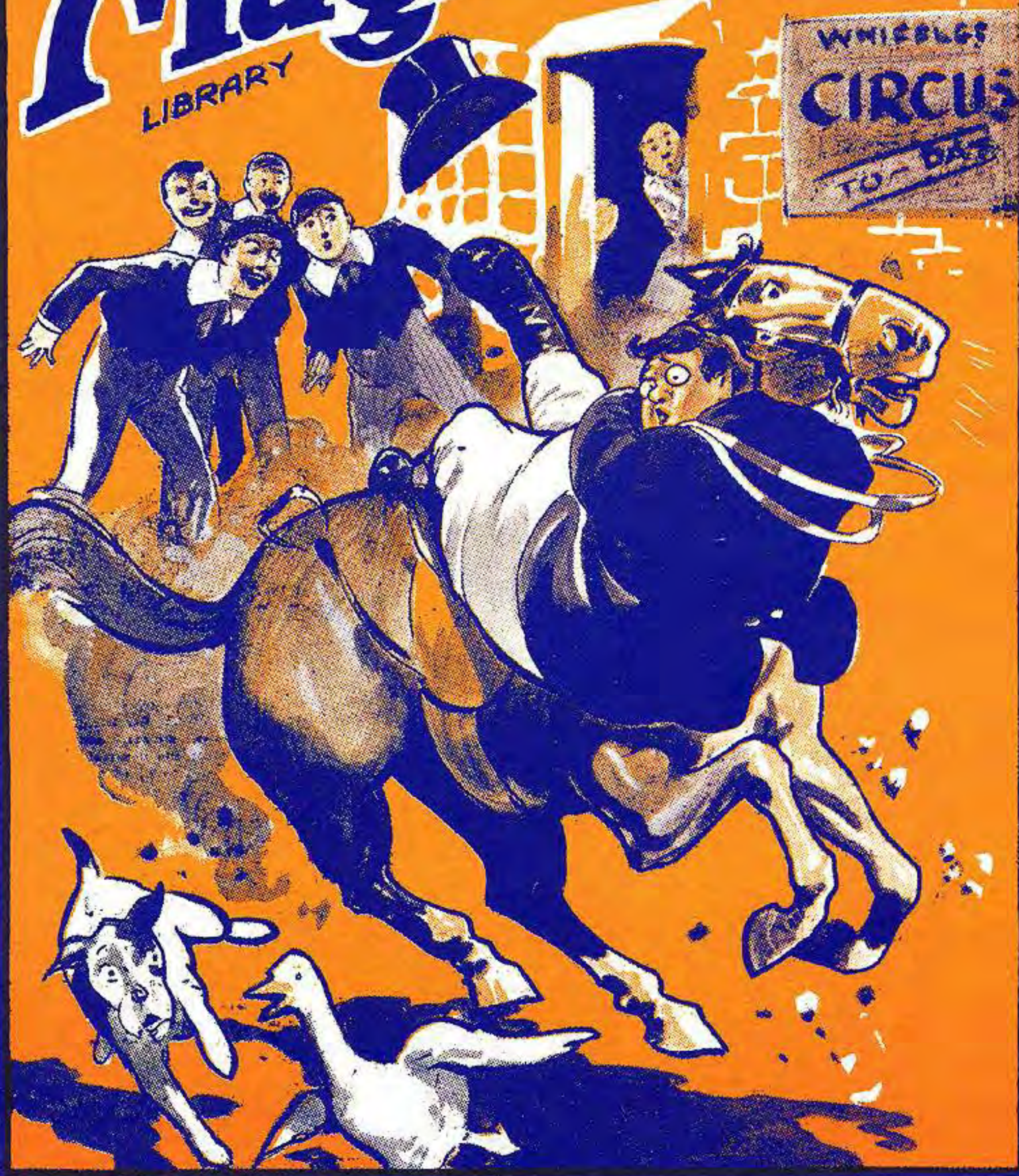
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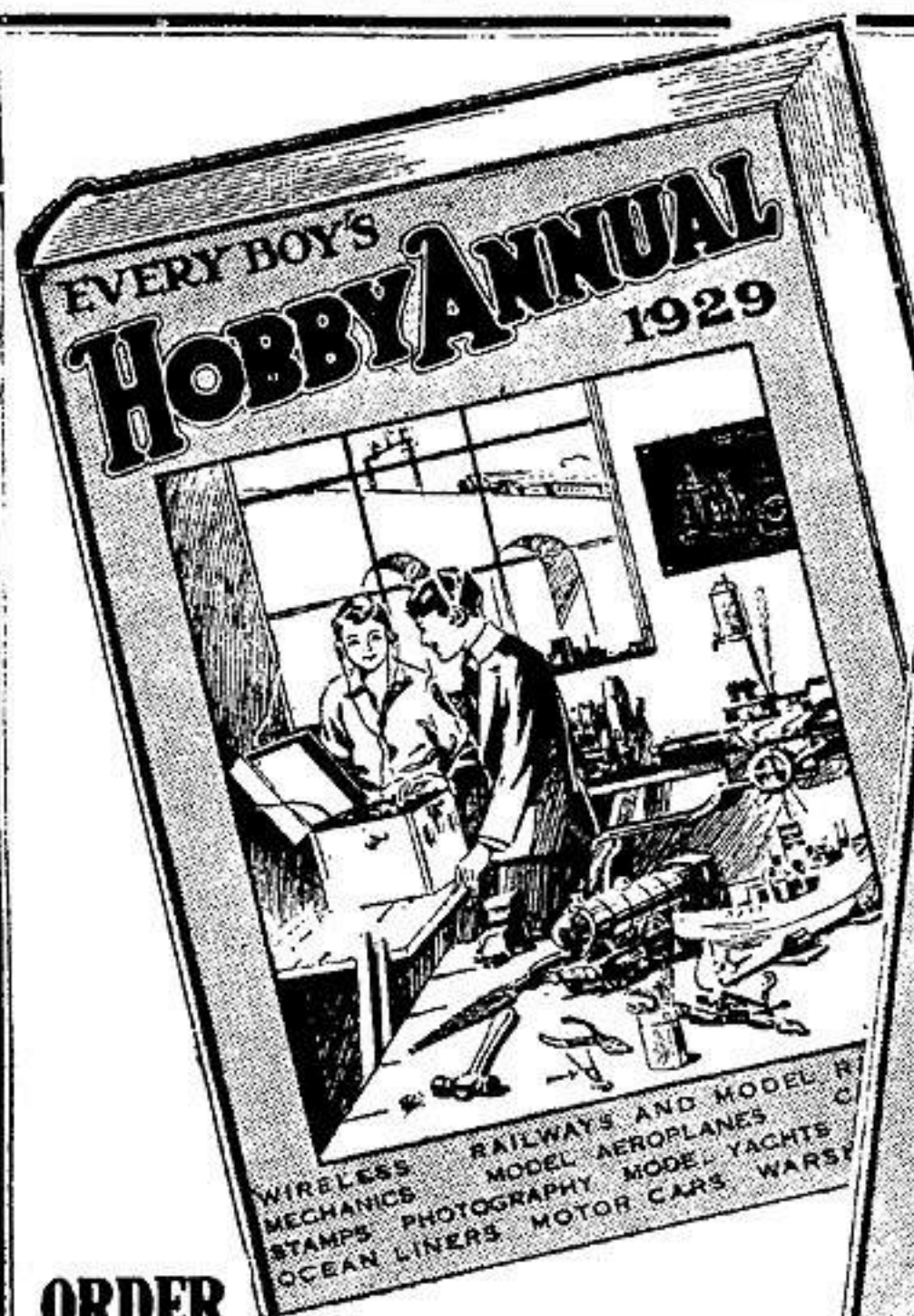
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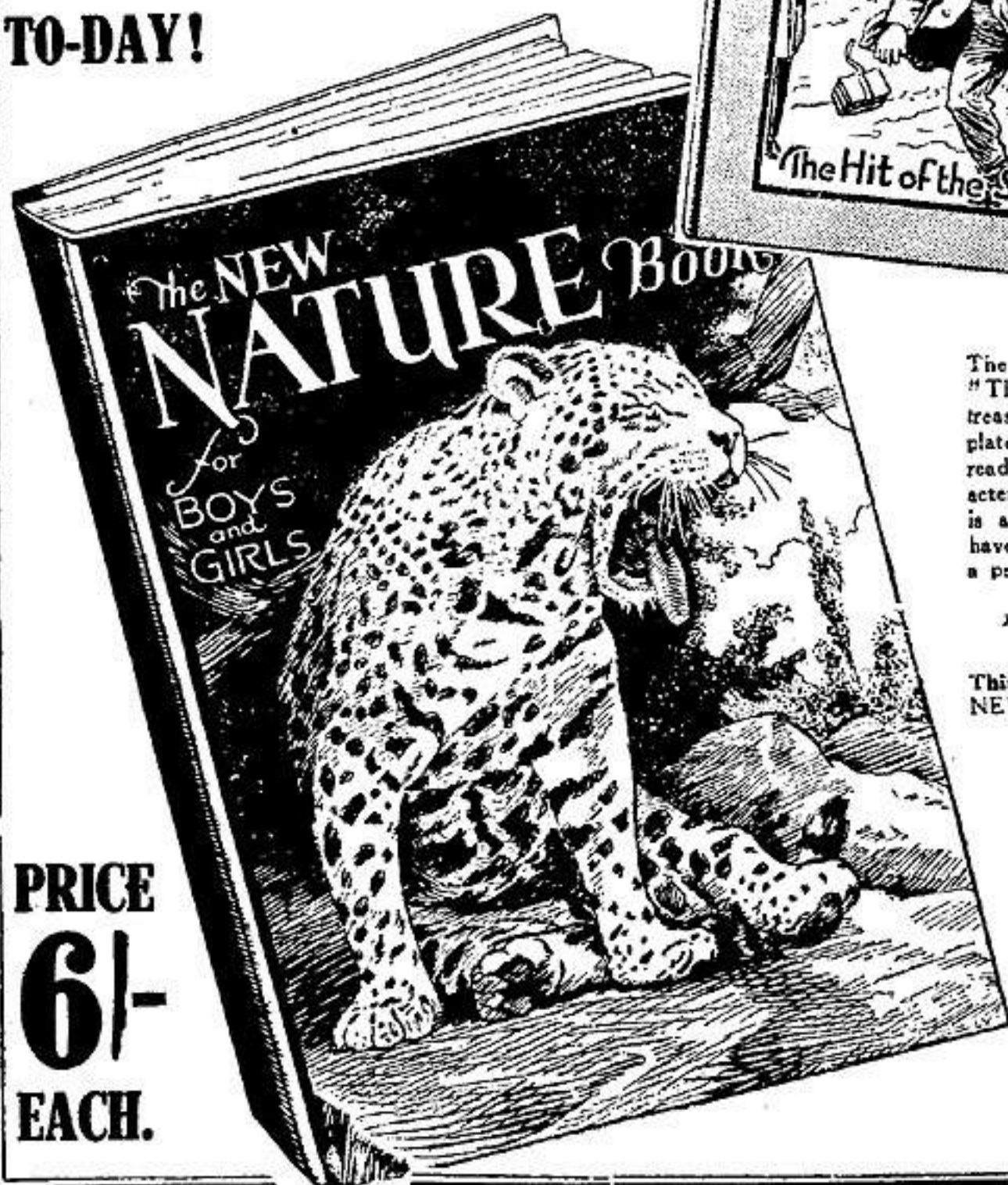


BILLY BUNTER'S "JOY" RIDE!

(A "moving" incident from this week's grand yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.)



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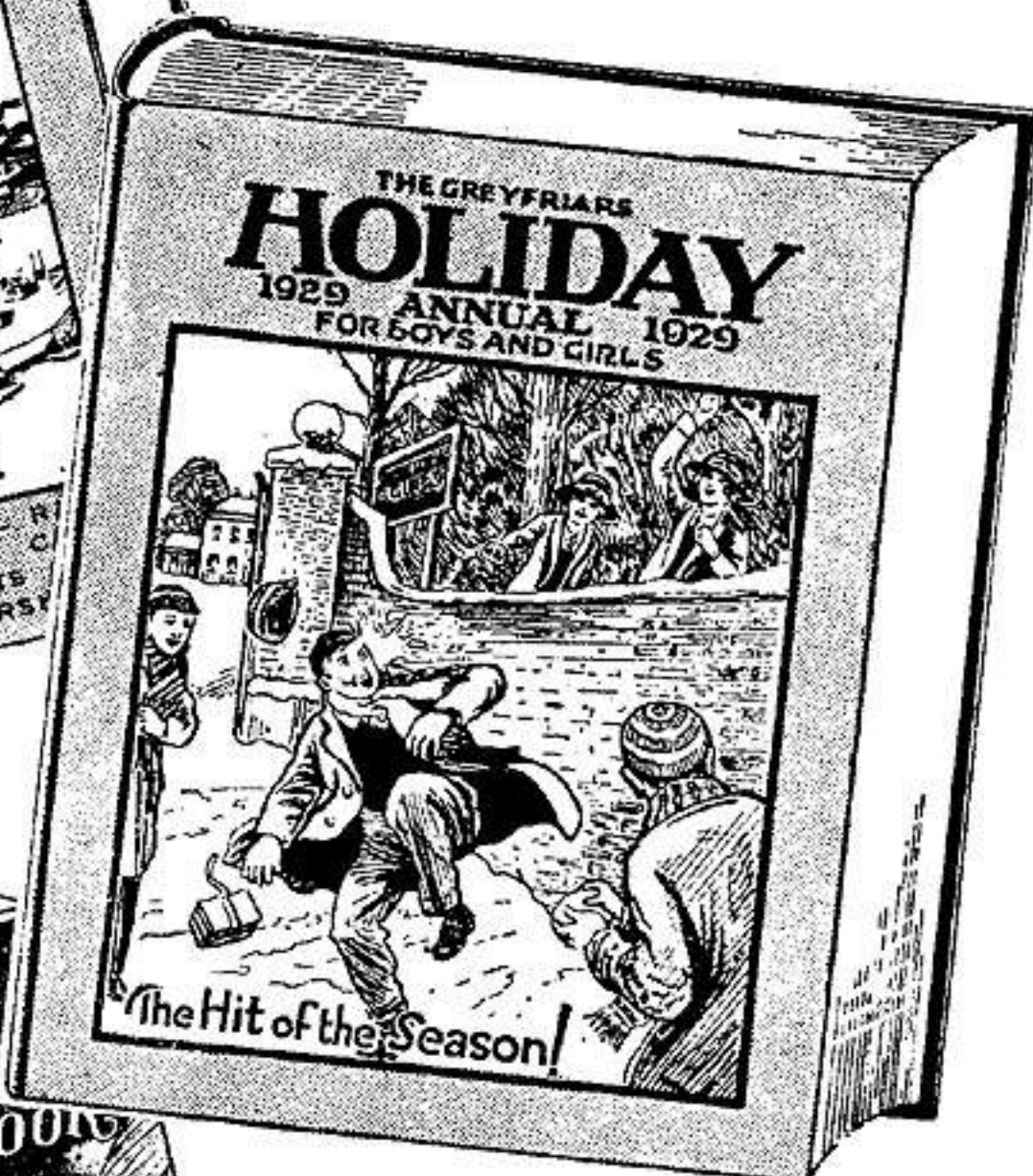
ANNUAL TREATS!

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A rollicking fine long complete school story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars dealing with the further exciting adventures of Billy Bunter in his new role as Boss of a Circus.

By
Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

"**G** EORGE!"
"Here, guv'nor."
"Bring round my horse."
"Yes, guv'nor."

Billy Bunter stood in the doorway of Mr. Whiffles' caravan, in the encampment of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus on a Surrey common.

It was a sunny August morning.

Greyfriars School had broken up for the summer holidays, and Greyfriars fellows were scattered north, south, east, and west.

Many and various were the ways in which Greyfriars fellows were spending their holidays. But the most remarkable, undoubtedly, was the way in which Billy Bunter was doing it.

A few weeks before, Bunter had been quite undecided about that vacation. Upon one point, of course, he had been decided—that he wasn't going home for the holiday. Bunter Court, glorious as that palatial residence was, according to Bunter's descriptions, had no attractions for him. Bunter Court was a last resource.

But fascinating fellow as Bunter was, fellows in the Remove never seemed keen to bag him for the holidays. On such occasions, Bunter was usually the bagger, not the baggee, as it were. Lord Mauleverer had shown a strong disinclination to take him along to the Towers. Harry Wharton & Co. had declined the honour without thanks. The Bounder, who was going abroad, had only laughed when Bunter remarked that he thought of going abroad also. Even Peter Todd, when Bunter had told him that he would probably give him a look-in, had warned him to make his will first.

There was no run on Bunter for the holidays, nobody wanted to get in early

to avoid the crush, and as the vacation drew near, it had really looked as if William George Bunter would be reduced to the painful necessity of going home with Sammy of the Second. There's no place like home; which perhaps, was the reason why Bunter preferred other places.

But fortune had smiled on Bunter in the most unexpected and remarkable manner.

He had wondered how he would spend that holiday, wondered rather anxiously, as the time drew near.

But in his wildest dreams, he had never pictured himself spending it at a circus, and as the circus boss.

That was what had happened.

A strange chain of events had led up to that extraordinary situation. Even now, Bunter could hardly believe that it really had come off.

But it had!

For there he was, standing in the doorway of the blue-and-red caravan, at Whiffles' World-Famous Circus, dressed in the remarkable clothes of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, adorned with the flowing nut-brown wig, the waxed moustache, and the pointed beard, that had been wont to adorn Mr. Whiffles.

To all appearance, he was Mr. Whiffles. Indeed, by this time Bunter himself almost believed that he was Mr. Whiffles.

He had become so used to playing the part, that it surprised him, every now and then, to remember that he was W. G. Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove.

Billy Bunter looked round him in the sunny morning, at the caravans and the tents, the great circus tent with its streaming flag, and grinned with satisfaction at the happy thought that he was monarch of all he surveyed, and that his right there was none to dispute.

He had finished breakfast—or rather,

several breakfasts one after another. All the circus had noted how wonderfully Mr. Whiffles' appetite had improved of late.

Now he was going for a ride.

He had learned that it was Mr. Whiffles' usual custom to ride in the morning, and Mr. Whiffles' own steed was now at his disposal.

Riding was one of the things that Billy Bunter fancied he could do really well. There were, in fact, very few things that he did not fancy that he could do well. He often told the Remove fellows how he backed fiery steeds—at home at Bunter Court. And it was at least true that he had ridden a donkey at Margate without falling off. Also he had ridden a donkey at Blackpool without falling off. After these wild equestrian experiences, Bunter was convinced that he was "some" horseman. Now he was going to ride Mr. Whiffles' steed, and he was looking forward to that ride with choery confidence.

"Here you are, guv'nor."

George Mix brought the horse round, saddled and bridled, all ready for the Boss.

Bunter descended the step of the caravan.

George held the horse's head, and the animal stood very quiet. Bunter blinked over him through his big spectacles. In theory he liked a steed with some spirit in him. In practice, he rather preferred a horse that bore a resemblance to a sofa. Mr. Whiffles' horse looked quiet enough. After all, it was easy enough for any fellow to ride. You only had to get on the gee-gee's back, and stay there. The drawback was, that there was no brake. But that couldn't be helped.

Billy Bunter climbed into the saddle, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,072.

rather as if he climbed up a fence. However, he got there.

Sitting in the saddle, with his feet in the stirrups, the reins in his fat hands, he felt very safe and comfortable. It was as easy as winking. He rather wished that a fellow sitting on a horse was not quite so far from the ground. Still, he was not going to fall off.

"Hand me my whip, George."

"'Ere, guv'nor."

"Let him go."

George let him go.

Billy Bunter gave the horse a smart flick, and started.

He trotted cheerily across the common to the road.

There, in one direction, lay the village of Wharton Magnus, in the other, the town of Redgate. Bunter decided to go through the village. He rather hoped that Harry Wharton & Co., who were at Wharton Lodge, would be out that morning, and would see him with the world with noble horsemanship. They wouldn't know it was he, but at least, the beasts would see that he could ride. Some of the circus people stared after him as he went. They had not noticed hitherto that the guv'nor rode like a sack of potatoes. They noticed it now.

"This is all right!" murmured Bunter, as he trotted. He gave his steed a cut with the whip, perhaps to show him that he had a master on his back.

The horse broke into a gallop.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

It was not his intention to gallop. The earth moved by too quickly in such circumstances.

He dragged on the reins.

"Whoa!" gasped Bunter.

The horse did not "whoa." Perhaps he wanted a little exercise that fine morning; or perhaps, he knew that he had a rider on his back who could not handle him. All the circus accepted Bunter as Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles; but they were only humans. The horse knew better. Bunter's riding style was enough to enlighten him.

"Owl! Stop, you beast!" roared Bunter, tugging at the reins frantically. He was already out of sight of the circus, clattering along a broad country road. The red roofs of the village were ahead. "Stop! Hold on! Oh, my hat! You beast, whoa!"

The horse took no notice whatever. He stretched his legs in a gallop, and the universe rushed past Bunter at an alarming rate.

"Oh, dear!" gasped the Owl of the Remove. "The—the beast looked quiet enough! Oh, crumbs! I—I—I—think I'll give him his head."

The horse had already taken his head.

Bunter's whip flew through the air. His hat sailed away on the breeze. His nut-brown locks—or rather, Mr. Whiffles' nut-brown locks—floated in the wind! Fortunately, they were more firmly secured than the hat. They floated in the wind, but did not part company.

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter swayed and rocked wildly. He took a list to port, and then a list to starboard. On either side of that wretched horse, the earth seemed jumping up to meet him. He let the reins go and clutched the horse's mane. It was probable that Mr. Whiffles' horse was unused to that style of horsemanship. It seemed to startle him. He galloped on faster than before.

There were shouts in the village street as Bunter came careering in. Chickens flew wildly across the street, narrowly escaping sudden death. People jumped out of the way, and shouted and roared. Bunter did not heed them. He was

clutching hold of the mane for dear life, bumping up and down in the saddle—which seemed to be hitting him viciously as hard as it could.

His face was buried in the mane, which brushed off his spectacles. The spectacles disappeared into space; but Bunter had no time to think of them. He had no time to think of anything. His fat brain was in a whirl. With a wild clatter he went through the village, and out upon the open road beyond. This was quite unlike riding the donkey at Margate. It was such a ride as had never been ridden since the days of John Gilpin. On and on and on—and it was fortunate that Bunter was too dizzy and confused to wonder what would happen if he met a motor-car.

Clatter! Clatter! Clatter!

"Yaroooh! Help!" yelled Bunter, as he sighted a cluster of figures on the road. "Help! Fire! Murder! Help! Yaroooooooh!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Removites to the Rescue!

"H ALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Whiffles!"

"The esteemed and ludicrous Whiffles!"

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Greyfriars Remove, were walking into the village that morning. They were still at a little distance from it, when a wild rider came careering out of the village street, and thundered down towards them. The clattering of the hoofs and the weird aspect of the rider, drew their attention at once.

They recognised the Boss of Whiffles' circus at a glance.

They had been at the circus, which had camped within a mile of Wharton Lodge. They were rather interested in Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. For one reason, his voice was remarkably like Bunter's fat squeak. For another, they believed that he knew something about Billy Bunter's strange disappearance from Greyfriars just before the end of the term. They were still of opinion that Billy Bunter had gone off with the circus; though why he was there, and what he was up to, they could not guess.

The Famous Five of Greyfriars stopped, and stood looking at the oncoming horseman. They grinned at the sight.

The rider, hatless, his hair blowing in the wind, his fat hands clutching at the horse's mane, was a sight for gods and men.

"Is that a circus stunt?" asked Johnny Bull. "Or is the giddy geegee running away with him?"

The rider's voice answered that question; yelling frantically for help as he charged down on the Famous Five.

"We've got to stop him!" said Harry Wharton.

"The stopfulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the speedfulness of the esteemed horse is terrific."

It was not an easy task to stop the runaway. The horse was going full gallop now, and evidently did not intend to stop if he could help it. He seemed to have forgotten that he had a rider on his back at all.

The juniors jumped out of the way as the horse thundered down on them. But Harry Wharton, with great activity, grasped at the dangling reins and caught them.

He was torn onward by the rush of the horse, and almost dragged from his feet, and his arms felt as if they were being jerked off.

But he held on hard, and the horse

swung round, trampling on the grass by the roadside, and halted.

Bump!

Bunter had wanted the horse to stop. Very much indeed had he wanted it to stop. But the sudden stop took him quite by surprise. He pitched headlong out of the saddle.

Before he knew what was happening, he was sitting in the grass, roaring, the horse trampling wildly within a few paces of him.

"Yaroooh! Ow! Help! Yooop!" roared Bunter.

The danger was past, but Bunter did not realise it for the moment. He yelled and roared.

Harry Wharton drew the horse to a roadside fence, and secured the reins to it. The runaway was a prisoner now. Then the juniors gathered round the dismounted horseman.

"All serene now, Mr. Whiffles," said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle.

"You sat down rather hard," agreed Bob.

"Beast!"

"Eh?"

"Ow! I'm hurt!"

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

Not only was Mr. Whiffles' fat voice just like Billy Bunter's, but his expressions were the same. And his gratitude for services rendered was on the same scale.

"You silly ass, Wharton!" howled Bunter.

"Wha-a-t?"

"Couldn't you stop that beastly horse without pitching me off, you silly chump?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"You silly idiot!"

"Is that the way you say thank you, Mr. Whiffles?" asked the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Yah! Go and eat coke!"

"The thankfulness of the esteemed Whiffles is not terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a grin.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"I say, Mr. Whiffles, are you any relation of Billy Bunter?" asked Frank Nugent, staring at the fat showman. "You've got his voice to a 'T.'"

"Don't be an ass, Nugent! Ow! I'm hurt! Lot you beasts care, standing round grinning like a lot of Cheshire cheese—I mean, Cheshire cats! Wow! Ow! Where's my specs?"

Bunter glared round in search of his big spectacles. He had left them somewhere in the village street, nearly a quarter of a mile behind.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Good-bye, Mr. Whiffles."

"Don't go, you beasts! Find my specs," roared Bunter. "I can't see without my beastly specs, can I? Look for them! Even you silly dummies ought to have sense enough to find a pair of specs."

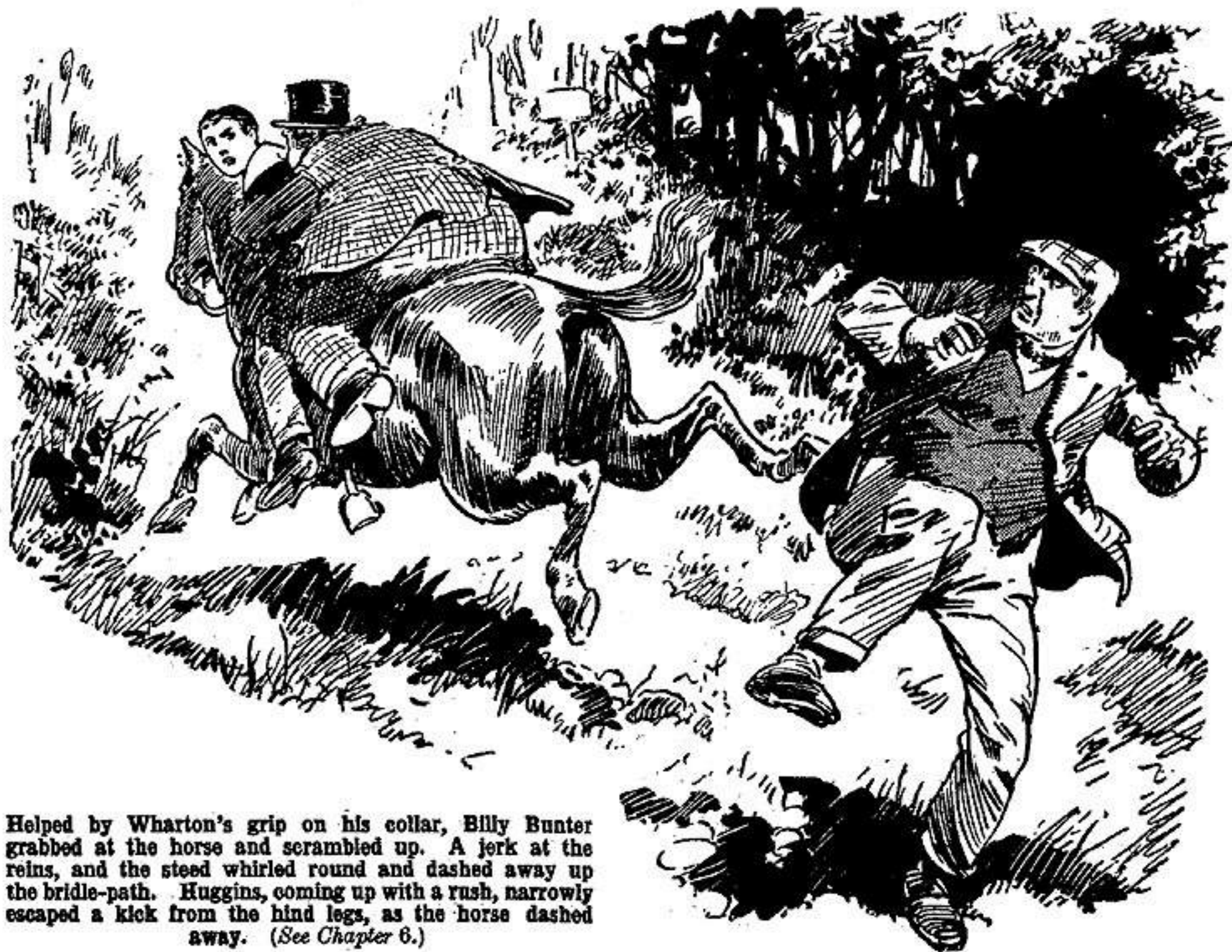
"We might look for them, if we were asked nicely," said Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows, do find my specs! I—I'll give you free passes for the circus if you find them. Oh dear!"

Bunter staggered to his feet.

He was rather winded, and rather bumped, but not really much damaged. But the loss of his specs was a serious matter. With them, Bunter was a good deal like an owl in the daylight. Without them, he was quite at a loss.

Harry Wharton & Co. good-naturedly proceeded to look for the specs. Mr. Whiffles' manner could not be considered good, but they could feel for a middle-aged, short-sighted gentleman who had lost his specs. Certainly Bunter was not likely to find them, even had they been



Helped by Wharton's grip on his collar, Billy Bunter grabbed at the horse and scrambled up. A jerk at the reins, and the steed whirled round and dashed away up the bridle-path. Huggins, coming up with a rush, narrowly escaped a kick from the hind legs, as the horse dashed away. (See Chapter 6.)

at hand. He needed them to see them with, which made the matter difficult.

But the Famous Five of Greyfriars hunted in vain for the missing specs. They searched through the grass, and rooted along the road, but nothing was to be seen of the spectacles.

They spent a quarter of an hour in the search, while the fat gentleman sat on the fence and rested.

"Nothing doing," said Harry Wharton at last. "Sorry, Mr. Whiffles, you must have dropped them along the road some distance off, I fancy. Can't see a sign of them."

"You silly chump!"

"Look here—"

"You frabjous ass!"

Wharton looked at him.

"Come on," said Bob Cherry. "Time we got going."

"Don't go, you silly idiots!" howled Bunter.

"Ta-ta, old bean!" said Bob.

"I say, you fellows, hold on! Look here. How am I going to get back to the circus?" howled Bunter.

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Bob.

"Beast!"

"He must be a relation of Bunter's," said Frank Nugent, with conviction. "He's got his voice and all his funny little tricks. Just the same manners, too—if they can be called manners."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter never let on that he had relations in the circus business," remarked Johnny Bull. "But that would account for his going away with the circus, as we know he jolly well did."

"So it would," agreed Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows, don't jaw," said Bunter. "You fellows are like a sheep's head—nearly all jaw, you know. Keep your cackle for the Remove passage. I say, if my specs are lost, what am I going to do?"

"The answer is a lemon," said Bob Cherry humorously.

"Beast! Look here. I can't ride that horse back—I mean, without my specs. I shall have to get some more specs. See?"

Harry Wharton smiled.

"I'll tell you what," he said. "One of us will ride to the circus on this horse and fetch you some specs if you like, if you've got another pair at home, Mr. Whiffles."

"Oh, don't be an ass! You can't ride for toffee!"

"How the thump do you know whether I can ride or not?" demanded Wharton.

"I—I mean—"

"Well, what the dickens do you mean?"

"Well, you look such a silly ass, you know," said Bunter. "You'd fall off to begin with. Besides, that's a beastly, wild, savage horse."

"The horse is all right. It's the rider that's no good."

"You cheeky ass!"

"Well, do you want one of us to fetch your specs or not?" asked Harry impatiently. He was getting fed-up with Mr. Whiffles. "If you like I'll fetch them while you wait here."

"How can I wait here while you go twenty miles, you chump?" howled Bunter. "My other glasses are at home."

"Eh? The circus isn't half a mile from here."

"Oh, I—I mean—"

Bunter stuttered.

He had a second pair of spectacles, of which he was now in dire need; but they were at home, not in Mr. Whiffles' caravan home, naturally, but in Billy Bunter's own home—the Bunter villa, which, in Bunter's vivid imagination, was dignified by the style and title of

Bunter Court. And the Bunter villa was certainly twenty miles away.

"Did we come out for a walk or for a conversazione?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Well, what can we do for you, Mr. Whiffles?" asked Wharton.

Bunter tried to think it out. Somehow or other he had to get that pair of spectacles from home. That was certain.

"I'll telephone," he exclaimed at last. "Sammy will send them to me if I phone."

"Sammy?" exclaimed all the juniors together.

"I—I mean," Bunter stammered again, "I—I mean, I—I'll telephone to—to this is, I mean— Look here, Wharton. I'll come along to the Lodge and use the telephone. It's only a few minutes' walk."

"You seem to know all about it," said Wharton blankly. How Mr. Whiffles knew anything about his home was a mystery to him.

"Oh, really, you know— Look here, we're wasting time. One of you fellows lead that horse. I don't want to go near him—I mean, I can't lead him without my specs. Come on!"

And Billy Bunter started up the road towards Wharton Lodge, leaving the Famous Five staring after him in blank astonishment.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Just Like Bunter!

"WELL, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton. The coolness of Whiffles fairly took his breath away.

Evidently the fat gentleman was taking it for granted that he could use the telephone at Wharton Lodge if he liked, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,072.

and equally for granted that the juniors were going to give up their morning ramble and accompany him, one of them leading the horse. Such coolness in Billy Bunter would not have been surprising; in fact, it would have been quite like him. But in a comparative stranger like Mr. Whiffles it was very surprising indeed.

"He's a relation of Bunter's," said Bob Cherry. "He's got his voice, his funny ways, his manners and customs, and his cheek. Must be an uncle or something, and Bunter was keeping it dark. That's why the fat bouncer cleared off with the circus. Bunter must have told him about us. He knows all about us as well as Bunter does. I say, what are we going to do, Wharton? Walk back with him?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"May as well," he said. "He's in a bit of a fix without his goggles, and it's up to us to help him if we can. But of all the cheek—"

"Of all the cheek—" said Nugent.

"The cheekfulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton unhitched the horse and mounted it. Mr. Whiffles' horse had played fantastic tricks with Bunter on his back, but he tried no tricks with the captain of the Greyfriars Remove. Wharton could ride, and it was easier to ride the horse than to lead him. He walked the steed after Bunter, the other juniors walking along by his side. Billy Bunter blinked round at them.

"I say, you fellows, come on! Old Wharton won't know me—I mean—"

"Do you mean my uncle?" asked Harry.

"Yes, ass!"

"Then don't speak of him like that, Mr. Whiffles, please."

"Oh, rats! Look here. Come on! I've got to make Sammy bring me my specs, and the lazy little beast won't hurry—you know Sammy."

"Do you mean Sammy Bunter?"

"Eh? Oh, yes—no. No, I—I mean another Sammy," stammered Bunter.

"I've never heard of Sammy Bunter. Who is he?"

"Why the dickens can't you own up that you're a relation of the Bunter's?" growled Johnny Bull. "It's clear enough, Mr. Whiffles."

Mr. Whiffles grinned.

"The—fact is, I'm a relation," he said. "I'm Billy Bunter's father—I mean, uncle. His uncle, you know. That's how it is."

"And Bunter's at the circus all this time, just as we thought when he cleared off from Greyfriars?" exclaimed Bob.

"Eh? No—yes—nothing of the kind. I've never seen him in my life."

"You've never seen your own nephew in your life?" roared Bob.

"Oh, I—I—I mean, you'd better get off that horse, Wharton. You'll be falling off in a minute."

"I'll get off when I fall off," said Harry, laughing.

"Well, don't blame me if you break your neck. You can't ride for toffee, any more than you can play cricket!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Set of silly fatheads all round," said Bunter. "That's my opinion, if you want to know it."

And Bunter tramped on again, the juniors following him. But for the outward aspect of Mr. Whiffles, which completely and totally disguised Billy Bunter from all knowledge, the Famous Five certainly would have thought they were dealing with the Owl of the Remove. As it was, they readily swallowed the explanation that Mr. Whiffles was Bunter's uncle. The family resemblance was striking—not in looks, but in manners and customs. But for the fact that Mr. Whiffles was—or seemed to be—a middle-aged gentleman, the juniors would undoubtedly have told him what they thought of him and his manners. As it was they smiled cheerily and followed him up the road to Wharton Lodge. The Lodge was soon reached, and Bunter rolled in at

the gates like a fellow who knew his way about there. Bunter had been at Wharton Lodge often enough in holidays. Four members of the Co. stayed at the gates, one of them holding the horse, while Harry walked up to the horse with Mr. Whiffles.

Colonel Wharton met them on the drive and glanced very curiously at the fat gentleman. His nephew explained how matters stood.

"By all means," said the colonel courteously. "You are very welcome to use the telephone, sir. Take Mr. Whiffles to the house, Harry."

"This way, Mr. Whiffles," said Harry.

"Think I don't know the way?" grunted Bunter, as he followed the captain of the Remove.

"Eh? I don't see how you could."

"I—I—I mean, of—of course, I don't! That's what I really meant to say," stammered Bunter.

"Oh!" said Wharton.

The door stood open, and he led Mr. Whiffles into the old hall of the Lodge. The telephone was in a little room opening off the hall; and Mr. Whiffles started towards that room at once, Wharton staring after him. It was absolutely inexplicable how Mr. Whiffles knew where the telephone was, in a house that he was supposed never to have entered before. Bunter opened the door of the telephone cabinet and went in, and then blinked round at the captain of the Remove.

"I say, Wharton, sheer off!"

"What?"

"You get away from this door. See? What I've got to say on the phone is private."

Wharton coloured.

"If you weren't old enough to be my father, Mr. Whiffles, I should punch your nose," he said.

"Eh?" Bunter was glad, at the moment, that he looked old enough to be Wharton's father. "I—I say, what are you getting your rag out for? Just like you, snapping a fellow's head off. You all over!"

"You'd better get to the telephone," said Harry, and he walked across the hall, leaving the width of it between him and Bunter.

Billy Bunter gave him a suspicious blink, went into the telephone cabinet and shut the door carefully behind him. Then he picked up the receiver and asked for a number. It was a trunk call, and Bunter had to wait. He opened the door again, and blinked out into the hall. Wharton was at a distance.

"I—I say, Wharton—"

Wharton looked round.

"Did you hear the number I asked for?" demanded Bunter.

"Of course not!" snapped Harry.

"It wasn't Redgate 101?" said Bunter cautiously.

Wharton stared at him. He was aware that Redgate 101 was the telephone number of Mr. Bunter's house in Surrey. Bunter had made that fact known at Greyfriars.

"Nothing of the kind, you know," said Bunter, blinking at him.

"No business of mine, Mr. Whiffles," said Harry, half-laughing. The manners and customs of Mr. Whiffles undoubtedly were remarkably like unto Billy Bunter's. The more Wharton saw of him the more that was borne in upon his mind. Fatuous fibbing was a chief characteristic of W. G. Bunter, and evidently of this fat gentleman also.

"If you think I'm telephoning to Sammy Bunter you're mistaken, that's all!" added the fat gentleman, as if

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Sexton Blake versus Zenith the Albino in a Story of Strange Mystery and Clever Deduction.

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Dr. Ferraro, Master of Mystery, pits his wits against Sexton Blake, and the result is gripping and enthralling in the extreme.



to clinch the matter. "I don't even know his telephone number. See?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I—"

The bell rang and Bunter popped in again and shut the door after him. He grabbed the receiver.

"Hallo! Is that Redgate 101? Is that Sammy?"

"Is that you, Billy?" It was the voice of Bessie Bunter. "I say, you're not coming home, are you?"

"No."

"Good!"

"Cat!"

"Brute!"

"Look here, Bessie, tell Sammy to come to the phone. I want to speak to Sammy. Buck up! It's important."

"Sammy's in the garden."

"Well, call him!" snapped Bunter.

"I don't suppose he'll come when I tell him it's you."

Bunter breathed hard.

"Look here, Bessie, it's awfully important—frightfully important! I'm in a fearful fix!"

"Sammy wouldn't lend you anything. Besides, he's stony."

"Tain't that!" howled Bunter. "I've got lots of money—tons!"

"Then you can send me that five shillings you owe me," said Miss Bessie Bunter promptly. "Don't bring it, send it!"

"Cat!"

"Brute!"

"I—I mean, I'll send it at once, Bessie. I'll send it off by the next post, old girl! Call Sammy!"

"Well, I'll call him, but I don't suppose he'll come," said Bessie. And there was silence. Apparently Miss Bunter had gone to call Samuel Bunter, of the Second Form at Greyfriars, now enjoying his holidays at the Bunter home. And Billy Bunter waited anxiously. There was the sound of a voice on the phone, and he ejaculated:

"You've kept me waiting, you beast!"

"Sir!"

It was a feminine voice, in indignant tones.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Will you have another three minutes?" asked the feminine voice, in icy tones.

The young lady at the exchange seemed cross.

"Oh, yes!"

Bunter did not care how many trunk calls piled up, of course. He did not have to pay the telephone bill at Wharton Lodge. He stood clutching the receiver and waiting, wishing from the bottom of his heart that he were near enough to Sammy of the Second to stir him into activity with a brotherly kick.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Sammy!

"**T**HAT you, Billy?"

It was Sammy Bunter's voice at last.

"Yes, you little fat beast!"

gasped Bunter. "What have you kept me waiting all this time for? I say, Sammy, I want you to do something for me."

"Oh, I know that," said Sammy cheerily. "You wouldn't have rung up if you didn't. Sure you don't want to ask how I am, and how I'm enjoying the hols?"

Sammy was pleased to be sarcastic.

"Oh! Yes, of course! How are you enjoying yourself, Sammy?"

"Fine!" said Sammy. "You can't

imagine how nice it is at home now, Billy! You'd stay away oftener if you knew!"

"You cheeky little beast!"

"Is that all?" asked Sammy. "Good-bye!"

"Hold on!" gasped Bunter. "I say, Sammy, you must do something for me. I'll pay the expenses."

"What with?" asked Sammy.

"I've got lots of money now."

"Whose?"

"I don't want any of your Second Form cheek, you little beast! Look here, I've lost my specs."

"He, he, he!"

Sammy Bunter seemed to find something entertaining in that. Brotherly love was not highly developed in the Bunter clan.

"You know where to find my second pair in my room, Sammy. I simply must have them! I want you to bring them to me."

"Catch me!"

"I'll lend you a quid, Sammy. I'll stand you a feed when you get here—as much cake as you can eat—and ice-creams."

"That sounds all right," said Sammy Bunter. "Where are you? How am I to get there? The pater said you were in Sussex."

"I'm in Surrey now, near Redgate—the other side of Redgate—less than twenty miles. You could bike it—"

"I can see myself doing it!"

"Well, there's trains."

"What about the fare?"

"I'll pay the fare when you get here."

"That's all right; only railway fares have to be paid in advance," chuckled Sammy.

"Well, you little beast, can't you pay the fare and trust me to square when you get here?" demanded Bunter indignantly.

"No jolly fear! Besides, I haven't the tin. My last bob went on ice-creams this morning."

"You guzzling little pig!"

"Well, I like that!" said Sammy.

"What about you? Talk about guzzling! Of all the guzzling porkers—"

"Never mind now, Sammy. Look here, take a taxi."

"Take a taxi twenty miles!" yelled Sammy.

"Yes, old chap. Expense doesn't matter! I'll pay at this end—see?"

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"Your little joke! He, he, he!"

"I mean it!" hooted Bunter. "I tell you I've got tons of money—as much as I like!"

"Gammon!"

"It's true!" howled Bunter.

"Held up a bank?" asked Sammy sarcastically. "You can't have become a cat burglar! You're too fat. Is there such a thing as a pig burglar? That would be about your mark!"

"Look here, you cheeky little rotter—"

"Will you have another three minutes?" came the feminine voice, interrupting.

"Eh! Yes! Blow you! I mean, yes! Sammy, you're running up a bill here, with your silly burbling! Look here, take a taxi, and bring me my specs, and don't lose a minute!"

"Oh, come off!" said Sammy. "It would cost pounds!"

"Pounds are nothing to me!" said Bunter loftily. "When I want money, I simply have to ask my manager!"

"Your what?" howled Sammy.

"I—I mean—" Bunter realised that Sammy wanted a lot of convincing. Sam knew his elder brother so well.

Sammy had no objection to taking a taxi ride for twenty miles. What he objected to was being left with the taximan to pay at the end of those miles. Bunter understood that he had to reassure Bunter minor on that important point! "Look here, Sammy! I've got a job—a sort of job—at a circus!"

"Whiffles! Circus?" exclaimed Sammy. "Then you did clear off with the circus when you scooted away from school? I say, Quelchy says that you won't be allowed back next term!"

"Blow next term! Blow Quelchy! Look here, I've got a job at the circus, and I'm rolling in oof!"

"In the menagerie?" asked Sammy.

"Don't be a cheeky little beast! Bring me my specs, and I'll stand the taxi fare here and home again, and stand you a topping feed—see?"

"Well, if it's gammon, I shall have to let the taximan tackle the pater when I get back," said Sammy. "He will stop it out of your allowance next term."

"That's all right!" said Bunter. "I keep on telling you I've tons of money. You ought to be glad to come and see me, your only brother, Sammy."

"So I am, if you've got tons of money," said Sammy.

"You're a mercenary little boast, Sammy. I mean, all right, old chap. Come through Redgate, and keep on; you'll find the circus pitched on a field near Wharton Magnus—the village near Wharton Lodge, you know. Ask for Mr. Whiffles?"

"Well, I'll do it," said Sammy. "If you're gammoning, it will bag all your allowance next term."

"That's all right! Start at once. Mind you don't forget to bring the specs."

"Right-ho!"

"You ought to get over here in an hour or so. Ask for Mr. Whiffles, and don't mention me. You'll see a big blue-and-red caravan. That's mine. Make haste, Sammy!"

And Bunter rang off, taking no heed of a feminine voice which was asking him again if he would have another three minutes.

He rolled out into the hall, feeling relieved and satisfied. He blinked round for Wharton. Without his specs Bunter's surroundings swam in a haze.

"Where's that beast got to—"

"Hallo! Finished, Mr. Whiffles?"

"Yes," grunted Bunter. "I say, I suppose old Wharton—"

"You suppose what?"

"I mean, I suppose Colonel Wharton won't mind letting me have the car back to the circus?" asked Bunter, blinking at the captain of the Remove. "I'm fed-up with that horse, and, of course, I can't walk."

Wharton gazed at the fat gentleman. His breath was almost taken away.

"Well?" snapped Bunter. "You're not dumb, I suppose? Ask your uncle to order the car—see?"

"I shall ask my uncle nothing of the sort," said Wharton curtly. "The sooner you start walking, Mr. Whiffles, the better!"

"Oh, really, you beast—"

"That's enough!" said Harry.

He walked out of the house, and Bunter, with an angry grunt, followed him. They rejoined the juniors who were waiting at the gates.

"That's your horse, if you want to lead him home, Mr. Whiffles," said Harry. "Good-bye!"

"One of you kids can lead him back," said Bunter. "I'll tip you half-a-crown for your trouble."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" Harry
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Wharton's patience was wearing rather thin.

"I'll make it five bob!"

"Cheese it!"

"Beast!"

Bunter rolled out at the gates.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What about this geegee?" called out Bob Cherry, who was holding the horse.

"Blow it, and blow you!"

Bunter did not mean to trust himself with that geegee any more. He rolled away towards the village, leaving Bob Cherry holding the horse and the Greyfriars juniors staring at one another. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles certainly would not have been so reckless of the horse; but what became of Mr. Whiffles' horse did not concern Billy Bunter very much. He rolled away regardless, and the juniors were left standing.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Asking for It!

MR. DANCE, the manager, stared at his boss as the latter came rolling wearily home. Bunter blinked at him morosely. Walking on a hot August day was tiring, and Bunter was tired; and, as a natural result, bad-tempered, moreover, the loss of his big specs was discomfiting. It was irritating to have to wait till Sammy arrived with the other pair from home, and it was annoying to have Sammy coming at all. Altogether it had not been a successful morning, and Bunter was very cross. "Where's the horse?" asked Mr. Dance.

Bunter blinked at him. When Bunter was without his specs all faces were the same to him—just blurs.

"Don't ask questions!" he snapped. "Get a lemon-squash, George, and buck up!"

"Eh!"

"I'm thirsty!" snapped Bunter. "If you want the sack, George, you've only got to hang about like a stuffed dummy when I give you an order—see?"

"I'm not George, you fat idiot!" said Dance. "Have you lost your spectacles?"

Bunter gave him a blink.

"Oh! Yes! Tell George to bring me a lemon-squash."

"But where's the horse?"

"Blow the horse! I preferred to walk back!"

"Look here, if the horse is lost—"

"Bother the horse! I can lose my own horses if I like. I suppose. Mind your own business, Dance! Send George with that lemon-squash, and shut up."

Bunter rolled into the blue-and-red caravan, and sat down to rest. He was in a bad temper, and had no politeness to waste on Mr. Dance. Dance's eyes glinted as he moved away. It suited Dance to have Bunter playing the part of Mr. Whiffles; the unscrupulous manager was feathering his own nest all the time, though Bunter did not realise it. But every now and then Dance was oppressed by an almost irresistible yearning to take the guv'nor by the scruff of the neck and shake him till his teeth rattled. He resisted that yearning; but he felt that it would be too strong for him some day.

George brought the lemon-squash, and Bunter sipped it and scowled. He was tired, and he had had a heavy bump when he alighted from the horse. And he wanted his specs, and he had a misgiving that Sammy Bunter would not hurry along with them.

He had impressed upon Sammy the importance of haste; but he knew Sammy.

It would be quite like Sammy to leave it till after lunch. Sammy was greedy. The thought of lunch, however, cheered Bunter. Cooking was going on, and pleasant scents were wafted to him as he sat in his van. Wherever the circus moved, since Bunter had been in control, the commissariat had been run on a lavish scale. So far as tuck was concerned, Billy Bunter was having the time of his life. As he thought of that the smiles returned to his fat face.

His misgiving with regard to Sammy was justified. No taxicab came buzzing from the direction of Redgate.

Dinner-time came round, and still there was no Sammy.

Still, dinner was a great comfort—a very great one. Bunter ate, and was happy. Afterwards he took a nap, and the circus was entertained by a deep, rumbling snore from Mr. Whiffles' caravan. And when the long, long nap was over there was tea and cake. Still Sammy had not appeared in the offing. The afternoon performance at the circus was now on. Dance, in charge of the ring, and strains of music came from the big tent, and the galloping of horses. Bunter rolled out of his van and blinked across the field towards the road. Motor-cars whizzed by in the distance, but none stopped at the circus. No taxicab came with Sammy and the specs.

"Beast!" growled Bunter.

He walked down to the road at last, and stood blinking along it in the direction of Redgate. That was the way Sammy would come—when he came. Evidently he was not hurrying himself.

Bunter walked along the road towards the distant town. Sammy could not be long now, even if he had stayed at home for lunch and a rest afterwards. It occurred to Bunter that it would be a good idea to meet Sammy before he arrived at the circus. Sammy was an inquisitive little beast. That sort of thing ran in the Bunter family. He did not want Sammy to spot how matters stood at the circus. If Sammy discovered the state of affairs there, it would be just like him to stick, and not go home at all.

Sammy, as Bunter sadly reflected, was always on the make. So different from his brother Billy. It was much better to keep him away from the circus. The only real use Sammy was was to bring Bunter the much-needed specs. After that the sooner he disappeared into space the better. Bunter rolled along the road, hoping every moment to spot the taxicab coming along, with the exasperating Sammy in it. Even without his specs he would know Sammy as soon as he saw him. The circumference of the Bunters leaped to the eye, even a short-sighted eye.

Half a mile from the circus Bunter reached a spot where two roads branched. On a patch of grass in the middle was a signpost, which told which was the Redgate road—to everybody but Bunter. Bunter could not read the sign.

In the grass at the foot of the post a roughly-dressed man was lying asleep, with a battered hat over his face. He looked like a tramp. Bunter halted quite close to him and stood blinking up at the sign. It was no use. The lettering on it was only a blur to Bunter. He blinked at the man sleeping in the grass. A tip to the tramp would work the oracle, and Bunter had money in his pockets these days.

"Here, you wake up!" called out Bunter, stirring the man in the ribs with his foot.

The man grunted and awoke.

He threw aside the battered hat and sat up in the grass and stared at Bunter.

Then an extraordinary expression came over his face.

It was not a pleasant face. It was beetle-browed, with a square, stubby jaw and a broken nose.

Those details were lost on Bunter. At the present moment the face was to him a misty blur. That this shabby tramp was Bill Huggins, the ruffian, who had vowed vengeance on Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, did not occur to him for a moment. He had almost forgotten Bill Huggins by this time, though he was aware that it was the terror of the broken-nosed ruffian that was keeping the real Mr. Whiffles in hiding away from the circus.

"My eye!" murmured Huggins, staring blankly at the fat gentleman, whom he, like all the world-famous circus, believed to be Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

"I say, my man, tell me what's on this signpost, will you?" asked Bunter. "I'll stand you sixpence."

"My eye!" repeated Mr. Huggins, staring at Bunter, as if the fat face with its waxed moustache fascinated him.

Bill Huggins could scarcely believe in his good luck. He was hanging about the circus, waiting for a chance at the "guv'nor" who had sent him to "three months hard." And here was the guv'nor walking right into his hands on a lonely road. The ferocity in Mr. Huggins' battered countenance would have terrified Bunter could he have seen it.

"Do you hear me?" said Bunter irritably. "I've lost my specs and can't read the sign. See?"

"Oh, my eye!" said Mr. Huggins.

Bunter started.

He had heard that expressive expression before, and the voice sounded familiar to his ears.

He blinked at Mr. Huggins with a startled blink.

"I—I—I say, who are you?" he stammered.

Bill Huggins grinned and rose slowly to his feet. Bunter backed away in alarm.

"I—I—I say—"

"'Ere you are, are you, guv'nor?" grinned Huggins. "Walking right into a man's 'ands—what? My eye!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

He knew who it was now. His fat knees knocked together. He blinked at Bill Huggins with his little round eyes almost starting from his head.

"I—I—I say— Oh dear! Ow! You! Oh my hat! I say—"

"Strike me pink, if this ain't luck!" chuckled Mr. Huggins. "I dessay you've got the peelers arter me, Whiffles. But there ain't any peelers 'ere now. 'Ere's the bloke you sent up for three months. Now I'm jest going to smash you into little pieces, Whiffles! I'm going to bash your nose through the back of your 'ead!"

"Yarooogh!"

Bunter jumped away as Mr. Huggins advanced on him with a ferocious grin. He made a desperate rush to escape.

Tramp, tramp, tramp! came the heavy footsteps of Mr. Huggins behind him.

In a few moments he felt the grasping hand of the ruffian at his shoulder. In sheer terror he collapsed in the road, and Mr. Huggins, going too fast to stop, stumbled over him and went headlong. There was a roar from Huggins as his bullet head banged on the hard high road.

Bunter usually did not move quickly.



Mr. Huggins darted across the grass, and sprang at a fence to clamber over it. But he was not quite quick enough. Before he could clear the fence Bob Cherry had grasped his ankles. The burly Huggins came down from the fence with great velocity. "Ow!" he roared. (See Chapter 9.)

But circumstances alter cases. Now he was on his feet again with the speed of lightning.

Huggins was sprawling in the road, howling out expressive expressions. Bunter gave him one wild blink, and darted into a grassy path leading into the wood beside the country road. He knew that he had no chance in a foot-race with the ruffian, and he had some vague idea of climbing a tree. He bolted into the shady bridle-path, and there was a shout.

"Look out!"

"Ow!"

Bunter, narrowly escaping a collision with a horseman who was riding down the path to the road, rolled over in the grass, roaring.

"Yow-ow! Help!"

"Great Scott!"

Harry Wharton reined in the horse and stared down at the sprawling figure in amazement.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

"MY hat! Whiffles!" Harry Wharton stared at him.

"Yow-ow! Help!"

"What's the row now, Mr. Whiffles?" asked Harry.

"Groogh! Help!"

"I'm bringing your horse back as you didn't send for him," Wharton explained. "You jolly nearly ran into me."

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!"

Wharton looked round in astonishment. He could see the white road stretching past the end of the bridle-

path, but for the moment Bill Huggins was not in sight. Wharton was on his way to the circus, to take back the horse Mr. Whiffles had left behind. It was quite a good horse, for a fellow who knew how to ride, and Wharton had taken a rather round-about way by the bridle-paths through the woods, which was more agreeable than trotting along a high road haunted by cars. It was fortunate for William George Bunter that he had done so.

Bunter staggered to his feet.

"I say— Help! That beast Huggins— Oh dear! He's after me again. Who are you? Help!"

There were heavy, trampling footsteps on the road and a hoarse, shouting voice.

"He's coming!" gasped Bunter.

"Help! Oh crumbs! Ow!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Wharton, as he caught sight of Mr. Huggins. The ruffian came plunging from the sunlit road into the shady path.

Wharton knew him at once as the ruffian from whom the Famous Five had rescued Mr. Whiffles a few days before.

With his comrades to help him, Wharton would have tackled him willingly enough. But his chums were playing tennis at Wharton Lodge, far away. And the captain of the Remove, sturdy as he was, would have been helpless in an encounter with the broken-nosed ruffian. There was no time to spare, and Wharton acted quickly.

"Mr. Whiffles! Quick! Jump up!"

"Eh? What? Help!"

Wharton leaned down and grasped him by the collar.

"Get on—quick!"

"Oh! Ow! Wow!"

Terror sharpened Bunter's wits. He grabbed at the horse and scrambled up, helped by Wharton's grip on his collar. He sprawled across the horse behind Wharton, who whirled the steed round, and dashed away again up the bridle-path.

He was only in time. Huggins, coming on with a rush, narrowly escaped a kick from the hind legs as the horse dashed away.

There was a yell of wrath from Mr. Huggins, and he rushed in pursuit. But the galloping horse very soon left him behind.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" came from Billy Bunter as he sprawled and clutched and gasped for breath. "Oh! Ow! Wow! Yow-ow!"

Wharton glanced back.

Huggins had disappeared from sight in the winding path through the wood. He slackened speed.

"All serene now, Mr. Whiffles," he said.

"Yow-ow-ow! Keep on! Get back to the circus!" gasped Bunter. "Don't stop! Ow! Help! Keep on!"

Harry Wharton laughed, and rode on. He knew all the paths for miles round Wharton Lodge, and he picked one that led in the direction of the circus camp. When he came out on the road at last, the circus tent was in sight, and the music reached his ears. He pulled in the horse.

"Here's the circus, Mr. Whiffles," he said. "You're all right now. Better get down. You don't want to arrive in this style."

"Sure he's gone?" gasped Bunter.

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"He's a mile off."
 "Oh, good! Oh, dear!"
 Bunter slid to the ground.
 "I—I say, stick to me till I get in!" he gasped. "That beast may turn up again! It's all Sammy's fault! I'll punch his head! Oh, dear!"

"Any old thing," said Harry.
 He dismounted and took the reins over his arm, leading the horse to the circus camp. Bunter limping and gasping by his side. Wharton looked at him, and started, and grinned.

"I say, Mr. Whiffles—"  "Don't jaw! Let's get in!" gasped Bunter.

"Haven't you better put your moustache straight first?"
 "Eh?"

"It's a bit sideways," grinned Wharton. "I thought I'd mention it before you show up at the circus."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He grabbed at his moustache. Wig and beard, fortunately, were still in place, but the waxed moustache was on one side of Bunter's fat little nose. Bunter set it right.

"I—I say, this—this isn't a false moustache, you know!" he gasped.

"Isn't it?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Nunno! Nothing of the kind! And if you think I'm wearing a wig, you're jolly well mistaken."

"Oh, my hat!"

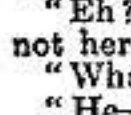
"Nothing of the sort! Moustaches g-g-g-go like this sometimes, you know."

"Do they?" stuttered Wharton.

"Oh! Yes! Besides, mind your own business! I suppose I can stick on a moustache if I like, and a beard too if I want to. Not that I'm doing anything of the kind, you know."

"Oh!" said Harry.

Bunter rolled on hurriedly to his van. There was a roar of cheering in the big tent, which was crowded by the local inhabitants. A man came up to take the horse from Wharton. Bunter rolled into his caravan, gasping for breath. On the road, at a little distance, a taxicab stopped, and a fat youth rolled out of it, staring towards the circus tent. Wharton, as he sighted him, recognised Sammy Bunter, of the Second Form at Greyfriars. Then he looked into the blue-and-red caravan.

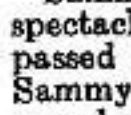
"Mr. Whiffles—"  "Grooogh!"

"I'm going back through the village," said Harry. "Would you like me to call in at the police-station and tell them about that man Huggins. The sooner he's run in the better."

"Oh! Yes! Do!" gasped Bunter.

"Right-ho!"

Wharton walked away towards the road. The taxicab was waiting by the roadside, and Sammy Bunter was blinking round him through the big spectacles that were so like William George's. He stared at the captain of the Remove, and called to him.

"Hallo! I say, Wharton—"  "Hallo, Sammy!" said Wharton, stopping.

"Is this Whiffles' Circus?"

"Yes."

"Good! Seen Billy about?"

"Billy! No! Is he here?"

"Well, he said he was," answered Sammy.

"That would make me think he wasn't, of course, only I know he must be. He told me to ask for Mr. Whiffles' caravan. Know where it is?"

"There it is," said Harry, pointing.

"The blue-and-red one yonder. Mr. Whiffles is there, but I don't think your major is."

"Well, he must be here somewhere!"

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said Sammy. "He's got to pay for the taxi! I suppose Whiffles knows?"

And Bunter minor rolled on towards the blue-and-red caravan, and Harry Wharton, in a very wondering frame of mind, walked away to the village.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Sammy Sticks!

"O H, dear! Beast! Oh, crumbs! Ow!"

Sammy Bunter grinned. As he approached the blue and-red caravan, a familiar voice reached his ears. Bunter, in a breathless state, was spluttering in the van, ignorant as yet of the fact that his minor was in the offing.

"Ow! Ow! Groogh! Beast! Oh, dear!"

Sammy chuckled.

"I say, Billy!" he called out. Wharton had told him that Mr. Whiffles was in the van, but not Bunter of the Remove. Evidently, however, Bunter Major was there now, as Sammy could hear his familiar dulcet tones. Bunter, in the van, gave a jump as he heard his minor's voice.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Is that you, Sammy?"

"Yes, old bean."

"Got the specs?"

"Yes, rather, Billy!"

Sammy Bunter clambered up the steps into the van. Then he blinked round him in amazement. A fat man who looked fifty years old, with a nut-brown head of hair, a waxed moustache, and a pointed beard, sat gasping in the chair. No one else was visible. In the confined space of a caravan there was no room for concealment for a fellow of Billy Bunter's ample proportions. Sammy blinked round him in wonder. Billy was there. He had heard his voice, and Billy had answered him. Yet he was not there! It really was enough to startle any fellow.

"I—I—I say—" stuttered Sammy.

"Give me the specs!" growled Bunter. "You've kept me waiting! Why didn't you come at once, you lazy little fat bouncer?"

"I—I say, where's Billy?" gasped Bunter minor.

"Eh? Oh! Nowhere! He—he—he's not here!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"He—he's gone for a walk, you know!" gasped Bunter. "Give me the specs. I've been waiting for them all day."

"You've been waiting?" gasped Sammy.

"Yes! You know I can't see without them, you fat idiot! What did you keep me waiting for?" demanded Bunter wrathfully. "It was all your fault I nearly got killed by a fearful ruffian! Oh, dear! Where's the specs?"

Sammy, with a dazed face, drew a spectacle-case from his pocket, and passed it to the fat man in the chair. Sammy's brain seemed to be turning round and round. This fat man was asking him for Billy's specs with Billy's voice. It was like some strange dream to Sammy Bunter. He had seen Mr. Whiffles when the circus was near Greyfriars. He knew Mr. Whiffles again at once. But what did Mr. Whiffles want with Billy's specs? And what was he doing with Billy's voice? Sammy almost fell down in his astonishment.

Bunter opened the case, took out the glasses, and jammed them on his fat, little nose with great relief and satisfaction.

"That's better!" he said.

Sammy gazed at him in a trance.

Mr. Whiffles blinked at him through Bunter's spectacles.

"You little fat rotter!" he said. "I've a jolly good mind not to pay the taxi now. I suppose you came in a taxi?"

"Yes!" gasped Sammy, still in a trance.

"I told you to come at once, you lazy little slacker! I've a jolly good mind to punch your head for keeping me waiting like this!" snapped Bunter. "You always were an inconsiderate little beast, Sammy!"

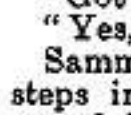
Sammy could not speak.

He could only stare.

Obviously, it was his brother Billy who was talking to him. There was no doubt about that. There couldn't be. But what was his brother Billy doing with the outward semblance of Mr. Whiffles? Where was the real Mr. Whiffles, if Billy was here in his caravan got up like him? What did it all mean, anyhow? Sammy's fat brain was in a whirl of bewilderment.

"Billy!" he gasped, at last.

Bunter started. He had forgotten for the moment the part he was playing. Bunter belonged to that class of persons who proverbially ought to have good memories; but sometimes have bad memories, and thereby get into difficulties.

"Oh," gasped Bunter, "I—I—I—" 

"Billy!" repeated Sammy, parrot-like in his amazement. "Billy, oh, crikey—Billy! You, Billy!"

"I'm not Billy!" gasped Bunter. "Don't be a silly idiot, Sammy! How could I be Billy when I'm Whiffles?"

"You—you—you're Whiffles!" articulated Sammy.

"Yes, of course! The boss of this circus," answered Bunter. "Anybody here can tell you I'm Whiffles."

"Oh, crikey!" said Sammy.

"How much was the taxi?" asked Bunter. "I'll give you your fare back, of course Sammy. And a quid over. I've got lots of money now. I'd have stood you a spread if you'd come earlier. Now I won't! The sooner you get off the better. You'll be late back. Bessie will be anxious about you. You'll hardly get back before the pater comes home from the City, anyhow. Get a move on!"

Sammy did not get a move on.

He sat down on the bed-ottoman in the caravan, and blinked at Mr. Whiffles with wide-open, staring eyes.

"What's this game?" he gasped.

"Game! There's no game! I'm Whiffles!"

"You're Billy!"

"You young ass! Do I look like Billy?"

"No, you don't," said Sammy. "Not a bit like him. But you're Billy. You know you are! How did you get yourself up like that?"

"I didn't! I—I wasn't! I'm Whiffles! Look here, Sammy, you get out! Bessie will be wondering what's become of you."

"She won't. Besides, if you're Whiffles, what do you know about Bessie?"

"Oh, I—I mean,—that is, I—I—" stammered Bunter. "I—I don't know anything about Bessie. Of—of course, I don't. Never heard the name."

"He, he, he!"

"Don't sit there cackling, you fat little beast! Get out of it!"

"I'm jolly well going to know what this game is!" said Sammy. "You've got a wig on, Billy."

"I haven't!" gasped Bunter. "Nothing of the sort! Don't I keep on

telling you I'm Whiffles? I'm the boss here!"

"Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia!" said Sammy. "This beats it! You're Billy, got up as Whiffles! Great pip! Where's Whiffles all the time? Why is he letting you do it? Is this the job you told me you'd got?"

"No. Yes. Exactly. I—I say, Sammy, it's time you were off. You'll be late home."

Sammy chuckled.

"What about tea?" he asked.

"Tea! You can't stop for tea, old chap! Look here, I'll walk down to the taxi with you and see you off. Think of Bessie worrying about what's become of you, Sammy."

"She won't worry," said Sammy cheerfully. "If I don't get back to tea she will have all the cake. That will suit her."

"But if the pater comes home and finds you're still out—"

"He won't mind. In fact, he's asked me twice if there isn't any friend of mine at Greyfriars who'd like to have me home with him for part of the vac."

"But the mater, old chap. Think of the mater. I'm surprised at you, Sammy, making your poor old mother anxious like this."

"That's all right. The mater told me this afternoon that if I didn't make less noise in the house she would ask Dr. Locke to keep me at school over next holidays."

Sammy seemed to have an answer ready for all objections. Billy Bunter glared at him wrathfully. He had had a misgiving that Sammy might stick. That misgiving was fully justified. Sammy was sticking.

"Look here, Sammy, you've got to clear!" hooted Bunter, quite forgetting in his wrath and excitement that he was supposed to be Mr. Whiffles. "I'm fed-up with you, see? I get quite enough of you in the term at Greyfriars, if you want me to speak plainly, see?"

Sammy chortled.

"Making out you're Whiffles, and talking about the term at Greyfriars. Oh, my hat! You tell lies jolly badly, Billy, considering all the practice you've had."

"I—I—I mean—"

"Never mind what you mean," said Sammy cheerfully. "I'll tell you what I mean. I mean to have tea here. You've got on to a good thing. Well, I'm on to it, too. Is Whiffles paying you to do this?"

Bunter glared at him. In the circumstances, it really did not seem useful to maintain that he was Whiffles. Even a credulous fellow could scarcely have believed it. And Samuel Bunter was anything but credulous.

"No," he gasped—"I mean yes. That is—"

Sammy nodded sagely.

"I see! Whiffles wants to keep out of sight for some reason, and he's got you to stick here pretending you're him. What's the game? Somebody after him for money?"

"No, you young ass!"

"Not the police after him?" asked Sammy. "Has he done anything?"

"No!" hooted Bunter.

"Well, he must have some reason for letting you play this stunt," said Sammy. "I can't make it out."

"No bizney of yours, you prying little beast! Look here, Sammy, the fact is you're in danger if you stay here," said Bunter.

Sammy winked.

"I mean it! I'll tell you the whole truth," said Bunter impressively.

"I don't suppose you could if you

tried," remarked Bunter minor. "Still, go it, and get as near as you can!"

Bunter lowered his voice cautiously.

"That man Whiffles is in fearful danger," he said. "A frightful, fierce, ferocious murderer is after him."

"Oh, my hat!"

"He's hiding away in fear of his life," continued Bunter. "I'm taking his place to face the danger. You know my pluck."

"I do!" assented Sammy. "You could put it all in a nutshell, leaving plenty of room for a full-sized nut."

"You cheeky little fat monkey! I think it shows my pluck, when I'm taking old Whiffles' place and facing this fearful danger for him, while he stays in hiding," said Bunter. "I've had two narrow escapes already. Not that I care, of course. Danger doesn't worry me. But I'm worried about you Sammy. I don't want you to share my fearful danger."

"You mean you don't want me to share the loot?" asked Sammy.

"No!" roared Bunter.

"Well, I'll tell you what," said Sammy. "I'll help you face the danger. I'll stand by you, and back you up."

"You'd run away like a rabbit."

"Well, so would you. We'll run in company."

"Look here, Sammy—"

Sammy settled himself comfortably.

"You'd better go and pay that taxi, Billy! It will be running up all this time. Then we'll have tea."

Billy Bunter gave his minor a long, expressive look. Expressive looks were wasted on Sammy. He simply grinned, and gave his elder brother another fat wink.

Suppressing his feelings, William George Bunter left the van, and proceeded to pay off the taxi-man. Sammy remained grinning in the van.

As Billy Bunter had feared, he was sticking; and for the present, at least, there seemed no hope that he would come unstuck.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Explains!

"WHO'S this?"

Dance, the manager, asked that question, staring at Sammy Bunter.

The afternoon show at the circus was over. At a table set by the steps of the blue-and-red caravan, Mr. Whiffles and Sammy Bunter were at tea. George Mix, whose special duty it was to wait on Mr. Whiffles, was kept very busy. Almost as fast as he was able to put supplies on the table, they disappeared under the onslaughts of the two Bunters. Sammy's fat face wore an expansive and beatific grin. This was life! He had suspected that Billy was on a good thing! But he had never dreamed that it was such a good thing as this. Unlimited tuck appealed to Sammy as strongly as to his major. If Sammy had been resolved to stick before tea, he was doubly resolved as soon as he saw that tea, and started on it.

What it all meant, Sammy could not guess; he concluded that Mr. Whiffles had some personal reason for keeping out of sight, and had squared Billy to take his place. Anyhow, he was satisfied with matters as he found them. Billy obviously had power to order all he wanted—the lavish spread on the table proved that. That was enough for Sammy. The most devoted of brothers could not have stuck to William George

more devotedly than Sammy Bunter meant to stick to him now.

Dance stopped by the table, and stared at the fat fag. He had never seen Billy Bunter in his own proper person, so he did not recognise the resemblance, except in the matter of circumference.

"Oh, just a guest," he answered. "Sammy's staying to tea. He's going home after tea."

Dance looked hard at Sammy.

"A Greyfriars schoolboy?" he asked. "Yes. Pass the jam, Sammy."

"Here you are, old man. I'm not going home after tea," said Sammy. "I've come to stay with you, for a bit, old bean."

"Oh, really, Sammy—"

Dance glanced round. George had gone to the refreshment tent for more supplies, and was out of hearing.

"Does he know—?" he muttered, in Bunter's ear.

"That's all right," said Bunter. "Sammy will keep it dark. Don't you worry, Dance. This is my manager, Sammy. He knows! Nobody else knows, so mind you don't jaw."

"Right-ho, Billy, old bean," grinned Sammy, with his mouth full.

"Call me Mr. Whiffles, you fat dummy."

"I'll call you anything you like, old chap, so long as you stand me spreads like this," said Sammy amiably. "I say, I saw Wharton of the Remove when I came here. Does he know?"

"No, you ass! Not a word to those beasts."

"Look here, this won't do," muttered Dance.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Mind your own bizney," he answered. "I'm boss here, ain't I?"

Dance set his lips. He was about to speak again, but checked himself, as Nobby Nobbs, the clown, came up.

"Man wants to see you, guv'nor," he said to Bunter. "A policeman from the village."

"Oh, good," said Bunter. "Tell him to come along."

Mr. Nobbs went away, and Dance stared after him. A fat and rubicund village policeman was waiting near the circus tent.

"What does this mean?" asked Dance.

"What is a constable coming here for?"

"I told Wharton to send him," said Bunter. "That man Huggins got after me again this afternoon. I'm going to have him run in."

"You fat fool!" he hissed. "Send the man away."

"Oh, don't be a silly ass," said Bunter. "Do you think I'm going to have that fearful ruffian waylaying me every day? No fear."

"You born idiot! If Huggins is run in, Whiffles will come back," hissed Dance. "It's only his fear of Huggins that is keeping him away."

"Oh, my hat!" Bunter had forgotten that very obvious consideration. "Oh! But I tell you that man Huggins is dangerous! He—"

"Do you want Whiffles to come back and kick you out?"

"Oh! No! But—"

"Well he's just waiting for Huggins to be got out of the way," snarled Dance. "As soon as that happens, you'll see him here."

"Oh, crikey!"

Billy Bunter's hand, with a jam-tart in it, stopped half-way to his mouth. He blinked at Dance in dismay. Sammy went on with his tea; but he was listening with both his fat ears. He was learning things.

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"But—but I can't have that villain Huggins after me you know," stammered Bunter. "He's too jolly dangerous."

"If you don't send this man away, the game's up," hissed Dance. "Have a little sense, and a little pluck, you booby."

He said no more, as the village constable was now at hand. The plump policeman came up to Mr. Whiffles, touching his helmet.

"Mr. Whiffles?" he asked.

"That's me," said Bunter.

"Master Wharton, of Wharton Lodge, called on me this afternoon, sir. He informed me that I was wanted here."

"Oh! Did he?" gasped Bunter.

"A case of assault and battery, I understand, sir," said the constable, taking out a notebook. "A man named Huggins—"

"Oh!" gasped Billy Bunter.

"If you'll give me the details, sir, and a description of the man—"

Dance gave Bunter a fierce look of warning. Sammy contentedly munched jam-tarts. Bunter sat blinking in dismay. He was terrified of Mr. Huggins—as frightened of him as the real Mr. Whiffles was. But he realised that Huggins, dangerous as he was, was all that stood between him and the return of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, and the sudden end of his career as a circus boss. Had Mr. Huggins been at hand, at that moment, Bunter would not have hesitated. But Mr. Huggins was not at hand, the danger was not pressing. On the other hand, the advantages of his present position were very clear so long as he could make it last. Funk swayed Bunter in one direction; greed in another. The latter won.

"The—the—the fact is—" he stammered.

"Yes, sir!" the village constable wetted the end of his pencil. Cases of assault and battery seldom came his way, in the quiet Surrey village. He was quite keen to get on the track of the dangerous ruffian, of whom Harry Wharton had told him.

"The—the fact is, there—there isn't any Huggins!" gasped Bunter. He had made up his fat mind.

"Eh?"

"Nothing of the sort," said Bunter. "Never heard of such a man in my life."

The constable looked puzzled.

"But Master Wharton told me you had sent him to me, sir," he objected.

"Did he?"

"He did, sir. I understood—"

"I—I expect he was pulling your leg," said Bunter. "You know these—these schoolboys! Always playing practical jokes."

"What? Do you mean that you did not send Master Wharton to me this afternoon?" exclaimed the constable.

"Oh! No! Nothing of the sort. Who's Wharton? I don't know the name," said Bunter.

The constable closed his notebook with a snap.

"Then I've come here for nothing," he grunted.

"Exactly. Good-afternoon."

"You are sure, Mr. Whiffles—?"

"Oh! Quite."

"I shall speak very plainly to Master Wharton about this," said the justly-incensed village policeman.

"I should," agreed Bunter. "Like his cheek, pulling your leg like that! These cheeky schoolboys want licking! That's what's the matter with them. Rotten practical jokes, I call it!"

The policeman grunted, and stalked away towards the village. He intended

to speak very plainly to Master Wharton, of Wharton Lodge, on the subject of that practical joke. His time had been wasted. His time, in a constabular sense, was not very valuable; but the village policeman of Wharton Magnus was also a gardener, and his time was valuable as a gardener if not as a constable. He departed in wrath.

Bunter grinned.

"That's that!" he remarked. "Pass the cream puffs, Sammy."

"I say, Wharton will be waxy!" grinned Sammy.

"Let him! He's a cheeky rotter, anyhow. I say, these cream puffs are good, ain't they? Have some, kid?" said Bunter hospitably.

"I say, can you really order anything you jolly well like here, old chap?" asked Sammy.

"Yes, rather: I'm boss!" said Bunter loftily. "You can clear, Dance! I shan't want you."

The manager cleared.

"That's how I handle 'em," said Bunter, with fat satisfaction. "When I'm boss, I'm jolly well boss, and don't you forget it. I've got them feeding out of my hand."

"But where's the real Whiffles?" asked Sammy, in wonder.

"Goodness knows! I don't!"

"But won't he come back?"

Bunter chuckled.

"He's too jolly afraid of that beast Huggins! If he had my pluck, he would be all right. But he hasn't, you know."

"Must be a funky ass, if he's got less pluck than you, old chap," said Sammy.

"Don't be cheeky, Sammy. What train are you catching after tea?"

"I'm not catching any trains, thanks, old fellow. I'm staying with you. This grub is good. I'll send a message home."

"Now, look here, Sammy! I'm in fearful danger here," said Bunter impressively. "I can't let you in for it."

"That's all right. I don't mind."

"Well, I do!" roared Bunter.

"Rats! Pass the ice-cream."

"Do you want me to order some of my hands to sling you out on your neck, Sammy?" asked Bunter darkly.

"I don't mind, old chap. When I tell them you're no' Whiffles, they won't sling anybody out," said Sammy cheerfully. "I say, the pater don't know you're doing this stunt, Billy. What would he say, do you think?"

Bunter breathed hard.

"Of course, you can stay on if you like, Sammy," he said. "In fact, I—I'll be glad to have you. I hope I'm an affectionate brother."

"I hope so!" assented Sammy. "It's never too late to mend. As you're giving orders here, tell that chap to bring some more ice-creams. They're jolly good—and cheap, too. I'm going to enjoy staying with you over the holidays, Billy. Fancy anybody enjoying staying with you! He, he, he!"

And Sammy stayed.

The next day the circus moved on, and Sammy Bunter moved with it. A second bed was fixed up in the blue-and-red caravan, and when the World-Famous Circus camped at night, two deep snores instead of one proceeded from the caravan belonging to Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Row on the Road!

"G LORIOUS weather!" said Bob Cherry cheerily.

"Terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Hot!" said Johnny Bull,

"The warmfuln. is grateful and comforting," said Hurree Singh.

It was a blazing August morning, and even the junio from India's coral strand found it warm enough.

Five cheery cyclists rode away from Wharton Lodge in the sunshine. Every bike had a carrier laden with the necessities for camping-out. The Famous Five of Greyfriars were going on a cycling tour for a week or two, cycling by day, campin' out at night. And, if weather conditions permitted, as seemed likely, they expected to enjoy it.

Four faces in the cheery Co. were bright; but Harry Wharton had rather a thoughtful look.

He was thinking of Mr. Whiffles—inimically.

The village constable had come up to the lodge, indignant. Colonel Wharton had been annoyed by the statement that his nephew had played an absurd practical joke or the role representative of law and order in the village. Wharton, greatly astonished, had explained how the matter stood. His uncle was surprised, but satisfied; and a pound note slipped into the constable's had satisfied the representative of law and order.

But the captain of the Remove was extremely irritated with Mr. Whiffles. He had gone to the circus field to tell him so, but found that the World-Famous Circus had already taken the road. The next day the chums of the Remove were due to start on their cycling tour, and now they were starting. But Wharton had a strong desire to tell Mr. Whiffles what he thought of him.

"We may happen on that dashed circus again," Wharton remarked, as they pedalled cheerily along the sunny road. "I'd like to see that man Whiffles again, and say something to him. He's no right to make me out an idiotic practical joker."

"Blessed if I see his reason," said Bob. "I suppose he must want that man Huggins run in."

"I should think so. The man's after him to bash him," said Harry. "He's in danger of getting damaged so long as that ruffian is loose. I can't make it out. If we come across him again, I'll jolly well tell him what I think of him, the cheeky old ass."

"We may hit the circus again," said Nugent. "They've gone westward, and we're heading west. What a jolly day!"

"Ripping!"

Mr. Whiffles, and his sins were dismissed, as the Famous Five cycled onward by the sunny country road.

They had covered six or seven miles when Bob Cherry suddenly ejaculated:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What?"

"The jolly old Huggins bird!" chuckled Bob.

"Oh, my hat!"

A roughly clad man ahead of the cyclists had turned in the road to stare at them as they came up.

They knew the beetle-browed face and broken nose at once. It was Bill Huggins.

Evidently he recognised them also, for he gave them a black scowl as he stared at them.

"That's the man," said Harry Wharton. "Looks as if he's following the circus. It must have taken this road."

"If that old fathead, Whiffles, had played up, and made a charge against the man, we could collar him now, and hand him over," remarked Nugent.

"We could," agreed Harry. "Still, we don't specially want the job. Give him a miss."

The bunch of cyclists rode on, taking no notice of the scowling, lowering tramp in the road. But as they passed him Bill Huggins stooped and picked up a flint from the roadside.

"Whoop!" roared Bob Cherry, as he caught the whizzing flint between his shoulders. Evidently Mr. Huggins was in a revengeful mood.

"Why, the rotter—" exclaimed Nugent.

Whiz! Whiz

"Look out!"

There was a heap of flints by the roadside, placed in readiness for road repair. Mr. Huggins had plenty of ammunition, and he appeared to be rather a good shot.

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

"Let's get back," panted Bob. "By

"Collar him!" shouted Johnny Bull.

"Duck him!"

"Good egg!"

On the other side of the road was a deep ditch. Leaving their bikes in a heap, the Famous Five grasped the sprawling ruffian and yanked him across the road. Mr. Huggins did not go willingly. He roared and howled objections as he went. But with five sturdy schoolboys grasping his legs and putting all their beef into it Mr. Huggins had to go.

Splash!

"Ooooooch!"

Mr. Huggins went headlong into the ditch. The ditch was deep, but in the hot summer weather there was not much water in it. There was plenty of mud, however, and a good allowance of green

"Ooooooch! Grooooh! Strike me—Mooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. rode cheerily on their way. Mr. Huggins was left sitting by the roadside scraping himself. He had a lot of scraping to do; and his language as he scraped would have excited the envy of the Army in Flanders of olden time.

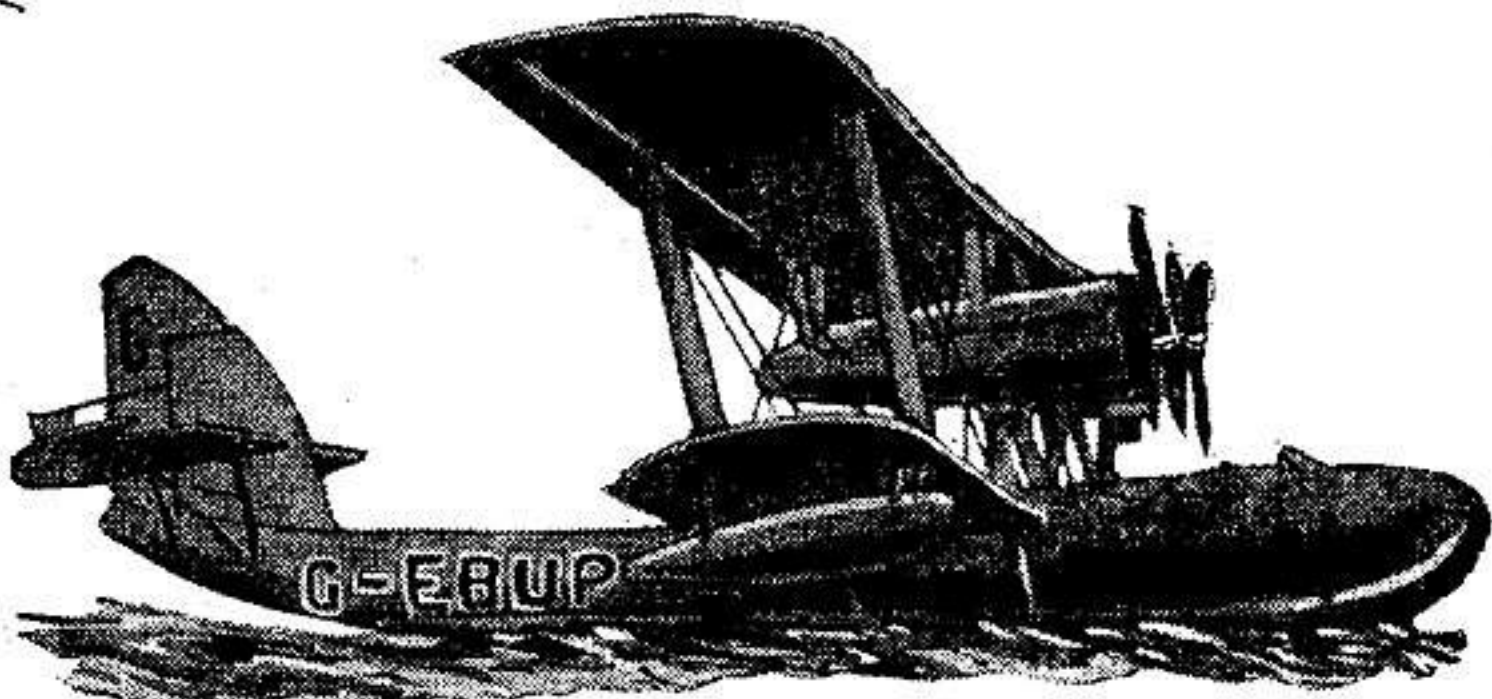
THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Left Behind!

BILLY BUNTER woke. As it was about four o'clock on a sunny afternoon it was hardly a time for any fellow to be asleep—excepting Bunter.

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Jove, I'll bust his nose over again for him! I—"

Mr. Huggins was hurling flint after flint, expecting the cyclists to put on speed and escape out of range as quickly as they could. Instead of which, they whirled round their machines in the wide road, and came charging back at Mr. Huggins. The bikes fairly flew.

Mr. Huggins stayed only to hurl one more stone, which narrowly missed Wharton's head, and then ran for it. He darted across the grass by the roadside and sprang at a fence to clamber over it. But he was not quite quick enough. Before he could clear the fence Bob Cherry was off his bike and had grasped his ankles.

Mr. Huggins came down from the fence with great velocity.

"Ow!" roared Mr. Huggins. "Strike me pink!"

ooze and a considerable quantity of stinging nettles. Mr. Huggins sprawled in the ditch, half-submerged, his hands clutching wildly at stinging-nettles, and his voice raised like unto that of the Bull of Bashan. Bob Cherry gave him a shove with his foot to push him right under, and there was a fearful gurgling gurgle from Mr. Huggins as he disappeared.

"There!" gasped Bob. "That will do him good!"

"The goodness will be terrific."

The juniors returned to their bicycles. As they mounted in the road Mr. Huggins crawled out of the ditch. He presented a fearful sight. Mud cloaked him from head to foot, green ooze clung lovingly round his bull-neck, slime masked his unprepossessing features. He gurgled and spluttered wildly as he crawled out.

But Bunter had lunched that day not wisely, but too well.

After a lunch that would have made several substantial dinners for anyone else, Bunter naturally wanted a nap. Like a boa-constrictor, he retired into the shade to sleep off the effects of his feed. The bed-ottoman in the red-and-blue caravan was quite comfortable when the van was halted or when it was going over a smooth road. Bunter slept and snored peacefully as the long circus procession wound on its way by high-road and leafy lane. But all the roads in Surrey were not smooth; some of them were bumpy. The travelling circus had just struck a very bumpy one. That was why Bunter awoke.

He awoke suddenly and painfully.

The van had given a sudden bump

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(Continued from page 13.)

over a deep rut, and it lurched wildly. Bunter rolled off the ottoman.

Bump!

It was not far to the floor of the van. Bunter had not far to travel. But the journey was swift, and the stop sudden and hard.

"Yaroooooh!"

Hitherto, the rolling of the wheels had been accompanied by a deep and regular snore from the van—two snores mingled in one, in fact, as Sammy was sleeping on the other bed. So far as lunches were concerned, and naps after lunches, the Bunters were very alike—it was a case of two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one. Now the snoring suddenly ceased, and was replaced by a wild yell.

Bunter rolled on the floor yelling.

"Ow! Wow! What the thump—Oh! Oooop!"

He sat up dazedly.

On the other ottoman Sammy Bunter sat up, clutching hold to save himself from rolling over.

The van gave another lurch over another rut, and Sammy pitched off.

Between the two beds in the van, roomy as it was for a caravan, there was very little space. What space there was Bunter filled as he sprawled on the floor. Sammy fell towards the floor, naturally; but he did not reach the floor—Billy was in the way. Falling on Billy was quite unavoidable. Sammy fairly crashed on him.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Sammy.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

Billy Bunter had broken Sammy's fall. To judge by his yells, Sammy's fall had also broken Billy Bunter.

"Ow! Gerroff!" shrieked Bunter. "You fat idiot! Ow! You're squashing me! Oh, my hat! Gerroff!"

Sammy scrambled up. But another lurch of the van caught him before he could get ashore, as it were, on the ottoman. He rolled back on Billy with a shock that drove nearly all the breath out of him.

There was an agonised gasp from the fat junior underneath. Billy Bunter squirmed.

"Grooooooh! Gerroff! Ow! You fat little idiot, will you gerroff?"

Sammy did not answer and he did not get off. He was winded, and he sprawled helplessly.

The van gave another lurch, and another. Sammy scrambled up at last. He rested a knee on Billy Bunter's waistcoat—or, rather, on Mr. Whiffles' waistcoat—and raised himself breathlessly. Bunter gave a gasping howl. Had Mr. Whiffles been inside his own waistcoat it would not have mattered. But Billy Bunter was inside it, and it mattered very much indeed.

"Ooooooooooch!" squeaked Bunter.

Sammy clambered back on his ottoman. Bunter lay in the narrow aisle between the two beds and gasped and spluttered. He sat up at last and addressed Sammy.

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"You fat dummy!"

"Oh, cheese it!" gasped Sammy. "I'm hurt! I've banged my elbow on something! Ow!"

"It was my eye!" shrieked Bunter.

"He, ho, he!"

"You cackling young chump!"

"He, ho, he!" Sammy seemed to derive comfort from the circumstance that Billy's eye was more damaged than his own elbow.

Bunter staggered to his feet. He stood and glared at Sammy with a most unbrotherly glare.

"I've a jolly good mind to give you a jolly good licking, you clumsy fat little brute!" he roared.

"Go it!" said Sammy. "I'll jolly soon have that wig off you!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter, as the caravan gave another lurch and he sat down on his bed.

He bounced up again, his fat face red with wrath. His sudden awakening from his afternoon nap had not improved his temper. When Bunter had eaten enough for three or four fellows it made him genial; when he had eaten enough for six or seven it made him crabby. Even William George Bunter's inside was not made of elastic. His stowage capacity was vast, but it had its limit. There was a large pie inside Bunter, which was a pie too much; it was doubtful whether the pudding which had preceded the pie was not a pudding too much. Anyhow, he was crabby.

He lurched to the door at the back of the caravan, and, holding on carefully to the doorposts, glared out. The door was wide open to let in what coolness there was that hot afternoon. Outside the sun shone down brightly, and the air was thick with dust kicked up by many hoofs and many wheels. The circus had turned off the high-road and was ascending a rather hilly lane that was broken with sun-dried ruts. Bunter had to hold on for his life as the caravan plunged and pitched on its way.

"Dance!" he roared.

The manager was riding a horse at the side of the procession, which was led by Nobby Nobbs on the back of Mumbo, the elephant. Dance stared at Mr. Whiffles, and rode closer to the van.

"Well, what?" he snapped.

"I've been woke up!" snorted Bunter.

"What about it?"

"What about it?" repeated Bunter.

"You silly chump, I've been pitched over! I'm hurt!"

"Is that all?"

"You—you cheeky chump! What are we coming this way for?" roared Bunter. "Why couldn't you stick to the high-road?"

"We're heading for Greenleaf. That's our next stop, and we're due to perform there to-night!" snapped Dance. "Did you expect them to lay down a special road for you?"

"Don't be cheeky!" roared Bunter. "I want a nap! See? I'm going to have a nap! Stop here!"

"What?"

"Stop the whole blessed shoot!" roared Bunter. "Call to them to stop! I refuse to go a foot farther! See?"

"Look here—"

"Shut up! I don't want any back-chat from you! Who's boss of this circus, I'd like to know?"

"We can't stop!" hissed Dance. "We've only got time to get to Greenleaf and set up the tent for the show this evening!"

"That's my business!"

"We shall miss giving a show—"

"Miss it, and be blown! Do as I tell you, or I'll jolly well sack you on the spot!" roared Bunter. "I'll jolly well show you who's the boss of this circus! Got that?"

"I say, guv'nor," called out Tommy Thompson, who was Tomasso Tomsonio when he was in tights and spangles on the high trapeze—"I say, we haven't any time to spare if we're giving a show at Greenleaf to-night!"

Bunter glared at him.

"Who asked you to butt in?" he roared.

"Oh, draw it mild, guv'nor!"

"Shut up!"

"My word!" murmured Mr. Thompson.

He shut up.

Bunter turned his attention to Dance again. The manager was gritting his teeth, his face red with anger. Without completely spoiling his own game, the manager could not refuse obedience to the fat personage whom all the rest of the company believed to be Mr. Whiffles. But he was feeling the strain of Bunter severely. Besides, it was necessary to get on to the next pitch; the pay-box was an important consideration. If the circus could not perform, obviously the money would not come in. Bunter was blind to that consideration, and to every other, at the present moment.

"Now, you listen to me, Dance!" shouted Bunter. "Stop here! We rest for an hour! If we're late, I don't care a rap! You'll do as I tell you, or I'll sack you on the spot! I'll show you who's who and what's what! Don't answer! Just shut up, and do as you're told!"

"Look here, Mr. Whiffles—"

"Shut up! Tell the man who's driving this van to pull off the road! We stop here! That's final!"

Dance controlled his feelings with difficulty. The word was passed along the line, and the long procession swayed to a halt. Bunter's van was backed off the road under a clump of trees, and the horses taken out of the traces.

"I'll show 'em!" growled Bunter.

"Jolly good idea!" yawned Sammy, for once in agreement with his major. "A fellow wants his nap out!"

"I should jolly well think so!" snarled Bunter. "I'll let 'em see who's boss! I'll sack the lot of 'em! Cheek!"

He settled down on his bed again. Sammy settled down also. In the stillness of the van it was easy to drop off to sleep once more. In two minutes the Bunters were snoring.

As he dozed off, it never occurred to Bunter that perhaps his lordly orders were not being carried out.

As a matter of fact, they weren't.

If he noticed, as he dropped into balmy slumber, that there was still a sound of hoofs and wheels, he supposed that the noise was made by the vehicles stopping or shifting. If they halted there, they had to get off the road; they could not block up the lane to all other traffic. Bunter had no doubt that all was well.

Probably he would not have slept so peacefully had he been aware that the circus procession was still winding on its way, leaving his caravan marooned, as it were, by the roadside.

That was Dance's idea.

If Bunter wanted to stop and sleep, he could; Dance had no objection to offer. In fact, it was a relief to be rid of him for a time. The new boss of the circus was necessary to Dance, and he certainly did not want to part with Bunter altogether. But the less he saw of him the better he liked it. He passed

a brief order along the line, and the procession rolled on. Billy Bunter could sleep as long as he liked. In the meantime, the circus travelled on to Greenleaf, several miles farther on.

The rolling of wheels and the thudding of hoofs died away. The baggage-vans at the tail of the procession disappeared.

Silence fell on the countryside and the leafy lane. The circus was gone, and in the van by the roadside the two Bunters slept and snored.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Camping Out!

"WHAT about camping?" asked Bob Cherry.

"The campfulness is a wheezy good idea!" assented Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

"Let's!" agreed Wharton.

It was late in the golden afternoon. The chums of the Remove had that pleasant tiredness which follows a day spent taking things easily in the open air in fine weather. They were wheeling their machines now on a rising road, and they stopped at a point where a deep, shady, leafy lane branched off and ran up into the green of the downs. It was a beautiful, shady lane, with a broad belt of grass on either side of the sun-baked track, and looked tempting to a party who were already thinking of camping.

"This will suit us!" remarked Johnny Bull. "We shall find some jolly little nook along this lane."

Nugent glanced up at a signpost at the corner.

"'Four miles to Greenleaf,' " he read out. "We'll find a good place long before we get to Greenleaf."

The five juniors wheeled their machines up the leafy lane. It ran between wide, green fields bordered by hedges and trees. In places the branches met across the road, forming a pleasant shade from the hot sun. It was rather a relief to get off the open road and away from the dust.

"If we spot a farmhouse we'll get milk and eggs," remarked Frank Nugent.

But they did not spot a farmhouse. There seemed to be no habitations within sight of the lane. It ran through pasture-land, with nothing of life in sight save a few cows in the distance.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob suddenly. "Somebody caravanning here!"

The juniors paused to look at the halted van by the wayside under the branches of two or three ancient elms.

"Why, that's old Whiffles' caravan!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"So it is! I know it now! You wouldn't forget that colour scheme in a hurry!" chuckled Bob. "The circus has passed this way!"

"And left Whiffles behind, it seems!" "Chance to tell him what you think of him!" grinned Nugent.

"Listen!" said Bob.

From the van came the sound of deep snoring.

"Reminds me of the jolly old Remove dormitory!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Wouldn't you swear that that was Bunter's snore?"

"Yes, rather."

It was rather puzzling to see Mr. Whiffles' van halted by itself, with no sign of the circus anywhere near at hand. It was, as Frank had remarked, a chance for Wharton to tell Mr. Whiffles what he thought of him. But

by that time Wharton had dismissed Mr. Whiffles' offences from his mind.

"Let's get on," he said.

Bob Cherry leaned his bike against the van, mounted the step, and gave a sudden roar.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he bawled.

It was only Bob's playful little way. Even after a long summer's day on the road, his spirits were still exuberant.

Bob's voice was a powerful one. Probably powerful as it was, it would not have awakened the Bunters at night, when they were really fast asleep. But now they were only taking an afternoon nap—which had lasted several hours since the circus had gone on and left them. That terrific roar did awaken them.

Bunter sat up.

"Eh! Beast! 'Tain't rising-bell!" he gasped.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Why, it's Sammy! Sammy Bunter's here, you men!"

"My hat!"

Sammy Bunter sat up. He rubbed his eyes, and grinned at Bob Cherry in the doorway.

"You joined the giddy circus, Sammy?" asked Bob, staring at the fat fag of the Second Form at Greyfriars in wonder.

"He, he, he!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "What the thump do you mean by waking me up, Bob Cherry? Blow you!"

Bob stared at him, and grinned. Bunter was, of course, still in the guise of Mr. Whiffles; but his beard had shifted a little to the other side. The chums of the Remove already knew that Mr. Whiffles' hirsute adornments were artificial; though they were far from suspecting that those adornments covered the identity of William George Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Sorry, old bean!" said Bob cherrily. "Only my little joke!"

"You silly idiot!"

"Same to you, Mr. Whiffles, and many of them," said Bob.

Billy Bunter glared at him. Again he had awakened in a bad temper. Perhaps it was the pie. Perhaps it was the pudding. Perhaps it was the steak. It might have been the cream-puffs, or the plum-cake. It might have been the ice-creams. It

might have been the lot of them together; probably it was. Anyhow, there was no doubt that Bunter was a little out of sorts, and a good deal out of temper. He sat up and glared round him, and grabbed up a soda siphon, which was among the many things that were in readiness in the van in case of hunger or thirst—two troubles that haunted Bunter incessantly.

Squish! Swizzzzz! Swash!

"Oh!" roared Bob.

The jet of soda-water caught him fairly in the eye suddenly. He staggered back, lost his footing, and rolled off the steps of the van. He landed on the grass with a bump.

"He, he, he!"

Bunter rolled off the bed in a hurry. So far so good; but he had apprehensions as to what might happen next.

(Continued overleaf.)

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He reached out of the door of the van, grabbed it, slammed it, and locked it. Then he slammed the little window and fastened it. Then he felt safe.

Bob Cherry scrambled to his feet. He was not much hurt by his fall on the thick grass. But he looked excited.

"Grooogh!" Bob dragged out his handkerchief and mopped his streaming face. "Why, the cheeky old ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You asked for it, old chap," chuckled Johnny Bull.

"The askfulness was terrific, my absurd chum," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and ridiculous Whiffles did not like being waked up."

"I've a jolly good mind to mop him up!" roared Bob.

"He, he, he!" came from the van.

"Come on," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We don't want a row with Whiffles."

"You kids clear off!" yelled Bunter, from the van. "I'll order my men to kick you out if you hang about here."

"You fat old donkey!" roared Bob.

"Oh, come on!" said Nugent.

Bob Cherry grunted, and came on. The juniors wheeled their bicycles up the lane, and the caravan was left behind. Bunter major and minor settled down to finish their interrupted nap. They were snoring again almost before the Famous Five were out of hearing. Bob Cherry continued to mop his face with one hand, wheeling his machine with the other. He did not, for the moment see anything comic in the episode, though his comrades seemed to find it rather entertaining.

"Here's a place that will suit us," said Harry, coming to a halt at a spot about a hundred yards from the caravan, which was out of sight in the leafy, winding lane.

It was a very pleasant spot; a stretch of grass beside the hedge. The sun was setting, and a golden glow lay over lanes and hedges and fields. The bikes were packed under a tree; bags and bundles unpacked, the kettle filled from the water-bottle and set on the spirit-stove. It was soon singing cheerily, and the tea was made, and poured into tin cups, with condensed milk for want of better. The juniors sat round in the grass, and ate bread and cheese, and hard-boiled eggs, and ham, and cake, with the healthy appetite given by the open air and strenuous exercise.

"Jolly!" said Bob.

"The jolliffulness is terrific!"

"Ripping!" said Harry Wharton, with a deep yawn. All the party were tired and ready for sleep.

"I say, it's jolly queer Sammy Bunter being along with the circus," said Bob. "Can't make it out."

"Well, we knew Billy Bunter was there," said Harry. "We haven't seen him there, but he's there all right. Old Whiffles is a relation of their's, that's plain enough. I say, I'm sleepy!"

"Same here!"

"The samefulness is terrific."

"Well, we shan't be disturbed here," said Johnny Bull. "Might be on a desert island, for anything we can see of the giddy inhabitants. We're all right if it doesn't rain."

"If it rains, we'll trot back and share old Whiffles' van!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, it's not going to rain," said Harry. "It's rained all it can this summer; I don't believe there's any left. Turn in—what?"

"Yes, rather."

And the campers turned in; with the cheery assurance that they were not likely to be disturbed in that quiet, secluded spot. But that assurance was ill-founded. They were going to be disturbed, and in a very startling manner.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Stranded!

BILLY BUNTER sat up and yawned.

Then he blinked round him.

It was deep dusk in the caravan. Bunter had had a good sleep. Now he had had enough sleep, and he was hungry again. The effect of the pie, the pudding, and the many other things had worn off. Bunter was ready for supper. He was rather puzzled by the silence around him. The circus camp was not generally silent. So far, Bunter had no suspicion that the circus had gone on to Greenleaf, and left his van behind. Such cheek on the part of his manager naturally did not occur to his fat mind. But he was puzzled.

He rolled off the bed and blinked at Sammy in the deep dusk. Sammy was still fast asleep and snoring—just like him, Bunter reflected. Fat and lazy—nothing like his brother William George. Bunter stooped and shook him, not gently.

"Here, wake up, you fat frog," he grunted. "Are you going to sleep all round the clock?"

Sammy opened his eyes and blinked, and groped for his spectacles, and jammed them on his fat little nose.

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!" he remarked.

"Oh, stop yawning!" said Bunter irritably. "For goodness' sake get up, and don't be such a lazy little beast! Blessed if I can make this out! I can't hear a sound!"

"I'm hungry," remarked Sammy.

"Are you ever anything else?" sneered Bunter. "Never saw such a guzzling little pig! I'll sack George for this—he ought to have called me. It's getting dark. I want my supper. I'm famished. They can't all have gone to sleep without my having had my supper. That's impossible."

Bunter groped to the door of the van in the gloom.

He was perplexed.

Unless the hour was very late, and the circus had gone to sleep, he could not account for the stillness. He unlocked the door and peered out. Only the dim, leafy lane and dimmer fields beyond the hedges met his gaze.

"George!" he howled.

Echo answered "George!" But there was no other answer, and Bunter breathed hard with wrath.

"I'll sack him!" he snorted.

"I say, they can't have gone on, can they?" asked Sammy.

"Of course not, fathead! I'd sack the lot if they did! They're further up the lane, I suppose!" grunted Bunter. "Go and call George, Sammy."

"Rats!"

"If you want to be kicked out of this van—" roared Bunter.

"You're wasting time, old man," said Sammy. "I can tell you I'm hungry. Looks to me as if they've gone on."

"Oh, rot!" growled Bunter.

But he had a misgiving, and he hurried out of the van. He rolled a little way up the lane, but there was no sign of the circus. He rolled down the lane, and there was still no sign. His fat face was red with wrath as he

rolled back to the van. It was only too clear now that the circus had gone—no doubt the evening show was on in the big tent at Greenleaf.

"I—I—I'll sack 'em!" gasped Bunter. "I'll sack the lot! They've gone on and left us behind! Me, you know! The boss—left behind."

Sammy yawned.

"Well, I suppose we can follow on," he said. "Even you know how to drive a van, Billy."

"You silly owl! There ain't any horses," hooted Bunter. "The horses were taken out when we stopped."

"Oh crumbs!"

"That beast Dance—I'll sack him! I—I'll punch his head! We're stranded. Lucky there's some grub in the van!" gasped Bunter. "I believe that villain wouldn't have cared if we'd been left without any grub. Get up and light the lamp, Sammy."

"Don't you know how to light a lamp?" inquired Sammy.

"If you're going to be a lazy little beast—"

"Well, everybody says I'm like you," said Bunter minor. "'Tain't my fault—it's a misfortune."

Billy Bunter lighted the lamp. From the window of the van illumination streamed out into the summer night. Bunter's little round eyes fairly gleamed with wrath behind his big spectacles. He was stranded miles behind the circus—his circus—and there was no moving the van till horses were sent back for it. To walk several miles, by dark and unknown lanes, was out of the question. And very likely that beast Dance was laughing in his sleeve all the time. Very likely he was glad to get rid of his boss, and his boss' bossy interference with the show. And even for this unexampled cheek Bunter wasn't able to sack him, because Dance knew that he wasn't Mr. Whiffles.

Still, matters were not so bad as they might have been. There was a good supply of grub in the van. Bunter always saw to that. Now he had cause to be thankful for his forethought. Had he been stranded there without grub—Bunter shuddered at the thought. It was an unnerving thought. Fortunately, matters were not so bad as that.

Sammy was already beginning on a cold pie. Billy Bunter proceeded to negotiate a cold fowl. Undoubtedly, matters might have been worse.

As a matter of fact, they were going to be worse. The two Buntors were still at their supper—too busy even to talk—when the silence outside the van was broken by heavy, tramping footsteps.

"There's somebody!" remarked Sammy, with his mouth full.

"I suppose that rotter Dance has sent somebody back!" growled Bunter. "I'd jolly well sack that cheeky beast, only—only—"

"Only you can't sack him!" grinned Sammy.

"Shut up, and don't be cheeky!"

The heavy footsteps in the lane came to a sudden halt. Whoever it was that had come tramping up from the high-road had halted, quite near the van. Suddenly a voice was heard, in tones of astonishment:

"Strike me pink!"

Bunter jumped.

He knew that voice.

Unfortunately, his mouth was full of cold chicken at the moment. Some-



Tired and cheerful, with appetites sharpened through their exertions, the Famous Five sat round on the grass to eat. "Isn't this just jolly!" said Bob Cherry, pouring out the tea. "Rather!" agreed Wharton. "The jollyfulness is terrific!" chimed in Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. (See Chapter 11.)

thing went the wrong way. Bunter spluttered wildly.

"Groogh! Ooooh!"

The footsteps came across the grass from the lane, heading for the van under the elms. Bunter, still spluttering, turned an eye of horror on the open door. In the doorway was framed a hefty form, and two gleaming eyes stared in over a broken nose.

"Strike me pink!" repeated Bill Huggins. "It's the gov'nor! This 'ere is luck!"

"Groogh! Ow! Ooooh!" spluttered Bunter.

Sammy stared at the newcomer. Bill Huggins was a stranger to him, as yet. But the sight of a scowling, lowering tramp in that lonely spot was sufficiently terrifying to Sammy.

Bill Huggins, with a horrible grin, put a foot inside the van. Billy Bunter, in sheer desperation, seized a bottle of lemonade from the table, and hurled it. It smote Huggins full on his already damaged nose, and, with a roar, he went backwards off the van. As he crashed to earth, Bunter leaped to the door, grabbed it shut, locked it, and shot to the bolt. Never in all his fat career had the Owl moved so swiftly. Then he collapsed on the bed, gasping and spluttering.

"Who—who—who is it?" stuttered Sammy Bunter.

"Ow! Huggins! Oh dear!"

There was a fierce dragging at the caravan door. Then a heavy, clenched fist beat on it.

"Whiffles!" roared Huggins. "I've got you! I'm arter you! Open this 'ere door before I smash it in."

"Ow! G-g-g-go away!" gasped Bunter.

Bang!

"G-g-g-go away! I—I—I'm not Whiffles!" groaned Bunter.

Crash!

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh crikey!" squeaked Sammy.

Supper lay unfinished on the table. Bunter major and minor gazed at one another with scared eyes, while the ruffian outside beat furiously on the door of the van.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Awful!

"O H, jiminy!" groaned Billy Bunter.

He sat on the bed quaking. The proverb states that after the feast comes the reckoning. It was like Bunter to enjoy the feast without thinking of the reckoning. Now the reckoning was at hand. He was stranded in the caravan in a solitary spot, and round the caravan prowled Bill Huggins—his appetite for vengeance whetted by the crash of the bottle on his nose.

Really, Bunter might have expected trouble. He knew that Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was keeping away from the circus for fear of Bill Huggins and his threatened vengeance. Having assumed Mr. Whiffles' identity, Bunter had naturally incurred his liabilities as well as his assets.

Each time he had encountered Mr. Huggins, Bunter had resolved to "chuck" it, and go while the going was good. Each time that the danger was past, he had been tempted to keep on. Now he repented from the bottom of his heart that he had not "chucked it." Now it was too late!

Having banged and thumped on the door, and found it too stout to break in, Bill Huggins prowled round the van. His face suddenly appeared at the little window. The window was, of course, too small for Huggins to force a way in. But the sight of his face there sent a shudder through Bunter from head to foot. He gazed at the threatening face stonily, like a fat rabbit fascinated by a snake. Huggins glared into the van.

"I've got you, Whiffles!" he hooted.

"Ow! G-g-go away!"

"I'm going to smash you up, Whiffles! I'm the bloke you sent to three months' 'ard!"

"Ow!" groaned Bunter. "Why didn't the beasts make it six months? Ow!"

"You're going to git it jest where you live, you are, Whiffles!" said Bill Huggins ferociously. "I'm going to knock your features right through the back of your blinking 'ead!"

"Go away!" moaned Bunter.

"'Ere, you!" said Huggins, glaring at the petrified Sammy. "You open that there door, and I'll let you 'ook it! See? Hutherwise I'll smash you up along with the old bloke! Sharp's the word!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Sammy.

He could not have obeyed Huggins if he had wished; he was glued by terror where he sat.

"It won't take me long to bust in this 'ere van!" grinned Huggins. Mr. Huggins had a hideous and terrifying grin. "You wait!"

The battered face disappeared. The two Bunters heard the ruffian groping. He reappeared at the window with a length of branch broken from a tree.

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Crash! Crash!

The window flew into pieces, glass and sash. Huggins reached a long, powerful arm inside, and the knobby stick just missed Bunter as he squirmed out of reach.

"Ow! Keep off! Help!"

"I'll 'elp yer!" growled Huggins.

Billy Bunter turned out the lamp. There was darkness in the caravan. In the darkness the stick thrashed to and fro, the two terrified Bunters keeping out of reach. Billy Bunter tried to pull himself together. Even a worm will turn, and from sheer excess of terror Bunter found a little desperate courage. The ruffian ceased to thrash about with the stick, and, grasping the window-frame, made a fierce effort to force himself in. There was too little room for the passage of his bulk, but the possibility of his squeezing in electrified Bunter. He grabbed up a soda-siphon and made a jump at Huggins.

Crash!

There was a fearful roar from Huggins as the siphon crashed on his head. He slid back from the window in a great hurry.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Wild howls came from Huggins in the darkness outside. He was hurt. There was no doubt that he was hurt.

For some minutes there was peace. The siphon dropped from Bunter's nerveless hands. He waited in terror for the next move from the enemy.

"Oh dear! Perhaps he's going now!" breathed Sammy.

Bunter groaned. He could not believe that Huggins would go. He would have given all Mr. Whiffles' possessions, with Mr. Whiffles thrown in, for Huggins to go. But it was unlikely. That crash on his bullet head had stopped Huggins for a time, but it was not likely to have had the effect of placating him. His voice could be heard as he rubbed his head, growling with a growl as blood-curdling as that of a tiger. Bunter quaked as he listened.

"Oh, you silly ass!" breathed Sammy. "You've got me into this, you dummy! You burbling chump! If you'd told me—"

"It's that beast Whiffles' fault!" moaned Bunter. "He's keeping away on purpose and leaving me to this! Oh dear!"

"Tell him you ain't Whiffles!" hissed Sammy.

"I've told him! He won't believe me!" moaned Bunter. "Ow! I wish I'd never seen that rotten circus! I wish—"

"Here he comes again!" gasped Sammy.

Mr. Huggins avoided the window now. No doubt he had had enough of soda-siphons at close quarters. The two shivering Bunters heard him clambering over the roof of the caravan, evidently seeking an entrance there. They listened in terror.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

But the roof was stout, and resisted the blows Mr. Huggins rained on it with his stick. Suddenly there was a slithering sound, a yell, and a heavy bump.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "He's fallen off!"

"If he's broken his neck—" breathed Sammy.

The voice of Mr. Huggins, raised in sulphurous language, indicated that his neck was far from broken. He was heard to scramble to his feet.

There was another respite; the fall from the roof of the caravan had

damaged Mr. Huggins a little, though, unfortunately, not permanently. Then he was heard prowling round the van again. Bunter had read of tigers prowling round Indian villages at night, and this horribly reminded him of it.

"If he'd only go away!" he moaned.

Mr. Huggins obviously did not intend to go away. He wrenched at the door, and the caravan almost rocked. The Bunters listened, with their hearts in their mouths. But the door held fast.

"Oh dear! I wish I was at home!" mumbled Sammy.

"Don't I!" gasped Bunter.

"I'll 'ave you, Whiffles!" roared Huggins. "You wait till I get something to bust in this 'ere door! You jest wait!"

"Beast!" moaned Bunter.

Huggins' footsteps were heard receding. There was silence, but the hapless Bunters knew that he was not gone. He was searching for something where-with to burst in the door. As soon as he found a log or a large stone he would come back. And then—

"Oh, you silly idiot, Billy!" groaned Sammy Bunter.

"Tain't my fault, you fat dummy! It's Whiffles'! He thinks I'm Whiffles!" gasped Bunter. "If he'd only believe I wasn't Whiffles—"

He broke off with a gasp. Bunter's brain, as a rule, worked slowly—when it worked at all. But under the stress of terror his intellect developed activity. Such as it was, it was working at full pressure now.

"I've got it!" he stuttered.

"What?" panted Sammy.

"I'll show him I ain't Whiffles!"

Bunter dragged open the attache case in which his own clothes were packed. With a rapidity that was quite unlike William George Bunter, he stripped off Mr. Whiffles' clothes and put on his Etons, which had lain packed in the attache case ever since he had run away from Greyfriars. Wig and beard and moustache came off in hot haste. Clothes and hirsute appendages were stacked hurriedly in the bag. Bunter, like Richard, was himself again. He had worked in the dark, but now he relighted the lamp. He wanted Huggins to see into the van now. He wanted him to see with his own eyes that Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was not there.

When the lamp was lighted, certainly no trace of Mr. Whiffles remained in the van. All that was left of him was packed in the attache case. Sammy Bunter blinked at his major.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"He's coming back!"

Mr. Huggins' heavy footsteps were heard approaching the caravan again. He was breathing hard, as if carrying something heavy. Bunter blinked cautiously from the broken window. In the starlight in the lonely lane he sighted Bill Huggins approaching the van with a heavy log on his shoulder. Huggins dumped down the log by the step and spat on his hands.

"I—I—I say—" called out Bunter in quavering tones.

"You jest wait a minute, Whiffles! Only a minute, old covey!"

"I—I say, Whiffles is gone!" gasped Bunter.

"Gammon!"

"Look for yourself!" stuttered Bunter.

Huggins came round to the window and glared into the lighted van. He saw two Bunters instead of one, but he did not see Mr. Whiffles. He glared at Billy Bunter blankly.

"You! Where did you spring from?" he snarled.

"I—I—I—"

"Where's old Whiffles?"

"He—he's gone!" gasped Bunter. "He—he—he went, you know! Jumped out and—and bolted!"

"Strike me pink! And 'ow did you get 'ere?" demanded Huggins, with a terrifying glare at the Owl of the Remove.

"I—I just got here—I—I got here just—just as Whiffles was jumping out!" gasped Bunter. "He—he—he's gone! He—he ran up the lane—like—like anything—"

Huggins glared at him, and glared round the van. That a gentleman of Mr. Whiffles' circumference was concealed anywhere in the van was impossible; there was no room for the concealment of even a gentleman of single width. Yet the ruffian had been out of sight of the blue-and-red caravan only a few minutes.

"I—I was coming along," gasped Bunter. "I—I saw this van and—and stopped, and—and saw him jump out. See? He—he ran up the lane. I—I wondered why—"

"Up this 'ere lane?" demanded Mr. Huggins. Puzzled as he was, he could see that Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was not in the van. "Ow long ago?"

"Not more than two minutes," gasped Bunter.

"I'm arter him! If I 'ad time," said Mr. Huggins ferociously. "I'd bust in this 'ere van and smash you two fat blokes into little pieces. But it's Whiffles I'm arter. Sure he went up the lane?"

"Yes," gasped Bunter. "Certain!"

"If I don't find 'im I'll come back and smash you!" growled Mr. Huggins, and he retreated from the window.

"Oh, crumbs! That's done it!" gasped Bunter in relief, as he heard the heavy footsteps of the ruffian receding up the shadowy lane.

"Oh, crikey!" moaned Sammy. "Is—is—is he really gone?"

Mr. Huggins was really gone. His footsteps died away. In hot haste, Mr. Huggins was rushing up the lane in pursuit of an imaginary Whiffles. The situation was saved, and Billy Bunter sat on the bed and wiped the perspiration from his brow. Suddenly, from the distance up the lane, came wild sounds of strife. Mr. Huggins could not possibly have found Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles there. But evidently he had found someone.

He had.

As he charged up the lane in the deep shadows Huggins almost ran into a dim form, and, with a chortle of glee, he seized upon it and bore it to the ground.

"Got yer, Whiffles!"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

What Became of Whiffles!

"SOUNDS like a row!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"What on earth—"

"The rowfulness is terrific!" observed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The camping party in the Greenleaf lane had all awakened. They had gone to sleep in their blankets with the assurance that they were not likely to be disturbed in that quiet and solitary spot. But the uproar down the lane, though it was a hundred yards distant, would have awakened the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, and it very quickly

roused the Famous Five from their dreams.

They sat up in their blankets and listened. Banging, and crashing, and a shouting voice reached their ears.

That some sort of a row was going on was clear. But what sort of a row it was was more difficult to guess.

"Tramps, having a shindy, most likely," opined Johnny Bull. "So long as they don't come this way it's all right."

"Sounds like somebody trying to smash in somewhere," remarked Frank Nugent.

Harry Wharton listened intently.

"That row's going on at Whiffles' caravan," he said. "I wonder if we'd better cut along and see?"

"Blow Whiffles!" growled Bob Cherry. "I'm fed up with Whiffles!"

"It's somebody banging on the van, all right," remarked Nugent, as the crashing noise was resumed. "Look here, we don't want to get mixed up in Whiffles' rows, Harry."

"Let 'em rip!" said Bob.

"The ripfulness is the proper caper," assented Hurree Singh. "The esteemed and execrable Whiffles can go and eat coke!"

The juniors sat and listened. If Mr. Whiffles was mixed up in some shindy they were not keen to have anything to do with it. But a sudden thought flashed into Wharton's mind.

"Might be that ruffian, Huggins, after old Whiffles again!" he said.

"Well, it's his own fault," grunted Bob. "He could have the man run in if he liked."

"That's so," assented Wharton. "He made out that I was playing the goat when I sent the bobby along to see about Huggins. Still—"

The captain of the Remove rose and stepped out into the road, looking down the hilly lane towards the spot where the caravan rested.

Mr. Whiffles' conduct in refusing to have the ruffianly Huggins "run in" was a mystery to Wharton. But if the proprietor of the World-Famous Circus was in danger he did not like the idea of leaving him to it. Under the shadow of the overhanging trees all was dark, and Wharton could see nothing. But the din had died away at last.

There was a twinkle of light through the dark trees and hedges. He guessed that it came from the window of the blue-and-red caravan. The lamp had been lighted there. Wharton listened.

He thought he could detect a faint sound of voices from the distance. But the shindy, whatever it was, was evidently over. It had not lasted long, though it had been noisy enough while it lasted. Suddenly, through the deep shadows, came a sound of hurrying feet and deep breathing. Somebody was running up the lane. Wharton strained his eyes in the gloom to discover who it was. A moment later he knew, as a heavy body bumped into him, and he was grasped in muscular arms, and the voice of Bill Huggins hissed in his ear:

"Got yer, Whiffles!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

"Got yer this time, Whiffles!" roared Bill Huggins. "You ain't getting away this 'ere time! I'll—"

"Rescue!" yelled Wharton, as he struggled with the ruffian.

"Strike me pink! It ain't Whiffles!"

"Back up, Greyfriars!"

Four juniors leaped from their blankets and rushed to the spot. Bill Huggins was grasped on all sides and dragged to the ground. In the dim starlight the juniors piled on him and

SPECIAL FOR NEXT WEEK!

Being Boss of Whiffles Circus has its advantages—it also has its disadvantages. Billy Bunter doesn't mind taking over Mr. Whiffles' name and power, but he hasn't much time for Mr. Whiffles' implacable enemy—the formidable Bill Huggins. And Bill, not knowing, of course, that Mr. Whiffles has quietly dropped out of the picture, and that William George Bunter has taken his place, is still bent on "smashing" his old enemy. But Bunter's fat mind rises to this emergency with surprising ingenuity. How he keeps out of reach of Bill Huggins is told in swinging style in

"BUNTER'S BODY-GUARD!"

next week's top-notch story of the Greyfriars Chums.

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The Magnet 2

held him there. Huggins struggled, and yelled, and roared.

"Let a bloke go! I'm arter Whiffles! I ain't got no trouble with you coveys. Let a bloke alone!"

With a terrific effort Huggins wrenched himself loose and scrambled away. Panting for breath, he rushed on up the lane, the juniors staring after him blankly.

"What the thump—" gasped Bob Cherry.

"It was Huggins!" panted Wharton. "Whiffles must have cut out of the van, and Huggins thinks he came this way. He didn't, or he would have passed us. The brute took me for Whiffles—"

"We'd better get along to the van and see what's happened," said Nugent.

The Greyfriars juniors ran quickly down the lane. Huggins' heavy footsteps died away in the opposite direction as he rushed on in pursuit of the imaginary Whiffles.

Harry Wharton & Co. arrived at the blue-and-red caravan. The light streamed from the broken window. There was no sound of alarm, but voices could be heard in the van. The juniors crowded round the little window and Harry Wharton looked in. There was a yell.

"Ow! He's come back! Go away, you beast!"

"Billy Bunter?" yelled Wharton in amazement.

"Oh! I—I thought it was Huggins!" gasped Bunter. "Has that beast gone? Where is he?"

"He's gone—"

"Oh! Good! Oh, dear!"

"What are you doing here?" shouted Wharton. "How did you get here at all, you fat freak?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Billy Bunter!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, staring in at Wharton's

shoulder. "Both the blessed Bunters!"

"I knew that fat bounder was with the circus all the time," said Johnny Bull.

"The knowfulness was terrific! But—"

"Where's Whiffles, Bunter?" exclaimed Wharton.

Billy Bunter blinked at him. Sammy Bunter grinned.

"Whif-Whif-Whiffles?" stammered Bunter.

"Yes; that man Huggins is after him. Where is he? Did he cut out of the van and scoot for it?"

"Oh, yes. Exactly!"

"He, he, he!" contributed Sammy.

"And how did you get here, Fatty? You weren't in the van when we passed it a few hours ago."

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you fat image?"

"You!" said Bunter cheerfully. "Your face, you know! What do you expect, with those features?"

"Why, you cheeky fat porpoise—"

"Sure that beast Huggins is gone?" asked Bunter.

"He's gone up the lane after Whiffles."

"He, he, he!"

"Whiffles must have gone some other way, though; he never passed us. What are you cackling at?" roared Wharton.

"He, he, he!"

"I suppose he's not likely to find Whiffles in the dark," said Bob. "If he does, I'm sorry for Whiffles!"

"He won't find him!" chuckled Sammy. "Whiffles is all right! He, he, he!"

"Let's get back to our camp," said Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows—" exclaimed Bunter.

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"Well, fathead?"

"I say, that beast Huggins said he would come back if he didn't catch Whiffles—and he won't catch him—"

"How do you know he won't?"

"He, he, he!"

"You cackling chump—"

"He, he, he! I do know he won't!" said Bunter. "He won't find Whiffles in a hurry! He, he, he! I say, you fellows, you stop here in case he comes back. He's jolly dangerous, you know. He's got his knife into me, the beast!"

"Into you?" said Harry.

"Yes; he thinks I sent him to three months' hard—"

"He thinks you did?" said Wharton blankly. "He thinks Whiffles did, you mean—or, rather, he knows Whiffles did."

"He, he, he!"

"There's something here that I don't catch on to," said the captain of the Remove, staring hard at Bunter. "Look here, you fat, frabjous freak, what does all this mean? What are you doing here in Mr. Whiffles' caravan? And Sammy, too? I can't make it out!"

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, come on!" said Johnny Bull. "We're missing our sleep; and I'm fed-up on Bunter's cackle!"

"I say, you fellows, stop here!" exclaimed Bunter. "You can camp beside the van. See? Keep guard all night. One of you stay awake all the time. See?"

Apparently the chums of the Remove did not "see." At all events, the idea of remaining awake all night to watch over Billy Bunter did not appeal to them. They turned away from the caravan and walked up the lane to their camp.

"There's something in this I can't catch on to," said Wharton. "Old Whiffles and the Bunters are up to something, but I'm blessed if I can make out what!"

The mystery was too deep for the Famous Five. They gave it up and returned to their blankets.

In the cyclists' camp and in the blue-and-red caravan the remainder of that eventful night passed peacefully. Somewhere in the dark distance Bill Huggins was still seeking Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles—without even the remotest chance of finding him.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Problem for George!

THE thudding of hoofs and the jingling of harness awakened Harry Wharton & Co. in the sunny morning. They sat up and glanced round them. Down the hilly lane from the direction of Greenleaf came two horses, with George Mix sitting on one and leading the other. George gave the schoolboys a cheery nod and a grin as he passed, and they watched him wind down the lane with the horses towards the caravan and disappear from sight.

"They've sent back for Whiffles' van," remarked Bob Cherry. "Wonder how it came to be left behind?"

"Whiffles won't be there," said Harry. "I wonder what became of him? Turn out, you chaps; it's a lovely morning."

The campers turned out in the early sunshine. Meanwhile, George Mix trundled on his way and reached the halted caravan lower down the lane. He whistled as he came in sight of it and noticed that the window was smashed in.

From the van came the deep snore to which George's ears had become accustomed since Billy Bunter had assumed the identity of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. George backed the horses to the van and traced them, and then banged on the door.

"Wake up, guv'nor!"

Snore!

George grinned. Leaving the door, he took the horses' heads and led them out into the lane. His guv'nor was a hefty sleeper, but George opined that he would wake up as soon as the van started up the hilly lane and rocked over the sun-baked ruts.

He was right. The lurch of the van hurled Bunter off his bed, and he woke up with a roar. Sammy woke up at the same moment with a howl.

"Ow! It's moving!"

"That beast again!" gasped Bunter.

"Help!"

The van stopped, and George's face grinned in at the window.

"All right, guv'nor! Mr. Dance sent me back for you with the 'orses," said George. "Mr. Dance expected you last night, sir; he says he thought you'd walk in, sir."

"The cheeky beast!" roared Bunter. "I'll sack him! Leave this van alone, you fool!"

"Wha-a-at?" gasped George. He was staring blankly into the van. He saw two Bunters there; but not, as he expected, Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. "Who—what—how—My word!"

"Leave this van alone!" roared Bunter angrily. "I'm not getting up yet, you idiot! Wait till I tell you I'm ready!"

"Who are you, I'd like to know?" demanded the astonished George.

"What?"

"Where's Mr. Whiffles?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Bunter had turned in without taking the trouble to resume his disguise. Now he presented his own natural aspect to the eye—the aspect of a complete stranger to George Mix.

"Where's the guv'nor?" exclaimed George.

"Oh dear! I—I—I—"

"You've done it now!" grinned Sammy.

"Shut up, Sammy!"

"Look 'ere," said George, "where's the guv'nor? That's what I want to know. And who are you, fatty? That's

what I want to know, too! What's been going on 'ere? The window's broke in, and the door marked all over. What's up? What's 'appened to the guv'nor?"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Bunter.

"I fancy this 'ere is my business," said George. "I want to know what's 'appened to my guv'nor? He ain't come back to the circus, I know that; and he ain't 'ere. Well, where is he?"

"Find out!"

"He, he, he!" came from Sammy.

"Look here," said Bunter, "you clear off! See? Come back in two hours for the van. Then I'll be ready."

"Think I'm taking orders from you?" sneered George.

"I'll sack you, you cheeky rotter—"

"Will you?" grinned George. "I don't see 'ow, fatty."

"I—I mean—"

"Well, Mr. Dance sent me for this 'ere van, and I'm taking it back to the circus," said George.

"I tell you—"

"Oh, can it!" said George rudely.

Puzzled—as he might well be—at finding a fat schoolboy in the van where he had expected to find Mr. Whiffles, George turned away from the window and went to the horses' heads again. He led them up the lane, and the van rolled and rocked after them. It rumbled past the camp of the Famous Five, and Bob Cherry hailed it cheerily.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Good-morning, Bunter!"

"Beast!"

The caravan rolled on, George tramping at the horses' heads, leading them. Bunter blinked cautiously out of the window. The van was on its way to the circus camp at Greenleaf; and if it arrived there with Bunter still in his own proper person his career as boss of the circus was at an end.

During the night, while Mr. Huggins prowled like a tiger round the van, Bunter had wished from the bottom of his fat heart that he was anybody but Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

But in the sunny morning matters were different.

As usual, the danger that had passed faded from Bunter's mind, and the needs of the present occupied his thoughts.

The chief need was breakfast.

Supper in the van had finished the

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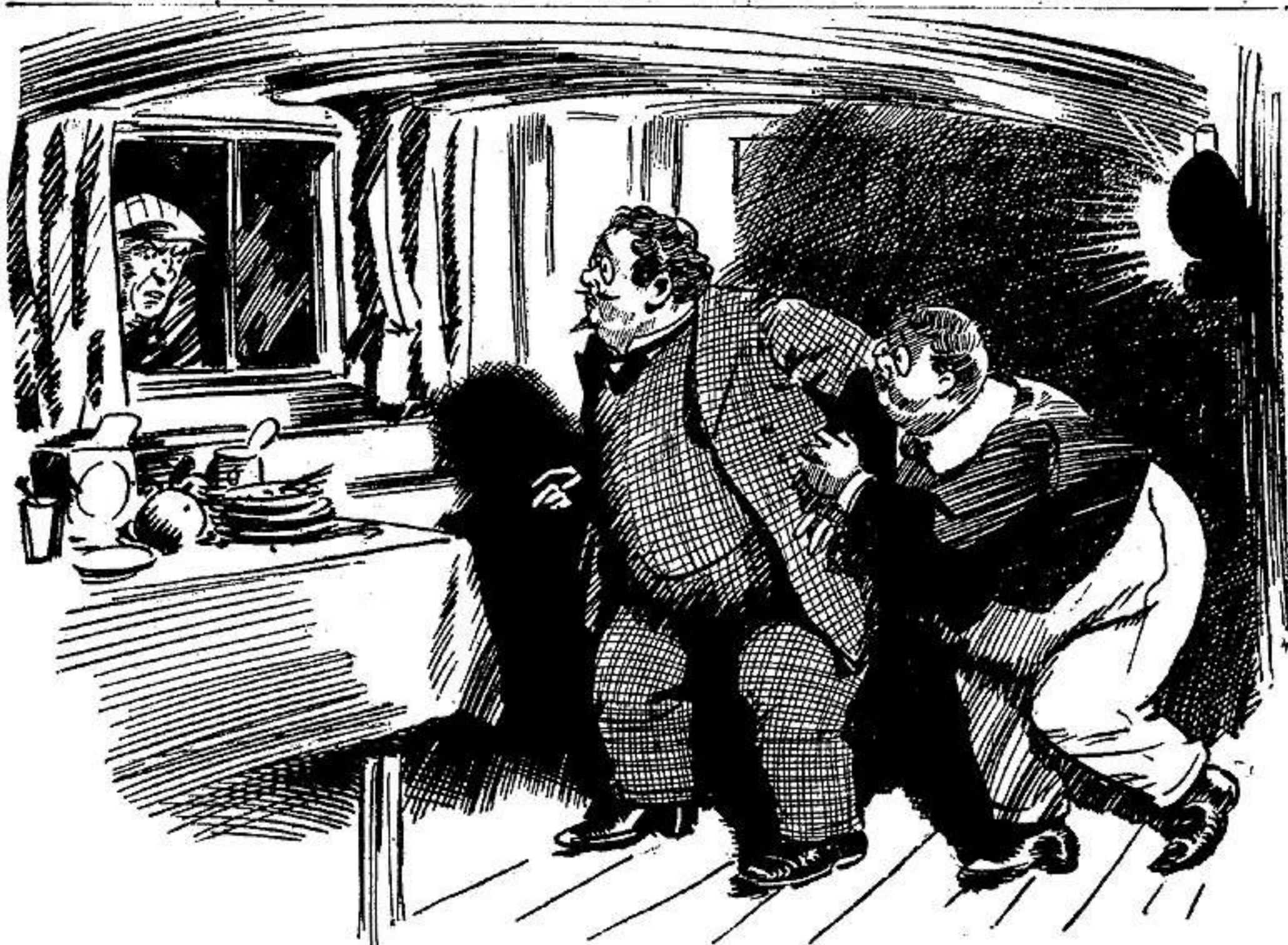
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POPULAR WIRELESS

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The sight of Bill Huggins' face at the little window sent a shudder through Bunter from head to foot. He held on to his young minor Sammy and gazed at the threatening face stonily, like a rabbit fascinated by a snake. "I've got you now, Whiffles!" hooted Huggins. "Ow! G-g-go—go away!" moaned Bunter. (See Chapter 13.)

provisions there. Nothing remained for breakfast.

The most important matter within the wide limits of the universe, therefore, was breakfast for Bunter.

Only as Mr. Whiffles was there any breakfast for him.

That settled the matter.

Having ascertained that George Mix could not possibly see into the van while he was leading the horses, Billy Bunter stripped off his Etons and hurriedly encased himself in Mr. Whiffles' clothes once more.

Adjusting wig and moustache and beard was a rather more difficult matter with the van rocking and bumping over a rough road.

However, Bunter succeeded at last.

Sammy Bunter watched him with a grinning face.

"Keeping it up, what?" he asked.

"Don't jaw!" said Bunter crossly. He stacked away his own clothes in the attache-case, and blinked in the looking-glass that hung over the bed. "That's all right."

"I say, that chap knows Whiffles wasn't in the van," said Sammy. "How are you going to explain?"

Bunter sniffed.

"I never explain to underlings!" he said loftily.

"Oh, my hat! He'll think it fishy—"

"Let him! I'll sack him as soon as look at him."

"Well, you've got a neck!" said Sammy.

"Brains!" said Bunter. "That's what it is—brains! If you had my brains, Sammy—"

"I'd apply for admission to a home for idiots!" said Sammy.

Billy Bunter disdained to make any reply to that remark. Being now, to all outward appearance, Mr. Whiffles again, he sat down to wait for the arrival of the van at the circus camp. He was still annoyed at being awakened so early. But the prospect of breakfast was a consolation.

The van rocked and rumbled on. It turned on to grass at last, and from the window Bunter had a view of the circus camp. The blue-and-red caravan came to a jerking halt. Then George's voice was heard.

"Mr. Dance, sir!"

From the window Bunter saw the manager coming towards the van. There was a grin on Dance's face. No doubt he was amused by the "boss" having had a night out.

"Somethin's 'appened to this 'ero van, sir," George was saying. "It's been banged all over, and the winder's busted in, and Mr. Whiffles ain't in it. That fat little cove is there, and another fat cove jest like him, sir, but Mr. Whiffles ain't there."

"What?" exclaimed Dance.

The door of the van was thrown open from within. Dance stared at the doorway. So did George.

George's eyes almost bulged out of his astonished head as the figure of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles appeared in the doorway of the van. George could not believe his eyesight.

"You—you there, guv'nor?" he gasped. "Oh crumbs! Oh scissors! 'Ow did you get there, guv'nor? You wasn't there. And—and where's that fat bloke what was there?"

"Don't stand there burbling," said Bunter. "Go and get my breakfast, and sharp!"

"It's the guv'nor!" said the dazed George. "It's the guv'nor or his blooming ghost. But 'ow—"

"Do you want the sack?" hooted Bunter. "Breakfast, sharp! I'm hungry!"

George almost tottered away.

"What does this mean?" asked Dance.

"What—"

"Shut up!"

"But what—"

"Shut up!" roared Bunter. "I'm fed-up with you, Dance. I've a jolly good mind to sack you. Shut up and clear!"

Mr. Dance shut up and cleared. George, looking like a man in a trance, set out the breakfast for his guv'nor. How Mr. Whiffles had got into the van, and what had become of the "fat cove" he had seen there, were deep mysteries to George. George could not make head or tail of it, and the guv'nor, certainly, was not likely to explain to George. George was left to wrestle out that mental problem unaided. But George's dizzy amazement did not worry Billy Bunter. Breakfast claimed all his attention. Breakfast was ample, and Bunter's appetite was ample, so all was well.

The wild happenings of the night passed from Bunter's mind as he travelled through mountains of toast, hills of rashers, and knolls of kidneys. Life was once more worth living, and, Whiffles or no Whiffles, Huggins or no Huggins, the World-Famous Circus was still Bunter's Circus.

THE END.

("Bunter's Bodyguard!"—that's next week's Greyfriars yarn is a real treat. Don't miss it, chums, whatever you do!)

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a slippery as an eel, and as cunning as a fox is Chalmers, alias Black Michael. But Ferrers Locke has sworn to bring this modern Captain Kidd to justice—and it's only a matter of time now before he slips the bracelets on his "man"!

THE LORD OF LOST ISLAND!



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

(Introduction
on next page.)

The Whip Hand!

"YES, there was a reason!" said Ferrers Locke pleasantly. "No, don't move, Mackaw. I have you covered. You, also, Joe!"

The three men stood as though rooted to the spot, gazing at the Baker Street detective with astonishment and incredulity in their eyes.

"Put your hands up!" rapped Ferrers Locke. "Jump to it!"

Slowly three pairs of hands crept waveringly upwards, and, at a nod from his guv'nor, Jack stepped forward. He drew a gun from the pocket of Mackaw's reefer jacket and another from Joe's trouser pocket. Henri was unarmed.

Not one of the three showed the slightest sign of resistance in the face of that gun which covered them with such deadly menace. That it was unloaded was not for them to know.

"Now," said the detective, taking Mackaw's gun from Jack Drake, and substituting it for the empty one he held, "please sit down!"

"Where in thunder have you come from?" snarled Mackaw. "I—I thought you were aboard the Angatau!"

"Sit down!" replied Ferrers Locke coldly. "I will not tell you again!"

Sullenly Mackaw and Joe seated themselves at the table. Henri was already seated, something approaching fear in his eyes.

"Shut the outer door there, Jack," said Ferrers Locke. "Keep your back against it, and don't let anyone in!"

Jack obeyed, posting himself against the door with Joe's gun in his hand.

"What—what are you aimin' to do?"

whined Joe. "We thought you were drowned in the Angatau, and—"

"Shut your mouth!" barked Mackaw. "This detective's got the drop on us. It's up to him to say what he's got to say, 'cos even now I ain't seein' just how he reckons on leavin' this island alive, with all them Kanakas around in our pay around here!"

"I do not anticipate any trouble or difficulty whatsoever in leaving this island!" replied Ferrers Locke calmly.

"Listen to me, Mackaw. I warned you that Chalmers—or Black Michael, if you like—would cheat you. He has cheated you. Already he is on his way back to his base at Lost Island!"

"What?" roared Mackaw.

"The pilot, Federkiel, whom you sent for the ransom money, returned, and, as you suggested just before I butted in, dropped to the water with his engine switched off so that you would not hear him. He swam to the Angatau, released Black Michael, and then opened the sea cocks, leaving my companion and I to drown!"

"He opened my sea cocks?" roared Mackaw, launching himself to his feet, his face working with fury. "He did that, after I promised him his life! The ungrateful swat!"

"You have a peculiar way of looking at it!" commented Ferrers Locke, with grim humour. "Yes, he was so ungrateful to you that he opened your sea cocks, and your ship went under. The boy and I escaped in the nick of time!"

Mackaw slumped heavily back into his chair, staring at Ferrers Locke with eyes which expressed both wrath and indecision.

"What—what if I say I don't believe you?" he said hoarsely.

"When dawn comes, and it will not be long now, you could send a Kanaka

diver down. He would tell you that Black Michael is not in the cabin!" replied Ferrers Locke.

"Yes—yes," muttered Henri, plucking at his lips with twitching fingers. "I liked not the look of him, that Chalmers—that Black Michael. Ah, I warned you, Mackaw, about—what you say—the defying of the law!"

"You shut your trap!" snarled Mackaw, then turned to Ferrers Locke. "And what you aimin' to do with me?" he demanded.

Ferrers Locke ignored the question for the moment. He addressed himself to Henri.

"You!" he said sharply. "Tell me, where is the nearest wireless station?"

"At Tapuka Island, m'sieur!" replied Henri eagerly. "Yes, at Tapuka. I have had no hand in this business, m'sieur. I am not against the law, you know that—you will say that!"

"What I will say to the authorities depends entirely on how you conduct yourself now!" replied Ferrers Locke grimly. "How far is Tapuka Island from here?"

"Eighty miles, m'sieur! But I have a boat. I can send a message if the weather holds. My boat, she is fitted with a motor, and I use her to collect copra from the little islands around here!"

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"The dawn is at hand," he said. "You, Mackaw, Joe, and my companion and I will leave here at once for Tapuka. Play square with me, and I give you my word that no harm will come to you. We will take one Kanaka with us. Do you agree?"

"But, yes—yes!" babbled Henri. "I am not against the law, and—"

"You listen to me, you Britisher!" said Mackaw. "How are you figuring

taking me and Joe to Tapuka? Do we go as passengers, or what?"

"You go as prisoners," replied Ferrers Locke sternly. "What the authorities will say to you for your share in this business I neither know nor care. But it is entirely through you that Black Michael has escaped!"

"Are you standing for this, you weevil?" roared Mackaw, wheeling on Henri. "Are you going to see this Britisher take your friends off this island like this? By heck! Lemme say just one word to my Kanakas, and he won't ever live to see the sun rise!"

Henri shrugged his shoulders.

"I am for the law," he replied. "Yes, I warned you. Often have I warned you, Mackaw, that some day you would go too far. Now that you have done so you wish to involve me in the—what you say—consequences. But no, you will not!"

"Curse you, you're yellow!" shouted Mackaw. "You're scared! Say, listen! This Britisher and his boy assistant won't live two minutes, no matter if they are armed, if we shout mighty loud to our Kanakas. Say, you don't think them Kanakas is going to let him walk us plumb right off this island without them raisin' a finger to help us?"

"Yes, and if we do that a warship will come here, Mackaw, to investigate, and I will hang as well as you!" said Henri.

"Warship nothin'!" snarled Mackaw. "Nobody'll ever know anything about it. This detective and his boy will just disappear. I can keep my Kanakas quiet."

"Yes, whilst you are with them, maybe," admitted Henri. "But some day, Mackaw, I think one of them will talk, and then the warship will come and we will hang. No, I am for the law, and you will not involve me in what you suggest—the murder of this detective!"

"Then, curse you, I'll pass the word to my own Kanakas off my ship!" roared Mackaw, leaping to his feet. "I'll—"

"You'll sit down!" rapped Ferrers Locke icily.

Mackaw glared at the gun in the hand of the Baker Street detective.

"You wouldn't dare fire!" he said hoarsely, half fearfully.

"I shall fire if you have not resumed your seat in two seconds!" said Ferrers Locke grimly.

With an oath Mackaw slumped back into his chair.

"Tie 'em up, Jack!" said the detective. "You can leave Henri's hands free. I will trust him till he makes the first false move. When that happens I will shoot him out of hand!"

"Indeed—indeed you can trust me, m'sieur!" replied Henri fervently. "I am not a fool."

At Tapuka!

IT was towards mid-afternoon of that same day when Ferrers Locke and Jack reached Tapuka with their prisoners. MacAndrew, the leading trader on the island, listened to as much of Ferrers Locke's story as the detective saw fit to tell him, then promptly made himself responsible for the safe custody of the prisoners.

From the wireless station Ferrers Locke sent out a long message in code to the flagship of the Pacific fleet. It was an hour later that a reply came through for him. He decoded it, read it through, then handed it to Jack. It was as follows:

"Two battle cruisers and aircraft

carrier proceeding to Lost Island. Airplanes will make exact location of island. Seaplane will proceed to Tapuka. Hold prisoners pending further instructions.

"FRASER."

"From the jolly old admiral of the fleet," commented Drake. "Well, guv'nor, it seems as though everything is over bar shouting!"

"It seems so, Jack," replied Ferrers Locke. "Unless the pirates have forced open a passage they are trapped on the island, and the warships will collect 'em. But"—and a touch of bitterness crept into his voice—"I have failed."

"Failed, guv'nor?" exclaimed the boy. "Why, the whole gang will be cleaned up solely through your efforts."

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"Not the whole gang," he replied grimly. "The most dangerous of them all—the leader himself—has slipped through my fingers."

"You mean Chalmers?" said Jack. "But he thinks that you and I are dead. Won't that have given him such a sense of security that he will have returned to Lost Island, knowing that we were the only two who knew the location of it?"

"I do not think he will have taken the risk of returning to Lost Island," replied Ferrers Locke. "Even if he is convinced that we are dead, he still has to reckon with Mackaw. He sank Mackaw's ship, and Mackaw is quite capable of concocting some story for the authorities in which he appears as an innocent victim of Chalmers. Chalmers must realise that Mackaw can be a source of danger to him."

"But Mackaw doesn't know very much!" protested Jack.

"He knows enough to make Chalmers uneasy, I'll warrant," replied Ferrers Locke grimly. "No, lad, I think you can take it as pretty certain that Chalmers has headed for the mainland."

"But won't there be certain documents and bullion on Lost Island which Chalmers will want?" said Drake. "Surely he won't pass them up without an effort?"

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"That is a good point, Jack," he said. "But put yourself in Chalmers' place for a moment. If he wishes to collect certain papers and documents from Lost Island, his visit there must, of necessity, be a fleeting one. Now, what explanation could he give his trapped men as to his landing, collecting his papers, and shoving off again without delay?"

"Yes, he'd find explanations rather

INTRODUCTION.

After overcoming innumerable difficulties and dangers, Ferrers Locke, the celebrated Baker Street detective, succeeds in capturing Black Michael, the modern Captain Kidd, who has been terrorising the western seaboard of South America. Aided by Jack Drake, his clever boy assistant, Ferrers Locke, at Chalmers' secret island stronghold, carries the pirate chief aboard his own seaplane. At the pistol's point, Chalmers' man, Federkiel, is forced to pilot the machine, but has to descend again owing to shortage of petrol. Thus handicapped, the Baker Street detective is obliged to transfer his prisoners aboard the Angatau, a passing trader, whose rascally skipper, Mackaw, readily falls to Chalmers' tempting bait of one hundred thousand pounds as the price of his freedom. During Federkiel's absence to fetch the ransom money, Mackaw, leaving Locke and Drake bound in the cabin, goes ashore and makes merry. In the meantime, the cunning Federkiel, who has merely been hovering around in the seaplane, sneaks back to the Angatau, releases Black Michael, and then opens the seacocks, leaving Ferrers Locke and Drake to drown. The latter two escape to the shore, and overhear Mackaw's friend, Henri, asking why the seaplane lingers near the Angatau.

(Now read on.)

embarrassing," admitted Jack. "And he daren't tell them the truth, that he's clearing off because he thinks the game's up!"

"No, for if he told them that they would most certainly hold him there to face the music along with themselves," said Ferrers Locke. "No, I do not for one moment anticipate that we will find either Chalmers or Federkiel at Lost Island."

"But we'll get him, guv'nor," said Jack confidently. "He daren't show his face in any civilised country now, or the police will nab him!"

"Yes, if they can find him," remarked Ferrers Locke dryly. "And that may not be so easy as one would imagine. It is certain that a man of Chalmers' intellect must have foreseen that he could not go on indefinitely raiding the shipping routes of the Pacific. He will have had plans all ready for going to earth somewhere when the crash did come!"

"Well, if we don't find the scoundrel at Lost Island," said Jack, "we'll probably find some clue there as to where we can find him!"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"If you had been Chalmers, lad," he asked quietly, "would you have left the slightest vestige of such a clue anywhere?"

"Not if I could have helped it!" replied Drake.

"No; and I don't think Chalmers will have done so, either!" said Ferrers Locke. "If he has escaped, then we can look forward to as difficult and as dangerous a trail as we've ever followed!"

Off to Lost Island!

THE sun was setting in a blaze of golden glory beyond the distant horizon some twenty-four hours later, when a large twin-engined seaplane came thundering towards Tapuka from the south-east. Circling over the island its nose went down, and, as the roar of the engine died away, it landed on the water and ran towards the beach.

As it lost way, the pilot, young and boyish, splashed a sea-anchor overboard, and dropped into the Kanaka canoe which had shot off from the beach to bring him ashore.

Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake were waiting to meet him, and, after mutual introductions, they turned and walked with him towards MacAndrew's quarters.

Beverley was the name of that pilot—Flight-Lieutenant Eric Beverley, of Number One Squadron, attached to H.M. Aircraft Carrier Hawk. And he was fairly bubbling over with news.

"Yes, we located Lost Island at dawn this morning!" he said, with a cheery grin. "The blighters popped at us with anti-aircraft guns, but it was only a half-hearted effort. They chucked it after we'd bombed 'em for a few minutes. They hoisted the jolly old flag of surrender, and six boatloads of blue-jackets from the battle cruisers went ashore and took over the island!"

"They had not succeeded in blowing open the channel, then?" asked Ferrers Locke.

"Well, they'd got enough of the debris blown up to permit of ship's boats getting through, but they hadn't cleared it anything like sufficient to get either the Seagull or the submarines out!"

"And their leader, Chalmers?" asked Ferrers Locke quietly.

"Ah, that's the fly in the giddy old ointment!" replied Beverley. "Not a sign of the villain. Ho and his pilot

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never returned to Lost Island. I suppose they knew the game was up!"

"I suppose so!" murmured Ferrers Locke, glancing quizzically at Jack. "The pirates gave no trouble, really?"

"No; they saw it was useless. What I mean to say, thanks to you, we had the blighters trapped like rats. They know that resistance was futile. Their spokesman, quite an intelligent chap, named Von Mauser, who was a submarine commander, or something, asked us to treat 'em leniently owing to their having surrendered more or less quietly."

"And did you find any of the bullion?"

"Von Mauser swore that there was little more than twenty-five thousand pounds' worth on the island!" replied Beverley. "He showed us where it was, and, sure enough, there was that sum. But Captain Milvain, who's in charge of operations, is having the island thoroughly searched!"

"And did any of the pirates venture an opinion as to where we might find Chalmers?" asked Ferrers Locke.

"Not that I know of," replied Beverley. "But I don't think Mr. Chalmers is particularly popular with them. They had some rather lurid remarks to pass about his having left them in the lurch and saved his own skin!"

"Well, what did the fatheads expect?" burst out Jack Drake. "Chalmers is as cunning as a snake and has the principals of a skunk! They might have known that he'd take jolly good care he was all right when the crash came!"

"Yes, he's escaped," remarked Ferrers Locke, "and I wonder how many millions of bullion remained to be found. We must admit that if we're winning on points, Chalmers is not knocked out yet, and is, in fact, very much on his feet!"

"But you'll get him sir!" said Beverley confidently. "Just a matter of time before you slip the jolly old bracelets on the gentleman's wrists—what?"

"I hope it will be as easy as your words suggest!" laughed Ferrers Locke. "But here we are at MacAndrew's bungalow. What were your orders?"

"To place myself absolutely at your disposal, sir!" replied Beverley. "After a spot of brekker—which I'll have after a wash and brush-up, I'm quite at your service!"

"Then we'll go back to Lost Island!" replied Ferrers Locke. "I suppose the cruisers and aircraft carrier are still lying off there?"

"Yes; clearing up the mess and taking all prisoners aboard ship!" replied Beverley.

It was an hour later that Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake bade good-bye to MacAndrew, leaving the fuming Mackaw and the whining Joe in his custody. They clambered into the copious rear cockpit of the seaplane. Beverley, who had spent twenty minutes in overhauling the machine, switched on, and the engines burst into life with a shattering roar.

Beverley ran them up, alternatively, to full revolutions; then, satisfied that they were functioning perfectly, he opened up the throttle and pressed on the rudder-bar. The seaplane swung away from the beach, heading towards the open sea. It tore across the water with everincreasing impetus, leaving a long line of creamy foam in its wake.

As Beverley pulled on the control wheel the machine took the air in a

long upward climb. It circled once over Tapuka Island, then swung towards the south-east, where, far beyond the horizon, lay Lost Island.

All through the short night hours the machine thundered onwards. It was when a faint lightening of the eastern sky heralded the coming of the dawn that Ferrers Locke knew they must be near their journey's end. Then, as the cold, grey light of early morning came flooding in across the desolate sea, he saw Lost Island rising stark and grim from the waters far ahead.

Near it lay the grey shapes of two battle cruisers, and the mighty hull of H.M. Aircraft Carrier Hawk, with its long flat flying deck glistening white against the sombre background of the sea.

Beverley's hand closed on the throttle, and the nose of the seaplane went down. From ten thousand feet he dived towards the Hawk, and, roaring low over the squat wireless mast, dropped to the water and surged close inboard.

The interrogation of Von Mauser!

ABOARD the Hawk Ferrers Locke was conducted to the state-room of Captain Milvain whilst Beverley took Jack Drake down to the ward-room.

"I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Locke," said Captain Milvain, rising from his desk with outstretched hand. "It is entirely through your splendid efforts that this terrible menace to Pacific shipping has been brought to an end. We experienced little difficulty in taking Lost Island as probably Beverley has told you."

"Yes," replied Ferrers Locke. "My only regret is that Chalmers, alias Black Michael, should have eluded capture."

"I have questioned his officers, but not one of them can throw any light on where the man has gone," said Captain Milvain. "Probably you would like to question them yourself."

Ferrers Locke shook his head. "No, knowing their mentality, I cannot think they would keep anything back which they knew about Chalmers," he replied. "And, further, I think the last thing Chalmers would have done would be to have taken any one of them into his confidence to the extent of telling him of his future plans."

"I agree with you," said Captain Milvain. "Certainly I think nothing would please them better than to learn of the capture of Chalmers whom they bitterly blame for deserting them. They know now of his escape from Tala Island. It was necessary to tell them that before attempting to question them as to Chalmers' present whereabouts."

"Have you had any of Chalmers' personal belongings brought from the island?" asked Ferrers Locke.

"No, I gave orders that his quarters were to be left absolutely untouched pending your arrival here," replied Captain Milvain. "I thought it better!"

"I am very much obliged to you," replied the Baker Street detective. "Now about the bullion. How much did you find on the island altogether?"

"Little more than twenty-five thousand pounds' worth," was the reply. "There must be an enormous amount missing."

"Have you questioned any of the men as to where the missing bullion might be?"

"Yes, but could get little satisfaction. Apparently, after a raid, Chalmers was in the habit of sharing out, and then

transhipping the major portion away from Lost Island by submarine. That much I have learned, but I have had little time to pursue the question."

"Who told you these facts?"

"Von Mauser."

"Then I will question him here, if I may," said Ferrers Locke.

"Certainly!" replied the captain, and pressed a bell on his desk.

In response to his orders, Von Mauser was brought to the cabin under armed guard. He looked very pale, but bowed stiffly to Captain Milvain, and seemed quite composed.

"Attend to me, please," said Ferrers Locke crisply. "I wish to know what was the procedure of Black Michael as regards the bullion which he looted from Pacific shipping."

"After a share out amongst the men, the remainder was transhipped to the mainland by submarine," replied Von Mauser readily.

"By a submarine from Lost Island, of course?" pressed Ferrers Locke.

"No!"

"What?"

"I say, no!" reiterated Von Mauser.

"Will you kindly explain what you mean?" rapped the detective.

"Black Michael had his own submarine for that particular job," replied Von Mauser sullenly. "None of us knew from whence it came and none of us cared to be over inquisitive. It used to come to Lost Island, load up with the bullion, which Chalmers claimed as his share, then leave for some unknown destination."

"Which, you say, was somewhere on the mainland?"

"Which I presume was somewhere on the mainland!" retorted Von Mauser.

"Who was in command of this submarine?"

"I cannot tell you his name. I never spoke to him."

"Can you describe him?"

"No, he was always masked."

"Von Mauser"—Ferrers Locke's voice was very stern—"are you telling me the truth?"

"Yes, I am!" replied Von Mauser, looking the detective straight in the eyes, a hint of defiance in his own. "What have I to gain by lying, now? I swear I am telling the truth!"

"Yes, I think you are," nodded Ferrers Locke quietly. "Can you tell me anything about the crew of this strange submarine?"

Von Mauser shrugged his shoulders. "You would not believe me if I did," he remarked.

"What do you mean by that?"

"It was a strange crew, the four members I saw of it."

"Strange?"

"Yes. A crew with which I would not have cared to have sailed."

"Why do you say that?" asked Ferrers Locke, his eyes on Von Mauser's face.

Von Mauser looked about him uneasily.

"The four men whom I saw come ashore from the submarine," he said slowly, hesitatingly, "were—were not like other men!"

"Will you describe them?" asked Ferrers Locke patiently.

"They were always muffled in heavy coats," went on Von Mauser, "and only came ashore to carry the bullion to the submarine. They shuffled instead of walked, and were very bent of shoulder, with abnormally long arms. With coat collars turned up and caps

News Pars and Pictures!

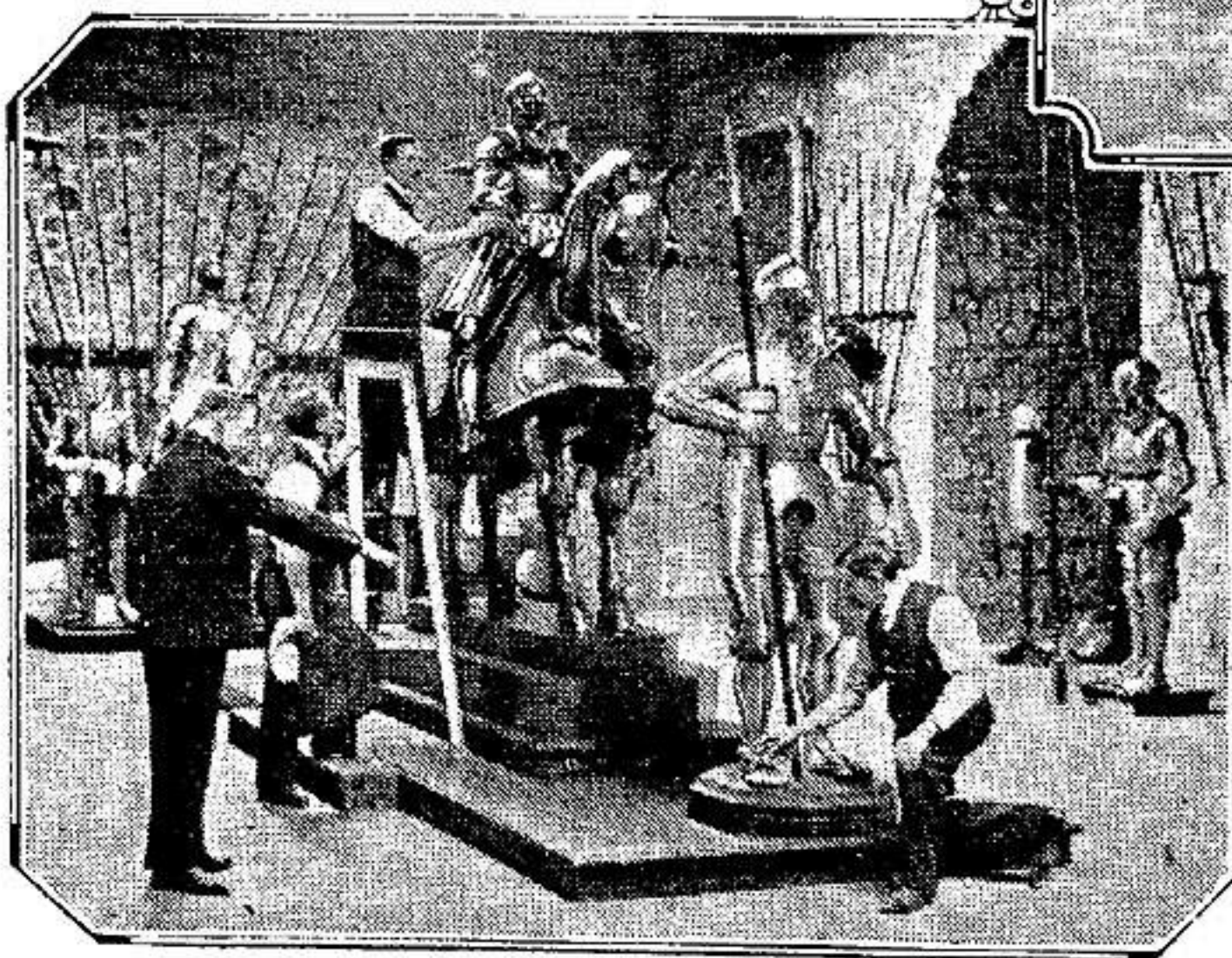
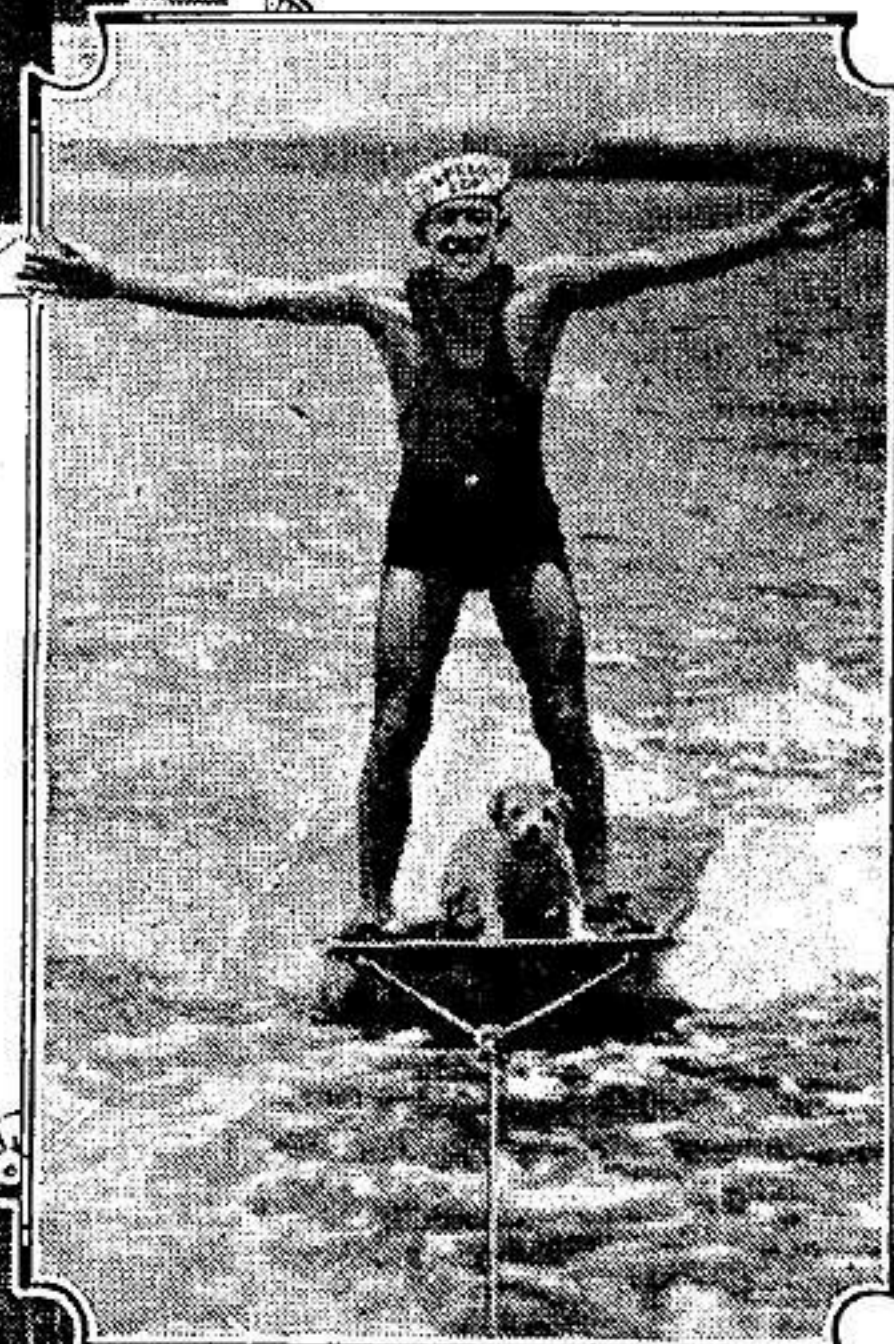
ALL THE WORLD OVER!

It's a far cry from the beach at Bognor to a street in Shanghai, but there's one thing they have in common—jolly old Punch and Judy. John Chinaman takes as great an interest in this world-wide favourite as any English youngster on holiday at the seaside, as the photo shows. But that old villain Punch's voice is raucous enough in English; can you imagine it in Chinese?



NOT SO EASY AS IT LOOKS!

Judging by the cheery and confident expression on the face of the gentleman on the right, nothing could be easier than the job of keeping on your feet while being yanked along on top of the waves at umpteen miles an hour behind a careering motor launch. But appearances are sometimes deceptive. Aqua-planing, as this sport is called, demands a great sense of balance, a considerable amount of nerve, together with lots of practice before it can be mastered. Probably the expert in our photo is glad that he's got something soft to fall on in case of accident, and it's quite on the cards that he was on his back in the briny the instant after this snap was taken. The dog looks as if his motto is "Be prepared," anyhow!



CLEANING DAY AT THE TOWER!

Most people have paid a visit to the Tower of London at some time during their lives, but I wonder how many of them have taken the trouble to count the pieces of armour that make up the wonderful collection housed in the White Tower? I know I didn't, but I have since gleaned the interesting information that there are round about seven thousand altogether, and that each separate piece has to be overhauled and treated at regular intervals to prevent rust. Here you see the attendants with their dusters and bottles of Brighto busily engaged in imparting that little extra bit of polish that marks the really well-dressed knight. Surplus pieces of armour are sold to visitors. Here's your chance, chums

LORD OF LOST ISLAND!

(Continued from page 26.)

pulled well down, it was difficult to see their faces; but—

"Yes, get on, man!" said Ferrers Locke, as Von Mauser paused.

"But their faces were of a strange yellow hue, with little shifty black eyes," continued Von Mauser. "They were faces which seemed to—to have died; faces which seemed to possess neither life nor any emotion except in the eyes!"

"And did Chalmers never give you any explanation as to who these men were?" demanded the detective.

"He said once that they were Asiatics from the wilds of Northern Mongolia," replied Von Mauser. He said they were deaf mutes from a strange and unknown race, and that they made excellent servants. Indeed, their strength was enormous. I have seen one of them lift a bullock chest which it would take four men to lift."

"I see," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "Were you ever aboard the submarine?"

"Never. No one from the island was allowed to board her. She was a black

craft; but apart from that I know nothing about her."

"Her masked commander was, in every way, normal? He was not like these other four of whom you speak?"

"No, he appeared to be a normal man—a European or American, I think."

"And that is all you can tell me about this submarine which was evidently Chalmers' private craft?" asked Ferrers Locke. "You have no idea from whence it came or where it went with the bullion?"

"I swear I have not! I would tell you if I could!" replied Von Mauser emphatically.

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"One last question," he said. "Can you, or anyone else who was on Lost Island with Chalmers, give us any idea as to where he might now be found?"

"I cannot. He took none of us into his confidence to that extent. With our submarines, we never anticipated capture, and the question of what we should do were we trapped was never seriously considered, as we never anticipated being trapped!"

"That is all, then, Von Mauser," replied Ferrers Locke quietly.

Captain Milvain made a gesture of dismissal, and Von Mauser was taken from the cabin by his guards. When

the door had closed on the prisoner Captain Milvain turned to the Baker Street detective.

"What do you make of this strange crew of which Von Mauser spoke Mr. Locke?" he asked.

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"It might be that Chalmers spoke the truth when he said they were deaf mutes from a lost Mongolian race," he replied non-committally.

"You do not think so?" pressed the captain.

"I have formed no definite opinion—yet," replied Ferrers Locke. "There can be more than one explanation as to just who and what those men were!"

Captain Milvain nodded, and did not pursue the matter any further just then.

"Are there any more of the men whom you wish to interrogate?" he asked.

"No, I will go ashore now and have a look at Chalmers' quarters," replied the detective.

"I will order a boat for you at once, Mr. Locke," replied Captain Milvain, rising to his feet.

(Will Ferrers Locke succeed in making any discoveries concerning the missing villain, Black Michael, on Lost Island? See next week's thrilling long instalment of this powerful yarn.)

FALSELY AKKUSED!

(Continued from page 15.)

"Oh, crikey!"

Mr. Lickham flung a commizzerating glance at the three heroes of the Fourth, who, brave as they were, cowered at the Head's words.

"Do your worst, sir!" mermered Jack Jolly, with a resined shrugg. "We know, at all events, that we are in the right!"

"You shall suffer for those words, Jolly!" roared the Head furiously. "And now, back to the camp! Bring that rabbit along, Licky!" he added, sotto vocey. "Half a loaf is better than none, after all!"

Mr. Lickham obediently shoved the rabbit into one of the sacks which they had left under the hedge, and brought up in the rear of the procession, which returned to Snorter Magnus.

Their arrival attracted quite a lot of

attention at the St. Sam's Camp. And when the news spread that Jack Jolly & Co. were to be flogged for poaching, the starving boys of St. Sam's felt nothing but simperthy for the heroes of the Fourth.

Simperthy, however, wasn't much use to Jack Jolly & Co. in the ordeal which they had to face in the Head's tent. Unforchuntly, it didn't lessen the sting of Dr. Birchmall's crool birchrod in any degree.

Let us draw a veil over that painful seen. Suffice it to say that, altho Jack Jolly & Co. yelled and howled and roared in angwish; not a sound escaped their lips. They bore their punishment with the fortitude of real heroes.

Later, in the sacred presinks of the Junior Common Tent, Jack Jolly swore a solum swear.

"Come what may," he cried, "I intend to have my giddy own back. From now on, my motto is ah I for an I!"

"Mark my words," went on the kap-tin of the Fourth, "I fully intend to rid this camp of the ttrany which is

making our lives here a mizzery. Somehow or other, I will bring the bully Birchmall to heel!"

"Hooray!"

"Rely on me, chaps! Before you are much older, I'll get you all you want. We'll live in a land flowing with milk and honey, and the Head will cower at our bidding."

"Oh, grate pip!"

"Now, buzz off, and leave me for a little while," concluded Jack Jolly. "I want to be alone, to think."

The juniors buzzed off as requested. And Jack Jolly sat down, and set his branebox to work.

Within a few minnits, a grin had spread over his feetchers.

"Got it!" he eggsoclaimed.

He had thought of a wheeze.

THE END.

(Just how Jack Jolly's bright wheeze turns out will be related in next week's laughable story of St. Sam's, entitled: "The Poacher Poached!" Don't miss this breezy yarn, chums, whatever you do!)

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"AY I come in, sir!"

It was Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, who poked his head into Dr. Birchmell's tent at the St. Sam's Camp and asked that question.

"By all means, Licky! Trot in and take a peep," answered the Head of the Skool under Canvas jennally. "What's the matter with your fuz this morning? You look the picture of mizzery, old scout!"

"And no wonder, sir!" groaned the master of the Fourth. "Since we have been in camp I haven't eaten enuff to keep a sparrow alive."

Evidently Mr. Lickham was speaking the truth, for he looked as pale as pall could be.

But Dr. Birchmell merely frowned. "I trust you are not complaining about your rations, Lickham? Before I reduced them I went to the trouble of insulating a grate diet specialist on the subject, and he assured me that two slices of dry bread per day, with plenty of water, should be quite enuff for skoolboys and korm masters alike."

"Then I'm afraid I must be an egg-secton to the jenneral rule, sir," said Mr. Lickham mournfully. "I can tell you, anyway, that your bread-and-water diet is causing me to wait away to a shadow of my former self."

"In that case you ought to be grate-sexy fat!" said the Head severely. "Now buzz off, Licky, and let me hear no more of your mizzery wailings."

But, to the Head's surprize, Mr. Lickham, for once in a way, ignored his master's voice.

Far from buzzing off, in fact, he came closer to Dr. Birchmell, and a threatening look replaced the mournful expression on his dille.

"If you don't mind, sir, I'd rather stay here," he said, a sinister note entering his voice. "But if you insist on my hopping it, I'll just buzz off to Shorter Lodge and give Major Snorter some information about the mysterious poacher who has recently been pinching his rabbits."

The Head recoiled, white to the lips. "What the merry dickens do you mean?" he asked, tickling himself slyly on the funnybone, so as to force a laugh. "I know nothing of Major Snorter's rabbits, Lickham, but me if I do!"

"Not you, sir!" sneered Mr. Lickham, with biting sarcasm. "Why should you? Of course, the bearded feger in gown and mortarboard that leaves the poet you're wondering what made me,

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Camp to go poaching every day is your dabble—or possibly one of the boys. It couldn't be you, could it?"

"Hisssed!" hissed the Head. "We may be overheard!"

"Jolly good job, too!" said Mr. Lickham venomously.

Dr. Birchmell threw a glance full of fear at the open tent door, and seized his assistant fiercely by the collar.

"Look here, Lickham. Don't go and put me in the cart!" he cried hoarsely. "As you have rumbled me, I'll admit that I am the bunny-hunter."

"Ah!" eggsclained Mr. Lickham, with a nod.

"But don't go and blow the gaff to anybody, for Heaven's sake!" implored the Head. "Whatever happens, I can never face the scandal of eggsposure. The world must never know that the headmaster of St. Sam's is a poacher. So just you keep mum, Licky, and I promise you you'll get all the grub you want."

"Now you're talking, sir!" eggsclaimed Mr. Lickham, rubbing his hands. "Thanks! I'll keep mum."

And in response to a quite imaginary invitation, Mr. Lickham helped himself to a deonut lying on the Head's desk.

"You see, Lickham, it's like this here," eggsplained Dr. Birchmell, removing the rest of the grub out of sight. "For some time now I've been worried by the size of the grub bill at St. Sam's, and that was the reason which induced me to knock off some of the luxuries while we were in camp. Why give the hole skool butter on their bread, I thought, when I can't afford to go to the pictures more than three times a week myself?"

"I see, sir," nodded Mr. Lickham, licking the traces of the demolished deonut from his lips.

"Then, again," pursued the Head, "why give them three slices of bread each, when by cutting the allowance down to one slice I could afford to pay up my arrears of subscription to the Muggleton Hopscotch Club?"

"Eggsactly, sir!" said Mr. Lickham. "I quite sympathize with your point of view. By all means cut down the rations to the barest minimum; in fact, down to nothing at all, if you like. My objection only begins when you start cutting down mine!"

the headmaster of a grate public skool, start pinching rabbits?"

"Well, I must confess I feel a certain amount of curiosity on the point," admitted Mr. Lickham, with a grin.

The Head threw out his hands in an eloquent jesture.

"Merely the need for economy, my dear Lickham, that is all. I simply couldn't afford enuff grub to keep sole and heel—I mean, body and soul—together. So as they were nice and handy, I started helping myself to Major Snorter's rabbits."

"And very nice too, sir!" grinned Mr. Lickham. "I could just manidge a couple of nice rabbit-pies for to-day's dinner myself."

Dr. Birchmell started, and his face broke into a sudden grin.

"Grate pip! That's a wheeze!" he eggsclained. "Why don't you come along and help me this morning, then?"

"What, me become a poacher?" gasped Mr. Lickham. "Oh, how could you suggest it, sir? I have been a cat-burglar and a forger, but I draw the line at being a poacher. No, sir, I couldn't do it!"

"Come, come, Lickham, think again!" urged Dr. Birchmell. "If I could only describe in words the joys and thrills of rabbit-catching, I am sure you would come like a shot. Besides, think of the rabbit-pies after the hunt has been brought to a successful conclusion!"

"H'm! Perhaps you're right," mormered the master of the Fourth thoughtfully. "Well, all right, then, sir, I'll come."

"Good egg!" cried the Head enthusiastically. "We'll sport a bottle of jinger-pop on the strength of it, dash my buttons if we won't!"

"By all means, sir!" grinned Mr. Lickham reddly.

There and then Dr. Birchmell and Mr. Lickham toasted success to their poaching enterprise in foaming jinger-pop.

After which they picked up a couple of sacks marked "RABBITS," donned their mortarboards, and quitted the tent.

All unknown to the Head and Mr. Lickham, three watchful pairs of eyes were following them as they crept stealthily out of camp that morning.

The eyes in question belonged to Jack Jolly & Co. of the Fourth.

"There he goes!" murmured Jack Jolly from the Co.'s hiding-place behind a bush. "And old Lickham's with him, too! Would you believe it?"

"Our own giddy Form master nothing but a common poacher!" snorted Bright. "I always said he was a bad egg!"

"Are we going to follow them?" asked Merry.

"What-ho!"

And follow them our heroes did. Through crool hedges that tore their clothing to ribbons, up steep, perilous hills that would have made the stoutest hart quake, down fearsome valleys where one slip meant a sudden and garasty death, they pursued the two biggers in skollastic caps and gowns. Many fellows would have chuckled it up in disgust. But our heroes never chucked up anything.

At last to their grate relief they perceived the following notice attached to a board in a field:

"RABBIT PRESERVES.

Anyone pinching rabbits will be persecuted with all the riger of the law.

By order, MAJOR SNORTER.

"This is where the fun begins!" mormered Jack Jolly.

And the kaptin of the Fourth, as usual, was right.

After a cautious look round to see that nobody was looking, the Head and Mr. Lickham crept through a hole in the hedge, and entered Major Snorter's prezerves.

Without an instant's hezitation, Jack Jolly & Co. followed them.

The St. Sam's poachers had been quick to get to work. As our heroes came on the scene, they saw Mr. Lickham grasping a scared-looking rabbit by the tale.

Jack Jolly & Co. could not repress their indignation at such croolty.

"Shame!" they cried fiercely. "The Head and Mr. Lickham swung round, with startled eggsclamations, and their jaws fairly dropped as they saw who there shaddowers were."

"Jolly!" cried the Head, in amazement. "What the thump are you doing here?"

"I think we might ask the same question of you, sir," replied Jack Jolly scornfully. "Perhaps you can eggsplain what you're doing with that rabbit—"

"Silence, you disrespectful young cub! Any more of your insolence, and I'll—"

What Dr. Birchmell was going to do,

however, in the event of any more insolence, was never known, for at that moment came a totally unexpected interruption. Three burleigh-looking fellows, wearing fierce eggspressions on their dices, rushed up without any warning, and pointed guns at the entire St. Sam's party!

"Hands up!" they roared menacingly. Five pairs of hands shot up like lightning. At the same time there was a yell of terror from Dr. Birchmell and Mr. Lickham, both of whom were terrible cowherds at hart.

"Spare us!" howled the Head. "I'll do anything or anybody if you'll only spare my life! Kill all the rest, if you like, but please don't touch me!"

"Don't shoot me, kind sir, and you can have all the wealth I possess!" quavered Mr. Lickham. "I've got three-farthings on me, gentlemen, and you can have every penny of it!"

But the burleigh strangers only larfed harshly.

"Don't think you can bribe us with your filthy looce!" cried their leader. "We are honest gamekeepers, and the only money we take is the wages our master, Major Snorter, pays us."

At the mention of Major Snorter's name, Dr. Birchmell ceased his pleas for mercy, and changed his tune altogether.

"Bless my sole!" he cried. "Major Snorter is a close personal friend of mine. Please put your weapons down, my good men. I thought at first you were desript outlaws. Had I known you were gamekeepers, I should, of course, have acted differently."

"But wot about that rabbit yore accomplice is still holding?" asked one of the men suspiciously. "Mean to say you don't know anything about it?"

It looked for a moment as if the Head was cornered. But Dr. Birchmell was never cornered for long. On this occasion he had a real brane wave.

"Yes, I do know something about it, if it comes to that," he answered. "I am Dr. Birchmell, headmaster of St. Sam's. As a matter of fact, I and my assistant, Mr. Lickham, have been following up these boys from our camp. I promised Major Snorter that I would find out who had been pinching his rabbits, and, sure enuff I have done so. There are the guilty parties, covering before you—Jolly, Merry, and Bright. You have my permission to arrest them at once, if not sooner, and take

them to the nearest perlice-station to await their trial."

"Oh, crickey!" mormered Mr. Lickham, almost overcome by the cleverness of his superior, while Jack Jolly & Co. fell back a pace, absolutely staggered by the treckbery of their headmaster.

"Well, wot have you got to say to that, young shavers?" asked the head gamekeeper shrilly.

"Only this—that we are innocent!" cried Jack Jolly, in wringing axents. "The guilty ones are there, and we were merely following them up."

"The gamekeeper larfed skeptically. "Skoolmasters poaching? And boys following them up? I can't believe that!"

"Nor can we!" growled the other two gamekeepers.

"No. That won't wash, young man. I shall have to accept the word of your headmaster."

"Oh, grate pip!" cried Merry and Bright in dismay.

"Boys, this means chokoy for us!" mormered Jack Jolly, in a choked voice. "Breaking stones in the quarry or working the treadmill by day, and chained in a dreary dunjon by nite. What a fate!"

The head gamekeeper shook his head thoughtfully.

"You boys look too young to go to clink," he said. "Consequently, I won't call in the perlice this time. Instead of that, I'll hand you over to your headmaster here, and ask him to give you each a good thrashing. Would that be troubling you too much, sir?"

"Not at all, my good man!" grinned the Head, almost dancing with deblite at the happy termination of the bizness.

"I'll flog them black and blew, with the gratest of plezzure!"

(Continued on page 28.)

