

"THE TOUGHEST TEAM IN THE LEAGUE!" Brilliant New Footer
Yarn Starts To-day!

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The Magnet

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EVERY SATURDAY.



MR. DANCE MAKES BILLY BUNTER DANCE!

Billy Bunter was placed in a very favourable position for a whacking, and the enraged Mr. Dance promptly took advantage of the fact. (A "roaring" incident from this week's fine yarn of Harry Wharton & Co, of Greyfriars!)

Our Special Football Feature!



STARS AND THEIR METHODS!

By "REFEREE."



Our contributor is out to tell you the secrets of the Footer Stars' success. Last week he dealt with Dixie Dean's "tricks o' the trade." This week he throws light on the methods adopted by Alec Jackson, Huddersfield's crack winger.

SO far as most positions on the football field go, there are differences of opinion as to who is the greatest player—the master—of the moment. It is likely that some readers of the MAGNET will not agree with me over some of the masters I shall select for treatment in these notes.

But, while the foregoing is true, there is one position on the football field to-day over which there is a unanimity of opinion as to who is the best player.

Who is the best outside right in the game? Having asked that question, I wait for the answer—and in my imagination I can hear it coming in a mighty chorus of voices. The answer is—Alec Jackson. He plays for Huddersfield Town, of course, but he is more than a Huddersfield player. Scotland chooses him for her International matches, and people sit up and take notice whenever he is performing.

They have need to, for Jackson is worth noting, and many of his methods are worth copying. So famous is he that you probably know nearly as much about him as I do. So I am not going to use up much space in telling you what he has done.

Alec at Wembley!

I do want you to take your minds back, however, to a certain match between England and Scotland, played at Wembley last April. Scotland won by five goals to one, giving England the biggest whacking she has had in an International match for donkeys' years. Of those five goals which went to Scotland's credit, Alec Jackson scored three.

It is not a unique feat for one man to score three goals in an International match, but Alec Jackson's feat was a record, because never in a previous game between England and Scotland has an outside-wing man scored three goals.

A week or two later, Jackson was at Wembley again, and he scored a goal against Blackburn Rovers in the Cup Final. Huddersfield didn't win, and Alec was disappointed. But he had at least done his bit.

Control the Ball!

The first big reason, perhaps, why Alec Jackson has for the last few years been the most feared, and the most talked-about footballer, is that he has had wide experience, and is experienced. That may read funnily to you, but actually having experience and being experienced are not nearly the same thing. There are people who have experience, but learn little. There are

others who learn the maximum from every experience. Alec Jackson is among the latter.

He learnt his football in Scotland, because, as I have mentioned, he is of Scottish birth. In Scotland the first thing they teach their young footballers is to control the ball. I wish we taught our young English footballers the same lesson first. Too many of our English lads are put into fairly good football teams before they have really learnt to control the ball, and some of them never really learn how to do this.

Then Alec, with the spirit of adventure in him, went to America to see what the football out there was like. It didn't suit him too well. There is rather too much rough-and-tumble about it. Not that Jackson shirks a tackle or a charge. He can hold his own. But he regards football as a game of brain, not of brawn; of skill rather



Here's a typical action photo of Alec Jackson, Huddersfield's famous outside-right.

than of physical strength. So he came back to Scotland, and then signed on for Huddersfield Town. When Huddersfield got this signature, the manager did perhaps the finest bit of work ever done for the club.

Taking a Risk!

The great trouble with many Scottish footballers who come to England is that they have not the necessary pace for the game as played below the border. They have the ball control, but take too long in doing things. Jackson doesn't sacrifice ball-control on the altar of speed. He allies speed to his ball-control. Hence, in a great measure, the secret of his success.

He simply refuses to be bound by conventional ideas. I told you that he scored three goals for Scotland against England in the last International match. Strictly speaking, it is not the outside-right's job to score goals. But Jackson doesn't look at it that way. In other matches he has scored three goals, too. One instance I remember well. On the programme he was marked down as outside-right. He scored the first goal from the inside-left position; the second from the inside-right position; and the third from the centre-forward position.

It is a risky thing for a footballer to leave his allotted position on the field. You know that as well as I do. But this is the peculiarity and the particular genius of Jackson. He is often out of position, and yet he is always in his position when he is wanted there.

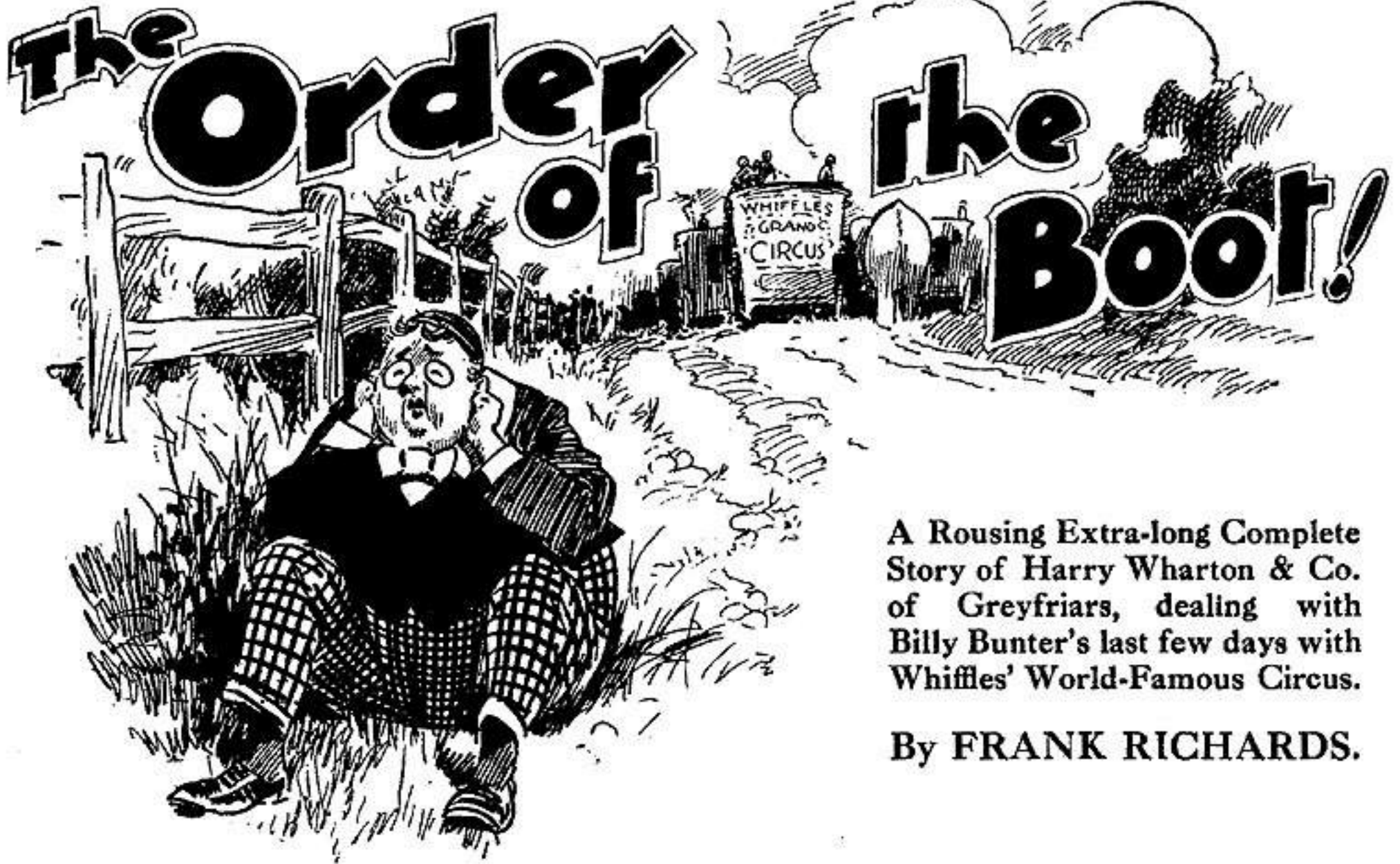
Not for Jackson the slavish hugging of the touch-line so much practised by many wingers. He can fly along the touch-line at top speed. He can also deliver a neat centre from there. But when there is a chance to cut in and shoot, Jackson takes it. Also, when he sees the ball coming over from the left wing, he slips in towards the middle of the field. By wandering—scientific wandering—Jackson lures his "shadows" into bad positions.

I don't want to emphasise too much the goal-scoring side of Jackson's play. He is so successful as a team man because he shoots at goal himself when there is no pal in a better position for shooting, and he passes when there is a pal in a better position.

Jackson has "got there" and gets there because he is a straightforward player, refusing to be bound down by ordinary conventions. He has skill in plenty, boundless enthusiasm, the capacity to learn, and the never-say-die spirit.



TOO GOOD TO LAST! Anyone but Billy Bunter could see with half an eye that his amazing imposture of Mr. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, proprietor of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus, couldn't last indefinitely. But Bunter can't see beyond the tip of his nose, although he sports an outside in specs!



A Rousing Extra-long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, dealing with Billy Bunter's last few days with Whiffles' World-Famous Circus.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mr. Dance Objects!

HARRY WHARTON came out of the tent in the camp of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus, in the early September morning. Early as the hour was, the camp was astir and buzzing with activity. The big tent had been struck, and was in process of packing. All hands were hard at work, getting ready for the road. The World-Famous Circus was about to move on once more.

Only one person in the circus camp was still inactive, reposing peacefully in the embrace of Morpheus. That one was the Boss. From the blue-and-red caravan proceeded a deep and reverberating snore, the outward and visible sign of the inward invisible Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry came out of the tent. "They're moving on this morning."

"And we're moving on, too," said Harry. "Not along with the circus, though."

Bob glanced at the Boss' caravan.

"Bunter's still asleep!" he said.

"We'll wake him up!"

Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came out. That morning the Famous Five of Greyfriars were to leave the circus, though the question was not yet settled as to whether Billy Bunter was to go with them. Bunter, who had played so long the remarkable part of Mr. Whiffles, Boss of the World-Famous Circus, was extremely unwilling to quit.

Dance, the manager, came over to the Famous Five. Mr. Dance was very busy that morning, having all the work of shifting camp on his hands. Bunter was Boss, but the only "bossing" he did was in the shape of throwing his weight about; work and responsibility he was willing to leave to his manager. Mr. Dance was not only busy, but he was in a bad temper—a common state of mind with Mr. Dance, no doubt owing to the

many disappointments met with in his elusive pursuit of winners. Moreover, Mr. Dance did not like the Famous Five, and did not approve of their travelling with the circus.

"Oh! You've turned out!" he grunted.

"The turn outfulness is terrific," assented Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Now you're up, you may as well lend a hand," said Dance. "There's plenty to be done, and you needn't loaf about. If you're travelling with the circus, you may as well earn your keep."

"We're not travelling with the circus," said Harry Wharton curtly.

"We're chucking it to-day."

"In the esteemed circumstances, the chuckfulness is the proper caper," remarked Hurree Singh.

"Oh!" The manager was rather taken aback. "You're going?"

"As soon as we've had a word with Bunter," answered Harry.

Dance started.

"With whom?"

"Bunter."

"I don't understand—"

"I'll make it clear, then," said Wharton coolly. "We've found out what's going on in this circus, Mr. Dance. Last evening we met the real Mr. Whiffles, and he told us. The fellow who's snoring in that caravan is not Mr. Whiffles at all. It's Billy Bunter—got up as Whiffles. You knew it all along. Now we know it, and we're clearing."

Dance gave the captain of the Greyfriars Remove a very unpleasant look.

"You can clear as soon as you like," he answered, "and I shall be glad to see the last of you."

"You'll see the last of Bunter, too, if he has sense enough to come with us," said Wharton. "What's going on here is something a good deal like a swindle, though Bunter hasn't brains enough to understand it. We're getting him out of it if we can."

"You'll mind your own business!" said Dance.

"We're making this our business, old bean," said Bob Cherry cheerily. "Any objections?"

"Yes!" snapped Dance. "Go if you like, and the sooner the better. It was against my wish that that fat fool brought you here. You will go without waking Bunter."

"Rats!" retorted Bob.

"The ratfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Dance's eyes gleamed at the juniors.

"If you want to be thrown out of this camp—" he began.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Johnny Bull unceremoniously.

"We're going to take Bunter with us, if he will come, Mr. Dance," said Harry Wharton quietly. "I hope he will have sense enough. You've got him here pretending to be Mr. Whiffles—while you run the circus. Bunter's a fool, but we're not fools, and we can see your little game plainly enough. You're handling the cash while the real Whiffles is away and Bunter is playing the giddy goat. You're not getting a Greyfriars fellow to help you in your roguery, if we can help it."

"No fear!" said Nugent emphatically.

Dance clenched his hands.

All the time the Greyfriars chums had been with the circus, the rascally manager had feared that they might learn the true state of affairs. Now they had learned it. And he was well aware that he could not deal with Harry Wharton & Co. as with William George Bunter. Bunter's fatuousness was all his own, not shared in the least by other Greyfriars juniors.

Harry Wharton turned away from Dance, and approached the steps of the blue-and-red caravan, once the dwelling of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, now the refuge of the Owl of the Remove.

He staggered back as Dance grabbed him roughly by the shoulder.

The manager swung him angrily aside.

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"Hands off!" shouted Wharton, his eyes blazing.

"Keep clear of that van!" snarled Dance. "Get out of the camp—the sooner the better. But I forbid you to go to that caravan."

"Forbid as much as you like," said Harry. "I'm going to wake up Bunter, and speak to him before I go."

"You're not!"

"Rats!"

Dance made a stride towards the van and planted himself at the steps. Evidently he intended to use force to keep the Greyfriars juniors away from the Boss. Bunter was essential to the manager's schemes; without a supposed Mr. Whiffles in the circus he could not possibly carry on. For Bunter personally he had a deep and intense dislike, but Bunter, the Boss, was very valuable to him, and he did not intend to part with the sham Mr. Whiffles.

"Stand back!" he snapped. "Give me any trouble, you young rascals, and I will call the hands to throw you out of the camp!"

"I fancy not," grinned Bob Cherry. "You don't want the circus hands to know who's in the caravan!"

"Stand aside, Mr. Dance," said Wharton curtly.

Dance did not call to the hands. Evidently he did not want them to hear what the schoolboys could have told them. But he raised a clenched hand as the juniors came to the steps of the van.

"Stand back!" he snapped.

"Rats!"

Harry Wharton came on, and the enraged manager struck at him. Wharton knocked up his arm with a rap that made Mr. Dance gasp.

The next moment, the manager was grasped by the Famous Five and tossed aside like a bundle.

He sprawled in the grass, red with rage.

Apparently, he had not supposed that the schoolboys would venture to handle him. He was enlightened on that point now. The chums of the Remove had no respect for a man whom they more than suspected of being a designing rascal.

Wharton stepped up to the door of the caravan and knocked.

Dance rose to his feet.

He could not venture to call on his men to deal with the Famous Five in the circumstances. Obviously, he could not deal with them alone. He slunk away, leaving them to their own devices. If they succeeded in persuading Billy Bunter to do the sensible thing, his game was up. But he still had hope in the abysmal obtuseness of the Owl of the Remove.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

To Go or Not to Go!

BILLY BUNTER snored. The knocking at the door of the caravan did not awaken him.

Bunter had an important question to settle that morning; but Bunter was not the fellow to meet troubles halfway. No question could be so important as having his sleep out. Bunter would have snored on till ten o'clock, at least, had he been left to himself.

But he was not left to himself.

Now that they knew the true state of affairs at the World-Famous Circus, Harry Wharton & Co. were anxious to be gone. They were not in the least inclined to wait till Bunter had had his sleep out.

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Bang! Thump! Bang! Thump!

Bunter still snored.

He snored on regardless till the Famous Five put their shoulders to the wheel—literally—and shifted the caravan.

The van gave a wild lurch, and the sleeping beauty awoke all of a sudden as he was pitched off Mr. Whiffles' bed.

There was a wild yell in the van.

"Yaroooooh!"

"The esteemed Bunter is awake!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yow-ow-ow! Whoop!"

Evidently Bunter was awake.

Harry Wharton thumped at the door again.

"Bunter!"

"Beast!"

"Open the door!"

"Rats!"

"We're going!"

"Go, and be blowed!" roared Bunter.

"You fat duffer! Are you coming away with us, or not?"

"No!" yelled Bunter.

"That does it," said Johnny Bull. "The fat chump is his own master. And I'm blessed if I want his company! Let's clear!"

Harry Wharton hesitated. Certainly Bunter was his own master, and had a right to get into any scrape he liked. But the captain of the Remove was loth to leave him to it.

"Look here, Bunter!" he called out.

"Shut up, you silly chump! What will my employees think if they hear you calling me Bunter, you fathead?"

"Are you coming?"

"No!" howled Bunter.

"Well, good-bye, then! We're going!"

Harry Wharton stepped away from the door.

A moment later the door of the blue-and-red caravan was thrown open, and Billy Bunter blinked out through his big spectacles. Not that his nearest relation would have recognised him as Billy Bunter. The ample nut-brown wig, the waxed moustache, and the pointed beard that had once belonged to Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, disguised him beyond all recognition. Only in his extensive circumference did he resemble the Owl of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows!" he squeaked.

"Good-bye, Fatty!"

"I say, you fellows, don't go!" exclaimed Bunter. "You can't leave me in the lurch like this, you know."

"Come with us, then," said Harry. "We're going back to Wharton Lodge to wind up the vacation. And you can come, if you like."

Bunter sniffed.

"Catch me! You fellows stay here! Look here, I'll put you on my salary list! I'll make Dance pay you handsomely."

"Fathead!"

"Suppose that villain, Huggins, gets after me again after you go?" said Bunter. "I engaged you as my body-guard, as you know jolly well, to keep that dangerous beast off. You can't chuck me now."

"We thought you were Mr. Whiffles then, you fat fraud," said Harry. "And Huggins is after Whiffles, not after you. If you take the wool off, and put on your own clothes, Huggins won't worry you."

"I'm keeping this up till the end of the vac," said Bunter positively. "Why, I'm living on the fat of the land here!"

"A pig in clover!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Beast!"

"Look here, you fat duffer, we're going!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"You can come with us if you like. Yes, or no?"

"You ain't going without your brekker, I suppose?" exclaimed Bunter, in astonishment.

"We can get some brekker in Easthorpe. We're going at once. Can't you understand that what you're doing is practically a swindle?" exclaimed Wharton impatiently. "We can't have a hand in it."

"Oh, really, Wharton!"

"Let's cut!" said Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows, stay on for brekker, anyhow!" said Bunter. "You'll be ill if you miss your brekker. 'I—I'm anxious about you.'"

"Fathead!"

"I am, really," urged Bunter. "We can't part like this, you know, such old pals as we are. I'll tell George to get brekker at once, and then—then I'll think it over. You can't expect a fellow to think anything out before brekker. Be reasonable!"

Harry Wharton paused. He wanted to give the fatuous Owl of the Remove every chance to get out of the extraordinary position into which his fatuousness had landed him.

"Well, we may as well stop for breakfast," he said, at last. "But that's the limit, Bunter."

"George!" bawled the boss.

George Mix came hurrying up to the blue-and-red caravan.

"Yes, guv'nor!"

"Brekker!" ordered Bunter. "Quick! Lots of it! Don't lose time!"

"Yes, guv'nor!"

George lost no time; but Bunter was out of the van before breakfast appeared. In the circumstances Bunter realised that he never would be allowed to have his sleep out, so he made up his fat mind to it. His ablutions did not keep him long. At Greyfriars Bunter had always got along with a remarkably small allowance of washing. As boss of the circus he had reduced ablutions to a very tiny minimum. That, in Bunter's opinion, was something like a holiday.

"George, where's that idiot? Where's that lazy slacker?" bawled Bunter. "George, I'll sack you! Where's my brekker?"

"Coming, guv'nor."

To George and the rest of the circus the Owl of the Remove was still Mr. Whiffles, monarch of all he surveyed. To the Famous Five he was simply Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove—merely that and nothing more. George hurried up with the breakfast, which was laid on a table outside the blue-and-red caravan, *à fresco*. Bunter sat down to it without delay—delays, proverbially, dangerous—and Bunter never lost time when a meal was toward.

"I say, you fellows, sit down!" he said, with his mouth full. "Make a good brekker! This is better than you'd get at Greyfriars, or at Wharton Lodge, either. This is as good as we get at Bunter Court."

"Better, perhaps," grinned Bob Cherry.

"The betterfulness is probably terrific."

Certainly the breakfast was good. Money was running short in the circus. All salaries and wages were in arrear. The takings were good; but the cash was in the hands of Mr. Dance, and was expended chiefly for the benefit of certain bookmaking gentlemen, who viewed with enthusiasm Mr. Dance's ceaseless and hopeless attempt to back winners. But even for the noble purpose of raising the wind to back losers, Mr. Dance never ventured to cut down the food supply. Only so long as the



As Harry Wharton strode up to the van the enraged circus manager struck at him. Wharton knocked up his arm, and the next moment Dance was grasped by the Famous Five and tossed aside like a bundle. He sprawled in the grass, red with wrath. (See Chapter 1.)

World-Famous Circus was a land flowing with milk and honey would Bunter have consented to carry on as Mr. Whiffles, and provide the rascally manager with the screen he needed to hide his rascality.

Bunter's fat face grew very good-humoured as he proceeded with a Gargantuan meal. He had missed some hours of sleep; but that breakfast really was worth it. Bunter's face expanded in smiles.

The Famous Five were finished long before Bunter. They waited with unconcealed impatience for him to get through. But Bunter was in no hurry.

"Look here, Bunter—" said Harry Wharton, at last.

"Leave it till after brekker, old chap!" said Bunter. "I say, try that jam! It's jolly good jam!"

"We've finished."

"Try the cake! It's a ripping cake!"

"Bother the cake!"

"Well, what about the jolly?" urged Bunter. "You've got room enough for a plate of jelly. The fact is, you fellows don't eat enough. That's why you're such a skinny lot. If you want a figure like mine, you will have to tuck in a bit more, I can tell you."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Not that I eat much," said Bunter. "I always say that enough is as good as a feast. But a fellow wants enough. I never get enough at Greyfriars. I lost weight there last term. I've got it back since I've been with this circus. Look here, tuck in again! There's lots! I never was mean. Shove that jar of

jam over this way, Bob! Hand me that tablespoon, Franky! Good!"

Bunter proceeded to wind up his breakfast with the jar of jam, helping himself from the jar with the tablespoon. His fat face beamed over the jam jar. He was cheery and sticky and happy.

Harry Wharton & Co. rose from the table. They were not disposed to wait till Bunter had reached the bottom of the jar.

"Now, then, Bunter—" began Wharton.

"Shut up, you ass! George will hear," said Bunter hastily.

"Bother George! Look here—" "George!" bawled Bunter.

"Yes, guv'nor."

"You can clear! Go and help with the packing up! Don't slack round here like a stuffed dummy."

George departed. Billy Bunter, still busy with the tablespoon and the jam, blinked at the impatient juniors over the jar.

"I say, you fellows! I want you to stay on! Look what a brekker you've had. You stand by me, and—"

"Fathead! We're going," said Harry. "You'd better come! Mr. Whiffles is keeping an eye on the circus—"

"I know that!" Bunter grinned. "But he's jolly well afraid to come back so long as that man Huggins is loose. Huggins keeps him off. It's as safe as houses. You fellows stay here, and keep Huggins away from me—without

getting him run in, of course. That will make it all serene."

"Huggins will be run in pretty soon," said Harry. "He's wanted now for robbery with violence, since he bashed that St. Jim's fellow, Cardew. Can't you see that the game is up for you here?"

Bunter shook his head. There are none so blind as those who will not see, and Bunter certainly did not want to see that his game was up as boss of the World-Famous Circus.

"Nothing of the sort," he said obstinately. "I dare say Huggins will dodge them. He's an artful beast. And so long as he's free, Whiffles is afraid to come back to the circus, and it's all serene. Only I want you fellows to stay on, to see that the beast doesn't bash me, taking me for Whiffles."

"If we come on Huggins again, we shall collar him, and hand him over to the police," said Harry. "He's got to answer for what he did to Cardew."

"Blow Cardew! He ain't a Greyfriars man, anyway," said Bunter. "What does that ass Cardew matter! It's me that matters."

"You fat chump!" said Bob Cherry. "Can't you see that while you're playing at being Mr. Whiffles, that roguo Dance is running the circus and bagging the cash?"

"Well, that's all right," said Bunter. "The circus would have to shut up shop, while that funky old Whiffles is hiding away, if I wasn't here to help Dance

carry on. Dance is earning the money he bags, by running the show. That's how he looks at it."

"Very likely; but that isn't how the law would look at it," said Frank Nugent. "It would be called a swindle. Whiffles could prosecute Dance for what he is doing."

"Well, he won't, so long as Huggins frightens him away."

"Huggins will be nabbed soon."

"Well, I suppose I can carry on all right until he's nabbed, anyhow," said Bunter. "You fellows stand by me so long as it lasts, and then I'll take you all to Bunter Court and give you a glorious holiday. You haven't been to Bunter Court yet. You'll meet all the nobs—"

"I suppose it's no use trying to get any sense into your silly head, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove. "Look here—we're going. Will you come with us, and go while the going is good? You'll get into serious trouble if you stay on. Chuck it up and come."

"No fear! You fellows stay on," urged Bunter. "I'm not giving up all this for nothing. Stay another week—"

"We're going now."

"Another day," urged Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"Then you can jolly well go and eat coke," exclaimed Bunter wrathfully. "You're ungrateful, that's what's the matter with you. I'm fed up with you! Get out of my circus, and be blowed."

And the Famous Five, leaving the Boss still busy with the jam, got out. The die was cast!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

On the Road!

"READY!" snapped Dance. Billy Bunter blinked at him.

He was ready to take the road, if it came to that. He was prepared to travel, so long, of course, as he could travel sitting down. He was not feeling disposed to walk, after the enormous breakfast he had tucked away inside Mr. Whiffles' crimson waistcoat with yellow spots. A rest on the bed in the blue-and-red caravan was an inviting idea, while the circus procession wound on through the high-roads and by-roads of Hampshire. But—There was a "but." William George Bunter was in a doubtful frame of mind.

His body-guard were gone. It had been a stroke of genius, Bunter considered, to enlist the Famous Five to travel with the circus, and keep off the redoubtable Bill Huggins. So long as they had believed him to be the genuine Mr. Whiffles, the Famous Five had played up, and more than once they had dealt faithfully with the vengeful ruffian who was haunting the track of the circus, watching for a chance to "bash" his old boss. But now they knew who the supposed Mr. Whiffles was, they had "chucked" it; and Bunter was left once more on his own. Even in the daytime he feared the thought of the vengeful Huggins; and after the day would come the night, when danger would threaten. Bunter did not often look ahead, but he could not help doing so now. Bill Huggins haunted his thoughts with terror. He had had several narrow escapes from a terrific "bashing" that was intended for the showman he was impersonating, and he knew that next time he might not escape.

"They're gone, Dance," he said dismally.

"All the better," growled Dance.

"That's all very well," said Bunter warmly. "But suppose that beast Huggins turns up again. What about that?"

"You must take your chance of that, Mr. Billy-Bunter-Whiffles," said Dance coolly. "You can't expect to live on the fat of the land for nothing."

Bunter glared at him. He was not disposed to take his chance of a "bashing," if he could help it. And he did not see why he shouldn't live on the fat of the land for nothing. In fact, that was exactly what he wanted and what he had always considered his due.

"I've a jolly good mind to chuck it up," he snapped. "After all, it can't last much longer, anyhow. And it ain't safe. Those fellows make out that you're not honest, Dance. They think you've got your fingers in the cash."

Dance stared at him. He was well aware of Bunter's obtuseness, and had marvelled at it. But he could not help wondering what Bunter supposed he was playing this peculiar game for, excepting for the purpose of getting his fingers into the cash. Certainly, he was not doing it for the pleasure of Billy Bunter's society, fascinating as that doubtless was.

"Oh, don't be a fool," he said brusquely. "Get into the caravan, if you're coming, and if you're too lazy to walk."

"I don't want any cheek, Dance! So long as I'm here, I'm boss of this show, and don't you forget it! I can jolly well tell you I'm going to cut, if I ain't safe from that beast Huggins. He will be following the circus, same as he did before, I know that. Now those fellows are gone—"

"You can hide to-night in a baggage van or in a packing case, if you like," said Dance sarcastically. "Anyhow, if you're coming, get into the van—we're starting. We've got a long trip to make to-day; the next stop is in the next county."

Dance turned away, and mounted the horse he was to ride in the procession. George Mix stood ready to put up the steps of the blue-and-red caravan when the Boss was inside. Slaney was already mounted in the driver's seat, and taking the reins of the horses.

"Getting in, guv'nor?" called out George.

Bunter made up his mind, and clambered into the van. He was uneasy in his fat mind; which was not surprising now that his bodyguard had left him. The genuine Mr. Whiffles was frightened away from his own circus by his dread of the truculent Bill Huggins, and Billy Bunter was not gifted with much more courage than the fat circus proprietor. Strongly he was tempted to "cut," and go while the going was good, as Wharton had advised him. But he could not make up his fat mind to abandon the pleasure of "bossing" the circus; still more was he reluctant to turn his back on the fleshpots of Egypt. And Dance's suggestion, sarcastic as it was, had given him an idea—why shouldn't he hide in some inaccessible corner after nightfall, and so elude the vengeful Huggins if he came? There was comfort in that thought to the fat Owl, as he rolled away in the blue-and-red caravan in the circus procession.

The village of Easthorpe was left behind, and the procession wound along the country road, past the gates of Eastwood House, the home of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's. Bunter, sitting in the caravan, blinked at the

red roofs of the old house showing through the trees of the park, and frowned. He had visited that mansion with Harry Wharton & Co., and had not been treated there with the respect that he felt was his due. There had been a cricket match, and D'Arcy & Co., instead of gazing at Bunter's cricket with awed admiration, had fallen into convulsions of mirth. No doubt it was merely envy—still, it was annoying. Bunter had cleared off without even staying to supper. So his fat brow was morose as he blinked at the park gates, and became still more morose, at the sight of three St. Jim's juniors standing there—Levison and Clive and Cardew, members of D'Arcy's house-party. But his frown changed to a grin as he stared at Cardew. Cardew, the dandy of the St. Jim's Fourth, had a black eye and a swollen nose, and his aspect entertained Bunter. Bill Huggins had recently handled Cardew severely, having replenished his exchequer by robbing the St. Jim's junior. It was likely to be some time before Cardew recovered from Mr. Huggins' handling.

"I say, you fellows!" shouted Bunter.

The three St. Jim's fellows were looking towards the passing circus. They started as the Boss hailed them from the open door of the blue-and-red caravan.

Bunter waved a fat hand to them and grinned.

"I say, Cardew, where did you pick up that eye?" he yelled.

Cardew stared at him blankly. He would not have been surprised at such a hail from Billy Bunter of Greyfriars, but from Mr. Whiffles, the boss of the World-Famous Circus, it was surprising.

"Eh—what?" he ejaculated.

"You look a perfect picture!" chuckled Bunter. "I say, your face would take the booby prize in a beauty show any day!"

"You cheeky old ass!" exclaimed Cardew.

"I say, Levison!" yelled Bunter.

"Well, what have you got to say to me, Mr. Whiffles?" asked Ernest Levison, rather grimly.

"Have you told your pals at St. Jim's that you were sacked from Greyfriars?" squeaked Bunter.

"What?"

"He, he, he!"

The caravan rolled on, the St. Jim's juniors staring after it blankly. Billy Bunter grinned at the astonished faces of the three.

"Give D'Arcy a message from me!" he yelled. "Tell him he's a silly stuffed dummy, will you, and he can't play cricket for toffee!"

"Well, my hat!" said Clive.

"Tell Tom Merry he's a howling ass, and tell the rest that they're a lot of footling duds," added Bunter. "As for you three, you're a set of rotters, and I'd get down and lick you if I had time. Yah!"

And Bunter rolled on in the van, feeling a little better now that he'd told the St. Jim's fellows what he thought of them. Levison & Co. could only stare after him in amazement. That unexpected outbreak on the part of Mr. Whiffles dumbfounded them.

The circus rolled on, and Eastwood House was left far behind. Billy Bunter settled down on Mr. Whiffles' bed for a morning nap. Naps were always welcome to Bunter, morning, noon, or night. Indeed, with the necessary wakeful intervals for meals, he could have napped very comfortably from early morn till dewy eve.

It was quite pleasant, rolling along the high road in the rumbling caravan, the warmth of the weather tempered by the breeze that wafted in at open door

and window. Billy Bunter slept the sleep of the just, prepared to nap till lunch-time came round. But his nap was not destined to last so long as that. There came a ratty lane about an hour later, and as the van jolted over the ruts Bunter was violently bumped and awakened. He sat up, and another jolt knocked his head against the side of the van, and he gave an angry yelp.

The next moment Bunter's bullet head was projected from the window of the caravan, and he was yelling to the driver.

"You beast!"

"Hallo, guv'nor!" said Slaney, looking round from the horses.

"You're bumping me, you silly idiot!" roared Bunter. "How's a fellow to sleep when he's jolted about like that, you born dummy?"

"Can't 'elp it, guv'nor."

"Drive slower, you fathead!"

"Oh, I don't mind," said Slaney. "Crawl if you like, guv'nor!"

It was not a respectful reply; its want of respect perhaps being due to the fact that wages were in arrear in the World-Famous Circus. However, Slaney slowed down the van, with the result that the long procession behind was thrown into confusion. Dance came riding up with a scowling face.

"Get a move on!" he shouted. "What are you slowing down for?"

"Guv'nor says slow down, sir."

"Drive on faster, you fool!"

Billy Bunter's head came out of the window again. He glared at his manager.

"Mind your own business, Dance!" he roared. "I've ordered the man to drive slow. Do as I tell you, Slaney, or I'll sack you!"

"Look here——" roared Dance.

"Shut up!" said Bunter.

His head was withdrawn into the van again. So long as Bunter was boss he was boss, and he was not going to have any mistake made about that. Mr. Dance scowled and snapped his teeth.

"Fall out with the van, Slaney," he said. "Fall to the tail-end, and then you can drive as slow as you like."

"Orlright," said Slaney.

The van pulled to the roadside, and the procession passed it. Then Slaney pulled out again, and the van brought up the tail of the circus procession. It lumbered on slowly, the circus drawing farther and farther ahead, a circumstance of which Bunter was blissfully ignorant, as he sank once more into the happy realm of dreamland.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

At Last!

"**S**TRIKE me pink!"

It was Mr. Huggins who made that remark.

He skulked out of sight behind a clump of trees by the roadside, and watched the circus procession on the dusty road. The World-Famous Circus was a dozen miles from Easthorpe when Mr. Huggins' sour glance fell on it once more, and he scowled at it blackly.

Mr. Huggins had not lingered on the scene of his latest exploit in the foot-pad line. Robbery with violence was a serious matter; and Mr. Huggins, who had done three months' hard for pilfering when in Mr. Whiffles' employ, was not anxious to do three years at Dartmoor for his attack on Cardew. Anxious as he was to get to close quarters with Mr. Whiffles he lost no time in putting ten miles or so between himself and Easthorpe.

At that distance Mr. Huggins felt fairly safe; and, having tramped all night, he slept the morning away in a

clump of trees, and was awakened towards noon by the noise of the passing circus procession. It was his intention to put a still greater and safer distance between himself and Easthorpe; but he did not intend to lose track of the travelling circus. His many failures to get at Mr. Whiffles had not discouraged him, but rather whetted his appetite for vengeance.

"Bashing" his old Boss was a fixed idea in Mr. Huggins' mind. He was not in other respects a bashful man; but when he was offended his thoughts naturally ran to bashing. Many times had Mr. Huggins bashed, not wisely but too well; but the bashing he intended for Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was to be a record. Mr. Whiffles had sent him to hard labour for stealing. Labour Mr. Huggins abhorred, in any shape or form; and hard labour he specially disliked.

He stared at the circus procession as it passed, looking for the blue-and-red caravan that belonged to the proprietor. That van was generally toward the head of the procession; but now Mr. Huggins' watching eye missed it from its accustomed place. Mumbo, the elephant, led, with Nobby Nobbs sitting on his back; and all sorts of vehicles followed, with riders among them, and he saw Mr. Dance among the others. But the blue-and-red caravan was not to be seen, and Huggins was puzzled. It was not till the long procession had gone by that he caught sight of the familiar blue-and-red caravan in the distance down the dusty road, coming on slowly, far behind.

"Strike me pink!" repeated Mr. Huggins.

He had intended to follow the circus, keeping to lanes and byways, out of public view, and hoping to find better luck after nightfall at the circus camp. But as he stared at the caravan crawling slowly along the road his intention changed. On his right the procession was winding out of sight; on his left,

the blue-and-red caravan was coming up at a crawl. By the time it reached him the rest of the circus would be far out of sight and hearing, and the country lane was a lonely and unfrequented one. It looked to Mr. Huggins as if his chance has come unexpectedly. If Mr. Whiffles was in the van—as, naturally, he would be—he had offered Bill Huggins a chance by dropping behind in this way. Only the driver of the caravan was there to help him, and Bill Huggins was prepared to make short work of the driver if he intervened.

The trampling of the procession died away up the lane, and the blue-and-red caravan had not yet reached the spot where Bill Huggins skulked and watched.

He remained in cover, his eyes glittering at the slowly-approaching van. The caravan came abreast of the clump of trees at last, and Slaney drove on, without a glance in that direction. And as the van crawled by, Mr. Huggins stepped out into the road behind it.

Luck had favoured him at last, and seemed determined to favour him still more, for the door of the caravan was wide open, and from within came the sound of the deep, reverberating snore that Mr. Huggins knew.

He grinned.

"Strike me pink! If this ain't luck!" he murmured.

He followed behind the caravan, easily keeping pace, and peered in. Two nights before Mr. Huggins had penetrated into that van, and had been surprised to find there a fat schoolboy instead of the showman he sought. But now it was broad daylight, and he could see into the caravan and make sure that his destined victim was there before he gave any alarm.

One glance into the van was enough.

Stretched on Mr. Whiffles' bed was a fat form encased in the remarkable clothes worn by Montgomery St. Leger

(Continued overleaf.)

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Whiffles, known far and wide wherever the World-Famous Circus moved. The nut-brown hair, long and curly, the pointed beard, the waxed moustache, were equally well known. That those adornments were artificial, and had been borrowed by Billy Bunter, Mr. Huggins naturally had no idea. The Boss lay there snoring under his eyes—the Boss who had sacked him, and sent him to the residence he called the "stone jug." The hour of bashing had struck.

The van was moving slowly, and it was easy for Mr. Huggins to clamber in as it moved. The driver was jogging on drowsily, quite ignorant of the fact that the caravan now had two passengers instead of one. If all went according to plan the bashing would be over before the driver could intervene—if he ventured to intervene at all. Mr. Huggins was willing to bash him, too, if he did. But for the moment his thoughts were concentrated on the bashing of Mr. Whiffles.

The sleeper did not awaken as he entered the van. Bunter, good at few things, was good at sleeping. He could have slept through an earthquake. When Bunter was taking a nap after a substantial meal the crack of doom, had it occurred, would probably only have made him stir fitfully in his slumber. Unconscious of danger the Owl of the Remove sloped on. And a sweet smile played over his face as he dreamed of a spread in the dormitory at Greyfriars.

Mr. Huggins gazed down on him gloatingly.

His hour had come. The van rumbled on, the driver half-nodding in his seat in front in the warmth of the September morning, unconscious of what was happening behind him. Bunter snored on peacefully. The road was deserted ahead; but Mr. Huggins, looking back, spotted a little car in the distance. His heavy fist was clenched to awaken the Boss with a terrific bash, but at the sight of the little car he paused. It was safer to let the car pass before beginning the bashing. And evidently the Boss was not going to wake and take the alarm.

He watched the car impatiently. The caravan was crawling, and the slowest car should have passed it very quickly. But the little car in the distance seemed to be crawling, too. Huggins stared back at it with lowering brows, wondering why a motorist should be crawling along at a snail's pace. There was only one man in the car—a man in black, in a bowler hat, who was driving, a man with a smooth, hairless face, as fat as that of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, but destitute of any hirsute adornment. For several minutes Mr. Huggins waited for the little car to come up and pass. But it still kept its distance. And Huggins lost patience at last. He was not going to lose this chance of "bashing" the Boss. And if that motorist intervened, so much the worse for that motorist.

Huggins turned back to the sleeping figure on the bed. He clenched his huge hand, and then unclenched it again, and grasped the sleeper by the collar of his coat, and dragged him off the bed.

Bump!

"Ooooooop!"

Billy Bunter awoke as he landed on the floor of the caravan. He sat there dizzily, and groped for his spectacles. When he jammed them on his fat little nose and blinked at the towering figure of Bill Huggins, Bunter's fat heart almost died within him. He could not

speak. He could only gaze at the threatening ruffian in horror. The figure that drew Priam's curtains at dead of night, and told him that Troy was on fire, did not inspire such horror as Bill Huggins inspired in the breast of William George Bunter. Like a fat rabbit, fascinated by a serpent, Bunter sat and gazed at the ruffian.

"'Ere we are agin, guv'nor!" said Huggins, with ferocious jocularity. "Glad to see me, what? Me, what you sent to the stone jug! Me, what you give three months' 'ard! What?"

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

"Git up and take your medicine!" grinned Mr. Huggins. "I'm going to bash you proper! I'm going to knock your blooming nose right through the back of your blinkin' 'ead, guv'nor! You 'ear me? Git up, and take it!"

The ruffian grasped Bunter by the collar, and jerked him to his feet.

Then Bunter woke to sudden activity. The extremity of fear lends a kind of courage. The attache case in which Bunter's own clothes were packed lay close at hand. Hardly knowing what he did in his terror Bunter snatched it, and smote wildly at the stubby, bristly face of Bill Huggins.

The unexpected blow sent the ruffian backwards. He sat down with startling suddenness.

Fortunately, for Bunter, though unfortunately for Mr. Huggins, he sat down in the doorway of the van, just over the edge.

Naturally, he did not remain there, having no visible means of support.

The next instant he was sprawling on his back in the road, having landed there with a terrific crash.

Mr. Huggins gasped wildly, with every ounce of breath knocked out of his burly body by the shock.

Bunter blinked at the open doorway, dazed and dizzy. He could scarcely believe in his good luck. But the ruffian had fallen out of the van, and Bunter was alone.

He leaped to the door, slammed it, and locked it.

Then his bullet head was projected from the side window, and he howled to the driver:

"Quick! Do you hear? Drive quick! Gallop!"

Slaney glanced round drowsily. In the heavy rumble of the wheels he had heard or heeded no other sound. He gave the Boss an uninterested stare.

"Wot's that?" he yawned.

"Quick!" shrieked Bunter. "Faster—faster! Gallop!"

"Ketch these 'ere 'orses galloping with this 'ere van behind, and your weight in it!" grinned Slaney.

"You idiot! Quick! I'm being murdered!" yelled Bunter. "That beast, Huggins—Quick! Drive on faster!"

"You hordered me to go slow!" objected Slaney.

"Quick, you dummy! Faster!" howled Bunter.

"This 'ere van won't go quick, and well you know it, guv'nor," answered Slaney calmly. "But if you've changed your mind, I'll get a move on. 'Owling one thing at a man one minute, and another thing another minute!"

Slaney cracked his whip and jerked his reins, and the caravan rumbled on more rapidly. Bunter fastened the window and sank palpitating on the bed, in terror every moment of hearing Bill Huggins hammering at the door.

At that moment the Owl of the Remove wished from the very bottom of his fat heart that he had taken Harry Wharton & Co.'s advice and gone while the going was good,

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Whiffles on the Track!

"H I!"
"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!"
"Hi! Stop!"
Harry Wharton & Co.

stopped.

The Famous Five were sauntering at a leisurely pace along the lane to Easthorpe. They had left the circus camp, and were done with the World-Famous Circus and the sham Mr. Whiffles, for it was that world-famous gentleman who hailed them.

A little car was drawn up under a clump of beeches by the side of the lane. In the little car sat an extremely fat gentleman, almost as broad as he was long, refreshing himself with sandwiches and bottled beer. He was dressed quietly in black, and wore a bowler hat jammed down on his head, and a pair of gold-rimmed glasses. Although the juniors had seen Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles more than once, this fat gentleman would have seemed a stranger to them had they not known who he was. He was the genuine Whiffles, minus the ample nut-brown wig, his waxed moustache, and his beard. His smooth, fat face, without a trace of hair upon it, was very difficult to recognise as that of the showman. Indeed, they would not have thought of recognising him had they not been aware of his identity. This was the man who had warned them that the pretended Mr. Whiffles was an impostor, and so led to their discovery that it was Billy Bunter who was Boss of the circus.

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!" said Bob Cherry genially. "Top of the morning, Mr. Whiffles!"

"Hush!" exclaimed the little fat man, with a fearful glance round him as if he feared that the beeches and hawthorns had ears.

The juniors chuckled. The fat gentleman's terror of Mr. Huggins had something ludicrous about it in their eyes. Certainly, Bill Huggins was a very tough customer, and one drive from his hefty fist might have had serious results for the fat little man. But the idea of a man hiding away from his own circus, skulking in concealment, made them smile. Obviously, Mr. Whiffles was not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

"Not that name!" breathed the fat little man. "Hush! If—if that villain should be at hand—"

"Ain't you jolly well ashamed of yourself, Mr. Whiffles?" asked Johnny Bull gruffly. "Haven't you as much pluck as a bunny rabbit?"

Mr. Whiffles did not answer that question. No doubt the answer would have been in the negative, had Mr. Whiffles told the truth.

"Have you schoolboys left the circus?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Wharton.

"You are no longer guarding that villain—that dastard—that rascally impostor—"

"Oh, draw it mild," said Harry. "That impostor, as you call him, is a fat duffer who hasn't sense enough to know what he is up to. It's your manager, Dance, who is a rascal, and really at the bottom of it."

"The rascality of the esteemed Dance is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It is as terrific as the white-liverfulness of the preposterous Whiffles."

"Why the thump don't you go back to your circus and turn that duffer out?" demanded Johnny Bull. "If Huggins comes after you, you can have him run in, or get police protection."



"Git up!" roared Huggins. "I'm going to knock your nose right through the back of your head!" The ruffian grasped Billy Bunter, and at that the fat junior woke to sudden activity. Snatching up his attache case, he smote wildly at the stubbly face of Bill Huggins. The unexpected blow sent the ruffian sprawling backwards into the dusty road. (See Chapter 4.)

Mr. Whiffles shook his head.

"How can I have him run in, until he has done something to be run in for?" he demanded. "And what he is going to do is to bash me. What's the good of sending him to chokey after he's bashed my nose through the back of my head?"

"Something in that," said Frank Nugent laughing.

"But he's wanted for something else now," said Wharton. "He's wanted for robbery with violence on Easthorpe heath. The police are looking for him now, and they're bound to get him."

The little fat man's face brightened.

"Oh! Good! What has he done?"

Wharton told him of the attack on Cardew of St. Jim's. Mr. Whiffles rubbed his fat hands together with great satisfaction. Apparently he had no sympathy to waste on the victim of the attack. It was good news to him that Mr. Huggins had transgressed the law to such an extent that he would be safe for three years or so when once he was caught.

"Splendid!" he ejaculated.

"Not for Cardew!" grinned Bob.

"Eh? What? No! I suppose not," agreed Mr. Whiffles. "But—splendid! If they get him for that, all will be clear. As soon as I hear that he is taken, I can go back to the circus at once! I have been following the circus all the time—keeping an eye on it! Several times I have seen Huggins! He does not know me—like this! Ha!"

The juniors grinned. Nobody was likely to know the present Mr. Whiffles who had known him in his glorious state of hairiness of old. His own natural aspect was a complete disguise.

"Has the circus moved on?" asked Mr. Whiffles.

"It was going to shift when we left," answered Harry.

"Which way does it go?"

"Into Wiltshire, I think."

"Good! I shall pick it up again easily enough. If that villain Huggins succeeds in bashing that rascally impostor, all the better. I hope he will succeed. You are sure the police are after him?"

"Yes; and we've told them about the brute following the circus," said Harry, "so they know where to look for him."

Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles rubbed his fat hands again. He was hearing good news that morning.

"Good! Splendid! All is ready for my return, once that dangerous scoundrel is in chokey! Good! Fine!"

Mr. Whiffles glanced at a portmanteau that lay in the little car. In that portmanteau was a new outfit—wig, and beard, and moustache, and clothes; all prepared for the moment when Mr. Whiffles, like the king in the ballad, should come into his own again. And Mr. Whiffles felt that the hour was drawing nigh, owing to Bill Huggins' peculiar mode of earning a livelihood.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked on, leaving Mr. Whiffles to finish his sandwiches and his bottled beer. After which, Mr. Whiffles started up his car, and got into motion.

For days and days Mr. Whiffles had been hanging on the traces of the travelling circus, hoping to hear that Bill Huggins had "bashed" the impostor, and had been safely run in for that performance. Now his arrest seemed probable, even without the bashing of the impostor. Mr. Whiffles was in great spirits as he tooled the little car along the road, and soon picked up the track of the World-Famous Circus.

When the blue-and-red caravan dropped behind the circus procession, Mr. Whiffles slowed down, barely crawling along the road to keep the van in sight. And when Bill Huggins suddenly invaded the caravan by the rear door, Mr. Whiffles gave a jump.

"Huggins!" he gasped.

Then he grinned and edged the car a little nearer.

He knew who must be in the blue-and-red caravan, and it seemed now that the long-deferred bashing was about to take place almost under his eyes. Mr. Whiffles' feelings towards the impostor were deeply inimical. He smiled with pleasant anticipation of his impersonator "going through" it at the ferocious hands of Mr. Huggins.

So it was quite a disappointment to him when Bill Huggins tumbled backwards out of the caravan and landed in the road.

The caravan rolled on more rapidly, leaving Mr. Huggins sprawling and gasping wildly in the dust.

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Whiffles.

Huggins sat up in the road, staring about him dizzily. Mr. Whiffles jammed on his brakes. He was safe from recognition; but the mere sight of Bill Huggins sent cold shivers down his spine. Huggins staggered to his feet, limping and gasping, and Mr. Whiffles turned his car into a side lane and promptly vanished.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Cardew on the Warpath!

"YOU fellows needn't come."

"Oh rot!"

"Rubbish!"

Three fellows were seated on a grassy bank in the leafy lane, and their voices reached Harry Wharton & Co., as the Famous Five sauntered along after their meeting with Mr. Whiffles. The voices were familiar to the Greyfriars juniors, and they paused and looked round.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! St. Jim's chaps!" said Bob Cherry.

The chums of the Remove had rather
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expected to fall in with some of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's house-party. The three they had fallen in with were Levison, Clive, and Cardew of the St. Jim's Fourth. An argument appeared to be in progress among the three as they sat on the grassy bank with three strapped bags lying beside them.

Levison of the Fourth waved a hand to the Greyfriars fellows, as he sighted them. Levison, who had once been a Greyfriars man himself, was always glad to see his old schoolfellows.

"Left the circus?" he asked. "We saw the procession this morning, and didn't see you men in it."

"Yes—we're done with the giddy World-Famous," said Bob Cherry, taking a seat in the grass. "We're off!" He glanced at Cardew. "Still feeling a bit crooked, I suppose?"

"Not at all," answered Cardew nonchalantly. "Right as rain! But I'm feelin' a trifle annoyed about this eye and this nose!"

"More than a trifle, I think," grinned Sidney Clive. "Cardew's made up his mind to trail down that man Huggins like a giddy Chingachcook, you fellows."

"That's what we're arguin' about," remarked Cardew. "I'm goin' after the man who gave me a black eye and a prize nose. I've got a sort of yearnin' to see him landed in chokey."

"Quite natural, in the circumstances," said Harry Wharton. "We'd be jolly glad to help get the brute under lock and key."

"The gladfulness would be terrific."

"Only these asses," said Cardew, "insist on comin' along with me, and I don't want to muck up their holiday."

"You've left D'Arcy's place, then?"

"Yes," said Levison. "If Cardew's going, we're going. What he thinks he could do to Bill Huggins on his own, I don't quite know; but we're not letting him go after that ruffian without his pals. So we've said good-bye to Gussy for the present, and here we are. We've got time to kill, so we're spending it in arguing."

"You see, the circus travels at about the rate of a tortoise," said Clive. "We've lots of time to catch it up by the time it stops at its next pitch. That man Huggins, if he is after it, isn't likely to show up there in the daylight."

"No; he's a jolly old night-bird!" grinned Bob Cherry. "He seems bent on bashing Whiffles; though, as a matter of fact, Whiffles isn't with the circus at all. That's why we've left. We found we'd been taken in by a giddy impostor. The real Whiffles is skulking out of sight of Huggins; and you'd never guess who's rigged up in his giddy whiskers in his place."

"Nobody we know?" asked Levison, puzzled.

"Yes, rather! Billy Bunter!"

"What?" exclaimed the three St. Jim's fellows, in chorus.

"Fact!" said Wharton. "It's the queerest thing you ever heard of. That howling ass Bunter got into a row with our Form master just at the end of the term, and cleared off from Greyfriars. It seemed certain, from a lot of things, that he had gone with Whiffles' Circus; but he couldn't be found there. Now we've found him."

"Got up as Whiffles!" chuckled Nugent. "It seems that Whiffles rigged himself up in a wig and beard and moustache, and was never seen without them. From what we learn, Bunter bagged the lot while he was bathing—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And he had the neck to rig himself

up as Whiffles, and butt into the circus as boss," said Johnny Bull. "He's just Whiffles' build—they're both the shape of a cask—"

"By gad!" said Cardew. "What a game!"

"How it would have turned out, goodness knows; but this man Huggins being after Whiffles, and Whiffles, being a funky ass, gave Bunter a chance. Whiffles is frightened away by Huggins, and he's lying low."

"What a giddy hero!" chuckled Cardew.

"Well, all his pluck could be put into a thimble, leaving lots of room for a finger!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "We've seen him two or three times; he's keeping on the track of the circus, hoping to see Bunter bashed, and Huggins run in for bashing him. Jevver hear of such a game?"

The St. Jim's juniors chuckled. Billy Bunter's amazing way of spending the summer vacation struck them as comic.

"We found it all out last night, and we've cleared," said Harry. "Bunter refused to come away; he hasn't sense enough to go while the going's good."

"But is he carrying on that game without being spotted by anybody at the circus?" asked Levison, in amazement.

"The manager, Dance, is in the game, or he couldn't have done it," said Harry. "I fancy that Johnny has his fingers in the cash-box, and is jolly glad to have a sham Whiffles there, instead of the real article, for that reason."

Levison whistled.

"That's rather serious for Bunter when it all comes out," he said.

"The fat chump can't understand that. I don't like leaving him at the circus," said Wharton. "But he wouldn't come away. Whiffles will go back when Huggins is arrested; and it will be serious enough for Bunter if he's still there then. And Huggins will be taken soon, that's a cert."

"He jolly well will!" said Cardew, between his teeth. "You fellows said that he was following the circus wherever it went—"

"That's so; sticking to it like glue."

"That's what gave me the idea," said Cardew. "We're following it, too, and we're going to nail Huggins as soon as he shows up there. At least, I am, and these fellows insist on comin' along to help."

"I'm not sure that the three of you could handle Huggins, if you came on him," said Harry. "We've tackled him more than once, and he gave the lot of us plenty to do. He's frightfully hefty."

"We'll try," said Cardew.

Wharton looked thoughtful.

"Look here, we're at a loose end," he said. "We expected to stay with the circus till the end of the vac, and it's got another week to run. We don't feel comfortable about leaving that idiot Bunter there, playing the goat and getting into trouble. We might join forces."

"Good egg!" exclaimed Levison brightly.

"Eight of us can walk all over that ruffian, hefty as he is, if we get a chance at him," said Bob Cherry. "Jolly good idea!"

"And if we get Huggins, we can give Bunter the tip to clear," said Harry. "He will know the game is up when the way is open for Whiffles to come back. Goodness knows what may happen to him if Whiffles catches him there, dressed in his clothes and wearing his wig and things—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By gad!" exclaimed Cardew. "I understand now why that fat Johnny

slanged us when the circus passed us this mornin'. I couldn't understand old Whiffles callin' us names! So it was Bunter! You fellows mind if we punch his nose next time we see him?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Punch it as much as you like," he said. "We don't want him run in for impersonating old Whiffles; but a jolly good hiding would do him good!"

"We'll make a walking party of it," said Levison. "The weather's going to be good, and it will be ripping!"

And so it was arranged to the general satisfaction. Five Greyfriars and three St. Jim's juniors took the road together. There was ample time on their hands, for the slowest walking-party made better speed than the lumbering circus procession.

In sunny September weather it was pleasant to ramble by leafy lane and grassy footpath. Cardew, the fastidious, had not forgotten his dislike of travelling in a crowd. But circumstances alter cases, and the heftiness of the truculent Mr. Huggins made the new recruits more than welcome.

It was certain that if Mr. Huggins was run down there would be a terrific scrap before he was secured. And Ralph Reckness Cardew was grimly determined to secure him and hand him over to justice. He had already forgotten, or almost forgotten, the valuables of which the ruffian had robbed him. But he could not forget a blackened eye and a swollen nose. He had resolved that Mr. Huggins should be behind prison bars before his eye resumed its natural hue and his nose its accustomed shape.

The walking-party lunched at a wayside inn a good many miles from the home of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. It was easy enough to pick up the trail of the World-Famous Circus, which, naturally, attracted attention wherever it passed. The party had a lift on a country bus route in the afternoon; and when they left the bus they learned that they were only a couple of miles behind the circus.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly, as the juniors were proceeding along a shady lane over the border in Wiltshire.

A little car was coming along the lane, and the juniors recognised the fat man in black who drove it.

"That's Whiffles!" ejaculated Nugent.

"The one-and-only Whiffles—without his hair!" chortled Bob Cherry. "The jolly old bird is on the same trail."

The car slowed down, and the fat little man hailed the juniors.

"Hi!"

He blinked at them through his gold-rimmed glasses, and recognised them.

"Oh, you again!" he exclaimed. "Have you seen the circus? I've lost track of it."

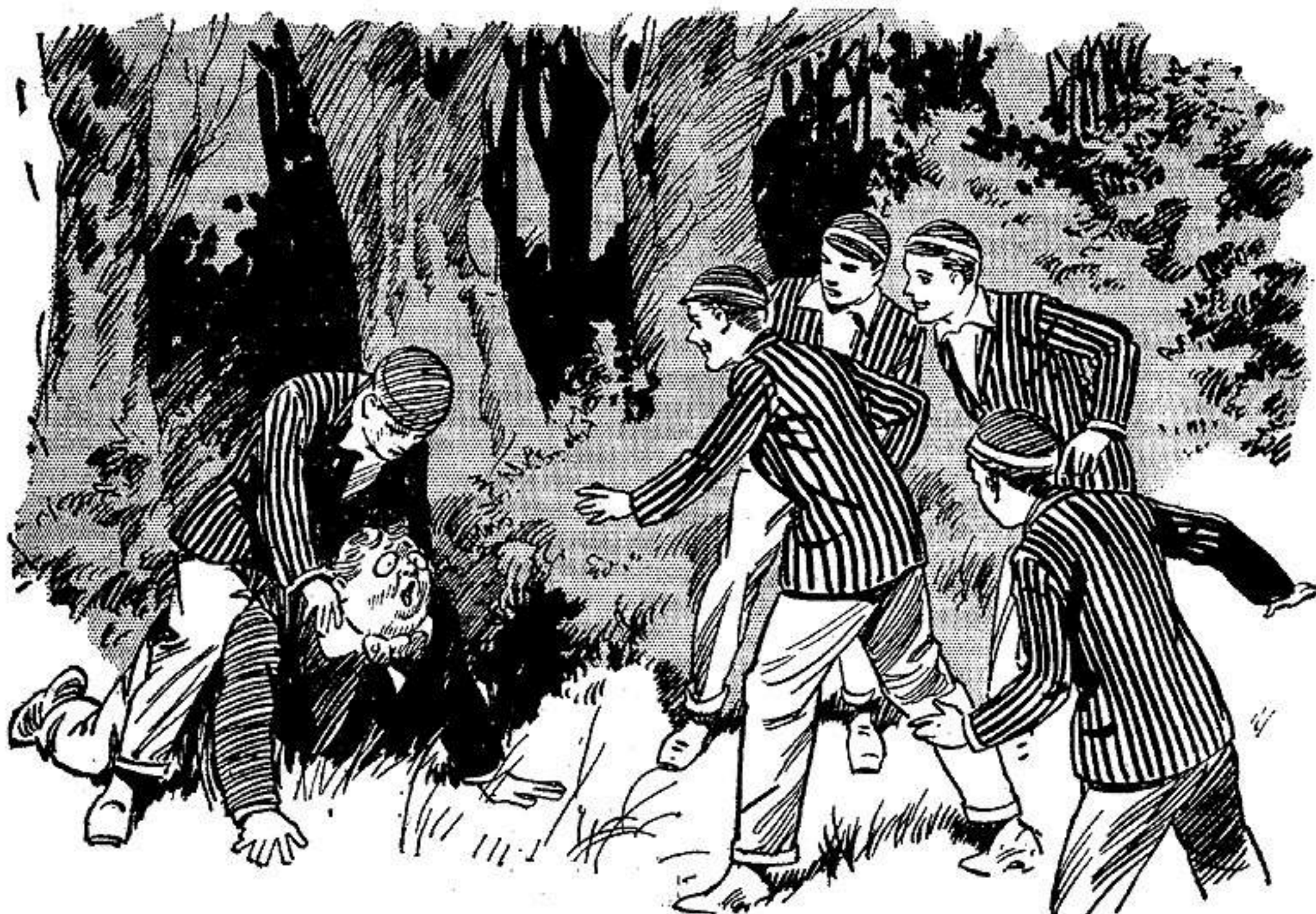
"We've seen a bill in the last village, Mr. Whiffles," said Harry, with a smile. "Your circus is giving a show this evening at Greenoaks—that's about a couple of miles from here."

"Good!" said Mr. Whiffles. "I have seen Huggins! I saw him this morning—he is not far away, I think! Ha!"

Mr. Whiffles drove away, the juniors staring after him curiously. Billy Bunter's proceedings that summer vacation were remarkable, but the proceedings of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles were more remarkable still.

"What a game!" said Cardew.

Under the setting sun, a little later, the walking-party came in sight of the circus camp in the distance. Strains of music reached their ears, from the big



Hurree Singh turned on his electric torch. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! This isn't Huggins!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, staring at the figure struggling beneath Cardew's weight. "What!" "My hat! You've bagged the wrong man, Cardew!" exclaimed Levison. "It's Bunter!" "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 8.)

tent where the evening performance was about to commence.

"That's the show!" said Bob Cherry. "Bunter's there, as large as life! And if Huggins gets after him again to-night—"

"I hope he will!" said Cardew. "I'm as anxious to see Huggins as Whiffles is not to see him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors did not approach the circus. They stopped at the village of Greenoaks for supper, and it was at a later hour, under the September stars, that they made their way in the direction of the circus camp, hoping that the truculent Mr. Huggins would turn up once more that night, and ready to deal with him faithfully if he did.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter

BILLY BUNTER was worried.

It was a beautiful September evening; the sun setting in banks of purple and gold, bright stars coming out in velvety sky. But the beauties of Nature did not appeal to William George Bunter. Sunsets and stars were nothing to him. He was thinking of Bill Huggins as the night fell, and the more his thoughts dwelt on that redoubtable gentleman the more worried he felt. His narrow escape that morning had left the Owl of the Remove with jumpy nerves.

It had been the narrowest of all his escapes. That time Mr. Huggins had very nearly got his man. Bunter had palpitated in the caravan, in dire terror, until it had rejoined the circus procession.

Fortunately, Mr. Huggins had been too severely damaged by the heavy fall on the hard road to take up immediate pursuit; he had disappeared once more. But Bunter had a fear, only too likely well founded, that, under cover of darkness, Mr. Huggins would turn up again like a bad penny.

Once more, for about the twentieth time, Bunter was tempted to throw up bossing the circus, discard the outward semblance of Mr. Whiffles, and go while the going was good.

But he could not make up his fat mind to do it. Where, outside the World-Famous Circus, was he to live like a pig in clover, in a land flowing with milk and honey? Where else was he to find an unlimited supply of tuck, for which he had to pay nothing? To the Owl of the Remove the World-Famous Circus was a sort of fat Lubberland—the land of heart's desire—for Bunter's podgy heart desired little more than ample tuck and ample sleep, and an allowance of swank. Only as boss of the circus could he swank; only as Mr. Dance's puppet could he live on the fat of the land. Bunter Court, with all its glories, was small beer in comparison. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles had given up his circus, temporarily, to elude Mr. Huggins; but then M. St. L. Whiffles had his bank account to draw upon, and the fat of the land to live upon while he lay low. Bunter, if he gave up the circus, had nothing. That made a lot of difference. As the shadows lengthened Bunter grew more and more uneasy; but every time he almost made up his mind to bolt he remembered that ample supper that was due later, and unmade it again.

"Beasts!" said Bunter, a dozen times at least.

He referred to the Famous Five. So long as his bodyguard was there to protect him all was well. Now he had lost his bodyguard; and he shuddered to remember how narrowly he had escaped, only that morning, having his fat little nose knocked through the back of his bullet head.

There was loud music, and the galloping of horses, from the big tent. The evening show was going on, Dance acting as ringmaster, utterly indifferent, as Bunter reflected bitterly, to the shadow of peril that hung over the Boss like the sword of Damocles. That beast, Dance, did not care whether he was bashed or not—did not mind at all if Huggins hammered him to small pieces, so long as there was enough left of him to carry on, and enable Dance to carry on with his dishonest fingers in the cash-box. All that Dance was thinking of was getting a good audience and plenty of takings. Bunter was certain that he was not thinking at all about the most important individual in the universe—W. G. Bunter.

Sleeping alone in the blue-and-red caravan that night, with nobody on the watch, was impossible. Hefty sleeper as he was, Bunter felt that he would not be able to close his eyes, in such circumstances. Even if he curled up in some obscure corner in the circus camp he would not feel safe. As the shadows deepened, the truculent face of Bill Huggins haunted him like that of an ogre. Billy Bunter's powerful brain did not generally work actively—indeed, there were times when it did not seem to work at all. But the Owl of the Remove was doing some hard thinking now. He was thinking even while he ate his supper that evening—a most unusual performance on Bunter's part.

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Generally, at meal-times, he gave his whole attention to the meal. But the threatening face of Bill Huggins came even between Bunter and a veal-and-ham pie. It seemed to scowl at him from the depth of a jar of jam; it lowered at him from a plate of jelly. At supper he ate scarcely enough for four or five fellows. The thought of Bill Huggins was taking away his appetite.

But his unaccustomed mental exercises had produced results. Bunter knew what he was going to do that night. After supper he called to George Mix.

"George!"

"Yes, guv'nor," said George.

"You've been in the village, George?"

"Yes, guv'nor."

"There's an inn there, I suppose?"

"The Peal of Bells, guv'nor," said George. "Ome-brewed ale, sir."

George smacked his lips. Apparently George's visit to Greenoaks had been for the purpose of sampling the liquid refreshment sold at the village inn.

Home-brewed ale was one of the few forms of refreshment that did not appeal to Billy Bunter. But he was interested in the inn.

"How far is it from here, George?"

"Ten minutes' walk, sir. This 'ere field is only a step from the village street, sir," answered George.

"Good! You can go, George."

George was not sorry to go. Mr. Whiffles, in these days, required much more waiting upon than Mr. Whiffles of old, and it made George tired.

Bunter, left alone, went into the blue-and-red caravan.

He locked the door carefully and curtained the window. Then he proceeded to strip himself of his borrowed plumes and dress in his own clothes, which he took from the attache-case.

Mr. Whiffles' belongings he packed into the bag.

Then he opened the door of the van and peered cautiously out.

Nobody was in sight. The performance in the big tent was still going on, though it was drawing near its close.

The coast was clear.

Billy Bunter—in his own proper person, resembling Mr. Whiffles only in his circumference—stole down quietly from the van and started off.

As Billy Bunter he had nothing to fear from Mr. Huggins, even if he met him. As Billy Bunter he could not occupy a caravan in the camp, but the village inn at Greenoaks offered a safe shelter for the night. That was the masterly scheme that had been evolved by so much brain fag.

Bunter stepped out quickly. He wanted to get clear while he had the chance. It was easy enough, and in a few minutes he was outside the circus camp, and tramping, bag in hand, across the field.

In the distance, through a screen of trees, he caught the twinkling of the lights of the village. Ten minutes' walk would bring him to the inn, where it would be easy to engage a room for the night; and in the morning he would walk back to the circus camp, stopping in some thicket by the way to change back into the clothes and wig of Mr. Whiffles. The night would be safe and tranquil; and it was such a jolly good idea that Bunter wondered that he had never thought of it before. He resolved that on all future occasions, so long as he was boss of the show, the World-Famous Circus should always camp within easy walking distance of an inn.

He passed under the trees to reach the lane, and found himself in darkness under the thick branches. Thick foliage shut out the glimmer of the stars, and Bunter paused to blink about him. As

he stood there blinking he heard a rustle in the thickets close at hand, and started, the thought of Bill Huggins leaping instantly into his mind. He was no longer Mr. Whiffles, the special object of the ruffian's vengeance, but he remembered what had happened to Cardew, and he did not want to meet Mr. Huggins at all.

The thicket rustled again, and Bunter made a sudden rush to get through the dark trees into the open.

From the darkness a shadowy figure loomed up; and the next moment Bunter went with a bump to the ground, and the bag flew from his hands. He gave a stifled howl of terror as his fat face rubbed into grass roots and a knee was planted in the small of his back.

"Groooogh!"

"Got him!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

— — —

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Cardew's Catch!

"SISTER ANNE, Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?" yawned Bob Cherry.

"Shurrup, ass!"

"The shut-upfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed Bob. Your esteemed and terrific voice can be heard at a preposterous distance."

Bob Cherry chuckled and yawned again.

"If you're fed-up, you can get back to the inn," said Cardew. "I'm stickin' it out."

"Oh, same here!" said Bob. "What's the odds, so long as you're happy? But if the Huggins bird doesn't show up to-night—"

"He will show up, sooner or later," said Wharton.

"No need for you fellows to sit up and watch," said Cardew. "The man hasn't blacked your eye or ornamented your nose. I'm watchin' for him till I get him, but you fellows—"

"Oh, rot!" said Bob. "We're all in the game."

Eight juniors were lying at their ease on the thick grass, in a thicket of trees on the edge of the circus field. The music from the distance told that the show was not yet over, though the hour was growing late. Faintly through the branches overhead came a glimmer of starlight. But it was too dark for the schoolboys to see one another, except as dim shadows.

Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent and Sidney Clive had gone to sleep, their heads pillowed on their arms. All the others fellows were drowsy, excepting Cardew. Cardew had never been more awake or alert. The ache in his blackened eye, and the pain in his swollen nose, perhaps accounted for it. So long as that ache and that pain continued the dandy of St. Jim's was likely to continue implacable towards the ruffian who had handled him so severely.

Harry Wharton & Co had taken up their position in the trees at a late hour in the evening, but before the circus closed down. They had every reason to believe that Bill Huggins would be lurking about the circus camp that night, and they did not want to lose a chance of falling in with him. Indeed, it was as likely as not that when he came, he would lurk in those very trees to watch the camp before entering it, and they would hear him coming. Later, it was their intention, when the circus was asleep, to approach more closely to the camp and separate, keeping watch on it at various points, and any fellow who sighted a nocturnal intruder was to warn the others by a whistle. Granted that Bill Huggins turned up at

all, it seemed fairly certain that the party would succeed in getting hold of him.

Cardew's only thought was to get the ruffian into the hands of the police for the punishment he richly deserved. But the Famous Five were a little concerned about Bunter. Fatuous and exasperating as the Owl of the Remove was, they most certainly did not want him to be "bashed" by Mr. Huggins. A bashing from the hefty fists of Bill Huggins was an extremely serious matter, and any fellow who received such a bashing was likely to be a hospital case for some time afterwards. Bunter no doubt deserved a good licking for his fatuous folly, but such a bashing as Bill Huggins was likely to give the pretended Mr. Whiffles was altogether too much of a good thing.

Bob Cherry yawned again deeply. He was as keen as the other fellows on protecting the Owl of the Remove from a bashing, and on getting Mr. Huggins into the place where he properly belonged. But it was difficult for Bob to keep still for any length of time; immobility was not in his line.

"After all, he ain't likely to come along before the circus closes down, you know," Bob remarked at last.

"He might," said Levison.

"The mightfulness is a possible probability," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We might hear his esteemed footsteps at any preposterous moment."

"And if he comes along and hears us jawing, he may possibly guess that he's bein' watched for and clear!" suggested Cardew sarcastically.

"Right, O king!" yawned Bob. "I think I'll go to sleep for a bit."

"Good!" said Cardew. "I suppose you don't talk in your sleep?"

"Shut up, old chap!" murmured Levison.

Bob Cherry did not answer Cardew's sardonic remark. He was good-tempered, and he could make allowances for a fellow who had a disfigured nose and an eye as black as midnight. Cardew was irritable and touchy, but Bob, fortunately, was neither and, as it takes two to make a quarrel, no quarrel was made. Bob Cherry stretched his long limbs in the grass, pillowed his head on his arm, and slumbered peacefully. The night was warm and fine, and slumber came pleasantly and easily in the deep grass under the trees.

"No reason why you men should keep awake," said Cardew. "We shall be awake most of the night if we're going to watch the camp as we've arranged—and a little sleep now will be all to the good. I'm keepin' awake."

Cardew was taken at his word. In a few minutes more, seven members of the party were sleeping or dozing. Ralph Reckness Cardew rose to his feet and stood leaning on a tree close by the narrow grassy path that ran under the trees. He was more used to late hours than the other fellows, and the throbbing in his discoloured eye conduced to wakefulness.

He listened to the sounds from the circus tent in the distance. The show would be over soon, and then the night-watch would begin in earnest. But the strains of music were still wafted on the night breezes, when Cardew was conscious of a sound near at hand.

He started, and listened intently.

There was a movement under the trees. Something, or somebody, was stealing cautiously along in the thickets and the deep shadows. Cardew's eyes gleamed in the darkness.

It had occurred to him already that this thicket was a very likely place for Huggins to choose for cover when he

came. Who else could be stealing along there, alone and cautious and stealthy? Cardew drew a deep breath, and set his teeth.

From the shadows, a shadow loomed, dimly seen. Cardew moved, and a branch near him rustled, and at the sound the shadowy figure broke into a sudden rush.

With the spring of a tiger, Cardew was upon it. The shadowy figure went headlong under his sudden attack, crashing down face foremost in the grass, and in a second Cardew's knee was planted in its back.

"Got him!" yelled the St. Jim's junior.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Who—what—"

"This way!" shouted Cardew. "Bear a hand—quick! I tell you, I've got him."

Harry Wharton & Co. were instantly awake and swarming to the spot. They could barely see Cardew, but they made out that he was kneeling on the back of somebody who was gasping in the grass. Ready and willing hands were laid on that somebody.

"Oh, what a little bit of luck!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The luckfulness is terrific!"

"Got him!"

"Grooogh!" came from the crumpled figure under the mob of juniors. "Oooch! Moooooch! Woooooch!"

"We've got him safe!" exclaimed Nugent, with his grip on a pair of fat ears. "Strike a match, somebody!"

Hurree Ramset Jam Singh produced an electric torch. He turned on the light, and revealed the crowd of juniors, with the struggling, wriggling, gasping form almost hidden beneath them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! This isn't Huggins!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. He could not see who it was yet, but it was clear as soon as the light was on, that the short, podgy figure was not the burly Huggins.

"What?" panted Cardew.

"My hat! You've bagged the wrong man, Cardew!" exclaimed Levison.

"Rot!" snapped Cardew.

"It's not Huggins!" exclaimed Wharton. "More like—oh, my only summer hat!" he ejaculated, as a fat and furious face was lifted from the grass, and two little round eyes blinked furiously over a pair of spectacles that had slid down a fat little nose. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter!" shrieked Bob Cherry.

"What?" roared Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha! Bunter!"

"Groooh! Gerroff! I say, you fellows—ooch! Gerroff a fellow's neck! Beasts! Help! Yoooop!"

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

They released the breathless, spluttering Owl of the Remove. Seven of the party were roaring with laughter—only Cardew stared at the fat junior with angry eyes. Billy Bunter sat up and spluttered wildly.

"Ow! Beasts! Grooogh! Wharrer you piling on a fellow for? Where's my bag? Grooogh! Beasts! Oh dear! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at—ow! Groooh! I'm winded! Ow! What silly ass jabbed a knee in my back? Wow!"

"Cardew," chortled Bob Cherry. "He took you for Huggins! Oh, my only Uncle Christopher! Ha ha, ha!"

"The silly idiot! Ow! Wow! I'm hurt! Groooh!"

"Your catch, Cardew," chuckled Bob Cherry. "The catch of the season!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Cardew, with a crimson face,

scowled blackly at William George Bunter, who sat in the grass and gasped and gasped and gasped as if he would never leave off gasping.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Only Bunter!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW did not speak. The other fellows shouted with laughter; they really could not help it. Billy Bunter had developed a habit of late of turning up unexpectedly in unexpected places. But certainly he had never turned up so unexpectedly as now. And Cardew had been so certain of his

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man—he had never doubted that he had "got" the redoubtable Huggins—and he had, as it were, landed a minnow instead of a whale. There were many things that the fastidious Cardew disliked, and chief among them was appearing ridiculous; and he could not help feeling a little ridiculous now. The laughter of the other fellows was not music to his ears.

The crimson faded out of his face, leaving it dark and set. Ernest Levison gave him a glance—he could not see Cardew's face in the deep dusk, but he knew his chum's uncertain temper, and guessed what his silence and stillness meant. Levison certainly did not want any quarrel between his old friends and his new.

Bunter sat and gasped and spluttered. The Famous Five were still laughing, and Clive laughed as heartily as any of

them. But Levison, sensing trouble in Cardew's sullen silence, fell silent also.

"Well, this is some catch," said Johnny Bull. "Blessed if I see how a chap could take Bunter for Huggins, even in the dark. There's rather a difference in length."

"Cardew must have measured Bunter sideways," suggested Bob Cherry. "Sideways he's about as tall as Huggins."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The sidewaysfulness of the preposterous Bunter is terrific," chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But now we have caught him, my esteemed chums, what are we going to do with the absurd and fatheaded Bunter?"

"Can't hand Cardew's catch over to Inspector Moles, as we intended," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Mr. Moles doesn't want Bunter."

"I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter—"I say, where's my bag? I dropped my bag when that born idiot grabbed hold of me. I say, I thought it was Huggins in the dark! Ow!"

There was a fresh yell of laughter.

"They took one another for Huggins!" shrieked Bob. "Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want that bag, you-beasts!" howled Bunter. "It's got all my things in it! I can't change back without that bag!"

"What are you up to now, you fat boulder?" asked Harry. "Why aren't you got up as Whiffles, as usual? Have you chucked it after all?"

"No jolly fear!" said Bunter promptly. "I say, you fellows, don't let it out to everybody. Those St. Jim's chaps will hear you—"

"They know already, fathead! If you're not playing Whiffles now, what's your little game?" demanded Bob.

"I'm going to the inn for the night," explained Bunter. "I'm fed-up with that beast Huggins rooting round my van. I've got Whiffles' things in the bag, and I'm going to change back in the morning. See?"

"Sort of game of Box and Cox!" chuckled Bob. "You're Bunter at night, and Whiffles by day. Is that it?"

"That's it. Rather a wheeze—what?" said Bunter. "I wish I'd thought of it before. It's a jolly good stunt! You see, by daylight that savage beast won't show up, and at night there won't be any Whiffles if he does! I say, you fellows, what are you doing here, anyhow?"

"We're after Huggins."

"Then you can jolly well clear off and mind your own business!" exclaimed Bunter warmly. "You let Huggins alone. I'm safe from him now, now that I've thought of this stunt; so I don't want him touched."

"What you want, old fat bean, doesn't matter the least and weeniest-teeniest little bit in the wide world," answered Bob. "Huggins is going to be bagged for robbing Cardew and busting up his features."

"Blow Cardew! What on earth does Cardew matter?" demanded Bunter. "He's only a St. Jim's fellow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You let Huggins alone," said Bunter. "Huggins is jolly useful. He's keeping that other beast, Whiffles, off. Leave him alone."

"Fathead!" said Harry Wharton. "We're after Huggins!"

"And we won't be happy till we get him!" said Bob.

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

"And you'd better keep clear, Bunter," said Harry. "Now you've turned into a fat owl again, you'd better stick to it."

"Rats! Mind your own business!" snapped Bunter. He scrambled to his feet at last. "I say, you fellows, where's that bag? It went somewhere when that silly chump grabbed me. Find it for me."

"My dear chap, we're minding our own business," chuckled Bob. "Find it for yourself, old fat man."

Billy Bunter blinked round anxiously through his big spectacles. The attache-case containing Mr. Whiffles' outfit had flown from his hand somewhere into the bushes in the darkness, when he went down under Cardew's tackle. It was not easy to find in the dark—indeed, it was quite impossible for Billy Bunter to find it. But to leave it unfound was also impossible, from Billy Bunter's point of view. Without the contents of that bag he could not change back into the Boss of the circus, and it certainly was not Bunter's intention to abdicate from that high position.

"I say, you fellows, help me find that bag!" hooted Bunter. "I can't go back to the circus in the morning without it!"

"All the better," answered Harry Wharton. "You've done quite enough spoofing at the circus, Bunter. It's high time to chuck it."

"Beast!" Bunter groped wildly about in the darkness for the bag.

"I say, Inky, you've got a torch!" he howled. "Lend it to me to find that bag, will you, you rotten beast—I mean, old chap?"

"The answer is in the esteemed negative, my absurd Bunter. It is terrifically better for you not to find the bag."

"Mind your own business, you rotter! I suppose I can do as I jolly well like!" hooted Bunter.

"Certainly; and the same applies to my esteemed self," chuckled the nabob. "The esteemed torch will remain in my excellent pocket."

"Look here, Bunter, nobody here is going to help you keep up your spoofing," said Wharton. "In fact, if we see the bag we shall collar it and keep you from playing the giddy goat, whether you like it or not. If you haven't sense enough to keep out of trouble, we'll keep you out of it."

"Let's collar Bunter, too, now we've got him," suggested Bob Cherry. "We can tie him up to one of these trees for the night—"

"Good egg!"

"And chuck him into a train in the morning, labelled for Bunter Court—wherever that is—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's going!"

Bunter was going—and very fast! Abandoning the search for the missing bag, William George Bunter scuttled away under the trees and vanished. Apparently he did not want to be kept

till morning, and then consigned to the railway labelled for Bunter Court.

"Going—going—gone!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter did not slacken speed till he reached the village. But there was no pursuit. The juniors had no intention of wasting time on Bunter. Bob's suggestion had been merely humorous.

The strains of music from the circus had died away now; the show was over. In the distance the sounds could be heard of many footsteps crossing the field to the road as the audience dispersed. The hour was growing late.

"Well, we've made one catch," said Sidney Clive, with a grin. "If we get Huggins to-night, it will be a good thing for that fat duffer not to be able to show up again as Whiffles in the morning."

"Only we'd better take care whom we catch next time," said Bob Cherry.

And there was a chuckle.

"There's been enough row to warn Huggins off, if he's within a mile of us," said Cardew's voice, with a sneer in it.

"I suppose it was awfully amusin', and you Greyfriars men couldn't help bein' tickled. I'll leave you to enjoy the joke."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What—"

"Cardew!" called out Levison anxiously.

There was no answer, save a rustle in the darkness. Ralph Reckness Cardew was gone.

The juniors peered at one another in the gloom under the trees.

"What's the row?" asked Bob, in surprise. "Has Cardew cleared?"

"I—I think so," muttered Levison.

"Oh, my hat! Did he get his little back up?" asked Bob. "Didn't he think it was rather funny, bagging Bunter instead of the Huggins man?"

"Apparently not," answered Levison, rather dryly.

"More duffer he, then," said Bob. "If he wants to get his silly back up, let him. I've no special use for sulky asses."

Levison made no reply to that.

"Oh, he'll turn up all right later," said Clive cheerfully. "The circus has closed down now, you fellows; it's time we got on the watch."

Wharton moved through the trees and looked out on the open field where the circus was camped. The audience were gone, and the lights were being extinguished. He could see nothing of Cardew. But he was not concerned about him. If the St. Jim's fellow chose to sulk, Wharton was ready to leave him to it till he got over it. One by one the lights went out and the juniors watched till the last one had gone.

Then they left the trees and approached the quiet camp. Where Cardew had gone they did not know; and, excepting perhaps Levison, cared little. Seven juniors took up their positions at various points round the sleeping camp, prepared to watch for the possible coming of Huggins till the dawn lightened the eastern sky. And they hoped and expected he would come.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Trapped!

CARDEW stood in the shadow of a tent and listened.

No doubt Cardew's back was up when he quitted the other fellows. He was in a state of deep annoyance, and had he remained with the Greyfriars fellows it was very

probable that there would have been a "row." Cardew's temper never was very reliable, and it was less reliable than ever in his present frame of mind. But the St. Jim's junior was not thinking merely of sulking when he cleared off on his own. He had been thinking since the absurd capture of Billy Bunter in mistake for Huggins, and his cool, clear brain had evolved a plan which, in his present mood, he had not chosen to confide to the other fellows.

Harry Wharton & Co. had circled round the circus camp, taking cover here and there. Cardew was inside the camp, and he stood in the shadow of a tent and listened. By that time tents and caravans were quiet. All were sleeping. Cardew listened for a few minutes, and then left the shadow and moved on, looking about him cautiously in the glimmer of the stars.

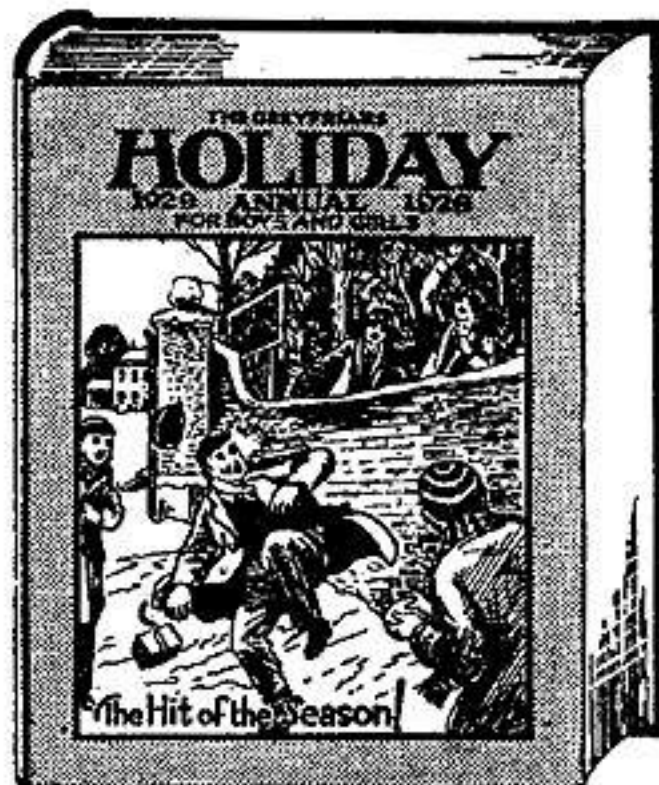
He was looking for the blue-and-red caravan, which belonged to Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, and had been occupied by Billy Bunter since that fat and fatuous youth had played the part of Boss of the circus. As Bunter was gone for the night, the blue-and-red caravan would be empty, but that circumstance, of course, would be unknown to Bill Huggins. Huggins, if he came, would naturally make for that van, expecting to find the Boss there. Cardew's plan was founded on that probability.

It was not difficult to find the van. It was the largest caravan in the circus, painted bright blue and red, picked out with gold. It had been designed by Mr. Whiffles to catch the public eye, and it caught Cardew's eye easily enough in the starlight.

Softly and sliently the St. Jim's junior crept to the van and reached it. He mounted the step, opened the door, and looked in. Within all was dark and silent, and it was evident that the van had no occupant.

Cardew stepped into it.

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From door and window sufficient starlight glimmered into the big van to light his movements. He stopped beside the bed that had once been occupied by Mr. Whiffles, and had lately afforded repose to William George Bunter. The bed was unoccupied now, and Cardew, gathering various articles from about the van—a rug, an overcoat, and other things—proceeded to make up a dummy in the bed.

In a few minutes the bed looked as if it contained a sleeper.

Cardew's next proceeding was to change the key to the outside of the door, and set the door wide open.

Then he left the van.

He did not go far. He slipped underneath the van, and there, in complete concealment, waited.

Cardew was not patient by nature; but he was patient now. He stretched himself on the soft grass under the caravan, his head on his arm, his eyes wide awake and watchful.

It was past midnight now, and the night was very still.

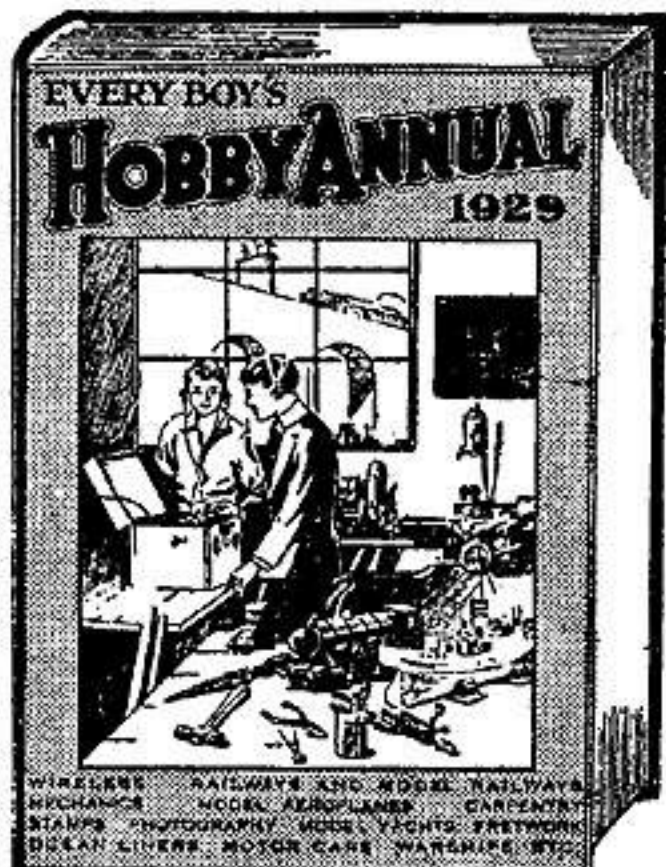
From tent or caravan, near at hand, Cardew could hear the sound of the steady breathing of sleepers in the stillness.

He waited.

He began to feel drowsiness creeping over him; but he did not think of yielding to it. Huggins was almost certain to come. The circus was pitched many long miles from Easthorpe, where the ruffian who had attacked Cardew was being searched for. So long as the World-Famous Circus had remained on its old pitch, it was likely that Huggins would keep clear of it, for, undoubtedly, he had cleared off from the neighbourhood for safety's sake. But, at nearly twenty miles' distance it was another matter. And Mr. Whiffles had said that he had seen the ruffian on the road to Greenoaks. He was certain to come, unless he had given up his vengeful intentions towards Mr. Whiffles, which was very improbable indeed.

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An hour passed, and another. Cardew was sleepy, but still awake and watchful. And a soft and stealthy sound rewarded his watchfulness at last.

He peered out from behind a wheel of the caravan.

For some minutes he could see nothing, but a moving shadow caught his keen eye at last.

His heart beat faster.

In the dim starlight a burly figure moved softly, and stood listening by the steps of the van.

"Strike me pink!"

Cardew heard the whispered ejaculation, and grinned in the darkness under the van.

He did not stir or make a sound. It was Huggins! And if the juniors were on the watch outside the circus, it was evident that the ruffian had crept past them undiscovered.

For long minutes Huggins remained standing where he was, listening. He was, no doubt, puzzled by seeing the van door wide open at night, and probably doubted whether Mr. Whiffles was in the van at all, in consequence.

But there was a creak at last as the heavy ruffian mounted the steps, and peered into the caravan.

He stood there for a full minute, his head bent in at the open doorway, peering into the dusky interior.

A ferocious grin overspread his stubbly face as he made out the form of a sleeper in the bed.

There was no sound of snoring, such as Huggins had heard on previous occasions when he had sought Mr. Whiffles. But there was a sleeper there—his eyes told him that.

Softly Huggins stepped into the van. With hardly a sound he approached the bed, and grinned gloatingly down on the still form there.

Cardew crept out from under the caravan.

How many moments it would take Huggins to discover that the bed contained only a dummy Cardew did not know; but a very few moments were enough for the St. Jim's junior.

The caravan door slammed shut.

Huggins, with his hand already grasping at the figure in the bed, turned round with a gasp of surprise.

Click!

The key turned in the lock.

"Strike me pink!" gasped Huggins.

He made a spring to the door. He heard the sound of the key being withdrawn as he shoved savagely at the door. It was locked and fast, and the ruffian knew that he had been trapped.

He whirled back towards the bed.

"You've got me, guv'nor, 'ave you?" he snarled. "Well, if you've got me, I've got you, and now you're going through it, you are!"

His savage grasp dragged at the sleeper. Bedclothes and dummy were dragged off the bed together.

Bill Huggins stared at them, almost in stupefaction.

"Strike me pink!" he stuttered.

Mr. Whiffles, evidently, was not there. Nobody was there, except Huggins. He had been tricked and trapped.

With a roar of rage the ruffian hurled himself at the van door.

The whole caravan shook under the shock; but the door held fast. Mr. Whiffles' van was of stout construction. And Bill Huggins had little more chance of breaking out of it than out of his late residence, the stone jug.

And outside the caravan Cardew was shouting now:

"This way! Back up, St. Jim's!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Caged Bird!

HARRY WHARTON started, and listened. He was seated on the shaft of a baggage cart, half-nodding, though determined to keep awake. Watching the circus all through the night for Mr. Huggins had seemed quite a good and easy stunt when the juniors had planned it in the day time. But practice, as so often happens, was not so simple as theory. After midnight all the juniors had to struggle against sleepiness, and one or two of them, possibly, succumbed to it. An hour of watching in the silent night seemed to contain more than sixty minutes—nearer sixty thousand, in fact. It seemed to Wharton that the long night never would pass, and the stunt that had seemed so excellent when it was planned grew less and less attractive with every long minute. The coming of Bill Huggins would have been a welcome relief, if only to break the monotony. But the monotony was broken at last at about two in the morning, and it was broken suddenly and emphatically. From the sleeping circus came a shouting voice which Harry recognised as Cardew's, and in the silence it rang and echoed far and wide.

"This way! Help! Back up! Back up, St. Jim's!"

Wharton jumped up.

He did not feel at all sure that Cardew had spotted Huggins. Moreover, it had been arranged that a whistle should be the signal, and that the watch should be kept outside the radius of the camp. But Cardew was shouting for help, and Wharton hurried at once in answer to the call. The sound of Cardew's voice guided him, and he ran into the encampment among tents and vans and stacks of goods. And the sound of voices and footsteps told him that his comrades were hurrying towards the same spot. Other voices joined in, too, from startled sleepers suddenly awakened.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled the powerful voice of Bob Cherry. "Where are you? What's up?"

"This way!" yelled back Cardew.

Harry Wharton was the first to reach the blue-and-red caravan, guided by the shouting of the St. Jim's junior; but Levison of the Fourth was only a second behind, and Bob Cherry was a good third. The rest of the party came scampering up from various directions.

They stared at Cardew in astonishment.

He was seated on the steps of Mr. Whiffles' caravan, and had ceased to shout as the juniors came panting up. He was alone, and looked cool and undisturbed. He gave the newcomers a nonchalant nod.

"Look here, what's this game?" demanded Bob Cherry indignantly. "What are you doing here, Cardew?"

"Sittin' on these steps."

"What on earth were you yelling for?" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "I can't see anything of Huggins."

"Naturally!"

"Is this a lark?" asked Nugent hotly.

"The larkfulness is not the proper caper, my esteemed Cardew," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh reproachfully. "If the execrable Huggins is anywhere near, he must have taken the alarm."

"He has!" said Cardew, with a nod.

"You've seen him?" exclaimed Clive.

"Oh, yes!"

"And he's taken the alarm, of course," said Bob.

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"Quite!"

"Well, of all the silly asses——"

"Same to you, old bean, and many of them," answered Cardew urbanely.

All his sulky resentment was gone now, in the hour of success. He was in a cheery and mocking mood, and quite good-humoured.

"Cardew," said Levison, "if you've seen Huggins and given him the alarm——"

"Just that, old bean! Does it matter?"

"Matter!" hooted Bob Cherry. "I suppose it matters, as we've been staying up all night to watch for the brute. If he's cleared off, what's the good of watching for him?"

"Is that a conundrum?"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass, if you can help it!" snapped Bob. "Next time we watch for Huggins, if we ever do, we'll do it without any help from St. Jim's."

"There won't be any next time," yawned Cardew. "You see, I've caught Huggins."

"Caught him!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Precisely!"

"Then where is he?" demanded Bob, staring blankly at the St. Jim's fellow.

"Not in my waistcoat pocket," answered Cardew calmly. "I've locked him in the van. I thought he'd be safer there."

"Locked him in the van!" roared Levison.

Cardew held up his hand.

"Lend him your ears!" he said lightly.

From the interior of the van came a sudden terrific crash. Bill Huggins had been rooting about for something heavy to "bash" open the door of the van. His thoughts still ran on bashing, though it was not now the features of Mr. Whiffles that were to be bashed. He had found a stool, and, using it as a club, he beat on the interior of the door. The crash of the stool meeting the door was almost deafening, and from the door came a groan as it almost burst under the smite.

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Bob. "Mean to say he's in the van?"

"Yes, and gettin' a little annoyed, to judge by the shindy," drawled Cardew. "He will break out, sooner or later; and we'd better stand round to catch him when he drops."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton.

Crash! Bang! Crash! came the stool on the groaning door. A panel burst through with a scatter of splinters. Then there was a howl of rage from inside the van. The last hefty smite had smashed the stool, and the pieces of it fell round the enraged Huggins.

"Gettin' emphatic, ain't he?" yawned Cardew. "I believe he will be in a very excited state when he gets out. Better get hold of somethin' to tap him on the napper."

"Sure it's Huggins in the van" asked Bob. "You seem to have caught somebody; but some of your catches are a bit off-side, you know."

"Strike me pink!" came a roar from the van. "I'll smash the lot of yer! I'll knock you all silly if you don't let me out of this here van! You 'ear me, you Whiffles?"

"That's Huggins!" chuckled Nugent. "I'd know that sweet voice anywhere."

Crash, crash! Bang! Crash!

Mr. Huggins had found another weapon, and the caravan window flew out in small fragments. Huggins' bullet head was put out of the orifice, and the starlight glimmered on his battered features and his broken nose. He glared furiously at the crowd of schoolboys.

"What a beauty!" remarked Cardew.

"That's the nice man who han'led me

and cleared out my pockets a few nights ago. I'd know him among a hundred other gaol-birds. Good-evenin', Mr. Huggins!"

"Strike me pink——"

"We've got him!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "You're a bit of an ass, Cardew, but you've done the trick this time."

"Thanks! You're more than a bit, if you don't mind my mentionin' it," answered Cardew urbanely. "But I think we've got him. There's enough of us to handle him when he splinters Mr. Whiffles' van, as he seems bent on doin'."

"Yes, rather!"

"You let me out of this 'ere, you Whiffles!" roared Bill Huggins. "I'll bash your face through the back of your 'ead! You 'ear me?"

"Mr. Whiffles isn't here, dear man," answered Cardew coolly. "It was I who rigged up that dummy in his bed, and locked the door on you. Don't you remember me? You've got my watch and chain about you somewhere."

Huggins glared at the St. Jim's junior. He recognised the schoolboy whom he had beaten and robbed on the heath near Eastwood House.

"You!" he snarled. "I'll give you some more, and wuss, when I get 'old of you. You jest wait till I get out of this 'ere van!"

"Waitin', dear man!"

Huggins disappeared from the window, and there was a crashing at the van door again. Stout as the door was, it shook and creaked and groaned, and it was clear that the entrapped ruffian would not be long in breaking out. Harry Wharton & Co. gathered in a group at the door to be ready for him. There were enough of them to handle Mr. Huggins, desperate as he was, and they did not mean to give him a chance to bolt.

"We've got him safe," said Levison, with satisfaction. "The circus people will help us collar him, if we want help."

"I'm jolly sure that Mr. Dance won't," grinned Bob Cherry. "I dare say the others will. Anyhow, we don't need help."

Crash, crash, crash! rang in deafening uproar from the caravan. By this time the whole camp was awakened, and men, dressed or half-dressed, gathered on the spot. A crowd circled round the blue-and-red van, listening to the uproar made by the entrapped and enraged Mr. Huggins. Dance, the manager, came on the spot with a dark and frowning brow. He knew Huggins' voice, and knew what had happened before he reached the van. He pushed his way through the crowd of juniors gathered at the creaking door; and Harry Wharton, as he saw who it was, coolly shoved him back, and Mr. Dance suddenly sat down in the grass.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Held by the Enemy!

DANCE scrambled to his feet, red with rage.

Harry Wharton eyed him coolly. He quite understood the rascally manager's motives for desiring that Huggins should not be taken. The discovery of the real identity of the "Boss" had enlightened him on that point. But he did not intend to allow Dance to intervene.

"What does this mean?" panted Dance. "What are you schoolboys doing here? Who gave you leave to come back?"

"Nobody, old bean," answered Bob Cherry. "We just came! Ain't you

pleased to see our nice faces once more?"

"What do you mean by kicking up a disturbance here in the middle of the night?" shouted Dance. "Leave this camp at once!"

"We'll leave it fast enough when we've got hold of Huggins," said Harry Wharton contemptuously. "He's in that van."

"That is no business of yours."

"Bosh!" said Bob Cherry. "Likewise, rats!"

"The ratfulness is terrific, my esteemed and scoundrelly Dance," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The execrable Huggins belongs to us."

"I say, gents, is the guv'nor in that there van?" asked George Mix.

"Only Huggins," said Bob. "The jolly old Boss cleared off long ago. We're going to escort Huggins to the police station when he steps out."

Crash, crash, crash!

"You men will lend a hand, if we need it?" asked Harry Wharton, looking round at the circus men. "He will put up a fight."

"What-ho!" answered Nobby Nobbs, the clown.

"You will do nothing of the sort!" roared Dance. "I forbid you to interfere! I order you schoolboys to leave this camp immediately!"

"Order away!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "We shan't take any notice. But keep on, if it amuses you! It's a free country!"

"You're trespassing here!"

"So is Huggins," chuckled Bob. "We'll go along with the other giddy trespasser."

"It's nothing to you if a tramp breaks into a caravan in this circus," said Dance, biting his lip. "I can manage my own affairs, and Mr. Whiffles does not want your interference. I will deal with that man myself."

"Like you did before—by letting him bolt," said Harry. "You're not getting another chance at that, Mr. Dance."

"If you do not go, I will order my men to throw you out!" shouted Dance.

"Look 'ere, sir, that blooming hooligan came 'ere to bash the guv'nor!" remonstrated George Mix. "If the guv'nor had been in that van, look what he'd have got! That bloke wants running in!"

"Hold your tongue!"

"Oh, draw it mild, Mr. Dance!" interposed Samson, the strong man of the circus. "You don't want that brute to get away, I suppose?"

Dance gritted his teeth. He could not admit that he wanted Mr. Huggins to get away.

"I don't want interference from a mob of wandering schoolboys," he snarled. "I'm manager of this circus, and this is my business. I will not allow them to interfere."

"Allow me a word!" drawled Cardew. "Your circus can go to pot, Mr. Dance, if that's your name! And you can go along with it! That man, Huggins, is wanted for robbery with violence. I'm the fellow he robbed. And you can see what he's done to my eye! I'm goin' to give him into custody, and if you interfere to help him get away, you'll be prosecuted!"

Dance breathed hard.

"I shall not let him get away, of—of course," he said. "But I insist on taking charge of this matter myself."

"You can insist till you're black in the face and it won't make any difference," retorted Harry Wharton. "We're going as soon as we get hold of Huggins. And we're not going

before! We're taking that brute with us!"

"You impudent young rascal!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Wharton unceremoniously.

Crash! Crash! Crash! A part of the door flew out, with the lock attached to it. What remained hung loosely to the hinges.

"Look out!" roared Bob Cherry. "He's coming!"

"Back up, Greyfriars!"

In the doorway of the caravan, open now, Huggins stood, his battered face crimson with fury, his eyes burning under his beetling brows. He grasped a fragment of the broken stool in his muscular hand. Evidently he was about to leap out, and make a desperate attempt to fight his way clear through the crowd. He looked a desperate and dangerous ruffian, and some shrank back before his menacing glare. But the Famous Five of Greyfriars faced him steadily, and shoulder to shoulder with them stood the three St. Jim's juniors. And there was plenty of help for them. Samson the Strong Man towered over the juniors, and he alone was fully a match for Bill Huggins. And with him were Nobby Nobbs, and Tomasso Tomsonio, and half a dozen other hefty fellows. Dance, anxious as he was to see the ruffian escape, could scarcely order the circus men to let him do so; neither would they have heeded such an order. The manager backed away, white with rage and dismay, realising that he was beaten.

"Look out!"

"Collar him!"

The crowd swayed and shouted as Bill Huggins leaped from the van, brandishing the leg of the stool.

But the ruffian's desperation availed him nothing.

He had no chance to strike a single blow. Hands grasped him on all sides, and he went down, struggling furiously.

For several minutes there was a heap of struggling, sprawling, gasping figures on the grass. Bill Huggins was at the bottom of the heap, raving and yelling. But hands grasped him, his limbs, his clothes, his hair, and his ears, were all grasped tenaciously. And Samson the Strong Man had a herculean grip on the back of his neck. Hefty as he was Mr. Huggins had not the ghost of a chance, and he was overcome at last, and lay gasping and exhausted under his captors.

Cardew drew a length of whipcord from his pocket, and coolly and scientifically bound Bill Huggins' muscular hands together behind his back.

Then the ruffian was jerked to his feet.

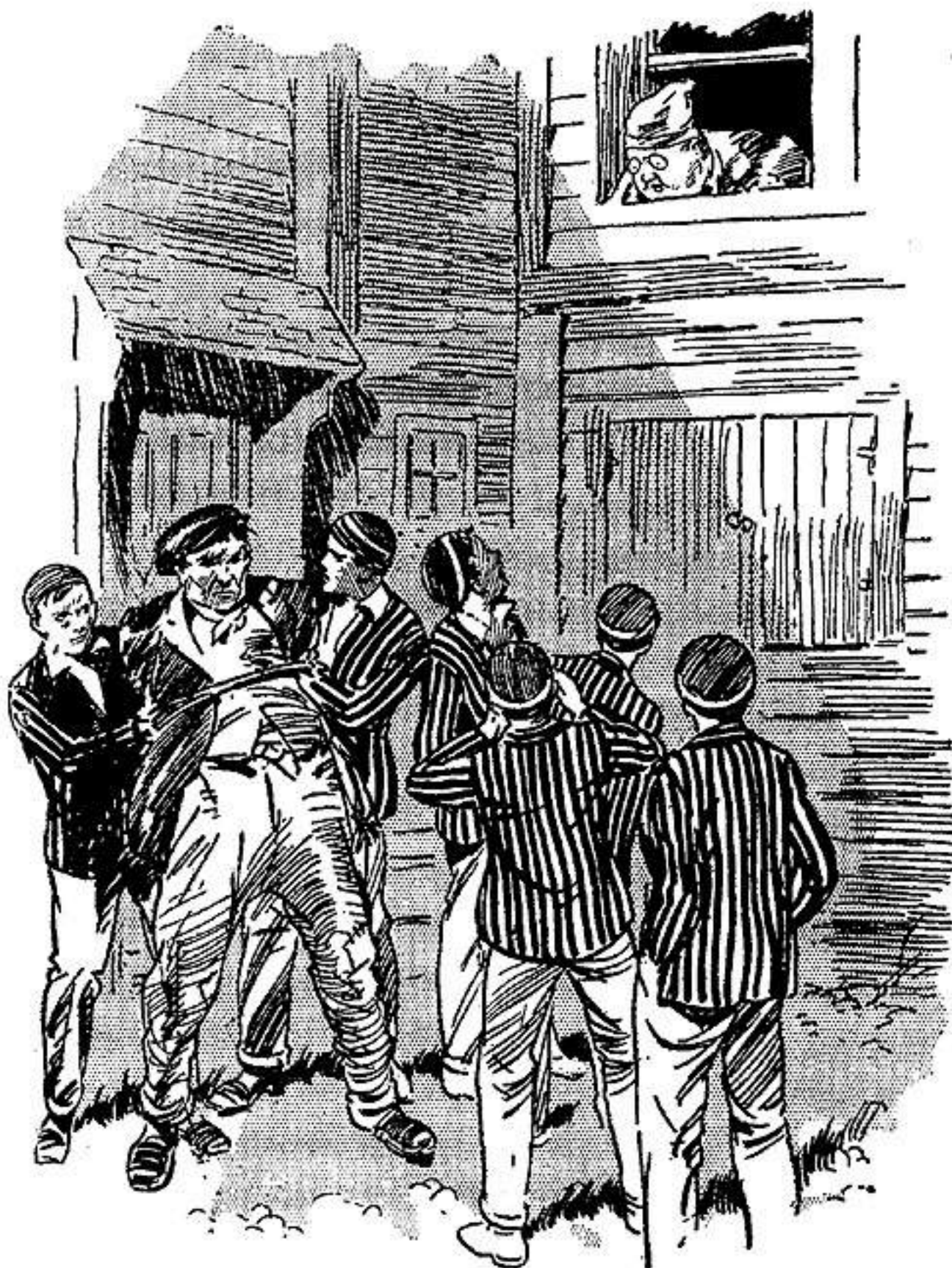
He stood unsteadily, gasping for breath, and with all the truculence taken out of him, for the present, at least.

"Gather round, my infants!" said Bob Cherry breathlessly, but cheerfully. "Keep hold of the brute! Ready to take a little walk, Huggins?"

"Garooogh!" gasped Huggins. "Oooch! Mrrrggh!"

"Sorry! I don't speak German!" said Bob politely. "Or is it Russian? Anyhow, get a move on!"

With eight juniors round him, several of them holding on to him, and his hands securely bound, Bill Huggins was not in a position to raise objections. He was told to march, and he marched. Harry Wharton & Co. marched him triumphantly out of the circus camp, and some of the circus men cheered them as they went. Mr. Dance did not cheer; he scowled blackly. Bob Cherry called out a cheery parting word to the manager.



Mr. Whiffles stared down at the group of juniors and their prisoner in surprise. "How dare you make this disturbance in the middle of the night!" he roared. "All serene, Mr. Whiffles. We've got Huggins!" "You've got Huggins?" yelled the circus proprietor. "A prisoner, do you mean?" He blinked in amazement at the burly form held by the juniors. (See Chapter 13.)

"Look out for the Whiffles-bird now, Dancey! You can expect him to come whiffing in when he hears of this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Dance was already thinking of that. Ere long, he knew, Mr. Whiffles must hear of Huggins' arrest, and that meant the return of the genuine Whiffles. How long it would be Mr. Dance did not know; but it was not likely to be very long, he knew that. And then he would have to account for the takings of the circus while it had been in his hands—takings which had passed into the hands of many and various bookmakers, in Mr. Dance's untiring but unsuccessful hunt for winners. Before Mr. Whiffles came back, it was Dance's cue to bolt—that was all that was left for him now. His reflections were not pleasant as he retired to his van again—not to sleep much again that eventful night.

But the chums of Greyfriars and St. Jim's were satisfied, if Mr. Dance was not. And in an imperfect world it was impossible to satisfy everybody. They marched Bill Huggins off the field and into the road, and in the direction of the village of Greenoaks, where they hoped to be able to wake up a village constable, into whose official hands he could be consigned.

"They'll tell us at the inn," said Levison. "And when we've got shot of him I shan't be sorry to get to bed, for one."

"Same here," yawned Nugent. "The samefulness is terrific."

And eight sleepy juniors, and one ruffian, wide awake and muttering expressive and disagreeable words, arrived in a body at the Peal of Bells.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Whiffles Himself Again!

KNOCK! Knock! Knock! Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles grunted. Knock! Knock!

Grunt!

Mr. Whiffles, taking his ease in his bed, was annoyed at being awakened at three o'clock in the morning by a loud and persistent knocking at the inn door. It wasn't what a tired, middle-aged gentleman had a right to expect, at a quiet little inn in a quiet little Wiltshire village.

Another guest at the Peal of Bells in the next room to Mr. Whiffles had already disturbed him considerably.

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That guest—some person unknown to Mr. Whiffles—was snoring stertorously—snoring as if for a wager. The partitions between the rooms at the old inn were not thick, and that snore would have penetrated the thickest partition. Twice already had Mr. Whiffles been awakened by that hefty snore, and each time he had tapped angrily on the wall as a signal to the snorer to cease from troubling, and to let the weary be at rest. But the snore went on regardless.

Mr. Whiffles had grown, as it were, hardened to the snore, and slept. Then he was awakened by that loud and insistent knocking at the door. He sat up in bed and frowned wrathfully. It was too bad. There was no doubt whatever that it was altogether too bad.

Knock! Knock! Knock! came from below outside. Snore came from the room adjoining Mr. Whiffles' sleeping apartment. Taken between two fires like this, sleep was out of the question for the world-famous Whiffles.

He blessed the knockers, and he blessed the snorer. Perhaps "bless" is not the word, but, whatever was the verb, Mr. Whiffles was emphatic about it. He had had a long day out in his little car, tracking the World-Famous Circus. He had put up at the Green-oaks inn at a rather late hour, and he was entitled to balmy slumber. Like so many of us in this troublesome universe, Mr. Whiffles was not getting what he deserved.

Mr. Whiffles had been dreaming, in his brief spells of slumber, of hearing of the arrest of Bill Huggins; of seeing that truculent person tucked away safely at Dartmoor for three years; of returning to his world-famous circus, of kicking out the impostor there, and laying a malacca cane round the person of Mr. Dance, the manager. Twice or thrice that snore had awakened him from this blissful vision; and now it had fled for good. But he had not dreamed that the unknown person who was snoring was that very impostor who had played his part at the circus; any more than Billy Bunter dreamed that the genuine Mr. Whiffles was in the next room to him. And certainly Mr. Whiffles did not dream that the knocking at the inn door proceeded from a party of schoolboys who had the redoubtable Mr. Huggins a prisoner in their hands. Had he been aware of that, the disturbance would have been as sweet to his fat ears as strains from the lute of Orpheus.

The innkeeper, evidently, was not in a hurry to answer the knocking at the door. He was not accustomed to admitting guests at three in the morning. Harry Wharton & Co. had engaged rooms at the inn; but they had gone out and not returned. And guests who came back at three a.m. were likely to apply long for admittance at the village inn.

Knock, knock, knock!

Doubtless the innkeeper slept through it peacefully; at all events there was no sound or sign from him. But Mr. Whiffles did not and could not sleep; and he jumped out of bed at last and crossed to the window. His intention was to tell the late-comers what he thought of them from the window, and threaten them with the police if they did not go away, or at least keep quiet.

It was a night-capped head that Mr. Whiffles put out of the window. In his portmanteau the showman had a complete outfit for resuming his old accustomed aspect; but while he was

dodging Bill Huggins he never ventured to put it on. Still, Mr. Whiffles was sensitive on the subject of his baldness; very sensitive. And during the day he never removed his bowler hat if he could help it; and at night a nightcap concealed the broad and shining surface that, in its natural state, bore a striking resemblance to the harvest moon. An angry face, surmounted by a nightcap, therefore, looked down on the group gathered before the door of the inn.

"Silence there!" hooted Mr. Whiffles.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"How dare you make this disturbance in the middle of the night, and wake me up!" roared Mr. Whiffles.

"Did we wake you up?" asked Bob Cherry.

"You did!" snorted Mr. Whiffles.

"And does it matter?" continued Bob.

"What? What?"

"I mean, are you anybody in particular?" inquired Bob, with great politeness.

"Why, you—you—you——"

"I know that chivvy," said Johnny Bull, staring up at the smooth, podgy face in the starlight. "That's Whiffles."

"Whiffles!" exclaimed Bob.

"The esteemed and preposterous Whiffles!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Mr. Whiffles put on his spectacles, and stared again at the group below. With the aid of his glasses, he recognised the Greyfriars juniors.

"Oh! You!" he exclaimed.

"Little us, old bean!" said Bob Cherry. "Like to come down and let us in, Mr. Whiffles, as the innkeeper seems deaf?"

"Hush! Not that name——"

"All serene!" called up Harry Wharton. "We've got Huggins."

"What!" roared Mr. Whiffles.

"The gotfulness is terrific, my esteemed funky Whiffles!"

"You've got Huggins!" yelled Mr. Whiffles. "A prisoner, do you mean?" He blinked at a burly form close by the porch, with its hands behind it, and two of the juniors holding its arms. "Is—is—is that Huggins?"

"That's the jolly old hooligan!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "We've got him, safe and sound, with his paws tied. You can come down, Mr. Whiffles; we want to know where the village bobby lives, to hand him over."

"Great Scott!"

Mr. Whiffles' eyes danced behind his spectacles. He was not sorry now that he had awakened to hear this glorious news. The capture of Bill Huggins, with a charge of robbery and violence to answer for, and two or three years in the "stone jug" ahead of him, was what Mr. Whiffles had happily dreamed of. Unlike most dreams, this one was coming true!

"Oh, good!" gasped Mr. Whiffles. "Splendid! Fine boys! Young heroes! Good boys! Hurrah!"

Bill Huggins, scowling blackly, stared up at the face above. He remembered having seen that face, but he did not recognise it as Mr. Whiffles'. He had only known Mr. Whiffles' face with its hairy adornments.

"Strike me pink!" growled Bill Huggins. "You blokes gone off your blooming onions? That ain't old Whiffles, that ain't!"

"That's all you know, old bean!" grinned Bob Cherry. "You don't know Whiffles with his beauty unadorned! That's the merchant!"

"That 'im!" gasped Huggins. "Then

where's his blooming whiskers, and his blinking long hair like a blinking mop, what?"

"You see, those jolly old ornaments were semi-detached," explained Bob, with a grin.

"Strike me pink!" grunted Bill Huggins. "If I'd knowed——"

"Coming down, Mr. Whiffles?" called out Harry Wharton.

"Yes! Certainly! Wait a minute! Immediately! Splendid!" gasped Mr. Whiffles. "Oh, good boys, good boys, good boys!"

Mr. Whiffles withdrew his night-capped head from the window, and hurriedly dressed. He hummed a tune as he dressed. All was serene now; the coast was clear; the clouds had rolled by; the king was coming into his own again. Mr. Whiffles, in spite of his disturbed slumbers, was as light-hearted as a schoolboy. He lighted his lamp, grinned at his reflection in the looking-glass, and danced a few steps in his glee, with the airy grace of an elephant. Then he dressed hurriedly, but with care.

But he did not dress in the quiet black clothes in which he had travelled in his car, and arrived at the inn. The danger was over now, and the need of concealment was gone with it. Mr. Whiffles' gorgeous nature was once more able to expand, like a sunflower in the sun.

He unpacked his big portmanteau, taking out a suit of striped checks, and a crimson-spotted waistcoat, and a bell-brimmed silk hat, and a gorgeous tie—an outfit exactly resembling that which Billy Bunter had worn as Boss of the circus, but rather newer and brighter. He almost purred as he arrayed himself in those striking garments. Too long he had blushed unseen, and wasted his sweetness on the desert air. Now he was once more arrayed like Solomon in all his glory, only a little more so.

He grinned gleefully into the glass as he arranged a flowing, curly, nut-brown wig—the replica of the one long worn by Billy Bunter. He chuckled as he placed in position a long waxed moustache. He chortled as he affixed to his fat chin a pointed beard. The glass gave him the reflection of the Whiffles of old—the Whiffles of the World-Famous Circus!

He was ready at last, and he descended the stairs, lamp in hand. Harry Wharton & Co. had ceased to knock; but they were waiting very impatiently, wondering what was keeping Mr. Whiffles so long. They, certainly, would not have required so long to dress. But dressing, with Mr. Whiffles, was not a rapid operation; it resembled rather assembling the parts than merely dressing. Still, he was finished at last; and he came down, lamp in hand, followed by the echo of Billy Bunter's deep snore, and passing another snore on his way down, from the room where the innkeeper was still peacefully reposing.

Chains and bolts rattled off the inn door, and Mr. Whiffles threw it wide open, and held up the lamp.

Bill Huggins made a movement.

"Hold him!" gasped Mr. Whiffles.

"We've got him all right!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Strike me pink——"

"Shut up, old bean," said Bob. "You're dead in this act, you know. Why, what—My hat!" He stared at the restored Whiffles. "Oh crumbs! Richard's himself again, you men!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Whiffles coloured a little. He did not like the schoolboys being aware that his hirsute adornments were, as Bob Cherry expressed it, semi-detached. But that could not be helped; and Mr. Whiffles hoped that he would never see them again, at all events. It did not matter much if these schoolboys knew, so long as the dread secret was not known at the World-Famous Circus. That mattered very much indeed—to Mr. Whiffles.

"Well, here we are again!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Now, Mr. Whiffles, if you know where to wake up the village policeman—"

Mr. Whiffles eyed Huggins nervously. Even with his hands bound, and in the grasp of the juniors, the ruffian had not lost his terrors for Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. And the look on Bill Huggins' battered face showed what he would have done to the fat gentleman, had he been able.

"All safe, Mr. Whiffles," said Cardew. "We've got him—and we're goin' to give him in charge for robbery with violence. We only want to find a harmless and necessary bobby."

"He would be scarcely safe in the village policeman's cottage," said Mr. Whiffles. "We cannot be too careful with such a dangerous ruffian—such a ferocious hooligan—such a desperate desperado—"

"Strike me pink—"

"I have my car here," said Mr. Whiffles. "I can get the key of the shed—the car is garaged in a shed—he can be taken to a safe place in the car—"

"Good!" said Cardew. "Rippin' in fact! We can run him back to Easthorpe and hand him over to Inspector Moles, who is hunting for him. If you will lend us your car, Mr. Whiffles!"

"I would lend a hundred cars for such a purpose!" grinned Mr. Whiffles. "We cannot make too sure of him! I will get a man from somewhere to drive—I—I would prefer not to drive the car myself—I—I have business here—"

There was a chuckle from the juniors. They were well aware that Mr. Whiffles did not want to trust himself anywhere near Huggins, secure as he was.

"That's all right," said Cardew. "I can drive a car, Mr. Whiffles. You can leave that to me."

"Good!"

Mr. Whiffles took down the key of the shed which was used as a garage at the Peal of Bells, and came out of the inn. Bill Huggins eyed him a good deal like a wolf, and the showman edged carefully away from the ruffian as he passed. A few minutes later, the car was heard starting up, and it ran lightly out into the street before the inn, with Mr. Whiffles at the wheel. He stopped and alighted, and waved a fat hand to the car.

"At your service, gentlemen!" said Mr. Whiffles.

Cardew stepped in and sat down in the driver's seat.

"What about bed?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Blow bed!" answered Cardew. "I'm goin' to hand that brute over to Inspector Moles before I go to bed. I'm goin' to make sure of him."

"Good!" ejaculated Mr. Whiffles. "Right! Good boy!"

"Well, there isn't room for the lot of us in that car," remarked Harry Wharton. "It will be rather a pinch for you three chaps, with Huggins."

"We can take care of the brute; we shall keep him tied," said Levison. "Now we've got him we shall go back

to D'Arcy's place for the rest of the vac."

"That's so," agreed Clive. "We've done the job."

"Pack in," said Cardew. "You can put the Huggins bird on the floor and keep your feet on him. Then there will be just room for you to pack into this exhaustin seven."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Strike me pink—" Mr. Huggins appeared to object. But his objections were overruled unceremoniously. Mr. Huggins was forcibly packed into the car, his hands still tightly tied, and Levison and Clive took their places. Cardew waved his hand to the group of Greyfriars juniors and started. Levison and Clive called out good-bye, and the car glided down the village street, and Cardew took the road for Easthorpe. Harry Wharton & Co. and Mr. Whiffles watched it out of sight, and the last sound that came back to them, mingled with the whirr of the car, was the powerful voice of Bill Huggins requesting some person or persons unknown to strike him pink.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Whiffles Takes Control!

MONTGOMERY ST. LEGER WHIFFLES strolled into the circus field in the sunny early morning, with an expansive smile on his fat face.

Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was feeling good that morning.

The king had come into his own again, and all was calm and bright.

The sights and sounds of the circus were pleasant to Mr. Whiffles, who felt like the old soldier who "smelt the smell of the barracks."

"Mornin', guv'nor!" said George Mix.

George looked rather curiously at the guv'nor.

The Boss looked the same, only a little neater and cleaner and brighter than of late. But there was some subtle difference, and George touched his hat more respectfully than usual.

"Good-morning, George!" said Mr. Whiffles genially. "Good-morning! Fine morning, George, what?"

"Yes, guv'nor," said George.

"It's good to be back, George," said Mr. Whiffles. "I—I—I mean, it's a lovely morning, George. Where is Mr. Dance?"

"He ain't up yet, sir," said George.

"Arter the row 'ere last night, sir—"

"Oh! Yes! Exactly! Go and call Mr. Dance, and tell him that I want to see him at once."

"Yes, guv'nor."

Mr. Whiffles walked cheerily to the blue-and-red caravan. He found that gorgeous vehicle somewhat in a state of disrepair. The signs of Mr. Huggins' brief occupation leaped to the eye. But Mr. Whiffles did not mind that. He did not mind anything that morning. Mr. Whiffles was in a happy mood—and indulging in happy anticipations. He was going to deal at last with Mr. Dance as he deserved.

With the impostor who had been impersonating him, he could not deal. The Greyfriars juniors had told him that the impostor was no longer at the circus, though they had not told him who the impostor was. Mr. Whiffles regretted that he would not be able to kick that wretched impostor out of the World-Famous Circus. Still, it would be a consolation to kick Dance out.

Perhaps, he reflected, it was all for the best. With the impostor gone, the whole story could be kept dark, and Mr.

Whiffles was very anxious for it to be kept dark. He did not want the circus company to know the real nature of his imposing nut-brown locks, his magnificent moustache, and his beautiful beard. The impostor, of course, knew the secret, but he was gone. Dance, evidently knew it, but he was going. Nobody else knew it, and Mr. Whiffles earnestly desired nobody else ever to know.

Mr. Whiffles entered his van, and looked round the interior. The malacca cane he had left in the van, long weeks ago, was still there. Mr. Whiffles picked up that cane and swished it in the air. He liked the feel of it in his hand as he dwelt upon the idea of Mr. Dance getting the feel of it on his rascally back. It was going to be a happy morning.

Mr. Whiffles left the van again, cane in hand. George came back, with a covert grin on his face.

"Mr. Dance says you're to wait, if you want to see him, sir."

"What?" roared Mr. Whiffles. "What?"

"He says he ain't time for you now, sir."

Mr. Whiffles turned purple.

But he realised at once that Dance supposed that he still had to deal with the impostor. He had not guessed, of course, that the genuine goods had returned to the circus so suddenly and swiftly. No doubt, he expected to see the real Whiffles soon, but he did not look for him at sunrise.

"The impudent rascal!" said Mr. Whiffles. "I'll teach him! I'm going to sack Mr. Dance, George."

"Are you, guv'nor?" said George. This was more like the Whiffles he had known of late. Bunter had been rather given to bestowing the order of the sack. Bunter had sacked George himself at least six or seven times.

"Yes!" said Mr. Whiffles. "I find that he is dishonest, George. He has been cooking the accounts. I have a good mind to prosecute him. But—but for certain reasons, I shall not do so. He is a rascal, George."

"Oh, guv'nor!" said George.

Mr. Whiffles walked across to Dance's van, making George a sign to follow him. He banged on Dance's door with the malacca.

"Dance!" he shouted.

"Get away, you fat fool!" came the manager's voice from within. "Don't bother me now."

"You rascal!" roared Mr. Whiffles.

"Fool!"

"You scoundrel!"

Mr. Dance opened the door of the van, and glared out at Mr. Whiffles. The guv'nor's voice was loud and wrathful, and was heard all over the circus. A dozen pairs of eyes were turned on him already.

"What do you mean by this?" hissed Dance.

"Come out of that van!" snorted Mr. Whiffles. "Rascal! You are discharged! Sacked! Kicked out! Understand?"

"You fat fool!"

"George!" roared Mr. Whiffles.

"Yes, guv'nor?" gasped George.

"Get into the van and pitch that rascal out on his neck!"

"Oh, my eye!" gasped George.

Dance, with a face crimson with rage, stepped out of the van. He was quite at a loss to understand these proceedings on Bunter's part—still supposing that it was the sham Mr. Whiffles with whom he had to deal.

"Now, you idiot—" he said, between his teeth.

"Silence, you disrespectful rascal! Get out of this circus!" roared Mr. Whiffles. "I will have your things sent after you. Do you want me to ask you to render your accounts before you go?"

Dance stared at him.

"What do you mean?—What——"

"What have you been doing with the takings?" hooted Mr. Whiffles.

"The—the—the takings?" stammered Dance.

"Yes, you rogue! Think yourself lucky that you're not given into custody for pilfering! Take that!"

Whack!

"Oh!" roared Dance, as the Malacca cane came across his shoulders with a resounding whack.

"Oh crikey!" gasped George.

"Are you mad?" yelled Dance.

"Why, I—I—I——"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Take that!" roared Mr. Whiffles. "And that—and that—and that! Rascal! Pilferer! Confederate of impostors! Take that—and that!"

Mr. Dance took them—he could not help it! He took them right and left, dodging and jumping like a kangaroo to escape the rain of wrathful lashes—without being able to escape them.

"Take that—and that—and that!" Mr. Whiffles was short of breath, and he gasped wildly as he whacked. But he continued to whack with great energy. "Go! Get out! If you are here in ten minutes from now, I will send for a constable and give you in charge! Take that—and that!"

The truth dawned upon Mr. Dance then. It flashed into his mind that this was not—could not be—Bunter! He had wondered whether Mr. Whiffles would hear the news that day and return. He realised now that Mr. Whiffles must have heard the news overnight, and had returned! It was the genuine Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles who was whacking his with the malacca. He understood at last.

Whack, whack, whack!

Dance made a furious rush at the circus proprietor under the whacking cane. He had to go, he knew that, and he knew that he was lucky to go without being placed in custody. But he could not resist the temptation of giving the genuine Mr. Whiffles just one before he went.

"Yarooogh!" roared Mr. Whiffles, as the manager hit out and he sat down on the hard, unsympathetic earth with a jarring bump. "Ow! Help! Seize him, George! Knock him down! Kick him out! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Oh crumbs!" said George.

"Send for a constable!" spluttered Mr. Whiffles. "I'll prosecute him, after all! I'll charge him with embezzlement! I'll——Groogh!"

Dance was about to follow up his attack, but at those words he paused. He did not want to see a constable that morning.

Instead of proceeding with assault and battery on Mr. Whiffles, therefore, the manager darted into the van, grabbed up a valise, hastily crammed a few things into it, snatched up his hat, and jumped out again. By that time, however, Mr. Whiffles had got his second wind, and was on his feet. He made a rush after the manager, the malacca uplifted.

Whack, whack!

"Ow!" yelled Dance. "Keep off! Wow!"

He broke into a run. Mr. Whiffles broke into a run after him. As he ran he let out his foot. There was a howl

from Dance as he received the impact, and he went flying.

"There!" gasped Mr. Whiffles. "Now take that—and that—and that!"

And Dance scrambled up and fled under a rain of blows. Mr. Whiffles stopped at last, completely winded by his exertions. He was puffing and blowing as he returned into the camp under the amazed stare of the whole circus company. But he was feeling better.

Dance was gone—the impostor was gone. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was once more lord and master of the World-Famous Circus, and he gave breathless orders to pack up and take the road.

Billy Bunter was still snoring in his room at the Peal of Bells when the circus took the road. He was quite unconscious of the fact that he had finished with the World-Famous Circus. But he had! As the long procession wound away by the high-road and by-road Mr. Whiffles sat in the blue-and-red caravan, and smiled. The king had come into his own again; and so far as Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was concerned, at least, everything was for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Good-bye, Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were down rather late to breakfast that morning.

They had lost a good deal of sleep over night, and they made up for it in the early hours of the morning. It was ten o'clock when they gathered to breakfast at the inn.

A telegram was handed to Wharton at breakfast. It was from Levison, and announced that Mr. Huggins had been safely handed over to Inspector Moles.

"So that's that!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully, as he cracked his second egg. "I suppose the Whiffles bird has flown back to his nest! I wonder where that fathead Bunter is?"

"We shall have to find him before we go," said Harry. "He can't be far away. Even Bunter will be able to understand that he can't go back to the circus again."

"Whiffles will give him a warm reception if he does!" grinned Bob.

"The warmth will probably be terrific!"

The Famous Five had almost finished breakfast, and were discussing the question of looking for Bunter, when a fat figure rolled into the room. Now that they were done with the circus and Mr. Huggins, Harry Wharton & Co. intended to return to Wharton Lodge. In a few more days it would be necessary for them to disperse to their homes before the new term began at Greyfriars School. But they agreed that Bunter had to be found first and warned to keep clear of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus.

A fat voice interrupted the discussion.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Oh, my hat! Bunter!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Then the fat idiot was here!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What are you doing up so early, Bunter? It's only half-past ten."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Bunter came to the table and sat down. He was ready for breakfast—more than ready.

"I'll have a snack before I go," he remarked, helping himself. "I shall get a better brekker than this at my circus! Still, I'll have a snack."

"You won't get any brekker at the circus this morning, old fat man!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Better make the best of this!"

"The game's up, Bunter," said Harry. "Huggins is in chokey, and Mr. Whiffles has gone back to the circus. If you go there again, you'll find Mr. Whiffles!"

"What?" gasped Bunter. "Gammon!"

"Fact!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Rats!"

"You fat chump!" exclaimed Bob. "Whiffles was here, at the inn, last night. He lent Cardew his car to take that man Huggins away, and then he went back to the circus."

"Rot!" snorted Bunter. "You can't pull my leg like that. I know you fellows never were so particular about telling the truth as I am, but this is a bit steep. Bosh!"

"Look here, you fathead——"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter. "I know you're envious, and you'd like to spoil my vac, if you could. Dry up!"

The juniors stared at Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was unwilling to believe that his boss-ship of the World-Famous Circus was at an end. Bunter had a great capacity for believing what he wanted to believe, and disregarding what he did not want to believe. Apparently he had made up his fat mind that the game was not up yet.

"I tell you, Bunter——" said Wharton at last.

"Oh, can it!" said Bunter. "You've wanted to get me away from my circus all the time. You're envious! That's what's the matter with you. Pass the jam!"

"Well, we've warned you," said Harry.

Bunter winked a fat wink.

"You can't stuff me, you know," he remarked. "I'm wide—jolly wide!"

"The widefulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; "but the fatheadedness is also great."

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Well, we may as well get going," said Harry Wharton. "You'd better come away with us, Bunter. I tell you it's all up with you at the circus."

"Gammon!"

"Oh, go and eat coke, then! Come on, you fellows," said the captain of the Remove. "Our train goes at eleven."

"I say, you fellows!" howled Bunter, as the chums of the Remove left the table. "I say——"

"Well, what, ass? Are you coming away?"

"No fear! You fellows pay for this brekker before you go," said Bunter. "Pay for mine. I'll settle up next term at Greyfriars. I think I mentioned that I was expecting a postal order——"

"Oh, my hat!"

Harry Wharton settled the account at the inn, including Bunter's, and the Famous Five left, and walked to the railway station. Bunter refused to budge, in the belief—or, at least, the hope—that the game was not up at the World-Famous Circus. Besides, he had not finished breakfast yet. So far, he had eaten only enough for three, and had hardly taken the keen edge off his morning appetite. So the Famous Five had no choice but to leave him to it—and they left him to it.

That afternoon the Famous Five arrived at Wharton Lodge, where they forgot Bunter.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

All Up!

BILLY BUNTER finished his breakfast that fine morning at his leisure. He rolled out of the inn at last, and rolled away down the village street towards the circus field.

He blinked into that field, with a startled blink.

Having made up his mind that the Co. had been pulling his leg, he had expected, of course, to see the circus encampment there as he had left it. All he saw was a vacant field, with a few bottles and tin cans sprinkled about, and some straw fluttering in the breeze. The circus was gone.

Bunter blinked, and blinked again.

"Oh crumbs!" he ejaculated.

He could scarcely believe his eyes, or his big spectacles, for some moments. But the circus was gone. It was, as a matter of fact, a good many miles away by that time.

Bunter frowned darkly.

"That beast Dance!" he ejaculated.

Bunter saw it all. Dance, instead of waiting for him, as he ought to have done, had taken the road and left him behind, as he had done on a previous occasion, as Bunter well remembered. The circus had gone on, leaving Bunter to follow, as had happened once or twice already in Bunter's career as Boss. With deep wrath Bunter realised it.

He rolled into the trees to look for the lost bag. In the daylight it should have been easy to find. But it was not to be found. Bunter hunted high and Bunter hunted low; but the lost bag did not come to light. That puzzling circumstance was easily accounted for. Wharton had told Mr. Whiffles about the bag, as it and its contents belonged to Mr. Whiffles, and the circus proprietor had looked for it and recovered it before the circus moved on. Mr. Whiffles, naturally, did not want to leave such things lying about.

Bunter was not aware of that; but he became aware of the fact that the lost attache-case was no longer there. He rolled out of the trees again, warm and perspiring from his exertions, and pink with wrath.

He had to follow the circus in his own proper person, if he followed it at all, and he was determined to follow it. That beast Dance would have to see him through somehow; for if the game was up for him, it was up for Dance, also. The first thing was to discover in which direction the World-Famous Circus had travelled after leaving the pitch. Bunter rolled back to the road, to look for some native of whom he might make inquiries.

A man was seated on a grassy bank by the road, with a bag beside him. He was occupied in rubbing various parts of his person, as if he had lately received injuries all over him. As a matter of fact, he had, for it was Mr. Dance. Mr. Dance was still feeling severely the effects of the Malacca cane, which the gov'nor had laid on not wisely but too well. The Owl of the Remove, quite unaware of his identity, rolled up to him.

"I say, did you notice which way the circus went?" asked Bunter.

Dance looked up.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

He recognised the one-time manager of the World-Famous Circus now.

"You!" said Dance.

"You!" said Bunter.

Dance rose to his feet. He had forgotten Bunter; he had had more important matters to think of. But he was glad to see him again. He had no further use for the Owl of the Remove; the game of spoof was up. Still, he was very glad to see him. All the time that Bunter had been at the circus Dance had persuaded himself that, when he had no further use for the Boss, he would give him the thrashing of his life. Bunter often inspired feelings of that kind in people with whom he came in contact.

Dance smiled grimly at him. He had had a severe thrashing from Mr.

Whiffles; he was anxious to pass it on. It really was obliging of Bunter to turn up like this, in time to take it.

"I say, what does this mean?" demanded Bunter, unconscious of the thoughts in Dance's mind. "Where's the circus?"

"Gone!"

"Without you?" asked Bunter, puzzled. "I thought you'd gone on and left me behind, as you did before, you cheeky beast! But what—"

"So you don't know what's happened?" said Dance, with an unpleasant grin. "That old fool Whiffles has come back. I'm sacked! You're game's up."

"Oh orrikey!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked at Dance in dismay. Conviction forced itself into his fat mind. Dance evidently had been kicked out of the circus. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was in command again. With the genuine Mr. Whiffles in control of the World-Famous Circus, there was no

FOR NEXT WEEK!

Poor old Bunter's in a fine stew now—as good as sacked from Greyfriars. Certainly Dr. Locke doesn't want him back, and neither does Mr. Quelch, for that learned gentleman is thoroughly fed up with William George Bunter. Still, Bunter's a sticker. His one aim now is to get back to Greyfriars. You'll laugh loud and long over "BUNTER COMES TO STAY!" next week's rousing long tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.

ORDER Next Saturday's issue TO-DAY!

room there for the sham Mr. Whiffles—even Billy Bunter could understand that.

"Oh crumbs!" said Bunter. "Oh dear!"

"I'm glad to see you!" grinned Dance. "I've got something for you, Mister Billy Bunter-Whiffles, that I've saved up for you for a long time—all the time that you were swanking and throwing your weight about, you fat oyster! Now you're going to get it!"

"I—I say—" gasped Bunter.

He jumped back. He did not like the expression on Mr. Dance's face. It reminded him, at that moment, of the countenance of Bill Huggins.

Mr. Dance jerked the strap from his bag and doubled it in his hand. Bunter did not need to ask what he was going to do with the strap. With a gasp of dismay the Owl of the Remove turned and ran for it.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooh!"

Even as Mr. Whiffles had done unto the manager, so the manager did unto the Boss. Bunter fled wildly. Dance

followed him up strapping hard. Bunter flew across the road, and made a wild jump over a stile to escape. He landed on the top bar of the stile. As he clung there, gasping, his little fat legs thrashing the air, he was nicely placed to receive what Mr. Dance had been saving up for him so long.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooh! Help! Whoooooop!" roared Bunter.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow! Help! Fire! Murder!"

Whack, whack!

Bunter rolled over the stile, landed in a heap, picked himself up, and fled frantically across the fields. Mr. Dance grinned after him, feeling comforted.

Bunter was several fields away before he stopped. He pumped in breath and rolled on dismally. He was glad to get away from Dance, and he realised only too clearly that he had better keep away from Mr. Whiffles. Bossing the circus was a thing of the past. The Boss had fallen from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof!

It was an hour or two later that Bunter, sadder if not wiser, limped into a train for home. Home was now his refuge; but, from the expression on his fat face, he did not seem to be dwelling with ecstasy on the glories of Bunter Court.

It was, in fact, a doleful and dismal Bunter that left the train at last, and rolled wearily down the road to the villa which, in Bunter's fertile imagination, was a magnificent mansion, but which in cold reality was a detached villa—merely that and nothing more.

His brother Sammy met him at the door.

"You're for it!" grinned Sammy.

"Beast!" said Bunter.

"The pater's in no end of a wax."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"William!" came a fat voice. "Is that you, William? Come here, William. I have something to say to you, William!"

William came dispiritedly.

Mr. Bunter eyed him severely.

"Have—have you missed me a lot, pater?" asked Bunter.

"Eh—what? Why should I miss you?" asked Mr. Bunter, in surprise.

"Oh!"

"I have something serious to say to you, William, so please do not talk nonsense," said Mr. Bunter.

"Oh!"

"I have received a letter from your headmaster at Greyfriars, referring to the new term and your return to the school."

"It appears," said Mr. Bunter, "that Dr. Locke, in view of your having left school without leave at the end of the last term, and left him in ignorance of your whereabouts, and for other offences, has decided that you will not be allowed to return to the school for the coming term."

"Ow!"

"You will not, therefore, go back to Greyfriars—"

"Ow!"

"I shall find you a place in my office—"

"(Ooooh!)"

"Where you will be set to work—"

"Wow!"

"And where I hope you will be worth the trouble you will give!" wound up Mr. Bunter.

Billy Bunter made no reply.

He couldn't!

Many and many a time had W. G. Bunter landed himself in trouble. Many and many a time had he got out of it somehow. But this time it really looked as if it was all up with Bunter!

THE END.

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The Toughest Team in the League!



The opening chapters of a brilliant new story of football and detective adventure, starring Ferrers Locke, detective, and his boy assistant, Jack Drake.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Warning!

"**T**HEY won to-day, guv'nor!" Ferrers Locke smiled at his young assistant's enthusiasm. "As I expected," remarked Ferrers Locke. "And the score was 3-1. If Sparsdale—"

Jack Drake sat bolt upright in his chair and the newspaper he had been reading dropped in his lap.

"How on earth did you know that, guv'nor?" he inquired, his boyish face aglow with astonishment. "I hadn't mentioned the Sparsdale Athletic, or the score."

The famous detective smiled.

"You haven't mentioned them aloud I will admit, but for the last five minutes your lips have framed the words 'Sparsdale Athletic' and '3-1.' Added to that the expression on your face has been one of gratification at Sparsdale's success. You should control your emotions a little better, my lad."

"Well, I'm blessed!" ejaculated Drake, then his face broke into a mischievous grin. "I tell you what, guv'nor. I'll bet you a dozen doughnuts to a Havana cigar that you can't tell me the top goal-scorer to-day?"

Ferrers Locke wagged an admonishing finger at his assistant.

"Betting is a bad habit," he said.

"But I'll take that cigar—"

"That's a go!"

"Four goals was the highest score of any individual player to-day, my lad," said Ferrers Locke easily.

"Oh, my hat! You're right!"

"And Dixie Dean of Everton," went on the detective, "was the scorer!"

Jack Drake gaped at his chief in open-mouthed amazement.

"But how on earth did you know that, guv'nor?" he asked. "Why, the paper's only been here five or six minutes, and it has never left my hands!"

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Quite long enough for an observant person," he remarked, pulling contentedly at his briar. "You see, your paper was folded, but the Stop Press column was visible. True, the news was upside down, but reading matter that is upside down is not a difficult feat. You try it!"

Drake eyed his chief in undisguised admiration.

"There's not much you don't see, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,075.

guv'nor. I wish I used my giddy optics like you."

"Practice makes us perfect," said Locke lazily. "But there, unless I'm mightily mistaken, is our mutual friend, Inspector Pycroft."

Following the detective's remark there came to Drake's ears the sound of heavy footsteps. A moment later the outer door bell rang and Sing Sing, Locke's Chinese servant, moved softly along the passage to answer the summons.

"Evening, Mr. Locke!"

A tall, burly individual in a lounge suit and a bowler hat in his hand, tramped into the cosy sitting-room. It was Inspector Pycroft, of the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard. His rugged features were red and cross-looking. Evidently, something had happened to disturb Inspector Pycroft's usual equanimity. Without waiting for the formality of being asked to seat himself, Locke's old friend plumped himself into a handy armchair and wiped his heated brow.

Locke watched him, a slight twinkle of amusement lighting up his steely-grey eyes.

"Trouble?" he queried, after a pause.

The C.I.D. man grimaced.

"Chief's on the warpath," he grunted. "A week ago, he gave me the job of running to earth the gang that has been plaguing the society nobs for the past couple of months. But I'm blessed if I know where to start."

"Clever gang?"

Pycroft grinned feebly.

"Cleverer than I am," he admitted.

"They simply swoop down when and where they like. No clues, no fingerprints, no—no—no anything!" he added, with a helpless gesture.

Drake grinned at the helpless expression on the C.I.D. man's face, but he was gravity itself as Pycroft suddenly glared at him.

"What are you grinning at, you young monkey?"

"Was I grinning?" asked Drake demurely.

He fixed a mild gaze on the frowning face of the inspector, but his eyes twinkled and, unable to withstand their boyish impishness, the C.I.D. man's features broke into an expansive grin.

"Well, young Jack, here, knows what I have some for," said Pycroft frankly. "I want your help—"

"That's easy," said Locke. "Drake and I have been taking a rest cure after the strain of the Lost Island case

and a couple of months down by the sea has recuperated me, but left me strangely fed-up with inactivity. I'll certainly give you a hand with the job."

"Good man!"

Drake, who was peering out of the window, suddenly gave a start.

"There's that fellow Wentworth!" he exclaimed.

Ferrers Locke looked significantly at Inspector Pycroft.

"Jack's gone a trifle weak in the head over the Sparsdale Athletic," said the detective. "He's certain in his own mind that they'll win the cup."

"So they will," exclaimed Drake. "Look at their record already; only lost one match. And that chap Wentworth, the outside-right, is as good as Alec Jackson of Huddersfield."

Inspector Pycroft snorted. It was many years since he had bestowed any interest on Soccer.

Drake, still peering out of the window at the stalwart figure of Harold Wentworth, touched his chief on the arm.

"That's funny," he said. "Wentworth's passed this door three times—just as if he were going to call here, and then thought better of it. He's gone now."

Ferrers Locke was not impressed. He was keen enough on Soccer, for he was an all-round athlete and had won his Soccer blue at Oxford, but naturally he did not give such free rein to his enthusiasm as Drake.

"I see no reason why this fellow Wentworth, if it was he, should want to call on me," said Ferrers Locke. Then turning to Inspector Pycroft: "Where was the gang's last crib?"

"Park Lane," said the C.I.D. man. "Good haul it was, too; something like twenty thousand quid in diamonds and platinum. I—"

He was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone bell.

Locke took up the receiver.

"Ferrers Locke?" came a hoarse voice over the phone. "Right! If you want to live a bit longer keep your nose out of our business!"

The detective smiled grimly.

"I haven't the pleasure of your acquaintance," he said easily. "But I have no doubt as to the nature of your business—"

"Curse you. I know that that fool Pycroft has come round to you. It isn't difficult to know why. Well, you'd better not meddle in our business or you'll be a goner in double-quick time."

"Thanks for the tip," replied Ferrers Locke coolly. "But for your information and that of your estimable friends, I'm going to meddle, as you call it, right away!"

His caller rang off with a savage imprecation and Locke, replacing the receiver on the hooks, turned to Inspector Pyecroft.

"Unless I'm mightily mistaken, that message was from the gang you were speaking of a few moments ago."

Inspector Pyecroft started.

"They were kind enough to inform me that if I meddled in their business I was a gone coon! A compliment in a way, you must admit."

The C.I.D. man's face fell.

"Then I shan't be able to count on your help, Locke?"

Ferrers Locke smiled grimly.

"On the contrary, you can count on my full services," he replied. "I'm used to such threats; they serve to make a case interesting. But try one of these Havana's, old man; I can thoroughly recommend them."

And a few moments later the cosy sitting-room was a haze of blue smoke through which could be seen the thoughtful, intellectual face of Ferrers Locke, the rugged features of Inspector Pyecroft, and the youthful head of Jack Drake as he bent over a press-cutting file busy putting in their proper places the news paragraphs of its day relative to crimes solved and unsolved.

No one looking in just then would have thought that the life of Ferrers Locke had been threatened, for he looked a picture of repose as he pulled contentedly at his Havana.

Yet the threat was not an idle one, as future events were destined to prove.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. At Dead of Night!

BOOM!

Intermingled with the occasional purring of the cars that traversed the quietude of Baker Street came the strident tones of a nearby clock as it chimed the hour of midnight.

Then all was still.

Ferrers Locke, still fully dressed despite the hour, smiled grimly. His briar was well alight; he was content. None would have thought that peril loomed in the offing. In the ordinary course of events the famous detective would have been deep in slumber at that hour, but instinct upon which Locke had relied so often, now served him well.

Watchful as a cat, as quiet as a mouse, he waited, his keen ears attuned to every minor sound that disturbed the silence.

He moved ever so slightly as a faint sound from below stairs creaked through the house; he smiled somewhat as Jack Drake—fast asleep in an adjacent room—bespoke his presence by reason of his youthful snore.

The detective had not waited in vain. Faintly came the soft tread of rubber-soled feet. Someone was mounting the stairs!

Locke's hand slowly travelled to his jacket-pocket. It nestled on a loaded automatic that reposed there.

Creak, Creak!

Three hours had passed since Inspector Pyecroft had taken his leave. Why Locke expected a visitor—an unwelcome visitor at that—could only be explained by that instinct which prompts a man to whom peril is a common occurrence to be ever on the alert.

Creak, creak!

Those muffled sounds at last ceased. Followed an almost inaudible noise as a key was inserted in the lock of the outer door of the flat.

A few seconds, and the door swung open. A tall man, dressed in an ulster, with a felt hat pulled down well over his forehead, crept in.

"Good!"

The word escaped him in a whisper as he stood there, watching, waiting, his hand gripped fast round an automatic. Then, apparently assured that his intrusion had occasioned no alarm, he moved forward.

As if he were well acquainted with the geography of Ferrers Locke's rooms, the intruder padded softly to Locke's bedroom. And as he went he turned the key in the lock of each apartment he passed!

Ferrers Locke stiffened in the arm-chair, heard the click of the sitting-room door, and murmured something under his breath. He had not counted on the foresight of his visitor.

With equal quietness of movement the



FERRERS LOCKE, the celebrated Baker Street detective, who is taking a very active part in this great new serial. You will follow the adventures of this master criminologist with great enjoyment.

detective rose to his feet and crossed to the door.

It was locked!

Meanwhile the man in the ulster crept on. His hand felt for the lock of the detective's bedroom. It gave to his pressure without a sound.

The door swung open, slowly, significantly.

The man in the ulster peered into the room like a tiger about to pounce upon its prey.

A shaft of moonlight trickled in through the window, lighting up the Jacobean bed, the figure of a sleeper between the sheets—a sleeper who did not stir.

Slowly, menacingly, the right arm of the midnight visitor was raised. The moonbeams flicked colourfully on the polished blue automatic which was directed straight at the figure lying so still between the sheets.

"Easier than I thought!" muttered the man in the ulster. "Ferrers Locke, this is your last moment."

A finger curled round the trigger of the automatic. Then—

Crack! Crack!

Two death-dealing messengers sped from the blue muzzle of the automatic, straight at the sleeping figure.

As if not content that he had accomplished his fell purpose the man in the ulster drew trigger again.

Crack!

"Farewell, Mr. Ferrers Meddling Locke!" he hissed. "You had your warning!"

He moved forward like a grim shadow, to witness the fruits of his handiwork.

With a savage gesture he tore away the bedclothes that concealed that still figure which had been his target, and a torrent of invective left his lips on the instant.

The bed contained only a bolster!

At the same moment came the upraised voice of Jack Drake. The sounds of the shots had awakened him. In a bound the youngster was at the door of his bedroom. He plucked wildly at the handle, but it refused to budge.

"Guv'nor!"

Ferrers Locke did not respond. At that moment he was censuring himself for his negligence in underestimating his foe, but at the same time he was busy. His bunch of skeleton keys was at work. It was a new experience for the detective to pick his own lock, but at last the wards gave to his per—at last it gave to his persuasion. At a run he made for the door of his bedroom.

Click!

His hand felt for the electric-light switch and the room was flooded with light. The detective saw the man in the ulster before he himself was seen.

"Put up your hands!" he exclaimed grimly.

"You!"

Crack! Crack!

With a snarl of rage the man in the ulster whipped round and fired point blank at the detective. In the space of a split second, Locke's automatic spoke too. A bullet sped by his head, missing him by the fraction of an inch, and buried itself deeply in the wall. At the same time a cry of pain escaped the man in the ulster, and his weapon dropped from a nerveless hand.

"A near thing," said Locke easily. "You can count yourself lucky that it was your wrist I aimed for and not your heart!"

The man in the ulster clasped his wounded wrist and backed to the wall.

"Stand still!" commanded Locke. "The next time I shall not be so lenient!"

His keen eyes sought to study the face of his assailant, but the felt hat still hid effectively the man's features.

"Guv'nor!" It was Jack Drake's voice, eloquent of alarm and anxiety.

The youngster had forced the lock of his door. He burst into his chief's bedroom like a cyclone. Ferrers Locke half turned to say something to him and the man in the ulster took full advantage of his temporary respite. With the swiftness of light he snatched up a water jug and flung it straight at the glowing electric-light bulb.

On the instant the room was plunged in darkness.

"The window!" gasped Ferrers Locke. "Hold the door, Jack!"

With revolver at the ready the detective rushed to the window. Drake backed to the door.

"Where is he, guv'nor?" he gasped. "I—"

His words ended in a moan as a fist took him clean to the jaw. Drake felt his senses leaving him, but for all that he tried desperately to hold his assailant.

Thud!

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Another fist landed like a steam hammer in his dazed face and he knew no more. Without a sound he sank to the floor. And over his recumbent figure dashed the man in the ulster, regardless of the fact that he now presented a full target to Ferrers Locke as the moonbeams fell across his figure. Crack!

It was a snap-shot that the detective took in that momentary glimpse, and it just failed to find a billet. Next moment the man in the ulster was dashing down the stairs, a trail of crimson, flowing from his wounded wrist, marking his passage.

The whole thing had happened in a matter of seconds. Ferrers Locke, racing hard at the heels of his assistant, heard the front door slam. In feverish haste he tore at the handle and wrenched the door open. He had a glimpse of a car running alongside the kerb; saw the figure of the man in the ulster jump into it; heard the thunderous acceleration of the car as its driver stamped hard on the gas—and next moment it was roaring away through the night, the smoke from the exhaust successfully hiding the number-plate.

"Done!" panted Locke.

For the space of two seconds he stood at the doorway of his rooms, staring grimly at the rapidly disappearing car. His first thought was to give chase. And then he remembered Drake.

Biting his lip in his vexation, Locke mounted the stairs and returned to the bedroom. Drake was still sprawled on the carpet in an unconscious heap.

Bang! bang!

There came the sound of heavy blows on a door as Sing-Sing, Locke's servant, strove to leave his bedroom. The noise of the fracas had awakened him. It was the work of a moment for Locke to turn the key of Sing-Sing's room. The Chinese eyed him in mingled horror and relief.

"Me heard shots!" he exclaimed, his usually impassive face expressive of his anxiety. "What has happened, Mistle Locke?"

But the detective did not waste time in enlightening Sing-Sing just then. He rushed back to his own bedroom, gathered up Drake in his arms, and carried the lad into Sing-Sing's lighted room.

"Smelling salts!" he rapped out, and the Chinese moved off swiftly, to return in less than a minute with what the detective required.

"Knocked out!" muttered Locke. "Poor old Drake!"

He jammed the bottle of smelling salts to his assistant's nostrils and at last had the satisfaction of seeing him stir.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Drake, blinking up inquiringly into the detective's face. "Where am I?"

"Take it quietly, my lad," said Locke. "You'll be all right in a moment."

Sing-Sing, quick to be of use, doused Drake with a sponge of cold water.

Drake sat up, blinking.

"Did he get away, guv'nor?"

Locke made a grimace.

"He did. Slipped through our fingers like an eel. But how do you feel?"

Drake smiled—or rather tried to.

"Fine!"

"Good lad," said Locke feelingly.

"You're a plucked 'un!"

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In the space of five minutes Drake was himself again. There was a bruise under his eye and an ache in his jaw, but he made light of them.

"Who was he, guv'nor?" he asked.

Ferrers Locke shook his head.

"Haven't the foggiest notion," he returned. "But the villain dropped his revolver, perhaps that may afford a clue."

With Drake he made his way to the bedroom, now fully lighted, for Sing-Sing in his usual thoughtful fashion, had replaced the broken bulb with a new one. The revolver lay where it had fallen.

With great care, Ferrers Locke picked it up, what time Drake gazed in horror at the bolster in the bed which showed three bullet holes in a radius of less than a couple of inches.

"The murderous brute," he exclaimed wrathfully. "Why, you'd have been dead as a doornail if you'd been sleeping here, guv'nor."

Locke smiled slightly.

"Quite true," he admitted. "I'm afraid I underestimated my man. Yet his automatic may help us to even up accounts."

Drake looked interested.

"So you mean you've discovered a clue, guv'nor?"

Ferrers Locke's face was expressionless.

"Perhaps—and perhaps not!" he replied noncommittally.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Sparsdale v. Arsenal!

FOR the space of five minutes, Drake watched his chief examining the automatic the man in the ulster had left behind him, although the youngster gathered little from the set expression of Locke's face. Certainly, it masked effectively the activity of the detective's brain.

At such times as these, Drake knew the futility of asking questions. He just waited, therefore, for his chief to break the silence.

Locke turned in his direction and handed him the automatic.

"Have a good look at it, my lad."

Drake looked long and intently at the weapon. His boyish face wrinkled in perplexity as he handed the automatic back.

"Well?" said Locke. "Do you notice anything about it?"

"Blessed if I do!" exclaimed Drake.

"It's an automatic—that's all!"

"That's what I thought at first," said the detective. "But a second glance told me a lot, and a glimpse of the registered number of the gun clinched the matter."

"Meaning—" began Drake.

"That this automatic was once mine!" declared Locke.

"Great Scott!"

Ferrers Locke smiled grimly.

"Four years ago, you will remember, we were trailing the Maxton gang. They were daring enough to burgle this very flat. True we interrupted their merry little game, but one or two things were lifted. This automatic was one of them."

"But we followed up the Maxton crowd, guv'nor," said Drake, "and shoved 'em in clink eventually."

"We did!"

"What's more," said Drake reflectively, "the gang, with one exception,

was put safely behind the bars for seven years."

Locke clapped his assistant on the back.

"Good for you, my lad. I'm glad to see that your memory is improving."

Drake was thoughtful for the moment, searching his mind for a name that hovered on the tip of his tongue, so to speak, but failed to materialise. His persistency won in the end.

"I've got it, guv'nor," he exclaimed suddenly. "The name of the chap in the Maxton gang who got the short sentence of three years was Clifford Morgan. That means he's done his time. But does it mean necessarily that Morgan was our late visitor?"

"It does not," said Locke. "For this gun might have passed through scores of criminal hands since the days of the Maxton gang. Still, it is a starting point. And we must remember, too, that our late visitor was well acquainted with the lay-out of the flat. To-morrow, my lad, we must get on the trail of Mister Clifford Morgan and give him a look in. It'll be your job to look up all references to him in our index before brekker. Now off to bed!"

"You don't think we shall be disturbed again, guv'nor?"

Locke smiled grimly.

"Not to-night, my lad!" he said crisply. "In any case, I'm going to take a spell in the sitting-room. I've one or two things to think over."

He smiled genially at his young assistant and turned on his heel. But Drake did not retire to bed to sleep. On the contrary, he was so wide awake that he entered the study and devoted two hours of the night to hunting up all references to Clifford Morgan. His labours were not wasted. When Locke, hours afterwards, came into breakfast there was a tabulated sheet of information all ready for him.

"Last football season he got a job as groundsman to the Sparsdale Athletic, did he?" muttered the detective, as he perused the index. "I wonder if they took him on again this year?"

"If he behaved himself there is every reason to think that the Athletic would," ventured Drake.

Locke smiled as a sudden thought struck him.

"I think your reasoning is sound enough, my lad. Now we'll combine business with pleasure. The Athletic are playing at home to-morrow—their Saturday fixture."

"With the Arsenal!" interrupted Drake.

Locke nodded.

"What do you say to stopping to watch the game, my lad? We'll hunt round for Mister Clifford Morgan after the match."

Drake's eyes glistened. He couldn't have been offered anything better. Sparsdale Athletic versus the Arsenal would be a game worth watching.

"I'm on, guv'nor!" he smiled joyously.

"Then it's settled," said Locke, and he devoted the rest of the time to breakfast.

After the meal he opened the huge pile of correspondence that had come by the morning post, and his keen eyes roaming over the various envelopes were quick to discern one that was not stamped. He picked up the missive and smiled grimly.

The envelope was one of good quality paper although the various smudges and the scrawling handwriting that stood out from it hardly made that good quality apparent at first glance.

Locke opened the flap and pulled out a double sheet of paper which also bore a generous number of smudges and the same scrawling caligraphy. The letter ran:

"It was a near thing last night and you got away with it. But next time there won't be any mistake!"

Nothing more than that. Unsigned—unaddressed, but it was obvious that the letter came from the midnight visitor.

Locke tossed the letter to Drake. "Fellow seems a bit peeved about things," said Drake, with a wry grin. "We shall have to keep our eyes well skinned for him."

Locke nodded. In the course of his experience as a detective he had been the recipient of hundreds of letters similar to this one and had become inured to the threats

"I don't know about us," said Locke, with emphasis on the last word. "But they somehow don't like your humble. I've a beautiful ring of bullseyes on my bolster—and from my own gun, too."

"Yes, that's mighty queer," said Pycroft. "What do you intend doing now?"

Locke was silent for a moment. "To-day, I'm doing nothing," he said at last. "To-morrow, Drake and I are going to a footer match."

tain to win," said Drake absent-mindedly.

Locke smiled. "Then that clinches the matter!"

The following day saw Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake mingling with the great throng wending its way to the Athletic's spacious ground situated north-east of London.

In Locke's pocket reposed a couple of tickets for the grandstand, and



"Go it, Wentworth!" Encouraging shouts rang out from all sides of the spacious ground as the Athletic's outside-right sped away with the ball. Then a groan went up from that vast concourse as, opposite the stand, Wentworth was seen suddenly to stop and drop in his tracks like a pole-axed bullock! What had happened to him? (See page 28.)

against his life that they invariably contained.

"You note the quality of the paper, my lad?" he remarked to Drake, who was pouring himself out a second cup of coffee.

"Jolly good stuff," said Drake. "Much too good for the chap who seems to make a hobby of murder. Perhaps it's stolen stuff."

"Possibly. Or perhaps our charming friend is in the employ of a master with plenty of money and a good taste for decent note-paper," muttered Locke, half to himself. "Another cup of coffee, my lad!"

"Coming over, guv'nor!" said Drake cheerily. "Hallo, hallo, here's friend Pycroft."

The familiar tread of the C.I.D. man was plainly audible on the stairs without. A moment or so later the burly inspector himself appeared.

"Morning!" he said boisterously. "Any news?"

Locke quietly recounted the adventure of the previous night and Pycroft's face grew grim.

"So the dogs are out to get us, are they?"

The C.I.D. man started. "A footer match? What on earth do you want to go to a footer match for?"

"Two reasons," replied Locke. "Firstly, to see Sparsdale whack the Arsenal; secondly, in the hope of meeting the nice gentleman who dropped his, or rather my automatic last night."

Inspector Pycroft scratched his head in perplexity.

"And you reckon you'll find him at a footer match?" he grunted.

"It is possible—just possible!" returned Locke.

The C.I.D. man reached for his bowler.

"Blessed if I can make you out," he said. "A footer match. However, you usually know what you're doing."

"Thank you, my dear Pycroft!" said Locke gravely.

"Well, I'm off to the docks," said the inspector. "Thought I'd just drop in beforehand. Cheerio!"

"Cheerio, old bean!" sang out Drake, and the burly inspector departed.

"Friend Pycroft doesn't seem to think much of our occupation for to-morrow, does he?" said Locke, lighting up his pipe. "And yet at the back of my mind I feel sure that we're on the track!"

"And the Sparsdale Athletic are cer-

Drake was all eagerness to be there. At last the pair of them were mounting the stairs that led to the stand.

Locke ran his eye over the crowd and noticed the heavy frame and the bluff features of Samuel Bigways, the Chairman, and Managing Director of the Athletic. He was in conversation with the manager in the box set aside for the special use of the directors.

From these two, Locke's keen eyes roamed over the crowd noting many a face that was familiar to him. Drake, meanwhile, kept his eyes glued on the passage that ran from the playing ground to the dressing-rooms. He was waiting for the teams to emerge.

It seemed an age before the band stopped playing and the Athletic trooped out. A rousing cheer greeted them, and there was a special cheer for Harold Wentworth, the star winger, in which Drake joined with great gusto.

The Athletic were a hefty-looking side, trained to the minute.

"Up the Athletic!"

"Another win to-day, boys!"

Then another mighty burst of cheering soared heavenwards as the Arsenal eleven came into view, led by that formidable warrior, Blyth.

The referee called the captains to the centre: the coin spun, and the

THE TOUGHEST TEAM in the LEAGUE!

(Continued from previous page.)

Sparsdale captain indicated that he had called correctly.

"That's a good start, guv'nor," said Drake delightedly. "We've won the toss!"

The game started with a rush from the Arsenal forwards. Working like a well-oiled piece of machinery they swept down the pitch. The half-back line was passed to the accompaniment of storming cheers from the Arsenal supporters, but the threatened goal did not materialise, for Huff Wilkins, the burly Sparsdale right-back, cleared with a mighty kick and sent the ball to his outside-right. Harold Wentworth was on it like a flash. He streaked down the line like a hare, the ball under perfect control at his feet. To Drake's delight he eluded the half-back who rushed to despoil him; he beat the back with consummate ease and was seen to centre.

Boooooomph!

Ted Warner, the Sparsdale centre, an unprepossessing looking individual, but withal a footballer of considerable merit, took the pass and with a first time kick had the satisfaction of notching first blood for Sparsdale.

Beyond a hearty hand clap, Locke did not join in the comments of the crowd, but Drake did.

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" he exclaimed delightedly. "Good old Wentworth!"

It had been Wentworth's goal really, and the crowd were not slow to see it and applaud accordingly.

First blood to the Athletic, but that lead was not maintained for long; two minutes after the kick-off the Arsenal had drawn level. Thereafter it was a ding-dong struggle with each side straining every muscle and fibre for the mastery, but at half-time the score was still one all.

"Jolly good game," said Drake, during the interval. "We shall see some fireworks in the second half, guv'nor. I say, look at Mr. Bigways. He doesn't look very pleased with himself, does he?"

Locke glanced towards the directors' box and saw the frowning features of the chairman of the club. He was reading a letter and it was evident that the contents did not please him.

"Here they come, boys!"

There was a stir in the crowd as the Sparsdale eleven came out for the second half, closely followed by the Arsenal.

Pheep!

The game was in motion once more. It was not a match which would ever be remembered by the number of goals scored, for up to three minutes of the



JACK DRAKE, Locke's clever young assistant, who will brave any dangers for the sake of his beloved "guv'nor."

close of the game, no one on either side had looked like notching a winning point. But for defensive work on the part of both teams' half-back and full-back lines it would be remembered for many a day.

"Hallo, Wentworth's away!"

The crowd took up the yell as the Sparsdale outside right was seen to take the ball in his stride, and race along the touchline.

"Go it, Wentworth!"

"Good boy!"

The noise was deafening. People were cheering wildly, waving caps, call-

ing on the Sparsdale man to give them victory.

Up in the stand, Drake was excitement personified. He was standing on his feet, his face alight with enthusiasm. Even Locke caught something of it, as Wentworth, on whom the fate of the match now depended, cleverly beat the two half-backs who rushed to dispossess him and raced on. It wanted a minute to full time.

Would Wentworth do it?

Would—

There was a sudden groan from the crowd as Wentworth, who a second before had been travelling at top speed, was seen suddenly to pull up and then drop in his tracks like a pole-axed bullock! The ball trickled on, but the outside-right lay in a huddled heap a yard from the touchline in front of the stand!

The whole thing had happened so swiftly, so unexpectedly, that, following the initial groan of dismay, a deathly silence settled on that vast concourse.

Eyes from every quarter of the ground were fixed on the inanimate figure of the Sparsdale outside-right.

What had happened to him?

The referee was the first man to get a grip on himself. His whistle shrilled out, bringing the game to a halt. Then, followed by members of the two teams, he rushed towards the touchline.

His own face blanched as he saw the deathly pallor that had settled over Wentworth's handsome features; his eyes almost started out of their sockets as through the black-and-white jersey there trickled an ominous crimson stain.

"Good heavens!"

Next moment the referee was on one knee, feverishly tearing away the neck of the jersey. Wentworth's chest was laid bare.

"Shot!" gasped the referee in horror. "Good heavens!"

There was no mistaking that ominous stream of crimson or the ugly bullet wound from which it flowed. In some inexplicable fashion, Harold Wentworth, the Athletic's star winger, had been shot!

(Here's the beginning of a first-class mystery, boys, which is going to take all the cleverness of Ferrers Locke to solve. See that you read next week's trenchant instalment; see, too, that your pal doesn't miss this wonderful yarn of sport and detective adventure.)

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SHOOTING



There are great doings at St. Sam's this week. The whole school is shooting for a four carat and one turnip rolled-gold cup. Who wins it?

GOOD shot, sir!" "Well aimed!" "Good old Jack Jolly!"

The cheering on the St. Sam's Miniature Rifle Range rang out in a deafening roar.

It was the day before the grate shooting competition for the gold cup presented by General Crackpot, and the entire school was agog with eggshite interest. The targets were fairly besieged by eager competitors, anxious to improve their marksmanship to the highest possible pitch before the grate day arrived. And, needless to say, Jack Jolly, the handsome kaplin of the Fourth, was well to the forefront. Jack had just achieved the amazing feat of scoring half a dozen "bulls" in succession. Hence the applaws. The fellows looked on in wrapped amazement as he riddled the centre of the target. He was undoubtedly streets ahead of anyone else, in fact, some fellows already were loudly egging the opinion that it was practically a walk-over for him.

So clever was Jack Jolly that he hardly troubled to take aim at all. He would calmly turn his head round, and talk to his pals while he was firing, and even then the bullet would land in the "eggshite spot." No champion at Bisleigh had ever given such a wonderful performance.

In the midst of the loud cheering the door of the Rifle Range opened, and a majestic figure in cap and gown sneaked in. It was Dr. Birchmell, Headmaster of St. Sam's, and he had come to see what sort of a show his protegee, Crackpot of the Fourth, was making.

Unknown to the Skool at large, the Head had made up his mind that by fare means or fowl, General Crackpot's son should win the cup which his pater had presented. General Crackpot, who was as keen as mustard on making his son a grate marksman, had promised the Head a tip-top feed in the tuckshop if young Crackpot succeeded in winning the trophy, and, with that treat in view, the Head had spent no end of time in coaching the boy. But Crackpot couldn't shoot for toffs, and even the crool blows of the Head's birch had not made a lot of improvement in him.

Dr. Birchmell pricked up his ears as he heard the cheering. "Someone has evidently been doing well," he mormered. "Perhaps Crackpot has been displaying his troo form at last."

Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, caught the Head's words, and shook his head.

"No, sir. They are cheering Jolly," The Mager Library.—No. 1,075.

TO



he eggshite. "From what I can see of it, sir, Jolly is going to break all records to-morrow." "Rats!" snorted the Head. "Tell that to the Maroons, Lickham! Jolly will sing very small, I can tell you, when he sees young Crackpot get bizzzy!"

"Grate pip! Are you serious, sir?" gasped Mr. Lickham. "Surely you are aware that Crackpot is the most doddering duffer in my Form at rifle-practise?" "I am not aware of anything of the kind!" barked Dr. Birchmell. "If I were a betting man, Lickham, I wouldn't mind wagering ten to one in donouns that Crackpot wins with ease!" "Dear me!" Then I suppose I was mistaken, sir," said the master of the Fourth, giving the Head a very queer look.

Inwardly, he was wondering whether Dr. Birchmell had suddenly gone off his rocker, but he didn't mention that, of course. Bursleigh of the Sixth, the handsome and popular kaplin of the Skool, strolled up just then to relieve the situation.

"Good-evening, sir!" he cried, doffing his cap with deference. "Everything is ready for to-morrow, I presume?" "To the best of my nollidge and belief it is," answered the Head. "How many of the Sixth are entering for the Cup, Bursleigh?"

"Oh, quite a number of us, sir!" said Bursleigh. "There's the Gunn and Cart-ridge, and Shooter, and Alimstrait, and, of course, myself. Practically all the best shots in the Sixth are having a try."

Dr. Birchmell scowled.

"Kindly tell them all, then, that I shall be eggshite annoyed if any of them win!" he snapped. "When General Crackpot presented the Cup, I am sure he didn't dream that a crowd of grate, hulking prefects would be avaricious enuff to compete for it!"

"But the competition is open to the entire skool, sir!" cried Bursleigh, with a stare. "That may be, Bursleigh. Nevertheless, the covered trophy, in my opinion, should go to a junior, and if any member of the Sixth wins it, I shall have something to say—and I shall probably say it with a birchrod!"

"Mind-inform your fellow-compettitors of my decision," wrapped out the Head. "By the way, the same thing applies to the Fifth also."

"Right to the Fifth as well?" stutered Bursleigh.

"Certainly!" "Well, this takes the giddy biskit!" mormered Bursleigh, as he turned on his

heel and set out on his inevitable mission.

Dr. Birchmell grimaced, and rubbed his bony hands together with satisfaction when Bursleigh had gone. Now that he had egged his view on the subject of Seniors winning the Cup, nobody in the Fifth or Sixth was likely to make a serious attempt in the competition. By his astute move Dr. Birchmell had left the weigh a little clearer for Crackpot of the Fourth.

But there was still the Fourth to consider, and, above all, Jack Jolly. The Head scowled fiercely as he saw what a fuss everybody was making of the kaplin of the Fourth.

"Jolly!" he thundered. "Yes, sir!" cried Jack Jolly, pitching his rifle into a corner, and standing upright.

"Come here at once! I want to have a quiet word with you!"

"Two, if you like, sir!" said Jack Jolly, with a cheery grin; for our dawntless hero had nerves of steel, and not even the tyrant of St. Sam's could strike fear into his hat.

"Now, Jolly," said the Head, in a horse whisper, when the kaplin of the Fourth was standing fearlessly before him. "I want you to understand that under no circumstances must you win the Crackpot Cup to-morrow!"

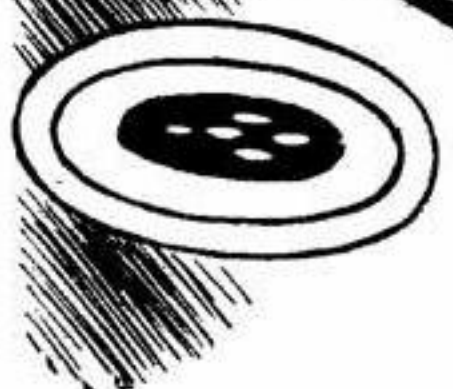
"And why the thump not, sir?" asked Jack indignantly.

"Because I say so!" hissed Dr. Birchmell fiercely. "There's no need to go into details, Jolly, but I just want to make it quite clear that it won't pay you to win the trophy. If by some strange fluke you do so, it will be at your perill. Savvy?"

Jack Jolly droo himself up to his full height of four-feet-ten, and looked fearlessly at the Head.

"No, sir, I don't savvy," he answered coolly. "And whether you like it, or whether you don't, I'm out for the Crackpot Cup to-morrow. Even tho I suffer tortcher afterwards, I shall shoot to win!"

WINN!



DICKY NUGENT lets himself go in this screamingly funny school tale! He'll win great praise from his many followers, you bet!

"Hooray!" yelled the crowd, in a subdued and nervous whisper. The Head fairly nashed his teeth with baffled rage. "Very well, Jolly, we shall see!" he cried. "Go in and win! But, by hokey, remember that he larfs last who larfs last!"

And with that sinister threat Dr. Birchmell swept the entire Range with a bitter look, then swept out.

Will all those in favor, kindly signify in the usual manner?" The Head looked round the crowded room, fully egged to see a forest of hands shoot up in the air. But, instead of that, to his fearful shagrin, not a single hand went up.

"Very well, then!" he cried, his die simply livid with rage. "You have all chosen to eggshite yourselves as fooling duds, not worthy of wasting Crackpot's time! So be it! Get on with the giddy washing."

And the competitors, as rekwested, got on with the giddy washing. Starting with the Sixth, they lined up four at a time, and aimed at their respective targets. All the seniors began well, but when they turned round and saw the Head scowling at them they remembered Bursleigh's instructions, and hurriedly changed their tactics, and started aiming anywhere but at the bullseye.

As a result they made a miserable eggshite, and the Fifth were not a bit better. Then the Fourth came on the scene, and immediately a grate change came over the proceedings. Steadfast, to begin with, droo rounds of applaws by scoring 76 out of a possible hundred. Very soon after Loye beat him with a mastery 80. And then Frank Fearless fairly brought down the house with a wonderful 90.

At last Jack Jolly's turn came. With a cheerful grin on his fazz, the kaplin of the Fourth took up his position and fired. There was a roar of applaws. Jack had scored a bull first time!

After that our hero didn't trouble to aim again. He just fired at random, it seemed, but each shot went home unerringly. Only at the last go did he fail to score a bull, and that was because someone happened to fall on top of him while he was firing. Even then he scored 4 out of a possible 5.

Dr. Birchmell, meanwhile, was almost in a state of appoplexy. To win the Cup, Crackpot of the Fourth would have to score the maximum figger of 100. Unless he could do that, there would be no feed for Dr. Birchmell. The Head began to feel absolutely despair.

And then in his darkest hour he had a sudden branwave. If only the target was a dozen yards away, instead of the regulation 25, even Crackpot wouldn't have any difficulty in scoring 100. Why not? thought the Head suddenly. Of course, nothing could be done in

front of this grate crowd. If the range was shortened, it would have to be in the dead of nite, while nobody was looking on. But if only he could postpone Crackpot's effort until to-morrow that difficulty would be overcome. "By jiminy!" muttered the Head. "I'll do it!"

The only competitor left now was Crackpot. The Head made up his mind that Crackpot should not shoot that day.

"Stop!" he cried, rushing forward. Crackpot lowered his gun. "Crackpot, my boy, you are not looking well," said the Head, with a wink at the seprized duffer of the Fourth. "Are you sure you are fit enuff to fire?"

"I, sir?" asked Crackpot, fairly blinking. "I'm all right!" "Silence!" roared the Head, giving Crackpot a sly kick that made him yelp with pain. "How dare you say you are all right, when you are crying allowed in agerry! Lickham, I think Crackpot had better shoot to-morrow! The boy is obviously unwell!"

And to make the picture look even more real the Head gave the unfortunate junior another terrific kick that made him roar with pain. "Dear me, how very eggshite!" exclaimed Mr. Lickham. "It seemed to me that Crackpot was quite well until you spoke to him, sir."

"He is certainly far from well now," Crackpot a quiet jab with a pin. "Yarooooo!" howled the Head, giving Crackpot a quiet jab with a pin. "There you are!" cried Dr. Birchmell, all triumphantly. "The boy seems to be in agerry. I think that we, as judges, should allow him to fire to-morrow instead of to-day. What do you say, Lickham?"

"Very well, sir. I suppose that's only fair," said Mr. Lickham devoutly. "Jentlemen! The last competitor, Crackpot of the Fourth, will fire to-morrow morning. To-day's events are over, the winner, so far, being Jack Jolly with 99. To win the trophy, Crackpot will have to score 100."

"What a hope!" grinned the skool, as they dispersed. For the rest of the day the sole topic of conversation was Jack Jolly's remarkable score in the Rifle Competition. Nobody considered for a moment that Crackpot could possibly win the Cup now. But Dr. Birchmell still had his trump card to play. And that nite he played it!

(Look out for the concluding story of this fine series next week.) The Mager Library.—No. 1,075.