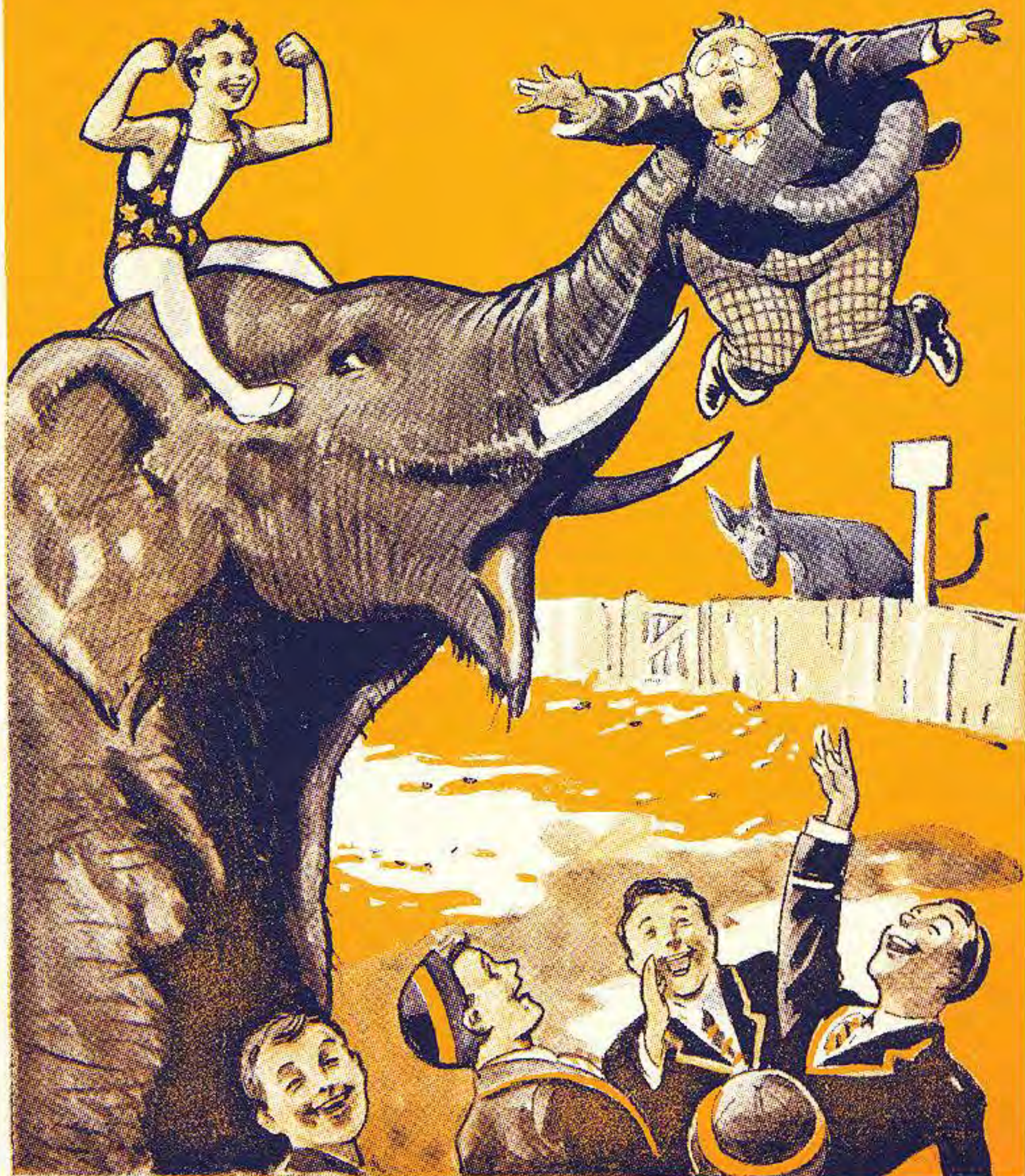


There's Roars of Merriment in . . . **"BUNTER, THE INK-SPLASHER!"** This Week's Superb Story of Greyfriars.

The **MAGNET** 2^D

No. 1,160. Vol. XXXVII. Week Ending May 10th, 1930.

EVERY SATURDAY.



BILLY BUNTER'S "JOY-RIDE!"

(One of the many humorous incidents contained in this week's long school and adventure story.)



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address:
The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

OF course, you fellows have heard all about Dick Turpin, Jack Sheppard, Captain Kidd, and other notoriety of that ilk, but I wonder how many of you have ever heard of Jesse James? Jesse is not very well known on this side of the Atlantic, but in the United States and in Canada I think everyone has heard of him. One of my Sheffield readers has written to me, asking me to enlighten him about this desperado. Well, Jesse was

"A REAL TOUGH GUY,"

as Fisher T. Fish would say. He was the leader of the biggest and most daring gang of American outlaws who ever "held up" a bank, or robbed a train. Missouri was the State which Jesse favoured with his attentions; and he was well supported by his brother Frank, and three other principal members of the band of freebooters, who were Cole, Jim, and Bill Younger—all brothers.

They started off by robbing a bank at Liberty, Missouri, but one of the band got captured, and a few days later, the rest shot the gaoler, who refused to hand over the keys of the town gaol. They were immediately outlawed, but promptly held up another bank, and killed the cashier.

They lived in a cavern in the mountains, and established a sentry system. Every one who came near their roost was promptly shot, and their "hold ups" continued at frequent intervals. Then they staged the first train robbery by tearing up a portion of the track and wrecking the overland express. The driver was killed, and many passengers injured—some of them fatally. Although a price of ten thousand dollars was placed upon the head of Jesse James, the outrages continued. For years the gang terrorised the neighbourhood, but at last they met their Waterloo at a small town called Northfield.

Here they rode down the main street, firing their revolvers and hoping to scare the inhabitants, and leave the way clear for a robbery of the bank. But the men of Northfield gathered round the bank and gave the raiders a warm reception. In the battle which ensued, three of the outlaws were shot dead, and Bill and Jim Younger were wounded. The robbers made off, and were vigorously pursued. They might have escaped, had it not been for

A TRAIL OF BLOOD

which flowed from Jim Younger's wound! Jesse James proposed that Jim should be murdered there and then, but Bill Younger indignantly refused to allow this, and the James brothers rode off and left the others. The three Youngers were overtaken, captured, and received a life sentence. Later on, Frank James sur-

rendered to the authorities, but Jesse James continued his outlaw existence, and was eventually shot dead by another bandit for the sake of the reward. And that, in brief, is the story of the most audacious and callous outlaw who ever terrorised the United States!

THERE are quite a number of interesting anniversaries this week. For instance, Monday is the 99th anniversary of the death of Napoleon at St. Helena. Tuesday is the anniversary of the accession of our present King, in 1910, and next Saturday is the 93rd anniversary of the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny at Meerut. But there are even more interesting anniversaries, such as that of next Wednesday, for it was on May 7th, 1915, that the s.s. Lusitania was torpedoed by the Germans. There were no fewer than 1,134 people drowned on that occasion, and the callous sinking of this magnificent passenger liner caused a wave of horror in this country.

Britain had more than her own back on May 10th, 1918, however, for that was the day on which H.M.S. Vindictive blocked Ostend Harbour, and so prevented the German submarines from coming out. The Germans had turned Ostend into a naval base, as they had also done with Zeebrugge. As I told you, our Navy blocked up Zeebrugge Harbour, and the Germans never expected that we would attempt the same tactics again. But they underestimated the bravery of the British Navy, and the result was that Ostend was blocked up just about two weeks afterwards.

After the War it was a big job to get the Vindictive raised, but it was accomplished in due course, and this gallant vessel, which had done such great service, was eventually broken up. Relics of her are to be found at the museum which was established by the Belgians at Zeebrugge.

So, you see, this week has loomed large in history!

Just before I begin to devote myself to queries which readers have asked me, let us have a laugh at this joke, which has come from Allan Holmes, of 25, Clifford Road, Wallasey. He has received a penknife for it.



"Ours is a hunting family," said the boastful boy. "My father died hunting."

"Oh, really!" said his friend.

"What was he hunting?"

"He was hunting for a gas-leak with a lighted candle!" was the reply.



I WONDER how many of you have heard of CAPTAIN BLOOD!

It sounds like the title of a new serial, but Captain Blood actually existed, and two hundred and fifty-nine years ago he attempted to carry out the most audacious robbery in history. This was nothing less than an attempt to steal the Crown Jewels from the Tower of London! Blood had been an officer in Oliver Cromwell's household, but was discarded, and, with some confederates, he seized the Duke of Ormond, and attempted to hang him. He actually got the duke to Tyburn, but the duke's friends managed to rescue him before Blood could carry out his intention. Blood, after various exploits on the highway, disguised himself as a clergyman, got into the Tower, and seized the Crown. Unfortunately for him, he did not manage to get away with it, and was captured. But, notwithstanding this, Charles II. pardoned him—and actually settled a pension of £500 per annum upon him! Other highwaymen were hanged—but Captain Blood was too clever for that!

The next letter comes from a reader who takes me to task for my recent paragraph about Buffalo Bill. He says that

BUFFALO BILL NEVER SHOT A BUFFALO

in his life! As a matter of fact, my reader is quite right! You see, the buffalo exists only in the old world—principally Africa and Asia. But the Americans call the bison a "buffalo," and it was, of course, bison which "Buffalo" Bill shot!

My reader reminds me that we call a lot of things by names which are not correct. Let me give you a short list of some of the outstanding mistakes which are made in our language:

You all know that a guinea pig is not a pig, and that it does not come from Guinea. But do you know that—

A cuttlefish is not a fish? It is an octopus.

A flying fox is not a fox—it is a large bat.

A titmouse is not a mouse—it is a small bird.

A prairie dog is not a dog—it is a rodent.

A blind worm is not a worm, nor is it blind—it is a lizard, and has two eyes.

I could go on for hours like this, telling you of things which are wrongly called. Lead pencils do not contain lead, but graphite. Also there is no chamois in chamois leather, which comes from sheepskin. And the camel's-hair brush which artists use is really made from the hair of squirrels!

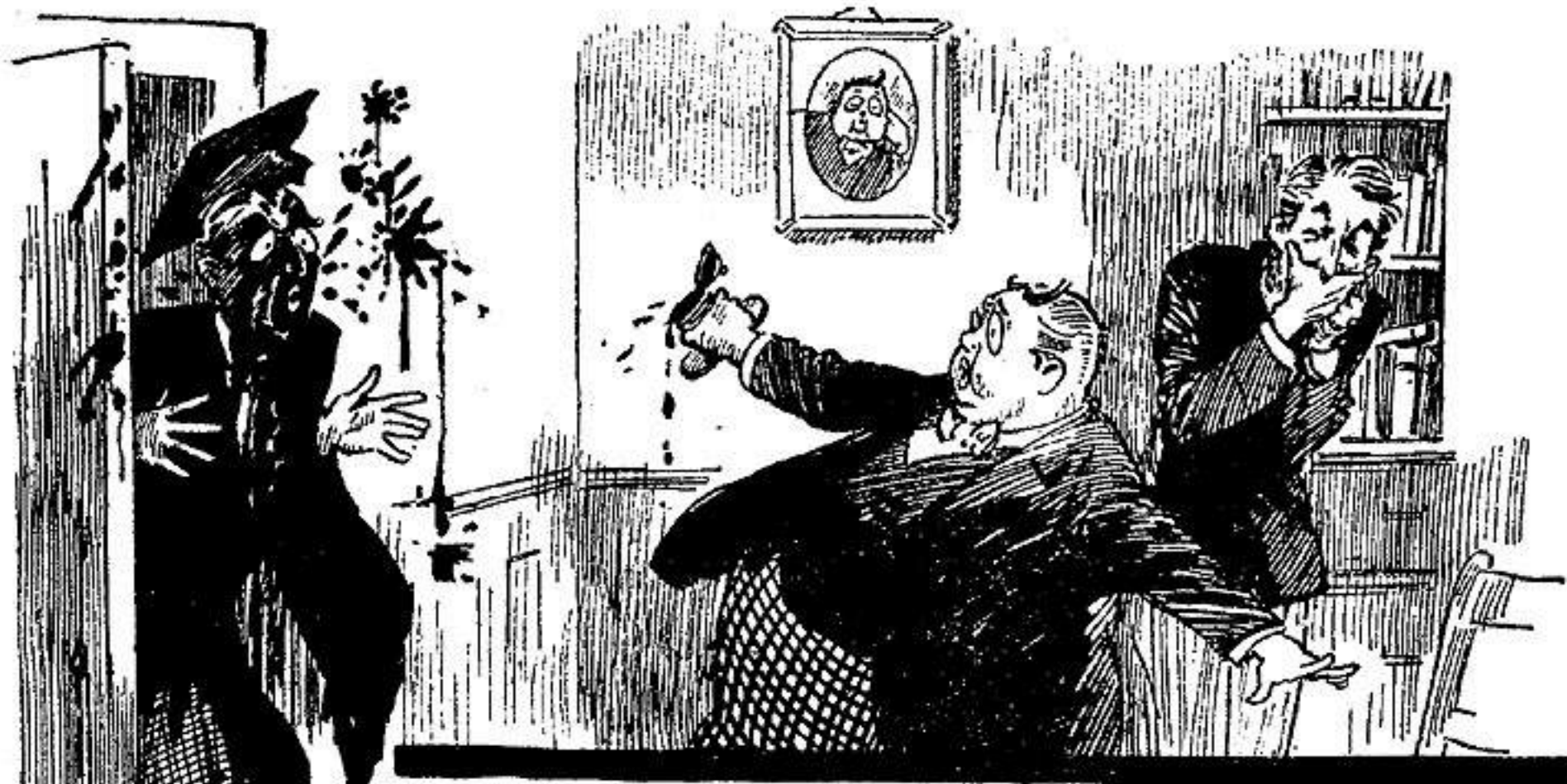
Now, what have you got to say to that?

Here's a curious question! Arthur Duncan, of Trowbridge, wants to know this:

DO OYSTERS GROW ON TREES?

Now, don't laugh! This is a serious question, and it might surprise some of you to know that there are any amount of "oyster trees" in the Spanish Main! You see, oysters are found in lagoons and swamps all along the coasts, and the mangrove trees, which flourish in salt

(Continued on page 28.)



BUNTER, THE INK-SPLASHER

A Ripping Complete Story, featuring Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greysfriars, and Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Mr. Quelch!

"**Y**OU fat ass——"
"Shut up, Toddy!"
"What are you up to?"
roared Peter Todd.

"Don't worry."

Peter was surprised.

He had cause for surprise.

He stared at Billy Bunter across the table in Study No. 7 in the Remove blankly.

Toddy was in his study writing lines when Bunter butted in. Bunter came in hurriedly. He hurled open the door of Study No. 7, rolled in, gasping and puffing like a grampus, and shut the door hastily. Bunter, apparently, was in flight. But having reached the refuge of his study, the Owl of the Remove did not sit down to rest after his exertions.

He blinked wildly round the study, as if in search of a weapon of defence. Peter gathered that Bunter was fearing pursuit.

He grabbed the inkpot from the table. Peter had lately refilled the inkpot, and it was full almost to overflowing. With the inkpot in his hand, the fat junior took up his stand just within the door, his eyes, gleaming through his big spectacles, fixed on the door. The inkpot was lifted apparently in readiness for the next comer.

Peter, pen in hand, sat and stared.

"You fat dummy——" he recommenced.

"Shurrup!"

"What's this game?" shrieked Peter.

Bunter did not turn his head. His eyes were fixed on the door. He was waiting for it to open.

But it did not open. Pursuit, perhaps, was not so near at hand as the fat junior had supposed.

"You benighted owl——" said Peter.

"Do shut up, Toddy!" said Bunter over his shoulder. "The beast may be here any minute! He saw me heading for the stairs. He will guess that I came to the study."

"What beast?"

"That rotter Temple of the Fourth!" gasped Bunter. "Ow! I'm breathless! I'm winded! I—I had to put it on, you know."

"What have you done to Temple of the Fourth?"

"Nothing!"

"He's after you for nothing?" asked Peter sarcastically. "You're as innocent as a babe, as usual?"

"That's it, old chap! I say, Peter, look here, be a pal and thrash him when

went into his study to—to look out of the window at—the view! There's a beautiful view from Temple's study window."

"And a beautifuller view in his study cupboard when he's got jam-tarts there!" chuckled Toddy.

"The tarts weren't in the cupboard; they were on the table. Not that I touched them, you know. If they were gone when Temple came in, it must have been the cat. You know that cat of Mrs. Kebble's——"

"And Temple caught you scoffing his tarts?"

"I've told you I never scoffed his tarts. Temple's suspicious. He kicked me——"

"Good!"

"Beast! Luckily, I caught hold of his ankle when he kicked me, and he came down wallop on his back. I—I think it made him waxy."

"Ha, ha! It would!" agreed Peter. "At any rate, it wasn't the way to put him in the best of tempers."

"Well, he sounded waxy when I bunked," said Bunter. "I disdained to stay and argue with him—making out that I had his tarts, you know. I—I think he came after me."

"Very likely," assented Peter.

"You could lick him, old chap——"

"I fancy I could. But I jolly well know I'm not going to!" said Peter cheerily. "If you had the tarts you can take the licking, too!"

"I never had, old chap! I never knew there were any tarts there! I didn't see them on his table when I was passing the study. Besides, you know I'm not the fellow to touch a fellow's tarts! You know me, Peter."

"I do!" chuckled Toddy. "I does! Hallo! That sounds like somebody coming up from the stairs."

Bunter gasped with alarm.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,160.

SWOOOOOSH!

The ink swept out in a deluge,
and——

YE GODS! A MASTER GOT IT!

he comes in. You can lick Temple. I'll hold your jacket. You're not going to let a Fourth Form cad come bullying in a Remove study, are you, old fellow?"

"That depends!" chuckled Peter.

"If he's after you for nothing——"

"Absolutely nothing!"

"Of course, I'm bound to take your word——"

"Of course, old fellow."

"But if you were a fellow whose word could be doubted," said Peter gravely, "I should fancy that Temple was after you for something—judging by that smear of jam on your fat chivvy."

Bunter started.

"Is—is—is there any jam on my face, Toddy?"

"About a pound!"

"Oh, really, Toddy! I never touched Temple's jam-tarts, of course. I—I

There were footsteps in the Remove passage, and they were coming along from the Remove staircase towards Study No. 7.

Billy Bunter gripped the inkpot with a deadly grip. His little round eyes gleamed with desperation through his big round spectacles.

Even a worm will turn—and all Greyfriars knew that William George Bunter was a worm! If Bunter had been tracked to his lair he was not going to be the unresisting victim of Cecil Reginald Temple's elegant boots. He was desperate.

Peter Todd looked on with great amusement.

"Better put that inkpot down, old fat bean," he said. "If Temple's cross already it's no good making him crosser."

"Lick him for me, old chap—"

"I don't think!"

"Well, I'm going to give him the ink if he opens this door!" gasped Bunter. "I can bunk while he's mopping the ink off his chivvy! He's going to have the ink if he butts in here."

"He's welcome to it," said Peter cheerily. "Ink's not dear! But—"

"Shut up!" breathed Bunter.

He listened in tense anxiety to the footsteps coming up the Remove passage.

He had a faint hope that it was not, after all, the avenger. Possibly it was some Remove man going to his study. But the footsteps stopped at the door of Study No. 7.

Tap!

Temple of the Fourth prided himself on his elegant and courteous manners, but it was rather surprising that even the polished Cecil Reginald should tap at a study door when he had come there to slaughter the occupant. The door opened immediately after the tap.

Bunter's uplifted arm jerked forward. Swooooosh!

A stream of ink flew from the inkpot and landed, splashing fairly in the face of the personage in the doorway.

"Oh! Ooooooh! Upon my word! Goooooooh!" came a wild splutter. "Oh! What—what—what—"

"Great pip!" gasped Peter, in horror.

Bunter stood rooted, the empty inkpot in his hand. Horror rooted him to the floor.

For the gasping, choking voice that proceeded from the inky face of the new arrival was not the voice of Cecil Reginald Temple of the Fourth Form.

It was the voice of Henry Samuel Quelch, the master of the Remove.

"Oh, holy smoke!" gurgled Peter Todd. "You've done it now, Bunter!"

Bunter could not speak.

There was no doubt that he had!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Neck or Nothing!

MR. QUELCH staggered. Mr. Quelch had never been so surprised in his life.

Life, certainly, is full of surprises. It is often the unexpected that happens. There are some unforeseen happenings, against which the most careful and thoughtful man cannot guard. This was one of them.

For a Form master, coming up to a junior study to inquire after lines that ought to have been handed in some time ago, to be greeted by a shower of ink full in his august visage, was unprecedented.

The Remove master had had many experiences; but this had never occurred in his experience before.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,160.

He was taken wholly by surprise.

He staggered and clutched at the doorpost for support, and glared into the study through a mist of ink.

Ink clothed him like a garment.

It was unfortunate that Toddy had recently refilled that inkpot, and that it was a large inkpot, containing a generous supply. But as the proverb says, "It never rains but it pours." Shakespeare also has remarked that "When sorrows come, they come not in single spies, but in battalions." The whole thing was disastrous, whichever way you looked at it. A few drops of ink from the bottom of the pot would have had the same effect on Mr. Quelch as a red rag on a bull. The streaming contents of a large inkpot well-filled had a still more telling effect. Mr. Quelch streamed ink, he breathed ink, he spluttered ink, he scattered ink; he was of the ink, inky! And the expression on his inky face might have shaken the nerve of Richard Cœur-de-Lion or a Knight of the Round Table.

Bunter gasped with horror and affright.

Peter sat and stared, in horror and dismay.

Wild gasps and gurgles proceeded from Henry Samuel Quelch. He gouged ink from eyes and nose and

HANDSOME FREE GIFTS for "GEM" Readers!

Look for your name and
address in this week's
issue.

mouth. He choked and gasped and spluttered and spluttered.

He found his voice. There was an edge on Mr. Quelch's voice, like that of a well-stropped razor.

"Bunter! Bunter! You—you—"

"Ow!"

"Bunter—you—"

"I—I—I didn't!" gasped Bunter.

"What?" roared Mr. Quelch.

"What?"

"It—it wasn't me—"

"Boy!"

"I—I—I mean—"

"Boy! Rascal! Dastard!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "You—you—you dare to—to—to assault your Form master! You venture to hurl ink—ink—in the face of your Form master—Groogh! You—you—you shall be flogged—flogged—with the utmost—oooh!—severity! Woooooooh!"

"Oh dear! Ow! I—I—I—"

"I am smothered with ink! I am drenched—I am choked! I—I—I—"

Words failed Mr. Quelch.

He grasped a fat shoulder in a grip of iron.

"Come with me!" he roared.

"I—I say, sir—"

"Come!"

Mr. Quelch—unfortunately, from his own point of view—had not brought his cane with him. As he was calling at Toddy's study for Toddy's lines, he had not supposed that a cane would be needed. As it had turned out a cane

was needed, more than it had ever been needed before in all Mr. Quelch's scholastic career.

He hooked Bunter out of Study No. 7, squirming. To get Bunter to his study downstairs, where there was a cane—and to test the lasting powers of that cane on Bunter—that was the Remove master's only thought now.

"Ow! I say—sir—wow—"

"Come!"

Mr. Quelch hooked Bunter along the Remove passage to the stairs. He hooked him down the stairs.

Bunter went—quaking! Only too well he knew what was going to happen when they reached the Form master's study.

They did the stairs quickly—in fact, in record time. Mr. Quelch's movements were generally stately. Now he was going on his highest gear. He fairly whisked.

The door of the House was wide open, letting in the summer breeze and the summer sunshine. Bunter cast a longing glance towards it as they reached the ground floor.

The call of the open air, the lure of the wide spaces, had never appealed to Billy Bunter very much. Now they appealed to him strongly. He felt like the person in the old song who desired to be endowed with the wings of a dove. Far, far away, Bunter certainly would have roved had he possessed, at that moment, the wings of a dove.

"Come!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

He was heading for Master's passage—and the cane! He was in a hurry to arrive! Bunter, on the other hand, was not pressed! Gladly he would have emulated the pace of a snail, a tortoise, or a cheap American motor-car.

Five Remove fellows were standing in the doorway, sunning themselves there; and they stared blankly at the hurrying pair as they appeared from the staircase. The eyes of the Famous Five were glued, in amazement, on the inky countenance of their Form master.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"The pipfulness is terrific!" gasped Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Somebody's been wasting a lot of ink!" murmured Frank Nugent.

"Poor old Bunter!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"Come!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Bunter—"

Bunter was desperate.

How he ever came to have the nerve to do it Bunter never knew. But the excess of terror will lend courage.

As Mr. Quelch jerked him away towards Masters' passage, the Owl of the Remove suddenly hooked his leg in the august leg of his Form master, and wrenched himself away.

The unexpected had already happened to Henry Samuel Quelch once that afternoon. Now it happened a second time.

Bump!

Mr. Quelch sat down.

Bunter, for the moment, was released. A moment was more than enough for Bunter! The open spaces called! Bunter flew!

He came out of the doorway like an escaping rhinoceros. There was a yell from the Famous Five.

They were not, of course, looking for a charge from an escaping rhinoceros. The unexpected happened to them also!

Right and left they staggered under

the charge. A charge with Billy Bunter's weight behind it was not a light matter. It was, in fact, a heavy matter—a very heavy matter indeed.

Nugent sprawled to the right, Wharton to the left. Hurree Singh and Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull went rolling down the steps.

Over them charged Bunter.

Bunter was in a hurry. He did not stop to inquire whether he had hurt the five fellows who sprawled and yelled. No doubt he knew he had. Leaving them for dead, as it were, Bunter charged on.

In an unlucky moment for himself, Vernon-Smith was coming up to the House. He had almost reached the steps, when Bunter happened.

The Bounder hardly knew what followed. He knew that he was lying on his back, gazing at the blue sky, and feeling as if a steamroller had hit him. Bunter vanished into space.

"Oh! Ow! The fat villain—"

"Ow! Oh! On

crumbs!"

"The terrific fat-head—"

The scattered juniors sorted themselves out. They staggered to their feet. In the doorway appeared a visago that glistened with ink and glowed with wrath.

"Wharton! Cherry! All of you—!" Mr. Quelch gurgled. "That—that boy—that—that Bunter—follow him—pursue him—bring him back—bring him back to my study—keep him there till I come—I authorise you to use force—lose no time, or—"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Wharton.

Mr. Quelch rustled away. Wrathful as he was, Mr. Quelch did not feel that he could pursue Bunter across the quadrangle, in the open sunshine, under a hundred pairs of eyes, in his present state. He rustled away in search of a wash; which there was no doubt he badly needed.

The juniors scudded into the quadrangle.

In the distance a fat figure was vanishing.

"This way!" shouted Johnny Bull.

He started in a direction which certainly was not the direction taken by the fleeing Owl.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

His comrades followed him.

The Famous Five were all feeling shaken and breathless. On their own account they would gladly have collared the fat Owl and bumped him severely. But delivering him into the hands of the Beaks was quite another matter.

Mr. Quelch had told them to go after Bunter, and they were obedient youths; and they obeyed. It was their duty and they did! But, from the direction they were taking, they had a long journey before them before they met

Bunter—twenty-five thousand miles, to be exact. In these circumstances, they were not likely to capture Bunter and take him to the Remove master's study.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Wanted!

"O H dear!" gasped Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Remove tottered into the bike shed. It was instinct that led him there. In his present terrified and horrified state, Bunter was hardly capable of thought. He had assaulted a Form master—he had inked the visage of Henry Samuel Quelch; which of all the visages at Greyfriars, was the least likely to be inked with impunity. To get out of Quelch's reach—to give him time to cool down—that was the one thing needful. True, it had been an accident—the ink had been intended for Temple of the Fourth. But it was Quelch who had captured it—that was

But there were other machines to choose from. Dick Russell's Sunbeam was really a very nice machine; and it was there on its stand. Bunter hooked it off the stand.

More than once he had asked Russell to lend him that machine. On each occasion, Russell had answered in the negative, adding that if he ever found Bunter on his machine, he would burst him, scalp him, and slaughter him. Fortunately, Russell was not on the spot. Bunter trundled the machine out of the shed.



Mr. Quelch, glistening with ink and glowing with wrath, appeared in the doorway. "Wharton! Cherry! All of you—!" Mr. Quelch gurgled. "That—that boy—Bunter—bring him back—I authorise you to use force!"

the outstanding horrifying fact! Quelch, obviously, was in no mood for explanations.

Later, he might be! Bunter had a natural desire that the explanations should come before the licking, not after. The instinct of flight drove Bunter to the bike shed. He wanted to get out of reach—and get out of reach rapidly. It was a half-holiday; and if he stayed out of gates till call-over, Quelch might have cooled down by then. Bunter rolled into the bike shed and blinked round for a machine.

He did not blink at his own machine. His own machine, as usual, had several punctures waiting for some Good Samaritan to mend them. Likewise it had a dislocated crank, a bent pedal, and several other defects. It was not a bike that a fellow would have selected when he was in a hurry.

He nearly trundled it into a fellow who was coming in. He almost groaned as he saw that it was Russell of the Remove. Glad he known that Russell was coming there for his bike, certainly he would have borrowed some other jigger. But how was a fellow to know?

Russell glanced at the bike.

"Got a new jigger, old fat man?" he asked.

Bunter breathed again.

"Yes!" he gasped. "N-n-nice machine, ain't it, old chap? Present from my Uncle George—a Christmas present—I mean a birthday present—I say, I'm in rather a hurry—"

"Looks decent!" said Russell. "Same make as mine! It won't look like that long, I fancy! You can't be trusted with a jigger, Bunter."

"I say, gerrout out of the way, old chap—"

"What's the hurry?"

"I—I've got to see—to see—a man—I mean—I— Do let a fellow pass! I'm frightfully pressed!"

"Oh, all right!"

Russell stepped aside, and Bunter hastily rolled the bike onward. He had been in a hurry before, on Quelch's account. Now he was in a hurry on Russell's account also. He rushed the bike away to the side gate, and ran it into the lane.

Dick Russell went into the bike shed, for his machine. He was going for a spin that fine afternoon; at all events, he thought he was. But once inside the bike shed, his experience was like that of the celebrated Mrs. Hubbard! When he got there, the bike-stand was bare; and so Russell had none. He stared at the empty stand.

"Why, what Cheeky blighter's got my bike?" ejaculated Russell, in great wrath. "Who—what— Oh, that fat villain!"

Russell understood why Bunter's new bike was so like his machine. He tore out of the shed.

"Bunter!" he roared.

If Bunter heard, he heeded not, except to put on a little more speed. Russell of the Remove rushed in frantic pursuit.

Bunter was in the lane. He already had one fat leg over the machine, when Russell came running out.

"Stop!" yelled Russell.

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter plumped into the saddle, and drove at the pedals. Dick Russell made a leap after him.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

He pedalled frantically.

Russell was almost within reach. He jumped and clutched. But the bike

shot forward under Bunter's desperate drive; and Russell's downward clutch just missed him.

Crash!

"Ow!" howled Russell, as he pitched forward on his face.

Bunter tore on. Russell lay flat, his nose grinding into the dust. He scrambled to his feet.

"Stop!" he shrieked. "Bunter, I'll skin you! I'll burst you! I'll smash you into small pieces! I—I—I'll—"

He rushed in pursuit. But Bunter was going strong now. As a rule, Bunter did not shine as a cyclist. But circumstances alter cases. Bunter put his beef into it; and whatever else he lacked, Billy Bunter had plenty of beef. He fairly flew; and Russell dropped hopelessly behind.

"I—I—I—I'll skin him!" gasped Russell, halting at last, crimson with wrath and exertion. "I'll burst him! I'll—I'll—"

Bunter vanished round a corner far ahead.

"The—the cheeky fat villain! B-b-borrowing my bike!" gasped Russell. "I—I—I—" Words and breath failed Russell together.

He walked back to Greyfriars, simmering with wrath. Bunter was gone; and the bike was gone.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row old bean?" Russell came on the Famous Five as he was crossing the quad, and his excited face drew their attention.

"That villain Bunter—" gasped Russell. "He's bagged my bike, and bunked! I'll—I'll burst him all over Greyfriars—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" roared Russell. "You know what Bunter does to a bike? He will bring that jigger back with half a dozen punctures, and the pedals bent, and the mudguards twisted—"

"Bunter was in a hurry!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"The hurryfulness was terrific!"

"When he comes in—" breathed Russell.

"He won't come in yet," chuckled Nugent. "Quelch is after him—he seems to have bunged ink at Quelch, goodness knows how, and why. You won't see him till calling-over—if then."

"The fat villain! There's a circus at Woodend, I've heard—and I was going over on the bike—"

"Well, Bunter will go over on the bike," said Bob. "Bunter often goes over, on a bike."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silly ass!" snorted Russell. "What are you fellows rooting about the quad for? Looking for something?"

"We're looking for Bunter!" explained Wharton.

Russell stared.

"Well, you won't find him in the quad, you silly owl, when he's gone out on a bike."

"That's why we're looking in the quad."

"Eh—why?"

"Because we shan't find him here."

"Potty?" asked Russell.

"Not quite! Quelch told us to look for Bunter, and bring him in to be licked. So as Bunter went one way, we're looking the other."

"Oh!" Russell grinned. "The silly ass! He will only get it worse when Quelch gets hold of him! And I'll jolly well slaughter what Quelch leaves of the fat bounder."

Russell went on his way. Harry Wharton & Co. continued to look for Bunter—in the quadrangle. They had been told to look for Bunter; and they were dutiful and obedient youths.

"You fellows seen Bunter?" Temple of the Fourth came up. There were signs of wrath in the usually calm and aristocratic visage of Cecil Reginald Temple.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter seems to be in demand this afternoon!" said Bob Cherry. "You wanting Bunter?"

"I'm goin' to burst him—"

"The burstfulness of the esteemed Bunter will be terrific, at this rate," chuckled Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

"He scoffed a bag of jam-tarts out of my study—under my very nose!" breathed Temple. "Right under my nose, you know! And when I kicked him, he had the cheek to grab my ankle, and land me on my back—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling chumps! Do you know where he is?" demanded Temple.

"We're looking for him now."

"He's not here, ass!"

"That's why!" chuckled Bob. "Quelch wants him for execution—and we're putting him in a stay of execution."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Temple snorted and strode away. Peter Todd came out of the House, and sighting the Famous Five, bore down on them.

"Seen Bunter?" he asked.

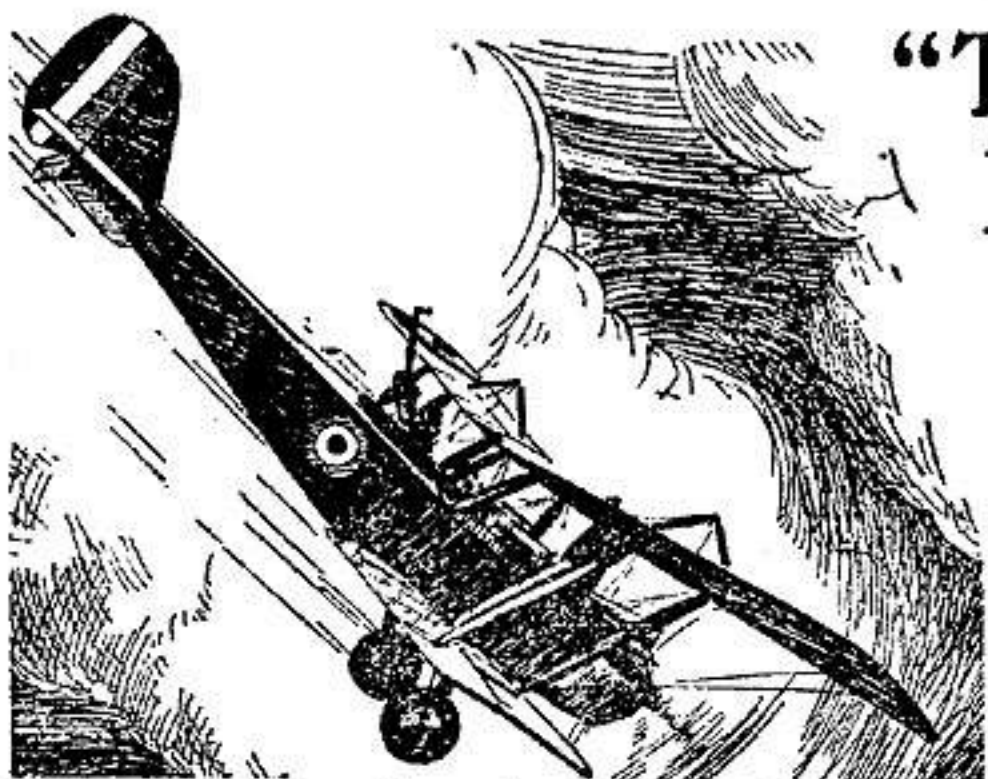
"My only hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "Does everybody at Greyfriars want Bunter this afternoon?"

"We're looking for him," Bob Cherry explained once more. "We're looking for him because he isn't here! Join up, old bean, and help us not to find him."

"Quelch wants to see him," said Frank Nugent. "Bunter didn't seem to want to see Quelch. He seemed to hate the idea."

Peter Todd chuckled.

"The fat idiot! Quelch came up to the study for my lines, and that



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the study for my lines, and that benighted chump thought it was Temple after him, and let fly with a pot of ink—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quelch looked a bit inky," chortled Bob. "Looked as if he had been making up as Othello for a play!"

"And Bunter's bunked on Russell's jigger!" said Johnny Bull. "So we're searching the quad for him."

And the Famous Five continued to search for Bunter till they considered that a sufficient time had elapsed; after which, they repaired to Mr. Quelch's study to report that William George Bunter was not to be seen within the walls of Greyfriars.

They found Mr. Quelch less inky. He had had the necessary wash, and he was newly swept and garnished, so to speak. But the expression on his face was quite deadly.

"Very well!" he said; and if a Royal Bengal Tiger could have said "Very well!" he would have said it exactly as Henry Samuel Quelch said it.

"My hat!" murmured Johnny Bull, as they went down the passage. "There's something waiting for Bunter when he comes in."

"Let's hope the old boy will cool down!" said Harry Wharton. "Now what about a run over to Woodend on the bikes? According to what I've heard, Swinger's Circus opens there this afternoon."

"Let's!" agreed the Co.

And the Famous Five walked away to the bike shed and wheeled out their machines. And though they felt rather sorry for Russell and his Sunbeam, they were rather glad that Bunter had selected that Sunbeam, and not one of their own machines.

They mounted, and pedalled away by the winding lanes for Woodend, in cheery spirits. And suddenly, Bob Cherry gave a shout.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look!

"My hat! Bunter!"

Ahead of the Famous Five a fat figure was labouring along on a bicycle. Billy Bunter blinked round over a fat shoulder, and gave a gasp of alarm. Evidently he looked on the Famous Five as pursuers. He drove at his pedals and fled, and the Famous Five, chuckling, rode after him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Takes the Lead!

"**B**EASTS!" gasped Billy Bunter. Bunter had covered a mile or two at high speed. After that he had slackened down. He was, he considered, safe from immediate pursuit, and he was taking it easy, when that blink over his fat shoulder revealed the Famous Five behind him.

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter.

He had strewn the Famous Five recklessly, right and left, in his flight from the House. It was just like the beasts to follow him like this; as if Bunter hadn't had enough trouble on hand, with Henry Samuel Quelch yearning to flog him, and Temple of the Fourth thirsting for his blood, and Russell of the Remove longing to scalp him. Troubles were piling thickly on William George Bunter that eventful afternoon; but he had supposed that he had a respite, at least, until he sighted the five juniors behind.

That they were there because they happened to be going to Woodend, and because that lane happened to lead

to the Woodend road, did not occur to Bunter. They were behind him, riding after him, and that was enough for the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter made fresh efforts, and drove recklessly at his pedals.

He was near the end of the lane, where it turned into the Woodend road. As a rule, there was little traffic on that road. On this especial afternoon, however, there was unaccustomed traffic. Billy Bunter had not heard of Swinger's Celebrated Circus, and was quite unaware that Mr. Swinger was opening at Woodend that afternoon. So the sudden rolling of a drum, and the blare of a trumpet, made him jump as he pedalled on as fast as his fat little legs could drive the pedals. He blinked through his big spectacles, wondering what the row was, and through the openings of trees and

HALT HERE FOR A SMILE, CHUM!



Housewife (to tramp): "Well, my man, and how did you like that cake I gave you yesterday?"

Tramp: "All right, mum, but it brought back old memories."

Housewife: "Of your home?"

Tramp: "No, breaking stones at Dartmoor!"

H. Carter, of 88, Albemarle Road, Willesborough, near Ashford, Kent, who sent in the above winning rib-tickler, has been awarded one of this week's useful pocket-knives.

Set down your funny story and send it on to me. If it's worth a prize you'll get one!

hedges he caught sight of the circus procession.

A tall elephant, with a circus acrobat in tights and spangles, led the way, and following him came horses and other animals, and a motor-car. The fellow on the elephant was beating a drum, and a clown was blowing a trumpet, and after the procession trooped a large collection of the local juvenile population.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That's the jolly old circus, you men."

And the Famous Five cycled on faster, to stop at the corner and watch the procession as it passed.

Bunter's fat little leg's ceased to drive. He gave a blink back at the Famous Five as he free-wheeled.

They were coming on faster than ever. "Beasts!" gasped Bunter.

Whether to stop or whether to dash out into the road crowded by the oncoming circus procession, was a question to which Bunter had to find the answer

in about a second—considering the rate at which he was going!

Bunter's powerful brain never worked quickly.

There was a slope in the lane, and Bunter, though free wheeling, was going fast. He had made up his fat mind to stop, and chance it with his pursuers, by the time his bike carried him past the corner.

What happened next was dark to Bunter.

His bike crashed into something—he learned later that it was the leg of an elephant.

There was a crash and a clatter, and a wild howl from Bunter as he went spinning and sprawling, and a startled exclamation from the circus performer mounted on the elephant's neck.

Then Bunter—like a fellow in a dream—found himself travelling onward.

He was not on his bike! He was not on his feet! His dazed and dizzy brain was in a whirl, and he could not, for some moments, grasp what was happening.

Then, as he suddenly realised, he let out a yell that awoke most of the echoes of the countryside.

He was in the elephant's trunk.

With the trunk curled round him, Billy Bunter was being carried onwards. It did not occur to Bunter that the circus elephant was trained to carry people in his trunk. He squirmed, and yelled, and shrieked.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. The Famous Five stopped at the corner, in time to see William George Bunter proceed by the new and remarkable mode of progression.

"Great Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooooh! Help! Murder! Fire!" yelled Billy Bunter. "Oh, ow, ow! Yaroooooh! Grooooooh! Yoooooop!"

Bang, bang, bang! came from the drum. The fellow with the drum did not seem alarmed—he seemed entertained. He grinned down at Bunter.

"All serene!" he called out. "Picface won't hurt you—he's all right! Don't you be afraid."

"Yow—ow—ow—ow! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! Leggo! I'm killed! Ow! Help! Whooooop! Make that beast leggo!" raved Bunter.

As a matter of fact, the well-trained elephant had picked Bunter up in his trunk, to avoid treading on him. But Bunter was not grateful. He wriggled, and roared, and squirmed, and struggled.

"This is a jolly old unrehearsed performance!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop! Yooooop! Help! Rescue! Whooooop!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob. "Poor old Bunter—"

"He's all right!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "That's an old game with that bullphant—you can see that! He won't hurt Bunter. The fat chump's lucky not to be trodden on, biffing into an elephant like that."

"He's getting a lift!" remarked Nugent.

"The liftfulness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help! Rescue! Murder! Fire! Yaroooooh!" yelled Bunter, wriggling wildly in the curling trunk of Picface, the elephant. "Stop! I say, stop! Do you hear me? Yaroooooh! Stop!"

A stout gentleman in the motor-car that formed part of the procession shouted to the man on the elephant:

"George!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,160.

"Yes, boss?"

"Keep on!"

"What-ho!"

The huge elephant trampled on sedately, apparently untroubled by the heavy weight he nold curled in his trunk.

The acrobat on the elephant's neck grinned down at Bunter.

"You're all right!" he said.

"Yaroooh!"

"Can't stop here. Jest stick it! We'll be in Woodend in a few minutes."

"Whooop!"

"You're as right as rain, sir! Don't you worry."

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Bang, bang, bang! went the drum. Blare! went the trumpet.

William George Bunter, squirming and yelling, hardly aware whether he was on his head or his heels, was borne onward. It was not easy for the long, winding procession to halt in the narrow road, and Mr. Swinger, the stout gentleman in the car apparently saw no reason for stopping. He knew that Bunter was in no danger, if Bunter did not. Bunter had butted into the procession, and now he was forming part of it. Onward he went, to an accompaniment of wild yells from Bunter, blares from the trumpet, bangs from the drum, and roars of laughter.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Wharton. "They're sticking to Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry grabbed Russell's bike, and dragged it out of the way of the procession. The procession wound by, and when it had passed, the Famous Five emerged into the road, and followed on, wheeling their machines. Onward went the circus, Bunter in the lead. It was Billy Bunter's belief that he was a born leader—one of those fellows who are born to command. Never before had Bunter's rights to leadership been acknowledged. Now he led—but he did not seem to be enjoying it.

But there was no help for Bunter, and when the circus procession rolled into Woodend, Bunter was still in the lead—and in the elephant's trunk.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Surprising Offer!

"**W**OW!"

Billy Bunter made that remark as he was landed at last.

He sat in the grass and gasped.

"Ow! Wow!"

Mr. Swinger, the fat and rubicund proprietor of Swinger's Celebrated Circus, grinned down at him. Mr. Swinger had a plump, good-natured face, and a cheery eye. He seemed quite entertained by Bunter's adventure; and to judge by their chuckles, the rest of the circus company were entertained. Billy Bunter was far from sharing their entertainment.

He sat and spluttered.

"Ow! I'm killed! Wow!"

"You ain't hurt!" grinned Mr. Swinger. "Why, bless your 'eart, Pieface is used to carrying fellers in his trunk. You've had a free ride! I ain't charging you anything for that ride."

"Ow!"

Billy Bunter blinked round him dizzily.

Pieface, the elephant, had uncurled his trunk, and dropped him in the grass near the big circus tent. George was leading Pieface away.

"Show opens in half an hour!" said Mr. Swinger cheerily. "You come in front, and you'll see Pieface carrying George in his trunk."

"Ow!"

"Prices to suit all pockets," said Mr. Swinger. "Boxes at half-a-guinea, down to a bob."

"Ow!"

"Biggest show on earth! You don't want to miss it!" said Mr. Swinger. "You've had a free ride to the circus. You come in front and enjoy yourself."

"Wow!"

"Bit short in the wind?" asked Mr. Swinger sympathetically. "Well, you sit there as long as you like, and take a rest. No charge for sitting on the grass. Take it easy."

"Ow!"

Mr. Swinger turned away. He was a busy man that afternoon. The circus had "processed" through the neighbouring villages to draw an audience for the afternoon show, and the show was scheduled to begin in half an hour. So Mr. Swinger had no more time to waste on Bunter.

Bunter sat where he was, spluttering.

There was never much breath in Bunter, and now there was hardly any. And his fat brain was still in a whirl. It took Bunter quite a long time to realise that he was not hurt.

He sat and gasped for breath, unheeded by the busy circus company. The door of a caravan near at hand opened, and a fat face looked out. Bunter set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked at the man, who was staring at him from the door of the caravan.

The man seemed interested in Bunter.

He was a fat man—an enormously fat man! Judging by his circumference, he might have been a relative of Bunter's. He stepped out of the van, and the steps creaked under his weight.

He seemed so keenly interested in Bunter that the fat junior blinked at him in surprise. He could guess, from the man's looks, that he was the Fat Man of the circus. On the circus advertisements he was billed as Rollo the Fattest Man on Earth. He looked it.

He came down the creaking steps, and approached Bunter. His eyes were fixed with intent interest on the Owl of the Remove—why, Bunter could not imagine. He had never seen Rollo before, and wasn't interested in him now.

"My dear grandmother!" ejaculated the fat man. He spoke in a rich, rolling voice.

Bunter blinked at him.

The Fat Man had not taken part in the procession. Perhaps his weight was too much for him to carry about with comfort. He towered over Bunter, a hill of flesh. Slowly he walked round the fat junior sitting in the grass, scanning him from all sides—north, south, east, and west. His interest in Bunter was keen, but inexplicable.

"Look here! What are you staring at?" demanded Bunter warmly.

Bunter was a fellow who seldom passed without a second glance. He was aware of this, and attributed it to his good looks and distinguished appearance. But he was not accustomed to being inspected in this manner. He was annoyed.

"What's your weight?" asked the Fat Man.

"Eh?"

"Weight?"

"What the thump does that matter to you?" snapped Bunter, more and more annoyed. Remarks on his weight never

pleased Bunter. He had heard too many at Greyfriars.

"Never been weighed? What about sixteen stone?" asked Rollo.

"Nine stone!" said Bunter, with dignity.

"And the rest!" said the Fat Man.

"Look here—"

"You looking for a job?" asked the Fat Man.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Don't I speak plain? Looking for a job?"

"A—a—a job?" stuttered Bunter.

"What's your name?"

"Find out!"

"That's why I'm asking! You're a find!" said the circus man. "You're a priceless find, you are! Look here! You're the lad I've been looking for for donkey's years."

"You've been looking for me?" gasped Bunter, wondering whether the man was a little wrong in the head.

"Jest you!" said the Fat Man.

"Exactly you! You're a find!"

"A—a—a find?"

"That's it! Look here, if you're looking for a job you don't want to go any further."

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "I'm not looking for a job! What the thump do you mean?"

"What do you do for a living?" asked the Fat Man.

Bunter blinked at him and then grinned. Evidently this circus man did not realise that he was a schoolboy, and that he had never been under the necessity of doing anything for a living.

"Nothing!" he answered.

"Oh, come off it!" said the Fat Man. "You don't live on air! You don't look as if you do, anyhow. Ever been in a circus before?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

"Not that it matters—previous experience ain't necessary. Not in my line. You wouldn't be wanted to walk the tight-rope!" said Rollo facetiously. "And we wouldn't ask you to jump through the hoop! I tell you, I've been looking for a boy like you for donkey's years! You're a find! How'd you like to join?"

"Join?" stuttered Bunter. "What do you mean?"

"Jest what I say—jest that, and nothing more or less. Don't you understand plain English?"

Bunter blinked at him with wide-open eyes behind his spectacles.

"Do you mean join the circus?" he gasped.

"Well, I don't mean join the Army," said Rollo. "Nor yet I don't mean join the Diplomatic Service. Course I mean join the circus!"

"Oh crumbs!"

There was a shout from the direction of the big tent.

"Rollo!" It was Mr. Swinger's voice.

"Coming!" called back the Fat Man. He turned to Bunter again.

"Look here, young 'un! I got to go now—I'd like to have a talk with you. You ain't in a hurry? No? Look here, that's my van, you take a rest in it till I come back! What? If you'd like a snack you'll find some grub in the cupboard. Don't you clear off till I come back. I can tell you this is a chance for you. You're a find, you are—you're priceless. Now, you'll wait, won't you?"

Bunter scrambled up. The mention of grub in the caravan was enough for him. He was not going back to Greyfriars till the latest possible moment. So Mr. Rollo's offer came like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years.

"Certainly," he gasped.



Bunter was not accustomed to being inspected in this manner. He was annoyed. "What's your weight?" asked the Fat Man. "What the thump does that matter to you?" snapped Bunter.

"Good!" said the Fat Man. "That's all right! You wait for me!"

"But—but what should I do in the circus?" gasped Bunter. "What do you mean? What good should I be?"

"Jest walk into the ring and let the B.P. look at you!" grinned the Fat Man. "That's all."

"The—the what?"

"The B.P.—the British Public!"

"Oh! But wha-a-at would they want to look at me for?" stuttered the amazed Owl of the Remove.

Rollo grinned.

"Look in the glass in my van, and you'll see!" he answered. "All right, boss, I'm coming. 'Don't spare the grub, young 'un—make yourself at home. And wait for me—mind you wait for me!'"

"Right-ho!" gasped Bunter.

Rollo rolled away, and Bunter rolled into the caravan. The fat junior was completely amazed and perplexed, but in the midst of his amazement and perplexity, one salient fact stood out clear; there was grub in the van, and that fact was enough for Bunter. Billy Bunter lost no time in accepting Rollo's hospitable offer. He was quickly in the van, quickly he found the cupboard, and with an ecstatic expression on his fat face, he gazed at a cold pie and other good things.

In the circus tent, the performance began with a blare of music. Bunter did not heed it.

Bunter rather liked circuses. But on this occasion, the counter-attraction was stronger. There was a large supply of grub in Rollo's van, a very large supply. Rollo had told Bunter not to spare it, and Bunter did not spare it. He was going strong when a familiar voice hailed him from the open doorway of the van.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Means Business!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five had walked into Woodend after the procession, and put up the bicycles in the village. Then they walked round to the circus. Before going in, however, they felt that it was up to them to ascertain what had happened to Bunter. And as they came into the circus field, they were in time to see the Owl of the Remove going into the caravan. So they came up to the van.

Billy Bunter blinked at them, his mouth full of pie.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at him. They had wondered how they would find Bunter after his ride in the elephant's trunk, but they had not expected to find him in a circus caravan scoffing the foodstuffs.

"Beasts!" said Bunter, with his mouth full. "Gerrout!"

"What on earth are you doing here?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Go and eat coke!"

"You fat burglar!" said Johnny Bull. "You'll get into a row if they come and find you scoffing the grub."

"Yah!"

"You'll get run in!" said Nugent.

"Beast!"

"Look here, you fathead, what are you up to?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"I've been asked to tea in this van," said Bunter, with dignity. "I can't ask you fellows—there's not enough grub. You had better clear off!"

"Well, my hat!" said Bob.

"My esteemed fatheaded Bunter—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter. He refilled his capacious mouth before he continued. "I say, you fellows, was Quelchy waxy?"

"The waxfulness was terrific," chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"It was an accident, of course," said Bunter. "I meant that ink for that beast Temple of the Fourth. He made out that I'd bagged his tarts, and came after me—at least, I thought he was after me. Then that old ass Quelch butted into the study. He got it!"

"You fat chump—"

"Of course, I wasn't to blame," said Bunter. "But it was no use trying to explain to Quelch. The beast was going to wallop me!"

"Well, you fat duffer, you'll get the walloping just the same," said Johnny Bull. "You might as well have got it over."

"Quelchy may cool down—"

"Ho may!" grinned Johnny Bull. "But he didn't look as if he had when we saw him last. He looked like a Hun."

"Well I'm jolly well not going to be flogged," said Bunter. "I know that. Quelchy can go and eat coke. You can tell him so, from me!"

"Yes, we're likely to give Quelchy that message—I don't think!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"I suppose Quelchy sent you after me?" sneered Bunter. "Well, you can go and eat coke! I'm not coming back."

"You'll have to come back for calling-over, fathead."

"That's all you know!" said Bunter loftily. "It may interest you to hear that I've had an offer to join this circus!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"I've been asked to join this circus. A very flattering offer, too," said Bunter. "The salary hasn't been mentioned yet, but, of course, I shall stick out for a very large salary. Probably a hundred pounds a week."

"Oh crumbs! Somebody been pulling

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your silly leg?" asked Harry Wharton, in astonishment.

"What do they want you for?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Are they running a Chamber of Horrors in this Circus?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "I can jolly well tell you I'm asked to join this circus, simply to walk in the ring and let the public see me. I've always thought that I ought to be able to make something out of my good looks, and now I've got the chance!"

"Your—your whatter?" stuttered Bob.

"My good looks!"

"Oh, great Christopher Columbus!"

"O where and O where can they be?" sang Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The goodlookfulness of the esteemed Bunter is not terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But perhaps there is a show of esteemed and ridiculous freaks in this absurd circus?"

"I don't want any cheek!" roared Bunter. "Look here, you fellows, clear off. You needn't mention to Quelch that you've seen me here. I want that kept dark."

"You fat idiot, you've got to come back to Greyfriars," said Harry Wharton. "You can't take on a job as a circus freak, or whatever it is they want you for."

"You cheeky beast——"

"Come round and see the show with us, and come back to school with us," suggested Bob Cherry. "You've got to come back, you know."

"I decline to come back! Quelch's not going to take it out of me because he was ass enough to stick his head into my study when I had the ink all ready for Temple. I refuse to be flogged!"

"You silly owl——"

"I may come back later. That depends. If Quelch likes to be civil I——"

"You burbling chump——"

"At present I'm staying here. This grub is good——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can take Russell's bike back with you, if you can find it. Tell him he can go and eat coke. Tell Quelch he's an old ass—from me. Tell Temple I'll lick him when I come back to Greyfriars—if ever I do. I'm not at all certain that I shall. I'm not going to turn up my nose at a salary of a hundred pounds a week, I can tell you."

"You footling fathead——"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter. "I'm staying here. This is better than being licked in Quelch's study."

"You footling frump, you'll be fetched back if you don't come!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I'm relying on you fellows not to give me away, of course. You're not going to sneak, I suppose?"

"Well, I suppose not," said Harry Wharton, rather perplexed. "But you jolly well know that you can't stay here."

"I jolly well know that I can, and I jolly well know that I'm going to," said Bunter, with emphasis. "If Quelch wants to lick somebody he can lick Temple. It was all his fault. I've received a very flattering offer, and I'm going to accept it—for the present, at least. All you fellows have got to do is to keep your heads shut. See?"

"You burbling bandersnatch——"

"Yah!"

"Oh, come on!" said Johnny Bull. "We're missing the circus. Bunter can go and eat coke!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,160.

"Look here, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove. "We've left the bikes at the Cyclist's Rest, in Woodend. Come there if you want to go back with us; we shan't have any time to waste after the show's over if we're to get in for roll-call. Mind you're there!"

"Yah!"

"If you're not we shall have to go back without you."

"You can go and eat coke."

"Oh, come on!" said Johnny Bull. "What's the good of missing the show while we listen to Bunter wagging his chin? Come on, I tell you."

"Right-ho, old bean!"

And the Famous Five left Bunter to feed in peace. They made their way to the entrance of the big tent and went in, to find the show well under way. But the tent was not crowded, and they found seats. After which they forgot all about Bunter.

Swinger's Celebrated Circus was very much like other circuses; but the chums of the Remove had come there to enjoy themselves, and they enjoyed themselves. They cheered every turn, from the clown and the bareback riders

LOOK, LADS, HERE'S A CLEVER GREYFRIARS LIMERICK!

Two Fifth-Formers, Potter
and Greene,
With Coker are usually seen.
When Horace has money
These two are like honey,
But like lemons when he's not
a "bean."

One of this week's leather pocket
wallets has been dispatched to:
William Carroll, Buckley Hall,
Rochdale, author of the above
winning effort.

If you have not won a prize yet
set about doing so now!

to the elephants and the acrobat on the high trapeze, and the Fattest Man on Earth.

And when the show was over they lost no time in getting back to the Cyclist's Rest, in the village. They were some miles from the school, and it was close on time for calling-over, and they had no time to lose. There was no sign of Billy Bunter at the Cyclist's Rest, in Woodend. Wharton inquired for him, but nobody had seen him, and evidently the Owl of the Remove had not turned up.

"The fat chump!" said Harry. "Quelch will be madder than ever if he doesn't turn up for calling-over."

"Well, he's not here," said Johnny Bull.

"If he won't come, he won't!" remarked Nugent. "We can't roll him home three miles, like a barrel."

"The fat idiot!" growled Wharton. "I suppose we'd better go."

"Yes, come on," said Bob Cherry. "No use wasting any more time on the fat idiot!"

"The no-usefulness is terrific, my esteemed chums," murmured Hurree Singh.

There was evidently nothing else to be done. The Famous Five wheeled out their bicycles, Bob Cherry taking Russell's machine in tow. They rode back to Greyfriars at a good speed and arrived just in time for calling-over. And when Mr. Quelch cried the names in Big Hall there was one voice that failed to answer "adsum." It was the voice of William George Bunter, conspicuous by his absence from the ranks of the Remove.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter on his Travels I

SNOORE! Rollo, the Fattest Man on Earth, started.

That deep, echoing, and musical sound proceeded from his caravan, and for the moment it startled Rollo.

"My dear grandmother!" ejaculated Rollo.

Snoore!

He mounted the step and looked into the van.

On the bed was stretched a fat form—snoring! William George Bunter was fast asleep.

Bunter had exerted himself that afternoon. His flight from Mr. Quelch and his bicycle ride had tired him; but his exertions in Rollo's van had tired him still more. Plentiful had been the supply of "grub" in Rollo's cupboard. Rollo himself looked a hefty trencherman; and he was what he looked. His food supply was good, and there was plenty of it. It was so good, in fact, that Bunter had perhaps considered that it would be a pity to leave any of it. At any rate, he hadn't left any of it. And after he had cleared it up to the last morsel Bunter needed a rest. Now he was taking it—with his mouth wide open and a gargantuan snore proceeding therefrom.

The circus Fat Man gazed at him.

Bunter did not look a sleeping beauty. He did not strike the beholder as a thing of joy for ever. As he lay snoring it was the rotundity of his form that caught the eye of the beholder.

"Immense!" said Rollo, with a nod of satisfaction.

The van creaked under Rollo as he came in. The performance was over, the audience had gone, and already the company were preparing for the road. Mr. Swinger, in spite of advertisement by means of processions, with a banging drum and a blaring trumpet, had not been doing big business in that quiet and secluded neighbourhood. Most of the juvenile population of Woodend and its environs had patronised the circus, but the juvenile population was not large. Mr. Swinger had remarked to his company that if they remained any longer on their pitch at Woodend they would soon have to apply for accommodation at the local Union. So that was the last performance, and that night the Celebrated Circus was to seek fresh fields and pastures new. And Rollo had come to his van for a hasty meal before he took the road.

He looked in the cupboard. He looked round the van. He looked at Bunter, and seemed puzzled.

Foodstuffs galore had been left there. There had been a cold meat pie, a large apple pudding, several sausages and savalloys, a couple of cold mutton chops, a salmon cutlet, and any amount of potatoes, a cucumber, and other articles. Of all these edible goods, Rollo failed to find any trace in his van.

Where they had disappeared to was a mystery. Certainly, he had told Bunter not to spare the grub. Rollo was an hospitable soul, and—from his own peculiar point of view, considering the views he had for Bunter—the more this fat fellow ate, the better. But it seemed impossible that Bunter could have stacked away all those foodstuffs inside. Unless Bunter was made of elastic, and could stretch to any desired extent, it really seemed out of the question.

"My great grandmother!" said Rollo, in perplexity.

(Continued on page 12.)

ANY FELLOW CAN MAKE THIS !

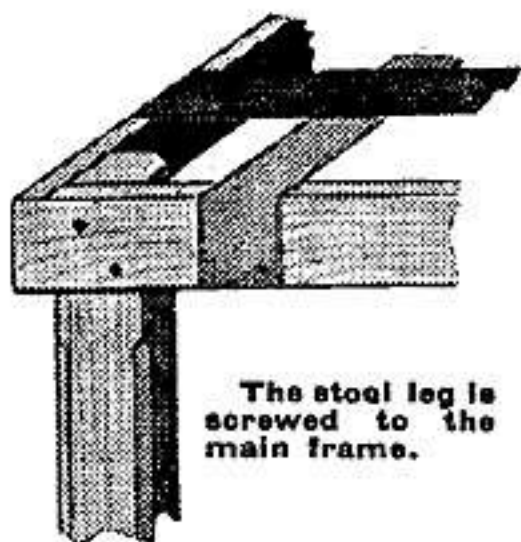
A STUDY STOOL.

In this interesting article the Magnet "Hobby Specialist" tells you how to make a comfy study stool at a very low cost.

A Study Stool.

A HANDY little piece of furniture for study or room is a stool, something one may lounge on in odd moments or kick across to a chum who drops in for a chat.

If you follow the instructions carefully in this article you will find it quite an easy matter to make one of these useful articles yourself.



The stool leg is screwed to the main frame.

The stool illustrated is a homely, comfortable sort of chap, with a wooden frame and seat made of leather or canvas.

The choice of wood rests entirely with the maker. It is advisable, however, if funds will allow, to have good stout legs made of a fairly hard wood—oak, for instance.

The frame must be capable of bearing the strain of the seat bands when the stool is in use. Three-ply wood will do very nicely for this.

The Legs.

The legs are composed of four pieces 15 in. long by 2 in. wide and 1 in. thick, nicely finished off with a stopped $\frac{1}{2}$ in. groove or chamfer down the outer edge of each by way of decoration. The chamfer should be stopped $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. from the top and $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. from the base of each leg.

The Frame.

The frame consists of four pieces, two measuring 18 in. and two 12 in., of half-inch three-ply wood 2 in. wide.

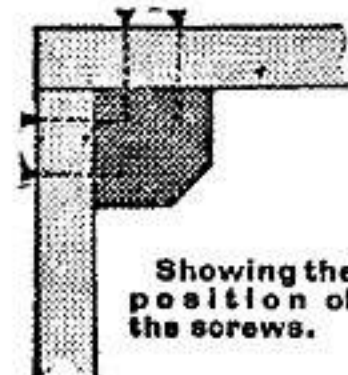
These are fixed into position either simply by two screws at each end, or by lap-joints, in which case, of course, further work must be put in on the legs and the side pieces of the frame cut to 11 in. instead of 12 in.

The second method is the neater, however, but it calls for more complicated joinery, and providing your measurements are accurate, and you can fit the ends and edges of the frame flush with those of the legs, the simpler method will do as well and look as neat if the ends of the frame are rounded off with gouge or chisel. The use of brass-headed screws for fixing the frame to the legs will add to the appearance of the stool.

The Seat.

Having finished the construction of the wooden frame with a coat of varnish, begin next on the seating.

For this, seven strips of leather, canvas or webbing will be required. Leather will be the strongest, of course, but the most expensive; webbing and canvas are within easier reach of our pockets and practically as good.



Showing the position of the screws.

It will be advisable, however, when either canvas or webbing is being nailed to the frame to use a small scrap of leather as a socket for the nail or tack, otherwise in time the canvas may split and drag.

First cut three strips, each 23 in. long by 2 in. wide, and nail them the

length of the stool. The first strip should be fitted on the side of the frame so that its edge is flush with the tops of the stool legs. Its ends must be passed over the outside and tacked to the inside of the side pieces of the frame. There should be $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. between each strip.

Next cut two strips each 2 in. wide, about 21 in. long and tack them into position across the frame 2 in. from each side, passing each strip underneath the lengthwise strips.

Now cut two more, each 4 in. wide, of the same length, and tack them across the frame, but pass these over the lengthwise strips. The inside edges of these strips should practically meet. Their outside edges consequently will be about 1 in. from each side strip.

When measuring the strips it is advisable to leave just a small margin for the play of the leather or canvas.

The seat naturally sags when the stool is in use, and if the bands are too tight, the strain on the frame of the stool may be too much. If desired, some brass-headed pins may be used further to secure each strip to the outside of the frame.

Having finished off the construction soundly, how about putting an extra "posh" appearance on the stool by polishing it?

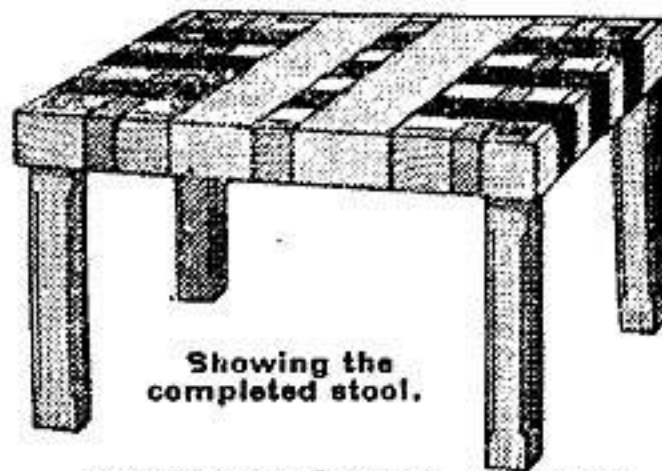
A polisher's pad is made by taking a piece of cotton-wool, folding it into a firm oval pad, and covering it tightly with a piece of old linen.

The polish must be applied to the pad from the back—never from the front, and when it has thoroughly soaked through, it should be applied to the surface of the wood in a gentle circular motion.

Remember that a fresh coat of polish must never be applied until the first one is thoroughly dry. Also, between each coat the surface should be rubbed down gently with pumice powder and then dusted.

Now to finish off. Take some very fine pumice powder, mix it with a drop of linseed oil, and work it gently on to the shell, following the grain of the wood. Next, a final coat of polish should be applied on top of all this, and the stool must be left for a few hours.

The last step is to take an entirely new piece of cotton-wool and pour a small quantity of crystal glaze on to it. Once more rub the surface very gently, still with the same circular motion, until the new pad is almost dry, then rub vigorously until a fine bright polished surface is obtained.



Showing the completed stool.

BUNTER, THE INK-SPLASHER!

(Continued from page 10.)

Peering around the interior of the van revealed no food. It was in the interior of Bunter that a search had to be made to be rewarded.

Rollo shook the fat junior by the shoulder. Billy Bunter grunted, but did not awaken.

"Here, wake up!" said Rollo, shaking again.

"Groooogh!"

Shake! Shake!

"Ow! Beast! Leggo! Leave off!" mumbled Bunter. "Tain't rising-bell."

Ow! Look here, Bob Cherry—

"Wake up!" roared Rollo.

"Shan't!"

"Look here—"

Snore!

Shake! Shake! Shake!

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. He woke up at last, sat up, and blinked round him through his spectacles. "Ow! Beast! Wharrer marrer?"

"Well, you know how to sleep, you do!" said Rollo, staring at him.

"Oh! You!" gasped Bunter. He remembered where he was. "Groogh! Wharrer marrer? Can't a fellow have a little nap?"

"Where's the grub?"

"Eh! What grub?"

"You ain't scoffed the lot, I suppose?" asked Rollo.

"There wasn't a lot," said Bunter. "I had enough—well, nearly enough. If you've woke me up to say tea's ready, all right. Where do you have tea in this show?"

Rollo gazed at him.

"You—you ain't scoffed all that in the van, have you?" he asked faintly.

"Oh! Yes! I was rather hungry," said Bunter. "You told me not to spare the grub, you know. So I had a snack."

"You had a—a snack?" gurgled Rollo.

"Yes. Still, I could do with some tea," said Bunter. "I like cake for tea—and a few tarts and scones and tea-cakes and some doughnuts. Not much, you know; I eat very little, as a rule."

"My dear grandmother! Where did you put it?" asked Rollo.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"No wonder you're fat! Look here, I suppose you're not going to burst! I don't want you bursting all over my van!"

"Look here—" hooted Bunter.

"Not a crumb left!" said Rollo, in wonder. "Well this beats the band! This does beat the band, this does! Oh, Jerusalem!"

"What about tea?" asked Bunter.

"Tea? You're ready for tea?"

"Oh, quite!"

"My only Uncle Joe!" said Rollo.

"Still, I can wait," said Bunter.

"That's all right! It's not much I eat, you know. I say, I've decided to accept your offer. I think the life will suit me. I'll finish my nap, if you don't mind."

Bunter laid his bullet head down again. Rollo stared at him. Bunter's eyes closed behind his glasses, his mouth opened, and the gargantuan snore rumbled through the van again.

"Well," said Rollo, "you're a corker, you are! You're a prize-packet! You take the cake, you do! My only Aunt Maria!"

Rollo left the van, in search of sustenance elsewhere. Bunter snored on peacefully.

It was already past time for call-over at Greyfriars. Bunter had forgotten all about Greyfriars. He slumbered in

happy peace; the wrath of Henry Samuel Quelch a mere nothing to him now.

The noise of packing and harnessing, of shouting voices and rumbling wheels, did not awaken Bunter. A thunder-storm would not have awakened him. When the caravan got into motion he slumbered on.

Through the summer twilight Swinger's Celebrated Circus moved off on the road; and with the circus went William George Bunter.

The van jolted and jarred on ruts and ridges, without awakening the Owl of the Remove. To the rolling and rumbling of the wheels his deep snore furnished a musical accompaniment.

But the Owl of the Remove awakened at last.

The caravan had stopped. Perhaps the cessation of motion helped to awaken him; or perhaps it was an inward monitor warning him that it was high time for another meal.

He awakened, and blinked round him. All was dark. Night, evidently, had fallen.

Bunter sat up, rubbed his eyes, set his spectacles straight, and grunted. He was hungry. He rolled off the bed, and groped his way to the door of the caravan, and opened it.

The camp was pitched on a wide common. Overhead, in the summer sky, the stars glistened. Lights gleamed in the circus camp, surrounded by the gloom of night.

Bunter wondered where he was. He did not mind much, so long as he was a good distance from Greyfriars, and safe from pursuit and recapture. The pressing matter for the moment was that he was hungry.

He descended from the van.

A stout gentleman, in a crimson waistcoat, with a silk hat on the back of his head, was talking to George, the acrobat, at a little distance. Bunter recognised Mr. Swinger, and rolled up to him.

"I say—" he began.

Mr. Swinger glanced at him, and nodded.

"Oh, you?" he said. "You're Rollo's new find! Well, you look the part!" Mr. Swinger scanned Bunter with evident interest. "Rollo's right—you'll do! What do you think, George?"

"Priceless!" said George.

Bunter smiled, a pleased smile. Exactly what the circus people wanted him for he was not yet aware; but he had no doubt that he was required to play some distinguished part—some part in which a handsome fellow, of unusual good looks and distinguished appearance, was required. That suited Bunter. He was, in fact, born for such a part.

Once Bunter had had an ambition of going on the films, in a Valentino part, for which Nature had so obviously designed him.

Something of that sort, he supposed, was wanted now; otherwise, why should these people be so anxious to engage him? He smiled cheerily.

"You're joining Rollo's lot, then?" asked Mr. Swinger.

"Oh, certainly!" said Bunter.

"Right! By the way, what's your name?"

Bunter hesitated a moment. Howsoever much the circus people wanted an unusually handsome fellow of distinguished appearance, they were not likely to give refuge to a runaway schoolboy—if they knew it! Bunter was not bright; but he was bright enough to guess that much. His hesitation was only for a moment.

"Robinson!" he answered.

"Well, Robinson, you look as if you'll do!" said Mr. Swinger. "Anyhow, it's Rollo's business; he runs the side-show. You'll find Rollo in the tent yonder; he's having supper."

Bunter waited for no more. He was not particularly anxious to see Rollo; but he was very anxious indeed to see supper. He shot off towards the supper-tent like an arrow from a bow.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Nice for Quelch!

"BUNTER!"

Mr. Quelch's voice was not loud, but deep. There was no answer from the ranks of the Remove.

"Bunter!"

The Remove master repeated the name. Mr. Quelch's voice, never very musical, sounded like a rasp.

But there was no answer! W. G. Bunter was not present. Mr. Quelch marked him absent, with a glint in his eyes.

"Where's that fat idiot got to?" murmured Peter Todd. "He will get a frightful whopping when he does come in!"

"Funke coming in, I fancy!" grinned Skinner. "He knows what Quelch has got ready for him!"

Some of the Removites chuckled. By that time all the Remove knew of the mishap in Study No. 7.

It was not surprising, in the circumstances, that Billy Bunter funked coming in; but cutting call-over was not the way to placate Mr. Quelch. The Remove men knew that glint in Quelch's eye, and nobody envied Bunter what was awaiting him.

When the school left Hall after call-over, Mr. Quelch spoke to the captain of the Remove.

"Wharton?"

"Yes, sir?"

"You will send Bunter to my study as soon as he returns."

"Oh! Yes, sir."

Wharton was glad that the Form master did not ask him if he knew anything of the missing Owl's whereabouts. Fortunately, it did not occur to the Remove master that his head boy knew anything on that subject.

Harry Wharton hurried after his friends. They went up to the Remove passage; and in Study No. 1 they looked at one another.

"Well, he hasn't come back!" said Bob Cherry. "I—I suppose he'll blow in later."

"If he doesn't—"

"He won't be fool enough to stay out!" said Nugent.

"Isn't he fool enough for anything?"

"Well, yes; but—"

"There will be a frightful row if he stays out after dorm!" said Harry.

"Oh, my hat! Just a few!"

"The rowfulness will be terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The lickfulness of the esteemed Bunter will also be preposterous!"

"The fat ass funks coming in and taking his licking," said Harry. "But the howling chump is only making matters worse, by getting Quelch's rag out like this."

"Quelch will be boiling over soon!" remarked Johnny Bull. "He was simmering at call-over! If Bunter doesn't come in before dorm, he will boil over."

"Well, let's hope the fat idiot will have sense enough to come in before dorm!" said Bob.

It was a faint hope. Apparently, the

circus people were allowing Bunter to remain at the circus; for what reason, the Famous Five could not guess. So long as Bunter had a refuge, he was not likely to turn up at Greyfriars and face the devastating wrath of Henry Samuel Quelch.

Bunter was not the fellow to think of the future. He was not the fellow to meet trouble half-way. Without being able to read a line of Horace, Bunter was in full agreement with the philosophy of that ancient gentleman, the "passing day" was enough for him. The future could take care of itself. The fact that a record licking awaited

generally had a heap of papers requiring his attention.

On the present occasion, he found it difficult to give the papers his attention. Bunter haunted his mind.

Mr. Quelch was marking the papers. In his present mood, it is probable that he did not err on the side of extravagance in giving good marks.

He ceased to peruse and mark papers, as the half-hour chimed from the clock-tower. It was bed-time for the Remove.

Bunter had not come in.

Mr. Quelch left his study again, and gave the Remove a glance as they marched off to their dormitory. The

fat figure of the Owl of the Remove was missing from their ranks.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard and deep.

The reckless Owl was staying out after dorm. In a state of suppressed excitement, the Removes went to their dormitory. Wingate came in to see lights out.

"Any of you kids know where Bunter is?" he asked.

"Haven't the faintest idea," said Peter Todd. The Famous Five were judiciously

anxious about his safety. Such a mixture of feelings was by no means comforting.

At ten o'clock Mr. Quelch made up his mind to telephone to the police station, and inquire whether any accident had been heard of.

No accident had been heard of.

This was comforting, so far as it went, but in proportion as Mr. Quelch's anxiety was relieved, his wrath intensified. Had William George Bunter rolled into Greyfriars just then, he would have been given ample reason to wish that he hadn't.

But he did not roll in.

Apparently he was making a night of it.

If Bunter did not come in, it was Mr. Quelch's duty to report his absence to the Head. Mr. Quelch naturally shrank from performing that duty. He was putting it off as late as possible.

The Head, certainly could not lay any blame on him; he was blameless in the matter. Still, it was an unfortunate occurrence. Boys were not supposed to give all this trouble; their Form masters were supposed to see that they didn't. And Mr. Quelch was Bunter's Form master.

The Head would be disturbed and annoyed; he might even remark that these things did not happen in other Forms. Already, Mr. Quelch did not doubt, the matter was under discussion in Masters' Common-room, and he dreaded the comments of his colleagues. Criticism of one another was the chief entertainment of the staff, and Quelch



him at Greyfriars was a sufficient reason for Bunter to stay out of gates, so long as he had refuge. And apparently he had found a refuge at Swinger's Celebrated Circus.

After prep, the Famous Five went down to the Rag. Most of the Removes were discussing the absence of Billy Bunter. That fat and fatuous youth had not yet come in.

As bed-time drew nearer, interest in the missing Owl intensified. To stay out after bed-time was an almost unheard of offence, but it looked as if the Owl of the Remove intended to be guilty of it. At nine o'clock, Mr. Quelch came along and glanced into the Rag.

"Bunter has not returned?" he asked, addressing no one in particular.

"No, sir!" said Harry.

"Very well!"

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips in a tight line, and walked away. He had said "very well!" but his expression did not indicate that it was well.

The Remove master returned to his study.

On his study table lay a stout cane, a cane specially selected for William George Bunter. That cane should have been exercised before this, but it still lay idle. Mr. Quelch picked it up, absently, and swished it in the air, with a loud swish.

Had Billy Bunter heard that swish, and seen the expression on the face of Mr. Quelch he would not have been encouraged to return to the school. He would have been encouraged to continue his travels to the greatest possible distance from Greyfriars.

Mr. Quelch laid down the cane, sat at his table, and proceeded to go through a heap of papers. Mr. Quelch

"Wha-a-at?" Mr. Quelch gasped over the mouth-piece. "Upon my word! I—I—"

silent. "I fancy he's staying out to dodge a licking, Wingate."

"The young ass!"

Wingate put out the lights and left the dormitory. There was a buzz of voices from bed to bed. All the Remove—with five exceptions—were wondering where Bunter was. The general opinion was that he had bolted for home, in which case it was fairly certain that Mr. Bunter would send him back in the morning, and that the last state of William George would be worse than the first. Harry Wharton & Co. still hoped to hear the Owl of the Remove coming in—till they fell asleep and forgot his existence.

Mr. Quelch, however, could not forget the existence of that troublesome pupil.

There was anxiety mingled with Mr. Quelch's wrath. It was probable, in fact certain, that the fat junior was staying out to escape a licking. Nevertheless, the possibility of an accident existed. Mr. Quelch had learned that Bunter had been seen on a bicycle. Bunter, of course, was exactly the fellow to have a spill on a bicycle. If an accident had happened—

It was quite awkward to be yearning to give Bunter the thrashing of his life, and at the same time to be feeling

"I—I say, sir, are you waxy?" spoke Bunter, into the transmitter.



was sensitive to criticism. At half-past ten, Quelch was almost in a mood to forgive Bunter, if he would only come in.

Tap!

Mr. Quelch jumped, as that tap came at his study door. He gave a gasp of relief, nothing doubting that it was Bunter at last.

But it was not Bunter. The door opened, to reveal the ample form of Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth.

Mr. Quelch almost glared. Of all his colleagues, Prout was the one he least desired to see when there was trouble in his Form. Prout was intolerably patronising at the best of times. Now he was likely to be insufferable.

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,160.



BUNTER, THE INK SPLASHER

(Continued from page 13.)

"I hear that a boy of your Form is missing, my dear Quelch!" said Prout. "Not an accident, I hope?"

"I am sure not."

"Is it possible that the boy is deliberately remaining out of gates, after bedtime, without leave?" asked Prout.

"It would appear so!" said Mr. Quelch pointedly. "I have a number of papers to mark—"

"I will not interrupt you, my dear fellow," said Prout. "I thought I would look in. I am sorry. I was remarking to Capper that you have a very troublesome Form."

"Indeed!"

"Far be it from me to obtrude advice upon a colleague," said Prout. "But perhaps a little more severity, my dear Quelch—"

"I am obliged to you," said Mr. Quelch, in a voice that might have made a refrigerator feel unusually chilly. "But I am quite capable of managing my own Form."

"Oh, quite, quite," said Prout. "Far be it from me that a slight change of method—"

Buzzzzzzzz!

Perhaps it was fortunate that the telephone bell rang just then. The reply that trembled on Quelch's lips might have made Prout jump. Buzzzzzzzz!

Mr. Quelch jumped to the telephone. He hoped that it was news of Bunter. It was!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Staggering!

BILLY BUNTER smiled.

He was in a smiling mood.

The hour was rather late, for a Remove fellow. But as Bunter had slept most of the afternoon and evening, he was in no hurry for bed. He was feeling very merry and bright, in fact.

Supper had been good. Still more to the point, it had been ample.

Certainly, many eyes had been turned in wonder on the fat junior as he stacked it away. Again Rollo, the Fat Man, had been puzzled to guess where he put it all. But no one had said him nay. After supper, therefore, William George Bunter had reason to feel merry and bright. He was, in fact, a pig in clover. His new employer had told him that they would talk business after supper. Bunter was cheerfully prepared to talk business.

He was still in the dark as to what part he was to play in the company of Swinger's Celebrated Circus, and he was rather keen to learn. Also he was rather keen to hear about the salary. If it ran to a hundred pounds a week, Bunter would be satisfied. Indeed, he felt in his present fat and generous glow that he could be satisfied with less than that. How much circus performers drew in the way of salaries, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,160.

Bunter did not know; but he supposed that star turns were paid large sums. And he was going to be a star turn.

Rollo, the Fat Man, sat on the steps of his van, in the summer starlight, smoking a cigar. The steps creaked under him. A camp-chair creaked under Bunter.

"Now we'd better talk it over!" said Rollo.

"Certainly," said Bunter.

"By the way, what's your name?"

Bunter hesitated a moment. He was not trying to remember his own name. He was trying to remember what name he had given Mr. Swinger when that gentleman had asked the same question. The great drawback of telling whoppers is that it is so difficult to remember precisely what whopper one has told. Bunter remembered that he had given some name that was not his own; but the name for the moment escaped him. Still, he had to answer the question.

"Johnson!" he said.

"Well, Johnson," said Mr. Rollo, "we'd better fix things up. The minute I saw you, I saw that you'd do. You'll fill the bill. You're the boy I've been wanting. I don't mind telling you so. You've never had an offer from a circus before?"

Bunter shook his head.

"You must have kept out of sight, then," said Rollo. "Why, you're built for my side-show. My show, as it happens, is the great draw of the circus. Swinger doesn't realise it, but that's how it stands. There's a lot of swank, and a lot of conceit, about circus folks. That chap George Binks, for instance, thinks the people in front come to see him doing stunts on the trapeze. They don't!"

"No?" said Bunter.

"No!" said the Fat Man. "Then Sandy, the Strong Man, thinks they come to see him slinging round dummy weights. They don't."

"No?" repeated Bunter.

"Horrocks, who does the bareback stunts, thinks they come to see him and his horses. They don't."

"No?" agreed Bunter.

"And—you'd hardly believe it—but Swinger thinks he's a draw himself!" said Rollo. "He thinks people in front like to come and see him. They don't."

"No?" said Bunter, for the fourth time.

"No!" said Rollo emphatically. "I can tell you what the people in front come to see, Johnson. They come to see the Wild Weird Freaks."

"The—the what?" ejaculated Bunter.

"The Wild Weird Freaks!" said Rollo impressively. "And for a freak show, young 'un, I can tell you that my show takes the biscuit. It prances off with the whole biscuit factory! It does that!"

Bunter gazed at him. For the moment he could not speak. He had heard of freak shows at circuses. He had seen them. But he wondered dizzily what a freak show had to do with engaging him. A fellow of distinguished appearance and unusual good looks could hardly have anything to do with a freak show. He blinked in perplexity at Rollo.

"You'll make the show complete!" went on the circus man, in blissful ignorance of the effect of his words on William George Bunter. "There's four of us now—me, the Fattest Man on Earth, Florida, the Fat Lady, Madame Whiskerina, the Bearded Lady, and the Living Skeleton. You're going to be billed as the Fattest Boy on Earth."

"The—the what?"

"The Fattest Boy on Earth!" said Rollo. "You'll make the family complete. I've been looking for a fat boy for donkey's years, to add to my show. Minute I saw you, I saw that you were the goods. The genuine goods! How you carry all that fat about with you, without falling down, is a blessed mystery. I've seen fat boys before, but you take the cake! I tell you, you'll earn your money as one of the Wild Weird Freaks."

Bunter's jaw dropped.

He gazed speechlessly at the Fat Man of the Circus.

He could scarcely believe his ears.

He had wondered for what part he was designed. He had taken it for granted that it was some part in which good looks and a distinguished appearance were essential. Certainly it had never occurred to him that he was to be engaged as a freak.

Such an idea had never crossed his mind. Rollo had told him to look in the glass; but Bunter might have looked in a dozen glasses without guessing the dreadful truth. When Bunter looked in the glass, he saw a handsome, well-set-up fellow, with a rather aristocratic bearing. His glasses, he fancied, rather added to his distinguished appearance than detracted from it. He had no doubt that had Apollo looked in a mirror, he would have seen something very like what Bunter saw there. Never in his wildest imaginings, would it have occurred to Bunter that his mirror reflected anything suitable to be added to a freak show in a circus.

He gasped.

Rollo, happily unconscious of Bunter's feelings, blew out a cloud of smoke from his cigar, and rattled on cheerily.

"I wonder you've never been snapped up before! I really do wonder! You see, it ain't only that you're fat—though you're uncommon fat. But there's your funny face."

Bunter gurgled. Words would not come! He could only gurgle.

His funny face! That handsome, pleasing countenance that looked back at him when he glanced into a mirror—as he often did, admiringly—was described by this idiot—this imbecile—this lunatic—as a funny face, likely to be a draw in a freak show!

"Your features," went on Rollo, with growing enthusiasm. "I tell you, young 'un, that if I'd made you out of wax, I couldn't have done it better for my freak show. Look at your nose."

It was really impossible for a fellow to look at his nose without the aid of a mirror. But Bunter did not want to look at his nose. He knew that it was a handsome nose. Not exactly Greek, perhaps—scarcely classic. But a handsome nose, supporting a pair of spectacles in a very distinguished manner. Not one of your large noses—perhaps rather on the small side, and perhaps with a slightly elevated tendency; but a nose that Bunter had often felt thankful for, comparing it with other fellows' noses.

"Like a little dumpling chucked at your face, and sticking where it 'appened to fall!" said Rollo.

The man was evidently insane!

"Then your mouth—" said Rollo.

Bunter found his voice.

"What about my mouth?" he hissed.

"Biggest I've ever seen," said Rollo.

"When you open it, blessed if I don't feel as if you 'ead is coming in 'arf."

Bunter made an inarticulate sound. Of course, the man was mad! This description of Bunter's well-chiselled mouth showed hopeless insanity.

"And your ears!" said Rollo. "Talk

about elephants! Why, they flap as you walk!"

Bunter was not smiling now. His smiling mood had completely left him. His eyes gleamed through his spectacles.

"Take you for all in all," said Rollo, "and you're the goods. If you don't make the B.P. laugh, nothing will!"

Bunter breathed hard. It was not his ambition, in the very least, to make the British Public laugh. Neither was he likely to believe that Nature had designed him to such an end.

"Well, as I said, you'll do," said Rollo. "How a freak like you hasn't been snapped up before, I don't know. The Fat Boy with the Funny Face—that will do all right for the bills. What? How do you like it?"

Bunter did not like it at all. He sat and blinked at Rollo through his spectacles, in speechless rage. The Fat Man threw away the stump of his cigar and rose from the step of the caravan.

"Fifteen bob a week and all found!" he said. "You'll run me into another quid for grub, and more, I expect. And I don't mind telling you that I'm glad to have you among my freaks. I don't mind telling you that you're born for it. You don't want to get conceited about it, you know. But I believe in giving a bloke his due; and I tell you fair and square, that when it comes to freaks, you're the genuine goods. You are that!"

And Rollo strolled away, leaving William George Bunter absolutely speechless.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Quits!

"**B**EAST!"

That was Billy Bunter's first remark when he recovered the power of speech.

Bunter's face was red with rage.

He had been feeling rather pleased with Rollo. The man was certainly liberal in the grub line, and understood that a fellow had an appetite. And his evidently keen desire to obtain Bunter's services had been rather flattering—until Bunter learned exactly what services he was to render.

He was not pleased with Rollo now. Gladly would he have planted a fat fist full in the plump countenance of the Fat Man of the circus.

Bunter had often listened to plain English about himself; in the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars they did not always measure their remarks, and seldom observed the strict rules of Chesterfieldian politeness. But Rollo's remarks were really the limit. Bunter had never felt so awfully insulted in his life.

So this was what the fellow wanted him for—to join a company of freaks, the "Wild Weird Freaks." Bunter had wondered, but he certainly never had dreamed of this. Never for a single instant had it crossed his mind that anybody could ever regard him as a Wild Weird Freak. The man, of course, was a fool—a hopeless idiot—in fact, insane. Bunter longed to kick him, all the same.

"Beast!" repeated Bunter. "Awful beast! Cheeky beast! Low rotter! I—I'd jolly well like to punch his nose! I'd give him freaks!"

Punching Rollo's nose, however, was out of the question. Bunter could not have reached it, anyhow.

At a little distance Rollo had stopped, and was talking to Mr. Swinger in the light of a naphtha lamp. There was a satisfied expression on the Fat Man's face. He was obviously pleased at having made a satisfactory arrangement with Bunter and added that precious

specimen to his collection of freaks. Apparently it did not occur to Rollo that Bunter was not equally satisfied. He had taken silence for consent. He was far from dreaming of the fury he had left raging in Bunter's fat breast.

Bunter blinked at him with deep animosity.

"The cheeky rotter! The—the—the frightful beast! Me—a freak! I'd give him freaks!" gasped Bunter. "But—but what the thump am I going to do now? Oh lor'!"

Bunter was not thinking of accepting the flattering offer made by the Fat Man of the Circus. Even had the salary been high, Bunter would not have dreamed of accepting it. Even had the grub been twice as good and twice as ample, Bunter would not have accepted that offer. Not for any consideration whatever would Billy Bunter have joined a company of freaks in a side-show in a travelling circus. No inducement whatever would have made him display himself to the British Public as the Fat Boy with the Funny Face along with the Fat Man, the Fat Lady, the Bearded Lady, and the Living Skeleton.

He was not, after all, wanted for a star turn. He was not required for his good looks, his distinguished appearance, or his aristocratic bearing. And his thoughts turned back to Greyfriars.

He looked at his watch. It was past ten. In the belief that a star turn awaited his lofty acceptance if he condescended to remain with the circus, Bunter had recklessly cut call-over and stayed out after dorm. He had made matters ever so much worse at the school if he returned there now. The thought of returning late at night and facing the gimlet-eyes of Quelch made him shudder. He could not do it. On the other hand, it was impossible to accept the position offered him in Swinger's Circus. He could not do that either. The hapless Owl of the Remove was on the horns of a dilemma.

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

Quelch, of course, would be as mad as a hatter. His wrath, like wine, would have improved with keeping. If Bunter could only have explained somehow that it had been a dreadful mistake in Study No. 7—that the ink had been landed on Quelch's august visage in error—

But he shook his head dismally. Quelch was not likely to listen, especially as he had stayed out after dorm.

Bunter felt as if the cane was already swishing on his fat person as he thought of it. If he tried to explain to Mr. Quelch, it was essential to be out of Mr. Quelch's reach when he made the explanation.

Then his fat face brightened.

"I'll jolly well get him on the phone!" he muttered. "He can't lick a fellow at the other end of a telephone wire."

It was a happy thought.

Bunter rose from the camp-chair.

Unless he was to become a professional freak in Swinger's Circus, Greyfriars was his only refuge. He dared not return to Greyfriars without having made his peace with Mr. Quelch. Evidently a communication on the telephone was indicated.

The lights in the circus camp were being extinguished now. Most of the

company had gone to bed. Rollo was coming back towards his van and he gave Bunter a cheery smile. Rollo was in a mood of satisfaction, and he supposed that Bunter was in the same state. Rollo looked on Bunter entirely with a professional eye, and no doubt he supposed that Bunter felt flattered by the information that in the freak line he took the cake. Bunter blinked at him malevolently.

Bunter's mind was made up. He was going to get to the nearest telephone, phone to Quelch, explain to that exasperated gentleman, and make the best terms he could. Then he was going back to Greyfriars. He did not want to go back, but it was a case of any port in a storm. And he would have been very glad to punch Rollo's nose before he went had that been practicable.

"Time to turn in, Johnson," said Rollo genially. "I can fix you up in my van for to-night."

Bunter's fat lip curled.

"Thanks!" he said sarcastically.

"That's all right!" said Rollo.

Bunter opened his lips to tell Rollo what he thought of him. Then he remembered in time that he did not know where the circus camp was pitched, and that he required information to get to a telephone.

"Look here, where are we now?" he asked. "We came a good many miles from Woodend, didn't we?"

"About five," said Rollo. "This here is Courtfield common."

Bunter jumped.

He had taken it for granted that when the circus travelled on from Woodend it was travelling farther away from Greyfriars. Instead of which, it had travelled nearer. Courtfield common was not a mile and a half from the school.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Bunter.

"We're opening here to-morrow," said Rollo. "Swinger expects to do better business near the school. There's a big school near Courtfield."

"Is—is—is there?" gasped Bunter.

"Yes; it's called Greyfriars, or some such name," said the Fat Man. "Swinger's taking the procession past the school gates in the morning to let the fellers there know about the circus. He expects to get a good house from the school. I've fixed it up with him for the Freaks to be in an open car in the procession. They get the public, you know. You'll be along."

Bunter gurgled. He was booked to pass the gates of Greyfriars in the circus procession in an open car—with the other freaks! This was the job Rollo was offering him!

"Oh!" he gasped.

If Bunter had dreamed for a moment of sticking to the circus this would have

(Continued on next page.)

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torn it. Fortunately, he had learned the dreadful truth in time.

"Better turn in now," said Rollo. "You'd have to be up early in the morning, Johnson. I'll fix you up—"

"Thank you for nothing!" said Bunter.

"Wha-a-at?"

Rollo stared at him.

Billy Bunter returned his stare with a haughty sneer.

He had no further use for Rollo now. He knew where the circus was, and knew where he could get at a telephone now that he knew he was near Courtfield and the school. He could not venture to punch the Fat Man's nose before he left, but at least he could tell the Fat Man what he thought of him. There was no reason why he should not pour forth his overflowing scorn and contempt for the Fat Man and all his works.

Bunter fixed his eyes on Rollo's feet and let them travel slowly up to Rollo's astonished face. Then they travelled down to Rollo's feet again, and then once more to Rollo's still more astonished face. This was what Bunter called looking a fellow up and down.

The effect should have been petrifying.

Rollo, however, did not seem petrified. He seemed astonished, and he gazed at Bunter in great surprise.

"Look 'ere—" he said.

Bunter curled his lip in a portentous sneer. It was a sneer of the most ineffable scorn, and it ought to have withered Rollo. But the Fat Man seemed only more and more astonished.

"What are you making them faces for?" he asked in wonder.

"Pah!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Pah!"

Rollo looked slightly alarmed as well as astonished.

"I—I say, you ain't wrong in the 'ead, are you?" he asked. "If you're wrong in the 'ead I can't engage you."

"Why, you—you—" gasped Bunter.

"Well, what's the matter with you?" demanded Rollo. "What you blinking like a owl for, and making them faces?"

"Pah! I'm done with you!" said Bunter. "You're a low ruffian! A rotter! Go and eat coke. I'm fed up with you! I'd jolly well kick you, if you were worth a fellow soiling his boots on! Yah!"

Bunter turned haughtily away.

Rollo gazed at him as if mesmerised. Never had the Fat Man been so astonished.

"Hold on!" he ejaculated, as Bunter was rolling away. He rolled after him. "Hold on, young 'un! What's the trouble? If you think fifteen bob ain't enough, I might make it a pound. Look here, if you turn out a draw, it'll be worth your while. I own up that I don't want to lose a freak like you—"

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Bunter.

"Call it a pound a week!" said Rollo.

"What about that? I can tell you you've got a future before you, as a freak—"

"Shut up!" howled Bunter. "You cheeky rotter! Is that the way to talk to a gentleman?"

"Who's talking to a gentleman?" demanded Rollo. "I'm talking to you, ain't I?"

"You—you—you beast!" gasped Bunter.

"Blest if I know what's come over you!" said Rollo blankly. "You was

keen enough to join the circus afore.

What's made you change your mind?

Look here, you try it on—"

"I wouldn't be found dead in your rotten circus!" roared Bunter.

"Look here—"

"Go and eat coke!"

Bunter strode away, with a contemptuous snort.

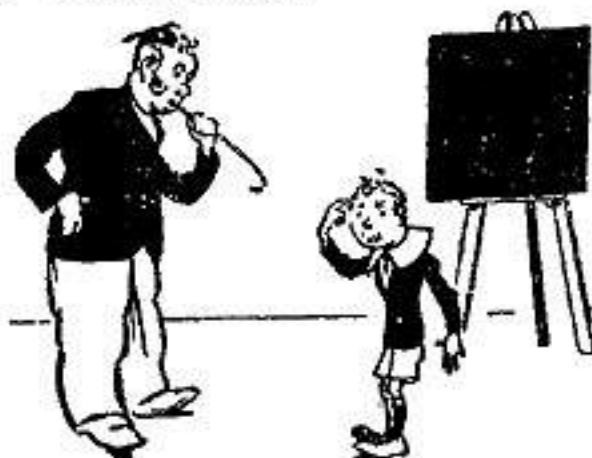
"My dear grandmother!" ejaculated Rollo.

Rollo the Fat Man was a good-tempered man. Like most fat people, he had a placid and good-natured disposition. But the best-tempered Fat Man might have been annoyed by Bunter's actions and words just then. Wrath flushed into Rollo's fat face. He followed Bunter.

"So you're going?" he exclaimed.

A LAUGH FROM LONDON!

Arthur Blanchard, of 15, Crogsland Road, Chalk Farm, N.W.1, wins a useful penknife for supplying MAGNET readers with the following laugh.



"How old are you?" asked a teacher, of a small boy.

"Er—er—er—" The youngster became flustered and stammered.

"Come, come," said the learned one, "don't be afraid. How old were you on your last birthday?"

"Seven, sir." The youngster got it out at last.

"And how old will you be on your next birthday?" asked the teacher.

"Nine, sir," came the prompt reply.

"Now, think again," said the teacher. "How could that be?"

"Please, sir," said the little one, "I am eight to-day!"

Why not emulate Arthur and win one of these useful prizes YOURSELF? It's simple enough!

"Of course I'm going, you low ruffian!"

"Then you can jolly well take that along with you!" said Rollo, and he landed out with a large and heavy foot.

Crash!

"Yaroooooh!"

"And that!" added Rollo.

Crash!

Bunter ran for it. Rollo made a rush in pursuit; but, fortunately for Bunter, he had too much weight to carry for an effective pursuit. Billy Bunter vanished into the darkness of Courtfield Common.

"Wow! Yow! Yaroooooogh!" yelled Bunter. "Stop it, you low rotter!"

But Rollo didn't stop it. He came after Bunter.

Once again his boot landed where Bunter's trousers were tightest.

"Ow! Wow!" yelled Bunter, as he took the weight of that boot. "Oh crikey!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Talk on the Telephone!

MR. QUELCH grabbed the receiver off the hooks. Never had the ring of the telephone bell been so welcome in the Remove master's study. He felt sure that it was news of Bunter. Mr. Prout glanced at him, smiled ironically, and departed for Capper's study, to tell the Fourth Form master what he thought of Quelch and his methods with his Form.

"Hallo!"

"Is that Greyfriars?"

"Yes. Mr. Quelch speaking."

"Oh, good!" came a fat, familiar voice.

Mr. Quelch started.

He had expected that that late ring on the telephone would prove to mean news of Bunter. But he had not expected to hear Bunter's voice.

Still, it was rather a relief to hear it. This was better than a trunk call from Mr. Bunter, in Surrey, to state that his son had arrived home; and much better than a call from the police station to announce that an accident case had been taken into Courtfield Hospital.

"Bunter?" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!"

"You—you young rascal!"

Relief at learning that Bunter was safe and sound, gave place immediately to intensified wrath. Now that he knew Bunter was safe all Mr. Quelch's yearning to give him the thrashing of his life revived.

"You—you young rascal! How dare you absent yourself from the school!"

"You see—"

"How dare you remain out after bedtime!"

"You see—"

"You will be punished most severely."

"Oh lor'!"

"Where are you, Bunter? Answer me this moment! Where are you?"

"In a telephone box, sir."

"You stupid boy! I mean—"

"I—I say, sir, are you waxy?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Waxy."

"Upon my word! I—I—" Mr. Quelch gasped over the receiver. "I—I—I— Upon my word!"

"I hope you ain't waxy, sir!"

"Boy!"

"The fact is, sir, that I'm not to blame! I never meant to wallop that ink over your chivvy, sir—"

"Bunter!"

"If you'd let me explain—"

"Return to the school at once! I will wait up for you! I command you, Bunter, to return to Greyfriars immediately!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir. That's what I want to do, sir. But I want to explain—"

"You can make any explanations when you are here, Bunter! I command you to return without a moment's delay!"

"Yes, sir. But—but about that licking."

"What?"

"Licking! Can't you hear me, sir?"

"I can hear you, Bunter! Were you within my reach I would chastise you with the utmost severity for your impertinence."

"Oh crikey!"

"You will return at once! Immediately! Instantly! Any prolongation of your absence from school will only add to the severity of your chastisement. You have already incurred the severest punishment. Your conduct is



Rollo stepped out of the caravan with a stick in his hand. Bunter wondered what it was for. He was soon to learn!

outrageous—flagrant—flagitious! Never in all my experience as a schoolmaster have I known of such unparalleled conduct. You are the most troublesome boy in my Form. But I shall make an example of you. You will learn that you cannot defy authority with impunity!"

Mr. Quelch paused for breath.

"I didn't catch that, sir—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Would you mind saying that again, sir?"

"I—I—I— Upon my word! Bunter! Am I to understand that you are now returning to Greyfriars, or am I not to understand that you are now returning to Greyfriars?" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir! But about that licking—"

"I refuse to bandy words with you, Bunter! Do you dare to presume for a single moment that you can make terms with your Form master?"

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Quelch looked as if he would bite the transmitter. Could William George Bunter have seen his speaking countenance at that moment he would probably have decided that Greyfriars was no place for him, even if the alternative was a freak show in a circus.

"Boy!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Boy!" The Remove master's usual easy flow of eloquence seemed to fail him.

"Yes, sir! If you'll let me explain—"

"If you have any explanation to make, Bunter, you can make it in my presence!"

"No fear!"

"What?"

"I—I—I mean, I'd rather make it by phone, sir! Your voice sounds as if you're awfully waxy!"

Mr. Quelch uttered a sound like the

growl of the Great Hugo Bear. He would have given a term's salary, at that moment, to bring Bunter within reach of his cane. It was intensely exasperating to have Bunter's voice at hand, and the rest of him out of reach. It was the rest of him with which Mr. Quelch wanted to deal.

"Where are you, Bunter?" asked Mr. Quelch at last. "I order you to tell me your present whereabouts. I warn you that if you do not immediately return to the school, you will be fetched. You understand me?"

"Oh crikey!"

"Bunter—tell me at once—"

"I—I—I'm miles away, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Hundreds of miles! You couldn't possibly find me, sir! I haven't been near the circus."

"The circus!" repeated Mr. Quelch. "Is it possible, Bunter—is it imaginable, that you are at a circus?"

"Oh! No, sir! I—I haven't been at a circus—in fact, I haven't seen a circus! I haven't been offered an engagement in a circus. I'm not staying at a circus, sir! Nothing of the kind."

"Bunter—"

"I'm not going back to the circus for the night, sir, if you cut up rusty. I haven't thought of anything of the kind."

"Bless my soul!"

"If—if—if that licking's off, sir—"

"You will be flogged, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

"You will be flogged with the utmost severity—"

"Ow!"

"You will make matters worse by prolonging your absence, and giving further trouble. I command you—"

"Oh dear!"

"Do you hear me, Bunter! I command you to return to the school this instant! Do you hear me?"

No reply.

"Bunter!"

Still no answer.

"Boy!" roared Mr. Quelch.

But answer there came none; Billy Bunter had rung off.

Mr. Quelch, with an expression on his face that no words could adequately describe, hung up the receiver. He was almost trembling with wrath as he left the telephone. Not only had Bunter dodged away from a deserved licking, not only had he cut call-over, and stayed out after bed-time, but he had had the unheard-of insolence to ring his Form-master up on the telephone, and attempt to make terms before returning to the school. The cup of Bunter's offences had been full before. Now it was overflowing. Judging by the expression on Mr. Quelch's face, the most fortunate thing that had ever happened to Bunter was the fact that a telephone wire separated him from the incensed Form master.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

N.G!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry opened his eyes, and blinked, as the light came on in the Remove dormitory.

Several other Removites awakened, and blinked in the light. It was past half-past-ten now, and all the Lower Fourth had been safe in the arms of Morpheus, when the dormitory door opened, and the light was turned on.

Mr. Quelch stood in the doorway.

The awakened juniors stared at him.

"Bunter at last!" said Peter Todd.

"That's it!" said Harry Wharton.

"That fat chump has come in at last!" "Has Bunter come in, sir?" asked Bob Cherry.

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"Bunter has not come in, Cherry!" answered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!"

"I am sorry to disturb you, my boys," added the Remove master kindly.

"Not at all, sir!" said Lord Mauleverer politely.

Most of the Removites were awake now, staring at Mr. Quelch. As Bunter had not come in, they wondered what the Form master wanted there. Mr. Quelch proceeded to explain. Apparently he was in quest of information.

"Can any of you tell me whether there is a circus in this neighbourhood?" he asked.

The juniors stared in astonishment. Their own interest in circuses was rather keen; but they had never supposed that such entertainments would appeal to their Form master.

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Russell. "There's a circus at Woodend."

"At Woodend!" repeated Mr. Quelch. "Yes, sir; Swinger's Circus!" said Russell. "I was going over there this afternoon, only—" Russell checked himself.

"You have heard of no other circus in this vicinity?"

"No, sir!"

"Very good. Thank you, Russell!"

"But it will be closed now, sir!" added Russell, apparently anxious that his Form master, if he wanted to see a circus, should not have his journey for nothing.

"Closed?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir! No good going now, sir!"

"Bless my soul! I am not thinking of going to the circus!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "At all events, nor for the—the performance. You are sure the circus is at Woodend?"

"Oh, yes, sir! I believe some fellows went there to-day."

"I desire to make quite sure," said Mr. Quelch. "Did any boy in this Form go to the circus to-day at Woodend?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry Wharton. "I went with my friends!"

"Very good; then there is no doubt that the circus is at Woodend. Thank you! I regret to have disturbed you. Good-night, my boys!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The light went out, and the door closed. There was a murmur of sleepy voices from the row of beds.

"Fancy old Quelch going to circuses!" said Russell. "Hardly thought he'd care for such things."

"He's not going to see the show!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Well, he said he wasn't," said Vernon-Smith. "But if he isn't going to see the show, what is he going for?"

"He must have found out that Bunter's there!" said Harry Wharton. "Goodness knows how he found out."

"Oh, my hat! Bunter at the circus?"

"That's where we left him, anyhow!"

said Bob Cherry. "He said they had offered him a job! May have put him in the menagerie."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a drowsy chuckle, and the Remove closed their eyes again. They were too sleepy at that time of night to discuss the weird proceedings of William George Bunter.

Mr. Quelch descended the stairs, his mind made up. He had gathered from Bunter's remarks on the telephone—though Bunter was unaware of it—that the fat junior had found refuge at the circus. He had inquired among the Sixth Form prefects, but they had been unable to give him any information: they were blissfully ignorant of the existence of Swinger's Celebrated Circus. But Mr. Quelch sagely opined that, though the great men of the Sixth were sublimely indifferent to circuses, it was probable that the Lower Fourth knew something about the matter. Hence his visit to the Remove dormitory.

Having reached his study, Mr. Quelch picked up the receiver, and telephoned to Courtfield for a taxi, giving instructions for the taxi to stop at the Masters' gate. At that hour, he did not want the vehicle to come grinding and honking up the drive to the House.

The less publicity this matter received, the better Mr. Quelch liked it.

Already it was the one great topic in Masters' Common-room—a great relief to the usual boredom of that exchange of gossip. Already Prout's remarks had made the Remove master writhe: and he was quite able to guess

what Capper, Twigg, Wiggins, and the rest were saying to one another. Already, he knew, Monsieur Charpentier had alluded to the matter as "l'affaire Bunter." Mr. Quelch felt like gritting his teeth, at the idea of the "affair Bunter" becoming the absorbing topic of all Greyfriars. Indeed, probably he would have gritted them, had they not been an expensive set.

Mr. Quelch donned coat and hat, and quietly let himself out of the House. He walked quietly down to the side gate under the elms, to which all masters and prefects had keys.

Woodend was three miles from Greyfriars; too far for a walk at that late hour. But it was an easy run for a taxicab.

To arrive at Woodend, call at the circus for Bunter, pitch that rebellious and rascally young mutineer neck and crop into the taxi, and bring him back to the school—that was the Remove master's simple plan.

Why and how the circus people were giving shelter to a runaway schoolboy, Mr. Quelch could not imagine. He concluded that they could not know that Bunter was a runaway schoolboy, and that the fat Owl had deceived them somehow. At the same time, he intended to give Mr. Swinger a piece of his mind. Mr. Swinger should have been more careful in such matters, and Mr. Quelch intended to convey that fact to him in a few well-chosen sentences of a vinegary nature.

He let himself out at the gate, closed it after him, and waited in the road for the taxi. It was quite a pleasant summer's night, with bright stars twinkling in a dark blue sky, and a soft breeze stirring the branches of the elms that overhung the ancient stone wall. But the beauty of the summer night was entirely lost on Mr. Quelch. He was not in a mood for the charms of Nature. He was in a mood to use the cane, which he had thoughtfully tucked under his arm before leaving his study. It had seemed to Mr. Quelch probable that he might need that cane, if Bunter showed any reluctance to leave his refuge.

Mr. Quelch stared along the shadowy road in the direction of Courtfield as he waited for the taxi to arrive. A shifting shadow in the gloom, close to the wall, caught his eye, and he started a little. It was so close that it was a little startling, and Mr. Quelch uttered a suppressed exclamation.

"Who—what—"

The shadow vanished.

Mr. Quelch slipped the cane into his hand. He stepped quickly along the wall.

No one was there.

Someone had been there, crouching close against the wall, when he let himself out at the gate. He was sure of that. But whoever it was, he was gone now. Mr. Quelch concluded that it was some tramp, who had stopped to rest his weary limbs on the wall, and dismissed the matter from his mind. There was a gleam of headlights on the road, and a whirr of a car.

The taxi came buzzing up from Courtfield.

Mr. Quelch stepped into the road, and the vehicle stopped. The taxi-driver peered at him.

"Where to, sir?"

"Woodend," said Mr. Quelch. "I desire to reach a circus which, I understand, is at Woodend, or close by the village."

"Yessir!"

Mr. Quelch sat down in the taxi, the

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engine buzzed, and he was whirled away through the night.

By shadowy lanes and byways the taxi buzzed on, rocking over ruts and dried mud, hooting loudly as an occasional cow strolled in the way.

Mr. Quelch sat bolt upright in the cab, his lips compressed, his eyes glinting under knitted brows; his arms folded, and the cane firmly grasped in one hand. His grip on that cane was very firm. There was a keen longing in Mr. Quelch's heart to exercise that cane on the portly form of William George Bunter.

The taxi ran into Woodend at last. The driver stopped, reached back to the door, and opened it.

"This 'ere's Woodend, sir. Don't see no circus."

Mr. Quelch peered out.

All Woodend was fast asleep at that time of night. The last light had been extinguished even at the Peal of Bells. Dimly the cottages loomed in the glimmer of the stars. From somewhere came the howl of a dog, from everywhere the smell of hay and agricultural products.

"The circus is here!" said Mr. Quelch. "It was visited this afternoon by some boys from the school. It is certainly here."

"Don't see it, sir!" said the chauffeur.

Mr. Quelch stepped out of the cab.

"There's a stop, sir!" said the driver.

"What? What?" Mr. Quelch looked round quickly, fearing that he was about to tread in a puddle.

"A peeler, sir."

"A—a peeler?"

"The bobby I mean, sir!" said the driver, jerking his thumb towards a stout figure that was coming slowly down the village street.

"A—a constable!" Mr. Quelch comprehended.

"Might ask him, sir!"

"Very good!"

The village constable, fortunately on his rounds, and the only wakeful person in Woodend, came up to the taxi, turned his light on it, and peered suspiciously at Mr. Quelch.

"Good-evening, officer!" said Mr. Quelch politely. "Perhaps you can tell me where to find the circus."

"Bless you, sir, you're too late for the circus," said the constable.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard through his nose.

"It is not my desire to witness a performance at the circus," he said freezingly. "I desire to see the proprietor. I understand that a Mr. Swinger—"

"That's right, sir—Swinger's Circus!" said the Woodend constable. "They give a performance here this afternoon, sir. Not a bad show, sir, if you ask me. That there Fat Man—fattest man you ever saw—"

"But where—"

"And the Living Skeleton, sir!" said the Woodend constable, who had apparently beheld, with enthusiasm, the attractions of Swinger's Celebrated Circus. "I can tell you, sir—"

"Yes, yes; but where is the circus?" interjected Mr. Quelch. "The hour is late, and I am pressed for time—"

"Oh, it's gone!" said the Woodend constable.

"Gone?"

"Yes, they packed up and went after the show this afternoon."

"They—they packed up and went?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch was silent for a moment. It was difficult for him to express his feelings in words that would not have startled and shocked the constable and the taxi-driver.

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.

Dicky Nugent may be a clever "orther" himself, but he has to play second fiddle to our brilliant rhymester, who selects the youthful Dicky for his subject this week.



○ F Dicky Nugent let me tell:
In Second Form, the leader;
A stalward laddie; bright as
well;

He sure is some "high-speeder."
He doesn't always lead the Form
In paths of staid propriety:
They get in water—more than warm,
And earn much notoriety.

A hefty lad, whose theories are
Backed up by methods fistie;
In fact, he's proved himself a star
At doings pugilistic.
An animal, a healthy one,
With appetite unsated
For ragging, and all forms of fun
Where prefects can be baited.

He's cheeky, too, but not unkind,
Nor versed in subtle folly;
And older fellows always find
His pranks are clean and jolly.
You would not scold a puppy, who
Was playful, gay, and tricky,
And so we find excuses, too,
For Nugent Minor—Dicky!

He aims to join th' elusive kind
Of animals surprising,
Whose "tales," instead of being behind,
From out their heads are rising.
I speak of "orthers." Noble band
Of awe-inspiring "fellers,"
Who through the seasons, flood the land
With dubious best-sellers!

All MAGNET readers take delight
In Dicky's strange orthography:
His style is neither strained nor trite,
In story or biography.
Perhaps one day he'll reach that end
To which his pen aspires,
And all will claim to be the friend
Of the "orther" of Greyfriars!

The cheeriness of Dicky's ways
Through all the school infuses,
And even on the dullest days,
Among the rest it oozes.
So let us give a hearty cheer
For Dicky Nugent—writer.
We're truly grateful he is here
To make our school-days brighter!

"Can you tell me where they are gone, officer?" he asked at last.

The policeman rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"'Fraid I can't, sir! They might have gone on to Lantham—"

"Lantham?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Or maybe to Redclyffe—"

"Redclyffe?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Or maybe Pegg way—"

"You cannot tell me where they are gone?" asked Mr. Quelch, in a voice that was like unto the filing of a saw.

"Couldn't say, sir!" said the Woodend constable cheerfully. And he touched his helmet civilly, and proceeded on his round.

Mr. Quelch stood quite still for a few moments. Mr. Quelch knew half a dozen languages, but not one in which he could have expressed his feelings. He had come out to Woodend at that late hour of the night—to find the circus gone—vanished into the unknown—and Bunter as far away as ever—or farther! He stood nonplussed, his lips hard set.

The taximan coughed, as a gentle hint that he, personally, had no desire to make a night of it.

Mr. Quelch stepped back into the cab. "Greyfriars!" he said curtly.

Evidently there was nothing doing! The missing Owl of the Remove was not to be recaptured that night! Mr. Quelch's grasp on the cane, as he drove back to Greyfriars, was almost convulsive. Bunter had to be left over until the morrow, and it seemed to Henry Samuel Quelch that it was really impossible to wait till the morrow before thrashing Bunter.

But there was no help for it. For that night, at least, Billy Bunter had to remain uncaptured and unthrashed, and Mr. Quelch had to make the best of it.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

○ H dear!" groaned Billy Bunter.

Bunter drifted down the High Street of Courtfield in the lowest possible spirits.

He had hoped much from that talk on the telephone with Quelch. He had hoped to explain how very innocent he was—from a safe distance—and placate Quelch before venturing within reach. It had not been a success. The tone of his Form master's voice had told him how little Quelch was to be placated. For only one thing was Bunter thankful, and that was that he had attempted the explanation on the telephone, instead of taking the chance personally.

He had been able to gather, from Quelch's voice, what would have happened had he been in Quelch's presence.

But that was Bunter's only comfort. All the rest was comfortless. It was late—he dared not go back to Greyfriars—and at the circus his remarks to Mr. Rollo had had the effect of burning his boats behind him. The Owl of the Remove had nowhere to rest his weary head.

He thought of the hotel at Courtfield. But he realised that it was useless to tell the hotel people that he was expecting a postal-order. They conducted business there on a sordid cash basis; and, so far as Bunter was concerned, cash, as usual, was the one thing needful.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

Greyfriars was barred to him now. His fat ear had caught the tone of yearning in Quelch's voice. The thought of coming within reach of

Quelch's cane made cold shivers run down Bunter's back.

But what was a fellow to do?

He had to go to bed! Fortunately, he had had supper. But he had to go to bed. He could not sleep under the stars. If only that beast Quelch had been willing to listen to reason—

The beast ought to have been glad to get him back. Bunter wondered bitterly what Quelch would feel like, if he never went back at all! The beast would be sorry then that he hadn't jumped at this chance of getting him back!

Still, he hadn't! All that Mr. Quelch was likely to jump at was Billy Bunter himself—came in hand!

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

Reflection often comes too late! In Bunter's case it always came too late, when it came at all. He wished now that he hadn't bolted from the school, but had stayed to take his licking; it would have been over, and he would have got over it by this time. Alternatively, as the lawyers say, he wished that he hadn't slanged Rollo, the Fat Man; he could, at least, have stayed the night in the caravan.

"Oh crikey!" said Bunter dismally.

He stopped on the road over the common. It was getting awfully late; and he was tired, and getting sleepy; and thought of a warm bed was a delightful vision. He envied the Remove fellows tucked up safe in bed in their dormitory, sleeping—the beasts, as Bunter bitterly reflected, without giving him a thought! But bitter reflections were no use; the question was, where was Bunter to find a bed? That, at the moment, was the one question of importance within the wide limits of the solar system.

It was Greyfriars or the circus, Bunter realised that. After all, that fat brute, Rollo, might let him in—soft sawder cost nothing, and Bunter was prepared to say anything, or to agree to anything, to get a shelter for the night. The beast had been jolly keen to get him to join the show. Certainly Bunter had no intention of joining a freak show; but he felt that it would be justifiable to temporise.

He rolled along the path from the road towards the circus camp.

All was dark there when he reached it.

Mr. Swinger and his company were fast asleep, in tent or van; and the only light was that provided by the stars.

Bunter made his way to Rollo's van.

From the interior of that van proceeded a rumbling snore. This indicated that Rollo was there, and that he had retired to rest.

Bunter tapped at the door.

Tap, tap, tap!

The steady snore answered him. Rollo did not seem easier to awaken than Bunter himself. The Owl of the Remove became impatient. He selected a rather heavy stone, and banged at the door of the caravan.

Bang, bang, bang!

The snore in the interior ceased, and he heard a muffled exclamation. Rollo was awake.

Bang!

"My dear grandmother! What's that?"

"Me!" answered Bunter.

"What? Who?"

"Me! I've come back!"

Rollo seemed to recognise the voice. Bunter heard him draw a deep breath.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said the Fat Man; and Bunter heard a heavy creaking as Rollo sat up in bed.

"Yes, old chap!" said Bunter. "I've

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come back! I say, let me in! I've nowhere to go!" he added pathetically.

"You've come back, have you?" said the Fat Man; and there was a tone in his voice that Bunter did not wholly like.

"Yes, old fellow!" said Bunter. "I say, you're going to put me up for the night, ain't you? We—we—we'll talk it over to-morrow about—about my joining the show—what?"

"Wait a minute!" said the Fat Man. "Wait till I get something on, and I'll open the door!"

Bunter gasped with relief.

"Oh good!"

He waited hopefully. He heard the Fat Man moving in the van; the vehicle creaked to every movement. Bunter waited, and grinned while he waited. If the Fat Man supposed that he had come back to accept the offer to join the "Wild Weird Freaks," he could jolly well suppose so—till the morrow. Bunter was willing to let him suppose anything he liked—so long as he—Bunter—was given shelter for the night. That was the important matter. The caravan door opened at last.

Rollo, in trousers and slippers, stepped out. He had a stick in his hand, and Bunter wondered what it was for.

He was soon to learn.

Rollo rolled towards him, with a firm grasp on the stick.

"You've come back, have you?" he said. "After checking a man and calling him names, you've got the nerve to come back and wake him up in the middle of the night! Well, I'll bet ten to one that you'll never do it again after I'm through with you!"

"I say—Here, leggo!" howled Bunter, in alarm, as the Fattest Man on Earth grasped his collar, with a hand that seemed, to Bunter, the heaviest hand on earth.

Whack, whack, whack!

The stick fairly rang on Bunter.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter, struggling wildly. "Ow! Wow! Leggo! Chuck it! Yarooogh! Help!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Whoooooooooop!"

"That's for your check!" gasped Rollo, panting with his exertions.

"That's for your impudence! That's for your nerve." Whack, whack, whack! "That's for your neck!"

"Yooop! Help! Fire! Murder! Help!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Take that—and that—and that—and that—"

"Yooooooooooooooooop!"

Bunter made a terrific effort, and tore his collar away from the grasp of the Fat Man. He jumped away.

Rollo made another swipe at him as he jumped, and a fiendish yell answered from Bunter. Then he was out of reach.

"I ain't finished yet!" panted Rollo. "Come back, you young scallywag! I ain't finished yet."

He brandished the stick, and plunged after Bunter.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

The last howl of Bunter answered from afar. Once more William George Bunter was hitting the open spaces, with a speed that did him credit.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Luck!

GREYFRIARS lay silent, shadowy, under the glimmer of the stars.

The last door had closed, the last light had been extinguished.

The school was sleeping.

In the spacious quadrangle, amid the grey old buildings, all was silent and still, save in one spot, where a fat figure stirred.

With stealthy steps that fat figure moved towards the House.

Bunter had come back!

There had been no help for it! His reception at Rollo's van had been distinctly discouraging; and he was done with Swinger's Circus. And Greyfriars was the only alternative to a night spent under the stars.

A night under the stars did not appeal to Bunter in the very least. Quelch or no Quelch, the footsteps of the weary wanderer had to lead him back to Greyfriars.

But he still had a faint hope. Hope springs eternal in the human breast. It was past midnight now; and Quelch, of course, would be in bed, like the rest of Greyfriars.

Bunter's idea was to get in somehow, sneak quietly to the Remove dormitory, and turn in. The dreaded interview would be put off till the morrow.

In the morning Quelch might be more disposed to listen to reason. He had apparently let the sun go down on his wrath; but a night's rest might have a calming effect. He might dream of Bunter, wandering in a cold, cruel world, and his heart might soften. He might even realise, on reflection, what a thoroughly nice fellow Bunter was, and how little he could be spared from the Remove. At any rate, Bunter was putting off the evil hour; and the future could take care of itself. At present Bunter wanted to lay his weary head on a pillow. That was his object now.

Somehow or other he was going to get into the House—stealthily, without awakening Quelch. He had clambered in over the Cloister wall with considerable difficulty, but he was now safe within the precincts of the school. And he rolled into the House hopefully.

As a last resource he might pitch stones up to the windows of the Remove dormitory and awaken some of the fellows. But that was a very last resource, for there was a risk of awakening others beside the fellows. A door or a window might have been left unsecured. Wiggins, the Third Form master, had been known to leave his study window wide open—Wiggins being a remarkably absent-minded gentleman. Bunter crept round the great facade of the House, hunting for an unfastened window.

The starlight gleamed on window after window, all fastened. Then all of a sudden Bunter stopped, with a grunt of satisfaction.

He stopped under Prout's window.

For a moment he could scarcely believe in his good luck.

He blinked anxiously at the window. There was no mistake—the lower sash was raised six or seven inches.

"My hat!" murmured Bunter. "The old ass!"

He was alluding to Prout in that disrespectful manner. If Prout had left the study window open at the bottom it certainly was very careless of Prout. Even Wiggins only left his window open at the top, when he forgot to close it before going to bed.

And here was Prout's window, open at the bottom! It was an amazing stroke of luck, for the Fifth Form master was by no means an absent-minded gentleman like Mr. Wiggins. It really seemed as if Prout, for the first time in his life, had left his study window open for Billy Bunter's especial behoof.

Bunter grinned with satisfaction.

This was real luck! There was no difficulty in his way now. He only had to clamber in at Prout's window, grope his way up to the Remove dormitory, and go to bed.

He grabbed the window-sill and clambered up.

Resting on his fat knees, Bunter caught hold of the sash and pushed it up higher, very softly and cautiously.

There was, of course, nobody in the study; Prout had gone to bed long ago. But had Bunter been a cat-burglar he could not have been more careful to make no noise.

Up went the sash, slowly and softly, till there was room for Bunter to squeeze in.

He squeezed in, and gasped with relief when he found himself standing inside the House.

He closed down the sash carefully and felt for the catch to fasten it. If Prout had carelessly left his window open for the convenience of any burglar who might happen to come along, Bunter was not going to follow his example. Bunter fastened the catch.

Then he groped across Prout's study to the door.

Then a sudden mis-giving smote him. Form masters sometimes locked their studies at night; Prout generally did, if not invariably.

"Oh crikey!" murmured Bunter. "If that fat old ass locked the door I—"

But fortune seemed to be smiling on Bunter that night, after frowning on him all day.

The door opened to his touch.

His groping hand did not touch a key; he groped again, and found that there was no key in the door.

It really was very singular. Prout must have changed the key to the outside, and forgotten to turn it before taking it out.

"Old ass!" murmured Bunter ungratefully.

He passed out of Prout's study and closed the door noiselessly behind him.

He was in Masters' passage now, in dense darkness.

At a little distance there was a window in the passage, and at that window a glimmer of starlight fell dimly in.

Bunter's eyes were fixed on that window.

He stood stock still.

His eyes bulged behind his spectacles, the fat heart within him almost ceased to beat.

Terror, like a cold chill, crept along his spine.

For the square of the starlit window was broken by a black shadow; the starlight was barred by a figure that stood there.

It was a human figure.

It was silent, motionless, as Bunter himself. Not a dozen paces from him, still, soundless, the head bent, as if listening.

Bunter's fat brain spun.

At that hour nobody in Greyfriars school was out of bed. Nobody, if he had been out of bed, would have been



The burglar sprawled on his back, in the glare of the electric light, with both hands pressed to his waistcoat! His face was ghastly and he moaned horribly.

standing silent in the darkness in Master's passage, his head bent to listen.

Bunter suppressed a groan of terror as he realised what it was—what it could only be.

He knew now why Prout's window had been open at the bottom. The catch had been forced from outside.

He knew now why Prout's study door had been unlocked, though the key had been taken away by the Form master. Prout had left it locked, and the lock had been picked.

Bunter had found his surreptitious entrance into the House so facile because somebody else had made a surreptitious entrance before him.

And he had emerged from Prout's study while that "somebody" was still in the passage outside.

His fat brain reeled as he realised that he had entered the House almost on the heels of a burglar.

And the burglar had heard him! Cautious as Bunter had been, he had been heard by the man who was so close at hand. The night-prowler, probably creeping on his way to the Head's study, where the safe was, had heard Bunter emerge from Prout's room and stopped, and was listening. It came to Bunter in a wave of terror that the man knew he was there.

He staggered back against Prout's study door with a gasp of affright. That gasp was answered by a muttered exclamation from the darkness.

The black shadow at the starlit passage window moved.

It moved towards Bunter!

A yell of terror from the fat junior

rang through the silent House. Far and wide rang that terrific howl.

There was a footstep—a muttered oath. Bunter made a jump, to flee.

Crash!

"Yoooooooooooh!" shrieked Bunter frantically as he crashed into an unseen figure in the darkness.

Bump!

"Oh!" came a startled gasp.

The sudden collision had up-ended the unseen one. Bunter heard him sprawl on the floor. He started to run, stumbled over a sprawling eg, and came crashing down—on the burglar!

"Ooooooooooh!" came faintly from the wretched man as Billy Bunter's weight landed fairly on his waistcoat. "Ooooooooooh!"

Bunter was up in an instant, and running for his life. As he ran he yelled.

"Help! Burglars! Fire! Thieves! Rescue! Yaroooogh! Help! Help! Oh crikey! Help!"

The House rang with Bunter's wild yells—rang, and buzzed, and echoed. Doors opened, voices called, lights flashed on. Billy Bunter continued to yell.

From the burglar came faint sounds—sounds of woe! A low, murmuring moan of anguish expressed the feelings of the hapless wretch on whose waistcoat Bunter had fallen. A faint, anguished moan, like the moaning of a mournful cow, was the only sound that proceeded from the unhappy malefactor, who lay helplessly on his back, with every ounce of wind knocked out of him.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Burglar!

HELP!"

"What—"

"Yarooooogh!"

"Who—what—what—"

"Burglars!" roared Bunter. "Help! Fire! Help!"

"Bless my soul! That is Bunter's voice! Bunter!"

"Yoop! Help! Ow! He's after me! Help!" raved Bunter.

"Boy!"

Mr. Quelch's voice was simply terrible. But Bunter had lost his terrors of Quelch now. As the light flashed on, and he discerned the Remove master, draped in a dressing-gown, on the stairs Bunter beheld him with joy. He could have hugged Quelch.

He charged up the stairs. Behind Quelch came Prout and Capper, and behind Prout and Capper, a crowd of startled Greyfriars fellows, half-dressed and excited and alarmed.

"Bunter!"

"Help! Oh crikey! Burglars! Help!"

Mr. Quelch caught Bunter's collar in a grip of iron. His eyes almost bored into Bunter.

"Bunter! You young rascal—then you have returned—"

"Leggo! Help!"

"How dare you make this disturbance at this hour?" shrieked Mr. Quelch. "Silence! Be silent!"

"Ridiculous!" boomed Prout. "Ridiculous! Really, Quelch, this is too much! I do not desire to wound you, Quelch! Far be it from me to wound the feelings of a colleague! But I am bound to say that this is too much! This boy of your Form—"

"Burglars!"

"Silence!"

"This boy of your Form, after a day of rebellious and mutinous conduct, enters the House surreptitiously, and awakens us all in the middle of the night—"

"It is past midnight!" said Capper.

"It is nearly one o'clock!" said Twigg.

Prout boomed again.

"I say it is too much! Quelch, I repeat that it is too much! This sort of thing cannot be tolerated!"

Mr. Quelch's face was crimson. He held Bunter firmly by the collar, and he looked as if he would have liked to bite him. From the crowd of fellows farther up the staircase came a chuckle.

"Go it, Prout!" called out a voice, unknown in the crowd, though Mr. Quelch fancied he recognised the voice of the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Prout glared round.

"What? What? What are all you boys doing out of your dormitories? Go back to bed at once! Do you hear me?"

"We thought it was burglars, sir!" said Bob Cherry.

"Nonsense!"

"Somebody was yelling for help!" said Harry Wharton.

"Absurd! This stupid boy has been frightened in the dark, and has awakened the whole House!" snorted Prout. "There is no occasion for alarm! No occasion at all! Quelch, I repeat—"

"Will you allow me to speak, Mr. Prout?" hooted the Remove master. He gave Bunter a shake. "Bunter—"

"Wow!"

"How did you enter the House, Bunter? Explain yourself at once!"

"Ow! The burglar—"

"There is no burglar!" boomed Prout. "The wretched, cowardly boy has been frightened by a shadow—"

"Let me speak, sir!" bawled Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, explain to me at once how you entered the House, after it is locked up for the night."

"Oh dear! I got in at Prout's window, sir—Mr. Prout's window—it was open—"

"Preposterous!" boomed Prout. "My window was shut and fastened—my study door locked—the key in my pocket! Preposterous!"

"Bunter! Is that the truth?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Ow! Yes! The burglar—"

"Absurd!" boomed Prout. "We are awakened at one o'clock in the morning, because this boy of your Form has been frightened by a shadow—"

"Let the boy speak!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "He must have entered the House somehow—Bunter—"

"Let us search!" suggested Mr. Capper. "If there should really be a burglar—"

"Ow! There's a burglar!" gasped Bunter. "I ran into him, sir—he got me—he nearly got me—oh dear! He's there now! I can hear him! Ow!"

"Hark!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

He held up his hand for silence. Prout, about to snort contemptuously, suppressed his snort. All listened.

From below came a strange sound of woe. A faint, moaning, mooring sound, like the last expiring moan of a dolorous cow.

"Who—what is that?" ejaculated Prout.

"It sounds as if someone is hurt!" remarked Capper.

"I—I fell on him, sir!" stuttered Bunter.

There was another chuckle from farther up the stairs.

"I—I think I—I fell on his tummy, sir—"

"His what?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Tummy, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old burglar!" said Bob Cherry.

"If Bunter landed on his bread-basket it's a hospital case!"

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

He released Bunter and hurried down the stairs. Prout and Capper and Twigg followed him. By this time, some of the Sixth were on the scene, and Coker of the Fifth arrived with an Indian club in his hand. A crowd followed the masters as they approached the spot whence that agonized moaning proceeded.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Prout.

There lay the burglar, in the glare of the electric light.

He lay on his back, with both hands pressed to his waistcoat! His face was ghastly, his eyes seemed to be starting from his head. He moaned. He moaned horribly. He seemed incapable of motion, indifferent to capture. He was still struggling to get back the wind Bunter had so effectually knocked out of him, but he was not succeeding yet. Law-breaker as he was, the sight of his anguish might have moved a heart of stone.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

"A—a—a burglar!" gasped Prout.

"Undoubtedly a burglar! We must secure him! He does not seem to be in a state to offer resistance."

"Let me get at him, sir!" said Coker of the Fifth. Coker seemed anxious to show what he could do with the Indian club.

"Stand back, Coker! The man seems quite helpless," said Mr. Quelch.

"Bless my soul! There—there was really a burglar! This—this is the

man! Bunter has—has prevented a robbery! Wingate—Gwynne—secure that man—I think he will give you no trouble!"

"I think not, sir!" said Wingate, with a grin.

The burglar gave no trouble. He only moaned as Wingate and Gwynne lifted him to his feet. He continued moaning as they led him away to be locked in a room till the police came for him. Prout rushed away to telephone for the police.

Mr. Quelch's eyes turned sternly on the Removites.

"Boys! You should not have left your dormitory! Go back at once! Bunter!"

"Oh dear! Yea, sir!"

"I will deal with you in the morning, Bunter! I—I will deal with you as leniently as possible in—in the circumstances! It is clear that you have prevented a burglary, by giving the alarm! I shall take that into consideration! Go to bed at once!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

He rolled after the Remove as they went back to their dormitory. He was grinning when he arrived there.

"I say you fellows—"

"So you've come back, you frabjous fozzling fathead!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Wouldn't they have you in the menagerie at the circus after all?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Beast! They offered me a topping engagement," said Bunter. "Big salary, star turn, but on the whole, I thought I'd stick to the old school. I felt that Greyfriars needed me."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Lucky I came back, as it turns out," said Bunter. "You fellows would have gone on snoring while the Head's safe was burgled! I'd like to know which of you fellows would have had the pluck to tackle that burglar as I did? You'd have been jolly well scared! Not me! I knocked him spinning—"

"And you weren't scared?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Scared! Me!" said Bunter contemptuously. "Scarcely! He sprang at me, and I knocked him spinning—a straight left, you know."

"When we heard you yelling it sounded as if somebody was scared!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh really, Cherry—"

Mr. Quelch looked in.

"Are you boys not in bed yet?"

The Remove bolted into bed.

Billy Bunter turned out the next morning in a cheerful mood.

Bunter was a hero—in his own estimation at least! He was to see Mr. Quelch after prayers! He was looking forward to the interview! He had it mapped out in his mind! Mr. Quelch was going to pat him on the head, or tap him on the shoulder, and say, in a voice full of emotion: "Bunter! All is forgiven! My brave boy! How can I thank you? You have brought credit on your Form, Bunter!"

It would be quite nice to hear Quelch saying that. Bunter, of course, deserved it all, and more. But he would reply modestly: "Oh, no, sir! Not at all, sir. I only did my duty!"

So when he rolled away to Quelch's study, Bunter was in a state of happy anticipation.

That happy state was destined to be brief.

"Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch's voice did not thrill with emotion. It was quite matter-of-fact.

(Continued on page 28.)

For the Glory of France!

by Geo. E. Rochester



**Important
Announcement
on Page 26.**

PAUL BLAKE saluted and withdrew, leaving Sergeant-Major Bolke to solve the problem as to why Guy Warren should have offered him a thousand pounds to see that the Legionnaire Blake did not return from the desert alive; and then for this same Warren to have got himself killed in an effort to save the boy.

The thing didn't synchronise. It was absurd—mad!

But, nom d'un chien, were not all Englishmen mad? With which sage reflection Sergeant-Major Bolke mentally bade farewell to his thousand pounds, and, unbuttoning the flap of his revolver holster, went out to inspect the patrolling of the walls.

The attack came when the first faint light of dawn was greying the eastern sky and flooding the desert with a cold and eerie half-light.

"Les Arbis!" yelled a voice near Paul. "Voila! Les Arbis!"

Silently, and with deadly swiftness—like grey ghosts in the murk of dawn—a huge force of Arabs was advancing upon the village.

"Aux armes!" roared Bolke. "Stand to, you dogs! Prepare to open fire!"

Every butt was cuddled into cheek and every rifle barrel trained on the oncoming horde. There were a full three thousand of them, and the pitiful little garrison now numbered less than two hundred men.

Bolke, standing rigid and motion-

less by an embrasure in the wall, watched the advance through eyes which were cold and hard.

"They think to take us by surprise, the dogs!" he muttered to the corporal by his side. "Saere nom, but it is they who will get the surprise!"

Less than one hundred yards separated the leading white-robed Arabs from the walls of the village. But still Bolke stood motionless. Then suddenly he roared:

"Fire!"

There came a reverberating crash of musketry, and lurid flame stabbed

3,000 Arabs attack

200 Legionnaires

"STAND FIRM, LEGIONNAIRES!"

outwards the whole length of the wall.

"Rapid fire!" screamed Bolke. "Rapid fire, you dogs! Blood and fury! I'll shoot the first man who fumbles!"

Like men possessed—firing, loading, firing—the Legionnaires poured volley after volley into the close-packed yelling hordes, who, mown down by that dead sweeping hail of lead, were breaking and surging like waves of the sea.

"Keep firing!" roared Bolke. "Sangmort! If that gate falls, we're doomed!"

A large party of the Arabs was attacking the gates with axes and

swords, covered by the fire of others who were armed with muskets.

Paul, his rifle cuddled into his cheek, was firing with the coolness and precision of a veteran. On one side of him was Desmond, and on the other the grim-faced Zimmermann. They were concentrating their fire on the Arabs who were trying to smash in the gates, and every bullet went home in some dark-skinned yelling fiend.

Bolke, revolver in hand, directed that defence, exposing himself fearlessly to the Arab fire. His courage was magnificent, and he looked a very fiend incarnate as, with livid face streaming with blood from a seared scalp wound, he screamed his orders, swinging the fire of the Legionnaires with an effect which completely demoralised the Arabs surging about the gate.

Then, as though realising the failure of their first whirlwind attack, the Arabs swept back, retreating to the cover of the sandhills some distance away, and leaving the stretch of sand between them and the village dotted with huddled and lifeless, white-robed forms.

The bugler of the Legion Company sounded the "Cease fire!" and there came the order to unload and stand easy.

Fifteen men had been killed by balls from the Arab muskets in the terrific onslaught, and twice that number wounded.

"All wounds will be dressed here on the firing platform!" said Bolke harshly. "You, Zimmermann, see that pails of water are brought up for the replenishing of water-flasks. Esterharn, assist Corporal Dupont to have the ammunition-boxes brought up from the magazine. Three hundred rounds per man! Blake, you will come with me!"

Paul accompanied the sergeant—
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,160.

major on a quick tour of the barrack-rooms. Bolke wasted no time on those who, having reported sick, were abed.

"Dress, you dogs!" he snarled. "Every man is wanted to defend the walls. We carry no passengers. You can take your choice—an Arab bullet, or one from me!"

The majority of these men were really ill, weakened by the long, forced march to Zukra, the eternal blazing sun, and the stinking water. But to a man, they rose and dressed and, collecting their rifles, went out to man the walls. More than one could scarce stand on his feet; but, as long as trigger-finger could function, they were useful to Bolke.

It was towards mid-afternoon that the Arabs attacked again. A large force, numbering fully a thousand men, had made a wide detour during the morning. And now, yelling and shouting, they came sweeping to the attack on the opposite side of the village to that assaulted at dawn.

Bolke had posted eighty men to repel attack from this quarter, and they at once opened a rapid and withering fire. But this time, it seemed, the Arabs were not to be baulked.

On they came, eighty of them falling every time the rifles of the Legionnaires crashed reverberatingly.

Their losses were enormous, but they surged onwards to the very foot of the walls.

And then it was that the second attack on the gates was launched at the other side of the village. Yelling like demons, the main body of the Arabs bore down on the gates, sweeping forward like some great wave which would foam and cream over the bullet-spattered walls, carrying the little band of Legionnaires before it.

"Drop them!" screamed Bolke. "Blood and fury! Keep firing, there!"

Frantically the Legionnaires fired, loaded, and fired again. Not a shot went wide, and those Arabs who pitched forward to the sand were trampled underfoot the next instant by their companions, who swept on towards the gates.

They were firing as they came, and they had picked marksmen among them, for their bullets were being placed with an accuracy which was both disconcerting and unexpected.

Esterharn, firing through an embrasure near Paul, suddenly clutched at his throat and spun round. The clatter of his falling rifle impinged on Paul's hearing, and for an instant he turned his head in that direction.

Bolke saw the boy do it, and he

sprang at him, maniacal fury blazing in his eyes.

"You turn your head again, you rat," he screamed, "and I'll shoot you where you stand! Get on with your job, rot you!"

Next instant he grabbed at his shoulder, his face drawn and grey with sudden agony. An Arab bullet had got him, shattering his left shoulder. But with the iron will which was his, he had himself under control again in a moment.

Now the Arabs were at the gates, hacking and slashing at them with heavy swords and gleaming axes, oblivious, it seemed, to the withering fire poured down on them from above.

"By thunder! But the dogs mean business!" roared Bolke. "You there, Zimmermann, why in blazes aren't you firing, curse you?"

Zimmermann did not answer. He was shot through the lungs, and there was a drool of blood-flecked saliva at the corners of his twisted lips. He was dying, and he knew it, but, true to the code of the Legion, he remained on his feet to the last.

Weakly he slid his rifle barrel across the wall, sighted it on the fast blurring mass of white-robed figures below, and pressed the trigger. Then suddenly the rifle fell from his nerveless hands. His knees caved in, and, his face greying with death, he pitched face foremost to the ground.

Shouting and cursing, Sergeant-Major Bolke endeavoured to speed up the firing of the weary, powder-begrimed handful of men now left to him. But it was—and he knew it in his heart—only a postponing of the inevitable end.

Already the gates were beginning to cave in against the almost berserk onslaught of the yelling Arabs: whilst at the other end of the village the wall was now being held by less than a score of men.

Bolke turned to his bugler and snarled out an order. The man clapped his bugle to parched and cracked lips, and there rang out above the hubbub of battle the order to "Cease fire!"

"Fix bayonets!" roared Bolke. "We hold the gates with steel!"

There was something magnificent about that last desperate stand of the Legion. Formed in a pitifully small square, the sun gleaming on their fixed bayonets, they waited shoulder to shoulder inside the splintering gates for the first frenzied rush of the triumphant Arabs.

Depleted in numbers like they were, it was a matter of impossibility to hold out much longer against the Arabs.

But the brave band of Legionnaires did not falter. Every man was ready to fight to the very last inch. If death was to be their lot they would die fighting.

And was not Sergeant-Major Bolke there to help them? Bully as he had proved himself to be, his courage was magnificent. He was a leader of leaders, a doughty warrior, and his presence inspired them.

THE LION versus THE CORNSTALK!



THE TEST MATCH HOPE!

BY JOHN BREARLEY



Smiling Bill Murray they call him, and rightly so, for Bill's radiant smile shines through all Dame Fortune's unkind kicks.

And what a cricketer! What a rod in pickle for the "Aussies!"

See him bowl; follow his canny left arm; watch the deft turn of the wrist, the baffling pitch of the ball! Crash! The wicket's spreadeagled; another of Australia's crack batsmen has fallen into Bill's trap!

You'll want to chuck your cap in the air when you see Bill disposing of Don Bradman, Woodfull, "the unbowable," Victor Richardson, and the rest of 'em!

You'll want to kick, too, the unpleasant individual who is trying to put paid to Bill's successful cricketing career!

READ AND ENJOY THE FINEST SERIAL STORY OF THE
"TESTS" EVER WRITTEN! STARTS IN NEXT WEEK'S

"MAGNET."



Sergeant-Major Bolke went down, his skull cleft by a downward flashing blade wielded by a great giant of a Touareg!

It came as the gates crashed inwards, and a horde of yelling demons, with whirling swords aloft, poured into the narrow street.

"Stand fast, Legionnaires!" roared Bolke.

Next instant he went down, his skull cleft by a downward flashing blade wielded by a great giant of a Touareg. And then the last stage of the fight was on.

Parrying, lunging, thrusting, the gallant little band was pressed back. A cleaving blow from a great curved sword was parried in the nick of time by Paul, but it splintered his bayonet and bit deep into his arm.

Scarcely conscious of the spouting blood from severed artery, the boy clubbed his rifle, whirling it with what remained of his fast ebbing strength. All around him now were grinning, leering, snarling faces. Not more than a dozen of his comrades remained on their feet.

It was the end!

Then, faint and far away, as though in a dream, there came to the boy's ears the clear notes of a distant bugle sounding the "Advance!"

Next instant, felled by the broken sword of a huge Arab, Paul Blake went down, the blackness of oblivion closing over his head.

When next Paul Blake opened his eyes it was to find himself lying in bed in one of the barrack-rooms which had been converted into a hospital ward.

Standing by the side of the bed was Lemarne. Seeing the boy awake, the old Legionnaire bent down, a smile in his eyes.

"So you live, comrade," he said. "Ma foi, but we just arrived in the nick of time!"

Then, seeing the look of bewilderment in the boy's face, he went on:

"But you do not know. I got through to Kesh-el-Kabar, and fifteen hundred men, including a mule-mounted company, were dispatched at once for Zukra. We took the Arabs in the rear, and those whom we did not kill are mostly prisoners. Few escaped!"

For some minutes he lingered, then, looking towards the door, said:

"But there is another who wishes to speak to you, mon ami. I will see you again later!"

He withdrew, and to Paul came Charles Desmond, his arm in a sling.

"How are you, Blake?" he asked quietly.

"All right, except for a beast of a headache," answered Paul cheerily, fingering the bandage about his head.

Desmond handed him a bloodstained piece of paper—the piece of paper which Fraser had given Paul from Guy Warren.

"I want you to know that I've seen this," he said awkwardly. "It fell from your belt when we carried you in here. I picked it up and looked at it before destroying it. I—I'm sorry!"

Wonderingly Paul took the paper.

In the rush of events he had almost forgotten all about it.

Unfolding it, he read the words which Warren had scrawled that fateful night before bearding Ali bu Sadi:

"Paul Blake, at my request, shouldered the blame of having appropriated thirty pounds of the Gower Fund at Greystones. He fled from school to save my good name, for I was the one who took the money. Blake can make any use of this letter he likes, and I suggest that he sends it to the Governors of Greystones. That is the only recompense I can make to Blake, whom I have deeply wronged."

"GUY WARREN."

Slowly Paul raised his eyes to Desmond's.

"Well?" asked Desmond quietly.

"What do you intend to do?"

"I intend to ask you to forget that you've ever seen this," replied Paul. "Warren is dead—and he gave his life for me. I remain with the Legion! You and I alone know the truth."

Slowly and deliberately Paul Blake tore the note into fragments.

THE END.

(You've read the announcement on the previous page, haven't you, chums? Well, now sit tight until next Saturday, when Smiling Bill Murray makes his debut in the greatest sporting yarn ever written.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,160.

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!*(Continued from page 2.)*

water, form convenient places to which the oysters can attach themselves. The oysters fasten on to the mangroves as far up as the tide will rise, and the result is, that when the tide is out the trees present a strange appearance with their crop of oysters!

It might also interest Arthur to know that shirts grow on trees, also! The Indians in South America peel off cylindrical pieces of the bark of a certain tree, and make them into a sort of shirt. The upper opening serves for the head, and two holes are cut to allow for the arms!

Ready for a limerick? Here's one that has earned a useful pocket-wallet for James Dixon, of 2, Tenter Lane, Stamford, Lines:

When a cheque for a thousand pounds came
To a porter, Bill Gosling by name,
His head it quite turned,
In his pocket it burned,
Till at last it brought Gossy to shame!

Now for a few

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES.

J. W. Pearson (Halifax, Yorks.).—The plant probably gets its name of "Sea Dew," because it is found growing in profusion round the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea.

J. K. A. (Stonebridge Park).—The Humming Bird makes the hum by means of its wings—not its mouth! Furthermore, it is the only bird that can fly backwards!

"Boxer" (Dublin).—The longest fight that ever took place was in New Orleans, in 1893, between a negro and a white man. It lasted 110 rounds, or seven hours and nineteen minutes. The referee then

stopped the fight, and declared it "no contest"!

Tom Grant (Gateshead).—Yes, the Atlantic has been crossed in a rowing-boat. Two Norwegians once rowed from New York to Havre, and took sixty-two days to do it! But I wouldn't advise anyone to try to emulate their example!

Now let's see what the Black Book has to say!

First and foremost, next week's super-story of the Chums of Greyfriars is entitled:

"ROLLING IN DOLLARS!"

By Frank Richards.

It's a real "corker," and it's bound to keep you in roars of laughter; so if you're sensible, you'll make arrangements for a copy of next week's issue to be reserved for you. You'll find that Fisher T. Fish is very much in the limelight, and, as you know, when the American junior gets going, something decidedly amusing is certain to happen!

Here's another little surprise for you, namely, a new serial, which is written round the all-important Test Matches against Australia's crack cricketers. John Brearley is the author—you remember his "Foundry" story, of course—and in

"THE TEST MATCH HOPE!"

this popular author has excelled himself. You'll find the long, opening instalment in next week's issue, and I have no fear of your verdict.

Last, but by no means least, there will be another delightful yarn dealing with Medieval Greyfriars, entitled:

"SAVING SIR STILTON!"

a further poem by the Greyfriars rhymester, and jokes and limericks from our readers. Can you beat this for a programme?

YOUR EDITOR.

BUNTER, THE INK-SPLASHER!*(Continued from page 24.)*

"Bunter! You have been guilty of outrageous conduct! You have incurred the very severest penalties! I am bound to take into consideration, however, the fact that you prevented a burglary last night, and caused the arrest of a law-breaker whom the police recognise as an old offender and a very bad character. It was purely by chance; nevertheless, I am bound to take it into consideration."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

Quech was not proceeding according to programme—Bunter's programme.

"You would have been flogged with the utmost severity, Bunter. In the circumstances, you will not be flogged. I shall reduce your punishment to a simple caning."

"Eh?"

Mr. Quech picked up a cane from his table.

"Bend over that chair, Bunter."

"Wha-a-t?"

"At once!" Mr. Quech swished the cane. "Do not waste my time, Bunter."

Evidently Bunter's programme was off. He blinked at the Remove master in dismay and indignation.

"Oh, really, sir! I think—"

"Bend over!" said Mr. Quech, in a formidable voice.

And Bunter gasped and bent over.

Six times the cane rose and fell; and every time it fell there was a roar in Mr. Quech's study. When Bunter departed from that study, he wriggled his way down the passage, and had Mr. Swinger seen him then, it is probable that he might have offered Billy Bunter an engagement on the spot as a contortionist.

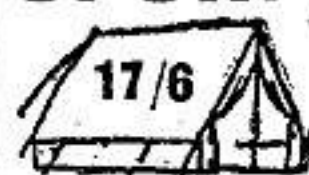
THE END.

(Next week's rollicking fine story of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled: "ROLLING IN DOLLARS!" It features Fisher T. Fish, the guy from "Xoo York," and, believe me, chums, you'll enjoy every line of it!)

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RASH! Bang! Wallop! A timorous rap sounded on the door of the Head's study. Dr. Birchmell, Master of Artfulness, hastily folded the comic paper in which he had been absorbed and thrust it beneath his blotting-pad. "Trot right in!" he said in his most dignified manner.

The door opened, and Jack Jolly, Merry, and Bright, the heroes of the Fourth, came in like lambs, looking very sheepish. Dr. Birchmell, like the Old Man of the Sea—or was it the Ancient Mariner?—fixed them with his glittering eye. It was a baffling look. "You—you sent for us, sir?" Jack Jolly interjected.

"I did!" said the Head grimly. "I sent for you, Jolly, to ask you what you jolly well mean by it?" "Mean by what, sir?" "By not attending my lecture last night on 'Famous Headmasters of St. Sam's, from Mo downwards.' Attendance at the lecture being optional, I naturally commanded every boy to be present. The roll was called, and you three boys failed to answer Adams."

"We've 'ad some!" murmured Merry, sotto voce. Listening to the Head's long-winded lectures was no picnic. Dr. Birchmell glared. "For why?" he demanded acerbity. "For why did you absent yourselves?" "Ahem!" cooed Jack Jolly. "The— the lack is, sir, we were all sick."

"Sick of my lectures, do you mean?" "Nunno, sir. We were indisposed." "Felt dicky, you mean?" "Yessir!" "Then why can't you use King's English?" thundered Dr. Birchmell. "And what, pray, was the nature of your sickness?"

Jack Jolly & Co. looked at each other. They hesitated a minute, and then, clapping their hands to their jaws, they blurted out in chorus: "Toothache, sir!" "Toothache, sir?"

Dr. Birchmell frowned. "It is eggstraordinary," he said, "that three boys, at one and the same time, should be stricken down with toothache. First time I new that tooth-ache was infectious!"

"It—it's awfully catching, sir!" said Bright. "Vorse than measles, or rabies. Why, I've known it spread right through the school, sir, on the evening of one of your lectures!"

A TOOTH for a TOOTH!

By DICKY NUGENT



GOT TOOTHACHE? HARD LINES! COME TO DR. BIRCHEMELL'S ACADEMY, HELL CURE YOU!

It was a very gloomy procession that trooped down to the village a little later. Jack Jolly & Co. looked as if they were going to their own eggscution. And Dr. Birchmell, who strode briskly ahead, might have been the Chief Eggscutioner.

Bitterly did the juniors regret having told that tale of toothache. Why hadn't they hit upon some other malady, such as mumps, or colic, or housemaid's neck, as an eggscuse for not attending the lecture?

But it was too late for vane regrets. Here they were, being hustled off to the terrifying Mr. Gentle—"Gentle by name and brutal by nature," as Jack Jolly remarked under his breath.

A wild idea of bunking occurred to Jack Jolly & Co., but only for a moment. The links-eyed Dr. Birchmell seemed to have eyes in the back of his head. "Funks! Cowards!" snorted Dr. Birchmell, when they reached their destination, and were ushered into the waiting-room.

"You are all showing the white feather, I declare! Is this the stuff that heroes are made of? Pah! Likewise, yah! You make me blush for you, you craven brats!"

Pulling himself together, he rushed into the study. The first thing that met his gaze was the eggernized and distorted face of Dr. Birchmell. Then he transferred his gaze to the floor, where, to his unspeakable horror, he saw about a dozen teeth!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Mr. Lickham, in blank dismay. "Whatever have I done?" "What have you done, you villain?" cried the Head, in a choking voice. "You have pulled out my false tooth—the entire plate of them! That's what you have done! And the aching tooth is still intact in my head!"

"A thousand pardons, sir!" gasped Mr. Lickham. "It was a bad blunder on my part, but I will soon correct it." And he made a movement towards the string.

But the Head was in no mood for a second eggperiment. He had reached the limit of his endurance. He fell upon his would-be benefactor, and snote him hip and thigh—wiped up the study with him, in fact. And after a few hectic and breathless moments, Mr. Lickham shot through the study door, landing on the lino for the second time, making a noise like air escaping from a punctured football.

Mr. Lickham picked himself up at last, and, aching in every limb, tottered back to his own study. "I hope Birchmell's tooth pains him for ever and anon," he mumbled to himself.

Meanwhile, the Head of St. Sam's was pacing his study carpet, roaring like a caged lion. "Ow-wow!" he yelled. "What can I do? I shall go mad in a minute! Ah, Mr. Gentle, callus as he is, I must have him. I'll tellyone the brute now!"

An hour later, Mr. Gentle was seen to arrive at St. Sam's, bringing with him a black bag containing the deadly weapons of his trade. He spent ten minutes in Dr. Birchmell's study—ten minutes of the most painful minutes the Head had ever eggperienced.

Mr. Gentle offered to eggtract the tooth, by gas, but the Head preferred electric light. And he leaned back in his chair and gave himself up to the tender mercies of Mr. Gentle. Jack Jolly & Co., peering in at the window, kept urging the Head to be brave, and not to show the white feather. "Be a Spartan, sir!" chorled Jack Jolly. "Be a Stoick! Show us the sort of stuff of which heroes are made!"

A leonish yell rang out from the Head's study—a yell which might have been heard in Muggleton.

The offending molar was knocked out at last; and Mr. Gentle was nocked out at the same moment, by a terrific punch from the Head's fist.

"Take that, you—yon butcher!" panted the Head. "That's the last time I'll ever have any dealings with a dentist! Ow! Wow! Grooooh! Yawoooh!"

And, with that tuneful duet—for Mr. Gentle lay on his back and joined in the chorus ringing in their ears, Jack Jolly & Co. staggered helplessly away to tellyone for the ambulance!

THE END. (Look out next week for another yarn of Muggleton Dregghers, entitled: "SAVING SIR SPITTON!" You'll enjoy it from first line to last!) THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 1,160.

Jack Jolly & Co. blinked at the Head in dismay. "Really, that's not necessary, sir!" gasped Jack Jolly. "Our toothache's gone now."

But Dr. Birchmell, grinning wickedly into the tellyphone, paid no heed. He was already calling up Mr. Gentle's number—"Muggleton oh-oh-oh!"

After a pause, the quaking juniors heard him say: "Hello! That you, Mr. Gentle? Dr. Birchmell speaking. How's biz? Quiet, gested a wiff of gas for the opera-