

Billy Bunter in a Screamingly Funny Circus Adventure—Inside!

The Magnet ^{2^D}



**BUNTER THE
LION-TAMER!**

THERE'S FUN AND EXCITEMENT GALORE IN THIS SUPER CIRCUS STORY—

BUNTER THE LION-TAMER!

By FRANK RICHARDS



Opening Yarn of Our Record-Breaking New Series, Featuring **HARRY WHARTON & CO.,**
the Cheery Chums of Greyfriars.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

At Last!

"TWOPENCE!"
"Threepence!"
"Sixpence!"
"One absurd penny!"

"Nix!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the Famous Five of the Remove through his big spectacles in surprise.

The Remove had come out of the Form-room in morning break. Harry Wharton & Co., instead of scampering out into the open air as speedily as possible, had stopped at the end of the corridor. They were going through pockets, turning out cash, and counting up the same.

The counting presented no difficulties. They did not have to go into high figures.

Harry Wharton produced twopence, Bob Cherry threepence, Frank Nugent a whole sixpence, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh a penny. Johnny Bull failed to produce anything. Evidently times were hard with the chums of the Remove. There was a shortage of cash.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter, while we're counting up our wealth!" said Bob Cherry. "Let's see—twopence and threepence, that's fivepence—"

"I say—"

"And a whole tanner—that's elevenpence. And Inky's solitary brown—that makes up a bob."

"Rotten!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The rottenfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sadly. "It looks as if the esteemed circus is off."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It does, rather!" he agreed.

"Admission one shilling to Muccolini's Magnificent Circus and Menagerie—
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that's the lowest price. We've got enough to admit one—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"There's a chance yet," said Bob Cherry. "One of us may get a tip from home before to-morrow. In fact, there may be a letter in the rack at this very minute with something useful in it."

"Let's go and see, anyhow!" said Frank Nugent.

"I say you fellows, do listen to a chap!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "I say, I'm going to the circus to-morrow afternoon, and I was going to offer to take you fellows—my treat, you know."

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"We can't afford to let you stand treat, old fat man! We've only got a bob among the lot of us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "If I stand treat, I shall pay for the tickets. I'm expecting a postal order—"

"Muccolini's Circus will have moved on by the time your postal order comes!" said Bob, with another shake of the head. "I don't know how long they're staying at Courtfield, but it can't be hundreds of years—"

"I'm expecting a postal order to-day!" snorted Bunter.

"The same one you were expecting last Easter?" asked Bob.

"Or the one you were expecting last Christmas?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Or the one you were expecting the day I came to Greyfriars?" asked Harry Wharton.

The chums of the Remove were hoping that something in the way of cash might turn up in time for a visit to the circus on the morrow, which was Wednesday and a half-holiday. But certainly they were not hoping that Billy Bunter's celebrated postal order would turn up. That was altogether too much to hope for.

Billy Bunter lived in a constant state of expecting that postal order. But the delays in the post seemed interminable. Somehow or other that postal order never seemed to arrive.

"The fact is, it's from one of my titled relations," explained Bunter. "I'm pretty certain it will come to-day. I'll tell you fellows what. We all want to go to the circus to-morrow. Let's pool resources—see? One of you fellows may get a remittance in time, but I'm pretty certain of my postal order. If it runs to it, we'll book a box at the circus. You can get the Royal Box there for a pound, and we can all cram into it. Mind, I'm only suggesting this, because most likely you fellows won't get anything, and my postal order is a practical certainty."

The chums of the Remove chuckled.

Knowing their Bunter as they did, they deduced from his offer that, while he hoped some of them might bag remittances, he had not the slightest belief that his celebrated postal order would materialise.

Had Billy Bunter supposed, for one moment, that there was a letter sticking in the rack for him, containing a postal order, he would not have been wasting time on the Famous Five. He would have been scuttling off for that letter as fast as his fat little legs could carry him.

"What about it?" asked Bunter.

"May as well agree," grinned Bob Cherry. "If we go, that fat barrel will roll along anyhow, and we shall have to pay for his ticket."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Let's go and look for letters," said Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, is it a go?" asked Billy Bunter anxiously. He wanted it to be settled that it was a "go" before the juniors went to look for letters. A remittance for some member of the

famous Co. was a possibility, but the arrival of Bunter's postal order, though possible, was extremely improbable.

"Yes, fathead!" said Harry Wharton. "Any old thing."

"Hold on a minute!" said Bunter. "Let's have it clear. Any one of us six who gets a remittance stands the tickets at the circus, and if it runs to it we book a box for a pound—what?"

"Right as rain!"

"I shall expect you fellows to stick to that!" said Bunter. "Of course, there's just a chance that my postal order might not come—"

"Quite a healthy chance, I think!" chuckled Bob. "Come on, you men! It's hard luck if there's nothing at all for at least one fellow among five—"

"Among six!" said Bunter.

"Bow, wow!"

The Famous Five walked away, with Billy Bunter rolling after them. Some other Remove fellows were already gathered at the rack, looking for letters.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Any for us, Smithy?" called out Bob Cherry. Herbert Vernon-Smith was standing before the rack, looking over the letters.

"None for you," answered the Bunder.

"Rotten!"

"There's one for Bunter," added Smithy.

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter rolled up. Smithy hooked out a letter and handed it to him, and the fat Owl of the Remove blinked at it through his big spectacles. There was no letter for any member of the Famous Five. Unexpectedly there was one for Bunter—though nobody, not even Bunter, believed that it contained the long-expected postal order.

"Oh, rotten!" grunted Bunter. He seemed in no hurry to open his letter. "I say, you fellows, it's still a go if anything comes in time for to-morrow afternoon."

"Yes, ass!" said Harry. "Aren't you going to open your letter?"

"Oh, it's only from the pater!" said Bunter. "I jolly well know what's in it—jaw! Still, I suppose I may as well look in it."

Bunter inserted a grubby fat thumb into the envelope and rent it open. He took out a folded letter, evidently without enthusiasm.

Parental advice was all that the fat Owl expected to find in a letter from Bunter senior, and it was clear that he placed no high value on it. But as he unfolded the letter he gave a sudden jump and a startled squeak.

"Oh crikey!"

An engraved slip of paper was enclosed in the letter. Billy Bunter blinked at it through his big spectacles with his startled eyes almost bulging through those spectacles. And the other fellows stared at it. They were astonished—though not, apparently, as astonished as Bunter!

"Oh crikey!" repeated the fat Owl.

It was a postal order for a pound!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Spot of Bother for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER rolled into the Remove Form Room when the bell rang for third school with a deeply thoughtful wrinkle in his fat brow.

He sat at his desk, deep in thought!

Five other fellows were grinning.

Harry Wharton & Co. could guess the cause of Billy Bunter's unusually deep reflections.

For whole terms the fat Owl of the Remove had been expecting a postal

order—or, at all events he declared so, and perhaps believed so.

Now, at last, it had come!

Amazingly, unexpectedly, that celebrated postal order had arrived!

But it could not have arrived at a more unfortunate moment.

In the full belief that he would, as usual, draw the letter-rack blank, Bunter had made that agreement with the Famous Five to pool resources for the visit to Muccolini's Magnificent Circus on the morrow. By that astute agreement, Bunter had stood to lose nothing, as he believed—as a tip might have come for some of the Co., but hardly for himself!

And lo and behold!—a tip had come for Bunter, and not for any member of the Co.!

For once in possession of a whole pound, Billy Bunter had to whack that pound out among half a dozen—according to the agreement that he had proposed, insisted upon, and got away with!

Instead of going over the counter at the school shop for refreshments liquid and solid, that pound had to be reserved to pay for the Royal box at the circus on Wednesday afternoon!

No wonder Bunter's fat brow was deeply clouded with dismal thoughts. And no wonder the Famous Five grinned as they noted it.

Bunter had, in point of fact, intended to "diddle" the Famous Five. He had

Ever since Billy Bunter has been at Greyfriars he has been dubbed by his schoolfellows the world's biggest funk. Now, with startling suddenness, the fat Removeite becomes BUNTER THE BOLD!

succeeded in "diddling" himself! Which, from the point of view of the five, was amusing—from Bunter's point of view, not!

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, also noted that thoughtful shade on Bunter's fat brow. Possibly he fancied that it meant that Bunter was thinking about the lesson, which happened to be history.

If so, he soon found out his mistake.

When he addressed Bunter he received no answer. Bunter, deep in painful reflections on the subject of that postal order, had forgotten where he was, and the voice of his Form-master was no more to him than the irritating buzz of a bluebottle.

"Bunter!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

No answer.

"Bunter!"

All the Remove glanced round at Bunter. Quelch's voice was growing both loud and deep, and a glint had come into his gimlet eyes.

Peter Todd reached out a long leg and kicked Bunter under the desk, to draw his attention. Then the fat junior woke up, as it were.

"Wow!" howled Bunter.

"Bunter!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Ow! Wow!" gasped Bunter.

"Some beast backed me—ow!"

"Will you give attention, Bunter?" exclaimed the Remove master. "What is the matter with you, Bunter?"

"Oh! I—I'm giving attention, sir!" stammered Bunter. "I—I heard every word you said, sir."

"Then answer my question!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh lor'!" mumbled Bunter. He realised that the Form-master had asked him a question; but as he had not heard it, he could scarcely answer it.

"You were not listening to me, Bunter!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I—"

"I will repeat my question. What did King Vortigern offer to the Saxons in return for their aid against the Picts and Scots?"

"A—a postal order for a pound, sir—"

"What?"

"Oh lor'! I—I—I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the whole Remove.

Evidently that postal order filled Bunter's thoughts to the total exclusion of early English history. The Removeites understood, but Mr. Quelch, who knew nothing of that tip from Bunter's pater, naturally did not. He glared at Billy Bunter as if he could have bitten him.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Bunter! How dare you make so absurd an answer! You are the most obtuse and backward boy in the Form, Bunter. You are also the laziest and most careless. Bunter! Tell me at once what you know about King Vortigern."

What Billy Bunter knew about that ancient British king amounted to precisely nothing. Bunter's fat brain absorbed knowledge of any kind reluctantly, and got rid of it as soon as possible. After being driven to learn anything, Bunter's only consolation was to forget it as soon as he could. So he blinked at Mr. Quelch in dismay. But Bunter did his best.

"Oh! I—I know all about him, of course, sir!" he stammered. "He—he won the Battle of Trafalgar, sir—"

"The what?"

"I—I mean the Battle of Waterloo, sir! He—he said 'Kiss me, Hardy' and—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"And—and he never smiled again, sir!" said Bunter.

"Bless my soul!"

"Is—is—isn't that right, sir?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Bunter, you will remain in the Form-room after class, and I shall set you a history paper."

"Oh crikey!"

"Silence!"

Billy Bunter contrived to give his Form-master a little attention after that. Ancient Britons and invading Saxons, marauding Picts and Scots, had no interest whatever for a fellow who had just received a long, long-expected postal order! But the fat Owl sat up and took notice, with a faint hope that Quelch might let him off with the rest of the Remove at the end of the lesson.

But that hope was delusive.

When the Remove were dismissed after third school, Billy Bunter was kept in. Mr. Quelch provided him with a history paper to keep him busy, and left him in the Form-room on his lonely own.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter, when the door closed after the Remove master.

Shakespeare has remarked that when sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions! Thus it was with Bunter! His postal order had arrived at the most unfortunate moment possible—and now, with a whole pound burning a hole in his pocket, he was detained in the Form-room, instead of being able to make a straight cut for the tuckshop.

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True, as that pound had to be reserved, by agreement, for the circus, Bunter had no business in the tuckshop. But he seemed to think that he had! He groaned dismally over Ancient Britons and Picts and Scots.

It was not till a quarter of an hour before dinner that Mr. Quelch came in to take Bunter's paper and release him.

He snorted at the paper, apparently not satisfied. However, he let Bunter go, which, after all, was all that mattered.

Bunter went.

Once out of the House, the fat Owl blinked cautiously round him through his big spectacles, and was relieved to see nothing of the Famous Five. He scudded away to the tuckshop. He dreaded to be hailed by some member of the Co. on his way there. But no unwelcome voice fell on his fat ears, and he scuttled into the tuckshop like a fat rabbit into a burrow.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bunter jumped.

Five fellows in the school shop grinned at him cheerily. That was why he had not seen them in the quad! They were there!

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows—I—I say, Quelch wants to see you—"

"He'll see us at dinner!" said Harry Wharton.

"I—I mean, he wants to see you now, at—at once! You'd better cut off—you know Quelch hates being kept waiting."

The Famous Five exchanged glances.

"Do him good to wait!" said Johnny Bull. "Got that postal order safe, old fat man?"

"Oh! Yes! But, I—I say, I—I mean it's the Head wants you! You can't keep your headmaster waiting."

"We'll chance it," said Frank Nugent gravely.

Billy Bunter blinked at the five in intense exasperation. Under their eyes he could not very well hand that postal order over to Mrs. Mimble.

"I say, you fellows, you may as well cut!" he grunted. "If you think I've come here to spend my tip—"

"Of course not!" said Harry Wharton, with great gravity. "How could you, when it's booked for the box at the circus to-morrow!"

"Ex-exactly!" gasped Bunter. "I say, there's a fight on in the Cloisters, you fellows! Coker of the Fifth and Hobson of the Shell! You fellows going to see it?"

The Famous Five chuckled. Coker of the Fifth at that moment was in full view in the quad from the doorway, walking and talking with Potter and Greene.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter peevishly. "Look here, you fellows—"

Fisher T. Fish of the Remove came into the shop.

"Bunter yere?" he asked. "I reckon I spotted him—oh, yere he is! Say, you fat geck, I yere you've had a remittance. I guess you ain't forgotten that you owe me a bob— Say, where are you going?"

Billy Bunter did not answer—he went.

When the Remove sat down to dinner, that postal order still remained in Billy Bunter's pocket, unchanged.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Shadowing Bunter!

"ROT!" said Johnny Bull. "My esteemed Johnny—" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I said rot, and I mean rot!" grunted THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,481.

Johnny. "Why shouldn't Bunter keep to an agreement, like any other fellow?" Harry Wharton laughed.

"Lots of reasons!" he answered. "In the first place, this Co. wouldn't be found dead taking a treat from that fat ass."

"That's all very well—"

"Very likely one of us will get something to-morrow, in time for the circus!" said the captain of the Remove. "If not, we shall have to wash it out."

"Bunter doesn't often get a postal order!" grinned Bob. "The fat duffer is sorry he spoke, by this time. All very well to pull his leg, but we're not bagging his quid."

"No fear!" agreed Nugent.

"An agreement's an agreement," grunted Johnny Bull. "Bunter proposed it, because he fancied we might get something, and jolly well knew that he wouldn't. We let him get away with it, and now—"

"Now we're letting him get away with the quid," said Harry, laughing. "It goes by vote in this Co., old bean—you're in a minority of one."

Snort, from Johnny Bull.

"I believe the Cliff House girls are going to the circus to-morrow," he said. "I'd like to go. And the lion-taming act is jolly good, from what I hear. Man called Marco— Hobson's seen him, and says he's worth seeing. I don't see letting Bunter back out."

"Not much choice about the matter, I fancy!" chuckled Bob. "We shall have to watch Bunter like jolly old shadows, to keep that quid till to-morrow. As for the jolly old Royal Box that's gone—I've heard that Temple of the Upper Fourth has booked it for to-morrow afternoon, for himself and his pals."

"Bother the box! Shilling seats will do for us!" said Johnny Bull. "And I jolly well think that Bunter ought to play up."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There he is!"

The Famous Five were discussing the matter in the quad, after class. Billy Bunter came in sight—crossing towards the tuckshop!

Bunter's range of vision being limited, even with the assistance of his big spectacles, he did not observe the grinning group, as he passed them at a little distance.

He rolled on to the tuckshop, and went in—doubtless relieved at finding that the Famous Five were not inside this time. Johnny Bull gave a snort.

"There goes the quid!" he said.

"After him!" said Bob Cherry. "We can let Bunter keep his silly quid; but it will serve him right to pull his leg."

And the Famous Five walked after Bunter. They entered the tuckshop, to behold the fat Owl talking to Mrs. Mimble at the counter.

"It's a postal order," Bunter was explaining. "A postal order for a pound. I don't want to go down to the post office, so I want you to take it."

"Very well, Master Bunter."

Mrs. Mimble looked at that postal order very carefully, before she dropped it into her till. However, she was satisfied, and Bunter's eyes gleamed with anticipation behind his big spectacles.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob cheerily.

"Oh crikey!"

The fat junior spun round. His little round eyes bulged through his big round spectacles, at the sight of the smiling five.

"Look here, you beasts—" hissed Bunter.

"Eh? What's up, old chap?" asked Bob innocently.

"Oh, nothing! I—I wasn't going to spend that pound, you know," groaned Billy Bunter. "N-n-nothing of the k-

kik-kind. I—I'm just changing it for a pip-pip-pound note, to pay at the circus to-morrow, you know."

"Good idea!" agreed Harry Wharton solemnly. "They would hardly take a postal order at the circus. Much better take a pound note."

"That's—that's what I was thinking," groaned Bunter. "Gig-gig-give me a pip-pip-pound note for it, will you, ma'am?"

"Certainly."

Mrs. Mimble handed over a pound note. Billy Bunter stood with it in his fat hand, blinking round longingly at the luscious things that could have been bought for a pound. But there was no help for it, and the fat Owl tucked the pound note into his pocket, and wrenched himself away from the beatific vision.

"Oh dear!" he mumbled, as he rolled dismally doorward.

"Anything the matter, old chap?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, no!"

"You look a bit peeved!" said Bob. "Got a pain?"

"Rot! Never felt better," groaned Bunter. "Enjoying life, in fact. Oh, lor! I say, you fellows!" Outside the tuckshop Bunter came to a halt and fixed his eyes, and his spectacles, on the chums of the Remove. "I—I say—"

"Say on!" said Bob encouragingly.

"I—I say, d-d-do you think we ought to go to that circus after all?" asked Bunter. "It's a bit frivolous, don't you think—hardly the sort of thing that Quelch would care for us to go to—"

"I've heard that Quelch is going himself, with Prout."

"Oh, is—is he? Blow him—I—I mean, all right! I—I hope I shall be well enough to go to the circus to-morrow," said Bunter. "If—if I happen to be ill, or anything—"

"That would be too bad!" said Bob sadly. "But you're not likely to be ill, old chap, as you've just told us you never felt better."

"I—I meant that I—I never felt worse!" gasped Bunter. "I—I can feel it coming on—pneumonia, I think. In my—my right leg."

"Oh crikey!"

"My grandfather was lame with it," said Bunter. "It comes on quite suddenly. If—if I'm not able to go to-morrow—"

"Then we'll tell you all about it when we get back!" said Bob. "As you're standing the box, we shall go all the same, though, of course, we shan't really enjoy it without your company."

"The enjoyfulness will not be terrific," said Harree Jamset Ram Singh, shaking his dusky head. "But the standfulness of the esteemed box settles the matter."

"Oh, quite!" said Harry Wharton, with a nod.

Billy Bunter blinked from face to face.

"Oh!" he said. "I—I see! Oh, all right! Of course, I might lose this pound note."

"We'll mind it for you, if you like," said Bob. "Wharton will lock it up in his desk, if you ask him, till we start to-morrow."

"Certainly, if you like, Bunter."

"Oh, no! I—I shan't lose it!" gasped Bunter. "Not the slightest danger of that. That's all right."

And the fat Owl rolled hurriedly away. But under the eyes of the Famous Five, he could not roll into the tuckshop. Sadly he turned his podgy back on that attractive establishment.

The Famous Five chuckled.

"Looks as if we should have all our work cut out to keep that quid till to-morrow!" remarked Bob Cherry. "But this is rather a game! Hallo,

hallo, hallo, the fat old bean's heading for the gates! Come on!"

Grinning, the chums of the Remove followed Bunter down to the gates.

Cut off from the school shop, it was clear that Bunter was going to walk down to the tuckshop in the village, and bestow his patronage on Uncle Clegg there. It was worth even a mile's walk to turn that quid into eatables and drinkables.

He blinked round him, cautiously, outside the gates. The expression that came over his fat face as he discerned the Famous Five just behind him, was worth more than a guinea a box. The glare he bestowed on them might almost have cracked his spectacles.

"Going for a walk, old chap?" asked Bob cheerily. "Jolly good idea! Let's go down to the village, what? Lots of time before tea."

"I—I'm going for a—a—a walk in the—the wood," stuttered Bunter.

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

"Eh? We shan't bother you, walking to the village, while you're walking in the wood, shall we?" asked Bob, in surprise.

Billy Bunter did not answer that question. A walk in the wood had no attractions for him, as there was no tuckshop in the wood. And if the Famous Five were going to the village, Uncle Clegg's was barred as effectually as the school shop. Billy Bunter revolved on his axis! He started in the opposite direction.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Aren't you going to walk in the wood and meditate on jolly old Picts and Scots?"

"I—I'm going on Courtfield Common—you fellows trot on to the village," said Bunter, over a fat shoulder. "Tell Toddy I shan't be back to tea."

long white road behind him. He glared at them with a deadly glare.

"Beasts!" hissed Bunter.

And he ran. The fat Owl vanished round the next bend of the winding road.

Ten minutes later, sauntering cheerily on, Harry Wharton & Co. found the road ahead of them bare, as it stretched across the green common towards Courtfield town. Bunter had vanished.

"Stole away!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently Billy Bunter had dodged into the wood bordering the road, to take cover. Anyhow, he had disappeared from sight.

"Here endeth the jolly old joke!" said Bob. "Let's get back, and get a knock or two at the nets before tea."

And the Famous Five walked back to the school, done with Bunter, and not doubting that the pound note—changed



As Billy Bunter started to run, the tramp reached out with the crook of his stick. What happened next, Bunter hardly knew. A fat leg was hooked from under him, and he pitched forward. "Ooooooogh!" he spluttered.

"Better still—let's!"

"Ripping in the wood, in this lovely June weather!" agreed Nugent. "Jolly good idea of yours, Bunter."

Billy Bunter breathed hard and deep.

"Look here, you fellows, I don't want to be shirty, but I want to be alone," he said. "I—I've got to—to think out some history for Quelch—I got into a row in class this morning about those filthy Picts and Scots, and—and—"

"Wharton's a whale at history," said Bob. "He will help you."

"Glad to!" said Harry.

"Well, look here, I don't want any help. You fellows clear off, and leave me to—to—to think it out."

"You're not going to the village?"

"Oh! No!"

Bob winked at his comrades.

"All right! If you don't want our company, we'll go on to the village—"

"Eh?"

"While you walk in the wood! Come on, you men!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter rolled on, leaving the chums of the Remove chortling. They knew why Bunter had selected Courtfield Common. The circus encampment was there, and attached to the circus were refreshment stalls of various kinds. It was a longer walk than that to the village of Friardale; but Bunter was getting quite desperate now. Tea-time was near; Bunter was hungry!

"Dear old Bunter!" chortled Bob. "He thinks he's pulling the wool over our eyes all this time! Anybody like a walk to Courtfield Common?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was quite a pleasant walk in sunny June. And keeping up this game appealed to the juniors' sense of humour. They walked after Bunter.

Blinking round over a fat shoulder ten minutes later, the Owl of the Remove had the pleasure—or otherwise!—of seeing five figures dotting the

into tuck—would be safely packed away inside Billy Bunter by the time they saw him again.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Out of the Frying-pan!

"O H crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter.

He stumbled over something in the dusky woodland path, and tripped.

Having escaped from his shadowers, the fat Owl of the Remove was following a narrow, leafy footpath that wound through a deep wood, on the border of Courtfield Common. This meant going some little distance round to reach his destination, and walking never appealed to Bunter; but he had, at least, shaken off those beasts who were shadowing him.

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The deep shade of the wood was very agreeable, after the blaze of summer sunshine on the open road. But it was so very deep and dusky under the thick foliage, that the fat Owl hardly saw where he was going. He stumbled over the obstruction in the path, before he saw what it was.

In point of fact, it was a long leg stretched out from a man who was sitting under a tree. And as Bunter tripped over it, a gruff, husky, angry voice proceeded from the proprietor of the long leg.

"Ere, look where you're going, four eyes!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He righted himself, and blinked round at the man who had spoken. He was not a nice man to look at. He was roughly clad, with a dingy, battered bowler hat on an untidy head, and three or four days' growth of beard on a stubbly chin. His nose glowed red in the dusk of the wood, hinting that its owner was a strenuous supporter of the drink traffic. A knobby stick lay across his knees, and beside him were the remnants of a meal in a red-spotted handkerchief.

Clearly, the man was a tramp—and he looked the surliest, roughest, and most unpleasant tramp that Bunter had ever seen.

Not by any means the sort of man that a fellow would have chosen to meet on a lonely footpath in a wood—especially when that fellow had a whole pound in his pocket!

Bunter gave him one startled blink through his big spectacles, and started to run.

The tramp, grasping his stick, reached out. The stick had a crook handle, and he reached for Bunter with the crook.

What happened next, Bunter hardly knew.

A fat leg was hooked from under him, and he came down, hitting the county of Kent with a heavy bump.

"Oooooogh!" spluttered Bunter, as he sprawled.

The tramp grinned, and rose to his feet. He gave a quick glance up and down the footpath.

Overhanging boughs shut off the view in both directions. It was as secluded and sylvan a spot as any tramp could have desired. Mr. Jimmy Guggs had, indeed, selected it for that reason, while he partook of his meal. That lunch, as a matter of fact, did not belong to Mr. Guggs. Mr. Guggs had "pinched" that lunch from the circus encampment on Courtfield Common; and, naturally, he had not desired to remain in the open while he devoured his prey.

Confident that nobody belonging to the circus would find him there, the tattered man had enjoyed his lunch in peace. He had been in luck that day—but he had not looked for such luck as this—a fat schoolboy walking right into his hands, in the very spot that he would have selected for such a meeting! Lunch was all very well; but Jimmy Guggs was in need of something of a fluid nature to wash it down, and he was short of current coin of the realm. He hoped that this fat chap was better provided.

As Billy Bunter lay gasping and spluttering, the tramp stirred him, with a poke of the stick in his fat ribs.

"Urrrggh!" gurgled Bunter.

"Git hup!" said the tramp.

"Grooogh! Lemme alone!" gasped Bunter. "Oh crikey! I say, I haven't any money! Oh dear!"

"I said git hup!" growled Mr.

Guggs, with a threatening growl that made Billy Bunter's fat flesh creep.

The fat junior crawled to his feet.

He backed away a pace or two—and the tramp followed him up, with a menacing scowl and a flourish of the stick.

"You want your 'ead cracked?" he asked.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter. "No!"

"Tramping on a man's legs!" said Mr. Guggs indignantly. "Can't a cove sit down and 'ave a minute's rest in the shade, without a bloke tramping on his legs! Waking up a cove nappin' arter his lunch!"

"I—I never saw you!" gasped Bunter.

"Well, you see me now, and you see this here stick! Five bob will fix it!" said Mr. Guggs.

"I—I haven't got five shillings!" groaned Bunter. "Oh lor'!"

He blinked at the bulky ruffian in horror. His fat hand clutched the pound note in his pocket. He had escaped from the Famous Five—to fall into the hands of this fearful ruffian—out of the frying-pan into the fire!

"If you ain't!" said Mr. Guggs. "I'll take wot you got! You can't trample on a man's legs, and nothing said. 'Ere, 'old on!"

Bunter, desperate, made a bound to escape. The tramp made a bound after him, and grabbed him by a fat shoulder.

"No, you don't!" he grinned.

"Leggo!" gasped Bunter. "Owl! Leggo! Help! Fire! Murder! Help!" Bunter's frantic yell woke echoes far and wide.

"Old your row!" hissed Mr. Guggs. The spot was lonely; but it was quite possible that somebody from the circus camp was looking for a lost lunch, and Bunter's wild yells spelled danger for the footpad. "Stow it, blow yer!"

"Help!" shrieked Bunter.

"Take that, and shut up!" hissed Mr. Guggs, and his heavy hand smacked Billy Bunter's head with a hefty smack that made it ring.

"Ow! Wow!" howled Bunter.

"Now then, you keep quiet!" said the tramp; and, holding Bunter by the collar with his left hand, he began to grope through the fat Owl's pockets with his right.

Billy Bunter was no fighting man. But the bare thought of losing that pound stirred him to reckless resistance. On any other day in the term the tramp might have gone through Bunter's pockets, and had only his trouble for his pains. But this day Bunter's postal order had arrived—and at the awful thought of losing it, Billy Bunter forgot that he was a funk, and fought madly.

The tramp, hardly expecting resistance from the fat schoolboy, was taken by surprise as a fat fist crashed full into his stubbly face. It landed in his eye, and Mr. Guggs blinked and howled.

The next moment he punched. It was not a smack this time, but a punch, and it sent Billy Bunter rolling.

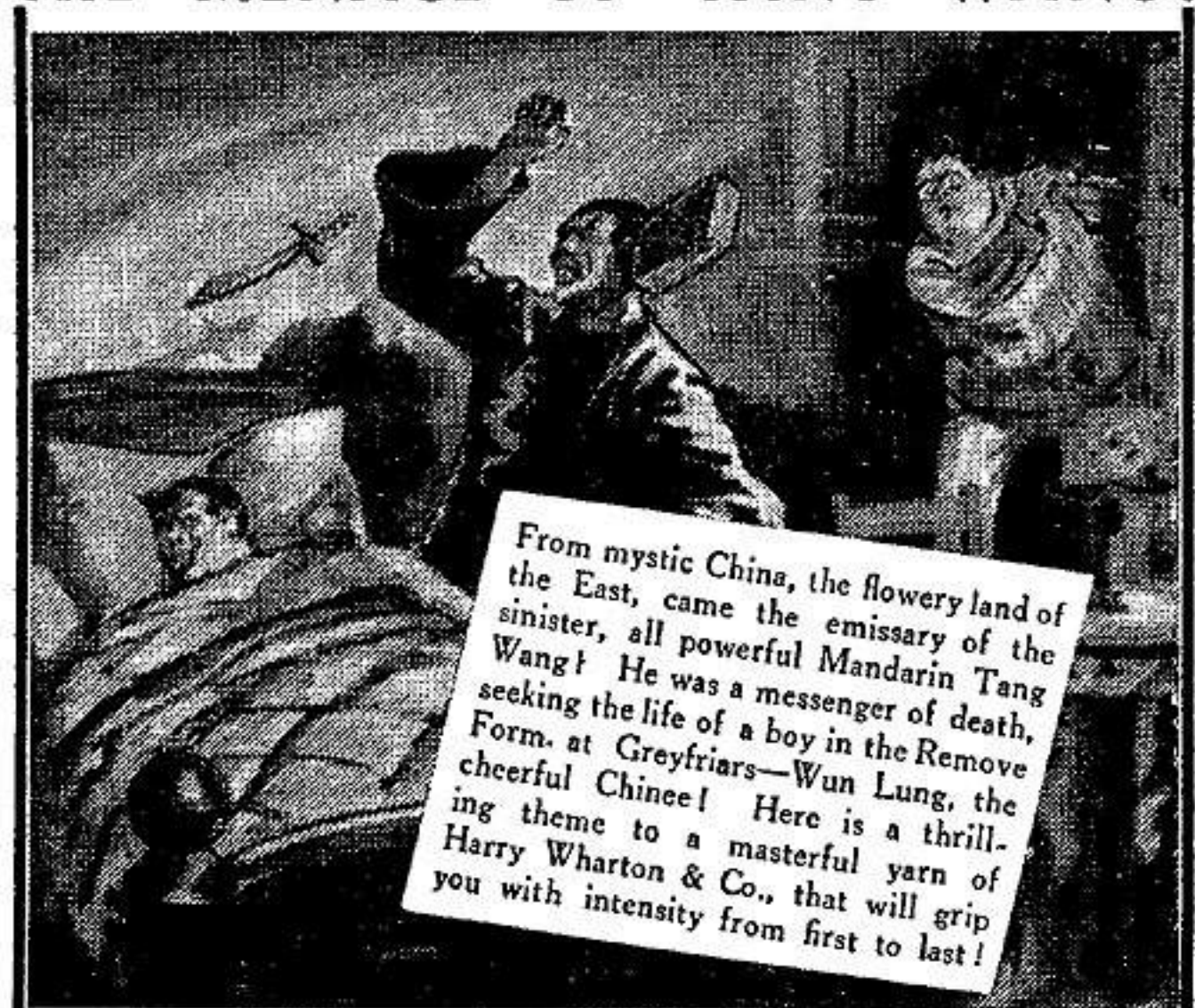
He rolled and spluttered wildly.

"Now, then—" snarled the footpad. He jumped at the sprawling fat Owl.

In the excitement of the combat, neither Bunter nor the tramp had noticed, or heeded, a rustling in the branches that jutted over the narrow path. Neither was aware of a new arrival on the scene, till a powerful hand gripped the tramp by the back of the neck as he was jumping at Bunter.

In that grip, which seemed like a steel vice, Jimmy Guggs was jerked backward, and he hung helplessly, wriggling and gurgling.

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Billy Bunter, gasping for breath, sat up, set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked at the man who had come to his aid so unexpectedly.

He saw a big, broad-shouldered, powerful man—almost a giant in stature. The tramp, wriggling wildly, hung in his grip like a sack. The big man grinned down at Bunter.

"Hurt, sonny?" he asked.

"Oh! Yes! Wow!" gasped Bunter.

"I'll make this brute pay for it!"

"Oooogh!" moaned Mr. Guggs. "Leago! Oooogh! Leago! You're a-cracking of my neck, you are! I'll go quiet. Leago!"

Billy Bunter staggered up. He was rescued—and the pound was still safe in his pocket. He blinked at his rescuer—and blinked at him again. There was something familiar in the herculean figure, the strong-featured face, the massive shoulders. Suddenly he remembered that he had seen that face and figure in pictures on all the boardings about Courtfield and Friardale for the last week—pictured in the circus bills. The big man was Marco, the lion-tamer of Muccolini's Magnificent Menagerie and Circus.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, thanks! I say, hold him! D-d-don't let him get loose! Oh, lor! He was going to rob me. Oh dear!"

The big man chuckled.

"Does he look like getting loose?" he asked.

And Billy Bunter chuckled, too. The tramp did not look like getting loose. Crumpled up in the iron grasp of the lion-tamer, Mr. Guggs could only wriggle, and moan, and gurgle spasmodically. Jimmy Guggs had heard, more than once, that honesty was the best policy; and now, for the first time, it struck him that there was something in it.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Plucky Bunter!

"**Y**OU'RE a plucky kid!" said Marco.

"Eh?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Leago!" moaned the tramp feebly.

Taking no notice of the ruffian sagging in his grasp, like a bundle of rags, the big man looked at Bunter, with admiring approval—which was rather a new experience for the fat Owl of the Remove.

"There's not many kids of your age who would have tackled a hulking brute like this!" said the lion-tamer.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "No! Yes!"

As a matter of fact, the fat Owl had been frightened almost out of his fat wits. Only in sheer desperation, at the idea of losing his pound, had he put up resistance. But Marco's misapprehension was natural. He had arrived on the spot just in time to see Bunter hit the tramp in the eye, and go over under Guggs' punch. His impression was that the fat schoolboy had displayed uncommon pluck, in trying to handle a burly tramp, obviously more than a match for half a dozen of him.

Billy Bunter was not the fellow to disclaim credit, deserved or undeserved. He was more than willing to admit that he was a plucky kid.

"You see, I wasn't going to let him rob me!" he said. "The beast was going through my pockets!"

"It was plucky," said Marco. "You'd have got rather smashed if I hadn't come along!"

Bunter shivered.

"I say, I'm jolly glad you came

up!" he said. "Did you hear me call for help?"

Marco grinned.

"You could have been heard a mile off," he answered. "But I was looking for this sportsman. At least, I was looking for a prowling thief who pinched a lunch off my caravan—and I think I've found him!"

"Leago!" moaned Mr. Guggs. "My bones are a-going! I tell yer, you're cracking me blooming neck! Leago!"

"You've been pinching from the circus!" said the lion-tamer.

"I ain't!" gurgled the tramp. "I ain't! I never knowed there was no circus anywhere about, and I never—urrrgh!"

Shake, shake, shake!

The hapless footpad swung helplessly in the sinewy grasp. He gurgled and spluttered and sputtered.

"Urrgh! Leago! I own up! I 'ad it! You can 'ave it back—wot's left of it! Leago!"

Marco glanced at the remnant of food in the red-spotted handkerchief lying in the grass. What was left of that lunch did not look worth recapturing.

"Leago!" moaned Mr. Guggs.

"I ought to run you in for pilfering," said the lion-tamer. "But you ain't worth the trouble. Stick there!"

"Yoo-hoop!" howled the tramp.

Jimmy Guggs was no light weight. But the big man swung him into the air with ease, with a grip on the back of his frowsy collar.

Bunter blinked in wonder. Up went the tramp, swinging, and the lion-tamer swung him bodily over a thick oak branch that jutted across the path.

The tramp hung there, eight or nine feet above the earth, his tattered waistcoat resting on the branch, his legs hanging down on one side of it, his head and arms on the other. Folded over the branch, he gurgled horribly.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"Gurrrgh!" gurgled the tramp. "Urrgh! Oh, my eye! 'Ook me down out of this, blow yer! Urrgh!"

"You'd better come with me, kid," said Marco. "You don't want to be in this wood when that brute gets going again."

"No fear!" said Bunter promptly.

And he followed the big man along the footpath, leaving Mr. Guggs to wriggle breathlessly along the branch and clamber down the tree. His gasps and gurgles died away behind, as Bunter and the circus man walked on and emerged from the wood on the side of Courtfield Common.

Far in the distance, towards the town, could be seen the circus camp—a huge tent, smaller tents, and parked caravans and lorries.

"I say, you belong to the circus, don't you?" asked Bunter. "I've seen your pictures on the posters—you're Marco, the wonderful lion-tamer!" added Bunter.

A little soft sawder. Bunter considered, never came amiss. And Marco was a great man in the circus company, and might be good for a "pass" which would save the price of admission to a fellow who had other roads for his money.

"That's right!" agreed Marco.

"Some of the fellows at our school have seen you in the circus," went on Bunter. "They say it's wonderful. The best thing in the show."

"They ain't far wrong," agreed Marco, with a complacent smile. "Old Mucky can say what he likes; but it's the lions they come to see."

Like most gentlemen who live by pleasing the public, the lion-tamer had an excellent opinion of himself and his

performance. Probably every member of Signor Muccolini's numerous company, was convinced that his own turn was the real genuine attraction that drew the public.

"I say, the fellows will stare when I tell them that I've actually spoken to Marco, the famous lion-tamer!" went on Bunter.

A little soft sawder having gone down, Bunter was trying the effect of a lot. He found the lot go down as successfully as the little. The smile on Marco's broad, good-humoured face grew more expansive. It was clear that he liked this! In fact, he lapped it up.

"I was going to have a look at the circus," went on Bunter. "I'm thinking of bringing a party to-morrow—standing them a box!"

"Come along with me, then!" said Marco. "I'll show you the lions!"

Billy Bunter toddled across the green common by the side of the big man. He had to trot every now and then to keep pace.

Bunter was, as a matter of fact, more interested in the refreshment stall at the circus than in the lions. And he had to get back to Greyfriars before the school gates were closed. But Marco, having taken his soft sawder in good faith, was going to show him the lions, so the fat Owl had to make up his mind to that waste of time.

They reached the circus encampment. The evening performance was not due for a good time, and the public were not yet arriving. A fat man in a silk hat, with an eyeglass screwed in his eye, gave Marco a nod, and Bunter a stare.

"That kid's no good, Marco!" he said gruffly.

Billy Bunter blinked at him. That remark seemed to him far from polite, and quite uncalled-for.

He guessed that the silk-hatted man was Signor Muccolini, the proprietor of the circus, and he took a dislike to him on the spot. But Marco's reply enlightened him as to the cause of the circus-master's remark.

"This ain't my new boy, Mucky!" answered the lion-tamer. "I ain't found one yet! This is a young gentleman from the school, and I'm going to let him see the lions!"

"Oh!" said Signor Muccolini, and he walked on.

Billy Bunter blinked after him with a deep frown. Not only had the signor mistaken Bunter—a Public school chap—for a new circus boy engaged by the lion-tamer, but he had supposed, on his looks, that he was no good! The cheek of it naturally made Bunter wrathful.

"This way!" said Marco, and he led his young friend into the annexe, where the animals' cages were parked.

Billy Bunter felt an inward quake. Marco had a good impression of him, and Bunter was anxious to improve it—chiefly with a view to a possible "pass" for the performance. But he did not like wild beasts at close quarters. He hoped that all the cages were safely secured.

A deep-throated, thunderous roar woke the echoes, as Marco stopped before the bars of a cage.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"That's Caesar!" said Marco, as a huge, maned head approached the bars from within. "Tame as a rabbit! Stroke his head."

"Eh?"

"He likes it," said Marco.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Caesar, the big circus lion, might like having his gigantic head stroked—but
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Billy Bunter did not like the idea of stroking it. Very much indeed he didn't!

Marco put his hand through the bars and stroked the great head. Then he glanced at Bunter, evidently expecting him to do the same.

Clearly, the lion was tame enough. But the great jaws looked to Bunter like a cavern. He repressed a shudder.

"Think—think he'd like it from a stranger?" he stammered.

"Try him!" smiled Marco. "Some kids wouldn't do it, but you've got plenty of pluck, from what I've seen of you."

Something made Bunter play up. At Greyfriars, the fellows would have grinned at the idea of Bunter having plenty of pluck. But the lion-tamer, as brave as a lion himself, did not doubt it—and, somehow or other, Billy Bunter could not let himself down in the eyes of the one person in the wide world who believed that he was plucky!

He would have given his pound, and a dozen more with it, to be safe out of the circus at that moment. Nevertheless, he made an effort and played up. His fat hand went between the bars, and he stroked the lion's head. Immensely to his relief, Caesar evidently did like it.

"Good man!" said Marco. "By gum! I can tell you, kid, old Mucky himself wouldn't do that! You're not afraid of lions!"

"N-n-n-o fuf-fuf-fear!" gasped Bunter.

"I'll take you into the cage with me," said Marco. "I'm just going to feed him. Come with me."

He stepped towards the grated door of the cage.

Billy Bunter blinked after him with a horrified blink. The bare idea of entering the cage, with that immense beast loose within, made Bunter's blood almost curdle. True, Caesar seemed tame enough—as tame as a cat! But one snap of his awful jaws, one pat of his paws—

It was not good enough for Bunter!

As Marco's back was turned, the fat junior made a sudden bolt, and crashed headlong into the circus attendant, who was bringing the lion's food.

"Oooogh!" gasped Bunter.

He sat down suddenly, and the circus man staggered and dropped what he was carrying. It landed on Bunter's head with a plop—and rolled down his face, and came to a rest on his fat knees—and he sat and blinked at a lump of juicy raw beef.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

In the Lion's Cage!

"G ROOOOGH!" gasped Bunter. He dabbed beefy juice from his fat face. The lion-tamer stared round.

"What the dickens—You clumsy ass, Parker!"

"The silly kid rushed into me!" gasped Parker.

"Rubbish!"

Marco gave Bunter a hand up.

The fat junior dabbed his juicy face with his handkerchief. Parker, scowling, picked up the beef.

It was rather dusky in the canvas-covered passage before the cages, and Marco had no doubt that the man had walked into Bunter. It did not occur to him that that plucky youth had been

in the act of bolting when his back was turned.

"Come on, kid!" said the lion-tamer kindly, and, taking Bunter's fat arm, he led him to the doorway of the iron cage, now open.

He was taking it so completely for granted that Bunter was not afraid, that the fat Owl contrived somehow to screw up his courage to the sticking-point, rather than let himself down.

But his fat heart almost died within his podgy breast as he stepped into the cage with Marco.

He knew that there could be no danger, or the lion-tamer would never have dreamed of taking a schoolboy into the cage. Still, it was possible that Marco was mistaken at that point! At least, it seemed so to Bunter, as he blinked at the terrific jaws and claws of the huge lion.

Caesar came across the big cage to meet his master.

Bunter would have backed behind the lion-tamer as the huge animal approached. But he could not stir. Terror glued his feet to the floor.

"That's right!" He heard Marco's voice, like a fellow in a dream. "Always look an animal in the eyes! That's right!"

Evidently Marco did not realise the reason why Bunter was standing glued. The attendant handed in the meat.

"Give it to him, lad!" said Marco. "Bit of an experience for you to have fed a lion in his cage, what? And Caesar will like you, after you've fed him."

Bunter mechanically took the platter.

A deep boom came from Caesar's cavernous throat. No doubt it was a sound of happy anticipation; but to Bunter's terrified ears, it sounded like a roar of ferocity. He dropped the platter, and the beef rolled under the lion's nose.

Caesar gobbled it.

That was rather a relief to Bunter, who had been in awful and fearful expectation of being gobbled himself!

Fascinated by the sight, at such close quarters, Billy Bunter watched the lion feed. Marco pulled the door shut. The clang of it sounded like the knell of doom to Bunter.

"Can't be too careful!" explained the lion-tamer. "Caesar likes wandering—he wouldn't do any harm, but he would get out if he could. He got away once, and we had a lot of trouble getting him back."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Once he was safe through this, the fat junior realised that it would be something to brag of in the Remove passage! He had been in a cage with a lion—he had actually fed the terrific brute! But he wished that it was safely over.

His terrors were leaving him now. Obviously, even to Bunter, Caesar really was as tame as a cat, terrific as he looked. Still, he would have been very glad to get on the safe side of the grated door.

"Now I'll show you some of his tricks," said the good-natured lion-tamer.

"I—I say, I—I shall have to be getting back to the school!" stammered Bunter. "I can't be late for calling-over."

"I'll run you back in my car!" said Marco.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He had not expected to hear that a performer in a circus had a car! It looked as if Marco did well out of lion-taming stunts.

"Now look!"

Marco made a sign, and the lion rose on his hind legs. He seemed, to Bunter, to tower to infinite height, and the fat junior hardly breathed.

"Dammi la zampa!" said Marco.

He held out his hand to the lion! Caesar held out a great paw! They shook hands!

The lion-tamer had an Italian name, but he had hitherto spoken in very ordinary English. No doubt that foreign name was adopted for show purposes, and, indeed, Bunter was to learn, later, that Marco's real name was the very British one of Williams! But foreign-sounding names "went" better with the public! In speaking his commands to the lions, Marco used the Italian tongue, in order to let the public have their money's worth. That was why he asked Caesar for his "zampa," instead of his paw.

It amazed Bunter to see the tamer thrust his hand to that awful paw! But it was a regular turn in the circus, and evidently without danger.

"Now you ask him for his paw!" said Marco. "Use the same words—'Dammi la zampa!'—he's accustomed to it."

Bunter shuddered.

But he repressed his shudders. It was clear to him now that he was in no danger—and when danger was absent, Bunter could be bold. Still, it was in a very gingerly manner that he held out a fat hand to Caesar.

"Dammi la zampa!" he said.

And he uttered the command in an exact imitation of the lion-tamer's voice. That was an easy trick to the Greyfriars ventriloquist. He hoped that the familiar tones would have a soothing effect on Caesar—not that that good-tempered beast needed soothing.

Marco gave a start.

His own deep voice was very unlike Bunter's natural squeak. But the fat ventriloquist had reproduced it exactly.

"Say! Do that again!" exclaimed the lion-tamer.

Bunter grinned.

"Dammi la zampa!" he repeated, again in exact imitation of the lion-tamer's voice.

"That's a clever trick!" said Marco.

"By gum, if you were looking for a job, young man, you're the boy I want."

Caesar took Bunter's fat hand in his huge paw. For a second, Billy Bunter's fat heart seemed to miss beating. But the next moment, he was quite reassured. Caesar shook hands with him, as he had done with his master.

"By gum!" said Marco. "Say, kid, what's your name?"

"Bunter!"

"You're at school?"

"In the Remove, at Greyfriars."

"You ain't looking for a job, then?"

Bunter grinned.

"Hardly!"

"I'd start you at a good salary!" said Marco. "You see, I have a boy with me in the performances—and the last kid was got away from me by another show. They ain't so easy to get in this line of business. It wants pluck, and plenty of it! It would suit you."

"So far as that goes, yes!" agreed Bunter cheerfully. "I'm pretty well known at Greyfriars for my pluck."

"If you leave school," said Marco, "you let me know! You've got a job waiting for you, if ever you want one. Like to try a ride on his back? I'm a bit too heavy, and I've had to cut that since my boy left me. But you—"

"I don't weigh much," said Bunter. "But—"



Billy Bunter watched the Removites as they rolled Temple along the quad. Then, suddenly, his eyes and spectacles fell on an oblong piece of cardboard that fell from Temple's pocket. "Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "It's a ticket for the circus!"

Marco grinned. "You don't weigh anything like me, anyhow," he said. "Try it on!"

By that time Bunter was reassured. He was still a little uneasy, but he made no demur as the lion-tamer lifted him astride of Caesar's back. The lion walked sedately round the cage, with Bunter on his back, clinging hold of the mane.

"Now, if you're in a hurry to get back to school—" said Marco.

"Oh! Yes! You see—"

"If you had time, I'd like you to have tea in my caravan," said Marco.

"I'm not in such a hurry as all that!" said Bunter promptly.

"Come on, then!"

Bunter had made friends with the lion. He was no longer afraid of Caesar. Still, he was rather glad when he was once more on the safe side of the grated door.

He was still more glad when he was seated in Marco's handsome and roomy caravan and an attendant brought in tea from the mess tent. It was quite a nice tea, and there was plenty of it, and Billy Bunter began to think that there was a good deal to be said for circus life!

Best of all, when he got into Marco's little Austin, to be driven back to Greyfriars, his pound was still in his pocket. He had fed up to his fat chin, and it had cost him nothing, and that pound was still intact, after its many perils. It was a happy and satisfied Bunter that whizzed back to Greyfriars School in the lion-tamer's Austin.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bob Loses a Bet!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's true—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked round at the

laughing fellows in the Rag, with a wrathful blink that might have cracked his spectacles.

Most of the Remove were there, after prep, and they seemed entertained. Bunter had been telling the tale!

Billy Bunter was not the fellow to hide his light under a bushel. He was the fellow to make the most of an exploit. And—having by that time forgotten his terrors in entering the lion's cage at the circus—Bunter's idea was that he had done a jolly plucky thing, and naturally he wanted the rest of the Remove to know what a daring and dauntless Bunter he was! So he told them!

Sad to relate, the Removites only roared with laughter. So far from believing Billy Bunter to be daring and dauntless, they did not believe that he would have faced a white mouse without a tremor, so they were not likely to swallow the lion story.

Had Bunter explained that Caesar, the lion, was as tame as a tabby cat, they might still have doubted. But Bunter did not explain that. He described Caesar as a savage, fierce, and ferocious wild beast of the jungle, that roared and growled in a manner that would have terrified anybody but Bunter!

So the Remove fellows laughed! They knew exactly how near Billy Bunter would have approached a savage, fierce beast of the jungle! Bunter, as usual, could not tell a plain, unvarnished tale, and the trimmings he added only made his tale of derring-do incredible.

"I say, you fellows, it's true, every word!" howled Bunter. "I walked into the lion's cage as cool as an iceberg—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The lion roared like—like—anything! Absolutely fierce!" said Bunter. "I looked right in his eyes! Always look an animal—any animal—straight in the eyes! What are you staring at me like that for, Smithy?"

"Looking an animal straight in the eyes!" answered Smithy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" howled Bunter. "I can tell you, that lion was as quiet as—as a lamb, after I'd looked him full in the face—he was frightened of me—"

"Did your face do that?" asked Peter Todd. "It's a bit of a nightmare, I know, but—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah! I'd like to see you do it, anyhow!" hooted Bunter. "I'd like to see you face a fierce, ferocious lion in a cage—"

"Well, I'd like to see you do it!" remarked Peter. "Not a fearfully likely thing to happen, though."

"I did it!" shrieked Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you been to the circus at all?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Haven't I told you I have?" yelled Bunter.

"Yes, but that looks as if you haven't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I had tea with the lion-tamer in his van!" roared Bunter. "I tell you I had a jolly good tea in that van."

"Did he spot you bagging it?" asked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! He asked me to tea, and I said yes—"

"That sounds probable!" remarked Johnny Bull. "If anybody asked Bunter to tea, he would say yes all right."

"The yesfulness would be terrific," chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"He drove me back to Greyfriars—"

"For pinching his tuck?" asked Skinner.

"No, you silly ass, he drove me back—"

"Serve you right if you pinched his tea from his van."

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"You silly idiot, let a fellow speak—he drove me back to Greyfriars in his car!" howled Bunter. "He admired my pluck no end. I sat on the lion's back—"

"And broke it?" asked Skinner.

"No, you ass! You should have seen me riding round the lion's cage on the lion's back—and the beast roaring and gnashing his teeth fearfully all the time!" added Bunter impressively.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites.

"If you don't believe me—"

"Believe you!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat! Not quite!"

"The believableness is not terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did you book that box while you were at the circus?" grinned Bob.

"Oh! No! I—I was going to, but I—I forgot—being so busy in the lion's cage, you know!" said Bunter. "I've still got the money."

"Gammon!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You fat ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, laughing. "We jolly well knew you were dodging us, to blow that quid on tuck."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"And we jolly well know you did!" said Bob. "Chuck it, old fat man—we know you got your tea out; there's still jam on your face—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we know you blowed that quid on it!" continued Bob. "You see, we knew your game all the time, and we were only pulling your fat leg. Now chuck telling whoppers, and own up that you've been to the bun-shop at Court-field and blowed that pound note."

"I haven't!" yelled Bunter.

"Rats!"

Billy Bunter glared at the grinning juniors.

It was true that he had dodged the Famous Five, with the fixed intention of "blowing" that pound on tuck. Still, owing to unforeseen circumstances, he had not carried out that intention. Had not Marco stood him that tea, there was no doubt that Bunter would have stood himself one before he came back to the school. Nevertheless, it was a fact that the pound note was still intact.

"I say, you fellows, if you can't take a chap's word—" hooted Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've still got that quid—"

"Gammon!"

"I tell you—" roared Bunter.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Bob. "You dodged us to blow that quid on tuck, and you've blown it. You could no more keep a quid in your pocket, when there was tuck to be bought, than you could fly. What's the good of gammoning, you fat dunder?"

"I tell you—"

"Well, if you've got it, let's see it," grinned Bob. "Bet you two to one, in doughnuts, that you can't show it up."

"Done!" said Bunter at once.

He groped in his pocket.

The juniors watched him with grinning faces. They did not believe a word of the lion story, and did not, therefore, believe that Bunter had tea'd in the lion-tamer's van. But it was certain that Bunter had tea'd, for nothing could have kept him away from the foodstuffs, when he had the wherewithal to pay for the same. So they had no doubt that the fat Owl had "blowed" that pound. And his groping in his pockets did not change their belief, as they fully expected to hear Bunter announce that he couldn't find the pound.

A fat hand came out into view.

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There was a slip of paper in it.

Bunter held it up.

"Oh crikey!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob.

It was a pound note.

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton blankly. "He's still got the quid. Wonders will never cease."

"Oh, really, Wharton! Didn't I agree to book a box at the circus with this quid?" demanded Bunter. "Ain't I a fellow of my word? You owe me two doughnuts, Bob Cherry."

"Fan me!" murmured Bob.

Bob had lost his bet—there was no doubt about that.

"Now perhaps you believe me," said Bunter scornfully. "That lion-tamer chap admired my pluck so much, he would have been jolly glad to take me on as his assistant in the lion-taming act—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! You fellows would have been scared stiff by that lion. I never turned a hair."

"I'll bet you'd turn a corner if you saw a lion a mile off!" remarked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter, for once in his fat career, was telling the truth, or as near the truth as Bunter could possibly get. But it bootied not. Not a fellow believed a word of it. Indeed, Skinner remarked that Bunter the Lion-Tamer was the best joke of the term; and the other fellows agreed that it was.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Going—Going—GONE!

BILLY BUNTER hesitated.

It was break the following morning.

Bunter, as soon as the Remove were dismissed from their Form-room, made a straight cut for the school shop.

Many fellows liked a snack in break. Billy Bunter liked a large snack. If Bunter's funds ran to it, Bunter's snack was likely to be as large as any other fellow's square meal.

Bunter was in funds now. A whole pound note reposed in his pocket. And he was, of course, hungry.

It was really surprising that Billy Bunter hesitated at the door of the school shop. The call of the foodstuffs was strong.

But that afternoon there was the circus. Bunter wanted to go to the circus. And he wanted to keep his word—to stand that box, as per his agreement with the Famous Five. He really did want to. Unluckily, he did not want to keep his word, so much as he wanted to sample the good things in the tuckshop.

It is well said that he who hesitates is lost. Thus it was with Bunter. He hesitated—almost a whole minute. Then the tuckshop drew him like a magnet.

Had the Famous Five been on hand, Bunter, no doubt, would have refrained from "blowing" that pound, as he had done the previous day, when their eyes were on him. But they were not on hand. They did not take that compact with the fat Owl seriously; they did not want him to stand them a box at the circus; and they had done with pulling his fat leg on the subject. So the Owl of the Remove was left to his own devices, and his own devices drew him to where the foodstuffs most did congregato.

That pound had had a series of narrow escapes the day before. But it's vicissitudes were over now. It passed over Mrs. Mimble's counter.

Break that morning was a happy time for Bunter—happy, and rather sticky.

He sat on a high stool at Mrs. Mimble's counter, and gobbled.

But Billy Bunter had a conscience.

As soon as the pound note had passed over to Mrs. Mimble, the game was up—so far as booking a box at the circus was concerned. But there were "bob" seats at Muccolini's magnificent circus. And Bunter manfully resolved to reserve six shillings out of the pound to pay for admission for himself and the Famous Five.

Fourteen shillings was, to any fellow but Bunter, a considerable sum; to spend on tuck at one sitting. Even Billy Bunter felt that he had had almost enough when that exact sum had been expended.

Then he hesitated again.

There was almost unlimited accommodation for foodstuffs inside William George Bunter's wide circumference. Six shillings remained, and if it went it was all up with the circus that afternoon. He hesitated.

But this time he who hesitated was not lost, for the bell for third school clanged out across the quadrangle. There was no time for more.

Sticky and shiny, Billy Bunter rolled out of the tuckshop—six shillings still safe in his pocket.

The Famous Five grinned at the fat junior as the Remove went in. The sticky state of Bunter's fat countenance told its own tale. They could guess that the pound, after its miraculous escape the previous day, was gone.

"I—I say, you fellows!" said Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove rather uneasily through his big spectacles. "I say, about that box—"

"Still standing it?" chuckled Bob.

"Oh, yes! But I've been thinking that—"

"What on earth with?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, I've been thinking about that!" said Bunter. "I—I don't think much of the boxes at the circus, you know. They call 'em boxes; but it's all rot, really—only swank. My idea is that a fellow would see much better on the benches in the bob seats. If you fellows prefer it, we'll go into that part, instead of having a box."

"And if we don't?" asked Bob gravely.

"Well, my idea is that it's ever so much better," said Bunter. "I'm only thinking of you fellows, of course. What I want is—you fellows to enjoy the show this afternoon. That's the chief thing. I haven't been spending the money in the tuckshop, or anything of that kind—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I've still got that pound, of course."

"I think I should win the doughnuts this time," remarked Bob Cherry. "Have another bet on it, Bunter."

"Well, I don't approve of betting, old chap, even in doughnuts," said Bunter, shaking his head. "I know you don't mean any harm, of course, but, you see, it's a matter of principle with me."

"Why, you fat villain!" gasped Bob.

"I don't think you ought to call a fellow names, because he's got high

principles, Cherry. I don't think Quelch would approve of betting, even in doughnuts, and we're bound to respect Quelch's opinion. You see—"

"Let's see the pound," said Nugent. "Certainly, old chap, if you like! Here it is! Oh, I forgot, I left it in the—"

"The tuckshop."

"No; in my study. But I think we'd better have the shilling seats this afternoon. I've kept six shillings out of the pound—I mean, I haven't changed the pound."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove went into their Form-room for third lesson, many of them thinking more of Muccolini's Circus than of Mr. Quelch's valuable instruction. Quite a crowd of the Remove were going to the circus that afternoon.

Among them were the Famous Five; for the letter-rack that morning had turned up trumps. There had been a letter for Frank Nugent, with a ten-shilling note enclosed from a thoughtful aunt, so the difficult question of finance was happily settled.

Billy Bunter, unaware of that happy circumstance, had a thoughtful expression on his fat brow as the lesson drew to an end.

Most fellows, having parked fourteen shillings' worth of refreshments in break, would have been content to wait till dinner for further sustenance.

But Billy Bunter could not help thinking of the delightful things that could be purchased for the sum of six shillings.

When the Remove were dismissed again, the fat junior wandered away to the school shop across the quad, as if his footsteps were drawn in that direction by some invisible but irresistible force.

He rolled in.

If he hesitated, it was one more example of the fact that he who hesitates is lost.

Six shillings passed over the counter! Tuck to that precise value was packed away inside William George Bunter!

Bunter rolled out again.

The box at the circus was a goner; now the shilling seats were goners, also. It was a little more than twenty-four hours since Billy Bunter's postal order had so surprisingly arrived! Now the fat Owl of the Remove was in his accustomed stony state once more!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bunter gave a guilty start as he almost ran into the Famous Five, coming out of the tuckshop. He blinked at them rather uncertainly through his big spectacles.

"Booked that box?" asked Bob blandly.

"Oh! No!" gasped Bunter.

"We've got to start soon after two. Better get it on the phone. Quelch will let you use his phone, if you ask him."

"The circus isn't on the phone, fat-head!"

"They've got an agent in Courtfield to book seats."

"I—I don't know his number."

"I've seen it on the bills—Courtfield, two-double-one."

"Oh! All right! I—I—I'll go and ask Quelch!" Bunter gasped.

He rolled away to the House, leaving the Famous Five grinning. But he did not roll to Mr. Quelch's study to ask leave to use the telephone. Billy Bunter's brief wealth had evaporated; his postal order had come—and gone! Harry Wharton & Co. were going to the circus that afternoon, but it looked as if Billy Bunter wasn't!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

And Bessie!

"O H lor'!" gasped Billy Bunter. He blinked at the letter in his hand.

He blinked again.

He blinked in horror.

Bunter was reading the letter that had arrived the day before, with the postal order enclosed in it.

Hitherto, Bunter had not read that letter. He had been more interested in the postal order than in the letter. Still, the letter had to be read, some time or other; and now Bunter was reading it, sitting on one of the old oaken benches in the quad, after dinner.

The contents of that letter from Mr. Bunter seemed to give his hopeful son a shock.

Bunter had been surprised to receive that postal order—so surprised that it almost looked as if he had not really been expecting a postal order at all! But he found the explanation, now that he read the letter from his father.

It was rather a long letter. It contained a good deal of what Billy Bunter described as "jaw." Bunter's half-term report did not seem to have caused Mr. Bunter any great satisfaction. Mr. Bunter expressed an emphatic hope that the term's report would be better.

Bunter was used to this sort of thing, and could tolerate it with a certain amount of cheerful resignation. But there was a paragraph in the letter that made him jump.

"Your sister Bessie has written that there is a circus at Courtfield, to which she desires to go. No doubt you would like to go also. You may, therefore, take Bessie to the circus on the next half-holiday—Wednesday, I think. Bessie informs me that a box may be booked for the sum of one pound. I enclose a postal order for £1, for you to use for this purpose."

Billy Bunter's eyes almost bulged through his spectacles at that startling paragraph in his pater's letter.

Really, he wished he had read that letter earlier, as a dutiful son certainly ought to have done.

That pound was not a sudden burst of exuberant generosity on the part of Bunter senior. It had been sent for a specific purpose. And now—it was gone!

Bunter had not guessed this! He had never dreamed of it! Certainly, he would have learned it had he read the letter at once, as he ought to have done. But he hadn't read the letter—till now! Now it was too late!

"Oh crikey!"

groaned Bunter.

Now that the pound was gone, the fat Owl had to make up his mind that the circus that afternoon was off. That was bad enough. But, as Shakespeare has remarked: "Thus bad begins, but worse remains behind." Bessie Bunter, of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School, remained to be dealt with. No doubt she had been expecting to hear from Brother Billy about the arrangements for visiting the circus. It was

certain that Brother Billy would hear from Sister Bessie! On that point there was not a shadow of doubt.

"Oh, jiminy!" said Bunter.

The pound was gone! Not a copper remained. If the British public had been admitted to Muccolini's Magnificent Circus at a penny a head, Bunter could not have raised the price of admission.

Any minute now Bessie might blow in to join up for the excursion. She must have expected Billy to call for her at Cliff House. But if he did not, she would call for him at Greyfriars. If the mountain did not come to Mahomet, Mahomet would go to the mountain!

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Bunter.

The interview with Miss Elizabeth Bunter was certain to be painful. She wanted to go to the circus, she expected Billy to take her there, and she supposed that Billy was in funds for the purpose! It was going to be awful when he saw Bessie!

If only he had read that letter sooner! But he hadn't—and that was that! Bunter rose from the bench under the elms. There was only one thing to be done; he had to avoid an interview that was not only unprofitable, but very disagreeable. As it was a half-holiday, he was free to go out of gates, and stay out as long as he liked—till call-over. And, as Bessie might blow in any minute, it was only judicious to go while the going was good.

The fat Owl blinked round the quad and spotted Harry Wharton & Co. coming out of the House. He rolled over to them.

"I say, you fellows!" he squeaked hurriedly. "I—I'm sorry it's all off, about the circus! I—I've got to get out this afternoon, to see my pater."

"Then we shan't get that box, after all!" said Bob Cherry sadly. "How lucky we never supposed that we should!"

"The luckfulness was terrific!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Well, it's not really my fault," explained Bunter. "As my uncle's coming down to Lantham, and wants to see me—"

"Your uncle?"

"Yes, my Uncle William—"

"As well as your pater?" asked Nugent.

"I—I mean my pater," stammered Bunter. "My father William—I mean, my uncle father—that is, I mean—"

Bunter seemed to be getting a little confused.

Practice is said to make perfect, and there is no doubt that Billy Bunter had had a lot of practice at fibbing. But.

(Continued on next page.)

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somehow, his fibs never seemed to convince anybody. He was rather liable to get them mixed.

"You mean your Aunt George, or your Uncle Mary?" asked Bob. "Or perhaps your father's uncle, or your uncle's father?"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You fat ass!" said Harry Wharton. "Can't you get it into your silly head that we were only pulling your leg, and wouldn't be found dead in your box, even if you were really going to stand one, which you weren't?"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"No need to go out of gates, as we know the whole game, you fat chump!" grunted Johnny Bull. "So cut out the rest of the whoppers."

"I say, you fellows, I never changed that pound, and I kept back six shillings out of it, too!" said Bunter. "But I've really got to go out, because Bessie will——"

"Bessie?"

"I—I mean, because my Uncle Peter—I mean, my Father William—that is, my pater, is coming down to Courtfield——"

"As well as Lantham?"

"I—I mean Lantham—and I've got to go over and see him, and so, if Bessie happens to blow in before you go to the circus, you tell her that—that I've had to hurry off to see my uncle—I mean my pater. See?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

Looking past the fat Owl, they had a view of a figure coming in at the gates—a plump figure, that rather resembled Bunter's, with a plump face and a large pair of spectacles that resembled Bunter's very much indeed.

Bunter had read that letter, and taken warning, too late! Bessie had arrived!

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter peevishly. "What are you fellows cackling at? I say, if Bessie asks you whether I booked that box at the circus, tell her I had to rush off in such a hurry that I hadn't time. I couldn't keep my uncle waiting at Courtfield—I mean I couldn't keep my father waiting at Lantham! Tell her I will send half of the postal order to her. See? I shall be able to do it to-morrow. I'm expecting a postal order—another postal order, you know—and——"

"Why not tell her yourself?" asked Bob.

"I can't wait till she comes," explained Bunter. "I've got to rush off before she gets here—I mean, I'm awfully sorry that I can't wait till she comes over, but you see how it is, don't you?"

"I think so!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "But you won't have to wait long to see Bessie, old fat man! You see, she's just behind you."

"Wha-a-t?"

Billy Bunter spun round.

Bessie, having spotted the group by the House, was coming directly towards them. Her unhappy brother met her face to face.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter. "I—I say, Bessie, old dear, I—I'm jolly glad to see you! I—I wasn't just going out, Bessie."

Miss Bunter blinked at him.

"I should think not!" she said. "Have you got that box?"

"Oh! No! Yes!"

"Why didn't you call for me at Cliff House?" demanded Bessie warmly. "Do you think girls ought to have to call for boys?"

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"Oh! Yes! No! I—I didn't want you to call!" gasped Bunter, for once telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

"I've been expecting you ever since dinner!" snapped Miss Bunter. "Marjorie and Clara have been waiting, too. I'm taking them to the circus. There will be room for four in the box. Marjorie and Clara——"

"Oh crikey!"

"They've gone on, and they're going to wait at the stile," said Bessie. "Are you ready to start?"

"Oh! Yes! No! You see——"

"I think you might have put a clean collar on," said Bessie. "And I think you might have washed, while you were about it. I can see that you had treacle pudding at dinner."

"Look here——"

"Well, how long are you going to keep me waiting?" asked Bessie. "If you haven't booked the box yet, we shall have to get there early——"

"Oh! That's all right! You—you start!" gasped Bunter. "I—I've got to see Quelch—I shan't be long after you—you get off, old girl—you can't keep Marjorie and Clara waiting at the stile——"

"Sure you've got that box all right?"

"Think I don't know how to book a box? You book 'em by telephone—Courtfield two-double-one, you know. I—I'll just cut in and change my collar, and—and I'll be after you like—like a shot!" groaned Bunter.

"Well, none of your dawdling," said Bessie, and she turned and walked away to the gates, to follow on the way Marjorie and Clara had gone.

Bunter gasped with relief when she disappeared.

"You fat villain!" said Harry Wharton. "Are you going to keep the girls waiting at the stile, when you're not really going at all?"

"I—I—I——" Bunter gasped. "I—I'm going! I—I'm only waiting till—till Bessie gets clear——"

"To go in the other direction?" asked Harry.

Bunter made no reply to that. But it was clear that that was his intention. The pound was gone; and there was no box. Bunter could not produce a box at the circus, like a conjurer producing a rabbit from a hat! His one idea, at present, was to avoid painful explanations with Bessie.

"There's one thing you've forgotten!" said Bob. "If they're waiting at the first stile, they'll see you go out——"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better cut off to the dorm and hide under the bed!" suggested Bob.

"Beast!"

The Famous Five walked down to the gates. Billy Bunter was left rooted in the quad, blinking helplessly, at the end of his resources.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Windfall!

CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE of the Upper Fourth Form grinned. His friends, Dabney and Fry, grinned also.

Billy Bunter was the object of their risibility.

"Here he is!" said Temple.

"The jolly old lion-tamer!" grinned Fry.

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Dabney.

Bunter's tale of derring-do had been going the rounds since the previous day. In the Remove nobody believed a word

of it. Outside the Remove there was the same lack of faith. Temple of the Upper Fourth declared that it was Bunter's funniest story; and his friends agreed that it was.

Having a little leisure on his hands, Cecil Reginald was improving the shining hour by chipping Bunter on the subject.

Temple & Co. were going to the circus. But they were in no hurry to start, like commoner mortals. Cecil Reginald did these things in style. He had a ticket for the Royal Box in his waistcoat pocket, which had cost him a whole pound. And he was going to phone up a taxi to take himself and friends to Muccolini's Magnificent Circus and Menagerie. Other fellows, who were going to walk, were already getting off, but the wealthy man of the Fourth had lots of time to spare.

"Tell us about it, old fat freak!" said Cecil Reginald banteringly. "I hear you've been daring to be a Daniel, what?"

"More like a spaniel than a Daniel, if you ask me!" remarked Fry.

"Spaniel in the lion's den!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked morosely at the grinning Fourth Formers. He was in no mood for badinage.

He was worried—deeply worried. Unless he joined the Cliff House girls, waiting at the stile on the road, it was certain that Bessie would come back for him—not in a good temper.

Bessie would be wrathful; all the more, because, believing that Billy had carried out his father's instructions, she had asked two other girls of Cliff House to share that box! What Bessie would say when she learned that there was no box, and not even the price of admission to "bob" seats, Bunter hardly dared to think. It was certain to be something awfully unpleasant.

"Taming jolly old lions, what?" went on Temple. "I can sort of see Bunter doing it, you men."

"Sort of!" chuckled Fry.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Fancy Bunter handling a lion!" chortled Temple. "I fancy he would jump clear of the ground, if he heard a dog growl! And a lion—— Ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gave him a glare.

"I'd like to see you do what I did!" he snapped.

"Easy enough," grinned Temple, "as it was nothing at all!"

Gurrrrgggh! came a sudden, hideous, and snarling growl, almost under Temple's feet, behind him.

Temple of the Fourth, no doubt, had heard that Bunter of the Remove was a ventriloquist. But he was not thinking it just then, and he was taken quite off his guard.

At that horrible growl just behind him, Temple gave a gasp and a sudden bound, which lifted him a good foot from the quad.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

"Oh gad!" gasped Temple. "Look out for that dog——"

"What dog?" asked Fry.

"Didn't you hear him, you ass—why—what—where——" Temple stared round him blankly. There was no dog to be seen.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "Who jumps clear of the ground if he hears a dog growl? He, he, he!"

"I—I heard him——" stuttered Temple.

"He, he, he!"

"It was that fat ass playing tricks," grinned Dabney. "I remember he made a dog growl under Capper's chair once——"



The playful Mr. Tip reached out at Billy Bunter, who sat in the box with the Cliff House girls, and jerked out a string of sausages from the fat junior's pocket. Bunter, as red as a turkey-cock, glared in speechless wrath at the clown. "You've brought enough grub!" said Mr. Tip. "Thought you'd be hungry before you got home to tea, what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Fry. Temple crimsoned with wrath.

There was no dog present—it was a trick of the Remove ventriloquist—and the dandy of the Fourth had been needlessly alarmed. And, after his words to Bunter, there was no doubt that Cecil Reginald Temple looked an ass!

Temple did not like looking an ass! That he was one made no difference to that! He did not like it at all.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "Who's afraid of a dog? Who jumps when he hears a dog growl? He, he, he!"

Temple glared—and grabbed! There was a howl from Bunter, as the dandy of the Fourth got him by one fat ear.

"Yaroooh! Leggo! Whoooop!"

"You cheeky fat slug!" hooted Temple. "I'll jolly well teach you to play your silly tricks on a Fourth Form man!"

"Yow-ow!" roared Bunter. "Leggo, you beast! I say, you fellows, rescue!"

Five or six Remove fellows came speeding up.

Bunter's fat ear, considered merely as Bunter's ear, was of no great consequence; but Bunter was a Remove man, and Remove ears were not to be pulled by the Fourth—not with impunity.

Vernon-Smith came up with a rush. He barged into Temple and sent him spinning.

Bunter's ear was released as the dandy of the Upper Fourth went over. He rubbed it tenderly.

Dabney and Fry promptly grabbed Vernon-Smith. Redwing and Peter Todd and Squiff, Tom Brown and Ogilvy, of the Remove, were on the spot in another moment. Dabney and Fry were strewn in the quad.

Temple jumped up, redder than ever,

and wrathier than ever. He hurled himself at Smithy.

The Bounder grinned and grappled with him. They rolled over together in the quad.

"I say, you fellows, give 'em jip!" gasped Bunter.

Bunter did not join in giving the Upper Fourth Formers "jip." He was busy rubbing a painful fat ear. But there were plenty of other hands.

Dabney and Fry fled for their lives, with three or four Removites whooping after them. Temple was not so fortunate. He had grasped Smithy, to give him what he deserved—only to make the annoying discovery that Smithy's grip was about twice as strong as his own!

The Bounder, getting the upper hand, rolled him along the ground, with ruinous results to Temple's elegant clobber. Temple gasped and spluttered as he rolled; but he had to roll, and he went rolling on and on, followed by the Remove fellows, roaring with laughter. His hat fell off—his handkerchief dropped from his pocket—and he rolled on, spluttering, leaving them behind.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

He stood blinking after the juniors as they went, rolling Temple along the quad.

Then suddenly Bunter's eyes and spectacles fell on an oblong piece of cardboard that lay almost at his feet.

He blinked at it.

He jumped.

That oblong card had evidently fallen from Temple's pockets, like other articles, as he wrestled in the grasp of the merry Removites.

The other articles did not interest Bunter! But that card did! He had no use for Temple's hat or handkerchief! But he had a use for Temple's

ticket for the Royal Box at Muccolini's Magnificent Circus!

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

A moment more, and that ticket was in Bunter's waistcoat pocket.

If Temple did not want that ticket, Bunter did! And if Temple wanted it, he shouldn't have started pulling Bunter's ear, and got into a ragging!

Bunter felt that, in the circumstances, he was entitled to bag that ticket! Bunter generally felt, in any circumstances, that he was entitled to bag anything he wanted, if he could get his fat paws on it.

Billy Bunter did not delay to change into a clean collar, or wash! He was not fearfully keen on a clean collar, or even a clean face! But he was keen on the circus, and on escaping Bessie's just wrath! The fat Owl walked out of gates, with Temple's ticket in his waistcoat pocket.

Temple, in the hands of the Philistines, was still rolling and roaring. Billy Bunter cheerfully left him to roll and roar!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Box!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. raised their straw hats very politely as they came up to the group by the stile.

Marjorie Hazeldene was standing by the stile, Miss Clara Trevlyn sitting on the top bar, and Bessie Bunter on the step. The three schoolgirls were waiting for Billy Bunter to join them; which, so far as the Famous Five could see, was rather improbable.

"Where's Billy?" demanded Miss Bunter, as the five juniors came up.

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BUNTER THE LION-TAMER!



(Continued from page 13.)

before anyone else could speak. "Isn't he coming yet?"

"I—I think not!" said Harry, rather dubiously. He could not explain the circumstances to the Cliff House girls; but, at the same time, he did not want to leave them waiting there, for a fellow who was not coming. "What about walking on to the circus?"

"Billy's got the money!" answered Bessie.

"Has—has he?"

"Yes, he has, and we're going to have a box! There won't be room for you boys in it!" added Miss Bunter.

"Oh! We're trickling into the common or garden bob seats!" said Bob Cherry. "If—if Billy doesn't come along, perhaps you'll all come along with us."

"Rot!" said Bessie.

"Hem!"

"If he keeps me waiting much longer," said Miss Bunter, "I'll go back for him. And if I go back for him, I'll scratch him!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Boys have no manners," said Bessie. "Keeping us waiting! Why didn't you bring him along, if you were coming?"

"Well, you—you see—"

"Lazy!" said Miss Bunter. "Too much trouble! You're worse than Billy!"

"My esteemed and beauteous Bessie," murmured Hurreo Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Well, I shan't wait much longer," said Bessie darkly, "and if I go back for him, he will be sorry for himself!"

"Let us walk on!" suggested Marjorie gently.

"Bosh!" said Miss Bunter.

"Now, look here, Bessie," said Clara, "we don't want to be late! Ten to one Billy won't turn up! He's almost too lazy to live; and—"

"Rubbish!"

"I'll tell you what," said Harry Wharton. "Let's walk on, and if Bunter catches us up, you can go into his—hem—box; and if not, you can come into the bob seats. They're really quite all right."

Marjorie and Clara, it was clear, were inclined to close on that. But Bessie shook her head and sniffed.

"Stuff!" she said curtly.

"But—but, really, it's a good idea!" urged Harry. "I—I shouldn't wonder if something happens to stop Bunter from—"

"Has he blued the quid?" asked Miss Clara cheerfully.

"Oh, Clara!" gasped Marjorie.

"Oh!" exclaimed Bessie. "Is that it? I'll scratch him! I'll—"

Miss Clara slipped from the stile.

"Let's beat it," she said. "No good waiting for Billy. Come on, Marjorie!"

Marjorie hesitated.

The chums of the Remove could discern that neither Marjorie nor Clara was keen on sharing the Bunter box. Bessie had asked them, and they had not cared to refuse. Both would have

preferred the "bob" seats with their friends, to a box with Billy Bunter. At the same time, it was impossible to turn the Bunters down, so long as there was a chance of Billy arriving.

"Do you think Bessie's brother is really coming, Harry?" asked Marjorie.

"Well—" Wharton hesitated.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob. "Here he comes!"

All eyes turned on a fat figure that was rolling up the road from the direction of the school gates.

Bunter was coming!

The Famous Five could only stare. Knowing what they knew, they had naturally not expected to see Bunter again that afternoon. They had, of course, no idea of what had happened to Temple's ticket, which had caused so complete a change in William George Bunter's plans.

"Buck up!" called out Bessie impatiently. "What have you kept us waiting for, Billy? You haven't changed your collar, either!"

"Oh, really, Bessie—"

"Nor washed your face!" added Miss Bunter, surveying her brother critically. "It needs it."

"Look here—"

"All boys have bad manners, but you're really a conghdrop!" said Bessie. "Keeping us waiting about like this—"

"I—I couldn't find the ticket!" stammered Bunter. "I—I mislaid it, you know."

"Then you've got the ticket?"

"Oh! Yes! The Royal Box!"

"You've got a ticket for a box at the circus, Bunter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh? Yes! I've got it all right! Sorry I can't ask you fellows into it, after all—but, you see—"

"Never mind that," said Harry.

"Look here, Bunter, don't play the goat. We can all go into the shilling seats—"

"Wouldn't be found dead in them!" retorted Bunter calmly. "All right for you fellows, but I have to be a bit more particular—especially when I'm taking ladies to the circus. I've got the Royal Box."

"I heard that Temple booked that for to-day," said Harry. "If he's got it you can't have."

"Only Temple's swank!" answered Bunter. "You know what a chap he is for swank. I don't suppose he could afford it. Anyhow, I've got it!"

Harry Wharton & Co. could only stare.

They knew that Bunter had made that pound fly, and, without it, he could hardly have booked the box at the circus; moreover, only a quarter of an hour ago they had left him in a state of dismay, evidently thinking of anything but circuses.

It was quite a puzzle; and they could only suppose that it was some more of Bunter's "gammon"; and that, when they arrived at the circus, the fat Owl would announce that he had lost his ticket, or something of the sort.

"Now, look here, Bunter—" said the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, rot; let's get on," said Bunter. And Bunter started.

"Don't lose it!" said Bessie. "You know what you are, Billy! Do come on—we shall be late for the circus at this rate."

And the party proceeded, Billy Bunter grinning a fat and satisfied grin. Once or twice as they went, he glanced back over a fat shoulder. But there was really no danger of pursuit.

Temple of the Upper Fourth, when he missed that ticket, was fairly certain to search in the quadrangle for it. Certainly he was not likely to find it; neither was he likely to guess that Billy Bunter had picked it up and walked off with it.

There was no sign, at all events, of Temple coming along. The schoolboys and schoolgirls walked on to Courtfield Common, and a blare of music from afar greeted their ears as they approached the circus.

Plenty of other people were heading in the same direction: townfolk from Courtfield, villagers from Friardale and Woodend and the other villages round about: Greyfriars fellows, and Highcliffe fellows, and fellows from Redclyffe and St. Jude's. In the midst of a large crowd, the Remove party crossed from the road to the entrance of the circus tent.

Near the entrance, Harry Wharton slipped his arm through Bunter's, and drew him out of hearing of the Cliff House girls.

"Now look here, you fat ass—" he whispered.

"Leggo!"

"We've got enough tin to stand bob seats all round," said Harry. "We'll see you through, you fat duffer. You've not got a ticket—"

"I've got a box!"

"Are you going to keep up that gammon till we get inside?" snapped the captain of the Remove. "Don't talk rot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Chuck it, you fat ass! We all know—"

"Leggo my arm, you beast!" snorted Bunter. "I'm sorry I can't take you into the box! I know that was the arrangement; but you see, I hadn't read my pater's letter then—"

"Never mind that, fathead—"

"But I do mind!" said Bunter. "The pater sent me that pound for a box, to take Bessie, and she's brought two girls with her, so you have to be left out! Take it smiling."

"You blithering idiot, we wouldn't be found dead in your box if you had one; but you haven't, and—"

"Ladies first, you know!" said Bunter. "In the circumstances, you fellows have to stand down! I can't crowd my lady friends with a lot of schoolboys."

"You howling ass—"

"Leggo!"

"You blinking bandersnatch, you'll have to own up in another minute that you haven't a ticket—" hissed Wharton. "And so—"

"If you doubt my word, Harry Wharton—"

"Idiot!"

"Look here—"

"Fathead! Ass!"

"Well, look at this, then!" snorted Bunter, and he jerked from his waistcoat pocket the card that had lately been the property of Cecil Reginald Temple.

Harry Wharton stared at it—blankly.

"Satisfied now?" sneered Bunter. "You clear off to the cheap seats with your grubby crowd—and leggo my arm! I've got to see my lady friends to my box."

And Bunter rolled away, leaving the captain of the Remove dumbfounded. With a cheery grin on his fat face, he saw his lady friends to his box: while the Famous Five, having paid their shillings, scampered over wooden benches to bag front seats.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Too Clever!

BUNTER looks bucked!" remarked Bob Cherry. "He does—he do!" grinned Nugent.

The circus was filling. The Famous Five had bagged seats in the front row, and the benches behind them were filling fast. Most of the great tent was banked with tiers of seats; but there were boxes—somewhat flimsy structures, it is true, but, nevertheless, boxes; and in the centre one, which Signor Muccolini called the Royal Box, sat Billy Bunter and his lady friends.

Royalty, it was very probable, had never inhabited the box: still it was, in name at least, the Royal Box; and the most expensive one in the Magnificent Circus: and Bunter had it!

So naturally Bunter looked bucked! There were other boxes: and in one of them, Coker of the Fifth sat with Potter and Greene of that Form. And Coker glanced along at Bunter with a frown. It was "side" in a junior, Coker considered, to bag that box, and he told Potter and Greene that he would jolly well kick Bunter, later on, for putting on "roll" to that extent. While Bunter, blinking along at Coker, gave him a patronising stare—Coker's box being merely a ten-shilling one, not nearly so commodious and swanky as Bunter's Royal Box.

Billy Bunter sat between Marjorie and Clara, and blinked patronisingly not only at Coker, but at the whole circus. Bunter had the most expensive seats in the place—though not expensive to Bunter! He felt very swanky and important: rather like a millionaire to whom money was no object. Wingate and Gwynne, who were Sixth Form men and prefects, were there—but only in the half-crown seats. A crowd of the Remove were wedging into the shilling benches, scuffling for places. Billy Bunter felt very superior: and looked it—though the effect, certainly, would have been enhanced by a clean collar and a wash.

Marjorie, catching sight of the Famous Five at a distance round the ring, waved her hand and smiled.

Bunter blinked in the same direction.

"Anybody you know there?" he asked. Bunter's vision did not extend so far, even with the aid of his big spectacles.

"Harry and his friends!" answered Marjorie, smiling.

"Oh, that lot!" said Bunter. "They're in the bob cram! Hard up you know! Well, I suppose everybody can't afford boxes."

To which Marjorie made no reply.

"Got any choes, Billy?" asked Bessie Bunter.

"No: haven't you?"

"No! You can get some from the attendant!" suggested Bessie, brightly.

Billy Bunter preferred to turn a deaf ear to that suggestion.

"That's Mucky!" he remarked, with a jerk of his fat thumb towards a plump gentleman who appeared in the ring, in silk hat, crimson waistcoat, and eyeglass, with a whip under his arm.

"Who?" asked Miss Clara, glancing at the ring-master.

"I mean Signor Muccolini—they call him Mucky, for short, in the circus," said Bunter, with an air of a fellow who knew things. "Rather a cheeky old ass," he added, remembering the Signor's remark of the previous day. And Bunter gave the circus-master a very severe blink through his spectacles. There was a thud of galloping hoofs,

as horses careered round the ring. The performance was beginning.

A clown tumbled in, in a series of catherine wheels. He exchanged back-chat with the ring-master, cracking the ancient wheezes of the circus: rode a horse with his face to the tail, jumped through "balloons" and over "banners."

Billy Bunter blinked at Clara's programme.

"Tippity Tip, the Funniest Clown on Earth, and the World's Wonderful conjurer!" he said. "I'd like to see him do some conjuring. We've got a chap in the Remove, fellow named Kipps, who can do conjuring tricks—but he can't take me in. I spot him every time. I—"

"Oh, look!" said Clara.

Mr. Tip had borrowed the signor's hat—and from that hat, he was producing a remarkable variety of things; a rabbit, a kitten, and yards and yards of coloured ribbon. Then he drew—or appeared to draw—yards and yards of ribbon from the signor's ears, and wound them round and round Signor Muccolini, amid laughter and applause.

"That's very clever!" said Marjorie.

"Easy enough!" said Bunter. "I could do it on my head. He's got it all in his sleeves, of course."

Billy Bunter always had a happy persuasion that he could do anything that anybody else could do—until he came to do it. Then he woke up, as it were.

The Cliff House girls had come to the circus to enjoy the performance, like most of the audience. Bunter preferred to criticise.

There was a roar of laughter as Mr. Tip, having told the ring-master to open his mouth, appeared to take therefrom a set of false teeth—a set so large that obviously they had never been inside a human mouth. He rushed off, brandishing his prize, with the Signor in pursuit, cracking his whip. This "turn" made the audience roar.

"Pretty cheap stuff!" said Bunter, disparagingly. "I saw him take them out of his sleeve, you know."

"I didn't!" said Clara.

"Well, I jolly well did!" declared Bunter. The fact that he hadn't was a trifle, light as air, to Bunter. He was more concerned with showing how jolly clever he was, than sticking to the facts.

"Bow-wow!" said Clara, and Marjorie laughed.

"Gammon!" said Bessie.

Billy Bunter grunted. A clever fellow like Bunter expected to be admired for his cleverness. Bunter was annoyed.

"Rotten show," he said. "That fellow can't conjure for toffee! Sooner they clear him off the better, and let's see something worth seeing."

Mr. Tip was passing in front of the boxes as Bunter made that remark—in quite a loud voice. The fact that the funny merchant of the circus could hear him, did not matter to Bunter. The clown glanced round at him.

"Cheese it!" murmured Miss Clara. "He can hear you."

"I don't care if he does!" retorted Bunter. "He's welcome to hear my opinion of his rotten show. He can't conjure. Rubbish!"

Mr. Tip came up to the barrier, just in front of the box. There was a grin on his highly decorated visage.

"Did you bring the sausages?" he asked.

Bunter stared at him blankly.

"Wha-a-t?" he ejaculated.

"Did you bring the sosses?" repeated Mr. Tip in a voice that was heard all

through the circus. "Have you eaten them?"

"You cheeky ass!" hooted Bunter, crimsoning with wrath. "What the dickens do you mean?"

"Have you got the sausages?"

"Of course I haven't, you silly ass!" howled Bunter. "Gerraway!"

But the playful Mr. Tip did not get away! He reached at Bunter, and, to the fat junior's amazement, jerked a string of sausages from his pocket.

"Here, chuck that, Tip!" shouted the signor.

The signor did not approve of tricks on members of the audience, from a business point of view. But Tippity Tip was annoyed with Bunter, and he did not "chuck" it.

He drew an almost endless string of sausages from the Owl's pocket, amid yells of laughter. Billy Bunter, as red as a turkey-cock, glared in speechless wrath at the clown. The fat Owl liked the limelight, but not in the way he was getting it now.

"Well, you've brought enough grub!" remarked Mr. Tip. "You thought you'd be hungry before you got home to tea—what?"

"I—I—I never——" gasped Bunter.

"And a pork pie, too!" exclaimed Mr. Tip, extracting it from the astonished fat junior. "You wasn't going to starve! And a cake! And a box of chocolates!"

Billy Bunter's eyes almost bulged through his spectacles as the clown produced those articles, one after another, apparently from the fat junior's pockets.

"You said you hadn't any choes, Billy!" snapped Bessie.

"I—I hadn't——" gasped Bunter.

"Why, there they are this minute!"

"I—I hadn't——"

"You were going to keep them all for yourself——"

"I—I—I wasn't!" stuttered Bunter.

"I—I never knew I had them—I mean, I never had them—I—I——"

"Gammon!" sniffed Bessie.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, the fat pig!" came Coker's voice from the next box. "Fancy even that fat pig Bunter bringing sausages and pork pies to a circus! Jever hear of anything like it?"

Signor Muccolini came up, cracking his long whip round Mr. Tip's legs as a hint that he had carried that little joke far enough. Mr. Tip scampered off, and Billy Bunter was left gasping.

"You might have passed those choes round, Billy!" said Bessie Bunter acidly. "Now that clown's taken them——"

"They were his, I think," said Marjorie, laughing.

"How could they be his when they were in Billy's pockets?" demanded Bessie. "You were always a pig, Billy!"

"I—I never——" gasped Bunter.

"Pig!" said Bessie.

"Cat!" snapped Bunter.

"I think you'll have to own up now that Tippity Tip can do conjuring tricks!" chuckled Miss Clara.

And Billy Bunter had to admit that he could.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter the Bold!

THE jolly old lions!" said Bob Cherry.

There was a general stir in the packed circus when Marco's turn was announced. A gigantic cage was wheeled in, through the bars of which sinuous forms could

be seen moving. Marco followed it in—a magnificent figure in a crimson singlet.

From the cage, as it was halted in the centre of the arena, came a deep, booming roar.

There were four lions in the cage—the biggest of them Cæsar, the extremely tame old lion with whom Billy Bunter was already acquainted. The other three were younger animals, and by no means so good-tempered, and there was no doubt that the tamer needed a nerve of iron to trust himself in the cage with them—as he was going to do.

There was something thrilling in the deep-throated roar that boomed and echoed from between the bars.

"Shouldn't care to have that chap's job!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Hardly!" agreed Harry Wharton.

"They've got a stunt in this circus of offering a prize to anybody who will step into the cage with the lion-tamer!" said Bob Cherry. "Any of you fellows going in for it?"

"No fear!" grinned Nugent.

"Rotten stunt," said Johnny Bull. "Some ass might take it on some time and land in trouble."

"I expect they'd take care he didn't!" remarked Harry Wharton. "But nobody's likely to take it on, I fancy! They don't sound inviting. That chap Marco must have a nerve of reinforced concrete."

Marco was standing at the grated door of the cage, all eyes on him. But all eyes turned on Signor Muccolini as he took off his silk topper and bowed round to the audience. The ringmaster was going to make his usual announcement; a safe offer that had never yet been accepted, but which never failed to impress the "people in front."

"Ladies and gentlemen," boomed the signor, "Marco, the King of the Lions, is about to present his wonderful act, as performed before all the crowned heads of Europe! A purse of fifty guineas is offered to any member of the audience who will step into the lions' cage with Marco and remain inside for one minute."

Billy Bunter jumped.

"I say, that's good!" he ejaculated.

Bunter's eyes were fixed on the lions' cage.

The roars from that cage did not thrill Bunter as they did the rest of the audience. Bunter had been there before, so to speak. He had ridden on the back of old Cæsar, and after that experience Bunter had no more fear of Cæsar than of a tame rabbit.

The distance to the centre of the arena was considerable, and Bunter was in happy ignorance of the fact that other lions were in the cage. With his limited vision he could make out the bars of the cage, with a dim glimpse of something moving therein. That was all.

Everybody else in the circus could see four lions. But he could not see any, but supposed that there was one—the one he was acquainted with.

He jumped up.

If a purse of fifty guineas was going for any member of the audience bold enough to step into the lions' cage, Bunter was "on." His eyes gleamed behind his spectacles at the bare idea of bagging so considerable a sum with such ease.

"Sit down, Billy!" snapped Bessie Bunter. "Do you think I can see through you?"

"I'm on this!" said Bunter.

"You're not on anything—you're standing up, and—"

"I mean I'm taking that offer."

"Don't be funny!" advised Bessie.

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"You'll jolly well see!" said Bunter determinedly. "Think I'm afraid of lions?"

"You're afraid of mice!" retorted Bessie.

"Yah!"

Signor Muccolini paused, like Brutus, for a reply. As a rule there was no reply, and he did not expect to hear one now. But it was the unexpected that happened. There was a buzz of astonishment in the circus as a fat schoolboy clambered out of a box into the arena.

"Billy!" gasped Bessie.

"What the dickens—" gasped Miss Clara, while Marjorie stared dumb-founded.

There was a yell from about fifty Greyfriars fellows in the audience. All eyes were on Bunter as he rolled into the ring.

"Bunter!"

"That fat ass!"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"What does that fat duffer fancy he's up to?"

"Bunter!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Is he potty?"

"The pottiffulness must be terrific!" ejaculated Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Famous Five stared at Bunter, spellbound.

They had plenty of pluck themselves, but they never dreamed for a moment of stepping into the lions' cage.

Obviously it was not a safe proposition for anyone but the tamer; and, in fact, it was not safe for him—for Marco risked his life at every performance. But if any reckless, unreflecting fellow thought of taking the risk, the very last fellow the Famous Five would have thought of was Billy Bunter! Yet there was Bunter, as large as life, rolling towards the cage!

"Mad as a hatter!" said Johnny Bull.

"They won't let him do it!" said Nugent. "The offer's only swank—it's not meant to be taken on. I suppose he knows that."

"Blessed if I make it out!" said Harry.

Neither did Signor Muccolini seem able to make it out. He stared blankly at William George Bunter.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

"Go back to your seat, please!"

Bunter blinked at him scornfully.

"I'm jolly well taking on your offer!" he retorted. "I'm jolly well going into the lions' cage—see? And I'll jolly well stay in it as long as you jolly well like!"

"But—" gasped the signor, taken quite aback.

"Blow your butts!" retorted Bunter.

"You made the offer, didn't you? All these people heard you! I'm taking it on!"

"But—" stuttered Signor Muccolini.

"Rats!" said Bunter. And leaving the plump circus-master staring, Billy Bunter rolled on to the door of the lions' cage, where Marco stood.

There was a breathless hush in the audience.

As bold as brass, the fat junior marched up to the cage. Every eye in the circus was glued on him.

Suddenly Bunter halted.

Close to the iron bars, he made a discovery. His old friend Cæsar was there, as he expected. But his old friend Cæsar was not alone there, as he had also expected. Three other lions were there, and they were looking at Bunter through the bars with gleaming eyes and terrifying jaws. Billy Bunter halted, and stood as if rooted to the tan.

"Oh!" he gasped.

Marco gave him a stare of astonishment, and then an approving nod. He already had the impression—rather a

mistaken one—that Billy Bunter had heaps of pluck. But—unaware of the short-sighted Owl's misapprehension—he had not expected such daring as this.

"All right, kid, if you'll risk it!" he said, and he put his hand on the grated door.

That was enough for Bunter!

For one terrified moment Bunter stood blinking at the gleaming eyes and terrifying jaws in the cage. Then, as the lion-tamer put his hand to the door, the fat junior let out a squeal of terror.

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter turned and bolted!

There was a yell in the circus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hook it, Bunter!"

"Put it on!"

"The fat ass—ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the audience.

Marco stared. Signor Muccolini grinned. The audience rocked with laughter as the bold Bunter—all his boldness gone—streaked across the arena, going all out.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked all the audience.

Bunter did not heed. He hardly heard. Only one thought was in Bunter's mind—to get out of the arena before the door of that cage was opened!

He puffed, and he panted—and he flew! He did not head for the Royal Box, where Marjorie and Clara and Bessie were laughing as merrily as the rest. He streaked for the nearest exit and vanished. He left the whole circus rocking with laughter.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry, wiping his eyes. "Bunter ought to join a circus—he can put up a funnier turn than any clown."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did the fat ass really fancy he had nerve enough to go into the cage?" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Goodness knows! He changed his mind, if he did!"

"The changefulness was terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter did not reappear in the Royal Box. Even Bunter did not care to show up again, after the absurd figure he had cut under so many eyes. He missed the rest of the performance—which was a sheer waste of Cecil Reginald Temple's expensive ticket!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Nice for Bunter!

THE next day William George Bunter did not seem to be enjoying life.

After the juniors had returned from the circus, the fat Owl heard all he wanted to hear—and more—about his adventure there. He did not want to hear about it again on the following day. But he did!

Bunter's lion-taming tale had been taken as a joke in the Remove. Nobody had believed it. The fellows were less likely than ever to believe it now, after Bunter's antics in the arena. But a good many fellows took the view that Bunter, in making such an ass of himself, had let down Greyfriars in the public eye. For a fellow to march up to a lions' cage with the declared intention of entering it, and turn tail and bolt when the door was going to be opened, was no doubt funny; but it was not good enough for Greyfriars. Which fact was made clear unto Billy Bunter.

Coker of the Fifth, meeting him in the quad after breakfast, kicked him. Potter and Greene, who did not always

follow the example of their great leader, followed it in this instance, and kicked Bunter, too.

Bunter, fleeing, ran into Hobson of the Shell.

"Oh, you!" said Hobson. "You fat ass!" He grabbed Bunter by the collar. "I saw a crowd of Higheliffe cads chortling when you made a fool of yourself yesterday at the circus! Take that!"

He twirled Bunter round, and Bunter took "that!"

"I say, you fellows!" Bunter rolled up to the Famous Five in the quad. "I say, that beast Hobson's kicked me—"

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "Hobby has good ideas sometimes! Let's all do the same, you fellows."

"Hear, hear!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter indignantly. "Look here—"

"You blithering fat ass!" said Harry Wharton. "What did you play the goat for, letting the school down? Making us all look asses to those Higheliffe cads—they were all there, grinning."

"Kick him!" said Johnny Bull.

"The kickfulness is the proper caper!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter had often been kicked in the course of his fat career. But he had never grown to like it. He fled from lunging boots, yelling. It was rather a relief to him when the bell rang for class, and the juniors went into the Form-room.

In break that morning, several other fellows looked for Bunter, to tell him what they thought of him, and to emphasise the same with a hack or two. Once more Billy Bunter was glad to hear the bell ring for class.

Billy Bunter was quite morose that day.

And he had another worry on his fat mind. Temple of the Fourth was making a fuss about that lost ticket of his.

Bunter, having used the ticket, had dismissed the matter from his mind, as over and done with. Temple, who had paid for the ticket without being able to use it, did not dismiss it so easily.

That ticket, of course, had not been found. And Cecil Reginald suspected, by this time, that some fellow had picked it up and gone to the circus with it.

Bunter did not mind what Temple suspected, so long as suspicion did not turn on him personally. But with everybody talking about his antics at the circus, it was only too likely that Cecil Reginald would learn who had occupied the Royal Box on Wednesday afternoon. In which case, the fat Owl was likely to have some painful experiences at the hands of the indignant Cecil Reginald.

There was only one spot of silver lining to the cloud. The Famous Five were going over to Cliff House to tea after class that day—and Bunter was included in the invitation.

That was rather unusual, for Marjorie & Co. did not seem to pine for the company of William George Bunter, fascinating as it was. No doubt it was because Bunter had stood the box at the circus. They were far from being aware whose box he had stood!

After class, Bob Cherry tapped the fat junior on the shoulder.

"Start in half an hour, fatty," he said, "and if you take my tip, you'll hunt cover till we start. Temple of the Fourth lost a ticket yesterday—"

"What the thump should I know about Temple's ticket?" grunted Bunter.

"Well, he's looking for the chap who found it!" grinned Bob.

"Of course, I never found it!" said

Bunter. "So far as I know, Temple never dropped it when Smithy was ragging him. I never saw it lying in the quad. Besides, I left it there, just where it was."

"Oh crikey! You'd better tell Temple that!" gasped Bob. "He may believe it—perhaps!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had been puzzled about Bunter's box. But when they learned of Temple's lost ticket, the mystery, of course, was elucidated. And by this time, it had reached Cecil Reginald's ears that Billy Bunter had

occupied his box. So, after class, Temple looked for Bunter.

It was a worry to Bunter. A dozen fellows, at least, had kicked him that day for letting down the Remove by his antics at the circus. Bunter did not want any more. And when, after Bob had warned him, he spotted Cecil Reginald in the quad, Bunter rolled down to the gates, deciding to wait for the Famous Five outside, till they started for Cliff House.

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

Continuing his series of interviews, our clever Greyfriars Rhymester supplies us with another snappy poem. This week his subject is

HERBERT TREVOR.

of Study No. 9 in the Remove.

(1)

A fellow, like Linley, from Lanes,
His pater's a miller in cotton,
With money in several banks
And never a ha'penny forgotten!
He keeps up a couple of cars
To travel in suitable splendour,
He goes in for costly cigars,
But still, he's not much of a spender!

(3)

Like father, like son, so they say,
A proverb veracious and pithy,
And Trevor, in quite a small way,
Takes after his father—and Smithy!
He hasn't a scrupulous mind
Where money concerns are affected,
And that is the reason you'll find
He isn't much liked or respected.



(6)

These three cheery sports on the make,
My presence entirely unheeding,
Were after their halfpenny stake,
I stood there and watched them proceeding.
For Trevor was losing—not much,
But sufficient to set his heart beating,
He frowned at the cards in his clutch,
And half-thought that Skinner was cheating!

(8)

And while they went on playing nap
I took out the cards I'd abstracted
And dropped them in poor Skinner's lap,
While none of them saw how I acted.
We then heard the bell ring for class
And Skinner, in quite a gay manner,
Said, "Pack it up, Trevor, you ass!
You now owe me one and a tanner!"



(2)

Without the intention to carp
At such profiteering top-liners,
It can't be denied he is sharp
At getting his hooks on the "shiners"!
At letting his money go forth
He isn't too recklessly lavish,
In fact, he is known in the North
By nickname as Angus MacTavish.

(4)

And yet he's not really too bad,
He hasn't the strength or the cunning,
He's merely an average lad
Who's generally out of the running!
He hasn't a very low vice,
And yet has no very high morals,
You can't say he's nasty or nice,
He just simply isn't worth laurels.



(5)

I set out to visit the chap
This afternoon, just after dinner,
And found him at home, playing nap
With two other blades, Stott and Skinner.
He gambles, but never a lot,
It isn't a game of his choosing,
He stops any game like a shot
When once he discovers he's losing.

(7)

A spare pack of cards on the chair
Attracted my casual attention,
I stealthily moved over there,
Unnoticed by them, I may mention.
I carefully took up the pack
And from it I took all the aces,
The rest of the cards I put back—
Then bent down to do up my laces!

(9)

So Trevor paid up, with a doubt
And many suspicious grimaces;
Then Skinner stood up to walk out,
And—down came a torrent of aces!
Quite speechless at what he beheld,
He stood there, his senses were spinning.
"You underhand cad!" Trevor yelled,
"So that's how it is you've been winning!"



(10)

And then, oh, dear readers, a fight,
A horrible combat, was started.
I could not endure such a sight
And so, with a tear, I departed.
It's sad to see friends in a scrap,
And if you'd avoid such a quarrel,
Be careful, and never play nap!
I leave you to think on the moral!

"Hold on!" came a shout behind him. Temple had spotted him.

"Oh lor!" gasped Bunter. He ran!

So did Temple! Bunter dodged out of gates and scudded up the road. After him scudded Cecil Reginald Temple.

"Stop!" yelled Temple. Bunter flew.

Down the road, from the direction of Courtfield Common, a man came running, in wild haste. He seemed to be in a tremendous hurry, and did not see Bunter. Neither did Bunter see him. They crashed.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter, as he sat down in the road.

The running man staggered and almost fell. But he recovered himself and rushed on.

"Look out!" he shouted over his shoulder as he went.

"Ow! Ooogh!" spluttered Bunter.

"Look out!" the man shouted again as he passed Temple.

Then he vanished down the road towards Friardale.

Temple did not heed him. He saw nothing special to look out for. He scudded on after Bunter, and reached him as the fat Owl was staggering up.

"Now, you fat rotter!" roared Temple, as he clutched the Owl of the Remove by the collar. "Now, where's my ricket?"

"Ow! Leggo!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never had it! Besides, I didn't know it was yours! You shouldn't have dropped it in the quad! And I never—"

Billy Bunter broke off suddenly. From up the road, the direction from which the unknown man had come running, sounded a deep-throated roar. Bunter knew that roar. He spun round, his eyes starting through his spectacles.

"Oh gad!" gasped Temple.

He released Billy Bunter's collar and stood petrified, staring at the terrifying figure that came lumbering down the road.

It was a lion—a large size in lions!

He knew now why that man had been running! It was an escaped lion from Muccolini's Magnificent Circus and Menagerie!

"Run!" panted Temple.

And he turned and fled.

Billy Bunter stood spellbound. He would willingly have run; but his fat knees were knocking together, and his feet seemed glued to the ground. Transfixed with terror, he stood blinking at the circus lion. The terrific beast reached him in another moment.

Bunter, almost fainting with terror, gave a moan. The lion reared on his hind legs, and, to Bunter's dizzy amazement, extended a paw.

The next moment he understood—as he recognised Caesar.

Caesar, evidently, knew Bunter again, and remembered the fellow who had fed him, shaken hands with him, and ridden on his back. Bunter gave a gasp of relief. The lion lumbered on, leaving the fat Owl standing in the road, blinking after him.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He stared after the lion. Three or four fellows, looking out of the school gates, yelled and darted in, as the lion appeared. Caesar halted a moment, and blinked in at the gates, as if thinking of going in. Then he lumbered on, and disappeared through a hedge, cheerfully continuing his travels.

"Oh crikey!" repeated Bunter.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Amazing!

"LION!"

"Escaped lion!"

"Look out!"

"Run for your lives!"

There was wild excitement in the Greyfriars quad. Temple of the Fourth was the first to give the alarm as he scudded across the quad and bolted into the House, yelling to the fellows to look out. Other fellows, who had seen the lion pass the gates, added their voices to the uproar.



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"That ass Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

He had seen Bunter send out of gates.

"Get into the House!" said Harry Wharton. "If the brute gets in here—"

"But, Bunter—he's gone out—" gasped Bob. "He cut, with Temple after him. Temple's got in; but Bunter—"

"Oh, come on, then!"

Harry Wharton ran down to the gates, followed by his chums. Facing an escaped lion was not a light matter; but if Bunter was out in the road they were not going to hunt cover and leave him there.

On the road there was no sign of a lion to be seen. Caesar had already taken to the fields, and was lumbering away towards Pegg. But Billy Bunter could be seen. He was standing in the middle of the road, and, to the astonishment of the Famous Five, showed no signs of terror.

"Bunter!" roared Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Run!" yelled Nugent.

"Eh? What for?"

"There's an escaped lion loose from the circus, you fat idiot!" howled Harry Wharton.

"Oh, I know that!" said Bunter calmly. "He passed me a few minutes ago! You should have seen Temple cut! He, he, he!"

"He—he passed you!" stuttered the captain of the Remove. "He doesn't seem to have hurt you."

"Oh, I just looked at him!" said Bunter carelessly. "The power of the eye, you know! I'm not afraid of lions!"

The Famous Five stared at him. Temple of the Fourth was no funk, but his feet had hardly touched the ground as he ran. And Bunter had not run! He was not even in a hurry to go in, though the escaped lion was at hand—and might have appeared at any moment from behind a hedge or a fence.

The quad was in a roar now. Gosling, at the alarm of an escaped lion in the vicinity, ought to have shut the gates promptly. Instead of which—Gosling had shut himself in his lodge and bolted the door. And the gates still stood wide open. Several masters were in the quad, ordering the boys into the House—an order that most of them were glad to obey with unusual promptness.

"You fat ass!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Come in! Come in at once!"

"What rot!" said Bunter.

"Do you want to be chewed up?" roared Johnny Bull.

"Oh, I'm not afraid!" said Bunter airily. "I say, you fellows, if you're funky, you cut in! He, he, he! But you look here—if we're going over to Cliff House to tea—"

"You burbling bandersnatch!" exclaimed Bob. "Do you think we're walking through the wood, with a lion loose there?"

"Well, I shall be with you!" said Bunter. "I'll look after you!"

"You—you—you—" gasped Bob.

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Bunter. "Look here, as soon as Quelch hears about that lion being loose, he will gate us—the Head will gate the whole school. That means we shan't be able to go over to Cliff House."

"Who wants to go over now?" gasped Nugent.

"Eh? I jolly well do!" said Bunter. "They always stand a decent tea at

Cliff House—old Miss Primrose lets them have a jolly big cake—"

"My only hat!" gasped Bob.

It was like Bunter to think of the cake, certainly; but the chums of the Remove hardly expected even Bunter to think more of a cake than of an escaped lion prowling about.

"This is our chance!" urged Bunter. "As soon as Quelch gets his eyes on us, we're done. We shall be gated, you can bet on that!"

"Of course we shall, till that lion's caught!" said Harry. "Come in at once, you fat ass, before they bang the gates on us!"

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter. "If you're afraid of the lion, you can cut—I'm going to tea at Cliff House! Think I'm going to have the girls saying that I was afraid to come because there was a lion loose?"

"We're dreaming this!" gasped Bob.

Really, it seemed like it! Knowing nothing of Cæsar and his tameness, or of Bunter's knowledge of the same, the Famous Five could scarcely believe their ears! They were going to give up that excursion to Cliff House School, as a matter of course, after this startling news. It seemed that Bunter wasn't.

"If you've got cold feet," continued Bunter cheerfully, "you can cut in and hide under the beds in the dorm! He, he, he! I'll tell Marjorie and Clara that you were afraid to come!"

"You're not going!" yelled Bob.

"I jolly well am!"

And Bunter, with perfect coolness, rolled off down the road, leaving the Famous Five rooted with amazement, staring after him.

He reached the gap in the hedge through which the lion had gone, and glanced back at the petrified juniors.

"Funks!" he howled.

And he plunged through the gap and rolled off across the fields, the way Cæsar had gone, which led towards the village of Pegg and Cliff House School.

"He—he—he's gone!" gasped Bob.

"Is he mad?" stuttered Wharton. "What the dickens—"

"Well, he's gone," said Johnny Bull grimly, "and I'm going, too!"

Johnny started down the road. His friends rushed after him.

"You can't!" exclaimed Nugent. "The lion—"

"Nobody's going to call me a funk!" said Johnny Bull. "I'm going, if all the lions in Africa were just round the corner."

Bob Cherry nodded.

"Bunter's not going to get away with that!" he said. "I can't understand it—but if Bunter's not afraid of the jolly old lion, I'm jolly well not! I'm going as far as Bunter does, and chance it!"

"It's rot!" said Harry.

"I know—but I'm going, all the same."

Johnny Bull was already plunging through the gap in the hedge. Bob Cherry plunged after him.

"The rotfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But this esteemed Co. never backs down. Come onfully, my absurd chums!"

And Wharton, Nugent, and the nabob followed on. Bunter was already a field's length ahead, and they hurried after him. It was folly, and they knew it; but they were not going to be outdone by the fat Owl of the Remove. Where Billy Bunter had got all this nerve from was a mystery—a mystery beyond their fathoming. But they were not going to be outdone, at any rate.

Behind them the gates clanged

Alarmed masters were shepherding excited fellows into the House. The Head's order went forth, "gating" the whole school. But that order could not be applied to fellows already out of gates, who numbered six—the Famous Five and Billy Bunter. And, cool and plucky as they were, it was with watchful eyes, and not without trepidation, that Harry Wharton & Co. followed Bunter across the fields, more and more amazed to see the fat Owl sauntering along carelessly, his hands in his pockets, evidently not in the least afraid of the escaped circus lion!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Alarm at Cliff House!

"OOOOOOOH!" shrieked Bessie Bunter.

"What——" exclaimed Marjorie.

"What——" echoed Clara.

"Ooooooooooh!" came in a prolonged howl from Miss Elizabeth Bunter.

"What's the matter?" shrieked Barbara Redfern.

The four girls were playing badminton while they waited for their friends to arrive from Greyfriars for tea. Bessie was missing the shuttle with a regularity worthy of her brother Billy. Now she suddenly dropped her racket, and stood screaming.

Her eyes and her spectacles were fixed on a form that had suddenly appeared on the edge of the court.

Looking round in the same direction, Marjorie and Clara and Barbara saw it also, and three shrieks were blended into one.

They had seen Cæsar before, but behind iron bars in the cage in the circus arena. Now they saw him free as air, wandering at his own sweet will, and at close quarters. It was a terrifying sight.

"Run!" gasped Marjorie.

"Oh, run!" panted Barbara.

"Help!" shrieked Bessie Bunter. "Oh dear! Ow! Lions and tigers—yaroooh! Help! Whoop!"

A deep-throated roar pealed from Cæsar.

As a matter of fact, the cheery old lion meant no harm by it. He was encouraged to roar at the circus, to give the "people in front" value for their money. He had an awe-inspiring, nerve-racking roar—but it was only his way! The Cliff House girls, naturally, did not know that that fearful-looking beast would not have harmed a kitten. On his looks old Cæsar was nerve-shaking. They shrieked and ran.

Bessie led the way, going all out. In wild haste, she did not remember that the badminton net stretched in her way. She charged into the net, tangled in it, and howled wildly.

"Run!" shrieked Clara.

"Yaroooh! Help! Help me! Yooop!" howled Bessie.

Another roar from the lion! He stalked across the badminton court towards the schoolgirls.

Terrified as they were, Marjorie and Clara and Barbara ran to Bessie, and dragged her out of the tangled net, and set her going again.

Bessie gurgled, and charged on. Between the badminton court and the School House was a wide shrubbery, and the schoolgirls scuttled away by the paths through it at a pace old Cæsar could hardly have equalled, had he been in active pursuit.

But old Cæsar was not, for the moment, bothering about Marjorie & Co. He had walked over the tangled

net, which caught in his legs and annoyed him. He grabbed and clawed at the net, dragging it off the posts, and tangling it in his claws.

Bewildered and irritated by the clinging net, Cæsar roared and roared, and clawed and clawed, his usual good temper rather failing him. His roaring rang like thunder.

Startled voices rang in all directions. The deep bass voice of Miss Bullivant, the maths mistress, was heard, alternating with the startled treble of Miss Penelope Primrose, the principal of Cliff House School. Schoolgirls ran and scuttled and screamed. Deep and terrible, the lion's roar rang over all other sounds.

"Go in—go in at once!" boomed Miss Bullivant.

"Goodness gracious! Are all the girls safe?" came the high-pitched voice of Miss Primrose.

"Run for your lives!"

"Oh, run!"

"The lion! The lion!"

"Oh dear!"

"Run! Run!"

Marjorie and Clara and Barbara scuttled in at the doorway. Miss Bullivant was holding the big oak door, ready to slam it when all were inside. Miss Primrose stood in the doorway, a fragile but determined figure. Behind her a frightened crowd buzzed and shrieked and gasped.

"Miss Primrose, please let me shut the door!" exclaimed the Bull. "Do please step out of the way, Miss Primrose!"

"Are all the girls indoors, Miss Bullivant?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Ask Miss Locke to take the roll at once!"

"Bessie hasn't come in!" gasped Clara.

"Bessie?"

"She was with us!" exclaimed Marjorie. "I thought——"

"Bessie!" shrieked Miss Primrose, from the doorway. "Bessie! Bessie Bunter!"

Bessie Bunter had scuttled through the shrubberies with the others. But with Bessie it was a case of more haste and less speed. She had taken the wrong path, and charged on at full speed in the wrong direction, unnoticed by the others. Bessie was still in the grounds—with the lion!

"If you will let me shut the door——" gasped Miss Bullivant.

Miss Primrose drew a deep, deep breath.

She was a rather ancient lady, and looked as fragile as a piece of old china. But her heart was as stout as her ancient figure was slim. She was Head of Cliff House School—and duty was duty! The roar of the escaped lion sent a chill to her very heart—but she stepped out of the doorway.

"Miss Primrose!" came a general shriek.

"You will close the door, Miss Bullivant," said Miss Penelope calmly, though her old heart was throbbing. "See that all doors and windows are closed. I must find Bessie."

"You will be torn to pieces——"

"Please shut the door!"

"I will come with you, Miss Primrose!" exclaimed Marjorie.

"You will do nothing of the kind! Stand back! Miss Bullivant, close the door at once! The lion may come this way! Do you hear me?"

The big oak door was closed on the headmistress of Cliff House.

With a firm step, Miss Primrose

went down the path. From a dozen windows terrified eyes watched her. The lion could not be seen; but at short intervals his booming roar resounded.

"Bessie!" called Miss Primrose, in a firm voice. "Bessie!"

From a distance came a shriek.

It came from Bessie Bunter. Finding herself at a distance from the house, the hapless Bessie had clambered into a tree. From the branch to which she clung, she could see the lion stalking to and fro, with fragments of the badminton net trailing from his limbs, growling and roaring by turns.

Cæsar was not so good-tempered now. He had smitten one of the badminton posts, smashing it to splinters with one swipe of his mighty paw. Now he was chewing the racket Bessie had dropped.

"Bessie!"

Shriek!

"Where are you, Bessie?"

Shriek!

"Come to me at once, you foolish girl! Run!"

Shriek!

Nothing would have induced Bessie to descend from that tree. But Miss Primrose, guided by the shrieks, hurried towards her. At the same moment she sighted the lion, and her blood ran cold at the sight. Discarding the fragments of the racket from his gnashing jaws, Cæsar came lumbering towards Miss Primrose.

The poor lady's limbs almost failed her. She stood gazing at the lion with dilated eyes.

Bessie Bunter clambered higher into the tree. But Miss Primrose's tree-climbing days were long over. She did not even think of it. Closer and closer came the lion, with gleaming eyes and open jaws. And Miss Primrose, staggering weakly against the tree-trunk, could only watch him in frozen horror—while from the branches above came shriek on shriek from Bessie Bunter.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Follow Your Leader!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"You fat idiot!"

"Funky?" grinned Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. glared at the Owl of the Remove, as if they could have eaten him.

The Greyfriars juniors had emerged from the field-paths, into the road which ran down to the village of Pegg, past the gates of Cliff House School.

They had seen nothing of the escaped lion so far. It was possible that he had taken to the woods, and they hoped that he had. Certainly they did not want to fall in with him.

Bunter did not seem to mind.

On the open road the Famous Five looked about them very sharply and anxiously. They were certainly not funky, but they did not enjoy this reckless adventure. That the circus lions were fierce animals, and needed the iron hand of the trainer to control them, they knew. They were not aware that one of the lions, old Cæsar, was as tame as a cat, and that Marco sometimes allowed him to trot at his heels about the circus. That, indeed, was how Cæsar had got loose—his desire for wandering having come on while he was outside his cage. But the chums of the Remove, of course, knew nothing about that, and they could have kicked Bunter for this new and astounding reck-

lessness he was displaying and themselves for having followed him.

Bunter was grinning cheerfully.

Seldom, or never, did Billy Bunter have a chance of showing off his pluck. Now he had a chance, and he was making the most of it.

"I say, don't dawdle, you fellows!" said the fat Owl admonishingly. "It's not civil to be late for tea, you know."

"We're early," grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, no need to waste time, all the same," said Bunter. "If Bessie gets a chance at that cake, I jolly well know what will happen to it. Come on!"

"And suppose we walk into the lion?" snorted Bob Cherry. "He may have come this way, as likely as any other."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Bunter. "Leave him to me!"

"You blithering, blethering fat frump—"

"You can call a fellow names!" jeered Bunter. "But I'm jolly well not afraid of lions, if you are! Follow your leader!"

"Bunter's bursting with pluck!" said Johnny Bull sarcastically. "Same as he was yesterday, at the circus. Did you scuttle away from the cage because you weren't afraid of lions, you fat spoofer?"

"Yah!"

"We're playing the goat!" said Frank Nugent. "If we sight the lion, we shall have to stick to that fat funk, and the brute will get some of us!"

"Yah!" retorted Bunter. "If we sight the lion, I shan't see your heels for dust! Do I look afraid?"

It was a fact—Bunter didn't. And it was quite puzzling and mysterious to the Remove fellows.

"Come on!" grinned Bunter. "I shouldn't wonder if the lion came this way—I know he started in this direction. Well, that's all the more reason why we should go on to Cliff House. The girls will be fearfully frightened, if the lion turns up there."

"Not so frightened as you will be, if you see the lion a mile off!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"My dear chap, I can handle lions!" said Bunter breezily. "I told you how I went into the lion's cage the other day—"

"Don't tell us that silly yarn again!" snapped Harry Wharton. "Come on, you fellows! We can warn them at Cliff House that a lion has escaped from the circus, if they haven't heard already. Blessed if I like the prospect of walking back to Greyfriars, though, with that brute roaming about."

"I shall be with you!" Bunter pointed out.

"Shut up!" roared the Famous Five, with one voice.

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter rolled on, regardless of peril, being in the fortunate position of knowing that the peril was non-existent. Harry Wharton & Co., to whom the danger was real, kept a very shary lookout as they went. The road ran by the high palings that enclosed the school grounds, the gate being at a distance, towards the sea.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "Listen!"

Over the palings, from the trees and shrubberies within, came a deep, booming roar from the distance.

Harry Wharton caught his breath.

"The lion!" he exclaimed.

It was the deep roar of the circus lion, booming from within the grounds of Cliff House School. Evidently the lion was there—in the grounds. The juniors felt their hearts stop beating for a moment.

"It's the lion!" breathed Nugent.

"The absurd and terrific lion!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows, come on!" squeaked Bunter. "Follow your leader!"

The Famous Five stared at him. They were amazed by Bunter's recklessness in venturing outside Greyfriars while a lion was loose in the vicinity. But they had taken it for granted that the fat junior would bolt at top speed if anything were seen or heard of that lion.

Instead of which there was Bunter breaking into a run towards the Cliff House gates, and calling to them over his fat shoulder to come on.

Bunter was not running away—as any fellow who knew Bunter would naturally have expected. He was heading for the danger-zone. The Famous Five stared at him stupefied.

Bunter was putting on speed. His fat little legs fairly twinkled as he ran.

Wharton set his teeth.

"Come on!" he said. "The girls may be in danger—we can't do anything, I suppose, but we've got to see—come on!"

"You bet!" said Bob.

The Famous Five scudded after Bunter. There was little or nothing that unarmed schoolboys could do, in the way of tackling a lion; but that did not make them pause. If the schoolgirls were in danger, as seemed likely enough, they were going to be on the scene, at least, and do what they could.

But Billy Bunter had a good start, and he was going all out.

It was the first time in history that Bunter had run with his face to the danger-spot, instead of his podgy back! But he was doing it now. The Famous Five were still behind when the fat Owl of the Remove turned in at the open gateway of Cliff House, ahead of them, and disappeared from their sight. They panted on after him.

Roar on roar was pealing over the palings. Amid the deep roars came shriek on shriek. They could hear the shrieks of Bessie Bunter now—loud and shrill! Breathless, panting, the Famous Five tore in at the gate of Cliff House School.

And then, in sheer stupefaction they halted and stared at what they saw. It was not easy to believe their eyes.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter the Hero!

BILLY BUNTER gasped for breath as he blinked round through his big spectacles.

He was, as usual, short of breath, though, on this occasion, not short of pluck. His eyes and his spectacles, fixed on the startling scene in the school garden which was watched from a distance by packed faces at windows. From Bessie Bunter, hidden by foliage high up the tree, came pealing shriek on shriek. Miss Penelope Primrose was not shrieking. She was silent, white as chalk, leaning feebly on the trunk of the tree, making mechanical motions with her hands, as if to wave the lion off. And within three yards of her, with bristling mane, whisking tail, and yawning cavernous jaws, stood Cæsar, the circus lion—pawing the ground and roaring.

It was a sight to thrill any heart. Miss Primrose had given herself up as lost; she could only stare at the dreadful vision before her, with white, fixed face and stony eyes.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Had it been any other of the circus lions, Miss Primrose would have been in terrible danger, and Billy Bunter,



Three shrieks were blended into one as the Cliff House girls turned round and saw the lion on the edge of the court. "Run!" gasped Marjorie. "Oh, run!" panted Barbara. "Help!" shrieked Bessie Bunter. Bessie led the way, going all-out. In her wild haste, she charged into the badminton net, tangled in it, and howled wildly. "Yaroooh! Help!"

certainly, would not have been rushing to the rescue. But the Owl of the Remove knew what he was about.

Dozens of pairs of eyes at the windows of Cliff House School saw Billy Bunter barge in at the gates. And those eyes widened in utter astonishment as Bunter, instead of barging out again faster than he had barged in, at sight of the lion, cut across to the spot where Miss Penelope Primrose stood.

Bunter knew that eyes were on him—many eyes. His own little round eyes twinkled with satisfaction behind his big round spectacles. This was a chance for Bunter! Marjorie and Clara had seen him scuttle away from the lions' cage in the circus, and he knew that they had laughed like the rest. Were they going to laugh now? Rather not.

"All right, ma'am," squeaked Bunter, as he charged up, "don't be afraid, Miss Primrose. Leave him to me."

Miss Primrose heard him and saw him. Her starting eyes turned on the fat junior as he came. She was scarcely able to speak; but she articulated:

"Go! Go! Run!"

"No fear!" said Bunter.

With perfect coolness William George Bunter stepped between the headmistress of Cliff House and the lion.

From crowded windows the schoolgirls watched him. Harry Wharton & Co., coming in panting at the gate, watched him. Bunter had the house, so to speak. It was Bunter first, and everybody else nowhere.

Standing in front of the lion, Billy Bunter raised a commanding fat hand. Caesar blinked at him.

No knew Bunter! In fact, he liked Bunter! Bunter had fed him, which was a passport to Caesar's esteem! Caesar had taken Bunter on his back at his trainer's command! Bunter had spoken to him with his trainer's voice,

and the fat ventriloquist had not forgotten that trick. He spoke now to the lion in an exact reproduction of Marco's commanding tones.

"Up!" commanded Bunter.

He advanced on the lion, breathlessly watched by countless amazed eyes. Miss Primrose wondered if this were a dream. Harry Wharton & Co. were almost convinced that it was an optical illusion.

With perfect coolness, the fat junior advanced on the lion, his fat hand raised in command.

"Up!" barked Bunter in the well-known tones of Marco.

Cæsar was not in his best temper. The tangled net had irritated him, and a fragment of Bessie's racket was sticking in his jaw. But the habit of obedience was strong. Automatically, as it were, the lion played up at his master's voice.

The gigantic beast rose slowly on his hind legs. To Miss Primrose's terrified eyes, he seemed to tower. But Billy Bunter was not terrified! Not Bunter!

Harry Wharton & Co. were ready for a desperate rush forward to help the fat Owl, nothing doubting that the lion was about to seize him in his terrible paws. But they were not needed.

"Dammi la zampa!" commanded Bunter.

The well-known words, which Cæsar had obeyed hundreds, if not thousands, of times, produced their accustomed effect.

Amazed eyes stared, as the lion, reared on his hind legs and extended a paw to Bunter!

Bunter, grinning cheerily, took it with a fat hand.

"G-goo-goo-goodness gracious!" stuttered Miss Primrose.

"Billy!" howled Bessie, peering in amazement from the foliage. "Billy! Oh crikey!"

"Are we dreaming this?" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"I think we are!" gasped Harry Wharton.

Bunter blinked round reassuringly at Miss Primrose.

"It's all right, ma'am——"

"My boy—my dear brave boy——" stuttered Miss Penelope. "Take care—oh, take care——"

"I can handle him all right, ma'am!" said Bunter. "I'm not afraid of lions, ma'am! I'll take him away——"

"Goodness gracious!"

"Down!" barked Bunter.

Cæsar dropped on four legs.

Billy Bunter, cool as a cucumber, clambered on his back and gripped his mane.

"Houp-la!" he barked

Cæsar ambled away, with Bunter on his back! Bunter calmly guided him down the drive to the gates.

This was Bunter's moment! He knew that every eye in Cliff House School was on him. He saw the Famous Five fairly gaping! He heard the howl of amazement from Sister Bessie!

Releasing one hand from the lion's mane, the fat junior took off his hat and waved it to the packed windows as he rode Cæsar out of the gateway. Life at that moment was well worth living to William George Bunter!

"Billy!"

"Bunter!"

"Brave boy!"

"What pluck!"

"What courage!"

"Amazing!"

"Dear, brave lad!"

Bunter was the goods! Having ridden the lion out of gates, Bunter had left Cliff House in a buzz of amazement and
(Continued on page 28.)

CAPTAIN VENGEANCE!

The Guardian of the Tombs!

By JOHN BREDON.

ROY DRAKE clapped a hand to his throat, his hair stiffening at the roots, his mouth and lips dried with horror.

It was a great and monstrous serpent, a boa-constrictor, that guarded the Tomb of the Kings in Pai Yang; those ancient tombs with their treasures of gold and jewels that Von Eimar, the modern pirate, had attempted to despoil.

Von Eimar, one-time convict on Nemesis Island, now captain of the pirate cruiser Vengeance, had led his crew of convict-pirates in a raid upon the Island of Pai Yang, intent upon enriching himself with the spoils of that remote and unguarded relic of ancient Eastern civilisation.

Up to a point all had gone well. Roy Drake, his English boy prisoner, son of Morgan Drake, of the British Secret Service, had escaped, attempting to warn the islanders; but had been recaptured before he had been able to achieve his object. The sultan, the Dutch resident, and Chu Ho Shan, the wealthy Chinese jewel merchant, were all Von Eimar's prisoners, and the Great Pagoda had been captured. With a native priest as a guide, Von Eimar had penetrated deep into the ancient catacombs of Pai Yang, where the treasure was hidden—to discover, in horror, that the jewels were guarded by a gigantic boa-constrictor that had its haunt under the tombs.

On his hands and knees Von Eimar groped in the darkness, till, more by luck than anything else, he chanced upon his fallen electric torch. He pressed over the switch, and, though he and his men were instantly relieved of the enfolding cloaks of shadow around them, the beam of the light showed the monster in all its fearful proportions.

A flat, hideous head, green eyes scintillating like emeralds, reared high upon a pendulous trunk that rolled in fold after fold from its den beneath the tomb. Giant muscles rippled like waves beneath its barred and spotted scales that were all the colours of the rainbow. In the middle it was so thick that a man's arms could not have circled round it; from forked tongue to the tip of its tail the snake must have measured fifty feet at least.

Often had Roy Drake heard of the monstrous boa-constrictors that dwell in the fetid swamps and jungles of Burma and Malaya, but never had he dreamed that a creature of such size could exist on the island of Pai Yang.

Von Eimar was the first to recover his stunned senses.

"Treachery!" he barked, raising his automatic and closing one eye over the sights. "That cursed priest—led us into this! Quick! Find him! Find the exit!"

In that confined space the explosion of his pistol was appalling. Fumes of sulphurous cordite filled the narrow tomb-chamber.

Pi-i-i-ing!

The screaming bullet merely grazed that scaly and sinuous trunk and flattened itself in a splash of lead.

The boa-constrictor checked its advance as if startled by the stinging shot, swaying its head from side to side. Then slowly, leisurely, it recommenced its rhythmic approach.

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As the Frenchman went crashing down, a scintillating diamond dropped from his hand. "You sons of dogs!" snarled Von Eimar, turning on his pirate crew. "The next man I catch at that thieving game will get a jewel from me, and it will be of steel-jacketed lead!"

To be caught in those coiling, revolving folds meant a certain and agonising death. The creature was capable of crushing a horse or a buffalo into a pulp, and then swallowing it whole.

"Back!" roared Von Eimar, as the thing shudderingly recoiled. "Where's that priest? Find the way out!"

Dazedly Roy Drake blinked around. The priest had disappeared. Killer Moran and Ramiro had thrown themselves flat upon the worn stone flags, hiding their faces in an agony of terror.

Galvanised by Von Eimar's urgent injunction, Roy groped back through the shadows. The circular tomb-chamber was ringed with squat stone pillars, filling the space between them and the wall in gloom, and he was not sure of the exact locality of the doorway. Round two or three of the massive columns he stumbled—in time to see a gigantic block of stone filling the doorway as it swung upon a hidden pivot.

A chuckling laugh from the absconding priest filled his ears as the stone slab grated into position.

With a cry of anger, the boy flung himself upon the rough surface of the stone; but the slab was immovable.

Some secret mechanism, known only to the priests of the Great Pagoda, had enabled their guide to entrap them.

Almost sobbing, Roy beat upon the rugged surface with his fists, clawed at the cracks with his nails until his fingers were bruised and bleeding—all in vain! Whatever the secret mechanism that moved the stone was, it was beyond his powers of discovery.

Von Eimar, crouching behind a pillar, blazed his electric torch full into the eyes of the unnatural monster as it coiled and coiled about the tomb-chamber. The blinding white light seemed to dazzle it, for it swayed its head to and fro like an inverted pendulum, as if in a daze.

Crack, crack, crack!

Stunning reverberations filled the chamber as Von Eimar pressed the trigger of his automatic.

The whistling bullets had as little effect upon the thick overlapping scales of the boa-constrictor as they would have had upon steel armour-plating.

His sole chance was to wing a bullet through one of those hideous, unblinking eyes that stared upon him.

And that Von Eimar could not do. The chief pirate's hand was cool and

steady. He was an excellent shot. But the bright, strong light dazzled his vision; nor was the monster still for a second.

And if he snapped off the torch they would be left in total darkness, at the creature's mercy.

Killer Moran and Luis Ramiro, abandoning their rifles, lay crouched in the sable shadows beyond the circle of pillars. Under their mask of swaggering aggressiveness and brutality these two were a choice pair of poltroons, and their nerve failed them utterly at this juncture.

Crawling on hands and knees, with one eye upon the giant snake as it writhed and coiled, Roy Drake snatched at Moran's rifle where it lay in view of the torch's beam, hastily examining the magazine as he took cover behind a pillar.

Five cartridges were left.

Carefully Roy Drake took aim, running his steady gaze down the sights as he crooked one finger round the trigger.

Crack!

His first shot whirled past that flat, ugly head.

Recoiling a second, it swayed towards him. The second bullet tore a scale from that huge, coiling body.

"Look out, young Drake!" roared Von Eimar.

With all its snaky nature aroused, the thing writhed towards him. One second, and Roy barely avoided those crushing coils. Dodging nimbly round the colonnade, he saw the rifle being caught up, the barrel bent and twisted like a corkscrew.

And now it was a mad, unearthly, nightmare race; a race that lived for ever in Roy Drake's memory. The boa-constrictor was rolling, lashing, thrashing its undulating curves and folds about the stone-flagged floor. In and out of the columns the four prisoners dodged, avoiding its embraces with no more than inches to spare, helped only by the light that Von Eimar kept flashing into its eyes.

Perspiration clogged Roy Drake's vision. Out from his lungs pumped his breath in great, sobbing gasps. He was nearing the end of his tether, and he knew it. He knew, too, that it would not be long before the battery in Von Eimar's torch would be exhausted, and then they would be lost in the blinding, pitchy blackness, blundering into one another and falling helplessly into the hug of the constrictor.

Tripping in a crack between two worn flags, Roy fell flat upon his face, with all the wind knocked out of his body.

Lying inert, shackled by the weight of his helplessness, he closed his eyes and waited, with thumping heart, for the inevitable end.

And then, faint and sweet, from the distant shadows, there fell upon his ears a sound of music.

The Jewels of Dead Kings!

ROY DRAKE supposed that his senses were playing him tricks; that the sound that he heard was the likeness of ringing bells that fills one's ears at the last point of exhaustion. For a full minute he lay prone and gasping, unable to rise, and waiting for the crushing embrace that he was unable to avert.

Nothing happened. Only the low, sweet strains of music rose and fell in a rhythmic cadence, seemingly from somewhere above his head.

At last he realised that it was the wailing of a reed pipe.

Recovering his breath, and the power of his tired muscles, the boy twisted over and raised his head.

By the light of Van Eimar's torch he beheld the giant boa-constrictor, rolled in a pyramid of enormous coils, resting in the midst of the tomb-chamber, and swaying its flat, ugly head gently to and fro as if enthralled with the rhythm of the music.

The strains of the reed pipe, Roy discovered, came from an air-shaft hewn through the domed roof of the chamber.

Gazing around dazedly, he discerned his companions, equally astonished, staring stupidly at the now subdued boa-constrictor.

"Mein Gott!" he heard Von Eimar say, in a feeble, gasping voice, that testified to the exhaustion even of his powerful frame.

Roy had heard of the uncanny charm that music possesses for these gigantic snakes. But who was the unknown friend who thus piped their deliverance?

Slowly, as he watched, the boa-constrictor rose upwards, coil after coil, wriggling and undulating through the air-shaft in quest of that alluring music.

With starting eyes, the prisoners watched the movements of that huge, cable-like trunk, till, at last, the tip of its tail disappeared into the mystery above.

Von Eimar drew a handkerchief from his pocket and swabbed a matted, oozing forehead.

"Ach! What a sight!" he grunted throatily, and a shake in his voice betrayed the terror that had strained even his iron nerves to breaking-point. "That was terrible! May I never see the like again!"

He produced a silver hip-flask, and unscrewed the stopper with his strong white teeth.

"That gave me a turn, my friends," he added, after he had poured a liberal mouthful of the potent, fiery liquid down his throat.

Then he passed the flask to Moran and Ramiro, who emptied it between them.

"Now we must find a way out of this death-hole," pursued Von Eimar, flashing his torch around the chamber. "That—that thing—may come back, and I'm not anxious to meet it when it does!"

Even as Von Eimar spoke, Roy Drake heard a grating noise as the huge block of stone swung round again in the doorway. The music had died away, and, except for that faint creak of chafing stone, a silence as of death itself hung over the tomb-chamber.

Hastily Von Eimar crammed fresh bullets into the chamber of his automatic.

The stone slab opened wider, and then all four prisoners laughed shakily, in relief, as instead of the murderous priests they expected, they recognised the brown, scarred features of Von Eimar's followers, headed by Dietz, the German quartermaster.

For once, even Roy Drake was glad to see the brutal visages of his captors.

"What is this, captain?" Dietz stared in stolid surprise at their white, strained faces. "What's happened? We waited a time, and as you didn't come back, we forced another of those demon-priests to show us the way—begging your pardon, sir, for acting without orders, but we suspected foul play. Is anything wrong? You look as if you'd seen a ghost, captain."

"A ghost? I've seen the devil, rather, Dietz—or the devil's likeness in the shape of the biggest serpent that ever lived!" ejaculated Von Eimar. "These devil-priests have a very pretty way of guarding their ancient treasures."

Then the pirate chief told his followers of the fifty-foot boa-constrictor that had its lurking-place among the tombs.

"Someone lured it away with music,"

Von Eimar concluded, pointing to the vertical air-shaft. "Whoever it was I don't know, but I'd like to meet him. He's a pal! Each one of us would have been cuddled into a pulp if he hadn't turned on the entertainment!"

Uneasily the convict-pirates gazed at the aperture in the domed ceiling.

"The priests control the thing, I suppose, with their infernal music," Von Eimar ran on. "What they feed it on I'd not like to guess. I know one thing, though, and that is that I'm not going up to investigate—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Roy Drake. "Look, Von Eimar! What's this?"

There was something like a stampede as the convict-pirates crowded back into the doorway, just as a light, swishing object slipped down from the air-shaft and brushed against the stone flags as it dangled.

"Keep your heads, you rabbit-hearted fools!" snapped Von Eimar, jamming a cigar into the corner of his mouth.

"Don't you know the difference between a rope-ladder and a boa-constrictor? A rope-ladder won't hurt you!"

A rope-ladder it was, though in the uncanny atmosphere of the tombs, and after Von Eimar's startling story, it was quite enough to shake the unsteady nerves of the convict-pirates.

They watched as a gorgeous figure in gaily coloured silks descended the rat-lines.

As he reached the floor, he turned with an inscrutable smile, and with a profound Oriental obeisance to Von Eimar.

"Chu Ho Shan!" cried the pirate captain, in surprise.

"My humble and obedient self, and always at your command," smiled the Chinese jewel merchant, speaking in his usual impeccable English.

"But—but—" Von Eimar stared, the cigar held between plump fingers. "How came you here, Chu Ho Shan? Was it you that decoyed the boa-constrictor?"

With another bow and a bland smile Chu Ho Shan drew a small reed pipe from the breast of his flowered, embroidered jacket.

"I have some small knowledge of the priests of the Great Pagoda of Pai Yang, and of their little ways," he explained. "Yes, it was I that played the snake-music, knowing that the priests only led you to this place so that they might entrap you. Rest assured. The great snake is now soothed to sleep. He will no longer disturb you. You see, it did not suit my purpose that you should die in so barbarous a fashion, Von Eimar, nor"—and here his oblique brown eyes dwelt upon the features of Roy Drake—"this so brave English lad here."

Von Eimar rubbed his square chin, and through his monocle a pale blue eye rested suspiciously upon the Chinese jewel merchant.

"It did not suit your purpose—ch, Chu Ho Shan?" he repeated, watching the Chinaman narrowly. "Now, I find that strange. I am your enemy; I have captured you to obtain ransom. I would not have supposed that you were so devoted to me, Mr. Chu!"

A faint smile quivered about the lips of Chu Ho Shan as he spread out his hands.

"For Von Eimar personally—possibly not," he returned softly. "But Von Eimar is the chief wolf of the pack. Without its head this private gang of yours would go mad. Better I should pay you ransom, Von Eimar, with a portion of my wealth, than that my throat should be cut, and Pai Yang burned and destroyed, with its people."

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massacred. 'That is what would happen had you been killed, Von Eimar.'

"I see," agreed Von Eimar, nodding his shaven head. "I see your point, Chu Ho Shan. But—" and he glanced around at the tomb-chamber, "where, I wonder, is the secret treasure of jewels of the Great Pagoda? Not far, I should imagine, if the boa-constrictor is its guardian."

Chu Ho Shan's narrowed eyes rested upon the carved stone sarcophagus in the midst of the chamber.

"That," he said, pointing, "is the resting-place of Melesa, first of the ancient kings of Pai Yang, the founder of its now forgotten greatness. It is said that he hoarded a vast wealth in jewels, which disappeared at the time of his death—"

"Of course!" Hands upon his hips, Von Eimar looked down upon the sculptured effigy on the lid of the sarcophagus. "If the jewels are anywhere, they will be here. Come, men! Fetch your hammers and crow-bars and open the lid. It's not the first time some of you have broken open a bank—though never such a strange bank as this, I'll warrant!"

Thunderous echoes rang in the roof of the crypt as the tomb-robbers set promptly to work.

Roy Drake, on the fringe of the little group, looked on in cold disgust.

By the light of torches and hurricane-lamps, the tomb-robbers plied their tools with the skill of practised cracksmen.

At last, the stone lid was split open, and it crashed on to the floor in a cloud of splinters, chips, and dust.

Perspiring faces looked downwards as they crowded forward eagerly.

Impelled by a curiosity that he could not restrain, Roy Drake peeped between bowed shoulders and craning necks.

In the stone coffin he saw a swathed and swaddled mummy, with a gold mask set over the dead face. Jewelled eyes stared upwards silently at the would-be despoilers of the dead.

The majesty of death bound the tongues of even those hardened rogues. So tense was the stillness that their breathing sounded loud and heavy.

Only Von Eimar sounded unimpressed, and his mocking, contemptuous laugh, though it jarred on Roy Drake's ears, served to break the tension.

"Say, cap, I don't see no treasure," drawled Killer Moran. "Guess them two 'rocks' must be worth suthin', an' thet gold mask, but yuh kain't call thet a heap when shared amongst all of us!"

"D'y'e expect the jewels to jump out into your hands, you fool," snapped Von Eimar impatiently. "Search, men, search!"

Roy Drake turned aside in aversion, and as he did so, he encountered the sombre gaze of Chu Ho Shan.

The Oriental's face was as impassive as ever, and Roy was left to rack his brains to discover what it was that was so oddly reminiscent about Chu Ho Shan.

All his efforts were fruitless. Shu remained to him a baffling enigma. There was something indefinable about the man that stirred the chords of his memory, but the more he probed the mystery the more he was left puzzled and wondering.

It was as he pondered that a wild cry of delight suddenly rang in his ears.

"Here we are!" cried Von Eimar, exultingly. "Jewels! Hidden beneath

the mummy! Rubies, sapphires, emeralds! Look at that opal—and that string of pearls! Mein Himmel, they must be worth hundreds of thousands sterling—a million, I wager!"

At his words, Roy glanced back, and instantly his eyes were dazzled by the prismatic, multi-hued splendours of colour as the delighted convict-pirates passed the stones from one horny palm to the other. It was as though a rainbow had been broken up into a thousand tiny pieces, and magically scattered into that dark, dank vault.

Von Eimar picked up a splendidly luminous diamond and held it between finger and thumb, scrutinising it with one critical eye in the glow of the hurricane-lamp.

"Ach, this alone must be worth a fortune," he declared enthusiastically. "I'll swear there is not another like it in the markets of the world! And these twelve pink pearls, equally matched, pearl for pearl—a millionaire couldn't afford to buy them for his bride! Look at that ruby, big as my thumb! Men, our fortunes are made! There's enough here to make us all rich when we get back to civilisation!"

Little as he knew of gems and their value, Roy Drake could well believe him as he saw those magnificent stones being passed to and fro and examined by the ex-convicts, many of whom were experts in such matters.

Then suddenly Von Eimar growled in his throat like an angry mastiff, and his doubled fist crashed full into the mouth of a man who had once been a notorious confidence trickster in the Continental cities, a Frenchman named Duprez.

As Duprez sprawled flat, Roy Drake saw a scintillating pebble drop from the man's fingers and spin across the tomb-chamber floor in flashes of light.

"You dog!" snarled Von Eimar, kicking the Frenchman savagely in the ribs as he bent down and secured the stone that his quick eye had detected being slipped up the man's sleeve.

"So that's your game, is it, you underworld sewer-rat? I'll deal with you later. Moran, watch every man as he comes out of this chamber. Each one is to be searched, down to his toenails!" Grimly Von Eimar thrust a big fist under the flap of his gun-holster. "The next man I catch at that game will get a jewel from me, and it will be of steel-jacketed lead! Remember that, you sons of dogs!"

Every man shifted his gaze as Von Eimar glanced round at them; but, to Roy Drake, who was watching closely, it seemed as if the fires of rubies and emeralds were transferred to those narrowed, gleaming eyes that squinted furtively at the scowling master-pirate.

Already the jewels had acted like an apple of discord tossed into the pirates' midst.

Chu Ho Shan laid a hand gently upon Von Eimar's arm.

"If I may have the privilege, Von Eimar," he said, in a quiet voice, as the captain glanced round at him, "I would like to have a word with you—in private!"

Chu Ho Shan's Proposal!

ROY DRAKE would have been glad to hear the conversation between Von Eimar and the Chinese jewel merchant. But the two withdrew to the shadowy colonnade that encircled the tomb-chamber,

and the quartermaster, Dietz, headed him off, scowling as his hand rested upon the butt of his gun.

Aside, Von Eimar watched the Chinaman with keen blue eyes.

"Well, and what is it, Chu Ho Shan?" he inquired, in a tone that suggested that he understood what was coming.

Before he answered the question, Chu Ho Shan, with a murmur of apology, gently withdrew the big diamond from Von Eimar's fingers and studied it as it rested in the hollow of his yellow palm.

"I cannot say definitely, in this light, what is its price, Von Eimar," he said; "but, all the same, I fully endorse your opinion that there is not another like it in the markets of the world!"

In the half-light their eyes met.

"Von Eimar," the Chinaman continued, as he read encouragement in the captain's gaze, "you took me as your prisoner because I, Chu Ho Shan, am reputed to be one of the richest jewel dealers in the world. You wanted ransom. But—I think that I can point out to you a better way, a way wherein we can make a mutual profit."

Von Eimar grinned. Already he had fathomed the Chinaman's meaning.

"Go on, Chu Ho Shan," he said, flicking the ash from his cigar.

Though they were remote from any possible listener, instinctively Chu lowered his voice, and glanced around before he proceeded.

"I take it that it is your intention to disband your pirate crew after this raid?" he questioned softly.

"That is so," Von Eimar nodded.

Chu stroked his beard.

"Jewels make excellent booty. They are easily concealed, and they always fetch their price. But"—and here Chu laid a slim yellow finger upon the broad, massive chest of Von Eimar—"it is not always easy to dispose of rare and large gems, if you cannot give a reliable account of how they came into your possession. Especially"—and he opened his hand to show the great diamond—"such immensely valuable ones as these. There are but few dealers who could handle them, and those that would take the risk would only offer you a twentieth part of their value."

"I understand you, Chu Ho Shan," Von Eimar spoke quietly. "You mean that you are prepared to dispose of them for me?"

The Oriental bowed.

"Precisely, Von Eimar. I am Chu of Pai Yang. With all humility, I say that my name and reputation is known from New York and Amsterdam to Macao and the East. I alone could dispose of such jewels without suspicions being aroused. I will not pretend to be moral. What, after all, are the dead kings of Pai Yang to me? I am not a native of this country! Let it be supposed that I am carried aboard your pirate warship by force, to provide you with ransom. That will sound plausible; indeed, it was your first intention. Then, when your cruiser is scuttled and your crew safe in hiding, I will sell these jewels for you. I will sell them quietly and secretly, and at five per cent commission, shall we say, I can make a handsome profit for myself."

"It is a bargain!" declared Von Eimar. "I know that you will not play me false, Mr. Chu. For if I am taken and executed for a pirate, then Chu Ho Shan goes to the gallows with me!"

The cold blue eyes of Von Eimar met the oblique brown ones of Chu Ho Shan,

and the thin, crooked smile around the mouth of the one was reflected in the face of the other.

"We understand each other, then," smiled Chu Ho Shan.

"The Prisoner Has Escaped!"

THE stars were paling to the dawn, when, with creak of oars and rowlocks, the boats containing Von Eimar and his pirates crowded under the vast steel hull of the Vengeance, as she rode at anchor with steam hissing from pipes, and with her powerful guns still trained upon the silent roofs and pagodas of Pai Yang, that were silver in the dawn.

Ronald Westdale met Von Eimar as the pirate chief sprang up the accommodation-ladder to the gangway. The Englishman's handsome, clean-cut face was grave and stern, and there was an angry glint in his eyes.

"The prisoner has escaped," Roy heard him say, as the boy followed Von Eimar up the rungs. "The Dutch flying officer, I mean. He got away during the night." And with that his cold grey eyes flung a challenge into the face of Von Eimar.

"Why, that is unfortunate." Von Eimar fingered his square, heavy chin. "I left him in your charge, Mr. Westdale."

"You did that," Westdale agreed grimly. "But that's not all. I'm not taking the blame so tamely as that, Von Eimar." His cold clear eyes never left those of Von Eimar as he added: "I saw to it last night that he was secure before my gun-crews were piped to their stations. After that we had no time to attend to him. But someone helped him to escape. The door was unlocked—not forced—and so were the locks of his fetters. Have you still got the keys, Von Eimar?"

From every side angry growls reached Roy Drake's ears as he stood in the gangway, close by Von Eimar. Behind him Killer Moran was leading the rest of the raiding-party as they scrambled up the side. They had loaded rifles and bandoliers slung over their naked brown shoulders, bags of loot hung to their belts, and they scowled blackly and muttered together as they overheard Westdale's words. Every eye was upon Von Eimar, but his broad, fair face never lost its frosty smile.

With a quickening of his heart, Roy Drake remembered Von Eimar's dark hints, uttered a few hours previously—that perhaps the Dutchman might escape, taking with him the news that Roy had voluntarily joined the pirates. Was this Von Eimar's revenge upon his old enemy, Morgan Drake, Roy's father? Had he secretly left instructions with a trusted man among the pirate crew to release the Dutchman during the night?

That, evidently, was in the minds of the pirates as they glowered suspiciously at their leader. Von Eimar's hints had been uttered in the hearing of Ronald Westdale and Killer Moran.

As it happened, Roy had earlier explained the whole situation to the Dutch prisoner—but this Von Eimar did not know.

"Gee, that's a sour bite, I'll tell the world!" Killer Moran glared sulkily at Von Eimar. "I mind yuh said suthin' about Dutchy makin' a break, cap, on'y t'other day—just before we left Inaccessible Island? An' now—what? Ef Dutchy spills the beans about Inaccessible Island, we're done for."

We'll have a dozen warships nosin' round the place!"

Luis Ramiro, behind him, led the surly mutter with which the crew voiced their uneasiness.

But Von Eimar merely yawned.

"You alarm yourself unduly, my dear Moran." With a sweep of his plump hand, Von Eimar took in the green, en-

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

I WONDER if you realise how necessary oil is to modern civilisation? A Southampton reader asks me this week if I can tell him how much oil is used in this country in a year. The answer may surprise you. In twelve months this country uses nearly

TWO THOUSAND MILLION GALLONS

of oil, almost the whole of which is brought from overseas. So far, we have been dependent upon foreign lands for our oil, but experts hope that in time we will become self-supporting. Last year thirty-nine oil-prospecting licences were granted in Britain, and all over the country men are trying to "strike oil." It seems curious to think that there are oil wells in this country, but there is a well in Derbyshire which has yielded nearly three-quarters of a million gallons since 1919. Two years ago another flow of oil was discovered in the same county.

Down near Portsmouth a group of experts are now searching for oil, and are drilling through rock at a cost of three pounds per foot, in the hope of finding a new well.

The next question comes from Sam Watts, of Darlington, who asks me to tell him something about

THE GOLD RUSH,

which happened in the Yukon in the year 1898. What, he asks, was the method of mining for gold used in that district? It was a pretty tough job, I can tell him! The gold had been deposited in the ground by rivers that had flowed there in past ages, and the long-lost rivers had dried up and been covered over. It was necessary to dig down between twenty and thirty feet below the surface to strike the "pay streak." Now considering that the ground was frozen as hard as nails, you can imagine what that meant. First of all, the ground had to be thawed out. This was done by building bonfires over the spot where the shaft was to be sunk. When a few feet of earth had been thawed out, this was dug away, and then another bonfire started.

The shafts were generally about five feet square, and every few feet another bonfire had to be burned. It took two or three weeks to dig a shaft to a depth of about twenty-five feet. The gold was found in tiny nuggets about the size of a pea. Doubtless you have heard the expression "fool's gold." Do you know what it was?

The ground round about there was rich in pyrites, which sparkled and gave the impression of being gold. Actually, it was worthless. Real gold in the raw state does not sparkle, but is merely a dull yellow. Many inexperienced prospectors wasted all their time collecting quartz which contained pyrites, and then trekked

folding shores of the bay, the peaked roofs and spires of Pai Yang, and the crescent-shaped junks and proas mirrored in the placid blue of the sea. "See for yourself. Pai Yang has no communication with the outside world. The wireless station at the Residency has been wrecked beyond repair. There

(Continued on next page.)

back to Dawson City—to find that their "strike" was utterly worthless!

Now let's come nearer home and talk about

BURIED TREASURE IN ENGLAND!

Down in Dorsetshire, at a place called Barton Farm, a great treasure hunt is to begin. Nearly a thousand years ago the farm was the property of a monastery at Cerne Abbas. It is believed that the monks buried treasure of a great value somewhere in the ground which the farm now occupies. A little while ago a water diviner went over the farm searching for subterranean streams. To his surprise his rod indicated the presence of metal, and this is believed to be the long-hidden treasure of the ancient monks.

This isn't the first time this diviner has discovered metal in the earth. While searching for water at another farm in the neighbourhood his rod indicated metal. The ground was dug up—and a Victorian brooch was found. That, of course, was not very valuable, but the treasure hunters are hoping that they are going to find something much more exciting this time!

Dorset seems to be a county that is rich in buried treasure. Not so long ago workmen were digging foundations for a new department store in Dorchester, when they discovered twenty thousand third-century silver Roman coins!

So if any of my readers are holiday-making in Dorset this year, they might have a look round for hidden treasure!

Tom Walker, of Esher, asks:

HOW MUCH SALT IS THERE IN THE DEAD SEA?

The Dead Sea contains the most salt of any sea in the world. The salt content is twenty-five per cent—far and above that of any other sea. The Adriatic comes next with only a little over four per cent. The Atlantic contains only three and a half per cent salt content. The Black Sea has less than two per cent, but that hasn't deterred the people of Bulgaria, who live on the shores of the Black Sea. They are proposing to develop a new industry by producing salt from the waters of the sea. I am afraid they've got a big job in front of them.

And now a word or two about next Saturday's programme. First of all there is:

"BILLY BUNTER'S BUNK!"

the second story in the grand new circus series Frank Richards is writing for us, and by jingo, chums, it's a top-notch! Billy Bunter, our prize porpoise, piles up so much trouble for himself that he shakes the dust of Greyfriars from his feet. But there's a method in Bunter's madness, for he's got a safe refuge at Muccolini's Circus where he is determined to become a big noise and a great gun! You'll rock with laughter when you read this smashing yarn, chums. As for thrills, you'll get a whole heap of 'em in the further exciting adventures of Captain Vengeance and his convict pirates. Our other features—a really humorous "Greyfriars Herald," the Rhymester's contribution, and my little chat will be bang up to the usual standard.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,481.

are no steamers in the harbour, not a single motor-boat on the whole island. It will take days for a sampan to reach Batavia in the Dutch East Indies, which is the nearest point of civilisation."

"Yeah, an' what then, sirree?" demanded Killer Moran, thrusting out his heavy jaw.

"By then, my dear fellow, we shall have recovered the bullion from the Sylvia Bay, which we cached on Inaccessible Island, and will have left our secret island-base for ever. As I told you, this raid upon Pai Yang was intended to be our last enterprise. For the future, we have to seize some small freighter, scuttle the Vengeance, and then make our way to some remote South American port to share out our spoils."

Chu Ho Shan, standing beside Von Eimar, smiled, and softly rubbed his hands together.

Killer Moran did not answer—at least, not directly and in words. Instead, he growled like a balked dog as he swung away, and the look that he exchanged between Luis Ramiro and Duprez, and one or two more, boded the pirate leader no good.

Unheeding him, Von Eimar climbed to the cruiser's forebridge, and, unplugging the speaking-tube, called down to Mikhail Lebedoff, the renegade engineer, as he stood down in the sweltering steel compartment that housed the Vengeance's powerful twin engines.

"Steam up, Lebedoff? All in readiness?" he asked. "Good!" he added, as the other replied. "Let her rip, Mikhail. I want to make Inaccessible Island as swiftly as possible!"

With that, he took his binoculars, surveying the smiling blue of the Indian Ocean; then spoke a few brief words to Dietz, the scarred German quarter-

master, as he stood at the steering-wheel.

Roy Drake, pacing the well-deck, felt the deck plates strain and heave beneath his feet as the engines below throbbed into life, the pirate cruiser taking the sea with a swirl of foam at her bows.

From the receding masses of trees, hills, and glinting pagoda roofs of Pai Yang, Roy glanced to Westdale, who smiled grimly and shrugged his broad shoulders. About the gun-turrets, ventilators, and hatches he looked to see the convict-pirates gathered together, scowling, muttering.

Killer Moran and Luis Ramiro were busy among them, and Roy Drake sensed that trouble loomed ahead for Von Eimar, the modern pirate.

For one thing the boy felt grateful. The Dutch flying officer who had been Von Eimar's prisoner had escaped, knowing the full facts of Roy's position on the pirate cruiser, and that spelt the death of Von Eimar's despicable plot to make it seem to the world that Morgan Drake's son was one of his pirate crew.

But what lay ahead? What part would Chu Ho Shan play in the troubles that Roy Drake sensed were coming?

Whichever way he looked at the situation, the future seemed dark and foreboding.

In the growing golden light of the morning the Vengeance lunged swiftly through the sea, black plumes of smoke volleying from her twin funnels, driving with all the speed of her giant turbines towards Inaccessible Island, where the rest of the career of Von Eimar and his pirates was to come to its eventful conclusion.

(There's a surprise for Von Eimar, and a surprise for you, in next week's chapters of this powerful pirate yarn!)

BUNTER THE LION-TAMER!

(Continued from page 23.)

admiration behind him. But he had not been long gone. Caesar was already hunted for, far and wide, and a party from the circus were coming up the road as Bunter rode Caesar out. He handed over the lion and walked back—rolling in with a cheery grin on his fat visage, and his little fat nose elevated even more than Nature had elevated to begin with.

Bunter was surrounded at once. Miss Penelope Primrose overwhelmed him with praises and gratitude. A whole bevy of girls made a tremendous fuss of Bunter; for once, the Famous Five were nowhere, and Bunter was the goods. But they did not mind; they made much of Bunter themselves, Bob Cherry expressing his feelings by a smack on the back that made Bunter emit a yell on his top note.

There was tea at Cliff House—Bunter the guest of honour. Nobody seemed to notice that Bunter ate all the cake! Bunter, for once, was the goods—and a privileged person!

When Bunter walked back to Greyfriars with the Famous Five, he seemed to be walking on air! And he only hoped that nobody would find out that the escaped lion was a tame animal who would not have hurt a mouse! That, Bunter could not help feeling, would have detracted considerably from his glory!

THE END.

(On no account, chums, miss the second story in this screamingly funny circus series. It's entitled: "BILLY BUNTER'S BUNK!" and you'll burst yourself with laughter when you read it. Be sure to order your copy EARLY!)

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4-7-36

THE HEAD WITH THE GOLDEN HART!

This Week's "Sensashunal" Instalment of Dicky Nugent's "Grate" Serial: "Doctor Birchmall's Dubble!"

Mr. I. Jolliwell Lickham burst into the Fourth Form Room like a cyclone. There was a cane in his hand and a scowl on his face.

"Jolly!" he cried. "Come out! And bend over!"

"Because why?" asked Jack Jolly.

"Because I'm going to give you a wacking!" roared Mr. Lickham. "To-day major says you're the one that chalked that libellous picture of me on the Skool House wall this morning; and I intend to make you set up for being so sawey!"

"Oh, all right, then, sir," sighed the kaptin of the Fourth. "Anything for a quiet life!"

He walked out to the front and touched his toes; and Mr. Lickham rolled up his sleeves and spat on his hands as though he intended to flay his viktims alive.

Then, just when it seemed that Jolly was in for a jolly ruff time, there came a startling interruption. The door of the Form-room opened, and there on the threshold stood Professor Willknot Birchmall, the new headmaster of St. Sam's!

"Stop!"

The new Head's voice rang out like a pistol-shot. Mr. Lickham dropped his cane like a hot brick and looked round like a startled fawn.

"G-g-good-morning, sir!" he stammered.

Professor Birchmall stalked majestically into the Form-room. There was an eggpression of utter horror on his face.

"Mr. Lickham! Do my eyes deceive me?" he asked, in a voice that fairly trembled with emotion. "Were you really going to give that poor lad a wacking?"

Mr. Lickham felt himself breaking out into a cold sweat.

"Well, sir, he properly asked for it," he gasped. "He chalked a picture on the Skool House wall—a picture of me!"

"Is that any reason why you should inflict on him a barbarous punishment with a cane?"

Mr. Lickham opened his mouth and shut his eyes. The Head then dived into his trousers pocket and brought out a big bottle of medicine and a tablespoon. Whipping out

of St. Sam's, Mr. Lickham, the boys will be ruled by one thing only—kindness! If any master raises a cane to a boy, then I shall raise Cain with that master! Do you here?"

"I here, sir!" gasped Mr. Lickham. "But what about boys who are sawey, like Jolly has been this morning?"

Professor Birchmall smiled jently.

"When that happens, Mr. Lickham, you must treat them as a doctor would treat his patients. When boys are naughty, you must look on them as being ill, and give them a dose of fizzick. Let me show you what I mean. Jolly!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Tutt-tutt! Don't worry about the 'sir,' smiled the new Head. "My name is Willknot Birchmall, Jolly. You may call me Willie for short."

"Oh, crums!" gasped Jack Jolly. "All right, Willie!"

"Mr. Lickham tells me you chalked a picture of him on the wall," went on Professor Birchmall, beaming at the kaptin of the Fourth. "Is that correct?"

"I—I'm afraid it is, Willie."

"Don't be afraid, my boy," chuckled the new Head. "The bad old days when you would suffer pain and yewmiliation for it are gone. You can look on me as the headmaster with the Golden Hart! I fully understand why you drew Mr. Lickham's picture. It was because you were ill. Just open your mouth and shut your eyes, and I will give you something to make you better!"

In a state of grato serprize, Jolly opened his mouth and shut his eyes. The Head then dived into his trousers pocket and brought out a big bottle of medicine and a tablespoon. Whipping out

the cork, he pored out a dose of the fizzick, then tipped it into Jolly's open mouth.

The next instant the kaptin of the Fourth jumped as though he had been shot.

"Ouch! Groooooo! Woocoooo! Whattisit?" he shrieked. "You've poisoned me, Willie!"

"Just a dose of fizzick, Jolly, that's all!" beamed Professor Birchmall. "It will do you any amount of good. You may go back to your desk now."

"Ow! All right, Willie! Grooooo!"

Groaning and moaning, Jack Jolly fairly staggered back to his desk. Professor Birchmall then turned again to Mr. Lickham and wagged a solemn fourfinger at him.

"Remember, Mr. Lickham!" he cried. "No more corporal punishment after this! If a boy is sawey, just be kind and

croolty and the Guvvners had appointed in his stead his cuzzin Professor Birchmall, everybody had been prepared for shocks. But they hadn't quite been prepared for a headmaster who doled out fizzick instead of lickings and eggspeted his pupils to call him "Willie!"

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If you had told anyone in the Fourth just then that Professor Birchmall and his cuzzin were one and the same, they would have said you were potty. If you had said that the new Head was merely the old Head in a new guise—a guise which he had adopted in order to keep his job and dodge his creditors—nobody would have beleaved you for an instant. So far, the Head's cunning ruse was certainly proving a grate success!

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Form-room had been repeated all over the Skool House that morning. Professor Birchmall seemed to have had a regular morning out. He had stopped Mr. Justus meting out his pekular brand of justiss; he had chipped in on behalf of Second Form chaps when Mr. Swishingham was swishing 'em; and the Third Form, he had strikly forbidden Mr. Chas. Tyzer to act as a chastiser!

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"Oh crikey!"

"Right-ho, sir—I mean, Willie!"

"You're the man foms, Willie!"

"Good! I'm awfully glad you like me," said Professor Birchmall, with a smirk. "Sorry I can't stop longer. I've just remembered Burleigh asked me over to the tuckshop for a snack. Cheerio, chaps!"

"Cheerio, Willie!"

The new Head trotted off in the direction of the tuckshop!

"My hat!" breathed Jack Jolly, breaking no silence that ensued after he had gone. "We've got something new in Heds this time and no mistake!"

The kaptin of the Fourth mite have thought differently, however, had he heard what Professor Birchmall was saying to himself at that very moment.

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ALONZO TODD.

The game was between Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch on the one hand, and Mr. Front and the Reverend Lambe on the other. How appropriate, I reflected, as I watched them, that these quiet, dignified gentlemen should be playing this quiet, dignified game of croquet! How pleasing to the ear was the rustling of the trees in the breeze as a background to the "Click!" of mallet striking ball! How soothing the cultured voices of the players!

I must confess, my dear friends, that the technical details of the game rather eluded my comprehension. My chief impression was of the leisured movements of the learned players and the studied deliberation with which each in turn made his stroke.

And the Head larked and larked again, till he found other uses for his mouth at the skool tuckshop—at Burleigh's egg-pensio!

(More rib-tickling developments, boys, in next week's instalment!)

Answers to Correspondents

"SECOND-FORMER": "Bolton gave me a pocket mife because he thought I was going to stand him a feed on my birthday. I didn't, and now he wants his mife back. Should I give it up?"

Give it up!

W. G. B. (Remove): "I'm always being invited out." Yes; we've often seen you being invited out of parties you attended without being asked!

CROQUET—FROM TWO ANGLES!

We sent along two reporters to write up the croquet match played on the Head's lawn this week—Alonzo Todd and Fisher T. Fish. Here's what they said:

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The Doc. wielded his bludgeon like he really meant it and Quelch was the elephant's hind legs, I'll tell the world! The Prout-Lambe combination gnashed their teeth every time the Doc. walloped his globe, and I'll say it was a dizzy delight to see the Slugger snite his sphere!

Wham! And the Doc.'s pill would whiz through the hoop like it really and truly belonged there! Bang! And the Slugger's pellet would smash through the hoop like someone was pulling it! How those two boys did clout their onions!

"Well, boys," remarked the Rev. Lambe afterwards, "we certainly gotta hand it to you. You surely do know how to waggle them swat-sticks!"

I'll say he spilled a bibbl!

You pay your money and you take your choice, lads!

WHAT SHALL WE DO with MAULY'S MOKE? No Prizes Offered!

Lord Mauleverer, our one-and-only belted earl, has distinguished himself by buying a donkey.

Which only shows what drawbacks there are about being soft-hearted. Quite a lot of chaps I know wouldn't have looked twice at the hawker who was whacking his donkey in Friar-dale Lane last Wednesday afternoon. But Mauly not only looked—no, planted his knuckles in the hawker's face, too! Having done which, he promptly bought the moke off the man for spot cash and led him back to the school!

Half-way there, Mauly had one of his tired spasms. Thinking that he might as well make use of his purchase while he was about it, he mounted the moke and rode the rest of the journey. The result was that those of us who happened to be down at the gates a few minutes after were treated to the unexpected sight of a donkey trotting into the school premises, bearing a sleeping aristocrat on its back!

We were all full of enthusiasm when we heard he'd bought the animal. Keeping a pet donkey at school was a now one on most of us, and it didn't seem a bad wheeze either. The only

snag was, would the Beak allow it? Nugent had a bright idea. Why not let it graze on the waste patch at the back of Little Side and keep the whole matter dark? No one else could think of a better plan, so Nugent's idea was duly carried out. For two whole days after that, Mauly's moke was the Remove's secret. We fed it and exercised it, without any outsider getting an inkling of what was on.

And then Wingate barged right into us, and the game was up. Quelch knew in five minutes and the Head in ten, and in just under a quarter of an hour Mauly was on the carpet.

The Beak was quite an old sport about it. He said he—ah!—quite appreciated Mauly's motives, but really—ahem!—it must be understood that there were no facilities at Greyfriars for such an inconvenient pet as a donkey. Mauly would have to arrange as soon as possible for it to be transferred elsewhere.

And that's how things stand at the time of going to press. And the question "What shall we do with Mauly's moke?" is one to which no answer has yet been given.

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The Beak was quite an old sport about it. He said he—ah!—quite appreciated Mauly's motives, but really—ahem!—it must be understood that there were no facilities at Greyfriars for such an inconvenient pet as a donkey. Mauly would have to arrange as soon as possible for it to be transferred elsewhere.

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"Tutt-tutt! Don't worry about the 'sir,' smiled the new Head. "My name is Willknot Birchmall, Jolly. You may call me Willie for short."

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"I—I'm afraid it is, Willie."

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