

"FROM SCHOOL TO CIRCUS!" Screamingly Funny Adventures of . . . **Bunter the Lion-Tamer.**

The Magnet ^{2^D}



ANOTHER ROLICKING FINE YARN OF SCHOOLBOY ADVENTURE!

FROM SCHOOL TO CIRCUS!



Featuring Harry Wharton & Co. and Billy Bunter, the Boy Lion-Tamer.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Letter From Bunter!

HENRY SAMUEL QUELCH, master of the Remove at Greyfriars School, put his head out of his study window. He glanced—or, to be more exact, glared—into the sunny quad.

"Wharton!"

The name shot from Mr. Quelch like a bullet from a rifle.

Five fellows were standing in a group, at a little distance. They were talking cricket, while they waited for the bell for class. But they forgot cricket as Mr. Quelch barked the name of the captain of the Remove. All five of them spun round, at once, towards the study window.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Henry looks waxy this morning!"

There was no doubt that "Henry" did! The expression on his face was a very good imitation of the "frightful, fearful, frantic frown" of the Lord High Executioner.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" answered Harry Wharton.

"Come to my study at once!" barked the Remove master.

"Oh! Certainly, sir!"

Mr. Quelch's frowning face disappeared from the study window. Harry Wharton blinked at that window, and then at his friends.

"What the dickens is up?" he murmured. "Anybody know why Quelch has got his rag out?"

"The old scout's been rather shirty ever since Bunter started playing the giddy ox," remarked Frank Nugent.

"The shirtfulness has been rather terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But—"

"But that's no reason why Quelch

should bark at me!" said Harry. "I'm not responsible for Bunter's actions."

"Hardly! Even Bunter isn't!" remarked Johnny Bull. "Better cut, old bean—Quelch didn't look as if he would like to be kept waiting."

Harry Wharton nodded, and left his friends and walked away to the door of the House. It was clear that something serious was "up"; but he could not begin to guess what it was. Quelch could not possibly know who had put the gum in Loder's inkpot, so it couldn't be that. He might know who had knocked off Coker's hat in the quad—but a little harmless fun like that would not have brought such a frightful, fearful, frantic frown to Quelch's brow. It was quite a puzzle—for it was evident that the Remove master was in a towering "wax."

The captain of the Remove arrived at his Form-master's study door, and tapped.

"Come in!" came a bark from within. Wharton entered.

Mr. Quelch was seated at his study table. On that table lay a pile of letters.

It was one of Mr. Quelch's duties to give the correspondence addressed to members of his Form the "once-over" before the same was put up in the rack to be taken in break. Evidently he had been engaged on that task when he stepped to the window to bark at his head boy.

There was a letter in his hand—crumpled in angry fingers. It dawned on Harry Wharton that it was a letter addressed to him that was the cause of that angry bark.

But that only deepened the mystery. So far as he knew, he had no correspondents to whom his Form-master might object. Fellows like Skinner and Smithy had acquaintances outside the school who might injudiciously have written. Wharton hadn't!

"Wharton!" Again the name came like a bullet.

"Yes, sir!" said Harry.

"You are well aware, Wharton, that Bunter, of my Form, has been missing from the school for some days. You are aware that efforts to trace him have failed, and thus his present whereabouts are unknown. You are aware that his extraordinary conduct has caused his headmaster and myself great trouble and anxiety! You are perfectly aware of this, Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove was well aware of it. So was every other fellow at Greyfriars. The amazing antics of Billy Bunter had been the talk of the school for days. Wharton was also aware that Billy Bunter's antics had had a deteriorating effect on Quelch's temper! But really, he could not see that he was to blame in any way. He stared.

"You are aware of all this, Wharton!" barked the Remove master.

"Certainly, sir!"

"Now it appears," went on Mr. Quelch, "that you, my head boy, could have thrown light on the matter had you chosen. You are in touch with the foolish boy who has run away from school."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton. "No, sir!"

"You are not?" barked Mr. Quelch.

"Nothing of the kind, sir!"

Mr. Quelch gave his head boy a grim and searching glare. Harry Wharton bore it with all the equanimity he could muster.

Nobody at Greyfriars knew where Billy Bunter was, or what he was up to. But Harry Wharton & Co., in point of fact, had a strong suspicion, which almost amounted to a certainty.

Their belief was that Billy Bunter was at Muccolini's Magnificent Circus, which was camped on Courtfield Common, a couple of miles from the school.

Still, they were not sure.

Even had they been sure they would not have felt entitled to pass on what they knew to the "beaks."

And certainly the captain of the Remove was not in touch with the fat and fatuous junior who had run away from the school. He had seen and heard nothing of Bunter since the Owl of the Remove had bolted. Wharton could not even guess what had put such an idea into his Form-master's head.

"You have not seen him?" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir!"

"You have not heard from him?"

"No, sir!"

"He has not told you how he is occupied during this extraordinary and unexplained absence from school?"

"No, sir!"

"Then how do you explain the fact that he has written to you, Wharton?"

"Oh! Has he, sir?" ejaculated Wharton.

"He has!" barked Mr. Quelch.

Wharton could guess now the source of that letter, crumpled in Quelch's angry hand! Evidently the Remove master had recognised Bunter's "fist" on the envelope.

"Well, if he wanted to write, I couldn't stop him, sir!" ventured Harry.

"You were not expecting a letter from Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Then you are not in touch with him?"

"Not at all, sir!"

Mr. Quelch's brow cleared a little. The frightful, fearful, frantic frown perceptibly diminished.

"Very well, Wharton," he said, "I accept your word, of course. If you have no part in that stupid boy's rebellious and reckless proceedings—"

"Certainly not, sir."

"Very well! You may take this letter, Wharton! But I must ask you to open it in my presence and hand it to me for perusal. It is clear, from the postmark, that it was posted in Courtfield, and that proves that Bunter is not very far away. No doubt a clue to his present whereabouts is contained in this letter. Open it!"

The Remove master passed the letter to Harry Wharton. The junior took it, and slit the envelope rather slowly. Why the missing Owl of the Remove had written to him was a mystery, especially as Bunter was very keen to keep his whereabouts a secret. Even a fathead like Bunter might have remembered that letters for Remove fellows passed through the Form-master's hands, and that Mr. Quelch would certainly spot his fist.

Very slowly Wharton drew the letter from the envelope.

He did not want to give Bunter away. Had that letter reached him, unseen by Mr. Quelch, certainly it would never have met the eyes of the Remove master. But there was no help for it now. Quelch was going to see that letter.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Harry suddenly, as he glanced at the epistle from the missing Owl.

"What? What did you say, Wharton?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Wharton did not answer.

He stood with the letter in his hand, staring at it, blank dismay written in his face.

Mr. Quelch's eyes fixed on him grimly.

"You have read that letter, Wharton?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" stammered Harry.

"Now hand it to me."

"I—I—I—"

Grimmer and grimmer grew the brow of Henry Samuel Quelch. Once more the frightful, fearful, frantic frown predominated.

"Wharton, have you any objection to showing me that letter, which you have received from a junior who has run away from school?" he barked.

"Oh, I—I—I'd rather not, sir!" stammered Wharton.

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet. The fabled Gorgon had nothing on Quelch as he glared at his head boy across the table.

"Wharton, give me that letter!"

"If—if you please, sir—" stuttered Harry.

"Hand me that letter at once!" thundered Mr. Quelch. He stretched out his hand. There was no help for it. Harry Wharton handed him the letter, and then stood waiting for the thunderstorm.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Artful Bunter!

MR. QUELCH breathed hard through his nose.

Seldom had the Remove master been so intensely angry. He had been, as Frank Nugent remarked, "shirty" ever since Billy Bunter had cleared off from Greyfriars without leave. A fellow was likely to be "sacked" for such a performance—and Quelch hated the idea of an expulsion in his Form. But he was keen—awfully keen—to see a lesser punish-

In the Remove Form at Greyfriars School, Billy Bunter was a nonentity. But at Muccolini's Magnificent Circus, he's "It" with a capital "I"!

ment administered unto Bunter. A flogging—the severest flogging in the history of Greyfriars—was due, and it would have given Quelch real pleasure—though its effect on Bunter, of course, would have been far from pleasurable. Now there was, apparently, a clue to the missing Removite, and his head boy was unwilling to let it come into his hands. No wonder Quelch towered in wrath!

"Wharton, I shall read this letter! I have no doubt that it will enable me to lay hands on that incredibly stupid boy Bunter. Your unwillingness to let me see it, Wharton, causes me to suspect that you have been hand-in-glove with Bunter in his reckless defiance of authority—"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Wharton.

"Then why," thundered Mr. Quelch, "do you desire to keep the information contained in this letter from my knowledge?"

"There—there's no information in that letter, sir," stammered Harry; "but—but I—I'd rather you didn't read it, sir—"

"I shall certainly read every word of it!" barked Mr. Quelch. "And if I find that it contains a clue to Bunter's whereabouts, Wharton, I shall know what to think."

"It—it doesn't, sir—"

"I shall satisfy myself on that point."

"But, sir—"

"Silence!" barked Mr. Quelch.

Harry Wharton stood silent. He watched his Form-master with a fascinated gaze as Mr. Quelch started to read that letter from William George Bunter.

There were reasons—good reasons—why he did not want Mr. Quelch to read that letter. But Quelch was reading it now.

The expression that came over his face as he read was extraordinary. The letter ran—in Billy Bunter's almost illegible scrawl:

"Dear Wharton,—I thort you and my other pals at school wood like to know what has bekum of me. I feel shore you've been ankshus.

"But it's allrite. I'm dun with school for the pressent. I may come bak after the summer hols, but I'm not shore about that. The fækt is that I'm waisted at Greyfriars, and I can tell you I'm fed-up with that old ass Quelch.

"As I dare say you kno, I cleered off because that beest Loder was after me, and I wasn't going to be wopped. Loder is a beestly booly. You can tell him so from me, and tell him that if I mete him I'll punch his knosc. Fat lot I care now for prefects! No moar than I doo for old Quelch!

"You needn't think that I'm anywhere neer the school now. At the pressent moment I'm hundreds of miles from here. I don't mind telling you that I'm going to see! A life on the oshun wave, and a home on the roling depe.

"That old fathead Quelch cort me in Courtfield the other day, but he won't have a chance of katching me again. I am going to poast this letter in Southampton just before I take the steemer. So you can tell old Quelch, if he asks you, that I'm dun with him—and jolly glad to be dun with him, too! And you can tell him to go and eat coak!

"Yore old pal,
"W. G. BUNTER."

Mr. Quelch uttered no word as he read that precious epistle through from beginning to end, but his face was fearfully expressive.

No doubt after the perusal he realised why Wharton had not wanted to show him the letter. It contained no clue to Bunter's whereabouts—but several clues to Bunter's opinion of his Form-master.

Harry Wharton stood dumb.

He could hardly imagine what the effect of that letter was going to be on Henry Samuel Quelch. If Remove fellows in reckless moments ever alluded to their Form-master as an ass or a fathead, they were never reckless enough to do so in Quelch's hearing. Now Bunter had done it! Those awful words stared Mr. Quelch in the face.

Quelch laid the letter on the table; he seemed to be choking.

"The—the—the young rascal!" Quelch almost gurgled. "The—the disrespectful young rascal! So that is how he alludes to—!" He broke off. "You may go, Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove left the study. He was glad to get away. Certainly he was not to blame for Bunter having written him that idiotic letter. But in Quelch's present mood he was rather dangerous at close quarters. It was a relief to get safe away.

The Co. were waiting for him when he came out of the House. Several other Remove fellows had joined them, wondering what was up. Six or seven voices greeted Wharton at the same time as he came out into the quadrangle.

"What's the row?"

"Licked?"

"What's up with Quelch?"

"Whopped?"

"It's Bunter," said Harry.

"Bunter?"

"He's written—"

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"The silly ass!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "He might have known that Quelch would spot the letter!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I fancy he did," he answered. "He's called Quelch a lot of fancy names, which looks as if he doesn't expect to see him again; and he's mentioned that he's taken a steamer at Southampton."

"Southampton!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Yes. He says he's going to sea, and posting the letter in Southampton before he takes the steamer."

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull.

"The gammonfulness is terrific."

"Well, nobody knows where he is," remarked Smithy. "He's fathead enough to do anything, if you come to that. Still, if he says he's in Southampton, I suppose that means that he's somewhere else. Bunter couldn't tell the truth if he tried."

"And it's not on record that he's ever tried," remarked Bob.

"I suppose he knew that Quelch would see the letter, and put in Southampton to shift him off the track," said Nugent.

"That's it," said Harry, laughing. "Only he forgot that it would be post-marked Courtfield when he posted it there."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors yelled.

Evidently Billy Bunter, sagely foreseeing that Mr. Quelch would read that letter, had put in it a false clue to his whereabouts for the Remove master to fasten on. That was why he had written—to put Quelch on a false scent.

It was like Billy Bunter to forget the trifling matter of a postmark!

As the envelope was post-marked Courtfield, Mr. Quelch was not likely to believe that it had been posted in Southampton. It was, in fact, proof that the missing Owl was only a few miles from Greyfriars. Such was the outcome of Billy Bunter's deep artfulness.

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

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The blithering owl—Bunter all over!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The howling ass!"

"The burbling cuckoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites were still chuckling when the bell called them into class. It was rather a relief to find that Mr. Quelch was not taking that class. Considering the probable effect of Bunter's letter on the Remove master's temper, class with Quelch would not have been enjoyable.

The Remove were handed over to Mr. Lascelles for extra maths. Few Remove fellows liked mathematics; but they all agreed that maths were better than Quelch that morning!

They could guess why Quelch had left them to Lascelles. The clue of the postmark had set him on Bunter's track again, and they had no doubt that he was spending the morning in another search for the elusive Owl. Certainly, he was not likely to go as far as Southampton to look for him. That letter, intended to give Quelch the impression that Bunter was hundreds of miles away, had demonstrated that Bunter was only a few miles from the school—though where, was still a mystery.

Whether Quelch would "get" him or not was quite a thrilling question in the Remove. That was a doubtful point; but on one point there was no doubt at all—if Quelch did get him, Bunter would be sorry for the fancy names he had put in that letter. On that point

there was no shadow of doubt—no possible, probable shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Two of Them!

BILLY BUNTER smiled.

He smiled with satisfaction. On that bright sunny morning in July, Billy Bunter was feeling that life was really worth the trouble of living.

He sat on the step of Marco's van and blinked over the circus camp through his big spectacles.

On his fat knees was a bag of bullseyes. From that bag he extracted bullseye after bullseye, and disposed of the same in the customary manner.

If this was not better than grinding Latin with Quelch in the Form-room at Greyfriars, Billy Bunter would have liked to know what was.

No wonder he smiled, when he thought of fellow after fellow in the Remove standing up to hand out his "con," under Quelch's gimlet-eye, while he, William George Bunter, sat at his ease and devoured unlimited bullseyes.

Bunter could really have felt grateful to Loder of the Sixth for being the cause of this change in his conditions and prospects. It was to dodge the bully of the Sixth that Bunter had cut, in the first place. Now he was glad of it. Loder was very small beer, in his eyes, now. He was a Sixth Former and a prefect; but, after all, only a dashed schoolboy, if you came to that—while Billy Bunter was—or was going to be—a star of the circus. Was he not billed as Bunto the Boy Tamer? Was not Marco, the King of the Lions, glad to engage him as his boy assistant? Was he not having the time of his life?

He was!

Sitting on the step of Marco's handsome van, Bunter was lazy and sticky and happy. He had a view of the morning activities of the circus camp. Some of the hands were rubbing down horses. Others were busy in the big tent, preparing it for the next inroad of the British public. Signor Muccolini, proprietor of the circus and ringmaster, stood talking to Marco, the lion-tamer—every now and then glancing towards Bunter, not admiringly.

The fat, swarthy, greasy-complexioned Italian, with his silk hat and eyeglass and gorgeous waistcoat looked, in Bunter's opinion, the very last word in bounders. He did not think much of Bunter—but Bunter thought less of him. Big, rugged Marco stood like a tower of bone and sinew, over-topping the signor by a head. They were talking about him, Bunter guessed that—but it did not worry him. That fat dago could say what he liked, but Marco knew a good man when he saw one.

Nearer to Bunter was Mr. Tippetty Tip, the circus clown. Mr. Tip was engaged in an occupation that brought a fat sneer to Bunter's face. He had a ventriloquial doll on his knee, and was practising ventriloquial ack-chat.

Mr. Tip did business with ventriloquism in a side-show of the circus. It was the usual stuff, a squeaky voice apparently proceeding from a doll. Billy Bunter sniffed with contempt. The number of things that Billy Bunter could not do was almost unlimited. But there was one thing that he could do, and do well; and that was ventriloquism. Some peculiar gift of Nature made the fat Owl a past-master in that art.

That it was a gift, all the Greyfriars Remove agreed. Had it required brains Bunter could not have done it.

But there was really nothing in the ventriloquial line that Bunter could not do, and do well. So Mr. Tip's poor little efforts made him sniff.

"What did you have for supper, John?" asked Mr. Tip, addressing the doll on his knee.

"Am!" squeaked a reply.

"Ham! Now, what generally goes with ham?" asked Mr. Tip.

"Shem and Japhet!" answered the squeak.

"Speaking of Ham, Shem, and Japhet, what did Noah say when he heard the rain on the roof?" asked Mr. Tip.

"Ark!" replied the squeak.

"Good! Very good! You know a lot, John. Now, what would you say if I threw you into a reservoir?"

"Silly ass!"

Mr. Tip jumped.

He almost fell off the bench he was seated upon.

He had been about to make the reply, in his ventriloquial squeak, "Tanks." But before he could squeak, the doll answered of its own accord—or, at all events, appeared to do so.

That there was a fat ventriloquist seated within a few feet of him, Mr. Tip was not aware. He was not taking any heed of Bunter at all, as he put in his back-chat practice for the side-show.

"What the poker—" ejaculated the astonished Mr. Tip, staring blankly at the figure on his knee.

"Oh, shut up!" said John.

"Eh?"

"You talk too much!"

Tippetty Tip jumped up from the bench, dropping John. He stood staring at the doll on the earth with an expression on his face that made Billy Bunter chuckle.

"I'm dreaming this!" gasped Mr. Tip. "If I'd been down to the Peal of Bells this morning, I should think—But I ain't! Wot's it mean? That's what I want to know. The blessed thing's speaking—"

"Pick me up!" came from John.

"Oh cripes!" gasped Mr. Tip.

"You clumsy ass, dropping a fellow about!"

"It's a dream—a 'orrid dream—a fearful nightmare!" stuttered Tippetty Tip. "Ere, signor—ere, Mr. Marco—you hear this!"

Signor Muccolini and Marco were coming across towards Bunter's van. They stopped, and stared, as the clown called to them.

"What's up, Tippetty?" asked Marco.

"That bloomin' doll—" gasped Tippetty.

"What do you mean?" snapped Signor Muccolini. The podgy circus-master treated Marco with tact, as a valuable member of his company, and a great draw with the public. But Tippetty Tip was only a clown, and his manner to Tippetty was quite different.

"I say, he's talking!" gasped Tippetty. "I was practising making him talk, and he started speaking of his own accord. I tell you."

"Don't be a fool!" snapped the signor.

"Draw it mild, old man," said Marco, with a grin. "Keep your funny tales for the ring, Tippetty."

"I tell you he did!" gasped Mr. Tip. "You could have knocked me down with a motor-jack! Speaking of his own accord—"

"You've been drinking!" grunted the signor.

"Not a drop!" protested Mr. Tip. "I tell you it's days since I've pushed one back. I tell you that doll was speaking—that kid must have heard him—he's near enough." Mr. Tip glanced

round at Bunter for confirmation. "Say, young Fatty, didn't you hear that doll speak?"

"Rot!" said Bunter cheerfully. "The doll never spoke! How could it?"

"I don't know how it could, but I tell you it did, and you must have heard it same as me!" hooted Mr. Tip.

"I never heard the doll speak!" said Bunter. "Only that fatheaded squeaking that you call ventriloquism. You can't ventriloquise for toffee."

"It's chucked it now," said Mr. Tip, staring at the doll again. "But I tell you, it was speaking—"

"Rubbish!" snapped the signor. "Dio mio! Why do you talk such nonsense?"

"Fat lot you know!" came a voice from John, in the grass. "You go and wash your neck!"

"They never wash in Italy!" went on John. "Ice-cream is in their line, not soap and water!"

"Chuck it, Tippity, you ass!" exclaimed Marco, alarmed by the fury gathering in the circus-master's face. He, like the signor, had no doubt that this was a new ventriloquial effect of Mr. Tip's. He knew nothing of Billy Bunter's peculiar gift.

"I tell you, I never said a word!" howled Mr. Tip, "I tell you that there doll is speaking of his own accord. It's blooming magic!"

"You—you—you dare!" gasped Signor Muccolini, red with fury. "You dare to insult me—to insult my country, my great and glorious country, the conquerors of Africa—the great

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

"Take that—and that—and that!" roared the signor. "I will sack you—I will kick you out—animale—furfante—matto—sciocco—take that—and that—"

"Oh, holy smoke! Yaroooooh! Chuck it—ow! Wow! Oooogh!" spluttered Tippity, as he scrambled wildly away.

He scuttled off round a van, and the enraged signor hurled the ventriloquial doll after him. A wild yell floated back from Mr. Tip as John crashed on the back of his head.

"He, he, he!" chortled Billy Bunter. Signor Muccolini stood gasping with rage. Marco stared after the fleeing Tippity, amazed at the audacity of the circus ventriloquist. It did not occur to him that there were two of them!



Tippity Tip stood staring with an expression on his face that made Billy Bunter chuckle. "Pick me up!" came from the ventriloquial doll on the ground. "You clumsy ass, dropping a fellow about!" "It's a dream—a 'orrid dream—a fearful nightmare!" stuttered the circus clown, unaware of the fact that it was Bunter who was doing the voice-throwing.

Signor Muccolini glared at John, and then glared at Mr. Tip. His fat, swarthy face was red with rage. Whether the signor ever washed his neck, nobody in the circus could have undertaken to say; but it was an undoubted fact that he did not look as if he did. But washed or not, the signor did not relish personal remarks of that sort.

"Tip! You impudent rascal! How dare you!" exclaimed the signor. He was not likely to believe that John the doll was speaking! Naturally, he attributed John's remark to Tippity.

"I never spoke!" gasped Mr. Tip. "Why, I couldn't ventriloquise like that, to save my life! I never said a word!"

"Gammon!" came from John.

"Hear him!" gasped Mr. Tip, "Hear him!"

"Tell that dago to go and wash his neck!" said John. "He hasn't washed it since he left Italy!"

"Hear him!" stuttered Mr. Tip, while Signor Muccolini glared.

nation led by our illustrious Duco Mussolini—"

"I—I never—" gasped Tippity, "I never—"

"Rascal! Fool! Furfante!" roared the signor.

"Shut up!" came from John.

"Tippity—" gasped Marco.

"I—I never—yarooooh!" roared Mr. Tip, as the circus-master, spluttering with rage, suddenly grasped him.

The little clown whirled round in the signor's podgy hands, and the signor's boot was planted on his trousers. Signor Muccolini was a heavy, beefy man, and all his weight and beef were put into that kick. Tippity Tip flew two or three yards before he sprawled.

"Yoo-hoop!" yelled Tippity.

"Well, you asked for that, Tippity!" said the astonished Marco.

"Yow-hoop! I never—"

Signor Muccolini stooped, grabbed up John, and taking the doll by its feet, rushed at Mr. Tip. Using John as a weapon, he swiped at the hapless clown.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Taken for a Ride!

BILLY BUNTER resumed his operations on the bag of bullseyes. He had had to suspend those operations while he produced his ventriloquial effects. Now he made up for lost time.

Marco came towards him, followed by the signor, whose swarthy face was still dark with anger. It was rather fortunate for Bunter that the signor never dreamed of guessing the real source of John's voice! All he knew of Bunter was that he was a fat schoolboy, who looked, in the signor's eyes, a fat fool! He did not suspect that there was more in Bunter than met the eye.

"How'd you like a turn with the elephants, kid?" asked Marco.

Bunter ceased to chew bullseyes.

"The elephants!" he repeated.

"You're not afraid of them?" said the lion-tamer.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, "No!"

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The signor sneered. Marco believed that Bunter was plucky—remarkably plucky. He would never have taken him on, as an assistant in a lion-taming act, had he believed otherwise. But the signor, bullying and aggressive as he was, was a keen judge of character, and he did not agree in the least with the lion-tamer's estimate of Bunter.

"It is useless, Marco!" he snapped. "You are mistaken in the boy! I have told you so many times. He can deal with old Caesar, a lion that is as tame as a house cat! He is afraid of the other lions! He has no pluck! He has pulled you the leg."

"Oh, really, you know—" protested Bunter.

Marco grunted. Owing to circumstances, which had given him a mistaken impression, he believed that Bunter was plucky. Having formed that opinion, he had no idea of changing it, at least, unless Bunter gave him cause.

Hitherto, Bunter had played up quite well. The fact that the lion-tamer, brave as a lion himself, believed in him, helped the fat junior to play up. Not if he could possibly help it, was Billy Bunter going to let himself down in the eyes of the only person in the wide world who believed in his courage!

Bunter's turn, so far, had only been with Caesar, the tame old lion with whom he had made friends, and with whom he was careful to keep friendly by feeding him. Marco's other three lions, Brutus, and Pericles, and Apollo, were fierce and intractable, and needed all the trainer's firmness and courage to handle them.

Not on any account would Marco have allowed Bunter to handle them, if he had wanted to! Not that Bunter wanted to! Had he been expected to deal with Brutus & Co., Billy Bunter would have preferred Quelch in the Remove Form Room at Greyfriars.

"You see, kid," went on Marco, in his kind, deep voice, "my last boy used to take a turn with Rajah, the big elephant. You've seen Rajah—he's as quiet as old Caesar! You have to ride round the ring on his back—"

"Oh!"

"And let him take you up in his trunk—"

"Ow!"

"And walk round the ring with you—"

"Oh lor'!"

"And then put you down and step over you—"

"Oh crikey!"

The signor gave a scoffing laugh. He was still angry and irritated from

the scene with Tippetty Tip, but at the best of times, his temper was not a pleasant or agreeable one. Billy Bunter gave him an inimical blink through his big spectacles. He disliked Signor Muccolini intensely, and never so much as at that moment.

The prospect of a "turn" with the big elephant almost made Bunter's blood run cold. He had seen Rajah step over men lying in the tan, in the circus ring, and though certainly no accident had ever happened, it was only too clear what would be the result if the elephant made a false step! The barest possibility of being turned into a pancake was horrifying to Bunter.

"The ragazzo is afraid!" sneered the signor.

"Ragazzo yourself, and be blowed!" retorted Bunter indignantly. "Who are you calling a ragazzo, I'd like to know?" After the torrent of abuse the signor had hurled at Tippetty, Bunter supposed that "ragazzo" was an Italian swear-word.

Marco chuckled. He was not an Italian, except so far as his professional name went; but he had learned some of the Italian language for use in the ring. "Ragazzo means 'boy,'" he said soothingly. "The signor isn't swearing at you."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

"The boy is a fool!" snapped Signor Muccolini. "Also he is afraid! I have told you so."

Marco regarded Bunter a little doubtfully. He had a kind, simple, and unsuspicious nature, and he believed in his new assistant. But certainly Bunter's look, at that moment, did not encourage a belief that he possessed boundless pluck. Bunter, at that moment, was wishing that he was safe back in the Remove Form Room. Even Quelch was better than Rajah!

"If you don't like the idea, kid—" said Marco, very slowly.

"Pah!" snapped the signor. "He's a coward—he is useless, he is afraid!"

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. It was true that he was afraid of the elephant—horribly afraid. But afraid or not, he was not going to be sneered at by this greasy foreigner. Somewhere within Billy Bunter's fat circumference, there was a germ of British pluck. He was not going to let himself down to Marco—and he was not going to let a greasy dago score over him!

"Who's afraid?" he yapped. "I'm no more afraid of elephants than I am of lions!"

Which was a strictly accurate statement; Billy Bunter was equally afraid of both!

Signor Muccolini shrugged his podgy shoulders.

"Andiamo!" he snapped.

"Look here, don't you jolly well call me names!" exclaimed Bunter.

The signor stared at him, and Marco gave another chuckle.

"That only means 'let's go,' kid," he said. "Come on. Scipio's got the elephant ready if you're going to try it on."

"Andiamo!" retorted the signor peated impatiently.

Billy Bunter reluctantly followed the signor and the lion-tamer into the big tent. The great space of the ring, and the endless tiers of circling seats, were unoccupied now—except for Rajah, the big elephant, and Scipio, the black man, in charge of the animal. Scipio, a big, brawny negro, grinned, with a flash of white teeth, as Billy Bunter approached in a very gingerly manner, blinking dubiously at the towering quadruped through his big spectacles.

"Him quiet, sar!" said Scipio reassuringly. "Him very quiet. You no be 'fraid of Rajah."

"Who's afraid?" snapped Bunter, who was very much afraid. "Don't you be cheeky! You jolly well shut up, see?"

That was Bunter's way of expressing thanks for a well-meant word of encouragement. The good-natured grin faded off the black man's face, and his dark eyes glinted.

"Come, come, kid," said Marco, "a civil word costs nothing, you know. Scipio is used to the elephant, and he will put him through his tricks."

"I don't want cheek from a nigger!" grunted Bunter.

"That will do!" said Marco, more curtly than he had ever spoken to Bunter before. "Don't mind him, Scipio; the kid isn't used to our ways yet."

The negro made no answer.

"Get on with it!" said Signor Muccolini. "If the boy is afraid we do not want him to display it before the people in front to-night. Let him show now what he can do."

"The kid isn't afraid!" grunted Marco. "Now, then, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter seemed rooted to the tan. The vast bulk of the elephant, towering over him, gave him a freezing chill. But Marco dropped a hand on his shoulder and twirled him directly in front of the elephant.

Bunter's fat heart thumped.

At that moment he would have given all his prospects as a star of the circus to be sitting at his desk in the Form-room at Greyfriars, grinding Latin with Quelch.

But there was no help for it now.

Scipio made a sign to the elephant, and the sinuous trunk wound round the fat form of the Owl of the Remove and lifted him from his feet.

Billy Bunter would have uttered a howl of apprehension, but terror froze him and he was dumb.

Up he went in the elephant's trunk, his fat brain spinning. Bunter's weight was considerable, but it was a feather-weight to Rajah. With his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles, Bunter was lifted in the trunk, and the circus tent swam round him.

He could not speak. He could not utter a sound. It seemed to him a century before the elephant, at another sign from the black man, set him on his feet again in the tan. Then he gurgled: "Oooooogh!"

"A bit out of breath?" smiled Marco. "You'll soon get used to it."

"Oh lor'!"

"Down!" rapped Marco, and the great elephant sank on his knees to take a rider on his huge back.

"Jump on, kid!" said the lion-tamer encouragingly.

"I—I—I—" gurgled Bunter.

"Help him on, Scipio!"

The negro grasped Bunter and heaved him on to the elephant's back. Up rose Rajah again, higher and higher, till it seemed to the wretched Owl, clinging on his back, that he would never stop rising.

"Urrrrggh!" gurgled Bunter.

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"Take him round the ring!" said Marco.

Scipio prodded the elephant, and Rajah lumbered away, making the circuit of the ring, with Bunter high on his back. The fat junior held on for his life. A fall from that height would rather have damaged Bunter; but it was easy enough to hold on to the elephant's trappings, and Bunter clung on like a limpet to a rock.

Marco and the signor stood in the centre of the ring, watching him. Round lumbered Rajah, prodded from behind by Scipio, keeping on round the ring till he had made the complete circuit.

By that time Billy Bunter was able to breathe again. He realised that he was safe on the elephant's back.

"Stop!" called out Marco.

The elephant stopped.

"Take him home, Scipio!" said the lion-tamer. "You can ride him to his quarters, Bunter."

"I—I think I'll get down!" gasped Bunter.

Scipio prodded the elephant.

The huge animal turned to the staff entrance of the tent, and lumbered out. Marco and the signor remained in the tent, discussing Bunter's turn, while Rajah lumbered out into the open air.

"Stop him now!" gasped Bunter.

Scipio did not seem to hear. He gave the elephant another prod, and the quadruped lumbered on, past the annexe where the animals were parked.

Bunter blinked down at the negro with an infuriated blink through his big spectacles.

"Stop him!" he howled. "You silly black beast, stop him! Do you hear me, you blinking nigger?"

Scipio grinned—not a good-natured grin this time. Perhaps he did not like being called a black beast and a blinking nigger!

"You no 'fraid Rajah," he said sarcastically. "You tell dis child shut up! Dis child shut up!"

"Tell the brute to stop!" spluttered Bunter, as the elephant marched onward. "Will you tell him to stop?"

"Me shut up, like you say," answered Scipio.

"You black beast, I can't get down unless he kneels!" shrieked Bunter. "Make the brute stop! Stop him!"

"You say shut up; me shut up!" answered Scipio obstinately.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Some of the circus hands were staring at the fat junior on the elephant's back and grinning. Rajah lumbered on, leaving the circus camp behind. Scipio came to a halt, watching him as he went.

Bunter, clinging on to the towering back, cast a desperate blink behind.

"Stop him, you black beast!" he howled.

Scipio grinned.

"You stop him! You no 'fraid Rajah! Me shut up!" he called back.

"Oa jiminy!"

Billy Bunter could no more have stopped the elephant than he could have stopped a runaway car. Perhaps he realised just then the truth of Marco's remark that civility costs nothing. Having put the black man's back up, he had no help to expect from the elephant's keeper, and he could not help himself. Marco was still in the tent, unaware of what was happening. Rajah lumbered on, with Billy Bunter on his back, and hit the open spaces of Courtfield Common. The circus camp disappeared behind Bunter, and the hapless fat Owl, clinging to the towering back of the elephant, wished once more, and still more fervently, that he was safe back in the Form-room at Greyfriars.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Quelch!

"BUNTER!"

Mr. Quelch gasped out the name.

He was almost too astonished to speak, but he managed to gasp.

Mr. Quelch was walking to Courtfield. Billy Bunter's letter, which had been intended to convince him that the fat Owl was hundreds of miles away, had given him indubitable information that Bunter was still in, or near, that town. Mr. Quelch was going to spend the morning in inquiring after that troublesome and elusive member of his Form.

But, as it happened, no inquiry was necessary. He was not half-way to Courtfield, when he suddenly sighted the junior of whom he was in search. He was taking a short cut across a corner of the wide common when Billy Bunter suddenly dawned on him.

Mr. Quelch had been very much puzzled by Bunter's absence from school, by his unknown reason for absenting himself, and by the mystery of his present whereabouts. He had wondered where Bunter could possibly be, and what he could possibly be doing.

But in his wildest surmises he had never even dreamed of finding Bunter riding an elephant on Courtfield Common! That really was a thing that no one could have surmised or expected.

Yet that was what he saw.

The towering form of Rajah came in sight, trampling through a belt of hawthorns. Glimpsing the elephant, Mr. Quelch guessed that the animal had wandered from a circus which he knew was located on the common. Then he saw the elephant's rider. He gazed and he gasped. He stared at Bunter as if he could not believe the evidence of his eyes—as, indeed, he hardly could!

"Bub-bib-Bunter!" he stammered.

Standing rooted to the ground, he gazed at the advancing elephant and its rider.

"It—it—it is Bunter!" almost gabbled the Remove master. "It—it is B-b-Bunter—riding an elephant! Bless my soul! Bib-bib-Bunter!"

It was Bunter—there was no doubt about that! Squatting on the towering back of the elephant, holding on with both fat hands, blinking round him through his big spectacles—there was Bunter! Bunter—at last! That which was lost had been found!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, as he suddenly spotted the Remove master standing in front of him looking like a man in a dream.

He almost fell off the elephant in his surprise and alarm. What Quelch was doing there, when he ought to have been in the Form-room at Greyfriars was a mystery to Bunter. Obviously, he couldn't be looking for Bunter, as Bunter had so artfully led him to believe that he was hundreds of miles away!

But, looking for Bunter or not, he had found him! That was a dismal certainty!

"Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, recovering a little from his amazement. "You—you young rascal! What—what are you doing on that—that elephant?"

"Oh! Nothing, sir!" gasped Bunter.

Rajah lumbered on. Up to that moment Billy Bunter had been only anxious to escape from his elevated seat on Rajah's back. Now his wishes were quite altered. The sight of Mr. Quelch reminded him of what awaited him at Greyfriars if he were caught and taken back.

The Remove Form Room would have

been preferable, perhaps, to hitting the open spaces as an elephant rider—riding a huge, lumbering beast that he could not control or even dismount. But it was a Head's flogging for running away from school that awaited Bunter! The sight of Quelch brought that disagreeable prospect nearer—and the nearer it came the less Bunter liked it! On second thoughts—proverbially the best—Billy Bunter preferred elephant riding to bending over under his headmaster's birch!

"I—I say, sir, gerrout of the way!" spluttered Bunter. "He—he may tread on you, sir!"

"Get down from that—that creature at once, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I—I—I c-can't, sir!"

"Stop the animal immediately!"

"I—I can't!"

"Bless my soul!" Mr. Quelch dodged out of the elephant's way, and Rajah marched on.

Probably Rajah liked a walk in the fresh morning sunshine, and was enjoying his unaccustomed liberty. He showed no sign of intending to stop.

Mr. Quelch walked by his side, glaring up at Bunter. Bunter blinked down at Quelch.

"You—you young rascal!" barked the Remove master. "How dare you absent yourself from school and play these absurd tricks! Get down at once, Bunter!"

"I can't, sir!" squeaked Bunter. "He—he won't stop!"

"What do you mean by this, Bunter?" shrieked Mr. Quelch. "How did you get on that elephant? I presume that it belongs to the circus near Courtfield."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I haven't been at the circus, sir! I don't know anybody at the circus."

"I do not suppose that you do, Bunter! Don't talk nonsense! How is it that I find you riding an elephant, you utterly absurd boy?"

"I—I—I found him, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I was taking a—a walk on the common, sir, and I—I found him."

Bunter realised that his Form-master had no suspicion that he had become an inmate of Muccolini's Circus. Really, no Form-master was likely to guess that one!

His one idea now was to keep that knowledge from Mr. Quelch. Marco, keen as he was to keep "Bunto, the Boy Tamer," as his assistant in the lion-taming act, would certainly never have allowed him to remain had he known that Billy Bunter had run away from school. But it was all right, so long as Quelch did not know that Bunter had been at the circus!

Bunter was not trammelled by any regard for the truth. The truth and Bunter had long been strangers; and this, evidently, was not the moment for striking up an acquaintance.

"I—I found him, sir!" explained Bunter, blinking down at the Remove master. "He—he was lying down asleep, and—and I—I thought it would be rather a lark to—to sit on his back, sir! And—and then he got up, and I—I couldn't get off again!"

"You utterly stupid boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "The elephant must belong to the circus, and they have allowed him to wander."

"Do—do you think so, sir?" stammered Bunter.

"There can be no doubt of it. The animal appears to be quite tame," said Mr. Quelch. "You are in no danger, you stupid boy, fortunately. Jump down!"

"I—I can't, sir! He—he won't stop!"
 "I must stop the animal," said Mr. Quelch.

"I—I say, sir, you keep clear!" gasped Bunter. "He—he's awfully fierce—"

"Nonsense! He is evidently quite tame!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "The circus people would not be so careless as to allow him to wander, if he were at all dangerous."

"They—they didn't, sir—"

"What?"

"I—I—I mean—"

"You can know nothing about the matter, Bunter!"

"Oh! No, sir! N-n-nothing at all! But—but I—I think—"

"Nonsense!"

Mr. Quelch whisked ahead of the elephant. Rajah was proceeding at a slow and stately pace. Quelch had found Bunter, but he was very anxious to get his grasp on the collar of the elusive Owl; and certainly he did not want to follow him in an elephant ride all over the county of Kent!

Standing in front of Rajah, Mr. Quelch lifted his umbrella commandingly, and said:

"Shoo!"

Quelch did not know how circus people talked to elephants. He addressed Rajah as if Rajah had been a chicken.

But Rajah stopped. That was satisfactory, as far as it went. What followed was less satisfactory.

A long, sinuous trunk reached out and wound about the Remove master. Before Mr. Quelch knew what was happening, he was plucked off his feet.

Mr. Quelch was not aware of it, but Rajah had taken his gesture as a signal to lift him in his trunk. Thinking that that was what was required, Rajah got on with his accustomed job.

"Oooogh!" spluttered Mr. Quelch, as he spun.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh! Ow! Help!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

His umbrella flew in one direction, his hat caught on one of the elephant's tusks. Rajah strode on again, slow and stately, with the Remove master curled in his trunk! Mr. Quelch wriggled and roared.

It was his accustomed job, to Rajah—but it seemed like some fearful, awful nightmare to the Remove master of Greyfriars. Earth and sky spun round him.

"Oh jiminy!" gurgled Billy Bunter. Rajah proceeded onward—Bunter on his back, Quelch in his trunk!

"Ow!" gasped Bunter suddenly.

The elephant passed under the branches of a beech. A bough caught Bunter under his fat chin.

He grasped at it frantically, as he was swept from the elephant's back.

Rajah passed on from underneath him, leaving Bunter hanging to the branch.

Hanging there, spluttering, Bunter was left behind—while Rajah stalked on, carrying the Remove master in his trunk, in such a state of alarm and bewilderment as Henry Samuel Quelch had never before experienced.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Treed!

BUMP!

"Ooooooooooh!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

He sat and stuttered.

His senses were spinning, and he hardly knew whether he was on his head.

or his heels. But he realised that the elephant had set him down, after carrying him a little distance. He sat down with rather a bump in the grass, Rajah towering over him like a mountain of flesh. He was too bewildered and breathless to move! But a thrill of horror passed through him, as the gigantic animal's bulk towered right over him. For one awful instant it seemed to Mr. Quelch that he was going to be squashed like a pancake.

But Rajah had been trained to step carefully over persons in his path. Awful as it seemed to Mr. Quelch, he was in no danger whatever.

Having set him down, Rajah stepped carefully over him, as he was accustomed to do with performers in the ring. Then he lumbered on his way, continuing his stroll, leaving the Remove master rather wondering whether he were alive or dead.

"Oooooogh!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Oh! Ah! Ow! Bless my soul! Oh! Oooooogh!"

He recovered his breath a little, and tottered to his feet. His umbrella was gone, his clothes rumpled, and he was wildly flustered. Staring after the elephant, he discerned that Billy Bunter was no longer on the towering back. Rajah was strolling on riderless.

Mr. Quelch panted for breath, and his eyes glittered. He felt rather shaken up, but he was not hurt. And his thoughts fixed on Bunter. He had found that elusive youth, only to lose him again.

Bunter, no doubt, had slipped from the elephant's back while Quelch was curled up in the trunk. No doubt he was already in flight. Mr. Quelch set his lips hard. He wanted—he really yearned—to be within whopping distance of Billy Bunter. He would have found great solace in giving the fat Owl of the Remove the licking of his life.

The elephant had carried him no great distance. Mr. Quelch retraced that distance, looking for his umbrella.

He did not expect to see Bunter again. He had no doubt that the runaway was in full flight. But it was the unexpected that happened.

He sighted his umbrella lying in the grass near a tall beech-tree. He sighted something else at the same moment. That was a pair of fat little legs swinging in the air, under a horizontal branch of the beech.

Mr. Quelch stared at those fat legs.

Then a grim smile came over his face—a smile that was very grim.

It dawned on him that Bunter had not dismounted from the elephant and fled. He had been brushed off by the branch as the quadruped passed under the tree. And he was clinging to the branch that had brushed him off.

Mr. Quelch was still breathless—but he broke into a run. He was in a hurry to get to Bunter, before Bunter got away.

But there was no danger of Bunter getting away! Bunter was treed.

Left hanging on that branch, the fat junior had essayed to climb on it, in order to get along to the trunk and clamber down. But it was not easy for the fat Owl of the Remove to lift his weight.

He struggled desperately, panting and gasping, streaming with perspiration. He succeeded, at last, in getting his elbows over the branch. But it was a case of "thus far, and no farther." Exhausted by his efforts, the fat junior hung there, gurgling.

He blinked downward. The grass was ten feet below his boots. He dared not drop! He dared not climb up! He

hung suspended, like Mahomet's coffin, between the heavens and the earth.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Oh lor'! Oh jiminy! Oh crumbs!"

He made another tremendous effort. He gasped, and gurgled, and his fat little legs thrashed. But it was futile. He could not lift himself on the branch. He could only hang there and gurgle. There was nothing for it but to hold on with his hands and drop and chance it.

Luckily, the elephant had carried Quelch away: he was done with that beast! But was he?

"Bunter!" came a deep voice below.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, as the well-known bark fell on his fat ears.

"Oh jiminy! Quelch!"

Instead of dropping, he clung desperately to the branch, trying to bunch up his fat little legs lest Quelch should grab them.

"Bunter! Come down this instant!"

"Oh lor'!"

"Drop from that branch, Bunter!"

"Oh scissors!"

"Will you come down, Bunter?"

thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Urrgh! Beast! Oh dear!"

Mr. Quelch glanced round him and picked up his umbrella. Umbrella in hand, he stepped back to Bunter.

"Now, Bunter, drop from that branch immediately! It is quite an easy drop, and the grass is soft! You will not be hurt! In any case, drop!"

"Ow! Oh dear! Ow!"

Instead of dropping, Bunter made another frantic effort to clamber on the branch. He might have dropped the distance, and rolled over in the grass without much damage. But he foresaw quite clearly that there would be damage, once Quelch's grip had closed on his collar. Bunter would almost as soon have dropped into the jaws of a lion.

Mr. Quelch took a grip on the umbrella, swished it in the air, and whacked. Bunter was out of reach of his hands; but not out of reach of his umbrella. That umbrella came across Bunter's trousers with a tremendous whop.

Whack!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

Whack!

"Yoo-hoop!"

Whack!

"Ow! Oh crikey! Stop it, you beast!" yelled Bunter. "Oh lor'! Wow!"

Bunter, holding on desperately, wriggled wildly in the air. Mr. Quelch, with a glint in his eyes, and a very firm set to his lips, stepped closer and whacked, and whacked, and whacked.

If ever a troublesome junior deserved to be whopped, Billy Bunter did. Mr. Quelch gave him what he deserved, and perhaps a little over.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Ow! Wow! Stop it! Yaroooooh!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Quelch laid it on hard and fast. He was prepared to go on whacking till Billy Bunter dropped like a ripe apple from the tree. Every whack rang like a pistol-shot. Quelch was bony; but he packed a good deal of muscle. He put all his muscle into this. He found satisfaction in it, if Billy Bunter did not.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

It was more than flesh and blood could stand! Bunter made one more wild effort to drag himself on the branch, and failed. Then, as Quelch, reaching up, delivered a terrific whack, he dropped.



Mr. Quelch took a grip on the umbrella, swished it in the air, and whacked. The umbrella came across Bunter's tight trousers with a tremendous whop. Whack! "Ow! Oh crikey! Stopplit, you beast!" yelled the fat Removeite, wriggling wildly on the branch. "Oh lor'! Wow!"

Crash!

It was rather unfortunate for Mr. Quelch that, reaching up to deliver that last ringing whack, he was standing just underneath Bunter. He expected Bunter to drop, under the persuasion of the umbrella; but he did not seem to expect him to drop at that precise moment. Bunter dropped—suddenly—so suddenly that he crashed on his Form-master's head, before Quelch knew that he was coming.

"Ooooh!"

One gasp escaped Mr. Quelch as he crumpled up under Bunter's weight. He went over backwards, bumping in the grass, with Billy Bunter sprawling headlong over him.

Bunter sat up dizzily.

He sat up on something hard and bony, not realising, for a moment, what it was. Then a suffocated gurgle apprised him what it was. It was Mr. Quelch's face.

"Grrroooooogh!" came from under Bunter.

Bunter bounded off. He bounded away. In terror every moment of Quelch's clutch falling on his fat shoulder, he ran for his life.

But Mr. Quelch was not in pursuit. Mr. Quelch was in no state to pursue Bunter! Stretched in the grass under the beech, the Remove master gasped and gasped, and gurgled and gurgled. Every ounce of wind had been driven out of him; and he could only gurgle and gasp.

A fleeing fat figure vanished among the gorse on Courtfield common. Mr. Quelch did not heed it.

It was several minutes before he sat up. Then he sat and spluttered for several minutes more. He was still breathing spasmodically, when at long last he tottered to his feet. He stared round him dizzily. Bunter had vanished.

"Bub-bub-bless my sus-sus-soul!" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

Dizzily he picked up his hat and umbrella. He had found Bunter, only to lose him again. Only the memory of the thrashing he had given the fat Owl comforted Mr. Quelch as he tottered away.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Triumph!

"Oh lor'!" breathed Billy Bunter. He listened in terror.

It was more than an hour since he had seen Mr. Quelch. Billy Bunter had run till his fat little legs had no run left in them. In what direction he ran he neither knew nor cared; all he wanted was to get clear of Quelch. Probably he had not covered more than half a mile; but a half-mile, on a warm July morning, was more than enough for Bunter. Panting and perspiring, and feeling that he could not have run another yard if Quelch had been just behind him, the fat junior crawled out of sight into a thicket of hawthorns and lay there resting and recovering his breath.

But there was no sound of footsteps in pursuit—no sound on the wide common save the sigh of the wind in the branches, and the twittering of the birds. Relieved of his fears, the fat Owl rested in comfort. There was no hurry to get back to the circus; and he felt that he could do with a great deal of rest after his uncommon exertions.

Then, suddenly, there came a sound of brushing in the thickets.

Somebody was coming!

Bunter sat up, listening with all his fat ears! His podgy heart jumped. He had taken it for granted that Quelch would have given up looking

for him by that time. Had the beast rooted him out?

The hawthorns swayed and rustled. A heavy trampling came to the ears of the fat junior. He realised that this could not be the tread of his Form-master. It sounded more like an elephant than a human being.

Then Bunter discovered that it was an elephant! High over him, looming through the crackling hawthorns, towered the mighty mass of Rajah.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

He leaped up as if he had been electrified, and bounded out of the elephant's path. Rajah looked at him and lumbered on. The fat junior blinked after the mighty form as it went. A sound of splashing and gurgling came to him. Rajah had stopped at the pond beyond the hawthorns, and was quenching his thirst. No doubt that was why the intelligent animal had travelled in that direction.

Bunter had not noticed that he was near the pond on Courtfield Common. But now that he knew, he knew where he was—a mile from the circus camp, which lay at that distance from him in the direction of the town. He had a mile's walk ahead of him to get back—a dismaying prospect to a fat, lazy, and weary Owl.

Rajah, having mopped up gallons from the pond, lay down on the margin. Perhaps, like Bunter, he wanted a rest after his stroll, or perhaps he was just taking life easily on a warm summer day. Bunter could see him through the hawthorns, which had been trampled down like reeds in the elephant's passage.

The fat junior blinked at the elephant long and thoughtfully. Marco's suggestion that he should go through circus tricks with the elephant had terrified

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the fat Owl of the Remove, though he had contrived to play up. But since then he had got rather used to Rajah. He had come to no harm riding on his back, and he realised that his fears had been unfounded. Certainly he was not keen on elephant-riding. On the other hand, he knew now that it was quite safe, and he did not want to walk a mile if he could help it. And the idea of riding into the camp on the elephant's back appealed to Bunter. It would show that sneering dago, Muccolini, whether he was afraid of elephants, or not!

He rolled cautiously towards the great animal.

He had almost made up his fat mind, but he approached Rajah in a very gingerly way. Rajah gave him a sleepy glance.

After all, what was there to be afraid of? Nothing! He had seen the elephant often in the ring, carrying Scipio, or Tippet Tip, or Zara the Queen of the Ring on his huge back—and he had carried Bunter that morning. When there was nothing to be afraid of Bunter could be bold.

Taking his courage, such as it was, in both hands, as it were, the fat junior clambered on the elephant's back at last.

Rajah took no more notice of him than he might have taken of a fly. That was encouraging. Bunter was going to chance it.

"Up!" he barked.

At the accustomed word of command Rajah reared up his mighty bulk. Bunter clung on with both fat hands.

He repented him at that moment that he had uttered the command. But it was too late! He was for it now! Up went Rajah, and Billy Bunter was high in the air.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter breathlessly.

But there he was, safe and sound, on the mighty elephant's back. His fat confidence returned.

"Go!" he barked.

Rajah got into motion. He lumbered away through the hawthorns, and came out on the open grassy common. Billy Bunter cast an anxious blink round through his big spectacles. But there was no sign of Quelch. Far in the distance fluttered the flag over the summit of the high circus tent.

Bunter hoped that Rajah would take that direction of his own accord. But Rajah, though he did not object to a rider on his back, seemed bent on taking a stroll on his own. Leaving the distant fluttering flag on his left, he lumbered on. But Bunter, now that he was no longer in a state of funk, recalled how he had seen the elephant guided in the circus.

Holding on with great care, he jammed his foot on the elephant's left ear. He had seen Scipio guide Rajah by that means. Rajah answered to the accustomed signal, swung round to the left, and headed for the circus camp.

Billy Bunter grinned with satisfaction. Not only was he riding the elephant, but he was guiding him.

All his fears had left him now. Rajah had been a circus elephant for twenty years or more, and what he had learned in his training was second nature to him. An accustomed word or touch was enough, and the mighty animal obeyed at once. Once or twice he showed a desire to wander from the way, but Bunter found that he could steer him as easily as he had seen Scipio do it.

Grinning with satisfaction, Bunter headed him for the circus camp.

A shout greeted him as he appeared in sight there. A crowd of the circus

people gathered to see him come in. Scipio had expected the fat rider to tumble off before he had gone very far on Rajah. Billy Bunter did not look as if he had tumbled off. And he had no intention of mentioning his misadventures during his morning's ride. Not Bunter!

"Oh, here you are, kid!" Marco ran up to him, with evident relief in his face. "What the dickens did you ride the elephant out of camp for? I never knew you were gone till—"

"What do you mean, fool of a boy?" exclaimed Signor Muccolini, angrily. "You should not have taken the elephant out of camp. Suppose he had caused some accident! Have you no sense?"

"That's all right!" said Bunter, blinking down at him. "You wanted to see whether I could ride the elephant, didn't you? Well, I've ridden him!"

"Do you think that elephants are allowed to wander over the country?" bawled Signor Muccolini. "Where have you been all this time?"

"Oh, riding round!" answered Bunter airily.

"You have been riding the elephant all this time?" stuttered the signor. "How far have you been, then?"

"Oh, about twenty miles—"

"You have taken that elephant twenty miles from the camp!" shrieked the signor.

"Well, perhaps twenty-five or so," said Bunter calmly. "I couldn't be sure to a mile or two. You see, I was enjoying the ride, and hardly noticed the distance."

"You young fool—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Bunter warmly. "Did you want me to try my hand at elephant-riding, or didn't you? I thought I'd better put him through his paces, if I'm to ride him in the ring. I've had a jolly nice ride—about thirty miles—"

"You shouldn't have taken the elephant out for a ride, Bunter," said Marco.

"I couldn't help—"

"What?"

"I mean, I couldn't resist the temptation. It's so jolly easy, you know. I've had a ripping ride! I haven't bashed into a tree, or fallen off, or anything. Just ridden him like a pony!"

"If you had come upon a motor-car—" gasped Signor Muccolini.

"I passed dozens of cars!" said Bunter calmly.

"Wha-at!"

"Scores! But it was all right! I've brought him back safe, haven't I?" demanded Bunter. "You wanted to see whether I could ride an elephant? Well, now you can see. I've had a topping ride. But as it's getting near dinner-time I thought I'd better be getting back."

Marco grinned.

"You mustn't take Rajah out for rides, Bunter," he said. "But I think you'll have to own up, Mucky, that my new assistant isn't afraid to handle an elephant—what?"

Signor Muccolini snorted. He was puzzled and angry. Still, it was clear that Bunter had justified the lion-tamer's faith in him. The fat junior grinned down at the circus-master, enjoying his triumph. By luck, if not by pluck, Billy Bunter had proved that he was the goods!

"Down!" he barked to the elephant. He was getting quite in the way of it now!

Rajah lurched down to his knees obediently. Billy Bunter slid off the huge back. He blinked at Scipio.

"Take him away!" he said loftily.

Scipio, with a queer expression on his black face, led the elephant away. Billy Bunter, grinning, rolled off to his van.

He had justified Marco's faith—and he had shut up that sneering dago! And that was that! Except for a few painful twinges that reminded him of Mr. Quelch's umbrella, Billy Bunter was feeling quite satisfied with his morning's work!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bessie Blows In!

"NO luck!" murmured Bob Cherry. And the chums of the Remove grinned.

The Remove were out of the Form-room when Mr. Quelch returned to Greyfriars.

The look on his face as he came in indicated that he had had no luck. As he came alone, it was clear that he had not recaptured the runaway. He had a rather rumpled and dusty look, and the compression of his lips, the glint of his eyes, showed only too plainly that he was not in his bonniest mood. Billy Bunter's antics, which afforded entertainment in the Remove, evidently did not amuse the Remove master.

The Famous Five grinned—but they were very careful not to let Mr. Quelch see them grinning. Quelch, obviously, was near boiling-point, and they did not want him to boil over for their benefit!

They rather hoped that Quelch would go Bunter-hunting again that afternoon. That hope was shared by all the Form.

But they were disappointed. Mr. Quelch took the Remove, as usual, that afternoon; and it is hardly necessary to mention that his Form did not enjoy it.

Mr. Quelch was a just man. He would never have dreamed of visiting Bunter's offences upon unoffending heads.

Had the Remove been an absolutely faultless Form, no doubt they would have got through that afternoon without trouble, deeply and intensely irritated as their Form-master was.

But they weren't! And Mr. Quelch was in no mood to pass lightly over faults in his Form. He would never have been unjust; but he was fearfully just—strictly and awfully just!

So the Remove had rather a hectic time. Lord Mauleverer was given a hundred lines for yawning. Skinner was given a detention for projecting an ink-ball at Fisher T. Fish. Fishy was given lines for ejaculating "I swow!" when the ink-ball landed in his neck.

Bob Cherry had lines for shuffling his feet. Peter Todd had his knuckles rapped for dropping a book.

Then Smithy was whopped.

Of course, the Bouncer asked for it. Even the most reckless ragger in the Form might have taken warning by Quelch's speaking countenance. Instead of which, Vernon-Smith let his desk-lid fall with a bang that rang through the Form-room like the report of a rifle.

"An accident, sir!" drawled Smithy as the Remove master's gimlet eyes turned glitteringly on him.

The Removites, wondering at Smithy's nerve, sat breathless. A fellow, of course, might let his desk-lid fall by accident. But Mr. Quelch was not in a mood for such accidents.

"Stand out before the class, Vernon-Smith!" he said curtly.

"It slipped from my hand, sir!" said Smithy.

"Quite so! But you must learn to be more careful, Vernon-Smith. Stand out before the class. Now bend over that desk!"

Whop, whop, whop!

Three of the best no doubt helped Smithy to learn to be more careful. At all events, his desk-lid did not drop again by accident that afternoon.

Ten minutes later Squiff was up for whispering. He had whispered low, but Quelch seemed to have preternatural powers of hearing that day.

"Field! You are talking in class!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Sampson Quincy Iffley Field. "W-w-was I, sir?"

"You were, Field! What were you saying to Hazeldene?"

"Oh!" Squiff crimsoned. "Er—n-n-nothing special, sir!"

"Repeat at once what you were saying to Hazeldene!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "I am waiting, Field!"

"I—I—I said—" stammered the Australian junior, "I—I—I said—"

"Well?" barked Mr. Quelch.

"I—I said you were rather shirty to-day, sir!" gasped Squiff.

The Remove gasped. So did Mr. Quelch. He grabbed the cane from his desk.

"Field! Stand out! Bend over that desk!"

It was "six" for Squiff. He did not whisper again in class. He sat wriggling, but very silent. Neither did any other Remove venture to remark, in even the faintest of whispers, that Quelch was shirty that day!

"Fish!" barked Mr. Quelch suddenly.

"Oh! Yep!" gasped Fisher T. Fish.

Fishy was lounging on his form, but he sat bolt upright as the Remove master barked at him.

"The Form-room is not a place for careless lounging, Fish!"

"Oh! Nope! I guess not, sir."

"Cannot you speak English, Fish, you foolish boy?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"During all the time you have been at Greyfriars you have utterly failed to benefit by the instruction you have received!"

Quelch, evidently, was getting a little unreasonable. Usually, the junior from New York was allowed to talk in his native language.

"Aw! Yep! Sure, sir!" stammered Fish. "I guess—"

"Is that intended for impertinence, Fish?"

"Oh! Nope! Not on your life!" gasped Fish. "I'll surely say nope, sir."

"Take two hundred lines, Fish!"

The atmosphere in the Form-room was growing rather electric. The juniors began to wonder whether that afternoon would ever end.

But it ended at last, and the Remove marched out, richer by a very unusual crop of lines. In the quad, Bob Cherry fanned himself with his hat.

"Thank goodness that's over!" he remarked. "Did anybody notice that Quelch was rather cross?"

And the juniors chuckled.

"It's that ass, Bunter's, fault!" growled Bolsover major. "I'd jolly well kick him if I knew where he was!"

Harry Wharton & Co. found consolation in cricket. After a turn at the nets they came along for refreshing ginger-pop at the school shop. The name of Bunter, uttered by two or three fellows, caught their ears as they were about to go in, and they looked round. For a moment they wondered whether the missing Owl had come back.

But it was not Billy Bunter. It was a Bunter—but another Bunter—to wit, Bessie Bunter, from Cliff House School.

The plump schoolgirl blinked round through the big spectacles that made

her look so like Brother Billy, and came over to the Famous Five. These polite and nice-mannered youths lifted their hats. They were not, perhaps, overjoyed to see any member of the Bunter tribe, but their manners were irreproachable.

"Where's Billy?" asked Miss Bunter.

"Not here," answered Harry Wharton. "Haven't you heard that Billy's cleared off?"

"Of course I have," answered Bessie. "That's why I came over. What is the fathead up to?"

"Not knowing, can't say!" answered Bob Cherry.

"The knowfulness is not terrific, esteemed and beauteous Bessie!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"His Form-master ought to look for him!" said Bessie.

"He's been hunting high and low," said Nugent, "but he hasn't been able to find him yet."

"He must be an old donkey!" remarked Bessie.

"Hem!"

"I came over to see if Billy had come back yet," said Bessie Bunter. "Are you sure he hasn't?"

"Oh, quite!"

"I was going to have tea with him, if he'd come back. Have you had tea yet?"

"Oh! No!"

"Then I'll take tea with you, if you like."

"Oh!" gasped Harry. "Do!"

"That's all right," said Miss Bunter graciously. "I will!"

And she did.

Instead of refreshing themselves with ginger-pop after cricket practice, the chums of the Remove made rather more

(Continued on next page.)

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extensive purchases from the school shop and conveyed the same to Study No. 1 in the Remove. Bessie Bunter sat down to tea with a cheery smile on her plump face, and the Famous Five, with their very best manners on, looked after their distinguished guest.

Bessie seemed rather to enjoy tea in Study No. 1.

She did not seem unduly anxious about the missing Billy. Indeed, she did not mention him again.

Her conversation was chiefly about Miss Elizabeth Bunter. She related how she had beaten Marjorie at Badminton, and Clara at tennis; how she was the only really good one at net-ball; how she knew more history than Miss Locke did; and how she could, if she liked, play Miss Bullivant's head off at mathematics. To all of which the juniors listened with their politest smiles, realising that there was a strong family resemblance between the different members of the Bunter clan. Really, they could almost have fancied that it was Billy in the study!

And then came a sudden interruption.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Little Misapprehension!

MR. QUELCH started. His eyes glinted. He set his teeth hard. Indeed, in the gust of sudden anger that came over him, he would probably have actually gritted his teeth—but they were an expensive set.

Seldom had the Remove master been so bitterly, intensely angry. Not even when Bunter had escaped him on Court-field Common! His face became almost pale with anger.

And the cause of that sudden, fierce anger, was simply a careless remark from Bolsover major.

Bolsover did not see Quelch. The Remove master was walking under the old elms, thinking, in a very irritated frame of mind, over the peculiar problems of Bunter. Owing to the extreme artfulness of the missing Owl, Quelch had learned that he was still in the vicinity of the school. Then he had

actually encountered him, only to see the elusive fat junior slip through his fingers again. Where was Bunter? How was he to be found?

The situation was most unpleasant for Quelch. Other beaks, in Common-room, made remarks on the subject. Capper had been heard to say that nothing of that kind could happen in the Fourth. Hacker, the master of the Shell, asked Mr. Quelch every day if the missing member of his Form had returned, and raised his eyebrows expressively when told that he hadn't. Prout, the Fifth Form master, boomed unwelcome advice on the subject.

Even the Head appeared to think that Mr. Quelch ought to have done something. Bunter was in his Form. But what could Mr. Quelch do?

Thinking over that knotty problem as he paced under the elms, Mr. Quelch heard the voices of boys of his Form. Squiff, with a bat under his arm, called to Bolsover major, who was leaning idly against a tree, with his hands in his pockets.

"Seen Wharton and his pals?"

Bolsover major chuckled.

"Oh, they won't be coming down to cricket yet. They're feeding the Bunter barrel in the study."

"They were coming down to the nets, and—"

"Too busy, I expect! You know what Bunters are, when they begin to feed," chortled Bolsover.

Squiff laughed, and walked away with his bat.

Mr. Quelch did not laugh! Far from it! He stood quite still, as if rooted to the ground, quivering with anger.

So Bunter had returned!

Bolsover major's words could mean nothing else. True, there was another Bunter at Greyfriars—Sammy Bunter of the Second Form. But a Second Form fag could not be feeding in a Remove study. The Second never tea'd with the Remove. Who could the "Bunter barrel" be, but Bunter?

If the missing Owl had blown in, certainly it was a great relief to Mr. Quelch. It solved his problem.

But that did not prevent him from feeling intensely angry. Instead of re-

porting himself to his Form-master, the young rascal had gone to tea in a Remove study, just as if nothing had happened.

And Wharton, his head boy, was entertaining the young rascal to tea, instead of reporting his return, and relieving the anxiety under which he knew his Form-master to be labouring!

Mr. Quelch came very near gritting his teeth, expensive as they were! He was in a royal wax!

It did not occur to him for a moment, that there was a third member of the Bunter tribe; Bessie of Cliff House. He had not seen Bessie come in; he had not the faintest idea that she was at Greyfriars that afternoon; he did not even remember her existence.

Mr. Quelch was not thinking of Cliff House School, or Cliff House girls. He was thinking of Billy Bunter!

For a long moment he stood as if transfixed. Then he strode rapidly round the big elm against which Bolsover major was carelessly leaning.

Bolsover was whistling. His whistle stopped, suddenly, at the sight of his Form-master, and the expression on his Form-master's face. He blinked at Mr. Quelch, in great alarm. Seldom had he seen the Remove master looking so angry. He wondered apprehensively what was the matter with Quelch, and whether Quelch had heard anything of his bullying among the fags.

"Bolsover!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Bolsover major.

"I heard what you said to Field."

"D-d-did you, sir?" stammered Bolsover. He rapidly reviewed, in his mind, what he had said to Squiff. There was no harm in it, so far as he could see.

He had alluded to Bessie Bunter as the "Bunter barrel." But that was only a jest. Certainly, it was not in the best of taste. But surely it was no cause for the terrific wrath that he read in the countenance of Henry Samuel Quelch.

"I did, Bolsover!" barked the Remove master. "I heard you say distinctly, that Wharton and his friends were feeding the Bunter barrel—a very coarse and odious expression—in the study."

"I—I shouldn't have said barrel, sir, I—I know," stammered Bolsover, quite scared by the Remove master's look. "I—I never meant anything. I—"

"It was a coarse and odious expression, Bolsover; but it is not of that that I am speaking now. I refer to your statement to Field. Is it true?"

"True, sir," stuttered Bolsover. "Oh, yes, sir! No harm in having a visitor to tea in a study, sir, is there? It's allowed—"

"You are well aware, Bolsover, that if that young rascal is in the House, it should have been made known to me at once."

Bolsover fairly gasped. Quelch was in a temper, certainly; but it was amazing to hear him speak of a girl as a young rascal! And he had said that "barrel" was a coarse and odious expression! So, undoubtedly it was—but did he think that "young rascal" was any better?

"However, you are not to blame, Bolsover—it is Wharton, my head boy, who should have reported this to me, at once. I can scarcely understand the negligence—indeed, his careless impertinence, in failing to apprise me of it."

Bolsover major could only blink at him. It did not happen often, but it did happen, that the Cliff House girls came to tea with their friends in the Remove. Bolsover could not begin to guess why Quelch was making such a

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"Bunter! You young rascal! You incorrigible, insolent young rascal!" thundered Mr. Quelch, hurling the door of Study No. 1 wide open. "I shall cane you! I shall——" The Remove master broke off suddenly at the sight of Bunter's sister Bessie, with a tea-cup in one hand and a jam tart in the other, blinking at him through a large pair of spectacles.

fuss about such a very ordinary incident. "You were not, by chance, speaking of Bunter minor, of the Second Form?" added Mr. Quelch. He was sure of that; but he wanted to make assurance doubly sure.

"Bunter minor!" repeated Bolsover, blankly. Oh, no, sir!

"It is not Bunter minor who is at tea in Wharton's study?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Very well, Bolsover."

Mr. Quelch started for the House with long strides. Bolsover major stared after him, as he went, utterly amazed. Quelch, it was clear, was in a towering temper; but why, was a mystery to Bolsover major.

Mr. Quelch hurried into the House. He stepped into his study to pick up his cane. That cane would, of course, be wanted in Study No. 1 in the Remove.

A terrific whopping for Bunter—a record whopping! A whopping that the young rascal would remember for whole terms, and that would definitely cure him of any desire to run away from school! And "six" for Wharton, for failing to report the missing junior's return! That was the least he deserved for so carelessly neglecting his duty as head boy of the Form! As for Bunter, a Head's flogging was coming to him—but that would come later. A whopping—a record whopping—from Quelch, would do for him to go on with!

Mr. Quelch gripped the cane hard, as he whisked up the stairs. His gown streamed out behind him like a thunder-cloud.

Fellows who saw him go, stared after him. Quelch did not heed them. He rushed up the stairs.

He whizzed across the Remove landing. He shot into the Remove passage. He

arrived almost breathless at the door of Study No. 1.

Generally, Quelch knocked at the door. He was quite punctilious in such matters. But he was too angry and exasperated now to be punctilious.

He grabbed the door-handle, and hurled the door wide open. It was a sudden interruption to tea in Study No. 1.

Mr. Quelch tore in.

He fairly brandished the cane.

"Bunter! You young rascal! You incorrigible, insolent young rascal! So you are here!" thundered the Remove master. "Bunter, I shall cane you, before I take you to your headmaster! I shall——"

Mr. Quelch broke off suddenly.

Five juniors, on their feet, stared at him, in blank wonder, as if hypnotised, dumbfounded.

A fat schoolgirl with a teacup in one hand, and a jam tart in the other, stared at him through a large pair of spectacles.

Bessie was as amazed as the Famous Five. She was alarmed! It was enough to alarm any schoolgirl, for an angry man to rush into the study, brandishing a cane, and spluttering with wrath.

Bessie shrieked.

"Ooooooooooooooh!"

Mr. Quelch blinked at her. He had not had the remotest idea that there was a girl in the study.

"Who——?" he gasped. "What——"

"Ooooooh!" shrieked Bessie. "Keep away! Keep him away! You're not going to cane me! I won't be caned! I'll tell Miss Primrose! Ooooooooooh!"

"Mr. Quelch——" gasped Wharton.

"Keep away!" shrieked Bessie. "Keep that cane away! I won't be caned! You've got no right to cane me! Ooooooooooooooh!"

Mr. Quelch gasped helplessly. He

lowered the cane—he put it behind him. Obviously, he had no use for it in Study No. 1.

"Wharton!" he gasped. "Where—where is Bunter?"

"Bunter, sir!" stuttered the captain of the Remove. "He's not here! Did—did you think Bunter was here, sir?"

"I—I—I—I heard—I—I understood—I—I——" Quelch's face was crimson, and he stuttered wildly. "I—I certainly thought——"

"Bunter hasn't been here, sir!" said Frank Nugent, in wonder. "This—this is Bunter's sister, sir——"

"Ooooooooooooooh!" from Bessie. "You bad old man, go away! Go away!"

"I—I regret—I—I am sorry—I—I was given to understand that—that Bunter was here!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "I—I had no idea that—that it was—was—was Bunter's sister——"

"Ooooooh! Go away!"

"Bessie came over to inquire after her brother, sir!" said Bob Cherry. "She—she stayed to tea, sir! No harm——"

"No! No! Certainly not! I—I regret, Miss Bunter, if—if—if I startled you—I—I supposed——"

"Oooh! Go away! I won't be caned!" shrieked Bessie.

"No! No! I had no intention—none whatever——"

"Ooooooh!"

"I—I thought—I—I understood—I—I—I have been—been deceived—I—I really regret——"

Stuttering, Quelch faded through the doorway.

Never, in all his career, had Henry Samuel Quelch felt, and looked, so complete an ass. He was thankful to get on the other side of the study door. Harry Wharton & Co. were thankful, too, for they could not laugh, till the

(Continued on page 16.)

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FROM SCHOOL TO CIRCUS!



(Continued from page 13.)

door closed on Mr. Quelch; and they felt that their ribs would crack if they did not laugh soon.

Ten minutes later, Bolsover major was sent for, to his Form-master's study. Mr. Quelch's ludicrous mistake, of course, was entirely due to Bolsover, and the choice expression he had used concerning Bessie Bunter. Mr. Quelch gave Bolsover six—the toughest six Bolsover could remember—for having alluded to a plump young lady as a "barrel." No doubt Bolsover deserved to be whopped—but it was very probable that Mr. Quelch gave him a little more than he deserved!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Haunted!

"GET OUT of the way!" grunted Billy Bunter.

Mr. Tippet Tip breathed hard through the nose he was rubbing with grease-paint.

Dressing-room accommodation at Muccolini's Magnificent Circus was somewhat limited. Magnificent, perhaps, the circus was, as the signor declared it to be, but the quarters of the staff were far from magnificent. It annoyed Billy Bunter to have to share a limited space with Mr. Tip, who was making-up in the same canvas-walled room for the evening show.

Perhaps it annoyed Mr. Tip, too, but Tippet Tip was a good-tempered, good-natured little man, used to taking things as they came—even things like William George Bunter. So Tippet Tip did not grumble.

Bunter did! Bunter was a far more important person than Tippet Tip. "Bunto the Boy Tamer" was billed quite large. Perhaps it had got into his head a little. Tippet Tip was only the circus Joey. Moreover, he was under the frown of Signor Muccolini, ever since the strange affair of the ventriloquial doll. Billy Bunter had a chance to throw his weight about. He was not the fellow to let such chances, like the sunbeams, pass him by.

Bunter was making-up for the performance, as well as Tippet Tip. There was one glass of a decent size, and Bunter wanted it. Any old bit of a mirror was good enough for the clown, in Bunter's opinion. So, as Mr. Tip was admiring his make-up effects in front of the glass that Bunter wanted, Mr. Tip was told to get out of the way.

Which he did—breathing rather hard. Bunter ensconced himself in front of the glass, where he beheld a reflection much more pleasing than that of Mr. Tip—in his own belief at least.

Bunter's fat form was encased in tights for the show. His ample figure showed to great advantage in that garb. Bunter could not help admiring that figure. There was really a lot of it to admire.

The fat Owl had had some practice at make-up, as a member of the Remove

Dramatic Society. It came in useful now. Bunter was very careful in his make-up. With the circus camped so near Greyfriars School, almost every day Greyfriars fellows came to the performance. Every half-holiday, there was a swarm of the juniors, and often the evening performances were honoured by the presence of Sixth Formers, and sometimes of Fifth Form men who had special leave from Prout.

Any Greyfriars fellow who had spotted Bunter would not, perhaps, have given him away to the powers, but certainly he would have related it at the school, and once it went the rounds of the school, it was pretty certain to reach the "beaks" sooner or later.

But when Bunter was made-up for the show, there was little likelihood of recognition. His costume was as unlike that of a Greyfriars Removee as could be imagined, and his fat face, when it was well daubed with grease-paint, was quite unlike Bunter's own. Only his big spectacles gave a clue to his identity.

Dozens of Greyfriars fellows had seen "Bunto the Boy Tamer" in the ring with Marco. Not one of them had dreamed that he was Billy Bunter. Indeed, no fellow who knew Bunter would have expected to see him anywhere near lions or elephants! Even had he looked like himself, they might have doubted the evidence of their eyes! But he did not look anything like himself—and he was very careful about that.

"You're a kind-hearted bloke, you are!" remarked Mr. Tip, as the fat junior smirked at the pleasing apparition in the glass.

Bunter blinked round at him.

"Eh! Wharrer you mean?" he asked. "Stick it on!" said Mr. Tip. "Put it on thick! You can't put it on too thick! Don't let 'em see your features."

The fat junior gave a start. For a moment, he fancied that Tippet Tip had guessed that he was using grease-paint as a disguise, in fear of being recognised and marched back to school.

"Jest kind-heartedness, ain't it?" said Mr. Tip. "You know it would spoil the evening for the people in front if they saw your features. What?"

Billy Bunter gave the sarcastic Mr. Tip a wrathful blink. He realised that Tippet Tip had not guessed that he had a secret to keep. Mr. Tip was only indulging in sarcasm.

"Look here, you cheeky ass!" exclaimed Bunter.

Mr. Tip shook his head.

"Ask me anything else!" he implored. "Anything but that! Wait till you've got that face covered up before you ask me to look there! My eyesight ain't strong! It wouldn't stand it!"

Bunter breathed wrath.

"And how long are you going to stand in front of that glass," went on Mr. Tip. "I want it when you're through."

"You can have it when I'm done with it!" snapped Bunter.

"The question is, can I?" retorted Mr. Tip. "I'm expecting every minute to hear it go crack!"

Bunter's fat face was red with rage, under his grease-paint. He was not, perhaps, the handsome fellow he believed himself to be. But even Bunter's face would not have cracked a looking-glass.

"Do you know what happens to cheeky cads at my school?" he bawled.

"I don't!" answered Mr. Tip. "But I s'pose you do! I s'pose you've been through it!"

"They get kicked!" roared Bunter. "See? When a cheeky rotter cheeks his betters, he gets jolly well kicked!"

"They must have used up a lot of

boot-leather on you!" remarked Mr. Tip thoughtfully.

Billy Bunter did not answer that. He was getting the worst of this war of words. Words were wasted on this cheeky clown, and Bunter was going to proceed to action.

Cheeky cads, as he had said, were kicked at Greyfriars. He was going to kick Tippet Tip.

As an important member of the company, dealing with an unimportant member, he considered that he might venture upon that drastic proceeding, especially as Tippet Tip was under the frown of the circus-master, and not at all sure that the "sack" was not coming his way.

As Bunter did not answer, the clown turned to his little mirror, to get on with his making-up.

Then Bunter turned on him.

Mr. Tip's back being turned, he was favourably placed for the kicking he deserved, and Bunter barged across the dressing-room behind him.

Mr. Tip grinned into his mirror.

In that mirror, he had a full view of the fat Owl, a circumstance that did not occur to Bunter at the moment.

But he did not stir till Bunter was just behind him, and his foot lifted to deal out the well-merited punishment.

Then Mr. Tip spun round swiftly.

A fat ankle was suddenly grasped, as Bunter's foot swept the air, and Bunter gave a startled yelp, as he hopped on one leg.

"Ow!"

"Go it!" said Mr. Tip encouragingly.

"Ow! Leggo! Beast! Leggo!" howled Bunter.

He hopped frantically on one leg. The other was safe in Tippet Tip's grip. Mr. Tip grinned cheerfully at Bunter.

"Hop it!" he said. "Say, that turn would bring down the house! Like to put this through in the ring?"

"Leggo!" shrieked Bunter. "I shall fall over! Beast! Leggo!"

Bunter hopped frantically. Only by a series of balancing tricks did he save himself from a fall. He hopped, and squeaked, and yelled. Mr. Tip, apparently deriving entertainment from this unrehearsed performance, walked round the dressing-room, taking Bunter's foot with him under his arm. Bunter hopped after him on the other leg.

"Will you leggo?" shrieked Bunter. "I'll have you sacked! I'll make that dago sack you! You cheeky beast, leggo!"

Bump!

Bunter missed a hop and sat down! He sat down suddenly and hard. Mr. Tip, releasing his foot, grinned down at him.

"That's not a bad turn!" he remarked. "Shall we rehearse it again?"

"Urrrrrrgh!" gasped Bunter.

Tippet Tip, grinning, went back to his mirror. Billy Bunter sat and gurgled for breath. Tippet Tip took no further notice of him. But Bunter was taking some further notice of Tippet Tip. He gave the fat little cough which was a preliminary to his ventriloquial stunts. He had quite given up the idea of kicking Tippet Tip. But there were other ways.

"Tip!" suddenly barked the aggressive, unpleasant voice of Signor Muccolini from outside the doorway of the dressing-room.

Tippet Tip spun round from his mirror.

"Yes, boss!"

"How dare you play such tricks! You're sacked! Do you hear? Sacked!" barked the signor's voice.

"Oh, crimes!" gasped Mr. Tip.

"Don't show up in the ring to-night!

"You're not wanted there! Get out of the circus! You're sacked!"

"I—I say, boss—" stammered the dismayed Tippity.

"You're sacked!"

Mr. Tip stood staring in the doorway. The signor had not appeared in sight there; but the barking, aggressive voice seemed to come clearly through the canvas partition from the passage.

"Oh, holy pokers!" gasped Mr. Tip.

"I—I say, boss—"

There was no answer. Tippity looked at Bunter. Bunter was grinning. A minute ago Tippity had been grinning. Now he was extremely serious, and it was Bunter's turn to grin. And the fat Owl grinned.

"That tears it!" said Mr. Tip dismally.

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Bunter. And he went back to the beautiful view in his looking-glass.

Tippity did not heed him. He went out into the canvas-walled passage, where Marco was standing, in talk with Wiggles, the contortionist. Signor Muccolini was not to be seen.

"Has the boss gone?" asked Mr. Tip.

Marco looked round at him.

"The boss? He hasn't been here!" he answered.

"Oh, don't be a hass!" said the distressed Mr. Tip. "Ain't he jest howled in at my door that I'm sacked? You must have heard him!"

The two circus men stared at Tippity.

"Leave it alone, Tippity!" advised Wiggles. "Give it up, and stick to pure, unadulterated water!"

"I ain't pushed one back to-day!" hooted Mr. Tip. "Mean to say you didn't see the boss, and hear him howl at me that I'm sacked?"

"Mucky's in the ring, and he hasn't been here, old man," answered Marco soothingly. "You're dreaming!"

"He ain't been here?" gasped Mr. Tip.

He almost tottered back into the dressing-room. He blinked at Billy Bunter. Bunter chuckled.

"This here circus is haunted!" said Mr. Tip, with conviction. "It's blooming well haunted! Fust that there doll, John, begins to talk on his own the other day. Now there's voices—yooman voices! I 'eard Mucky's voice plain—plain as your face, and that's saying a lot! And he wasn't there! I tell you, this blinking circus is haunted!"

Billy Bunter grinned as he rolled out of the dressing-room. But Tippity Tip did not grin. He was quite worried and perplexed about the mysterious voice that haunted Muccolini's Magnificent Circus.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Coker Makes a Startling Discovery!

"THAT'S the new turn!" remarked Coker of the Fifth. "Bunto the Boy Tamer!" remarked Potter, looking at his programme.

"He hasn't been slimming!" observed Greene.

"Fat, if you like!" agreed Coker.

Coker & Co. of the Fifth Form were patronising the circus. They had seen it before, but they were paying another visit, to see the new turn—Bunto the Boy Lion-tamer. Horace Coker had told his friends that it was worth a second visit to see the new turn, and as Coker was standing the seats, Potter and Greene agreed that it was. So there they were, sitting in the front row of the half-crown seats, and they gave special attention to the new turn when Bunto the Boy Tamer appeared.

"Fat as Bunter!" said Coker, with a grin.

"Fatter!" said Potter.

Marco the King of the Lions had been through his thrilling turn, with Brutus, Pericles, and Apollo. Now Caesar's cage was wheeled into the arena, and Caesar's deep roar echoed and re-echoed. To all appearance, Caesar was as truculent a beast as any of the other lions; but appearances were deceptive. Caesar was as tame as a white rabbit; otherwise, there would certainly have been no "Bunto" turn starred on the circus bills.

Billy Bunter was quite used to Caesar by this time, and on the most friendly terms with the old lion. But to the "people in front" the turn looked thrilling enough, as the fat youth strutted into the lion's cage, and the grated door was closed on him.

Marco stood at the cage door, with an iron bar in his hand, as if in readiness should his help be wanted. But that was only a theatrical effect, to give the audience an impression that there was a spice of danger, and let the public have its money's worth.

All eyes were on the fat figure in the cage. There were rounds of applause. Billy Bunter's eyes beamed through his spectacles. Bunter was enjoying this. He liked the limelight. In the lion's cage he was getting it.

He commanded Caesar to stand up, and the great lion reared up on his hind legs. He squeaked "Dammi la zampa," and Caesar extended a huge paw, and shook hands with the boy tamer.

Then "Bunto" sat astride of the lion's back, and gambolled round the cage with him. Every now and then, unobserved by the audience, he gave the lion a touch that Caesar understood, and there was a deep roar.

"Wants some nerve," remarked Potter.

"Yes, rather!" agreed Greene.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Coker. It was only necessary for any fellow to state an opinion, for Coker to adopt the opposite one. "I believe that's the lion that escaped from the circus the other day, and gave the girls at Cliff House a fright. He doesn't seem to have done any damage while he was loose."

"Like to meet him out of his cage?" asked Potter, with a wink at Greene.

"Well, I fancy he's pretty tame!" said Coker. "If he's the same lion that got loose, that kid Bunter of the Remove ran into him at Cliff House, and I've heard helped to capture him. So he can't be very dangerous."

"He looks it."

"Looks ain't everything!" said Coker oracularly.

"That's lucky for some people!" murmured Potter, with a glance at Horace Coker's rugged countenance.

"Eh? What did you say, Potter?"

"I said you're quite right, old chap! I dare say that lion is awfully tame. Look here! They let people volunteer to go into the cage at this circus. You going to do it?"

"Bit undignified for a Greyfriars senior!" answered Coker. "Otherwise I'd do it like a shot!"

Whereat Potter bestowed another wink on Greene, and Greene grinned. Both of them had rather a suspicion that it was not merely the dignity of a Greyfriars senior that kept Horace Coker on the safe side of the bars.

"Look at that!" said Potter. "Doesn't that want nerve?"

Bunto the Boy Tamer had lain down on his podgy back, on the floor of the cage. Caesar laid a huge paw on his chest.

Standing over the fat figure, the paw

on his chest, Caesar lifted up his head, and gave utterance to a tremendous roar that woke every echo of the circus tent. Even Coker was a little impressed. But he was not going to admit it. What he had said, he had said!

"Well, if he's tame—" he remarked.

"Oh, if!" agreed Potter. "He doesn't look awfully tame to me."

"You're rather an ass, Potter!"

"Well, I jolly well wouldn't like to do what that fat kid's doing!" said Potter.

"Very likely!" said Coker, shrugging his shoulders.

"And you jolly well wouldn't, either!" said Potter tartly.

"Don't be an ass, Potter!"

"You jolly well—"

"Don't be a cheeky ass, Potter! You'd better shut up!"

"I jolly well think—"

"I said shut up!" Coker pointed out.

Potter, breathing rather hard, shut up. Coker was standing the seats, so it was up to his pals to stand Coker.

"Now that kid does an elephant turn," said Coker, when Caesar's cage was drawn out. "I don't say he's bad—but there's not much in it."

The circus audience, however, appeared to think that there was something in it. They gave Bunto cheers when he was taken up in Rajah's trunk, and carried round the ring.

Then Bunto lay down in the tan, and the gigantic quadruped stepped over him. That part of the "turn" always gave Billy Bunter an awkward moment; but with Marco's eyes on him, he succeeded in playing up.

After which, Rajah knelt down, and Bunto clambered on his back, and Tippity Tip followed him up. Bunter faced forward; Mr. Tip, behind him, faced the tail.

Rajah stalked round the ring amid cheers and laughter. This was part of the turn that did not please Billy Bunter. Tippity Tip introduced a comic element into the performance, quite superfluous, from Bunter's point of view.

Moreover, Mr. Tip stood on his feet, and then on his hands, on the elephant's back, as they paraded the ring, an acrobatic performance that Bunter could not have put up to save his fat life. Billy Bunter had not been a circus star long, but he already had his full allowance of professional jealousy, and liked to get the "hands."

Mr. Tip, always remembering Bunter's polished manners in the dressing-room, also had the check to play tricks on the fat Owl. Standing on his hands, he tickled the back of Bunter's neck with his toe.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter, lurching in his seat. "What's that? Bother you, you silly ass, chuck it! Wharrer you up to?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Came from the people in front.

The elephant towered past in front of the row of seats where sat Coker & Co. For the first time they had a close view of Bunto the Boy Tamer, and his squeaking voice reached their ears.

Mr. Tip, instead of chucking it, as Bunter requested, persisted in being playful. Still upside down, on his hands, he tapped Bunter on the back of the head with his foot.

"Stop it!" yelled Bunter.

"Oh!" roared Mr. Tip. "I've hurt my toe! I've banged my toe on a lump of wood! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chorled the audience. "You cheeky beast!" howled Bunter.

"You wait till we get off this beastly

elephant, and I'll jolly well punch your cheeky head!"

"You'll have to get on the elephant again to reach it!" retorted Tippity.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The elephant lumbered on. Coker of the Fifth stared after it and its two riders with a fixed, astonished stare.

"Did you fellows hear that?" he gasped. "Did you hear that fat kid's voice? Did you hear it? Don't you know it?"

"Blessed if it didn't sound——" said Potter, equally startled. "But—but it couldn't be——"

"It couldn't——" said Greene.

"Haven't you heard that squeak often enough at Greyfriars?" exclaimed Coker excitedly. "Bunter's missing—he's somewhere near the school, and nobody knows where or what he's up to! That's Bunter!"

"It can't be!" gasped Potter.

"It is!" said Coker, with conviction.

"But it can't——" said Greene.

"I've said that it is!" hooted Coker.

After which, of course, there was nothing more to be said. If Horace Coker of the Greyfriars Fifth said that it was, it was, whether it was or not!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

"**O**UR knock!" said Harry Wharton.

It was the following afternoon. That afternoon the Remove were booked to play the Shell, and both junior teams were now on Little Side. The captain of the Remove had performed that first duty of a skipper—winning the toss—and elected to bat first.

Hobson & Co. of the Shell went into the field. Harry Wharton was bidding Bob Cherry and Vernon-Smith, who were opening the innings, to pull up their socks and knock the Shell bowling skyhigh, when a Fifth Form man appeared on the scene.

"Here, Wharton!" called out Coker of the Fifth.

Harry Wharton did not even look at him.

The Fifth Form at Greyfriars had a good opinion of themselves, and agreed that the Lower Fourth were very small beer. But no other Fifth Form man, probably, would have had the neck to interrupt a junior captain just at the start of a cricket match.

Bob and Smithy took up their places at the wickets, and Smithy got the bowling from Stewart of the Shell. Harry Wharton, carefully ignoring Coker, had his eyes on the Bounder as he wielded the willow. But a grab at his shoulder jerked him round, and he had to turn his eyes on Coker of the Fifth instead.

"I called you!" snapped Coker. "Didn't you hear me, you young ass?"

"Get out!"

"What?"

"Buzz off, fathead! Do you want to be kicked out?" demanded the captain of the Remove. "Here, you men, prod him!"

The waiting batsmen were all ready to prod Coker. They were prepared to give him as much prodding as was required to hasten his departure. Half a dozen of them circled round Coker with willows to the fore.

"Don't play the goat, you fags!" said Coker, frowning. "I want you, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Can't you see we're playing cricket?" he asked.

"Never mind that!"

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"Oh, my hat! Look here, are you going, or are you waiting to be prodded off? Say which!"

"Oh, prod him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The proddfulness is the proper caper!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Coker, with an effort, restrained his wrath.

"You're head boy of the Remove, Wharton," he said. "You've got to attend to this. It's about Bunter."

"Blow Bunter!"

"Will you listen to me?" hooted Coker. "Keep those bats away, you young rotters! I'll jolly well——"

"Hold on, you men!" said Harry. "If the fathead's got anything to say let him get it off his chest. But buck up, Coker—we're busy."

"I don't want any cheek, Wharton!"

"Cut it short!"

Coker breathed hard. He was tempted to smite that cheeky mob of juniors' hip and thigh. But even Coker realised that a crowd of fellows with cricket bats would put in most of the smiting, if smiting began. With an effort he controlled his wrath, and went on:

"I've found Bunter!"

At which statement the Remove

Our clever Greyfriars Rhymester has "missed the boat" with his "Interview" this week, but he's promised us a really brilliant set of verses next week, written around GEORGE TUBB, the captain of the Third Form.

cricketers began to take a little interest in Coker's remarks. True Billy Bunter was of absolutely no consequence in comparison with cricket. Still, he had been missing from school for a week or more, and it was an intriguing mystery what had become of him.

"You've found him!" exclaimed Peter Todd.

"Yes, I have. I spotted him last evening."

"Well, if you have, you needn't shout it out all over the school," said Tom Redwing. "No business of yours to give Bunter away."

"You shut up, Redwing! Now, look here, Wharton," said Coker impressively. "I'm speaking to you as head boy of Quelch's Form. Bunter's got to be fetched back, I suppose you know that. A Greyfriars kid can't be allowed to run away from school and mix up with all sorts of riff-raff. You can chuck this and go and get him—see?"

"I can see myself doing it!" said Harry.

"It's rather an awkward position for me!" explained Coker. "If the Head had the sense to make Fifth Form men prefects it would be different. If I were a prefect I should report Bunter. But I'm not. Well, if a fellow who isn't a prefect reports a fellow it would look a bit like——"

"It would look like sneaking," said Harry—"and it would look like sneaking because it would be exactly that!"

"At the same time," continued Coker, "I can't let this go on. Knowing where the young ass is, I can't let him stay out of school."

"Why not mind your own business?" asked Harry.

Coker glared at him. That resource, evidently, had not occurred to Coker.

"Don't be cheeky, Wharton! I'm telling you this as head boy of the Form.

You can go and fetch Bunter in. Then it will be all right."

"Is that all?" asked Harry, with one eye on the batsmen, who were running.

"Yes, that's all."

"Thank goodness! Now run away and play!"

"You'd better go at once——"

"Fathead!"

Coker clenched his hands. It was very hard for Coker to tolerate cheek like this from the Lower Fourth.

"But where is Bunter?" asked Squiff. "Have you really seen him, or did you only dream it?"

"Don't be cheeky, Field. Bunter's at the circus—Muccolini's Circus."

"Rot! The performance isn't on yet."

"You young ass, I mean he's joined the circus."

"Wha-a-at?"

Coker had attention now! Astonished stares were fixed on him.

Harry Wharton and his chums exchanged a quick look. They had suspected—more than suspected—that Billy Bunter had found refuge at the circus. It looked as if Coker really had discovered something.

"I dare say you kids have seen a name on the circus bills," said Coker.

"Bunto the Boy Tamer——"

"I've seen him in the ring," said Squiff. "What about him?"

"He's Bunter."

"What!"

It was quite a yell of astonishment. Even the batsmen making the running were forgotten for a moment.

"Surprised you, I dare say!" said Coker. "Well, I was at the show last evening with Potter and Greene. We all saw him. I never knew it was Bunter till I heard him talking. Then I knew. The young ass has joined the circus, and he's doing a turn with lions and elephants——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a laughing matter!" snapped Coker. "A Greyfriars chap can't be allowed to carry on like that. Potter and Greene don't believe that it was Bunter——"

"Then they're not so potty as you, old bean!" said Peter Todd.

"Don't be cheeky! I'm absolutely sure of it!" said Coker. "I thought of telling Quelch when I came back, but—but—well, I can't very well tell Quelch. At the same time I can't let it go on. I've heard, too, that the circus is moving on soon, and Bunter will have to be fetched away before it goes. As head boy of Quelch's Form, Wharton, it's up to you. You see that?"

"Not quite," said Harry.

"Well, I'm telling you so," said Coker, as if that settled it. "I can't allow it to go on, of course."

"Is it any bizney of yours?"

"I've told you not to be cheeky! Cut off and get it over!" said Coker. "As it's a half-holiday this afternoon, you can get away, and bring Bunter back, and that's that! But don't waste time."

"Haven't you noticed that we're playing cricket this afternoon?" inquired the captain of the Remove.

"Your fag game doesn't matter!" snapped Coker. "That young ass has got to be fetched back. I've told you where he is. Now——"

"You've said your piece, Coker," remarked Frank Nugent. "Now run away!"

"You're sure you've got it right, Coker?" asked Peter Todd. "Sure he's Bunto the Boy Tamer? He's not Marco, the King of the Lions, or Signor Muccolini, or Tippity, the clown, or Zara the Queen of the Ring, or——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently the Remove fellows regarded Coker's startling information rather as a joke.

Coker glared.

He, at least, was quite certain of it. Potter and Greene doubted. And they had pointed out to Coker that, anyhow, it did not concern Fifth Form men. But that was not good enough for Coker. Attending solely to his own concerns had never been one of Coker's weaknesses.

"Bob's got the bowling," said Tom Brown; and the Removees turned away from Coker to watch the game.

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Well hit!" shouted Wharton, as Bob Cherry steered the ball cleverly past second slip, and the batsmen ran.

"You young sweep—"

"That's two—three!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "Good old Bob! By Jove, he— Yaroooh!"

Wharton gave a yell as a grip on his shoulder spun him round. He glared at Coker's wrathful face.

"You silly idiot, chuck it!" he roared.

"You cheeky young ass, I've told you what you're to do! Are you going to do it?" hooted Coker.

"Buzz that silly ass off!" yelled the captain of the Remove.

Evidently it was a case for prodding. Words were wasted on Coker of the Fifth. Squiff lunged with his bat, and Coker let go Wharton's shoulder with a wild howl.

"You young— Whoop!" Peter Todd lunged, as did Tom Brown and Johnny Bull, and Frank Nugent. Bats lunged at Coker on all sides. They lunged hard. "You young sweeps! Yoop! You—you— Yaroooh!"

"Go it!"

"Kick him out!"

"Cut off, Coker!"

"Give him a few more!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you stop it?" yelled Coker, retreating before the prodding bats. "I tell you— Yoop! I say— Yaroooh! I'll smash you! Ow! I'll spifficate the lot of you! I'll— Whoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker of the Fifth retreated. He was not a fellow to retreat, if he could help it. But a fellow, prodded by six or seven cricket bats, all at once, had no choice about it. The willows clumped on Coker, and they clumped hard. He roared, he raved, and he rallied; but he was driven before the prodding bats, and he had to retreat. Back went Coker, raging, and the chuckling juniors followed him up, prodding and lunging till his retreat became a flight.

Horace Coker was feeling rather damaged by the time he got off Little Side.

"Come back and have some more, Coker!" roared Johnny Bull, brandishing his bat.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Coker did not come back for more. He seemed to have had enough. And the Removees turned back to the game, and in a few minutes forgot the existence of Coker of the Fifth, important as he was.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. An Unwelcome Visitor!

"SIT up!" commanded Billy Bunter.

Cæsar sat up in the sawdust.

Bunter placed a biscuit on his nose.

"Bunto the Boy Tamer" was teaching the old lion a new trick—sitting up to beg for biscuits. Cæsar, who liked biscuits, was not unwilling to learn that trick.

The fat junior was so used to Cæsar by this time that he was as easy and confident in his presence as in that of a cat or a dog. Old Cæsar was as tame as either, fierce as he looked. Moreover, he had taken a liking to Bunter—perhaps because Bunter always fed him. That was the way to Bunter's own fat heart, and he had found it a success with Cæsar.

So tame was the cheery old lion that he was often allowed out of his cage, and followed at Marco's heels about the circus like a dog. At the present moment Bunter had him in the ring. There was no performance due yet, and Bunter and the lion had the circus tent to themselves.

Remove fellows would have found it hard to believe that Billy Bunter had complete control of a fierce-looking lion, and that Cæsar would follow him at a call, and obey every order and sign he gave. But so it was, and the fat Owl of the Remove fancied himself no end of a lion-tamer. He was even prepared to put in a little work at the job he had taken on, which the Remove fellows might have found it still harder to believe.

Cæsar sat up on his haunches, with the biscuit balanced on his nose. He wanted that biscuit, but he did not think of gobbling it till he received the sign from his trainer.

"Go!" said Bunter.

(Continued on next page.)

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The biscuit dropped into the mighty jaws, and vanished.

Parker, the animals' keeper, came in by the staff entrance, and looked round.

"Oh, here you are, sir!" he said. "I've been looking for you!"

"Oh, I want you, Parker!" said Bunter. "Lie down in the sawdust here."

"But——"

"Do as I tell you!" snapped Bunter irritably.

Parker gave him a look. He did not think very much of the fat star of the circus. But Marco did, so Parker had to toe the line.

"But, sir," he said, "I came to tell you——"

"Don't jaw!" said Bunter. "Lie down here! I'm teaching Cæsar a trick. Shut up, and do as you're told—see?"

Parker resisted a temptation to take the fat junior by the scruff of his fat neck, and give him the shaking of his life. He did as he was told.

He extended himself on his back in the tar. Old Cæsar blinked at him, and waited for a sign from his master.

Bunter raised a fat hand.

"Guard him!" he said.

Cæsar crept towards Parker, and placed a huge paw on his chest. The keeper was not, of course, alarmed, though to a stranger's eyes it would have been rather a thrilling sight.

Bunter made another sign with his hand. Cæsar opened his great jaws and roared.

"Now——" Bunter was going on.

"I came here to tell you——" said Parker.

"Don't interrupt me, Parker!"

"Oh, all right!" said Parker. "But there's somebody called to see you——"

Bunter jumped.

"Somebody to see me!" he ejaculated. "Who?"

A vision of Mr. Quelch, with a cane in his hand, floated before Bunter's eyes. At that terrifying vision the star of the circus became the runaway schoolboy again.

"A young gentleman, sir, came and asked to see you."

"Oh, a young one!" exclaimed Bunter, in great relief. Mr. Quelch could not, by the widest stretch of imagination, have been described as a "young" gentleman. "Do you mean a schoolboy?"

"Yes."

"Beast!" hissed Bunter.

Parker stared at him.

"You can get up!" snapped Bunter.

"Go and tell him I'm not here."

"What!"

"I—I mean——" stammered Bunter.

"Well, what do you mean?" naturally inquired Parker, as he picked himself up out of the sawdust.

Bunter paused. The terrifying vision of Quelch with a cane vanished. But it was almost as alarming to hear that a schoolboy had called and asked to see him. It was sure to be a Greyfriars fellow, and he had no doubt that it was one of the Famous Five.

He knew that the chums of the Remove suspected his hiding-place. They had looked in at the circus camp one day for him, and he had got rid of them by playing a ventriloquial trick, and landing them in a row with the circus people. Now one of the beasts had looked in again—he had no doubt of that.

"Look here, go and kick him out!"

said Bunter. "Tell him I don't want to see him, and kick him out, see?"

"I'll tell him you don't want to see him!" answered Parker, going towards the exit.

"Hold on, though!" exclaimed Bunter.

Parker held on.

Billy Bunter wrinkled his fat brows in worried thought. It was easy enough to turn away a Greyfriars fellow who wanted to see him. But if that fellow knew he was there, and chose to talk about it at the school, Bunter's game was up. He knew that the Famous Five could have said nothing, so far, about what they suspected, or Quelch would have looked in at the circus already. After all, they were not the fellows to give a fellow away. Still, it was certainly wiser to be civil, in the circumstances.

"Look here, tell him I'm very busy, and I'm sorry I can't see him now," said Bunter. "Tell him any day next week will be all right."

"We shall be gone on to Wapshot next week!" Parker reminded him. He thought Bunter must have forgotten that. Bunter hadn't!

"Tell him what I've said, and don't jaw!" snapped Bunter.

"Oh, all right!"

Parker left the ring.

Billy Bunter gave an angry grunt. He was rather anxious for the circus to move on and get away from the perilous vicinity of Greyfriars. So far, he had carried on undiscovered; but he was uneasy so near the school. He would have been still more uneasy had he known of the discovery Coker of the Fifth had made the previous evening.

Parker came back in a couple of minutes, and Bunter gave him an angry blink through his big spectacles.

"If you please, sir, the young gentleman says he wants to see you."

"Rot!" snorted Bunter.

"He told me to ask you if you'd rather see Quelch, sir!"

"Oh crikey!"

Parker stared at him curiously. Nobody at the circus knew that Bunter had run away from school. They knew that he belonged to Greyfriars, but it was understood that he had leave of absence from his headmaster. But the fat junior's obvious unwillingness to see one of his schoolfellows made Parker very curious.

Bunter blinked at him in suspicious alarm. He wondered if Parker knew who Quelch was. But the circus man, of course, had never heard the name of a Greyfriars Form-master.

Parker did not know how alarming his message was. But it filled Billy Bunter with the deepest alarm. It was a threat! It meant that if he did not see the schoolboy who had called at the circus, that schoolboy would send Quelch after him. He had to see the unwelcome visitor.

"T-t-t-tell him——" stammered Bunter.

"Yes, sir!" said Parker.

"Tut-tut-tell him——" Bunter paused.

"Look here, take him into my dressing-room. Tell him I'm coming."

"Yes, sir!"

Parker went out again. The fat junior knitted his podgy brows. That message about Quelch, of course, meant that the caller knew who he was—knew that "Bunto" was Bunter! He had to see the beast and prevail on him to keep it dark. He wondered which of the Famous Five it was—Wharton, most likely. No doubt the beast had come

there to persuade him to return to school, blow him!

He had to see him! A malicious glimmer came into the little round eyes behind the big round spectacles. He called to Cæsar! He was going to see that unwelcome visitor—and take the lion with him, and jolly well give the beast a fright!

"Cæsar! Follow!" barked Bunter.

And the lion walked at his heels as he left the ring and headed for his dressing-room.

At the doorway he made a sign to Cæsar, who crouched outside as Bunter went in. It only needed a call from Bunter to cause the big lion to charge into the room with a terrific roar—which, Bunter considered, would make that schoolboy sorry he had called!

So, leaving Cæsar crouching outside the doorway, Bunter rolled into the room, expecting to see one of the Famous Five. He jumped in surprise at the sight of the big Fifth Former standing there waiting for him.

"Kik-kik-kik-Coker!" gasped Bunter.

It was not Harry Wharton. It was not one of the Co. It was Coker of the Fifth, and Bunter blinked at him in rage and astonishment. And Coker, with a grim smile, remarked:

"So I've found you, you young rascal!"

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

"And you're jolly well coming back to Greyfriars with me!" said Coker.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coker is Sorry He Called!

BILLY BUNTER blinked at Coker of the Fifth in utter dismay. He was discovered—there was no doubt about that. He was not in his circus rig now—and Coker knew him at a glance. Not that his circus rig would have helped him, as Coker evidently knew already that "Bunto" was Bunter. How he knew, Bunter had no idea, but it was clear that he did know.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "You—you silly ass! What the dickens are you butting in here for, I'd like to know?"

"Don't be cheeky!" said Coker warningly. "If you want me to whop you, you've only got to ask for it."

"Look here, you beast!" hissed Bunter. "I—I thought it was one of the Remove chaps, or I wouldn't have come. What are you butting in for?"

"I spotted you in the ring last night," said Coker. "I dare say you noticed me, in the front seats——"

"As if I should notice you!" said Bunter disdainfully.

"I've warned you not to be cheeky!" said Coker, frowning.

"Have you told Quelch?" howled Bunter.

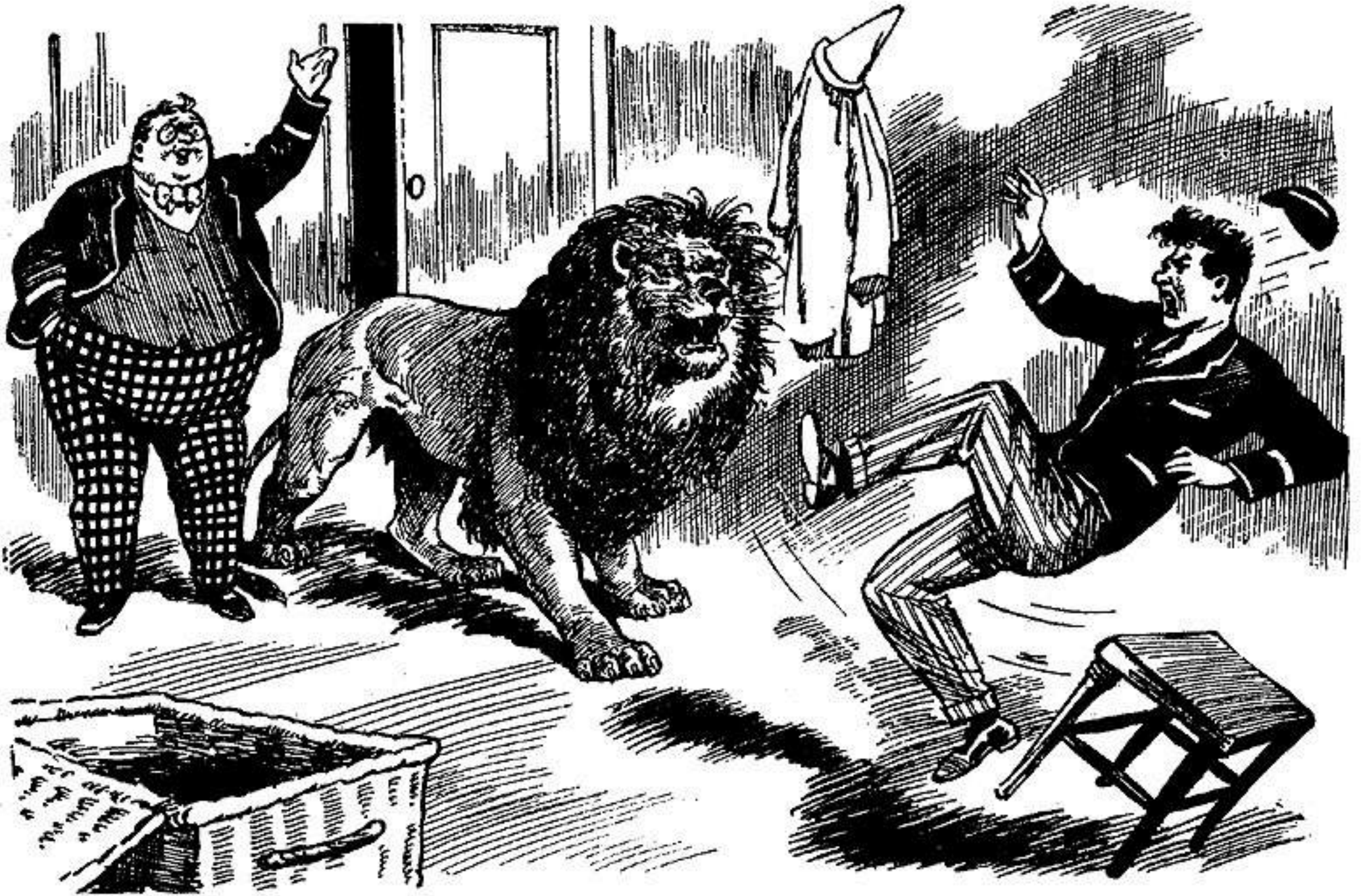
"No, I've told——"

"Not the Head?" shrieked Bunter.

"No, you young ass! I've told Wharton——"

"Oh!" Bunter gasped with relief. "That's all right. Wharton won't give a chap away. Besides, he jolly well knew already. Look here, Coker, you keep this dark—see? You're not going to sneak about me?"

"Don't be a young ass! Do you think that you can carry on here, with the whole school wondering what's become of you, and your beak hunting for you high and low?" demanded Coker.



"Guard him, Caesar!" barked Billy Bunter. The majestic beast gave a roar and then made for Coker's direction. In sheer terror the Fifth Former backed across the dressing-room, stumbling over a stool that was in the way. "Oooh!" he stuttered. "Kik-kik-kik-call him off, Bunter!"

"No business of yours, is it?" hooted Bunter.

"Isn't it?" said Coker. "Well, I'm jolly well making it my business. I can't allow it, Bunter."

"Mind your own business, blow you!"

"I'm giving you a chance!" explained Coker. "I told Wharton to come and fetch you back—it's up to him, as head boy of Quelch's Form. He was cheeky, and refused. So I've come myself."

"Beast!"

"Blessed if I know how they've allowed you to stay here," said Coker. "You can't have told them you've run away from school. Anyhow, you've got to go back, and I'm going to take you. I suppose you'd rather me take you than Quelch."

"I'm not going!" hissed Bunter.

"You are going!" said Coker calmly. "I'm going to see that you do. I can't allow this to go on!"

"It's not your business, you cheeky dummy!" howled Bunter. "Can't you mind your own business, you silly fat-head?"

"You're coming back with me!" said Coker. "If you don't—"

"I jolly well won't!"

"Then I shall march you off by your neck!" explained Coker.

"I'll call Parker to chuck you out, you beast!" hissed Bunter. "I'll call half a dozen of them, and have you chucked into the ditch!"

"I fancy some of them would get hurt first," said Coker calmly. "But it won't make any difference, you fat young ass. I can't allow this. If I don't get you back to the school, I shall be bound to report to Quelch where he can find you. I don't want to do that. Better come quietly."

Billy Bunter glared at him, with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. No doubt Coker was right—that a run-

away schoolboy ought to be rounded up and taken back to school. Still, it was no special business of Coker's. Really and truly, his headmaster had never requested Coker of the Fifth to manage Greyfriars for him! But it was one of Horace Coker's little ways, to manage the affairs of others without waiting to be requested so to do.

"Now, are you coming?" demanded Coker.

"No!" howled Bunter.

"Then I'll jolly well take you!" Coker made a stride at Billy Bunter, with a large hand outstretched to grasp a fat shoulder.

"Caesar!" shouted Bunter.

Coker stopped suddenly, his outstretched hand touching Bunter. He stopped quite still, as if petrified. His eyes almost started from his head at the sight of a terrifying form that appeared in the doorway of the dressing-room. It was a huge lion, with bristling mane and open jaws.

A roar pealed from Caesar. It echoed and boomed through the circus. Coker stared at the lion transfixed.

He did not speak. He could not. His jaw dropped. Open-mouthed, but speechless, he gazed at Caesar.

Coker had plenty of pluck—heaps of it! But it all deserted him at that awful moment!

His blood almost curdled as he found himself standing face to face with a lion's open jaws.

Had those huge jaws closed on Coker, the Greyfriars Fifth would have lost its most important member! One smashing blow of that huge paw, and Horace Coker would only have been a memory in the Fifth Form at Greyfriars!

The previous evening, Coker had told Potter and Greene that that lion was, most likely, jolly tame, and that there was nothing much in "Bunto's" per-

formance. He did not think so now. Only a yard or two from the cavernous jaws, from which a fearful roar was pealing, Coker did not feel like relying on the tameness of that lion!

"Guard him!" barked Bunter.

Roar from Caesar! The majestic beast made for Coker's direction. Horace Coker staggered back, pace by pace.

His knees knocked together, his legs sagged under him. In utter horror, he gazed at the lion as he tottered back and back. Backing across the dressing-room, he stumbled backwards over a stool that was in the way, and unintentionally sat down. He bumped and gasped.

Bunter yelled to the lion.

"Guard, Caesar!"

A mighty paw tapped on Coker's chest. With a suffocated yelp of horror, Coker collapsed on the floor.

Over him stood the mighty lion, a paw resting on Coker's chest, while a deep roar pealed from his throat.

This was a performance to Caesar! He was performing with Coker, as he had performed with Parker, in Bunter's rehearsal in the ring. But Coker realised, only too clearly, that that mighty paw could have torn him into shreds; that those immense jaws could have bitten him into halves! The idea of being thus reduced to a fifty-fifty state was awful.

Billy Bunter grinned.

He had the upper hand now! Caesar had been brought there to give his visitor a scare! The visitor was an unexpected one; but he was getting the scare! That was a cert!

"Ooooooh!" moaned Coker faintly.

Roar from Caesar. It boomed and pealed. It seemed to Coker that it must alarm the whole circus, and bring a

crowd rushing to the room, to round up the escaped lion. But there was no such rush. Nobody came. Everybody in Muccolini's Magnificent Circus was too used to Caesar and his roaring, to take any especial heed.

"Guard him!" grinned Bunter.

Coker, white as chalk, felt the perspiration running down his face in streams. He dared not move a finger. He hardly dared breathe.

With dilated eyes he stared up at the lion. For a full minute he expected instant destruction. But the lion seemed satisfied with pinning him down with a paw on his chest. Then it dawned on Coker's confused mind that Bunter was standing there grinning, and he remembered that "Bunto" was the "Boy Lion-tamer."

"Kik-kik-kik—" stuttered Coker. "Kik-kik-call him off, Bunter! You can do it, you little beast! Kik-kik-call him off!"

"No fear!" grinned Bunter.

"Get him away!" breathed Coker. "Get him away and lemme gerrup! Get him away before he does any damage, you horrid little fat toad!"

"I don't think!" chuckled Bunter.

"Better not try to get away, Coker. If you move he will nip your head off!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Right off, at one bite!" grinned the fat Owl. "I couldn't stop him if I tried! He's jolly fierce."

"You little beast!" groaned Coker. "You can handle him—I've seen you do it. For goodness' sake call him off! You know you can do it!"

"He, he, he!"

Coker lay gasping. The paw on his chest felt like a ton weight. Suppose it gripped him. He shuddered.

"Bunter, you little fat beast—"

"He, he, he!"

"I—I'll get out if you'll call him off!" gasped Coker. "I—I will, really! I—I won't take you back to the school!"

"You jolly well won't!" agreed Bunter. "You're all right if you don't move, Coker! If you stir, I'm afraid he will tear you in pieces—little pieces! Not my fault! I've warned you!"

"I—I—I'll smash you!" hissed Coker.

"You don't look like doing it! He, he, he! I can jolly well tell you that if I wasn't here, keeping him in control, you'd be chewed up already. Only my presence restrains him!" said Bunter loftily. "Merely that! If I stepped out of the room, you'd be in small pieces—"

"I—I say—"

"Little pieces—rags and tatters—shreds and patches!" said Bunter, with relish. "They would have to sweep up what was left of you!"

"L-I-look here—"

"I'm sorry I can't waste any more time on you, Coker! I've got a lot of things to see to. I've got to get back to the ring—"

"D-d-don't go!" gasped Coker.

"It's my busy day!" explained Bunter. "You'll be all right, so long as you keep perfectly still—that is, until his feeding-time. When he gets hungry, I can't answer for what will happen!"

"I—I—I—Dud-did-don't go!" stuttered Coker. "I—I say, let me get out of this. For goodness' sake—"

"And let you go back and tell Quelch where to look for me?" grinned Billy Bunter. "Not half!"

"I—I—I won't mention it to Quelch! After all, it's not my business if you play the goat!" gasped Coker. "It doesn't matter to me."

"Just thought of that?" grinned Bunter.

"You little beast—"

"He, he, he!"

For the first time in his career, Coker of the Fifth regretted that he had not attended wholly and solely to his own business. But he seemed to realise now that it was no concern of his if Bunter played the goat! Caesar was helping him to realise it!

"Will you call him off?" panted Coker. "I—I'll get out— I—I— Oh crikey!" Coker broke off with a gasp as Caesar gave a roar. For an awful moment he fancied that the jaws were going to snap on him. However, they didn't! "Will you kik-kik-call him off, you fat toad? Ow!"

Bunter chuckled. He had Coker where he wanted him now.

"I'll call him off if you'll promise, honour bright, not to give me away to Quelch!" he said coolly. "You can think it over if you like. I'll leave you to it—"

"D-don't go! I—I—I—" Coker choked. "I—I promise! I—I won't say a word! Now kik-kik-call him off!"

"Honour bright?" grinned Bunter.

"Honour bright!" gasped Coker.

The fat Owl gave another chuckle.

"Right-ho!" he said. "Keep still, you know! Don't move till I've got him under control! He's fearfully savage. If you excite him, I can't possibly save you!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Coker.

"Caesar!" barked Bunter. "Caesar! Here!"

Prompt to obedience, Caesar withdrew his mighty paw from Coker's chest, and walked across to Bunter.

Coker staggered up. He gave Bunter a look—an expressive look. But he did not stay for more. Coker got out of the dressing-room at great speed.

But he turned back at the doorway.

"You little beast! You wait till you come back to Greyfriars, and see if I don't smash you—"

Bunter gave the lion a touch. Caesar stalked across to the door, roaring.

Coker broke off quite suddenly.

"Run!" yelled Bunter. "I can't stop him now! Run!"

Coker bolted.

He was out of the tent in a split second. In two or three more, he was out of the circus camp. He disappeared across the common, going strong. Not till he was half a mile from Muccolini's Magnificent Circus did Coker venture to slacken speed.

Billy Bunter, chuckling, gave Caesar a biscuit.

Tippity Tip glanced into the dressing-room.

"Friend of yours from your school?" he asked.

"Oh! Yes! An old pal!" said Bunter.

"He left rather suddenly," said the clown. "Anything the matter?"

"A bit scared of the lion," said Bunter carelessly. "They haven't all got my pluck, you know! What are you grinning at? Don't snigger at me! Get out!"

Mr. Tip got out, still grinning.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Too Late!

L ODER of the Sixth came up the Remove passage from the stairs—and paused.

There was a buzz of boyish voices from Study No. 1.

It was not yet time for prep, and four members of the famous Co. were

TAMING THE BULLY!



With a right-hand punch like the kick of a mule, Alfred Higgs, the new junior in the Fourth Form at Rookwood, regarded himself as monarch of all he

surveyed. But little did he realise how soon Jimmy Silver would cultivate a straight "left" for his special benefit. If you like a yarn with a real punch in it you can't do better than read: "Taming the Bully!" Never has Owen Conquest written a more exciting school yarn of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood. Read and enjoy it. No. 272 of

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chatting in that study. Harry Wharton had not yet come up.

The name of "Bunter" came to Loder's ears through the half-open door. That was why he paused.

He cast a quick glance up the passage. No one was in sight—and Loder stopped where he was, by the door of Study No. 1.

It was a couple of days since Coker had made his startling announcement to the Remove cricketers.

Hardly a fellow in the Remove doubted that Coker had made one more of his idiotic mistakes. Even the Famous Five, who guessed that Billy Bunter was at the circus, found it hard to believe that he was appearing in a lion-taming act there.

But Coker's statement, whether right or wrong, was certain to be talked of far and wide. And it was! So it was not surprising that a rumour of it had reached the ears of a prefect.

Coker, wrathful as he was after his visit to the circus, was a fellow of his word. He had said nothing since, as he had promised Bunter. But that really did not make a lot of difference, as he had already let the cat out of the bag.

It was, of course, a prefect's duty to get information if he could, and round up the runaway. Loder was very keen to perform that duty.

He owed Bunter a whopping. Not only was that whopping overdue, but it would be a feather in his cap if he succeeded in tracking the runaway junior where everybody else had failed.

He had little doubt, after the snatches of talk he had heard, that Bunter's form-fellows in the Remove could "put him wise" if they liked. Now he was going up to Study No. 1 to question Wharton and his friends. He had thoughtfully brought his ashplant with him.

But as he heard the voices from the study, he stopped—and listened. It was by no means sure that even with the aid of the ashplant he would be able to extract the information he wanted. Now it looked as if the ashplant would not be needed. There was nobody in the passage at the moment. And the fellows in Study No. 1 were discussing Bunter—just now the reigning topic in the Remove.

The headmaster of Greyfriars expected his prefects to be keen on duty. But certainly he would never have expected any of his prefects to adopt Loder's present methods. He would have been distinctly shocked at the idea of a Sixth Form prefect listening at a door. But Loder was not particular.

"Bunto—Bunter!" Bob Cherry was saying. "The name's rather like, that's a cert! But fancy Bunter as a lion-tamer!"

"Too jolly steep!" said Johnny Bull. "The steepfulness is terrific."

"Well, I'm not sure!" said Frank Nugent. "Bunter knows the lion-tamer at the circus—we knew that. And you remember how he tackled that escaped lion at Cliff House. We've heard since that he was tame and harmless—"

"Might have guessed that one, at the time!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Of course, Bunter knew that."

"Well, if a lion's tame, even Bunter wouldn't be afraid of him," said Frank. "And from what I hear, this chap Bunto at the circus is short and fat, and sports a big pair of specs—"

"That sounds like jolly old Bunter! But—"

"But lots of fellows have seen Bunto in his lion-taming act!" said Johnny Bull. "And nobody but Coker fancied he was Bunter."

"It seems that Coker heard him speaking, and recognised his voice. Anybody would know Bunter's squeak."

"Coker's dropped the subject since," said Bob. "A dozen fellows have asked him about it, and he's only told them to shut up."

"Lucky for Bunter, if he's really Bunto!" chuckled Nugent. "That bully Loder would be glad to get on his track. And if Quelch heard—"

Loder's eyes glittered.

He was after information, and there was no doubt that he was getting information now. He moved a little closer to the door, which stood ajar, and listened intently.

Having, naturally, no eyes in the back of his head, Loder did not see a junior rise into view on the Remove staircase.

But Harry Wharton, as he came up and glanced across the landing, saw Loder.

He could scarcely have failed to see him. Loder was big enough to be seen. He did not recognise him, as Loder's back was to him, and one senior was very like another from a back view. But he saw, of course, how he was occupied.

Wharton stared at Loder's back.

The sight of a senior man obviously listening at a study door, was rather startling.

Wharton's face set grimly.

Instead of walking up the passage with his ordinary tread, he tiptoed along behind Loder. Whoever that eavesdropper was, he was going to get a surprise—which might be a valuable lesson to him not to listen at study doors.

"If Quelch heard," went on Bob's voice, "my hat, he would be down at the circus like a shot! If Bunto's Bunter, Quelch would spot him all right, if he had the faintest idea—"

"Well, nobody will tell Quelch!" remarked Nugent. "The fact is, I'm pretty certain that we know now what that fat ass is up to! I'd bet any man ten to one in doughnuts, that if Quelch went down to see Bunto at the circus he would meet jolly old Bunter! Still, nobody will give the fat duffer away."

Loder grinned.

That unguarded talk in Study No. 1 had given the fat Owl of the Remove away pretty effectually, with Loder listening outside.

But the next moment the grin vanished from Loder's face. Harry Wharton, silent but swift, had reached him.

Wharton's right foot was drawn back. It landed on Loder's trousers with a terrific thud.

Loder gave a gasping yell.

That tremendous kick pitched him headlong forward. He crashed on the door of Study No. 1, hurling it wide open with his weight.

There were startled exclamations in the study as the door crashed open and Loder pitched in headlong, sprawling full length on the floor.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"What the thump—"

"Who the dickens—"

"Oooooooh!" spluttered Loder dizzily.

"Oooooowww!"

"Loder!" gasped Nugent.

"Great pip!"

Harry Wharton looked in at the door. His chums stared at the sprawling Sixth Former, and stared at Harry.

"That ead was listening at the door!" explained Wharton. "I gave him a lift with my boot, as a hint that that sort of thing won't do in the Remove."

"Oh crumbs!"

"It's Loder!"

"Loder!" exclaimed Wharton. "A prefect! Oh crikey!"

Loder struggled to his feet. He was hurt. No fellow could have captured that kick without getting hurt. And he was infuriated. It was not pleasant to be caught eavesdropping. It was still more unpleasant to be kicked for the same! Loder wriggled with pain and gurgled with rage.

"You—Wharton—you—"

"You—you—you—" he gasped.

Harry Wharton looked at him steadily. He had not been aware that the eavesdropper was a prefect, but it would have made no difference. A fellow who listened at doors had to take what was coming to him.

"You—you kicked me!" gasped Loder.

"I did!" assented the captain of the Remove. "And if I catch you listening at my study door again, Loder, I'll kick you again!"

Loder gasped with fury. His ashplant had fallen to the floor, and he stooped and clutched it up.

"You—you young rascal!" he panted. "I'll thrash you so you can't crawl! I—I'll— Bend over that chair!"

"I won't!" said Harry Wharton coolly. "You can't come the prefect, Loder, after being kicked for spying at a study door. I'll go to the Head with you if you like, and I'll tell him I've kicked you and why."

Loder glared at him. He dared not go to the Head, as Wharton was very well aware. The headmaster was the last person in the world whom Loder would have desired to acquaint with his peculiar methods of getting information.

"Will you bend over, Wharton?" he panted.

"No!"

"Then I'll—" Without wasting time explaining what he would do, Loder proceeded to do it. He jumped at Wharton, lashing with the cane.

"Back up!" shouted Harry.

But he did not need to call. Loder was a prefect, and it was against all laws, written or unwritten, for prefects to be handled by juniors. But, as Wharton had said, Loder could not "come the prefect" in the peculiar circumstances.

Five pairs of hands grasped Loder of the Sixth all at once. Wharton got one swipe from the ashplant. Then the ash was wrenched away, and Loder, struggling wildly in the grasp of the Famous Five, went whirling out of the study.

"Kick him out!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Boot the ead!"

"Boot the rotter!"

Loder of the Sixth hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels, as he went whirling along the Remove staircase. He went down that staircase rolling.

And he did not come up again. The Famous Five were ready, if he did, to give him some more of the same. But Loder, it seemed, did not want any more, and he went gasping down the lower stairs, and the chums of the Remove returned to Study No. 1.

"That's that!" said Harry Wharton. "But what the dickens was he listening at the door for? You fellows talking about anything special?"

"Bunter," said Bob.

"Oh, my hat!"

"He's heard the whole thing," said Bob. "Of course, we never dreamed he was there. He knows now."

Harry Wharton whistled.

"Then that's why. That means that Bunter's number's up!"

There was no doubt on that subject.

(Continued on page 28.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,483.

CAPTAIN VENGEANCE!

By JOHN BREDON.

Stranded on Shark Reef!

THE bulkhead's giving way! We're lost! The ship's going down!"

These dreadful words rang in Roy Drake's ears like a sentence of doom.

It was a strange situation in which the son of Morgan Drake, Britain's master Secret Service agent, now found himself—in total darkness and up to his chin in swirling water as he knelt in the flooded compartment of the pirate cruiser Vengeance, which was slowly sinking into the vast depths of the Indian Ocean as the roaring, triumphant waters surged through the breach in her torpedo-shattered hull. Just before him, though he could not see it, was the forward water-tight bulkhead, propped up with stacks of coal and bunks of timber, but on the point of giving way before the terrific pressure of thousands of gallons of water.

Once it yielded to the strain those desperate toilers in the heat and darkness of engine-room and stokehold would be engulfed in a rush of overwhelming water, drowned like rats and hurled into eternity as the boilers burst into an explosion of scalding steam.

Von Eimar, or Captain Vengeance, as he now called himself, had just been at the point of his piratical career when golden success seemed to be in his grasp when luck had turned to swift and irretrievable disaster.

Returning from his successful raid upon the Island of Pai Yang, where he had seized the fabulous wealth of jewels hidden in the tombs of its ancient kings, the master-pirate had just quelled a mutiny among his recalcitrant convict-pirates when his cruiser was suddenly torpedoed by a mysterious white yacht that had appeared from the night.

Slowly and steadily the pirate warship was foundering, though on the bridge Von Eimar stood with his fists upon the spokes of the wheel, determinedly striving to beach the Vengeance on the reefs of Inaccessible Island while there was yet time.

"Run for it, mates, while we still have a chance!"

It was Duprez, the Frenchman, who thus screamed and raved in the unnerving blackness and flood of waters, splashing wildly along the alleyway away from the cracking bulkhead.

"Stop that howling, you fool! Stop it!"

Guided by the Frenchman's panic-stricken yells, Ronald Westdale stumbled from wall to wall, knee-deep in water as he splashed in the crazed fellow's wake.

Those palpitating screams had had a dangerous effect upon the already tautened nerves of the men blocking up the bulkhead in the darkness and rising water. Once Duprez started a panic all would be lost.

The list of the sinking cruiser sent Duprez toppling over in the unseen ripples and eddies, and his howls were silenced as his head disappeared under the surface. Blundering behind him, Westdale found the fugitive by stumbling over his legs. They rose



Bawling like men possessed, the convicts scrambled along the shelving deck-plates of the derelict cruiser and crowded round the boat-davits!

together, dripping and gasping, and Westdale, judging the distance in the velvety blackness, lunged out his clenched fist with all the force of a piston-rod.

Taking the shock upon his left ear, Duprez sank on caving knees, knocked his head against the iron ladder, and shouted no more.

Back to his post where the men still heaved with coal and stacks of timber staggered Ronald Westdale.

"It was a false alarm!" gasped Mikhail Lebedoff, the giant Russian engineer, as, perspiring and half naked, he directed operations close by Roy Drake. "A false alarm! But the strain's increasing now! It won't stand much longer—"

As he was speaking, there came a sudden, straining jolt, and in the pitchy gloom they were flung in a heap against the steel alley walls.

"Beached!" cried Westdale, as he arose, clutching at an overhead girder. "Von Eimar's saved us—at the post! We've run aground on Shark Reef! Come on, lads! We can do no more here!"

Blindly Roy Drake sprawled and staggered through the narrow alleyway, stumbling over floating struts of timber

and submerged lumps of coal as he was jostled by unseen men, till at last he groped his way to the ladder that led to the engine-room hatch.

The impact had dislodged the temporary barrier by which they had reinforced the bulkhead, and had they still been moving through deep water its collapse could have been only a matter of seconds. But the immediate danger was past now. Von Eimar had run the doomed cruiser ashore on to the rocky ridge known as Shark Reef, that projected out from the high cliffs of Inaccessible Island, and, with luck, they stood a fair chance of escaping alive on to the island which for months had been the pirates' secret lair.

At the foot of the ladder Roy Drake tripped over Duprez, lying unconscious with his head resting upon the steel rungs just above water. Little as he liked Duprez, Roy called out to Westdale to help him, and between them they dragged the insensible man up to the main deck.

A rush of cool, invigorating air filled Roy Drake's lungs as he scrambled through the engine-room hatch, gasping with relief after the heat and blackness of the flooded compartment.

Wiping his eyes with the back of his hand, the boy gazed about him.

With her iron decks tilted at an angle of forty-five degrees, the Vengeance lay jammed between two fangs of rock in the barrier reef that curved between white, foaming tidal currents towards the headland of Inaccessible Island and the hidden inlet.

Day was breaking, and its pale eastern glow showed terror and confusion as the frightened, half-naked convicts scrambled along the shelving deck-plates of the derelict, bawling like men possessed as they crowded round the boat-davits, to find most of the life-boats already swamped and submerged.

By stranding his ship upon Shark Reef, Von Eimar had saved the lives of his crew and staved off the immediate catastrophe. But the Vengeance was a hopeless wreck. Never could she be re-floated. The first storm would reduce her to a heap of scrap-iron and twisted metal upon those sharp-fanged coral reefs and rock-girt bluffs.

Staring over the misty wastes of water as he clung to a steam-capstan, Roy Drake could discern, four miles distant, the masts and single funnel of their adversary above the haze. She was standing off, having no doubt seen the disaster to the Vengeance, and her master would, of course, be aware of the sinister reputation of Inaccessible Island and its girdle of coral reefs.

What ship was this, he wondered, built on the lines of a pleasure yacht, but actually a formidable man-o'-war. Was it—

He had no time for speculation, however, for the decks around him were a press of seething, pushing, trampling men, who were stumbling and falling over one another in the throes of unimaginable terror.

Marooned on Inaccessible Island!

DOWN the starboard bridge-ladder stamped Von Eimar, monocle screwed in his eye, gun-belt round his waist. Then, with huge strides, he crossed the armoured superstructure and so into the raving mass of men in the well-deck.

Heaving his massive shoulders through the crush, kicking and buffet-ing men from his path, he swung his way to the bulwarks, and there turned to glare savagely at the swaying crowd of men around him.

Roy noticed that under his arm he gripped the leathern valise that contained the jewels, sapphires, emeralds, rubies, and diamonds, valued at a million pounds, that he had taken from the tombs of the kings of Pai Yang.

"Silence! Keep your heads, you scum of the underworld!" Like a trumpet-blast his powerful voice drowned their frightened clamour. "You fools, the danger is past! Look! As soon as the tide ebbs, which it will in a few minutes, you will be able to pass along the reef to Inaccessible Island."

It is doubtful whether any other man could have withstood that panic. But those lawless, murderous ruffians from Nemesis Island feared their leader more even than the sharks and hungry seas that surrounded them. Moreover, the evident truth contained in his masterful voice served to sober them.

From the stranded cruiser, Shark Reef ran in a half mile of rock and reef, lashed by spray and billows to the giant promontory that guarded Hidden Inlet. There was no need for the boats—indeed, these had either been swamped or staved in by the rocks, except for the petrol launch on the

superstructure—and though it was a difficult and laborious path, the jagged, roaring, spray-swept reef was a road to safety that might be traversed in less than an hour. From the rocks at the base of the promontory, ledges and crevices and gullies made a precarious ladder to the cliff-top.

"Way there!" barked Von Eimar vigorously. "Westdale! Hinton! Krunow! Dietz! And you, young Drake! I want you to lower away the petrol launch. Chu Ho Shan"—this to the Chinese jewel merchant from Pai Yang, who had offered to dispose of the stolen gems—"you come with me as well! Lebedoff, I leave you in charge. You overlook the men as they abandon ship. Pipe all hands, bo'sun!"

Obediently the Finn blew a call on his silver whistle.

With black and sullen looks the convict-pirates manned the boat-falls and lowered the small petrol launch into the swirl and foam alongside.

Capable seaman as he was, Von Eimar evidently did not believe in the old sea tradition that the captain should be the last to leave his ship—though, unscrupulous as he was, no one could have called him a coward.

Ronald Westdale threw a glance along the decks.

"What of Killer Moran—of Luis Ramiro, Von Eimar?" he asked quickly. "They are in the brig—"

In the bobbing stern-sheets of the launch, Von Eimar laughed savagely.

"Let them stay there!" he rasped. "Did they not mutiny and attempt to murder me not long ago? You soft-hearted English fool, you would risk your life to save a pair of skunks like those two, who'd stab you in the back for your pains? Let them drown like a pair of rats in a trap. I'd have hung them at the yard-arm, anyway. Come on! We're waiting to cast off!"

"Wait a minute!" snapped Westdale. "I've got to get something from my state-room."

He was back again in one minute, leaping lightly into the launch as Krunow threw open the throttle and it purred away from the careened steel hulk of the Vengeance. Lighting a cigarette, he took the tiller from Von Eimar, narrowing his eyes as he watched with the skill of a practised sailor the dangerous passage that opened between high bluffs into the lagoon of Inaccessible Island.

Glancing back over the gunwale, as the motor-boat chugged its way over swelling billows and through mazes of reef, Roy Drake saw the convict-pirates leaping and scrambling on to Shark Reef; then they rounded the rocky shoulder, and he saw no more.

Von Eimar, with his hitherto immaculate white uniform all stained with brine and spindrift, scowled blackly as he squatted on a thwart, lugging the bulky valise on his burly knees. Nobody spoke. But the thought was in each of their minds—that they were castaways on Inaccessible Island, with no hope of escape, and that soon a fleet of cruisers, aeroplanes, and destroyers would be out to compel them to ignominious surrender.

Giant rocky headlands closed them in, and the Indian Ocean disappeared from view as they threaded the narrow, wind-ing channel towards Hidden Bay.

Von Eimar spoke at last, and his voice was harsh and forbidding.

"Checkmate!" he said, jewelled fingers quivering. "The luck's been with us throughout the game—but it's failed us at the last throw. But we're not beat yet. Mein Gott—no! I've been in tighter corners before, and I've always won through!" His jaw set like

granite. "If the worst comes to the worst I still hold one valuable hostage"—and his pale blue eyes darted malevolently upon Roy Drake as the motor-launch surged onwards towards the rocky arch of the sea-caves wherein had been cached the bullion taken from the Sylvia Bay.

Double-Crossed!

VON EIMAR, ahoy! Whar are yuh, hiding in the caves? Come out, yuh skunk o' the world, come out and take what's coming to yuh!"

Von Eimar bounded to his feet on the flat ledge of rock inside the sea-cavern, taking care, however, to screen his square, shaven head behind a lump of jagged lava as he flashed his electric torch over the black, rippling waters beneath him.

Still that shouted hail echoed and re-echoed among the rocky niches, arches, and buttresses of that domed sea-cavern.

"Who was that?" His fat finger crooked around the trigger of his automatic, as carefully he peered round the boulder. "That was Killer Moran's voice, I swear. How did he get here? Somebody must have let him out of the brig."

"I did," answered Westdale. "I took the keys from the master-at-arms, and dropped them down the grating into the cell just before we abandoned ship. I'm no cold-blooded killer, Von Eimar."

"You did?" Von Eimar twisted round, scowling murderously. "You fool! You loosed those two cutthroat hounds on my heels? I've a mind to shoot you for that—"

"Put up your gun, Von Eimar," smiled Westdale wearily. "I fancy you'll be needing all your supporters before you're through."

With that he took a carbine from the rack, lay flat among the rocks, and rested the barrel in a crevice as he tested the magazine and sights.

Roy Drake, with Krunow, Dietz, and Hilarity Hinton, the Cockney, followed his example without saying a word. One and all would be murdered without mercy if Killer Moran got the upper hand; as doubtless the chief mutineer had all the crew on his side.

"Ahoy, Von Eimar, yuh square-headed skunk!" Killer Moran's raucous accents boomed through the arches of the caverns. "Yuh hear me yaup? Come outa those caves, yuh double-crosser! We've got yuh bottled! D'yuh hear me? We wants to speak to yuh about what yuh've done for us, darn yuh!"

"Hallo, Moran, you gutter-rat!" roared Von Eimar in his bull voice. "So you got out of the Vengeance's brig, did you? Better for you if you'd remained there, to become shark's meat. You're done! When you leave Inaccessible Island again, it'll be in irons, back to Nemesis Island—"

Crack! Ba-bang—bang—bang!

A thousand echoes repeated the explosion of Killer Moran's rifle as the gangster lost patience. The bullet ricocheted off the boulder behind which Von Eimar crouched, knocking a chip of rock from the saw-toothed ceiling of the cavern-lake.

"Let the scum have it!" growled Von Eimar, coolly sighting his automatic, and blazing away into the clinging shadows that masked Killer Moran and his mutineers.

The duel began. The rebels had evidently armed themselves from the

Vengeance's armoury before deserting her. The caves above the underground lake were filled with rolling, crashing echoes, and lit with lightning flashes from the continuous fire.

For an hour the duel continued, and then it ceased. Both sides, in fact, were merely wasting ammunition. They could not see each other in the darkness, and though Moran and his followers had reached the lake by filing along the rocky ledges that bordered the entrance to the lagoon, without boats they could not hope to reach Von Eimar's party across the gap of shadowed water.

Von Eimar grunted, and by the light of his electric flash-lamp examined the chambers of his re-loaded automatic; then he stood up.

"I'll be doing a little exploring," he said curtly. "There's no saying what Moran and his rebels may be doing. This island is such a rabbit-warren, they may be skulking round to take us in the rear somewhere. Keep watch here, Westdale, and don't let them catch you napping."

The last they heard of Von Eimar was the low clink, clink, of his heavy sea-boots as he climbed the rugged, zig-zag path up to the living-cave where they kept their stores.

A further half-hour dragged by according to the illuminated dial of Roy Drake's wrist-watch; then, all at once, they were startled by a white blaze of light from above, and a hoarse, raucous voice called to them from the path whence Von Eimar had not long before disappeared.

"Let up, yuh ginks!" snarled Killer Moran from behind that glaring light. "Put 'em up, thar! I guess I got yuh frozen. I've a Mills' bomb right handy hyar, an' ef yuh don't shove up yore mitts I'll shore let yuh have the works, right an' dandy!"

There was no help for it. Evidently, as Von Eimar had foreseen, Moran and his mutineers had threaded the chain of caves, fissures, and rocky burrows that honeycombed the volcanic rock of Inaccessible Island, and taken the little party in the rear; and just as evidently they had missed the pirate chief in the shadowy mazes.

Reluctantly Roy Drake, Ronald Westdale, Krunow, Dietz, and Chu Ho Shan elevated their hands as Killer Moran scrambled down the steep slope, followed by Luis Ramiro, Duprez, and some others, disarmed them, and searched them roughly for weapons.

"Whar's Von Eimar?" inquired the head mutineer gruffly, as he flashed his torch rapidly to and fro upon the rocky, shadowy landing-stage. "Whar's he hidin', durn him? I gotta bucketful o' lead for him, the skunk—"

"You won't find him here, Moran," replied Westdale quietly, as the Killer glanced into his face. "He's gone. I fancy he's deserted us. You're not likely to find him easily in this labyrinth—"

"Aw, is that so?" growled Moran. "The rattler! Guess I've a kinda feelin' for yuh, Westdale, as yuh let me outa that death-trap, or I'd give yuh an' yore pals a sample o' what I've got in store for him, goldurn him—"

"Santos!" suddenly screamed Luis Ramiro. "Look! Look there, Moran-o! That is Von Eimar I see—in the diving-suit, as you call it—"

Killer Moran flashed his light over the underground lake, and let out a howl of rage and amazement.

Roy Drake, blinking in the bright white light, stared across the inky waters of the cavern lake. In the midst of swirls and ripples he saw a metallic, globular shape, like an enormous diver's helmet, surging slowly through the waters of the lake.

It was the gigantic diving-machine of Oskar Vorst, the German hermit-professor of Inaccessible Island, now dead; the queer walking-submarine which the pirates had at first taken to be a strange, prehistoric sea-beast haunting the undersea caverns.

Now they understood the reason for Von Eimar's errand.

The diving-machine, which could be manipulated by one man, had been stored in one of the living-caves having access to the lake. How easy it had been for Von Eimar, under pretext of exploring the rear caves, to place himself in the machine and abscond, taking with him, of course, the jewels of Pai Yang, and deserting mutineers and loyal men alike!

With a furious oath, Killer Moran emptied the chamber of his automatic after the disappearing machine.

The bullets glanced off that round steel head like hailstones off a roof!

"C'mon, boys!" Killer Moran led the way up the rugged, rocky stair as the diving-machine glided away through the archway that led to the lagoon. "The cobra! He's double-crossed us—ev'ry one, and landed us high an' dry up on this hyar rock! He's got away with the booty, but he kain't git away from this island. An' when I git him, I'll shore fill him with as many holes as'll make a fishin'-net! Step on it, yuh ginks!"

Chu Ho Shan Shows His Hand!

THE sudden blaze of sunshine blinded Roy Drake as they blundered through a green mesh of ferns, vines, and brushy, tropical foliage that curtained one of the innumerable outlets from the caves. He had to blink his painful eyelids several times before he could accustom them to the glare, and then he followed Killer Moran and Westdale up a steep spire of lava rock that jutted from a sea of emerald fronds and creepers of the jungle.

Before his gaze loomed the lagoon of Inaccessible Island, called Hidden Bay by the pirates.

The sands were dotted by groups of lounging castaways from the Vengeance, mostly half-naked and squatting listlessly watching the lagoon.

Suddenly, every man started to his feet as a sonorous drone of aeroplane motors broke the silence.

Resting on the blue lagoon waters was a broad, white monoplane, of antique pattern, just opposite the entrance to the sea-cavern, and as Roy Drake watched, with amazed eyes, he saw one of the convicts industriously twirling the propeller, while a goggled figure covered him with a steady, level muzzle that glinted bright in the sun.

As they watched, the man turning the propeller suddenly dived off the floats, and, as the hum of the engine increased, the seaplane glided forward in a swirl of washing waters, finally rising gently as her wings took the wind, and soaring gracefully into the air before their eyes.

Killer Moran let out a gust of angry oaths.

Ronald Westdale stopped short, and then laughed bitterly.

"You can spare your breath, Moran," he said. "Von Eimar's crossed us neatly and completely. That's the seaplane the German Government sent out to Inaccessible Island in sections before the War—Von Eimar told us about it. He had it reassembled, I remember, just before we left Pai Yang, and housed in one of the sea-caverns for a hangar." He stared upwards as the monoplane flew right over their heads, Von Eimar waving a derisive farewell as its shadow fell on to their upturned faces. "A pre-war machine, of course—obsolete—a Taube, if I remember rightly—but it's in good working order, and good enough for Von Eimar's purpose. He's got away with the Pai Yang jewels, and we're left here, marooned—until the warships come to take us back to Nemesis Island," he added, in a hard voice.

Suddenly a sound like distant thunder shook the air.

"What was that?" Killer Moran stood agape.

"That was a gun!" Ronald Westdale cocked his ears. "Anti-aircraft! That's the yacht that torpedoed us last night. I'll bet a thousand to one. Come on! Perhaps we'll see the tricky Von Eimar beaten at the post yet!"

They ran, gasping, perspiring, to a jutting bare promontory, the tall, wind-swept summit of which commanded a wide view of island and sea.

Chu Ho Shan followed more slowly in his long, silken robes.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Sea and sky and spires of rock echoed with the thunderous reverberations of the mysterious yacht's anti-aircraft guns.

Half-blinded with perspiration, the party were just in time to see the last scene of the drama.

The strange white yacht lay off the coral reef that encircled Inaccessible Island, puffs of smoke jetting continuously from the trim snowy lines of her hull.

Fascinated, they watched in spell-bound silence as Von Eimar manoeuvred his plane in the most startling and unnerving evolutions, looping, spinning, diving nose-down, and then rising almost as steeply to escape those whirling, ever-narrowing half-moons of smoke and flame that remorselessly hemmed him in.

The end came at last.

Fine airman as he was, Von Eimar could not elude his fate.

With wide eyes they watched as a smoke-haloed star of fire crumpled up one of the monoplane's wings. The machine seemed to hover for a breath-catching second, then down she swooped, turning over and over, bearing Von Eimar and the fortune of jewels that he had schemed, murdered, and betrayed to win, to nose-dive straight into the sea, and then vanish.

"And that, my friends, is the last of Captain Vengeance," drawled a quiet, smooth voice behind the watching party.

With one accord they all spun round, and never was their amazement greater, for, above the silken, embroidered robes of Chu Ho Shan, they beheld the face of Morgan Drake, Roy's father, and Britain's master-mind of the Secret Service!

Morgan Drake Explains!

CHU HO SHAN, or Morgan Drake, as he must now be called, pulled a silver whistle from the breast of his Chinese garments, and as he blew a shrill, sharp call thereon, Roy Drake blinked his eyes to see, jumping out from the rocks and verdant jungle below, Ben Byrcraft, the bo'sun of his father's yacht, the Shadow, with a dozen sturdy A.B.'s armed with rifles, revolvers, and bayonets like navy men—which, in fact, they actually were.

What Killer Moran and the rest of the convict pirates thought, in their stupefied brains, cannot be told; but, as he saw the white-uniformed men running towards him, the giant American ex-gangster waited for no more. Taking to his heels, he darted into the tropical foliage, followed by Luis Ramiro, Duprez, Krunow, Dietz, and the rest.

Morgan Drake waved back his men, as they were about to follow.

"Let them run, lads!" he exclaimed to Ben Byrcraft and his sailors. "You'll never catch them in the caves and jungles of Inaccessible Island. They're at the end of their tether. In twenty-four hours there will be warships here, and the end can only be that they will surrender to be taken back to Nemesis Island!"

Ronald Westdale and Hilarity Hinton alone had remained when the rest of the pirates bolted into the jungle. They stood beside Roy Drake, staring in bewilderment; and the boy's own bewilderment was hardly less as he stared at the metamorphosed Chu Ho Shan.

Morgan Drake's grey eyes twinkled good-humouredly as he rubbed the remains of grease-paint from his cheeks.

"I have often flattered myself that I am a master of disguise," said Morgan Drake; "but here I have an unconscious tribute. Not only my old enemy, Von Eimar, but my own son did not know Chu Ho Shan to be Morgan Drake!"

"Bu-but—but—" Roy Drake was bereft of speech.

Now he understood what it was that had so intrigued and baffled him about the mysterious Chinese. His own father! And he had not recognised him.

The rest is best explained in Morgan Drake's own words as he stood on the bridge of the Shadow with his son, Ronald Westdale, and Hilarity Hinton, as the armed yacht of the British Secret Service foamed through the soft tropic dusk on her course for Singapore.

"There is no need for us to remain blockading Inaccessible Island," observed the millionaire, as he lighted a cigarette and leaned on the bridge-rail. "There are British cruisers and destroyers hurrying up in response to the wireless message I have sent out in code. Moran and his cutthroats cannot get away. They will have to surrender in time."

He paused for a minute, and then resumed:

"No doubt there are many points on which your curiosity would like to be satisfied. As briefly as possible, I will explain them.

"When Von Eimar and his pirate cruiser vanished from the seas after the sinking of the Sylvia Bay, it was decided, after a rigorous but fruitless search, that the Vengeance must have struck an uncharted reef and foundered, as he had told the world in his fake S.O.S. I did not believe it. Such men as Von Eimar do not die so easily.

It was clear to me that Von Eimar must have some secret island base among the islands of the Eastern Archipelago. Where it was I had, of course, no idea. Inaccessible Island, to me, as to all the world, was a barren rock in mid-ocean, which no ship could approach because of its coral reefs. I knew nothing of Oskar Vorst and the investigations he had carried out for the German Government before the War. But of one thing I was certain—that the world had not heard the last of Captain Vengeance and his modern pirates.

"I put myself in Von Eimar's place. What would I do in the circumstances?"

"Obviously, Von Eimar could only make one more pirate raid, for after that his position would become intolerable; and that raid, therefore, would have to be a highly successful coup.

"I studied the map, and I put my finger at once upon the Island of Pai

Yang. It answered all Von Eimar's requirements. It was rich; it was undefended; it was remote. Here it was that Captain Vengeance would make his last stroke for fortune.

"How right I was, you yourselves know. I approached my old friend, Chu Ho Shan, the Chinese jewel merchant of Pai Yang—there is such a man who has every reason to be devoted to me. He readily consented to allow me to take his place. In Chu Ho Shan's palace I awaited the coming of Von Eimar. The Shadow I had hidden in a small bay a few miles south of Pai Yang city. When the Vengeance appeared in the harbour, ostensibly as the Zarka of the Varland republic, I knew my trap was primed and set. You can imagine my surprise when my men—trusted servants of the real Chu Ho Shan—whom I had set to watch the sup-

(Continued on next page.)

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.

PHEW! Warm, isn't it? And the papers tell us it's going to be warmer still next week! I'll bet the ice-cream vendors will be doing a roaring trade, what? And they won't be the only busy folk. Believe me, the newsagents will be having a very busy time next Saturday, coping with rush orders for the MAGNET, containing the first of our cover-to-cover yarns of Harry Wharton & Co. Never before has the demand for the good old Paper been so great! And no wonder, considering the spanking fine series of circus yarns Frank Richards is at present writing for us.

The first of our extra-special long yarns is entitled:

"THE CIRCUS SCHOOLBOY!"

Laugh? Why, you'll fairly burst yourselves when you read of the further exciting capers Billy Bunter cuts at Muccolini's Circus. The fat Greyfriars Removite to Signor Muccolini is like a red rag to a bull! Willingly would the enraged proprietor give a year's takings to "fire" Bunter out of the circus, but — Anyway, you'll read all about it next Saturday.

Look out, too, for more interesting tit-bits of information concerning Harry Wharton & Co. in the "Greyfriars Herald," and another snappy poem by our clever Greyfriars Rhymester.

Here is a paragraph which may interest you. It concerns

THE SALMON GLOBE-TROTTER!

A young salmon was caught in a net off Bergen, Norway. It was marked, and then let loose again. A little while afterwards it was caught again off the coast of Scotland. It had travelled 400 miles, and if it came direct it must have averaged twenty miles per day. Sea trout frequently travel across the North Sea, while River Tweed trout are often caught on the Dogger Bank, three hundred miles away. The curious thing is that Scottish fish seem to travel further afield than those of any other country.

Have you ever heard of

"THE FOUR-MINUTE LAKE,"

chums? Tom Sheldon, one of my Brighton readers, came across the expression in a story, and asks me if I can tell him what it means. The "four-minute lake" was created in 1925, in Wyoming, and gained its name because it took only four minutes to form the lake. An entire section of a mountain fell in a tremendous landslide, and blocked the Gros Ventre valley to a height of 400 feet. The river which ran through the valley rose at a terrific rate, spreading over the landslide and forming the lake. Eventually the lake reached a depth of 220 feet, a width of a mile, and a length of four and a half miles!

Here's an interesting query from Norman Hood, of Esher. He asks me to give him some information regarding

THE GOODWIN SANDS.

How big are they he asks. The sands stretch for ten miles from North to South, and are situated about 6 to 7 miles from the coast, with Ramsgate at the northerly end and Kingsdown at the southerly end. At high water the Goodwin sands are covered to a depth of sixteen feet, but at low water a considerable portion is from three to five feet above the sea. The sands are quite firm, and one can safely walk on them at low tide. The Goodwins have been the scene of innumerable wrecks, and were once the most dangerous spot on our coasts. Nowadays, however, lightships, buoys, fog-signals and warning guns are sufficient to guard ships from the treacherous sands and lead them safely to the wide channel of the Downs, which runs between the sands and the coastline.

Just to finish up my little chat for this week, here is an answer that might surprise some of my London readers.

HOW MANY CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLES ARE THERE?

Someone has been telling John Harvey, of Kennington, that there are more than one. Being a Londoner, John indignantly denied this, and claimed that the only real Cleopatra's Needle was that on the Embankment, in London. Sorry to disappoint you, John, but your friend was right. There are two Cleopatra's Needles—one in London, and another in New York. They were twin obelisks.

Well, that's all for now. Meet you again next week.

YOUR EDITOR.

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posed Zarka, appeared with my own son as a prisoner."

He turned to Roy.

"You will understand, of course, Roy, why I did not reveal myself. You had to be completely ignorant of my identity. Von Eimar had an eye like a hawk. He would soon have discovered it, had there been any secret between us. Then, when Von Eimar looted the Pai Yang tombs, I offered to accompany him. The Shadow, according to my orders, followed. The rest you know."

Ronald Westdale took a deep breath.

"I understand, Morgan Drake," he said quietly. "What I'd like to know is—what do you intend to do with us, myself and Hinton. You know who I am, the naval lieutenant who betrayed the secrets of my country—"

"The naval lieutenant who was tricked into betraying those secrets, Mr. Westdale," corrected Morgan Drake. "I know more about your past disgrace than you know yourself, Westdale. Von Eimar was the master-spy who tricked you—you didn't know that, did you? But it is true, and—well, Mr. Westdale, if you still wish to serve your country, you and Hilarity Hinton, I can find a use for a man of courage and desperate fortunes like yourself. What do you say?"

"I say—thank you, sir!" cried Ronald Westdale breezily.

And Roy Drake laughed in delight as he and Morgan Drake clasped hands.

So ended the amazing adventures of Captain Vengeance, or Von Eimar, and his convict-pirates from Nemesis Island.

Killer Moran, Luis Ramiro, Duprez, Mikhail Lebedoff, and the rest were soon rounded up by a British naval detachment, and, offering no resistance, they surrendered, to find themselves back again at last on Nemesis Island. But the exploits of Von Eimar had at least one good sequel. An investigation was made into the affairs and past history of the penal colony. Governor Zarda and Admiral Mericksi, both of whom were rescued from Inaccessible Island, were degraded from their offices; and the Varland Government was forced to rule its convict island with at least something like common humanity.

As for Von Eimar, pirate and master-spy—the sea knows how to keep its secrets.

THE END.

FROM SCHOOL TO CIRCUS!

(Continued from page 23.)

Loder knew now as much as the Remove fellows knew, and it was certain that he would not be long in making his report to Mr. Quelch. If Billy Bunter of the Remove was, in fact, Bunto the Boy Tamer of the circus, as the juniors hardly doubted that he was, his number was up—right up! The only consolation was that Loder of the Sixth had been kicked. And Wharton was glad to remember that he had put all his beef into that kick.

"Impossible!" said Mr. Quelch.
"Certain, I think, sir!" said Loder.
Loder was making his report.

He was not explaining how he had gained the information. Neither was he reporting the kicking episode. Those details were better left in oblivion. According to Loder, he had been making industrious investigations, and this was the result.

"It seems impossible!" said the Remove master. "Yet the foolish boy is certainly in the neighbourhood somewhere. He must have found a refuge of some sort. I recall, too, that he was riding a circus elephant the day I saw him, though he declared that he had found it asleep on the common. Upon my word, Loder, I begin to believe that you must be right."

"I've no doubt of it, sir!" said Loder.
"I am much obliged to you, Loder."
"Not at all, sir!" said Loder, with a smirk.

He left the Remove master's study, happily convinced that Billy Bunter was booked now for recapture and a Head's flogging. Quelch had only to call at the circus for him, now that he knew where to lay hands on the elusive Owl.

Mr. Quelch remained in deep thought.

It seemed improbable—almost impossible—and yet—and yet—Mr. Quelch was not convinced, but he was going to ascertain the facts. At the thought of laying hands on the runaway Owl, a glint came into Henry Samuel Quelch's eyes. He was keen, very keen indeed, to give that member of his Form a lesson on the subject of running away from school.

He left his study, donned hat and coat, and walked out of Greyfriars. He expected the evening performance to be on by the time he reached the circus. He would watch the performance of "Bunto" with the eye of a hawk, and if he saw any resemblance—the faintest resemblance—to the missing Owl, he would see that "Bunto" never performed again in the company of Signor Muccolini.

Mr. Quelch covered the ground with quick strides.

He turned off the Courtfield road at the spot where he remembered that the circus had camped. Rather to his surprise, no flare of lights, no blare of music, greeted his eyes or ears.

All seemed dark and deserted.

Mr. Quelch peered round him in the dusk.

He was sure of the spot. But he did not behold the big circus tent, the parked caravans and lorries. He beheld nothing but trampled grass and odds and ends lying about, showing that a camp had been there. He peered, he stared, and he blinked!

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

Muccolini's Circus had been there, but Muccolini's Circus was no longer there! Trampled grass and rubbish indicated where it had been, but it was gone! The circus had moved on!

"Bless my soul!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

There was nothing doing! The circus was gone, and the fat junior who had changed over from school to circus was gone with it!

THE END.

Watch out for the first of our grand Cover-to-Cover yarns:

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by Frank Richards

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TIRANTS PREFERRED!

Believe it or not, the St. Sam's boys are in revolt against their headmaster because he is too kind-hearted in this week's instalment of Dicky Nugent's serial:

"DOCTOR BIRCHEMALL'S DUBBLE!"

"I'm fed up with Professor Birchemall. He's too kind-hearted!"

Jack Jolly made that surprising statement as he was undressing for bed in the Fourth Form dormitory. More surprising still, the Fourth supported their kaptin's opinion with a harty: "Hear, hear!"

"It's simply sickening, the way he goes on," continued Jolly. "He tells us good-nite fairy-tales and tucks us up into bye-byes as if we were infants. And when we do anything wrong, he gives us a dose of fizzle!"

"It's the giddy limmit," said Merry. "Speaking for myself, I'd rather have a wacking in the old-fashioned way!"

"Eggactly! So say all of us," nodded Jack Jolly. "We used to think ourselves pretty hard done by in Doctor Birchemall's day because he was such a tyrant. But now we know what it's like, we'd rather be birched by Alfred Birchemall than treated like babes in arms by Willknot Birchemall!"

"Hear, hear!" "Why not show him what we think of him, then?" asked Frank Fearless, with a merry twinkle in his eye. "Nobody seems to have thought of japing him yet because he's so kind-hearted. I think it's about time we began."

"Good for you, Fearless!" grinned Jack Jolly. "What sort of jape do you suggest?"

"I was thinking it wouldn't be a bad idea to tie some lengths of cord to the near corners of the carpet and trail them across to my bed. Then when the Head comes in to tell us our good-nite fairy-tale, I can pull the cord and yank him off his feet."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "That's a branewave and no mistake!" chuckled Jack Jolly. "I'll help you to fix it up, old chap."

"Thanks!" grinned Fearless. "Let's get bizzy then before he arrives!"

He fell on his neeze and got to work without any further waste of time. With Jolly to help him, Fearless made short work of fixing up guide ropes to the end of the carpet and putting the ends beside his bed. Then he undressed and got between the sheets. A few seconds later, there was a clumping of hob-nailed boots along the corridor and Professor Birchemall walked in.

"Ah, boys! In bed already, I see!" he cried, in his kindly voice. "Now for your good-nite story! It's going to be an awfully eggsetting one to-nite—one which I am quite sure will be new to all of you. It's called 'Jack and the Beanstalk.'"

"Oh crikey!" "Help!" "I will make myself comfortable in a chair by the window before I begin," said Professor Birchemall, beaming at the disgusted juniors.

"Don't get too eggsited, children, will you?" Beaming all over his dial, the kind-hearted Head of St. Sam's tripped across the carpet.

Frank Fearless, seizing his opportunity with both hands, grabbed the ends of the cord and pulled with all his mite. Next instant the carpet jerked forward, the Head's feet flew up in the air, and there was a crash that shook the Skool House to its very foundations.

BOOM! "Yarooooo!" shrieked the Head. "Help! Murder! Perlice! Earth-quakes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Lawneh the lifeboats!" yelled Jack Jolly. "Man overboard!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The Fourth fairly yelled. After a couple of weeks without even setting eyes on a birch, they felt they could afford to make the most of Fearless' little jape. The thought that the Head's kind-hearted ways would now undergo a sudden change held no terrors for them. It would be quite a relief, in fact, to see Professor Birchemall lashing out like the tyrant who had rained before him!

But the Head didn't lash out! Had the Fourth known the facts of the case, this would not have surprised them. Had they known that Professor Willknot Birchemall was only the old Head, posing as a kind-hearted skool-

master merely because the Guv-vornors were determined to allow no more tyranny, they would have understood. But of course, they didn't know this. All they knew was that Professor Birchemall didn't lash out. Instead of that, he staggered to his feet and shook a reproving fourfinger at the historical Fourth Formers.

"Nawty, nawty!" he cried. "I believe you did that a-purpose!" He dived into his trowsis pocket for the big bottle of fizzle he always carried about him. "I shall have to give everybody a dose of medicine now!"

"Help!" "Can't you give us a licking each instead, sir?" asked Frank Fearless. The Head paused in the act of uncorking the bottle and gazed at Fearless almost in horror.

"You are suggesting that I should cane you—or, to put it vulgarly, administer corporal punishment? Impossible! It shall never be said of Willknot Birchemall that he indulged in such barbarous praktisses, Fearless! You will kindly open your mouth and shut your eyes!"

Fearless made a grimace and obeyed and a tablespoonful of the Head's fearsome fizzle rolled down his throat, almost choking him. After that, the Head went round from bed to bed till every man-Jack in the Fourth had had a dose of his evil mixture. "There!" he beamed, when he had finished. "You'll soon be better after that! And now for 'Jack and the Beanstalk.'"

He sat down and started to read out "Jack and the Beanstalk," and the Fourth had to listen to it, whether they liked it or not!

By the time the Head had finished the fairy-tale and tucked them up in bed, the Fourth were simply fuming; and the moment the dormitory door closed behind him, their smouldering pashuns burst into flame.

"Down with the Head!" "Down with Professor Birchemall."

"What does he take this for? A nursery!" asked Frank Fearless fiercely. "You're the Form kaptin, Jolly. What are you going to do about it?"

"Hear, hear!" "Good old Jolly!" "On the bawl!"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows!" said Jack Jolly, in grim and Earnest tones. "Things are getting desprit!"

"Hear, hear!" "Of course, we don't mind a Head being kind-hearted," went on the kaptin of the Fourth. "But

the match began Monday evening and it was to play right through the week! It ended. Remove went in first."

On Monday, Wharton and Vernon-Smith opened the inn and stayed in. They stayed in of Tuesday, too.

On Wednesday afternoon, the Upper Fourth got the under out; also Tom Redwing and Bob Cherry. On Thursday they got another wicket and on Friday three more. On Saturday they got the rest of the team out by tea-time. Remove's score was 457!

What worried Temple the Upper Fourth, however, was the score, but the time factor.

"We break up in the middle of next week, and any way we shan't have so much time next week for play," he told Wharton. "I'm wondering whether we shall have enough time to finish a game!"

Wharton advised him to worry about it.

After tea, the Upper Fourth started their innings. They were all looking a little tired. The thought that they had more than three days' play left seemed to disturb them.

But all their worries were at an end before stumps were drawn that evening. Temple & Co. found that they had enough time to finish the match quite comfortably.

The reason was that they got them all out by six o'clock for June!

kaptin of the Fourth, glancing round the sea of faces beneath him, "Are you all in favor?"

For answer, the Fourth rose as one man and crowded round their leader, shaking his hand and thumping his back and cheering like the very dickens.

"Up the rebels!" they cried. "Down with fizzle and fairy-tales! Down with Professor Birchemall!"

Jack Jolly grinned. "Then it's carried m. con.!" he cried. "Gentlemen, the grate rebellion has begun!"

(Don't miss Dicky Nugent's account of the funniest school rebellion ever known in next week's instalment of "Doctor Birchemall's Dubble!")

FOURTH v. REMOVE TEST MATCH A SCREAM

Declares TOM TOWN

We agreed to play single innings match to a finish against the Upper Fourth before the semi-breaks up, and I never laughed much in my life.

The match began Monday evening and it was to play right through the week! It ended. Remove went in first."

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GREYFRIARS REGATTA NEEDS LIVENING UP!

Declares

BOB CHERRY

I don't know what you chaps think about it, but the school regatta last week seemed a pretty tame affair to me. A lot of fellows paddling up and down the river and a lot of paters and maters and sisters and Old Boys lounging about on the banks and floating about in punts. That's about all there was to it!

Of course, it was quite pleasant and all that. Shimmering water, rustling trees, sparkling eyes, ravishing dresses, rippling laughter and what not. (Hi! Steady on, Bob! You're getting quite literary!—Ed.) But there wasn't the same pep about it that you get at the Cup Final or an All-In Wrestling Match.

My idea is that we ought to do something to make it a great success. Just think how it would brighten things up, for instance, if a few people fell into the water and had to be rescued. Nothing like that ever seems to happen at the Greyfriars Regatta. But it could easily be arranged. We might get a few volunteers to fall into the river of their own accord!

Failing that, it would be simple enough to push them in while they were off their guard!

Another improvement would be to introduce sinking competitions between two or more boats—seeing which could sink the others, if you get the idea. I can quite imagine the refined hand-clapping that you hear with the present races turning into a fearful hullabaloo of cheering



as boat after boat went down under the onslaughts of the victor.

In fact, while we were about it, it would be a jolly good wheeze to have a sort of Pirate Carnival, with two boatloads of desperadoes—Remove and Upper Fourth perhaps—having a really good set-to with cutlasses, boathooks, peashooters, ripe tomatoes, and any old thing! Why not?

Better still, let the spectators join in and pelt competitors in races or anything else with whatever they care to lay their hands on!

I've got plenty more bright ideas up my sleeve if the principle of the thing is agreed. Divers, for instance, bobbing up and grabbing chaps' oars unexpectedly.

But I'll go into all that later on, if and when the powers that be invite me to liven up the Regatta! (The "if" ought to be spelt in capitals and underlined!—Ed.)

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!

Roars GERALD LODER

I'm a believer in the mailed fist for fags. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" is my favourite motto. There's only one thing a fag understands from a prefect and that's his asplant!

These are my firmest beliefs and I'm putting them plainly so that even your puerile brains can understand what I mean!

NOW! If I ever read agin in this piffing paper of yours so much as one word of abuse, sarcasm, or ridicule meant for me, I'm going to act up to my beliefs right away—and there won't be any half-measures about the way I act, either!

I've endured scurrilous attacks in this

rag of yours for years without doing anything about it except kicking the writers round the quad when I see them. But young Todd's libellous and offensive article: "Let's Be Just To Loder!" has opened my eyes to the need for really drastic action!

The next time it happens, I shall come right round to the editorial office and wallop every little worm I find there. I shall simply pulverise you young cubs and strew you all in little pieces down the passage.

The way you young whoops write about me, one would think I was a rank outsider. I'm not! The fact is, although I don't boast about it, I'm

I KEPT COOL IN THE HEAT WAVE

Boasts H. VERNON-SMITH

The great problem during the recent heat wave was keeping cool, and I don't think anybody at Greyfriars managed it better than I did. Yet, strange as it sounds, I got cool quite by accident.

At first I had no more success than anybody else. I fixed up an electric fan in the study. The fact that this is against the rules made it a pleasant pastime. But it didn't seem to reduce the temperature a bit!

In search of coolth, I wandered across to the ruins and went down into the crypt. Three Upper Fourth Form chaps had gone down exploring in front of me. We started arguing about whether a Remove chap should be allowed to breathe the same air as a Fourth Form chap. The argument alone was heated, and when we got from words to blows, it was a dashed sight worse. I got the worst of the argument and arrived back on the upper surface of the earth feeling warmer than ever!

Then I went to the tuckshop to sample an ice-cream. The shop was packed with perspiring people and the ice-cream was reduced to a luke-warm liquid before I had had a couple of spoonfuls. By the time I had struggled through the crowd into the quad once more, I was almost melting myself!

I tottered down to the river for a swim. That was cool enough while it lasted, but a chap can't spend half the day in the river, can he? As I came away, I realised that I was hotter than I'd been all day!

Back I trekked to the school. In the quad, I heard a sound you'd have thought would have been stilled on a "halfer" during a heat wave. It was the clicking of Quelch's typewriter!

"Jever know anyone quite like Quelch?" I asked Russell, who was passing. "You'd think the fathead would be satisfied with writing his idiotic 'History of Greyfriars' in the cold weather. But even in a heat wave he has to go on turning out the tripe. Potty! Must be!"

And then, suddenly, I realised that Quelch was working on a balcony just above us and that he'd heard every word I'd said!

Quelch got up, looked down, fixed his well-known gimlet eyes on me, and proceeded to give me the most freezing glare I've ever had in my natural.

Without the slightest effort on my part, my temperature promptly went down about 40 degrees!

It didn't go up again. I fancy it will be quite a long time before it does. And now you know how I kept cool during the remainder of the heat wave!

IS THIS WHAT COKER MEANS?

Coker writes to tell us he was last in the Senior Cross-country Run because he acted as pacemaker to the rest.

Well, they certainly "went by" him!

a warm-hearted, honest, truthful, clean living fellow, generous to a fault, brave as a lion, and gentle as a turtle-dove. And anyone who says I'm not, is dashed well FOR IT!

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED! (Thanks for the warning, Loder! From what we've seen of you, we should say you're as warm-hearted as a weasel, as honest as the average fox, as truthful as Ananias, as clean-living as a blowfly, as generous as a jackal, as brave as a worm and as gentle as a man-eating tiger!—Ed.)

N.B.—Will the Editor's storm troopers please report at once for urgent defence duties!

QUITE TRUE!

Some of the Upper Fourth Cricket Committee doubted Temple's word when he told them he was called away on pressing business.

But it was quite true. Shortly afterwards we saw him ironing his flannel bags!