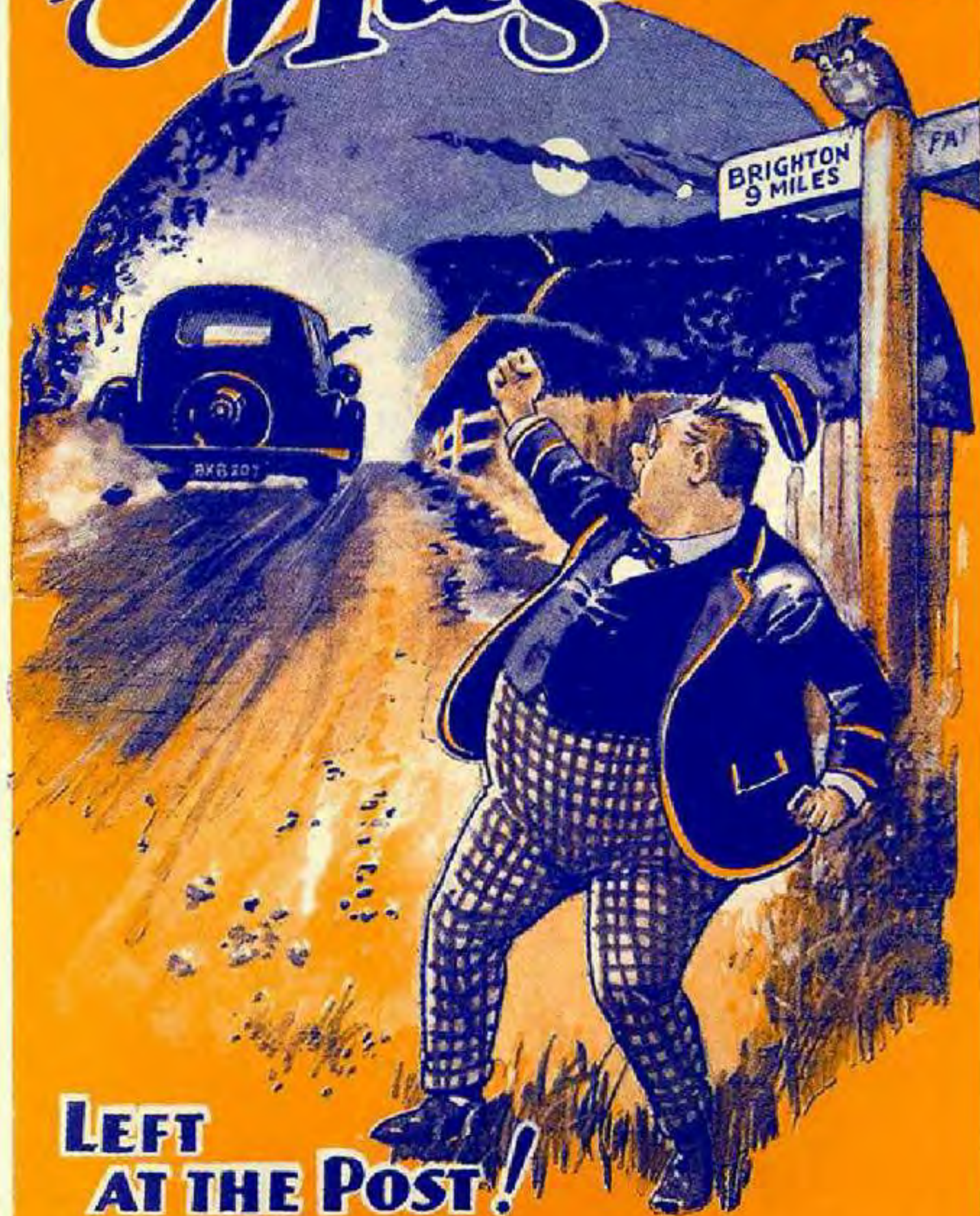


A TIP-TOP HOLIDAY YARN FEATURING BILLY BUNTER—INSIDE!

The Magnet^{2D}



**LEFT
AT THE POST!**

THRILLS, LAUGHS, ADVENTURE, IN A FINE EXTRA-LONG STORY ENTITLED:

THE RASCAL OF THE REMOVE!



By

FRANK RICHARDS

Featuring Peter Hazeldene and Billy Bunter, as well as Harry Wharton & Co., the cheery chums of Greyfriars, on holiday.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Row on the Road!

"FINISHED?"
"No!"

"How long?"

"Hours and hours, I expect, if silly asses keep on interrupting me with fatheaded questions."

Bob Cherry did not seem in his best temper.

Generally, Bob's face was as sunny as that bright August day, and his temper was as sunny as his face.

But circumstances alter cases.

It was hot! The day had been hot, and the evening, as it drew on, seemed almost hotter. Bob, in his shirt-sleeves, was red and perspiring. He was bending over a bike that was up-ended by the side of a dusty country road in Sussex. His hands were grubby and sticky. There were grubby smears on his crimson face. When he passed a grubby hand over his forehead to wipe away perspiration, it naturally left traces. He looked, and felt, and was, dirty and sticky and horrid. And that puncture was a brute!

"Can we help?" asked Harry Wharton mildly.

"No good making it worse."

"Hem!"

"My esteemed Bob—" murmured Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Can't you fellows take a walk?" asked Bob with a grunt.

"Perhaps we'd better!" remarked Frank Nugent with a grin.

"Looks as if we shall get into Brighton by dark!" said Johnny Bull.

"It's twelve or fourteen miles yet."

Bob Cherry lifted his red, grubby face and glared.

"Who's stopping you?" he inquired.

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"I haven't asked you to sit round like a lot of moulting fowls, that I know of."

"Hem!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"No good getting shirty, old chap, because you've got a rotten puncture to mend!" said Johnny.

Johnny Bull had many excellent qualities, but tact was not included in the list.

"Who's shirty?" hooted Bob.

"Hem! Let's go for a stroll!" said Harry Wharton hastily. "We'll come back in half an hour, Bob!"

Grunt!

Leaving their bikes parked under a tree, four members of the famous Co. sauntered away across the meadows.

Bob Cherry gave another grunt as they departed, and settled down to wrestle manfully with that obstinate, irritating puncture.

Twice had Bob dealt with that puncture, and twice had it broken out again, as if it had a will of its own, and was sardonically bent on annoying him. Third time is said to be lucky, and Bob hoped for the best as he got going again.

It was not a happy task. The sun was setting over the downs, but it blazed red and hot. There was hardly a breath of wind. Brighton and its refreshing breezes were still afar. The road was dusty, and passing motor-cars churned up the dust, and left it to settle on Bob, accompanied by a reek of petrol. Naturally, there were plenty of cars, in August, on any road that led to Brighton. It seemed to Bob that they roared by every second or two.

"Blow it!" murmured Bob.

He was irritated by the puncture and the trouble it was giving him. He was remorseful for having snapped at his friends, who really were not to blame for that burst. He was doubtful

whether Brighton would be reached by dark, as the Famous Five had planned when they started on that ride early in the morning. He was hot and sticky and worried, and altogether far from being in his bonniest mood.

So when a tattered-looking man in a battered bowler hat came tramping up the road, and stopped to stare at him, and grinned, Bob breathed very hard.

It was not his desire to afford entertainment to a dusty, stubbly tramp with a disfigured nose. Rather, he felt a desire to add to the disfigurement of that organ. He gave the tramp a glance, with a gleaming eye, and settled down to work again. He had nearly finished now, and this time it looked promising.

"My eye!" said the man in the battered bowler. "You, is it? I fancied I knew you when I spotted you 'ere."

Bob looked up again, and stared at him.

Now that he gave the tramp a closer look, he recognised the stubbly face and slanting nose. He had seen Jimmy Guggs before, though he had forgotten him.

Clearly, Mr. Guggs had not forgotten! He came closer to the Greyfriars junior, with a threatening expression on his stubbly face.

"You 'andled me, that time back in Surrey!" he said. "You and your friends! You 'andled me, didn't you?"

"I'll handle you again if you ask for it!" retorted Bob. At the same time he rather wished that his friends had not gone for that walk. Jimmy Guggs was a hefty nian, and Bob, sturdy as he was, was only a schoolboy. And the truculent look on the tramp's face told that he meant mischief. "Get out!"

Jimmy Guggs did not get out. He

gave a quick glance round to ascertain whether Bob's friends were in the offing. Then he came nearer.

It was two or three weeks since Harry Wharton & Co. had fallen in with Mr. Guggs on a lonely woodland path near Wharton Lodge. They had caught him in the very act of robbery with violence, and they certainly had handled him, as he said. The chums of the Greyfriars Remove had forgotten the episode, but Mr. Guggs, perhaps naturally, had a longer memory. Evidently he was very glad to fall in with one member of the Co. on his lonely own.

"Andle me again, will you?" said Mr. Guggs. "I'll give you a chance, my pippin. That's for a start!"

He lifted a tattered boot and kicked at the up-ended bike.

Crash!

Over went the bike with a crash and a clatter and a clang.

Bob Cherry gave a roar of wrath. "You cheeky rotter!" he roared. And, regardless of the fact that Jimmy Guggs was obviously more than a match for him, he rushed at the tramp, hitting out.

Jimmy Guggs gave a yell as a fist crashed on his nose. That nose, already damaged in some bygone scrap, was now still further damaged. There was a spurt of crimson from it, as Bob's knuckles crashed.

The next moment, a thump on the chest sent Bob staggering backwards. He sat down with a bump on the edge of the roadside ditch.

There was a shout across the adjoining meadow. Harry Wharton & Co., sauntering back to the road after their walk, beheld that startling sight from a distance.

Instantly their leisurely saunter was changed into a rapid run. They tore across the field to the road.

"Now, blow yer—" panted Jimmy Guggs. "Now I'll—"

Bob Cherry scrambled up and met the ruffian fist to fist. But it would have gone hard with Bob, if his friends had not come racing across the field. Jimmy Guggs saw them coming, and backed off.

Before they could reach the road, the rascal turned, and started off at a run. He was already at a distance, when Harry Wharton jumped into the road, followed fast by Nugent and Johnny Bull and the nabob.

"Bob, old chap—" gasped Wharton. "Ow! All right!" gasped Bob. "Glad you came back. Ow! That brute would have knocked me out! Ow!"

"But who—"

"It's that footpad we caught two or three weeks ago! He remembered me—ow! It's all right—I'm not hurt—only a punch!" Bob gasped for breath. "The rotter kicked my jigger over—if that dashed puncture has gone again—"

It had!

Bob Cherry set the bicycle up again, with feelings too deep for words. Far in the dusty distance, Jimmy Guggs disappeared over the horizon.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked on, with silent sympathy, while Bob got going on that puncture again. Sympathy was keen—but it was tactful to be silent. It was clear that Bob's feelings were very, very deep!

By the time Bob reached the end of his weary labours, the shades of night were falling fast, as the poet has expressed it! If the chums of Greyfriars had doubted before whether they would reach Brighton by dark, they had no further doubts now. It was only too clear that they wouldn't!

"After all, it will be a ripping ride by starlight!" said Harry Wharton, when Bob's jigger was right side uppermost again.

"Ripping!" said Frank Nugent heartily.

"The ripfulness will be terrific!" declared Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

Bob Cherry looked at them.

Then he grinned faintly.

"Let's get going, anyhow!" he said. And they got going.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Lift for Bunter!

MR. TIPPITY TIP, clown, wheeze-wangler, and general mirth-merchant in Muccolini's Magnificent Circus, shook his head.

"It beats me!" said Mr. Tipp.

"Me, too!" said Wiggles, the contortionist.

"Oller!" said Tippity impressively. "Abso-bally-lootly 'oller! I don't ketch on!"

And the elastic man agreed that he did not catch on, either.

Muccolini's Magnificent Circus was on the road.

It was booked for a pitch near Brighton, where no doubt Signor Muccolini expected to do good business during the holiday season. There had

"Purple Peter will win the two-thirty race," prophesies Guglielmo, the crystal-gazer of Signor Muccolini's Magnificent Circus. And Hazel yields to the lure of easy money—little guessing that Guglielmo is Billy Bunter in disguise!

been some stops on the road since leaving Surrey; but now the Magnificent Circus was on the last lap of its journey to the coast.

With Muccolini's Magnificent Circus travelled Billy Bunter, the fat ornament of the Remove at Greyfriars.

Why Signor Muccolini permitted Bunter to hook on to the circus nobody knew. It was no secret that he loathed the sight of Billy Bunter's fat face and big spectacles.

But the circus company had got used to Bunter by this time, and took him for granted, as it were.

Bunter was travelling in one of the baggage vans.

It was very poor accommodation for an important fellow like Bunter. He would have preferred a seat in Marco's car; or in the handsome caravan of Zara, the queen of the ring.

Still, it was better than walking, and the fat Owl of the Remove made the best of it. As for getting a lift in the signor's own big car, Bunter, with all his nerve, had not thought of even giving a hint to that effect. Still less had he dreamed that the circus-master would offer him a lift in his Singer.

And Mr. Tip fairly jumped when Signor Muccolini called to him, told him to find Bunter, and ask that fat youth if he would prefer a seat in the car.

There was no doubt, of course, that Bunter, or anyone else, would have preferred a seat in a comfortable car

to a corner of a rocking van packed with baggage. But Mr. Tip could scarcely believe his ears. It was the first time that the Italian circus-master had shown any regard for Bunter's comfort—or, indeed, anything but dislike for the fat Owl of Greyfriars.

As Tippity told Wiggles, it beat him hollow!

"The long procession was winding up a hilly road, at a very slow pace, and Tippity and Wiggles were walking. Signor Muccolini's car crawled at the tail of the procession.

"I don't ketch on, Wrig!" went on Mr. Tip. "I tell you, Mucky can't stand that fat covey. What he lets him 'ang on for, beats me 'oller! He ain't no use, and he ain't no ornament! He's cheeky! You've heard him cheek the boss."

"Ain't I just!" agreed Wiggles.

"Well, what does Mucky let him cheek him for, Wrig?" demanded Mr. Tip.

"Ask me another!" said the elastic man.

"And now," said Tippity, "he's going to give him a lift in his car! There ain't a covey in the whole outfit, Wrig, that the boss would give a lift in his car! And now—"

Mr. Tip shook his head over the puzzle, and gave it up. He proceeded to the baggage-van, in which Billy Bunter was seated on a packing-case, leaning back against a bale of canvas.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. He was not comfortable, and he was not in a good temper. It was very hot, and countless hoofs and wheels raised clouds of dust, floating in the red glare of the sunset.

"'Ere you!" called out Tippity.

Bunter frowned at him. He did not like Mr. Tip. And "'Ere you!" was not a properly respectful form of address from a circus clown to a Public school man!

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Bunter.

"Message from the boss—"

"Blow the boss!" grunted Bunter.

"Mucky says—"

"I don't care what he says! Go and tell him to go and eat coke—from me!" Mr. Tip grinned.

"You can tell the boss that yourself, if you want to be kicked from 'ere to Brighton!" he remarked.

Snort—from Bunter!

"I'd like to see a cheeky dago kick me!" he said contemptuously. "Yah!"

"If the boss 'eard that, I fancy he wouldn't repeat his offer!" grinned Tippity. "But he says you can get out of that van, and sit in his car, if you like."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

His frowning fat brow cleared. He blinked back towards the signor's car at some distance behind the van. He could see the beefy, swarthy Italian, with his eyeglass stuck in his eye, at the wheel. He blinked at Mucky—and he blinked at Mr. Tip—suspiciously.

"You're not pulling my leg?" he asked.

Billy Bunter had the best of reasons for knowing that Signor Pietro Muccolini did not enjoy his company. He was more surprised than Mr. Tip by the signor's unexpected offer.

"That's what he says," answered Tippity. "Please yourself!"

And he rejoined Wiggles, leaving the fat schoolboy to please himself.

Bunter promptly dropped off the slow-moving van.

It was not an offer he was likely to refuse. He backed to the roadside, to

let the vehicle pass and wait till the signor's car came up.

The procession wound on slowly up the hill. But the signor's car did not come up. Signor Muccolini had halted the Singer, and Billy Bunter had to walk back to it.

He eyed the beefy Italian curiously as he reached it. It was seldom that Pietro Muccolini looked at him without a scowl, or a dark glitter in his black eyes. Now, however, the signor gave him a nod and a smile.

"Get in, signorino!" he said amicably. "You would prefer a lift in a car—yes?"

"What-ho!" said Bunter.

He got in.

With a grunt of relief, the fat junior settled down comfortably on soft leather. Signor Muccolini set the car in motion again.

The circus was a little distance ahead by that time. Bunter expected the signor to follow on. Instead of that, however, Signor Muccolini turned into a lane that branched off the wide country road, and drove off at right-angles to the route.

Bunter blinked at him in surprise.

"I say, ain't you going on to Brighton?" he asked.

Signor Muccolini glanced at him, with a gleam in the depths of his black, beady eyes.

"Ma certo!" he said. "Certainly! But we take a different route—we arrive before the rest."

"Good!" said Bunter.

A rapid run in a car was much to be preferred to the slow motion of the moving circus. But Bunter did not quite see why the signor could not have cut on, passed the procession, keeping to the direct road. For some reason of his own, Signor Muccolini chose a different road.

The numerous vehicles of the circus disappeared from sight. The Singer ran swiftly up shady lanes. Bunter expected to see it emerge into another road, and head for Brighton, which was not ten miles away. Instead of which, the car kept to the lanes, while the sun sank lower and lower over the downs and the shadows lengthened.

"I say, we shan't be in first, at this rate!" Bunter remarked at last. "Have you missed the way?"

"I think so!" said Signor Muccolini, glancing at him. "I think I must have missed the road. But I shall soon find it."

"I'm getting jolly hungry!" remarked Bunter.

Signor Muccolini made no reply to that. He drove on, while the shadows deepened and deepened, lane after lane. He put on the car's lights at last, and they gleamed on shadowy hedges and dark trees.

But the Singer emerged at last from the shadowy lanes into a broad high-road. Bunter gave a grunt of relief. It was getting late, and he was getting fearfully hungry. It was like a fat-headed dago, he reflected, to lose his way. But it seemed that the signor had found it again at last.

He halted the car and peered about him.

"Si, si! I think this is the road," he said. "But we will make sure! There is a signpost. Please get down and look."

Bunter grunted. He was lazy and unwilling to move.

However, he stepped down and rolled towards the signpost at the side of the road. The signor sat at the wheel.

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watching him with a sardonic grin on his swarthy face.

Bunter reached the signpost and stood staring up at the sign. In the starlight he could read it:

BRIGHTON—9 MILES.

"It's all right!" he said. "We—why—what—I say! Oh, my hat!"

He spun round, staring at the car. The Singer had shot into motion again. Billy Bunter blinked after it, and its winking red tail-light, in astonishment and dismay.

"I say—" he yelled.

Only the buzz of the disappearing car answered him.

"Stop!" shrieked Bunter. "Hold on! You're leaving me behind! I say, you silly idiot, stop!"

He rushed wildly after the car.

In utter dismay at the prospect of being left on foot with nine miles to walk, the fat junior tore in pursuit, yelling at the top of his voice.

"Stop! Will you stop, you beast? You rotten dago, stop! Oh crikey!"

But the car did not stop. The red light winked away in the distance. The Singer was gone, and the signor in it, and Billy Bunter, spluttering and breathless, was left stranded.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter in Danger!

"O H lor!" groaned Billy Bunter.

He plugged wearily.

He was tired; he was perspiring; he was hungry; he was deeply, intensely exasperated. Nine miles lay between him and Brighton. Having done a quarter of one of those miles, Bunter groaned dismally.

For the first few minutes, when Signor Muccolini disappeared in the car, the fat junior had been utterly perplexed. But the truth was not long in dawning on his fat mind.

He had been stranded—deliberately stranded—on a lonely road at a late hour. That, he realised now, was why the signor had made that unexpected offer of a lift in his car. He had planned this.

Deliberately he had wasted time in the shady lanes till the hour was late. Then he had found the road, tricked Bunter into getting out of the car, and shot away for Brighton, leaving him to walk.

Bunter had not had the remotest suspicion till he was stranded. Even now he could hardly understand a man like Muccolini playing such a trick.

If he fancied that Bunter was left behind for good, he did not know Bunter. Only too well Bunter knew that the Italian circus-master would be glad to get shut of him. But he could hardly have expected to get shut of him by such a trick as this.

A walk of nine miles was awful to contemplate. But it was not likely to keep the fat Owl from rejoining the circus. Indeed, Bunter had no other resource, as he was in his usual stony state, and his choice was between plugging those nine miles after the circus and spending the night under a hedge or a haystack.

"The awful beast!" groaned Bunter. "I'll jolly well make him sit up for this! Oh, the beastly, greasy beast!"

He plugged on at a snail's pace, groaning at every other step. At that late hour it was hopeless to think of getting a lift on his way. He had to walk, and how he was going to walk nine miles he hardly knew.

He glanced back at the sound of a footstep on the road behind him.

In the starlight he had a glimpse of a tattered figure, surmounted by a battered bowler hat.

It was only a glimpse, but it alarmed Bunter. He could see that the man behind him was a tramp. He did not want to meet a tramp on a solitary road at night.

He quickened his pace.

A minute later he glanced back again. The figure was still visible in the clear starlight, but it had come no nearer, which was a relief.

The tramp was slouching along at a very leisurely pace. Obviously, he could not have been in a hurry, or he would have passed Bunter, whose rate of progress was snail-like.

Bunter hurried on. Tired as he was and lazy as he was, he was anxious to leave that tattered figure a safe distance behind him. He almost ran.

When he looked back again he hoped that the tattered figure would no longer be in view. But there it was—at the same distance as before.

Bunter felt a quake.

The man was following him; he could not doubt that. He must have quickened his pace when Bunter did, or he would have been left behind. But he was as close as before—or a little closer.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter.

He caught his breath as he blinked back at the shadower.

The starlight gleamed on a stubby face, with a slanting nose, and a spasm of terror ran through Bunter. He knew Jimmy Guggs again! It was the man who had waylaid him on the heath near Wharton Lodge, when Signor Muccolini had sent him with a message, which had caused him to fall fairly into the hands of the ruffian. On that occasion Zara, the queen of the ring, had come to his rescue.

Bunter broke into a breathless run.

Behind him he heard a patter of feet. There could be no doubt now. The footpad was in pursuit!

Gasping and panting, Bunter slowed down at last, and blinked over a fat shoulder. The battered bowler hat was at the same distance; the tramp slowed down when Bunter did.

It was plain that he was following the fat junior, but he did not seem in a hurry to come to close quarters. Keeping his distance, he shadowed the Owl of Greyfriars along the starlit road.

Bunter plugged on again, perspiring with exertion and terror. Ahead of him at some distance was a dip in the road, where trees on both sides, high and leafy, shut out the starlight, and all was dark. It flashed into his terrified mind that that was what the ruffian was waiting for.

On that dark stretch of road, where the tall trees would hide what passed from any possible view, the ruffian intended to close in on him. Jimmy Guggs was in no hurry. He could afford to wait till his intended victim passed out of the bright summer starlight into the deep shadow.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, through his chattering teeth.

He dared not stop. He hardly dared keep on. He blinked round desperately, in the hope of seeing a car, or pedestrian, or a cyclist. But at that late hour the road was utterly deserted.

This was what that putrid dago had landed him in by leaving him behind. Bunter had never dreamed of seeing Guggs again. He had last seen him in Surrey, and now he saw him in Sussex by the most unlucky chance. It did not occur to Bunter that it was not a chance.

The fat Owl had not the remotest suspicion of the desperate measures Signor Muccolini was taking to get rid of him.

from the circus. He was far from plumbing the depths of the Italian's treachery.

He plugged on, with terrified backward glances over a fat shoulder every minute or two. Now the dark dip in the road lay before him. For a quarter of a mile on it looked like a black tunnel between the pines and firs. And the footpad was behind!

The perspiration streamed down Billy Bunter's fat face. He slowed down and stopped, blinking back desperately at the tramp.

As the tattered figure and battered bowler came nearer he could see a grin on the stubbly face, and he saw Jimmy Guggs slip down a stick from under his arm into his hand.

That was enough for Bunter!

He flew!

He forgot that he was tired. Pant-

For a moment or two Bunter had hoped that he was safe—that the tramp, missing him in the darkness, would keep on. But he realized that Guggs had listened for the sound of his footsteps ahead, and, failing to hear them, knew that he had stopped. There was a moment of silence, and then a sound of returning footsteps.

Bunter's fat heart almost died within him. He crouched closer to the dark fence in helpless terror.

It was not robbery that he feared. He had little to lose, and what little he had he would have handed over promptly if that had been what the ruffian wanted. But it was not that. When Guggs had waylaid him on the heath near Wharton Lodge, it had been with the intention of "beating him up"—and beaten up Bunter assuredly would have been had not the queen of the

"Gotcher!" repeated Guggs, with satisfaction.

With an effort of sheer desperation, Bunter tore himself from the ruffian's grasp, and fled across the road. After him leaped Guggs.

His grasp would have been on the fat junior in another moment.

But in that moment there came a sudden flashing of bicycle lamps, a whir of wheels, a buzz of bike bells, and a startled shout as a whizzing bike crashed into Jimmy Guggs, and sent him spinning.

With a howl, the ruffian sprawled over, and over him sprawled a bike and a cyclist. And from the cyclist came a howl as loud as that uttered by the sprawling footpad.

"Ow! Oh, my hat! Look out, you



Hurling himself after the fleeing figure of Bunter, the tramp did not see the whizzing cyclists. "Yoowp!" he howled as Bob Cherry crashed into him at full speed and sent him spinning.

ing, gasping, he flew along the dark road under the shadowy branches.

Patter, patter, patter! came the sound of running feet behind. The patter came closer and closer. The ruffian had his victim where he wanted him now, and he was closing in. Desperately as the fat Owl of Greyfriars ran, the tramp gained on him easily. Closer and closer, in the deep shadows, came the patter, patter, patter of tattered boots on the road.

Breathless, winded, Bunter stopped. Flight was futile, but in the deep darkness there might be a chance of hiding. With his fat brain swimming with terror, the Owl of the Remove halted, backed to the roadside, and crouched against the fence over which the branches spread.

Patter, patter, patter!

He tried to still his laboured breathing as the running footsteps passed. He almost squeaked aloud with relief as the running man went by, and the patter grew fainter up the road. Then it stopped.

ring chanced to be out riding at the time.

Why the tramp had so bitter a grudge against him Bunter could not guess. But he knew that he had, though he did not dream of seeing the Italian circus-master's hand in it.

Once more the footsteps passed him—slowly now. The villain was hunting for him.

They passed, stopped, and returned. Bunter suppressed a moan of terror. A light suddenly gleamed out in the gloom. It came from a flashlamp in the hand of Jimmy Guggs.

To and fro in the darkness that beam of light played. It shone suddenly on a terrified fat face, and was reflected on a pair of big spectacles, behind which two little round eyes were dilated.

"Gotcher!" chuckled Jimmy Guggs.

The light was shut off. A hand grasped Bunter, and dragged him from the fence. He squealed with terror.

"Ow! Help! I say— Oh dear! Ow! Help!"

fellows! I've run into some blithering idiot! Oh crumbs!"

At Greyfriars School Billy Bunter had often heard the voice of Bob Cherry of the Remove without any particular pleasure. But at this moment the music of the spheres could not have been so delightful to his fat ears. In utter amazement and relief he heard that familiar voice, and yelled:

"Help! I say, you fellows, help!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Services Rendered!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. had been putting on speed. They were going to be late in that night, which could not be helped. But they did not want to arrive with the milk in the morning. With Bob Cherry in the lead, they swept along in a whizzing bunch.

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There was one advantage from the latencies of the hour—the road was clear. There was no traffic to get in the way.

They sailed merrily along in the gleaming summer starlight. Bob, ahead, was bent on making up for lost time, and his comrades were rather hard put to it to keep pace.

From the bright starlight on the open road, they shot into a dark stretch under tall, overhanging trees, like a black tunnel. And then the trouble happened.

Bob was going fast. He was, perhaps, going a little faster than was prudent on a dark road with many winds in it. But up till then the road had seemed quite deserted. Moreover, Bob could have stopped, with a sudden jam of brakes, had he seen anybody in the way in the glare of his lamp.

But no cyclist could guard against a figure suddenly rushing across the road, just in front of him, without warning, in the dark.

Bob had an instant's glimpse of a fat form that darted and vanished, and rang his bell, and crashed into a second figure that ran across right under his front wheel.

Bob had appeared on the spot so suddenly that he was there before either Bunter or Guggs knew that anybody was coming.

Bunter, as he fled across the road, had a narrow escape. Jimmy Guggs, leaping after him, did not escape. He went down, and over him piled cycle and cyclist. The cycle clanged; the cyclist roared, and under them sprawled Guggs, spluttering and howling, and wondering if it was the sudden end of the universe.

Harry Wharton and Nugent, Johnny

Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, jammed on brakes. Luckily they were a little behind Bob, and had time to pull in, though Wharton, who was leading, narrowly missed crashing into Bob. Four startled juniors jumped down.

Howls and yells came from Guggs. From another quarter came a squealing voice that made the chums of Greyfriars jump.

"I say, you fellows! Help! Hold him! Save me! Help! Yaroo! Help! I say, you fellows, hold on! Help!"

"That's Bunter!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Bunter!" stuttered Frank Nugent.

"Ow! Oh crumbs!" came Bob Cherry's gasp. "I've knocked somebody over! He ran right under my bike! Lend me a hand here!"

Harry Wharton pitched his bike against the fence by the road, jerked off the lamp, and ran to the spot, flashing the light on the scene. Bob Cherry picked himself up, limping rather painfully. He had collected a number of knocks in that sudden crash.

But Jimmy Guggs had collected more, and harder ones. He lay howling in the road, with the fallen bike over his legs.

"Not my fault!" gasped Bob. "He fairly rushed into me; but I hope he's not hurt. He sounded as if he is. Let's look—"

Bob broke off as Wharton flashed his light on a stubby face, with a slanting nose.

"That rotter!" gasped Bob.

He knew the ruffian again at once. It was the tramp who had kicked over his bicycle miles back on the road.

Jimmy Guggs had reason to repent of that action now. But for the dam-

age he had done to Bob's bike the Famous Five of Greyfriars would have been at Brighton before this.

That delay had kept them back till after dark; and now they came along at a most unfortunate moment for Mr. Guggs, though very fortunate indeed for William George Bunter.

"That footpad!" exclaimed Nugent.

"That esteemed and detestable blighter!" ejaculated Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Glad it's no worse," said Bob. "Serve the brute jolly well right! Is that Bunter yelling? What on earth's Bunter doing here? Is he going to haunt us, these hols, like a fat ghost?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Billy Bunter came into the radius of light, gasping.

He blinked at the Famous Five in immense relief. Never had he been so glad to see those cheery youths.

"I say, you fellows, collar that beast!" gasped Bunter. "I say, he was going to pitch into me. I say, hold him!"

There was a clang as Jimmy Guggs pitched the bicycle off his legs, and scrambled to his feet. He backed away promptly across the road.

"I say, you fellows, collar him!" yelled Bunter.

But Jimmy Guggs gave the juniors no chance to collar him, if they had been so disposed. Bob Cherry made a movement towards him, and he promptly turned and scuttled off into the darkness.

"What on earth's been happening here?" asked Harry Wharton. "Did that brute stop you on the road?"

"Ow! Yes! I say, you fellows, I'm jolly glad you came up!" gasped Bunter. "The beast was going to pitch into me! He's got a grudge against me, the beast! He was going to wallop me with a stick! Oh crikey!"

"But what the dickens are you doing here this time of night?" exclaimed Bob. "Have you left the circus?"

Harry Wharton & Co. had last seen the fat Owl of the Remove with Muccolini's Circus in Surrey. They had not heard of him since, and had, in point of fact, forgotten his fat existence. It was quite a surprise to find him on his lonely own on the Brighton road late at night.

"I got left behind," explained Bunter. "That beast Mucky—"

"Muccolini left you behind?"

"Yes; the rotter! I'll jolly well tell him what I think of him when I get back to the circus, too! I'll show him!" said Bunter. "The beast gave me a lift in his car, you know, and stranded me on the road to walk. If he thinks he has done with me, he's jolly well mistaken, I can tell him! I'll make him sit up!"

The Famous Five stared at Bunter.

From what they had seen of Bunter at the circus, they were aware that there was no love lost between the fat junior and the Italian circus-master. They had wondered why Mucky allowed him to remain, when he plainly disliked his presence.

"He stranded you on the road?" repeated Wharton. "Where's the circus now, then?"

"It's got in at Brighton before this," answered Bunter. "I wish I'd stuck to the baggage-van now. But when that dago beast offered me a seat in his car, how was I to know what he had up his sleeve?"

"But if he doesn't want you at his circus, why doesn't he boot you out?" demanded Johnny Bull. "No need for him to play tricks like this. You can't stay there without his leave."

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"Can't I?" said Bunter. "That's all you know! I'd like to see him boot me out, that's all!"

"Blessed if I make this out!" said Bob, staring blankly at the fat Owl. "How can you stop him booting you out, if he chooses, fathead?"

"That's telling," said Bunter mysteriously. "I may know something he doesn't want people to know, and I may not. I'm not going to tell you fellows. I'd like to see him boot me out. Just wait till I get back to the circus, and I'll make the beast sit up for playing this rotten trick on me. I say, you fellows, I'm jolly glad to see you! Which of you is going to give me a lift on his bike to Brighton?"

"The whichfulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Time we got on, if we're going to get into Brighton before morning," remarked Johnny Bull.

There was a howl of alarm from Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, don't go! I say, suppose that beast comes back? He may be watching all the time. I say, hold on!"

"We can't leave the blithering idiot here!" said Harry Wharton. "Anybody feel up to carrying a ton weight on his jigger?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Bother the fat Owl!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Looks as if we're going to make a night of it."

"Beast!"

The Famous Five looked at one another, and looked at Bunter. Late already, they still had eight or nine miles to cover before they got into Brighton. But it was clear that they could not abandon the fat Owl, who had fallen so unexpectedly on their hands.

"I say, you fellows, I'll tell you what!" said Bunter. "One of you lend me his jigger, and—and walk!"

"Try again!" said Johnny Bull, with deep sarcasm.

"Well, you fellows make out that you're jolly good walkers," said Bunter. "I could walk your heads off, if you come to that. But you make out—"

"Oh, ring off!" said Bob. "We've got to see that fat ass safe in, you fellows. We can't leave the burbling bandersnatch here. Luckily, it doesn't matter much what time we get in—we shall find the bungalow all ready. He can have my jigger, and one of you fellows can give me a lift."

"Put the saddle down for me," said Bunter. "I'm not an ostrich, like you, you know. I say, you fellows, I'm not sure where we shall find the circus. It's at Brighton, about half a mile out—that's all I know. We shall have to hunt for it till we find it, that's all."

"That's all, is it?" said Johnny Bull, unpleasantly. "I can see myself rooting about all night after that dashed circus—I don't think!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"We'll get you as far as Brighton, and then you can go to the circus, or go to Jericho!" said Bob.

"Beast!" snorted Bunter, doubtless by way of thanks.

And, Bob's saddle having been lowered to accommodate the short, fat legs of the Owl of the Remove, the party got going again. Bob Cherry stood on the footrests of Wharton's machine, with his hands on the shoulders of the captain of the Remove. It was the only solution of the problem, and the chums of the Remove made the best of it. Only from one member of the party was there a voice of complaint, and that member, of course, was William George Bunter.

"I say, this is a rotten jigger! I say, don't go so fast—I'm not going to race!

Look here, you rotters, don't leave me behind! Beasts!"

Which, no doubt, was Billy Bunter's way of expressing gratitude for services rendered.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Late Hours!

MARJORIE HAZELDENE stood at the window of the little bungalow on the Rottingdean road and looked out, in the starlight, over the cliffs and the sea. Her brother, Hazeldene of the Greyfriars Remove, sat, or, rather, sprawled, in an armchair, with a sulky expression on his face. Miss Clara Trevlyn, Marjorie's chum at Cliff House School, stood in the doorway, looking at them alternately.

It was a little holiday bungalow, with a bed-room and a living-room, divided by what the estate agent enthusiastically described as a "lounge hall"—which, to less enthusiastic eyes, looked more like a passage.

But it was very bright, and clean, and neat, and Marjorie's deft hand had added many pleasant touches. It stood within a short walk of Mr. Hazeldene's house, which was nearer Brighton, and ever since it had been taken for the Famous Five of Greyfriars to stay a week in. Marjorie and Clara had spent a good deal of time in it, adding little improvements here and there.

"I'm going to bed!" announced Miss Clara.

"Best thing you can do!" grunted Hazel, from the armchair. "And you'd better do the same, Marjorie."

"They're late!" said Marjorie, turning from the window.

"Oh, they've had punctures, or something!" said Clara cheerfully. "You know what boys are, on bikes."

Marjorie smiled.

"I hope it's nothing worse than punctures," she said. "They were to get in before dark. And now—"

"Now it's past bed-time!" growled Hazel. "The silly asses had to bike it, of course! They couldn't come by train! I dare say they'll blow in about midnight."

"Well, we can't stay up till midnight," said Marjorie hesitatingly, "but I'd have liked to see them when they got in. I suppose there can't have been any accident. There are so many cars on the road this time of year—"

"Shouldn't wonder!" said Hazel, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I dare say that fathead, Cherry, would barge into anything that came along."

"Bob isn't a fathead, Hazel!" said Marjorie, rather sharply for her. "And there's no need for you to stay up."

"Hazel's sleepy," remarked Miss Clara. "And when he's sleepy he gets sulky. Don't you, old bean?"

Hazel gave a grunt.

Whether it was sleepiness or not, there was no doubt that he was sulky. He gave the cheerful Miss Clara a far from pleasant glance.

"That won't buy you anything!" said Miss Clara, with undiminished cheerfulness. "Marjorie minds your scowling, old scout—I don't. Not a bean!"

"Clara!" murmured Marjorie.

"Marjorie!" mimicked Clara. "Look here, old dear, let's get off. Your father and mother will be wondering where the dickens we are. If those duffers have got hung up on the road, goodness knows when they will blow along. Boys will be boys—which is the same as saying that donkeys will be donkeys! Isn't it, Hazel?"

Snort from Hazel.

"Come on!" said Clara. "Hazel will

be chucking a cushion at me next! Your brother's manners are horrid, Marjorie!"

"Oh, Clara!" murmured Marjorie.

"As bad as Bunter's—or nearly," said Clara. "Do come, Marjorie! Supper's laid for them, all ready; and Harry's got the key."

"I suppose we'd better go," said Marjorie. "They must have been delayed." She turned to her brother. "Let's go, Hazel!"

Hazel did not stir.

"You girls clear off to bed," he grunted ungraciously. "I'll wait up for the silly asses."

"But there's no need," said Marjorie, in surprise.

"What rot!" remarked Miss Clara.

Both the girls looked at Hazel. Hitherto, they had attributed his sulky looks to the fact that they were waiting for Harry Wharton & Co. to arrive at the bungalow, and to Hazel feeling bound to wait with them, and walk back with them to Hazeldene House. Apparently, however, that was not the case. Hazel coloured a little.

"I don't mind waiting up a bit," he said. "Tell father I'm staying till they come. He won't mind. It's only civil, when they're coming here on a visit, and we engaged the bungalow for them."

"Yes; but they won't expect to see us here at this hour," said Marjorie. "It's very late already. Hadn't you better come?"

"No!" grunted Hazel.

"We might stay a little longer," said Marjorie, with a glance at Clara.

"Bosh!" said Clara. "I'm going!"

And she turned and walked across the lounge hall to the front door.

Marjorie paused, looking at her brother. She would have been glad to be on the spot to greet her schoolboy friends when they arrived. But she did not expect it of Hazel. He was on friendly terms with Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars School; but they were not exactly chummy, and, affectionate sister as she was, she could not help being aware that Peter Hazeldene cared very little for anyone in the wide world but Peter Hazeldene! Why he was so anxious, all of a sudden, to display unwonted civility to fellows for whom he did not care two straws was rather a puzzle.

"Is there anything wrong, Hazel?" asked Marjorie quietly, in a low voice.

Her brother stared at her.

"Wrong?" he grunted. "What do you mean?"

"You've been looking worried the past few days, about something—"

"Oh, rot! Is there bound to be something wrong because a fellow doesn't grin and gabble all day long like a silly schoolgirl?" snapped Hazel. "For goodness' sake, don't talk rot!"

"Is it money?" asked Marjorie, in the same quiet tone.

Only too well she knew the signs, when her brother was in money troubles.

Hazel growled.

"Suppose it was, you can't do anything," he said. "Besides, it isn't! Look here, good-night!"

Marjorie stood looking at him with a pucker on her brow. He turned sulkily away from her and stared moodily at the empty grate. With a sigh she left him, and joined Clara at the door.

It was a relief to Hazel to hear the door close and hear the footsteps of the two girls die away down the pebbly path. He had had a cigarette concealed in his hand for some time. Now he put it into his mouth, struck a match, and lighted it.

He rose from the armchair and moved
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moodily about the room, leaving a trail of blue smoke as he moved.

"The silly idiots!" he growled. "Why haven't they got in? Keeping a fellow sticking up to this time of night! The howling asses! Why couldn't they come by train? They had to bike it, the silly fatheads! Barged into a car, very likely!"

The possibility that the Greyfriars cyclists had barged into a car did not seem to alarm or distress Hazel. But evidently it irritated him.

He walked about the room, threw the stump of the cigarette into the grate, and himself into the armchair again.

From an inner pocket, he drew a folded paper. It was not a periodical that he would have cared for Marjorie to see in his hands—and had his father seen it, it was probable that Hazel's case would have been boxed. The title of it was the "Racing Oracle."

Deep in the wisdom of that oracle, he forgot that he was sleepy and sulky. His eyes gleamed over it.

"Purple Peter!" he muttered aloud. "Yes, yes. Gedgo says he's a cert, and Gedgo jolly well knows! Five to one against! Peter's my own name, and that may bring luck. Ten quids for a couple of pounds, if I get it on, and Gedgo will fix that, if I see him in the morning, only—only I've got to raise the wind! Why don't those silly fools come?"

Had Marjorie heard those muttered words she would have known why Hazel was waiting up for the chums of the Remove.

"Bother the silly asses! Are they going to keep me up till midnight?" growled Hazel savagely. "Why don't the thundering fools come?"

He pitched the sporting paper irritably to the floor, and lighted another cigarette.

It was, as Marjorie had guessed, a "money" trouble that worried Hazel. It was like the weak-natured, self-indulgent fellow to "let himself go" in the holidays, when the keen eyes of Mr. Quelch, his Form-master, were no longer to be dreaded. Both his parents were easy-going and unsuspicious, and Hazel did very much as he liked at home in the holidays; though Mr. Hazeldene would certainly have come down hard and heavy had he known the facts.

Hazel was not only hard up, but he had contracted several small debts, and a "tenner" would have seen him through handsomely.

But that tenner was not to be had, unless he got "on" in time, with a couple of quid on Purple Peter at five to one!

Even then it was probably very doubtful, though Hazel did not think about that possibility.

"Bother the silly dummies!" growled Hazel. "Why couldn't they come by train! Blow 'em!"

He was impatient, sulky—and sleepy. Sleepiness began to predominate. Thinking over the chances of that wonderful horse, Purple Peter, he nodded, and nodded again, and dropped off to sleep in the armchair. Marjorie would have told them at home that he was waiting for the Remove fellows, so nobody would be sitting up for him. That was all right. But Hazel, probably, would not have sat up till midnight, had he been awake.

Now, however, he was fast asleep, and midnight came, and went, and from somewhere in the distance the stroke of one boomed through the summer night. Hazel slept soundly in the armchair.

And when there were sounds, at last, of arrival, he did not hear them. In

an atmosphere of stale smoke, with cigarette-ends and burnt matches in the grate, and a racing paper lying at his feet, he sat there, fast asleep, to greet the eyes of the chums of Greyfriars when they came.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Unexpected Welcome!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! There's a light!"

"I say, you fellows—" "Shut up, Bunter!"

"Nobody can be up at this time of night!" remarked Harry Wharton. "But I dare say Marjorie left the light on for us."

"The esteemed and beauteous Marjorie is always terrifically thoughtful!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows—" "Dry up!"

"Beast!" hissed Billy Bunter. At a late hour—very late—the Greyfriars cyclists had got in. It was long past one in the morning. Nobody liked keeping such hours. They were tired, they were hungry, and they were sleepy. But it could not be helped.

Bob's puncture had delayed them more than a little—the damage done by Jimmy Guggs to Bob's jigger had delayed them more than a lot—and then, on top of all, Bunter happened. Instead of a rapid spin into Brighton, the Famous Five had to accommodate their pace to Bunter's.

So it was not surprising that they did not arrive till after one in the morning. It was, as Johnny Bull remarked, rather surprising that they arrived at all. Still, there they were at last.

They dismounted at the gate, and were glad to see the light shining through the blinds of the bungalow. They did not expect, of course, that anyone would be waiting for them there, at such an unearthly hour; but the gleam of the light seemed home-like and welcoming.

The Famous Five were very glad to arrive. Billy Bunter was not glad. Bunter wanted to get back to the circus.

He did not know precisely where it was, only that it had a pitch somewhere close by Brighton. Hunting for it in the middle of the night was not an idea that appealed to the Famous Five, relieved as they would have been to land Bunter there, or anywhere else.

Bunter did not want to undertake the hunt on his own, in the gloom and solitude of midnight. So he arrived at Chez Nous with the cyclists, peevish and annoyed, hungry and sleepy, and altogether in his most unpleasant mood. Only the happy certainty that they would be parting with him soon, restrained the Famous Five from kicking him hard and often. But Bunter had had several narrow escapes by the time they arrived at the gate of the bungalow garden.

Harry Wharton opened the gate, and the bikes were wheeled in, up the pebbly path. Bunter rolled after them, snorting.

He gave the little bungalow a contemptuous blink through his big spectacles.

"Is that tinpot place where you're going to stay?" he asked. "I'd have found something rather better than that."

"Good enough for us, old fat bean," said Bob. "If it's not good enough for you, go and look for your blessed circus!"

"I can't wander all over the place in the middle of the night by myself, you beast! That tramp may have come after us, for all I know! He may be

looking for me this very minute! I think you fellows might see me as far as the circus."

"Jolly glad to, and get shut of you, if we knew where it was!" growled Johnny Bull. "Would you like us to go rooting all over the coast of Sussex till morning?"

"Well, I hope you've got some supper here!" grunted Bunter. "I can tell you, I'm jolly hungry!"

"We're all rather hungry," remarked Frank Nugent mildly.

"Famished!" said Bob.

"I could eat the hind leg of a donkey!" said Johnny Bull.

Snort from Bunter.

"Just like you fellows, thinking of yourselves all the time," he said. "Fat lot you care about me."

Johnny Bull came to a halt on the pebbly path.

"Look here!" he said. "I don't see why we should be landed with that fat pig! Kick him out!"

"Beast!"

"We shall have to let the fat boulder hang on for the night," said Harry Wharton. "We can't leave him on the beach."

"I should jolly well think not, after all I've done for you!" said Bunter warmly. "I say, get on, and ring up the servants. The sooner they start getting supper the better. I'm famished!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Not much good ringing up the servants," he remarked. "You see, there aren't any."

"No servants!" gasped Bunter.

"Not a ghost of a one! There's going to be a charlady by day—only one! Not the host of menials you're used to at Bunter Court, old fat man."

"Well, that takes the cake!" said Bunter in utter disgust. "Mean to say you're asking me to put up in a place where there are no servants?"

"'Nobody asked you, sir,' she said!" sang Bob Cherry.

"The askfulness was not terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter!" grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"How am I going to get any supper?" hooted Bunter.

"Scrounge after it, same as we're going to do. I only hope there's some supper to be scrounged!" said Bob.

Billy Bunter's fat heart almost stood still. Scrounging his own supper was bad enough; but the awful possibility that there was no supper to be scrounged, was overwhelming.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped. "You—you silly asses! You—you blithering idiots! Mean to say you never gave orders for supper to be got in? Oh crikey!"

"The Hazeldenes got this place ready for us," said Harry. "My uncle arranged it with Mr. Hazeldene. We were supposed to get here in plenty of time to see Mrs. Whoof, and make our own arrangements. As we're late—"

"Oh lor!"

"Let's hope for the best!" said Bob. "It doesn't matter about Bunter—he could live three months on his own fat, like a polar bear."

"Beast!" groaned Bunter.

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Somebody's been here, looking for us, or the light wouldn't be on. I shouldn't wonder if Marjorie may have remembered that fellows get hungry, and fixed up something. She's a jolly thoughtful kid."

They arrived in the little porch at the front door. Wharton was feeling for the key that had been sent to him at Wharton Lodge; but Bob discovered that the door was on the latch. He



"What about a bathe before brekker?" inquired Bob Cherry, grasping the head of Bunter's bed. "Let me help you up."
 "Beasts!" howled the fat Owl as he rolled on the floor. "I'm not getting up till ten!"

opened it, and the juniors went in, leaving their bikes in the porch.

"Poky little hole!" grunted Bunter with a disdainful blink round what the enthusiastic estate agent described as a "lounge hall"! "No room here to be a cat!"

"Lots of room outside!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

Facing the juniors was the kitchen door; on the right, the bed-room door; on the left, that of the living-room; or, as the enthusiastic estate agent termed it, the drawing-room. From under that door came light.

Bob Cherry opened it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he ejaculated.

"Somebody's here—"

"Hazel!" exclaimed Harry in astonishment.

"That cad Vaseline!" grunted Bunter, referring to Hazel by the rather unpleasant nickname by which he was sometimes called at Greyfriars.

"Shut up, you fat rotter!" growled Johnny Bull.

Hazeldene, fast asleep, did not stir. The Famous Five gazed at him in very considerable surprise. Hazel, evidently, had sat up for them and fallen asleep in the armchair. They had never expected such an extent of civility and polite attention from Hazel.

"Jolly decent of him," said Bob. "Sorry we've kept the chap up so fearfully late though."

"Yes, rather!" said Harry.

He stepped towards Hazel to awaken him. Johnny Bull gave a rather emphatic sniff. There was a lingering odour of stale tobacco in the room. Apart from that sniff, however, Johnny made no remark on it. It was undoubtedly very civil of Hazel to wait up so long for the late-comers, and if he had played the giddy ox, it was his own affair.

But Wharton, as he stepped towards Hazel, frowned a little at the sight of several cigarette-ends in the grate and the "Racing Oracle" lying on the rug at Hazel's feet. Evidently, Hazel had been perusing that valuable literature before he dropped off to sleep. It was an indication of the kind of interests that Hazel was cultivating during the holidays.

"Somebody's been smoking here!" grunted Bunter.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Well, if you fellows like a place smelling like a tap-room, I don't! I say, what's that? The 'Racing Oracle'! He, he, he! Hazel's going it, in the hols."

"Can't you mind your own business?" snapped Bob.

"Well, if you fellows approve of this kind of thing, I don't!" said Bunter.

"That silly ass nearly got sacked from the school for getting mixed up with bookies! I suppose he thinks it's safe in the hols. Nice sort of place to ask a decent chap into—smoky as a pub, and racing papers lying about, and—yow-ow-ow-ow! Leave off kicking me, you beast!"

Hazel opened his eyes.

He rubbed them, and started to his feet.

"Oh! You fellows at last!" he exclaimed. "What's the time? Must be nearly twelve—"

"Past one!" said Harry ruefully.

"Oh, my hat! Nice time of night to get in!" grunted Hazel. "I shall get into a row if they hear me coming in as late as this."

"We had no idea you'd be sitting up for us, old chap!" said Bob. "Awfully decent of you to wait for us like this."

"The decentfulness is terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Hazel!" declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Well, you're here, anyhow," said

Hazel, colouring a little—perhaps at the thought of his real motive in waiting up for the Famous Five. "Is that Bunter? I never knew you were bringing that fat bounder?"

"We never knew, either," said Harry, laughing. "We picked him up on the road. We're landed with him for the night."

"There's no extra bed here."

"Oh, we'll manage, somehow."

"I don't see how you'll manage. Must be silly asses to let that fat sponger stick on to you!" grunted Hazel. It was clear that he had not awakened in a good temper. "You won't get shut of him in a hurry."

"That's all right," said Harry hastily.

"Bunter's got a job at a circus, and he is clearing off in the morning."

"I jolly well am!" snorted Bunter.

"If you fancy I want to stick in this poky little hole, Hazel, you're mistaken. And I'm rather particular about the company I keep, too! I've no use for racing papers."

Hazel started, and flushed. He stooped hurriedly, picked up the "Racing Oracle," and thrust it out of sight under his jacket. The Famous Five made an elaborate pretence of not noticing that action. But from Billy Bunter there came a squeaky chuckle.

"He, he, he! You needn't hide it, Hazel—we've all seen it. I say, how many losers have you been backing? He, he, he!"

Hazel did not answer that question in words. He was tired, peevish, irritable, and nervy, and Bunter was the last straw. He jumped at the fat Owl of the Remove, grasped him by the collar, and banged his head on the door.

Bang, bang!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

Bang!

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"Yow-ow! I say, you fellows, draggin' off!" shrieked Bunter. "I say—yooooop! I say—yoooooooooh!"

Bang, bang!

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

"For goodness' sake—," gasped Harry Wharton. "You'll wake everybody from Worthing to Newhaven! Chuck it—"

He grasped Hazel by the shoulder and dragged him away from Bunter. That fat youth promptly dodged round the table.

"Beast!" he spluttered. "Cheeky rotter! 'Tain't my fault that you've been losing money on gee-gees, is it?"

"Shut up!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Shan't! I jolly well think—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's a jolly good supper here!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. He lifted a cover. "Cold chicken, and—"

Bunter forgot that his head had been banged. He forgot everything but supper. He sat down, lifted the cold chicken from the dish to a plate, and started on it. And for the next quarter of an hour no word came from Billy Bunter—only a continuous sound like a turkey gobbling.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Overheard!

"**W**HOS for a bathe?" roared Bob Cherry.

Bright morning shone on the beach and the cliffs, and the wide, rolling sea. Bob Cherry, always the first up in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars School, was the first up at the bungalow by the bright sea waves.

A glorious morning greeted the eyes of the Famous Five as they looked out. Late as they had gone to bed, they were not late up in the morning. If any member of the Co. had felt disposed to put in an hour or two of extra sleep, he would not have found it easy, with Bob Cherry in the bungalow.

Bob bounded out of bed, with no signs of having done a long bike-ride the previous day, and of having gone to bed at two o'clock. His merry roar filled Chez Nous with echoes. He tore open the blinds and let a flood of sunlight in.

Frank Nugent sat up and yawned.

"Yaw-aw-aw!"

Snore! came from Billy Bunter. Bunter was not likely to turn out yet. But the other fellows turned out, rubbing their eyes.

"Lovely morning," roared Bob. "Bathe before brekker, what? Roll out! Hallo, hallo, hallo! You coming, Bunter?"

Snore!

There were five camp-beds in the room. Bunter had one of them. Luckily, there was an ottoman, on which an extra bed had been made up somehow for one of the others.

The chums of the Remove had been glad to get to bed the previous night, after packing away a hasty supper. Hazel had left them to it, hardly saying good-night before he went, with a scowling brow. He had taken little trouble, if any, to conceal his ill-temper, but the juniors could make allowances for a fellow who had sat up till half-past one, and fallen asleep in his chair. Hazel had a rather uncertain temper at the best of times, and that night it had seemed at its worst.

It did not occur to them, for a moment, what was the chief cause of Hazel's surliness.

He had not, as they supposed, sat up

from a friendly desire to be civil and attentive to his school-fellows, getting in after a long bike-ride. But his real purpose he had been unable to carry out. He had lingered a few minutes—but he could not speak to Harry Wharton, on the subject of a little loan, before all the crowd, and at such an hour of the night he could hardly get a tired and hungry fellow away by himself for a talk. Deeply disappointed and bitterly annoyed, Hazel cleared off, feeling savagely that he might as well not have stayed up at all.

The juniors, attributing his bad temper to late hours and Billy Bunter, hoped to see him in a better temper on the morrow, and let it go at that.

Bunter had been last to bed, sleepy as he was. He had finished the cold chicken—there being, fortunately, other provender for the other fellows. What they did not dispose of, Bunter carefully packed away before he turned in; he was not the fellow to leave eatables uneaten. Now he was sleeping the sleep of the just, and was good for many hours yet. He snored while the Famous Five got into their bathing costumes to run down to the inviting sea.

Bob Cherry shook him by a fat shoulder.

To the cheery and exuberant Bob, it seemed a pity for any fellow to miss a dip in the sea on that glorious morning in sunny August.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob. "Wake up, old fat man!"

Snore!

Shake, shake, shake!

"Urrrh! Beast! Lemme alone!" mumbled Bunter. "'Tain't rising-bell! I'm not getting up yet! Urrrgh! Tell Quelch I'm ill! Urrrh!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You're not at Greyfriars now, fathead!" roared Bob. "Wake up! We're going for a bathe! Don't you want to come?"

Bunter sat up and blinked at him.

"Beast! Is brekker ready?"

"Brekker won't be ready till Mrs. Whoof blows in at eight o'clock!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

Bunter fairly gasped with wrath.

"Eight o'clock? Are you waking me up before eight o'clock?" he hooted. "You blithering idiot! You silly chump! You—you—you—"

"It's nearly seven!" bawled Bob.

"Beast!"

"Glorious morning—"

"Rotter!"

"Turn out old fat man!"

"Idiot!"

"Tired?" asked Bob. "My dear chap, if you're tired, I'll help you out! I'll get those blankets off you—like that—"

"Yaroooooh!"

"And roll you out—"

"Leggo!"

"... like that!"

Bump!

"Yoop! Beast! I'll punch you! Beast! Rotter!" yelled Bunter. "I'm not getting up yet! Not till ten! Beast! Go away! Rotter!"

"Sure you don't want to come for a dip?" chuckled Bob.

"Beast! Brute! Blighter! Rotter! Cad! Get out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five, laughing, got out, leaving the fat Owl snorting with wrath, as he gathered up his bed-clothes to rearrange his bed.

Leaving him to it, the Famous Five ran out into the sunshine. Plenty of early bathers could be seen on the beach, and the sea rolled calm and bright and blue.

In a cheery bunch, they trotted out at the gate, to cut across to the sea, which was hardly more than a stone's throw from Chez Nous.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Hazel!" exclaimed Bob.

Hazeldene was coming along the cliffs, and the Famous Five waved their hands to him in surprised greeting. After his late night, they had not expected Hazel to turn out so early; but they were glad to see him.

"Coming down to dip, Hazel?" roared Bob.

Hazel shook his head as he came up. His expression indicated that his late night had not agreed with him.

However, he contrived to be civil, and made one or two perfunctory inquiries as to whether they were all right in their quarters. That, however, as all the juniors could see, was not what was in his mind, or the reason why he had risen so early in the morning.

"I had something to say to you, Wharton," muttered Hazel, colouring a little. "If you'll hold on a minute—"

"Go it, old chap!" said Harry cheerfully; and the other fellows ran down to the sea, leaving the captain of the Remove with Hazel.

"Sorry we didn't get in early enough to see Marjorie yesterday," said Harry. "It was jolly decent of you to sit up for us, old fellow. Feeling a bit tired after it?"

"Yes—no—that doesn't matter! I say, I—I had something to speak to you about," said Hazel, his colour deepening. "Come into the bung, will you?"

"Yes, if you like," said Harry in surprise. "But can't you speak here?"

"I don't want to tell all Brighton and Rottingdean!" grunted Hazel.

Wharton compressed his lips a little, and followed Hazel up the path to the bungalow. The front door had been left wide open by the juniors when they ran out, and Wharton and Hazel stepped into the hall.

Harry's face was a little clouded he faced Hazel there.

Hazel had something to say, which his friends were not wanted to hear, and he could hardly help connecting it, in his mind, with the "Racing Oracle" he had seen the night before.

He realised now that it was on his own account that Hazel had sat up late that night not from any concern for the cyclists—and that was not a pleasant reflection. Only too clearly he understood that the scapegrace of the Remove was in some of his dismal, dingy trouble again.

And the captain of the Remove was far from eager to hear anything about the sportsman's surreptitious speculations on "gee-gees."

"Well?" said Harry, rather curtly.

"You needn't bite a fellow's head off!" muttered Hazel resentfully.

"I didn't mean to, Hazel! But what is it?" asked Harry, as patiently as he could.

"I hadn't a chance to speak to you last night, you coming in so late!" muttered Hazel sulkily. "Look here, I hate asking you, or any fellow, but I—I'm in rather a difficulty! It's only a trifling matter—a couple of pounds."

A couple of pounds was not a "trifling" matter to Harry Wharton. Hazel spoke of it as a trifle light as air. As a matter of fact, Colonel Wharton had given his nephew precisely that sum for pocket-money during the week at Brighton. He had it—but it was nearly all he had!

There was a long pause.

But in Hazel's weak, good-looking

face there was a resemblance to Marjorie's that had often disarmed fellows who were angry with him. Wharton opened his lips—and closed them again.

"I shall settle in a few days, if that's what you're afraid of!" said Hazel, with a sneer. "I'm not the fellow to sponge, I hope."

Wharton made no answer to that. He could not help remembering that there had been similar occasions before, at Greyfriars, and that the item of "settling" afterwards had often escaped Hazel's memory. He spoke, at length, abruptly.

"It's no good beating about the bush, Hazel! I saw that racing paper last night. If you've been backing horses and got into debt—with some rotten sharper—"

"I was asking you to lend me a couple of quid, but not for a sermon," said Hazel coolly. "And if you want to know, I don't know any sharper, and I don't owe him any money!"

"You don't!" exclaimed Harry.

He had already made up his mind that if some dingy debt was hanging over Hazel's head, the two pounds would have to go—with a very remote hope of ever seeing it again.

"No!" snapped Hazel. "It's nothing of the sort! I owe a few small amounts, here and there, but that's not worrying me. Only—only I'm stony, and I can't ask my father again so soon. I happen to want two pounds in rather a hurry, that's all."

"You don't owe it?"

"I tell you, no!" snapped Hazel. "It's not that at all! If you want to know, I'm on a good thing—the best thing of the season. It's an absolutely sure snip!" Hazel forgot that he was sulky and resentful, and his eyes gleamed, and his voice became eager. "It's the real thing this time, straight from the horse's mouth! I can get a couple of quids on at five to one—that means a tenner in a few days. If Purple Peter—"

"Purple Peter?" gasped Harry.

"Yes, if Purple Peter wins—and he's practically bound to—I finger a tenner as easy as picking up pebbles on the beach," said Hazel eagerly. "I can get the money on—I know a man—"

Harry Wharton breathed hard.

"You're asking me to lend you money to back a horse! I wonder you've got the nerve! I can't do anything of the sort!"

"You mean you won't?"

"No, I won't!" said Harry, his eyes flashing. "And you ought to be jolly well ashamed of asking any decent fellow to do anything of the kind."

With that, and without waiting for a reply, Harry Wharton left the bungalow again, and ran down to the beach to rejoin his friends. Hazeldene stayed after him, with a black and bitter scowl, and, more slowly, walked down the path to the gate.

When he was gone, the bed-room door opened, and a fat face grinned out into the hall.

Neither Wharton nor Hazel had given a thought to Bunter—had they thought of him, they would have supposed that he was asleep. But the fat Owl had not yet settled down, after Bob's energetic proceedings, when he heard the voices in the hall, and—of course—listened! That was one of Billy Bunter's endearing ways.

"Well, my hat!" said Bunter. "He, he, he! Purple Peter—he, he, he! The silly idiot! He, he, he! I can see him bagging a tenner—I don't think! He, he, he!"

And Billy Bunter, chuckling, went back to bed—where his fat chuckle was soon changed into a deep, resounding snore.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter the Bully!

SIGNOR MUCCOLINI walked round the circus pitch, with a sardonic smile on his swarthy face, his silk hat tipped to the side of his oily, dark head, and a cigar slanting in his wide, thick mouth under the bushy moustache.

It was afternoon. The Magnificent Circus was settled in its new pitch, and all hands were getting ready for the evening show.

Brighton and Hove had been billed by the advance agent, and hordes of holiday-makers knew that Muccolini's Circus was there—and its list of wonderful attractions, from Marco, king of the lions, and Zara, queen of the ring, to Samson, the strong man, Wiggles the contortionist, and Tippetty Tip, the world's funniest clown, conjurer and ventriloquist.

There were other attractions, many of them; but one name had been excluded from the list—that of the Great Guglielmo, crystal-gazer and reader of the past and the future!

That was Billy Bunter's stunt in the side-shows. And Billy Bunter was not with the circus; so the Great Guglielmo was done with—and very glad indeed was the signor to have done with him.

Pietro Muccolini, circus-master and secret foreign spy, had got rid, at last, of the fat schoolboy who had found out his secret.

Not that Billy Bunter realised the real meaning of what he had seen at Wapshot Air Camp, where the Italian had taken secret photographs. It never crossed his fat mind that the beefy circus-master was a spy, in the pay of a foreign government.

All Bunter knew was that Mucky had broken the law in taking those forbidden photographs, and that he was very anxious not to have it made public.

But that knowledge, limited as it was, was too much for the Italian's comfort or peace of mind.

It enabled Bunter to stick on at the circus, whether Pietro Muccolini liked it or not. It encouraged him to be cheeky, and the swaggering, bullying signor did not like cheek from Bunter.

Twice he had plotted with Jimmy Guggs to "beat up" the fat Owl, and leave him in a state more suitable for a hospital than a circus. The first time, on the heath, near Wharton Lodge, Zara had unexpectedly happened on the scene and driven the ruffian off. The second time, the cunning Italian had planned more carefully.

Bunter had been dropped, on a lonely road, at night, at a certain hour and place, where it was arranged for Guggs to be waiting and watching. The ruffian was to follow him to a dark and lonely spot, and then carry out the signor's ruthless orders. And as Bunter had not reappeared at the circus, Signor Muccolini could not doubt that this time he had, so to speak, backed a winner.

If the fat Owl had escaped he would have rolled in before this—and he had not rolled in. So the signor grinned his sardonic grin as he walked round the pitch in the happy belief that he was never going to see William George Bunter again.

A good many members of the circus company remarked on Bunter's absence. But the queen of the ring was the only

one who was at all concerned on the subject. And as the signor made his round of the pitch, in the sunny afternoon, Zara came up to him, to inquire.

"Where is Bunter?" she asked.

"Bunter!" repeated the signor. He has left the circus. Dio mio! You do not miss that grasso porco, signorina? E un porcello!"

"I gave him my crystal," said Zara. "Sometimes we look into the crystal together. He is very clever with the crystal."

"He is a young rascal and fool, with the crystal and everything else," answered the signor. "Do you believe in the trickery of Guglielmo? Pah!"

"It is not all trickery," declared the gipsy girl. "On one occasion, reading the crystal, he made me hear the voice of my father, Barengro, speaking my name."

"Absurdo! It was a trick! Nonsense!" snapped the signor.

He had a touch of superstition, and did not wholly disbelieve in the crystal, in which Zara implicitly believed. But he was not likely to believe in any magic powers assumed by Billy Bunter.

"It is true!" said Zara angrily. "I tell you I heard my name spoken, and there was no one near when we were gazing into the crystal."

The signor laughed scoffingly.

"Perhaps it was Tip, with his ventriloquism," he suggested.

Neither the signor nor the gipsy girl had the remotest suspicion that Billy Bunter was a ventriloquist. Even Tippetty Tip, who declared that the circus was "haunted" by a mysterious "voice," never dreamed of attributing that mysterious voice to the fat Owl of Greyfriars.

"Nonsense!" snapped Zara. "Why has Bunter left? Tippetty says you gave him a lift in your car on the road yesterday. But he did not come when you came."

The signor grinned.

"He was impudent, and I made him leave my car," he answered. "I told him he was not wanted here, and that I would kick him if he came. No doubt he has gone to his home. At any rate, I am finished with the fat pig."

"Then he is not coming back?" asked Zara.

"Mai! Mai! Never!"

The gipsy girl left the circus-master, a disappointed expression on her dusky face. Signor Muccolini swaggered on, with a sneering smile. Passing the open gateway which led into the circus ground, he glanced at a taxi from Brighton that turned in from the road.

He glanced—and then stared! The grin faded from his swarthy face, and his teeth came together under his bushy, black moustache. His jetty eyes glittered at the passenger sitting in that taxi, fixing on a fat face and a large pair of spectacles.

"Cospetto! Quel furfante!" breathed the signor. "Then that fool—rascal—villain has failed me again! A second time he has failed!"

The taxi stopped, and the driver called to his passenger.

"This here's the place, sir!"

"Oh, all right!"

A fat figure rolled out of the taxi. Billy Bunter glanced round him through his big spectacles. His fat brows knitted at the staring signor.

"That's eight-and-six, sir!" said the taxi-driver.

"I've spent all my change," said Bunter. "Wait a minute!" He beckoned to Signor Muccolini. "Come here, will you?"

Any member of the signor's company who had beckoned to him and called THE MAGNET LIBRARY, No. 1, 186.

him, in that manner, would have been booked for the "boot," if not for a lash from the circus-master's whip. Bunter's impudence caused a deep flush of rage to overspread the swarthy face till Muccolini was almost purple. He stood still staring at Bunter with burning eyes.

"Do you hear, Mucky?" hooted Bunter irritably.

There was a threatening expression on his fat face. Billy Bunter was in a mood to stand no nonsense from a dago!

Hitherto, Bunter had only traded on his knowledge of the signor's secret to the extent of sticking on at the circus in spite of the Italian's desire to see the last of him. But Bunter was very much annoyed now. The trick the signor had played on him was exasperating.

But for falling in with the Greyfriars fellows, he would have been booked for an endless walk in the middle of the night; and he had had a very narrow escape from a ruffianly tramp. Like the prophet of old, Bunter felt that he did well to be angry!

Probably he would have been angrier still had he suspected that the trick that had been played on him had been a scheme to land him in the clutches of Jimmy Guggs! But Bunter had no suspicion of that.

He was prepared to "have it out" with Mucky!

If he was getting his ears up, Bunter was the man to make him put them down again!

"Will you come here or not?" bawled Bunter.

The taxi-driver stared at him. So did about a dozen of the circus men. Signor Muccolini choked down his rage and came over to Bunter. He did not want a scene like this, to attract everybody's attention.

He could hardly control his desire to take the fat junior by the neck and pitch him headlong out of the gateway. But he had to control it.

"So—so—so you—" he began, in a suffocated voice.

"Yes, I've come back!" said Bunter loudly. "And if you don't want me here, say so! Put it plain, before I send away this taxi. I shall want the driver to take me somewhere else, and you can guess where."

Muccolini could guess where—only too easily! And only too well he knew that if Bunter had told his story at the police station the officers of the law would see more in it than Bunter saw. If a search followed, the evidence of his treacherous work as a foreign spy would be revealed—and he dared not run the remotest risk of it. He had toed the line before, for that reason, and now he had to toe it again.

"Are you going to answer me?" demanded Bunter, in a bullying tone worthy of the signor himself. "Do you want me here or not?"

"Si, si! Yes," gasped the signor. "Certo! Stay if you wish. You are—very welcome!"

"Well, that's all right," said Bunter. "You played a rotten trick, offering me a lift in your car, and then leaving me to walk! I've a jolly good mind to turn you down, and go! In fact, I think I will!"

Signor Muccolini gave a gasp. "No, no! Remain!" he said, in a choking voice. "I ask you—I beg of you, to remain, little signor!"

"Well, no more tricks!" said Bunter. "I was jolly near knocked out by a tramp last night, owing to that rotten trick of yours. I jolly well shan't trust you again, I can tell you. Still, I'll come back, if you make a point of it."

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"Cospetto!" breathed the signor.

"Do you make a point of it or not?" demanded Bunter, in a loud, bullying tone.

"Si, si! Certo! Yes, yes!"

"All right, then! Pay the taxi," said Bunter. "I've got no change. Besides, it's your fault I had to take the taxi. I never knew where the circus was—and if you thought I was going to walk, you were jolly well mistaken—see? I might have been out all night if some friends hadn't pressed me to stay with them. Pay the taxi!"

Choking. Signor Muccolini paid the taxi fare. He was glad to pay it and get rid of the staring driver. The taxi buzzed away, back to Brighton, and the signor stood looking at the fat junior, his nails digging into the palms of his greasy hands.

Bunter gave him a haughty blink.

"No more of it, Mucky!" he said impressively. "I'm surprised at you, playing tricks like a silly kid—leaving a chap to walk! Rotten silly jape, like a Third Form fag! Yah! If you don't want me at this circus you can say so. But if you want me to be pally, you'd better mind your step! See?"

"I—I—I—" choked the signor.

"That's enough!" said Bunter.

And he turned his back on Signor Muccolini, and rolled on into the circus camp.

Mr. Tippet Tip, who had witnessed that scene, in the greatest astonishment, confided to his friend Wiggles once more that it beat him 'oller! And the elastic man agreed that it beat him, also, as hollow as a drum!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Wet Blanket!

"GONE!"

"Really and truly gone!"

"The gonfulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had been sunning themselves on the beach after lunch. They came back to Chez Nous, rather wondering whether Billy Bunter was still there. Bunter had stayed to lunch—he had, in fact, stayed in bed till he was called for that meal. They had left him taking a nap afterwards. As no snore greeted them when they came in, it seemed that Bunter had finished his nap; but that he had taken his departure seemed rather too good to be true.

But he had! Bunter's sticking powers in holiday-time were well known and dreaded. But it seemed that he had other resources now. Somebody else was to enjoy his fascinating society. At all events, he was gone!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's left a message!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"What?"

"Look!" grinned Bob.

A sheet of notepaper was pinned on the wall in the hall. On it was scrawled, in pencil, in Bunter's well-known orthography:

"BEESTS!"

"The cheeky ass!" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

Harry Wharton laughed.

Evidently Billy Bunter was not pleased or gratified by the hospitality he had received at Chez Nous. His message did not look as if he had left in a grateful or thankful mood.

However, he had left, and that was the chief thing.

"We ought to have kicked him before he went!" remarked Johnny Bull. "I dare say he hasn't been kicked since

we broke up at Greyfriars—and Bunter wants a lot of kicking! Still, Hazel banged his cheeky head last night—that's one good thing! But we ought to have kicked him."

"I suppose he's gone back to the circus," said Harry. "I heard somebody on the beach mention that it was at Hawk Lane; I believe that's a good step from here. Did he stick any of you fellows for a taxi-fare?"

Four heads were shaken.

"Then he must have walked!" said Harry, laughing. "Well, he's gone! I can't make out why that Italian chap lets him hang on at the circus when he jolly well doesn't want him there; but I hope he won't kick him out. If he does, the fat boulder will roll back here to roost."

"Let us hope that the esteemed and greasy dago will welcome him with the open armfulness!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Bob.

It was a puzzle to the juniors how Billy Bunter contrived to stick on at the circus, where evidently he was not wanted by the proprietor. But it seemed that he counted on it, and they undoubtedly hoped that he would get away with it. Signor Muccolini was more than welcome to him.

Billy Bunter's departure was not a blow to the chums of the Remove, neither were they unduly downcast by the polite message he had left. Bunter was dismissed from mind, and the juniors proceeded to don their best bibs and tuckers, so to speak, for a walk on the downs with Marjorie and Clara and Hazel.

Five juniors looked very neat and natty when they came out again and joined their friends on the cliffs. Marjorie and Clara met them with smiling faces, Hazel with a curt nod and a grunt.

Hazel, it was clear, was not in a good temper, and Harry Wharton, at least, was aware of the reason. Hazel pointedly avoided speaking to him, and Marjorie several times glanced at her brother, with a little pucker in her brow, as they went along the cliffs and turned inland.

Hazel loitered behind, making it quite clear by his manner that he did not enjoy the walk or much relish his present company. The Co. had their own opinion of a fellow who indulged an irritable temper and acted like a spoiled child, but they carefully took no note of Hazel's peevishness. Indeed, Bob Cherry, who had high spirits enough for two, dropped behind to walk with Hazel and cheer him up—which was rather a sacrifice on Bob's part, as he wanted very particularly to walk with Marjorie.

Marjorie glanced back at them, opened her lips to speak to Wharton, and closed them again. She was only too well acquainted with her brother's peevish temper, and she was wondering, rather uneasily, whether there had been any quarrel at Chez Nous when the juniors arrived there the previous night. But she did not care to touch on so delicate a topic. Miss Clara, however, was less reticent.

"You fellows been having a row?" asked Clara cheerfully.

"Oh, no! What an idea!" exclaimed Wharton. "We never row! Do we, you fellows?"

"Never!" said Johnny Bull solemnly. "Like lambs, Clara!"

"The lambsfulness of our esteemed selves is terrific and ridiculous, esteemed and beauteous miss!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You jolly well know that I'm speaking of Hazel!" said Miss Clara coolly.



"Pay the taxi!" demanded Billy Bunter. "That is, if you want me to remain here." Muccolini's face was black as thunder. "Yes—yes—remain!" he gasped in a choking voice. "I ask you—I beg of you to remain!"

"We left him sitting up for you in a rotten temper. Didn't we, Marjorie?" "Nonsense!" said Marjorie.

"And he's in a worse one to-day," went on Clara. "He went out for a walk before brekker, which is jolly unusual for him. He's lazy, isn't he, Marjorie?"

"No," said Marjorie. "And he came back to brekker like a bear with a sore head!" went on the wilful Clara. "His mater thought the dear boy must have a headache through sitting up so late, and his pater told him not to scowl at the table. Didn't he, Marjorie?"

"Do be quiet, Clara!" "My dear kid, these fellows are in his Form at Greyfriars, so they know all about Hazel's bonnie temper! Don't you, you fellows?"

"By Jove, what ripping air on these downs!" remarked Harry Wharton. "No wonder people come to Brighton!"

"What I like about Harry," said Clara Trevlyn, "is his tactful way of changing a subject! So neat!"

"But it's really ripping!" persisted Wharton.

"Oh, ripping! In fact, the ripfulness is terrific, isn't it, Inky?" asked Clara.

"Terrific and preposterous, beauteous miss!" assured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Well, if you haven't rowed with Hazel, you must be jolly good-tempered kids!" said Miss Clara. "He came in looking as if he'd rowed with somebody. Didn't he, Marjorie, old dear?"

"Rubbish!" said Marjorie. "What nonsense you talk, Clara!"

"Late hours make a chap feel seedy," said Frank Nugent, "and Bunter's rather trying to a chap's temper. Bunter was there last night, you know. We picked him up on the road."

And the conversation was switched to Bunter and the adventure on the road, much to Wharton's relief as well as Marjorie's.

The captain of the Remove was well aware that Hazel's sulky looks were due to his refusal to lend the necessary sum to back Purple Peter.

He was firm as a rock on that point, but it was rather an uncomfortable position. Hazel was a wet blanket, and the presence of the Cliff House girls did not cause him to conceal his sulky moodiness; and Wharton was glad that Bob had sacrificed himself to the general good by dropping behind to walk with him.

It was like the good-natured Bob, but he was not enjoying himself. Hazel slacked more and more till the others were quite a distance ahead. He made no remarks, and answered Bob's only with grunts. It was clear that he did not want to join in the walk at all, but, apparently, he had come along sulkily because he had nothing else to do.

A man, with a spotted yellow necktie and a bowler hat stuck rakishly on one side of his head, passed them, and gave Hazel a nod in passing.

Hazel coloured as he returned the nod, and walked on a little more quickly. He did not want to speak to Mr. Gedge in his present company.

Bob gave the man a look, and his sunny face clouded a trifle. It was no business of his, and he made no remark on it; but he could see that the man in the yellow necktie was a racing man, and he remembered the racing paper at the bungalow. They walked on in silence.

Hazel stopped suddenly, glancing back.

"Look here, I'm a bit tired!" he said. "I think I'll chuck this walk! You cut on to the others!"

As plainly as if he had said so, Bob knew that he was going back to speak to the man in the yellow necktie.

"Oh, come on, old chap!" he said. "We're going to have tea at that inn up on the downs! Topping tea you can get there!"

"I've no money to spend!" said Hazel bitterly.

"It does go on a holiday, doesn't it?" said Bob. "Blessed if I know where and how, but it does, somehow. But we're all right! Our treat, old bean! It's our first day here, you know, and we're rolling in filthy lucre!"

"Are you?" said Hazel, looking at Bob very attentively.

Bob seldom had more than two or three half-crowns to jingle in his pocket; but if he was, as he said, "rolling in it," it occurred to Hazel that he might be good for that trifling sum that was so urgently needed to back Purple Peter!

"Tons!" said Bob. "Why, Johnny's got a whole fiver, tipped him by his Uncle Bull!"

"Oh!" said Hazel, his face falling.

Had Bob been the happy possessor of that fiver, prospects might have been good. But Johnny Bull was rather a different proposition.

"Come on, old chap!" said Bob. "They'll be losing us if we don't buck up!"

Hazel came to a halt, staring after the party in advance, his eyes resting on Johnny's thickset, stocky figure.

That fathead, he reflected bitterly, had five pounds in his pocket, for which he had no particular use! Certainly, Johnny would not have kept it long had his ways been like Hazel's.

But Hazel was not thinking of that. He was thinking of the elusive tenner, just out of his reach. The man in the yellow necktie would take his bet; but not on "tick." He hated to lose that tenner for want of a couple of pounds—and that fatheaded Yorkshireman had five!

But it was futile to think of "touching" Johnny. Johnny was Yorkshire and canny. Among his friends, he was as open-handed as a fellow could need

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THE RASCAL OF THE REMOVE!

(Continued from page 13.)

to be. He would have thought nothing of "blowing" his whole fiver in some entertainment or excursion for the whole Co. But he was less—much less—likely than Wharton to lend money for Hazel's purpose. And he had a way of seeing right through a fellow. It was not much use to think of pulling the wool over his eyes. Hazel gave a discontented grunt.

"Look here! I'm going back," he said. "Tell Marjorie I'm tired, after last night! You kept me up till nearly two!"

Without waiting for an answer, Hazel went back down the road. At a little distance he broke into a trot, to overtake the man in the yellow necktie. Possibly he hoped to induce Mr. Gedge to book his bet on the "nod"—a very faint hope indeed. Mr. Gedge was not a man who lived on bad debts.

"Silly ass!" murmured Bob, and he hurried on and overtook the others.

They were on the downs now, with a wide and glorious view outspread before their eyes. In the distance a fluttering flag could be seen, which marked where the big circus tent was pitched. The spot where they were going to have tea was not far from Muccolini's Circus. Marjorie glanced at Bob as he came up.

"Isn't Hazel—?" she asked.

"He's gone back," said Bob. "Tired after last night, you know." Bob was not likely to mention that he guessed another reason, beside fatigue, for Hazel dropping out.

Marjorie nodded, and said no more. Fond as she was of her brother, probably the absence of his sulky face made her, as well as the rest of the party, more cheerful. It was a very cheery party that arrived at the inn on the downs, and sat down to tea under the spreading branches of a tree there.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Whose Fivers!

MR. TIPPITY TIP raised his tankard, tilted back his head, and the tankard after it, and enjoyed life. He set the empty tankard on the table, sighed with satisfaction, and turned to his friend Wiggles, seated farther along the bench.

"That," said Mr. Tip, "is good! And I needed it, Wrig! After seeing that fat oyster roll in, I tell you, Wrig, I needed a pick-me-up! And I needed it bad."

"He ain't," said the elastic man thoughtfully, "what you'd call a sight for sore eyes, Tippetty."

"What Mucky stands him for," said Tippetty, "beats me! Did he want him back at the circus? He did not! Did he kick him out? He did not! Why didn't he, Wrig?"

"Ask me an easier one!" said Wiggles.

"And when father says turn, we all turn!" said Mr. Tip gloomily. "Mucky could kick him out, and won't! I'd like to, and can't! We've all got to stand him! It's worst of all for me, because he's parked in my tent of a night. And the way that fat cove snores, Wrig!"

"You could hear him a mile off!" agreed Wiggles. "I woke up one night, and thought it was Marco's lions going it strong!"

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A party of schoolboys and schoolgirls, who had sat down to tea under a shady tree near that bench, glanced round at the two circus men, and some of them smiled. Harry Wharton & Co. could not fail to realise that Billy Bunter was the subject of that discussion.

"Well," said Wiggles, rising from the bench, "we got to get back, Tippetty. You coming?"

"I'll foller," said Tippetty. "I'm getting a rest from that fat cove's ugly mug. I don't want to see it again in a hurry."

Wiggles grinned, and walked away down the path towards the circus field. He raised his hat, as he passed, to the youthful party at the table, recognising the Greyfriars fellows, and they returned his salute politely. That drew Mr. Tip's attention to the party, and the clown shifted along to the end of the bench nearest the table, and touched his hat to them, with a cheery grin.

"How do you do, Mr. Tip?" said Harry Wharton, smiling. "Glad to see you again!"

"The gladfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Appy to meet you, ladies and gentlemen!" said Mr. Tip. "If you're looking for a first-class entertainment this evening, you can't do better than drop in at Muccolini's Magnificent Circus. Unrivalled list of attractions—Marco, the king of the lions; Zara, the queen of the ring; Samson, the strongest man on the earth, or off it; Wiggles, the elastic man, who ties himself into sailor's knots—for other attractions see small bills!"

"Not to mention Tippetty Tip, the world's wonderful wheeze-wangler!" remarked Miss Clara.

Tippetty chuckled.

"You said it, miss!" he assented. "But I'm too modest to mention the biggest attraction. It was always my failing! Thanks, I will!" Mr. Tip accepted cake, and munched the same. "You don't want to let that banknote blow away, sir!" he added, addressing Harry Wharton.

"Eh? What banknote?" asked Harry, puzzled. "I haven't any banknotes, Mr. Tip."

"What's that, then?" asked Tippetty, reaching to the table, and picking up a crisp slip of engraved paper therefrom. He held it up to view.

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Bob. "Johnny, you ass, what the thump are you dropping your fiver about for? Want to lose it?"

"Eh? I haven't dropped my fiver!" answered Johnny Bull.

"You must have—you're the only chap here that's got one," said Nugent. "It might have blown away, if Mr. Tip hadn't see it."

"Tain't mine!" said Johnny. "Mine's safe in my pocket-book! No such ass as to drop it about!"

"Better look!" said Bob.

"Rot! I tell you it's all right! Somebody else must have left that fiver on the table. Unless it's Marjorie's or Clara's."

"Likely!" remarked Clara. Marjorie laughed.

"We haven't any banknotes," she said. "It must really be yours, if you had one, and nobody else had."

"Well, who's the owner?" asked Tippetty Tip, holding up the banknote. "Which of you young gents is a millionaire?"

"Nobody here, if it's not Johnny's," said Harry. "Surely the last people here can't have left a banknote lying on the table!"

"It wasn't there when we sat down!" said Bob. "I'm sure of that!"

"Couldn't have been!" said Frank Nugent. "Look here! Johnny, you look in your pocket-book, and don't be an ass!"

Grunt from Johnny Bull.

"Rot!" he repeated. "But I'll look, if you like!" Johnny Bull took out his pocket-book, opened it, and revealed a folded five-pound note therein. "That's my fiver—safe, as I said it was! Think I'm the sort of ass to drop banknotes about?"

"P'raps you had more'n one!" suggested Mr. Tip.

"Well, I hadn't!"

"Didn't you drop this, then?" asked Tippetty. He stooped, and picked up another banknote from under Johnny's chair.

Two engraved slips of paper were now held up to view. The schoolboys and schoolgirls stared at them in astonishment.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Bob. "Has some giddy millionaire been here, splashing banknotes all over the shop?"

"I fancy it belongs to this young gentleman," said Tippetty, with a nod at Johnny Bull. "He's got so many, he doesn't count them."

"I tell you I had only one, and it's in my pocket now!" grunted Johnny.

"What's this, then?" said Tippetty, picking a banknote from Johnny's straw hat, which he had laid on the table. "You must have plenty of them, if you keep them in your hat!"

Johnny Bull's jaw dropped, and he stared dumbfounded at the hat and the banknote.

"And here's another!" exclaimed Mr. Tip, in a tone of wonder, taking a rustling slip of paper from the hat. "And, by gum, here's another!"

Five banknotes, in a bunch, were now held up in Tippetty's hand.

"I—I—I don't know where they came from!" gasped Johnny, finding his voice at last. "I—I never knew they were there!"

"Ain't they yours?" asked Tippetty.

"No, they're jolly well not!" gasped Johnny. "Some silly idiot must have stuck them in my hat, goodness knows why!"

"Well, here's twenty-five pun!" said Mr. Tip. "They say findings is keepings. If they really don't belong to you young gents—"

"They certainly don't!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Or you young ladies?" asked Mr. Tip.

"No fear!" said Clara, and Marjorie shook her head.

"Well," said Mr. Tip. "They say findings is keeping! Mucky won't never bankrupt his circus by the salary he pays me; and I got a lot of use for banknotes that nobody wants. Sure they ain't yours?"

"Certainly not!" said Harry.

"Well, I dare say they'll be useful to me, another time!" said Mr. Tip, rising from the bench. "A cove don't pick up twenty-five pounds every afternoon."

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Johnny Bull, warmly. "You can't keep those banknotes, Mr. Tip."

"Can't I?" said Tippetty.

"No, you jolly well can't! You're bound to take them to the police-station," said Johnny Bull.

"I can see myself doing it!" said Mr. Tip. "Police-sergeants is serious coves, and they ain't much use for conjuring tricks."

"Wha-a-a-t?" ejaculated the juniors together.

Tippetty Tip chuckled, and spread the banknotes on the table. Thus revealed to close inspection, the value of that sum of money diminished.

"Bank of Elegance!" Bob Cherry read out. "Oh, my hat! They're not banknotes at all! Why you spoofer—" "Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Miss Clara. "A conjuring trick—"

"The trickfulness was terrific. The esteemed and absurd Tip has been pulling us legfully!" exclaimed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Jest my little joke, ladies and gentlemen!" said Tippet. "Jest my stock-in-trade, that I always carry in my pocket. Jest a sample of the unrivalled, unequalled conjuring tricks you'll see at Muccolini's Circus, as displayed before all the crowned heads of Europe, not to mention a still greater number of uncrowned! Good-afternoon, ladies and gentlemen!"

And Tippet, raising his hat, walked down the path after Wiggles, chuckling over his little joke.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Tough on Tippet!

BILLY BUNTER frowned. It was morning again; and Billy Bunter was seated on the shady side of the Great Guglielmo's tent. Having risen late, eaten two or three breakfasts, one after another, and followed them up with a consignment of pastry from one of the refreshment stalls, Bunter was taking a little rest, which he really needed.

It was the sight of Zara, the queen of the ring, that brought the frown to Billy Bunter's fat brow.

Generally, the sight of the pretty gipsy girl caused Bunter to assume his most ingratiating and fascinating grin.

Zara's dark eyes had had an extraordinary effect on Bunter's fat heart, and on many occasions, he had bestowed the "glad eye" on the queen of the ring.

Possibly Zara did not recognise it as a glad eye, however, the effect being somewhat marred by Bunter's big spectacles.

Cake and jam tarts were Bunter's first love, which had hitherto held undisputed sway over his podgy heart. Now the dark-eyed queen of the ring had a share of it. Not so large a share, perhaps, as Bunter's first love, to which he was still faithful.

It had to be admitted that Zara's dark eyes had no chance, in rivalry with a plate of juicy jam tarts.

But Bunter was now loaded with sweet and sticky comestibles, up to his fat neck; and his thoughts turned on the queen of the ring, who was at least an also ran!

Guglielmo, the crystal gazer, had done quite well in his side-show the previous day. Lots of people had been willing to pay half-a-crown to hear the voices of absent friends—quite an easy trick with the Greysfriars ventriloquist.

So Bunter was in funds—and to such an extent that he had not, as usual, expended the whole of his financial resources on tuck.

Sitting in the shade of the tent, the fat junior was thinking of an excursion that morning. Probably Zara would be pleased to walk out and view the Devil's Dyke, or the ancient church at Ovingdean, or the race-course at White Hawk Hill, or some other of the numerous sights at Brighton—in company with so handsome and distinguished an escort as Bunter.

Unfortunately, when he saw Zara, he saw Marco also. The big, rugged lion-tamer was walking with the queen of the ring, and they were evidently going out.

Hence Bunter's frown.

Several times he had noticed that Zara seemed to like Marco's company. Why, he could not guess. In the matter of looks, Marco, compared with Bunter, was as moonlight to sunlight, as water to wine. At least, that was Bunter's opinion, and he had only to look in the glass to confirm it.

Walking slowly, and talking together, Marco and Zara did not even notice the fat Owl of Greysfriars, as they came along. So they were unaware of the frown that knitted his fat brow over his spectacles.

"Beast!" murmured Billy Bunter. He was referring to the king of the lions.

"Talking to yourself, fatty?" asked a cheerful voice.

Bunter blinked round at Mr. Tip.

His frown intensified. He disliked Mr. Tip. Circus clowns were far beneath Bunter's notice. He did not like having his quarters in the same tent with Mr. Tip. Tippet had had the cheek to remark on his snore. Indeed, the previous night, Tippet had actually had the nerve to heave a boot across the tent, which dropped on Bunter and woke him out of a scrumptious dream of a spread in Smithy's study at Greysfriars!

"Don't you be cheeky!" said Bunter, and he turned his fat head haughtily away from the clown.

Mr. Tip, gazing at that fat head, resisted a strong temptation to smack the same. He had his ventriloquial doll under his arm, and was looking for a shady spot to sit down and put in some practice. What came very easily to Bunter, was a matter of hard, and constant practice with the circus ventriloquist.

Bunter's gaze returned to Marco and Zara. They were quite near him now, and he heard Marco's voice.

"It's a bit of a walk up to the Devil's Dyke. But we've lots of time—"

Billy Bunter's little round eyes gleamed behind his big, round spectacles. He was going to put a spoke in Marco's wheel! He gave a little fat cough—the usual sign that the fat ventriloquist was just going to begin.

"Marco!" came a sharp, bullying voice. "Where are you going?"

The lion-tamer stared round.

It was—or ought to have been—Signor Muccolini's voice. Nobody at the Magnificent Circus knew, or guessed, that there was any ventriloquist in the show beside Tippet. For which reason, many of the circus company suspected Tippet of being the source of the "mysterious voice" that sometimes haunted the circus.

Marco's rugged face flushed with anger as he looked round. The signor spoke in bullying tones, more often than not; but he never ventured to bully the king of the lions. This sudden snap looked as if he was beginning!

"I'm going where I please, Mucky!" answered the lion-tamer. "What the dickens has it to do with you?"

"Go and attend to your lions!" snapped the bullying voice. "I don't pay you to go gallivanting about."

Marco stared about him with a gleam in his eyes. He could not see the signor; but there were several tents and vehicles at hand that might have shut him off from view.

"Why, the cheeky dago!" exclaimed Marco. "Where are you Mucky! Show yourself, can't you? What the dickens do you mean by talking to me like that?"

"My word!" murmured Mr. Tip. "Mucky must be in a temper to

talk to Marco like that! Marco ain't the man to stand it."

Bunter grinned.

The clown was only a couple of yards from him, but had not the slightest suspicion that the voice proceeded from Bunter.

"Where are you, Mucky, you cheeky fool?" roared Marco. "What the thump are you keeping out of sight for? You're asking me to pull your nose."

"Mucky's been in a bad temper ever since Bunter came back," said Zara, soothingly. "Don't mind him. Come along."

"Rubbish! I won't come!"

Zara started, and her dark eyes flashed at the lion-tamer.

It was Marco's voice this time, though the king of the lions would never have dreamed of uttering such words to Zara.

An expression of almost stupefied amazement came over Marco's face.

"Who—" he stuttered. "Who—"

"You will not come!" exclaimed Zara. "You say rubbish! Go, then, Marco, and never speak to me again!"

"I—I—I did not say that, Zara! I never spoke!" stuttered Marco. "Someone is playing a trick."

"Did I not hear you?" exclaimed Zara. "What do you mean, you did not say it?"

"I did not!" gasped Marco.

"That is nonsense! I will not walk with you. I—"

"Look!" exclaimed Marco. He pointed to a beefy figure in a silk hat, at a distance. It was Signor Muccolini, walking with Samson, the strong man, far out of the sound of a voice.

Zara looked. An expression of utter bewilderment came over her face.

"But—but he was here—he was speaking a moment ago—close at hand!" she exclaimed. "What does it mean? Tippet says the circus is haunted—"

"Tippet!" exclaimed Marco. His eyes flashed round at the clown. "Now I understand! It is ventriloquism—a trick! I did not say those words, Zara—and it was not the signor who was speaking to me—it was a trick, and it was Tip who was playing the trick."

"Oh!" exclaimed Zara.

Marco left her, and darted across towards Tippet. Mr. Tip gave a yell as he was grasped in the lion-tamer's powerful hand, and almost swept off his feet.

"You rascal!" roared Marco.

Billy Bunter felt a deep qualm. Had Marco guessed that he was the trickster, it would have gone hard with him.

But the lion-tamer did not even look at him. His wrath was concentrated on the unfortunate Tippet. He knew that Tippet was a ventriloquist, and he knew nothing about Bunter's weird gift.

"Ere, go easy, Marco!" yelled Mr. Tip. "What's the matter with you? Have you gone barmy, or what? Leave go a bloke!"

"Keep your trickery for the side-show!" roared Marco. "Do you understand, fool? Keep your silly ventriloquism for the boobies who are willing to listen to it! If you play a trick on me, I do not care—but you shall not play tricks on Zara—"

"I—I didn't—I never— Oh, holy pokers!" spluttered Tippet. "What do you mean? Leggo! I never said a word! I—"

"If you were as big as I am," said Marco, "I would thrash you! As it is, I will shake you!"

"I tell you—" shrieked Mr. Tip. Shake, shake, shake!

"Urrrh! Marco, old man, chuck it!" spluttered the clown. "I never said a word! Ain't I tol' you this 'ere circus is haunted—haunted by a voice! I say—Yaroooooh!"

Bump! Having shaken the hapless Tippity, a good deal like a terrier shaking a rat, Marco sat him down, with a heavy bump.

"Oooooogh!" gasped Tippity. "How could you play such a trick, Tippity?" asked Zara reproachfully. "You made me believe, for a moment, that Marco was speaking rudely to me—"

"I didn't," groaned Tippity. "On my davy, I never did! If that was—urrrh—ventriloquism, I couldn't do it to save my life! I can make the dolls talk, but I tell you I couldn't put up Marco's voice, nor yet the signor's—"

"But you did!"

"I never did! I tell you this 'ere circus is haunted! Marco, old man, you wouldn't believe I'd play a dirty trick like that! Even if I could."

"Who did, then?" snapped the lion-tamer.

"I tell you, this circus is haunted!" gasped Mr. Tip.

"Rubbish!"

Marco turned his back on the gasping clown, and walked away with Zara. Mr. Tip staggered to his feet, and stared after them, gurgling for breath.

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter.

Tippity looked at him. His eyes gleamed. If it seemed funny to Bunter, it did not seem funny to Tippity.

"You cackling image!" howled Mr. Tip. "Shut up!"

"He, he, he!"

Smack!

Up till then, Mr. Tip had resisted his desire to smack Bunter's head. But he was boiling now, and Bunter's fat cackle was the last straw. He smacked Bunter's head now, and smacked it hard.

"Ow! Oooh!" roared Bunter. "Why, you cheeky beast—"

Smack!

Finding solace in smacking Bunter's fat head, Tippity smacked it again! Bunter roared.

"Ow! Keep off, you beast! I'll make Mucky sack you! I—I—Yarooooh!"

Smack!

"Oh crikey!"

Smack!

"There!" gasped Mr. Tip. "I feel better now!"

And he walked away, leaving the fat junior roaring and rubbing his head—and wishing that he had not, after all, weighed in with his wonderful ventriloquism to put a spoke in Marco's wheel!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Terrible Temptation!

"BADMINTON!" said Bob Cherry. "I've brought rackets and shuttles in this bag."

"And a court in your pocket?" asked Miss Clara.

Bob grinned.

"Nunno! Easy enough to mark out a court on the sand."

"Too jolly hot!" said Frank Nugent. "Slacker!"

"Borrow a net from one of those fishing-boats?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We can imagine the net!" said Bob

cheerfully. "A furrow in the sand will mark the place, and we can guess the rest."

Marjorie Hazeldene smiled.

"Bob has jolly good ideas," she said.

Marjorie was keen on the game of badminton. Probably she guessed that that was why Bob suggested it, in those unusual circumstances. Hazel allowed a sneer to cross his face—he was still in his role of wet blanket. Bob, luckily, observed Marjorie's kind smile, and not her brother's sneer.

"Oh, any old thing!" said Harry Wharton. "We shall have to get clear of these pebbles, though."

"Tide's right out now," said Bob. "When it's right out here you get sand like a billiards-table—in places, at least. I've got my eye on a spot. Now, then, let's mark out the jolly old court."

Mr. and Mrs. Hazeldene were in deck-chairs on the beach in the blazing August afternoon. There were plenty of others. Farther along towards Brighton, the beach swarmed; but opposite Chez Nous there was more space.

Mrs. Hazeldene was nodding drowsily under a parasol; Mr. Hazeldene was deep in the City columns of a newspaper. The young people were more active, as became their years—or lack of years—with the exception of Hazel, who lay on the sand, silent and moody.

The Famous Five, Marjorie and Clara, walked down to the level stretch of sand that Bob had spotted, left uncovered by the retiring tide.

It was easy enough to furrow out lines in the sand to mark the boundaries of a court; though leaving the net to the imagination perhaps rather detracted from the game, considered as badminton.

However the schoolboys and school-girls were there to enjoy the sunshine and sea air, and life generally, and were easy to please. It was, anyhow, fun, as Bob declared. With considerable merriment, the court was marked out by furrowing the smooth sand.

Then Marjorie and Clara took rackets, and Bob did the same; and Johnny Bull and Harry Wharton joined in; and Frank Nugent, who had his sketch-book with him, sat down near him and opened it, to sketch some Brighton fishing boats at sea in the distance. Bob, Harry, and Johnny threw off their jackets, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh put them over his arm.

The shuttle was soon flying, and the game went on merrily.

Hazel, sprawling on the beach near the deckchairs at a distance, watched it with a moody brow and a sneer. Simple pleasure like that had no appeal for Hazel—still short of the trifling sum he required for that sporting flutter on Purple Peter.

The race was to be run the following day at White Hawk Hill; and if Hazel did not get "on" soon, he would be left "off"—and that chance of a lifetime was going to be wasted!

His friend with the yellow necktie had definitely refused to book any bets "on the nod."

Perhaps Mr. Gedge doubted whether a debt would be easy to collect from Hazel if Purple Peter lost! Perhaps, too, he did not feel so sure as Hazel that Purple Peter was the "dark horse" that was going to "romp home" at White Hawk Hill.

Anyhow, Mr. Gedge's terms were strictly cash—and as Hazel had no cash, there was nothing doing!

So Hazel's spirits were low, and his temper sullen, and he sulkily declined to join in anything that was going on.

The badminton players forgot him for the time, even Marjorie ceasing to remember his despondent looks. The Famous Five were not worrying very much about a fellow who seemed determined to be a wet blanket. Hazel, as he chose to keep to himself, was left to himself—and he resented that, too.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh stood watching the game for some minutes, and then he walked up the beach again, and came back to the deck-chairs. He threw the jackets over an empty chair, and bestowed a dusky smile on Hazel.

"The gamefulness is terrific, is it not, my esteemed Hazel?" he remarked affably.

"What utter rot!" grunted Hazel. "If they want to play badminton, there's a court in the garden at home."

"But it is preposterous fun on the esteemed sands," remarked the nabob. "Perhaps when they are through, you will take a turn with my idiotic self!"

"Rot!" was Hazel's polite reply to that suggestion.

The nabob made a grimace. He had tried to draw Hazel out of his sulks—and failed. So he gave it up, and sat down, watching the game from the distance. Hazel, farther back, scowled at the back of his head.

He was feeling choked with envy, hatred, and malice. That brute Bull had a fiver in his pocket—and if Hazel asked him for a loan of a couple of pounds, he would get—what?

He had been fool enough to tell Wharton what he wanted it for. Wharton might have told the others. That, really, was not likely; but to Hazel, it seemed possible enough. Anyhow, that keen brute, Bull, would see right through him; he knew that. He mightn't lend the money, anyhow; and he most certainly would not, if he guessed what it was wanted for.

And just a couple of pounds meant a tenner for Hazel—at least, he was convinced that it did. And if only he had had a fiver, like Bull, it would have meant twenty-five pounds, at five to one—he could still get five to one on Purple Peter!

It was a dazzling thought. He caught his breath at the idea of handling twenty-five pounds in a lump! What a plunge a fellow could have with a sum like that!

And that fathead had a fiver, and no use for it! Had it in his pocket at that very minute—

Then Hazel's eyes fixed on the jackets Hurree Singh had thrown across the empty deckchair, quite close to him—almost within reach. Bull carried his pocket-book in his inside jacket pocket.

Hazel's breath came in a gasp.

That fiver was there, within his reach. There was no eye on him as he sprawled on the sand behind the deckchairs. His master was asleep, his pater deep in his City stuff; both had their backs to him. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was wide awake enough, but he, too, had his back to Hazel, watching the game down on the sands.

The wretched scapegrace's head seemed to swim at the thought that came into his mind.

His face whitened.

For a moment or two Hazel was horrified at himself. The thought that had crept into his mind, like a poisonous snake, made him sick.

He drove it away savagely.

But it returned. Idly he stretched his hand and touched Johnny Bull's jacket. He drew his hand back as if his fingers had been stung.

The perspiration was thick on his brow!

Nobody would know—nobody could know—that was the thought that was in his mind now. When Bull missed that fiver from his pocket-book he would be mystified, but it would never even enter his head that Hazel had taken it.

Not, of course, that Bull would lose the money! It would be easy enough to return it afterwards—drop it in the bungalow, perhaps, for Bull to find. After the use of that fiver had netted twenty-five pounds for Hazel, the owner could have it back, or another just as good!

Where would be the harm in that? It was simply borrowing it for a couple of days. Hazel tried to think there was no harm in it.

He could not quite think so. At the bottom of his heart he knew that a fellow who touched another fellow's money was one thing, and one thing only—a thief! But his mind jibbed at that awful word! If he borrowed it—

He moved a little, giving a stealthy glance round him. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh glanced at him, and a rather startled look came into his eyes as he saw that Hazel's face was chalky white, and the sweat running down it. That chalky face flushed a sudden crimson under the nabob's glance.

"Do you feel ill, my esteemed Hazel?" asked the nabob, really concerned.

"What rot!" grunted Hazel. "Don't bother—I'm going to sleep."

He let his head fall on his arm.

During the minutes that followed, Hazel's heart was beating painfully. He almost hoped that the rest of the party would finish their game, and come up the beach, and thus remove temptation out of his way. But he dreaded to hear their footsteps on the pebbles. His chance would be gone.

In a state of torturing doubt he lay, till, at length, he lifted his head and gave another stealthy look round.

Then, as if moved by a will not his own, he stretched out his hand to the jacket that was so easily within reach. He touched it—he held it—he moved it—and there was a sudden light plop! as a pocket-book fell out of the inner pocket on the sand. Hazel grasped it.

Even as he grasped it he realised that Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky head had turned and that the nabob's eyes were upon him.

In that moment Hazel felt something like the bitterness of death. Fool that he was—the nabob had heard the pocket-book fall, and now—now he was a detected thief! His heart almost died within him.

For a split second the dusky schoolboy was transfixed. But the next moment he was speaking with his ordinary cheerful calm.

"The fatheadedness of my esteemed self is terrific," he remarked. "But I did not think of esteemed articles in pockets when I threw the jackets there. The whole esteemed bag of tricks might have fallen out."

Hazel looked at him—dumb!

"The luckfulness is preposterous that you saw the absurd Johnny's pocket-book fall from his jacket, my esteemed Hazel!" said the nabob affably. "Otherwise it might have been lost in the idiotic sand."

Hazel panted!

Again he called himself a fool! Of course, Hurree Singh did not guess—how could he? He supposed that the pocket-book had fallen from the jacket on the chair, and that Hazel had picked it up—a most natural thing for him to do, if he had noticed it fall.

The wretched junior breathed again.

"I—I saw it fall!" he stammered.

"Exactly!" assented Hurree Singh. "Put it back in the pocket, my esteemed Hazel, and I will hang the absurd jacket rightfully up on the back of the chair, so that it will not fall out again."

Hazel put the pocket-book into the jacket pocket. His eyes searched the dusky schoolboy's face as Hurree Singh proceeded to hang the jacket carefully on the back of the chair, so that nothing in the pockets could possibly fall out.

But that dusky face expressed absolutely nothing; and Hazel was satisfied that Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had not the remotest suspicion of what had really taken place. After all, how could he have?

No doubt it was by chance that

Hurree Singh, when he sat down again, had shifted his own deckchair a little, so that the hanging jacket was now under the corner of his eye.

Hazel had no chance for another attempt, even if his nerve had been equal to it. He lay on the sand, feeling sick—sick with the terrible moment of terror he had passed through, sick with his own rascality, and sick with disappointment.

He rose at last and lounged away.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dark eyes followed him, with a strange expression in their dusky depths. Then the nabob looked at Marjorie's graceful form and pretty, flushed face, in the distance down on the sands. And the thought in his mind was that not by

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

Continuing blithely on his way, our irrepressible rhymester pays a visit to one of Greyfriars' most famous characters

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH,

the Bounder of the Remove!

(1)

And now Vernon-Smith must be interviewed here.

The famous or infamous Bounder, Whatever his faults or his failings, it's clear That he is a ripping all-rounder; At cricket or football or fighting a scrap The Bounder is quite a front-ranker, He's also proficient at billiards and nap, And you won't meet his equal at banker!



(2)

He's clever and whimsical, cunning and cool,

His nerve is a matter for wonder, The masters all call him the bane of the school He takes little heed of their thunder. It is perfectly likely that he will be sacked, But that doesn't make him less cheerful, He'll carry it off with a laugh, and in fact, He'll probably give them an earful!

(3)

Now Smithy's the son of a millionaire dad,

And his pockets are lined with the "ready!"

This lavish allowance would not be so bad

If Smithy were prudent and steady, He's certainly hard where his cash is concerned

In all kinds of giving or lending, But what of the pounds he has recklessly burned In gambling and such silly spending!



(4)

I called in to interview Smithy—at least That was my original mission.

But I found him engaged at a sumptuous feast,

And my eyeballs popped out at the vision. There were sosses and ham and good things by the ton,

And Wharton and others were present, Resisting such dainties could never be done, So I smiled and began to look pleasant.

(5)

"Well?" said the Bounder, and gave me a frown.

"And what in the world are you after?"

"A bite of cold chicken," I said and sat down,

With a snatch of my pleasantest laughter, "Just pass me a plate," I implored, "if you please!"

"I'll begin with a couple of sosses!"

"You will!" he replied, and he handed me these

With a wallop—across my proboscis!

(6)

"Ha, ha!" roared the fatheads at what they beheld,

As I fell off the chair in my terror.

But I saw no reason to cackle—I yelled! For the sosses were hot and no error.

"Now hop it!" the Bounder remarked with a frown,

But the sight of the feast drove me scatty. And so, with a flattering smile, I sat down,

And asked him to pass me a patty!

(7)

Next moment the thing was rubbed into my hair.

"Ha, ha!" came the usual chorus. The Bounder released me and sat in his chair

With a face like a plesiosaurus!

I sat down again, though I felt like a wreck, And asked for some pop—just a bottle!

Next moment the pop gurgled right down my neck,

But outside, not inside, my throttle!



(8)

"Ha, ha!" roared the fatheads the same as before.

As I struggled, though I was unable To stop him propelling me nearer the door,

Until he bumped into the table!

Then over it went with a terrible jar, And the feast—well, his action had stopped it!

And then I perceived 'twas my turn to "Ha, ha!"

And I did so with vigour—and hopped it!



a word or a look must he betray what he knew, for Marjorie's sake. But if Hazel tried again—that was a problem for the junior from India's coral strand to think out.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Visitor for Mr. Tip!

"YOU!" grunted Billy Bunter. "Me!" assented Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin. Billy Bunter looked him up and down.

Bunter was not in the best of tempers that day. It was hours and hours since Tippet Tip had smacked his head; but his fat ears still tingled from the smacking.

Marco and Zara had not yet come back from exploring the Devil's Dyke. It was getting near time for the circus to open for the evening show; but they had not come in yet.

How the queen of the ring could stand Marco all that time was a mystery to Bunter—and an annoying mystery.

So when he beheld Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh in the circus enclosure, the fat Owl looked him up and down, and down and up, with all the contempt he could put into the process of looking a fellow up and down.

Which process the nabob bore with dusky smiling equanimity.

Failing to wither the cheerful nabob with a look, Bunter snorted.

"The public ain't allowed in here!" he said. "The show ain't open yet; and, anyhow, the public can't come in here. So hook it—see?"

"You have bought the circus?" inquired Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Oh, don't be a cheeky ass!" said Bunter morosely. "If you think I want you butting in here, you're mistaken—see? Are the other beasts with you?" He blinked round through his spectacles, but the Co. were not to be seen.

"I have dropped in alonefully," explained Hurree Singh. "The other esteemed beasts are at the absurd bung."

"Well, the sooner you go back there, the better!" said Bunter. "You put me up for a night—and a rotten, poky hole it was to put a fellow up in! That cad Hazel was ill-bred, as usual, and that fool Cherry hoicked me out of bed in the morning! Nice way to treat a guest! I dare say you fancy you can barge in on me here; but you're jolly well mistaken—see? I don't want to see any of you!"

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter——" Bunter raised a fat hand.

"I'm putting it plain!" he said. "I don't want any of Wharton's mob here! Like your cheek to come and see me without being asked!"

"But, my absurd and ridiculous Bunter——"

"That will do!" said Bunter haughtily. "I'm a star of the circus now! I don't want to have anything to do with a mob of schoolboys—see? Wait till I ask you before you pay me a visit. That's plain English!"

"The plainfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "But——"

"Well, clear off!" said Bunter. "I'll ask you when I want you to call on me. Till then, sheer off—see?"

"But I have not called on you, my esteemed and preposterous Bunter," said the nabob gently. "I have called to see the esteemed Mister Tip!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

And the nabob, grinning, walked on, leaving Billy Bunter staring after him through his big spectacles.

"Beast!" grunted Bunter. And he rolled into Guglielmo's tent, to get ready for the show.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh sauntered on, spotted Wiggles, and stopped to speak to him. The elastic man gave him a nod and a grin.

"Can you direct me to the esteemed quarters of the estimable and wheezy Tip?" asked the nabob politely.

"Want to see Tippet? I fancy he's making up for the show," said Wiggles. "I'll run you in to him, if you like."

"The obligefulness is terrific."

Wiggles grinned, and led the nabob along the passage in the dressing-tent. Mr. Tip was discovered in a canvas-walled dressing-room, with a wide-open door, putting on his cheery round face the red and white for his appearance in the ring.

"Young gent to see you, Tippet!" said Wiggles; and the clown glanced round, and gave the dusky nabob a genial nod.

"Walk in, sir!" said Mr. Tip. "Don't stand on ceremony! Found any more five-pound notes in your hat? Ha, ha, ha!"

The nabob smiled.

"That was a terrifically clever conjuring trick, esteemed Tip!" he said. "We have laughed over it with absurd enjoyfulness."

"It gets a laugh, sir!" said Tippet modestly. He went on dabbing at his face as he talked. "Conjuring's my line, though I do ventriloquism in the side-shows."

"I have called to ask an esteemed favour, Mr. Tip!" said the nabob.

"Give it a name, sir!" said Tippet. "Anything but a pass for the show. Free list entirely suspended."

"I desire to play a little trick, in the same playful and absurd manner," explained Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "It would be a boonful favour, if you would lend me one of your Bank of Elegance banknotes for a few days."

"Oh!" said Tippet. He ceased to dab his face, and regarded the Nabob of Bhanipur thoughtfully. "I say, I don't mind—not in the least—but you want to be careful with things like that! All very well for a conjuring trick—that's what them spoof banknotes are made for. But if you was seen with that sort of thing, you not being a conjurer—you get me?"

"I get you, esteemed Tip, and I shall be terrifically careful with the idiotic banknote, if you trust it in my absurd hands."

"What I mean is, spoof notes like them have been passed before now," said Tippet. "There's swindlers about who use them to diddle mugs. In a bad light a cove might not tell the difference between my conjuring notes and the real article. You wouldn't be careless with it, sir?"

"The carefulness would be preposterous!" assured the nabob.

Tippet Tip nodded, and turned from the glass, before which he was decorating his visage.

He groped in a pocket of a pair of trousers hanging on a nail, and handed a crisp, rustling slip of paper to the dusky schoolboy.

Mr. Tip was an obliging little man, and he liked the cheery Greyfriars juniors—who had treated him with a politeness very different from Billy Bunter's haughty manners and customs. He saw no harm in obliging a schoolboy who wanted one of his conjuring banknotes to play a trick. Certainly, he

would have taken great care not to let one of those peculiar banknotes pass into unreliable hands.

"There you are, sir!" he said. "Keep it if you like—they don't cost much. Jest about worth the paper they're printed on. Only don't you hand it over in a shop by mistake for the real thing." And Tippet chuckled.

The nabob chuckled, too.

"No fear!" he agreed. "I am terrifically obliged, Mr. Tip!"

"Don't mench, sir!" said Tippet. "More'n welcome!"

And the nabob, after a little further chat with the clown, took his leave, and left Tippet to his decorative work.

There was a smile on his dusky face as he walked away, with Tippet's spoof fiver in his pocket. As he strolled down the path to the gate on Hawk Lane, a blare of music announced that the circus was opening to the public.

But Hurree Singh had not come there to see the circus. He walked away; and as he turned out of the gateway, several early comers passed him, going in, and more were coming up the lane.

Among them was a schoolboy with a moody face, lounging along with his hands driven deep into his pockets. Hurree Singh's eyes turned curiously on Hazel.

Hazel, apparently, was going to the circus on his own. He seemed to be deep in thought, and he did not notice Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh as he passed him. The nabob stood looking after him, with a curious expression on his face, till he disappeared in the circus field.

Then Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh mounted his bicycle, which he had left against the fence, and pedalled away.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Consulting the Oracle!

Hazel lounged idly among the crowd in the circus ground. He looked at one side-show after another, but without entering any of them. The big circus tent, into which people were now going in crowds, did not seem to attract him—it was not the performance in the ring that he had come to see. He came to a halt, at last, in front of the canvas structure outside which a large notice announced that the Great Guglielmo could be found within.

That, it seemed, was his destination, but he hesitated to enter. He stood loafing by the tent, watching two or three people who went in and came out.

Hazel was, in fact, more than half-ashamed of the object with which he had come to the circus. He could not help feeling a contempt for himself, in fancying for a moment that there might be anything in such obvious "spoof" as crystal-gazing, fortune-telling, or reading the future. He was there in spite of his own common sense.

The truth was that he was a bundle of nerves, and willing to catch at any straw. When he thought of what he had so nearly done on the beach that afternoon, he was sick with shame. Yet the same temptation was still strong upon him, and he knew that it would be easy to find another chance in the Greyfriars fellows' bungalow.

He tried to think, and believe, that there would be no harm, or little harm, in "borrowing" that five-pound note, making a profit on it, and returning the "borrowed" sum. Johnny Bull might not even miss the note before it was returned—he might find a chance of replacing a fiver in the pocket-book, and Johnny was not likely to examine the number. But even if he missed it, he

would find it, soon afterwards, and could only believe that he had accidentally dropped it about the bungalow.

But—that depended on Purple Peter winning and the foolish punter handling the results. If Purple Peter lost—Hazel's brain swam when he envisaged that possibility.

Then, beyond all pretence and self-deception, he would be a thief, and he shuddered at the thought.

Purple Peter was going to win, of course. He was assured of that. Still, there must be a lot of people who thought that he wouldn't, or the bookies would not be offering five to one against him the day before the race.

Bookmakers, after all, did not live on losses. Obviously the backers generally must lose more than they won, or the bookmaking fraternity could not have existed at all!

Certain as he was that Purple Peter was going to romp home at White Hawk Hill on the morrow, Hazel had to admit that there was a chance, at least, that his "gee" might let him down.

Had he had money in his pockets, he would have disregarded that chance without a second thought. But the method by which he was considering raising the wind forced him to think.

How was he going to be absolutely certain, to make assurance doubly sure? He was not superstitious, but he was a great believer in luck. He fancied that it was a lucky omen that the horse had the same name as himself! Any absurdity seems reasonable to a gambler.

But how could he be quite, quite sure? Absolutely sure, that he would be able to replace that fiver if he "borrowed" it for a time?

It was in search of that assurance that he was there! At any other time, he would have laughed scornfully at the

idea of consulting a circus fortune-teller. Now he was catching at straws.

On the beach, that day, he had heard some people talking of a visit to the circus. One of them had seen Guglielmo, the magic crystal-gazer, and seemed greatly impressed by the seer. It was nonsense, of course—he knew that it was and could only be nonsense—still, he had come there to see Guglielmo.

After all, he argued with himself, why shouldn't there be something in it? Anyhow, it cost only half-a-crown, and it was easy enough to borrow half-a-crown from Marjorie. He was going to see for himself—he would jolly soon see whether the fortune-teller was spoofing!

If so, he would take no notice of Guglielmo's prediction. But if the man was genuine, that was a different matter. Anyhow, he could put it to the test by paying his half-crown and hearing what Guglielmo had to say!

Hesitating, ashamed, contemptuous of himself for his eager credulity, he loafed in front of the tent, while others went in and came out.

He noticed that one man came out with an amazed expression on his face, as if lost in wonder. That looked as if there was something in it. Hazel ventured to speak to the man—a plump middle-aged man, who certainly looked old enough not to be taken in by trickery.

"Excuse me," he said. "You've seen Guglielmo in there?"

"I'd never have believed it!" said the plump gentleman. "Never believed in such stuff! Never! Just did it for a joke! But—when he made me hear my boy's voice, and him in Australia—well, what's a man to think?"

Hazel stared after the plump gentleman as he went.

It was utter rot, of course—it must be

—some sort of a trick. But if it was genuine, there was no doubt about the powers of Guglielmo! Hazel made up his mind to judge for himself, and went into the tent.

Seated at a black-draped table was a figure in a cloak, with beard and moustaches and long hair. There was so much hair about, that little could be seen of the magician's face, except a stubby little nose with a pair of spectacles perched on it.

This was the Great Guglielmo!

Who else he was, Hazel had not the faintest suspicion. Nobody could possibly have recognised Billy Bunter in his magician's outfit.

But for Hazel's sulky temper, and his complete absorption in his own affairs, he might have heard what Harry Wharton & Co. knew on that subject. But he had talked very little with the Famous Five since they had been at Brighton—in fact, he had hardly talked to them at all, except to make curt answers when spoken to.

They knew Bunter's game at the circus, and might very probably have mentioned it in conversation had there been any with Hazel.

Certainly they would have made a point of mentioning it fast enough had they dreamed that Hazel was fool enough to consult a fortune-teller on the subject of his precious sporting speculations.

As it was, all Hazel knew was that Guglielmo was a circus seer—a humbug, of course, from the simple fact that all seers were humbugs. Still, he was going to judge that for himself.

He noticed that the black-robed magician gave him a very sharp blink through his spectacles as he came in.

(Continued on next page.)

BOYS! This is HORNBY SPEED BOAT WEEK

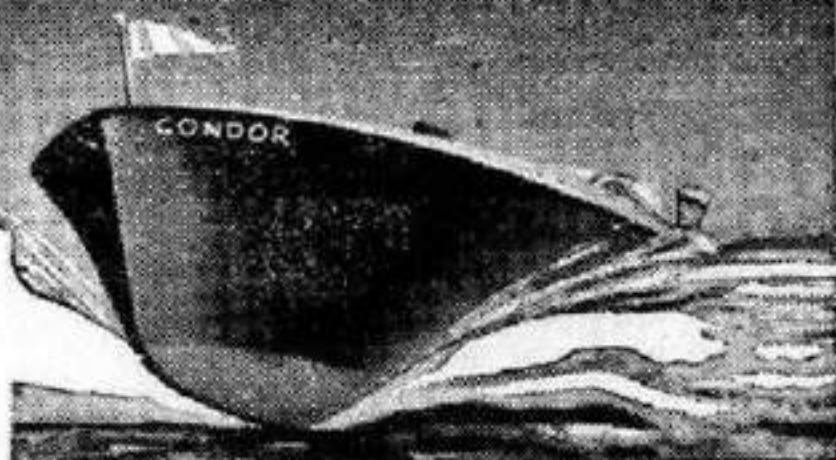
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The Great Guglielmo was out for custom; but he was not glad to see Hazeldene of the Remove.

His first thought on seeing Hazel was that the juniors had told him who the Great Guglielmo was. In which case, of course, Hazel could not have come as a "client" to consult the oracle, but more likely for a schoolboy lark.

But a second blink at Hazel's harassed face reassured the fat seer. He could see that the junior knew nothing of the truth, and that he was in a mood for anything but "larking."

Bunter grinned under his beard. If that utter idiot Hazel was blithering ass enough to ask to be made a fool of, Bunter was the man to fool him to the top of his bent. He had not forgotten the banging of his head at Chez Nous.

"Enter!" said Guglielmo, in a deep voice.

Hazel looked at him uncertainly. He was a little impressed by the sombre outfit of the magician, by the glimmering crystal that lay on the table before him, and by the deep voice.

"I—I want to—to ask you—" he stammered.

"Lay a piece of silver on the table!" came Guglielmo's deep voice, which bore not the slightest resemblance to Billy Bunter's own natural squeak. The fat ventriloquist was an adept in vocal trickery.

Hazel laid Marjorie's half-crown on the table, and it was immediately annexed by the Great Guglielmo.

"You—you read the future in that crystal?" muttered Hazel.

He was ashamed to hear himself talking such nonsense; but he had a feverish desire to believe in the charlatanry, and to hear the assurance he longed for.

"I read the past and the future!" boomed Guglielmo. "Which do you desire to know?"

"The future!" breathed Hazel. "I—I want to know something that—that's going to happen to-morrow. If—if you can read in that crystal, I needn't tell you what it is. Just go ahead and tell me!"

"So be it!" boomed Guglielmo.

The black-bearded face was bent over the crystal, and Hazel watched and waited with beating heart. He had never seen Guglielmo before; Guglielmo had never seen him—so far as he knew, at least. If the seer read anything that was true in the crystal—was it not proof? With beating heart, he waited for the crystal-gazer to speak.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Sure Snip!

GUGLIELMO was silent for a long minute, gazing into the crystal.

Hazel, leaning over, gazed in it, too. He could see nothing but the glimmer of the crystal. Could the magician see more? He knew perfectly well in his heart of hearts that the magician could not, because it was impossible. But he hoped that he could. He was eager to stifle common sense, and be convinced.

Guglielmo's deep voice came at last. "I see a great open space; a large building—it is a grand stand. Horses and jockeys. It is a race."

Hazel caught his breath. He had said nothing—absolutely nothing about what was in his mind. How did Guglielmo know that he was

anxious about a race, unless he was reading it in the crystal?

Billy Bunter, of course, was in no difficulty about that—after seeing Hazel's "Racing Oracle" at the bungalow, and after what he had overheard the foolish junior saying to Harry Wharton.

But to Hazel it was startling enough. "What else?" breathed Hazel, as the magician paused.

"The scene changes. I see a beach, cliffs, a bungalow. The name on the gate is Chez Nous."

"Oh!" gasped Hazel.

"I see two schoolboys—one is in a bathing-cloak. His face is angry. The other face is yours."

Again Hazel caught his breath. This was the scene of the morning after the arrival of the Famous Five. How did Guglielmo know, unless he was reading it in the crystal?

"I hear voices," went on Guglielmo. "The voices come to me like a whisper from afar."

"You—you hear them?" gasped Hazel.

"I hear them. The boy whose face is like yours in the crystal asks the other for money. He refuses."

Hazel wiped the perspiration from his brow. That was exactly what had occurred that morning at the holiday bungalow. How did Guglielmo know, unless, as he pretended, it was pictured in the magic crystal?

"But that's the past," muttered Hazel. "It's the future I want to know. Tell me about the race."

"The pictures come and go in the crystal. I can read only what I see!" boomed Guglielmo. "Now I see the racecourse again. Ah, the starter gives the signal! They're off!"

Hazel stared feverishly into the crystal. He could see nothing but a shadow cast by the magician's head. Could Guglielmo see more? If not, how did he know what had happened at the bungalow?

"Hark! I hear voices—many voices! The bookmakers are calling the odds. I hear a name—the name of a horse."

"What name?" breathed Hazel.

"Purple Peter."

Hazel hardly breathed.

"What are the odds?"

"Four to one—no, five to one against Purple Peter!" boomed Guglielmo. "They gallop. I hear the thudding of hoofs. The people shout. One horse leads—one horse is well away of the rest."

Hazel trembled.

"Tell me the colours of the leading jockey!" he breathed.

There was a pause.

Billy Bunter had not the faintest idea of the colours of any of the jockeys riding in that race. He knew, in fact, nothing about the race, except what he had heard from Hazel himself—eavesdropping in the bungalow. And the Great Guglielmo could not tell what Billy Bunter did not know.

"Who's leading?" repeated Hazel. "Can't you see his colours?"

"The crystal grows dim; the colours escape my eye. But I hear the voices of the crowd. They are calling—Purple Peter leads!"

"Oh!" gasped Hazel.

"Purple Peter leads by a head—by a length—by two lengths!"

Hazel clenched his hands till his nails dug into the palms in intense feverish anxiety. Was the magician truly reading all this in the glass—a picture of what had not yet happened, of what was to happen on the morrow?

How could he doubt it, when the magician had read in the crystal what

had happened at the bungalow? He wanted to be convinced—he was eager to be convinced—and he did not doubt now. If it was not magic, what was it?

"Hark! They shout; they roar—Purple Peter wins!" boomed Guglielmo. "Purple Peter wins by three lengths! The race is over!"

Hazel almost tottered.

"The scene changes. I see a schoolboy. It is yourself. You have laid money on Purple Peter. You pocket your winnings. The scene changes again. I see the beach; I see a school-girl. She calls you by name. The name she utters is Hazel. It is not really your name, but a familiar name by which you are called in your family. You answer her; you speak her name. Her name is Marjorie. Now the picture fades. I hear no more."

Hazel stood dumbfounded.

If he wanted proof, he had it now. How could a circus magician know his name—know that he was called by a familiar name in his family, and not by his own name of Peter? How could the man know that he had a sister, and that her name was Marjorie? It was proof overwhelming!

Guglielmo lifted his face.

"The sitting is over," he said. "I have told you all that I have read in the crystal. Are you satisfied?"

"Yes, yes!" gasped Hazel. "More than satisfied. I'd never have believed it possible. I can't understand it; but it's true—it's true!"

He almost tottered from the magician's tent.

Like a fellow in a dream, he walked away from the circus.

He had gone there, unbelieving, but feverishly hopeful, eager to catch at any straw. Now he believed—he had to believe! He wanted to believe, and he had what seemed overwhelming proof. The magician had told him things which no stranger to him could have known unless by magic. The last doubt was gone from Hazel's mind now; he was going to back Purple Peter in the morrow's race, by whatever means money came into his hands.

After he had gone the Great Guglielmo grinned.

"Beast!" murmured the circus magician, not in the voice of Guglielmo, but in Billy Bunter's. "Rotter! Banging a fellow's head—yah! Serve you jolly well right to lose your money! I hope it'll be a lesson to you! Beast!"

Bunter chuckled.

"I can see Purple Peter winning! He, he, he! I can see a sharper taking you on at five to one if that jolly old horse had a dog's chance! He, he, he! Silly idiot! If Wharton's ass enough to lend you two quids, he'll jolly well never see it again, and serve him jolly well right! He, he, he!"

And Bunter chortled.

His idea was that he had got his own back on Hazel for banging his head.

Certainly it did not occur to the fat spoofer for a moment by what desperate means Hazel was thinking of raising the wind. His idea was that the young blackguard was going to throw away his money, and that it served him right! But even the unscrupulous Owl would hardly have played such a trick had he dreamed whose money it was that Hazel was going to throw away!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Changing a Fiver!

JOHNNY BULL looked up from his "Holiday Annual" as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came into the garden at Chez Nous.

After coming back from the beach



Reaching for Johnny Bull's hat, Tippet Tip picked three more five-pound-notes out of it. "Ain't they yours?" he asked in surprise. "No, they jolly well aren't!" gasped the horrified junior, staring at the five banknotes in the clown's hand. "Some silly idiot must have put them there!"

the Co. had split up. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry had gone cycling with Marjorie and Clara. Frank Nugent had his sketch-book on the cliffs. Johnny Bull had the wireless on, while Hurree Singh went to call on Mr. Tip at the circus. Fed-up with the wireless, Johnny was sitting under a tree, reading, till his friends should come in. He laid it aside as the dusky nabob joined him under the tree, and sat down in a deck-chair by his side.

"My esteemed Johnny," murmured the nabob, "if you are not terrifically interested in esteemed and absurd literature—"

"Just finished a story," answered Johnny. "I was thinking of getting out on my jigger and meeting the chaps coming back. Coming?"

"Pleasurefully!" assented Hurree Singh. "But, first, there is an idiotic matter I wishfully desire to mention."

"Cut on!"

"You have an esteemed banknote for five absurd pounds in your pocket-book," said the nabob.

Johnny stared.

"Yes; what about it?" he asked. "Afraid I've lost it, fathead? I'm keeping it for the sea-trip on Saturday; I'm not going to change it till then. It's safe in my pocket."

"In the holiday season, my esteemed Johnny, there are lots of pickpockets in such delectable spots as Brighton," remarked the nabob.

"I'd like to see one pick my pocket!" grunted Johnny. "Look here, Inky, what are you driving at?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh paused a moment. He had no intention of telling Johnny or anyone else of what had occurred on the beach that afternoon. He hoped that no one but himself would ever know what Hazel had tried to do, and nearly done. But for Hazel's own sake, as well as for other reasons, he was

going to make sure that if the attempt was repeated, it should not succeed.

If that intention was still in the scapegrace's mind, if he waited and watched for an opportunity, there was little doubt that he would find one. How to defeat him without warning Johnny Bull of his intention was no easy matter. From that the nabob shrank. But his astute mind had thought of another resource—hence his visit to Tippet Tip.

"Give it a name!" said Johnny. He could see that his dusky chum had something in his mind. "Have you seen a pickpocket about, or what?"

"I have a terrific suspicion of an individual I saw on the absurd beach this afternoon," said the nabob.

"I never noticed him," said Johnny, little dreaming that it was Hazeldene of the Remove of whom Hurree Singh was speaking. "Give me the tip if you spot him again, Inky."

"I might not be on the spot, old scout. But I have an idiotic suggestion to make. The suspicious individual has, I think, heard us speaking of your fiver. He knows about it. My idea is to pull his absurd leg if he should succeed in getting thievish hands on your pocket-book. Look at this."

Johnny Bull stared blankly at the Bank of Elegance note that the dusky junior drew from his pocket.

"Where the dickens did you get that?" he asked.

"The esteemed Tip obliged me by giving it to me," explained Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I want you to put this, folded, in your pocket-book, and—"

"Eh?"

"And entrust your genuine fiver to my ludicrous keeping—"

"Wha-at?"

"And then, if the esteemed rascal filches the banknote, there will be no

harm done!" explained Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Johnny Bull sat staring at the dusky face of his chum blankly for a long moment. He seemed too surprised to speak.

"What rot!" he said at last.

"The rotfulness may be preposterous," assented the nabob. "Perhaps I am a silly ass, as you express in your benevolent countenance. But—"

"Well, you seem rather an ass, old chap!" said Johnny. "Still, if you really think that some blighter heard us speaking about the fiver, and has an eye on it—"

"I am assuredly certain of that, my idiotic Johnny! It would be a terrific calamity to lose the esteemed fiver. On the other hand, it would be rather an absurd lark for the suspicious individual to snaffle a Bank of Elegance note if he succeeded in getting dishonourable hands on it!"

Johnny chuckled at the idea.

"I can imagine his face when he unfolded it and found what it was!" he remarked. "But it's all rot, Inky! My banknote isn't in any danger."

"But you will not refuse request of estimable chum?" urged the nabob. "I should be terrifically shirty at refusal to trust my absurd and idiotic judgment!"

"Fathead!" said Johnny Bull. "I'll do as you like, of course! But I think you're an ass!"

"The thoughtfulness does not matter, so long as you accede to absurd request!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, all right, ass!"

Johnny Bull took out his pocket-book and extracted therefrom the five-pound note. In its place he tucked in the conjurer's Bank of Elegance note, folded in half.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with great
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satisfaction, packed away the genuine note in his own notecase.

"Now it is safe as a ridiculous house!" he remarked.

"It was safe before!" grunted Johnny. "Think I'm a mug to have my pocket picked on the Brighton front? Rats!"

Hurree Singh made no answer to that. It was not from a pickpocket on the Brighton front that the banknote was in peril. But the nabob could not, and would not, mention Marjorie's brother in such a connection.

He hoped, and tried to believe, that that mad temptation had passed, and that Hazel would think no more of it. But he knew that the probability was otherwise.

The "Racing Oracle" and Hazel's worried, sulky looks told their own tale. Harry Wharton had said nothing; but the keen-witted nabob had a very clear idea why Hazel had wanted to speak to him in private the first morning in Brighton—after waiting up so late for the party. It all fitted together with the incident on the beach.

Hazel was, or fancied he was, in desperate need of money, and likely to stick at little to get hold of it. Hazel certainly knew of the fiver—indeed, he had been asked to join in the projected sea-trip on the coming Saturday for which that fiver was being reserved.

Hurree Singh, naturally, wanted to save Johnny's fiver from dishonest hands, but his chief thought was to prevent Marjorie's brother, even in spite of himself, from becoming a thief.

If Hazel made no fresh attempt, no harm was done. If he did, and succeeded, he would snaffle a slip of engraved paper, worth what it was printed on and no more.

His disappointment, when he discovered what he had taken, would be his well-deserved punishment.

"Come on! Let's get the jiggers out!" said Johnny.

And the nabob rose and followed him.

"My esteemed Johnny," he murmured, "you thinkfully consider me rather an absurd fathead—"

"Right on the wicket! I do!" assented Johnny. "So will the other fellows if I tell them of this silly stunt."

"Perhapsfully so," agreed Hurree Singh. "Please do not mention it to our ridiculous friends, old bean. Mum is the absurd word!"

"Want to make a mystery of it?" grunted Johnny.

"Exactly!"

Johnny looked at him.

"Either you're a silly ass, Inky, or there's something behind this that you haven't told me!" he said. "But it's all right. I won't mention it if you don't want me to. Think a blessed pick-pocket might be hanging about overhearing us and getting wise to it?" snorted Johnny.

"There is an absurd possibility—" murmured the nabob.

"Rot!"

The nabob smiled—a dusky smile. Johnny Bull was puzzled and, perhaps, a little irritated. He saw no reason for the change of the banknote, and less reason for not mentioning what had been done. But the nabob had had his way—which was all that really mattered.

"Now, come on, and don't talk any more rot!" added Johnny Bull.

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, smiling, wheeled out his jigger after Johnny, and the subject was dropped.

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THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Plunge!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Hazel, old man!"

The Famous Five were surprised—and rather pleased.

They had spent that evening at Muccolini's Circus, with Marjorie and Clara, and it had been a jolly evening—none the less so, perhaps, because Hazel's sulky, discontented face was absent.

Hazel had had some other occupation, and had not come. Since the nabob had passed him that afternoon at the circus gate the chums of the Remove had seen nothing of Marjorie's brother.

Now, coming back to Chez Nous, after seeing the two girls home, they saw him—rather unexpectedly.

Mrs. Whoof, the charlady, as Bob called the good dame, had left a cold supper ready for the schoolboys when they came in, and gone; so they expected to find the bungalow locked.

Instead of which, the front door was wide open to let in what breeze there was on a breathlessly hot August night. The light shone out into the summer dusk, and the strains of the radio were heard.

Hazel was sitting there, in the "lounge hall," with the wireless on. Evidently he had arrived before Mrs. Whoof had left, or he could not have got in—which looked as if he had been waiting rather a long time for the juniors.

"Thought I'd give you a look-in," he said, shutting off the radio and rising from a long cane chair, with a slight flush in his face.

"Jolly glad to see you, old man!" said Harry Wharton. "We've been to the circus. We looked for you before we started, but—"

"I've been for a long walk along the front," said Hazel. "I've been feeling a bit seedy somehow, and I thought it would do me good. I think it has."

His manner was very amicable. If there was a touch of furtiveness about it, the juniors never thought of noticing it. Harry Wharton looked pleased—as he felt. Since that first morning in Brighton, Hazel had not spoken a single word to him, and evidently had been nursing resentment. It made matters rather awkward for the holiday party. It was a great relief to the captain of the Remove to see Marjorie's brother come out of his sulks.

"Nothing like a blow in the sea air if you feel run down!" said Bob Cherry. "Best thing you could do, old bean! Now you'll stay to supper?"

"If—if you'd like—"

"Of course! Yes, rather!" said Harry. "Mrs. Whoof will have left it all ready, old chap, and there's lots and lots—enough even for Bunter if he blew in! Squat down for five minutes, and we'll have it all ready."

"I'll shove on the wireless again, then; there's a good thing coming on."

"Do!" said Harry.

"My hat! It's warm!" said Bob Cherry. He peeled off a blazer, tossed it into the bed-room—where it landed on a bed—and went into the living-room. Bob started brewing orangeade with a heap of fresh, juicy oranges, to wash down the cold supper.

"Warm!" said Nugent. "You mean beastly hot!"

"The esteemed warmth is gratefully comforting," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. The blaze of a hot August day was welcome to the Indian schoolboy; it reminded him of the torrid climate of his native land.

To the Nabob of Bhanipur it was warm; to the other fellows, blazing hot. Four fellows discarded jackets.

Camping in the holiday bungalow had the advantage that fellows could take things easy in the matter of attire.

The Famous Five went into the living-room, where the supper lay covered on the table, and Hazel remained in the hall, with the wireless buzzing.

The door was left wide open, and the cheery voices of the juniors from the adjoining room mingled with the strains of the wireless.

Hazel stood by the radio, but he was not listening to the music.

He was thinking of other things.

Since his interview with Guglielmo at the circus his mind had been irrevocably made up.

Misgivings, shame, remorse had been banished; there was only one thought in his mind—one thought and one fixed purpose.

And he could not have found—or hoped for—a better chance than this.

Johnny Bull's jacket hung on a peg within a yard of him as he stood at the radio; he had hardly more than to stretch out his hand.

Johnny was very far from being a careless fellow. There was no carelessness in leaving his jacket hanging there with the pocket-book in it. Nobody was in the bungalow, except the Greyfriars juniors. To doubt that his property was safe in such circumstances would never have crossed Johnny's mind.

Johnny, now, was carving a cold chicken. Like the other fellows, he was glad to see Hazel in a more cheerful mood, and glad that he had come in to supper. He carved a very nice helping indeed for Hazel's plate.

The wireless roared on.

If Hazel made any movement in the hall it was drowned by the merry strains of a jazz band.

"Ready, Hazel!" called out Harry Wharton.

Hazel appeared in the doorway. He glanced across the room at the clock on the mantelpiece.

"Oh, my hat! Is it really eleven?" he exclaimed.

"Just on," said Harry. "We're a bit late, you know, after the circus—and it's rather a step from here."

"I never thought it was so late! I shan't be able to stay to supper," said Hazel hurriedly. "My father was a bit crusty about my staying out so late the other night—the night you came, you know. You fellows don't mind if I cut?"

He put on his straw hat as he spoke. Whether they minded or not, he was evidently going to cut.

"Oh, dash it all, stay a few minutes and have a bite!" said Bob. "It's a topping supper, old man! We're all as hungry as hunters!"

"I—I think I'd better not! Thanks all the same. Good-night, you chaps!"

"Well, good-night, if you think you'd better go!" said Harry.

"Good-night, old bean!"

"See you in the morning," said Hazel.

"I'll come along for a bathe—"

"Yes, do, old chap; we'll turn out early!"

Hazoldene hurried away; and the juniors, as they sat down to supper, heard his feet on the pebbly path to the gate at a run. Evidently Hazel was in a hurry to get away.

"Hazel seems to have got over his sulks," remarked Frank Nugent. "I'm jolly glad! He's not a bad chap really."

"Not at all," said Harry. "I suppose he will join up for the trip on Saturday now. It makes it better all round."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Bob.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sat silent. There were thoughts in his mind that he had no intention of uttering.

Having taken his precautions for the



"Help! Keep him off!" yelled Bunter, as Hazel rushed at him, hitting right and left. Signor Muccolini chuckled. He was not anxious to keep anybody off Bunter!

safety of Johnny's fiver, the nabob had dismissed the matter from his mind. But he could not help it recurring when Hazel made that sudden departure without staying to supper. He could not help wondering whether anything had occurred in the hall while Hazel was alone there with the radio. But he said nothing.

The Famous Five packed away their supper and turned in. It was an unusually late hour for them, and they were all more than ready for bed.

Meanwhile, Hazel was hurrying away breathlessly along the shadowed scabbard.

He had left the bungalow at a run, as if fearful that something might happen at the last moment. He dropped into a walk, but it was a quick walk. His hand was in his pocket, his fingers tight over a folded slip of crisp paper. His heart was beating almost painfully. He had taken the plunge now!

They would not suspect—they could not! If they did, suspicion would be washed out when a five-pound note was found again in the bungalow. On that point, of course, there was no doubt—not in Hazel's mind. After the race at White Hawk Hill on the morrow he would have five fivers of his own, as well as the stake returned with his winnings. He had only "borrowed" that stake—borrowed it for twenty-four hours!

At a dusky corner, nearly a mile from the bungalow, he almost ran into a man who was waiting, leaning against a tree, and smoking a cigar. There was a glimmer of a yellow necktie in the starlight.

"Oh, you're here!" breathed Hazel.

"Waiting for you, sir," said Gedge, peering curiously at Hazel in the deep dusk. "You said—"

"Yes, yes! It's all right! I—I've borrowed the tin!" muttered Hazel. "One of my friends. I told you I could manage it."

He glanced up and down uneasily. The hour was late, but people were passing. He dreaded to be seen speaking to Mr. Gedge by anyone who knew him by sight—and his father had relations, friends, and many acquaintances in Brighton.

"A fiver on Purple Peter, five to one—you've got it clear!" whispered Hazel, as his hand came out of his pocket.

"Right as rain, sir!"

"I'll see you to-morrow, then, after the race."

Hazel thrust the folded banknote into the ready hand and hurried away. He disappeared into the shadows, heading for home at a trot.

It was done now! It was done, and it could not be recalled! He hardly knew whether he was relieved, or whether he was more heavily oppressed, as he hurried away through the breathless summer night. But it was done, at all events—and that was that!

Gedge, the note in his damp, flabby hand, stood staring after him till he disappeared, a faint grin on his low-browed, cunning face.

The man in the yellow necktie thrived on "mugs"—but he told himself that he had seldom or never dealt with so complete a specimen of the mug as this schoolboy.

Hazel had backed Purple Peter to win at White Hawk Hill—having reason, of which the man in the yellow necktie knew nothing, for being absolutely certain that Purple Peter was the destined winner. If Purple Peter came anywhere near the first three, Gedge was going to be the most surprised man in Brighton on the morrow.

The racing man shrugged his shoulders and took out a greasy notecase to put the banknote in it. It was merely from a habit of caution that he unfolded it and looked at it before putting it away. It felt, and looked, like an ordinary five-pound note, and Gedge

had no doubt that Hazel had borrowed it from one of his school friends, as he stated.

But as he unfolded the doubled note and looked at it, a startling change came over Mr. Gedge.

He stared at that note.

He blinked at it.

The man in the yellow necktie was not unacquainted with Bank of Elegance notes! He had, indeed, used such articles in confidence tricks in his time. But it had never before happened to Mr. Gedge to have one passed on his own wary self! It had happened now.

For a long moment Mr. Gedge stared at that note with a most extraordinary expression on his face. Then he made a stride in the direction Hazel had gone. But the Greyfriars sportsman was long out of sight. And—judging by the look on Mr. Gedge's face—it was just as well for Hazel that he was out of reach.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Hard Knock for Hazel!

"BRIGHTON'S jolly!" said Bob Cherry.

"Terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Come in to brekker, Hazel."

"Yes, if you like."

"Whoof's got it all ready," said Bob, "and I'm ready for it! Nothing like an early morning bathe for the jolly old appetite."

The six juniors came up the beach in a cheery bunch. Hazel had joined the Famous Five in the early sunny morning for a dip, as they had arranged. They were glad enough to see him, hoping that this new cordiality marked the end of the sulks.

Hazel, in the peculiar circumstances, would rather have preferred to avoid THE MAGNET LIBRARY. No. 1,486.

that cheery company. But he dared not. For one thing, he was anxious to know whether the five-pound note had been missed from Johnny Bull's pocket-book. For another, he realised that it would look pointed if he kept away after his visit of the previous evening. He did not want it to be specially noticed that he had paid only one visit to the bung, and that on the occasion when a bank-note was missing! He had to keep up the friendly footing he had assumed, or ask to be suspected.

But it was clear that, as yet, nothing was known. Johnny Bull had had no occasion so far to open his pocket-book, and naturally he had not opened it without occasion.

Hazel walked up to the bungalow with the chums of the Remove. An appetising scent of bacon and eggs and tomatoes greeted them. Mrs. Whoof had done her duty nobly. The good dame cleared off, leaving the schoolboys to breakfast, to come back later to clear up.

Hazel forced himself to be friendly and cheerful and chatty. In point of fact he was feeling much more at his ease.

Likely enough, no discovery would be made until he had had time to replace that missing fiver. He might, with luck, find an opportunity of slipping it back into the pocket-book! That would be the best way if he could contrive it, and it was very likely that he could.

So he ate with a good appetite, and kept up a cheerful face. The talk of the juniors naturally ran on the circus they had visited the previous evening.

"You ought to have come, Hazel, old man!" said Bob. "Look here, let's fix up another visit later, and you come along—what?"

"Good idea!" agreed Hazel.

"There's some really ripping turns, especially Marco and his jolly old lions," said Bob. "And that clown chap, Tippetty Tip, is no end funny."

"Did you look in at any of the side-shows?" asked Hazel. He was wondering whether the Famous Five had had

any experience of Guglielmo's uncanny powers.

"Oh, yes; that chap Tip does a ventriloquial side-show, and we gave him a look in!" said Nugent. "I fancy Bunter could beat him at ventriloquism, though."

"Is that fat ass still at the circus?" asked Hazel carelessly.

"Oh, yes! He went back there after his night here," said Harry Wharton.

"I looked round the place yesterday, but didn't see him there!" said Hazel. "The fact is, I looked in at a side-show while I was there. Did you fellows see the fortune-teller?"

"You don't mean Guglielmo?" asked Bob, with a chuckle.

"Yes, that's the chap! I saw him," said Hazel. "I was—was rather curious to see whether there was anything in it!"

The Famous Five grinned. They could not help grinning. It was rather funny to think of a Greyfriars fellow having his fortune told by the fat Owl of the Remove.

Hazel frowned a little. Unaware of what the chums of the Remove knew, he saw no occasion for grinning, and he was easily annoyed.

"No, we didn't call on jolly old Guglielmo," chuckled Johnny Bull. "You see, we saw Guglielmo when the circus was near Wharton Lodge while we were staying there, and saw too much of him."

"So you've seen Guglielmo, Hazel?" asked Wharton, much amused. "I'll bet he surprised you. He did us when we first saw him."

"Well, he did surprise me," said Hazel, with a touch of sullenness. "I never believed that there was anything in fortune-telling or crystal-gazing—I always thought it rot—"

"So it jolly well is!" said Johnny Bull.

"That's all you know!" said Hazel tartly. "You may think different if you consult that man Guglielmo. I can tell you that I thought different after what he told me."

"You didn't see him with his whiskers off!" chuckled Bob.

"I don't know whether his whiskers come off or not, and I don't care! I don't see that that has anything to do with it," said Hazel snappishly. "You fellows can chortle if you like, but I can tell you he made my hair stand almost on end with what he read in the crystal."

"Bet you he did!" grinned Nugent.

"Well, he did!" grunted Hazel. "I'd never seen him before; he was an utter stranger to me, and I to him, so there can't have been any spoof about it. He read a lot of things in the crystal—how, I don't know, but proof's proof. For one thing, he told me my name—"

"He would!" grinned Bob.

"He mentioned that I had a sister named Marjorie—"

"Oh, quite! He knows that all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I don't see how he knows if he doesn't read it in the crystal!" Hazel almost snarled. "He even told me something that had happened in this very bungalow—exactly as it happened. What do you say to that?"

"Did he?" said Harry Wharton. "Then I'll bet it was something that happened while Bunter was here!"

Hazel stared blankly.

"I don't see what you're driving at!" he snapped. "As it happens, it was the first morning you were here, and Bunter stayed the night—I don't know whether he had gone when I spoke to you here, Wharton—"

Wharton knitted his brows.

"He hadn't!" he said. "He was in the bed-room—I never thought about him, but I should have supposed he was asleep if I had."

"I woke him up a bit before we went out!" grinned Bob.

"Oh! I remember now! Then that fat scoundrel was awake and listening!" said the captain of the Remove. "I'll jolly well kick him next time we go to the circus."

"Oh, don't talk rot!" said Hazel, with an angry excitement that surprised the juniors. "Even if Bunter was listening, as usual, think he told another man at the circus—and that Guglielmo had it all ready to palm off on me? What utter rot! I dropped in at the circus absolutely by chance—"

"Yes; but—"

"Do you want me to believe that Bunter told Guglielmo talk that he may possibly have heard in this bung, and my sister's name, and even mentioned that I was called Hazel in the family instead of by my name of Peter? Why should he? You're talking silly rot, and you know it!"

Hazel's voice was shrill, his face flushed. Harry Wharton & Co. stared at him, surprised and disconcerted by his evident anger. They did not dream how much depended, for Hazel, on the Great Guglielmo being genuine!

"Don't get shirty, old chap!" said Bob soothingly. "If you'll let us explain—"

"You can't explain how Guglielmo knew all that, unless he read it in the crystal. Don't be a fool!" said Hazel harshly. "Why should Bunter tell him a lot of stuff about me—a chap he had never seen, and was not likely to see? It's foolery, on the face of it."

"Yes, I can see it looks like that to you," said Bob. "Of course, Bunter never told him anything—he didn't need to. You see—"

"I put the man to a thorough test!" snarled Hazel. "I didn't believe in the

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thing, but I had to believe in it when he proved it by telling me things he couldn't possibly have known, except by the crystal. He actually read what it was I had in my mind—something I wanted to know about, that's coming off to-day—and as he was able to read the past, why shouldn't I believe that he could read the future, too? I never believed in crystal-gazing before; but when a thing's proved, it's proved."

"But if you'll listen for a minute—"

Hazel rose from his chair. "I won't listen to silly, obstinate cavilling at plain facts!" he answered. "I'm not a fool, to be taken in, I suppose. He told me—"

"He only told you what Bunter knew!" roared Bob.

"You've admitted yourself that Bunter never told him anything."

"Because he didn't need to, you ass! He's Bunter!"

"Don't you catch on, Hazel?" exclaimed Wharton. "You needn't get shirty about being taken in. We were taken in, just the same, when we first saw the spoofer, before we found him out—"

"What do you mean?" Hazel's face was like chalk. "Who's Bunter? What are you talking about? Have you all gone mad?"

"Hazel, old chap, you're ill!" exclaimed Wharton, in alarm.

He jumped up and came round the table. Hazel waved him savagely back.

"Will you tell me what you mean!" he panted. "If you're not mad, what are you driving at?"

"He's Bunter—"

"Who's Bunter?" shrieked Hazel.

"Guglielmo! That's his turn at the circus!" explained Wharton. "He gets himself up in a wig and cloak, and tells fortunes by the crystal, and makes people hear the voices of absent friends with his ventriloquism and—"

Hazel staggered.

"It's not true! It's not true! I don't believe it!" he gasped.

"It's true, all right," said Bob, in wonder. "We found him out—he's Bunter! That's the turn he's doing at the circus! What does it matter, anyhow, Hazel? He ought to be jolly well kicked for his rotten trickery, but I don't see—"

Bob broke off. It was clear that it mattered very much to Hazel, whatever the reason.

He leaned on the back of his chair, panting. He had said that it was not true, and he did not believe it. But he knew that it was true, and he did believe it. What had he done? Tricked by a charlatan, what had he done? The evidence of Guglielmo's genuineness had seemed overwhelming to him—as if there could be any real evidence of what was impossible! Hazel gazed almost wildly at the anxious, concerned faces of the Famous Five.

"Hazel, old man!" exclaimed Harry.

"Don't talk to me! Let me alone!"

Hazel turned and ran from the room and the bungalow.

Harry Wharton & Co. were left staring at one another in wonder and alarm. They hoped that Hazel would come back; but he did not come. Breakfast at Chez Nous finished far less cheerily than it had begun.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER!

The Spoofer's Reward!

BILLY BUNTER chuckled. Leaning on the gate of the circus field, the fat Owl of the Remove was blinking through his big spectacles at an early edition of the evening paper.

"Billy Bunter was not, as a rule, in-

terested in the column in the "Stop Press" headed "Racing Results." Bunter, undoubtedly, was an ass—but not quite ass enough to expend his cash—when he had any—in the support of the bookmaking fraternity.

But for once Billy Bunter was interested in that news for mugs. He wanted to know the result of the two o'clock at White Hawk Hill.

Now he knew—and it made him chuckle.

Signor Muccolini, coming by the gate, glanced at him with a scowl, and wondered what caused the fat Owl's satisfaction. Bunter was hardly the fellow to have backed a winner!

It was the fact that Hazel had backed a loser that caused Billy Bunter to cackle.

"Also ran—Purple Peter!"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter, grinning over that item of news.

From a professional point of view, the Great Guglielmo would have preferred his predictions to come out correct. From a personal point of view, Billy Bunter was glad that his prediction had come out otherwise! The beast who had banged his head at the seaside bungalow had backed a loser and lost his money—and serve him jolly well right!

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "Also ran! He, he, he! I wonder how much the silly ass put on him! He, he, he! Perhaps some fellow is sorry he banged a fellow's head! He, he, he!"

And Bunter, leaning on the gate, chuckled.

Signor Muccolini's scowling glance passed him and fixed on a schoolboy who was coming up the lane.

He did not know Hazeldene by sight, but he was struck by the set, savage expression on his face. He wondered what that angry-looking boy wanted there.

He soon discovered! That angry-looking boy spotted Bunter at the gate and broke into a run. His eyes blazed as he reached Bunter.

Hazel had already learned the result of the race, and the hapless fate of Purple Peter! Now he had come to the circus to see Bunter! He found him at the gate.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "Also ran—he, he, he! Serve him jolly well right! He, he—Yaroooh! Whoop! Who—what—yaroooh! Help!"

Bunter staggered away from the gate. The newspaper dropped from his hands. Somebody had rushed at him, and was hitting him right and left.

"Ow! Stoppit! Yaroooh! Help!" shrieked Bunter. "I say, who the thump—what the dickens—yaroooh! I say—help! Mucky, you beast, keep him off!"

Signor Muccolini grinned.

He was not likely to keep anybody off who was punching Bunter!

"Yaroooh! Keep off! Stoppit! Oh, it's you!" howled Bunter. "Hazel, you beast—wharrer you up to? Yooop! Help! Whoop!"

"You fat rotter! You spoofing worm!" panted Hazel. "Take that—and that—and that—and that—"

(Continued on next page.)

AN OPEN INVITATION TO—



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 Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

SHAKE hands, boys and girls. We're all smiles in the MAGNET office these days, for my new programme of cover-to-cover Greyfriars stories has brought us shoals of congratulatory letters, and the old paper is fairly booming! Frank Richards, like the rest of us, is smiling as he pounds away on his typewriter. He doesn't get much "time off" these days, as you can imagine, for that extra-long story every week keeps him hard at it. By the by, I wonder how many authors in this or any other country could keep on writing stories of this length and of the same super-quality regularly every week? I believe Frank Richards is unique in this respect, as in others.

I have heard it said that the Greyfriars stories must be written by a team of authors, working under the same name. Don't you believe it, chums! Frank Richards is just Frank Richards—and no one else. He and I, working together, give you the Greyfriars stories you like so much. And it's no light task, believe me. All we ask in return is readers—and yet more readers—for the good old MAGNET. If every one of you good chums would get one new reader for the paper every month, in a year's time our circle of readers would be TWELVE TIMES AS LARGE as it is

now—for no one ever ceases to read the MAGNET once he or she starts!

So will you see what you can do—by special request of Frank Richards and Your Editor?

Now for next week's programme. The full-length cover-to-cover story is a real "wizard," and no one but Frank Richards could have written it. The title is: "NOT WANTED AT THE CIRCUS." Naturally, you will not want two guesses to name the fellow who is "not wanted." It is the one and only Billy Bunter!

But Billy Bunter is nothing if not a stickler. It is made very plain to him that his presence at the circus is unwelcome—very plain indeed—but he employs all his ingenuity in contriving to "stay put." Harry Wharton & Co. unwittingly render him a great service, and so, by a combination of cunning and luck, Billy Bunter maintains his position, after providing the funniest turn ever seen at Muccolini's Magnificent Circus!

With this marvellous long story and the magnificent "Greyfriars Herald" Supplement, next week's MAGNET is absolutely unbeatable for entertainment value, and I will back it against any other paper in the world!

YOUR EDITOR.
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,486.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter, as he took them. "Help! Whoop!"

Signor Muccolini chuckled. Bunter had been chuckling; it was the signor's turn to chuckle now!

"Ow! Wow! Help! Keep him off!" roared Bunter.

The signor turned and strolled away. Who that angry schoolboy was, and why he was pitching into Bunter, Signor Muccolini did not know. But he wished him good hunting!

"Ow! Wow! Beast! Yaroo! Oh trikey!" spluttered Bunter.

He turned and fled wildly into the circus field. After him rushed Hazel, kicking. His boot landed with a crash on tight trousers.

Bump!

Bunter landed, in a yelling heap.

Then Hazel, panting, walked out at the gate again. Billy Bunter was left to sell.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Beast! Wow-wow-wow!"

Tippity Tip, grinning, kindly came along and gave him a hand up. Billy Bunter staggered to his feet, gasping for breath, and blinked round him through his big spectacles.

"Ow! Is—is—is he gone?" he gasped.

"He's gone!" grinned Tip. "But he's given you something to remember him by—what?"

"Ow! The cheeky beast! Pitching into a chap!" gasped Bunter. "I suppose he's found out—yow-ow—I dare say those other beasts have told him—grooogh! I'd jolly well have thrashed him if he hadn't cleared off—oogh!"

"Shall I call him back?" asked the obliging Mr. Tip.

"Beast!"

Bunter rolled hastily on, leaving Mr. Tip grinning. The Great Guglielmo was doing well at Muccolini's Magnificent Circus; but there were drawbacks to the career of a spoofer, and this was one of them.

For the next hour or more Billy Bunter was busily occupied in rubbing damaged places, and it was an aching and painful Guglielmo who appeared in the side-show that evening.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

All Serene!

MARJORIE waved her hand, and her face brightened.

"Here's Hazel!" she said.

"Merry and bright, as usual!" remarked Miss Clara.

The Famous Five smiled.

Hazel did not look exactly merry and bright, as he came slouching along the beach to the spot where the schoolboys and schoolgirls were sitting on the sand.

No doubt his interview with Billy Bunter at the circus field had afforded him some satisfaction. But he was

almost at his wits' end with dismay and apprehension and foreboding. He had not seen his friend in the yellow necktie; but it was useless to see Gedge. The wretched horse had lost, and the whole horizon was black for the hapless punter. Had they missed the banknote yet? Would they suspect him when it was missed—and could not be replaced? Whether they did or not, he knew what he was!

"Have some of this ginger-pop, old bean!" said Bob Cherry.

Hazel shook his head, and threw himself on the sand. Did they know yet? The happy, cheery faces did not look as if any disconcerting discovery had been made.

"It's weird!" Johnny Bull was speaking. "I thought Inky was a silly ass at the time—I said so, didn't I, Inky?"

"You did, my esteemed and fat-headed Johnny!" agreed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Well, it seemed such rot!" said Johnny. "But, as it's turned out—"

"Jolly lucky how it's turned out, anyhow!" said Miss Clara. "Inky's saved you five pounds."

"And our trip on Saturday!" said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather! We were keeping the jolly old banknote for that, you know," said Johnny Bull. "I think I'll let you go on looking after it, Inky! All the same, it beats me!"

Hazel looked at him. What all this could possibly mean was an utter mystery to him.

"I mean, how could anybody have got at my pocket-book?" said Johnny. "I've left my jacket off sometimes, of course, but—"

Hazel's heart stood still.

"Well, somebody did," said Miss Clara, "and, but for Inky—"

"Yes; but it's jolly queer, taking the banknote out, and leaving the pocket-book. Isn't that weird? You'd expect a pickpocket to bag the pocket-book itself, if he touched it at all," said the puzzled Johnny.

"The queerfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jameet Ram Singh, carefully not looking at Hazel. "But it is all right as the esteemed rain, as the banknote is still safe as a house."

Hazel sat up.

"What are you fellows talking about?" he asked, in a cracked voice. "Have—have you lost your fiver, Bull?"

"Hazel hasn't heard about it," said Marjorie, with a smile. "Nothing's been lost, Hazel, but it's all very mysterious."

"Nothing's been lost!" repeated Hazel.

"No; it's all right!" said Johnny. "You see, Inky had a suspicion that some pickpocket had an eye on me and my fiver. He made me hand it over to him for safety, and I put a spoof note

in my pocket-book instead—Inky got it from that chap Tip, at the circus."

Hazel sat still.

"I thought it all rot," went on Johnny. "and I can't see now how a pickpocket got at the note! But he did all right! It's gone!"

"Gone!" repeated Hazel mechanically.

"Yes; only, you see, the blighter who pinched it got a Bank of Elegance note instead of the fiver, owing to Inky!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "I should like to have seen his face when he looked at it afterwards. Must have been a picture!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, the chief thing is, that the fiver's all right!" remarked Frank Nugent. "Better take care of it, Inky."

"The carefulness will be terrific, my esteemed Franky!"

"Our trip on Saturday depends on it," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You're coming, Hazel, old man?"

Hazel gave him a strange look.

"Oh, yes, rather!" he answered. "Jolly glad to! If the weather keeps like this, we'll have a jolly day. I'll have some of that ginger-pop, Bob."

"Here you are, old bean!"

Hazel seemed to have thrown off ten years. If Hurree Jameet Ram Singh knew why, he said nothing of what he knew.

One thought was in Hazel's mind—he was not a thief! A crushing weight was lifted from his mind. Hazel was done with Gedge, done with the whole dingy business. What he had been through that day was more than enough for him.

Hazel surprised the chums of the Remove, and delighted Marjorie, by his cheery spirits that evening. And when the sea trip came off on Saturday Hazel was as merry and bright as any member of the happy holiday party.

"We're having a jolly time here, you men!" Bob Cherry remarked, when the chums of the Remove turned in on Saturday night.

"We are—we is!" agreed Johnny Bull.

"And it's Bunter who's making this jolly old holiday such a success!" said Bob.

"How's that, fathead? Bunter's sticking at the circus, and we never see him!"

"That's how!" explained Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five agreed that it was so.

THE END.

(Now look out for next week's full-of-fun yarn, entitled: "NOT WANTED AT THE CIRCUS!" It's extra-good and extra-long. Be wise and order your copy to-day!)

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8-8-36

MOLLY BIRCHEMALL'S DILEMMA

First Instalment of a Breath-taking
New Serial

by Dicky Nugent

"By Jove! There's Molly Birch-
emall!" eggshelled Frank Fearless,
jumping up suddenly from his deck-
chair on the prom at Winklesea.

Jolly and Merry and Bright winked
knowingly at each other. It was no
secret that Molly Birchemall, the
Head's pretty dawter, was a partik-
ular friend of Frank's, and Jack Jolly &
Co. could tell by his tone that he was
thrilled to death by the unexpected
vision of the girl of his heart.

"Good-morning, Miss Molly!"
cried Fearless.

Molly Birchemall looked round and
started violently as she caught sight
of the heroes of the Fourth. For some
unknown reason, she was a little pale
and worried-looking.

"Why, it's Fearless!" her silvery
voice rippled out. "Fancy meeting
you at Winklesea—and you boys,
too!"

"Fancy meeting you, Miss Molly!"
retorted Fearless merrily; then he
added more anxiously: "But you're
looking troubled over something.
What is it?"

Molly Birchemall hezzitated. Her
pretty eyes dropped under the curious
glances of the Co.

"It's—it's pop!" she tinkled.

Jack Jolly & Co. frowned. They
were by no means surprised to hear
that the cause of Miss Molly's trub-
bled mien was Doctor Birchemall.

They knew from their own egg-
perience what a knock he had for
causing pain and suffering in others!

"What has the old raskal been up
to now?" asked Fearless.

"He has vanished!" replied
Miss Molly, in tremulous, tinkling
axcents. "Three days ago, he walked
out of the Hotel Posh, where we have
been staying—and he has never been
seen since!"

"Grate pip!"

"I've informed the perlice, and
they've looked everywhere. They've
searched the sands, and climbed up
the cliffs, and prowled all over the
promenard—but without success.
He has gone just as if the earth had
opened and swallowed him up!"

"I can hardly swallow it," egg-
claimed Frank Fearless. "What do
you think has happened, then, Miss
Molly?"

A tear gleamed in Miss Molly's
eye.

"I haven't the phoggiest," she
trilled. "But now that such a long
interval has elapsed, I—I begin to
suspekt fowl play!"

Fearless shook his head.

"Cheer up, Miss Molly," he cried.

"If I were you, I should cut out the
idea of fowl play. After all, your
pater is no chicken!"

"Probably he's been on the peer
all the time, playing with the
ortomattick machines," grinned Jack
Jolly, who knew that the Head was
rather partial to penny-in-the-slot
games. "He'll turn up sooner or
later, depend on it!"

"I hoap so, I'm sure," sighed
Miss Molly. "But in the meantime,
I'm in an awkward dilemmer. The
manager of the Hotel Posh is pressing
me to settle pop's bill, and I haven't
the munny to do so."

"I shall be delited to lend you the
needful—" began Fearless, eagerly,

but Molly
Birchemall
interrupted
him with a
firm shake of
her head.

"I'm afraid it's impossibul, Fear-
less, thank you kindly, all the same,"
she twittered, cullinger slitley. "We
Birchemalls are a proud fambly. I
could never axcept munny."

"Then we'll help you in the only
other way I can think of," said
Fearless. "We'll search for your
pater. Won't we, you fellows?"

"Yes, rather!"

Molly Birchemall flung them a look
of grattitude—which didn't hurt
them in the slitest.

"Thanks awfully, boys!" she
trilled. "You can't think how grate-
ful I shall be if you suxceed! You'll
come and see me at the Hotel Posh
to tell me how you get on?"

"Oh, rather!"

"Then, aw revawr!"

And Miss Molly, with a ravvishing
smile at the Co., tripped off—Jack
Jolly & Co. doffing their hats and
bouncing low as she did so.

"My hat! I've never felt anxious
to run into the Head before,"
remarked Fearless, when she had
vanished. "But I'd give anything
to meet him now—for Miss Molly's
sake. The problem is how are we
going to find him?"

"What's the eggplan?"

"After him!" cried Jack Jolly,
thinking that Doctor Birchemall was
trying to escape, and the Co. broke
into a run. Then they realised that
the Head was not, after all, making a
getaway, for he had come to a stop
in front of an ortomattick machine
on which a gentleman had just been
playing.

Fascinated, Jack Jolly & Co.
crowded round the machine and
watched. They saw the Head grip
the control lever with trembling
fingers, and they noticed that a
feverish light was shining in his eyes.

"One ball left—and he didn't
know it!" they heard him mutter.

"If I can only get it into the 'coin
returned' pocket, I shall get a penny
back!"

The Head pulled the lever, and a
metal ball whizzed round the
machine once, twice—and thrice!
Then it disappeared into a pocket
marked "Lost," and a hollow groan
bust from Doctor Birchemall's lips.

"Down again!" he cried, des-
pairingly. "Will my luck never
change?"

Jack Jolly looked at each other
moeningly. Then they looked at the
Head.

"So this is the eggplan, sir,
is it?" said Frank Fearless. "You've
fallen a viktim to the ortomattick-
machine craze!"

Herlock Sholmes himself mite have
been eggcoused for failing to connect

this coffy-cullered coon with the
majestick Headmaster of St. Sam's.

But Jack Jolly & Co. pennytrated
the disguise in an instant.

"The Head!" they yelled.

A violent, spasmoddick start from
the man with the banjo showed them
that they had scored a bull's-eye.

His eyes almost popped out of their
sockits, as he perceived the chums
of the Fourth.

"Bless my sole!" he gasped. "I
thought it was impossibul for any-
body to know me in this rig-out—
particularly with my beard tucked
under my weskit! How did you
reckernise me, boys?"

"Well, there certainly wasn't much
left for us to reckernise you by, sir,"
larfed Jack Jolly. "I should think
it must have been the pimple on your
nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, ratts!" said the Head
crossly. "Anyway, now you have
reckernised me, what about it?"

The Co. eyed the Head rather
grimly.

"That's eggactly what we want
to know," said Fearless. "We've
promised to find out for Miss Molly
just what has happened to you.
Three days ago, you vanished into
thin air, leaving her without the
needful to pay your bill at the Hotel
Posh. Now you turn up on the peer
in the guise of a nigger minstrel!
What is the eggplan?"

Fearless waited for answer; but
he waited in vain, for just at that
moment the disguised Head made a
sudden dash to the other side of the
peer.

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marked "Lost," and a hollow groan
bust from Doctor Birchemall's lips.

"Down again!" he cried, des-
pairingly. "Will my luck never
change?"

Jack Jolly looked at each other
moeningly. Then they looked at the
Head.

"So this is the eggplan, sir,
is it?" said Frank Fearless. "You've
fallen a viktim to the ortomattick-
machine craze!"

Herlock Sholmes himself mite have
been eggcoused for failing to connect

this coffy-cullered coon with the
majestick Headmaster of St. Sam's.

But Jack Jolly & Co. pennytrated
the disguise in an instant.

"The Head!" they yelled.

A violent, spasmoddick start from
the man with the banjo showed them
that they had scored a bull's-eye.

His eyes almost popped out of their
sockits, as he perceived the chums
of the Fourth.

"Bless my sole!" he gasped. "I
thought it was impossibul for any-
body to know me in this rig-out—
particularly with my beard tucked
under my weskit! How did you
reckernise me, boys?"

"Well, there certainly wasn't much
left for us to reckernise you by, sir,"
larfed Jack Jolly. "I should think
it must have been the pimple on your
nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, ratts!" said the Head
crossly. "Anyway, now you have
reckernised me, what about it?"

The Co. eyed the Head rather
grimly.

"That's eggactly what we want
to know," said Fearless. "We've
promised to find out for Miss Molly
just what has happened to you.
Three days ago, you vanished into
thin air, leaving her without the
needful to pay your bill at the Hotel
Posh. Now you turn up on the peer
in the guise of a nigger minstrel!
What is the eggplan?"

Fearless waited for answer; but
he waited in vain, for just at that
moment the disguised Head made a
sudden dash to the other side of the
peer.

"After him!" cried Jack Jolly,
thinking that Doctor Birchemall was
trying to escape, and the Co. broke
into a run. Then they realised that
the Head was not, after all, making a
getaway, for he had come to a stop
in front of an ortomattick machine
on which a gentleman had just been
playing.

Fascinated, Jack Jolly & Co.
crowded round the machine and
watched. They saw the Head grip
the control lever with trembling
fingers, and they noticed that a
feverish light was shining in his eyes.

"One ball left—and he didn't
know it!" they heard him mutter.

"If I can only get it into the 'coin
returned' pocket, I shall get a penny
back!"

The Head pulled the lever, and a
metal ball whizzed round the
machine once, twice—and thrice!
Then it disappeared into a pocket
marked "Lost," and a hollow groan
bust from Doctor Birchemall's lips.

"Down again!" he cried, des-
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