

"THE HERO OF THE CIRCUS!" 99 **Amazing Yarn of School-boy Adventure, featuring Harry Wharton & Co.,** **By Frank Richards.**

The Magnet ^{2^D}



Two's COMPANY!

The HERO of the CIRCUS!



By FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Rag on the Road!

"LOOK!" grinned Bob Cherry. He lifted a hand from the handlebar, and pointed along the white road that led from Sandwich, in the direction of Margate. His comrades looked.

Then they grinned, too!

There was not much traffic on the road. Every now and then a car whizzed by, leaving a cloud of dust. Pedestrians were few, in the blaze of a hot August afternoon, on the long country road.

It was hot! Even Hurree Jamset Ram Singh admitted that it was warm. The Famous Five of Greyfriars were going at a leisurely pace, on their jiggers. They had lots of time to get in at Margate before dark.

But leisurely as was their pace, they were easily overtaking the pedestrian whom Bob had spotted, plugging along ahead. In fact, they would have gained on him if they had been crawling on their hands and knees.

That pedestrian, clearly, was feeling the heat. He plugged along at a snail's pace. Every now and then he jerked a straw hat from a bullet head to fan himself. Frequently he swatted flies. The sun blazed almost like a furnace; and that weary walker had about twice as much surface as the average fellow for the sun's rays to impinge upon.

"Seen that graceful form before?" grinned Bob.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It's either an escaped porpoise, or—"

"Or Bunter!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

The five cyclists had only a back view of the figure ahead. But there was no mistaking the familiar and ample outlines of Billy Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove. William George Bunter had a figure that, once seen,

was not easily forgotten. His circumference leaped to the eye.

"It's Bunter all right!" said Frank Nugent. "But what the dickens is Bunter doing here, all on his own—and walking! Walking isn't Bunter's long suit!"

"The esteemed Bunter's walkfulness is seldom terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, he's not walking now!" said Johnny Bull. "Crawling's the word! about a millionth part of one m.p.h."

The fat Owl of Greyfriars was some distance ahead. But the distance rapidly lessened.

He did not look round. He plugged on slowly, gasping and grunting, fanning and swatting. Why he was there, on his own, was quite a mystery to Harry Wharton & Co.

They had quite expected to fall in with Billy Bunter again during the summer holidays. On their cycling trip, they were following, more or less, the same route as Muccolini's Magnificent Circus, round the coast. Bunter, they knew, was travelling with the Magnificent Circus. They had encountered him at Brighton, at Hastings, and again at Folkestone—and they were likely enough to encounter him again at merry Margate. But certainly they had not expected to encounter him like this!

There was no sign of the circus on the road. If Signor Muccolini and his circus had travelled by that road during the day, they were a long way ahead, and quite out of sight. How Bunter had hooked on to the circus at all, was rather mysterious. It looked now as if he had come unhooked!

Closer and closer the grinning cyclists drew to the fat figure. If Billy Bunter heard any sound of the jiggers behind him, he did not trouble to turn his head. A good many cyclists had passed him on the road, and Billy Bunter was not interested in them.

Bob Cherry shot ahead of his comrades. Then, free-wheeling, he silently overtook the fat Owl of the Remove. Coming suddenly alongside, he leaned over, and roared in a fat ear:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He jumped almost clear of the ground in his surprise.

As he did so, Bob lifted the straw hat from his head, and glided on with it in his hand.

"Owl! Oh! Who—what—" gasped the fat junior of Greyfriars. "Who—what—how—oh—oh, you—you beast!"

There was a flash of big spectacles in the sun, as Billy Bunter glared at the playful cyclist.

Bob glided on, grinning, and waving the hat.

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "Gimme my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a cheery roar from the four cyclists behind.

Billy Bunter blinked round at them.

As he did so, Bob circled in the road, passed behind him, and deftly replaced the straw hat on his head in passing.

Bunter jumped again.

"Oh! What! Oh! You silly ass!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fat junior revolved on his axis again, and glared after Bob. Four cyclists, coming on, opened out to pass him, two on either side. Frank Nugent lifted the straw hat from his head, and waved it in the air, as he rode on.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gimme my hat!" shrieked Bunter. "Race you for it!" called back Nugent.

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove seemed to be in a playful mood that afternoon. No doubt the holiday spirit was strong upon them.

"I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter. "I say! Stop!" He charged after the cyclists, puffing and blowing, and streaming with perspiration, his fat face as red as a newly boiled beetroot. "I say—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" floated back from the five.

"Beasts! Rotters! Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter came to a halt, gasping. He stood in the middle of the wide road, and puffed and blew.

Then the five cyclists strung out in line, Bob Cherry leading. Bob turned, and the line turned after him. One after another they circled round the breathless fat Owl. Nugent, in passing, dropped the straw hat on his bullet head. It landed sideways.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. He clutched at the hat.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

"Good-bye, Bunter!" called out Harry Wharton, laughing, as the merry riders resumed their way.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Ta-ta, old fat man!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I say—stop!" yelled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, hold on! I say, I'm in a fearful fix! I say, old chaps, be pals! I say—" Breath failed Bunter, and he gurgled.

But the Famous Five were not proof against that appeal. They slowed down, and stopped, and waited by their bikes for Bunter to come up—which he did, at the pace of a very old and very tired snail, puffing and blowing as he came.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

No Bike for Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. smiled.

Bunter looked very warm. And damp!

Coming to a gasping halt, he fanned his fat face with his straw hat in one hand, and mopped it with a handkerchief in the other. His countenance glowed like a very rich sunset, and perspiration ran down it in streams, almost in rivers! Foot-slogging under an August sun told on the fattest fellow at Greyfriars School, or anywhere else. Bunter was in what a poet might have described as a melting mood.

"Ooooooh!" said Bunter. "It's hot! I say, get under these trees! Blow the sun! Blow the heat! Blow the dust! Blow the flies!"

"The blowfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"It's as hot as your rotten, beastly country, Inky!" gasped the fat Owl. "Oh, blow! Blow the sun—blow the flies—blow—"

"Blow the whole jolly old universe!" suggested Bob Cherry. "But what about taking the speech as read? We'd noticed it was hot."

"And we want to get on!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! Give a chap a chance to speak! I say, you fellows, I've been left behind by the circus!" gasped Bunter. "That beast, Tippetty Tip, pulled my leg, you know, and left me behind. I've been walking for hours and hours and hours—half an hour at least! I'll make the beast sit up when I get back to the circus! Oh dear!"

"So you're still with Muccolini's Circus?" asked Harry. "The dago hasn't kicked you out again?"

"I'd jolly well like to see him kick me out!" snorted Bunter. "It wasn't Mucky. Mucky's all right. I've got

him feeding from my hand. It was that beastly clown, Tippetty Tip. Jealous of me, you know. He doesn't want me at the circus. He would jolly well like to get shut of me!"

"And you so nice!" said Bob. "Fancy anybody wanting to get shut of Bunter, you fellows!"

"Only fancy!" chuckled Nugent.

"It's jealousy!" explained Bunter. "Tip does a rotten ventriloquial stunt in the side-shows, and I can ventriloquise his silly head off! That's the trouble. He's as jealous of my ventriloquism in the circus as you fellows are of my cricket at Greyfriars."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Marco's just the same," went on Bunter. "You remember Marco, the lion-tamer? He's always hanging about Zara, the queen of the ring, and he scowls at me whenever I go near. Jealous of a fellow's good looks, you know."

"Oh crikey!"

"But it was Tip left me behind," said Bunter. "That sneaking little beast of a clown, you know. You see, the circus came by this road, going on for Margate, and it had to stop at a level crossing. I'd have those rotten level crossings abolished! Tip suggested going into a place for a ginger-pop. Of course, I thought it a good idea. I wanted a snack."

"You would!" agreed Bob.

"And we went in," said Bunter, breathing indignation. "And what do you think the beast did? He said he

Billy Bunter will run a mile from danger. But if there's any glory going cheap, the Owl of the Greyfriars Remove is first in the queue!

would stand in the road and keep an eye on the circus when it started."

"And didn't he?" asked Bob.

"Yes, he did; but, of course, I thought he meant he would call out to me when it started. And he didn't—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! It wasn't funny!" hooted Bunter. "I thought it was a jolly long stop, but thinking that beast would call me, I thought it was all right, you know. I had a cake and some jam tarts, and a few other things. I was quite surprised when I found I'd been in the place over half an hour. You know how the time passes when—when—"

"When you're scoffing tuck!" chuckled Bob. "Yes, rather! Makes you forget time and space, doesn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, when I came out the circus had gone on," said Bunter. "Tip was gone, and the circus was gone—right out of sight. I ran after it—miles and miles—"

"I can see you running miles and miles!" assented Bob, with a nod.

"Well, a quarter of a mile, at least. After that I walked," admitted Bunter.

"The circus doesn't travel very fast, of course, and I thought I should come up with it; but I didn't."

"It would have to travel jolly slow for you to come up with it, at the m.p.h. you were doing when we spotted you!" chuckled Bob.

"Well, you see how it is," said Bunter. "I was left behind through the trickery of that beastly clown! The absolute rotter—"

"Oh rats!" said Harry Wharton. "We all know Tippetty Tip, and he's a jolly decent chap! You must have asked for it."

"That's the sort of thing I expect from you fellows!" sneered Bunter. "I can tell you, I've been kindness itself to that man Tip. Of course, I've looked down on him and despised him—a circus clown; hardly the sort of man for a Public school man to be civil to. Still, I've been kind to him. You know my generous nature—"

"We do!" gasped Bob. "We does!"

"The knowfulness is terrific!"

"Well, this is the gratitude I get!" said Bunter bitterly. "Of course, he's ratty at my bagging his show, as he calls it. Naturally it's no good him putting up his rotten ventriloquial stunts when I'm doing a better show. There's no room for two ventriloquists in one circus. Tip has had to stand down and chuck it. I've got his tent and his show, and he's bitter about it—actually bitter!"

"How frightfully surprising!" said Johnny Bull sarcastically. "Bagging a man's job away from him ought to please him. Mean to say that he hasn't thanked you?"

"Not a word," said Bunter, blind and deaf to sarcasm. "Rotten ingratitude all along the line! He actually dislikes me."

"You don't say so!" gasped Bob.

"I do!" answered Bunter. "The fellow actually dislikes me! I was quite surprised when he suggested that ginger-pop, he dislikes me so much. Of course, I never suspected what he was up to; but I can see now that he planned the whole thing—leaving me behind to walk, you know. I'll make him sit up when I get back, though! I'll jolly well make Mucky sack him!"

"You can make Muccolini do anything you like, of course," said Johnny, still sarcastic.

"You bet I can!" said Bunter. "No trouble about that. I've got that dago down all right. I'll pay Tip out for this rotten trick! The minute I get back to the circus, out he goes—on his neck!"

"You fat, frabjous freak—"

"But I'm not back yet," went on Bunter, unheeding. "Goodness knows how long I might have been getting back if I hadn't met you fellows. But if one of you will lend me his bike it will be all right—"

"If—if—if what?" stuttered Bob.

"Not your bike, Cherry—it's too big for me. I'm not a spindle-shanked octopus like you! I've had your bike before, and I don't like it. You can keep the rotten thing!"

"Thanks!" said Bob. "I'm going to."

"I'd rather have yours, Franky," said Billy Bunter, blinking at Nugent through his big spectacles. "I can ride yours all right. I dare say one of these chaps will give you a lift on his jigger. You can have the bike back if you call at the circus in Margate to-morrow. I say, will the saddle go down any lower? Put it down, if it will."

The Famous Five gazed at William George Bunter. They were on a cycling trip, and for a fellow on a cycling trip to part with his jigger was not, as Billy Bunter seemed to suppose, a trifle light as air.

But the fact was, that the affairs of the Greyfriars cyclists were of no consequence whatever, in comparison with the affairs of Billy Bunter. That, at least, was how Bunter looked at it.

"Let's have it clear!" said Nugent, grinning. "I'm to let you have my jigger and walk. You can't walk, but I can. And it's to help you get back

to the circus to get a man sacked whom we all like—a man you've treated like the fatheaded, frabjous, wriggling worm you are! I can see myself doing it—I don't think!"

Nugent put a leg over his machine.

"I say—" howled Bunter.

Frank Nugent started.

"Well, of all the selfish rotters!" gasped Bunter, staring after him through his big spectacles. "After I've told him how I'm stranded, to ride off and leave a fellow like that! I say, Harry, I'd better have your jigger."

"Perhaps," assented Wharton. "But perhaps better not!"

And he shot away after Nugent, and Johnny Bull and Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh, grinning, shot away after him.

"Beasts!" roared Bunter. "I say, Bob, old man, you're not a rotten, selfish beast like those fellows—"

"I am!" chuckled Bob. "Worse, if anything."

He put a leg over his bike. Bunter, desperate, clutched at his arm.

"I say, hold on! I've got to have a bike to get after the circus. Can't you understand that? Look here—"

"You don't want mine!" grinned Bob. "You're not a spindle-shanked octopus like me, you know."

"I'll make it do!" gasped Bunter. "I can manage somehow! I say—"

"Leggo, fathead!"

"But I say—Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as Bob gave him a gentle push on the widest part of his extensive circumference, and he sat down suddenly in the road. "Ooooooh! Beast! Woooooh!"

Bob waved his hand in farewell, and shot away after his friends. Billy Bunter sat and spluttered.

Looking back as they rode off in a cheery bunch, the Famous Five had a last glimpse of Bunter, still sitting and spluttering. Then he vanished from sight behind.

The Famous Five chuckled as they pushed on. If their old friend, Tippet Tip, was going to be sacked when Bunter got back to the circus, the later he rejoined the circus, the better they were going to be pleased. Not that they quite believed that Bunter's mysterious influence over the Italian circus-master was as strong as he fancied. There was no doubt that Bunter had asked for what he had got, and they cheerfully left him to it.

A mile ran under the wheels, and then Bob Cherry released a hand from a handlebar to point to an enticing sign that showed over a hedge:

"TEAS!"

"What about tea?" asked Bob.

"Passed unanimously!" answered Harry Wharton.

And the Famous Five halted, parked their bicycles in a stack inside the gate, and went into the garden for a cheery tea under the trees there. And—with the selfishness that Billy Bunter might have expected—they totally and absolutely forgot the existence of the fat and weary Owl, still plugging breathlessly along a sunny and dusty road.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Brainy Bunter!

"H!" gasped Billy Bunter.

"Good!"

Centuries, it seemed to Billy Bunter, had passed since he had lost sight of the Famous Five on the road. Hot and dusty, damp and sticky, the centre of attraction for

gnats and all sorts of winged enemies, the fat Owl plugged on at a snail's pace—and gasped, and panted, and puffed.

The road seemed endless—and, so far from hoping to sight the tail of the circus procession, Bunter could not help realising that it must be getting farther and farther away from him. Slowly as the circus travelled, Bunter travelled more slowly still—much more!

If one of those unspeakable beasts would have lent him a bike, it would have been all right. But no unspeakable beast would. So Billy Bunter foot-slogged, and gasped, and groaned—till suddenly his eyes, and his spectacles, lighted on a sign looking over a hedge, which bore the attractive legend:

"TEAS!"

It was an hour since the Famous Five, having arrived at that wayside tea-garden, had gone in to tea. Although it seemed like centuries to Bunter, it had really only taken him an hour to do the mile!

His fat face brightened. "Teas!" was a rare refreshing word to a fat junior, dry with dust and getting hungry.

Sitting under a shady tree, partaking of refreshments, liquid and solid, was obviously an improvement on foot-slogging. Possibly, too, a vehicle might be hired to take him on—though there might be difficulties about that, as Bunter had expended the last of his cash at his last stop, with the exception of a single, solitary half-crown. And that sole remaining coin had to go for refreshments.

Bunter stopped at the gate.

There was a shady path, lined with trees, leading into a tea-garden, at the side of a building that lay well back from the main road.

Within the gate five bicycles were stacked against a tree.

Bunter blinked at them.

He had forgotten the Famous Five—if he had thought of them he would have supposed that they were miles and miles ahead by that time, on their way to Margate.

But the five dusty machines recalled them to his mind. He blinked at them carefully. Then he knew! They were the machines of the Greyfriars cyclists—which meant that the Famous Five had stopped at that very place for tea, and were in the tea-garden now.

"Beasts!" breathed Bunter.

He blinked along the shady path. Trees and shrubberies cut off the view; but he had a glimpse of a moving figure here and there. A voice floated to his ears:

"What about getting on?"

"That beast Cherry!" murmured Bunter, recognising the voice.

"Jolly comfy here!" came Harry Wharton's reply. "But I suppose we'd better be pushing on. We've had a rest."

"Well, we want to get into Margate before dark."

"I'll call for the bill."

Billy Bunter's little round eyes gleamed behind his big round spectacles. They were there—out of sight beyond the trees. They would soon be on the move. But they were not on the move yet. They had refused to lend him a bike. Now he had the choice of five!

Except for a glimpse or two between the trees, nobody was to be seen; nobody was at hand. The Famous

Five supposed that their jiggers were safe, parked inside the gate. Those jiggers were not so safe as they supposed.

Billy Bunter's fat mind was very quickly made up. He wanted to borrow a bike—now he had a chance of borrowing a bike—and he was jolly well going to borrow a bike—and that was that!

He selected Frank Nugent's, and coolly wheeled it out at the gate. But he did not mount it immediately.

Those rotters might be along in a minute or two. Missing a bike, what would they be likely to do?

It was not merely likely, but absolutely certain, that the four fellows who still had machines, would hunt for the bike-pincher.

Bunter might be still in sight—anyhow, if some of them went up the road, and some of them down the road, he could hardly escape. He was not exactly the man for a bike-race!

They would bag that bike off Bunter—only too well he knew their selfish natures! More likely than not, they would whop him, over and above, for his cheek. Bunter's cue was to check pursuit.

Fortunately, that was easy.

Leaving Nugent's bike outside the gate, ready for mounting, the fat Owl gave his attention to the others. He unscrewed the valve caps and jerked out the valve rubbers—each tyre, as he did it, collapsing with a "squish!" It was quick work; in hardly more than a minute, four bikes had flat tyres, and needed some careful attention before they could be ridden again.

Then, with a cheery fat grin on his face, Billy Bunter rolled out at the gate. He had only just been in time.

As he left the gate, a sturdy figure appeared at the other end of the shady path from the direction of the tea-garden. And a cheery voice bawled as Bob Cherry sighted the fat figure at the gate:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He jerked Nugent's bike out into the road. Bob Cherry, staring at him along the path, jumped, as he witnessed that proceeding.

"Here, what's that game?" he roared. "Let that bike alone, you fat villain! Do you hear?"

Bob came along the path like an arrow.

In the road the fat Owl ran with the bike. He hopped on, and got his feet on the pedals, as the gate flew open again, and Bob Cherry rushed out into the road.

"Stop!" roared Bob.

Bunter was not likely to stop. He had given up the idea of refreshing refreshments at that spot, for the sake of borrowing a bike! Now he had got the bike, and was certainly not thinking of parting with it.

He drove at the pedals.

"Stop!" yelled Bob. "You fat rotter! I'll smash you! Bring that bike back, you blithering burglar!"

"Beast!" floated back over a fat shoulder.

Bunter drove on. Bob, with a face crimson with wrath, turned back into the gateway, and grabbed his bike to ride in hot pursuit.

From the garden his chums appeared in sight. They had heard Bob's roar, and taken the alarm.

"What's up?" called out Wharton.

"That fat scoundrel Bunter!" yelled Bob. "He's bagged Franky's jigger!"

"Oh, my hat! After him!"

The three ran down the path. With-

out waiting for them, Bob Cherry whirled his machine out into the road, leaped on it, and drove at the pedals. Bunter was going as fast as he could—which was not fearfully fast. He could easily have beaten any fellow on foot—but any fellow on a bike would have run him down in next to no time.

Bob had no doubt about that—till he started—in blissful ignorance of the state the artful Owl had left his jigger in. But he discovered its state immediately. The bike scratched and scraped and sagged, and Bob very nearly pitched off headlong.

He landed on his feet, panting. "Get after him, fathead!" shouted Johnny Bull from the gate.

"My jigger's crooked—puncture or something!" gasped Bob.

"Oh crumbs! You've always got a

Johnny Bull. He had his head down, examining his bike. "Some blighter has let the air out of the tyres! Bunter—"

"Oh, that fat rotter! I'll spifficate him—"

"The esteemed and execrable rascal—"

"I'll run him down, if I have to run him down on the rims!" roared Bob, and he jumped on his machine, and drove desperately after the fat figure, now vanishing in the dusty distance.

"You'll tear your tyres to tatters, fathead!" shouted Johnny Bull. "Chuck it! Chuck it, ass!"

Unheeding, Bob put all his beef into a desperate attempt to ride on flat tyres.

With a horrid jolting and jarring, he

the tyres pumped up again, they started, Frank Nugent getting a lift on Wharton's foot-rests, his hands on the shoulders of the captain of the Remove. They swept on at a good pace, eager—in fact, yearning—to sight Billy Bunter again.

It was but seldom that fellows were keen and eager to see Billy Bunter. But now there were five fellows who fairly thirsted for the sight of him. And when they did, Billy Bunter was going to be the saddest and sorrowfullest fellow that ever pinched a bike!

But the astute, fat Owl had a good start.

He was still hot, and still tired, and still lazy, but cycling was a big improvement on foot-slogging. And Bunter put on all the speed he could.

He was anxious to overtake the circus



"You cheeky clown—" Billy Bunter gave an alarmed howl as the donkey, under a touch from Tippity Tip, began to prance. "Here, keep that moke away, you silly fathead! Don't barge into me, you blithering idiot! Oh crikey! Yaroooh!" The circus clown grinned.

puncture or something, fathead! What the thump did you want to pick up a puncture now for?"

"You silly ass, get after him on yours!" roared back Bob.

"Right-ho—I don't collect punctures!" answered Johnny, as he rushed his jigger out at the gates.

But he did not mount it. The bike scraped dismally along the ground. The tyres were flat as pancakes—or flatter!

"What the thump—" gasped Johnny Bull, in amazement and dismay. "I—I—I seem to have got a puncture—"

"Oh, you ass!" roared Bob. "Isn't it just like you? Wharton—"

"My tyres are gone!" howled Wharton.

"Yours, too! Oh crumbs! Inky—"

"My esteemed tyres are as flat as an absurd flounder!" exclaimed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh scissors!"

"They're not punctures!" shrieked

went. But it was too severe a handicap in a cycle race.

The fat figure ahead disappeared round a bend in the road. Bob Cherry, with feelings too deep for words, dismounted, and wheeled his disabled jigger back. The Owl of the Remove had got away with it!

Five juniors gathered round four disabled jiggers, and looked at one another. They breathed wrath and fury.

"I'll smash him!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"I'll burst him!" hissed Nugent.

"The burstfulness will be terrific when we collarfully bag the execrable Bunter!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But at the moment, my esteemed chums, we had betterfully get the jiggers going again!"

Bob Cherry, in deep silence, opened his saddle-bag for his repair outfit. The juniors set swiftly to work.

When the damage was repaired, and

—easy enough on a bike. He was still more anxious not to be overtaken by the chums of the Remove. There were good reasons for haste, both fore and aft, as it were, and Bunter put all his beef into it, and he made Frank Nugent's bike really move!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Blows In!

TIPPITY TIP looked back along a white, dusty road and grinned. Tippity was able to look back along the road without turning his head. He was riding Edward, the donkey, with his face to the tail. That was the way Mr. Tip rode Edward in the ring, and he adopted the same method on the road, much to the entertainment of the younger generation among the passers-by.

Tippity grinned, and grinned again, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,489.

as he scanned the road, uncurling like a long, white ribbon behind the circus. For quite a long time the clown had been in a state of great hilarity. He seemed to find entertainment in the mental picture of a fat Owl slogging along that road after a circus that he was not likely to overtake.

The circus travelled slowly. Caravans and lorries had to accommodate their pace to the slow tramp of elephants. Signor Muccolini had gone on in his car, and was probably already at Margate, making arrangements there for the arrival of the Magnificent Circus.

But everybody else travelled with the slow cavalcade. Marco and Zara were in the lion-tamer's car. Samson, the strong man, sat on the back of Rajah, the towering elephant. Wiggles, the contortionist, sat on the roof of a covered lorry, where, every now and then, he would put his leg round his neck or under his arm for the astonishment of the British public on the roads, and by way of advertising the wonderful feats performed by the elastic man.

A quick walker might have overtaken the circus. But Tippet Tip did not expect Billy Bunter to do so. With deep cunning, the clown had stranded the fat Owl, and, unless Bunter got a lift, he did not expect to see him again that side of Margate—which amused Mr. Tip very much.

Marco glanced at him from the wheel of the car he was driving at a crawling pace, and grinned, too.

"Seen anything of Bunter?" he asked.

"Not a thing!" answered Mr. Tip cheerfully. "I shouldn't wonder if he's burst by this time! When I left him, he was stuffing jam tarts and ginger-beer—'undreds of jam tarts and gallons

of ginger-beer! I dessay he'll be picked up on the road, burst like a balloon!" Zara laughed.

"He will turn up again at Margate!" she said.

"Yes, I s'pose he will!" sighed Mr. Tip. "There ain't no seeing the last of 'im! Still, it's something to lose sight of him for a bit! When Mucky kicked him out at Folkestone I thought we was done with him. But I knowed all the time that it was too good to be true."

"Why the thump did Mucky let him come back?" asked Marco.

"He did let him, and let him bag his van!" said Tippet. "The fat freak would be in Mucky's van this blessed minute if I hadn't pulled his leg and left him behind. Well, it's a comfort to think of 'im 'oofing it in this 'eat!"

Mr. Tip glanced back along the road again, grinning. Far in the dusty distance a cyclist showed up, too far off for recognition.

"I ain't the covey to bear malice, I 'ope," went on Mr. Tip. "But that fat bloke does rile me more'n a few! Bagging a man's show! I don't say he ain't a good ventriloquist—he is; and he's better'n me at the game—I own up! But it was my show, wasn't it?"

"It was," agreed Marco.

"And he bags it, cool as you please!" said Mr. Tip, breathing hard. "And when I'd have booted him all round the circus and back again, the signor chips in and tells me I got to give him his 'ead! I got to let him snaffle my ventriloquial side-show or take the boot! Well, in these 'ard times, a bloke don't want no boot!"

Tippet's eyes gleamed. Undoubtedly he was feeling very sore about Bunter having bagged his show. The fat Owl had not exaggerated in stating that the

circus clown actually disliked him. Tippet did.

"But he ain't getting away with it free and easy!" said Mr. Tip darkly. "I got to toe the line, seeing as it's the boss' orders. I'd like to up and tell the boss that he's a greasy, sneaking dago, and hit him in the eye; but he wouldn't raise my salary for that! I got to let that fat scrounger scrounge my show! But I'll show him a thing or two, all the same!"

Tippet looked back again.

The cyclist in the rear was nearer now. Tippet caught a flash of spectacles in the sunshine.

He started a little, ceased to grin, and stared more intently.

"Holy pokers!" he ejaculated.

"Not Bunter?" asked Zara, laughing.

"'Im or his ghost on a bike!" said Tippet Tip. "Who's lent him a bike? What 'owling ass has lent that fat covey a bike? I never thought of 'im getting hold of a jigger. I'd like to see the covey what lent him that jigger! I'd call him some names that'd make his hair curl!"

No longer did happy grins wreath the cheery, chubby face of Mr. Tip.

From his seat on the shaggy back of Edward, he gazed morosely at the fat cyclist who came slogging up the road.

There was some comfort, perhaps, in observing that Billy Bunter was crimson with exertion, streaming with perspiration, and pushing at the pedals as if every push was his last expiring effort. Bunter, evidently, had had a warm and dusty time—which was so much to the good. But there he was—turned up again like a bad penny!

The fat Owl's eyes gleamed through his spectacles as he overtook Mr. Tip at the tail of the circus procession.

"Beast!" he hooted.

"Pinched a bike?" asked Mr. Tip. "Bobby arter you?"

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Bunter. "You wait till I see Mucky! You left me behind on purpose! You jolly well know you did!"

"Did you guess that?" asked Mr. Tip admiringly. "What a brain! Shows what an education you get at that school you talk so much about!"

"You're going to get sacked for it!" roared Bunter. "Where's Mucky?"

"In Margate afore this!" answered Mr. Tip cheerily. "Keep right on! Let's lose sight of your face!"

"Well, you wait till we get in!" said Bunter vengefully. "It's the boot for you, you cheeky beast!"

"Is it?" said Mr. Tip. "You got Mucky in your pocket to that extent?"

"You'll jolly well see!" snorted Bunter.

"Well, I'll believe it when I see it," said Mr. Tip—"not afore that! But thank you kindly, all the same, fatty!"

"You cheeky clown!" Bunter gave an alarmed howl as the donkey, under a touch from Mr. Tip, began to prance. "Here, keep that silly moke away, you silly fathead! Don't barge into me, you blithering idiot! Oh crikey! Yaroooh!"

Mr. Tip seemed able to guide Edward quite easily with his face to the tail. Billy Bunter swerved to keep out of the donkey's way as Edward pranced at him. The bike rocked into a fence beside the road and curled up, and Billy Bunter landed on the hard, unsympathetic earth.

His roar as he landed might almost have been heard from Sandwich to Ramsgate.

"Yoo—hoooooop!"

"Fine!" exclaimed Mr. Tip. "That'd fetch 'em in the ring! Do that again, Bunter!"

"Yaroooooh!"

The MANDARIN'S VENGEANCE!

By Frank Richards

Harry Wharton & Co., the chums of Greyfriars, have faced many dangers together, but nothing so perilous, sinister and terrifying as they encounter in far-off China! The menace of the Mandarin Tang Wang and his terrible "Red Dragon" Tong hangs over their heads, for they stand between Tang Wang and his victim—Wun Lung, their Chinese chum! Here's a great yarn of schoolboy adventure in China!



Ask for No. 273 of the

SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY

Now on sale at all Newsagents and Bookstalls.

4D

"Ha, ha, ha!" Billy Bunter sat up, roaring. The circus jogged on, Mr. Tip once more grinning as he looked back.

The fat Owl scrambled to his feet. He did not trouble to pick up the bicycle. He was done with it now; and when he was done with it, Bunter was not the fellow to bother about it further.

Having overtaken the circus, he was going to leave the bike behind for the owner to collect—and if the owner failed to collect it, that was the owner's look-out! Bunter could not help his troubles! Besides, he had no time to bother about bikes, if he was not to risk being left behind again.

He cut breathlessly after the circus. He wasted no more words on Mr. Tip. Signor Muccolini's van was moving with the other vehicles. Of that gaudily painted caravan Billy Bunter was now the possessor—though why Mucky had allowed him to take possession of it was a deep mystery to all the circus, and caused all sorts of surmises. There was hardly a man in the circus company who did not suspect, by this time, that Bunter had some sort of a mysterious hold over the Italian circus-master.

Billy Bunter clambered into the caravan. At long last he was able to rest his weary limbs.

He sank down on the comfortable ottoman, which made a comfortable bed at night, and gasped for breath. And through the open doorway at the back of the van he might, had he looked out, have spotted a bunch of cyclists far in the rear. Billy Bunter was done with the Famous Five—but if he had spotted that dusty bunch of riders he would have realised that the Famous Five were not quite done with him.

But Bunter was not looking out! Bunter was extended on the signor's ottoman, taking his fat ease. He had a bag of oranges in the van—and as he sprawled he scooped orange after orange—growing stickier and juicier and happier, as orange followed orange on the downward path. With so important an occupation on hand, Bunter was not likely to give attention to lesser matters, and the Famous Five of Greyfriars were entirely dismissed from his fat mind—though they were soon to be recalled to it.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Giving Bunter a Run!

"**H**OLD on!" called out Bob Cherry.

"Oh, keep up!" answered Johnny Bull.

"Fathead! There's a bike!"

"Mine, ten to one!" exclaimed Nugent.

The Greyfriars cyclists came to a stop, and Frank Nugent jumped down from behind Wharton's machine.

Bob had spotted a bicycle, lying on the grass by the roadside—evidently an abandoned jigger.

It was fortunate that the pursuers were not far behind the pursued. Very probably that abandoned jigger would not have lain there very long. However, there it was; and Frank ran to it and immediately recognised it as his own. Evidently, Bunter had done with it; and there it was, left on the road.

Frank Nugent breathed hard as he lifted it. Bunter, probably, had not given a thought to the possibility that some passing tramp might annex that jigger. Losing a bike, however, was a more serious matter to the owner than to the borrower thereof! Nugent had recovered his bike; but the way he had

found it made him keener than ever to get within thumping distance of Billy Bunter.

"Bunter can't be far off now!" said Harry Wharton. "He must have got to the circus or he wouldn't have left the bike."

"It's on this road, that's a cert!" said Bob Cherry. "We shan't be long now in catching it up. It's heading for Margate, same as we are."

"Come on!" said Nugent.

He jumped on his machine, and the Famous Five rode on again. All of them were very keen to see Bunter—Nugent keenest of all. They were sure of overtaking the slow-moving circus in a short time. And, in fact, before two more miles were covered they sighted the lengthy column of vans, lorries, and other vehicles ahead of them, winding along the road.

"There it is!" exclaimed Bob.

"And there's old Tippet, on his moke!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. Tippet Tip, looking back along the road from the shaggy back of Edward, sighted the Famous Five, and waved his hand.

They rode up, slowed, and kept pace with the donkey-rider.

"Fancy seeing you agin!" said Mr. Tip affably.

"Jolly glad to see you, old bean!" said Harry Wharton. "Has Bunter hooked on?"

"Oh, you've seen him, 'ave you?" said Mr. Tip. "Yes; I left him be'ind, but he pinched a bike from somewhere and caught us up. He's in his van now—the van what was Mucky's. It's his now!" Mr. Tip snorted. "I tell you, that fat covey is a big noise in this here circus."

"It was my bike he pinched, and he left it on the road!" said Frank. "I'm going to burst him!"

"No objections?" asked Bob.

Tippet chuckled.

"No fear!" he answered. "Burst him all you like—spread him all over the landscape, from Pegwell Bay to Canterbury. Scatter 'im far and wide! I'll stand round and cheer!"

"There's the van!" said Johnny Bull, pointing.

And, passing Mr. Tip, who was grinning again now, the Greyfriars cyclists rode on along the procession till they came abreast of the gaudily painted van, which had belonged to Signor Muccolini until the fat Owl of Greyfriars took possession of it.

They jumped down, and Bob Cherry handed his bike to Wharton. With an active bound, he landed in at the doorway of the moving caravan.

A fat figure sprawling on the ottoman within gave a violent start and sat up, and there was a horrid sound of gurgling. Bunter's capacious mouth, at the moment, was full of orange, and some of it went down the wrong way.

"Hurrerrgggh!" gurgled Bunter.

"Gurrerrgggh! Oooooooogh!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob.

"Oooogh! Ooooooch! Woooooh!"

"Heave him out!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Chuck that slug out!" shouted Nugent.

"I—I say—" gasped Bunter. "I say—gurrgh—I say—wurrgh—I say, you get out of my van, you beast! What the—grooogh—dickens do you mean by barging into a fellow's van! Wurrgh! If you're after Nugent's bike, I—I left it safe on the road for him—"

"You fat villain! You left it lying for the first tramp to pick up!" roared Bob. "Out you come!"

"Beast! Leggo!" yelled Bunter. "I

say, you fellows, I— Yaroooh! Will you leggo, you beast! Leggo my neck! Whoop!"

Bunter rolled off the ottoman. He rolled to the open doorway at the back of the van.

He roared with alarm.

"Ow! Don't pitch me out, you beast! Do you want me to break my neck? Yaroooh! Help! Whoop!"

"That's all right!" said Bob. "You'll bounce on the road."

"Ow! Stop it!" shrieked Bunter. "Yooooop!"

But Bob did not drop Bunter out to bounce! He grasped him by the back of his collar and lowered him, wriggling like a fat eel.

Bunter's heels scraped along the road. His voice reached from one end of the circus procession to the other.

"Now sit down!" said Bob.

"Whoop!" roared Bunter as he sat. "Ha, ha, ha!"

As Bob let go and the van moved on, Bunter sat—hard! He sat and roared. But he did not sit long. An elephant was following in the wake of the caravan, and Bunter squirmed quite rapidly out of the way of it.

He rolled breathlessly aside, and rolled into the midst of the fellows with the bikes. Bob Cherry jumped out after him.

"Got him!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Ow! I say, you fellows—"

"Now, you fat scoundrel—"

"Now, you bike-pincher—"

"Now, you podgy burglar—"

"Jump on him!"

"Squash him!"

"Ow! Wow! Keep off!" roared Bunter. "I—I never took the bike—and I only borrowed it—and I— Whoop! I say, help! Marco—Tip—Tip, you beast, come and help me! I'll have you sacked! Do you hear?"

"I 'ear!" grinned Mr. Tip as he passed on his donkey. "'Ear! 'Ear!"

"Help me, you rotten beast! I'll have you sacked!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mr. Tip. Billy Bunter's way of requesting assistance was undoubtedly lacking in tact.

Tippet waved a hand in farewell as he trotted on after the procession. Marco glanced at Bunter with a grin, but obviously did not seem disposed to intervene. Neither did anyone else. In all the Magnificent Circus, from end to end, there seemed nobody who cared two hoots what happened to William George Bunter.

The circus rolled on, and left him to his fate.

He sat in the dust, spluttering. Round him, the Famous Five stood in a circle.

But they did not jump on him, or squash him, or burst him, or perform any other of the dread operations they had pursued him to perform. Now that the fat Owl was captured, wrath evaporated.

Bunter staggered up. Bob Cherry gave him a gentle tap, and he sat down again.

"Stick there, old fat man!" said Bob.

"You silly ass!" gasped Bunter. "I shall be left behind again."

"Exactly!" agreed Bob. "That's the big idea."

"Why, you—you—you beast!" spluttered Bunter. "Look here, I'm not going to be left behind!"

Bunter jumped up again. The next moment he sat down once more, with a bump. He sat and spluttered.

Harry Wharton chuckled.

"Sit there, old porpoise!" he said. "You ought to be jolly well kicked, and you know it! But—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,439.

"The terrific kickfulness is the proper caper!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But—"

"But you can take a rest instead, old fat bean!" grinned Bob. "We'll wait and keep you company."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you beasts!" gasped Bunter. He blinked after the circus, already at a distance. "I—I say, you fellows—look here, you rotters—I say, dear old chaps, can't you take a jig-jig-joke! I never touched your bikes—never laid a finger on them—besides, it was only a joke! I say, I can't walk to Margate! It's miles and miles and miles!"

Up scrambled Bunter again. Again he sat down suddenly. There was a bump and a roar.

"Ow! Beasts! I say, dear old rotters—I mean, dear old chaps—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter sat, and gasped, in utter dismay.

If he was left behind again, there was little chance of borrowing another bike. And the circus was winding away in the distance, down the long white road.

There was still time for Bunter to catch it up, by putting on a desperate run. But with every passing minute his chance of hooking on again diminished.

"Oh lor!" groaned Bunter.

The Famous Five, grinning, remounted their jiggers. Leaving Bunter sitting in the road, they whizzed away after the departing circus.

The fat Owl staggered up.

"Beasts!" he spluttered.

He realised that the juniors had only been pulling his fat leg. He was not to be left behind. He was only to be given a run!

That was really a light punishment. But it was not light to Billy Bunter, who was no sprinter, and had a lot of weight to carry.

He started, scuttling after the cyclists as fast as his fat little legs could go. Looking round at him, they grinned, and waved their hands in farewell. Then they shot onward, passed the circus on the road, waving to Tippet as they passed, and whizzed on for Margate.

They vanished from Bunter's sight.

He ran, and ran, and puffed, and puffed, and blew, and blew. He gurgled and gurgled, and gasped and gasped. He lived, and moved, and had his being in a mist of perspiration. But he gained on the circus, and at last, long last, he came up with it.

"Put it on!" chortled Tippet Tip, as Bunter came gurgling up. "Feeling warm?"

"Urrrrrrggh!" gurgled Bunter.

A last frantic spurt, and he reached his van. He would have hooted to the driver to stop, but he had no breath left for a single hoot. How he clambered into the van, Bunter hardly knew. But he got in, at last, and sprawled. He did not even crawl on the ottoman. There was not a crawl left in Bunter. He sprawled on Signor Muccolini's rug, on the floor of the signor's van, and gasped, and gasped, and gasped, as if he would never leave off gasping.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

No Nonsense!

"COSPETTO!" muttered Signor Muccolini, between his teeth, and through his black bush of moustache.

His deep-set black eyes gleamed at the sight of Billy Bunter.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,489.

It was the following day, and the Magnificent Circus was at Margate, pitched in a field outside the town, in the direction of Kingsgate. Signor Muccolini was sitting in a tent, discussing some matter in connection with the show with Marco, when Billy Bunter rolled along.

The lion-tamer, as he saw the look of black dislike on the signor's swarthy face, glanced out of the doorway of the tent, to see the cause. As he saw Bunter, he shrugged his broad shoulders.

It would have been judicious, in the peculiar circumstances, for the Italian to conceal his bitter animosity towards the fat junior who knew his secret. But that the passionate-tempered Italian could not do.

His black eyes always glittered at the sight of the fat Owl, telling only too plainly how he would have liked to deal with him, had he dared.

Bunter was coming to the tent. There was a determined expression on his fat face—an expression that the signor knew! It indicated that Bunter was going to stand no nonsense, as Bunter regarded it—that he was going to be insolent, as the signor regarded it.

"I will speak to you presently, Marco!" muttered the signor. "Leave my tent now."

Marco gave a grunt.

"Can't Bunter wait?" he asked sarcastically. "Does that fat young rascal matter?"

Signor Muccolini did not answer that. He could not explain how matters stood, and he did not want the king of the lions to hear Bunter's cheek when he came in.

"Look here, Mucky," said Marco bluntly. "Your affairs are nothing to me, and I don't want to butt into them, but I'm going to tell you this—the whole circus is wondering why you stand Bunter about the place."

"Non fa caso!" muttered the Italian. "It is no matter."

"He cheeks the whole show, and cheeks you, too, and doesn't care who hears him at it!" grunted Marco. "You've let him bag Tippet's side-show—and you know what all the circus thinks of it. Everybody knows you'd like to boot him out—as you did at Folkestone, though you let him come back again! I can tell you this, Mucky, it looks thumping queer."

With that, the king of the lions tramped out, frowning at Bunter as he passed him.

Bunter acknowledged that frown with a disdainful blink.

Then he rolled into the signor's tent.

Signor Muccolini composed his features and suppressed his feelings. He had not needed Marco to tell him that the whole circus company wondered at his tolerance of the cheeky fat school-boy, and that it looked "queer." But there was no help for it, for the scheming Italian, whose own rascality had placed him under Bunter's fat thumb.

"Oh, here you are!" grunted Bunter. "I've got to speak to you, Mucky, and I'm going to put it plain. I'm not standing any more rot."

"Di che cosa tratta?" muttered Mucky, in a choking voice.

"Don't gabble that lingo at me!" snapped Bunter. "I don't understand it, and don't want to."

"What is it about? What for you want?" breathed the Italian.

"I'll tell you! Yesterday, that rotter Tip played a rotten trick on me, and left me behind! I told him you'd sack him for it."

"A joke—it was nothing—niente—"

"Are you going to sack him or not?" "No!" hissed Muccolini.

"Oh! All right!" said Bunter. "Either he goes, or I do!"

The black eyes flamed at him.

"Grasso porco! Go, then—go, and let me be rid of you!" snarled Muccolini.

"You've said that before, more than once, but you jolly soon altered your tune!" sneered Bunter. "I'll go, if you like! I dare say you'd like me to mention to a police inspector that I spotted you taking secret photographs of the air camp at Wapshot—"

"Silence!" hissed Muccolini.

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter. "If you don't want to keep it dark, I don't! If you do, you'd better sack that cheeky clown."

Signor Muccolini sat silent, gazing at him. The colour wavered in his swarthy face.

Billy Bunter himself, as a matter of fact, did not understand why the Italian was in such dread of that secret coming out. It had never occurred to his fat brain that Pietro Muccolini was a foreign spy, collecting secret information for a foreign government, and in dread of a long term in an English prison if his villainy came to light.

But though Bunter did not understand why the Italian was in such dread, he knew that he was! There was no doubt on that point!

Bunter did not comprehend the real import of what he had discovered. But others would, if Bunter talked too much. And only by allowing him to remain hooked on to the circus, and tolerating his impudence, could Muccolini keep him from talking too much.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. He saw the Italian clench his hands, as if he could hardly keep them off his fat hide—as, indeed, he hardly could! The fat junior backed away a step.

"You can cut that out, Mucky!" he said. "You turfed me out at Folkestone! I came back, and gave you another chance! As I said, I don't want to be hard on an ignorant foreigner. But you try it on again, that's all! You won't get another chance! Next time, I'll come back with a bobby. I'm standing no nonsense!"

"Will you be silent?" hissed Muccolini, in dread of the fat Owl's voice reaching other ears. Bunter did not trouble to subdue his voice, and anyone might have passed by the tent.

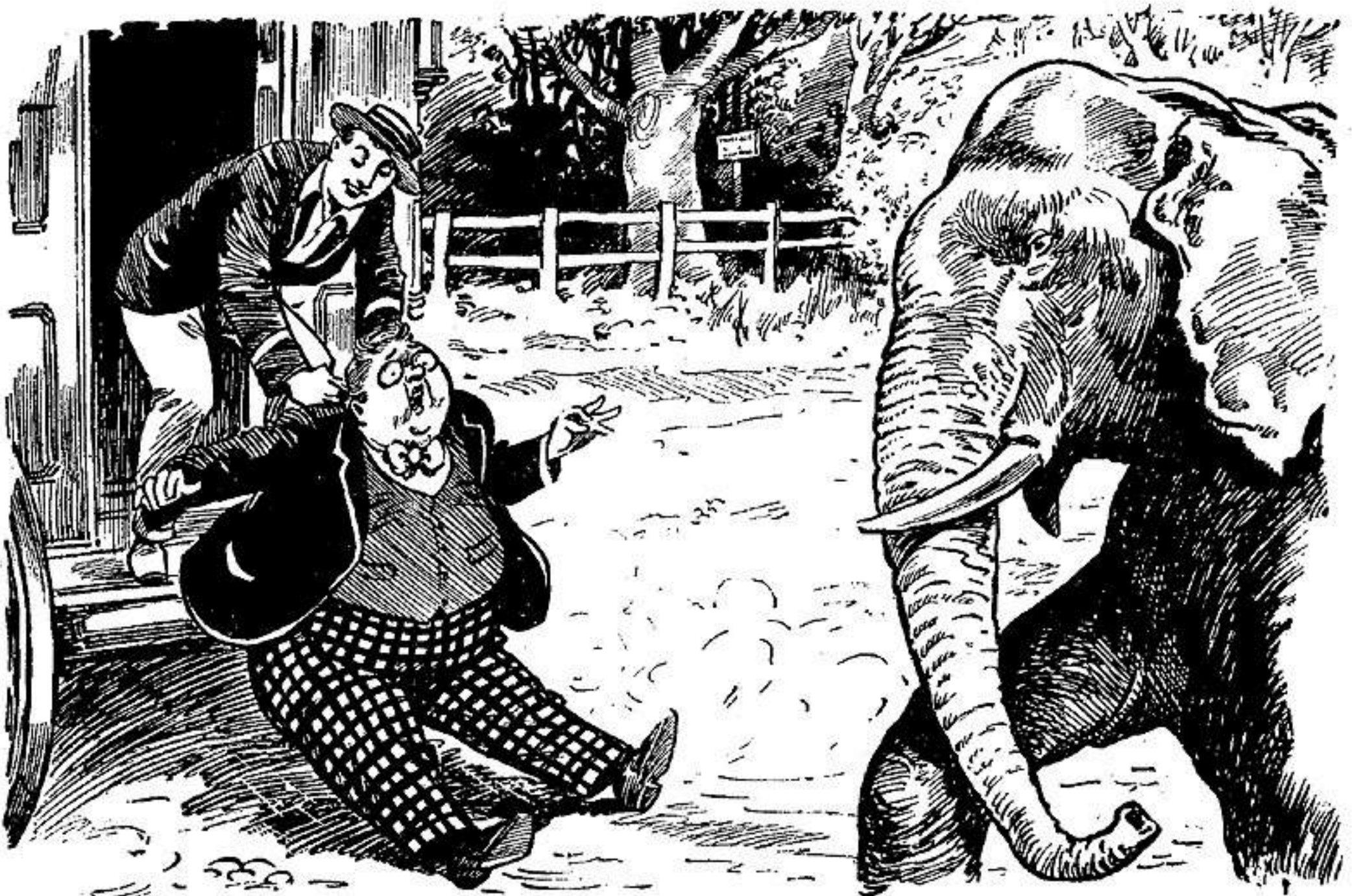
"No, I won't!" retorted Bunter coolly. "If you don't want me here, I'm not going to keep your rotten secrets for you! I'll jolly well shout them out for all Margate to hear, and all Broadstairs and Ramsgate, too! Now what is it going to be? Tip goes, or I go!"

"I cannot send the man away. I cannot replace him immediately. We give the first performance this evening—"

"That's your look-out!" said Bunter. "I know I'm not going to stand his cheek any longer! I tell you plain—I won't have him in the circus!"

"Dio mio!" murmured Muccolini. "Fool—rascal—pig! Do you understand that you draw the attention of everyone by your folly?"

"What do I care?" said Bunter. "I've got no sneaking secrets to keep! I'm not a rotten sneaking foreigner, breaking the law, am I? I'd jolly well see you run in, only I'm willing to let you off cheap, as you're a rotten foreigner, and don't know how to behave in a decent country! But I'm



Bob Cherry grasped Bunter by the back of his collar, and lowered him from the open doorway of the van, wriggling like a fat eel. "Ow! Stoppit!" shrieked the fat junior, as his eyes alighted on the huge elephant lumbering in the wake of the caravan. "Whoop!"

not going to stand any nonsense! Get that clear!"

"I—I—I will tell Tip he is to go!" breathed Muccolini. "I must give him some notice—say a week. I must have time to replace him."

"A week's too long. I'll make it two or three days, if you like. I don't want to be hard," said Bunter. "But mind, warn him not to be cheeky again. Any more cheek from him, and you've got to kick him out on the spot. Otherwise, you'll quarrel with me."

With that Billy Bunter rolled out.

Signor Muccolini wiped a spot of sweat from his swarthy brow. If everybody in the circus was talking and surmising already, they would be talking and surmising a great deal more if Tippet Tip was sacked at Bunter's order. Black thoughts were passing in the Italian's mind as he stared after the fat figure rolling away from his tent.

Billy Bunter might have been alarmed, could he have read those thoughts, or guessed at them. But the fat and fatuous Owl was not bothering about what the signor thought.

He had put his foot down, and made it clear that he would stand no nonsense. That, so far as Bunter could see, was all there was to it. And he was in a state of fat self-satisfaction as he rolled away from Muccolini's tent.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

At the Circus!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Guess who that is!"

"Professor Billo—"

"That fat ass Bunter!"

A blare of music announced that the

world-famous attractions of Muccolini's Magnificent Circus were open to the public. Among the many members of that public who thronged into the circus ground were the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove.

The circus performance in the big tent was not yet on. But the side-shows were open, and doing plenty of business. A painted sign caught the eyes of the chums of the Remove over a large canvas structure, and they paused to look at it with grinning faces:

"COME IN!
SEE AND HEER PROFESSOR
BILLO!
THE WORLD'S WUNDERFUL
VENTRILOKWIST!"

From the spelling alone the juniors would have guessed that that legend was the work of William George Bunter.

It looked as if the circus ventriloquist was going strong. Quite a goodly number of Margate holiday-makers were crowding into the tent. A man at the door was taking sixpences as they entered, and he seemed to be gathering in quite a harvest of those coins.

Glancing in the tent, the juniors had a glimpse of Professor Billo. The "Professor" wore a black frock coat and a curly moustache, which altered the appearance of Billy Bunter very considerably. But the big spectacles were familiar; and there was no mistaking the circumference.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Are you passing in your old pals on the nod, Bunter?"

The professor gave a start, blinked at the fellows outside through his big

spectacles, and turned haughtily away.

The ventriloquist was waiting for the tent to fill before he started on his "wunderful" performance. It was filling fast, however, and several voices were heard, requesting the show to begin.

"Bunter's making money," said Bob, with a chuckle. "We've kicked him often enough in the Remove passage for his ventriloquial stunts. But it's going down all right here. Shall we go in?"

"Well, I think not," said Harry. "According to what the fat chump told us, he's snaffled this show away from old Tippet. He ought to be jolly well kicked!"

"What about going in and kicking him?" suggested Johnny Bull.

"We haven't come here for a shindy, fathead! But it's rather thick, if he really has got Tip's show away from him."

"I believe you," said a familiar voice behind the juniors; and they looked round, and beheld Mr. Tip himself.

The clown was not looking his usual cheery self. The sight of Bunter, in possession of his show, and doing the trade, seemed to depress Tippet. The matter was for the circus-master to decide; and he had decided in favour of Bunter, having no choice, in the peculiar circumstances. But Tippet, rather naturally, was feeling a deep resentment on the subject.

"Oh, here you are, old bean?" said Bob. "So you're not doing your turn now with Jane and John, the jolly old dolls?"

Mr. Tip shook his head.

"There ain't room for two ventriloquial shows in the same circus," he said. "The boss said so, and, of course, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,489."

he's right. But I says to him, it's my show, ain't it? Who's that blooming bladder of lard, I says, to snoop a man's job? Lot of good talking to Mucky!"

"Why not walk in, and kick the fat blighter all over the circus?" suggested Johnny Bull. "I jolly well would!"

"You wouldn't, sir, if your job 'ung on it," answered Mr. Tip sadly. "Jobs ain't so easy to get these 'ere days. Clowns is a drug in the market. Why, I'm under notice to quit now. And I got to beat it, if that fat, frowsy, foozling freak don't put in a word for me with the boss. Would you believe it? Not that I'd ask 'im to put in a word. But it may blow over all right; but it won't if I 'andle the blighted bloater like I'd like to—no!"

And Mr. Tip passed on, to go to his dressing-room and make-up for the ring. Harry Wharton & Co. looked after him as he went, and then looked at one another.

"Poor old Tippet!" said Nugent.

"Look here! We haven't got any jobs hanging on it!" said Johnny Bull. "Let's go in and kick him! Snoop-ing a man's job—and a poor man, too!"

"Bunter's more idiot than anything else," said Harry. "If he had as much sense as a bunny rabbit, he wouldn't do these things."

"It's letting down Greyfriars, playing a rotten trick like that," grunted Johnny. "That dago oughtn't to let him get away with it. What the thump does he let Bunter boss the show for?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! They're beginning!" said Bob, as the flap was let down over the tent doorway.

Bunter's booth was full, and the fat ventriloquist was just going to begin. Harry Wharton frowned. It was hard lines on Tippet; and it was unscrupulous of Bunter. And there was no doubt that the fat Owl deserved to be kicked.

"Look here!" said Bob, his eyes dancing. "I've got rather a wheeze. Bunter ought to have a lesson about bagging another man's show—what?"

"Yes," said Harry. "But—"

"He ought not to be allowed to give it—"

"We can't stop him, ass!"

"Can't we?" said Bob. "That's where you've got another guess coming. You fellows follow your leader."

Bob Cherry moved round to the back of the tent. His comrades, in surprise, followed him.

From within came a sound of laughter. "Professor Billo," apparently, was entertaining his audience.

"What the dickens—" began Nugent.

"What about pulling up the tent-pegs?" whispered Bob.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter's show was a flimsy construction—canvas walls and roof, supported on light poles, kept in position by ropes pulled taut to pegs driven into the earth.

If those pegs were pulled out, there was no doubt that that canvas structure would collapse.

Nobody would be hurt by light and flimsy canvas billowing down on him. But it would certainly interrupt the performance of the "world's wonderful ventrilokwist" very effectually.

"Easy enough," murmured Bob. "If we pull up the pegs on this side, the whole thing will go. It will be quite a surprise for Professor Billo."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It won't please Bunter," continued

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,489.

Bob. "But it will please old Tippet when he hears of it. And a fellow can't please everybody."

"Let's!" chuckled Nugent.

"It is a terrifically wheezy idea!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The surprisefulness for the esteemed Bunter will be preposterous!"

Bob Cherry glanced about cautiously. The big tent was open now, and people were crowding towards it. The vicinity of Professor Billo's tent was almost deserted, save by the people inside, who, of course, could not see what was going on outside.

"Go it!" said Harry, laughing. "When we're ready, we'll give Bunter's audience the tip to clear!"

"Good egg!" chuckled Nugent.

And the juniors went it—swiftly and effectually. They grasped long wooden tent-pegs and jerked them out of the ground. The ropes were held taut, till a sufficient number of pegs had been removed. As soon as those ropes were let go, there would be a sudden surprise for Professor Billo.

"Hold on till I whistle!" murmured Bob, and he cut round to the front of the tent. And his chums chuckling, held on, and waited for the signal.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Beastly for Bunter!

PROFESSOR BILLO was going strong.

Billy Bunter, in point of fact, was a better man at the ventriloquial game than poor Tippet. He did naturally what Mr. Tip did with effort, and he did it better.

There were few things that the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove could do, but ventriloquism undoubtedly was one of them.

That peculiar gift had earned him more kicks than ha'pence in the Remove at Greyfriars School. But Bunter was making quite a good thing out of it now.

Tippet's poor efforts Bunter regarded with supreme contempt; and it did not seem to occur to his fat brain that there was anything unscrupulous in "snooping" Tippet's show.

Bunter, indeed, would have been quite indignant had anyone called him unscrupulous! His podgy intellect had its own original way of performing its functions!

Bunter was not wasting a thought on Tippet Tip. He had his show full of holiday-makers, who had paid sixpence each; quite a harvest for the fat junior. He was giving them ventriloquial value for their money.

He made a stuffed dog growl in so lifelike a manner that some of his audience backed away from it in alarm. Then he made it mew like a cat, amid laughter.

He made suffocated cries for help proceed from a locked chest, so realistically that some of his hearers demanded that the chest should be opened and the poor fellow let out. And there was great surprise when Professor Billo threw up the lid and revealed an empty interior.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen," said the professor, "I will show you my celebrated—Beast!"

It was the sight of the tent-flap dragged aside, and Bob Cherry's face looking in, that caused the professor to end his remark so unexpectedly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Everybody out of this tent—it's not safe!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "Get out!"

How dare you interrupt my show, you cheeky rotter! Push him out!"

"I'm only warning your audience, professor!" grinned Bob. "I tell you this tent is coming down!"

There was a general movement towards the doorway. Nobody wanted a tent coming down on his head. Billowing canvas would not have done any great damage, certainly; still, nobody was keen on it.

Billy Bunter glared at Bob through his spectacles with a glare that almost cracked them.

Bunter had no doubt that it was a false alarm. He did not believe for a moment that that tent was coming down.

"Stop where you are!" he roared. "The tent's all right! It's a rotten jape! I'll have that rotter run in! I'll—"

"Outside—quick!" shouted Bob. "It may be down any minute now!"

"Shut up, you beast!" yelled Bunter. "I say, don't take any notice of him! I say, it's as safe as houses! Cherry, you beast—"

"Here, let's get out!" exclaimed one of the audience. "That canvas don't look any too safe to me!"

It didn't! The canvas wall at the back of the tent was sagging, as the juniors there slacked some of the ropes as a hint to the people inside that it was time to go.

There was a general exodus.

Bunter roared.

"I say, stop! I say, it's all right! Cherry, you beast, I'll jolly well have you kicked out of the circus! I'll have you run in! I'll—"

Everybody was outside the tent except Bunter. Bunter was not alarmed. He was quite sure that that tent was safe. He was unaware of what was going on behind it.

Bob Cherry whistled.

Four juniors behind the tent acted promptly on the signal. The ropes were let go all at once.

Billy Bunter's excited eloquence was suddenly interrupted by a billow of canvas descending on his fat head.

"Ooogh! Oh crikey!" spluttered Bunter, as he was enveloped. "Oh crumbs! The—the beastly thing's coming down! Oh lor'! Help!"

Canvas dropped on him, and piled on him in billows. The fat junior rolled over, enveloped in waves of canvas.

"Yaroooh! Help!" roared Bunter. "Oh crikey! Help! I'm killed—Yaroooh! Help! Whoop!"

The crowd that had emerged from the tent stood staring at it.

The Famous Five cheerily mingled with the crowd. Their part in the unexpected performance remained quite unsuspected.

"By gum, that tent wasn't safe!" remarked one young man. "Thank you for giving us the tip, sir!"

"Not at all!" said Bob politely.

"Yaroooh! Lemme out of this!" came a muffled yell from under billows of canvas. "Yaroooh!"

The canvas was wildly agitated by the kicking of a pair of little fat legs underneath it. Billy Bunter was struggling wildly and frantically to escape.

He struggled and kicked and yelled and howled and roared.

"Ow! Beasts! Lemme out! Oh crikey! Yooop! I say—Grooogh! Oooogh!"

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

"Urrgh! Grooogh! Help! Lemme out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A dozen hands grasped the canvas to drag it away.

Professor Billo was revealed. He sat up, spluttering wildly for breath.

His frock-coat was split up the back, and his moustache had slipped sideways, one end over his mouth, the other tickling his fat, little nose. His aspect seemed to strike his audience as funny, for there was a general chortle.

"Ow! Ogggh!" gasped Bunter. "Ow! Wow! Groooh!" He set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked round dizzily. "I say—Ow! I say—Urrghh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fat junior struggled to his feet, gasping and gurgling. Harry Wharton & Co. walked away cheerfully, and left him to it.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Zara in Danger!

"H E'S fresh!" said Marco uneasily.

"I can ride him!" said Zara.

"Yes, but—"

"It's all right, Marco! Do you think the queen of the ring cannot manage a horse?"

It was morning. A groom was holding a black Arab horse for the queen of the ring, and Marco had come up at once to assist the gipsy girl to mount. It was a splendid horse, handsome as a picture as it stood pawing the ground, and full of spirit—rather too full, to Marco's eyes.

The big, rugged lion-tamer had his own reasons for being specially concerned about the queen of the ring. Some day, Marco hoped, he was going to run a circus of his own; and when that time came, Zara, he also hoped, was going to become Mrs. Bill Williams—that being Marco's unprofessional name.

No doubt the lion-tamer's concern was pleasing to Zara in one way; but it was displeasing in another. She was a wonderful equestrienne, and the merest hint that there was anything in the shape of horseflesh that she might not be able to manage, was enough to make her dark eyes flash.

"You haven't ridden him before, Zara!" said Marco. "If you are going to try him this morning, why not in the ring? Take him round on the tan—"

Zara laughed scoffingly.

"I am going to take him across country!" she answered decidedly. "Do you fancy he will run away with me, Marco? You are stupid."

"I know how you ride, Zara; but—"

"Nonsense!"

Without waiting for the assisting hand of the lion-tamer, Zara leaped lightly to the saddle. The groom let go, and she rode away, out of the circus field—casting back a mocking smile at Marco as she went.

"She's all right, Marco!" said Tippet Tip. "Zara can ride anything that goes on four legs!"

"The horse is savage!" muttered Marco. "And there are many cars on the road. I do not feel so sure."

He ran down to the gate to look after the gipsy girl. Zara was going up the road at a gallop, and in a few minutes she disappeared from Marco's sight.

With a knitted brow, the lion-tamer went back into the field, to attend to his lions.

Zara galloped on with a clattering thud of hoof-beats, her dark eyes bright, as the wind from the sea swept her face.

Never yet had the queen of the ring mounted a steed she was unable to handle. Nevertheless, Marco had reason for uneasiness; and the gipsy girl would have been wiser to try the new Arab in the ring.

Only that morning, the black Arab had been sent to the circus for Zara's inspection; and this was the first time she had mounted him. There was no doubt that the queen of the ring was wilful and rather reckless in taking the untried steed out on roads where cars buzzed by incessantly almost like bees.

But Zara's hand was firm on the rein; and she had no doubt of mastering any horse that gave trouble.

And she soon found that a firm hand was needed when a back-firing car startled the sensitive Arab, and he shied and backed, and made an attempt to dash off the road.

Zara's lips set in a firm line. She rode the Arab on, checking his pace. At a distance there was more open country along the cliffs that looked over the sea between Margate and Broadstairs. She turned off the road into a little shady lane.

As she did so, a car shot out of the lane. Some cheerful joy-rider came rocketing along, whipping round the corner with the happy inconsequence of some joy-riders.

The queen of the ring had to whirl the horse aside as the joy-rider, seeing her at the last second, honked madly.

The car roared by, almost brushing the horse. It vanished with a roar in a cloud of dust, leaving the black Arab rearing and prancing wildly.

Zara's lips set harder. The horse was startled and scared, and out of hand, and all her strength and skill were needed

(Continued on next page)



This is the sign of..

BROCK'S "CRYSTAL PALACE" FIREWORK CLUB

And it means the **BEST** Fireworks and the **BEST VALUE** for your money!

So do what all the other Boys are doing this year—join the Club that ensures you the biggest selection of splendid fireworks—BROCK'S!

Here's How to Join the Club—

Simply go to the shop displaying the BROCK'S FIREWORK CLUB Notice in the window, go inside and ask for a Club Card. If you've a penny to spend, give it to the shopman and he'll enter the payment on your Card. And maybe, when you've saved a lot of pennies, father will add a shilling or two—then what glorious fun you'll have spending the lot, and what fireworks you'll be choosing!

Get your Card, and start NOW!

Are you collecting the stamps from 9d. bottles of H.P. Sauce? Ask your grocer for this

FREE ALBUM

If he cannot supply one send your name and address (nothing else) on a postcard to:—

H.P. SAUCE WORKS (Dept. 76)

Box 255, ASTON CROSS, BIRMINGHAM, 6.

This Album contains an Entry Form for PAINTING COMPETITIONS WITH £250 IN PRIZES.

STAMPS 300 DIFFERENT, incl. Airmail, Beautiful Uncommon Sets, Pictorials, Colonials. Price 6d. (Abroad 1/-).—W. A. WHITE, ENGINE LANE, LYE, WORCE.

All applications for Advertisement Space in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

now. For several long minutes, there was a struggle between horse and rider—and then the Arab set off down the lane at a fierce gallop.

The gipsy girl breathed hard. It was borne in on her mind, much against her will, that she could not stop the horse if she desired. He was out of control.

The only thing to be done was to head him for the open fields and tire him down with riding. And she could only hope that there was no traffic in that narrow lane, rugged and rutty, and shut in between high banks of earth crowned with hedges.

Thud, thud, thud! The black Arab was going like the wind.

Luckily, that little lane was seldom used by cars. But ahead, the gipsy girl spotted a bunch of cyclists.

They were riding at a leisurely pace, going by a roundabout route towards the sea. She was overtaking them fast.

There were five of them; and though Zara could only see their backs, she knew who they were—the Greyfriars fellows who had chased Bunter on the Sandwich road, two or three days ago.

She strove hard to pull in the Arab. But she failed. Her wrist was like steel; yet the powerful horse was too strong for her.

Harry Wharton & Co., riding in a cheery bunch, heard the galloping of hoofs behind them as the gipsy girl drew closer and closer.

Bob Cherry glanced round over his shoulder.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's the circus rider, you fellows!" he said. "Cap her as she goes by!"

"Better give her room!" said Harry. "By gum, she's putting it on!" said Frank Nugent, with a backward glance. "Pull in, you fellows!"

It did not occur to the Famous Five, for the moment, that the horse was running away with the gipsy girl. They had seen Zara more than once riding in the ring, and knew what a splendid rider she was. That she was trying out a new and untried horse, and that it had been frightened by a car, they, of course, had no idea.

They strung out in line to give the horse room to gallop by. The bikes rocked in the sun-baked ruts in the deep lane. There was a ditch on the left, dry, but rather deep, and thick with weeds and nettles.

Stringing out along the verge of the ditch, the juniors would have given the rider ample room to pass, had the horse been under control.

But the black Arab thundered down on them at what seemed like lightning speed.

Johnny Bull, the last of the line, was barely clear, when he found the tossing head right over his shoulder.

He swerved away from it, skidded over the rough grassy edge of the ditch, and went over, crashing headlong into the nettles, with the bike clanging down after him.

There was a fearful yell from Johnny as he landed. Stinging-nettles were not pleasant to fall into; and the clanging bike gave him a painful bang on the legs as it landed on him.

The Arab thundered on. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Johnny's over!"

"Lend a hand!" exclaimed Nugent.

Johnny, sprawling in nettles under his jigger, was roaring at the top of his voice. Bob and Frank and Hurree Singh jumped down at once, to rush to his aid.

Harry Wharton was about to follow their example; but, instead, his eyes

followed the thundering Arab, galloping on ahead.

Zara, certainly, had seen Johnny go over, but she had not stopped, and seemed to pass by the accident unregarded. It flashed into Wharton's mind that the horse was out of control, and running away with her.

Instead of dismounting with his chums, the captain of the Remove rode on.

As soon as he realised that the black horse was running away with the gipsy girl, and that she could not control him, he realised her danger. Hardly a half-mile away were the cliffs, overlooking a drop of sixty or seventy feet to the beach! And the maddened horse was heading direct for the cliffs, and going like the wind.

Leaving his comrades dismounted, helping Johnny Bull and his bike out of the ditch, Harry Wharton rode on, putting on a desperate burst of speed after the runaway.

Whether he could help or not, he was going to try, if he could; and he rode as if for his life, and in a second he was out of sight of his chums—bending over the handle-bars, and scorching as he had never scorched before.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

At the Peril of His Life!

BILLY BUNTER was enjoying life.

Thud, thud, thud! If Bunter heard that sound of crashing hoofs, he did not heed it.

Bunter was busy.

He was sitting in the grass on the cliffs over the sea. The grass was thick, and made a comfortable seat. A little knoll made a comfortable resting-place for the fat Owl's podgy back. His straw hat was tilted over his spectacles, to shade his fat face from the hot August sun. A basket was open beside him—and that basket was well-filled with eatables and drinkables—though not so well-filled as when Bunter had walked out of the circus with it that morning.

It was a couple of hours since breakfast. Bunter was, therefore, hungry enough to do justice to a spread.

He had no fear of spoiling his appetite for dinner! Bunter's appetite was always quick to recover; and it had seldom failed to be ready for business when a meal-time came round.

Bunter was rather in funds these days. He made more sixpences in the ventriloquial side-show, than Tuppity Tip had ever made twopences. And when Billy was in funds, his funds always went the same way—transmuted into tuck down Bunter's fat neck!

Bunter liked the seaside! But he was not keen on bathing, or swimming, or boating, or cliff-climbing! Sitting in the grass on the cliffs and scoffing tuck from a well-packed basket, was Bunter's idea of a really enjoyable time at the seaside!

Even Bunter, of course, could not go on eating for ever—though he could keep it up for a remarkably long time. But he could generally go on as long as there was anything to eat. After that, a fellow could stretch himself in the grass, with his hat over his face, and sleep. What more could any fellow want to make him completely happy at the seaside?

Thud, thud, thud! Clatter!

Bunter was not likely to heed the approaching rider. He was, at the moment, deep in jam tarts—with a glass of ginger-beer in his left hand washing them down!

He had selected a quiet, retired spot, far from the madding crowd, for his picnic, and the snooze that was to follow. There was nobody at hand; and the only disturbance to his repose, hitherto, had come from the buzzing of aeroplanes overhead, buzzing to and from the air camp at Manston. Bunter did not heed them; and he did not heed the thunder of galloping hoofs.

"Prime!" said Bunter, breaking a long silence.

He sighed with satisfaction.

Life was worth living! Jam tarts, washed down by ginger-beer, on a sunny morning by the sea, made life seem, as the poet has expressed it, one grand sweet song!

Clatter, clatter! And then a cry!

Billy Bunter at last sat up and took notice. He blinked round him through his big spectacles.

"Oh!" He gasped at what he saw.

To Bunter's credit, be it said, he forgot even jam tarts and ginger-beer! He bounded to his feet.

"Zara!" he gasped. "Oh crikey!"

His little round eyes almost bulged through his big round spectacles. His fat face, generally ruddy as the cherry, became quite pale.

Coming across a stretch of open grass, heading directly for the cliffs, was a powerful black Arab horse, with the queen of the ring in the saddle.

Horse and rider were near enough now for Bunter, short-sighted as he was, to make them out clearly.

The horse, in a lather of foam, was galloping madly, with tossing head, the reins flying loose.

Zara, with a face as white as chalk, was still in the saddle, firmly seated, but without the remotest hope of controlling the runaway, now that a fierce wrench of the tossing head had torn the reins from her hands.

Bunter gazed in horror.

Zara could see her fearful danger—the line of the cliff-edge, high over the beach, far below. But the horse could not see it—or, at least, did not heed it.

The grass ran to the abrupt edge of the cliffs; there was no fence, no sort of protection of any kind. The grass, growing thick to the very verge, deceived the eye from a little distance, concealing the fatal drop beyond.

The black Arab came thundering on.

Zara uttered another cry—an inarticulate, gasping cry. She had seen Bunter there, almost directly in front of her. Perhaps the sight of any human being gave her a glimpse of hope.

Bunter stood paralysed.

Staring blankly, in horror, at the rapidly approaching runaway, he saw another figure behind.

It was that of Harry Wharton, driving on his bike, crimson with exertion, riding like a madman. But he had not succeeded in overtaking the frantic Arab.

Another cry from Zara!

Bunter, paralysed, stood rooted. But he woke to sudden life as the horse thundered down towards him.

He made a wild jump to get clear out of the way.

That movement startled the horse and caused it to swerve. The animal swung away from the straight line to the cliff edge, turning its left flank to it and thundering on.

Bunter, stumbling, rolled over in the grass.

He sat up, staring in horror.

Zara was swaying in the saddle. Half-fainting, the gipsy girl still clung on. Bunter jumped up and ran wildly after the horse. He had some faint idea of being of use, somehow, if he got near—which was not likely!

He gave a squeal of horror as he saw



As the tent was dragged clear, Billy Bunter, alias Professor Billo, was revealed. The fat junior sat up, spluttering wildly for breath. His aspect seemed to strike his audience as funny, for there was a general chortle. "Ha, ha, ha!" "Ow! Ogggh!" gasped Bunter. "I say—ow! I say—urrrrgh!"

Zara pitch forward. But she did not fall. Her desperate hold closed on the horse's neck, her white, rigid face buried in the tossing mane.

But that swerve of the horse gave Harry Wharton his chance.

He spun his bike to the right and shot on like a bullet. He leaped from the machine, letting it run whither it would, stumbling blindly as he landed from a leap at such speed.

But he stumbled only for a split second. He was ahead of the bolting horse, and he leapt at the flying reins.

Swerving again, this time to the left, away from him, the black Arab was again heading for the cliff-edge.

But Harry Wharton had caught the reins.

He dragged on them with all his strength and all his weight, and the wild, tossing head was fairly wrenched round, away from the cliffs.

It seemed to Harry Wharton that his arms were being torn from their sockets. But his grip did not loosen—it tightened. He wrenched the horse round and dragged it, still resisting, back from the cliffs, and reached one of the wooden benches that stood, at intervals, along the path, facing the sea.

A swift turn of the reins round the bench, and the horse was secured. The gipsy girl was still clinging on, but with an almost unconscious clutch. Harry Wharton, when the horse was secured, turned to her at once.

"I—I—I say—" Bunter came panting up. "I—I—I say— Oh, dear! I—I—I say— Ooooh!"

Wharton had not seen him till that moment. He did not heed him now. He lifted Zara from the black Arab's back.

The queen of the ring was slim, and rather a lightweight, and Harry Wharton was sturdy and strong. But he had

to exert himself to lift her down and land her in the grass, out of reach of the horse.

"All right now, Miss Zara?" he panted.

But the gipsy girl did not answer. Her eyes were closed, and she lay like a log, completely insensible.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter the Hero!

"O H crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton dashed the streaming perspiration from his brow. He was feeling utterly spent, his knees bending under him, after that wild chase of the runaway, his arms aching as if he had been on the rack.

Bunter blinked at him—and blinked at Zara.

"I—I say, she's fainted!" he gasped.

"No wonder!" panted Wharton.

"Oh crikey! If—if she'd gone over the edge—" stuttered Bunter through his chattering teeth.

Wharton bent over the gipsy girl.

"Miss Zara!" he exclaimed.

But she did not stir.

Her dark eyes remained closed; her face white and set, like marble. The Greyfriars junior looked at her in dismay.

He had stopped the runaway and saved the life of the queen of the ring. He had gone within an ace of losing his own, for he knew only too well that he might have been dragged over the dizzy verge by the frantic horse. All that pluck and courage could do, Harry Wharton could do; but how to deal with a fainting girl was a problem beyond him.

"She isn't hurt!" he said at last. "It's a faint. No wonder she's fainted, but

—but—but—do you know what to do, Bunter?"

"Dash water over her face," said Bunter. "That's the proper thing to do when girls faint."

"Got any?"

"Oh, no."

"Idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"We've got to do something—"

"There's another way. Burnt feathers bring people round when they faint, I've heard!" said Bunter. "Burn some feathers and put them under her nose and—"

"You silly ass!" roared Wharton.

Burnt feathers, whether a remedy or not, were not available.

"Well, go for help," said Bunter.

"You've got your bike. I'll stay here and look after Zara while you're gone."

"I suppose that's the only thing to be done. Keep her head up—you have to keep their heads up. Sit there and take her head—see?"

"All right!"

"I'll get help from somewhere, as fast as I can."

"I say, hold on!" exclaimed Bunter.

"If I'm going to stay here—"

"Yes, yes; what—quick!"

"I left my lunch-basket along there, when I ran after the horse. It's not far away. Cut off on your bike and fetch it, before you go. It won't take a minute."

Harry Wharton gave the fat Owl one look.

He was not likely to waste even one minute on fetching Bunter's grub!

Indeed, only the fact that Bunter was supporting Zara's head saved him from Wharton's boot!

The captain of the Remove ran back to his bike.

He lifted it, jumped on, and rode

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,489.



(Continued from page 13.)

away like the wind. There was a tea-shop about a mile away, on the front, and that was the nearest place to get help. He dashed off, Bunter blinking after him.

"I say," yelled Bunter. "You're passing the place—"

The fat junior seemed to have the impression that he was getting that lunch-basket. He wasn't!

Wharton sped on, past the spot where Bunter had left his tuck, and vanished. "Beast!" roared Bunter.

Zara stirred.

"Of all the rotters!" gasped Bunter. "Too jolly lazy to fetch a fellow his tuck, when a fellow can't move from the spot. Somebody may come along and snoop that basket, I shouldn't wonder! Beast!"

Zara's eyes opened.

"Oh!" Bunter realised that the gipsy girl was coming-to. He gave her a reassuring blink. "All right now, Miss Zara? I've got you safe. You're all right! Don't you be afraid!"

For a moment or two the gipsy girl did not realise where she was. Then, as remembrance came, with a rush, she started up.

Billy Bunter did not mind that dark, pretty head resting on his fat shoulder, even though it kept him out of scoffing distance of his tuck. But Zara did not seem to derive any comfort from it now that her senses had returned.

She leaped to her feet so suddenly that Bunter, unprepared for the sudden movement, pitched over and sprawled in the grass.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

Zara stared round her, with startled, dilated eyes.

She saw the black Arab, secured by the reins to the wooden bench, a few yards away, his heels keeping up an incessant clatter. She looked at him, and looked at Bunter.

Puzzled, amazed, she swept the landscape with her eyes. There was no other living thing to be seen.

Her dark eyes fixed amazedly on Bunter, as the fat junior scrambled to his feet, gasping for breath.

"You!" she panted.

"Eh?"

"It is amazing! I cannot believe it! How did you do it?" exclaimed Zara.

Bunter blinked at her. It seemed to him as if the queen of the ring was wandering in her mind. He was unconscious of having "done" anything.

"I—I must have fainted!" panted Zara. "I do not remember anything, after seeing you on the cliffs and crying out to you. But I knew you could not stop the horse! At least, I did not think that you could. How could you ever have done it?"

Bunter could only blink.

He did not realise, for the moment, that Zara, finding herself alone with him there when she recovered consciousness, had taken it for granted that he was her rescuer.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,489.

During that wild rush on the bolting horse the gipsy girl had had no knowledge whatever that a cyclist was in chase. Naturally, she had never looked back, and she had not given a thought, in those fearful moments, to the cycling schoolboys who had been scattered by the thundering Arab in the lane. That one of the cyclists had realised her danger and followed hard on her traces, never occurred to her.

She had been almost unconscious when Wharton stopped the horse, her face buried in the tossing mane as she clung wildly to the Arab's neck. She had not seen him, or, indeed, known what was happening at all. She was unconscious when Wharton got her down from the saddle and her eyes had not opened till after he was out of sight on his bike.

Of Wharton's part in the affair, therefore, she knew absolutely nothing. She had not the remotest idea that he had been anywhere near the spot.

Bunter was there! Bunter was supporting her drooping head when she came to her senses! Had Bunter saved her? Who else could have done it, when there was nobody else to be seen?

But it was so amazing, so utterly unexpected from a fellow like Bunter, that she could hardly believe it!

Bunter could only blink at her, wondering what on earth she was driving at.

"You saved me?" exclaimed Zara.

"Did you not? You saved me!"

Then the fat junior understood.

He realised that she had not seen Wharton, and knew nothing of him. She supposed that he, William George Bunter, was the rescuer!

Bunter opened his lips.

He closed them again.

His first impulse was to tell Zara that Wharton had gone for help! Second thoughts—not always the best—supervened in time!

He did not answer.

He blinked in the direction Wharton had taken. The captain of the Remove was far out of sight.

It would be some time yet, before he could return with help—even if he succeeded in getting any! Zara would not be there when he returned!

Billy Bunter's fat brain did not always work quickly. But it worked quite quickly now. Zara would be gone before Wharton came back. It was all right.

His eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

"You saved me!" repeated Zara. "It was you? Are you hurt?"

"Oh! Not—not much!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I'm pretty strong, you know."

"You do not look it, but you must be!" said Zara in wonder. "You might have been killed."

"Oh! No!" gasped Bunter. "You—you see, I'm—I'm used to horses! I ride a lot, you know, when I'm at home, at Bunter Court! It—it was—was easy!"

"It could not have been easy!" exclaimed Zara. "You must have risked your life to stop the horse! You have saved me from death, or, at least, from fearful injury. No one was here?" She cast a glance round again, as if a doubt struck her, so amazing was it that Bunter should have performed that difficult and dangerous feat. "Bunter! It was you?"

Bunter had made up his fat mind.

If any glory was going cheap, Bunter was the man to put in for it.

Zara was not likely to see Wharton again; not likely to speak to him, if

she did see him, knowing nothing of what had happened!

So far as Bunter could see, it was an absolutely safe proposition to capture the admiration and gratitude of the beautiful queen of the ring! It would rather put Marco's nose out of joint when he turned up at the circus as the gipsy girl's gallant rescuer! That was an attractive idea!

"Well," said Bunter. "I—I couldn't let you go over the cliff, could I?"

She looked at him—and again at the horse.

The black Arab had quieted down a good deal, but was by no means calm yet. He lashed his hoofs, and jerked at his tied head.

Tied as he was, Billy Bunter would have been extremely unwilling to go near him. That did not occur to Zara: but, looking at the powerful horse and at the fat junior, she wondered.

How Bunter had done it—how he had found the pluck to attempt to do it—mystified her. The only possible explanation was that there was more in Bunter than met the eye—that, in fact, she had misjudged him, and underrated him.

Whoever had flung himself at that maddened horse, on the perilous verge of the cliffs, had boundless pluck and resolution! And it was Bunter!

The gipsy girl breathed fast. She was quickly recovering from the strain.

"You are brave," she said. "I never thought so, and I am sorry. You are very brave, Bunter."

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Bunter. "I'm not the fellow to brag, Miss Zara, but any chap at Greyfriars will tell you that pluck's my long suit. I say, let's go, shall we? I'll see you safe home."

Zara smiled.

"I shall never forget this!" she said. "Never! I shall always remember how brave you are, Bunter, and that you saved me."

They were honeyed words to Bunter's fat ears! They quite consoled him for any qualm he might have felt at laying claim to another fellow's act of courage.

Zara walked to the horse. To Bunter's amazement and horror, she unfastened the reins from the bench.

"I—I say, you're not going to ride him again!" squeaked Bunter in great alarm.

"Certainly I shall ride him! He will obey me now—he is quiet!"

"I—I say—he—he—doesn't look very quiet!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, what about leading him home? I—I'll walk with you, and—and help!"

Zara laughed scornfully.

"The horse does not live that can beat me!" she said. "I shall ride him! He shall obey me! You will see?"

"Oh crikey!" said Bunter.

The black Arab backed when he was released from tether. But Zara drew him round and remounted with ease and grace. She waved a hand to the staring fat Owl and dashed away at a gallop across the fields.

"Oh crikey!" repeated Bunter.

And he continued to stare till the queen of the ring vanished from sight!

Then, remembering the interrupted spread, he rolled back to the spot where he had left the lunch-basket.

The black Arab, as he went, looked as if he was now under control; and Bunter hoped that the queen of the ring would reach the circus safely. But, to tell the exact truth, he forgot all about Zara when he restarted on his interrupted jam tarts and ginger-pop! Zara was a charming young lady, and it was very pleasant to be admired as a hero by a charming young lady; but first things came first!

So long as anything of an eatable nature remained in that basket, Billy Bunter concentrated on the things that really mattered!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Gone!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! She's coming back!"

Four members of the famous Co. were still in the shady lane. Johnny Bull was "hors de combat." He had collected bruises right and left when he tumbled into the ditch with his bike tumbling on top of him. Now he was giving them first-aid! He rubbed bruise after bruise, and grunted; while his comrades stood and waited for him.

Where Wharton was, and why he had shot off on his bike, none of the Co. knew—but if it had occurred to them that the black Arab was running away with its rider, they would have been reassured at the sight of Zara riding back.

She came along at an easy gallop.

The terrible experience she had been through had left no effect on the queen of the ring. She was determined to ride the black Arab; and no risk would have stopped her. But after that wild burst of excitement the horse was in a subdued state; and, though he still needed a firm hand, Zara controlled him easily enough.

As she sighted the four juniors she checked her pace. She remembered having seen Johnny pitch into the ditch as she rushed by.

The juniors capped her as she came, and Zara glanced at them with a smile.

"I hope you were not hurt!" she said to Johnny Bull. "I am afraid it was my fault you fell—my horse was out of hand, and I could not stop him."

"Oh, that's all right, Miss Zara!" said Johnny. "I've had a knock or two, but I'm not made of putty."

Zara laughed.

"I say, have you seen anything of Wharton?" asked Bob.

"Wharton?" repeated Zara.

"He was with us, and he went on when we stopped to pull Johnny out of the ditch. I think he went after you. Seen him?"

"No. I have seen no one on a bicycle," answered Zara.

She rode on her way.

"Where the dickens is the chap gone?" exclaimed Bob. "He went straight on after Zara passed us. I should have thought she'd have seen him when she turned back. What the thump is he up to?"

"Better go on and see," said Nugent. "Goodness knows why he cleared off! But I suppose we shall find him ahead somewhere."

"Ready, Johnny?"

"Ow!" was Johnny Bull's reply.

"Wow!"

He limped to his bike. He was not, as he had told Zara, made of putty; still, hard knocks were hard knocks. However, he was ready to go on.

The four juniors rode on, looking out for Wharton, and wondering what had become of him. At a little distance the lane dwindled to a mere track, crossing the fields towards the sea.

"Must have gone this way, as there's no other," remarked Bob Cherry. "But what did the potty ass shoot off for?"

"There's the tracks of a jigger, anyhow," said Frank Nugent.

In the sun-dried mud of the cart-track the traces of tyres were easily seen, mingled with the deep indentations of galloping hoofs.

The Famous Five were out that morning for a spin, not caring particularly where they went. As a matter of choice, the cyclists would have turned back and looked for easier going, when they came to that rough cart-track. But as it was clear that Wharton had gone that way, they pedalled on.

They crossed the open fields, and came out on the path that ran along the top of the cliffs.

But Wharton was not in sight there; nobody was in sight.

"Well, this beats it!" said Bob. "He's cleared right off! Anybody know where you get from here?"

"Right to Broadstairs, left back to Margate," said Frank. "But goodness knows how far, or whether we can ride it!"

"Wharton must have gone on, one way or the other," said Bob, quite puzzled. "Is the fathead playing hide-and-seek, or what?"

"Playing the goat, anyhow!" grunted Johnny Bull.

The juniors came to a halt and scanned the surrounding landscape, up and down and round about.

Billy Bunter, had they only known it, was at hand; but they did not see Bunter.

Bunter, having finished disposing of the contents of his lunch-basket, to the last crumb and the last plum, had stretched himself in the grass on the cliffs, his straw hat over his face, and settled down to snooze and to snore.

He was at a little distance; the grass hid him from sight, and the juniors had no idea that he was there. At the distance they were out of range of Bunter's snore.

Which way Wharton had gone, and why he had gone at all, was a mystery to the four. But Bob suddenly gave a yell at the sight of two figures on bicycles coming along the path from the direction of distant Margate.

One was recognisable as Harry Wharton; the other was a rather plump, ruddy-checked woman.

Harry Wharton's friends could only stand and stare. They were already mystified; now they were blankly astonished.

Wharton, as he sighted them, waved his hand.

He shot a little ahead of his companion and jumped down.

"Oh, here you are, you fellows!" he gasped. "Where is she? Have you seen her?"

"Her!" stuttered Bob.

"Who?" yelled Nugent.

"Zara!" answered Wharton impatiently. He stared round him. "I left her here, and her horse tied to that seat! The horse is gone—and Zara—and Bunter! What the dickens—"

The red-checked dame rode up and dismounted.

"Where is the young lady?" she asked. "Is she where you left her?"

Wharton looked bewildered.

"This is certainly where I left her, with Bunter looking after her!" he exclaimed. "The horse was tied up! They—they're all gone!"

"But what—" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Miss Zara had an accident here, fathead! I managed to stop her horse!" explained Harry. "She fainted, and I left her here, with Bunter looking after her. Bunter turned up from somewhere. I rushed off to get help—"

"Oh crikey!"

"I had to go as far as the teashop, nearly a mile away," said Harry. "And Mrs. Jones kindly came back with me to look after Zara—I—I—I say, ma'am, I'm awfully sorry to have brought you here for nothing!"

The red-checked dame smiled.

"Never mind that," she said. "I dare say there wasn't so much harm done as you fancied. The young lady seems to have walked off all right."

"I'm really sorry! You see, she was unconscious, and—and—" Wharton stammered. "She was quite unconscious when I left her, and—"

"No harm done," said the good-natured lady from the teashop.

And, still smiling, she remounted her bicycle and rode back the way she had come.

Wharton was left with a crimson face.

Mrs. Jones had very good-naturedly come with him to help a young lady in a faint after an accident. But she departed, evidently, with the impression that he was a young donkey who had been alarmed about nothing.

Four fellows smiled. Perhaps they were sharing Mrs. Jones' impression.

"Dash it all, she might have waited till I got back!" exclaimed Harry. "I—I had to get help; I don't know what to do with a woman in a faint! It might have been serious, for all I knew! She looked awfully white, and she was absolutely insensible when I left her."

"Then she mayn't have known you were coming back," said Nugent.

"Bunter would have told her, I suppose. I left him with her when I cut off on the bike." Wharton stared round. "Have you seen Bunter?"

"No. We've seen Zara. She passed us back in that lane, riding home, I suppose," said Bob.

"Riding that black horse?" exclaimed Harry.

"Yes. Why not?"

"She must have a nerve! I tell you, that horse was running away with her when she passed us and Johnny took his tumble; that was why I cut after her. She'd lost the reins by the time they got here, and if I hadn't got hold of them, the brute would have pitched over the cliff with her. She must be a fat-head to trust herself on that horse again—I—I mean, it's awfully reckless—"

"She seemed to be handling him all right," said Bob. "She stopped to tell Johnny she was sorry he took a tumble."

"Well, I'm glad she's all right," said Harry. "But Bunter must have told her I was coming back, and, really, she might have waited instead of making me look a fussy ass to that woman from the teashop! It was jolly good of her to come along. And now—Oh, bother! Let's get going!"

And the Famous Five got going.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Storm in a Teacup!

"ASSURDO!" snapped Signor Muccolino. "Tutta assur-dita!"

Zara's eyes flashed at him.

"I tell you it is true!" she exclaimed.

"Cio e impossibile! Non e vero!" snarled the signor. "That is impossible! It is not true! Quello grasso porco—that fat pig! Bah! He has as much courage as one rabbit! Bah!"

Zara stamped a small but emphatic foot.

The queen of the ring had a temper, and she did not like contradiction. And Mucky was offensively contradictory.

He was not likely to believe any good of Billy Bunter, if he could help it. And, indeed, Zara's surprising tale wanted some believing! Anybody who knew Billy Bunter could not help being surprised to hear that, in a moment of dire peril, he had acted with boundless pluck, prompt decision, and resolution, and complete forgetfulness of self.

"Do you think I have dreamed what

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,429.

has happened this morning?" she exclaimed.

The signor shrugged his shoulders. Zara turned her back on him. The signor, with another shrug, walked away. He was more likely to believe that Zara had dreamed it than that Billy Bunter had distinguished himself by courage and devotion.

"You—you are sure, Zara?" asked Marco hesitatingly.

Marco had had a high opinion of Bunter on first acquaintance, but longer acquaintance had quite reversed it. He was as surprised as the signor.

"Oh, you are stupid, Marco!" said Zara. "I tell you, I should have been thrown over the cliff but for that boy!"

"It ain't like what we've seen of him, Miss Zara!" said Tippetty Tip.

"I know that. But it is true!"

"That fat kid Bunter stopped that Arab when he was bolting?" asked Samson, the strong man. "Oh, Miss Zara!"

"I tell you, yes!"

"Well, if you say so, it is so!" said Wiggles. "I dessay his weight would stop anything if he got hold; but I can't see him jumping at a runaway horse—I just can't! But if you say so—"

"Haven't I said so!" snapped Zara.

"Yes, yes," said the elastic man soothingly. "But if you've made a mistake somehow—"

"How could I make a mistake? I should have been killed! I had given myself up for lost! If he had not stopped the horse, I should have been flung down on the beach—and killed!"

"Yet you rode that horse home!" exclaimed Marco. "Zara, it was reckless—it was foolish—"

"No horse shall ever beat me," said the queen of the ring disdainfully. "And now I have him well in hand! But I should never have returned to the circus, but for Bunter. He saved my life."

"But—" muttered Marco.

The king of the lions was ready and willing to believe the best of anybody; but he found it very hard to get this down.

"Perhaps you do not care if I had not returned?" Zara flashed at him. "It is of no consequence to you!"

"Oh, Zara!" said Marco reproachfully.

"But you see, miss—" stammered Tippetty.

"It sounds so steep!" said Wiggles. "It do sound so awful steep, Miss Zara. And that young sweep would make it out, if he could, whether it was true or not. You see, we know him."

"You will not do the boy justice, after he has risked his life to save me!" said Zara angrily. "Even you, Marco, do not wish to believe me!"

"Of course I believe you, Zara," said the lion-tamer. "But if that young rascal has deluded you somehow—"

"Am I a fool?" exclaimed Zara.

"No, no! But if, as you have said, you had fainted—perhaps—"

"Perhaps what?"

"I don't get on to it," said Marco honestly. "When I first came on that kid, Bunter, I thought well of him—I believed he was plucky—but it turned out that he was pulling my leg. He is more fool than rascal—but he is a young rascal, Zara! But if you tell us that you saw him—saw him with your own eyes—then it is true, for you could not be mistaken. But you have not said that you saw him—only that he was with you when you recovered your senses—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,489.

Zara stamped her foot again.

"I saw nothing!" she snapped. "I had lost my reins—I was clinging to the Arab's neck—half-unconscious. I did not even know that the horse had been stopped. The last I knew was that he was rushing on the edge of the cliff. My senses went. I knew no more till I came to myself, and Bunter was with me—and no one else in sight!"

"Then someone else—" began Marco.

"Have I not told you that no one else was there, or even in sight? Will you believe that someone else stopped the horse, and went away leaving me unconscious, rather than believe that Bunter did this?"

"Well, it doesn't sound likely, put like that!" said Marco slowly. "Any man who saved you would have remained. I suppose; but—it is possible—"

He paused.

"It is not possible!" snapped Zara. "Bunter was there—I saw him, when the Arab reached the cliffs, and cried out to him, though I did not think that he could help me. No one else was to be seen. Afterwards, when I came to my senses, he was there—and no other! Marco, it is mean of you to refuse to believe what the boy has done! I do not care whether you believe it or not! I will not speak to you again!"

"Zara—" exclaimed Marco.

"Do not speak to me!" snapped Zara, and she turned away and went to her van, leaving Marco in dismay.

The door of that van slammed with an emphatic slam.

The circus men looked at one another.

Evidently the queen of the ring was very angry. To Marco, at least, her anger was a matter of importance.

Tippetty Tip shook his head.

"I'll believe that of that fat young spoofer when I see 'im a-doing of it!" he said. "He spoofed Zara somehow."

"But how?" said Marco.

"That's a puzzle," admitted Tippetty. "But, I tell you, that fat young ass couldn't have done it if he'd tried—and I tell you that he never tried. I can see him jumping at that 'orse's head, on the edge of a cliff—I don't think! More likely froze with funk!"

"Much more likely!" grinned Wiggles. "If Zara had seen him do it, it would be different! But she didn't see him, did she?"

"She did not!" said Mr. Tip. "Nor wasn't likely to! Somebody else was there, and I'd like to know who it was!"

Marco walked over to Zara's van, with a worried face. He tapped on the door of that van.

"Zara!" he called.

"Go away!" came a snap from within.

"But, Zara—" urged Marco.

Zara looked from the window of the van. Her dark eyes flashed at the rugged, distressed face of the lion-tamer.

"You do not believe what I have told you?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, yes, yes; but—"

"You do not believe that Bunter saved my life this morning, at the risk of his own?"

Marco was silent. He would have been glad to believe it, if only to please the gipsy girl.

But he couldn't. Had Zara actually seen Bunter perform that heroic act of rescue, there could, of course, have been no doubt. But she had, in the circumstances, seen nothing of that. There was, at least, room for mistake.

"Yes or no?" snapped Zara.

"No!" said the lion-tamer at last. "If you had seen him, Zara, yes! But you did not see him—and I think there must have been someone else—"

"You do not wish to believe good of one you dislike!" said Zara scornfully. "I should expect that of Mucky, but not of you! If you valued me, Marco, as you have said, you would be grateful to that brave boy—"

"If I believed that he had saved you, Zara, I would thank him, on my knees," said the lion-tamer—"I would forgive him all his trickery, and would be his friend for life! But—"

"That is enough! Go away, and do not speak to me again! Go!"

"But, dear Zara—"

The window slammed.

Marco went, slowly.

It was some time before Zara was seen again. But when she was seen, it was also seen that the storm had not passed. Marco, when he saw her, came towards her eagerly—to be met by a cold, steely glance.

Having looked at the unfortunate Marco as if he was not there, the queen of the ring turned her back on him. Marco was left rooted, staring after her.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Conquering Hero Comes!

BILLY BUNTER rolled cheerfully into the circus.

Bunter was feeling good.

He had enjoyed that spread on the grassy cliffs. He had enjoyed a long and happy nap afterwards. Then he had strolled into Margate—ready for dinner!

In possession of funds, Bunter was able to "do" himself well at dinner—and he did. At the restaurant he honoured with his patronage, he left the waiters in a state of breathless astonishment at the quantity of food-stuffs he had packed away. When he went, they gazed after him, half-expecting him to burst all over Cliftonville.

He rolled down to the sunny sands for another nap. After which, he rolled back to the circus—ready for tea!

It had been a really happy day at the seaside, and it was no wonder that Bunter was feeling good!

And he was going to tea with Zara! He had made up his fat mind about that! Marco's nose would be put out of joint! He was in Zara's good graces now—which was quite a pleasant change! There had been a time when the queen of the ring frowned on him—indeed, she had gone so far as to smack his head. But that was all over now—now that he had heroically saved her life—or, at least, she fancied that he had!

No doubt she had told all the circus about that heroic deed—and the whole circus would be regarding Bunter with the admiration that was his due! That, too, would be a pleasant change!

Bunter felt that he was entitled to rather an ovation!

The queen of the ring, with all the little uncertainties of her temper, was very popular with the circus company. A fellow who had risked his life to save her from deadly peril would jump into general esteem at a bound.

The Owl of Greyfriars would not have been surprised had his arrival at the circus camp been the signal for a general outburst of cheering. Indeed, he rather expected something of the sort.

Nothing of the sort, however,

occurred. Plenty of eyes were turned on him—everybody, in fact, looked round at him. But there was no ovation. No ringing cheers woke the echoes, as Bunter had a right to expect. Signor Muccolini, spotting him, glanced at him with a curling, sneering lip.

Bunter blinked at him. "I say, I suppose Zara came in?" he said. "I say, I suppose she's told you what happened on the cliffs?"

"Si, si!" grunted Mucky, his lip curling till his bushy moustache almost poked into his eyes. "How did you delude her?"

"Eh!" "She fancies that you saved her life!" sneered Muccolini.

"So I jolly well did!" exclaimed Bunter warmly.

"Una menzogna—una falsita! Bah!" Signor Muccolini stalked away contemptuously. Billy Bunter blinked after him in wrath. This did not look much like an ovation.

"Cheeky dago!" gasped Bunter. "I say, Samson."

The strong man grinned at him. "I've been waiting for you to come in," he said. "I want to ask you something. Who was it stopped Zara's horse on the cliffs?"

"I did!" hooted Bunter.

"Tell me another!" said Samson. "Mean to say that Zara says there was somebody else there?" exclaimed Bunter, with a sudden doubt that Zara, after all, might have seen something of Harry Wharton.

"Zara doesn't—but I do!" grinned Samson.

"You silly ass! What do you know about it?" demanded Bunter.

"More than Zara does, I fancy!" chuckled the strong man.

"Yah!" snorted Bunter, as he rolled on.

Clearly, there was going to be no ovation—no ringing cheers for the hero. Still, it was a comfort to learn that Zara believed in him, if nobody else did. And, to judge by the grinning expressions on many faces, Mucky and Samson were not alone in their disbelief.

"Oh, hero you are!" said Tippet. "See, the corn-crushing hero comes!"

"I don't want any check from a clown!" snapped Bunter.

"I'm admiring of you!" explained Mr. Tip.

Bunter blinked at him doubtfully. He was worthy of admiration, of course; but he suspected Mr. Tip of making that statement with his tongue in his cheek.

"Can't help admiring a covey like you!" said Tippet. "I've come across some liars in my time; but I own up, fair and square, that you take the cake—the whole cake! You walk off with the whole Huntley & Palmer factory, you do! How do you do it?"

"Look here—" roared Bunter.

"It's a gift, I s'pose, like your ventriloquism!" said Mr. Tip thoughtfully. "Ow you do it, beats me! What I mean is, that every liar I've ever come across before, told the truth sometimes, if only by accident. But you ain't never had no such accidents."

Bunter rolled contemptuously past the clown. He left Tippet grinning. He came on Wiggles, who was grinning, too.

"How did you do it?" asked the elastic man.

"How did I save Zara, do you mean?"

"No. How did you make her fancy you did?"

"Yah!" "Here, Bunter!" Marco was not grinning, as he came hurriedly towards the fat junior. His rugged face was only too serious. "I'm glad you've come in! I want to ask you about what happened on the cliffs this morning."

"Hasn't Zara told you?" "Yes; but—"

"Then you know what happened," said Bunter.

"The trouble is, I don't!" said

Marco. "Zara believes that you jumped at her horse on the edge of the cliffs, and saved her life. But it seems that she did not see you do it, and—well, you can see that it's a bit surprising—"

"I don't see that! It might be surprising in a chap like you," said Bunter. "But it was nothing to me—simply nothing!"

"I hope," said the lion-tamer quietly, "that I should have done what I could,"

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

Although late in the list, this series of Interviews by our clever Greyfriars Rhymester would be incomplete without a story in verse written around

HARRY WHARTON,

the popular skipper of the Remove.

(1)

At last, of all the men we've met,
With Wharton I must trouble you,
For now our Greyfriars alphabet
Has gone right down to W;
From Angel, far up in the A's,
To Walker, just a week ago,
I've told you all about their ways
And other things you want to know.

(2)

And now we've met the whole Remove,
Except Wun Lung, we meet at length
Our cheery captain, who will prove
Where lies the secret of our strength;
For Wharton, everyone admits,
Was born to rule and take the lead,
And in his present job he fits
His intellect to every need.

(4)

He isn't perfect—that's all rot!
His weaknesses are evident,
He's sometimes obstinate, and not
Amenable to argument;
But who is perfect on this earth
(Except myself) when all is said?
And Wharton, though of sterling
worth,
Is sometimes known to lose his
head.

(5)

His daily duties in the Form
Are arduous and far from light:
They start when he awakes in dorm
And finish in the dorm at night.
As Head Boy he is first in class,
And there does all the donkey work;
Whatever changes come to pass
He dares not fool about or shirk.

(7)

As Editor he has to nurse
The "Herald" through its many woes,
And turns down really ripping verse
Like that which I myself compose.
I do not bear a grudge for this,
But there are times when I'm afraid
I'll have to speak with emphasis
And pat his features with a spade!



(10)

Upon a chair I took my stand,
Inspired with true poetic fire;
My manuscript was in my hand,
My eyes were burning with desire.
"Theophilus, thou lovely brute,
Oh, how I long to see thee now!"
And here a somewhat ancient fruit
Impinged upon my marble brow.

(3)

His personality is strong,
No fellow is so widely known,
He has his views of right and wrong
And makes them rigidly his own;
He never cares to interfere
With other chaps' ideas of fun
Unless it's absolutely clear
That it's a duty to be done.



(6)

As Skipper he must pick the teams
And listen to the angry words
Of better players (in their dreams)
Who come to shout at him in herds.
On practice day he searches for
The slackers, and he boots them out
When they would rather sit and snore
Than knock a cricket ball about.

(8)

And if these occupations can't
Account for all his interests,
He's practically compelled to grant
An interview to poet pests;
Or so he told me, when I went
To see him yesterday at tea—
And then, much more to my content,
"Sit down and stuff yourself," said he.



(9)

I finished just before I burst.
He said: "And now the little
chat!"
I answered him: "First things
come first!
Before I really start on that
I'm going to read a little ode
I've written for the magazine.
It's called 'Theophilus the Toad,
Or, Where was E'er Such Beauty
Seen?'"

(11)

Undaunted, on and on I read,
The Famous Five (who were at tea)
Took butter, radishes and bread
And used me as a target—me!
"Now what about that interview?"
Grinned Wharton. But to him I cried:
"And what about my poem, too?"
No, nothing doing—either side!

Bunter, if I had been there. If you did it—"

"There's no 'if' about it! I know what I did," said Bunter coolly. "And you needn't make out that you'd have done it, either! I can jolly well tell you that it wanted pluck!"

"Well, never mind that!" said Marco, breathing hard. "If you did it—"

"I'm not going to argue about it!" said Bunter disdainfully. "I'm used to jealousy and envy. It was the same at Greyfriars—the same everywhere! A fellow can't be a bit above the average without making other fellows jealous and envious! It's a bit sickening."

"Will you tell us exactly what happened?" asked Marco quietly. "Zara doesn't seem to know much about it, as she fainted. She seems to have had a terribly narrow escape, and someone saved her from injury or death."

"Yes—I did!" said Bunter cheerfully. "Nothing to make a song and a dance about. Greyfriars men do these things, you know. It's a way they have in the Public schools, if you could understand it. But, of course, outsiders like you wouldn't understand."

Marco breathed harder. His foot almost itched to be planted on Bunter. But he contrived to keep his temper.

He wanted, if he could, to believe as Zara believed, if only for the sake of making his peace with the queen of the ring. But if he had doubted before, he could not help doubting still more now.

Unless there was absolute certainty, he could not believe that this fat, fatuous, swanking young ass had really done a thing that might have taxed the courage of a brave man.

Tippity, Wiggles, and two or three other circus men gathered round. They were all curious to hear Bunter's own account of the occurrence.

"Well, what did 'appen exactly?" asked Mr. Tip. "We've 'eard from Zara that she saw you, when the horse ran on the cliffs, and nobody else was there."

"That's right!" said Bunter. "I was on the cliffs, when I saw her coming. Nobody else was there. It was quite a lonely spot. Nobody was following Zara, or—or anything!"

"Somebody was following her?" asked Tippity.

"I said nobody!" snapped Bunter.

"But what you say goes by contraries, don't it?" asked Mr. Tip.

"Shut up, Tippity, and let's hear it," said Marco. "You saw Zara coming on the runaway horse, Bunter? What did you do?"

"What do you think I did?" retorted Bunter. "What any chap would have done—any chap with pluck, I mean, of course! Leaping at the horse's head, I seized him in a grip of iron—"

"Oh, my 'at!" said Tippity. "You don't mean a grip of lard?"

"Look here—"

"Shut up, Tippity! Go on, Bunter!"

"The horse was wild and—and fearfully furious," said Bunter. "He struggled like—like anything! But I had him all right! Overpowering him, I—"

"I see you doing it!" murmured Mr. Tip.

"I tied him to one of those benches along the front. Then I lifted Zara down—"

"Could he lift half Zara?" asked Mr. Tip.

"I helped her down."

"That's better!"

"And laid her tenderly in the grass."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,489

She had fainted. I think she fainted just after she saw me—"

"That's natural," commented Mr. Tip.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Was it your face did it?" asked Tippity.

Bunter disdained to answer that question.

"I had a fearfully narrow escape," went on Bunter. "Struggling with the frantic horse, I was swung right over the edge of the cliff! But pluck did it! How I mastered him, I can hardly say. But I got through all right, or—or I shouldn't be talking to you this minute."

"Who else was there?" asked Wiggles.

"Nobody!" roared Bunter. "There was nobody to go for help, and he never went on a bike, and he wasn't out of sight when Zara opened her eyes—"

"What!" gasped Marco.

"There was absolutely nobody!" said Bunter. "Not a soul! The place was solitary as—a desert! Having saved Zara's life, I watched over her till—till she came to, you know. There was nowhere to go for help—besides, it was no use two going—"

"Two!" yelled Marco.

"I mean, I had to stay with Zara. I couldn't leave her in a dead faint, could I? Besides, she recovered all right before anybody came. It was a jolly long way, even for a fellow on a bike—"

"What fellow?" shrieked Marco.

"Oh! Nobody! There wasn't anybody!"

"You fat fool, you've admitted that somebody else was there!" roared the lion-tamer.

"I haven't! Nobody was there! I know jolly well that Zara never saw him, from what she said when she came to!"

"Him? Who?"

"Oh, nobody! She couldn't have seen anybody, as nobody was there! How could she? Besides, she was in a faint all the time he was there!"

"Ain't he a coughdrop?" said Mr. Tip. "Ain't he the limit? Ain't he the last word? 'Ow does he do it?"

"You lying young rascal!" exclaimed Marco. "Will you tell us who was there? Whoever was there, must be the one who saved Zara!"

"There was only me! I keep on telling you that there was only me!" hooted Bunter. "If you can't take my word—a Public school man's word—I decline to say anything further about the matter at all. I must say it's just what I might have expected from such a crew of outsiders."

And Bunter, elevating his fat little nose even further than Nature had done to begin with, rolled scornfully away.

He left the circus men grinning—with the exception of Marco, who was frowning.

Bunter's description of his deed of derring-do had left no shadow of doubt in any mind that he had not done that deed.

Obviously, somebody else had been on the spot—and that unknown person, whoever he was, was the rescuer of the queen of the ring.

Nobody doubted that for a moment.

"The young rascal!" exclaimed Marco. "He never let Zara know that anyone else was there—and he can have only one reason—"

"The other bloke did the trick!" grinned Tippity Tip. "That's the reason."

"He can have no other! And Zara believes—"

Marco clenched his

hands. "I will make him tell the truth! I will take him by the neck, and shake it out of him!"

And Marco strode away after Billy Bunter, and a chuckle from the circus men followed him. If Billy Bunter was a hero, it looked as if he would need all his heroism when Marco's hefty grasp closed on him.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Tea for Two!

ZARA smiled. She was seated at a little table, set up beside her van, which was laid for tea. A bright little kettle was simmering on a spirit stove.

Generally, Marco joined Zara at tea—but, that afternoon, she did not expect him. Having turned Marco down, with a very emphatic down, Zara was leaving him there—perhaps with a secret inner knowledge, however, that the big lion-tamer's loyal affection was proof against all her little airs and graces.

Her smile was called forth at the sight of Billy Bunter. She was glad to see Bunter, as he rolled towards her van.

Seldom, if ever, was anybody glad to see Billy Bunter—and Zara, certainly, had never hitherto had a high opinion of the fat Owl of Greyfriars.

But circumstances alter cases. Bunter, as she believed, had run a terrible risk to save her from danger—she was not only grateful, but remorseful for her previous low estimate of him. She felt that she ought to make up for it somehow. She was going to let all the circus see that she, at least, valued Bunter at his true worth—as now revealed!

So she directed her most gracious smile at the fat junior as he appeared, though unfortunately Bunter, owing to his short sight, did not catch it.

However, he would soon have been within smiling range, so to speak, had not his progress towards the spot been suddenly interrupted.

The towering figure of the king of the lions came striding in pursuit. He overtook Bunter, and grasped him by a fat shoulder.

There was a startled squeak from Bunter.

"Ow! What—who—leggo!"

He blinked round at the lion-tamer through his big spectacles.

"Leggo, you beast!" he howled. "Wharrer you mean by grabbing a fellow? Take your low paw off me, you beast!"

Instead of taking his low paw off, Marco compressed his grip, and the fat Owl gave another squeak.

"You young rascal!" said Marco angrily. "I am going to take you to Zara, and you are going to tell her the truth. Do you hear?"

"Yow-ow!"

"If you will not tell the truth, I will shake it out of you!" roared Marco.

"Wow! Beast! Wow!"

"Come!" snapped Marco, and with a grip on Bunter's fat shoulder that nearly crunched it, he marched him towards Zara.

The gipsy girl sprang to her feet, her dark eyes flashing.

"Marco! How dare you?" she exclaimed. "Take your hands off Bunter at once! Do you hear me?" She stamped her foot.

"Ow! Make him leggo!" yelled Bunter. "Ow! You're kik-kik-cracking my bib-bub-bones, you beast! I'll jolly well knock you down! Yow-ow!"

"Zara!" exclaimed Marco.

"Yow-ow! Wow! Leggo!" yelled



As the black Arab headed for the cliff-edge, Harry Wharton leaped forward and caught the flying reins. He dragged on them, with all his strength and all his weight, and the wild tossing head was wrenched round, away from the cliffs. Zara, the queen of the ring, was safe!

Bunter. "I'll jolly well kick your shins!"

"Let him go!" exclaimed Zara.

"I am going to make him tell you the truth!" said Marco. "I am going to shake it out of the young rascal! Now, Bunter—"

"Yaroooh!"

"Tell Zara who was present when the horse was stopped on the cliff—tell her at once!" roared the angry lion-tamer.

"Yoooooop!"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Urrgh! Gurrgh!" gurgled Bunter. "Wurrgh! Leggo! If you make my gig-gig-glasses fall off—urrgh—you'll have to pay for them—wurrgh—"

Shake, shake, shake!

Bunter sagged like a well-filled sack in the lion-tamer's grasp as he was shaken.

If shaking could have extracted the truth from Bunter, that hefty shake ought certainly to have done it. The fat junior gurgled and gasped and gurgled, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels.

Perhaps the truth might have been shaken out of him, if Marco's process of extraction had not been interrupted. But it was interrupted. Zara ran forward with flashing eyes.

"Let him go!" she exclaimed.

She caught Billy Bunter by his other shoulder to pull him away from the lion-tamer.

Zara's hands were small, but they were strong, the fingers like steel, as they needed to be, to manage mettlesome horses in the ring. Her grip on the fat shoulder was not so sinewy as Marco's, certainly, but it felt rather like a steel vice! It elicited another wild howl from Bunter.

"Ow! Wow! Oh crikey! Wow!"

Zara pulled—and Marco gripped!

With Zara pulling at one fat shoulder, and the lion-tamer at the other, Billy felt as if those fat shoulders were being pulled off, and he yelled with anguish.

"Yaroooh! Oh! lor! Leggo! Ooooooh!"

"Will you let him go, Marco?" shrieked Zara.

"But I tell you—"

"Let him go!"

"Zara—"

"Let him go this instant!"

"Yaroooh!"

Marco unwillingly released the fat junior. Zara's eyes were flashing at him. Zara had once smacked Bunter's head, and really, she looked at that moment like smacking Marco's! He released the howling fat junior in time.

"Ow! Beast!" gasped Bunter.

He promptly dodged round Zara.

"I—I say, keep him off!" he spluttered. "Oh crikey! I'll jolly well make Mucky sack him! Ow! Wow!"

"He shall not touch you again!" said Zara. "Go away, Marco! Go away at once! Do you hear me? Go away!"

"I will make him tell the truth!" said the lion-tamer. "Zara, I tell you that he has admitted that someone else was there this morning, whom you did not see—"

"I haven't!" roared Bunter.

"Nonsense!" snapped Zara. "If there was anyone I should have seen him. I am ashamed of you, Marco! You would like to make me believe that Bunter did not save my life—"

"He did not—"

"I jolly well did!" howled Bunter. "Zara knows, don't you, Zara?"

"I do!" said the gipsy girl. "And I am grateful, Bunter! I shall never, never forget what you did!"

"Tell Zara who was there, Bunter!" roared Marco.

"Nobody!" retorted Bunter. "No-

body at all! I think it's pretty rotten to be jealous of a chap, because he's done a plucky thing, that you couldn't have done! I'd like to see you do what I did! You couldn't!"

"Zara, I tell you—"

"You need tell me nothing!" said Zara, scornfully. "Perhaps, as Bunter says, you are jealous of him, because he is so brave. I will never speak to you again until you tell Bunter that you are sorry for doubting him. Now go away! Go away at once!"

Marco stood irresolute. Safe behind the gipsy girl, Billy Bunter gave him a contemptuous blink.

"Yes, you get out!" he said. "Nobody wants you here, you ruffian! Just clear off, and mind your own business. Any more of this, and I'll jolly well tell Mucky to kick you out, along with Tip. See?"

"Are you going?" snapped Zara.

Slowly, the lion-tamer turned, and went.

Billy Bunter wriggled; there was an ache in his podgy shoulders. But he grinned while he wriggled! Marco's nose was out of joint—there was no doubt about that! He had put a spoke in Marco's wheel!

Zara watched the lion-tamer go, and then turned to Bunter. She gave the fat junior her kindest smile.

"The awful rotter!" said Bunter. "I'd jolly well knock him down, only—only—I wouldn't soil my hands on the beast! He's not worth it. By gum, though, let him try it on again, and I'll jolly well show him what's what! I'd knock him spinning, as soon as look at him. I'd—what are you laughing at, Zara?"

"Nothing!" said Zara, laughing. "Let us have tea, shall we? I have some nice cakes, and—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,450.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter promptly. Bunter sat down cheerfully to tea.

There was a large supply of sticky cakes. Evidently Zara had made preparations to do honour to her gallant rescuer, and her gratitude had taken a form that Bunter could really appreciate.

Bunter enjoyed that tea. He enjoyed the foodstuffs, he enjoyed Zara's gracious smiles, and he enjoyed the looks that Marco cast on the scene, from afar. The lion-tamer's face was dark and overcast—jealousy and envy, in Bunter's opinion. He flattered himself that he had cut that cheeky beast out, anyhow.

Altogether it was Billy Bunter's lucky day, though the luck, alas! was destined to change.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Butts In!

"THE jolly old dago!" said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton glanced round.

A car was coming up the deep, winding lane. The juniors knew at once the swarthy man, with the bushy moustache, who sat at the wheel.

The Famous Five had camped for tea after a long spin. Leaving their bikes parked behind a hedge below, they had clambered up the steep bank to a shady spot, where the branches of a big oak shut off the glare of the blazing August sun. Sandwiches and cake and ginger-beer were turned out of a bag, and the juniors sat down in the grass under the oak, to dispose of the same.

It was rather a surprise to hear a car coming up the lane; for it was narrow and steep, and led to nowhere in particular, and was obviously seldom or never used by cars.

Bob Cherry rose and looked down, and spotted Signor Muccolini at the wheel.

The hillside was steep, and the juniors were more than twenty feet above the circus-master's head as he drove up the

lane. They were almost hidden from sight by the bushes and high grass, even if the signor had looked up, which he did not.

The buzzing of the engine died suddenly away. The car came to a halt, and the circus-master stepped down.

He lifted a lunch-basket from the car, and walked on up the lane, and in a minute or less, disappeared from the eyes above.

Harry Wharton's glance followed him curiously till he disappeared. He was looking very thoughtful as he sat down again.

"I wonder——" he said.

"Which and what?" asked Bob.

"Well, I've been wondering a good deal since we were at Folkestone," said the captain of the Remove. "You remember what Bunter was chattering about——"

"Can't remember all Bunter's chatter, old bean," grinned Bob. "Too much of it for a fellow to remember."

"The toomuchfulness is preposterous!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I mean," said Harry slowly, "what he was gabbling about that Italian, Muccolini. Something about seeing him with a camera at the air camp at Wapshot, before Greyfriars broke up for the hols."

"What about it?" asked Bob.

"Well, Bunter has some hold over that dago—we know that. All the circus knows it, and wonders about it. It's jolly queer! He's found out something, and is trading on it, like the blithering fat idiot he is. And what has the dago got in that lunch-basket?"

"Grub," said Bob, with a stare. "What else would he have? I suppose he's picnicking on his jolly old own, and he's parked his car down there while he does it. Why shouldn't he?"

"No reason why he shouldn't. But you remember he had a lunch-basket with him the day we saw him near Hawkinge air camp. And it got upset when you were pea-shooting him, and a camera rolled out."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"Cameras aren't usually carried in

lunch-baskets," said Harry. "And—and—and Bunter knows something about him. I can't help wondering whether——"

"Blessed if it doesn't look fishy!" said Johnny Bull. "He must have some jolly strong reason for standing Bunter. He kicked him out at Folkestone; but he's let him hook on again. And let him bag poor old Tippet's show, too."

"But——" said Frank Nugent.

"But what?"

"We met Ferrers Locke at Folkestone, you remember," said Frank, with a grin. "And Bunter gabbled all that stuff in his hearing. If there was anything in it, Mr. Locke would have been on it like a shot, surely."

"Well, yes, I suppose he would," agreed Wharton. "If Mr. Locke sees nothing in it, there can't be anything in it. Ferrers Locke is as sharp as a razor, and he heard all Bunter's chatter. Nothing in it, I suppose, though it looks jolly queer."

That it looked exceedingly "queer," there was no doubt.

Certainly the chums of the Remove were not likely to attach undue importance to anything said by William George Bunter. But that the fat junior had some sort of a mysterious hold over the Italian circus-master was as clear as daylight. They knew that, as well as all the Magnificent Circus hands knew it.

Still, what they had heard Bunter say on the subject had been heard also by Ferrers Locke. The celebrated Baker Street detective had paid it no heed—so far as they knew, at all events.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's raining cars!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the buzz of an engine came floating up through the thickets.

Another car had turned off the main road only a hundred yards or so away into that little deep, steep lane.

"Does this lane lead anywhere special?" asked Frank Nugent.

"I believe it's a short cut on foot to Manston Aerodrome," answered Bob. "But it's easier for a car to go by the road, and never mind the few extra miles."

"Whoever that is, he won't get by. The dago's car will stop him," said Johnny Bull, with a grin. "There isn't room down there for two cars to pass."

"By gum, that's so!" said Bob.

He rose to his feet, and looked down the rugged slope through the thick hawthorns and brambles that screened the view. Through openings in the thickets, he could see the second car that came up the lane.

It was driven by a man with a soft hat slouched over his face, under which a big, thick, ginger-coloured moustache was the chief thing to be seen.

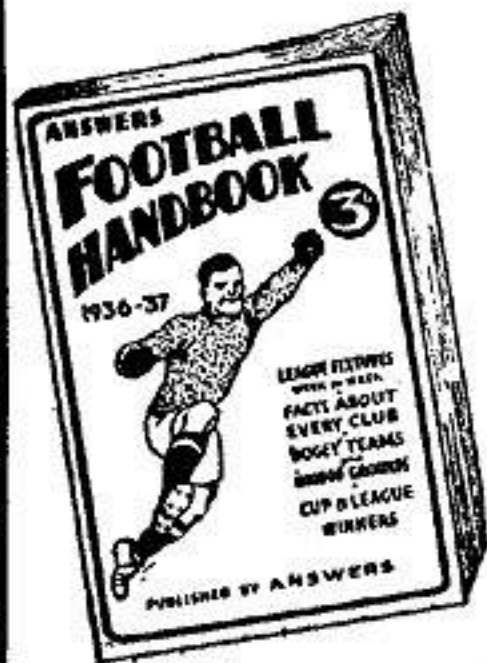
Bob was thinking of shouting down to the driver that there was a car in the lane ahead; but it was clear that the ginger gentleman had seen it, for he slowed down and stopped.

Bob rather wondered what he would do.

There was certainly no room for him to pass the car that Signor Muccolini had left parked there. No doubt Muccolini had picked that lane for parking his car because it was obviously never used by motorists, and it had not occurred to him that his car would be in the way of another one.

All that the newcomer could do was to back out again and continue by road, which, after all, was the most sensible thing, as the lane, farther on,

ALL about the Coming Football Season



ANSWERS FOOTBALL HANDBOOK puts you right about all the things you will want to know about the Football Season. The League fixtures are arranged so that you can keep a record of results. It gives the latest information about the clubs and players, also Cup-Tie and International Match dates, and a wealth of other useful information.

Get Your Copy To-day!

ANSWERS FOOTBALL HANDBOOK

At all Newsagents. Price 3d.

was little more than a track between high banks.

But the second car halted, and the man with the ginger moustache stepped down, as the Italian had done ten minutes ago.

He stood looking at the signor's car, and then, leaving his own, walked towards it.

If he was thinking of trying to get it out of his way, there was nothing in it, and Bob rather wondered that the ginger gentleman could not see that at a glance.

But that was not his object.

He passed the car, and stood for some moments looking up the lane in the direction in which the Italian had gone.

Then he turned back to the Italian's car, and, to Bob's amazement, coolly entered it.

It was difficult to follow his movements through the thickets; but Bob could make out that the man in the slouched hat was rummaging through the Italian's car, searching it.

"My hat!" breathed Bob.

He turned back to his companions. They were busy with cake and ginger-beer. But the expression on Bob's face made them look at him inquiringly.

"What's up?" asked Harry.

"Looks to me like pinching," answered Bob. "That sportsman who's just arrived is rooting through the dago's car. The man Muccolini is rather a brute, and we've had rows with him, but I don't see letting him be robbed. Take a squint at the man!"

Cake and ginger-beer were abandoned at once. The juniors rose to their feet, and peered through the thickets down the slope to the lane, where the two cars stood.

They could get only a glimpse here and there of the man with the ginger moustache. But they could see that he was making a thorough examination of the interior of Signor Muccolini's car.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

"We're jolly well stopping that!" he said.

"Yes, rather!" agreed Nugent.

"The ratherfulness is terrific!" agreed the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed dago is a preposterous blighter; but the pinchfulness is not the proper caper."

All the Famous Five made up their minds about that at once.

They had had trouble with the bullying circus-master, and certainly had no liking for him; but it was any fellow's duty to prevent a robbery, if he could.

And they could imagine no other reason for the man in the slouched hat rummaging through his car. Indeed, it began to look as if the second motorist had been following the Italian. His actions did not look as if he had turned into that unfrequented lane by chance.

"Come on!" said Bob. "We'll jolly well make him explain what he's up to, anyhow—if he's not pinching. I don't see anything else he can be up to."

"Nor I," said Johnny Bull.

And the Famous Five, leaving their camp, pushed down through the thickets into the lane below.

The rustling in the thickets evidently reached the ears of the man in the Italian's car, and gave him the alarm.

He stepped swiftly from the car, and shot a quick glance up the lane; then up the steep bank, down which the Greyfriars juniors were running and leaping.

As he stood staring up, Bob Cherry came down, covering the last ten feet of the steep slope with a flying leap, and

crashed into him, sending him reeling against the car.

The open doorway was behind him, and he sprawled backwards into it, with a startled gasp, followed by a yell as Bob, carried on by his own impetus, sprawled headlong over him, pinning him down.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Disguised Detective!

"OH!" gasped Bob.

"Ooooooh!" spluttered the man under him.

He heaved furiously. He was a strong and sinewy man, as the force of that heave revealed. But, pinned down on his back in the doorway of the car, he really had no chance.

Bob rocked, but he was not pitched off. He planted a knee on the man's chest, pinning him down more securely.

The slouched hat had fallen off into the car. It revealed a dark, close-cropped head, rather at variance in hue with the ginger moustache.

"You young fool!" panted the man.

"Release me at once!"

"What's the hurry?" grinned Bob. "I've got you, my man, and if you've pinched anything from that car you're jolly well going to put it back again."

"Yes, rather!" said Harry Wharton.

The Co. gathered round, ready to lend Bob helping hands, if they were wanted. But they were not needed. Bob had the man jammed helplessly in the doorway of the car, and, athletic as he was, he could not release himself.

"You needn't wriggle, old thing!" said Bob, grinning down at his prisoner. "I've got you all right!"

"The gotfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The man ceased to struggle.

The momentary excitement faded out of his face, and, to the surprise of the juniors, a glimmer of amusement appeared in the keen eyes that stared at them.

"You!" said the man.

There was a familiar ring in his voice, but there was nothing familiar in the face. So far as the chums of the Remove could see, the man was an utter stranger to them.

That they were not strangers to him, however, was clear. There was recognition, mingled with amusement, in his look.

"You seem to know us!" said Harry, staring at him.

"Oh, quite! Will you kindly allow me to rise, Cherry?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! How the thump do you know my name?" exclaimed Bob, in astonishment.

"You young ass! You are butting into an affair you do not understand. Get up at once, and allow me to rise."

"Not so jolly fast!" answered Bob.

"You've been going through a man's car, in his absence, and if you've been pinching, we're jolly well going to put the stopper on, see?"

"I don't see what else you can have been up to, my man!" said Harry Wharton. "If you've got anything to say, you can say it; but you're jolly well not going unless you can explain—"

"You do not know me, Wharton?"

"You seem to know me," said Harry, with a stare. "But I don't know you from Adam. I believe I've heard your voice before, though."

The man laughed.

"Take my word for it that it is all right, and go your way, and do not interfere!" he said.

"That's not good enough!" answered the captain of the Remove decidedly.

"If you've taken anything from that car—"

"You young ass!"

"Well, what else have you been up to?" demanded Johnny Bull. "You haven't been rooting through a man's car for amusement, I suppose?"

"Will you release me?"

"No, I jolly well won't!" said Bob Cherry coolly. "And there's enough of us to handle you if you want trouble. We'll jolly well keep you till old Muccolini comes back to his car, and you can explain to him, if you won't to us."

"You will do nothing of the sort, you young ass! I will tell you my name, and you will understand; but you must take great care not to utter a single word on the subject."

"I don't see that your name will make any difference," said Harry. "What the dickens is your name, anyhow?"

"Locke!" said the man quietly.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Ferrers Locke!"

"Great pip!"

For a second the Famous Five stared blankly at the man pinned down in the doorway of the car.

There was no trace of resemblance, in his looks, to the well-known face of the Baker Street detective.

But they knew now why the voice had seemed familiar. Indeed, they might have known Ferrers Locke by his voice, but for the complete change from his customary appearance.

It was not only the ginger moustache, but the complexion, the whole aspect of the face, seemed quite unlike Ferrers Locke's.

But they knew, from their old acquaintance with the famous Baker Street detective, that he was a past-master in the art of disguise.

"Ferrers Locke!" repeated Bob, almost dizzily.

He jumped up.

The man with the ginger moustache rose, rather stiffly. Probably he had collected a few aches, jammed down on his back in the doorway of the car. But there was a gleam of amusement in his eyes.

He picked up his hat, shot a swift glance up the lane, and then looked at the astonished juniors, smiling.

"I should have preferred to keep my identity a secret," he said, "but I can trust you—I am sure of that."

"Of—of course!" stammered Harry. "I—I say, I'm awfully sorry we butted in, Mr. Locke. I know you now, but—but—you don't look in the least like yourself, you know—"

"We—we thought—" stammered Bob.

"You fancied you saw a car-thief at work!" smiled the detective. "You could hardly have thought anything else, in the circumstances, and, thinking so, you did quite right to interfere. I could wish that Cherry's methods were a little less drastic, perhaps—" He gave a wriggle. "My back is not made of iron, you know."

"Sorry, Mr. Locke!" gasped Bob. "But, of course, we thought—"

"The thankfulness was a terrific error, but the excusefulness is great, in the ridiculous circumstances!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"Quite!" he said. "I do not blame you—in fact, as I said, you did quite right. All the more so because, I think, you do not like Signor Muccolini."

"Not the least little bit!" said Bob. "He's a bullying rotter, and we've had rows with him. But we weren't going to see him robbed. We never dreamed that— By gum, I can hardly believe it's you now, sir."

"That's a compliment to my art of disguise!" said the Baker Street detective, with a smile.

"Then—then you were going through that dago's car as a detective!" exclaimed Bob.

"Obviously!"

"And that means that you're after the dago!" said Bob.

"Not a very difficult deduction to draw," smiled Ferrers Locke. "I am, as you express it, after the dago. But you will realise, I am sure, that it is essential for the dago to remain unaware of it."

"Oh, of course, sir! We shan't say a word, you can bank on that."

"Not an esteemed or ridiculous syllable, sahib!" assured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"And if you guess my motive, as probably you will, you will be careful to say nothing of that, either!" said Mr. Locke.

"Well, we can't help guessing that, sir!" said Harry. "I thought at the time that you took no notice of Bunter's gabble, but now—"

"Precisely!" said Ferrers Locke. "But I have ascertained since that Signor Muccolini allowed Bunter to return to the circus, and remain there, so obviously against his own inclination that the matter is the talk of the whole circus."

"I understand," said Harry, "and, of course, we shan't say a word to anybody. But, Mr. Locke, it's pretty clear, of course, that Bunter has found out something about that dago, and is making use of it—"

"It could hardly be clearer!" said Mr. Locke.

"Yes, but—but—if it's anything really serious—and you must think it is, to take up the matter at all—Bunter doesn't know it!" said Harry. "Bunter's a silly idiot, and a bit unscrupulous, but—"

"You need not be concerned for Bunter," said Ferrers Locke. "I am very well acquainted with that peculiar young gentleman. He has found something out, without understanding in the least its real meaning. He fancies that Muccolini has carelessly disregarded the law in a trifling matter. I think you young fellows are keen enough to see that there is more in it than that, and I can only ask you to say nothing of what you may guess or surmise."

"Not a word, of course!" said Harry.

"And now—though I am glad to meet you again—we are wasting time!" said Ferrers Locke. "I did not know that you were in this vicinity, and if you would seek some other vicinity as fast as you can—"

"That's what I call a strong hint!" said Bob, laughing. "Come on, you men. Awfully sorry we barged in, Mr. Locke!"

The Famous Five lost no time. In two or three minutes they had extracted their bikes from behind the hedge, and were riding away down the lane, turning into the road at the end without a backward glance. Ferrers Locke was left to carry on undisturbed.

Not till they were a mile away from the spot did the chums of the Remove exchange even a word. Then Bob Cherry spoke.

"You fellows can see what it looks like!"

"Not much doubt about that!" answered Harry. "That fat fool, Bunter, doesn't understand, of course. But it's lucky he chattered that day, at Folkestone; it's that that put Locke on the track."

"Spying!" said Johnny Bull. "That's

what it must be—spy-work! That dago is a spy!"

"It can't mean anything else!" said Harry. "If it's that, it's safe in Ferrers Locke's hands. Mum's the word, so far as we're concerned."

"The mumfulness will be terrific!"

The chums of the Remove had plenty of food for thought as they rode home to their lodging in Margate. They had little, or, rather, no doubt, of the nature of the signor's secret. And they had no doubt at all that the matter was safe in the hands of the Baker Street detective. Wary and cunning as he was, Muccolini was no match for Ferrers Locke.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

"BUNTER in all his glory!" grinned Bob Cherry.

And his comrades smiled.

It was the following day, and the Famous Five were taking a walk up and down Margate and Cliftonville, crowded with holiday-makers, in the bright and sunny August weather.

Billy Bunter dawned on them in all his glory, as Bob expressed it.

In white flannels, with a Panama hat and white shoes, Billy Bunter looked unusually clean and neat and natty. "Professor Billo," it seemed, was doing well at the circus, judging by the fat Owl's new and rather expensive get-up.

Bunter was not alone.

A very pretty dark-eyed young lady was with him, whom the juniors recognised at once as Zara, the queen of the ring.

Bunter, it seemed, was taking Zara out for a walk.

Zara was not tall, but she overtopped Bunter very considerably. When the fat junior gave her glad looks—as he did every now and then—he had to direct his glad gaze upward.

The top of his Panama hat being about on the level of Zara's chin, there was, naturally, a certain difficulty in the way of bestowing glad looks on Zara.

Probably Zara was quite unconscious of the glad looks.

She was not aware—as Bunter was!—that he was a handsome, fascinating, killing sort of fellow, whom no girl would resist.

Indeed, she thought him rather a young donkey and rather a young rascal; but, in view of the tremendous service she believed that he had rendered, she tried very hard not to think him either!

Bunter, in his egregious and fatuous fatheadedness, had rather an idea that the queen of the ring had "fallen" for him, as he elegantly expressed it.

Instead of which, the queen of the ring was tolerating him, from a sense of gratitude for what he was supposed to have done.

She was Bunter's only champion in the circus; but she was a very keen and emphatic champion. Her kind and generous nature was moved to anger by the refusal of everybody else to give Bunter credit for his gallant action.

She had not spoken a word to Marco of late; and the words she spoke to Tippetty Tip, Wiggles, and the rest were sharp, not to say acid.

All the more because everybody was down on Bunter did Zara stand for the fellow who had, as she firmly believed, risked his life to save her from danger.

Marco was left quite out in the cold now, and whenever he came near the queen of the ring, she froze him off with icy glances. Bunter was basking in the sunshine of her smiles.

Now he was taking Zara out to tea in Cliftonville—and he had marched her off under the eyes of the whole circus—feeling no end of a knut and a lady-killer! He had quite enjoyed the clouded, dismal look that Marco had cast after them.

That Bunter was pleased with himself and the universe generally, was clear at a glance. He almost strutted.

And the chums of the Remove smiled as they beheld him in all his glory.

Harry Wharton & Co., as they drew nearer, raised their hats very politely to the queen of the ring.

She acknowledged the salute with a nod and a smile.

Not so Bunter!

He gave the Famous Five a startled blink.

The sight of those cheery juniors was about as welcome to Bunter as the ghost of Banquo to Macbeth.

He was aware that they intended to put in a week or two at Margate; but he had hoped that they would move on, or, alternatively, as the lawyers say, that they would come nowhere near the circus.

Bunter was a hero in Zara's eyes—at the moment! He was enjoying it! Only a few weeks ago the queen of the ring had smacked his head! Now she was all smiles and kindness. Obviously, that was a change for the better!

But Bunter's heroic reputation with the queen of the ring hung on a rather slender thread. A word or two from Harry Wharton would have been sufficient to break the thread!

Wharton, of course, had not the remotest idea of the fat Owl's spoof. But a chance word might have been enough.

So Bunter blinked very uneasily at the Famous Five, and was anxious to get by without anyone stopping to speak.

Wharton, however, slowed down.

He had not seen Zara since the dramatic episode on the cliffs. He was very far from being a fellow to make much of what he had done, or even to think that he had done very much at all. But it was only natural to suppose that Zara would wish to make some allusion, at least, to the matter. It had not occurred to him that she was totally unaware that he had played any part in the rescue at all. In the belief that Zara would be glad of an opportunity to speak to him, Wharton stopped.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Zara!" he said. "I—"

"Oh, come on, Zara!" gasped Bunter. "I say, come on!"

"But your friend wishes to speak to me," said Zara, and she stopped.

"I say, come on!" urged Bunter. "You don't want to let those seaside bounders talk to you, you know!"

"You fat ass!" said Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton!"

"You wished to speak to me?" asked Zara.

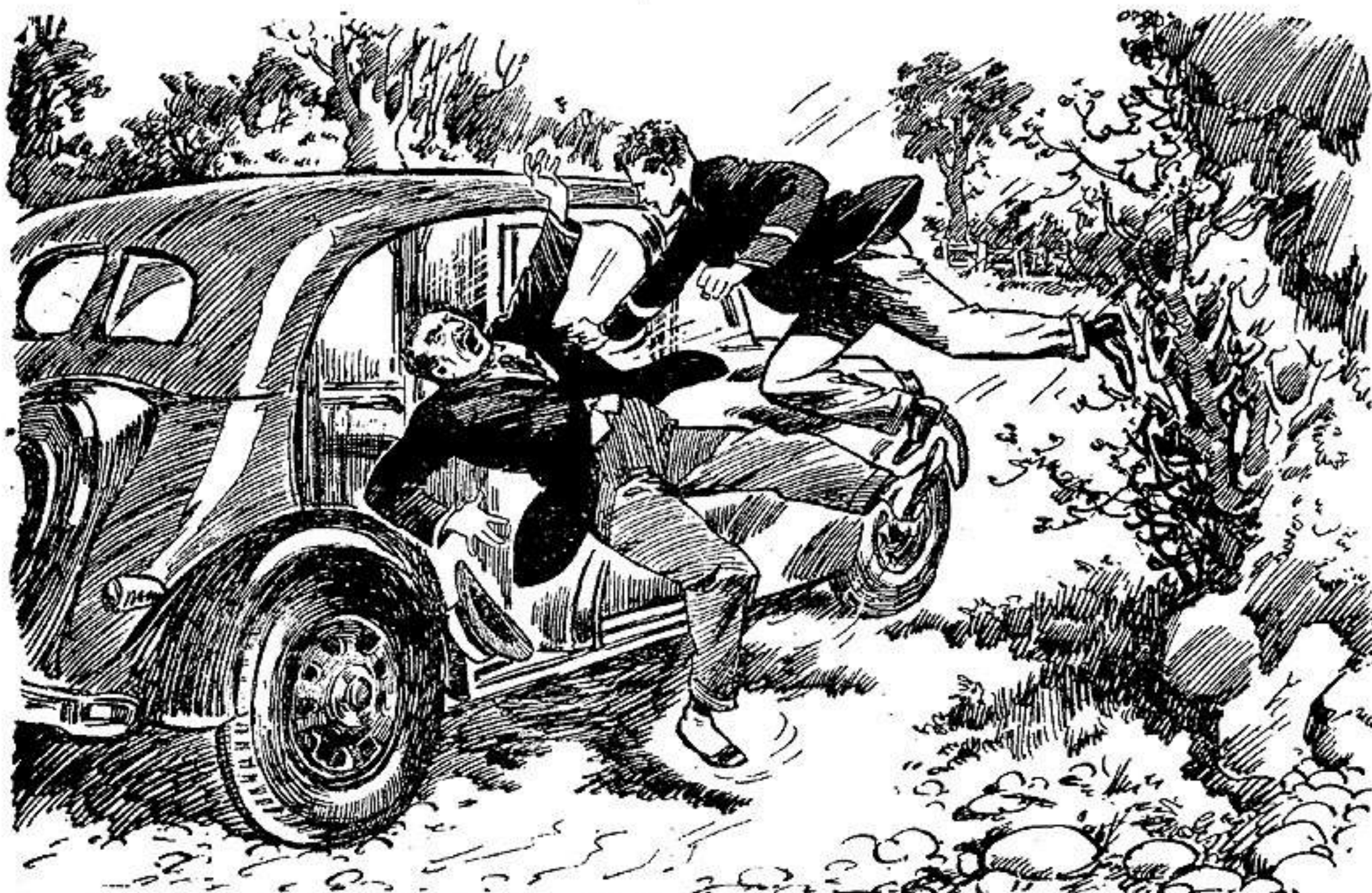
Wharton could not help looking surprised. His impression had been that Zara would have wished to speak to him.

"Only to ask you if you got home safe the other day," he said.

"Oh, you mean when my horse bolted!" said Zara, with a smile. "Yes, thank you! There was no harm done, and I rode the horse home."

"I say, come on!" gasped Bunter, in terror of what might be said next. "I say, I wish you wouldn't barge in, Wharton! I call it cheek!"

To his immense relief, Zara walked on with him. Bunter could have gasped with relief.



covering the last ten feet of the steep slope with a flying leap, Bob Cherry crashed into the man who had been rummaging through the car, sending him crashing backwards. "You young fool!" panted the man. "What the —!" "If you've pinched anything from that car, you're jolly well going to put it back again!" said Bob.

Harry Wharton stood looking after them for a moment with a puzzled expression on his face, and then rejoined his friends, who had stopped a few paces away.

Certainly he did not want a fuss made about what he had done, or anything of the kind. But Zara must know that the fellow who had stopped the black Arab on the cliffs had risked his life to do it; and surely a word or two of acknowledgment would not have been out of place.

The gipsy girl's utter indifference puzzled him, and perhaps irritated him a little.

Bunter, however, rejoiced that that dangerous interview was over. What Zara would have said if the facts had come out Bunter hardly dared to think. Still less did he dare to think of what she might have done!

Zara had a temper—of which Marco was now getting the chief benefit. Bunter did not want to get the benefit of it, any more than he wanted to lose the glory he had so cheaply acquired.

"Don't you want to speak to your friends?" asked Zara, surprised by the fat Owl's haste to roll onward.

"Oh, they're not friends of mine!" said Bunter. "Just fellows I know at school, that's all. Like their cheek to try to hook on to me in the holidays, you know! That fellow Wharton is a pushing bounder!"

"He does not look it," said Zara.

"An absolute rank outsider!" said Bunter. "Don't you ever believe anything he tells you?"

"Nonsense!" said Zara.

"Oh, really, you know——" gasped Bunter. "Don't you ever believe a word he says, especially if he tells you——"

"What?"

"Oh, nothing! I—I mean——"

"He is not likely to speak to me again, I suppose," said Zara. "But if

he did, I should certainly believe anything he said."

"Oh crikey!" said Bunter, in alarm.

He blinked over a fat shoulder, and was relieved to see that the Famous Five had disappeared in the crowd on the Northdown road.

Like the jackdaw who dressed himself in peacock's feathers, Bunter had been in danger of being stripped of his borrowed plumes. But the danger had passed, and Bunter could only hope that Zara would not meet Wharton again, especially if she was going to believe anything he said.

He piloted his lady friend into an expensive teashop, and dismissed Harry Wharton & Co. from his fat mind. Basking in Zara's smiles, and consuming enormous quantities of foodstuffs, Bunter was happy. Zara's smiles were sweet, and so were the cakes, the latter probably rather outweighing the former!

Billy Bunter was enjoying Zara's company, and it did not occur to him to wonder whether the queen of the ring was enjoying his. And if it had, it would never have occurred to him that the answer was in the negative.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Tippity Makes a Discovery!

"CHEER up!" said Tippity Tip.

Grunt!

"Have an ice?"

Grunt!

"Come for a swim?"

Grunt!

"Walk into the town, and push one

back with me?"

Grunt!

"Bill Williams," said Mr. Tip, "you

ain't what I call jolly company to-day!"

Grunt!

Mr. Tip gave it up.

He was sitting on the sands, which were fairly thick with holiday-makers, in the bright sunshine. Marco, the king of the lions, sat by his side.

Tippity looked as cheery as usual, but Marco's face was deeply clouded. He looked as if he was understudying that ancient king who never smiled again.

As Mr. Tip was under notice of the "sack" at the circus, he really considered that he had more cause to look glum and gloomy than Bill Williams, who was only under the frown of the queen of the ring.

To Mr. Tip's practical mind, the sack was a glummer and gloomier matter than the darkest of frowns from the prettiest of brows. But, then, Mr. Tip was older than Marco, and had had a good many more years in which to grow wise.

Tippity, undoubtedly, would rather have been frowned on by Zara than sacked by Signor Muccolini. But he was keeping up his cheery spirits, while Marco was sunk in the depths of gloom.

He had taken his friend out for a walk in the hope of dispelling his gloom. But even the invigorating air of merry Margate, even the happy crowds of holiday-makers, did not lift the shadow from Marco's brow.

He sat on the sunny sands, staring gloomily at the sea. Except when Mr. Tip spoke to him, he seemed to forget that he had a companion at all. And when Tippity spoke, he answered only with a grunt, which was not encouraging.

Tippity, giving it up, watched the crowds passing and re-passing. He grinned, and waved a hand at the sight of five familiar faces.

"Cheerio!" he called out.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's old Tippity!" said Bob Cherry.

And the Famous Five made their way

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,489.

towards the spot where the clown sat with Marco.

Marco did not seem to notice their arrival. But, as Tippet nudged him, he glanced round, gave a curt nod, and resumed watching the sea.

The juniors glanced at him rather curiously. Marco had always seemed to them a cheery, good-humoured sort of man, but it was evident that he now had what Fisher T. Kish of the Remove would have called a "grouch."

However, Tippet was cheery enough for two. He waved an invitation to the juniors to sit down on the sand.

"O't, ain't it?" he remarked.

"Warm!" agreed Harry Wharton, with a smile.

"The warmfulness is grateful and comforting," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, fanning himself with his straw hat.

"This 'eat brings out the sand beetles," said Tippet. "Is that one on your neck, Mr. Jampot?"

He reached over to the nabob, grabbed at his dusky neck, and held up a wriggling thing by one leg.

"Urrrgh!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, as he stared at it. "Thank you terrifically, esteemed Tip! I did not know the beastly thing was on my idiotic neck! Urrrgh!"

"Why, there's another!" exclaimed Tippet.

"Wha-a-t?"

Tippet tossed the beetle away—or, at least, appeared to do so—and made another grab at the nabob's dusky neck. Another wriggling beetle appeared in his hand.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, jumping up from the sand.

He shook himself vigorously, to shake off any further beetles.

The other juniors looked round them rather anxiously.

They had never heard of beetles haunting the sands of Margate before, and they certainly did not want any of the horrid, crawling creatures on them. But on the sand, at least, there were no beetles to be seen.

"Holy pokers!" exclaimed Tippet. "Why, you're fair covered with them, Mr. Jampot! Look 'ere—and 'ere!"

He jumped up and grabbed at the nabob's shoulder, and then at his waistcoat. Two hideous beetles wriggled in the palm of his hand.

"Grooooooh!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Is that another?" exclaimed Tippet. "My eye! You've been picking up a lot of beetles somewhere, sir."

The nabob jerked off his jacket. He shook it and waved it in the air. No beetles, however, dropped out of it.

"Blow me, if there isn't another sticking in your 'air!" exclaimed Tippet.

And he grabbed a wriggling beetle from the nabob's dark head.

"Urrrgh!"

"And there's one jest a-peeping out under his waistcoat!"

Tippet made another grab, and grabbed a beetle.

Off came the nabob's waistcoat in a hurry.

He waved the jacket in one hand and the waistcoat in the other, much to the entertainment and interest of about a hundred people, who stared at him in surprise.

"Are they all gone?" gasped Hurree Singh.

"I don't see any more," said Tippet, surveying him carefully. "But I think

there's one on your neck, Master Cherry."

"Groogh! Get it off!" yelled Bob, jumping up.

Tippet obligingly hooked the beetle off. It wriggled horribly as he held it up.

"Where on earth did they come from?" exclaimed Nugent.

"There seem to be a lot of them about," said Tippet. "'Ere, you sit still, Master Wharton, while I get that one off your ear!"

Harry Wharton laughed. He remembered—what his chums had for the moment forgotten—that Tippet was a conjurer at the circus. He did not believe in those beetles.

"Oh, leave it there!" he said. "I don't mind!"

"You don't mind?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Not at all!"

Tippet grinned, and sat down again, with two horrid-looking beetles wriggling in his hand.

"Chuck them away, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Bob.

"No fear!" answered Tippet. "Why, they cost five bob each!"

"Wha-a-t?" stuttered Bob.

Tippet, chuckling, slipped his mechanical beetles back into his pocket. Then the juniors understood.

Hurree Singh ceased to wave his jacket and waistcoat.

"You terrific ass!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You preposterous and ridiculous fathead!"

Hurree Singh hastily donned his waistcoat and jacket.

"Only my little joke, gents!" said Tippet. "Can't 'elp having my little joke! I tell you, that little trick generally gets a laugh. It would have tickled Marco no end to see Mr. Jampot a-waving of his jacket to shake off the beetles that wasn't there; only, you see, he's in such 'igh spirits already—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" grunted Marco.

He rose from the sand, and, with another curt nod to the juniors, walked away.

"Ain't he merry and bright?" sighed Mr. Tip. "Ain't he uproariously jolly? Don't he look as if he finds life a reg'lar joke—what?"

"Anything the matter?" asked Harry.

"Oh, lots!" said Mr. Tip. "There'll be a lot of dry eyes at the Magnificent Circus, I tell you straight, when your school gets going again, and we lose that fat covey Bunter! You'd think that he'd got Marco the push instead of me to look at him, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, Bunter!" said Bob. "Dear old Bunter! What's his latest?"

"Well," said Mr. Tip, "you blokes know Bunter better'n I do! Knowing him like you do, would you say he was the bloke to do stunts like a 'ero you read about in the noospapers—jumping at bolting 'orses and risking his life, and so on and so forth?"

"Eh!"

"What?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I gather," said Mr. Tip, "that you wouldn't! No! Well, that's the trouble. Bunter's a 'ero now—the 'ero of the circus—'im! Nobody but Zara believes so—and she's turned down poor old Marco, and given him the marble eye, because he won't believe that Bunter did it! She thinks it's mean of him to run down a bloke what's done such a 'ighfalutin stunt, jest as if a man could believe it, you know! Why, the fat covey as good as

let out that it was all bunkum, when we asked him!"

"But what—" asked Bob.

"I wish," said Mr. Tip, "that I could meet the bloke what done it! Zara, being in a faint at the time, and not seeing the bloke, has been took in by that spoofing frog! But, I tell you, he as good as let it out—"

"But what—" exclaimed Harry, startled.

"It was that day the 'orse bolted," explained Mr. Tip. "You haven't 'eard of it, of course; but a few days ago Zara's horse bolted, and nearly pitched her over the cliffs."

"We know all about that," said Bob.

"But what—"

"Well, somebody stopped that 'orse!" said Tippet. "And from what we got out of that fat freak, he went off on a bike for 'elp, leaving that lump of lard to look after Zara while he was gone. That's how I've worked it out, from what he let drop without meaning to. But Zara, you see, never knowed; and when she came to, there was Bunter. And she took his word for it that it was 'im done it—and I tell you she's been on the 'igh 'orse ever since, because nobody else will swallow it!"

"Great Scott!"

"And 'ow," demanded Mr. Tip, "can anybody swallow it? I tell you, Bunter as good as let out that it was all bunkum! But Zara won't 'ear a word—and she's got a down on old Marco that you could chop with a meat-axe! That's why he's looking so merry and bright, like you noticed!"

"The fat rotter!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"The spoofing porpoise!" roared Bob.

Tippet chuckled.

"I sort of get an impression," he remarked, "that you coveys don't believe that Bunter did it, any more than we do at the circus."

"Well, hardly!" gasped Wharton.

"But I'd like to meet the bloke what did!" said Mr. Tip. "I tell you, I ate to see them two at outs, and poor old Marco down in the dumps, and that fat lump of margarine putting on hairs, and Zara as sweet as sugar to him simply because he's made a fool of her—"

"If you'd like to meet the bloke what did," chuckled Bob Cherry, "you haven't very far to look for the bloke! He's sitting just beside you."

"Eh!" gasped Tippet. "What?"

"The awful rotter!" exclaimed Wharton. "I never dreamed—"

"Not you!" stuttered Mr. Tip.

"Zara couldn't have seen me following her on my bike, and I suppose she never saw me afterwards," said Harry. "She was gone when I got back with Mrs. Jones—I haven't seen her since, till this 'afternoon—"

"You!" yelled Tippet.

He jumped up, in great excitement. The holiday-makers on the sands, who had been entertained by Hurree Singh's performance with his jacket, were further entertained by the sight of Mr. Tip executing what looked like a waltz.

"Oh, my eye!" trilled Mr. Tip. "Oh, holy pokers! Oh, kiss me and call me Charley! Oh, won't I surprise that butter-faced lump of suet! Oh, won't I just! Oh, this is pie!"

It looked as if Billy Bunter's days as a hero were numbered!

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Alas for Bunter!

SIGNOR MUCCOLINI grinned. Marco smiled. Wiggles and Samson chuckled. Tippet Tip gurgled. A dozen other faces were wreathed in grins. All eyes were turned on Billy Bunter as he walked back into the circus

camp—looking fatter and podgier than ever by the side of the graceful queen of the ring.

Bunter blinked round haughtily through his big spectacles.

He was not quick on the up-take; but he could see that there was some joke on in the circus, and that he, William George Bunter, was the object of it.

All the circus company, in fact, had

been waiting for Bunter to come in, quite anxious to see him again.

Tippet Tip had got in an hour ago, and had not been long in telling the true story of Zara's rescue. Everybody at the Magnificent Circus knew it now, excepting Zara—and Zara was going to hear it. Billy Bunter's amazing spoof was about to be shown up—a prospect
(Continued on next page.)



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

USUALLY, at this time of the year, the heat is so intense that one likes to seek a shady corner in which to work. What a difference to-day! As I sit down to write this little chat by the office window I can hear the rain outside coming down by the bucketfuls. Will the summer ever come? Glancing through my paper this morning I read the following headline: "Heatwave expected in August!" If such proves to be the case you will all be sweltering by the time this chat of mine is in your hands. But can one be sure? Not a bit! There is only one thing you can be sure of these days, chums, and that is being able to get a copy of the MAGNET every Saturday. No matter how dull the weather is, the good old paper's always bright—thanks to the prince of school story authors—Frank Richards. His stories of Harry Wharton & Co. are the very best yarns obtainable. Frank Richards believes in clean, wholesome literature—the type of reading matter that appeals to all healthy-minded boys and girls. There is not an author in the whole wide world more competent to write school stories than the great "F.R." Although he has filled the breach since the MAGNET first appeared on the bookstalls, he is still a boy at heart, and can write just that type of school story that every British boy and girl loves to read—stories that have made his name famous in every quarter of the world. The boy and girl of to-day does not want to read nothing but the blood-curdling, sensational type of story—they enjoy really good stories of school adventure with the right amount of thrilling incident.

Having got that little lot off my chest, now for a few details of next week's super cover-to-cover story of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled:

"THE BOY WHO KNEW TOO MUCH!"

By Frank Richards.

and which, incidentally, is the last story in our present circus series. Knowing full well what would be his fate should Billy Bunter "spill the beans" about his spying activities, Signor Muccolini plots to still the fat junior's tongue once and for all. But never does it cross the signor's mind that he is being watched and shadowed by a detective who never fails to track down his quarry—Ferrers Locke! A more powerful yarn than this, chums, you've never read, so be sure to order your MAGNET in good time.

"Magnetites" will also find something to their liking in the grand yarn by Frank Richards appearing in this week's "Gem," for it describes the early adventures of

Harry Wharton at Greyfriars and the obstacles he had to surmount to live down the unhappy start his hasty temper had brought about—and which had made him the most unpopular fellow at Greyfriars. It's a masterpiece this story, chums, and as there must be thousands of you who have never read these early yarns, I strongly advise you to take advantage of this opportunity now by getting the "Gem" to-day. In addition to the Greyfriars yarn, there is also a tip-top story dealing with the exciting adventures of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's, entitled: "The Black Sheep's Dupe!" by Martin Clifford.

ONE of my Birmingham readers has heard that there is a MAN WITHOUT FINGER-PRINTS,

and he asks me if it is true. There is one case on record of a man having no fingerprints. He is an American, and recently applied for an identity card in the Argentine. Being a foreigner, he was obliged to have his fingerprints taken in order that they should be put on the card. To their surprise, the authorities discovered that there were no lines or whorls on the man's fingers, and therefore it was impossible to take his fingerprints. But as this is probably the only case of its kind in the world, the absence of fingerprints constitutes an even greater means of identification than otherwise!

Here's an interesting thing that an old waterman on the Thames was telling me the other day. Did you ever know that England's greatest river was once infested by

THAMES PIRATES?

It's a fact—and a pretty hefty gang they were, too! These pirates preyed on all sorts of ships in the Thames, stealing silently when they could, but never hesitating to attack ships when it was necessary. Then they would clear off with their haul long before anyone could get on their track. There were several gangs of pirates, and each had their own particular name. One lot was known as the "Night Plunderers," another as the "Light Horsemen," and another as the "Heavy Horsemen." In one year alone—1789—they attacked ships and amassed spoil to the total amount of half a million pounds sterling!

Two years later a census was carried

out on the river. It revealed the fact that 37,000 people were employed on the river, and of this number no fewer than 11,000 were known to be thieves and receivers! It wasn't until 1798, when the Thames Police was originally established, that piracy began to be stamped out on the Thames.

From a Rothwell reader comes the following query:

WHAT IS A CROW'S NEST?

It's the highest look-out point on a ship. In the old days it merely consisted of a barrel lashed high up the foremast. In this the look-out man would squat and search the seas for land or other vessels. What a difference to-day, though! The crow's nest on the Queen Mary, for instance, is one of the most comfortable places you could find. No longer has the look-out man to scramble up the rigging at imminent risk of being either blown overboard by hurricane, or washed over by mountainous seas. The foremast of the Queen Mary is hollow, and contains a ladder by which the look-out men can climb in comfort to their lofty position.

And it is a lofty one! The foremast itself reaches a height of 234 feet above the keel. The crow's nest is situated 130 feet above the sea level, and it is possible to see a distance of nine miles from it in clear weather. It is an enclosed steel platform, elliptical in shape, and fitted with electric heaters. Communication with the bridge is maintained by bell signals and telephones. A bit different from an old barrel and a battered megaphone!

Now for a few

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to shorter queries which several readers have sent:

Who is Zog? Zog is the king of Albania. His full name is Ahmed Beg Zogu, and he was President of the Republic before it became a kingdom.

What is an Albino? People whose skin is of a pale milky colour, and who have rose-coloured eyes and white hair. There are Albinos in the white, Indian, and negro races.

What is a Barbecue? A hog that is roasted whole. In America, however, the word is used to denote an open-air gathering where people eat roasted animals.

Do High Tides Affect Venice? Yes, an exceptionally high tide will flood all the streets between the canals. In such cases it is extremely difficult for a foreigner to tell which is a street and which is a canal.

Is an Orange a Berry? Yes, botanists class it as a berry. But strangely enough, a strawberry is not classed as one!

What does "Gules" Mean? It means a red colouring on a coat-of-arms. "Or" means gold, "Argent" means silver, "Purpure" is purple, and "Sable" black.

Were Irishmen Once Forbidden to Grow Moustaches? Yes. In the reign of Henry VI a law was passed compelling them to keep their upper lips shaved.

I think this is enough for this week, what?

Meet you all again next Saturday.
YOUR EDITOR.

that seemed to afford general entertainment—and brought a grin even to the signor's saturnine, swarthy face.

"Ere he is!" sang out Tippet. "See the conquering hero comes—I don't think!"

"Some hero!" chuckled Wiggles.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Zara's eyes flashed. She was prompt to take up the defence of her gallant rescuer.

"What does this mean?" she exclaimed. "Why are you all—"

"Zara," exclaimed Marco, "that young rascal has been found out! It was not he who stopped your horse on the cliffs—"

"Do not speak to me, Marco! I have told you not to speak to me until you are ready to do Bunter justice!" snapped the queen of the ring. "I will not listen to you."

"I tell you he has been found out—it was not he—"

"Nonsense!"

"It wasn't, Miss Zara—" said Tippet.

"Rubbish!"

"And we know who it was!" yelled Tippet. "See? I met the bloke and his friends this afternoon on the sands, and heard the whole story."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter.

His fat jaw dropped.

"I—I say, Zara, don't you believe him!" gasped the fat Owl, in dismay. "I—I say, it—it ain't true, you know! If those chaps have been telling Tip that Wharton did it, it's all gammon!"

Zara stared at him.

"Wharton!" she repeated.

"Yes—he was nowhere near the spot!" said Bunter. "He—he couldn't have done it, as he wasn't there, could he? If he makes out that he was there, it's all gammon! Don't you believe a word of it."

"You young rascal!" exclaimed Marco. "Zara, it was the boy Wharton—"

"It wasn't!" yelled Bunter.

"You may remember that you passed the schoolboys on their bicycles," said Marco. "Wharton saw that your horse was running away with you, and followed. That young rascal must have seen him following your horse, though you did not—"

"I didn't!" roared Bunter. "How could I see him when he wasn't there! Nowhere near the spot! Besides, he would never have caught up with the horse, if I hadn't been there—"

"Then—then he did—" gasped Zara.

"Oh, no, he didn't!" answered Bunter. "You see, he never came on the scene at all! I was there! Wharton wasn't!"

"He left you with Bunter while he went for help!" said Marco.

"He didn't!" roared Bunter. "How could he, when he wasn't there? Fat lot of good going for help, too! Zara was all right! She came to long before he got back, if he ever got back at all."

"Ark at him!" chortled Tippet.

"Jest 'ark!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Zara gazed at the fat Owl. She had not doubted before. But there was more than doubt expressed in her face now.

"Then Wharton was there?" she exclaimed.

"Don't I keep on telling you that he wasn't?" howled Bunter. "He never went for help, and you jolly well know that he never came back before you went—"

"Jest 'ark!" chortled Tippet.

"You shut up!" roared Bunter. "I don't want any check from a clown! I say, Zara, Wharton had absolutely nothing to do with it. I did the whole thing. All that silly ass could do was to call a fellow names!"

"He called you names!" gasped Zara.

"Yes, because he didn't know what to do with a girl in a faint, and I did," said Bunter warmly. "That's the sort of beast he is!"

"Then he was there—"

"Oh! No! He wasn't there!"

"How could he have called you names if he was not there?" shrieked Zara.

"Oh! I—I—I mean—I—I mean, he—he would have called me names, if—if he'd been there!" gasped Bunter. "You see, he didn't know what to do—I—I mean, he wouldn't have known what to

In Our Popular Companion Paper:

"THE BLACK SHEEP'S DUPE!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

A powerful long story of a St. Jim's senior who is faced with expulsion—unless he can save himself at the expense of an innocent junior!

"THE FAMOUS FOUR!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Every "Magnetite" will greatly enjoy this story of the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co.—in which the Famous Four show their fighting qualities when opposed to an escaped convict.

Ask for **THE GEM To-day!**

Now on Sale—Price 2d.

do, if he'd been there—but not being there, you know—of course he didn't—I mean, he wouldn't—that is, he wasn't—" Bunter was getting rather confused.

Zara stamped her foot, and her dark eyes flashed at the hapless fat spoofer.

"How dare you tell such untruths?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, really, Zara—"

"Had I known that anyone else was there, I should have known the truth. Why did you not tell me that Wharton was there?"

"Because he—he wasn't!" gasped Bunter. "He was miles away, when he was there—"

"What?" shrieked Zara.

"I—I—I mean, when—when he wasn't there—"

"It was Wharton who stopped my horse, as Marco says! Do you think that I cannot see that now?"

"It wasn't!" yelled Bunter desperately. "I tell you he was miles and miles away when he did it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He must think me ungrateful! I did not even stay to thank him, as I did

not know, and you did not tell me! Now I know why you did not wish me to speak to him to-day. Now I know the truth!"

The flash in Zara's eyes quite alarmed Bunter.

He jumped back.

Only too well he knew that the queen of the ring had a temper! Now that temper, plainly, was getting going!

"I—I—I say, you—you—you see—" stuttered Bunter. "What I mean to say is—yarooooop!"

Smack!

"Oh crikey!"

Smack!

"Yooo—hooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the circus men.

Bunter yelled and dodged. He had wondered, uneasily, what Zara would do if she discovered the truth. Now she had discovered it, and he was left in no further doubt as to what she would do—as she did it with great energy.

There was a roar of laughter from the crowd of circus men as she smacked his head right and left. There was a roar from Bunter also, though not of laughter.

Smack, smack, smack!

"Ow! Stop it!" shrieked Bunter. "I say—yooooop! Oh, you cat! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter bolted frantically. He bolted into Tippet Tip, who pushed him back, with a chuckle, into the reach of the smacking hand again.

Smack!

"Yoooooooo!"

Bunter made a bound in another direction. Wiggles grabbed him, and shoved him back. Once more Zara's hand landed on a fat head.

Smack!

"Ow! Wow! Will you stop it?" raved Bunter. "Ow! I was going to tell you all along—yarooooop! I was going to say—wow!"

Smack, smack, smack!

"Oh crikey! What a cat! Ow! Leave off!" shrieked Bunter. "Oh, my napper! Wow! Oh lor'!"

"There!" said Zara breathlessly. "Now go away, and never speak to me again. If you come near me, I will—"

Bunter did not stay to hear the rest! He bolted! A roar of laughter followed him as he went. Zara walked away—with Marco—leaving the circus men in a roar. Billy Bunter had not enjoyed that scene at all—but everybody else in the Magnificent Circus seemed to have enjoyed it immensely.

Bunter, the hero, was a hero no longer! Like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, he had fallen from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof.

Marco and Zara were the best of friends again. The storm in a tea-cup had blown over! Which was satisfactory to everybody—excepting Bunter!

Bunter, fortunately, did not matter!

THE END.

(The final yarn in this popular circus series in which the celebrated detective, Ferrers Locke, plays an important part, is entitled: "THE BOY WHO KNEW TOO MUCH!" Be sure to read it, chums!)

STAMMERING!

Cure yourself as I did. Particulars Free.—FRANK B. HUGHES, 7, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.C.1.

ABYSSINIA & QUEEN ASTRID PKT. FREE. 35 different, incl. stamps as above, War Memorial issue, Chili, Guatemala and Boy King, also 95-year-old stamp. Send 2d. post., requesting approvals.—LISBURN & TOWNSEND (U.S.), LIVERPOOL.

HORSEMAN

(ROUMANIA) PACKET FREE. Queen Astrid, King Charles on Horseback, set 5 Roumania, Antac, Luxemburg, 60 different. Postage 2d.; request approvals.—ROBINSON BROS. (A), MORETON, WIRRAL.

PERSIA

CORONATION PACKET FREE. 50 different, including also scarce Gold Coast (Castle), Sudan, Russia (Workman), etc., 2d. postage. Request "Fairway" approvals.—GEORGE ARNOLD, 29, WESTWOOD ROAD, BEXHILL.

THE SENTENCE OF THE HEAD!

Second Side-Splitting Instalment
of Dicky Nugent's 3-part Serial:

"FOR MOLLY BIRCHEMALL'S
SAKE!"

"Ow! Help!"
"Groooo! Gerroff my chest!"
Mr. Justiss and the disguised Frank Fearless sorted themselves out on the Head's garden-path—moaning and groaning as they did so. Doctor Birchermall gazed at them, with a thunderous eggspression on his skollarly fizz.

"Nice goings-on, I must say!" he wrapped out. "Mite I inquire, Molly, what's the idea of you running away from me like this here?"

Frank Fearless' heart gave a wild leap. The Head was still calling him "Molly"—so he had not yet pennytrated his make-up!

"Well, you see, pop," he trilled, in a life-like imitation of Molly Birchermall's voice, "I've just remembered that I had an appointment."

Doctor Birchermall gave an angry snort.

"And just because of that, you had to show me a clean pair of heels, and neck Mr. Justiss over to boot? Bless my sole!"

Frank Fearless put his tung in his cheek.

"I'm awfully sorry, pop," he tinkled. "And I do hoap you're not hurt, Mr. Justiss?"

"Ow! Well, you did rather nock the stuffing out of me, Miss Molly," confessed the Fifth Form master, with a rowful grin. "I always regarded your dawter, sir, as a dainty damsel, but she barged into me like a yung bullock!"

"She certainly put some beef behind it," mewed the Head, gazing at his supposed dawter with a very pekuliar eggspression on his dial. "I wonder—"

He eggspammed Frank Fearless more closely.

"There's something very unusual about you to-day, my child," he cried. "What strange eyes you have, Molly!"

"All the better to see you with, pop," trilled Frank Fearless.

"And what big ears!"

"All the better to hear you with, pop!" rippled Fearless.

"And what a long nose! Nothing like the delicate little nose you used to have!"

Doctor Birchermall reached out and touched the breathless junior's wig.

"And what strange hair—why, bless my sole!"

The Head felt the wig move. Then he gave it a violent tug—and Frank's golden locks came away in his hand! The next moment, the Head and Mr. Justiss yelled out together in sheer amazement.

"FEARLESS!" they shrieked.

"Oh, crums!" groaned Fearless. "That's done it!"

Fearless was right; it had! Quickly recovering from his shock, Birchermall grabbed the imposter by the shoulders, and shook him till his teeth rattled.

"By hokey! I'll soon find out the why and the wherefore of this!" he cried fiercely. "What made you dress up as my dawter, Molly? Speak!"

Frank Fearless met the Head's wolfish glare with fearless, flashing eyes.

"Shan't!" he said, in wringing tones. "My lips are sealed!"

"You'd better unseal them soon, or I shall get into a wax!" ground out Doctor Birchermall. "Hold the rebellious yung raskal by the hair, Justiss, while I twist his arms!"

Mr. Justiss nodded and grabbed a handful of Frank's towled mop, while the Head gave the junior's arm a crool, savidge twist. The pain was simply terribul, but Fearless bore it in dogged silence, save for a deafening roar of aggerney.

"Now speak, you yung welp!" hist Doctor Birchermall.

"Yarooooo! I refuse!"

"Then I'll speak for you!" growled the Head. "The fakt is that my dawter has flown in the face of my eggspression orders and gone on the screen! And you have been covering her traces! That's it, isn't it?"

"Ow! As a matter of fakt, sir—"

"How dare you interrupt me?" yelled Doctor Birchermall, who was in his most unreasonable mood. "She is at present in the studio of the film projucer, Selew Lloyd, isn't she? Speak!"



No. 203.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

August 29th, 1936.

The GREYFRIARS HERALD



"I—I—"

"Silence, I say! When will she be back? Answer me! Is there time for me to go and fetch her? Speak! Hold your tung!"

"Well, sir, if you—"

"Another word from you, and you'll regret it!" roared the Head. "You see, my dear Justiss," he said, turning to the open-mouthed Fifth Form master, "there are weighs and means of compelling a yung raskal to speak even when he declares he won't do so! Fearless is konvicted out of his own mouth. He admits that he has aided and abetted my dawter in a plot against her own father! Take him to the punishment-room and put him on a diet of bread-and-water!"

"And you, sir? What are you going to do?" asked Mr. Justiss, as his thumb and forefinger closed over Fearless' ear.

The Head smiled grimly.

"I am going to catch my dawter red-handed, and order her never to darken my doorstep again! She has deceived her own pop, Justiss. I have nursed a viper in my bosom, as it were, and I'm going to tick her off properly. Good-bye!"

And Doctor Birchermall turned towards the gates and set off at a brisk gallop.

Half an hour later, when he arrived at the film studios on the other side of Muggleton, he was just in time to see his dawter tripping out of the main entrance. Setting his mortar-board at a determined angle, the Head hurried forward. But before he could reach her, a car containing Mr. Selew Lloyd and his wife drove up. Doctor Birchermall heard Mrs. Selew Lloyd offer Molly a lift back to St. Sam's.

He put on a desprist spurt and gave a yell.

"Hi! Stop! Half a minnit! Do you here?"

But all that Molly heard as she stepped aboard was the roar of the powerful engine of the car.

The Head put in a last effort. Seeing that there was just room for him on the luggidge-grid, he made a dive.



He succeeded in grabbing it as the car leaped forward—and in a couple of jiffies he was very sorry he had done so, for he found he was hanging on by the skin of his teeth!

"Help! Perlice! Stoppit!" shrieked Doctor Birchermall, as he clung perilously to the back of the car. But none of the occupants heard him.

In sheer desperation, the Head made a safety-strap of his beard by knotting it to the back of the hood. That made him feel a little more secure, but it was still a jolly uncomfortable ride; and evenchally, when they drew near to St. Sam's, his little ruse had a most unforhunit sequel. As the car began to slow down, the Head suddenly lost his grip! If it hadn't been for that knotted beard, he would have rolled into the road unhurt now that the car's speed was reduced. But with his face funguss tied firmly to the car, the Head had to travel with it whether he liked it not!

After trailing along in the road by his beard for a few yards, yelling feendishly, he mannidged to get on his feet and finish the journey running. And so

it came about that the St. Sam's fellows who hap-pened to be near the gates just then, saw the amazing site of their revered and majestic Head racing madly along behind the car with the end of his beard tied neatly to the hood!

Then the car stopped, and the party from the film studios realised for the first time that they had been trailing a passenger behind them.

"What the merry dickens!?" ejaculated Mr. Selew Lloyd.

"Pop!" shrieked Molly Birchermall, rushing forward to untie her father's most-protector. But the Head sternly waved her back.

"Touch my whiskers at your peril!" he cried.

"You are no longer a dawter, line!"

"But, pop—"

"I refuse to discuss the matter!" said the Head, loftily, as he disengaged his beard at last. "You have disobeyed my orders not to act for the films. Worse still, you have dragged me along by my beard! After this, you are no longer my heir! Go!"

And the Head, with a dramattick jesture, turned on his heel. Unforhunitly, he was still a bit giddy from his recent eggspression, and the dramattick effect was completely spoiled when he tripped over and hit the roadway with his nose.

Bang!

"Yarooooo!" yelled the juniors.

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

Miss Molly, dabbing her eyes, returned to the car to go home with the film projucer and his wife. Jack Jolly & Co., shaking a tarfter, helped the Head to his feet. The drama was over—and it was pretty evident from the glare on Doctor Birchermall's dial that he hadn't fared very well.

But he had one consolation left, and his eyes were gleaming as he tramped through the gateway.

"Now for Fearless!" was the sinnister remark he uttered.

(Looks as if Frank is in for a "ruff" time, doesn't it, chums? How he gets on, you'll learn in the last instalment of Dicky Nugent's funny serial next week!—Ed.)

WHEN HOCKEY BEGINS —NO GRINS!

Begs MARJORIE HAZELDENE

Most of you Greyfriars boys smile when you hear Cliff House girls talking seriously about hockey. Football, you think, is worth any amount of serious talk. But hockey—

Oh, yes, I know what you think about hockey! A kindergarten game for giggling girls and softies! That's the idea, isn't it?

Well, you're wrong! And hockey begins this year, I'm going to ask you to treat it with the respect due to a game calling for lots of endurance and plenty of skill!

That's a shock for some of you football enthusiasts, isn't it? But I really mean it.

Just to prove my opinion, I thought of a plan that will enable you to see the Cliff House point of view in this matter. When the season is well started, I intend to get the Hockey Committee at Cliff House to issue a challenge to any hockey team at Greyfriars. And if you footballers will only come down from the dizzy heights in which you dwell and condescend to accept the challenge, I rather think we shall teach you that hockey is by no means the soft and simple game you supposed it to be!

We shall see!

(Hats off to Miss Hazeldene, lads, for putting us in our place! We are looking forward to that challenge!—Ed.)

SPEED FIENDS ON TANDEM-DE-LUXE—

And Uncle Thought They Were Safe!

After entertaining young Tubb and Myers at his seaside home for a couple of days, Tubb's Uncle John was at his wits' end to know how to keep them quiet. Tubb and Myers seemed to have a magic gift for getting into trouble!

If they went for a bathe, they inevitably found an out-size in crabs and dropped it in the lap of the nearest sun-bather. If they went for a walk along the sands, they inevitably bought ice-creams and accidentally dropped half of them down the necks of dear old gentlemen dozing in deck-chairs. If they played ball, the ball inevitably biffed some innocent holiday-maker on the boko!

What was to be done to keep them out of mischief? Tubb's uncle looked around—and his eye lighted on just the thing he wanted—a tandem-de-luxe!

In case you've never seen a tandem-de-luxe, we'd better explain that it's a low, long, rakish-looking vehicle in which two people sit side-by-side and pedal, the one on the right steering the thing along by a common-or-garden steering-wheel. All the best seaside resorts have been doing a roaring trade in them this season at a hiring fee of two bob an hour.

Tubb's uncle asked his two charges if they'd like a go. Tubb and Myers said: "What-ho!" and Tubb's uncle paid four bob to get them out of the way for two hours. Tubb's uncle then settled down to a couple of carefree hours in a deck-chair—and Tubb and Myers set off for a spin along the promenade.

Right from the moment when they were out of nunky's sight, the two fags skidded into trouble. In the first minute they floored a pedestrian and collided with a milk-cart. After that, they swiftly flattened out a deck-chair (happily, empty), and a pile of biscuit-tins, loaded with wafers for the beach! All this happened before they had really got into their stride. When they did get properly going, of course, their bag soon mounted up. In five minutes they had stamped a batch of donkeys, knocked down a newspaper-barrow, bashed into a bath-chair, run over the toes of half a dozen holidaymakers (mostly suffering from corns), and collided with a balloon-man, there-

by releasing a large assortment of balloons!

Tubb and Myers then decided that they might find it a little less crowded in the road, so they tootled off the prom, and joined in the traffic stream. Result: After a brief interval, half the traffic in the town was dislocated! We are assured by eye-witnesses that Tubb and Myers committed every crime known to road-users. When the signals said "Stop," they went on; when the signals



said "Go," they stopped! They cut in and swerved and skidded and crossed main roads with their eyes shut, and—but why go on? To cut a long story short, Tubb and Myers were at the police-station in less than half-an-hour, charged with dangerous driving and obstructing the police in the execution of their duty. Nunky had to be dragged out of his deck-chair to get them out of the mess; and the owner of the tandem-de-luxe had to send an assistant to tow the remains of the vehicle back to dry-dock!

Altogether, the adventure cost Tubb's uncle a little over a tonner.

Still, he got rid of the boys for the best part of an hour, so it's quite possible that from his point of view it was worth it!

A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES!

Some of the masters are awfully obliging.

When Prout recently gave lessons in golf to Wiggins and Twigg, and complained that his eyesight was weak. Wiggins and Twigg were so obliging that they started making "spectacles" of themselves!

TEMPLE PREPARES FOR NEXT TERM!

Chortles TOM BROWN

Exploring a cave one day during the hols., lads, I had quite an eerie adventure. But perhaps I ought to call it "ear-y." It certainly affected my ears more than anything else!

When I first toddled into the cave, everything was dead quiet, and I took it for granted that I was the only chap there. You can imagine how I jumped when a deafening voice suddenly roared in my ears. "NO RATIONAL MAN CAN SERIOUSLY MAINTAIN THAT A ROLLING STONE GATHERS NO MOSS!"

"What the thump!" I gasped. "THE POSITION IS UNTENABLE!" bellowed the gigantic voice. "THE ARGUMENT LUDICROUS! A ROLLING STONE GATHERS NO MOSS, INDEED! COULD ANYTHING BE MORE PATUOUS?"

I don't mind admitting, old pals, that my spine began to creep just a little! Alone in a cave with a lunatic! It was a jolly unnerving thought, I can tell you. Who else, but a giddy maniac would stand in a deserted cave, yelling himself hoarse about whether or not rolling stones gathered moss? The deafening argument went on, and I started to tip-toe out. Then I paused. Somehow there was something familiar about that voice. The cave magnified it out of all proportion, but I still seemed to recognise it as something I had heard before!

Plucking up my courage, I crept back again and investigated. And, believe it or not, the loony with the voice was none other than our old pal, Cecil Reginald Temple!

"Temple!" I yelled. The deafening din stopped, and in the grey light of the cave, Temple blushed.

"What the dickens are you doing here?" he growled. "I thought I was on my own!"

"But what's the idea?" I howled. Temple coughed.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I've been using this cave as a sort of practice-room for public speaking. I'm getting in trim for the Debating Society next term. Our first debate is on the proposal that a rolling stone gathers no moss, and I'm the chief speaker against it. See?"

I saw—and roared! And the chances are that I shall roar even more when I listen to the debate and compare Temple's subdued mouthings with the stentorian shouts I heard that morning in the cave!

"WHY BUY BLACK-BERRIES?"

Asked OGILVY

Ogilvy asked Rake, "Why buy blackberries, when you can go out with a basket and pick 'em for nothing?" As Rake wasn't prepared with an answer he agreed to join Ogilvy in a blackberrying expedition.

They set out with two big baskets—and bags of optimism! Ogilvy knew where to go and he led the way. When the bad-tempered bull that happened to be in the same field came charging down on them he also led the way out!

Undismayed, Ogilvy found fresh fields and pastures new—and in a brace of shakes, he and his henchman were being chased off by an angry farmer with a hunting-crop!

Ogilvy consulted a roadmender, and learned of a fine blackberrying-ground further afield. It was a sixpenny bus-ride—and when they arrived, it was only to find that other collectors had got in first and taken the lot!

After that, lunch seemed called for, so they made for the nearest village and spent five bob on cats at an inn. Then more bus-rides and searchings, until sunset, when they found what they were after and managed to gather about a pound of rather maggoty blackberries before nightfall.

Experts assessed the value of their haul at fourpence. The day's expenses amounted to twelve-and-sevenpence-halfpenny.

So now Ogilvy knows the answer to his question: "Why buy blackberries?"