

GREAT YARN OF THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S ON HOLIDAY—INSIDE.

The

GEM

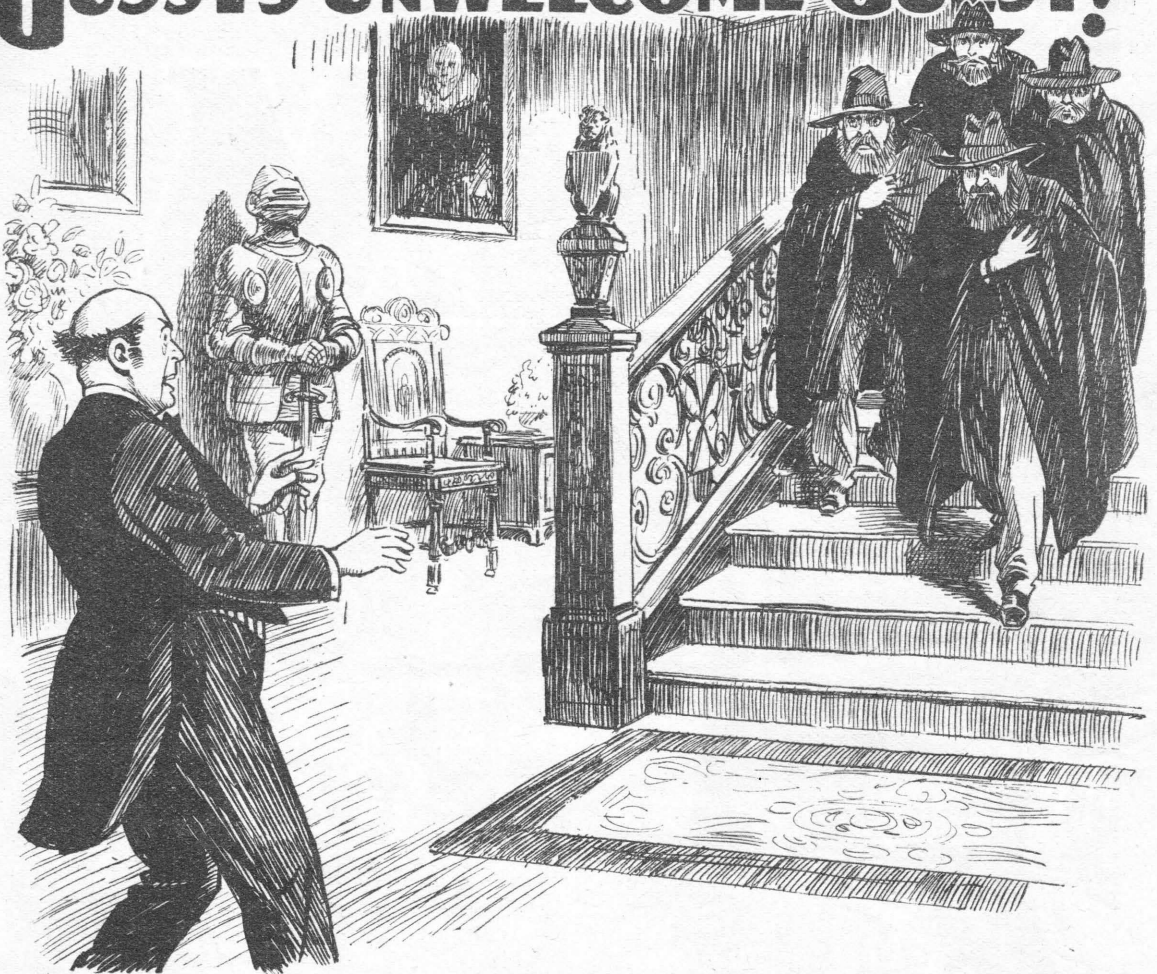
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**CRAZY
CRICKET!**

FOUR BOLD BAD VILLAINS SET OUT TO SCARE AWAY THE UNINVITED GUEST OF GUSSY'S HOLIDAY PARTY!

GUSSY'S UNWELCOME GUEST!



In the hall the disguised Tom Merry & Co. met Chillingham. The stately butler of Eastwood House staggered back in alarm at sight of the four villainous-looking ruffians. "Good gracious!" he gasped. "Who—who are you?"

CHAPTER 1.

The Uninvited Guest!

CHUMGUM'S Circus—"Good-mornin', deah boys!" "Good - morning, Gussy! Chungum's Circus, Captain Coke, the Lion Tamer; Texas Bill, the Wonderful Bareback Rider, and Broncho Buster—"

"I've had a lettah—"

"And Tiny Tony, the celebrated Clown and Unequalled Mirth Merchant," went on Tom Merry, reading from the "Easthorpe Times." "Also the Circus Cricketers. That sounds like a good item, you fellows!"

"Yes, rather!" said Jack Blake. "Any more?"

"Sapolio, the Serpent Charmer, Rab Rabbi, the Indian Juggler; Samsonio, the Strongest Man on Earth."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Sounds jolly good," said Monty Lowther. "We'll go, of course."

"You bet!"

"I was wemarkin', deah boys—"

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"The Circus Cricketers sound very good," remarked Manners.

"Worth seeing," said Digby.

"I was makin' a wemark to you fellows!" roared Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Hallo, were you speaking, Gussy?" asked Jack Blake affably.

"Weally, you silly-ass—"

"That's what I like about Gussy," remarked Monty Lowther enthusiastically. "He's always so jolly polite to his visitors."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ahem! I withdwaw that wemark, Blake. Howevah, if we were in the study at St. Jim's, instead of undah my patah's woof, pway undahstand that I should wegard you as a silly ass," said Arthur Augustus severely.

Tom Merry & Co. were seated round the breakfast-table at Eastwood House. The Terrible Three of the Shell Form at St. Jim's and the chums of Study No. 6 were spending their vacation under the paternal roof of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

They were at breakfast now, a rather

late breakfast. The rising-bell of St. Jim's no longer awakened them in the early dawn with its iron clang, and the juniors had not come down to breakfast until nine o'clock. The hospitable board of Eastwood House was well spread, and the juniors of St. Jim's were "doing themselves" remarkably well.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, was the last in. Arthur Augustus' morning toilet was a performance that required a good deal of time to arrange to perfection, and he was generally the last down. He came into the breakfast-room looking immaculate and elegant, as usual.

He held a letter in his hand, and the expression upon his noble countenance showed that the contents of the letter had not pleased him.

But Tom Merry & Co. were looking particularly merry. The announcement in the local paper that Chungum's Circus had come to Easthorpe was good news. They had never heard of Mr. Chungum or his circus before, certainly,

The sound of chuckles warned him that the juniors were there. They seemed to have forgotten about Bunter. The Co. were great on amateur theatricals, and they intended to give a performance during the vacation, and so their "props" had been sent from the school. But if they were busy about trying on costumes, apparently they had held a council of war on the subject of Bunter without result.

"Black beards," said Tom Merry's voice, as D'Arcy came in.
"And moustaches," said Blake.
"And darken your eyebrows," said Lowther.

"Regular stage villains!" chuckled Manners. "My hat! The fat bouncer certainly won't know us in this rig."

"He mustn't know us, of course."

"No fear!"
"Gweat Scott!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, staring at his chums. "What the dooce—" Words failed the swell of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry, Lowther, Manners, and Blake presented an extraordinary aspect. They had adjusted, black beards and moustaches to their faces, and were occupied in ruffling and darkening their eyebrows. They looked four desperate villains, and more than thirty years old, so far as their faces went, and such faces over boyish bodies had a very curious effect.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Blake affably.
"How do you like this?"

"What on earth are you doin'?"

"Disguising ourselves, of course!"

"But there are no such chawactans in the play, deah boy—"

"This isn't a play—this is real earnest. We're getting ready for Bunter."

"Buntah!" said Arthur Augustus.
"But—surely you are not thinkin' of goin' to meet Buntah like that?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Now, about the clobber," said Tom Merry. "Some rough old clothes and big boots. These nobby suits we're wearing won't do."

"But what's the little game?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Don't ask questions, and we'll tell you no lies!" replied Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I insist upon knowin'—"

"Rats! You've left the matter in our hands—"

"But I did not agree—"

"Well, we agreed, and that's enough," said Tom Merry, who was changing his clothes as he talked. "All you've got to do is to sit by and look pleased."

"But weally—"

"You can play Lumley-Lumley a hundred up at billiards while we're gone."

"I wefuse to play Lumley-Lumley a hundred up. I insist upon knowin' what you fellows are goin' to do in that widdleous wig."

"There! That's about done," said Lowther. "I think we shall do. Bunter wouldn't know us if he wore a pair of field glasses instead of specs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now we're ready!"

And the four disguised juniors walked to the door.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy planted himself in their way.

"You must weally explain. I insist that Buntah shall not be tweated with any wudeness, and I cannot approve of any japin'—"

"Exactly!" said Tom Merry. "That's why you're dead in this act. Buzz off!"

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"But—but you cannot go downstairs like that. You will alarm the whole house."

"Oh, that's all right."

"I weally cannot allow—"

"You fellows collar Gussy and keep him quiet," said Tom Merry, turning to the grinning juniors. "Sit on his head, if necessary."

"I wefuse to have my head sat upon. Leggo—yah!"

Herries and Digby seized the swell of St. Jim's and sat him down forcibly in an armchair. They held him there by main force while Tom Merry and his companions quitted the room.

They proceeded cheerfully downstairs. A maidservant, who caught sight of the four villainous-looking ruffians, fled with a gasping shriek. In the hall they encountered Chillingham, the stately butler of Eastwood House. Chillingham forgot his professional gravity for once. He staggered back in alarm.

"Goodness gracious!" he stuttered.

"Who—who are you? What—"

"Hallo, Chilly! What's the matter?" asked Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Master Merry!" ejaculated the bewildered butler, recognising the voice.

"Anything wrong, Chilly?"

"I—I did not know you, sir! That—that beard! Those—those moustaches and—"

"I've been using rather too much tatcho," Tom Merry explained, "taken an overdose, you know. It's warranted to make the hair grow."

"Oh, Master Merry!"

The four juniors went on their way chuckling, leaving the butler gasping. As they left the house they met Cousin Ethel. The girl gave a start.

"Don't be alarmed!" exclaimed Tom Merry quickly. "It's only us!"

"Why—what—"

"Only a little joke. Mum's the word!"

And, leaving the mystified girl looking after them in astonishment, Tom Merry & Co. walked down the drive.

Lord Conway, the eldest son of the Earl of Eastwood, was coming up the drive, with a gun in the hollow of his arm. He jumped at the sight of the four ruffians bearing down upon him.

"Who are you?" Conway exclaimed, planting himself directly in their path and frowning darkly. "How dare you come in here?"

"Away!" said Tom Merry. "Dare you cross the path of the Brethren of the Black and Gory Hand?"

Lord Conway stared at them. The juniors did not bear the remotest resemblance to their real selves, and he had not the faintest suspicion of their identity. The viscount pointed to the gates.

"Get out of here!" he said tersely.

And the four ruffians went rather hastily down the drive, Lord Conway seeing them off the premises before he walked away to the house. They chuckled as they came out into the road.

"Old Conway didn't know us," grinned Tom Merry, "so it's jolly certain that Bunter won't. He'll take us for what we look like, and if we don't scare him away from this neighbourhood for good you can use my head for a footstool!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I don't begin to think we've rather overdone it, though," murmured Blake. "We don't want them to call the police out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's only one bobby in

Easthorpe, and we could eat him!" grinned Tom. "By Jove, though, we do seem to be making rather a sensation!"

As the juniors entered the village startled urchins fled before them, and several old persons moved hastily out of their way. Tom Merry & Co. did indeed begin to feel that they had rather overdone it. But it was too late to make any alteration now. They had to see the thing through.

The party entered the railway station and the booking-clerk turned quite pale as he handed out their tickets. Two or three passengers who were waiting for the train looked very uneasy, and retreated as far away as possible.

One old gentleman stood his ground, looking very severely at the ruffians through his horn-rimmed glasses till he heard Monty Lowther remark, in a stage whisper: "Have you got the bomb ready, Brother Marco?" Then the old gentleman beat a hasty retreat, his glasses nearly falling off in his terror.

Fortunately, the train came in soon, and, needless to say, the four ruffians had a carriage to themselves. They were glad when the train rolled out of the station. Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"Lots of time!" he announced. "We shall get to Leckford in twenty minutes. Bunter's train stops there three minutes—quite long enough for us to find his carriage and get in. We shall have to wait there ten minutes for his train. All serene!"

"If we're not arrested as suspicious characters," grunted Blake. "We've overdone it."

"Can't be helped now."

The juniors left the train at Leckford. That was a much larger station than Easthorpe, and there were a good many people on the platform. They eyed the four foreign-looking ruffians suspiciously, and gave them a wide berth.

The express came in at last, and stopped. Tom Merry & Co. looked anxiously along the train. This was Bunter's train, which was to arrive at Easthorpe at 11.50. They had three minutes in which to spot Billy Bunter's carriage; but, as it happened, it was quite easy.

A fat face, adorned with a large pair of spectacles, looked out of a first-class carriage, and a squeaky voice called to a porter:

"Is this Easthorpe?"

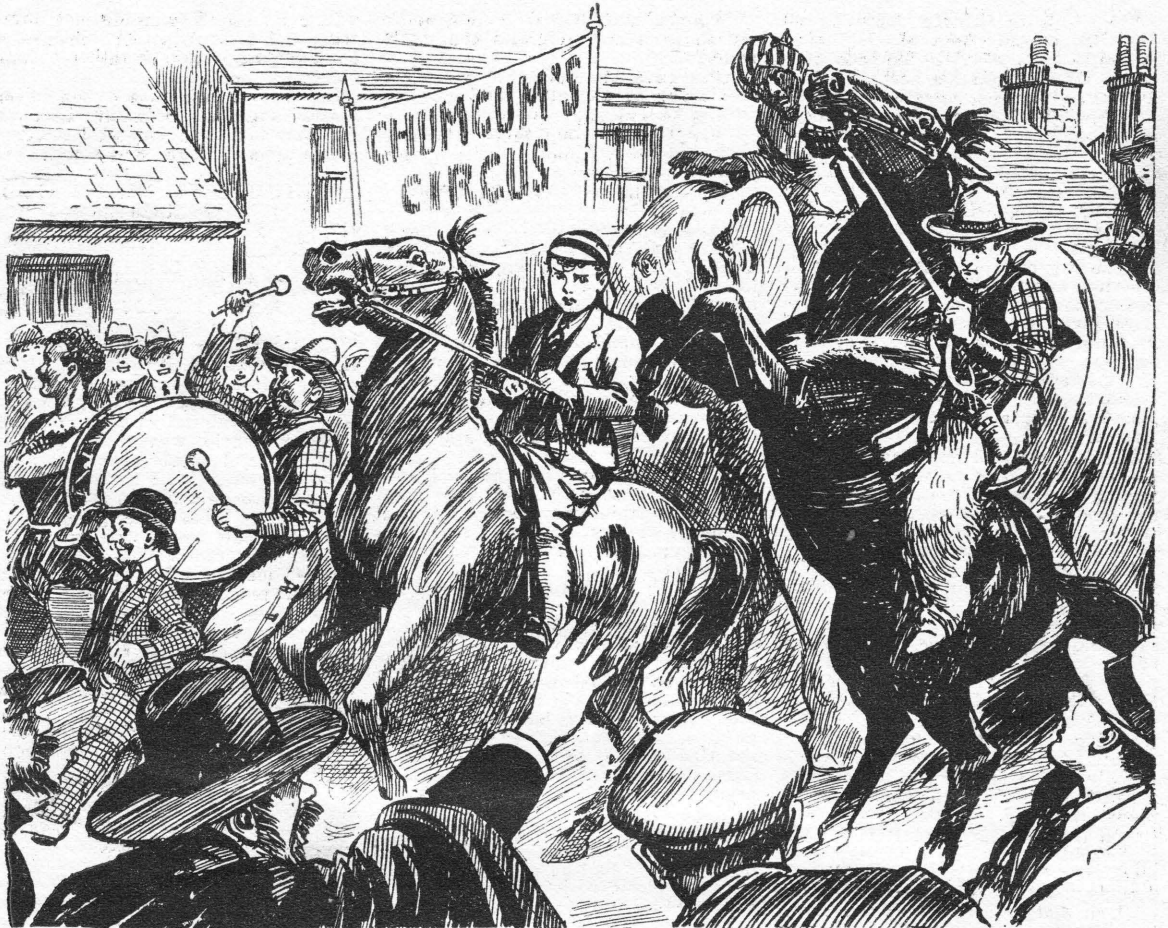
"Next station, sir."

The fat junior grunted, and drew in his head.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged a quick glance and made for his carriage. And the sight of those four ruffians getting into the carriage caused all the other passengers to get as far away as possible up or down the train.

The fat junior was not alone in the carriage. There were two ladies there, and they turned quite pale at the sight of the four dreadful characters that scrambled in. The fat junior blinked at them through his big spectacles, and the two ladies rose to leave the carriage.

Tom Merry & Co. politely made way for them, keeping, at the same time, in Billy Bunter's way, so that he could not follow their example. Bunter had risen to his feet with the intention of changing carriages. He had no mind to travel for a quarter of an hour in such dangerous-looking company.



As the circus procession was passing, the savage-looking black horse ridden by Texas Bill reared dangerously on his hind legs just behind the unsuspecting Wally. "Look out, Wally!" The fag started at hearing the familiar voice of Blake proceeding from a foreign-looking ruffian.

Tom Merry shoved him back. "Vere is your mannairs?" he asked, with a French accent. "Vill you get yourself in ze vay of ze ladies, zen?" "Let me pass!" gasped the fat junior. "I—I want to get out." "You let ze ladies get zemselves out first, zen."

As soon as the two ladies had alighted, Lowther drew the door of the carriage shut. Bunter tried to shove himself past the other three to get to the door.

"You push me, zen!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in so terrifying a voice that Billy Bunter dropped back upon his seat in alarm.

"No—please—not at all! I—I didn't mean to push you, monsieur!" stammered Bunter. "I—I want to get out!"

"Vill you push me, zen?"

"No! No!"

"Vell, zen, if it is not zat you push me, zen zat is all right. But if it is zat you shall push me, zen—"

"I beg your pardon! I assure you—"

"Zat is enough!" said Tom Merry, as the train started.

He had gained his object in keeping Bunter in the carriage until the train left the station. It was too late for the fat junior to think of changing carriages now. He settled back into his seat with a suppressed groan. There was a non-stop run of a quarter of an hour before him, and in such company Bunter felt the reverse of safe.

CHAPTER 3.

Bunter's Narrow Escape!

BILLY BUNTER screwed himself as small as possible—which was not very small—in his corner of the carriage, and palpitated.

The previous part of his journey had been very comfortable, filled with anticipation of the great time he was to have at Eastwood House as the guest of his old pal D'Arcy.

But those cheery anticipations had vanished now. The more he blinked at the four ruffians, the more deadly and murderous they looked. He blinked in ill-concealed uneasiness at his fellow passengers. Tom Merry looked at him.

"You stare at me, zen?" he demanded.

"No!" gasped Bunter. "Not at all; in fact, I—I was asleep—I mean, I am going to sleep."

"Sapristi!"

Bunter closed his eyes, keeping one corner open to watch the four ruffians. They took no notice of him for some minutes. Then their leader spoke.

"You are ready, my comrades, for ze deed of blood at Easthorpe?"

"Ve are ready!" said Blake, in a low voice.

"Hush!" said Lowther. "He will hear and betray us to the police!"

"Bah! He sleeps!"

"Mayhap he is a spy!"

"Non, non! He sleeps! Think not of him! We must lay our plans. In

ten minutes ve sall be in Easthorpe! You have ze dagger, Marco?"

"I have it!"

"You have ze pistol, Pedro?"

"Oui, oui, chief!"

"And you, Carlo, you have ze bomb?"

"Here, chief!"

"Good! I have ze ozzer bomb. And ven zat victim, marked out by ze Brothers of ze Black Hand, sall be stabbed, shot, and blown to pieces viz ze bombs, he sall be dead!"

"But why does he die, O chief?"

"He is ze son of a stockbroker in ze City. For zat he must die! Is it not ze duty of ze Brothers of ze Black Hand to kill all ze rich viz zemselves?"

"It is true, O chief!"

"Vat is his name?"

"His name is Buntair!"

Billy Bunter gave a violent start as he heard his own name pronounced. What would have happened if these fearful ruffians had known that their intended victim was in the same carriage with them? Evidently they did not know him by sight. In that lay the fat junior's safety.

"But how sall ve know him, O chief? Ve have nevair seen him?"

"Zat is easy! He arrives at Eastwood House ziz day. Zat has been learned by a trusty spy of ze Black Hand. Enrico and Pierre and Jacko are watching ze house, and zey vill see him arrive. Zey vill tell us, and zen ve sall say him!"

"But if we cannot find him there—"
 "Zen ve sall watch the house day and night till ve get ze chance. He cannot escape. Has not ze Brotherhood of ze Black Hand sworn his death?"

"Zat is so!"

"If he remains at Eastwood House—if he ever enters that house—he is dead! He can only escape us by fleeing. And he knows not his danger, so he will not fly."

"True, O king—I mean O chief!"

Billy Bunter's face was the hue of chalk. If the four villains had looked at him they must have observed that he was not asleep. Fortunately they did not look at him. Billy Bunter would have given anything for the train to arrive at Easthorpe Station. Never had minutes seemed so like hours. The ruffians continued to mutter to one another, till at last the train, to Bunter's great relief, stopped at Easthorpe.

His fellow passengers stepped out of the carriage. Bunter waited till they were well down the platform, and then rolled out. His knees were knocking together so much that his fat little legs would hardly support him.

He blinked along the platform after the ruffians. He felt that he had had the escape of his life. But if he went to Eastwood House it was simply running into the jaws of death. He thought of the police. But he knew that the police force would be very small in a little village like Easthorpe.

Besides, there were other villains watching the house, whom he had not seen. If he escaped these four it would be only to fall a victim to the daggers, automatic pistols, and bombs of the rest of the gang.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Bunter, leaning weakly against an automatic sweet machine. "Oh crikey! Who'd have thought it? I—I wish I could explain to them that the pater isn't really rich at all, but they wouldn't believe me! Oh, great pip! What am I going to do? I shall be murdered if I go near Eastwood House! And—and I haven't left myself enough money for a return fare. Oh crikey!"

He waited till the ruffianly foreigners were gone, and then rolled out of the station in a state of wild trepidation and anxiety.

As he came out he heard the voice of the leader of the gang addressing a porter.

"Will you tell me vat is ze way to Eastwood House?"

Bunter scuttled back into the station like a scared rabbit. There was no doubt of it; they were going to D'Arcy's place to lie in wait for him.

"I've got to bunk!" murmured Bunter. "I—I'm not going to stay here to be murdered! Ow! The awful beasts! All these beastly foreign gangsters ought to be hung! Ow! If anybody pointed me out to them they'd come and murder me now. And that beast D'Arcy hasn't come to meet the train, and he must have had my letter this morning. I could have borrowed the return fare of him. He's a beast! Oh crumbs!"

If Billy Bunter had possessed sufficient ready cash to pay his fare home he would certainly have caught the next train out of Easthorpe, and the object of the juniors would have been accomplished.

The hitch in the programme was not due to them; it was only due to William George Bunter's perpetual state of impecuniosity.

The Greyfriars junior was in a fix.

To go on to Eastwood House was out of the question. And to depart without the money to pay his fare was not possible. And now that it was too late, the Owl of the Remove at Greyfriars sincerely regretted his excessive sharpness in fastening himself upon the good-natured Arthur Augustus for a holiday. But how could he have guessed that he was to run into a fearful danger like this? He felt that he was not to blame.

As he stood with palpitating heart and wrinkled brows in the station vestibule there was a sudden blare of a trumpet in the street. Then there was a shout:

"The circus!"

"Hurrah!"

Bunter blinked out of the station. A

striking procession was coming up the village street. A huge elephant led the way, with a clown perched on his back, beating a drum and exchanging humorous remarks with the crowd. Next came a man on a camel, blowing mighty blasts on the trumpet. Then a big van lumbered by, with announcements upon it in red and black:

**"CHUMGUM'S CELEBRATED
 CIRCUS!
 SIX DAYS ONLY!
 COME AND SEE THE WONDER OF
 THE WORLD!
 CHUMGUM'S CELEBRATED
 CIRCUS!"**

All the village had turned out to see the procession of the circus. In the crowd before the railway station Billy Bunter recognised the four ruffians. Even in his palpitating state of mind he could not help wondering that such villainous and deadly characters should take an interest in so trivial a thing as a circus procession. But they evidently did. They were looking on with as much keenness as the village boys.

After the circus van came a big, bronzed man mounted upon a powerful and savage-looking black horse. It was Texas Bill, the Broncho Buster, a gentleman whose features seemed to hint that he came from a nearer country than Texas—perhaps Tipperary. More vans and animals and striking costumes were seen in the rear.

And suddenly Bunter uttered an exclamation as he saw a lad mounted upon a handsome pony riding abreast of the Texas gentleman. He recognised D'Arcy minor of St. Jim's—the redoubtable Wally of the Third. The fag of St. Jim's was grinning cheerfully. He had been out riding his new pony when he fell in with the circus procession, and he had calmly joined it, somewhat to the surprise of the circus folk, and causing much laughter among the crowd of onlookers.

"That's D'Arcy's young brother," murmured Bunter. "If I could speak to him I could get a loan."

But he scuttled back into the station doorway as one of the ruffians turned his head. If he had overheard the remark of that ruffian he would not have been so much alarmed.

"My hat!" the man was muttering. "It's that cheeky young bounder Wally! What would Gussy say if he saw him now?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the four foreigners.

Wally glanced at them as he came by. The sight of those four foreign-looking scoundrels in the village street astonished him, as it astonished all others who saw them. But the scamp of the Third was not scared by their villainous looks.

"Hallo, you want a shave!" he remarked in passing.

And the bystanders grinned.

Tom Merry glanced at the fag, but did not speak. He did not want Wally to recognise his voice. But Blake gave a sudden shout:

"Look out, Wally!"

Wally started at hearing the familiar voice proceeding from that unfamiliar person; but he took the warning, looking round quickly.

The savage-looking black horse ridden by Texas Bill had reared on his hind legs. Next moment he made a sudden lunge with his head at the pony, his bared white teeth showing in a snarl. The rider jerked him back at once, and the black horse pranced and backed; and the pony, startled and scared by



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the attack, sprang away. There was a wild surging back of the crowd.

"Hold him in, Wally!" yelled Blake. Wally was gripping the reins hard. But the pony was thoroughly frightened, having already been in a nervous state from the blare of the drum and the trumpet. He fairly bolted with the bit between his teeth.

In the narrow and crowded village street there was a yell of alarm. The bolting pony would certainly have knocked down half a dozen people, at least, before they could have escaped; but, as the animal sprang away, Tom Merry made a leap at him.

The junior's grasp closed on the bit, and his weight dragged the pony's head down.

Texas Bill forced his horse on, but Wally's pony was rearing and struggling wildly, Wally sticking to him grimly, and Tom Merry hanging at his head, with a flustered crowd surging round him!

CHAPTER 4.

Not a Success!

"HOLD him!"
 "Don't let him go!"
 "It's one of them furriners!"
 "Well done!"

Tom Merry hung on grimly. The pony was a powerful animal, and he dragged the junior clear of the ground twice. If Tom Merry had let him go, he would certainly have fallen under the trampling hoofs.

But he did not let go.

He held on grimly, and the pony's head was dragged down at last, and the animal, subdued, stood trembling, under the control again of his master.

"Thank you!" panted Wally. "That was jolly plucky! But what—what—"

He gasped with astonishment as he looked at his rescuer, and the crowd, surging round, gasped, too. They had been astonished at seeing one of the villainous-looking foreigners rush to the aid of the endangered lad. But they were still more astonished to see him as he looked after his struggle with the pony. For in the tussle his beard and moustache had come off, and a smooth, boyish face was revealed, looking queer and comical with the darkened eyebrows.

"Tom Merry!" yelled Wally.

Tom gasped.

"Yes, you young ass! Can you manage now?"

"Yes; but what—"

"Oh rats! You've spoiled a good jape!" grunted Tom. "Clear off!"

Wally grinned and rode off with the procession, which was under way again. Tom Merry was the cynosure of all eyes. He had been a good deal in the village during his stay at Eastwood House, and many of the folk in the street recognised him now, and there was a general chuckle.

Tom Merry looked anxiously towards the station. If Billy Bunter had seen that incident, and saw him now, the juniors had worked off that peculiar jape in vain.

And the first thing Tom Merry saw was the round face of Billy Bunter, with his eyes almost starting from his head behind his big spectacles.

Bunter was still there!

If Billy Bunter had had any money in his pocket he would have been gone; but he hadn't, and so he was still there. And the unmasking of Tom Merry had taken place under his very eyes.

Bunter blinked at him, his eyes growing as round as saucers. For some



moments he could hardly believe his eyes. But he recognised Tom Merry, and slowly a fat grin overspread his plump face.

He came out of the station, all his terrors of the four villains vanishing now.

He grinned affably as he joined the St. Jim's juniors.

"Hallo!" he said cheerfully. "How do you do, Tom Merry? He, he, he!"

"What are you he-he-he-ing about?" snapped Tom Merry crossly. He was by no means pleased at the total collapse of the jape.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "Of course, I knew whom you were all the time."

"What?"

"I said to myself, these chaps are trying to pull my leg, and I'll let 'em believe I take it in. He, he, he! Fooled you a treat, didn't I?"

The defeated juniors glared at Billy Bunter as if they would eat him.

"You—you—you Ananias!" roared Blake. "You jolly well know that you were scared out of your wits!"

"He, he, he!"

"You hadn't the least idea that it was us!" howled Lowther, greatly incensed.

"He, he, he!"

"You were shaking like a fat jelly!" snorted Manners.

"He, he, he!"

The Co. were intensely exasperated. The villagers round them were staring and laughing, and they were receiving much more attention than they cared for. Now that Tom Merry had been recognised, the onlookers guessed that the other villainous-looking foreigners were also schoolboys "got up" for the occasion, and the four juniors seemed to be even a greater attraction than the circus procession.

Grimming urchins thronged round them, making remarks; and one bold "nipper" jerked at Monty Lowther's beard and pulled it off, and there was a howl of laughter.

"I say, we've got to get out of this!" muttered Blake.

"Come on!" said Tom.

"I say, you fellows, if you're going back to Eastwood House, I'll come with you," said Billy Bunter. "I don't mind a joke. You should see the way I jape the fellows in the Remove at Greyfriars.

Quite a dab at it. You didn't take me in, either. I knew it was you fellows all the time."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"How is it that my old pal Gussy hasn't come to meet me at the station?" asked Bunter.

"Bow-wow!" growled Blake.

"I really expected it of him. However, you fellows can show me the way to Eastwood House. Gussy will be delighted to see me."

"Will he?" growled Blake.

"You bet! We got pally from our first meeting," said Bunter confidentially. "Just the kind of fellow I can pull with, Gussy is. I've given him lessons in ventriloquism, you know. I'll show you fellows some ventriloquial tricks later on. I'm a dab at it. My hat, this blessed crowd is following us!"

The juniors strode down the village street, feeling extremely uncomfortable in their absurd disguises now that they were known.

A grinning and chuckling crowd of villagers followed them.

"I say, we can't go back to Eastwood like this!" said Tom Merry. "These blessed kids are following us all the way. They seem to think we are going to give a performance, or something."

"He, he, he!"

The St. Jim's juniors glared at Bunter. He was the cause of it all. Had the jape gone well, they could have slipped back to Eastwood House quietly; but with the crowd of village urchins following them that was impossible. To walk up the drive with that crowd staring and chuckling after them at the lodge gates was out of the question.

They stopped in the lane and removed their disguises as far as they could; but they could not remove the paint from their faces, or the shadowing from their eyebrows and eyelashes, or the rough clothes they wore. Their aspect now was, in fact, odder than when they had worn the beards and moustaches. And Billy Bunter grinned at them all the time, thoroughly enjoying their perplexity and dismay.

Three well-dressed youths came striding down the lane, and they paused at the sight of Tom Merry & Co. They were Cutts and Gilmore of the Fifth and Knox of the Sixth, three St. Jim's fellows, who were spending their vacation at Westhorpe, only half a mile from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's home.

Tom Merry & Co. were on the worst possible terms with them at St. Jim's; and since the vacation had started there had been trouble between the two parties. Cutts & Co. were the very last persons in the world whom the juniors would have wished to have seen at that moment. Their luck was very much out.

The three seniors stared at them in astonishment for a moment, and then burst into a roar of laughter. The juniors, in rough clothes suitable for men twice their age, were barely recognisable, and extremely comic to view.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Cutts. "Well, this takes the cake! Are you kids going out busking, or what?"

"Find out!" growled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see you've got a following," grinned Knox. "Are you made up for a Punch and Judy entertainment? Or is it a song and dance?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. glared at their old enemies and tramped on savagely. Billy Bunter followed, with his irritating

chuckle. Cutts & Co. looked after them, and roared with laughter till they were out of sight.

The village boys were still following. One or two of them, in the exuberance of youthful spirits, had begun to throw stones. Billy Bunter roared as a pebble caught him on the back of the head, and his chuckle was silenced for a while.

"I say, you fellows, I can't keep along with you if this kind of thing is going on," he said. "I'm not a snob, but I really do bar walking out with fellows who get themselves up in that kind of clobber. You'll excuse me."

"With pleasure!" snapped Blake.

"See you later!" said Bunter. "Ta-ta!"

He rolled on, leaving the juniors halted in the road. They were nearly in sight of the lodge gates at Eastwood House. Tom Merry could have sent a message by Billy Bunter, asking Digby and the others to bring out their clothes, and they could have changed in the wood. But he felt that, considering his intentions towards Bunter, it was impossible to ask a favour of him. So the Owl of Greyfriars rolled away and disappeared. And the four juniors looked at one another in dismay.

"Well, what are we going to do?" snorted Blake. "The fat beast has gone to Eastwood after all, and we're landed!"

"What rotten luck!" groaned Manners.

"We'll go down to the river and wash this stuff off our chivvies," said Tom dolefully. "Then, if those kids don't clear off, we'll charge them and wallop 'em! Come on!"

They cut down to the river, and washed the make-up from their faces in the flowing waters. The village urchins watched them from a distance, occasionally throwing a stone or two. When they had finished, the young rascals were still there, evidently prepared to follow them any distance. But Tom Merry & Co. were fed-up by this time. They broke off sticks from the thicket, and made a sudden charge at the group of urchins.

Whack, whack, whack, whack! The young rascals yelled and fled. The juniors pursued them some distance till they were in full flight. Then, somewhat consoled, they took their way to Eastwood House again.

CHAPTER 5. Gussy's Pal!

"**B**UNTAH, bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was chatting on the terrace with Cousin Ethel when the fat figure of William George Bunter of Greyfriars appeared, coming up the drive. Herries, Digby, and Lumley-Lumley were there. They were waiting for the return of Tom Merry & Co. The 11.50 had long been in, and it was close on lunch-time. If the jape had been a success, it was time Tom Merry & Co. returned.

Arthur Augustus had been held a prisoner in his room until he had given his word as a D'Arcy not to attempt to chip in and interfere with the Co. and their enterprise. But even now he did not know what the enterprise was. But that it had been a failure was evident, as William George Bunter was seen rolling along the drive.

"Bunter?" repeated Cousin Ethel. "A friend of yours, Arthur?" "Ahem! Acquaintance," said D'Arcy. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,556.

"He's a Gweyfwiahs chap—the school we play sometimes, you know. He's a beastly ventwiloquist. I—I mean, a vevy clevah ventwiloquist."

"Bunter, by Joseph!" exclaimed Digby. "Then those asses—"

"I guess they've made a hash of it, after all!" grinned Lumley-Lumley.

"That is what comes of leaving it to the Shell fellows!" grunted Herries. "We should have managed it all right. But those Shell duffers—"

"Shush, deah boys!" murmured Arthur Augustus, as Cousin Ethel turned a puzzled glance upon the juniors. "Pway gwheet Buntah politely to oblige me!"

Billy Bunter came up, puffing. It was a warm morning, and the Owl of Greyfriars was not accustomed to exertion. He raised his cap to Cousin Ethel with a jerk of his fat hand.

The fat junior's face was beaming with smiles. If there was a little involuntary coolness in D'Arcy's manner, Bunter was determined not to notice it.

"Well, here I am, Gussy, old chap!" he said, holding out a fat hand. "How do you do? Jolly warm weather—what?"

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus, accepting the handshake in a very gingerly manner. "How do you do, deah boy?"

"Rather expected to see you at the station," said Bunter. "You had my letter?"

"Ya-a-as!"

Billy Bunter blinked at Cousin Ethel through his big glasses.

Arthur Augustus saw that there was nothing for it but an introduction, and he presented Bunter. The fat junior shook hands with Herries, Digby, and Lumley-Lumley in turn. He was determined not to see that his welcome was an icy one.

"Have you seen anything of the other chaps, Bunter?" Digby asked, very curious to know what had happened to Tom Merry and his companions.

Bunter chuckled.

"He, he, he! Yes, rather!"

"Did they—did they meet you at the station?" faltered Arthur Augustus.

"He, he, he! They got into the train at Leckford," grinned Bunter. "They were got up as foreigners, with ridiculous beards and things, and they thought they took me in. It was a jape, I suppose—not quite up to our form at Greyfriars, though. Of course, I knew them at once."

"Bai Jove!"

"They began to talk rot about daggers and bombs and things," said Bunter. "I pretended to take it all in. Bet they thought I was scared out of my wits! He, he, he!"

"Dear me!" said Ethel.

"When I got out at Easthorpe, I came part of the way here with them," said Bunter. "But I had to leave them, you know. There was a regular mob following them, owing to their being got up in that idiotic way, and I couldn't stand it any longer."

"Great Scott!"

"Then—then where are they now, Buntah?"

"Blessed if I know! They were stopping in the lane when I left them," said Bunter. "I dare say they'll come in presently. He, he, he!"

But the others did not laugh. The jape had been an utter and absolute failure, and the laugh was on the side of the Greyfriars junior. Arthur Augustus looked at his watch.

"They'll be late for lunch if they don't come in pweety soon," he remarked. "Weally, I must say you

fellows have mucked up the whole bisney!"

"Those Shell bounders have!" growled Herries.

"Bai Jove, here's Wobinson, and he's got a note!"

The lodgekeeper came up, grinning and touching his hat, and he presented a note to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. It ran:

"We're waiting in the lodge. Send our clothes.—T. M."

"Thank you, Wobinson! Wait a minute!"

A few minutes later the lodgekeeper departed, bearing the clothes of the four juniors in a bundle.

Billy Bunter chuckled gleefully. Whether he suspected the real object of the jape was not to be guessed. But he evidently enjoyed the discomfiture of the japers.

"You are stayin' to lunch, Buntah?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as politely as he could.

Bunter beamed on him.

"Certainly, my dear chap! In fact, I'm going to stay with you a few days. I can put off my other engagements till then. Lord Mauleverer, of our Form at Greyfriars, was very keen to have me down at his place, but I told him I must spare a few days for you."

"Bai Jove!"

"My bag's going to be sent down from the station," said Bunter. "If you'll let somebody show me to my room—"

"Pway come in, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, almost overcome.

Bunter followed him briskly into the house.

"Chillingham, Mistah Buntah is stayin' with me a day or two. Will you show him to a woom, please?"

And the stately butler took Bunter away.

Arthur Augustus' face was a little clouded as he went in to lunch.

Bunter was soon down, blinking genially through his glasses, and evidently quite at ease with himself and his surroundings.

D'Arcy reluctantly presented Bunter to his father and Lord Conway, and the fat junior sat down at the table in high good humour. He was luncheoning with a lord, and that alone was joy for Bunter. And the well-spread board made his little, round eyes twinkle with still greater joy.

Tom Merry & Co. were a few minutes late for lunch. When they came in they looked at Bunter as if they could eat him.

Bunter grinned at them genially.

"Got in all right—what?" he asked.

"Yes."

"All serene! I don't bear any malice for a little jape, especially as the laugh is up against you fellows. He, he, he!"

Tom Merry & Co. did not reply. Their feelings were too deep for words. The jape had been a failure, and Billy Bunter was securely "planted" at Eastwood House.

CHAPTER 6.

Bunter's Little Flutter!

"**W**ELL?" The Co. asked the question in chorus after lunch when the juniors strolled out of doors.

Billy Bunter was reposing in a long cane chair on the terrace. He did not feel inclined to exert himself after the meal. His exertions were made during the meal.

"Well," said Arthur Augustus, "you

appear to have made a ghastly failure of it, deah boys!"

"All that blessed Wally's fault!" said Tom Merry.

"Weally? How was that?"

Tom Merry explained.

"But Buntah says he knew it was you fellahs all the time, f'rom the time you got into the twain at Leckford."

"That's all rot! I am afraid Bunter hasn't been brought up on the same lines as George Washington. But it was a failure, that's a cert," admitted Tom Merry.

"And weally I do not approve of the ideah at all, deah boys. Pewwaps it is just as well."

"Oh rats! What are you going to do now?" demanded Blake.

"Nothin'."

"Are you going to swallow the boulder whole?"

"Yaas. It is quite impos for me to show discourtesy to a fellow undah my own woof, or to allow discourtesy to be shown him, deah boys. I have wesolved to make Buntah welcome. I wish all you fellows to do the same."

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"It's your bisney, Gussy. We tried to rescue you. But if you want the chap here, it's entirely your own bisney. But say the word and we'll dump him in the river."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or jape him black and blue and make him glad to clear off."

"Willingly!" said Blake heartily.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Impos, deah boys! As he is here as my guest it is up to me to be civil and to like him as much as I can. I shall, therefore, make up my mind to wegard him as a fwiend if I can. Pway t'weat him with gweat politeness for my sake."

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry solemnly, "it is up to us to meet Gussy's wishes in this matter. I hereby adopt Bunter as a long-lost brother."

"He shall be as dear to me as a prodigal son newly returned," said Lowther with equal solemnity.

"I shall take him to my bosom and weep over him," said Blake.

"I will fold him to my manly breast," said Manners. "He shall be the apple of my eye and the delight of my heart."

"Pway don't wot, you fellows! We will now let the subject dwop," said Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to make it a point to be fwiendly to Buntah. I wegard it as bein' up to me."

And, by way of a beginning, Arthur Augustus returned to the terrace and joined the Owl of Greyfriars. Billy Bunter blinked at him affably through his big spectacles. He was in a state of great comfort, reposing in the shade after a tremendous lunch.

"Anythin' I can do for you, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy.

Bunter sat up.

"Well, as a matter of fact, now you mention it—" he said. "The fact is, my letters will take some time getting here after me. I'm expecting a postal order from a titled relation of mine. Would it make any difference to you if you cashed it in advance? I will hand you the postal order when it comes."

"Oh!"

"Merely a trifling sum," explained Bunter. "But I happen to be short of money, owing to making Lord Maul-ever a loan."

"All wight, deah boy. How much?"

"Only a couple of quid," said Bunter carelessly.

Arthur Augustus was the son of an earl, and had a good allowance, but he



did not regard two pounds as a trifling sum. Bunter's ideas about money were evidently on a much grander scale, perhaps because he never had any. However, Arthur Augustus extracted two pounds from a leather wallet, and they disappeared into Bunter's trousers pocket. Bunter smiled with fat satisfaction.

"Thanks awfully, old chap!" he said. "I'll hand you the postal order immediately—ahem!—it arrives."

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

"What are you chaps doing here?" asked Bunter. "If you're thinking of getting up any cricket matches, you can rely on me. I'm a dab at cricket."

"We have played some cricket," said Arthur Augustus. "We spend a gweat deal of time on the wivah."

"Good! I'm a splendid oarsman. You'll find me right at home there."

"You seem to be able to do a gweat many things, Buntah."

"I'm rather a dab at a lot of things," said Bunter modestly. "I don't want to swank, but I may say I'm the best junior cricketer at Greyfriars, both at batting and bowling, and about the best oar on the river. At running I can beat all the Remove. At jumping there isn't a chap in the Lower School to beat me. I'm a topping cyclist, and have won a lot of pots and things. At amateur theatricals I am the leading member of the Remove Dramatic Society."

"Bai Jove!"

"If you are getting up any private theatricals here you can depend on me to play the title role. I'd do more than that to oblige a pal."

"Bai Jove!"

"By the way, I see there's a circus near here," went on Bunter. "I suppose you are thinking of taking your party—what?"

"Yaas."

"I'll come with you, of course. Get any seat you like for me. I'm not particular, so long as it's comfy, and not among common people. If you take any refreshments along with you, I prefer jam tarts. But don't mind me. Currant buns would do."

"Oh!"

"You'll find me an entertaining chap, too," said Bunter. "You know what a topping ventriloquist I am. If you'd

like me to scare your pater out of his wits by making a savage dog growl under his chair—"

"Weally, Buntah—"

"Or if you'd be amused by seeing a row started between your pater, say, and your elder brother, I could work it quite easily by imitating their voices. I've often made chaps quarrel like that, you know, and it's awful fun!" chuckled Bunter.

"You utter young wascal—"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean— I beg your pardon, Buntah, but I must wequest you not to play any twicks on my patah or old Conway."

"Just as you like, old chap. Shall I get up a row between Tom Merry and one of the others?"

"No!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, all right! I only wanted to entertain you, you know. By the way, what a ripping girl your cousin is!"

"Yaas."

"She seems rather to like me. Don't you think so?" asked Bunter, with a simper.

Arthur Augustus regarded him sternly. But the Owl of Greyfriars was too short-sighted to notice his expression.

"I dare say the other chaps won't like it," he said. "But it's really not my fault. It's always so. Some chaps are born with a fascinating way with them. Girls always take to me like ducks to water. Now, speaking of your cousin—"

"I should pwefer, Buntah, that you do not speak of my cousin," said Arthur Augustus, with such a note of sternness in his voice that Billy Bunter scented danger and promptly sheered off the subject.

"Ripping fine afternoon, isn't it?" said Bunter calmly. "I'll come out for a stroll with you fellows if you like. You can show me round the place. You've got quite a nice little place here. I should like you to see my pater's place in Surrey—deer parks and things, you know; our own golf course, and all that. The pater does things in rather a topping style. Yes, I'm ready, old chap."

Bunter put on his straw hat and strolled off the terrace with D'Arcy. Bunter was in high good-humour, and was very pleased with the excellent impression he had made on the swell of St. Jim's.

The juniors strolled down by the sunny river. At some distance from Eastwood House, along the river, was the Lodge—the place where Cutts & Co. were staying for their holidays. The juniors frequently saw Cutts and his companions on the river, and sometimes "slanging" remarks were exchanged between the two parties.

As the juniors strolled along the grassy bank they caught sight of a punt, moored in a shady spot under the trees, with Cutts and Knox sitting in it, playing cards and smoking cigarettes.

The two seniors of St. Jim's glanced at the juniors on the bank, and frowned at them. Billy Bunter blinked at the punt.

"Those fellows passed you on the road when you were looking such guys," said Bunter pleasantly. "Do you know them?"

"They belong to St. Jim's," said Tom Merry shortly. "They're not friends of ours."

"We don't allow that kind of thing at Greyfriars," remarked Bunter, with a nod indicating the cards and the cigarettes.

"It's not allowed at St. Jim's either,"

growled Blake. "The fellows can do as they like on a vacation."

"I guess they'd get into trouble, though, if any St. Jim's masters happened to be in this neighbourhood and spotted them," remarked Lumley-Lumley.

"Yaas, wathah! And serve them wight."

"I say, you fellows, I'm rather a dab at nap," said Bunter thoughtfully. "After all, we're on a vacation, you know. Why shouldn't we please ourselves?"

"Gamblin' is wotten bad form, Buntah, and my patah would be vewy watty, too."

"But your pater wouldn't know," suggested Bunter.

"If I did anythin' I should not care to mention to my patah, Buntah, I should wegard myself as a wotten cad!" said Arthur Augustus deliberately.

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter, with a grunt, and they walked on.

"I'm tired," announced Bunter, a hundred yards farther on. "I think I'll rest a bit. Don't you fellows stop for me. I'll have a nap here in the grass."

"Just as you like, deah boy."

Tom Merry & Co. were not, as a matter of fact, sorry to drop the fat junior. They walked on, and disappeared round the winding bank of the river.

Billy Bunter blinked after them and grinned. He did not take the nap he had mentioned. It was quite another kind of nap he was thinking of. Bunter regarded himself as a "dab" at many things, the game of nap among others. As soon as the St. Jim's juniors were out of sight, the Owl of the Remove hurried back towards the punt. Cutts and Knox stared at him as he halted.

"I say, you fellows—" began Bunter.

"Oh, clear off!" said Cutts.

"But, I say—"

"Do you belong to the circus?" asked Knox.

"The circus! No, of course not. Why?"

"Oh, I thought you might be the Champion Fat Man, or something of that sort."

Bunter glared at him.

"Look here—"

"Thanks! I'd rather not! You're not pretty to look at! Buzz off before I give you a clout with the punt-pole," said Knox.

"I say, you fellows, there's nothing to be ratty about. Look here, I can play nap, and I'll join you with pleasure," said Bunter.

Cutts and Knox exchanged a quick glance. Bunter was casting avid glances at the coins beside Cutts. The two rascals of St. Jim's had no objection whatever to interrupting their game for the time while they "skinned" the fat duffer who had come to them looking for trouble. Their manners changed at once.

"Oh, all right!" said Cutts, quite cordially. "Jump in! You're very welcome."

"Certainly," said Knox. "I can see you are a sport, youngster. Take a hand with pleasure."

Bunter stepped into the punt and sat down. In his egregious conceit and stupidity, he fully intended to "skin" the two St. Jim's seniors. He might as well have attempted to fleece a card-sharper.

Cutts and Knox were very polite all at once. They welcomed the fat junior into the game. Cutts changed a pound note for him cordially, and they played. In a quarter of an hour the change was

equally divided between Cutts and Knox.

Bunter was looking a little blue by this time. He changed his second pound note, and within ten minutes it had followed the first one. Bunter ran his hands through his pockets and extracted a couple of shillings, which were quickly added to the possessions of Cutts and Knox. Then Billy Bunter turned a feeble grin upon the two cool sharpers.

"Of course, you don't mind if I play on I O U's now?" he remarked.

"Cash, all gone?" asked Cutts.

"Yes."

"Good-bye, then!"

"Oh, I say! My I O U—"

"Thanks! We're not collectors of wastepaper," said Cutts. "Good-afternoon!"

"I—I say, of—of course, this is only a game," stammered Bunter. "We were not really playing for money, were we?"

"I fancy so!"

"I mean, you're going to give me my two quid back?"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Cutts. "If you get some more cash we'll give you your revenge with pleasure. But we don't play for wastepaper. Good-bye!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the two seniors of St. Jim's.

"I say, you fellows, you jolly well know that this is against the law!" he exclaimed. "If a bobby saw you chaps playing for money he'd run you in!"

"Go hon!"

"Well, you hand me those two quids back," said Bunter. "You know it's against the law to gamble. I'm not going to break the law."

Cutts and Knox laughed. The latter picked up the punt-pole.

"I give you one second to clear off!" he said.

"Look here! Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as the pole plumped upon his ribs. "Yow-ow! All right, I'm going! Yaroooh!"

He made a bound for the bank. The pole smote him behind as he went, and he stumbled and squashed down in the reeds, and there was a splash. The two seniors roared with laughter as the hapless Bunter, smothered in mud, crawled out of the reeds up the bank.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh!"

Billy Bunter shook a fat fist at the two fellows in the punt. Knox made a threatening motion with the pole, and Bunter retreated hastily, tramping away along the bank, leaving a trail of muddy water behind him. And Cutts and Knox, chuckling, settled down to their game again.

CHAPTER 7.

Two Rascals Ragged!

"**B**AI Jove! What's the mattah with Buntah?"

"Looks wet!"

"And muddy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. were returning from their walk, and they suddenly came in sight of Billy Bunter on the grassy bank, engaged in furiously scraping mud from his clothes and boots. He was rubbing off the mud with handfuls of grass, and was crimson with exertion.

He blinked round as the juniors came up. Tom Merry & Co. tried not to smile, but it was difficult.

"Taken a tumble, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus sympathetically.

Billy Bunter snorted with fury.

"I've been chucked into the mud!" he growled. "I've been swindled out of two quids, and then chucked out of the punt!"

The juniors looked serious at once.

"Do you mean to say that you've been playing cards with those fellows in the punt?" asked Tom Merry quietly.

"Well, they pressed me to have a little game," said Bunter. "Almost begged of me. I did it out of pity, really. They were so set on it. And I know jolly well that they swindled me. I'm a dab at nap, and I expected to—ahem!—I—I mean—"

"You expected to win their money, and they won yours instead!" said Blake. "Serve you jolly well right! You shouldn't have played!"

"I'll pay 'em out somehow!" snarled Bunter. "I'm not going to be robbed and have my clothes spoiled like this! They actually shoved me out with a punt-pole, simply because I asked for my money back. Of course, I was really only playing for fun. I never intended to let them keep my money."

"Did you intend to keep theirs?"

"Of course—I mean, of course not! I don't gamble. I call it low. Things like that may be done by St. Jim's chaps, but we don't do it at Greyfriars."

"Weally, Buntah—"

"I think you fellows ought to chip in and help me get my money back," said Bunter.

"I'm not going to, for one!" said Tom Merry. "I think you deserved to lose it! You had no right to do a rotten thing like that while you are here as D'Arcy's guest!"

"All the same, I think we ought to wag those wottahs!" said D'Arcy.

"They knew that Buntah was a silly ass! I beg your pardon, Buntah! I mean, they knew that he was a duffah—ahem!—I mean, a simple chap, and they ought not to have let a kid play cards with them. They are disgwaceful wottahs, and we ought to make an example of them! But as for gettin' the money back, that is all wot!"

"Of course it is."

"Look here, it's my money!" roared Bunter. "You can let them have your money, if you like, but you're not going to give them mine!"

"That's all wight, deah boy. We'll say no more about your handin' me that postal ordah, and then it will weally be my money you have lost, and I will allow them to keep it," said Arthur Augustus pacifically.

"My hat!" murmured Blake. "He's been getting money out of Gussy already! The fat pig! Poor old Gussy was born to be looted!"

"My opinion is—" began Bunter.

"Come on!" interrupted Tom Merry.

"But, I say, you fellows—"

But the fellows did not listen. They hurried along the bank towards the spot where the punt was moored. It was still there, and the two seniors of St. Jim's were still at cards. Cutts was smiling serenely, and Knox was scowling. It was pretty evident that luck was on the side of the dandy of the Fifth. Perhaps Cutts was assisting luck by "ways that are dark," as Lumley-Lumley, at least, knew very well was a trick not unbeknown to the Fifth Former of St. Jim's.

"Hallo! Still going strong—what?" asked Jack Blake cheerily.

Cutts looked round.

"Clear off!" he said tersely. "Don't hang about here, or we'll serve you as we've served your fat friend!"

"My dear chap, that's exactly what we're going to do to you!" said Tom Merry. "Pile in, School House!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Cutts and Knox started to their feet as the juniors made a rush for the punt. Tom Merry & Co. leaped on board in a body, and the punt rocked under their weight as they landed in it. Billy

Bunter stood on the bank, smiling. He was glad to see the two seniors handled, but he was not a man of war himself.

"Get out!" roared Knox, grasping the punt-pole.

Cutts hit out savagely, and Herries roared and dropped in the bottom of the punt. Digby rolled over him, caught on the chin by Gerald Cutts' left. But then the Terrible Three were upon Cutts at once, and he was whirled over and hurled out of the punt into the mud beside the river.

Blake and Lumley-Lumley had caught hold of Knox's punt-pole and prevented him from using it. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy piled on him and yanked him over. Lumley-Lumley and Blake threw themselves upon the Sixth Former as he stumbled, and he was pinned down in the bottom of the punt.

"All together!" gasped Blake.

"Chuck him out, deah boys!"

"Leggo!" roared Knox. "You cheeky fags! You young villains! You—you— Yaroo!"

Knox was lifted up bodily and pitched over the side. He joined Cutts, who was wallowing in shallow water and mud. The juniors grinned down at them from the punt. Herries was holding his nose, and Digby clasping his chin with both hands, but the other fellows had not been hurt. And all were grinning. On the bank, Billy Bunter cackled as if he were trying to imitate a cheap alarm clock.

"Groogh!"

"Yow-owp!"

"Don't get in again!" said Tom Merry, gently poking Knox with the pole as the Sixth Former grasped the punt.

"Outside, please!"

"Grooogh! You young rascal! Yah!"

"Let them have their cards!" said Tom.

Blake grinned, and gathered up the scattered cards in the punt. He threw them in a shower over the two seniors in the water. Then the juniors jumped ashore, laughing.

Cutts and Knox crawled into the punt as soon as it was empty, dripping with water and covered with mud. They shook their fists furiously at the juniors.

Blake kissed his hand to them as the party walked away. They looked back from a distance, and saw Cutts poling home to the Lodge, dripping with water and almost unrecognisable from the mud that caked his visage. What could be seen of his face was red with rage.

"Bai Jove, I considah that we have given those wottahs a lesson!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps they will leave our party alone aftah this!"

"You haven't got my money back!" grunted Bunter.

"That's all wight, Buntah. You needn't give me the postal ordah, and we'll call it square!"

"I am afraid that's impossible, Gussy. You see, I couldn't possibly accept money from you. But I tell you what I'll do. I'll leave it over till next term. I shall be coming over to St. Jim's to see you some time then, and I'll bring it with me!"

"Vewy well, deah boy!"

"That's settled, then," said Bunter. "I'll make a note of it. Now, the postal order, when it comes, will be mine, won't it?"

"Yaas!"

"Good! Always better to have these little things on a business footing," said Bunter. "The postal order will be here to-morrow morning. I suppose you won't mind cashing it for me?"

"Not at all, deah boy!"

"As I'm rather short of cash, I suppose it's all the same to you if you cash it now?" suggested Bunter. "Then I'll hand you the postal order immediately it comes."

"Ya-a-as!" said Arthur Augustus slowly.

"Thanks!" said Bunter, as he pocketed two pounds. "I'll remember that. If I forget, just remind me when the post comes in to-morrow morning, won't you?"

Arthur Augustus did not reply. He had now cashed Bunter's postal order twice, and, without being over-suspicious, he could not help having some inward doubts as to whether a postal order was really coming. The other juniors had no doubts at all. They were quite sure that it wasn't coming.

The juniors returned to Eastwood House in time for tea, and joined Lady Eastwood and Cousin Ethel at tea on the lawn.

Bunter hurried away to clean off the mud, and came down with a flower in his jacket and a fat smile upon his face. He made himself very agreeable, as he firmly believed, to Cousin Ethel; and when it was arranged that the party should go to the circus that evening Bunter promised Cousin Ethel that he would look after her—a generous promise that Cousin Ethel did not seem to hear.

Indeed, Cousin Ethel's manner to the fat junior was the reverse of chummy, somewhat to Bunter's surprise at first, till he realised, on reflection, that the young lady was probably very coy, and was trying to conceal the impression that Bunter's manifold fascinations had made upon her.

CHAPTER 8.

Rough on Cutts!

"WALK up, gentlemen!"

"Pom, pom, pom!"

"Ladies and gentlemen, this way to Chungum's Celebrated Circus!"

"Pom, pom, pom, pom, pom!"

"Come and see Samsonio, the strongest man on earth! Come and see Tiny Tony, the funniest mirth merchant in the universe! Come and see Texas Bill, the broncho buster, ride the wildest hoss in the solar system! Walk up! Walk up!"

A little fat man in clown's attire, thumping on a drum outside the entrance to Chungum's Circus, thus addressed the multitude.

The circus was pitched on Easthorpe Common, just outside the village, and there was a glare of lights in the dusk of the summer evening. Crowds of country folk and villagers were passing into the tent, some of them exchanging badinage with Tiny Tony as they went in. Tiny Tony was certainly tiny, so far as height went, but, as Jack Blake remarked, he made up for it sideways.

"Pom, pom, pom! Thump!"

"Gentlemen, walk up! Roll up! This is Chungum's Celebrated Circus, which has performed to all the crowned heads in Europe, not to mention a still larger number of uncrowned heads. Young gentlemen, walk up! A few of the best seats still vacant."

This was addressed to Tom Merry & Co. as they came up to the entrance of the big tent. Tiny Tony swept off his top-hat in graceful salute to Cousin Ethel.

"Chance of a lifetime, ladies and



"Shut up, you old fool!" The words seemed to proceed from Cutts, and Mr. Chungum turned purple with wrath. He pointed to Cutts with his whip. "Put that fellow out!" he shouted to two circus attendants, and they grasped the Fifth Former.

gentlemen! Biggest show on earth! Littlest clown on earth—and the clown to make you roar! Tiny Tony will make you yell! Tiny Tony will make you shriek! I'm Tiny Tony, so I know!"

"Bai Jove, that chap knows how to blow his own twumpet!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Cheek, I call it!" said Bunter loftily. "Here, not so much of your gas, my man!"

Tiny Tony looked at him.

"Other entrance for you, sir!" he said.

"Here, hold on, you fellows!" called out Bunter. "The fellow says it's the other entrance for the best seats!"

"Not at all!" said Tiny Tony calmly. "Keep right on, gentlemen. Other entrance for this young person. Stage entrance at the back. Artistes don't enter with the general public. Go right round—"

"What do you mean?" roared Bunter. "Do you think I belong to your rotten circus, you silly ass?"

"Ain't you the Fattest Boy on Earth?" asked Tiny Tony, looking astonished. "Ain't you Gig-Lamps, the celebrated fat boy, warranted to weigh twenty stone?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you cheeky rotter—" howled Bunter.

"Walk up, gents—walk up! Chungum's Celebrated Circus—"

"Look here, you cheeky beast! What do you mean by insulting a gentleman?" roared Bunter, greatly incensed by the clown's little joke, which had caused a general giggle among the Easthorpe folk crowding up to the entrance.

"Never done such a thing in me life, sir," said Tiny Tony. "Haven't insulted anybody but you, sir. Walk up—walk up!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

Tom Merry grasped Bunter's arm and marched him into the tent. Billy Bunter was blinking with rage. He had had the worst of his little encounter with the circus clown, as he deserved. He confided to Tom Merry that but for the fact that there was a lady in the party he would have returned and mopped up the earth with Tiny Tony. Perhaps, however, prudential considerations had something to do with his leaving Tiny Tony alone.

The juniors walked into the tent, which was already growing crowded. Circuses did not often come to Easthorpe, so Chungum's Celebrated Circus was likely to be well patronised during its stay. Tiny Tony's voice could still be heard outside:

"Walk up, gents! Come and see Tiny Tony, the smallest and wonder-fullest clown on earth! Come and see the circus cricketers! Walk up—walk up!"

The juniors were shown into their seats. Arthur Augustus booked the best seats in the place, but Chungum's Circus was not palatial, and the seats were hard. They were in the front row, however, and all were satisfied, with the exception of Bunter. The St. Jim's juniors had already discovered that Billy Bunter was very seldom satisfied.

"Not what I'd call comfy, Gussy!" said Billy Bunter, who had seated himself next to the swell of St. Jim's. No one was anxious to sit next to Bunter, so the kind and obliging Gussy had

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made the sacrifice. "Aren't there any better seats than these?"

"There don't appear to be, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "Sowwy!"

"I suppose they didn't know any decent people were coming," grumbled Bunter. "Hallo! Here are those cardsharps from your school again! I—"

Cutts & Co. had entered the tent, and were coming along to the front seats. Bunter, being at the end of the row of juniors, and the next seats unoccupied, Cutts sat down next to him, and Knox and Gilmore came next.

Cutts & Co. scowled at the juniors, but did not speak. Billy Bunter blinked at them savagely. He had not forgotten the way he had been poled out of the punt, and he had not forgotten the loss of his two pounds. True, he had replaced the two quids at D'Arcy's expense, but that made no difference.

Before his visit to Eastwood House terminated Billy Bunter intended to squeeze out a considerably larger amount of Arthur Augustus' spare cash. The second two pounds might have been his, anyway; and but for Gerald Cutts he might have had four. That was how Bunter looked at it, and he was decidedly resentful and indignant. A fat grin overspread his face as a scheme came into his mind for making Cutts & Co. "sit up."

A circus attendant was passing along behind the row of seats, showing some newcomers to their places. A gruff voice behind Cutts' head exclaimed:

"Get out of there! You're in the wrong seats!"

Cutts turned his head, angry at being addressed in so gruff a manner.

"Are you speaking to me?" he demanded.

"Get out, I tell you!"

The juniors looked round, too, surprised that an attendant should adopt such a tone towards the occupiers of the most expensive seats. The circus man was passing on without looking at Cutts.

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, my man!" said Cutts angrily.

The man paused and stared at him.

"What, sir?"

"Be civil, or you'll get into trouble."

"Wot's the matter? I ain't spoken to you, sir."

"Don't tell lies!" said Cutts angrily. "You told me we were in the wrong seats."

"Don't you be so quick to call a man a liar. I ain't spoken a word to you."

"That's enough!" growled Cutts, turning back and settling himself in his seat again.

"Get out of it, I tell you, you young rascal! Your sort ain't wanted in these seats!"

"What!" yelled Cutts, turning crimson and swinging round. "You impertinent scoundrel—"

The man had passed on, and he did not look back. Several people in the second row were grinning. Cutts scowled at them. A fat gentleman, the landlord of the Easthorpe Arms, was sitting just behind Cutts, with a stout lady beside him, evidently the partner of his joys and woes. He sympathised with Cutts.

"Cheek I call it, sir!" he said.

Cutts nodded shortly and resumed his seat, extremely irritated and angry. If he had known that the fat junior beside him was a ventriloquist, he would probably have fallen upon Billy Bunter, and smitten him hip and thigh. But he did not know it, and he did not connect Bunter with the incident at all, so he had to bottle up his wrath.

The performance was about to begin, and two or three horses had been sent galloping round the ring for a start. Cutts sat frowning at the arena, when a voice spoke behind his head, which was either the stout publican's voice, or else an exact imitation of it.

"Put your 'ead to one side, please! I can't see through your 'ead!"

Cutts jerked his head round. "I'll sit how I like!" he exclaimed, glaring at the astonished man behind him.

"Certainly, sir; I don't mind, I'm sure!"

"Then don't speak to me!" growled Cutts, as he resettled himself.

"Will you put your silly 'ead out of the light?"

Cutts jumped up.

"Look here, I don't want any of your cheek!" he shouted.

"Wot's that? Looks to me as if you've been drinking, young gentleman. I advise you to keep quiet," said the stout publican soothingly. "I ain't said a word to you. I 'eard somebody speak, I did, but I ain't said a word."

Cutts glared along the row, as if in search of a victim. Several people were grinning. They believed, as Cutts did, that the innkeeper had spoken, and the ragging of Cutts amused them. Cutts had a lofty and somewhat "swanky" manner, which sometimes had an irritating effect upon strangers, and they were not sorry to see him taken down a peg. Cutts' scowls were met with grins, and he sat down again, consuming his wrath.

"Queer 'ow that feller will shove 'is silly 'ead in a man's light!" went on the voice. "I know there's nothin' in it, but I can't see through it, for all that. Think a lot of 'isself, 'e does. Wonder if 'e's paid for them clothes?"

Cutts sat quivering with rage. It was miles below his dignity to enter into a "row" with the publican; but it was very hard to endure such remarks patiently. And the remarks were not finished yet.

"I've seen 'im before. 'E's a card-sharper—a professional, you know. Gets young gentlemen to play cards, and swindles 'em. I shouldn't wonder if the police are looking for him this very minute. Young scoundrel, I call 'im!"

"My hat!" murmured Knox. "They seem to know you here, Cutts, old man!"

And Gilmore giggled.

Cutts seemed to breathe with difficulty.

"And them other two, they're just as bad," went on the voice. "Young swindlers—both! The feller with the long boko is the son of a tailor in 'Oundsitch!"

Knox turned scarlet. Tom Merry & Co. could not help grinning at that description of the bully of the Sixth.

"And the other young reprobate is a boy from a reformatory. Mind your pockets, ladies and gentlemen. He was sent to a reformatory for picking pockets!"

Gilmore grew as scarlet as Knox. Cutts looked at them with a sneer.

"You're getting some of it now!" he remarked.

"I—I—I'll smash him!" panted Knox, jumping up. "Look here, you fat blackguard, hold your tongue! Do you hear?"

"Which I ain't said a word!" gasped the astonished publican. "And who was a-sayin' them things is more than I know of!"

"You lying cad!"

"Which they are probably wery true, all the same!" exclaimed the publican, getting very angry himself. "You look like it, I do say!"

"Are you going to hold your tongue?" shouted Cutts.

"Not at your horders!" said the innkeeper independently. "Who are you?"

"He ain't paid for them clothes!" said a voice that seemed to proceed from a white-whiskered gentleman next to the innkeeper. This was the local grocer, who happened to be very deaf, and had not heard a word. "He's a young swindler, he is! I know how he let his poor old father go to the workhouse!"

Cutts was almost dancing with rage. He shook his fist at the face of the grocer, who started back in astonishment and alarm.

"Here, what are you at?" he demanded.

"Hold your tongue, you old fool!" bawled Cutts.

The old gentleman put his hand to his ear.

"Eh?" And then a voice went on, as if continuing: "Don't you talk to me, you young rascal! Ain't I seed you cast off your poor old father, and allow him to perish in the workhouse?"

That was too much for Cutts. He grasped the deaf gentleman's nose and tweaked it. As the unfortunate man was quite unconscious of having given offence, Cutts' action, naturally, infuriated him. He gasped in amazement for a moment, and then he hit out, and Cutts caught a knobby fist with his nose and sprawled down by the seat. The surrounding seats were almost in an uproar by this time, and there were shouts:

"Sit down!"

"Put them out!"

Cutts leaped up, almost foaming with rage. He simply hurled himself at the grocer. The old gentleman would probably have been hurt, but Tom Merry had jumped up, and he grasped the

Fifth Former in time, and dragged him back.

"Hold on, Cutts!" he said quietly. "You're not going to hit an old man!"

"Let go!" yelled Cutts. "You heard what he said. Let go, or I'll knock you flying!"

"Shame! Attacking an old man! Put him out!"

"Sit down in front!"

"Shut up!"

"Order!"

Two or three circus attendants hurried up, and Mr. Chumgum, who had come into the ring resplendent in evening clothes, with an orchid in his button-hole and a whip in his hand, hurried to the side of the arena.

"Gentlemen—gentlemen!" he implored. "Order!"

"Shut up, you old fool!" Cutts did not say that, but the words certainly seemed to proceed from Cutts, and Mr. Chumgum turned purple with wrath.

He pointed to Cutts with his whip.

"Put that fellow out!" he said.

"What?" shouted Cutts. "Don't you dare—"

"Put him out! Give him his money back! I'll have no hooligans disturbing the peace in my circus! Ladies and gentlemen," continued Mr. Chumgum, as Cutts, struggling wildly, with his tie torn out, was hustled away by three or four rough hands—"ladies and gentlemen, I apologise for this disgraceful scene, which has never occurred before in the history of Chumgum's Celebrated Circus! Now that young hooligan is ejected, ladies and gentlemen, I beg you to take your seats!"

The ladies and gentlemen took their seats. Knox and Gilmore, who did not want to follow Cutts and leave the circus on their necks, settled down

quietly. Billy Bunter grinned ecstatically. He felt that he was quite even with Gerald Cutts now. Tom Merry & Co. were puzzled by the occurrence—till they caught the grin on Bunter's face, then they comprehended.

"Oh, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Buntah, was—was that you with your wotten, beastly ventwiloquism?"

Bunter gave a fat chuckle.

"I rather think I'm even with him now—what?" he murmured.

"Bai Jove! What a wotten tick! Ahem! If you play any more tricks like that, Buntah, I shall have to request you to wetiah from the circus."

Outside the circus, Cutts of the Fifth, dusty and dishevelled, with his collar and tie gone, was almost raving with rage. But he did not venture to re-enter, and the performance proceeded without the presence of the Fifth Former.

CHAPTER 9.

D'Arcy Distinguishes Himself!

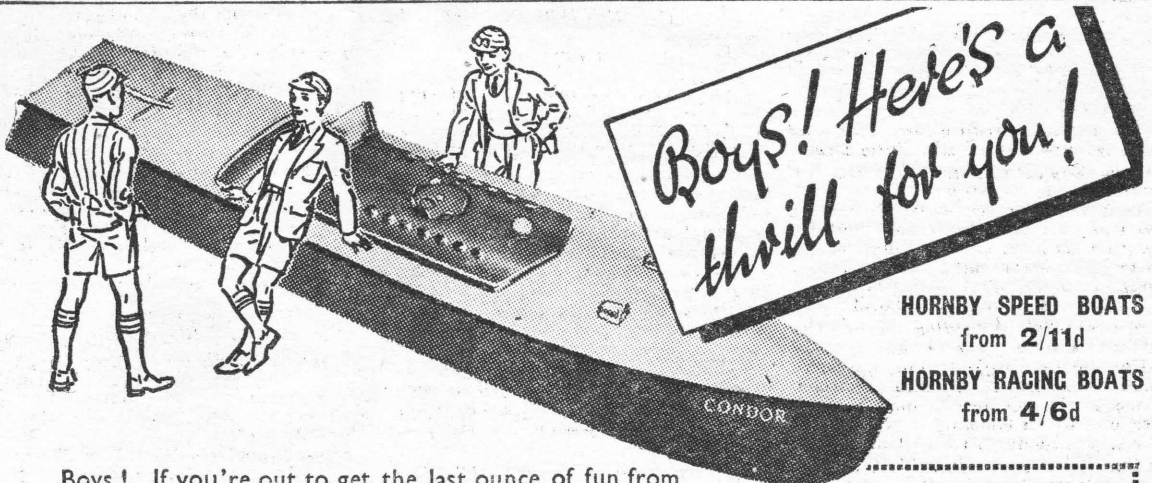
"JOLLY good show, deah boys!"

"Yes, rather!" Tom Merry & Co. and Cousin Ethel were having a good time.

There had been several turns, and all of them were good. Samsonio, the strongest man on earth, might not really have been the strongest man upon the globe, but he was certainly very strong, as was proved by the heavy weights he lifted. Tiny Tony's efforts to lift the same weights made the audience shout with laughter.

Sapolio, the serpent charmer, was very good; and Rab-Rabbi, the Indian juggler, wonderful. The audience were

(Continued on the next page.)



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satisfied that they were getting their money's worth, and all were in high good humour.

"Texas Bill next," remarked Jack Blake.

"That's a regular savage brute of a horse he rides," said Wally. "You saw the way he tried to bite my pony in the procession. This buckjumping business is genuine—the real, genuine article, you bet!"

There was a cheer as Texas Bill rode into the arena mounted upon the black horse.

The horseman was a good rider, that was evident, and he sat his steed well and kept him in control; but the juniors, who were very close as he rode round the ring, could see that the black horse's nostrils were quivering and his eyes gleaming. The brute was in a savage humour.

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and watched the black mustang attentively. Arthur Augustus was a great lover of horseflesh, and a good judge of it.

"Bai Jove!" he remarked. "That is a weally beautiful cweatnah, deah boys. I should like to wiede that horse."

"He'd eat you," said Blake.

"Wats! I could wiede him—and that's more than Texas Bill seems to be able to do, as a mattah of fact," retorted Arthur Augustus.

Texas Bill was giving the buck-jumping exhibition now. There was no doubt that the performance was genuine. The horse was making every effort to unseat his rider—rising on his hind legs and coming down with a crash, making sudden springs and bounds, and once or twice snapping savagely round with his teeth.

The audience gazed on, almost spell-bound.

The rider was holding the horse in check so far, but there was a hard and strained look upon his face. Possibly he was not in his usual health—a circumstance which could not be allowed to interfere with his usual appearance in the ring. The Bronco Buster was billed to appear—and appear he must.

There was a sudden yell from the front seats.

Texas Bill was seen to pitch heavily into the tan; and the black mustang threw up his heels and dashed off round the ring, the reins trailing beside him.

People in front jumped up and crowded back against the second and third rows, for the barrier between the seats and the ring was of the slightest, and a single spring of the savage horse would have carried him into the midst of the affrighted people, and in that close crowd the lashing hoofs would have injured many on all sides.

Texas Bill staggered to his feet, and then sank down again. He was evidently hurt by his fall. Tiny Tony swung himself upon a trapeze out of the way with great promptitude. Mr. Chungum scudded out of reach of the savage horse as it careered round the ring, tossing its head and thick black mane. There was a roar of alarm in the circus. Billy Bunter sat frozen to his seat, white with terror.

Over the barrier into the ring leaped a graceful form—the form of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with his lips set in a tight line and his eyeglass gleaming in his eye.

There was a yell from his comrades: "Gussy, come back!"

Arthur Augustus did not even turn his head. He was running for the horse. The mustang was careering by, and D'Arcy, with a quick spring, caught the

trailing reins; then the swell of St. Jim's swung himself into the saddle.

The juniors watched their chum with thumping hearts. They had not been prepared for D'Arcy's action, or they would have held him back. They knew he was a splendid rider. But what chance had he with a horse that had unseated the professional circus performer? Every instant they expected to see him hurled into the tan and trampled upon by the cruel hoofs.

The mustang had stopped stock-still as he felt a rider on his back; then he made a sudden spring into the air and came down upon his four feet, his head low, with a shock that would have unseated most riders on the instant.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was clinging to the saddle like a limpet to a rock. The brute's head came twisting round, with bared teeth glistening horribly; but Arthur Augustus' hand was like iron on the rein.

The horse shot suddenly forward, making a desperate rush right for the crowded seats. With shrieks of horror, the onlookers stamped back. But the mustang did not reach the seats. A wrist of iron turned him, and he was driven round the ring, breaking into a terrific gallop.

Texas Bill had staggered up again, and he was clinging to the centre pole, his face pale, his eyes staring. He had expected damage to be done by the horse now that it was uncontrolled. He stared with amazement at the sight of the school-boy in the saddle, riding the brute like a master.

Round and round the ring the mustang tore, as if seeking by sheer speed to get rid of the bold rider. and Arthur Augustus was well content to allow him to exhaust his savage strength with futile galloping.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Gussy's done it! Gussy can handle him! Bravo, Gussy!"

"Hurrah!"

"I—I—I say, you fellows," stuttered Billy Bunter, "let's get out of this! I—I say, make room! I want to pass! Oh crumbs!"

But no one listened to Bunter, or looked at him; all eyes were upon the horse and its young rider.

The mustang came to a sudden halt, with its fore feet planted on the earth, and for a second it seemed that D'Arcy must shoot forward over its head.

But he did not.

He sat in the saddle and drove the mustang on, and the brute began to buckjump—rearing on its hind legs, and even falling backwards, with the intention of crushing its rider. But as he crashed down D'Arcy slipped to the tan, only to leap into the saddle again as the horse struggled up.

And when the black brute was upon his feet again Arthur Augustus was on his back safe and sound.

A thunderous cheer rang through the circus. The mustang was conquered now. He galloped round the ring again,

but under evidently firm control. And Arthur Augustus, the grim look on his face relaxing, put him through evolutions, the horse obedient to every turn of his hand.

"Hurrah!"

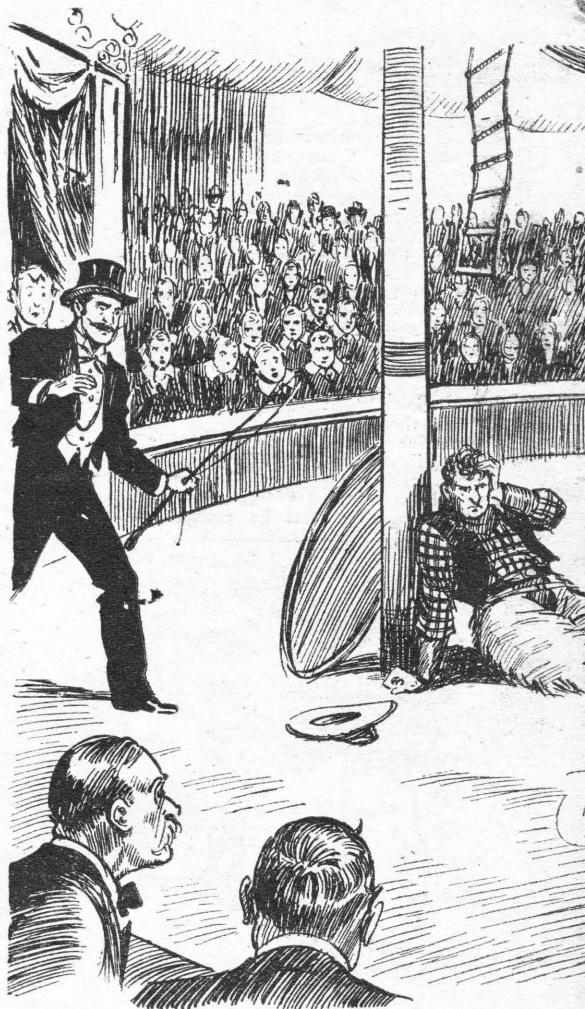
"Bravo, St. Jim's!" roared Blake.

"Hurrah for Study No. 6!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rode the mustang to where Texas Bill was standing, and halted. The animal was completely beaten and he recognised his master. D'Arcy jumped down.

"Here you are, deah boy!" he said gracefully.

"Hcwly mother of Moses!" exclaimed



The mustang was trying every trick it knew to unseat its young rider. But the expert horseman played his expert horsemanship. If the savage horse got

Texas Bill, with an accent that was certainly not that of Texas. "Tare and hounds! Young gen'laman, you ride like an angel, and it's me, Bill Flaherty, that says so! You've prevented some trouble 'ere this night, me bhoy!"

"Vevy happy to be of service, I'm sure!" said Arthur Augustus, handing the reins to Texas Bill, who led the mustang, quiet enough now, from the arena.

Mr. Chungum rushed across the tan and grasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy by both hands.

"Splendid!" he exclaimed. "Splendid! Goodness knows what that brute would have done! Young gentleman, if you are ever in want of a job, you jest walk right into Chungum's

Circus, and there's room for you. Your name, please?"

Arthur Augustus smiled. It was not really likely that the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the son of Lord Eastwood, would ever be in want of a job in a circus. But he gave his name cheerily enough.

"I'll remember that name," said Mr. Chumgum, "and if you ever want a friend, jest you remember Charlie Chumgum!"

"Yaas, wathah! Thank you vevy much, my deah sir!" said D'Arcy modestly.

And the swell of St. Jim's returned

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter, blinking peevishly at the juniors. "I'm rather a dab at riding, and I should have handled him all right. I was just going to spring upon him, you know, when you chipped in, Gussy!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom Merry unceremoniously. "Gussy, old man, it was splendid of you! And you can call Study No. 6 top study in the School House if you like—till next term! It was topping!"

The mustang having been taken from the ring, the audience settled down in their places again, and the juniors of

St. Jim's looked on keenly, for the next item on the programme was the circus cricketers, and Tom Merry & Co., who were great cricketers at St. Jim's, were very curious to see what the unique turn was like.

CHAPTER 10.

The Chumgum Challenge!

MR. CHARLIE CHUMGUM advanced into the ring, his great expanse of shirt front and his big diamond gleaming in the light.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to present to you the circus cricketers; a wonderful unique turn, which positively appears only in Chumgum's Celebrated Circus. Before their appearance, I have to make an announcement which will interest all cricket lovers and sportsmen in the audience."

"Bai Jove! This is gettin' intewestin'!"

"The Chumgum Cricket Eleven is a first-class team. Owing to limitations of space, the Chumgummers cannot fully display their powers within the circus. But the eleven are open to accept challenges from local teams for matches to be played on any days when matinee performances are not given."

"Bai Jove!"

"The Chumgum team has met many famous elevens, and has challenged the M.C.C., and many other celebrated teams."

"Bravo!"

Tom Merry had no doubt that the circus team might have played many local elevens in towns and villages where Mr. Chumgum had pitched his tent, and such matches would be more useful as advertisement than yards of print in the local papers.

"Many famous teams have not cared to risk their laurels by meeting the Chumgummers," the circus master went on, "otherwise the Chumgummers would have won great victories at Lord's and at the Oval. But we know Easthorpe—we know that we are in a sporting town."

"Hear, hear!"

"And I repeat that the Chumgum Eleven is ready to meet any local team, asking only a fair field and no favour," said Mr. Chumgum. "I pause for a reply."

Up jumped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I accept the challenge, Mr. Chumgum!"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Blake, dragging at D'Arcy's sleeve. "What are you talking about, Gussy? You're not in the local team."

"Wats! We'll play them with a St. Jim's team!"

"My hat!"

Mr. Chumgum looked at the swell of St. Jim's and bowed. There was a cheer from the audience. D'Arcy was known to most present as the son of the greatest local landowner, and he had attracted great attention by his mastery of the black mustang.

"Master D'Arcy, you do me proud!" said Mr. Chumgum. "May I ask if you are the captain of the local eleven—as I'm sure you ought to be?"

"I'll play you with a school eleven," explained Arthur Augustus. "I dare say you have heard of St. Jim's."

Mr. Chumgum had never heard of St. Jim's, but he guessed from Arthur Augustus' remark that it was a school eleven.

"Who has not?" he replied urbanely.

"Vevy well. I'll play your team with a St. Jim's eleven, when and where you like, my deah man."

"The challenge is accepted," said Mr. Chumgum.

"We'll play you on the local gwound to-morrow, if you like."

"Agreed."

"Stumps pitched as early as you like!"

"Shall we say ten o'clock?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The Chumgum Eleven will be ready," said Mr. Chumgum; "and I trust that all sporting members of the present audience will be there to see this great match!"

"Bravo!"

"There will be no gate-money," continued Mr. Chumgum. "The Chumgummers play for the honour of the great game, and not for money."

"Bravo!"

"Ladies and gentlemen, the Chumgummers' challenge having been accepted, the performance will now proceed!"

Mr. Chumgum retired, amid cheers, and Arthur Augustus sat down, looking very satisfied.

"This is wathah a stwoke of luck, deah boys," he remarked. "We have already whacked the local team twice, and I was feelin' like Julius Cæsar, you know—we wanted some fwesh worlds to conquah!"

"Eh? Wasn't it Alexander the Great who wanted fresh worlds to conquer?" asked Lumley-Lumley, with a grin.

"Weally, it is not vevy important whethah is was Julius Cæsar or Alexandah the Gweat. The important thing is that we have found a fwesh world to conquah. I wathah wegard it as a stwoke of luck. We have enough chaps at Eastwood to make up an eleven. There are ten of us, anyway, including Wally and young Fwayne. We can pick up an eleventh man somewhere."

"I'm quite at your service, Gussy, old man," said Billy Bunter at once.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass dubiously upon the fat junior of Greyfriars.

"Can you play cwicket, Buntah?" he asked.

"I'm a dab at it!"

"Ahem! You play at Gweyfwiahs?"

"Oh, yes, whenever there is a match that's worth the trouble of exerting myself in!" explained Bunter. "Of course, it wouldn't be quite cricket to



mouthful rider, but Arthur Augustus clung on desperately, dis- out of control there was no telling what damage it might do!

to his place, his ears tingling a little at the loud cheers from the audience. The juniors shook his hands, and thumped him upon the shoulders, and almost hugged him.

"Oh, you duffer!" gasped Blake. "You might have been killed! If you'd been killed, you ass, I—I—I'd have punched your silly head!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Jolly good!" said Billy Bunter, who had recovered now from his fright, and was trying to look as if he had not been frightened at all. "I was just going for the brute when you collared him, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! Were you weally, Buntah?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

play a fellow of my form against any team. But in specially tough matches I'm always to the fore. I find it rather a bore at times, you know. I have so many engagements that I can't always find the time. But when Wharton comes to me, almost with tears in his eyes, to beg me to play, it's difficult for a chap to decline."

"Yaas, I—I suppose so."

"I'll play for you with pleasure," said Bunter. "Of course, considering my form, I suppose you'll leave it to me to captain the team?"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm generally accustomed to taking the lead," Bunter explained modestly.

"As a mattah of fact, Tom Mewwy is our skippah," said Arthur Augustus, "and we are weally not lookin' out for a new one."

"Oh, I'll arrange that with Merry! In the circumstances, Merry, of course, you wouldn't mind standing down on this occasion?"

Tom Merry glared at the fat junior.

"Your mistake, I should."

"But, in the circumstances—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Ahem! Of course, I don't insist," said Bunter hastily. "I let Wharton captain the Form team at Greyfriars sometimes. I'm not a greedy chap. I'll play for you, anyway. Only give me plenty of bowling. I'm a dab at bowling."

"Well, that makes up the eleven, anyway," said Herries. "There's us four—Study No. 6—and you three Shell chaps, and Lumley-Lumley, and Wally and Frayne, and Bunter. That makes up an eleven—of sorts."

"I expect the circus team will be an eleven of sorts, too," said Tom Merry, laughing. "You don't know yet what you've let us in for, D'Arcy."

"Anyway, it will be a game, deah boy."

"Probably a very funny game," said Tom. "But I don't mind. We shan't be playing it at St. Jim's, anyway."

Certainly the preparations that were going on in the ring did not look as if the circus team took cricket very seriously. The Chumgummers' eleven might be a very good eleven when they met teams outside the circus. But in the circus it was evident that cricket was played from a humorous point of view.

Tiny Tony captained one side, and Texas Bill the other, and the sides consisted only of six players. Wickets were set up, and players in odd-looking costumes came in. Some of the audience looked a little nervous at first at the idea of a cricket ball being knocked about in the ring. But their anxiety was relieved when they discovered that the circus cricketers played with a rubber ball—or, rather, with a good many rubber balls. Tiny Tony brought in a whole basketful for the game.

Texas Bill and Sapolio, the serpent charmer, took the wickets, armed with tennis rackets instead of bats. Tiny Tony went on to bowl. The fieldsmen stood round, and Tiny Tony sent down the rubber ball. Sapolio smote it, and sent it bouncing along the tan, and the clown pursued it in a series of somersaults, amid yells of laughter from the audience. And after Tiny Tony went all the fieldsmen, also somersaulting.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Oh, Gussy, you've done it this time! That's the kind of team we're going to meet!"

"Bai Jove! I didn't know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter snorted.

"I'm afraid I shall have to withdraw my offer," he remarked. "I couldn't let

them know at Greyfriars that a player of my class met a team like that!"

"But—but Mr. Chumgum says they meet local teams," said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose they won't play like that in a real game."

"My hat, I hope not!" grinned Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all wight, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, recovering himself.

"This foolin' is only to entahtain the audience, you know. They couldn't play a weal game in here without hurtin' somebody. It will be quite diffewent when we meet them on the groud."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The cricket match lasted half an hour on the same lines, the audience being kept in a roar of laughter all the time. The Chumgum-cricketers retired at last, amid cheers. Tom Merry wiped the tears from his eyes.

"Oh, Gussy, if they play us like that!"

"It would be wathah widiculous, deah boy; but it's all wight."

"Well, I hope it will be all right. Anyway, it was a jolly funny show. Bravo!"

And the juniors of St. Jim's went out with the crowd, very well satisfied with the entertainment provided by Chumgum's Celebrated Circus.

CHAPTER 11. High Words!

"WAKE up!"

Billy Bunter opened his eyes slowly, and yawned.

The juniors had slept soundly that night, especially Billy Bunter. Bunter could do with a great deal of sleep. After the return from the circus he had polished off a supper that would have been far beyond the powers of Fatty Wynn of St. Jim's.

Then he had rolled off to bed in a very contented frame of mind, and, as he said "Good-night!" to Arthur Augustus, he assured him very affectionately that he would put off some of his engagements for the vacation, in order to make a good long stay at Eastwood House, an affectionate assurance which D'Arcy received with polite dismay.

Bunter's room adjoined that occupied by Arthur Augustus, and if that noble youth had not been sleeping the sleep of perfect health, the rumbling sounds that proceeded from Bunter's apartment would certainly have kept him awake most of the night. When Arthur Augustus awoke in the morning he was surprised and a little alarmed by a rumble like distant thunder, until he discovered that it was only a sonorous snore proceeding from Bunter's room.

The juniors were up at an early hour. They were to meet the circus cricketers at ten o'clock on the village green, and Tom Merry intended to put his team through a little early practice. They had not had much cricket since breaking-up at St. Jim's; and though Tom did not think that Tiny Tony's eleven would be very hard to beat, he did not mean to leave anything to chance. Also, he was curious to see how Bunter would shape, not having much belief in the fat junior's powers as a cricketer.

Bunter blinked at Tom Merry as he awoke. The captain of the Shell at St. Jim's was shaking him by the shoulder. The early sunlight was glimmering in at the window.

"Yaw-aw-aw!" murmured Bunter.

"Lemme alone! 'Tisn't rising-bell!"

"Up with you!"

"Groogh! Lemme alone!"

Tom Merry gave the Owl of the Remove another vigorous shake, and

Bunter came quite out of the land of dreams. He glared at Tom Merry.

"Look here, you chuck it!" he exclaimed. "'Tisn't time to get up! What's the time?"

"Six!" said Tom.

"Six!" howled Bunter. "Why, we don't get up at six at Greyfriars. Do you think I'm going to get up earlier on vacation than we do at school? If so, you're jolly well mistaken! Lemme alone! I'm not getting up for hours yet!"

"We're meeting the circus team this morning, Bunter."

"Well, that isn't till ten o'clock. I'll get up at half-past nine."

"Too late!"

"Well, nine, then! Lemme alone!"

"We're going to have some early practice," explained Tom. "Now, jump up! All the other fellows are up already."

Bunter rubbed his sleepy eyes and grinned.

"That's all right," he said. "You fellows go and get some practice. I dare say you need it. I don't. I'm a dab at cricket, and I'm always in topping form. I don't need any practice!"

"Oh rats! Get up!"

"I won't get up!" roared Billy Bunter. Being awakened early in the morning always made Bunter ferocious. "Let me alone!"

Tom Merry looked at him. He was greatly inclined to take the fat junior bodily, and yank him out of bed, and bump him on the floor. If Bunter had been a St. Jim's fellow, he would certainly have done it. He restrained himself with difficulty.

"Now, look here, Bunter," he said quietly. "You've had enough sleep. If you're going to play in the match, you've got to get up and practise. Otherwise, I shall refuse to play you at all."

"Rot! Pretty show you'd make if I didn't help you!" said Bunter contemptuously. "I shall insist upon playing. And I don't need any practice. Our form at Greyfriars is very different from yours at St. Jim's. We've licked you often enough for you to know that. Just you let me alone. I'll get up at nine!"

"Then you won't play!" said Tom determinedly.

Bunter blinked at him angrily. He was determined to play, and he was determined not to get up. But Tom Merry was determined, too.

"Let Buntah alone, Mewwy, you wottah! I insist upon my guest not bein' disturbed!"

Tom Merry turned round in astonishment towards the open doorway in D'Arcy's room. He was very much surprised at Arthur Augustus addressing him in that tone.

"What!" he exclaimed.

"Let Buntah alone. He is a vey good playah—bettah than you any day! I wufuse to allow him to be bothahed, and if you don't like it, you can lump it, bai Jove!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed. The St. Jim's juniors generally addressed one another in an extremely unceremonious manner; but there were limits. Tom Merry did not intend to be spoken to like that by anybody, nor to stay under the roof of a host who allowed himself such liberties.

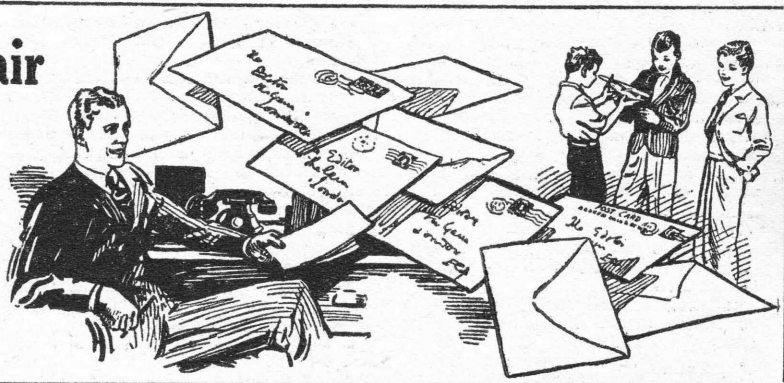
He left Bunter—who was grinning now—and strode into Arthur Augustus' room. D'Arcy was putting on a tie before the glass.

"That's enough, D'Arcy!" said Tom Merry.

(Continued on page 18.)

The Editor's Chair

Let the Editor be your pal. Drop him a line to-day, addressing your letters: The Editor, The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.



HALLO, chums! All good things come to an end, and holidays—worse luck!—are no exception. We all know too well that after-holiday feeling, when we have to get back to work again, or return to school. Of course, after a holiday, we ought to feel braced up and eager to continue our duties, but somehow it doesn't pan out like that.

Our office-boy suggests that we should have another week in which to get over a holiday. But I have my suspicions that he made the suggestion hoping that I would give him a few days extra. As a matter of fact, his job's one long holiday!

However, like everybody else, Tom Merry & Co., who have spent a jolly time at Eastwood House, are reluctant to return to St. Jim's again when the time comes. In next week's grand story:

"THE STOLEN STUDY!"

Monty Lowther gets a bright idea for prolonging their vacation, but unfortunately for the juniors, it doesn't work out quite right in practice. The result is that, although the juniors gain an extra day, it is a very miserable one.

Tom Merry & Co., therefore, return to St. Jim's a day after the rest of the school—and there's a big shock awaiting Blake & Co. Their study, No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage, has been "pinched" in their absence by Levison, Mellish, and Hooker. And what's more, Blake & Co. cannot turn them out, for the cads of the Fourth have the support of Mr. Linton, who is temporary Housemaster till Mr. Railton returns.

Such is the outcome of gaining an extra holiday! Blake & Co. are faced with the task of recapturing their famous apartment. I will leave Martin Clifford to tell you all about it next week. I should just like to add that readers won't find a dull moment in this lively yarn.

"THE GREYFRIARS CHINEE!"

In this number you have read—or will read—of the advent at Greyfriars of little Wun Lung from China. The Celestial seems a trifle timid in his new and strange surroundings and, but for Wharton's protection, he would have had a rough time at the hands of Bulstrode & Co. But in next Wednesday's gripping yarn, the Chinese comes right out of his shell!

Bulstrode tries to "rag" him in the dormitory, but the Remove bully soon discovers that he has woke up the wrong customer! The story develops a thrilling and sinister theme. A Chinaman breaks into the Remove dormitory! Who is he, and what is his object?

Make absolutely certain, chums, that you don't miss next week's great number. See that your GEM is reserved for you.

IN REPLY,

My mail gets larger and larger with every passing day. It is a good sign, and I like it. But I regret that, as a result, I have to keep readers waiting for answers to their letters. If I devoted the whole of two pages for my replies. I could not keep pace with the inflow of correspondence. Readers will understand, therefore, that I cannot reply to all letters, but I will try to deal with as many as I can.

Miss D. Bryce-Smith (Loughton).—Peter Hazeldene is Marjorie Hazeldene's brother, but Redfern of St. Jim's is no relation of Barbara Redfern of Cliff House; nor is Lawrence related to Marjorie Hazeldene. Sorry your joke was a little out of season.

E. Sharp (Cheadle Hulme).—Thanks for your compliments to the GEM and "Magnet." Mellish is fifteen years two months; Crooke, fifteen years nine months. Try again to win half-a-crown.

B. Cook (Hull).—The Greyfriars prefects are Wingate, Carne, Faulkner, Gwynne, Hammersley, Loder, North, Tremaine, and Walker. Mr. Ratcliff is senior Housemaster at St. Jim's, but it is to Mr. Railton that Dr. Holmes turns for advice and help. Dr. Locke is the oldest master at Greyfriars. Football at Greyfriars ends when the season does—that is, the first Saturday in May.

F. Hegarty (Millwall, E.14).—I will bear in mind your suggestion, but I am afraid that I cannot promise anything definite. W. H. Smith & Son have on sale a book called "Hugo's Simplified German," which I think would suit you.

M. Bunbury (Weymouth).—The ages you want are: Wynn, fifteen years four and a half months; Thompson, sixteen years; Kerr, fifteen years five months; Lowther, fifteen years eleven months; Glyn, fifteen years six months; Koumi Rao, fourteen years eleven months; Kildare, seventeen years eight months; Darrell, seventeen years six months; Cutts, seventeen years; Bull, fifteen years three months; Nugent fourteen years ten months; Vernon-Smith, fifteen years ten months; Lord Mauleverer, fifteen years three months; Wingate, seventeen years eleven months; Field, fifteen years three months; Redwing, fifteen years eight months; Gwynne, seventeen years seven months; Coker, seventeen years; Hobson, fifteen years;

Temple, sixteen years; Dabney, fifteen years; Dicky Nugent, thirteen years. Hope you have now fully recovered from your operation.

H. Stewart (Belfast).—I think you will find that whenever Martin Clifford reforms one of his black sheep, it is not long before he brings another on the scene. When Lumley-Lumley reformed, Levison stepped in to take his place as black sheep of the Fourth. Reformation stories are very popular with readers, and that is the reason why periodically Martin Clifford makes one of his bad characters turn over a new leaf. As a matter of fact, many readers are eagerly awaiting the reformation of Levison, which you seem to deplore. Naturally, all "Gemites" have their own favourite St. Jim's characters, but I am quite sure that, with the majority of them, Tom Merry is the most popular. I think you must be prejudiced against Tom, for he is just the reverse of effeminate, and although he is soft-hearted, he certainly hasn't a weak nature.

J. Bates (Middlesbrough).—Many thanks for your interesting letter. The story you are confusing with "The Lure of the Footlights" dealt with Monty Lowther running away from St. Jim's to go on the stage. It was in that story that Mr. Curil was first introduced.

J. Selby (Holborn, W.C.1.).—Sorry I got your name wrong before, chum. I have made a note of your request, and I will do my best to accede to your wish. I strongly disagree when you say that the present GEM yarns are not up to the standard of the old stories. Your opinion is just the opposite of the majority of other readers, most of whom say that the GEM stories get better and better. The ten best boxers on points among the juniors are: Tom Merry, Reginald Talbot, Jack Blake, Harry Noble, G. A. Grundy, Arthur Augustus, George Figgins, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, Richard Redfern, and Clifton Dane.

Miss B. Weale (Coventry).—Blake is fifteen years four months; Herries, fifteen years six months; D'Arcy, fifteen years three months; Levison, fifteen years six months; Digby, fifteen years four months. Frank Richards is not related to Hilda Richards.

Miss I. Jeffreys (Adelaide, Australia).—Very many thanks for your interesting and intelligent letter. I am very pleased to know that you are such an ardent admirer of the old paper. The information you want is, as you assume, a trade secret. Best wishes to you and your mother.

FEN PALS COUPON
24-7-37

THE EDITOR.
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,536.

Arthur Augustus turned round innocently.

"What's enough, deah boy?" he asked.

"What you've said. As soon as this match is over, I shall clear off. I won't trouble your hospitality any longer."

Arthur Augustus gazed at him in amazement.

"What on earth's the mattah, Tom Mewwy? What have I done?"

"You know very well what you've done!" almost shouted Tom, his eyes blazing. "Do you think I'm a fellow like Bunter, to be talked to like that?"

"Gweat Scott!"

"That's all I need say!"

Tom Merry turned on his heel.

Arthur Augustus made a jump after him and caught him by the shoulder.

"Tom Mewwy, you ass, I insist upon your explainin' yourself. If you are undah the impression that I have done anything—"

"You know what you said, I suppose?"

"Wha-a-a-at I've said!" stammered D'Arcy. "But—but I didn't say anything, deah boy. Has some silly ass told you I've said somethin'?"

The surprise and distress in D'Arcy's face made Tom Merry stare. He could not understand the swell of St. Jim's at all.

"Are you dotty?" he exclaimed.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I'm referring to what you called out to me just now when I was telling Bunter to get up!" exclaimed Tom angrily.

"Gweat pip! I didn't call you anything, deah boy. I didn't know you were wakin' Buntah. I was tyin' my tie," said Arthur Augustus, in bewilderment. "I suppose I should not be likely to be givin' attention to extwaneous mattahs at a time like that?"

"You called out to me!"

"I didn't!"

"What the dickens is the row?" asked Blake, coming in, surprised by the excited voices. "You don't mean to say you two fellows are having a row?"

"Tom Mewwy seems to want to have a wov," said D'Arcy. "But I uttably wufuse to have a wov with a fellow who is a guest undah my woof!"

"I shan't be jolly well under your roof, anyway!" exclaimed the exasperated Shell fellow. "I'm getting off as soon as we've played this match. I must stop for that."

"Bai Jove!"

"Hold on!" said Blake soothingly. "Easy does it! You can't really have anything to quarrel about, you two. Now what's the matter? Tell your Uncle Blake."

"D'Arcy called out to me!"

"I didn't!"

"In an insulting way!"

"Gweat Scott! I insist upon your withwavin' that wemark, Tom Mewwy. If you imply that I am capable of speakin' in an insultin' mannah to a guest undah my woof—"

"Well, you did!"

"Wubbish! And if you do not wetract that statement, Tom Mewwy, I shall give you a feahful thwashin' when we get back to St. Jim's!"

"Cheese it!" said Monty Lowther, coming in with the other fellows, all of them having heard the raised voices by this time. "No rows here. Tommy, my son, keep your temper. Don't look at Gussy as if you'd like to eat him. He's warranted quite harmless."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Let's get to the rights of this," said Blake, holding up his hand. "Tom Merry says Gussy called out to him, and Gussy says he didn't."

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"Yaas, wathah!"

"He did!" roared Tom Merry.

"Shush! Shush! Tom Merry says that Gussy called to him, and every chap present knows that Tom Merry is a giddy man of his word!" said Blake solemnly. "Gussy says he didn't call out, and we all know that Gussy beats George Washington in his own special line of business. Therefore, it is quite clear that both are right!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Tom Merry, therefore, heard somebody address him, and supposed it was Gussy, but it wasn't," said Blake. "That's the explanation. And if you'd asked your Uncle Blake before you started ragging one another—"

"I suppose I know D'Arcy's voice, don't I?" shouted Tom Merry. "Do you think I could mistake anybody else's voice for his? It isn't a voice you hear every day, for the matter of that. They don't grow D'Arcy's accent on every bush."

"Weally, you wottah—"

"Exactly," said Blake coolly. "Have you forgotten that jape on Cutts last night? You mistook the voice for Gussy's because it was exactly like Gussy's, and you are too howling a fat-head to remember that there is a ventriloquist in the next room."

Tom Merry jumped.

"A—a—a ventriloquist!"

"Yes, you ass! You ought to have known that Gussy wouldn't speak rudely to a guest," said Blake severely. "You're in the wrong."

"Bunter!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yes, Bunter, of course!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Buntah, the ventwiloquist—that uttah wascal!"

"Oh," said Tom Merry, between his teeth, "I—I understand! The rotten cad was imitating Gussy's voice! I—I—I beg your pardon, Gussy!"

D'Arcy waved his hand gracefully.

"Don't mench, deah boy. Fwom one gentleman to another an apology is quite suffish to set any mattah wight."

"But—but I really ought to have known better," said Tom, very repentant. "I was an ass! I—I was awfully surprised that you should speak to me like that. I didn't think for a moment of that beastly cad imitating your voice."

"It's all wight, deah boy. It was weally my fault for havin' such an unspcakable boundah undah my woof. Where are you goin', Tom Mewwy?"

Tom gritted his teeth. The callousness of the fat junior in risking a quarrel which might have been permanent between the two chums for the sake of a trick excited Tom Merry's rage to the point of fury. He strode into Bunter's room with his fists clenched. There was no question of politeness any longer. Politeness was wasted on a rascal who would play a trick like that.

"Tom Mewwy, deah boy, pway don't be watty. Aftah him, you fellows! He must weally not hurt Buntah!"

The juniors rushed after Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 12.

Bunter Pays the Piper!

SNOR-R-R-E-E!

That sound was proceeding from Billy Bunter's bed. The fat junior had calmly settled down to sleep again. Whether Tom Merry and D'Arcy quarrelled, whether they parted on bad terms or not, Billy Bunter did not care twopence. He did not even give the matter a thought. As soon as Tom Merry was gone he snuggled his

head into the pillow again, closed his eyes, and dropped back into dreamland.

But he did not remain there long. A heavy hand fell upon his shoulder, and he was dragged simultaneously out of bed and out of dreamland.

Bump!

"Yow—oh! Yah—oh!"

Billy Bunter came down with a mighty concussion on the floor. He awakened with a vengeance then. He sat up dizzily, blinking round him with fury.

"Ow! Ow! Wharrer you at? Lemme alone! Ow! You've broken my leg, you beast! Wharton, you rotter—I mean, Tom Merry, you beast! Yaroooh! Help! Murder! Fire!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Tom Merry had not let go. He proceeded to bump Billy Bunter on the floor as if he were trying to knock him through into the room below. Bunter's yells rang far and wide. He struggled, but his struggles did not make any difference to the sturdy Shell fellow. Tom Merry bumped him harder and harder.

"You rotten cad! You confounded blackguard! Take that—and that—and that!"

"Gweat Scott! Let him go, Tom Mewwy, deah boy!"

"Hold on, Tommy!"

"Chuck it!"

Bump, bump, bump, bump! Bang!

"Yarooooop! Help! Murder!"

The juniors rushed upon Tom Merry and dragged him off by sheer force. If they had not rescued him Billy Bunter would probably have been very much hurt. He felt quite sufficiently hurt already. He lay on the floor and bellowed.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yaroooooh! Help! Fire! Murder! Yah! Oh! Ow, ow, ow!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Blake. "Talk about old Stentor! Why, Stentor was a whispering cherub to that chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway shut up, Buntah! You will bwing the servants ip here with that wov."

"Yaroooh! My leg's broken! Two ribs broken, too! Send for a doctor! Ow!"

"Wats! You couldn't make that wov if your wibs were bwoken, Buntah!"

"Ow, ow, ow! Keep him off! Yah! Oh!"

"My deah Buntah—"

"Let me give him some more!" growled Tom Merry. "If he's going to make that thundering row, let him have something to make it for!"

"Shush! You mustn't knock Gussy's pals about in that way!" grinned Lowther.

"He's no pal of mine!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I should wufuse to wecognise as a pal any fellow who would play such a wotten twick. How-eh, he is my guest, and I weally wequest you not to bump him any more, Tom Mewwy."

"Right-ho! But make him shut up somehow, for goodness' sake! My eardrums will go soon!"

"Yarooop! Ow, ow, ow! My leg's broken! Groogh! My back's busted! Yow-ow! My neck's dislocated! Groogh!"

"Cold water's the cure for all that," said Monty Lowther. "Cheer up, Bunter! I'll give you something for it. Half a tick!"

Monty Lowther rushed for a water-jug. As he rushed back with the jug in his hands Bunter sat up hastily and ceased yelling.

"It's all right!" he panted. "I—I—"

Oh, you beast! Groogh! Ow!
Guguggggggg!

Splash!
Monty Lowther apparently did not believe in such a sudden recovery. At all events, he administered the cold water all the same. He inverted the jug over Bunter, and the water came down with a mighty swoop. Billy Bunter sprawled under it, drenched to the skin, and puffing and blowing like a grampus.

"Gug-gug-gug! Grooogh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Feel better, Bunter?" asked Lowther with friendly solicitude.

"Yow-ow-ow! No, I don't! I'm worse!" shrieked Bunter. "You silly beast, I shall catch cold! I'm lots worse! Ow, ow, ow!"

"Never mind, I'll get another jug of water!"

"I—I say, it's all right! I'm better now!" gasped Bunter, springing to his feet. "Don't you bring any water near me, you beast! Keep off! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Billy Bunter sat on the edge of his bed and glowered at the juniors. They were laughing loudly. Lowther's cold-water cure had not cured him, but the threat of a second dose had cured him at once. The water ran down Bunter's fat limbs and collected in a pool at his feet, and his pyjamas clung limply to him.

"Ow! You beasts! You rotters!" he stuttered.

"Weally, Buntah—"
"If this is the way you allow your guests to be treated, D'Arcy, you can't expect me to remain under your roof any longer!"

"If you feel bound to go away, Buntah, of course I should not like to stand in your way, deah boy. You are free to please yourself in evewy way."

"Ahem! Of course, I'm not going to leave an old pal because a thundering ass has drenched me with water," said Bunter. "I expect Tom Merry to apologise."

"You can go on expecting, then!" growled Tom. "You played a dirty trick. You nearly made me quarrel with D'Arcy by your beastly, caddish ventriloquism!"

Bunter grinned a little.

"Well, you wouldn't let me sleep," he said. "I had to make you sheer off somehow. Why can't you let a fellow alone? I don't need cricket practice like you St. Jim's chaps. We know how to play cricket at Greyfriars. If Tom Merry doesn't apologise, D'Arcy, I really don't see how I can remain here," said Bunter loftily.

"Well, I shan't apologise," said Tom, "and I'll do the same again if you play another rotten trick on me like that."

"Very well, for D'Arcy's sake I will pass over the matter."

And Bunter turned away to towel himself down and dress. After that drenching even Billy Bunter did not feel very sleepy. Tom Merry & Co. returned to their room to finish their toilet. Tom Merry was breathing hard, and Manners and Lowther were grinning. It was very seldom that their cheery, good-natured chum lost his temper, but Tom Merry had certainly let himself go that time.

"What a nice, lovable chap!" Lowther remarked. "His schoolfellows at Greyfriars must simply adore him, I should say."

"Blessed if I know how they stand him at all!" said Tom Merry. "If we had him at St. Jim's I think we should scalp him regularly every day."

"Only it's rather rough on poor old



All eyes were on Cousin Ethel as she ran to catch the ball, her hand outstretched. Next moment the leather smacked into her palm and she gripped it tightly. "Bravo!" "Well caught!" Cousin Ethel had made the winning catch!

Gussy if we rag him here," said Manners. "If it wasn't for that—"

"Perhaps I oughtn't to have lost my temper," said Tom, colouring. "But—but wasn't it a rotten trick? I jolly nearly had a row with Gussy. And I'm certainly not going to tell the fat brute I'm sorry, because I'm not sorry, and I'd do it again. I hope the bounder will keep clear of me, that's all. I want to keep the peace so as not to bother Gussy, but that fat toad gets on my nerves."

Tom Merry's nerves were not the only ones that were troubled by that "fat toad." Arthur Augustus' nerves were in the same state. But Billy Bunter was planted at Eastwood now, and, without positive rudeness, he was not to be got rid of. So the long-suffering Gussy had to grin and bear it.

CHAPTER 13.

The Eleventh Man!

"WIPPIN' mornin' for some cwicket, deah boys!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, as the St. Jim's juniors came downstairs.

They were very early birds. Only early housemaids were down so far, with the exception of the stately Mr. Chillingham, who was not in his usual state of exquisite finish when the juniors caught sight of him. Wally and Joe Frayne were already out, and the barking of Pongo could be heard on the lawn.

"What about brekker?" asked Bunter.

"We're goin' to pwactise before bwekkah, deah boy!"

"Practise before brekker!" exclaimed Bunter, in astonishment. "I certainly couldn't! Why, I'm frightfully hungry!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You fellows go out and get the wickets up, and I'll join you later," said Bunter. "I don't want to be a trouble, of course, Gussy, but I must have something to eat now I'm down. I suppose some of the servants can look after me?"

"I—I suppose so."
"If I kept a tribe of servants like you do, Gussy, I'd make 'em work," said Bunter. "It's all right. You fellows clear off, and I'll find something to eat."

"Buck up, then!" said Tom Merry shortly. "If you're going to play in the match you've got to show us what your cricket is like."

"My cricket's all right. A cut above what you're accustomed to at your school, anyway," said Bunter. "No need to worry about that."

Tom Merry restrained the reply that rose to his lips. It was really hard on the St. Jim's juniors that they were called upon to be incessantly civil to Bunter, when the Owl of Greyfriars did not seem to have the slightest idea of being civil to anybody. But, as Arthur Augustus explained, it was up to a decent chap to be decent, whatever a bounder might do.

The juniors went out, and Bunter remained indoors to seek for provender. At that early hour in the morning it was not easy to get a meal, even in so stately a residence as Eastwood House. But Billy Bunter could be trusted to provide for himself when he was hungry and there was food within reach.

The St. Jim's juniors intended to put in a couple of hours' practice before breakfast. Wally and Frayne had entered into the idea heartily, being elated at the prospect of playing as members of Tom Merry's team, which was quite beyond their reach when they

were at St. Jim's. Wally and Frayne were very good players for fags of the Third, and Tom Merry was more satisfied with them than he expected to be with Bunter.

In the keen morning air the juniors piled into cricket practice with a will, and they also forgot Bunter. The fat junior of Greyfriars did not appear in sight. Probably he had found something to eat. Tom Merry was in great form at the wicket, and Jack Blake was at the top of his form as a bowler. But at eight, when the juniors were thinking of going in for breakfast, Tom remembered Bunter.

"Where's that fat bouncer?" he exclaimed. "We've really got to see what he can do, you know. If he can't play at all, I'd rather play a man short."

"Here he comes!"
Cousin Ethel had just come out of the house, and Billy Bunter appeared with her. The fat junior was smiling his most agreeable smile. Bunter never believed that any girl could see him without falling a victim to his fascinating looks.

"I saw you from the window," said Ethel, as she came up. "You are out early to practice."

"Yaas, wathah, deah gal! We want to see what form we're in before we meet those Chumgum chaps," said Arthur Augustus. "We're waitin' for you, Buntah."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Bunter, with a wave of his fat hand. "No need for me to practise; I'm all right. But I'll coach you chaps."

"You'll what?" yelled Blake.
"I'll coach you! You see, with my

thorough knowledge of the game, I make a ripping coach. You fellows get going again, and I'll point out to you where you're wrong."

The St. Jim's juniors glared speechlessly at the fat fellow from Greyfriars. Billy Bunter's cool cheek simply took their breath away. For Tom Merry & Co., the champion junior cricketer of St. Jim's, to be coached by that fat, clumsy, unwieldy "bouncer" was a suggestion that required some getting used to.

Cousin Ethel turned away her head to hide a smile. Cousin Ethel could play cricket herself, and she did not require telling that Bunter was no cricketer.

"Well," gasped Blake, at last, "if that doesn't take the cake—if it doesn't prance off with the whole blessed biscuit—"

"I mean it," said Bunter briskly. "All I know about the game I'm willing to place at your service, to oblige my old pal, Gussy."

"The fact is Buntah, deah boy, we're not lookin' for a coach," said Arthur Augustus mildly. "And Tom Mewwy insists as skippah that, if you want to play in the match, you must go through some pwaactice. Will you bat, or will you bowl?"

"It's not really necessary," said Bunter. "But they say example is better than precept, so perhaps I had better show you how we play cricket at Greyfriars. Give me the ball."

D'Arcy tossed the ball to Bunter, who caught it clumsily, and Tom Merry went to the wicket. Bunter blinked along the pitch, and grasped the ball in his fat fingers, and took a little rolling run.

The ball flew, and there was a yell of alarm from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he caught Ethel by the arm and dragged her out of danger. As Ethel was level with the bowler's wicket, she ought not to have been in danger, certainly; but Billy Bunter was a bowler of unusual powers.

"You uttah ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "What are you throwin' the ball at Ethel for?"

"M-my hat! Where's that ball?" gasped Bunter. "I—I think it left my hand a little too soon—or, rather, a little too late. Chuck it over here!"

Jack Blake had picked up the ball, but he did not return it to the Owl of Greyfriars. He gave him a withering glare instead.

"You're not going to touch this ball again, you jay!" he growled. "You're not going to brain Miss Cleveland, and you're not going to brain us!"

"I'm a bit out of practice, perhaps," said Bunter; "but I'm a regular dab with the bat. Just you try me!"

Bunter took the bat and stood at the wicket. He leaned on the bat, with his big feet planted far apart, blinking along the pitch through his big spectacles towards the bowler.

Jack Blake took the ball, grinning. Bunter's attitude at the wicket was quite enough to tell him that the fat junior would never be able to stop the ball, unless it was lobbed down to him by a child. Blake sent it down like a bullet, and the wicket was shattered before Bunter knew what was happening.

"How's that?" chuckled Blake.

Bunter blinked down at the wicket. "That was a trial ball, of course," he said. "I wasn't expecting that. Try again!"

"Oh, all right! Stick up the wicket, Dig."

Billy Bunter blinked along the pitch very carefully for the next ball. He slashed at it ferociously with his bat, and there was a crash. The willow swept the wicket to pieces, and Digby gave a howl as one of the flying balls caught him on the side of the head. Billy Bunter was evidently as dangerous at the wicket as he was at the bowler's crease.

"Take that bat away from him!" yelled Digby. "If he bats again, I'll brain him with a stump! He's banged a ball against my napper! Ow, ow, ow! He's dangerous!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Put that bat down, you fat idiot!"
"Oh, really, look here!"

"Put it down, or I'll larrup you with this stump!" roared the infuriated Dig.
"My hat! I'll larrup you, anyway! You fat idiot!"

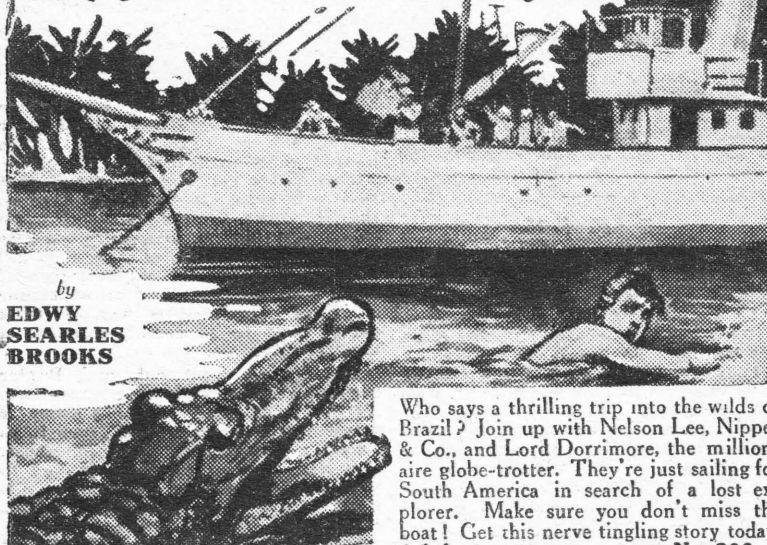
Dig rushed at Billy Bunter, flourishing the stump. Bunter blinked at him in alarm, and dropped the bat and fled. Digby pursued him furiously, lunging at him with the business end of the stump, eliciting a wild yell from Bunter at every prod. The two—pursued and pursuer—disappeared in the distance towards the house, leaving the rest of the juniors almost hysterical with laughter.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Blake, wiping his eyes. "If that's how they play cricket at Greyfriars— Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fat idiot can't play for toffee!" said Tom Merry. "I know very well he doesn't play for his Form; we've played them. We can't put such an idiot in our team, even to meet the circus eleven. He would be funnier than Tiny Tony!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"We shall have to play a man short,

The ST. FRANK'S EXPLORERS!



by
EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

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unless there's some kid about the estate Gussy can rope in for the match."

"I've got an ideah, deah boys."
 "Whose?" asked Monty Lowther.
 "Weally, Lowthah, I wish you would not be so funny. We want anothah membah for the team, Tom Mewwy. It would be wotten to play a man short. And I've got my eye on the vevy person. I wondah it did not occur to me before. Ethel, deah gal, will you oblige us by playin' in the team to-day?"

"Ethel!" exclaimed all the juniors together.

"Yaas, wathah! I pwesume Ethel will play a bethah game than Buntah."

"I don't think I can play a worse," said Cousin Ethel, smiling. "But—"

"No buts!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It's a ripping idea, and I ought to have thought of it. If you don't mind, Ethel—"

"Of course, I should be very pleased," said Ethel. "If you really think I am good enough—"

"Oh, that's all wight, deah gal! I shall make a centuwy, anyway, and I intend to perform the hat-twick, too. So that will make the match safe."

Cousin Ethel laughed.
 "Very well, count on me," she said cheerily.

And the juniors went in to breakfast in high good-humour. The cleventh man had been found for the team; and though the eleventh man was a girl, it was pretty certain that she would put up a much better game than Billy Bunter. The juniors found Bunter at the breakfast-table, looking very red and sulky, and glaring at Digby.

"Sorry I couldn't put in some more practice, Gussy," he said. "But it's all right. I don't need practice. You'll see what kind of a game I shall play."

"We can imagine that," grinned Tom Merry. "We don't need to see it. We shall not be playing you in the match, Bunter."

"Why not?" demanded Bunter angrily.

"Because you can't play cricket," said Tom calmly.

"Why, you—you—I could play your head off!" howled Bunter.

"I dare say you could—if I were within range when you were handling the ball," conceded Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Gussy. I insist upon playing. I can't tell the Greyfriars chaps there was a match here, with me left out of it. I insist!"

"You must speak to Tom Mewwy, deah boy Tom Mewwy's skippah."

"Well, look here, Merry—"

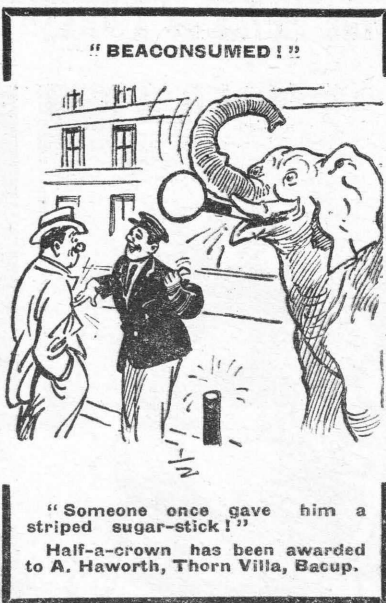
"Nuff said!" exclaimed Tom Merry tersely. "I'd rather play a man short than play you, Bunter. I'd rather play two or three men short, as a matter of fact. 'Nuff said!"

And Billy Bunter grunted, and went on with his breakfast in a very sulky humour. But Tom Merry meant what he said, and Bunter could see that he meant it, so there was nothing more to be said on the subject. Billy Bunter was to miss that chance of displaying his tremendous powers as a cricketer.

CHAPTER 14.

The Winning Catch!

"HERE we are, deah boys!"
 It wanted a quarter to ten when Tom Merry's eleven arrived upon the village green. The news of the match between



the Eastwood House team and the Chumgummers had spread, and there was already a gathering of villagers to see it. Tom Merry's team were the first on the ground, but the Chumgummers were not long in putting in an appearance.

The St. Jim's juniors could not help grinning as they saw them. As Mr. Charlie Chumgum arranged these matches for the purpose of advertisement, it was his object to make the circus team as striking as possible in appearance. Tiny Tony, who captained the team, wore his clown's clothes, and had his face made up as when in the ring. Texas Bill, alias Billy Flaherty, wore a cowboy costume, as when he rode the black mustang in the circus. Signor Sapolio was in tights and spangles, and Rab Rabbi wore loose white garments, and a turban.

The rest were in flannels, but their flannels were adorned with broad red stripes, so that they presented a peculiar zebra-like appearance. There was a chuckle from the gathering crowd at their appearance, and Tom Merry & Co. laughed.

Only Arthur Augustus looked a little solemn. Arthur Augustus' most precious possession was his personal dignity, and he was more than a little afraid that his personal dignity might be a little compromised by playing a match with so curious a team. He was fervently glad that all St. Jim's were not there to see them.

"Bai Jove, wathah a tag-wag-and-bobtail cwoad, Ethel!" he remarked to his cousin as Tiny Tony shook hands with Tom Merry. "Pewwaps I was too hasty in acceptin' Mr. Chumgum's challenge. It's wathah wiculous."

"Not at all!" said Cousin Ethel, laughing.

"Awful rough old lot!" snorted Billy Bunter, who had come down with the cricketers. "On second thoughts, I should refuse to play such a crowd myself."

"Vevy good!" said Arthur Augustus. "Then it's all wight about your bein' left out Buntah. I suppose we're fairly for it now."

Tom Merry and Tiny Tony tossed for choice of innings, and Tom Merry won,

and elected to bat. The circus eleven went into the field.

The clown went on to bowl. Round the cricket pitch the villagers were gathered in large numbers, to watch this curious match. Tom Merry opened the innings with Blake. The clown's contortions, as he went to the bowler's wicket, caused the spectators to roar. And Tiny Tony's manner of delivering the ball was unique. Instead of taking a run he turned a somersault, and then the ball came whizzing down, somewhat to the surprise of the batsman. There was a clack, and Tom Merry's wicket went to pieces.

The Shell skipper was out with the first ball of the match! Tom Merry looked a little lugubrious as he went out. The bowler's weird contortions had certainly put him off. Still, there was no known law against a bowler turning somersaults, if he wanted to, so no reasonable objection could be raised.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, as he prepared to take Tom Merry's place at the wicket. "I have weally nevah seen bowlin' like that before. This does weally take the cake!"

But Arthur Augustus was on his guard at the wicket, and his sticks did not go down so soon. But in the next over, delivered by Signor Sapolio, Blake was caught out by Samsonio, the strong man. The strongest man on earth tossed the ball into the air and caught it again.

"My hat!" said Lumley-Lumley. "We shall have to play up if we are going to beat those circus bouncers!"

"We shall, indeed!" said Cousin Ethel. "They are very funny, but they can play."

Ethel was right. The circus fielding was very good. There were several good catches. Mr. Chumgum, who umpired at one end, gave strictly fair decisions.

Tom Merry & Co. did their best; but the innings ended for a total of 55 runs, less than they were accustomed to knocking up in an innings against the New House at St. Jim's. Cousin Ethel had added ten to the score, and Arthur Augustus congratulated her warmly. Arthur Augustus' century had not come off—in fact, he had only scored four, but he promised wonders for the next innings.

There was an adjournment to the Easthorpe Arms for lunch, and then the circus innings commenced.

It was an eye-opener for Tom Merry & Co. Funny the circus eleven might be, but they knew the great game of cricket inside out. The hitting of Samsonio was terrific; the strongest man on earth drove the ball past the boundary a good many times with the greatest of ease, and gave the juniors plenty of leather-hunting.

Tiny Tony, though he would turn a somersault while the bowler was preparing to deliver the ball, was always "there" when he was wanted, and he defied the bowlers for a long time. He was caught out at last by Lumley-Lumley, turning a somersault once too often, and then knocking the ball right into the fieldsman's hands.

But the total for the innings was 100; and Tom Merry & Co. were looking very serious when they prepared to bat again.

Tom Merry was not caught napping a second time, and he scored 50 before Signor Sapolio caught him out. The rest of the wickets went down for a fair

(Continued on page 28.)

WUN LUNG FROM CHINA JOINS UP WITH THE REMOVE—AND SOON FINDS HIMSELF THE VICTIM OF A "RAG"!



"Now, then, off goes your pigtail!" exclaimed Bulstrode, waving the knife over Wun Lung's head. "No cuttee!" wailed the Chinese boy. "No cuttee!" "What's all this?" said a sharp voice; and Harry Wharton strode into the Common-room.

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK.

The Remove Form at Greyfriars make a raid in the night on their rivals of the Upper Fourth; but, unfortunately for the raiders, Temple, Dabney & Co. are ready for them. The Removites are drenched with water, and as a result they all catch colds.

The juniors try various remedies for curing themselves, and Frank Nugent buys some purple pilules, which he has great faith in.

Bob Cherry returns from the chemist in Friardale village with a patent remedy for his cold, and when he arrives at Study No. 1 he hears groans proceeding from the room.

(Now read on.)

No Takers!

"**N**UGENT! I say, old chap, what's the matter?"
"Oh-h-h!"
"What is it? Are you suffering much?"
"Ow-w-w!"

Bob Cherry, as he came into Study No. 1 at Greyfriars, looked at Frank Nugent in great distress. His chum certainly seemed to be in great pain. His hands, clasped over the lower buttons of his waistcoat, indicated the region of the pain.

"I say, what is it, old chap?"

"It's—it's the cold gone into my stomach, I think," groaned Nugent. "I've got a fearful pain there. Have you ever had a pain something like red-hot needles and something like being torn to pieces by wild horses?"

Bob Cherry scratched his head thoughtfully.

"Well, I don't know that I remember a pain exactly answering that description," he replied; "but it can't be the cold giving you that pain."

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"Oh, yes! I haven't anything else the matter with me."

"What about the purple pilules you bought for your cold? How many of those have you taken?"

"Well, I waited half an hour and my cold wasn't cured, so I thought I'd better take a few more," said Nugent. "I haven't had more than nine or ten altogether."

Bob Cherry roared.

"My had! That's what's the madder with you!"

"What's the madder?"

"Those purple pilules. They're probably some rot, anyway; but to take a double or treble dose—well, you must be an ass, Nugent!"

"Rod! It's not the purple pilules."

"You'd better have waited till I got in with my stuff," said Bob Cherry, uncorking the bottle of medicine he carried. "It's a marvellous stuff for curing colds. It says on the boddle—"

"Rads! Some patent medicine muck, I subbose."

"I thig it's jolly good! Look here, I'll give you a dose if you like, and it may cure you of that pain in your tummy."

"No, thags!"

"It's a cure for other thigs besides colds—pneumonia and lumbago and housemaid's knee and so on. It's wonderful stuff."

"You can geep id!"

"Where's there a beastly wineglass? Fancy not having a wineglass in the study when a chap wants to take medicine to cure a cold!"

"There's the ink-bottle."

"Rads! I must have a wineglass. I subbose I shall have to use this rotten old dumber! I shouldn't wonder if the medicine isn't so efficacious taken in anything but a wineglass. It says wineglass on the boddle."

"Oh, this is awful!"

"I'm sorry for you, Nugent; and if you like to take a dose—"

"Oh, shud ub!"

"You'll see the effect it'll have on me, old chap. It acts like magig!"

"Rads! Rod!"

"Well, you'll see, my pippin!"

Bob Cherry poured out a liberal dose into the solitary tumbler that belonged to Study No. 1, and drank it off at a draught. He made a horrible grimace the next moment, but, catching Nugent's eye on him, he tried to smile. That smile was a ghastly one.

"Nasdy, I subbose?" said Nugent.

"Well, not exactly nice, I admid," said Bob Cherry cautiously. "But id's nod so nasty as some medicines. And you must consider the effect, too. Id beats your rotten old purple pilules hollow."

"Don't be an idiot!"

"Whad else can I do for id?"

"Have some of this marvellous medicine. It's wonderful—"

"Rads! I'll stick to my pilules."

"Then you'll have some more red-hot needles and wild horses, you mark my words."

The power of faith is great. Bob Cherry already felt better—or thought he did. He put the bottle in his pocket and generously went forth in search of other sufferers to be relieved. He met Wharton in the passage. Harry was looking very much better.

"How are you feeling now?" asked Bob.

"Mudge bedder."

"Good! I can see your cold isn't quite gone, though. I've got some wonderful stuff here. Would you like to take a dose?"

"What is it?" asked Wharton guardedly.

"Dr. Pink's Marvellous Medicine for Sneezig Snortlers."

"I don't thig I'll have any, thags,

ANOTHER LIVELY YARN OF FUN AND ADVENTURE AT GREYFRIARS, DEALING WITH
THE EARLY SCHOOLDAYS OF HARRY WHARTON & CO.

THE BOY FROM THE EAST!

My sneeze is quite gone, and I haven't started snortig yet. You can keep it."
"Bedder have some. It will do you good."

"Rads! You can take it yourself."
"Now, don't be an ass, you know, Whartod!"

"My dear chap, I don't believe in patent medicines. I thig they're a fraud. I thig you're a silly ass to take thad stuff. Thad's my opinion."

"Oh, rod! It's wonderful stuff!"
"Then you can drig the whole boddle."

And Wharton walked on without sampling the marvellous mediciné. Bob Cherry shook his head solemnly.

"Suspicious beast!" he murmured. "I think he might have a liddle more faith in a thig like this. Why, the testimonials I've looked at show that thousands have been cured by it. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bulstrode, you look rodden!"

"I feel rodden!" said Bulstrode. "I should like to jump on somebody hard! Catch me raidig a beastly dormitory on a gold night again, thad's all!"

"I've got some good stuff here for curing a gold. You can hear by my voice how mudge I've been improved by takig a dose."

"Yes, I can, and no mistake!" said Bulstrode sarcastically.

"You can have some if you like. It's ribbing!"

"Rads! You can keep your muck!"
"It's splendid stuff! They get so many testimonials for it thad they haven't room to print the names and addresses of the people who send them. What are you grinning at?"

"Some rodden swindle!" said Bulstrode. "I know those testimonials." And he walked on.

Bob Cherry went into the Common-room, where there was the usual chorus of snorting, sniffing, and sneezing. Some of the Remove were better, but some of them were worse. And Billy Bunter was sneezing now with the rest; he had caught a cold.

"Nice rodder you are!" he remarked to Bob Cherry. "You see I've got the beastly gold, don'd you, you horrid rodder?"

"Well, why shouldn't you have it?" asked Bob. "Fair play all round, you know."

"I shouldn't have caught it if you chaps had kept out of the study, and left me the room to myself, as I asked you."

"You should have kept out of the study yourself, my pippin."

"Now you're talkig rod—and you know it, Cherry. But, I say, the only thig to do for a gold is to feed id."

"Go and eat goke, then."

"I borrowed five bob from Inky, and I was going to get a feed in time, when I met Lantham in the Close," said Billy Bunter, with a deeply injured air. "He raked up an old story about a few shilligs I owed him, and he saw the cash in my hand and made me give it to him."

"Hard lines!"
"Yes, wasn't it? I only owed him seven shillings, and I had promised my postal order when it came; but he's an unreasonable beast. He collared the cash, all of id, and left me stony again."

By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

It's liddle bedder thad stealig, in my opinion. Fancy takig it away from me, though I offered him a high rate of interest on his miserable loan if he would leave it over till my nexd postal order came."

"Some chaps are so unreasonable," agreed Bob Cherry. "It's lucky you met me—"

"You'll lend me five bob, Cherry?"

"Well, no, I can't do thad; but I'll give you a dose of this medicine, which will cure your gold like winkig. You take a dose—"

"Thad I jolly well don'd!" said Billy Bunter, retreating. "I'm not takig any of your filthy patent medicine."

"You yug duffer!"

"If you like to lend me five bob, Cherry, I'll cure the lod of you."

"Oh, go and ead gokernuts!"

Bob Cherry wanted to do the kind thing, but he found no takers. He was, however, the recipient of similar generous offers himself. A taste for patent

Greyfriars has had some unusual new boys, but none so strange as the boy from the East!

medicines seemed to have spread like a craze over the Remove.

Skinner listened to Bob Cherry's explanation of the merits of the marvellous medicine and shook his head, and then produced a small green bottle from an inside pocket.

"Whad do you thig thad is?" he asked.

"Blessed if I know!"

"It's Professor Porker's Elysian Elixir. It cures a gold in one dose. I've taken three doses."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Whad are you laughig at?"

"Your gold's not gone yed, my boy."

"Well, of course, the thig doesn't act like magig!"

"Thad's the best of this marvellous medicine, Skinner. It does act like magig."

"Well, your gold's not cured!"

"Not absolutely," admitted Bob Cherry, "bud you can hear from my voice thad id is mudge better, can't you?"

"Blessed if I can!"

"Whad an obstubate chap you are, Skinner!"

"Anyway, your gold's much worse thad mine. Mine's bedder, because I've taken a good lod of the Elysian Elixir. You can have a dose, if you like."

"I thig I'll stig to the marvellous medicine."

"Then you're an ass!"

"And you're another!"

With which exchange of compliments they parted, each firmly faithful to his own remedy.

The Nabob's Recipe!

BILLY BUNTER drifted disconsolately into Study No. 1. He was sneezing as he came along the passage, and he signalled his entrance into the study by a loud and prolonged cough. Perhaps he wanted to excite sympathy. He did not succeed. A boot came hurtling across the study, and it smote Bunter on the chest, and he sat down in the doorway.

"Now you shud up!" said Nugent. "It's bad enough to have golds all round, without a yug porker like you startig sneezig for fun."

"You beast! You've hurt me!"

"I suppose I have. I'll hurt you again if you don't shud up. I've god a pain. This gold has gone into my tummy. I'm not in a good temper."

"I've got a gold, too!" howled Bunter.

"Rads! You haven't. You're only doig some of your rodden ventriloquism."

"I'm not," said Bunter, scrambling up and sneezing violently. "I've god a fearful gold. Can't you hear id in my voice, you idiot?"

"If you call me an idiot I'll pulverise you!"

"Well, then, can't you see I've god a gold? I could cure it, and yours, too, if my postal order came. Whad I want is—"

"I'm sorry, if you've really god a gold," said Nugent. "Why couldn't you be more careful? Bad enough for us to have 'em, without you sneezig about. Don'd make such a row with it, anyway."

"You're makig row enough yourself."

"Thad's different. I've god a pain in my tummy."

"All through not feedig the gold. I say, Nugent—"

"If you've really god a gold you can have some of my purple pilules," said Nugent, feeling in his pocket. "Would you like a dozen or so?"

"Thag you, but I don't want 'em. Bob Cherry has offered me some of his muck already. Whad you want to do with a gold is to feed id. You feed a gold and starve a fever."

"Rads! These purple pilules are the thig."

"Look here, I want five bob."

"Oh, go and hag yourself!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came into the study. Billy Bunter tapped him on the arm.

"I say, Inky, can you led me five bob?"

"The esteemed Bunter is somewhat overpowering. I have already lentfully given him the worthy cash once."

"That beast Lantham made me pay up a few paltry shilligs I owed him."

"That was rough on the esteemed rodden Bunter."

"Yes, wasn't id? I had owed him the money for half a term, and it was really an old account. Some chaps

are so beastly mean, you know. I suppose you couldn't stand another five bob, could you, Inky?" said the fat junior persuasively. "You see, I've caught this rodden gold from these beasts!"

"I'm afraid the cashfulness would be impossible, but I will cure the worthy cold of my Bunterful chum. I have here the ingredients which I purchased chemistfully at Friardale to make up the recipe."

"I—I'd rather have a little cash, if it's all the same to you, Inky."

"But it's not all the same to me, my worthy chum. The cashfulness of my worthy self is exhausted, but the certainfulness of this wonderful recipe is terrific."

"I shal' probably die of this gold," said Bunter. "You chaps will be sorry then that you didn't give me a feed in time."

Hurree Singh made no reply. He bent over the fire and stirred it, and put a little enamelled saucepan on it. Into this he poured some water, and then added a portion of the contents of several little phials. Then he shook some powder in from two or three little packets.

The water began to fizz at once, and the nabob carefully stirred it with a pen-handle. A strange odour crept through the room as the fluid began to get heated, which increased in strength as it drew nearer to the boil.

Harry Wharton came in, looking almost himself again. He started and sniffed.

"That young ass, Bunter, burning the grub?" he asked. "What are you cooking, Bunt? Why, it is you, Inky! What are you up to?"

The nabob turned a warm face from the fire.

"I am making up the recipe for the cure of the honourable colds," he said. "It will make up into a pleasant liquid, very agreeable to the taste."

"My hat! It's not very agreeable to the smell!"

"That will pass off and disappearfully vanish, my worthy chum."

"I—I hope it will! Phoo!"

Bob Cherry looked into the study, and changed colour.

"What the dickens are you doig there?" he demanded. "Tryig to poison the whole school?"

"Inky's making up his recipe."

"My hat! Bedder chuck it out of the window, Inky."

"I say, you fellows—"

"The smellful scent will soon pass off, my worthy chums."

"I—I think I'll wait outside till it's passed off," murmured Harry Wharton.

"I rather think I will, too," agreed Bob; and they walked away very quickly.

Frank Nugent staggered out of the armchair. He was gasping. The scent of the chemicals was growing positively poisonous, and there was a thin haze in the study.

"I—I thig I'll take a turn in the fresh air!" gasped Nugent.

"But it is rainfully drizzling, my worthy chum."

"I—I'll have a walk in the passage, then."

And Nugent bolted from the study. Billy Bunter followed him and slammed the door.

The nabob, with a patient smile, resumed the stirring of his compound.

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He seemed insensible to the horrid smell, which grew worse every moment. It could be sniffed all along the Remove passage, and other fellows came to the doors of their studies and looked out and sniffed.

"It's scandalous!" said Bulstrode. "The drains in this place ought to be seen to. Id's dangerous to a fellow's health, and no misdake."

"Rodden, isn't it?" said Hazeldene. "I've never noticed it like this before."

Mr. Capper, the master of the Upper Fourth, came along the passage, and he sniffed. He sniffed again, and looked amazed.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "Bulstrode, do you notice a pungent and disagreeable perfume, which impregnates the atmosphere in this passage?"

"I notice a fearful smell, sir."

"Yes—er—that is what I mean. Do you know from what quarter it proceeds, Bulstrode?"

"I haven't noticed it before, sir. It seems to come up from the passage."

"Er—yes; that is how it appeared to me. I must investigate the cause of this remarkable and exceedingly disagreeable perfume."

And Mr. Capper moved along the passage slowly, sniffing like a dog trying to find a scent. Mr. Capper had already found a scent, and he was soon able to track it to its source. It grew stronger and stronger as he came nearer to Study No. 1. It was strongest of all just outside the door of Study No. 1.

It was evident that the scent proceeded from that apartment, and it was absolutely terrible just there. Mr. Capper tapped at the door and opened it, and then staggered backwards.

"Dear—dear me!" he gasped. "I—I— This is terrible! I have never previously experienced so extraordinarily unpleasant a perfume!"

The haze in the study had grown thicker. Hurree Singh had felt the effects of the compound at last, and he had tied a handkerchief over his mouth. He was kneeling on the rug, stirring the bubbling compound in the little saucepan, and Mr. Capper peered at him through the haze in blank amazement.

"Boy!" he gasped. "Boy!"

The nabob looked quickly round, lifting the saucepan from the fire, in case it should boil over.

"Will it please the honourable and revered teacherful sahib to enterfully step into the humble study of my worthy self?" he inquired.

"N-no!" gasped Mr. Capper, who would not have entered that study just then to pick up a ten-pound banknote.

"Boy! What does this mean? How dare you produce such an exceedingly disagreeable perfume in the house?"

"It will soon disappear, sahib."

"What—what is it? What are you doing?"

"I made up the recipe for the cure of the worthy colds of my esteemed chums, sir."

"You—you—you— Dear me!"

"The smellful scent will vanishfully disappear, and the recipe will cure the colds of the giddy and honourable Remove. Will it please the august teacher sahib to look at the esteemed compound?"

And Hurree Singh stirred the saucepan and extended it towards Mr. Capper. That gentleman caught one whiff of it and fled. Hurree Singh smiled sweetly and replaced the saucepan on the fire and recommenced stirring.

Medicine for Bunter!

THE chums of the Remove did their preparation in the Common-room. Billy Bunter had to be satisfied with tea in Hall. Even Bunter would not have faced that terrible odour for the sake of tea in the study.

After prep, Harry Wharton went upstairs to investigate, and found that the perfume was clearing off.

The fire had gone down, and the nabob had taken the saucepan off, and poured his compound into a basin to cool. There was a thick, greenish liquid in the basin, setting almost into a jelly. A pungent odour hung about it still. The window was wide open to the wind and rain, but all the scent had not yet cleared away from the study.

The nabob was examining his compound, and he looked up with a beaming smile on his dusky, good-natured face.

"The excellent preparation is now readily complete," he said. "I shall be glad to administer the dose to the honourable Wharton."

Wharton made a grimace.

"If it tastes like it smells, Inky—"

"The taste is a little bitter, but not extremely disagreeable."

"As a matter of fact, my cold's nearly gone, old fellow. I—I don't think I'll have any. Try Bob Cherry. He's in a rotten state still."

"Certainly. I will take the basin and a spoon to the Common-room, and administerfully give out the excellent doses."

"Jolly good idea!" agreed Wharton.

And the nabob carried the basin and a dessert-spoon to the Junior Common-room. The Remove still had the room to themselves. The Upper Fourth had no desire to share it till the epidemic of colds had passed off. The fellows looked at Hurree Janset Ram Singh curiously as he came in with the basin of greenish jelly.

"What on earth have you god there, Inky?" asked Nugent.

"That is the compound, my worthy chum."

"You don't think we're goig to take id, do you?"

"It will curefully relieve the honourable colds."

"Rads! I've got some pilules here thad are a marvel. I'm goig to stig to my pilules. The gold has gone into my tummy, and I've god to be careful."

"A spoonful of the honourable mixture would relieve the cold immediately."

"Rads! Try it on Bob Cherry."

"Thag you very mudge, Inky!" said Bob Cherry, with a shake of the head.

"But I've god some Marvellous Medicine for Sneezig Snortlers here. It's practically cured my gold. You can tell by my voice how mudge bedder I am already."

"The honourable voice of the esteemed Cherry sounds worsefully to my ear."

"Then there is something wrong with your ear, Inky. I'm mudge bedder, and my voice is quite glear now."

"It doesn't sound quite clear, my excellent chum."

"Oh, rads! I've taken two more doses, and I'm practically well."

"Will the esteemed Bunter taste my honourable mixture?" asked the nabob, offering spoon and basin to the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter blinked doubtfully at the basin through his big spectacles.

"Is thad the stuff that was niffing so fearfully?" he asked.

"That was only in the process of manufacture, my worthy Bunter. It's

very nice now, and the tastefulness is quite exhilarating."

"It looks a lot like table jelly," said Bunter, eyeing the mixture. "I'm jolly hungry. I had hardly anything to eat in Hall, and you've done us out of tea in the study making that horrid stuff there. I think I will taste it. Is it good to eat?"

"It is extremely strengthening."
"You can give me a spoonful to try, then, if you like."

The nabob took up a generous spoonful and extended it to Billy Bunter's mouth. The fat junior eyed it a little doubtfully.

"You take it in one gulp suddenly, and then you hardly notice the tastefulness, my Bunterful chum. It slidefully glides down the esteemed gullet."

"Well, go ahead, then. I suppose it can't do any harm."

And the spoonful of mixture was poked into Bunter's capacious mouth, and he swallowed it at a gulp. The next instant he sprang up as if moved by electricity, letting out a yell that would have done credit to a Red Indian on the warpath. He bumped against the nabob and sent him reeling, and basin and spoon crashed to the floor. Billy Bunter was clawing wildly at his mouth.

"Ow, ow, ow! I'm poisoned!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Whad's the madder?"

"Ow! I'm poisoned! Ow!"
"My worthy Bunterful chum—"

"You—you inky villain! You've poisoned me!"

"The mixture is extremely beneficial in—"

"Gr-r-r! Ow! Gr-r-r! Ow-wow-ow!"
"The ungratefulness of the honourable Bunter is terrific," said the nabob. "He's making the absurd fussfulness for nothing. The rest of the honourable mixture is spiltfully wasted on the floor, and I shall have to make some more—"

"Not in Study No. 1!" said Bob Cherry. "We've had enough of it there. The place will smell for a week. You can make a fire in the upper box-room and make the next lot there. But I don't think you need make any, though. I really think that nobody in the Form excepting Bunter will take it."

"But it's an extremely beneficial mixture—"

"Rads! And many of 'em! If you want a really good thing for golds, there's the Marvellous Mixture of Dr. Pink—I mean, the Marvellous Medicine—"

"Rads to you!" said Nugent. "What price the Purple Pilules for Goughs and Golds?"

"More rads!" said Skinner. "I stige to the Elysian Elixir."

"You can stige to it," said Bob Cherry. "Nobody else wants any."

"Faith, and it's Dr. Twister's Pills that I'm takig!" said Desmond. "And sure, they're a marvel! You take one before and after every meal, and an odd one whenever you feel inclined, and—"

"And a couple of dozen before going to bed, I suppose," said Nugent sarcastically. "Blessed if I can see why anybody should take all that quack rod, when there's the purple pilules to be had for one-and-threepence!"

Hurree Singh collected up the fragments of the basin and cleaned up the compound. Billy Bunter was wiping his mouth out with his handkerchief and looking daggers at the nabob.

Whether efficacious or not, it was evident that Hurree Singh's compound was a failure. To judge by Bunter's looks, the taste matched the smell. No

one else was inclined to put it to the test.

A sneezing and sniffing procession went up to the Remove dormitory that night. And at intervals through the hours of darkness the silence was broken by more sneezes and sniffs.

In the morning Harry Wharton's cold was almost gone. Probably that was due to some extent to his having taken no patent remedies. Bob Cherry and Nugent were no better, in spite of the purple pilules and purple medicine.

Skinner was a great deal worse. Billy Bunter had a swollen face and weeping eyes and nose. He could not keep his spectacles on straight, and he was a picture of suffering that would have touched every heart in the Remove, if they had not been suffering themselves.

"I—I don't feel that I can get up this mornig, you fellows!" said Bunter in a faint voice. "Will you tell Mr. Quelch I want my breakfast in bed, Whartod?"

Harry Wharton laughed. "Certainly, Bunter! But he will come up with a cane if I do."

Billy Bunter groaned. "I've a feeling that I shall die this time!" he said. "You fellows will feel sorry that you didn't feed me up in time!"

"Oh, rads! You're no worse than the rest of us!" grunted Bob Cherry. "Grin and bear it!"

"That's all very well for a strong brute like you, Cherry; but I've got a delicate constitution!"

"Oh, blow your rodden gonstitution!"
The Remove went down. Mr. Quelch looked them over grimly. He breakfasted cheerfully, while most of the Remove ate next to nothing. Billy Bunter had not lost his appetite, however. He did his best to feed his cold. In the Remove room, Mr. Quelch

beckoned to Bob Cherry and Nugent to come out.

"You look very bad, both of you," he said. "You stand out also, Skinner. You three seem to have taken cold worse than the others. I suppose you were in a low state when you caught the colds. I am sorry to see you like this."

"I'm mudge bedder, sir," said Bob Cherry. "I've been takig the Marvellous Medicine for Sneezig Snortlers, and id's nearly cured me. You can tell by my voice that the gold's nearly gone, can't you, sir?"

"It does not seem to me nearly gone, Cherry. Have you been taking anything for your cold, Nugent?"

"Yes, sir. I've been takig the Purple Pilules for Goughs and Golds, and they've made a new man of me. I'm feelig mudge bedder."

"And you, Skinner?" asked the Remove master dryly.

"Yes, sir. I've nearly cured myself with Elysian Elixir."

"You will throw away all that rubbish at once!"

"Whad, sir!" ejaculated the three dismayed juniors at once.

"You will throw away all that rubbish! I will give you a note to take to the matron, and you three will go into the sanatorium!"

"But, sir—"

"That will do!"

And the three Removites had to go. Mr. Quelch looked over the class keenly, and during morning lessons he picked on three more Removites, and they were dispatched to nurse their colds in the sanatorium.

Billy Bunter trembled under the eye of the Form-master. He believed in a cold being fed, but in the sanatorium the sufferers were more likely to get gruel than anything else. But Mr.



Hurree Singh poked the spoonful of mixture into Bunter's mouth, and the Owl of the Remove swallowed it at a gulp. The next instant he sprang up as if moved by electricity, letting out a wild yell and clawing at his mouth.
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Quelch did not notice him, and Bunter breathed again.

Bulstrode Feeds His Cold!

HARRY WHARTON looked depressed when he came into Study No. 1 after morning school. It was drizzling with rain in the Close, and there was nothing to do out of doors. The Common-room was a babel of sneezes and snorts.

But the study did not seem itself without Nugent and Bob Cherry. Those two unhappy sufferers were in the sanatorium, under the care of the matron and the school doctor, and they had been compelled to say a long farewell to their patent remedies.

"The study is loneful without our worthy chums," purred Hurree Singh. "It is roughly beastly for them to be in the respected sanatorium. If they had taken the mixture, this would not have happenfully occurred."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"No; they might have been in a cemetery instead!" he remarked. "I should prefer the sanatorium of the two."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, Buntly! Aren't you feeling any better yet?"

"I'm feelig worse, Wharton. I know perfectly well that I shan't get any better until I have a chance of feedig my gold!"

"My dear chap, it seems to me that you're always feeding! Dinner will be ready soon."

"What I want is a really good feed in the study."

"Well, I'd raise the tin for you if I could, Bunter, but I'm done till Saturday. You've cleaned out Inky, too. You'll have to grin and bear it."

Bunter certainly did bear it—there was no choice in the matter.

The Remove were a set of such miserable objects now that even the Upper Fourth had left off chipping them. That day was a nightmare to the Removites. During the afternoon several more were packed off to the sanatorium. Others, however, seemed to pull ahead during the afternoon, and Bulstrode and Levison were almost well that evening.

Bunter sneezed and sniffed endlessly, and always had a huge handkerchief well in view. But Harry could not help suspecting that a great part of his suffering was put on for effect, to get the sympathy of fellows who had failed to feed him up in time.

Funds were very low in Study No. 1. The purchase of the patent medicines had exhausted the exchequer. Billy Bunter, who always depended on being able to borrow of one or another of the Famous Four, was stranded.

At tea-time there was nothing but a stale loaf and a tin of sardines for the study tea, and Bunter was in a state of simmering indignation. Wharton and Hurree Singh, who cared little what they ate, cheerfully decided to have tea in Hall; but Billy Bunter was not so easily satisfied.

"It's all very well for you fellows," he said, eyeing the tin of sardines disdainfully, "but I've got to keep up my strength, or expire of this fearful gold! The question is, what am I goig to do?"

"Come with us and have tea in the Hall, Bunter."

"I've got to consider my constitution. A chap like me needs to be well fed, especially when he's got a gold. I don't think you are playig the game, Whartod!"

"What can I do, Bunter?" said Harry

patiently. "I've got no tin, and my Saturday's allowance is booked almost to the last shilling."

"Mrs. Mimble would trust you to any extent."

"But if I couldn't pay—"

"Oh, you could pay some time! I really thig, Whartod, that you ought to do something, you know. It isn't as if I were a fellow who was always wantig something."

Harry Wharton smiled. He disliked getting into debt, and the many temptations of schoolboy life had never been able to make him exceed his allowance, which was a generous one. Mrs. Mimble, at the school shop, would certainly have trusted him to almost any figure.

Harry looked at the swelling face and red eyes and nose of the fat junior, and his heart melted. He determined to relax his rule for once, and he took up a pen. Billy Bunter watched him eagerly as he wrote on a sheet of paper.

"There you are, Bunter! You can take that to the tuckshop."

Bunter glanced over the paper, and looked disappointed. It ran as follows, briefly and to the point:

"Please supply Bunter with anything he likes up to half-a-crown, and credit same to me. HARRY WHARTON."

Billy Bunter gave a grunt.

"You might have made it five bob while you were about it, Whartod!"

"You can take it or leave it!"

"Oh, I'll take id, Whartod! I suppose you mean well, but some fellows are stingy by nature, and can't help it! It's all right!"

And Bunter walked out with the paper. Wharton laughed rather strainedly. There was no reasoning with Billy Bunter.

The fat junior's face was clouded as he went to the school shop, dodging under the trees in the Close to get out of the rain. Mrs. Mimble looked far from amiable when she saw him come in. Billy Bunter was the least welcome of her customers. She glanced at the note he tendered, and frowned.

"There you are!" said Billy Bunter. "I suppose that's all right?"

"Yes, it's all right," said Mrs. Mimble. "But I'm surprised that Master Wharton has so much patience with you. What do you want?"

"It isn't a question of whad I want, but whad I can get!" grumbled Billy Bunter. "I had made my plans for a feed at five bob, and now I've only got half-a-crown to spend. If you would care to make id up to five bob, Mrs. Mimble, I'd led you have id back out of my postal order to-morrow."

"You owe me over thirteen shillings already, Master Bunter!"

"Oh, that's an old account!" said Bunter, rather indignantly. "I hardly expected you to make a bother about that, Mrs. Mimble! I suppose I can have a steak pie, and some cake and tards, for this half-crown! It's curious that a fellow like Whartod, with a big allowance, should be so rodden mean about a few shillings!"

"You're an ungrateful boy, Master Bunter!"

"Oh, of course, I'm goig to pay Whartod out of my postal order. But, never mind, what can't be cured must be endured. Give me my grub."

And Bunter gathered up his purchases. If Wharton and Hurree Singh were having their tea in Hall, there would be no one but Bunter to have tea in Study No. 1, and half-a-crown's worth of provisions would not be so bad for one. Bunter felt a little more cheerful as he left the tuckshop. He dodged through

the rain to the House, and encountered Bulstrode as he went in. The bully of the Remove stopped him.

"What have you got there, Bunter?" he asked.

"Only some thigs for Study No. 1," said Bunter hastily.

"Hurree Singh and Wharton are having tea in Hall," said Bulstrode. "I was just going in. And Nugent and Bob Cherry are in the sanatorium. Are you going to gorge all that lot yourself?"

"I'm tryig to feed my cold, you see, Bulstrode. I have to keep up my strength." And Billy Bunter dodged past the Remove bully and hurried up to the study.

There was no one in Study No. 1. Bunter soon had the fire raked up, and the steak pie warmed, and some potatoes baking in their skins. A fragrant odour spread through the room, very gratifying to the hungry junior. He had placed the feed on the table, and was about to begin, when someone entered the study. Bunter blinked round.

"I say, Whartod, you've had your tea, haven't you?" he asked anxiously.

"It's not Wharton," chuckled Bulstrode, closing the door and turning the key. The latter proceeding considerably alarmed the fat junior.

"I say, Bulstrode, what do you want?"

"It's all right. I've been thinking over it, and I've come to the conclusion that you're quite right about feeding a cold," explained Bulstrode. "I'm going to feed mine, and have tea with you."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"You see, you've had a good many feeds with me, when I used to be in this study, before Cherry came to Greyfriars," grinned Bulstrode. "It's about time you stood me one."

"I—I'll be jolly glad to stand you one to-morrow, Bulstrode, when my postal order comes," stammered Billy Bunter. "I'll stand you a really rippig one then."

"But I've got to feed my cold, and I can't wait till to-morrow."

"But—but—"

"That steak pie smells ripping, so do the spuds!"

Bulstrode drew a chair up to the table and sat down. Bunter eyed his proceeding with dismay. He was helpless to oppose the burly visitor, and help was far away, and the door was locked.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode! I—I say, you can't have tea here, you know."

"Why can't I?" roared Bulstrode threateningly.

"I—I mean, I'll be jolly glad if you will have tea with me," stammered Billy Bunter. "I—I want to run out of the study a minute. I'll be back in a jiffy."

"Where are you going?"

"I shan't be a minute—"

Bulstrode seized the fat junior and slung him into his chair again, with a shock that took most of his breath away, and then laughed unpleasantly.

"You're not going to fetch Wharton," he remarked. "We shall get on very comfortably without him, you know. There's just about enough for two here."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode, there isn't, you know."

"Then I'm sorry for you," said Bulstrode, helping himself liberally to steak pie. "Pass the potatoes this way." Get the skins off. Do you think I'm going to skin potatoes for myself, when I honour you by coming to tea with you?"

"I say, Bulstrode—"

"Are you going to skin those potatoes?" roared Bulstrode.

"Yes," quavered Billy Bunter. "Then look sharp, or I'll warm you!"

Bunter peeled the baked potatoes. Bulstrode helped himself to two-thirds of them, and had three-quarters of the pie. He was hungry. His plate was crammed, and Billy Bunter watched him in utter dismay as he piled it up.

"This is pretty good," said Bulstrode. "I say, you'd better start. I may want a second helping, you know."

The warning was sufficient. Bunter took what there was left of the steak pie and potatoes and started. He made good speed, too, thinking that what he lacked in the first course he could make up in the second. But Bulstrode saw to that.

"Hold on, Bunter!" he said, as the fat junior pushed his plate away, took a fresh one, and reached out for the jam roll. "Wait a bit for me."

"But I'm done, and—"

"Never mind; you can't have the second course till the first is finished."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"And you're such a young cormorant that I'm not going to risk your starting first."

And Billy Bunter had to wait. Bulstrode cleared his plate, eating at his leisure. Bunter watched him with envy. Bulstrode enjoyed the meal, and then nodded to Bunter to start on the next lot. The Owl of the Remove only needed permission. In a second he was eating away as if his life depended on it.

Bulstrode, who had taken the keen edge off his appetite, ate more slowly, and Bunter certainly had the best innings with the jam roll and the cake.

"This is really ripping," said Bulstrode. "It's kind of you to feed my cold like this, Bunter."

Billy Bunter grunted.

"And you were quite right about it, too," continued Bulstrode blandly. "What you want to do for a cold is feed it, and I've fed mine, and I must say I feel better."

"I haven't fed mine," groaned Billy Bunter, "and I feel jolly hungry!"

Just then the handle of the door was tried, followed by a kick on the panels.

"Hallo, here! What have you got this door locked for?"

It was Harry Wharton's voice. Billy Bunter half-rose; but Bulstrode made a threatening gesture, and he sank into his chair again.

Bulstrode threw open the door. Harry Wharton came in, and looked in amazement at the fat junior.

"What on earth did you have the door locked for?" he demanded.

"We were afraid of being interrupted," explained Bulstrode. "Bunter has been treating me to a feed, and we didn't want anybody else at the table, you see. Bunter advised me to feed my cold, and he's helped me to feed it. Bunter, I've enjoyed that feed."

And Bulstrode walked out of the study. Harry glanced curiously at Bunter.

"The beast!" groaned the Owl of the Remove. "He's scoffed my feed! He's ate about two-thirds of it, and there was barely enough for me at the start."

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"Do you mean to say that Bulstrode invited himself to tea?" he asked.

"Yes, rather, the beast! I told him I was feedig my gold; but it didn't make any difference. He said he wanted to feed his. I'm still hungry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't thig you ought to laugh at a fellow's misfortunes, Whartod."

"Well, it's funny, you know."

"I don'd see anything funny about it.

Bulstrode's scoffed my grub and I can't feed my gold. Can you lend me another half-crown till my postal order comes?"

Wharton shook his head.

"It's a special occasion," urged Billy Bunter. "I'll pay it up, as sure as a nail, and not put it on the old account."

"Can't be done, Bunter. As a matter of fact, if you've had a third of the steak pie, you've had enough, to judge by the size of the dish."

"That's quite a mistake."

"Well, if you dodge down into Hall, quick, you may pick up some crumbs."

"I don'd want any crumbs. I want a jolly good feed to cure my gold. I thig you're a fearfully selfish chap, Whartod."

And Billy Bunter, with an injured expression on his plump face, started on the last fragment of cake.

The Boy From the Yangtse Kiang!

"MY only hat!"

"Have you seen him?"

"He's a cough-drop!"

"Looks as if he had just hopped off a tea-caddy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was about half an hour after afternoon school on the Friday—the day on which the new boy was to arrive at Greyfriars. Harry Wharton had gone to pay a visit to his chums in the sanatorium, and most of the Remove were idling about in the Common-room.

Bulstrode had been to the tuckshop, and had come in with several packets under his arm, when the exclamations attracted his attention. He looked into the Common-room, and gave a whistle of amazement.

The new boy had arrived. He was seated on a box, gazing round him with an expression of innocent wonder.

He was a young Chinese of about fourteen. His figure was well-formed, supple, and graceful, but diminutive. He wore the loose garb of his native country, of a rich silken material, adorned with borders of strange characters. His face was oval, rather deep in colour, and not of the saffron hue some of the more imaginative Removees had expected. His eyes had the curious obliqueness of the Oriental. His pigtail hung down over his shoulders, and it was the pigtail more than anything else that excited the interest of the Remove.

"Now, young Chin-Chin Chinaman," said Bulstrode, with a grin to the Remove, "where did you spring from?"

"Me no springee. Me walkee."

"Ha, ha, ha! Where did you come from?"

"My countly is China. Me comee ffrom Yangtse-Kiang."

"Phew! And what do you mean by coming from a place like that?" demanded Bulstrode, contracting his brows.

The Chinese youth looked at him with a smile that was "childlike and bland."

"No savvy," he said.

"H'm! I fancy you don't savvy just when you don't want to savvy," said Bulstrode. "Now, what's your name?"

"Wun Lung."

"My aunt! Do you mean to say that you go about with a name like that?"

"Me no savvy."

"Did that thing grow on your head, or will it come off?" asked Bulstrode, taking hold of the Celestial's pigtail.

"No savvy."

"You young yellow-skinned ass, I'll teach you to savvy! Here, Levison, give me your pocket-knife. We can't

have a giddy heathen going about the place with a pigtail. I'll cut it off!"

A change came over the placid face of the young Celestial.

He sprang to his feet, his look wildly excited as Levison opened the pocket-knife. The juniors had no real intention of cutting off the pigtail, Bulstrode knowing perfectly well that he would have to answer for such an outrage to Dr. Locke. But Wun Lung evidently believed that they were in earnest, and he began to gesticulate wildly.

"No cuttee!" yelled Wun Lung.

"No cuttee!"

He made a desperate rush for the door; but the laughing Remove closed round him, and he was promptly collared, and dragged back to the centre of the room. He struggled desperately, exhibiting a strength and determination that no one would have dreamed dwelt in his diminutive frame.

He was as slippery as an eel. But the Remove held him fast enough, a dozen hands grasping various parts of his person and his clothes. He was dragged back and plumped down on the box, and Bulstrode waved the knife over his head.

"Now, then, off it goes!"

The almond eyes were dilated with terror.

"No cuttee!" wailed Wun Lung.

"No cuttee!"

"Faith, and hold on!" exclaimed Desmond. "I mane let go intoirely. It's frightenin' the gossoon ye are, and it's a shame!"

"You go and eat coke, Tipperary!"

"The shamefulness is terrific!" broke in Hurree Singh.

"Shut up, Inky!"

"I refusefully decline to shut up! I shall punchfully assault the honourable Bulstrode on his worthy nose if he does not stop his jokefulness!"

"Hold that black idiot back!"

Two or three rough spirits collared the nabob, and he was dragged back. Micky Desmond was shoved away. Bulstrode put the knife close to the Chinese's pigtail, and the little Oriental quivered like a jelly.

"No cuttee!" he moaned. "No cuttee!"

"What's all this?"

It was a sharp voice at the door as Harry Wharton came into the Common-room. He took in the scene at a glance, and his brow was black as he strode into the crowd. He shoved the Removees to right and left without ceremony, and gave Bulstrode's wrist a blow that sent the knife with a clatter to the floor.

"You rotten bully!"

Bulstrode's eyes blazed with fury.

"Stand back, Wharton!"

"Rats!" retorted the captain of the Remove. "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves for ragging a little chap like that!"

"I wasn't going to cut off his pigtail, you fool!"

"I know you weren't! You daren't! But he thought you were."

"Get aside!" said Bulstrode, between his teeth. "You may be captain of the Form, Wharton, but you can't ride the high-horse over us! You're not master here! We aren't going to hurt the kid."

"You're going to let him alone!"

"By James, I'll show you! Fellows, are you going to be bullied and dictated to like this?"

There was a murmur from many throats. Threatening looks were cast upon Harry from all sides. They did

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not daunt him. He had thrust Bulstrode back, and now he stood beside the Chinese boy, his hand on Wun Lung's shoulder, his eyes flashing defiance at the Remove.

"Stand aside, Wharton!" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"I won't!"

"Then we'll jolly soon shift you!" yelled Bulstrode.

He rushed furiously at Harry. Five or six of the rougher Removees followed him up. "Hurree Singh," Desmond, and Hazeldene ranged up beside Harry. Wharton's eyes were blazing. He hit out savagely, and Bulstrode received a right-hander on the chin, and went over backwards as if he had been shot.

The next moment Harry's left caught Trevor under the ear, and he sprawled across Bulstrode.

There was a shouting and trampling, and a fierce struggle for a few moments round the terrified Chinese boy. But most of the Removees held off from an attack on their Form captain, and, although Harry's chums were not there, he had friends to stand by him.

Levison, rather unexpectedly, took his side, and Bulstrode, when he rose to his feet, was not feeling inclined to continue the conflict. He had had only one blow, but it was a terrific one. The scrimmage ceased almost as soon as it had begun.

"There won't be any ragging of this kid while I can stop it," said Harry

Wharton. "I don't want to ride the high-horse, as Bulstrode suggests, but there's a limit, and you ought to stop at it. I'm going to see this kid through. As for Bulstrode, if he thinks I'm taking too much on myself, he's welcome to meet me in the gym any time he likes, with or without gloves!" Wharton linked his arm in that of the Chinese boy. "Come with me, kid! I'm going to look after you for a bit. You understand?"

"Mo savvy," said the Chinese boy softly, and he held Wharton's arm tightly as they left the Common room.

(Next Week: "THE GREYFRIARS CHINEE!"—a thrilling yarn telling how little Wun Lung makes Billy Bulstrode sing small. See that you don't miss it, chums.)

CUSSY'S UNWELCOME GUEST!

(Continued from page 21.)

average of runs. Cousin Ethel was the last man in, joining her Cousin Arthur at the wickets.

She took six runs for the over, and the score was now 120. Then the bowling came to Arthur Augustus, who breathed a sigh of relief as Ethel lived through the over. Now there was a chance for the mighty hitting that Arthur Augustus had promised to his comrades.

His first hit was a mighty hit indeed, and the swing of the bat almost spun him round; but, unfortunately, the willow did not come into contact with the elusive leather. There was a clack as the wicket went to pieces.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

The St. Jim's second innings terminated for 120. Cousin Ethel was not out.

Mr. Chungum "stood" tea in the inn gardens. The circus proprietor was evidently accustomed to doing things in style. All Easthorpe and most of the neighbourhood had gathered round the green during the afternoon, and Mr. Chungum was getting a tremendous advertisement for his circus, and he was in great spirits.

Tom Merry & Co. exerted themselves in the circus second innings. Blake performed the hat-trick, amid great applause. Samsonio's mighty hitting was cut short by a catch from Cousin Ethel, and Tiny Tony was stumped by Digby. The St. Jim's team looked more cheerful when the score stood at eight down for 50.

But before another wicket fell the score had jumped to 70; and when Rab Rabbi went in, last man, the circus wanted five to tie, six to win.

"Get that brown boulder out, Blake, old man!" said Tom Merry, as he tossed the ball to the Fourth Former.

"Not so jolly easy!" said Blake.

It wasn't easy. Rab Rabbi knocked the first ball away for four. Another hit like that would be the finish. Blake looked very serious as he grasped the ball again. It would never do for a St. Jim's team to be beaten by that happy crowd of mirth merchants, but it looked very much like it now.

Blake sent the ball down, and Rab Rabbi swept it away. The batsmen were running. Arthur Augustus gave a yell.

"Go it, Ethel!"

Cousin Ethel was running for the ball. It was a difficult catch, and the eyes of the field were upon her. A slim hand was outstretched; two steady eyes were on the ball as it came speeding through the air. Next moment the leather smacked into Cousin Ethel's hand, and she gripped it tightly.

"Bravo!"

"Well caught!"

Cousin Ethel, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, held up the ball. There was a roar from the crowd and from the cricketers. Cousin Ethel had made the winning catch! Rab Rabbi was out, and St. Jim's had won the circus match.

"I take off my hat to you, miss!" said Mr. Chungum, sweeping off his topper. "That was a splendid catch, and Chungum's eleven are proud to be beaten by such fair hands!"

"Ear, ear!" chirped Tiny Tony.

And Tom Merry & Co. marched off the field, victorious, and warmly con-

gratulated Cousin Ethel on the catch that had won the match—the catch of the season, as Blake put it.

A few days later Billy Bunter announced that he really couldn't take his many friends waiting for his desired presence any longer.

Arthur Augustus having steadily declined to cash any more postal orders in advance, and the post-doubtless owing to some mismanagement at head-quarters—having failed to deliver any postal orders to be cashed, there was a perceptible cooling in Bunter's great friendship for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The courtesy of the swell of St. Jim's was almost at breaking-point, but he preserved it to the very last, and even contrived to suppress a gasp of relief when the Owl of Greyfriars announced at last that he was going.

He saw Bunter off at the station, bought his first-class ticket, and made him a loan of several pounds, to be repaid at some future date—perhaps in time to take the place of an old-age pension.

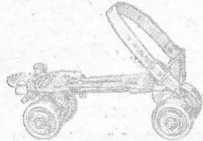
And before the train rolled away Bunter shook hands with him from the carriage window, and assured him that he would look him up as often as possible when the new term commenced at St. Jim's.

Billy Bunter was not missed. Indeed, merry as they were at Eastwood House all the time, there was no doubt that Tom Merry & Co. found a decided improvement after the departure of Gussy's unwelcome guest.

(The chums of St. Jim's return to school next week—to find that three black sheep have stolen Study No. 6! Make sure you read "THE STOLEN STUDY." Order your GEM early.)

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