

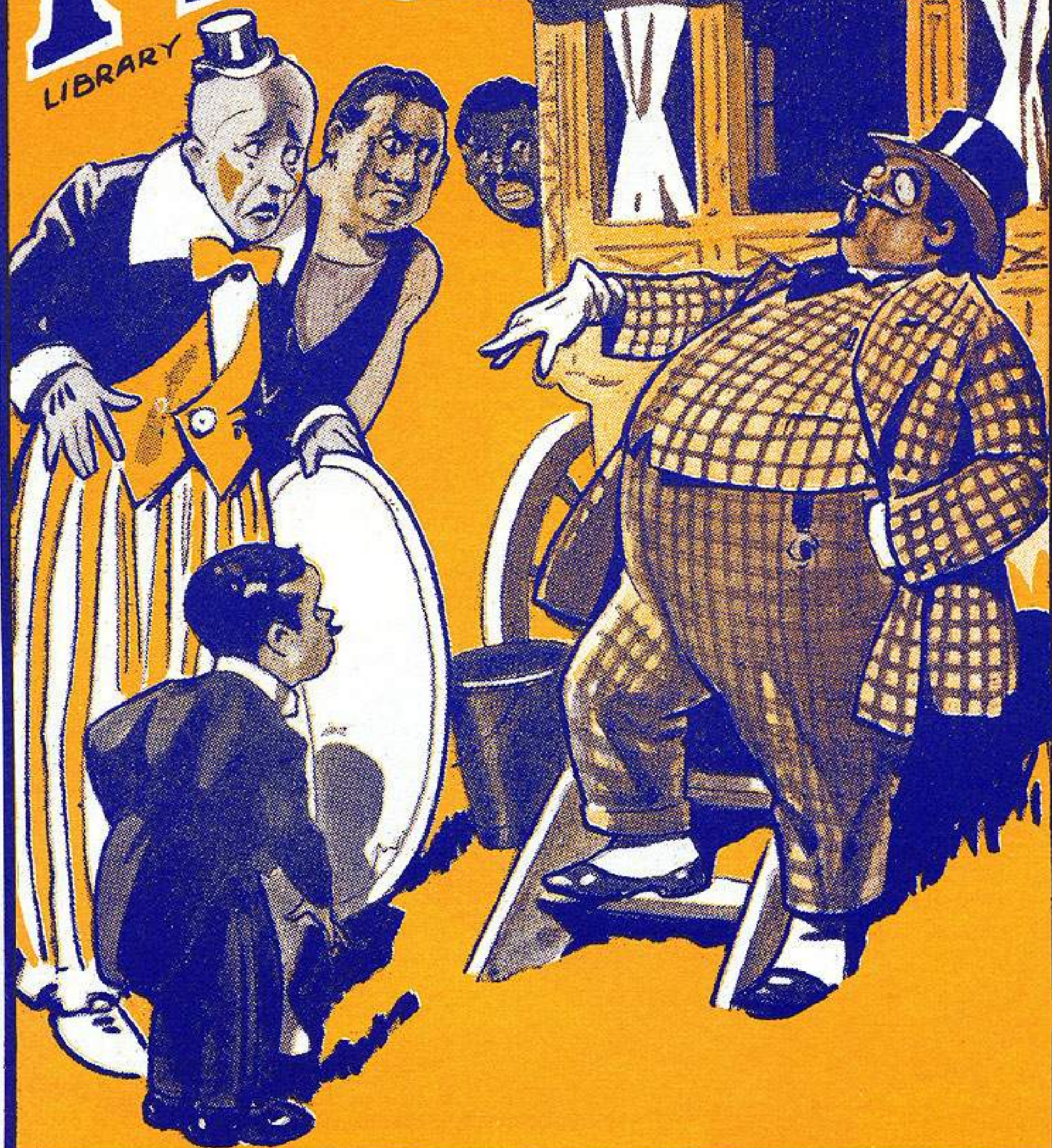
IDEAL HOLIDAY READING!

No. 1,070. Vol. XXXIV. Week Ending August 18th, 1928.

# The Magnet 2<sup>d</sup>

EVERY SATURDAY.

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**MR. WHIFFLES—alias BUNTER—BOSSSES THE SHOW!**

*(An amazing situation described in this week's grand yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.)*





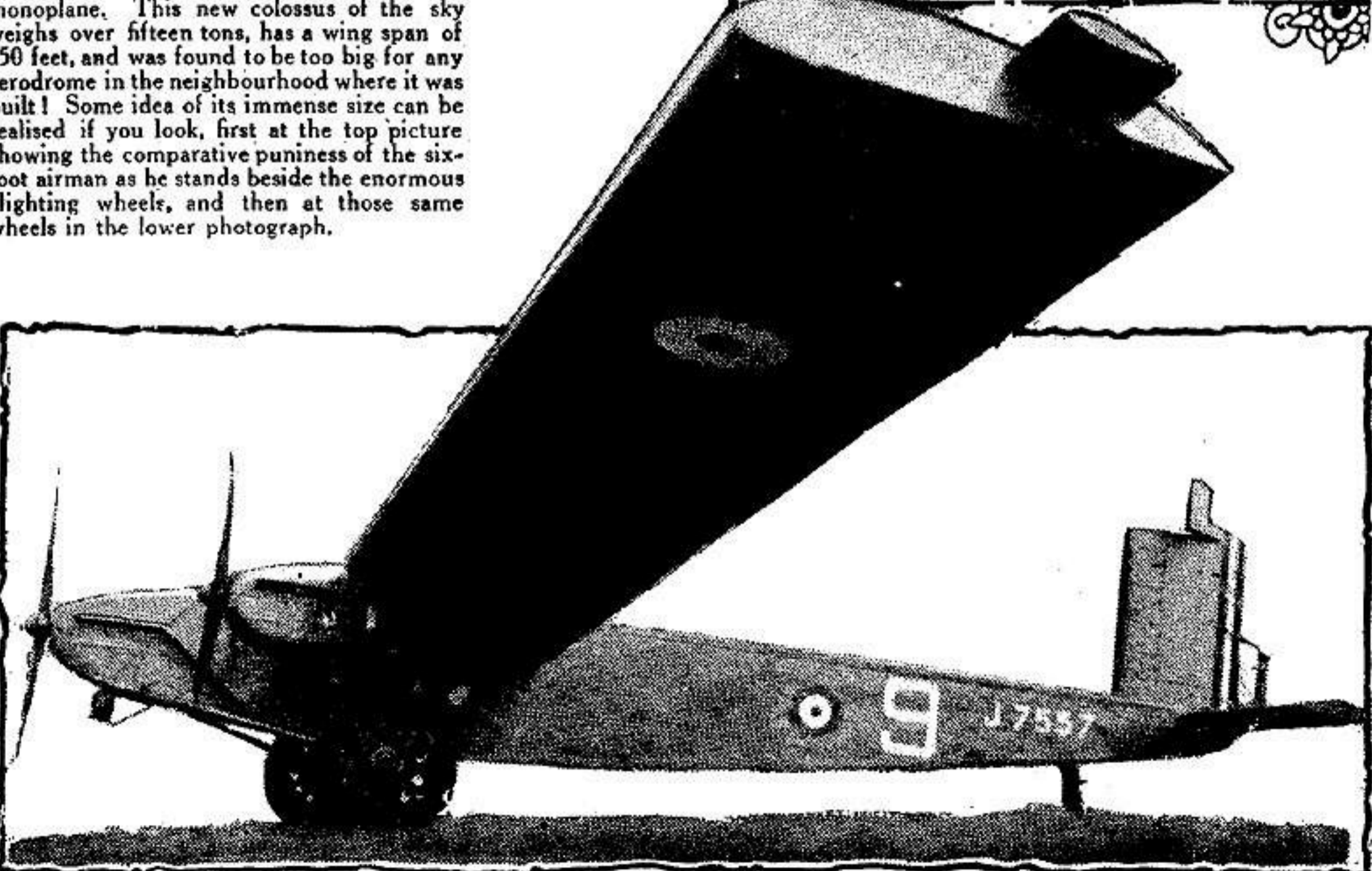
### "GEE UP!"

Just as English youngsters think of their donkey-rides, so do Indian boys revel in nylghan rides. And while the nylghan does not look so prepossessing as our good old "moke," he certainly looks as obstinate! The above is a photograph of a proud Indian boy about to go for a trot in the streets of the Sailana State, Central India.



### THE LARGEST IN THE WORLD!

Here we have two interesting views of the three-engined Beardmore-Rolls-Royce Inflexible, the world's largest all-metal monoplane. This new colossus of the sky weighs over fifteen tons, has a wing span of 150 feet, and was found to be too big for any aerodrome in the neighbourhood where it was built! Some idea of its immense size can be realised if you look, first at the top picture showing the comparative puniness of the six-foot airman as he stands beside the enormous alighting wheels, and then at those same wheels in the lower photograph.









fellow in the Remove would have understood readily that the circus at Courtfield had a more powerful attraction than the Form-room at Greyfriars. Much water had passed under the bridges since the days when Henry Samuel Quelch had enjoyed circus performances. It was difficult for fifty to see eye to eye with fifteen. Mr. Quelch could see no excuse at all for Billy Bunter's conduct. Harry Wharton could see a lot—which he was careful not to mention, however. It was useless to argue with a Form master. Every fellow in the Remove knew that Quelch had to be given his head.

"I caught Bunter breaking detention," resumed Mr. Quelch. "In fact, he collided with me in the passage as he was running out. I was actually knocked over—reduced to a very breathless state. I—What are you laughing at, Wharton?"

Wharton jumped. "I—I wasn't laughing, sir—"  
"You were smiling. No doubt you see something of a risible nature in Bunter's unexampled audacity and impudence!" rumbled Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir! Oh, no! Not at all, sir!" gasped Wharton. His eye lingered uneasily on the cane. Mr. Quelch seemed to be in that frame of mind when, as the song says, a victim must be found. The captain of the Remove did not want to be that victim. Very much indeed he did not want to. He composed his features to an expression of seriousness suitable to the solemn occasion.

"I have no doubt," rapped Mr. Quelch, "that Bunter went to the circus. I am aware that it was his intention to go to this—this somewhat childish entertainment, when I detained him this afternoon. I am convinced that he was there. You are sure you did not see him there?"

"Quite sure, sir. I think I should

have seen him if he had been there," said Harry. "In fact, I looked round for him, as I thought he was coming. But I did not see him, sir."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips. "Probably he remained out of gates for fear of the consequences," he said. "He will, of course, be dealt with all the more severely. You have no knowledge of his present whereabouts, Wharton?"

"No, sir."  
"Very well, you may go. You will tell Bunter to come to my study immediately he returns."

"Certainly, sir!"  
And Harry Wharton departed, greatly relieved to escape. He left the Remove master's study feeling a good deal as Daniel might have felt when he quitted the lion's den. In his present frame of mind Quelch really was not safe at close quarters.

"Bunter come in yet?" he asked, as he entered the Rag.

"No. Is Quelch wild?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Just on foaming at the mouth. That fat chump will get the licking of his life when he comes in."

"Perhapsfully that is the absurd reason of the stayfulness out," suggested Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

"Very likely. But the fat Owl is only making matters worse. I suppose he will come in for prep."

"And then look out for fireworks!" grinned Skinner.

But William George Bunter did not come in for prep. There were no fireworks when the Removites went to their studies for preparation. And after prep Bunter still had not come in. And the Remove fellows, in a state of breathless excitement now, wondered whether William George Bunter was going to make a night of it.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Sleeping Beauty!

**S**NORE!  
That deep, resonant sound proceeded from a blue-and-red painted caravan on Courtfield Common, the largest and most magnificent caravan belonging to Whiffles' World-Famous Circus.

Had any Remove man been near that caravan as the deep snore rumbled from it, that Remove man would have hazarded a guess that William George Bunter, of the Remove, was inside that van.

And the Remove man would have guessed correctly.

The mystery of Billy Bunter's present whereabouts would have been solved had any Remove man been there to hear that reverberating snore. But no Remove man, naturally, was there. All the Remove men, excepting Billy Bunter, were at prep at the school. There was no Greyfriars man within a mile of the circus. Billy Bunter was alone in his glory.

Snore!  
Although there were no Greyfriars ears to hear, there were many other ears. Five or six persons belonging to the circus had gathered about the steps of the caravan, listening in surprise and wonder.

From the big tent came strains of music, more or less musical. Cheers echoed from the tent, showing that the performance of Tomasso Tomsonio, the acrobat, was popular with the good folk of Courtfield, Friardale, and Woodend.

The evening performance was now on, and the big tent was crowded. But the imposing figure of Mr. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was missing from the ring. Always at the evening performance Mr. Whiffles took the ring, the afternoon performances being taken by his manager, Mr. Dance. It was not in the records of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus that the proprietor had missed an evening performance. Yet now he was missing it, and the puzzled and irritated Mr. Dance had taken his place.

From Mr. Whiffles' van came the steady sound of snoring, showing that there was a sleeper there—a very sound sleeper. So far as all the circus knew, that sleeper was Mr. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, world-famous proprietor of the World-Famous Circus. Nobody in the company had ever heard Mr. Whiffles snore like that before. But nobody, assuredly, had the faintest idea that Billy Bunter, of Greyfriars, was in the caravan. Nobody there had ever heard of Billy Bunter; nobody had the remotest idea of the strange sequence of events that had landed the Owl of the Remove in that gorgeous van.

Snorrrr!  
"He's going it!" remarked George Mix, the attendant who handled the refreshments, more commonly known in the circus as "Chocklits."

"He are!" agreed Slaney, the odd job man.

"Never heard the boss kicking up a row like that before," said Samson, the strong man of the circus.

"It was that tea he ate, sir," said George Mix. "Never knowed the governor to stow it away like that afore. He came back 'ungry after his swim."

Snorrrrr!  
Mr. Dance, the slim, dark-faced manager of the circus, came out of the staff entrance of the big tent. Outside it, he looked irritable and cross.

Mr. Dance had enough to do, in the way of general utility work, supervising the staff, acting as ringmaster in the

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"I caught Bunter breaking detention," said Mr. Quelch. "In fact, Wharton, he collided with me in the passage as he was running out. I was actually knocked over—reduced to a very breathless state. I—what are you laughing at, Wharton?" The junior captain jumped. "I—I wasn't laughing, sir," he said, his eye lingering uneasily on the Form-master's cane. (See Chapter 1.)



afternoons, and so forth, without having the evening performance thrown on his hands. Mr. Dance's opinion was that it was too thick.

He came over to the van scowling.

"Is the boss awake yet?" he rapped out.

"No, sir. Listen to him!" said George Mix.

Snorrrr!

Mr. Dance snorted.

"Well, it's the big equestrian turn next, and the boss is sure to want to take that on. He'd better be woke up."

Mr. Dance advanced to the step of the caravan and hesitated. Mr. Whiffles was an imposing and impressive gentleman in character, though in person he was well below the level of Mr. Dance's shoulder, though Mr. Dance was not a big man. It was extremely unusual for him to take a nap in this way, and cut the evening performance; but, on the other hand, no doubt he knew his own business best. If he had wanted to be called, surely he would have told George Mix to call him. He might be annoyed at being awakened, or he might be annoyed at not having been awakened—it was a doubtful point. Mr. Dance would have decided to let him have his sleep out but for the fact that he was himself tired and fed-up. He did not want to do Mr. Whiffles' job for him; he wanted to get away to the Courtfield Arms for a quiet smoke and a little refreshment.

That important consideration finally decided Mr. Dance. He mounted the steps and knocked at the door of the caravan.

Snore!

That was the only answer to Mr. Dance's knock.

Mr. Dance breathed hard.

He knocked again, more loudly. More people came along to look on and listen. Everybody, in fact, who was not occupied at the moment, evinced a keen interest in Mr. Whiffles and his nasal performances. All the company agreed that they had never heard the boss going it like that before.

"Sounds almost like hapoplexy!" said George Mix, probably meaning apoplexy.

Bang!

Mr. Dance fairly hammered on the door of the van.

Had it been Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles who was sleeping in the dark interior, undoubtedly that crashing at the door would have awakened him.

But as the sleeper happened to be Billy Bunter, of Greyfriars, the matter was different.

Bunter was not good at many things, but at sleeping he could have beaten Rip Van Winkle at his own game. Epimenides of ancient times would have looked a mere beginner beside Bunter. The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, in comparison, would have had to hide their diminished heads. The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood was simply not in it with the Sleeping Beauty in Mr. Whiffles' caravan.

Snore! That was Bunter's reply! Simply that, and nothing more!

Mr. Dance, intensely irritated, opened the door of the van. The interior was quite dark. Night had fallen on Courtfield Common, only the lights of the circus illuminating the scene. They did not penetrate into the interior of the blue and red caravan. There the darkness was intense; and from the darkness came the rumbling, reverberating

snore from the recumbent figure on Mr. Whiffles' bed.

"Mr. Whiffles!" shouted Dance.

Snore!

The manager entered the van. He dimly discerned the recumbent figure on the bed, bent over it, and grasped its shoulder and shook it.

"Mr. Whiffles!" he roared.

Snore!

Shake! Shake! Shake!

Mr. Dance was warming to it now. He was going to wake up Mr. Whiffles, whatever happened. Shaking him by the shoulder seemed futile. Mr. Dance decided on tugging at his hair. As it was dark in the van it would be easy to explain, when Mr. Whiffles awoke, that he had grasped the hair by mistake.

With a determined grip Dance fixed his fingers in the long, curly hair of the circus proprietor.

Tug!

There should have been a howl from the sleeper, and sudden awakening.

But there wasn't!

Snore!

But Mr. Dance stood petrified. That vicious tug at the long, curly hair had not hurt Mr. Whiffles—for a good reason. The long, curly hair had parted from the sleeper's head, and it hung now in the horrified manager's hand, completely detached from the sleeper!

It was a wig!

Mr. Dance stood rooted to the floor of the van in utter horror and dismay.

More than once he had suspected that Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles' ample nut-brown locks had not grown naturally where he sported them. More than once he had suspected that Mr. Whiffles owed those ample locks, not to Nature, but to Art.



Now he knew!

He knew, too, that Mr. Whiffles, whose weakest point was personal vanity, never would or could forgive anyone who discovered his secret. If he awakened now and found Dance standing there with the detached wig in his hand, it was the sack for Mr. Dance—even if it did not mean Mr. Whiffles' boot added to the sack. Dance knew it, and he almost trembled. For a moment he stood, overcome with horror at what he had done. But he saw, with intense relief, that there was no sign of awakening on the part of the sleeper. Ignorant of the wholly detached state of the nut-brown locks that had before been semi-detached, he slept on. Not for worlds now would Mr. Dance have awakened him.

Softly, silently, he dropped the wig beside the sleeper's dimly-seen head—softly, silently, he tiptoed out of the caravan. A deep, resonant, reverberating snore followed him.

Mr. Dance's face was quite pale when he stepped down from the van, having closed the door after him.

"Ain't awake?" asked Samson.

"No; I think I'll let him have his sleep out!" faltered Mr. Dance.

He walked back to the big tent.

It was not till he reached it that he grinned. Mr. Whiffles would never know that he knew; but his knowledge would be a source of entertainment to himself in private. Moreover, he had a pull over Whiffles now. If it came to a row, and the sack, he would be able to cover Whiffles with ridicule—and several times of late Dance had thought that it might come to a row and the sack. He grinned as he went into the big tent.

From the blue and red caravan the resonant sound of snoring still proceeded. It made a sort of deep bass accompaniment to the circus music, a nasal obligato, as it were. And it was quite late in the evening when the sleeper at last awakened.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### The Sleeper Awakes!

**B**ILLY BUNTER sat up.

He sat, like the heathen, in darkness.

And he sat in great astonishment.

He had had a long sleep, and he had had happy dreams. He had dreamed of the tea he had had in Mr. Whiffles' caravan. Over and over again, in happy visions, he had consumed jam-tarts, cream puffs, jam and cake and ice-creams. But everything comes to an end—even Billy Bunter's naps had to have an end some time. He sat up and blinked, and started, and wondered where he was and what had happened.

What had happened, and where was he? He blinked into the darkness of Mr. Whiffles' van and rubbed his eyes.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Bunter.

He began to remember.

"My hat! It must be call-over—past call-over! The fellows will be at prep—or gone to bed! Oh dear! Jiminy!"

He remembered now what had happened that eventful afternoon; breaking detention to go to the circus, and the chase given by Mr. Quelch and Loder of the Sixth. He remembered how he had seen Mr. Whiffles' clothes and wig and beard and moustache stacked in the thicket, while Mr. Whiffles was having his swim in the Sark. He remembered that wonderful wheeze that had come like a brain-wave, of borrowing the circus boss' clothes and hirsute adorn-

ments, and walking off as Mr. Whiffles, under the noses of Mr. Quelch and Loder the prefect.

He had got away with it! Any other fellow might have hesitated to try on such a remarkable stunt; but it is proverbial that fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Bunter had rushed in—and got away with it!

He grinned.

He remembered that he had sat in the Royal Box at the circus, as Mr. Whiffles, and no man had suspected him. He had the figure of Mr. Whiffles—in figure he was as like Mr. Whiffles as Mr. Whiffles was like a cask. All he needed to turn him into Mr. Whiffles was a suit of loud check clothes, his artificial pointed beard, his waxed moustache, and his ample nut-brown locks. And he had found them all where the bather had left them in the thicket by the Sark. He remembered that gorgeous tea in Mr. Whiffles' van—which he had ordered as Mr. Whiffles, and which had been brought to him without question.

He chuckled.

It was a happy memory!

But his fat chuckle died suddenly away as he remembered also that he had expected Mr. Whiffles back at dark.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

It was an alarming thought.

He did not know what time it was, but he knew it must be late in the evening, and that it had long been dark.

Until dark he had felt safe in his borrowed plumes.

Mr. Whiffles had been left in a bathing-costume, which was excellent for the water, but quite unsuitable for terra firma. He had nothing else beside a large bathing towel, which Bunter had kindly left in the thicket because he had no use for it. Swathed in the bathing-towel, no doubt Mr. Whiffles would attempt to sneak back quietly to the circus after dark; in the daylight he was really not likely to do it. So Bunter had felt quite safe in his assumed character till nightfall; safe in taking a little nap in the van! Only his nap had lasted longer than he had intended.

He shivered.

Suppose that beast Whiffles came while he was still in the van—why, he was bound to come!

He could not remain permanently lingering along the wooded banks of the Sark, clad in a bathing-costume and a bathing-towel.

He was sure to come! The surprising thing was that he hadn't come already!

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

He rose from the side of the bed.

It was Bunter's obvious move now to get clear. His own clothes were in the attache-case that lay in the van. Inside the van he could change easily enough. The question was whether he could slip away unobserved when he had become a schoolboy again.

He peered from the window of the van.

There was a neat little curtain to the window, and Bunter was able to peer out unobserved.

"Oh, lor'!"

Darkness surrounded the circus encampment; but close at hand it was light—very light. Half a dozen naphtha lamps were burning in various places, and a glow came from the direction of the big tent. He could see figures moving as clearly as by daylight. Worst of all, four or five of the circus people were loafing about, staring towards the van. They seemed specially interested in that van. Bunter heard a voice:

"He's woke up!"

Bunter was not aware that it was the cessation of his reverberating snore that apprised the onlookers of that fact.

Bunter firmly believed that he did not snore, disregarding contemptuously all that the Greyfriars Remove had told him on that subject.

He popped back from the window.

Sneaking out of the van as a schoolboy was obviously impracticable. He would be spotted instantly, and certainly collared at once; the circus people were not likely to let him go without investigation, if they discovered that a schoolboy had been shut up for hours in Mr. Whiffles' caravan. They might even suspect him of being a sneak-thief. There was money—a lot of money—in Mr. Whiffles' pockets, in the clothes Bunter was now wearing. Indeed, he remembered that he had tipped George a half-crown from Mr. Whiffles' pocket. He might be suspected of stealing—he might be run in! He sat on the bed again and palpitated.

If he was going to get out of that beastly caravan before that beast Whiffles came back, obviously he had to do so as Mr. Whiffles, in the garb and the hair and the beard and the waxed moustache. He recovered his courage as he thought of that. It was easy enough. He had passed muster so far, and could pass muster again. He could take the attache-case in his hand, with his own clothes in it, and walk away, and in some shady spot change back, and scuttle to Greyfriars as Billy Bunter once more.

Then the thought of Greyfriars, and what awaited him there, made the fat Owl palpitate once more.

A Head's flogging, at least! That was the very least he could expect!

He had broken detention; he had bumped over his Form master in his flight; he had led Mr. Quelch a dance along the river—last, but not least, he had cut call-over, and stayed out late at night! That the Form master would make an example of him did not admit of doubt.

Billy Bunter groaned.

After the feast came the reckoning. The feast had been all right. The reckoning was superfluous—and now it was due!

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

If only that beast Whiffles could have vanished into thin air, leaving Bunter to carry on at the circus! If only Mr. Whiffles, like the Hunters of the Snark, had met a Boojum, and "suddenly, silently vanished away." It was an ecstatic thought, but it was hopeless. Obviously, Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was not going to vanish into thin air to oblige Bunter. He might be back at any moment—might even at this instant be sneaking back to the circus, wrapped in a bathing towel, and carefully avoiding the public gaze. Bunter realised that he had no time to waste.

It was safe to go as Whiffles, anyhow—that would see him clear of the circus. What had to happen at Greyfriars had to happen, and could not be helped. Bunter ran his fat hands over his face and cranium to make sure that his disguise was in place, and jumped as he felt his own close crop on his scalp. The wig was off!

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He shuddered at his narrow escape.

Had he walked out of the van in Mr. Whiffles' beard and moustache, but without his hair, certainly he would have caused a sensation.

He realised that.

He groped over the bed, and picked up the wig, which he concluded must have fallen off while he was asleep.

He damped the adhesive patches inside the wig, and adjusted it to his bullet head.

He remembered that he had seen a



lamp in the caravan, and groped about for it; and found it, and lighted it with a match from Mr. Whiffles' silver match-box. The lamp hung on the wall beside a mirror, and in the mirror Bunter surveyed himself. His moustache was on one side, and his beard on the other, producing quite a remarkable effect. Hastily he secured them where they belonged.

Knock!

It was a loud knock at the door of the caravan, and Bunter started. His blood almost ran cold. If it was Whiffles—

"Are you awake, sir?"

It was Mr. Dance's voice.

"Oh! No! I—I mean, yes!" gasped Bunter. "What do you want?"

He gave another blink in the glass, and beheld there the countenance of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. All was well! He summoned his nerve to play his part again.

"You can come in!"

Mr. Dance opened the door of the van, and glanced very curiously at the occupant. The wig was in place now, as he expected. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was himself again. Mr. Dance's eyes lingered on those ample, curly, nut-brown locks for a second.

"I thought it best not to wake you, sir," he said. "You seemed to be having a good sleep."

"Oh! Yes, quite!"

"But the performance is nearly over, sir."

"The—the performance?"

"Yes, sir. The last turn is on now. I suppose you will be going on in the ring?"

Mr. Dance spoke with suppressed resentment. All his evening, which had been scheduled for the billiards-room at the Courtfield Arms, had passed away—in the ring. Now that the old blighter—as Mr. Dance mentally called his employer—was awake, the least the old blighter could do was to take the last turn, and let Dance get off. There was time for some refreshment, anyhow, before the Courtfield Arms closed.

Bunter blinked at him through his big glasses blankly.

"In—in—in the ring!" he stuttered.

Playing the circus boss in Mr. Whiffles' caravan was one thing. Playing it in the circus ring was quite another.

Certainly, Bunter was not prepared to undertake the duties of ring-master. Moreover, he had no time. He had to get clear before the genuine Whiffles turned up, like a bad penny.

"Nunno!" he stammered. "Oh, no! Certainly not!"

"But, sir—"

"Don't argue!" snapped Bunter.

So long as he was Mr. Whiffles he could give orders. Bunter liked giving orders.

"Mr. Whiffles—"

"That's enough. I shall not be in the ring to-night. Don't argue! Just get out!"

Suppressing his feelings with difficulty, Mr. Dance got out.

He waited till he was in the staff entrance of the big tent before he shook his fist in the direction of Mr. Whiffles' caravan.

Many times Mr. Dance had felt fed-up with his employer. Often he had longed to tell Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles what he thought of him, and shake the dust of the circus from his feet.

But there were difficulties in the way. Mr. Dance had a good post in the World-famous Circus, and good posts were not easy to get. But that was not all. There were certain little irregularities in Mr. Dance's accounts, which would have had to come to light had he

left the circus. They would have been called by the nasty name of speculation. Certain sums which should have passed through Mr. Dance's hands had stayed there, to be placed upon certain absolutely certain winners at certain races, which had turned out to be certain losers. Until Mr. Dance had some luck in the racing line, and could replace those little sums, he could not afford to quarrel with Mr. Whiffles.

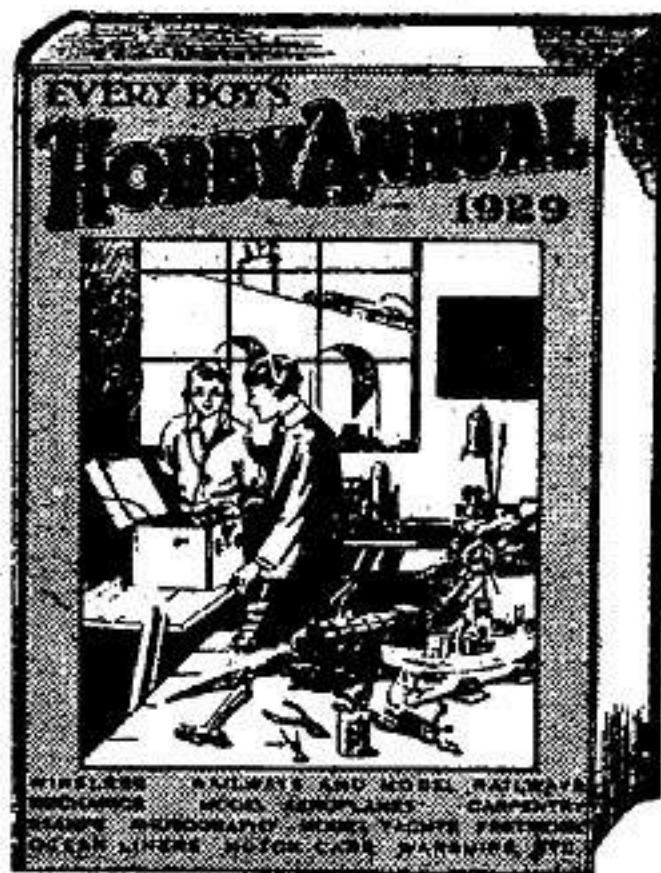
So he shook his fist in the direction of the blue-and-red caravan, and went back into the big tent to take the last turn.

Bunter was glad to see him go.

Evidently the right Mr. Whiffles had not turned up yet. The coast was clear for the wrong Mr. Whiffles.

Bunter blinked round cautiously through his big spectacles, and met many glances from various directions. But there was nothing like suspicion in any of the glances. He picked up the

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attache-case that held his own clothes. From the direction of the big tent came the sound of voices.

Billy Bunter jumped.

"It's very late to see Mr. Whiffles, sir."

"I must see Mr. Whiffles! It is important!" came a deep, sharp voice—a voice that Bunter knew.

He backed away from the door of the van.

The attache-case dropped with a bump from his hand. Bunter would have fled but terror rooted him to the caravan. A tall, angular figure was coming towards the van, following a circus man. And Bunter gazed at Mr. Quelch, the master of the Greyfriars Remove, as he might have gazed at a Gorgon!

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

#### Wrathy!

"HIS keeping it up!" Skinner made that remark in the Remove passage after prep. Skinner was amused. He found entertainment in the extraordinary antics of William George

Bunter that afternoon, also in the prospect of what was going to happen to Bunter when he came back.

"Keeping it up, and no mistake," grinned Bolsover major. "Why, it's only half an hour to dorm."

"Oh, he's going to make a night of it!" said Skinner. "Bunter on the jolly old ran-dan!"

"The fat chump is afraid to come in, that's what it is," remarked Ogilvy. "But Quelch will be getting madder and madder."

"I've just seen him," smiled Skinner. "He's been to speak to the Head. It's come up before the Head now. Bunter is fairly begging and praying for it this time!"

Peter Todd came out of Study No. 7 with a worried look on his face. He looked into Study No. 1.

Harry Wharton & Co. were all there, and they were looking rather merry and bright. The Famous Five were discussing arrangements for the holidays, now close at hand; and, as a matter of fact, they had forgotten Bunter. Summer holidays, after all, were a more important matter than whole tribes of Bunters.

"He hasn't come in!" said Peter.

"Who hasn't?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Bunter, fathead!"

"Oh, Bunter! The fat ass!"

"There's going to be a fearful row," said Peter. "Think the chump is staying out because he's in a funk?"

"Looks like it," said Harry Wharton. "I suppose he can't have bumped into an accident."

"He ought to know that Quelch will get wilder every minute," remarked Frank Nugent. "I suppose he went to the circus, though we didn't see him there. But he can't be at the circus all this time."

"The second show's on now," said Bob Cherry. "Bunter's fathead enough to stay for that; he must have missed a lot of the afternoon show. I hear that he was dodging Quelch and Loder most of the time we were in the circus."

"Even Bunter wouldn't be such a chump!" said Peter, aghast.

"The chumpfulness of the absurd Bunter is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"There's really no telling what Bunter might do, or mightn't," said the captain of the Remove. "If there's a chance to do anything absolutely idiotic, he's sure to jump at it. That's the only thing you can be sure of about Bunter."

"Skinner says Quelch has been to see the Head," said Peter Todd. "May not have been about Bunter, of course. But I think it was. Quelch is as mad as a hatter."

The buzz of voices in the Remove passage died suddenly away. Peter did not notice it as he went on:

"Quelch's never been so wild! He's simply ramping! Looks as if he's going to bite a chap as soon as look at him! Quelch's got a fearful temper, you know, when he lets it loose. He's absolutely ferocious now—dangerous at close quarters."

"Indeed!" said an icy voice behind Peter Todd.

Peter jumped.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped, as he spun round, to see Mr. Quelch standing in the Remove passage. It was the sight of the Remove master coming up the stairs that had stopped the buzz in the passage.

"What were you saying, Todd?" inquired Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Oh dear!"

"Were you referring to your Form master in terms of utter disrespect and impertinence?"

Really it was a superfluous question. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,070.



Mr. Quelch had heard every word uttered by the unfortunate Peter.

"I—I—I—" gasped Toddy.

"Go to your study, Todd, and write out the first book of the *Aeneid* till bed-time!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Peter.

And he escaped.

Harry Wharton & Co. had risen respectfully to their feet at sight of their Form master. Mr. Quelch looked into the study.

"Wharton, have you inquired whether anyone in the Form knows anything of Bunter's present whereabouts?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry. "Nobody's seen him."

"No one saw him at the circus?"

"Not so far as I can find out, sir."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips hard. The severe punishment that awaited Bunter was likely to grow more and more severe the longer he stayed out of gates. But a certain amount of anxiety now was added to Mr. Quelch's wrath. It might be funk that was causing Bunter to stay out, but there was always the possibility of an accident. Anyhow, it was a very serious matter for a Greyfriars junior to be out of gates at nine o'clock.

"Can you suggest, Wharton, where Bunter may be all this time?"

Wharton hesitated.

"I—I—I suppose it's barely possible, sir, that he may have stayed to see the evening performance."

"The what?"

"There's a second performance at the circus, sir, in the evening. Bunter must have missed most of the afternoon show if he went."

"Bless my soul!"

"He hasn't much sense, sir," ventured Wharton, anxious to say what he could for the exasperating Owl. "He might not think, sir—"

"He must learn to think," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "You can make no other suggestion, Wharton?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Quelch gave a little sniff. No doubt he expected more assistance than this from his head boy. It really was a little unreasonable. Wharton was not a Sherlock Holmes to elucidate mysteries of this sort.

"Oh! Very well!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

He rustled away.

"Thank goodness!" murmured Bob Cherry, in great relief. "I thought he was going to whop us all round. He looked like it."

"The whopfulness would be a relief to his esteemed and infuriated temper," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The dangerousness at close quarters is terrific."

Mr. Quelch rustled along the Remove passage. He questioned Remove man after Remove man.

But nobody could throw any light on the mysterious movements of William George Bunter.

Mr. Quelch was a just man; and, though he was—as Toddy had said—dangerous at close quarters in his present mood, he was not the man to punish any fellow unjustly as a relief to his temper. But while he was in the Remove passage he distributed a few just punishments.

Toddy had lines till bed-time already. Skinner was given a hundred lines for grinning when Mr. Quelch spoke to him. Russell was given fifty for shuffling his feet. Lord Mauleverer was gated for Saturday for not answering immediately he was spoken to. Fisher T. Fish had an imposition for not answering in English, as Mr. Quelch put it—as if

Fishy could help guessing and calculating! All the Remove breathed more freely when the Form master rustled down the Remove staircase.

"Quite wild!" said Skinner, with a yawn. "A hundred lines for grinning! Who could help grinning at a chivvy like that?"

"I guess he gets my goat!" said Fisher T. Fish indignantly. "I calculate that pesky guy surely gets my goat!"

Just before bed-time some of the Remove fellows observed Mr. Quelch leaving the House in hat and coat. They guessed that he was going to look for Bunter. Wingate of the Sixth shepherded the Lower Fourth off to their dormitory, and they turned in—with one bed in the dormitory vacant. It was long before the Remove went to sleep that night.

Bunter was still out—out at bed-time! Evidently the Owl of the Remove was making a night of it! If he had funk'd returning to the school to take his punishment, that could hardly account for his staying out after bed-time. Even the fat and fatuous Owl had sense enough to realise how very serious that was. But if that was not the explanation, what was the explanation? Until quite a late hour the Remove lay awake and discussed Bunter, and listened for his return. But he did not return. When the last fellow dropped asleep Bunter was still missing.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### A Startling Encounter!

"SCANDALOUS!"

Mr. Quelch repeated that word several times as he walked along the road towards Courtfield Common.

There was no doubt that it was scandalous. Bunter's conduct was really unprecedented. Mr. Quelch was beginning to think that such scandalous conduct merited not merely a flogging—a very severe flogging. He was beginning to think that only expulsion from the school would meet this serious case. Mr. Quelch was a busy man, especially at the end of term, and he had no time to worry about the least important member of his Form. He had no time to inquire up and down and round about Greyfriars for a junior who gave him enough trouble in class with his laziness and obtuseness. He had no time to peregrinate along a dark road and visit a circus in search of a troublesome Lower boy. He had to find the time. It was natural that his wrath should be at boiling-point. As he had to keep it bottled up it improved, like wine, with keeping. There was no doubt that Billy Bunter was booked for the time of his life when at last his Form master's eyes should fall upon him!

Mr. Quelch reached the wide, dark common, and paused. He knew where the circus tent stood, and there was a short cut across the common to the spot, which saved a quarter of a mile by the road. It was dark and shadowy on the common, and the path wound among trees and clumps of hawthorn. But Mr. Quelch decided on the short cut to save time.

He left the road and walked rapidly along the grassy path. It was rather a lonely place and footpads had been known on the lonely common after dark. Mr. Quelch had no fear of footpads, but he glanced about him sharply at the spot where the footpath skirted the deep shadows of a corner of Friar-dale Wood. From the distance he could

hear a blare of music, it came from the circus. But the intervening trees and bushes hid the circus from view for the present.

He reached the last of the bushes and before him lay the open common, with the lights of the circus gleaming in the distance towards the town. In the gloom of the hawthorns, a dim, white figure moved, and there was a rustling sound and Mr. Quelch started violently.

A superstitious person might have supposed that a ghost was lurking in the deep shadows. Certainly, the dimly-seen figure was very ghostly to the view. It was short of stature—hardly more than a boy's stature—but rather bulky; and it was all white.

Mr. Quelch stopped and stared at it. "Who is that?" he rapped out.

He heard a gasping sound.

The dim, white figure rustled hastily away in the bushes. Then there was a sudden howl—such a howl as anyone might have uttered who had found a thorn with a bare foot. But it was unimaginable that anyone could have been walking abroad at night with bare feet on Courtfield Common.

"Whoooooh!" came the startled howl. Mr. Quelch frowned and stared.

The figure in white was evidently trying to avoid observation—doubtless taken by surprise by the arrival of a pedestrian on the lonely path. It had run into cover—and found thorns! It came barging back out of cover—apparently fed up on thorns—and almost barged into the Remove master of Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch, being dressed in a dark coat, was not nearly so visible as the figure in white.

"Who—what—what—" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

He did not retreat, as a nervous man might have done. If this was some fool playing ghost to startle unsuspecting pedestrians on a lonely, dark path, Mr. Quelch was the man to deal with him. He had a stick under his arm and he grasped it and strode straight at the ghostly figure.

"Who are you?" he thundered.

"Oh dear!"

The ghostly figure backed off.

Mr. Quelch followed it up angrily. He remembered that he had put his electric torch in his pocket before starting, and he jerked it out with his left hand and flashed on the light.

Then he jumped almost clear of the ground in his amazement.

The light gleamed on a bald head, a podgy face that was clean-shaven, and a short, stout figure in a bathing-suit, wrapped round with a large, flowing bathing-towel!

Mr. Quelch gazed at it almost in stupefaction.

"Oh!" gasped the figure.

It bounded back.

"Bless my soul! It is some lunatic!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch aghast. "Upon my word! Stand back! Keep off! I shall strike you with this stick if you approach me! Go!"

Holding the electric torch in his left hand, Mr. Quelch brandished the stick with his right. Though not a nervous man in any way, he could not help being alarmed at this strange unnerving apparition. A man who walked about a common at night dressed in a bathing-towel could scarcely be anything but a lunatic—perhaps a dangerous maniac!

But if the man was a dangerous maniac, he was daunted by the Remove master's firm front. He showed no desire to come on. All his desire, evidently, was for retreat.

He blinked in the light and backed





"Stop! Villain! Thief! Rascal!" gasped Mr. Whiffles, rushing at Bunter. "My clothes! I will prosecute you! I will send you to prison—thief!" "Yaroo!" Billy Bunter put on an extra spurt, and just eluded the fat hand that stretched out to grasp him. (See Chapter 7.)

away, and suddenly took to his heels and ran.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Quelch.

He hurried on.

Even in such alarming circumstances, Mr. Quelch was too dignified to run. But, certainly, he walked very fast—very fast indeed. His heart was beating quite unpleasantly, and he held his stick ready for a blow in defence if the lurking lunatic should show up again.

But the ghostly figure did not approach him; only from the distance, in the shadows, he heard a howl, which indicated that the lunatic had found some more thorns.

It was quite a relief to Mr. Quelch when he reached the circus at last. The band was still playing; the last turn was approaching its end, but the evening performance was not quite over yet. Some of the circus hands were loafing about the big tent waiting for the finish, and they stared curiously at the well-dressed gentleman who arrived suddenly from the surrounding darkness.

"Jest over, sir," said one of them. "You're too late, sir!"

"What? What?"

"Course, you can go in if you like, sir, but it ain't 'ardly worth while. Pay at the box, sir!"

"Upon my word! I have not come to see the circus!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, scandalised at the idea. "Nothing of the kind! I am looking for a boy who is missing from school—I desire to see Mr. Whiffles, the proprietor."

And a minute later Billy Bunter was blinking from Mr. Whiffles' van in dire terror at his Form master.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Face to Face!

**B**ILLY BUNTER quaked.

He forgot, for the moment, that he was Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles; he remembered only that he was W. G. Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, and that it was for W. G. Bunter that Mr. Quelch must have come.

He blinked through his glasses at the Remove master, like a fat rabbit fascinated by a serpent.

The attache-case dropped unheeded at his feet. Bunter had some wild idea of slamming the door and locking it. But it was too late. Mr. Quelch was standing at the steps of the van, looking in, and the lamp in the van, burning brightly, revealed William George Bunter in all his glory.

"Mr. Whiffles!" said the Remove master.

He had seen Mr. Whiffles before; he knew the striped checks, the fancy waistcoat, the tubby figure, the big, gold watch-chain, the well-brimmed silk hat, the pointed beard, the waxed moustache, the curly nut-brown locks. He had no doubt that it was Mr. Whiffles standing in the van, blinking down at him with fascinated eyes.

"Mr. Whiffles!" he repeated.

Billy Bunter recovered a little; the name reminded him who he was at the present moment, and also assured him that his disguise was not penetrated by his Form master's gimlet eyes.

"Oh! Yes!" he gasped. "Certainly. G-g-g-good-evening, sir!"

"I am sorry to trouble you at this late hour of the evening, Mr. Whiffles."

"Oh, don't mench!" gasped Bunter.

"If you will kindly allow me to explain—"

"Get on with it—I—I mean, yes, sir!"

"A boy belonging to the school where I am a master is missing. A boy named Bunter—but, of course, you would be unacquainted with him."

"Oh! Yes! Of course! N-n-n-never heard the name in my life!"

"If you have seen him, however, you would probably remember him—an extremely fat boy in glasses—"

"Oh! Ah! No! Never seen him in my life, sir. He—he's not here! No good looking in this van for him, Mr. Quelch!"

"I was not thinking of looking in your van for him, sir," said the Remove master tartly. "But I believe he's in your circus."

"Oh! No! I am sure not! Absolutely certain that he's not anywhere about here, sir! He wouldn't be admitted! I—I think he's at Lantham."

"What?"

"In-in fact, I'm sure he's at Lantham, sir—or—or Canterbury! I—I think if you go to Canterbury, sir—or—or Folkestone—"

"Impossible! Even so foolish a boy cannot have gone there! Have you any reason to suppose that he has done so, Mr. Whiffles?"

"Yes; lots! I—I saw him in Canterbury this afternoon, sir, when I was at—at Folkestone!" gasped Bunter.

"Wha-a-at!"

"I—I—I mean—"

"Really, Mr. Whiffles—"

"I—I mean, I saw him at Folkestone, sir, when I was at Canterbury," gasped Bunter. "That is to say, I—I mean—"

Bunter was a little confused. The glint in Mr. Quelch's gimlet-like eyes was quite disconcerting.

"If you know anything of the boy, Mr. Whiffles—"

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"Oh, yes! I—I think I—I saw him at Lantham—"

"You know him by sight?"

"Oh! No! Never seen him in my life, sir!" said Bunter promptly. "Never heard of him till you mentioned him, sir."

Mr. Quelch sniffed. He could only conclude that this fat circus man had been drinking.

"I have come here, sir, to look for him," he said. "The boy is to receive punishment when he returns to the school—severe punishment—"

"Oh, lor'!"

"I think for that reason he may be staying out of gates. The boy is, I regret to say, absolutely stupid."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"It is possible—indeed probable—in view of his unexampled stupidity, that he may have remained here for the second performance at your circus, sir. I think he may be among the audience at the present moment."

"Oh! Good!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I mean, bad—very bad—awful, in fact!" gasped the Owl of the Remove. "Shocking!"

"You must excuse me for troubling you, Mr. Whiffles, but I am very anxious about the boy. May I beg your assistance in discovering him and placing him in my hands?"

"No jolly fear!" gasped Bunter.

"Mr. Whiffles! What—"

"I—I mean—I mean, certainly! Right on the spot! I—I—I—I'll help round up the young—the young scoundrel!" gasped the fat gentleman in the van. "He's in the tent all right—in fact, I saw him go in."

"You think you saw him go in?" asked Mr. Quelch, wishing that Mr. Whiffles was a teetotaler.

"I'm sure of it! He's nowhere near this van. That's quite impossible. No good looking for him here. Look in the tent. You'll find him all right. I'll swear he's there."

"If you saw him go in—"

"With my own eyes, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I— Now I come to think of it, I know him by sight. Bunter, you said?"

"Yes, his name is Bunter."

"I—I know him, sir—a rather handsome, distinguished-looking chap—"

"Nothing of the kind!" said Mr. Quelch. "It is evidently some other boy you have seen. The boy of whom I am in search is not in the least handsome or distinguished-looking—he is short and fat and clumsy, and has an expression of fatuous stupidity—"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"What?"

"I—I mean—"

"Really, Mr. Whiffles—"

"I—I mean, exactly! That's the chap! He's in the tent. Number ten in the second row of the half-crown seats!" said Bunter recklessly.

Bunter asked nothing better than that the Remove master should start exploring the big tent, where he would have an audience of at least five hundred to choose from. That would give the Owl of the Remove a chance to run for it. He might even get to Greyfriars and scuttle into bed while Quelch was still out. That would put off the painful consequences till the morning. Mr. Quelch might have cooled down by then. Bunter hoped so, at least. Hope springs eternal in the human breast.

"I think, sir," Mr. Quelch was say-

ing, "that if the boy sees me, he may attempt to escape—"

"Oh, no, sir, I shouldn't—"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean, I—I shouldn't think so, sir!" gasped Bunter. "It wouldn't be respectful, would it, sir?"

"Unfortunately, the boy is a disrespectful young rascal!" said Mr. Quelch. "I was about to suggest, sir, that you might direct some of your employees to detain the boy as he comes out, and then hand him over to me. I am aware, sir, that I am asking a favour at your hands, and am exceedingly sorry to give you trouble; but I am sure you will understand how serious it is for a boy to be out of school at this hour."

"Oh! Quite! Young villain!" said Bunter. "Young scoundrel! I—I'm awfully shocked at him! N-n-never heard of such a thing since—since I was a—a boy myself, sir."

"Thank you, Mr. Whiffles! Then you will be kind enough to act as I have suggested?"

"Oh, yes, rather! Anything you like, sir, so long as you clear off—I mean, so—so long as you catch that—that young rascal."

Bunter blinked round at six or seven of Mr. Whiffles' employees who were standing round looking on and listening.

"George!" he gasped.

"Yessir!"

"You hear what this—this old Beak—I mean, what this gentleman said. G-g-g-go and watch the tent and collar that fellow as—as he comes out!"

"Ow shall I know him, sir?"

"This old blighter—I mean, this gentleman will give you a—a description!" gasped Bunter. "Go with him."

"Yes, sir," said George.

"You other fellows go, too," said Bunter. "All of you go. You can't be too careful. Every one of you go at once."

"Thank you, sir!" said Mr. Quelch gratefully. "I can only apologise, sir, for giving you so much trouble—"

"Don't mench, sir! It's all right; only buck up! The—the young rascal may be going out this very minute."

"Quite so! I think I should mention, sir, that my anxiety for this wretched boy has been increased by a very strange thing that happened on my way here. Some lunatic is wandering on the common; and I desire to put you on your guard. Whether the man is dangerous I cannot say; but he is undoubtedly insane. A man is wandering about, sir, wrapped up in a bathing-towel—"

"Oh, crikey!"

"He was lurking in the bushes, apparently watching this circus from a distance, when I came along the footpath. I shall inform the police—"

"The—the police!"

"Yes; if the man is a madman, he must be secured," said Mr. Quelch. "I warn you, in case any member of your circus may encounter him."

"Oh, crikey! Oh, crumbs! Was—was—was he coming towards the circus?" stammered Bunter, blinking past Mr. Quelch, in terror of seeing Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles in the offing.

"No; he seemed to be lurking in the bushes. Apparently in hiding," said Mr. Quelch. "But I had an impression that he was watching this spot from a distance. Undoubtedly a lunatic; he was dressed in bathing clothes and a large towel."

"Great pip! I—I mean, thanks for the tip—that is, I'll look out for the beast! I—I say, you fellows, you cut off now. If—if you'll go with them, sir, they—they'll get that chap for you—"

"Once more, thank you very much, Mr. Whiffles."

"Not at all, sir! Only go—I mean, buck up! The—the fellow may be dodging away this very minute—"

And Mr. Quelch, immensely to Bunter's relief, walked away with the circus men. Bunter could hardly believe in his good luck when they disappeared round the big tent. Bunter did not need telling who was the "lunatic" Mr. Quelch had encountered on his way to the circus. A man lurking on the common in a bathing-towel could only be Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. There was not a second to lose.

The moment Mr. Quelch was out of sight, Billy Bunter scuttled down the steps of the van, and fairly ran for it.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### A Narrow Escape!

"O H, lor'!" It was an ejaculation of utter dismay from Billy Bunter.

The fat junior had run till his fat little legs simply would not keep going. Then he had perforce halted.

He dumped himself down on a grassy bank close by the Courtfield road, to rest and recover his wind.

And then—

Then it was his intention, after taking a little rest, to change back into school-boy clothes, discarding Mr. Whiffles' wig, and hurry on to Greyfriars, and be safe in bed there before Mr. Quelch returned.

On the morrow he would have to face the music, but he hoped that the music would be pitched in a milder key, so to speak, by that time.

At all events, he would have had time to decide how to account for his absence—how to explain why he had stayed out of gates.

No meticulous regard for the truth held Bunter in check. All he wanted was a plausible yarn. Truth and Bunter were strangers. Already there was a dim glimmering in his fat mind of a really good story—how he had helped a poor old blind man home, and lost his way back, or, alternatively, as the lawyers say, how he had carried a bundle for a poor old woman who lived miles and miles away, and got into the wrong train returning.

But alas for Bunter!

Clear of the circus, safe from Quelch, in a shadowy spot where he could have changed his clothes with perfect security, Bunter suddenly realised that in the haste of his departure, he had left the attache-case in the caravan.

In his hurried flight he had thought only of getting clear.

He had got clear!

But changing back into Etons was obviously impracticable when his Etons remained behind in the attache-case in Mr. Whiffles' caravan at the circus.

Bunter fairly groaned in anguish of spirit.

This really was a knock-down blow! He could not blame himself. A fellow couldn't think of everything at once. But it was a knock-out! He was half a mile from the circus and half a mile from his own clothes.

If he went on to Greyfriars he would



have to go as Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles!

That, of course, was not to be thought of. Bunter sat and groaned!

Misfortune seemed to dog his weary steps! As Shakespeare would have put it, "on horrors' head, horrors accumulated."

It was useless to go on! He dared not go back while Mr. Quelch was at the circus! One meeting with that gimlet-eyed gentleman was enough for the wrong Mr. Whiffles. He sat and rested, and puffed and blew, and groaned!

The sounds of music had died away at the circus now. Many of the glaring lights had been extinguished. The performance was over; the people were going. At a little distance Bunter heard a crowd of them streaming away

No fat schoolboy in spectacles had been seen or captured.

If Bunter had been there he had dodged away, after all, in the dark outside the tent. Mr. Quelch hoped that he had gone back to the school. He wanted to find him there—he yearned to find him there. But, wherever he was, it was useless for Mr. Quelch to seek him on the wide, dark common or up and down the roads and lanes.

Mr. Quelch was not tireless; and he was no Chingachgook to pick up trails. So he strode back to Greyfriars, and the glimpse Bunter caught of his face in the dusk as he passed sent a cold thrill down Bunter's spine.

Still, the beast was gone, that was one comfort. Mr. Quelch's footsteps died away in the direction of Greyfriars.

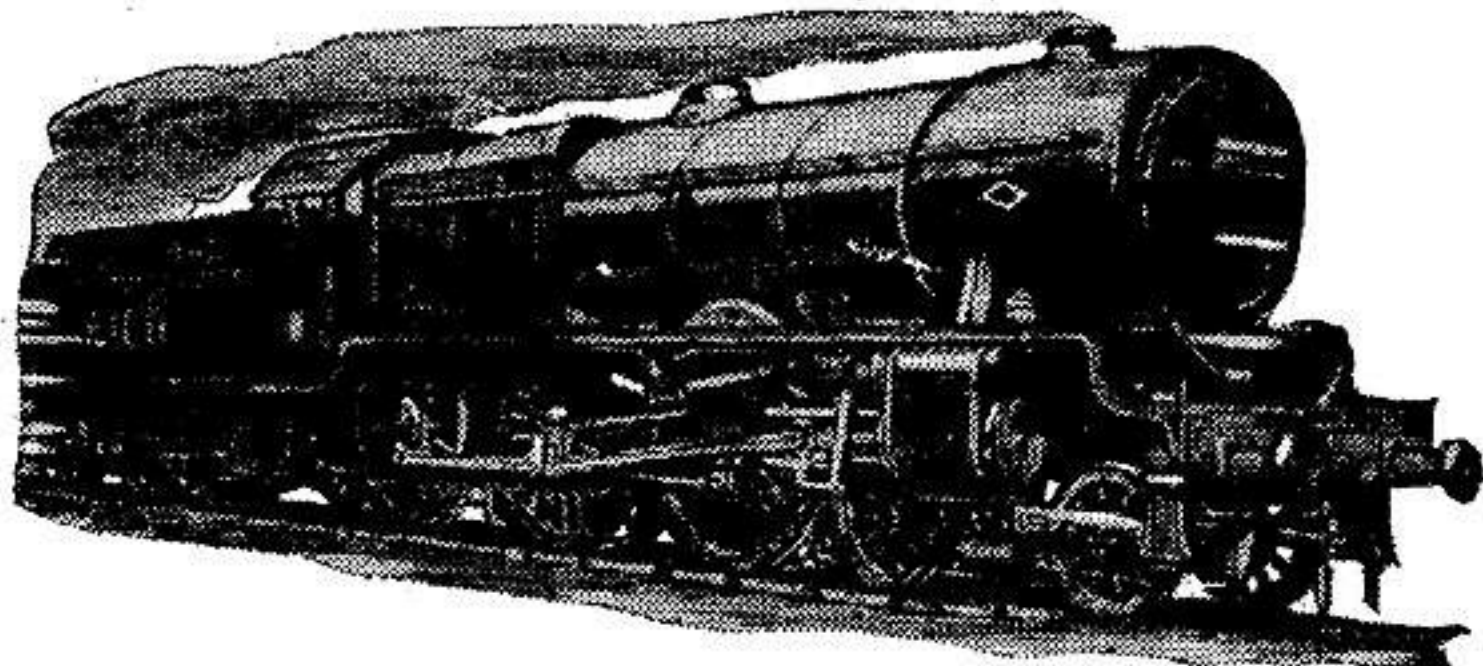
for Bunter to enter the red-and-blue caravan, bag the attache-case, and scud.

But if the gentleman in the bathing-towel had arrived—

Bunter's powerful intellect, as a rule, did not work quickly. But it was working under pressure now. He had been assured that Mr. Whiffles would not return till dark. But at dark he had not returned. Why not? Because he was lurking—as Mr. Quelch had described it—at a distance; and if he was lurking at a distance, for what reason could it be except to wait till the circus was asleep before returning. If that was the case, he was still lurking—and waiting; the circus was not yet asleep. A gentleman who had sported an ample head of hair among those who knew him could not be anxious to meet

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towards Courtfield. Other parties went by the footpaths over the common in various directions.

Bunter did not heed. He simply did not know what to do—until it was safe to creep back to the caravan after his clothes.

Suddenly, close at hand, there came a footstep; in the starlight he glimpsed a tall, angular figure walking, with sharp steps, down the road. He crouched back into the shadows as he recognised Mr. Quelch.

Mr. Quelch walked with sharp steps, a bitter tightening-of the lips, and a gleaming eye. He had watched the whole audience emerge, with the help of the circus men. There was more than one exit to the big tent, but all had been observed by Mr. Whiffles' men.

Bunter rose from the bank.

It was safe to return to the circus now. Safe to bag that attache-case and get away with his own clothes. After which his strange, eventful history as a circus boss would come to an end! Bunter little knew!

Not that he wanted it to come to an end. He would have been very glad to carry on as Mr. Whiffles! If only Mr. Whiffles could have been permanently disposed of in some painless manner—

But he couldn't!

Bunter blinked round him and started back to the circus camp where a few lights still burned.

Was Whiffles there?

That was the burning question.

If not, nothing could be simpler than

their astonished view with a head as bald as a billiards-ball.

Bunter grinned as he thought of it! It was all right! Whiffles wasn't there yet!

So the coast was still clear!

Bunter rolled on almost cheerily. He would have been quite cheery but for the lingering thought of what awaited him at Greyfriars! If only, only that beast Whiffles could have been disposed of somehow! How glorious to carry on as the circus boss, and leave Greyfriars over till the end of the holidays! The midsummer hols. were long—surely wrath would have died away by then. Mr. Quelch might let the sun go down on his wrath, but not the whole midsummer vacation, surely! If only—



"Stop!"

Bunter jumped as a gasping yell interrupted his reflections. He was only a hundred yards from the circus now. He blinked round in alarm, and jumped almost clear of the ground at the sight of a dim white figure—a figure he did not see clearly, but which he did not fail to recognise as that of Mr. Quelch's lunatic in a bathing-towel!

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

It was Whiffles!

The figure fairly hurled itself at him from the shadows of a hawthorn-bush, where it had been "lurking."

Mr. Whiffles, like Bunter, was short-sighted. But he lacked his glasses now! They were in the attache-case in the caravan. But even without his glasses he could recognise the glaring pattern of the striped check suit Bunter wore, and which Mr. Whiffles had been accustomed to wear. He knew that this was the scoundrel, the villain, the blighter who had robbed him of his clothes and other possessions while he was swimming in the Sark. It could be no other, for those clothes were unique! In a population of forty-five millions nobody else wore clothes like Mr. Whiffles.

"Stop! Villain! Thief! Rascal!" Mr. Whiffles hissed out the words as he rushed at Bunter. "My clothes! Rascal! I will prosecute you! I will send you to prison! Thief! Wretch! Villain——"

"Yaroooh!"

A fat hand was almost upon the dismayed Owl's shoulder when he fled onward, just eluding it.

Mr. Whiffles dashed after him.

Bunter flew!

Mr. Whiffles flew!

They raced across the grass, both going uncommonly strong. It was not only vengeance that Mr. Whiffles wanted—though he wanted that badly. He wanted his clothes. Above all, he wanted his wig!

For hours and hours the wretched Mr. Whiffles had lurked, waiting for the circus camp to fall into slumber, to give him a chance of sneaking back quietly and getting into his van unseen.

In a box in that van was a second wig, exactly like the first. Wigs, like other more usual articles of attire, have to be cleaned at times. When one of Mr. Whiffles' wigs was at his hair-dresser's the other adorned his bald head. It was the second wig that Mr. Whiffles had hoped to don before he should be seen by any of his company. But he dared not venture till the circus was asleep.

Fortunately, the summer night was warm; still, the light attire of a bathing-suit and a bathing-towel swathed round his fat person, did not protect Mr. Whiffles against the breeze that came from the sea. Lurking in the shadows round the circus camp was extremely uncomfortable. The sight of his own clothes and hair came as a windfall to Mr. Whiffles. Here was the thief, the blighter, the villain, who had robbed him! Vengeance and a renewed thatch were within his grasp at one fell swoop!

His clutch was just behind Bunter as the terrified Owl fled for his fat life.

Billy Bunter ran as he had seldom run before.

Gasping and puffing and panting, he fled onward at frantic speed.

Once the outstretched fingers behind touched his shoulder and electrified him into greater efforts.

He had one hope. He knew that Mr. Whiffles had been avoiding the lights of the circus and the gaze of his company ever since nightfall. It was obvious even to the obtuse Owl that

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Mr. Whiffles did not want to be seen wigless. If he could reach the lighted encampment—

He reached it!

He was almost at his last gasp as he rolled breathlessly into the radius of light of the naphtha lamps.

There was a shout.

Half a dozen people saw him rushing frantically in, and caught a glimpse of the wild, weird figure behind. The flaring lights gleamed on a bald head and a bathing-towel.

Mr. Whiffles stopped.

He could not face it. He turned and rushed back into the friendly cover of darkness. Bunter staggered on to the caravans.

He sank down on the steps of the blue-and-red caravan, and gasped and puffed and blew.

"Ow! Grooogh! Wow! Oh crumbs! Ooooooh! Groooooh!"

But he knew he was safe. The bald head that had shone and gleamed for a moment in the glare of the naphtha lamps was gone. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles was once more "lurking."

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### The Return of the Native!

"Ow! Wow! Ooooooh!"

Bunter gasped spasmodically. Half the circus gathered round him. Mr. Dance came up, Slaney came up, George came up. Tomasso Tomsonio and Samson and Nobby Nobbs, the clown, and a dozen others came up.

"What's happened, guv'nor?" asked Nobby Nobbs.

"Grooogh! Ooooh!"

"I saw somebody—something!" said Mr. Dance.

"Whoooooh! Ooooooh! Ooooooh!"

"Ave a drink, guv'nor," said George Mix. "Shall I bring you a brandy-and-soda, sir?"

"Oh crumbs!"

Bunter did not want a brandy-and-soda. He did not desire to play Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles to that extent.

"I—I—I—" he stuttered. He felt that an explanation was needed. "I—I went for a walk, and that—that—" He remembered Mr. Quelch's description of that figure in the bathing-towel. "That lunatic attacked me!"

"That there lunatic the schoolmaster saw, guv'nor?" asked George sympathetically.

"That's it!" gasped Bunter. "A dangerous maniac! He attacked me! Rushed on me! I—I just barely escaped his knife!"

"He's got a knife, sir?"

Uneasy glances were cast around into the encircling shadows. A lunatic with a knife was no joke.

"A—a—a carving-knife, I think!" gasped Bunter. "Raving mad, you know! Brandishing a knife!"

"No wonder you 'ooked it, guv'nor," said the sympathetic George. "The perlice ought to be told."

"The schoolmaster said he was going to phone to the police," remarked one of the men.

"He'll be run in before morning," said Slaney.

"Got out of some asylum, I s'pose," said Texas Bill, the broncho buster. "I'm going to lock my van to-night, I am."

"Same 'ere."

"If—if you see anything of him, drive him off!" gasped Bunter. "Don't waste time talking to him. Don't listen to a

word he says. Just drive him away. Never mind if you hurt him. Kick him! Kick him—hard!"

"You bet, guv'nor!"

"I am going into the town, Mr. Whiffles," said Dance. "I had better call at the police station and warn them."

"Oh, no! I—I mean, yes!" gasped Bunter.

He staggered to his feet.

"If—if you meet him on your way, knock him down!" he gasped. "Don't speak to the—the horrible villain! Knock him down! Jump on him! Don't let him say a word! Look out for the carving-knife!"

Bunter went into the caravan and closed the door on the buzzing, excited crowd of circus men. He sat down in Mr. Whiffles' chair and gasped.

"Oh dear! Ow!"

Circumstances had driven Bunter into assuming the character of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. Circumstances seemed determined to keep him in that character.

With all his efforts to change back into William George Bunter, he was still Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

To leave the camp again in the guise of Mr. Whiffles was impossible with the real Mr. Whiffles lurking just outside the radius of the lights. Bunter shuddered at the thought.

To leave as a schoolboy until the circus was asleep was impossible. Bunter was booked for the part of Whiffles, and could not help it.

There was only one recourse for Bunter—to remain where he was until all were fast asleep, and then change into his own clothes and sneak away.

Meanwhile there were consolations. He was hungry, and so long as he was Mr. Whiffles he could give what orders he liked.

As soon as he had quite recovered his breath he opened the door of the caravan and called:

"George!"

"Sir!" George Mix appeared at once.

"Bring supper."

"You won't have it in the supper-tent, sir?"

"No. Bring it here."

"Yes, guv'nor."

"And bring enough," said Bunter. "I had a fairly good tea, but I'm used to a good supper. Mind that."

"Yes, sir."

George brought supper to the van. There was cold beef and ham and pickles, and cheese and other things. It was what George Mix thought an ample supper. In ten minutes Bunter thumped on the bell on Mr. Whiffles' table. George came back.

"I told you I was hungry, George. Bring me some supper."

"Eh?"

George stared at the emptied dishes and plates.

"It's all right," Bunter said reassuringly. "I like the grub—what I've sampled of it. Now I'm going to have some supper."

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" gasped George.

Bunter had some supper! George was kept fairly busy for some time, coming and going. At tea-time he had wondered where Mr. Whiffles put it all. Now he marvelled.

But even Bunter was finished at last. He tipped George another of Mr. Whiffles' half-crowns and dismissed him.

He was feeling better now.

There would be no supper for him when he got to Greyfriars. He knew that. He would have to ring up Gosling to get in, and when he got in and saw Mr. Quelch, it was not supper





Hardly knowing what he did, Billy Bunter made a jump at Mr. Whiffles, as he came creeping up the steps of the van, and smote. Crash! Bump! The circus proprietor went toppling backwards down the steps. "Yooop! Ow! Help!"

(See Chapter 9.)

that would be handed out to him. The more Bunter thought of what awaited him at Greyfriars, the less he liked it. But it had to be faced. He remembered the infuriated Mr. Whiffles' words—thief, prosecution, prison! The beast was beast enough to go the limit, just because a fellow in sore straits had borrowed his clothes and his silly old wig! Bunter was quite shocked at the viciousness Mr. Whiffles had displayed. He hoped the Courtfield police would run him in as a wandering lunatic. It would keep him off the scene for a bit. But Bunter felt that that was too much to hope for. He had to get out as soon as the circus was asleep and the going was good.

Bunter waited.

He did not dare to go to sleep. He would have liked a nap. The hour was late, and his uncommon exertions that eventful day had tired him. But he knew that if he went to sleep he was more likely to sleep till morning, or at least till Mr. Whiffles came butting into the caravan, as he was sure to do some time during the night. Fortunately, his lengthy nap in the evening had refreshed him, and he was able to keep awake.

One by one the lights in the circus encampment were extinguished. The sound of voices died away.

Bunter, blinking from the curtained window of the caravan, saw no more lights; only a glimmering of starlight over the circus. He had extinguished his own lamp. Not a voice reached his ears. But, on opening the door and blinking cautiously out, he discerned a light burning in a caravan at a little distance. He saw a slim, dark figure come to the open door of that caravan, and stand there looking out while a cigarette was lighted. It was Mr. Dance, the manager. Evidently, he had returned from his walk to the town; but he had not gone to bed yet. Bunter blinked at him and popped back and closed the door of the blue and red van.

How long was that beast going to stay up? From his van, he was as likely as not to see anybody creeping out of Mr. Whiffles' van. Why didn't the beast go to bed?"

Bunter waited ten minutes, and blinked out of the half-opened door again. The light was still burning in Mr. Dance's van, though he was not to be seen at the open door of it now. Bunter gave the van a furious blink! What on earth was that beast stopping for, when everybody else had gone to bed? Bunter was not aware of the financial problems that Mr. Dance had to work out in the dark hours.

At Courtfield, over several whiskies and sodas, Mr. Dance had received and assimilated the unwelcome news that another of his winners had come in eleventh. The handsome sum he had intended to win, which would have set his accounts right, had not materialised; instead of that, he had netted a rather substantial loss; and how he was going to meet that loss, was the problem that kept Mr. Dance out of bed and wide awake! He saw nothing for it but a further inroad into the funds in his hands—and he was getting very close to danger-point in that line, now! If that old fool, Whiffles, got too inquisitive—!

No wonder Mr. Dance was sleepless!

But it was very awkward for Bunter! It was past midnight now, and another blink from the blue and red caravan showed Mr. Dance's light still burning.

Bunter breathed hard with fury and uneasiness. If he waited much longer, there was momentary risk of the return of the real Whiffles! Obviously, Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles could not mean to spend the rest of his natural life lurking among the hawthorns on Courtfield Common, clad in a bathing-towel. He could only be waiting for a chance to sneak back quietly into his van. Most likely he was now waiting, like Bunter, for that last light to be extinguished.

Bunter heard the welcome sound of a closing door. He opened his own door a few inches, and blinked out. The light was gone; the exasperating Dance had turned in at last.

Bunter breathed more freely.

A rapid change now into his own clothes—and flight! The coast, at long last, was clear! Bunter closed the door, and turned to the attache case. He did not venture to put on a light, lest some wakeful eye in the camp should observe it. He could change in the dark. He opened the attache case on the bed, and began to sort out his own clothes! And then—

Then he suddenly stopped, his hair rising on his head with the thrill of horror that ran through him! For he heard a stealthy creeping step without—the door was drawn open; and as he turned, frozen with horror, he saw the glimmer on a bald head!

Mr. Whiffles had returned!

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Neck or Nothing!

**S**TEALTHILY, Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles crept up the stairs of the blue and red caravan.

He might have been a cat burglar, from his stealthy movements, instead of the rightful owner of that van. All that was there was his—excepting Bunter, of course—yet he came like a thief in the night.

He was almost trembling with mingled eagerness and dread.

Like Bunter, he had waited for the last light to be extinguished. Like Bunter, he had prepared for action when that light went out. Unlike Bunter, he had acted with lightning swiftness.

For hours—or was it centuries—he had lurked and watched, and watched and lurked. Now his chance had come.

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(Continued from page 13.)

To get quietly into the van, to get at the box where he kept his spare parts, so to speak; to get a wig on his bare bald head; to re-assume the normal aspect of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles—and to do it all as rapidly as possible—that was the object of the unfortunate occupant of the bathing-towel.

Later, he would hunt for the villain, the blighter, the unscrupulous dastard, who had bagged his clothes and other appurtenances while he was swimming. He would hound that iniquitous wretch without mercy. And he would take care, on future occasions when he went for a swim, that his clothes and wig did not fall into nefarious hands. He would buy a dog—a ferocious dog—the most savage Alsatian he could get for love or money—and leave him on guard over the treasure, when in future he went for a swim. He would take a lot of trouble to seek out a fierce, fanged Alsatian with a reputation for biting. This awful disaster should never happen again. Once he was out of this fearful scrape.

But he was not out of it yet.

It is always easier to fall into a hole than to climb out of it again. Mr. Whiffles, at long last, seemed to be on the verge of success. But he was only on the verge; and proverbially there is many a slip betwixt cup and lip.

He did not dream for a moment that his van was occupied. He had spotted the thief, the dastard, the blighter, in his clothes and wig, on the common, and chased him. The villain had escaped. But it had never occurred to Mr. Whiffles that the iniquitous wretch was in his caravan. He did not dream that the dastardly villain had been playing his part for him. He did not know anything about that yet. He was just going to discover it.

He crept stealthily to the van door, and opened it. He peered into the dark interior of the van. He gasped with relief! It was done—he was in his van at last, and nobody had seen him wigless—nobody should or could ever know that the curly-haired Whiffles was as bald as a billiards-ball. It was done—and he gasped with relief. But he gasped too soon! It was not done!

Bunter blinked at him in horror and dismay.

Self-preservation is well-known to be the first law of nature. A rat will fight in a corner—a worm will turn—and it is said that there is no animal so dangerous as the peaceful, placid sheep, when it is driven to resistance. Excess of terror will lend courage. Bunter was so thoroughly alarmed and scared, that he forgot to be afraid. To be collared by Mr. Whiffles, shown up as a fraud, handed over to the police as a stealer of bather's clothes, confined to a cell in Courtfield Police-station for the night, bailed out in the morning by the head-master of Greyfriars—the prospect was too awful! Hardly knowing what he did, Bunter made a jump at the

shadowy figure in the doorway of the van, and smote.

Crash! Bump!

A smite with Bunter's weight behind it was not a light matter. And it came quite unexpectedly. Mr. Whiffles fairly flew.

Mr. Whiffles was being silent, stealthy, cautious; stealing into the van like a cat-burglar into a window. But as he went backwards down the steps, silence, stealth, and caution were naturally forgotten. The yell that Mr. Whiffles let out rang through the circus encampment, and awoke most of the echoes of Courtfield Common.

"Whoooooooop!"

Mr. Whiffles landed on the grass, roaring.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

"Yooop! Whoop! Ow! Help! Whoop!" roared Mr. Whiffles.

He sprawled in a dazed state.

Bunter blinked down at him, quaking. There was a shouting from two or three directions; lights flashed from several vans and tents.

Right up to that moment, it had never occurred to Billy Bunter to hold on to the identity of Mr. Whiffles, in the presence of the real Whiffles. It came to him like a flash now. It was the only way! Mr. Whiffles' best friend could not have recognised him now as Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. He was the lunatic in the bathing towel! It came to Bunter in a flash; simply because it was the only way to safety; the only way to avoid a rough handling and a cell at the police-station. He was driven to it. There was no escape—only check could carry him through. Bunter desperately played up.

"Help!" he roared. "Burglars! Madmen! Lunatics! Help!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" came from the sprawling Whiffles. "Yow-ow-ow!"

George Mix, half-dressed, came bolting out of the tent, with a lantern in one hand, and a chopper in the other. From all quarters came shouting voices, running feet, cries of alarm. Had Bunter wanted to escape, even in his present guise, he could not have got away unseen. Almost in a moment the caravan was surrounded, and a score of pairs of eyes turned on the sprawling, gasping, panting Whiffles.

"It's the lunatic!" yelled Bunter. "Collar him! Seize him! Look out for his knife! Help! Seize him! Bag him! Help!"

Five or six pairs of hands were laid, not gently, on the sprawling Whiffles.

He was dragged to his feet, and held securely.

He struggled furiously, utterly enraged by this attack from his own employees. He struggled and yelled.

But he was held fast. Slaney had one arm, Tomasso Tomsonio had the other. Samson the Strong Man took a grip on the back of his neck. George Mix brandished the chopper. Nobby Nobbs grasped him somewhere, and Texas Bill somewhere else. Two or three more men got a grip. Whiffles struggled and roared, and threatened in vain.

"We got him, sir!" gasped George. "Quiet, you murdering villain! Behave yourself, or look out for this chopper!"

"I'll sack you!" yelled Mr. Whiffles furiously. "I'll sack the lot of you! Take a week's notice all round!"

"Mad as a 'atter!" said George.

"Poor chap!" said Slaney. "Fair raving!"

"Let me go!" shrieked the infuriated Whiffles, struggling madly. "I tell you you're sacked! Sacked! Do you hear?"

"Pore feller!" said George Mix.

"Fair off his crummet, ain't he?" said

Nobby Nobbs. "Who does he think he is, I wonder, poor chap?"

"Hold him tight!" gasped Bunter.

"We got him all right, sir! He won't do any 'arm now."

"He—he—he thinks he's somebody else, you know!" gasped Bunter. "Lunatics do, you know. I—I dare say he thinks he's me, or—or the Prime Minister, or the Pope, you know. Lunatics are like that."

"Mad as a 'atter! Fancy a bloke going about at night dressed up in bathing clobber and a bathing towel!" said George. "Keep quiet, you image! We don't want to 'urt a pore lunatic; but you can't be let loose. Look 'ere! What asylum do you belong to?"

"Let me go!" shrieked Mr. Whiffles, almost foaming at the mouth.

He was utterly amazed, and astounded, and bewildered. The dreadful disaster of being seen without his wig had happened. That had been the very worst of Mr. Whiffles' terrors. But, apparently, it was not the worst. As Shakespeare has said: "Thus bad begins, but worse remains behind."

Mr. Whiffles forgot even his bald head, that long, and carefully-kept secret revealed at last, in his rage and fury at what was happening now. It seemed to him that the whole circus had gone insane.

"Let me go! You're sacked!" he bawled. "I'll kick out the lot of you! How dare you! Hands off!"

"Hold him tight!" gasped the Owl of the Remove. "He's dangerous, you know. Mind he doesn't bite!"

"Release me! Rascals, villains, wretches!"

"Got a fine flow of language, ain't he?" grinned Nobby Nobbs. "Look 'ere, my pore feller, you take it quiet! Tell us who you are, and we'll see you're took safe home without being 'urt. The pore chap can't help being balmy in the crummet!"

"Who are you?" demanded Slaney.

"What! You fool! I'm Mr. Whiffles!" roared the hapless circus proprietor. "Don't you know your own employer, you idiot?"

"Oh, my eye!"

Had Mr. Whiffles stated that he was the King of England, or the President of the United States, he would have been quite as likely to get away with it. More likely, in fact, for those gentlemen were at least absent, though hardly to be suspected of haunting Courtfield Common attired in a bathing-towel. But the man he claimed to be was there, standing in the doorway of the van, looking down on the scene. At all events, he seemed to be there. It is truly said that appearances are not everything. Still, they amount to a great deal. Bunter had the appearance of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. Mr. Whiffles hadn't. The spectators could hardly be blamed for judging by appearances in this case.

"Pore feller!" said George. "Mad as a blinking 'atter! Don't 'urt the pore feller!"

"You fools, idiots, dummies, chumps, fatheads, lunatics!" spluttered Whiffles. "Don't you know me?"

"Ow should we know you, when we've never seen you before?" demanded George.

"I'm Whiffles!"

"Pore feller!"

George had a sympathetic nature. He was really sorry for this poor man who imagined himself to be Mr. Whiffles.

Billy Bunter drew a deep, deep breath.

He had acted upon a sort of inspiration, because there was no other way



out. He had got away with it. He was Mr. Whiffles, and this interfering, ill-tempered, troublesome old donkey was a lunatic—that was how the matter stood. As usual, Bunter proceeded at one step from panic terror to self-satisfied self-confidence.

"Don't hurt the poor fellow, my men," he said loftily. "The poor chap can't help being potty. I—I'll find out tomorrow what asylum he's escaped from, and—and have him sent back. But he's dangerous. He was breaking into my van when I knocked him down. Hold him tight!"

"Villain!" roared Mr. Whiffles. "Rascal! It's my van! You are the dastard who robbed me!"

"Calm yourself, my poor fellow!" said Bunter. "You will be taken care of, and—and treated kindly. I'll send for a doctor in the morning."

"You—you—you—" articulated Mr. Whiffles.

"Hush! Quiet, my poor fellow!"

"I'll break every bone in your body!" shrieked Mr. Whiffles. "I'll slaughter you! I'll—I'll—I'll—"

"Ow! Hold him tight!"

"We've got 'im, guv'nor!"

"Put him somewhere!" gasped Bunter. "Is there a van he can be locked in?"

Mr. Dance arrived on the scene now, rubbing his eyes. The struggling circus proprietor howled an appeal to him.

"Dance! You know me, Dance?"

Mr. Dance jumped.

"Eh! Who—what—"

"You fool! Don't you know me? Whiffles—Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, your employer, you silly idiot!"

Mr. Dance stared at him.

"He's mad, sir," explained George. "Thinks he's Mr. Whiffles, and the guv'nor standing there right under his nose. He'll be saying he's the Pope of Rome next, or the Wild Man from Borneo!"

Mr. Dance looked very hard at the bald man in the bathing-towel, and then at the fat gentleman in the doorway of the blue and red van. There was something in that penetrating glance that Bunter did not like. He hurriedly intervened.

"Take the man way! Lock him in a van till morning! You can give him some clothes! Now, then, look sharp!"

"Right you are, guv'nor!"

Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, struggling and yelling and shrieking, was hustled away, and bundled into an empty van that was used for the transport of circus properties. The door was locked on him, and he was told to be quiet.

But he was not quiet.

In the circumstances, it was rather unreasonable to expect Mr. Whiffles to be quiet. No circus proprietor, locked in a baggage van by his own employees, would have been quiet. The voice of Mr. Whiffles came from that van in incessant iteration. It convinced the whole circus—if they needed convincing—that the poor fellow was absolutely off his rocker, and they were glad that there was a strong lock on that van.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bright Prospects for Bunter!

**B**ILLY BUNTER grinned. The danger was past now. It had been a case of "neck or nothing." And Billy Bunter, whatever other qualities he might lack, had plenty of neck.

He had got away with it. He was still Mr. Whiffles, and Mr. Whiffles was a disregarded lunatic locked in a van.

Bunter grinned.

All was serene now. Bunter sat down in Mr. Whiffles' chair, in Mr. Whiffles' van, and considered. With Whiffles locked up safely, he had only to wait till the circus settled down to sleep again, and then it was easy to change his clothes, and, like the Arab, when he folded his tent, steal silently away. But that was not what Bunter was thinking of now. Success had emboldened Bunter. Many times it had crossed his fat mind, how ripping it would be to carry on as Whiffles—to avoid going back to Greyfriars to face the Olympian wrath of Quelchy. It had seemed a hopeless dream. Now it seemed something more substantial than the stuff dreams are made of. Why not?

"Why not?" Bunter asked himself.

There was absolutely no reason why not. He was Montgomery St. Leger

Whiffles, to the satisfaction of the whole circus. The real Whiffles, instead of being a lurking danger, a sword of Damocles suspended over his head—a prisoner in a locked van. He could carry on, if he liked, and the wrath of Quelchy, the Head's flogging, indefinitely postponed, put off till next term, in fact—put off altogether. It was only a few more days to the holidays, and even a few days spent away from classes would be so much to the good. No flogging, no classes, no work, no exams, but peace and plenty in a circus caravan, giving orders, right and left, feeding on the fat of the land, and swanking to the top of his bent.

Bunter chuckled.

The case of the real Whiffles, doubtless, was a hard one. But he deserved no consideration at Bunter's hands. He was a beast! He intended to have Bunter run in! He had declared his intention of prosecuting the person who had bagged his clothes and his still more precious adornments. Bunter might be sorry for Whiffles. But he was not prepared to let him go ahead with the running-in and the prosecution! Bunter felt that that could hardly be expected of the kindest-hearted chap. It was all Whiffles' own fault, really, for being a beast!

That he was a beast admitted of no doubt! Anybody who bothered Bunter in any way was a beast! And if a man was a beast, he must naturally expect to be treated in a rather beastly way. That was logic.

Still, it was probably the knowledge of what awaited him at Greyfriars that influenced Bunter chiefly. What awaited him there could go on awaiting him! The long vacation would wash it all out. At least, Bunter hoped that it would! Anyhow, he was not the fellow to meet trouble half-way.

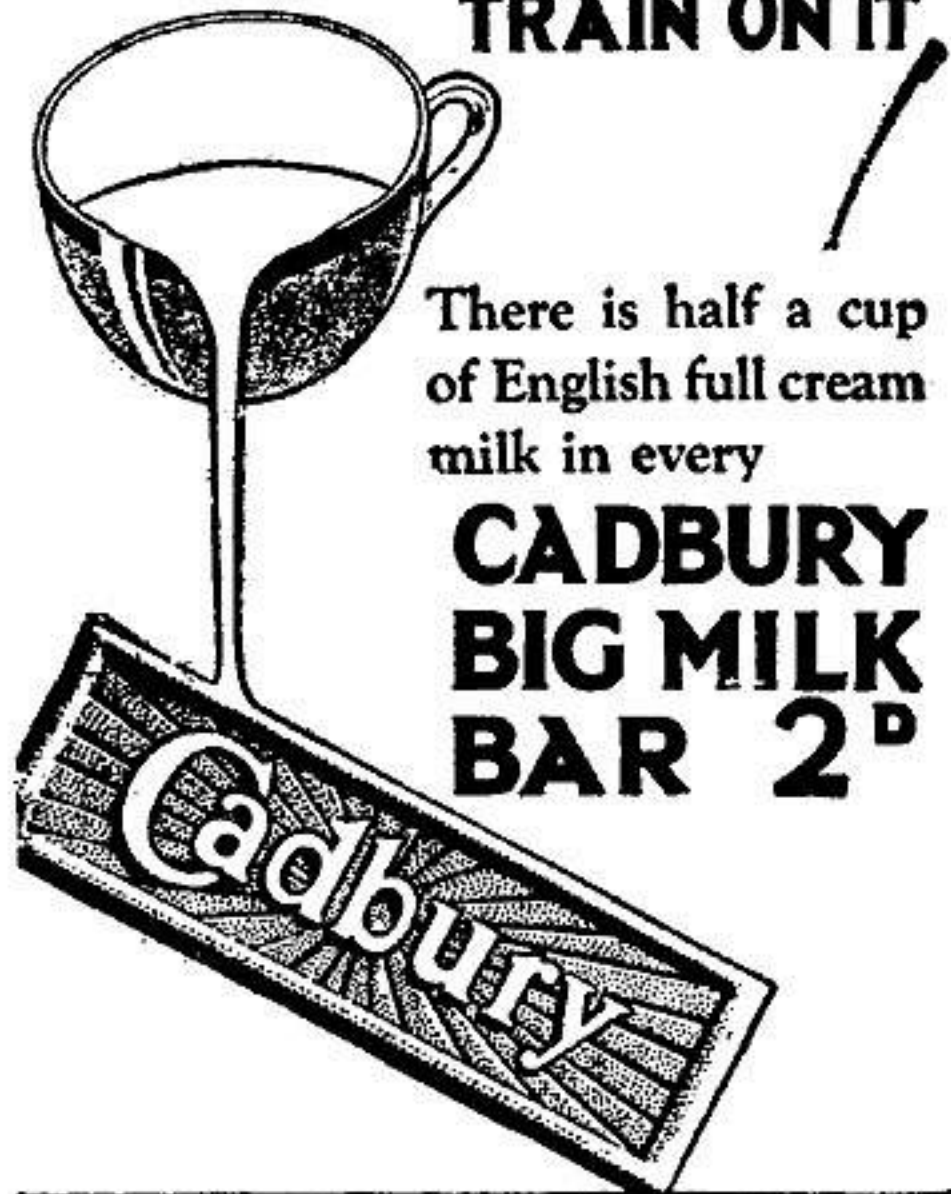
So Bunter, as he heard the wild roaring from the van in which Mr. Whiffles was locked, smiled. Let him roar!

The circus people had gone back to their bunks—with one exception. Mr. Dance was still up. He was hovering about, and at last he came up to the blue and red caravan.

"A most alarming occurrence, Mr. Whiffles," he said.

(Continued on next page.)

ATHLETES TRAIN ON IT



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Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh? Yes, rather! Poor fellow!" he said. "Poor, poor fellow! Quite mad, you know! Fancy his thinking he was me! He, he, he!"

Bunter's chuckle sounded a little false, however. He did not like that penetrating look on Dance's face.

"Very extraordinary!" said Dance.

"Oh, very! Lunatics, you know—"

Bunter noticed that Dance's glance lingered on his curly nut-brown locks. Surely the beast did not suspect that Whiffles wore a wig! Bunter inwardly resolved to sack this man Dance as soon as he could. He could sack him if he liked! He could sack the whole company if he liked! Bunter felt an expansive sense of power! All doubts vanished! Certainly he was going to carry on! He liked power in his fat hands. He was going to stick to it just as long as he jolly well could.

"Better go to bed!" he said.

"I am not sleepy, sir," said Dance, still with that penetrating, puzzled look fixed on the fat gentleman in the van.

Bunter felt that it was time to put his foot down.

"Go to bed!" he said.

"Mr. Whiffles—"

"We shall be busy to-morrow! If you miss your sleep you won't be earning your screw! I want no slackers in my circus!"

"Oh!" said Dance.

"So just get off to bed, see?"

Mr. Dance breathed hard.

"Very well, sir."

One more piercing look, and Mr. Dance went back to his van.

Bunter blinked after him rather uneasily. Did the beast suspect anything? If he did, the sooner he went the better. Bunter resolved to find some excuse for sacking him on the morrow.

The Owl of Greyfriars locked the door of the van, and laid down on Mr. Whiffles' bed to sleep. He could sleep now in safety and comfort—and the dulcet tones of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles were not likely to disturb him.

Those dulcet tones continued for a good hour, and then Mr. Whiffles' voice failed him. The circus men had put some sacks and rugs in the van for him, and Mr. Whiffles, completely tired out, went to sleep at last. He dreamed of to-morrow and vengeance.

Bunter slept peacefully in the blue and red caravan, as a fellow with a clear conscience—naturally would.

He did not wake when the circus turned out to a new day—the sound of footsteps, the hum of voices, the shining of the morning sun, did not awaken him. There was no rising-bell at Whiffles' Circus—not that the rising-bell at Greyfriars often awakened Bunter. Frequently he slept through the rising-bell, and only awakened when Bob Cherry or Peter Todd gave him a friendly kick or squeezed a wet sponge down his neck. Nothing of that kind was likely to happen here. Bunter slept on—till at last a hammering at the door of the caravan gradually penetrated his slumber, and he woke and yawned and blinked.

Thump, thump!

"Beast! 'Tain't rising-bell!"

Thump!

"Oh! My hat!" Bunter remembered. "Hallo, there! What—"

"Breakfast, guv'nor!" said George Mix.

"Oh, good!"

Bunter bounded off Mr. Whiffles' bed. He gave one blink at the mirror, a touch to wig and beard and moustache, and opened the door of the van. Breakfast was set on a little table outside the van,

in the fresh morning air. Bunter's face brightened joyously. At Greyfriars meals were limited. No fellow was expected to eat more than enough for two or three. Here there was no limit. George—perhaps having taken warning by his experiences of the previous day, regarding the new and improved appetite of Mr. Whiffles—had brought a Gargantuan supply. Rashers of bacon piled one dish, eggs filled a large plate, toast was in a mountain.

"Good!" said Bunter. "This will do to go on with! Bring me as much again—no, twice as much—and a jar of jam to finish with."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped George.

"Has that lunatic been giving any trouble?" asked Bunter, remembering the existence of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

"Yelling nineteen to the dozen, sir," said George. "Saying blood-curdling things, sir! Hawful."

"He's locked in safe?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"Yes, guv'nor."

"Is he still making out that he's me?"

"Keeping it up all the time, sir," said George, with a grin.

"He, he, he! Of course, it's very sad," said Bunter. "I shall have the poor fellow taken care of! I shall spare no expense."

"You've got a kind 'art, guv'nor," said George.

"That's my weak point," said Bunter. "I simply can't help being kind-hearted and generous. It's always been my way."

"Oh! Ah! Yes!"

"Here's half-a-crown for you, George. Bring that grub."

"Yessir! Thank you kindly, sir."

Billy Bunter breakfasted royally, turning a deaf ear to the frantic shouts and howls that came from the locked baggage-van. He could hardly be expected to bother about Mr. Whiffles while he was having breakfast. Matters of real importance naturally had to be attended to first.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### News at Last!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! No Bunter!"

Bob Cherry's first glance turned on Bunter's bed in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars when the rising-bell called the Lower Fourth up to a new day.

The bed was still empty! The Owl of the Remove had not returned! Evidently he had made a night of it!

"Good old Bunter!" grinned Skinner.

"It will be the sack now, for certain."

"The sackfulness will be a terrific certainty," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a sad shake of the head.

"Must be off his rocker," said Harry Wharton. "Staying out all night—phew!"

"May have been an accident," said Peter Todd. "He may have been run over or something."

"No such luck!" opined Skinner.

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!"

There was no news of Bunter when the Remove went down. He had been out all night, that was clear; and nothing was known of him. The juniors noticed when they saw Mr. Quelch that he had a worried look. Wrath had doubtless given place to anxiety. It was scarcely credible that any Lower boy in his right senses would have stayed out all night. An accident seemed a more probable theory. If Bunter returned, Mr. Quelch's wrath was ready to

rise again to boiling-point at a moment's notice. But so long as he did not return it took second place to anxiety.

At breakfast there was much whispering. All Forms were equally interested. What had happened to Bunter? Where was he? What was he up to? What did it all mean, anyway? Not only the Remove, but the Fourth and the Shell were keenly interested. The fags of the Second and the Third were quite excited. Sammy Bunter, of the Second Form, became quite a personage, simply because he was the minor of the fellow who was missing.

The Fifth and the Sixth, though usually affecting hardly to know that such a Form as the Remove existed at all, discussed Bunter now with the keenest interest. Even at the high table where the prefects sat, great men sitting apart in Olympian loftiness from the common herd, Bunter was the topic. It was a case of Bunter here, Bunter there, Bunter—Bunter everywhere. Bunter had provided the sensation of the term!

The infinite unimportance of William George Bunter was a thing of the past. Positively, for one occasion only, it was Bunter first and the rest nowhere.

The possibility of some serious accident was canvassed. But surely news would have reached Greyfriars by this time, had there been any accident? Skinner inquired whether Bunter had been in funds; and, learning that he hadn't been, declared that Bunter couldn't have burst in the Courtfield bun-shop. That was the only accident that Skinner regarded as at all probable.

But some fellows were feeling rather anxious. If Bunter was keeping away all this time just to dodge Quelch, he had done for himself at Greyfriars. He was sure to be sacked! If it was an accident, it was more serious still. The Head was already considering whether he ought not to communicate with Bunter's parents. Sammy of the Second, be it said to his credit, bore his anxiety—if any—with commendable fortitude. His fat face looked quite untroubled in the Second Form-room. Probably he thought that he would soon see Billy again. Possibly he thought he would see him sooner than he wanted to. Anyhow, he bore the present state of affairs with fortitude.

Bunter's place was vacant in the Remove Form-room that morning. Mr. Quelch's face was gloomy.

He was not in a tantrum. That showed that he was anxious. It was learned that all the prefects of the Sixth had gone out that morning to look for Bunter and make inquiries. If they failed to get any news, it was understood that the assistance of the police was to be called in. Wibley said they would be dragging all the ponds soon. Skinner suggested dragging all the tuck-shops. But Skinner was frowned upon. It was no time for Skinner's little jokes.

It was just on morning break when Trotter tapped at the door of the Remove-room and put his head in.

Mr. Quelch glanced round hopefully. He hoped that it was news. It would have been a great relief to Mr. Quelch to hear that Bunter was safe and sound, and to let his suppressed wrath boil up again.

"What is it, Trotter?"

"The telephone in your study, sir," said Trotter.

"Oh! You have taken the call I presume. Who is it?"

"Master Bunter, sir."

"What?"

Mr. Quelch jumped. All the Remove



jumped! That reply was utterly unexpected.

"Bunter!" repeated Mr. Quelch dazedly. "Do you mean that Master Bunter is on the telephone, Trotter?"

"Yessir. Says he wants to speak to you, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "That puts the lid on!"

"The lidfulness is terrific!"

"The fat idiot—"

"Silence! Trotter, did Master Bunter say where he was speaking from?"

That question showed how upset Mr. Quelch was. He had actually ended a sentence with a preposition. In calmer moments he would have been incapable of this. Fellows in the Remove had been given lines for such an offence. Mr. Quelch, of course, could not give himself lines. He did not even notice what he had done.

"No, sir. Jest said he wanted to speak to—to—to—"

"Kindly tell me exactly what he said, Trotter," snapped Mr. Quelch, as the House page hesitated.

"I—I—I 'ardly like to, sir!"

"What? Nonsense! Tell me this instant!"

"Very well, sir. He said he wanted to speak to old Quelch—"

"What—what?"

"And told me to fetch the old josser—"

"The—the what?"

"The old josser, sir—told me to fetch the old josser to the telephone, sir," said Trotter obediently.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Remove. They really could not help it.

Mr. Quelch's face was a study.

"He—he—he said—" he babbled.

"Yessir; and he said if the old—"

"Kindly do not repeat any more of the boy's impertinence, Trotter! Leave this Form-room."

"Why, you told me, sir—"

"Leave this Form-room at once!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yessir!"

Trotter vanished.

Mr. Quelch looked round at his class. That one look was enough. The Remove was reduced to instant seriousness.

"Wharton, keep order in this Form-room while I am gone."

"Oh! Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch whisked out of the Remove-room. He almost ran to his study, with his gown blowing out behind him. He fairly jumped at the telephone, and clutched the receiver. He jammed it to his ear, and as he did so a voice came over the wires:

"Look here, is that old donkey ever coming to the phone? Blessed if I'm going to wait much longer for the old josser!"

Undoubtedly it was Bunter on the phone!

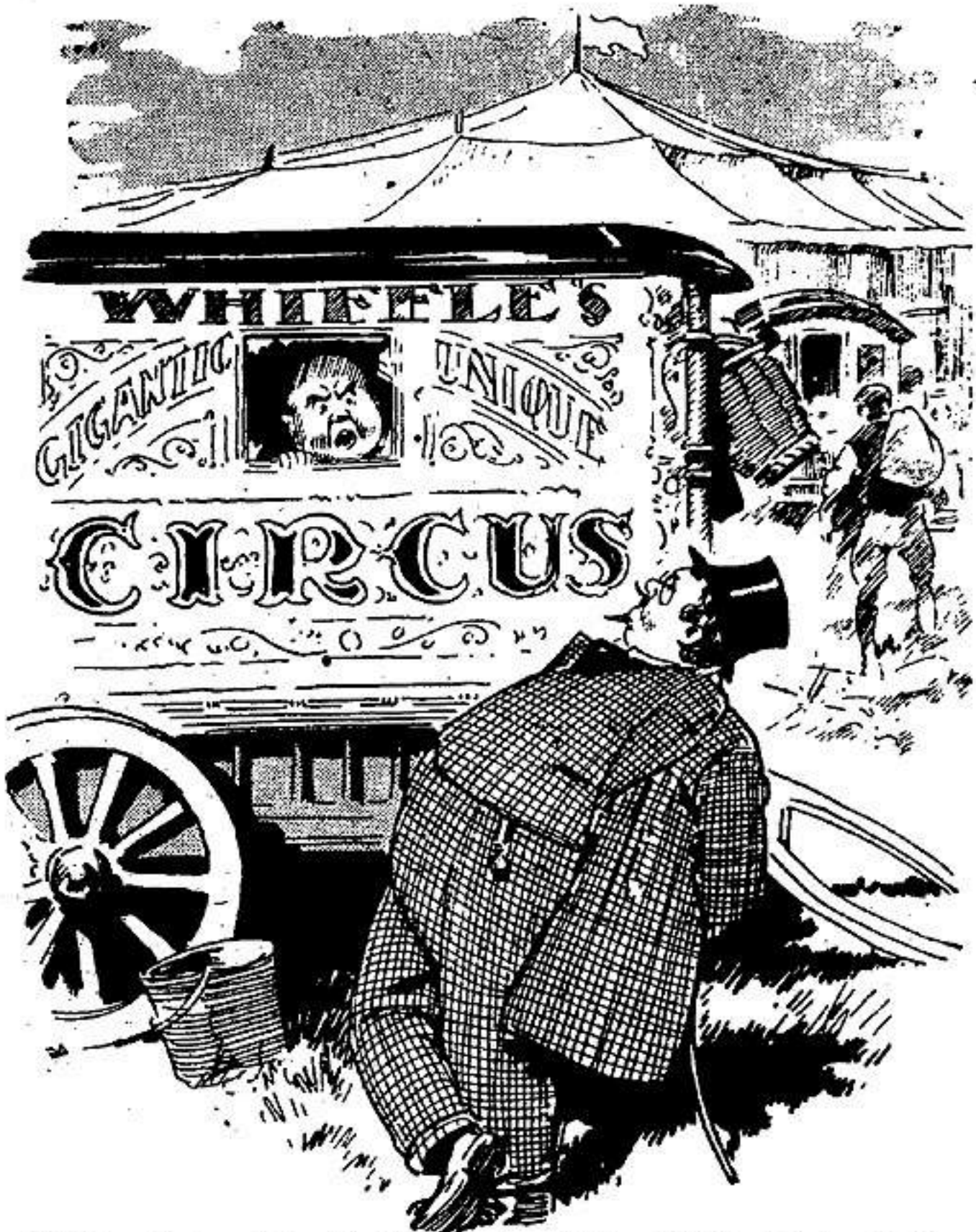
## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Boss of the Show!

**M**ONTGOMERY ST. LEGER WHIFFLES was growing husky.

His vocal cords were getting a tired feeling. His larynx was suffering from strain.

He had started the morning like the Bull of Bashan in his best form. He seemed to desire his plaint to reach the farthest limits of the universe. But he could not keep it up. His form gradually deteriorated. Husky barks and yapping now proceeded from the locked van. He was as wild and ferocious as ever, but it was a subdued ferocity. He



"Hallo, old bean!" said Billy Bunter affably. "Villain!" hooted Mr. Whiffles. "Oh, really, you know—" "Dastard! Thief! Wretch!" raved Mr. Whiffles, from the van. "Impostor! What are you doing in my clothes? What are you doing in my—my—my hair?" Billy Bunter looked at the circus proprietor, and grinned. (See Chapter 12.)

was worn down with his efforts. He could no longer roar; he could only bark and yap. He was so doing when Billy Bunter walked round to the van.

Bunter was now outside a tremendous breakfast, and he was feeling well and cheery and kind and compassionate. He felt that it was jolly good of him to waste a thought on a beast who had caused him so much trouble. But there it was; he was a jolly good fellow, and it was like him! Bunter was ready to do the best he could for Whiffles. Short, of course, of letting him loose and giving him his head. That was impossible! It was fixed in Bunter's fat mind now that he was going to be boss of the circus—monarch of all he surveyed on Courtfield Common. That was a settled thing, as immutable as the law of the Medes and Persians. Mr. Whiffles had to fit in with that arrangement, somehow.

Bunter blinked at the van. It had a small window, already knocked out by the infuriated Whiffles. Fortunately, the locked door was too stout for Whiffles to kick it out. He had tried, with painful results to his bare feet. Whiffles' face was framed in the little window as Bunter came up. The look he gave Bunter might have withered a stone image. But it had no effect on Bunter. Bunter was protected by an armour of self-satisfaction that was

more impenetrable than brass or triple steel.

"Hallo, old bean!" said Bunter affably.

"Villain!" hooted Mr. Whiffles.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Dastard! Thief! Blighter! Wretch!" barked Mr. Whiffles. "Dog! Rascal! Burglar! Impostor! Scoundrel!"

The noun substantive seemed to form the bulk of Mr. Whiffles' conversation that morning. Perhaps he had exhausted his adjectives. Hefty adjectives had floated out of that van during the night.

"Talk sense," said Bunter.

"Impostor! What are you doing in my clothes?" raved Mr. Whiffles. "What are you doing in my—my—my hair?"

Billy Bunter grinned.

"I will have the law of you!" shrieked Mr. Whiffles. "I will have you locked up—sentenced to penal servitude—hanged!"

"Are you going to be quiet?" asked Bunter.

"Quiet? No, villain!"

"Now, look here, old bean—"

"Dastard! Rascal—"

"Don't go over the list again," urged Bunter. "You're wasting time. I want to make things as easy for you as I can. I'm a kind-hearted chap—"

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"You—you—you—"

"You're wasting your breath—and you haven't got much—a fat old fellow like you," said Bunter. "What's the good? Now, if you agree to behave yourself I'll let you have some clobber. You shall have some brekker. I'm not mean. I'm not going to consider expense."

"Expense! Are you spending my money?" shrieked Mr. Whiffles.

"If you're going to be cheeky, all the worse for you," said Bunter darkly. Two or three people had drawn within hearing, and Bunter had to be careful. "I'm awfully sorry for a poor man who's off his head. I'm going to have proper care taken of you. Now, what's your name? If you know it, that is. I suppose a lunatic wouldn't."

"My name is Whiffles!" shrieked the prisoner of the baggage-van.

"Don't be funny!" urged Bunter. "Is your name Brown?"

"Villain! Wretch—"

"Is your name Jones, or Smith, or Robinson?"

"Dastard! Impostor! Rogue!"

"The pore feller wouldn't know his own name, sir," urged George Mix. "I 'eard of a loony once, sir, what thought his name was Julius Cæsar."

"Quite a common thing," agreed Bunter. "I suppose we can't find out from him who he is or where he's from. But we must do something with him."

"And him over to the police, 'sir?"

But Bunter shook his head.

"No; I'm going to be kind to the poor chap." Bunter sagely reflected that the police might listen to, and investigate, Mr. Whiffles' story, in which case Bunter himself might have a very unpleasant interview with the police soon afterwards. "I'm going to give him food and shelter, at present, while I make inquiries about—about the asylum he belongs to. Then I can hand him over to the—the asylum people."

"Villain!" yapped Mr. Whiffles. "I am Whiffles—"

"Oh, ring off that!" said Bunter peevishly. "It's time you made out you were somebody else, you know. Make it Nebuchadnezzar, for a change."

"Wretch! Rogue! Swindler—"

"Fancy 'im thinking he's you, sir—and 'im with that blooming bald 'ead, sir!" said George Mix, in wonder.

"Lunatics will think anything," said Bunter. "Now, George, you get the poor man some breakfast, and pass it in through the window. Don't open the door; he may do something dangerous if he gets out. He may drown himself, or jump under a motor-car, and we should be responsible. Find some old clothes for him—anything will do—and chuck them in the window. I'm going to the town to telephone to—to—to the county asylum to inquire about him."

"Wretch!" roared Mr. Whiffles.

"I dare say they've missed him, and they'll be after him soon," said Bunter calmly. "Give him some brekker—but no knives or forks, mind! Lunatics ain't to be trusted with them."

"Yes, sir!" said George.

Bunter rolled away, Mr. Whiffles barking furiously after him from the little window. In the broad daylight, in the full view of the circus, the prisoner in the baggage-van was not recognised as Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, to his rage and dismay. But it really was not surprising. A smooth bald head, a face without a vestige of hair upon it, bore no resemblance at all to Mr. Whiffles. Vanity had caused him to live in what was practically a disguise for many years. Now his disguise was gone, and he looked like a

totally different person. He felt quite overwhelmed by his helplessness, and wild with rage at seeing a stranger—some unknown rogue—walking about the circus in his clothes, his moustache, his hair, and his beard, accepted and acknowledged on all hands as the world-famous proprietor of the World-Famous Circus.

Bunter gave him no further heed. It was going to be a busy morning for the new proprietor of the World-Famous Circus, and Bunter had to ration his time. Whiffles had had his share, and he had done with Whiffles for the present.

He sought out his manager, Mr. Dance. He had a slight feeling of discomfort under Dance's penetrating eye. It really almost looked as if the beast suspected something; but that, surely, was impossible! Nobody else suspected anything.

"Look here, Dance," said Bunter. "I've decided to move on the circus. We're finished at Courtfield."

"Finished at Courtfield, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Dance. "Why, we've given only two shows, sir, so far—"

"That's enough! I've decided to move on."

"But we're doing splendid business, sir, and we're billed to stay a week!" exclaimed the manager.

"That's cancelled."

"But—Mr. Whiffles—"

Bunter raised a fat forefinger.

"Don't argue! Do just as I tell you. I'm going into the town now to telephone to Greyfriars—I mean to the county asylum to ask them to send for that lunatic. Get all ready while I'm gone. We take the road to-day. Pack up everything!"

"But—" gasped the manager.

Bunter frowned.

"Have everything ready when I get back!" he said. "Look out for squalls if you keep me waiting!"

"Oh! Ah! Very well, sir!"

"Understand this, Dance! I run this circus in my own way. I don't like argument. I'm not accustomed to argument from my underlings. Make a note of that! If you want to keep your job, do as you're told, without so much back-chat. See?"

Without waiting for an answer Bunter walked haughtily away. Dance sent a very curious glance after him. Was suspicion working in his mind? Did the discovery of the wig in the van, the previous evening, give Mr. Dance a hint that things were not quite right? If so, Mr. Dance kept his thoughts to himself, and proceeded to carry out the governor's orders. Tents were being struck when Bunter rolled away towards Courtfield, to telephone—certainly not to the county asylum.

Mr. Quelch would have ground his teeth had they not been an expensive set. So that disrespectful young rascal knew that he had been out in search of him the previous night!

"Banter! Where are you?"

"Here, sir!"

"Where, you stupid boy? Where are you—?" Mr. Quelch nearly said: "Where are you speaking from?" which would have been twice in one day. But he checked himself in time. "From where are you speaking, Bunter?"

"Not Courtfield, sir! I'm miles and miles from Courtfield!" came the fat voice, rather hastily.

"So you are in Courtfield!" hissed Mr. Quelch.

It really was odd how people naturally assumed the opposite from any of William George Bunter's statements. The same experience must have fallen to the lot of Ananias, Baron Munchausen, and George Washington.

"Nunno, sir! I've just said not! I—I'm speaking from Lantham! That is to say, Canterbury! Canterbury, sir!"

"You untruthful young rascal!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Return to the school at once, Bunter! Do you hear? You are to return to Greyfriars immediately!"

"I'm just going to speak about that, sir! Owing to circumstances, I shan't be able to come back to school this term."

"What? What? What?"

"It's only a few more days, anyhow, sir. We're just on the hols. I hope you won't mind if I start hols now."

"Certainly I shall mind! I shall mind very much! I command you to return instantly, Bunter, and take the punishment that is due for your unexampled audacity and disrespect and rebelliousness! I order you to lose not a moment in returning to the school, where the severest possible punishment is awaiting you!"

"I didn't catch that, sir."

"What?"

"Would you mind saying that over again, sir?"

"Bunter! I—I—I—"

"The fact is, sir, I've got an engagement, a very important engagement. It's nothing to do with a circus."

"You are at the circus now!" hooted Mr. Quelch.

Mr. Quelch felt that the telephone was an inadequate instrument. It did not bring you sufficiently in touch with people. He wanted to be in much closer touch with Bunter. He would have touched him hard.

"No; nothing of the kind! I haven't been to the circus at all. In fact, I haven't heard of one in these parts. But—"

"Bunter, I command you to return to Greyfriars!"

"Awfully sorry; it's impossible, sir! You see, I've got a rather important engagement. I shall be back next term, if you're anxious to see me, sir."

"Next term! Bunter—"

"Let my people know I shan't be home for the hols, sir! Tell them I'm all right. Tell my pater there's nothing to fuss about. He might be anxious—I'm the apple of his eye, you know! Tell Sammy—"

"Bunter!"

"Tell Sammy he can keep that bob he owes me. I've got plenty of money now. Tell Wharton and Bob Cherry that I'll kick them next term."

"Bless my soul."

"I think that's about all, sir. I thought I'd let you know I was all right, in case you were anxious, sir. Don't come rotting about after me any more. I'm not at the circus."

"Bunter, you will be severely flogged—"

"I don't think!"

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Quelchy Seeing Red!

**M**R. QUELCH gripped the receiver with a deadly grip. He would have preferred to grip William George Bunter. His grip would have been deadlier.

He fairly hooted into the transmitter.

"Bunter! Is that you, Bunter?"

"Oh! Is that you, Quelchy?"

"What? What?"

"Good-morning, sir! Nice morning!" came the fat voice over the wires. "I hope you're well this morning, sir! Not tired from your walk last night, what?"

Mr. Quelch would have ground his teeth had they not been an expensive set. So that disrespectful young rascal knew that he had been out in search of him the previous night!



"If you return to Greyfriars at once—"

"No fear!"

"But if you do not return, you will be expelled from the school!" boomed Mr. Quelch. "Do you hear, Bunter? You rascally boy! Expelled! Do you hear?"

But answer there came none!

"Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Boy! Bunter!"

Still there was no answer. Mr. Quelch realised that Bunter had rung off. He jammed the receiver back on the hooks, with a jam that made the telephone rock. Then he paced his study.

Mr. Quelch's anxiety for Bunter was quite relieved now. There was nothing to be anxious about. Evidently the fat junior had had no accident. The Remove master's wrath, long suppressed by that possibility of an accident, boiled over again.

He paced his study, thinking the matter over. The young rascal—the rebellious young rascal—must be expelled for this! That was inevitable. But he could not very well be expelled in his absence. Even an expelled fellow had to be handed over to his parents. Bunter had to be found.

Fortunately, owing to Bunter's masterly astuteness, Mr. Quelch knew where to find him. He was at the circus! Those riff-raff, who had pretended to be helping Mr. Quelch to find him last night, must be hiding him—helping him to defy authority, to flout his schoolmaster, Bunter must be found, dragged back to Greyfriars—flogged—and expelled—sent home, never to darken the door of the Remove Form-room again.

Thinking this out—with some solace in the prospect—Mr. Quelch rather omitted to observe the passage of time. It suddenly dawned upon him that there was a crowd and a buzz in the quad—all Forms were out for break—all excepting the Remove. His own Form were waiting his return patiently—or more probably impatiently—to be dismissed.

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

He hurried back to the Remove-room. A buzz of voices greeted him as he arrived at the door.

"This is rotten! Look here, I'm going!"

"Where the thump is old Quelch?"

"Can't be phoning to the other silly ass all this time!"

"I say, this is getting thick!"

"Blow old Quelch!"

That excited discussion stopped all of a sudden as Mr. Quelch opened the Form-room door and sailed in. The silence of dismay fell upon the Lower Fourth!

If Quelch had heard them—

Evidently he had!

"Wharton!" boomed Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"I directed you to keep order in this Form-room during my absence! You will take five hundred lines, Wharton."

"Oh!"

"Every other boy in the Form will take two hundred lines."

"Oh!" said all the Remove.

"Dismiss!"

The Remove marched out.

"This is getting rather thick," remarked Bob Cherry. "I wonder what Bunter said to him on the phone? It doesn't seem to have soothed him."

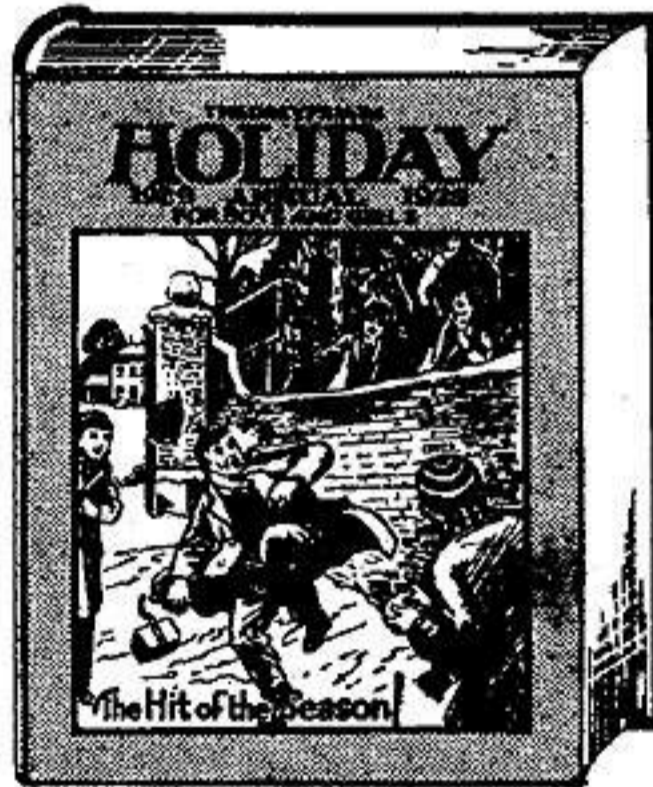
"The soothfulness does not seem terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We shall have a terrifically

high old time in third lesson! I shall not be sorrowful, my esteemed chums, when the term ends and we get a rest from the admirable and absurd Quelchy."

That feeling was generally shared in the Remove. They admitted that Quelchy had some cause to be wild with Bunter; but he was undoubtedly getting jolly unpleasant. In third lesson the nabob's anticipations were more than verified. The Remove had a high old time. Quelchy was in a tantrum—and it seemed to be his idea to give the Remove a little on account of what was due to Bunter.

All the Form were glad, very glad, when that lesson ended. It was quite a relief to get away from Quelchy for a bit. Fellows who had been looking forward to the holidays now looked forward to them much more eagerly and intensely. With Quelchy in this state, Greyfriars could not break up too soon for the Remove.

## BETTER THAN EVER!



Yes, the new edition of  
this world-famous Annual  
will be obtainable in a  
FEW WEEKS' TIME!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There he goes!" murmured Bob Cherry, as he spotted the Remove master in the offing. "He's after Bunter again!"

"Shouldn't care to be in Bunter's shoes when he gets him!" remarked Squiff.

Many eyes watched Mr. Quelch when he came back. Bunter was not with him; the Remove master came in alone, quite pale with the intensity of his emotions. And the whole school wondered.

It was later in the day when they learned that Whiffles' World-Famous Circus was gone.

Billed to stay at Courtfield for a week, and doing great business, it had suddenly packed up and taken the road. Nobody knew why.

Mr. Quelch, arriving on the common, in search of Bunter, had found the encampment broken up—and gone! Holes in the ground, left by tent-pegs; patches of burnt turf; fragments of

paper blowing about in the wind; old tin cans and discarded bottles, and such flotsam and jetsam, remained to mark the spot. But the circus was gone; and if Bunter was with the circus, he was gone, too!

Mr. Quelch walked back to Greyfriars in a mood that was only equalled by the mood of a bald-headed gentleman who was travelling with the circus, locked up in an empty baggage-van.

### THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

#### After Bunter!

"H" E'S gone with the giddy circus!"

"The fat idiot!"

"The unspeakable chump!"

"Good old Bunter!" said Skinner heatedly. "Bunter's a philanthropist! To go and do this, just when we're all bored to death, as usual, at the end of the term! It's kind of Bunter!"

"It's the sack for him, fathead!"

"Well, that's kinder of him than ever," said Skinner blandly. "Fancy next term without Bunter! Gorgeous!"

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!"

It was after classes that day that it leaked out that Billy Bunter was still with the circus—or was at least supposed to be still with the circus. It was known that Wingate of the Sixth, instead of class that afternoon, had gone out on his motor-bike.

From one fellow to another the rumour ran that Wingate had gone to look for the circus, which had shifted its quarters; and when Wingate came in he was heard to tell Gwynne of the Sixth that he had located the circus, on the road to Lantham, and he was heard to add that he hadn't seen Bunter with it.

That Bunter was supposed to have gone with the circus was clear, but it was perplexing enough to the Remove fellows.

That he might prefer going with the circus to returning to Greyfriars for a flogging was probable enough. But why had the circus people let him? They couldn't possibly want Bunter. Anything that was merely improbable might happen, but not anything that was impossible; and all the Remove agreed that it was impossible for anybody to want Bunter. He could not have squared them to take him; he had nothing wherewith to square. Moreover, how could they be such asses as to take a runaway schoolboy away with them? They couldn't!

It really was inexplicable.

Greyfriars had only one topic now—Bunter! Bunter filled the bill! All the more or less interesting things that happened at the end of the term took second place to Bunter.

It was rather a windfall, in some ways. At term-end, when masters were tired and jaded and irritable, and fellows looking forward to the holidays—everybody, as Skinner described it, fed-up to the back teeth with everybody else—Bunter had provided a sensation.

It was such a sensation as seldom or never happened—and it happened at a time when one was most needed! Fellows who during the length of the term had exhausted all their topics could now say to one another when they met, with keen interest, "What about Bunter? Ha, ha, ha!"

Masters Common-room, which was generally supposed to be on the verge of a row at the end of a term, found the new sensation a relief, just as the fellows did.



Mr. Prout of the Fifth held forth in his ponderous style; but, for once, Mr. Prout had something new to say. Mr. Quelch received all sorts of little jabs from the other masters on the subject—in the way of masters who, at the end of the term, were tired and getting nervy. All the masters agreed that things like this could not happen in their Forms, they were thankful to say.

The Remove men could guess what Mr. Quelch was feeling like. He was the only man at Greyfriars, excepting the Head, who did not find Bunter's antics a much-needed relief.

"It's too jolly bad!" Bob Cherry declared in the Rag. "Quelch is getting ragged over it. They don't call it ragging; but that's what it is. He can't help Bunter being a silly ass."

"Of course he can't!" said Skinner. "Can't even help being a silly ass himself, if you come to that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"It will be the finish for Bunter," said Wharton. "The fat chump has been asking for trouble all through the term. Now he's put the lid on."

"He's torn it this time, that's a cert!" said Nugent. "But I can't understand the circus people letting him go with them—if he's gone."

"May have taken him as a curiosity," suggested Skinner. "After all, Bunter is rather unique! May be taking him as the Fattest Freak on Record, or something like that. There are people who would pay sixpence just to see Bunter."

"Fathead!"  
"They may bill him as Bunter the Boy Barrel, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"I can't make it out," said Harry. "But if Bunter is with the circus he's got to be got away from it. If he doesn't come back and take his licking he will be sacked!"

"The sackfulness is an esteemed cert," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed Bunter may not understand that. His understandfulness is not terrific."

"Lantham!" said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "I hear that Wingate spotted the circus on the road to Lantham. We could do it on the bikes."

Harry Wharton nodded.  
"I was thinking of that. What about going after them? A circus travels slow, and we may pick them up this side of Lantham. If Bunter's there we may be able to make the fat idiot see sense. I don't suppose it's even crossed his silly mind that he may be sacked for this."

"Let's!" said Johnny Bull.

After a few minutes' discussion the Famous Five decided on it. If they were late back for lock-up it meant lines, or perhaps a licking in Quelch's present mood; but they were really concerned for the fatuous Owl of the Remove. If he was with the circus he might have dodged out of Wingate's sight, but he might listen to fellows of his own Form. And it was a pleasant summer's day, and a bike spin was not unattractive.

So the Famous Five wheeled out their bicycles immediately after tea and started.

The circus, with its train of caravans, baggage-vans, cages, and other paraphernalia, was certain to travel very slowly. It had left Courtfield in the morning, but quite probably it was not at Lantham yet. And the juniors covered the ground very quickly on their machines.

How and why Bunter could possibly be with the circus they did not understand. It seemed incredible that Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles would

allow a runaway schoolboy to travel with his show. But it was certain that Wingate had been sent after the circus to inquire for Bunter, so evidently Mr. Quelch thought he was there. Anyhow, the Famous Five were going to see.

They did not pick up the circus on the hither side of Lantham. They arrived at that town and headed for a field where, as they knew from past experience, circuses had often camped. But no circus was there. It appeared that Whiffles' World-Famous Circus had not stopped. Yet the circus was widely billed and advertised to stop a week at Lantham after its stay at Courtfield. The whole thing was puzzling. Mr. Whiffles had not only cut short the stay at Courtfield, after a single day's performance, but had cut out Lantham. It looked as if he was in rather a hurry to get out of the district altogether.

But the chums of the Remove were not to be beaten.

"Keep on—what?" said Bob.

"It means getting late back and getting into a row," said Harry Wharton. "But now we've come ten miles we're not going back without seeing what is what! Let's keep on."

"The keep-onfulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Singh.

And they kept on.  
The World-Famous Circus naturally attracted a lot of attention wherever it passed, and it was easy enough to pick up information. Plenty of people had seen the procession, and could point out the way it had gone.

Fast on its track rode the five cyclists from Greyfriars—so far out of school bounds now that they hardly liked to think how far they were. Still, if they brought the Owl of the Remove back with them it would be all right. For their own sakes now, as well as Bunter's, they hoped that they would be able to bring him back.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's the show!" exclaimed Bob Cherry at last, pointing to a distant field along the winding country road.

There it was—tents and caravans—backed by the setting sun. No performance was on; no strain of music reached their ears. The circus had apparently just camped for the night, and not to give a show. But the juniors were glad to see it, and they rode up to the camp, a little tired and dusty, but hopeful. If Bunter was there—

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### No Bunter!

"**B**EASTS!"

Billy Bunter was there. He was not recognisable by his nearest relation; but he was there—as large as life, though not so natural.

A fat gentleman in curly long hair, pointed beard, waxed moustaches, and remarkable clothes, with a bell-brimmed silk hat on his ample locks, was the first figure to catch the eyes of Harry Wharton & Co. as they came up.

They caught his eyes at the same time, and he ejaculated "Beasts!" before they were in hearing.

Greyfriars fellows were not welcome to his view. The new Mr. Whiffles was making all speed to get away from the neighbourhood of Greyfriars. All day the circus had been on the road. Much to the puzzlement of the whole company, performances were "off" for the time being. They were probably not sorry to take a rest, as salaries went on just the same; the loss was Mr. Whiffles'. But they were puzzled. They really

could not understand the motives of the boss—and the "boss" was not likely to explain. All that Bunter wanted at present was to get clear of Greyfriars, out of reach of fussy, interfering Form masters and headmasters. He had even contemplated travelling all night; but at fifteen miles from Greyfriars he was feeling fairly safe. The sight of the Famous Five, therefore, was not gratifying to the Owl of the Remove.

"Beasts!"  
Bunter walked away quickly towards his van. He decided to let his underlings deal with these interfering beasts, who were butting in when he thought he had seen the last of them.

But the Famous Five were not to be denied. Mr. Whiffles was the man they wanted to see, and here was Mr. Whiffles. They left their bicycles in a bunch and cut across to intercept the circus proprietor.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Mr. Whiffles!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Mr. Whiffles the Second stopped. He had to stop, with five fellows standing in his path.

He frowned at them.

"Look here—"

"Good-evening, Mr. Whiffles!" said Wharton, raising his cap politely.

"Oh, rats!"

"What?"

"Hook it! You're not wanted here."

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors stared at Mr. Whiffles. They had met Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles once or twice before going to the circus at Courtfield, and he had been very civil, in fact, impressively polite. But the afternoon at the circus he had cut up rusty. Now he was cutting up rusty again, for no reason that the juniors could guess. They did not, of course, know that Mr. Whiffles had changed his identity in the interval.

"My esteemed Whiffles!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"We've come for Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "A fellow belonging to our school is travelling with your circus, Mr. Whiffles."

"Rot!"

"We've come to take him back to Greyfriars."

"Rubbish!"

"Look here, Mr. Whiffles—"

"Rats!"

"Is Bunter here?" demanded Wharton, his temper rising a little. "Give us a plain answer, sir. We've a right to know."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"If you've got a runaway schoolboy here, you'll get landed in trouble," said Johnny Bull. "You ain't allowed to help a fellow run away from school."

"It's jolly plain he's here," said Frank Nugent. "Look here, Mr. Whiffles. You can cut up as rusty as you like, but we've come here for Billy Bunter, and we're not going back without him."

"You jolly well are!" answered the proprietor of the world-famous circus. "You get out! See? I don't want schoolboys hanging about here!"

"We want Bunter," snapped Wharton. "I can see that he's here all right, though goodness knows why. What on earth do you want the silly chump for?"

"Silly chump yourself!" snapped the fat gentleman. "I can jolly well tell you that if you had half Bunter's brains you'd do. Besides, he isn't here. I've never heard of him, in fact. Who is he?"

The juniors gazed at Mr. Whiffles.

"Look here, sir," exclaimed Harry sharply. "This won't do. You know jolly well who Bunter is, as Wingate came inquiring after him to-day."





Bob Cherry snatched up the heavy cabbage-stump, and hurled it with unerring aim at Mr. Whiffles the Second. It landed on the bogus circus-master's extensive waistcoat, and bowled him over heavily. Bump! "Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" he gasped. "Groooh! Ooooooh! Whooooop!" "Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the chums of the Remove.

(See Chapter 15.)

"Who's Wingate?"  
"A Sixth Form man of Greyfriars. He—"

"What's Greyfriars?"  
"Eh? That's our school."  
"Never heard of it," said Mr. Whiffles.

"You never heard of Greyfriars?" roared Bob Cherry.

"No."  
"Well, my hat!"  
"And I don't want to hear of it, or of you either," pursued Mr. Whiffles. "I'm fed-up with you! I shall have to stand you next term."

"What?"  
"I—I mean—" Mr. Whiffles stammered. "Look here. Bunter's not here. He's gone home. He went home this morning. See?"

"Gone home?" repeated Wharton.  
"Yes. I saw him off at the station."  
"What station?" demanded Nugent.  
"Courtfield—just before we left. Now clear off!"

"Look here, that's all rot," said Harry. "Quelch would know if Bunter had gone home. He hasn't."

"I tell you I saw him off at the station. We stopped in Lantham on purpose, and I put him into the train."  
"Oh crumbs!"

"You put him into the train at Lantham, after seeing him off at Courtfield before you started?" yelled Bob.

"Oh, I—I—I mean—" "Well, what do you mean?" said Harry Wharton. "You mean that he's here all the time, and you're trying to stuff us he's not!"

"I tell you he's gone, you silly ass! Now I come to think of it, I lent him a car to go home in."

"Great Scott!"  
"He's not gone home!" roared Bob. "Our Form master's been on the phone to his people to-day. He's not at home."  
"Oh, I—I didn't think of that! I—I

mean, I—I—" Mr. Whiffles stammered in a way that quite reminded the juniors of Billy Bunter himself. "Look here. Now I come to think of it, he's gone on a holiday. He's gone over to Boulogne. One of those trips, you know."

"He's done nothing of the sort," said the captain of the Remove, "and your trying to stuff us shows that he's here. We want you to hand him over, Mr. Whiffles, so that we can take him back with us."

"No jolly fear!" said Mr. Whiffles promptly. "Quelch's too jolly wild for that!"

"My only hat! Do you mean you're keeping him here because he's got a licking coming to him when he gets back?"

"Yes—I mean, no. I don't know anything about him. The fact is, I never heard of the fellow. Never heard the name in my life. Now get out. Bunter's not here. You can take my word for that."

"Take your word!" gasped Wharton. "I think I'd just as soon take Bunter's. Look here, Mr. Whiffles, we want Bunter; and if you don't hand him over, the headmaster of Greyfriars will send a bobby to fetch him. Haven't you sense enough to see that?"

"Oh, lor!"  
Mr. Whiffles blinked at the captain of the Remove in dismay, evidently startled by that suggestion.

"But—but—I tell you he's not here! He can stay here if he likes, I suppose? Besides, he isn't here. He—he—" The fat gentleman gasped. "Now I come to think of it, he's dead."  
"Dead!" yelled the juniors.

"Yes! Run over by a charabanc in Courtfield this morning! You'll find him at the—the hospital! He was killed instantly by the motor-lorry running right over him! A—a very sad case! I

—I saw him being taken to the hospital! His groans were awful!"

"His groans were awful, when he was dead?" gasped Bob Cherry. "Oh, my only summer hat!"

"I—I mean, his—his groans weren't awful! I mean they would have been awful, if—if he hadn't been dead! That's what I really meant to say. Now you fellows clear off. I suppose you can take my word?"

"Great Christopher Columbus!"  
The juniors did not take Mr. Whiffles' word. His statements were rather too mixed for that; too reminiscent of the kind of statements Bunter was wont to make in times of difficulty.

"I don't know why you're handing out these whoppers, Mr. Whiffles," said Harry. "But I suppose you don't expect us to believe them? You've got Bunter here, and you've got to hand him over—see! Where is he?"

"Looks as if Bunter's been kidnapped," said Bob Cherry, in wonder. "But what could they want to kidnap him for? He's here right enough."  
"The herefulness is terrific."

By this time a crowd of circus hands had gathered round. Mr. Dance stepped forward. His eyes had been fixed in a very penetrating way on his "boss," but now he looked at the juniors.

"What is the boy-like who is missing from your school?" he asked.

"A short, fat fellow—just like Mr. Whiffles in build," said Harry Wharton. "Oh!" exclaimed Dance.

Bunter felt a shiver run down his back. He had suspected before that Dance suspected something. Now it flashed into his mind as a certainty. It was neck or nothing again.

"Get out of this, Dance!" he exclaimed. "What the thump are you butting in for? You'll jolly soon be sacked at this rate! Clear off!"

(Continued on page 28.)



# THE LORD OF LOST ISLAND!

**NOT BEATEN YET!** Ferrers Locke has braved innumerable perils to put a modern Captain Hidd under lock and key. But Black Michael, even with the handcuffs on his wrists, is still capable of black treachery!



A Thrilling  
Story of Detective  
Adventure,  
featuring  
Ferrers Locke, and  
his boy assistant,  
Jack Drake.

(Introduction on  
next page.)

## The Skipper of the Angatau!

**F**EDERKIEL stared at Ferrers Locke, his face expressionless. Then he bowed slightly. There was breeding in the man, and never was it so evident as at that moment.

"I congratulate you on your courage—and success!" he said. "It is unfortunate for you that this hitch has occurred."

"You will repair the defect at once!" replied the detective sternly.

Federkiel shrugged his shoulders.

"That is impossible!" he replied. "It is my oil-feed. The fault is entirely mine, but I overlooked the replenishing of my oil supply before we left the lagoon."

He was not lying. A less keener man than the Baker Street detective might have suspected that, but Ferrers Locke knew Federkiel was speaking the truth.

"You have no oil aboard?" he demanded.

"None."

"Very good! We must stay here till we are picked up. I will give you this warning, Federkiel. At the first hostile move I will shoot you, and shoot to kill. You understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

"Then get into the rear cockpit and stay there!"

Federkiel obeyed, stepping cautiously to avoid the bound form of his chief lying on the floor of the cockpit.

"I think we were roughly about twenty-five miles from the vessel we sighted when we reached the water," said Ferrers Locke, turning to his boy assistant. "They would see us coming down, and will probably come to investigate!"

"What kind of ship do you think she is, gov'nor?"

"A trader running between the

islands, or from the mainland to the islands, I think," replied the detective.

Half an hour later a wisp of smoke showed above a tiny speck on the horizon.

"Here she comes, gov'nor!" cried Jack, as the speck slowly grew in size. "She's a slow old tub!"

"Yes," replied Ferrers Locke, with a smile; "but, judging by the way they're stoking her up she's pounding along as hard as her old engines can bring her!"

Volumes of smoke were now pouring from the smoke-stack of the steamer. As she drew nearer the detective and his boy assistant saw that she was a small, rusty-hulled tramp of less than one thousand tons burden. Her bridge was high and set well aft. Her smoke-stack was rusty, long, and black. She looked an untidy, uncared-for derelict of the seas, spending her last years amongst the islands.

"The Angatau," said Jack Drake, reading the name which was picked out in chipped and faded white lettering on her blunt bows.

Ferrers Locke turned to Federkiel.

"I am now going to handcuff you," he said. "Will you submit quietly, or must I use force?"

Federkiel thrust out his hands.

"One golden rule I have learned," he said evenly. "It is to recognise when one is at the wrong end of a gun!"

Ferrers Locke leant forward.

The handcuffs snapped on Federkiel's wrists. For a moment the eyes of the two men met.

"Ferrers Locke," said Federkiel quietly, "it is your call! But this game is not over! Some day I will kill you for this!"

"Seaplane, ahoy!" came a hail from the bridge of the Angatau, as slowly the small steamer lost way and lay heaving on the swell within a cable's length of the machine. "Can we assist you?"

"Yes!" shouted Ferrers Locke. "Lower a boat! I'm coming aboard you."

He turned to Jack Drake as a boat splashed from the davits into the water.

"Look after the prisoners, lad! I'll see if I can get any oil from the skipper. If not we'll have to take the seaplane in tow."

The Angatau's boat brought up alongside one of the floats, and Ferrers Locke dropped into it. It was manned by three Kanakas. A white man, dirty and unshaven, sat in the stern-sheets, holding the tiller-lines.

"What's your trouble, mister?" he inquired.

"We have had a forced landing," replied Locke. "If your skipper can let us have some oil we will be very much obliged."

"Best see him yourself," grunted the man, and gave a gruff order to the Kanakas.

The boat was turned and headed back towards the Angatau.

The fellow in the stern-sheets eyed Ferrers Locke steadily for a few moments.

"Say," he jerked out, "you've got a guy in handcuffs aboard that seaplane!"

"Well?" inquired the Baker Street detective curtly.

"Aw, nothin'! Reckon I was a bit curious, that's all. So's the old man. We had our glasses on you."

"I shall explain the position to your captain," replied Ferrers Locke quietly.

"Yes; guess he'll want to know just what's what, mister."

The boat bumped against the rusty, iron-plated hull of the Angatau, and Ferrers Locke went up a rope ladder. As he stepped on to a dirty iron deck, a big, hulking man slouched down the bridge ladder and came towards him.

He was wearing a dingy cotton shirt, and trousers which had once been white. His shirt, open at the neck, displayed a well-developed, hairy chest. His face



was mahogany colour, and little eyes peered from under a tangle of bushy eyebrows. His full-lipped mouth had a twist to it, which gave the impression of a permanent sneer.

"Well, what's your trouble, mister?" he growled, his little eyes taking the Baker Street detective from head to foot. "I'm Cap'n Mackaw, skipper and owner of this vessel."

"I am Ferrers Locke, of London!" replied the detective crisply. "Working in conjunction with the police of South America. I have two wanted men on board that seaplane. I was taking them towards the main shipping route when, owing to our oil giving out, we were forced to descend."

"Why the shipping route, mister?" demanded Mackaw. "Why not the mainland?"

"Because the petrol capacity of the machine would not allow us to make for the mainland," replied Ferrers Locke. "Wellington steamship route was the nearer!"

He resented the questions, but he knew some explanation was due to this skipper. Moreover, it was no earthly use antagonising the fellow by a curt refusal to answer questions.

"I will be much obliged if you can let me have some oil, if you have any aboard," he went on. "Needless to say, I will see you receive payment for it."

Mackaw shook his head, casting a side-long glance at the man who had accompanied the Kanakas in the boat.

"You refuse?" demanded Ferrers Locke sharply.

"Yes," Mackaw nodded.

"I demand your assistance in the name of the law!"

"I say no!" growled Mackaw.

"You are piling up trouble for yourself, captain," warned the Baker Street detective sharply.

Mackaw laughed harshly.

"It was only my joke, mister," he said. "I'd let you have some oil, an' welcome if I had it. I ain't got any. Just cheap, crude stuff, that would clog your oil pipes in five minutes." He turned to the other man. "That's correct, Joe, ain't it?"

"Sure!" grunted the man addressed, laconically.

"For where are you bound?" asked Ferrers Locke, eyeing the man closely.

"For Tala Island, to pick up copra," replied Mackaw.

Again the captain glanced towards his companion, and the detective's eyes narrowed.

"An' on Tala Island you'll get some refined oil," went on Mackaw. "The trader there is a fellow called Henri, and he's got a little petrol engine thing what he makes his electric light with."

"Oh!" Ferrers Locke's voice was casual. "Where does he get his oil?"

"We take—" began Mackaw, then checked himself abruptly. "We take it to him every other voyage," he went on quickly. "Ain't carrying none this trip."

"Well," Ferrers Locke turned towards the ladder, "the only course open to me is to transfer my prisoners to your vessel. If we sight a ship carrying wireless you will put us aboard her. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Very good! I will be obliged if you will instruct your men to help me in the transferring of the prisoners."

"Just a minute, mister!" said Mackaw, as Ferrers Locke moved away. "What's those prisoners wanted for?"

"For murder and piracy," replied the Baker Street detective quietly. "I am sorry, captain, but I must ask you to question me no further."

### Treachery!

"**J**ACK!" Ferrers Locke spoke rapidly, in a low voice. "Look out for trouble! The skipper of that vessel is a bad 'un!"

The Baker Street detective and his boy assistant were in the forward cockpit of the machine. Belw, by the port float, waited the boat to take them to the Angatau. Federkiel and Chalmers were in the stern sheets. The man, Joe, whom Ferrers Locke took to be the mate, had stayed aboard the Angatau.

"But surely he dare not ally himself with Chalmers!" replied Jack Drake.

"The men that sail these seas acknowledge no law except that of the rope, gun, or knife!" said Ferrers Locke grimly. "Yet we must go on that vessel, for it is our only chance of ever reaching the mainland. It would be futile to remain here on the off-chance of being picked-up by another ship!"

"Well, if it comes to a scrap, we'll be all there!" responded Jack.

"Yes, but there are too great issues at stake, my boy!" replied the detective. "Chalmers must not escape from us now. I—"

"Us Kanaka fellows plenty ready, mister!" called one of the natives from the boat.

"Right, we're coming!" shouted Jack.

"One last word, my boy!" said Ferrers Locke earnestly. "Keep by me as much as possible the whole time we are on that vessel, and keep your hand near your gun! Now, come on!"

Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant dropped down to the boat where a rope had already been fastened to the under-carriage of the seaplane. In silence they were rowed to the Angatau and their prisoners taken on deck.

Mackaw and his mate stood at the top of the rope ladder and subjected both Federkiel and Chalmers to a long appraising stare.

"I want these men where I can keep an eye on them!" said Ferrers Locke to Mackaw. "As your cabin accommodation will be limited I will put them in irons in the wheelhouse. Do you agree?"

"Sure!" drawled Mackaw, and bawled an order to one of the Kanakas to bring two sets of irons to the bridge.

Chalmers seemed like a man dazed. Before putting him in the boat the detective had removed his gag. But the pirate chief made no effort to speak, and submitted quietly to being put in irons. Federkiel also was strangely silent.

The seaplane tow-rope was made fast, the engine-room telegraph rang

### INTRODUCTION.

*Ferrers Locke, the Baker Street detective, is called in to investigate the mysterious disappearance of several large vessels lost with all hands in the South Pacific. Suspecting a man known as Professor Chalmers, who answers in every way to the description of Black Michael, a pirate who has been terrorising the western seaboard of South America, Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake, his clever boy assistant, disguise themselves and set sail for Buenos Aires. Arriving at their destination they scrape an acquaintance with 'Frisco Sam, proprietor of Black Michael's old haunt, succeed in getting aboard the Seagull, and eventually reach Lost Island, Black Michael's stronghold. Here, by a clever ruse, Ferrers Locke overpowers Black Michael, bottles up his stronghold, and with the aid of Jack Drake carries the pirate chief on board a seaplane in the lagoon. Covering the pilot with his gun, the London sleuth forces him to take off and circle widely in the hope of sighting a ship. Just as a smudge of smoke appears on the horizon, however, the plane is forced to descend owing to engine trouble. Turning to Ferrers Locke and Drake, Federkiel, the pilot, demands to know who they are.*

"I am Ferrers Locke," replies the Baker Street detective, "and both you and Chalmers are under arrest for piracy!"

(Now read on.)

janglingly, and slowly the Angatau got under way.

"We'll stop in the wheelhouse during this trip, Jack!" said Ferrers Locke. "I'm not giving either Mackaw or Joe a chance to chin-wag with those two prisoners. According to Mackaw we should reach Tala Island at dawn tomorrow!"

"How many men are there on board, do you think, guv'nor?" asked Jack.

"Mackaw and Joe seem the only white men! There appear to be four Kanaka deck hands, including the cook. I don't suppose the engine-room has more than three! Nine men, I think, lad!"

"H'm! Nine to two if trouble starts! Well, we've tackled worse odds, guv'nor!"

"Yes, and come through, Jack! We may be on a false scent in anticipating trouble with Mackaw, but we most certainly cannot afford to ignore such a contingency. We'll go to the wheelhouse, now!"

Mackaw and Joe were on the bridge. The skipper greeted Ferrers Locke with a friendly grin.

"If your aimin' on stayin' along wi' these prisoners of yours, mister," he said, "I'll tell cooky to bring your grub up here!"

"Thanks! I'll be much obliged!"

"I reckon that's all right! Always pleased to help th' law!" grinned Mackaw.

The wheelhouse was a mere cubby-hole. A Kanaka drooped drowsily over the wheel. Chalmers and Federkiel were sitting side by side on the floor. Jack perched himself on the table whilst Ferrers Locke lounged in the doorway. Mackaw and Joe, leaning against the bridge rail, were smoking placidly.

And thus passed the morning.

It was early afternoon when Chalmers spoke.

"Locke!" he said sharply.

The Baker Street detective straightened up and turned.

"Yes?" he said.

"Without beating about the bush, how much will you take?"

Mackaw sauntered towards the wheelhouse door at the sound of Chalmers' voice.

"Go on!" he said affably, as Ferrers Locke was silent. "Give th' fellow his answer!"

"Mind your own business!" snapped the Baker Street detective.

Mackaw's eyes narrowed, and the twist to his mouth became more pronounced.

"Meanin'?" he growled.

"Meaning that you'll keep out of this!" retorted Ferrers Locke coldly.

"Locke!" Chalmers' voice came clearly from the interior of the wheelhouse.

"What is your price? How much do you want to allow Federkiel and I to go free?"

"Your question is an insult!" replied Ferrers Locke evenly. "Be silent, or I shall have you gagged again!"

"I will give you one hundred thousand pounds in good red gold in return for the freedom of myself and Federkiel!"

"Jack!" Ferrers Locke snapped. "Gag that man!"

The boy obeyed. Mackaw drifted back to the bridge rail. He stood for a few minutes in conversation with Joe, then went below. Half an hour later a Kanaka relieved Joe on the bridge and the latter also disappeared below.

The afternoon wore on, and the flaming ball of the sun dropped lower and lower in the sky. At four bells in the first dog watch Mackaw and Joe returned to the bridge. They brought with them a strong, if elusive, smell of liquor.







## News Pars and Pictures!



### UP AND OVER!

A sight always calculated to arouse admiration is that of exhibition and trick riding by man and horse. It makes us marvel at the uncanny intelligence of the horse, and gasp at the agility and daring cleverness of the man. Our picture was taken during a jumping display given by the 7th Queen's Own Hussars.

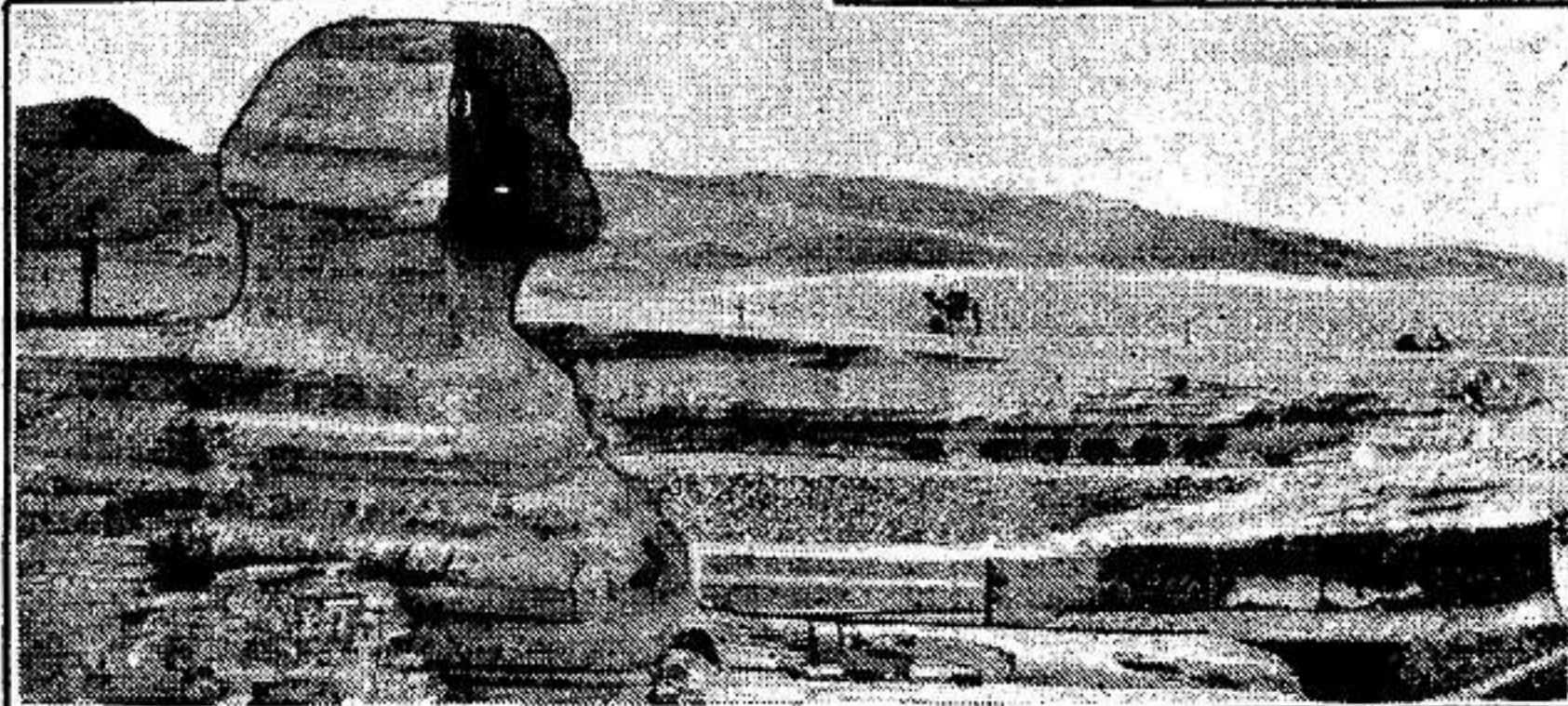


### TREASURE HUNTING!

Perhaps you wouldn't call it treasure at all, but three certain fisherboys of Hastings are pleased to call it that, for it is the means of their obtaining pocket-money. These lads have thought of a really brainy scheme. They collect starfish, sea urchins, squid, and other marine creatures, and then lecture about them to interested holiday-makers. Photo on right shows them digging for their specimens

### "BEAUTY." TREATMENT!

Like the people of to-day, the Sphinx has to have its "beauty" treatment. For thousands of years it has gazed stolidly over the sands of the Sahara, has faced storms and gales, and naturally "wrinkles" have appeared. But now those "wrinkles" have been removed. Once more the Sphinx is able to rear its huge bulk unblushingly, so to speak, beside the mighty pyramid of Cheops. In the photo we see the Sphinx during "beautifying" operations—the fourth time it has been repaired in history.





## BUNTER THE BOSS!

(Continued from page 23.)

Mr. Whiffles—

Clear off!" roared Bunter.

Mr. Dance obediently cleared off; but there was a glimmer in his eyes as he went that might have alarmed Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles the Second had he seen it. But Bunter was only too glad to see him go. For the moment, he dreaded discovery and denunciation.

"Now, you men! Clear those school-boys away!" he exclaimed. "See them off the field! They're cheeky! Kick them out!"

"Look here Mr. Whiffles—"

"Shut up!"

"If you don't hand Bunter over—"

"Cheese it! Turn them out!" roared Mr. Whiffles. "Kick them out! Chase them off the field! Kick them hard!"

"Right you are, gov'nor!" said George.

Harry Wharton & Co. beat a rather hasty retreat to their bicycles. They had come to the circus for Bunter; but a free fight with a crowd of rough fellows was not on the programme. Mr. Whiffles blinked after them triumphantly as they went.

"Kick them out!" he roared. "Yah! Go back to Quelch and tell him from me to go and eat coke! Tell the Head to go and eat coke! Yah!"

Forgetting the dignity of a circus proprietor, Billy Bunter grabbed up a cabbage-stump and hurled it after the retreating juniors.

"Ow!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

It was a thick and heavy stump, and Bob caught it with his neck.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Mr. Whiffles.

The cabbage-stump was in Bob's hand the next moment; and the next, returning to Mr. Whiffles. It landed on Mr. Whiffles' extensive waistcoat.

"Yoooooop!"

The circus-master sat down. He sat down heavily.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Grooogh! Ooooch! Whooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooogh! Oooooop!"

Leaving Mr. Whiffles the Second gasping and spluttering wildly, the chums of the Remove mounted their bicycles and pedalled away.

"Grooogh! Ow! I'm winded! Wow! Beasts! Ooooooch!" gasped Bunter. "Ow-ow! Wow-w-wow! Oooooop!"

Sympathetic hands helped Mr. Whiffles into the blue and red caravan, where he collapsed into a chair, and gasped and spluttered, and spluttered and gasped, and his faithful followers left him there, and did not grin till their backs were turned.

Meanwhile, Harry Wharton & Co. pedalled back to Lantham, and took the road to Greyfriars. They had learned as an absolute certainty that Bunter was at the circus; Mr. Whiffles' denials left no doubt on that point. Getting him away was quite another matter; but at least they could report at Greyfriars that there was no doubt now where he was. Darkness had fallen by the time they passed Lantham, and they lighted their lamps and rode on to Greyfriars—not in the happiest mood, in spite of their success in locating Bunter. It was already time for prep, and they were still ten miles from the school.

It was bed-time before they reached Greyfriars.

In a dusty, tired crowd, they arrived at the school gates, and rang up the porter.

Gosling came grunting down to let them in.

"Pretty goings hon!" said Gosling. "Which you're to report yourselves to Mr. Quelch at once! Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Oh, rats!" said Bob.

And the Famous Five walked wearily across to the House, to report themselves to their Form master.

THE END.

(There will be another magnificent long story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled: "BILLY BUNTER'S CIRCUS!" You will vote this one of the funniest yarns you've read for a long time, chums, so to avoid disappointment make sure of your copy now.)

## MR. LICKHAM'S REPENTANCE!

(Continued from page 15.)

"Now chuck him out of the window on his neck!" shouted Sir Frederick. Whiz!

The order was instantly obeyed and Kaptin Snooker, with a shriek of baffled rage, flew throo the study window, and hertled throo the air to land on the hard, unsimperthetick flagstones, fifty feet below.

Leaning out of the window, Jack Jolly & Co. watched the villun of Muggleton gain his feet, and after shaking a furious fist up at them, do a bunk for the gates. And that was the last they saw of him. St. Sam's had proved a bit too hot for Kaptin Snooker!

Inside the study, Dr. Birchmall and Mr. Lickham shook hands delightedly, and fairly beamed on Burleigh, and Jack Jolly & Co., who, between them, had saved their bacon.

"You have done well, my boys—very well, indeed!" said the Head gratefully. "As a reward for your efforts, I intend to stand you all a first-class feed—when my postal-order arrives!"

"Oh, that's all right, sir," answered Jack Jolly, modestly. "Virtue is its own reward. I'm satisfied to know that I have brought you and Mr. Lickham back to the straight and narrow path. I'm sure you won't easily forget this lesson."

Suffice it to say Jack Jolly's words proved correct, and later in the day when he saw Mr. Lickham sitting under the elms fairly engrossed in a copy of "Eric—or Little by Little," he felt that he really deserved well of his country!

THE END.

(Look out for the first of a grand new series of holiday yarns dealing with Jack Jolly & Co., in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "THE SKOOL UNDER CANVAS!" A real breezy yarn this, chums, and one you'll enjoy no end. Make sure of reading it by ordering your copy well in advance!)



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# Mrs. LICKHAM'S REPENTANCE!

DICKY NUGENT



In Fickham's it seems fall to the lot of a junior school-boy to help his former master out of a whole—that's the case with Mrs. Lickham's job! But such a situation arises in my tale of St. Sam's this week—D. NUGENT.

**D**R. BIRCHEMALL was worried. The scoldery Head of St. Sam's was sitting in his pink-collared study, in a brown study. His feet were resting in a dignified manner on his desk; his jaws were working rebellively at an enormous chunk of toffy which he had crammed into his mouth; he was rapped in thought, in addition, of course, to his scholastic govern.

As a matter of fact, Dr. Birchmhall had two very good reasons for feeling worried. The first was the threat of Sir Frederick Funguss to reduce his salary to five bob a week unless he put a stop to members of the school visiting the Jolly Sailor at Muggleton by night. Roomers were going round the school that even since the Head's warning, some bold spirit had broken bounds to go to that notorious haunt, and Dr. Birchmhall feared that they would reach Sir Frederick's ears. The loss of 1s. 8d. a week from his income would hit the Head badly, and as he pondered on the prospect, in spite of the fact that he savagely continued to chew the toffy, he felt fed-up.

The second reason—but of this more anonymously—As the Head stroked his beard and scratched his nose in his perplexity, his thoughts were rooily interrupted by the tramping of feet and the murmur of voices in the passidge outside.

Dr. Birchmhall detected the voice of Mr. Lickham above the rest. "Lemme go, you disrepective young idits!" the master of the Fourth was yelling. "I tell you I don't want to see the Head. I've changed my mind!"

"Ratts!" came an answering corrus. Dr. Birchmhall sat up and took notice. A moment later the door opened, and Jack Jolly & Co. entered, with Mr. Lickham in their midst, struggling furiously.

"Grate pip! What the merry dickens are you boys a-doin' of?" asked the Head, in astonishment. "Kindly explain matters, Lickham!"

"Gooooo!" These young rascals have savagely assaulted me!" groaned Mr. Lickham. "You see, it's like this here, sir. They kidded me to come along and

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confess, but on the way, I changed my mind—I mean—

The master of the Fourth quickly tried to correct himself, realising that he was giving the game away. But the Head's eagle eye was upon him, and he farly quailed before its stern glare.

"Well? Carry on!" barked Dr. Birchmhall. "What were you sayin' about confessin'?"

"Well, sir, in spite of your recent warning to the school, I myself went out on the tiles, playing the giddy ox down at the Jolly Sailor, the other nite!"

"Bust me!" said the Head, with a start. "When I arrived at that self-proclaimed inn, the lure and fascination of the gaming tables soon held me like a vice!"

"Mr. Lickham dramatically. "Hour after hour I sat at the snakes-and-ladders board, chucking away my hard-earned wealth. My opponent was Kaplin Snooker—"

"Kaplin Snooker?" cried Dr. Birchmhall, the cutter suddenly leaving his dille. "You're sure of the name?"

"Absolutely, sir! He was a dark, simi-cal-looking fellow with crool, gleaming eyes—"

"I presume the Kaplin will be calling to-morrow?" asked the kaplin of the Fourth.

"Yes, worse luck!" "Right-ho! You leave it to me!" said Jack Jolly, confidently. "I'll get you both out of your pite, never fear! I'll buzz off now, and make preparations. Come on, chaps!"

Followed by his faithful ehams, Jack Jolly knitted the study, leaving the Head and Mr. Lickham with silyly more hopeful eggspressions on their diles.

**W**HAT'S the giddy wheeze, Jack Jolly?" asked Merry and Bright, when they got outside.

"You'll soon see," he replied. "First of all, we'll trot along to see Burleigh. In a state of grate curiosity, Merry and Bright followed their leader to the Sixth Form passidge. There, they found Burleigh, the kaplin of the school, alone in his study, deep in a massive volume by Hoamer, the silyly-brated Greek orther.

"Hello, hallo! What do you kids want?" he asked.

"Sorry to trouble you, Burleigh," said Jack Jolly, apologetically, "but the fact of the matter is, we want you to

impersonate Sir Frederick Funguss!"

"What?" yelld Burleigh. "Impersonate the chairman of the board of governors? Are you potty?"

"No," answered Jack Jolly calmly. "I really mean it. It's the only way of saving the Head and Mr. Lickham from getting the order of the boot!"

Burleigh stared. "What the dickens have they been up to, then?" he gasped, in astonishment.

"No, I'll eggspain," said Jack Jolly. "The senior listated in an amezement to Jack Jolly's gratef description of the dilemma which confronted Mr. Lickham and the Head.

"Dash my buttons!" he remarked, when the Kaplin of the Fourth had finished. "I certainly never suspected that the Head himself would be in the toils of such a scoundril as Kaplin Snooker. But how the thump do you think I can help by impersonating Sir Frederick Funguss?"

"That's it," nodded Jack. "What do you chaps think of it?"

"Grate!" responded Merry and Bright admiringly.

"Right-ho, then. I'm on!" said the kaplin of the school good-nachterly. "What about the dispyes, tho?"

"That's easy," said Jack Jolly. "We can fix you up out of the props. of the Junior Drammatic Club."

And so it was arranged. The following morning, Kaplin Snooker banged throo the gates of St. Sam's, sawntered into the Head's house, kicked open the door of Dr. Birchmhall's study, and walked in.

He was surprised to find that several other people were prezant besides the Head. There was Mr. Lickham, and Jack Jolly & Co., while sitting in the chair of honner was a tall, stern, aristocratic-looking jentleman who wore a top-hat and white spats.

"Good-morning!" cried Kaplin Snooker, with a black look at Dr. Birchmhall.

"Good-morning!" corrused the com-pary, in grave accents.

"Got my bob handy, Doc? And you, Lickham?" asked the gallant Kaplin, bearing his teeth in a crool grin of anticipa-tion.

"No, we haven't!" wrapped out Dr. Birchmhall.

"Ho!" ejaculated the vilhan of Muggleton. "So that's your giddy game, is it? Very well, then! You know the penalty, both of you. If you don't part up with the oof pretty soon, I'll eggspose you, Lickham, to your headmaster. And you, Burleigh, I'll eggspose to Sir Frederick Funguss, your chair-crick man."

"That's it," nodded Jack. "What do you chaps think of it?"

"Grate!" responded Merry and Bright admiringly.

"Well I never!" said Kaplin Snooker, fainting pleasure, tho they could hear by the sudden pallor of his dille that he hadn't really wanted to meet Sir Frederick at all.

"Fancy that now! How are you, sir?" He extended a fobby paw, to be shaken. Sir Frederick, however, merely inspected it throo his monocle.

"What a dirty-looking object!" he said. "Put it away, my man! And now, turning to your remarks. What is the eggset natcher of the eggsposees you are going to make to me?"

"Oh, nothing of consequence, I assure you!" answered the Kaplin, for he didn't want to lose the further bud-money he was hoping to extricate from his viktime.

"I suppose the eggsposees in kwestion are in regard to the recent visits of these jentlemen to the Jolly Sailor?" went on Sir Frederick. "If they are, then all I can say is, you're a bit late, for I already know everything."

"Grate pip!" gasped Kaplin Snooker, his dille working convulsively. "But I bet these two preshous masters of yours haven't told you that I hold their I O U's for a bob?"

"Ha, ha! Tell that to the Maroons!" barked the chairman of the governers. "I'll believe that when I see the I O U's!" Kaplin Snooker farly snorted with rage.

"Well, here they are, then!" he cried savagely.

And with a flourish, he produced the documents. Sir Frederick glanced at them carelessly. Then, to the dismay of the scoundril from Muggleton, he chucked them on the fire.

"Obviously forgeries!" he said. "You are evidently a vilhan of the deepest dille!"

"Why—you—you!" roared Kaplin Snooker. "You've chucked my I O U's on the fire!"

"Just so!" yawned Sir Frederick. "And now I suggest we chuck you out on your neck!"

"Yes, rather!" corrused the Head, Mr. Lickham, and Jack Jolly & Co., with enthusiasm.

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