

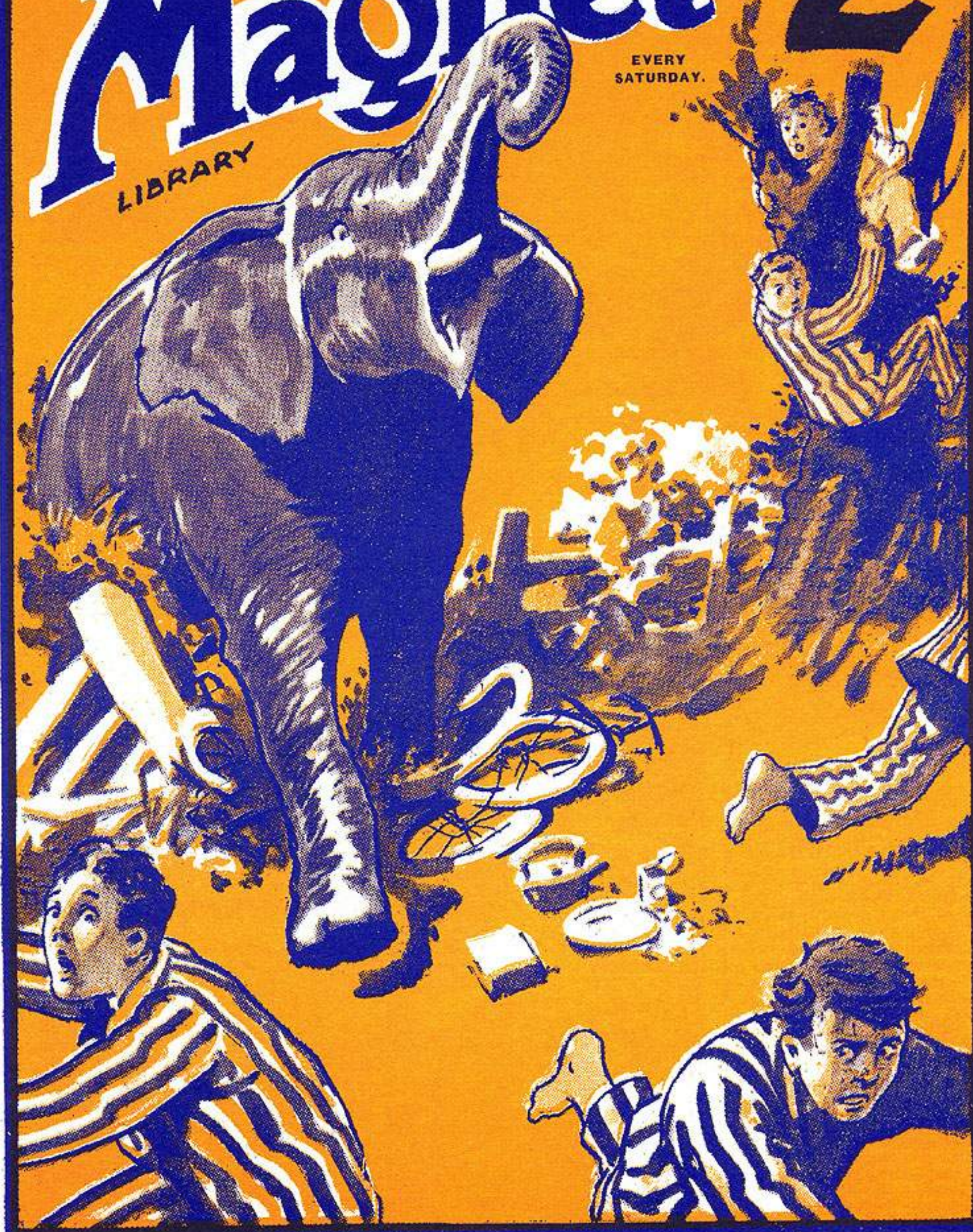
NOW ON SALE—THE "HOBBY" AND "HOLIDAY" ANNUALS!

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## AN UNWELCOME VISITOR!

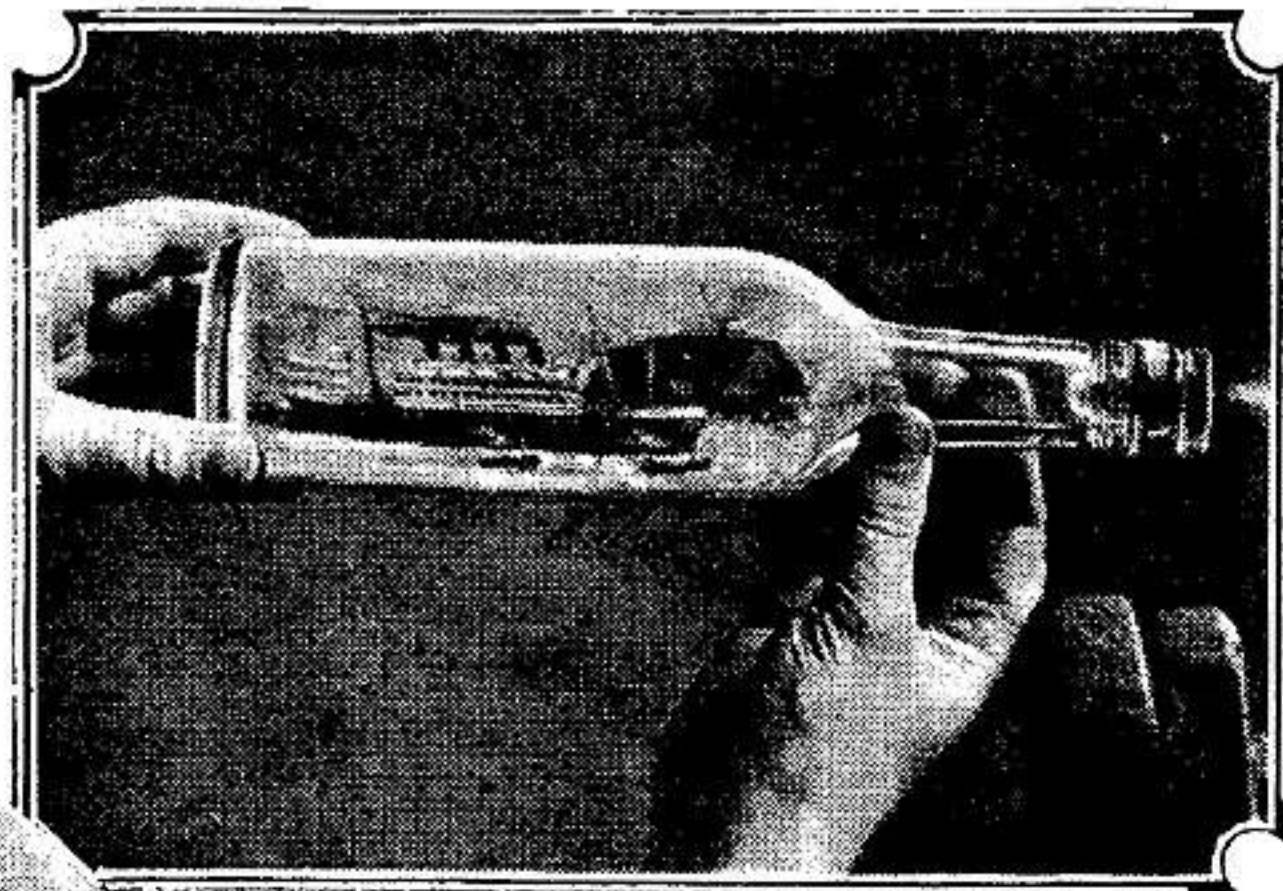
*(An exciting incident taken from this week's fine story of Harry Wharton & Co., the chums of Grenfriars.)*



## News Pars and Pictures!



One of the features at an exhibition held in London which aroused so much interest was the display of delightful miniatures, carved in ivory and bone, of old-time fighting ships. Modern vessels were represented, too, and in the photograph can be seen a clever model of a liner which was exhibited in a bottle.



### YOICKS!

Originality, we are told, is a splendid thing. Billy Guldner of Los Angeles, then, is to be congratulated, for he certainly chose an original steed in a 350 pound black sea bass, commonly called a jewfish. (See photograph). This great denizen of the deep was hooked and landed from the fishing barge Olympic, when anchored off Gerosa Beach, California. As regards Billy's facial expression, it is to be assumed that he is merely trying to copy that of his steed, and if such is the case, then Billy has hit it off very well.

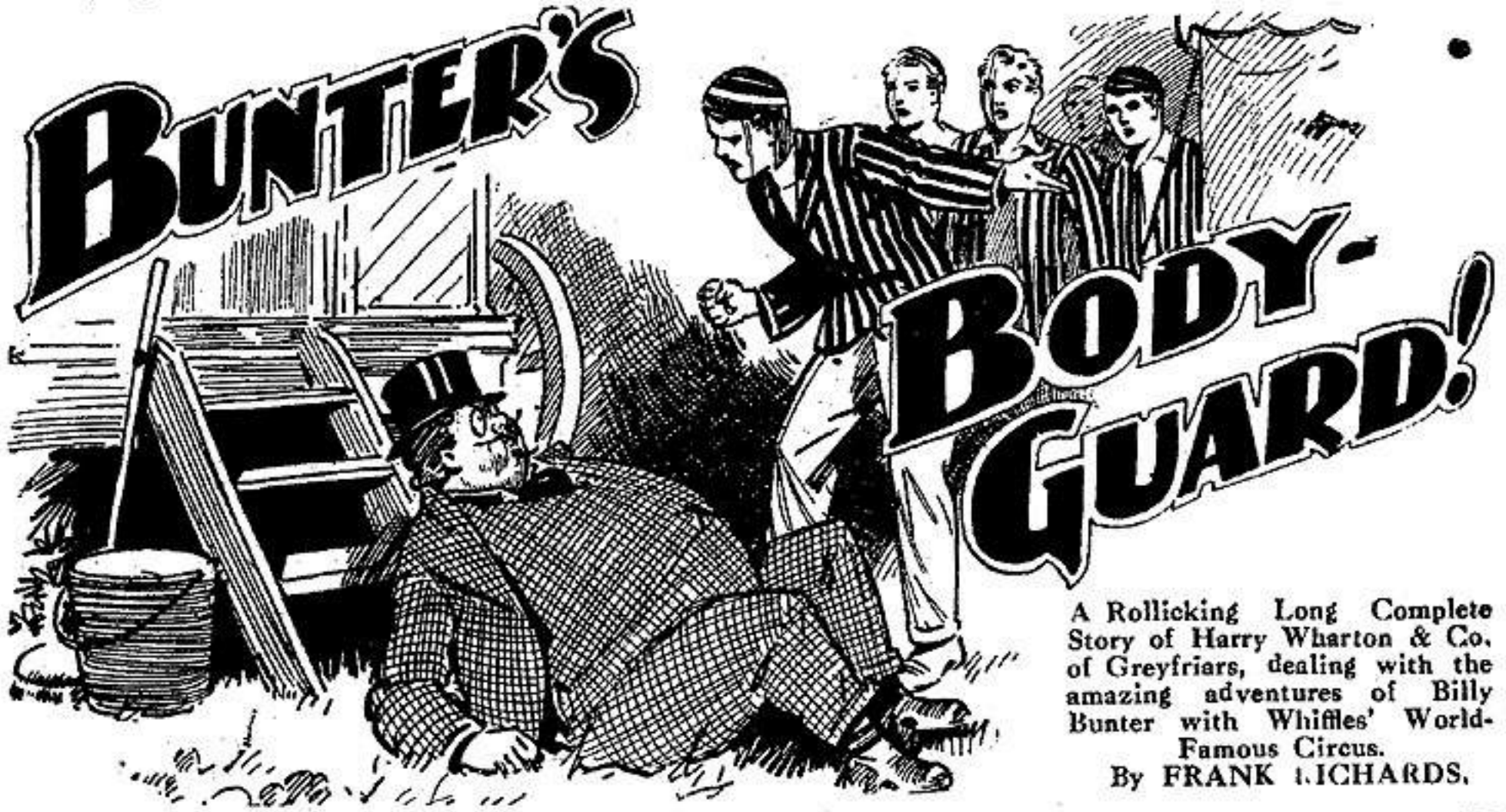
### LONDON'S HOTTEST JOB!

Those of you who gasp and perspire on the occasions when the sun shines down in all its unclouded glory and causes the thermometer to read 120 degrees, will readily sympathise with the chappies who are shown in the photograph—working at London's hottest job. For it is their "pleasant" duty to manoeuvre about enormous white-hot one-ton cylinder shafts—parts of gigantic printing machines—which have been heated in a furnace to 14,000 degrees centigrade. Phew! In the depth of winter one might possibly—only possibly!—envy them; but in summer—oh dear no!





Being boss of a circus sounds a very fine thing, but it has its drawbacks as well as its advantages. Billy Bunter discovers those drawbacks quickly enough in his amazing role of Boss of Whiffles' Circus, but, with his usual luck, he finds someone else to deal with them!



A Rollicking Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, dealing with the amazing adventures of Billy Bunter with Whiffles' World-Famous Circus.  
By FRANK RICHARDS.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Sammy is Not Taking Any!

"SAMMY, old chap!"

Billy Bunter spoke in affectionate tones.

Sammy Bunter grunted.

When that note of brotherly affection was audible in the fat voice of William George Bunter, Sammy became wary at once—like the sage old Trojan who feared the Greeks when they brought gifts in their hands.

Billy Bunter was leaning back very comfortably in Mr. Whiffles' caravan in the encampment of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus.

His fat person was encased in the remarkable check clothes that belonged to Mr. Whiffles, and his fat thumbs were stuck in the armholes of Mr. Whiffles' crimson waistcoat with yellow spots.

No Greyfriars man who had seen Billy Bunter at that moment would have dreamed that he was the Owl of the Remove.

Mr. Whiffles' nut-brown wig adorned his bullet head; the waxed moustache and pointed beard covered a good deal of his fat face.

Even Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes would have failed to detect Billy Bunter under the outward adornments of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

Only in two details was Bunter unaltered from his old self. His diameter and circumference were unchanged—unless, indeed, they had increased a little, since he had lived on the fat of the land as boss of the circus.

"Sammy, old fellow, I've been thinking!" said Bunter.

"Draw it mild!" said Sammy incredulously.

"Have you had a good dinner, Sammy?"

"Topping!" said Sammy, more cordially.

"I hope you enjoyed it, Sammy?" said Bunter, with great solicitude. "I want you to enjoy yourself while you're staying at my circus, Sammy!"

"Your circus!" grinned Sammy.

"Yes. You've always found me a kind and affectionate elder brother, haven't you, Sammy?"

"If I have, I've forgotten it!"

answered Sammy. "Can't say I've noticed it."

"Look here, you little beast—I mean, look here, old chap, haven't I let you butt into my circus and stick on like a leech?" demanded Bunter warmly. "Don't be ungrateful, Sammy. I may have been a little crabby when you butted in. You couldn't expect me to like it. But I've been thinking, and I'm going to let you stay, Sammy."

"Oh!" said Sammy.

"All this show belongs to me—at present!" said Bunter, with a wave of his fat hand towards the open doorway of the caravan. Outside, the circus camp lay in the glowing summer sunshine. "It's all mine—"

"Until old Whiffles comes back and kicks you out!" sniggered Sammy.

"And I'm going to whack it out with you, kid!" went on Bunter, unheeding. "Nothing mean about me. I'm going to let you share my good luck, Sammy. I'm going to keep you with me as long—as long as it lasts!"

"Are you?" said Sammy.

"Yes, old chap. Old Whiffles won't turn up again in a hurry. He's cleared off somewhere because he's frightened of that man Huggins. I've found out that that beast Huggins, used to belong to the circus, and Whiffles treated him rather badly, and he's after Whiffles' scalp. Well, that's all right—it keeps Whiffles skulking away somewhere. The trouble is that Huggins, thinking I'm Whiffles, is after me, and I've had some jolly narrow escapes!"

"You'll get bashed some day!" said Sammy cheerfully. "You jolly near got bashed last night! What's worse is that I jolly near got bashed along with you!"

"That's what I'm coming to," said Bunter. "Of course, I could have that brute Huggins run in. But if I did, the coast would be clear for old Whiffles to come back again, and he would come. I don't want that. That's where you come in, Sammy."

"Do I?" said Sammy.

"Yes. I can't have Huggins run in; but, of course, I can't have him bashing me. Every night I expect to hear him prowling round the van again. He's dangerous!"

"He is," agreed Sammy. "Jolly dangerous!"

"I keep on telling the men to stay awake and keep watch, you know," said Bunter, "but they never do. They're selfish."

"Fancy their wanting a night's rest after a day's work!" said Sammy sarcastically. "Horrid!"

"Yes; there's a lot of selfishness about," said Bunter. "It was the same at Greyfriars. I've got used to ingratitude, though. I'm going to treat you jolly well while you're here, Sammy. I'm going to let you have this swell caravan to yourself!"

"Oh!" said Sammy.

"I shall sleep in a tent in future," said Bunter. "This is a splendid caravan—the best in the bunch. You'll like it, Sammy. I shall miss it, of course, when I give it up to you. But I never was selfish. You take it over to-day, Sammy."

Sammy grinned.

"And Huggins along with it?" he asked.

"Eh?"

"Huggins knows that this is Whiffles' van! Next time he butts in, this is the place he will make for! Thanks!"

Billy Bunter coughed.

"Look here, Sammy, if that beast Huggins comes butting in again—"

"No if about it! He will!"

"Well, when he comes butting in again, all you have to do will be to yell for help. I shall rush up at once—"

"You mean you'll hide under a bed till he's gone?" asked Sammy.

"No!" roared Bunter. "I don't! I shall rush to help you at once, and all the men will come up, and Huggins will be collared. I can't have him run in, as the case stands, but he can be jolly well thrashed and warned off. That will be a tip to him to keep clear—see? You won't get damaged! You'll simply have to yell for help if you hear Huggins breaking into the van at night—"

"And suppose he bashes me before help comes along?" asked Sammy.

"Well, don't be funky, you know. A Greyfriars man ought to be prepared to face a little risk."

"I'll leave it to you, partner!" grinned Sammy.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,075.



"I hope you're not going to be a funky selfish little beast, Sammy!" said Billy Bunter severely. "After all my kindness to you—"

"Bow-wow!"

"This is a splendid van!" said Bunter. "Old Whiffles did himself jolly well in this caravan. You'll like it, Sammy. Of course, I'm really only thinking of you. Don't you see what a splendid idea it is? That beast Huggins is sure to come prowling round some dark night. If he found the van empty he would get prowling among the tents looking for me. But if you're in the van, and giving the alarm—"

Sammy Bunter was looking at his watch.

"Just time to walk it!" he remarked.

"Eh?"

Bunter minor rose to his feet.

"Good-bye, Billy!"

"Going for a walk?"

"Yes; to the railway station!"

"What are you going to the railway station for, Sammy?"

"To take the train home!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"I'm fed-up on your Huggins!" said Sammy. "The circus is all right, and the grub is all right, but I'm not going to have my nose bashed through the back of my head, thanks! It ain't good enough! When that fearful beast was prowling round the van last night I made up my mind to chuck it. I ain't greedy, and I know when I've had enough! You can keep your van, and you can keep your Huggins! Ta-ta!"

"Sammy, old fellow—"

Sammy Bunter descended the steps of the van. William George blinked after him in dismay.

He had thought of what seemed to him a really excellent scheme. The scheme did not appear to please Sammy, however. There was a difference in the point of view.

"I say, Sammy—" called out Bunter.

"Good-bye!"

"Beast!"

Sammy Bunter grinned, and rolled cheerily away across the field. He had quite enjoyed his stay with Billy Bunter's circus—until Mr. Huggins had turned up. Sammy had had one experience of Mr. Huggins. He did not want another. Very much indeed he did not want another. Sammy was fed up; and he was going.

"Sammy!" shouted Bunter.

Echo answered "Sammy." But there was no other answer. The fat fag of the Second Form at Greyfriars disappeared in the distance, heading for the railway station. Once more the selfishness and ingratitude of humanity were borne in sadly upon the mind of the Owl of the Remove.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Friends in Need!

"JOLLY!" said Bob Cherry.

"Topping!" said Nugent.

"Terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Famous Five, of the Greyfriars Remove, were enjoying life.

In a deep and shady lane, a couple of miles from the field where the World-Famous Circus was encamped, the cycling party were in camp. Five bicycles stood packed in a bunch, under the big trees that shaded the lane. On either side meadows and hedgerows ran up the slopes of the glorious downs, under a sky of cloudless blue.

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It was not—even Hurree Jamset Ram Singh found it warm enough. The Famous Five had camped there overnight; but in the morning they had not gone on their way. Near at hand was a deep, shady little wood, and in the wood a rippling stream; and the chums of the Remove had spent a happy morning swimming and bathing. They were in no hurry; in the long summer holidays they had time to kill. So they were taking things very easily.

Dinner in camp was followed by a luxurious rest in the thick grass, under the shady old elms and beeches, through whose leafy boughs the sunrays filtered like arrows of gold.

Undoubtedly it was hot; and the juniors were contentedly waiting for the cool of later afternoon, before they resumed their ride. In the meantime they lazed.

"How many miles shall we do when we get going again?" asked Johnny Bull, as he gently swiped at a buzzing fly with his hat. It was too hot for a vigorous swipe.

"Fifteen!" said Harry Wharton.

"Make it twenty," said Bob Cherry. "That will get us into Berkshire."

"Twenty-five, if you like," said Harry, laughing. "How far do you feel inclined to go, Franky?"

Frank Nugent, fanning himself with his hat, yawned.

"About a yard at the present moment," he answered. "Not more."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob, sitting up suddenly in the grass.

Down the lane, from the direction of the distant village of Greenleaf, came the sound of running feet.

"Oh, my hat!" said Nugent. "Somebody must be in want of exercise, running in this blaze!"

The juniors sat up, looking up the hilly lane. The winding hedgerows hid the newcomer from their sight as yet; but the hurried footsteps showed that whoever it was he was in hot haste. A fat figure came in sight suddenly, pounding down towards the cyclists' camp.

"Sammy Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five stared at the fat fag of Greyfriars.

Sammy Bunter resembled his major, William George, in many ways; and in nothing more closely than in his dislike of exertion. It really was amazing to see Bunter minor pounding along at top speed in the blazing sunshine of a September day.

Sammy was streaming with perspiration, and his fat face was the hue of a newly-boiled beetroot. He gasped and panted as he ran.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

Sammy gave a jump and blinked at the juniors in the grass by the side of the lane. He would have passed them unseen, in his haste, but for Bob's stentorian hail.

"Oh!" he gasped.

Evidently Sammy was glad to see the Removites. He turned from the lane, pounded into the camp, and collapsed in the grass, spluttering.

"Ow! Keep him off!"

"Him? Who?" asked Wharton.

He stared up the lane. There was no sign of a pursuer, and no sound of footsteps now that Sammy had stopped.

"There's nobody after you!" grinned Bob.

"Ow!" gasped Sammy. "Isn't there?"

"What have you been up to?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Ow! Nothing!"

"The guilty flee when no man pursueth!" grinned Bob Cherry. "You've been up to something, fatty!"

"Ow! Oh!" gasped Sammy. "Sure he ain't after me? Oh dear! I saw him! And he shook his fist at me! I thought he was after me! Ow! Oh crikey!"

"Who?" roared Bob.

"Ow! That awful beast Huggins!"

"My hat!" said Bob. "It rains Hugginses in these parts! I thought Huggins had cleared off last night, looking for old Whiffles."

"Oh dear!" gasped Sammy. "Oh crumbs! I—I thought he was after me. He shook his fist at me, and I bolted. Oh dear! I say, are you sure he ain't after me?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

Sammy sat up and pumped in breath. Harry Wharton & Co. regarded him rather curiously. They knew that Sammy had been with Whiffles' World-Famous Circus; though why was a mystery to them. They were still in ignorance of the fact that Billy Bunter had assumed the identity of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, and was passing his vacation in the remarkable character of a circus boss.

"Left the circus?" asked Harry.

"Ow! Yes!"

"Is Billy still there?"

Sammy grinned breathlessly.

"Oh, yes! He's there all right."

"Is Whiffles there now?" asked Bob.

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you fat frog?" demanded Bob. "From what I can make out, that ruffian Huggins was chasing old Whiffles last night, and I've been wondering whether he got him. Did he get clear?"

"He, he, he! Oh, yes!" gasped Sammy. "He's all right. He, he, he! I say, I'm going home! I've had enough of Huggins. I started for the station, and came on that beast all of a sudden about half a mile back—he was snoozing under a hedge, but he woke up when I came by. I thought he was after me. Oh dear! I'm jolly glad I came on you fellows. I believe he's still hanging about."

"Well, if he turns up, we'll handle him," yawned Johnny Bull. "We've handled him before, and we can do it again."

"The handfulness will be terrific, my esteemed fat Sammy!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Old Whiffles must be an ass not to have that man Huggins run in," remarked Nugent.

"He, he, he!"

"Sammy, old bean, you cackle too much!" said Bob Cherry. "Don't let us delay you, fatty. You keep right on for the station. It's about another half-mile."

Sammy Bunter shuddered.

"I—I say, I—I daren't go alone. I know that beast Huggins is hanging round. He will bash me if he gets the chance. He's ferocious. Look here, you fellows, you walk to the station with me and see me to the train."

"Well, I like something cool in this hot weather," said Bob. "We're just going to start in the other direction."

"I—I say, he's got his knife into me!" gasped Sammy. "You see, we pulled his leg last night, and sent him chasing off for nothing. I'm sure he's looking for me now—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes."

A burly figure, with a beetling brow and a broken nose, loomed up in the sunny lane. Sammy gave a squeal of terror and squirmed behind Bob Cherry.





"That blooming Huggins, sir," said George, "is coming!" "Ow!" roared Billy Bunter. He leapt from the wicker chair. Ice-cream went to the right, ice-cream went to the left as the "Boss" of the circus made a wild break for his van.  
(See Chapter 8.)

Mr. Huggins came to a sudden halt. Apparently, he was looking for Sammy, to give that fat youth the thrashing which, from Mr. Huggins' point of view, he deserved. But he stopped at sight of the Famous Five. Mr. Huggins had not forgotten the handling he had received from those cheery juniors.

Bob Cherry waved a hand to him.

"Come on, old bean," he called out. "We're all at home, and ready for visitors."

"The readiness is terrific, my esteemed absurd Huggins."

"This way for a ragging," said Johnny Bull invitingly.

Bill Huggins scowled at the cheery group, turned away, and tramped through a gap in the hedge. Evidently he did not want any more.

"Oh dear!" gasped Sammy. "Is he gone?"

"Gone from our gaze like a beautiful dream!" said Bob. "Pluck up your courage, fatty—what there is of it."

"Look here, you fellows, you walk with me down to the station," implored Sammy. "You don't want me to be bashed by that horrible hooligan."

"The bashfulness would probably be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let us see the absurd Sammy off trainfully, my esteemed chums. After all, we are not in a ridiculous hurry."

"Let's!" yawned Bob Cherry. "It won't take long, if we roll him down the hill like a barrel. That suit you, Sammy?"

"Yah!"

Harry Wharton laughed, and detached himself from the grass.

"Two of us can walk along with Sammy," he said. "We don't want to wheel the bikes all that way. We'll bring back something for tea from the town; and get another swim after tea.

If we start early in the morning, we can make a long day of it."

"Any old thing," said Bob. "What's life if you don't take it easy?"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry started down the lane with Sammy Bunter. All the way to the town and the railway station, Sammy blinked uneasily to right and left. But nothing was seen of Bill Huggins, and the Removites landed Sammy safe at the station, and saw him into his train, and were not sorry to see the last of him. Then they did their shopping, and walked back to the camp in the Greenleaf Lane; and there was a pleasant tea under the trees; and later, in the golden sunset, a swim in the stream in the wood.

It was agreed that the Greyfriars cyclists should break camp at dawn, and make a long day of it the next day. But when they rolled themselves in their blankets under the stars that night, the chums of the Remove, if they dreamed, certainly did not dream of what was destined to happen before dawn. That little change in their plans, trifling as it seemed at the time, was to make a very great difference to Harry Wharton & Co.'s holiday.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### No Takers!

**B**ILLY BUNTER blinked at the golden and purple sunset, with an uneasy and dissatisfied blink. The approach of night worried Bunter.

The fall of darkness was haunted by the memory of Bill Huggins; that unpleasant gentleman who had vowed vengeance upon Mr. Whiffles, and was seeking to visit that vowed vengeance upon

the hapless head of Billy Bunter, in the belief that he was Whiffles.

In his usual style, Bunter had forgotten the peril when it was past; but with the approach of night, it was possible that it would return; and so it filled Bunter's fat thoughts again.

Bossing the circus, while the pusillanimous Mr. Whiffles kept out of sight, suited Bunter admirably. Bunter liked giving orders. He revelled in throwing his weight about. He liked living on the fat of the land, regardless of expense. To the Owl of the Remove, the circus was a land flowing with milk and honey, and William George Bunter was like unto a pig in clover. What he did not like were the drawbacks to that glorious position. Chief of the drawbacks was Bill Huggins. During that day, three important events claimed Bunter's special attention—breakfast, dinner, and tea. But the horrid thought of Bill Huggins returned as night descended on the meadows and grassy downs of Surrey.

"Dance!" called out Bunter.

The manager of the World-Famous Circus was sitting on the step of a van, smoking a cigar after the afternoon show. The evening performance was not yet due. Dance was carefully perusing a pink paper. Mr. Dance had a weakness for getting rich quick by backing horses. He had not yet got rich, though he had increased the wealth of a number of bookmakers. Quite a number of fat gentlemen on the Turf would have been sorry to see Mr. Dance give up his attempts to get rich quick. Mr. Dance was now occupied in spotting a winning horse, which was to indemnify him for all his previous losses—perhaps. He glanced up irritably at Bunter. Mr. Dance' losses on his losers were paid out of the cash-box; and until a winner



came along, he could not afford to part with Bunter. Without Bunter he could not have carried on. But Bunter was a painful necessity—a necessary evil, in Dance's opinion, and he sometimes yearned to kick him out of the circus. He had not liked the genuine Whiffles as a boss, but he liked Bunter still less. There was no doubt that when Bunter was top dog, he overdid it.

"Well, what?" snapped Dance.  
"Chuck that rubbish away!" snapped Bunter. "You'll never get a winner! I've tried that game myself, and there was nothing in it. If a fellow of my brains can't make anything at it, what chance do you think you're likely to have?"

Dance made no reply to that. He only wondered how long it would be before he was driven to ruining all his carefully-laid plans by kicking Billy Bunter from one end of the circus to the other.

"Besides, it's disreputable," said Bunter. "I don't care to have that sort of thing going on in my circus. But never mind that now—about that beast Huggins, Dance! My brother Sammy has cleared off—he's afraid of that ruffian. Of course, I'm not! But I'm going to have your van to-night, Dance, and you can have mine. It's a much better one, you know, and you'll like it! Anyhow, I'm having yours. See? If that beast Huggins comes prowling round, you can yell for help, and I—I'll come and help you, see?"

"You can have my van, if you're in a funk," grunted Dance. "I'll sleep in a tent."

"Now, that's rot," said Bunter. "Somebody ought to be in the van to give the alarm if he comes. See? I don't want him prowling round and perhaps getting hold of me."

"Put one of the men in the van," said Dance, with a sour grin. "You're master, you know."

"That's so," agreed Bunter. "After all, if you're funky, you wouldn't be any good. Bit sickening for you to be funky of that hooligan, if you don't mind my mentioning it, Dance. That's what a public school does for a chap—makes him plucky."

Billy Bunter rolled away, leaving Dance to his pink paper, and his difficult task of selecting the horse that was going to win. He rolled along to a shady tree, where Nobby Nobbs, the clown, sat sipping a lemon squash, and talking to Tomasso Tomsonio, the acrobat. They grinned cheerfully at Mr. Whiffles.

Bunter gave them a lofty nod. Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles himself was a very lofty and condescending gentleman, and in that line Bunter was well suited to play his part faithfully. Swank was as the breath of life to the Owl of the Remove.

"Your turn wasn't bad this afternoon, Nobbs," said Bunter, in his most patronising tone. "But you'll have to get some new wheezes, you know. Your jokes are a bit ancient."

"Are they, guv'nor?" said Mr. Nobbs.

"They are! Moth-eaten," said Bunter; "and your business on the high trapeze ain't bad, Thompson. But you want to put a bit more life into it."

"Do I?" asked Tommy Thompson.

"Yes. One of these days I'll go on the trapeze myself and show you how it ought to be done."

"Oh!" said Mr. Thompson

"But never mind that now," said Bunter kindly. "You two fellows share a small van, I believe. Now, I don't

want any of my men to be uncomfortable. I'm going to let you two have my big van."

"Are you, guv'nor?" said Nobby Nobbs.

"Yes, you can begin to-night," said Bunter. "George will shift my things out, and you can shift yours in. See?"

Mr. Nobbs and Mr. Thompson exchanged glances.

"That bloke Huggins run in yet?" asked Nobby Nobbs casually.

"Eh! No! That doesn't matter."

"Look 'ere, guv'nor," said Nobby Nobbs, with a very curious look at the boss. "Why don't you have that hooligan run in? I tell you, he ain't safe! Look what he did to your van last night! One of these nights he'll bash you bad. He's been seen hanging about after the circus. The peelers would run him in quite easy. Why don't you do it?"

"Well, you—you see——" stammered Bunter.

"Everybody's wondering why you don't have him run in, guv'nor," said Mr. Thompson. "He'll do you some harm one of these days. He can't get over that three months hard you got him, after promising to let him off."

"I didn't—I mean—the fact is, I don't want to be hard on him," said Bunter. "I've got a—a kind heart, you know. He won't come round here again. I'm sure he won't! When he does, he'll find you two in the van instead of me, and you can yell for help, see?"

"Why not leave the van empty, guv'nor?"

"I don't want him rooting round the circus looking for me. I'm not afraid of the fellow, of course, but I don't like being woke up at night," explained Bunter.

"And it doesn't matter about us?" asked Mr. Nobbs.

"Exactly."

Bunter rolled away, satisfied. Mr. Nobbs and Mr. Thompson looked at one another, expressively.

"Ole beauty, ain't he?" asked Nobby.

"He are!" assented Mr. Thompson.

"I used to think that old Whiffles had his good points, along with his swank and gas. Bu. I can tell you, Nobby, I'm thinking of looking for another engagement. I can't stand that man Whiffles. You bunking in his caravan to-night?"

"Am I?" said Mr. Nobbs. "I think not! I rather fancy not! If anybody in this blinking circus is bashed to-night, it ain't going to be anybody named Nobbs! I don't think."

"Same here," said Mr. Thompson. "If he's afraid o' the man, why don't he have him run in? It's queer, Nobby."

"It's blooming queer," said Nobby.

"The whole circus is wondering about it. Time and again that man Huggins has tried to get at the guv'nor to bash him, and he won't have him run in. It's blooming queer, if you ask me."

"It's fishy," said Mr. Thompson.

"Blooming fishy!" assented Mr. Nobbs. "Huggins must have some sort of a hold over the guv'nor, I suppose. Anyhow, I ain't taking his bashing for him. I ain't paid to be bashed."

And so it happened that when sleep descended on the circus encampment that night, the largest and best-appointed caravan in the camp was vacant. Bunter snored peacefully in Dance's van, Mr. Dance slept in a tent; Nobby Nobbs and Tomasso Tomsonio occupied their usual quarters; and the conspicuous blue-and-red caravan once occupied by Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles had no tenant. And when a stealthy figure came sneaking into the camp at midnight's solemn hour, and

crept up the step of the blue and red caravan, and groped about in the interior, that stealthy figure found nothing to reward his search. And in a subdued voice Mr. Huggins made remarks that would have curdled Billy Bunter's blood had he heard them.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### An Alarm in the Night!

**A** ROAR of excited voices roused Billy Bunter from balmy slumber. He started up in bed, and listened with a palpitating heart. The uproar in the circus encampment was terrific. Had it not been so it would not have awakened the Owl of the Remove. But even Billy Bunter could not sleep through that terrific din. Voices shouted, caravan doors opened and banged, horses squealed, hurried footsteps echoed and re-echoed, and louder than all sounded the wild trumpeting of an elephant.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.  
Bang! Bang! Came at the door of the van.

"Yaroooh!"  
To Bunter's terrified mind, the uproar conveyed only one thing—Bill Huggins. He squirmed in his bed with affright.

"Guv'nor!" yelled a voice outside, as a fist banged frantically on the door.

"Yaroooh! I'm not here."

"Guv'nor!" It was Nobby Nobbs' voice yelling at the door. "Wake up, guv'nor! Mumbo's got away."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"You better come out, guv'nor!"

Bunter did not answer that.

Wild horses, or wild elephants, would not have dragged him from the safe shelter of the van. If Bill Huggins was anywhere near the circus, Bunter felt safer behind a locked door.

No doubt it was the duty of the Boss to take control in that moment of wild excitement and confusion. But Bunter had never beer a whale on duty.

He squirmed to the little window of the van, and looked out.

The whole camp was seething with excitement and uproar. Wild trampling and crashing and trumpeting told of the progress of Mumbo the elephant.

There was an acrid smell of smoke in the air.

"Look out!"

"Keep clear!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Run for it!"

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! Bunter, with fascinated eyes, saw the gigantic figure of the elephant loom up in the dimness, the circus men scattering before him on all sides. Mumbo, generally a patient and good-tempered animal, was in a state of the wildest excitement, roaring like a wild tusker in his native forest.

Dance, the manager, backed against Bunter's van. Bunter reached out and tapped him on the shoulder from the window.

"I—I—I say, what's happened?" he gasped.

Dance gritted his teeth.

"Somebody sneaked into the elephant's tent, and let him loose—and lighted a bundle of straw to frighten him. He's nearly mad now! There's no touching him."

"Oh, lor'!"

Crash! Crash! came as the trampling elephant collided with a tent, tramped through it, and dragged it down.

"I—I—I say, if he comes this way, we——" stutored Bunter.



"If he comes this way, he'll biff that van right over," said Dance.

"Yaroo!"

"Look out!" yelled Nobby Nobbs. "Dodge him."

There was another rush, as the elephant trampled across the camp, with fragments of the broken tent clinging to him.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter. "Who—who—was it, Dance? Has that beast Huggins been here?"

"I shouldn't wonder! Somebody did it," snarled Dance. "This will mean a pretty bill to pay, if the elephant gets away from the camp, and breaks down fences and things."

"G-g-go and catch him!" gasped Bunter.

"Fool!"

"Look here, Dance, you're paid to look after the show," hooted Bunter. "You aren't paid to dodge away from that elephant. You go and catch him at once."

"Idiot!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Shut up, you fat fool."

"Look here—" roared Bunter. "I jolly well order you to go and catch that beastly elephant, see?"

Dance gave a savage laugh.

"He's coming this way! Try it yourself, you dummy." And the manager disappeared round the van.

Bunter stood in the doorway, frozen with terror. The excited, maddened elephant was lumbering right across towards the van, as if he did not see it in his path. But he swerved as he neared it, only his mighty shoulder catching the corner of the van as he trampled past. But the heave of Mumbo's shoulder was like the charge of a battering-ram. The caravan went crashing over.

There was a yell from Bunter.

The van collapsed on its side, and Billy Bunter collapsed inside it, rolling over in the midst of a shower of falling and tumbling furniture.

Bunter's alarmed yells rang far and wide.

Nobody heeded him.

The whole circus was watching the elephant and dodging him. Even Nobby Nobbs, who was accustomed to handling Mumbo in the ring, did not care to approach him in his present frame of mind.

There was a gasp of relief when Mumbo trampled out of the camp and disappeared across the fields. From the distance came a sound of crashing fences.

"He's gone!" gasped Nobby Nobbs.

"Escaped!" said Dance. "There'll be a pretty bill for this!"

"Yaroo! Help! Whoop!" came from Bunter's overturned van.

"I dessay he'll calm down before morning," said Nobby. "He'll come back most likely."

"He'll do some damage before that!" said George Mix.

"He will that!" agreed Nobby. "There'll be some bill for the gov'nor to pay! It was that man Huggins did it. I saw him sneaking off. If the gov'nor had had him run in—"

"Yaroooh! Help!"

"Sounds as if the gov'nor's broke something," grinned Nobby. "Better go and get 'im out!"

Bunter was excavated from the overturned caravan. He was none the worse, except for a few bumps, but he was breathless, and spluttering wildly.

"Is—is—is he gone?" he gasped.

"Yes, gov'nor."

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.

"He'll do a lot of damage afore we get him back," said Nobby.

"What! I don't care what damage Huggins does, so long as he doesn't come back here!" gasped Bunter.

"I was speaking of the elephant, gov'nor—"

"Blow the elephant! I mean Huggins, you dummy! Is he gone?"

"Oh, yes, he's gone!" said Nobby.

"If you'd have him run in, gov'nor he'd—"

"Oh dear!"

"I dessay he expects to get a chance at you, gov'nor, going arter the elephant," said Mr. Nobbs, with a grin. "He's fair got it in for you, he has. You going after Mumbo now, sir?"

"Ow! No fear!"

"I s'pose it ain't much good till daylight," agreed Mr. Nobbs.

"I'm not going after him at all!" roared Bunter. "What the thump do you think I pay you wages for? Blow him, anyhow! Go and eat coke!"

"Oh, my eye!" said Mr. Nobbs.

"Get that van up!" hooted Bunter. "Now then, don't slack about, you lot! Get that van up!"

The van was righted, and Bunter was able to go back to bed. That was a comfort. Befor. he locked his door again Bunter howled to the circus men:

"Don't go after that elephant! That doesn't matter! Don't go back to bed! All of you stay awake and watch, in case that beast Huggins comes back! If you don't, I'll sack the lot of you."

And Bunter locked his door and went to bed. All hands looked at one another expressively.

"My eye!" said Mr. Nobbs.

And he went back to bed. The rest followed his example. Pursuing the escaped elephant in the darkness was not of much use, and any damage he might do was the gov'nor's business, not theirs. And the circus company did not seem disposed to remain awake for the rest of the night, watching over the safety of the boss. They did not feel any inclination at all that way. At the risk of the "sack" from the autocratic gov'nor, they went to bed.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### An Unexpected Visitor!

"**W**HAT the thump—" said Bob Cherry.

"Sounds like thunder!"

"Can't be thunder!" said

Nugent.

"The thunderfulness is not terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed noise is remarkable and alarmful!"

Five campers sat up in their blankets, in their camp beside the shadowy lane, and listened.

Starlight glimmered down through the trees, dim lights and shadows moved in the dusky lane.

From a distance came a loud and strange sound, and had they been in a wild, foreign land, the chums of the Remove would have supposed that it was the roaring of some huge wild beast.

In the county of Surrey it was hardly possible to suppose that a wild beast was roaming the woods and fields in the night.

But the sound was undoubtedly strange and alarming.

"My esteemed chums!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "If we were in my own excellent and execrable country, I should say that a wild elephant was somewhere nearfully."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"There aren't any wild elephants in

this little island, Inky! Might be some giddy mad bull."

"It doesn't sound like a bull," said Harry Wharton, listening intently to the trumpeting roar from the dim distance. "But it's some big animal. We're too far from the circus to hear the elephant there."

"It is an esteemed elephant," said the Nabob of Bhanipur, with conviction. "Perhapsfully he is taking an esteemed walk."

"They wouldn't let him go around loose," said Johnny Bull. "I say, it's coming this way whatever it is."

There was no doubt about that. The booming roar was approaching the cyclist's camp, and a heavy trampling could be heard from up the dark lane in the direction of Greenleaf.

Harry Wharton & Co. tumbled out of their blankets.

"It's the elephant, right enough," said Bob. "He's got away from the circus, I suppose. Some ass has let him loose."

"He sounds jolly excited, too!" said Nugent. "If he butts into here, we'd better not stop to argue."

The juniors listened anxiously. They felt sure now that the trumpeting noise and the heavy trampling came from an elephant, and so far as they knew, the circus elephant was the only one in the neighbourhood. An escaped elephant trampling into the camp was not a light matter. Obviously it would be useless to argue the point with him. They stared anxiously up the shadowy lane, and stood prepared to dodge.

In the eastern sky was a glimmer of light, and the stars were paling at the approach of dawn. The early summer morning was at hand. But it was still dark under the elms where the Greyfriars cyclists were camped.

They listened, their hearts beating rather fast. There was a crashing of hedges under a heavy body, and the sound of a fall and a wilder trumpeting followed. As clearly as if they had seen it, they knew that the elephant had trampled through the hedge, and tumbled over in a ditch on the other side. They could hear a wild trampling and scrambling and crashing, and shrill, excited trumpeting. Then the heavy footsteps came along the narrow lane again.

In the dim twilight a gigantic form loomed up, and they saw two little eyes that gleamed with rage from a massive head.

"Hook it!" gasped Bob.

The elephant was coming down towards the camp, and, even if he passed it, he would pass within a few yards. And if he turned on them—

In a moment the Famous Five were scrambling up a tree, and they clambered into the safety of branches out of reach of the elephant's trunk.

The gigantic figure lumbered on down the lane, the juniors watching it breathlessly from the foliage. The cyclists' camp was pitched on a spot where a wide patch of grass lay by the roadside, with a gate in the hedge beyond. Straight at the gate the elephant lumbered, and there was a sudden fearful crashing as he came on the stack of bicycles.

Five bikes were stacked together, and there was a hurried sound of crunching as they went under the elephant's huge feet.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The bikes!"

"Smashed!" exclaimed Nugent.

"The smashfulness is terrific!"

"Lucky we're not smashed, too," said

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,073.



Harry, with a deep breath. "If we were in the brute's path now—"

Crash! Crunch! Smash!  
Leaving the wrecked bicycles in a jagged heap, the elephant trampled on towards the gate. There was another crash as the gate went, at the first impact of the mighty shoulders. Trumpeting and trampling, the elephant lumbered on across a dark field.

"He's gone!" panted Nugent.  
"Stay where you are, though," said Harry. "The brute may come back. We're safer here."

"Yes, rather!"  
The juniors remained in the branches, listening and watching. They heard the elephant trampling about the field, and the crashing of another gate. Then the thundering footsteps were heard returning, and the gigantic figure emerged into the lane again. To the horror of the Greyfriars juniors, the elephant stopped, and looked upward at the tree in which they were lodged, and lifted his trunk and trumpeted. In the growing light of dawn, they watched the animal, remembering tales they had heard of enraged elephants tearing up huge trees by the roots. But Mumbo, though he was wildly excited, was not vicious. He stared up at the five juniors in the tree, trumpeted and squealed, and trampled across the camp, and went on down the lane. Another resounding crash told that he had smashed through a hedge and taken to the fields.

The trampling and trumpeting died away at last, and there was silence. Harry Wharton & Co. descended from the tree.

In the glimmering light of the summer dawn, they looked at their camp. They looked at it with deep dismay.

The bicycles were hopelessly smashed. Tin pots and plates were flattened, and the spirit-stove had been trodden on, and was as flat as a plate. The kettle was trodden into a disc. Blankets and ground-sheets had not suffered much. But everything in the camp that was breakable was broken.

"My only hat!" said Bob Cherry. "Looks like starting in the early morning—I don't think! Those bikes are scrap-iron!"

"The repairfulness will have to be terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We are strandfully landed."

Bob Cherry picked up his machine. It hung from his hand a good deal like a collection of seaweed.

"Oh, what rotten luck!"

"The rottenfulness is preposterous."

"If that fat little idiot Sammy Bunter hadn't butted in, we should have been gone!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Bother him! Look here, you men, what are we going to do?"  
But that was a question more easily asked than answered. It was rather difficult to decide what was going to be done.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Compensation Required!

**M**ORNIN', gents!"  
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's the giddy clown."

Harry Wharton & Co. had breakfasted, after a fashion. It was impossible to boil water or cook anything. Some bread and biscuits had escaped damage. The butter was still there, but it had been trodden on by the elephant, and was spread out very thin, and the juniors did not feel like scraping it up. Fresh water from the

spring in the wood washed down a rather meagre meal. That, however, was not very serious—fellows on a cycling tour, camping out, expected to meet with little difficulties and to rough it occasionally. What mattered very much was the state of the five jiggers. All the chums of the Remove were handy men, and could repair a damage—but not damages to this extent. Indeed, it looked doubtful whether the most expert mechanic in Coventry, had he been on the spot, could have done much for those bicycles. Mumbo had trodden on them, and he had a most emphatic tread.

The stranded cyclists were discussing the matter, when Nobby Nobbs came down the lane from Greenleaf, and paused to greet them. They greeted him in return cheerily enough. Nobby stared at the fragmentary bikes in the grass, and grinned.

"I was going to ask you gents if you'd seen anything of an escaped elephant," he remarked. "I reckon I needn't ask."

"He's been here," said Bob, with a rueful grin. "What the thump did you let him wander away from the circus for?"

"Feller let him loose last night," explained Nobby. "Frightened him by firing some straw. We've had a wild night, I can tell you. The boss don't seem to mind much, but Mr. Dance is wild and waxy. That blinking bullifant will do a lot of damage."

"He's done some here," said Bob.

"Looks as if he 'ave," agreed Mr. Nobbs. "I've follered him here with busted fences and broken gates and trampled hedges to guide me. There'll be a crowd raging round our circus claiming damages, I fancy, if we don't move on quick. And we can't move on without that there elephant. He's our biggest turn. Which way did he go?"

"Down the lane," said Bob. "I dare say he's in the town now, butting into shop windows and shifting buses over."

"Well, the gov'nor will 'ave to square," said Nobby. "All his own fault for letting that man Huggins run loose. Why don't he have the man run in and locked up safe? That's what we all want to know."

"Was it Huggins let the elephant loose?" exclaimed Wharton.

"It was," answered Nobby. "I seed him sneaking off after. The boss could send him to the stone jug for it. Only he won't! Well, I got to look for that bullifant. Mornin', gents!"

And Nobby Nobbs went on down the lane, whistling as he went, looking for the wandering elephant, but apparently not hurrying himself.

"Look here, you men," said Harry Wharton, who had been thinking it out, "we can get those bikes put together in the town, but it will take a jolly long time, and it will cost at least some pounds on each jigger. I don't see blowing our whole supply of cash for our excursion on that. Whiffles is responsible for the damage his elephant does. It's up to Whiffles to pay the bill for these bikes."

"I was just thinking so," said Johnny Bull. "Anyhow, we've got to hang about wasting time till they're mended, for our excursion on that. Whiffles is bound to pay the damage."

"It won't be less than twenty pounds for the lot," said Frank Nugent. "We're not millionaires."

"We'll get them down to the town, somehow, and then go and see Whiffles about it," said the captain of the Remove decidedly. "It's up to him."

Bob Cherry stared at the wrecked heap.

"How are we going to get them along? They won't wheel even! Can't carry them a mile."

"We can hire a cart somewhere. There's a farm across the fields—I can see the smoke."

Harry Wharton & Co. had planned to start soon after dawn and wind up that day in the next county. But it was evident that they were not going to see Berkshire that day, and probably not the next, or the day after that. The repairs required by the jiggers were extensive and complicated. Instead of starting on a long and cheery spin in the golden summer's morning, they walked half a mile to a farmhouse, where they succeeded in hiring a man with a cart to take the bikes into the nearest town. There they found a cycle establishment, the proprietor of which gazed at the machines in wonder when they were presented to his view. He had never been asked to perform repairs to that extent before. However, he undertook to do his best, and the jiggers were left with him.

It was a long walk to the circus, but the juniors did not mind the walk. They had made up their minds that Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles must pay for the damage done by his runaway elephant. That was only just; indeed, it was a necessity, as the bill for repairs would have exhausted the whole cash supply of the party. Which would have made it necessary to give up the cycling excursion and return to Wharton Lodge—where they were not expected back for a couple of weeks—and that was not to be thought of.

It was getting towards noon when they arrived at the circus camp. There were few men about; they guessed that most of Mr. Whiffles' men were spread over the countryside looking for the escaped elephant. But they found Mr. Dance, who stared at them irritably.

Dance was not in an agreeable mood that morning. The boss was not worried about the damage the elephant might do, but the manager, who had charge of the cash-box, was very worried. Takings had been good, but the running expenses of the circus were heavy, and Mr. Dance's hopeless quest of winners made a heavy drain on what was left. When the claims for compensation came in, as they were soon sure to do, Dance was likely to have a difficult task in meeting them. That task the boss cheerfully left to him. Bunter did not worry about the financial side of the circus business, so long as there was no shortage of supplies for himself. Any shortage in that direction, undoubtedly, would have made the Owl of the Remove sit up and take notice.

"What do you schoolboys want?" snapped Dance. "We're busy here—no time for people to butt in."

"Your giddy elephant—" said Bob Cherry.

"You've seen him?" exclaimed Dance.

"He butted into our camp, and smashed up five bicycles," said Harry Wharton. "We want Mr. Whiffles to foot the bill."

"The footfulness of the esteemed bill is the proper caper, on the part of the absurd Whiffles," explained Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Dance stared at him.

"Eh! Oh! Well, you can see Whiffles, if you like! He's sprawling in the grass on the other side of his van. If he isn't eating you'll find him asleep."

"Oh," said Harry. "Well, come on, you chaps."

They went round the van indicated by Dance, and found Mr. Whiffles—or,





Billy Bunter scrambled to his feet just in time to meet the rush of the Famous Five as they poured out of the tent. Bob Cherry grasped the half-seen figure and grappled with it. "Got him!" he yelled. "Back up!" (See Chapter 11.)

at least, William George Bunter in his likeness. He was not asleep—he was seated in the shade of the van, with a glass of lemonade in one hand, and a jam tart in the other.

He blinked at the Famous Five through his big spectacles.

"Oh! You fellows! You still hanging about?"

"The hangfulness about is your excellent fault, my esteemed Whiffles," said Hurree Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Your elephant got into our camp and smashed up our bikes," said the captain of the Remove curtly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"We've taken them to a shop; and the bill will come to at least twenty pounds."

"He, he, he!"

The juniors stared at Mr. Whiffles. His fat cachinnation was so exactly like Billy Bunter's, that it was quite uncanny.

"I don't see anything to laugh at in the matter, Mr. Whiffles," said Johnny Bull gruffly.

"He, he, he!"

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" demanded Bob.

"Oh! Nothing."

"You can see that you must foot the bill for the damage your elephant has done Mr. Whiffles," said Wharton patiently.

"Nothing of the sort! Besides, it isn't my elephant! I—I mean—that

beast Huggins let him loose! You can ask Huggins to pay the bill."

"Do you mean to say you won't pay for the damage?" demanded Frank Nugent warmly.

"Like your cheek, I think," said Bunter. "Catch me paying your bills! You've never paid mine! In fact, you've often refused to lend me a measly half-crown when I've asked you."

"Eh! What!" ejaculated the juniors all together, quite amazed by that statement from the proprietor of the World-Famous Circus.

"I—I—I mean—" stuttered Bunter.

"Well, what do you mean?" demanded Wharton.

"Oh! Nothing."

"Look here, that bill's got to be paid," said the captain of the Remove. "You know you're legally responsible, Mr. Whiffles."

"Rats!"

"What?" roared Wharton.

"Rubbish!"

The juniors stared at him wrathfully. Apparently Mr. Whiffles did not intend to admit their claim, obviously just as it was. Certainly, legal proceedings would have compelled him to do so. But legal proceedings, of course, were rather out of the range of schoolboys on holiday. Bunter blinked at them cheerfully through his big spectacles.

"Then you refuse to foot the bill?" asked Nugent, at last.

"Yes, rather."

"Well," said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath. "You're a thumping rascal, Mr. Whiffles."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"And if you weren't old enough to be my grandfather, I'd jolly well bang your napper against that van!" roared Bob wrathfully.

"He, he, he!"

"And I'll jolly well shove that jam tart down your neck, anyhow."

"Good!" said Johnny Bull, "and I'll mop this lemonade over him."

"I—I say, you fellows! Keep off!" roared Bunter, in alarm. "I—I say, I—I was only j-j-joking! It's all right."

"Look here—"

"Go to my manager," gasped Bunter. "Tell him I sent you! Tell him to pay the bill! It's all right! Nothing mean about me! Tell him I said so."

"If you mean that, Mr. Whiffles—" said Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I suppose you know I'm a fellow of my word."

"I know nothing about you."

"Oh! Yes! I—I mean—"

Once again William George Bunter did not explain what he meant. It dawned on his fat mind, rather late in the day, that his tongue was in great danger of giving him away.

"Let's go and see that man Dance again, then," said Harry. And leaving Mr. Whiffles to jam tarts and ginger-pop, the Famous Five went to look for the manager.



## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

## A Difficult Debt to Collect!

**R**UBBISH!"

"That was Mr. Dance's answer. "Look here——"

"Nonsense!"

"Mr. Whiffles says——"

"Hang Mr. Whiffles."

The manager was not in a good temper. In fact, he was in a very bad one. An infuriated farmer had just interviewed him, with an excited tale of smashed hedges and broken gates. Already he had had an interview with another enraged cultivator of the soil, whose haystack had been torn to pieces and trampled. He was expecting more interviews of this sort—many more. And the elephant was not caught yet.

It was not surprising that Dance was in a bad temper, and had no politeness to waste on a party of schoolboys who came along for compensation for smashed bicycles. He had to listen to the farmers, who threatened legal proceedings, visits from local solicitors, and a process called "attachment." But he considered that he did not have to listen to a mob of troublesome schoolboys.

"Look here," hooted Bob Cherry. "Those bikes have got to be paid for, see?"

"Rubbish!"

"We've asked Mr. Whiffles——"

"Go and ask him again, then, or go to Jericho!" snapped Dance. And he stalked angrily away.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob.

"The esteemed and execrable gentleman is somewhat infuriated," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It is not surprising under the ridiculous circumstances. But——"

"Let's see that old fat bounder again," said Bob; and the Famous Five trailed back to Mr. Whiffles.

Bunter had finished his morning snack. Now he was leaning against the van, his mouth open and his eyes closed, snoring. A little nap till lunch seemed to Bunter a comfortable way of passing a summer's morning.

The juniors did not feel disposed to wait till Mr. Whiffles awakened. They awakened him. A jab in his ribs from an emphatic toe did it. Mr. Whiffles awoke quite suddenly, and spluttered.

"Owl! Grooogh! Keep off, you beast! Help!" Mr. Whiffles had awakened thinking of Bill Huggins.

"Oh! You!" grunted Bunter, blinking at them. "You again, you beasts! What the thump have you woke me up for? Go and eat coke."

"Dance has sent us back to you, Mr. Whiffles," said Harry Wharton. "We've got to get the matter settled."

"What are you going to do about it, Mr. Whiffles?" asked Bob.

"Oh! Nothing! Look here, I'd prefer to let the whole matter drop," said Bunter. "I never was a fellow to haggle about money."

"What?"

"It's sordid," said Bunter, blinking at them. "Let it drop! I'm fed up with it."

"You silly chump!" roared Bob Cherry. "Can't you get it into your fat head that our jiggers have been smashed up, and the man won't stick them together again for nothing?"

"The fact is, I'm rather short of tin, at the present moment," said Bunter. "That beast Dance keeps me awfully short. Look here, come along next week—or say the week after——"

"After the circus has moved on?" asked Nugent sarcastically.

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"Exactly! I—I mean—nothing of the sort. The fact is, I'm expecting a postal-order——"

"What?" gasped the juniors. "From one of my titled relations," said Bunter.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Then I'll settle," said the Owl of the Remove. "Let it drop till then. I'm sleepy."

The juniors gazed at Mr. Whiffles as if fascinated. There was something absolutely uncanny about this. His many striking resemblances to Billy Bunter had struck them before; they had accounted for it by the theory that he was related to the Bunters. But to hear that he was expecting a postal-order was simply staggering. Billy Bunter's postal-order, which he was always expecting and which never came, was celebrated at Greyfriars. But it was amazing to hear the same tale from the proprietor of the World-Famous Circus.

Bunter closed his eyes again, as if he considered the matter at an end. But it was not quite at an end. The fat Owl reposed comfortably for about the millionth part of a second. Then he opened his eyes suddenly as a remnant of ginger-beer trickled from a bottle down his neck.

"Ow! Oooch! Grooh! Beast!" squeaked Bunter.

"This matter has got to be settled," remarked Bob Cherry.

"Beast! I'll settle up next term."

"Next term!" ejaculated Bob.

"Yes! I—I mean, next week! That's what I really meant to say. Look here, I'll make Dance pay for your rotten old jiggers. I'll tell him to send you a cheque. Now go away. I'm fed-up with you."

"We're more than fed-up with you," said Harry Wharton. "But we're stranded here till the bikes are mended, and we can't get them again till the bill is paid. We're in a fix."

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, come away!" said Bob. "I shall punch him if he cackles any more. We'd better go to the police station about it. They'll tell us what to do."

"Good!" agreed Wharton.

"I say, you fellows," exclaimed Bunter, in alarm, "I—I wouldn't do that! I don't want any bobbies nosing about here. They might nose out that—that—that—I mean, I—I don't want to trouble them. It's rather a shame to waste their time. I—I say, I'll tell you what! Stay to lunch."

"Eh?"

"I'm jolly glad to see you fellows again, you know," said Bunter. "I always am glad to see old pals. I say, I'm going to have a ripping lunch—better than you get at home, I can tell you. I can tell you that my grub here makes the Greyfriars grub look simply silly. Stay to lunch, old fellows, and we'll talk it over."

The juniors regarded the circus proprietor curiously. They could not account for his evident alarm at the idea of coming into contact with the police. But there were many things about this remarkable Mr. Whiffles for which they could not account.

"Blow your lunch, and blow you!" said Bob Cherry gruffly. "Those bikes have got to be paid for, and that's the point."

"Well, bring the bill along, and I'll give you a cheque for it," said Bunter. "Don't you bother about going to the police station. Bobbies are frightfully nosy."

"Is there anything here you don't want bobbies to nose into?" asked Nugent sarcastically.

"Yes, rather! I mean, no—nothing of the sort, of course. Still, I don't want to bother them. Bring along your bill! I'll see you have a cheque! That's all right. Now let a fellow sleep."

The boss of the circus closed his eyes again. This time he was allowed to slumber in peace. The juniors walked away, not wholly satisfied; but feeling that there was nothing more to be done.

They walked into the village of Greenleaf to lunch at the inn. Then they walked back to the town, four miles away, where the bikes had been left for repair.

"This giddy cycling tour seems to have turned into a walking tour!" Bob Cherry remarked. "By the way, isn't it queer that we've seen nothing of Billy Bunter at the circus. We know he's there."

"Blow Bunter, and blow the circus!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Blow all the Bunters! There's too many Bunters, and too much of all of them."

"The too-muchfulness is terrific."

At the cycle shop the juniors learned that the repair of the bikes had been undertaken, that the job would last four days at least, and that the total cost would be twenty-two pounds ten shillings. With this cheerful news, and a bill for the amount—which evidently had to be paid before the jiggers could be reclaimed, Harry Wharton & Co. left the shop, and walked once more towards the circus camp—to collect that cheque from Mr. Whiffles, but feeling considerable doubt on the subject.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

## Bunter Has a Brain-Wave!

**E**UREKA!"

George Mix looked quite startled.

George was fairly busy.

The September afternoon was hot. In the big tent a circus performance was going on. Galloping of horses, and more or less musical music, awoke the echoes. Everybody was occupied—excepting the boss. The boss reclined in a wicker-chair in the shadow of his van and took it easy. An ample lunch was packed away inside Billy Bunter. Now he was toying with ice-creams. It was the duty of George Mix to supply chocolates and other light refreshments to patrons of the circus; but Bunter gave him little time to perform those duties. Bunter generally wanted something, and when the boss wanted anything it was no time for delay.

George was now supplying Bunter with ice-creams. Quite a plentiful supply of ice-creams had already been disposed of, but more were wanted. George came up with a fresh supply.

Bunter had been thinking.

This unaccustomed proceeding on Bunter's part had brought a deep wrinkle into his fat brow. He gazed at George absently, as he consumed ice-creams. He startled George by that sudden exclamation.

"Oh, sir!" said George.

George did not know any Greek. He thought that the boss was waxy and calling him names.

A fat grin broke over Bunter's face. Evidently he was pleased with the result of his cogitations.

"Eureka!" he repeated.

Bunter did not take Greek at Greyfriars School; his knowledge of that language was limited to one word—"eureka." In fact, he knew one word more of Greek than George did.

"What's the row, gov'nor?" asked George in an aggrieved tone.



"Row?" repeated Bunter.  
"Ain't that ice-cream all right, guv'nor?"

"Ripping!" answered Bunter.  
"Top-hole!"

"Ain't the biscuits all right?"

"Fine!" answered the boss.

"Well, what's the row, then?" said George. "What you call me names for, I'd like to know, guv'nor?"

Bunter blinked at him and grinned again. He understood that he was misunderstood.

"That's all right, George! I only said eureka," he answered condescendingly.

"Who's a reeker?" demanded George restively.

"He, he, he! Eureka is a Greek word, George," Bunter explained. "It means 'I've found it.'"

"Does it, sir?" said George. He had never suspected Mr. Whiffles of being the possessor of classical knowledge before.

"It does," said Bunter, "and I said eureka, George, because I've got an idea! I'm the fellow for ideas! Precious few fellows about with a brain like mine, I fancy."

"Not outside a blooming 'ome for idiots, anyway," George said to himself. But he was careful not to say it to the boss.

"I've got it," said Bunter. "I rather think of things, you know. Intellect, and all that! That's what you get from a Public-school education, George. It makes a fellow self-reliant, resourceful, cool as ice in an emergency, brave as a lion in the hour of danger! That's what it's done for me, George!"

George gaped.  
He had not known that Mr. Whiffles was a Public-school man, and he had not observed that the boss was cool as ice in an emergency, or brave as a lion at any time whatever. In the hour of danger, in George's opinion, the boss' coolness was wholly confined to his feet, which at such times could be better described as cold than merely cool.

"You wouldn't understand it, of course," said Bunter patronisingly, "but that's how it is, George. It's the Public-school system does it." Bunter liked to talk, especially about himself, and he was now in the happy and glorious position of having a listener who, being in his employ, could not escape. George shifted from one foot to the other, and cast a longing glance towards the circus tent. But he could not go, and he listened. "That's what's made me what I am, George."

"Is it, sir?" said George, who did not know what the Public-school system was, but did not think much of it if it had made the boss what he was.

"Yes," said Bunter. "Now, f'rinstance, suppose an escaped lion should come this way, George—"

"There ain't any lions in the circus, Mr. Whiffles! You mean a helephant?" suggested George.

"You ass! I'm putting a case!" said Bunter irritably. "Suppose an escaped lion—or an elephant, if you like—came this way, you'd bolt."

"I would that!" agreed George.

"Now, I shouldn't," said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"You'd see me as cool and calm as ice," explained Bunter. "Without turning a hair, I should face the danger, whatever it was! While all you common fellows ran for it or yelled for help, I should stand up to it, like Pontius Pilate defying the lightning, you know, or like Ajax facing the Philistines—like a—a—a tower of strength. That's what comes of being a Public-school man, George!"

George gazed at the boss. Then he uttered a sudden startled ejaculation.

"That blooming Huggins, sir—"

"What?"

"He's coming!"

"Ow!" roared Bunter.

He leaped from the wicker chair.

Ice-creams went to the right, ice-creams went to the left. Biscuits flew to all parts of the horizon. Faster still flew Bunter.

Bump! Crash!

Bunter landed in his van and slammed the door.

"Ow! Keep him off!" he roared.

"Keep him away! Call Dance! Call the men! Stop the performance! Fetch the police! Help!"

"It's all right, sir!" said George.

"He ain't coming!"

"What?"

"I thought I seed 'im, sir, but it was only that feller Slaney coming round a tent, sir!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Sure?"

George winked into space.

"Yessir! Quite sure! It's only Slaney! I jest thought for a minnit it was that blooming Huggins—"

"You fool! You ass! You idiot!"

"Oh sir!" said George deprecatingly.

"I've a jolly good mind to sack you!" roared Bunter. "Giving a fellow a fright like that, you blinking chump!"

The fat Owl rolled out of his van again. He blinked round him through his big spectacles. There was no sign to be seen of the redoubtable Huggins. George had been mistaken—or had he? Bunter blinked very suspiciously at George.

But George's face was very grave. It was impossible to suspect George of pulling so important a leg as Bunter's.

Bunter sat down again.

"Bring me some more ice-creams!" he snapped. "You silly chump! You gave me a fr—I mean, a start! Of course, I'm not afraid of the man! If

he came along here now I'd knock him spinning! Fetch me some more ice-creams, you burbling ass!"

George obeyed, and did not chuckle till he was out of hearing of the boss. His face was grave again when he returned with the ice-creams.

"You can go back to the tent!" snapped Bunter. "You're stupid, George! You're a silly fool, in fact! Look here, if those Greyfriars fellows come along again, bring them to me at once! I want to see them particularly! Treat them civilly, do you hear?"

"Yes, guv'nor!" said George.

"Now get out!"

George, not sorry to go, got out. Bunter's conversation, fascinating as it was, had palled on him.

Bunter leaned back in the chair, and consumed ice-creams in vast quantities, and smiled. The idea that had germinated in his fat brain pleased him immensely. The more he thought of it, the more he liked it. In fact, it was quite a brain-wave.

And when he caught sight of five boyish figures coming across the field he waved a fat hand to them, and shouted:

"I say, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"This way, you chaps! I'm glad to see you! Come over here and have some ice-creams!"

And "Mr Whiffles" turned on his pleasantest grin to greet the chuns of the Remove as they came.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Billy Bunter's Bodyguard!

**H**ARRY WHARTON & CO. stood before the elegantly sprawling proprietor of the World Famous Circus and looked at him. His genial reception rather surprised them after the  
(Continued overleaf.)

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happenings of the morning. But they were rather glad of it. If Mr. Whiffles meant to play the game, it would save a lot of trouble.

"Sit down, old fellows!" said Bunter cordially.

There was only the grass to sit upon, and the juniors preferred to stand. Still, the invitation was no doubt hospitable.

"Like some ice-creams?" pursued Bunter.

"Thanks, but we'd rather talk business!" said Harry Wharton bluntly.

"Plenty of time for that," answered Bunter genially—"lots of time! Have some ice-cream first! George!"

He blinked round irritably. "Where's that ass George? Where's that idiot George? My hat, I'll sack that booby if he keeps me waiting like this! I'll—"

"Yes, guv'nor!" George was at his elbow.

"Oh, there you are, you fathead! Bring ice-cream for my friends—lots of it! Sharp!"

"Yes, guv'nor!"

"And bring chairs, or a bench, or something!" said Bunter. "Look alive, you slow-coach!"

"Yes, guv'nor!" said the patient George.

Some wicker chairs were brought and a bench, and the Famous Five sat down, not sorry to get a rest after a lot of walking. The ice-creams were good and plentiful, and the juniors found them agreeable. But the effusive geniality of the boss surprised them more and more.

"Now, you fellows," said Bunter, "I've been thinking. I've thought it out. I've got a proposition to make to you."

"About the bikes?" asked Bob.

"Blow the bikes—I mean, yes! I'll pay the bill, of course!" said Bunter.

"That's all right! I'll see my manager about it as soon as he comes out of the tent. Never mind that now. Now, you fellows are rather stranded, aren't you?"

"That's so," assented Bob. "We can't get on our way for days now, thanks to your blessed elephant, Mr. Whiffles!"

"You'll have to put up somewhere—what?"

"Oh, we can camp out all right!" said Wharton.

"But it will cost you money," argued Bunter. "You can't live on air, I suppose?"

"That's so," said Wharton, puzzled.

"We don't expect to live on air, Mr. Whiffles. What are you driving at?"

"Well, how would you like a job?"

"A—a—a job?"

"That's it!" said Bunter, blinking at the captain of the Remove. "I don't mean work," he added hastily. "Don't be scared. It ain't work. How'd you like to stay with the circus—"

"Stay with the circus!" repeated Nugent.

"And travel with it—"

"Travel with it?" said Johnny Bull, staring.

"All expenses paid, and a tent to camp in, and the fat of the land to live on," said Bunter. "Free admission to all the performances, if you like, and George to wait on you—when I can spare him—what?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Better than hanging round a little country town waiting for your bikes to be put together—what?" grinned Bunter.

The Famous Five looked quite blankly at the fat gentleman in the

chair. The proposition took them utterly by surprise.

"But what—" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"You see, I'd like your company," said Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!"

"You're such nice chaps—"

"Great pip!"

"I always liked you, you know," said Bunter.

"D-d-d-did you?"

"I've always said you lot were the best of the bunch in the Remove, you know."

"What on earth do you know about the Remove, Mr. Whiffles?"

"Oh! Ah! Nothing, of course," stammered Bunter. "I—I mean—"

"But what—" repeated Bob Cherry. This change on the part of Mr. Whiffles was too surprising to be assimilated at once.

"You'll have good quarters," said Bunter. "You'll have good food—plenty of it. I look after the food myself. I can tell you I take jolly particular care about the food. Dance grumbles about the expense, but I shut him up fast enough, I can tell you. You'll live on the fat of the land. You'll see life, you know. You can go on in the ring, if you choose—after all, you can ride, Wharton. Not like I do, of course; still, you can ride. What do you say? Like the idea?"

The juniors exchanged glances. That they liked the idea, so far as that went, was obvious from their looks. The circus appealed to them; there would be plenty of fun and excitement in travelling with a circus—indeed, it beat a cycling tour by a great deal, for a change at least.

And even had it not been so attractive in itself, it was better than waiting about for days while their bicycles were turned into going concerns again. That was indubitable.

But they did not understand. The offer was utterly unexpected, and they did not know what to make of it.

"But what do you want us to do, Mr. Whiffles?" asked Wharton at last. "You want something, I suppose?"

"Not at all! You come as my guests," said Bunter. "Just because I like you, you know. Of course, one good turn deserves another."

"Quite! And what is the other?"

"Well, once or twice you fellows have butted in when that beast Huggins was after me," said the Owl.

"Oh!" Wharton began to understand.

"He's still after me," said Bunter.

"You could have him locked up," said Nugent. "You've got no end of charges against him, and he could be sent to chokey for what he's done."

Bunter grinned.

"That wouldn't do," he answered. "I—I mean, I—I'm rather tender-hearted, you know. I—I forgive him! He—he's misguided. I—I hope he'll think better of it if I let him off lightly. See?"

The juniors did not see. Such forgiving tender-heartedness to a ruffian like Bill Huggins seemed to them rather out of place; and rather inexplicable, as Mr. Whiffles was obviously in mortal terror of the man. However, that was Mr. Whiffles' own business.

"The beast is looking for a chance to bash me," went on Bunter. "Well, I don't want to be bashed, you know."

"The bashfulness is not an esteemed boonful blessing," agreed Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"If you fellows come along with me, you can keep an eye open for him," said Bunter. "If he comes along, tackle him. I don't want him run in, because

—because I'm so tender-hearted. But you can thrash him—thrash him hard—jolly hard. Anyhow, keep him off. You'll be a body-guard, see?"

"A body-guard?" repeated Johnny Bull.

"That's it," said Bunter. "You'll travel along with the circus, and keep that beast off. That ain't much to do, is it? You're not funky of him?"

"We're not funky of him, certainly," said Harry Wharton. "But—"

"Take it on," said Bunter. "It's a good offer. I'll agree to anything reasonable. You'll save all your expenses. You'll have a good time. I may put you on a salary list."

"Never mind that," said Harry, with a smile. "We shouldn't want that. I rather like the idea. What do you fellows say?"

"The likefulness is terrific."

"Good egg!" said Bob Cherry. "We join the jolly old circus, and we put the stopper on the Huggins bird if he blows in. Is that it, Mr. Whiffles?"

"That's it, old chap."

"It's a go!"

"The go-fulness is terrific!"

Bunter grinned complacently. Days of fear and nights of terror were at an end for the boss of the World-Famous Circus. So long as Huggins was at liberty, he would keep off the real Mr. Whiffles. So long as the Famous Five were on guard, he would not get at the spoof Mr. Whiffles. Bunter had reason to be satisfied with his astuteness. He could not have secured a more efficient body-guard; and expense was no object with Bunter. The Famous Five had equal reason to be satisfied. A tour of the country, camping with the circus, was very attractive; and they did not share in the least the boss' terror of Mr. Huggins. They were quite prepared to handle that gentleman efficiently if he blew in.

And so it was settled!

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Camping with the Circus

DANCE came out of the big tent by the staff exit. The performance was over, and the crowd was streaming away. Dance came across to Mr. Whiffles' van, and scowled at the sight of five sunburnt boys gathered at an alfresco tea with the boss, George Mix busily waiting on the tea-party.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in cheery mood.

The arrangement they had made with Mr. Whiffles rather pleased them. And the boss, equally pleased, was in his best temper, and made himself as agreeable as possible. And the tea was good and ample—there was no doubt about that. Whether Billy Bunter could manage a circus or not, there was no doubt whatever that he knew how to order grub. Spreads in the study at Greyfriars paled into insignificance beside this tea at the circus. So far as the commissariat went, the Famous Five were likely to do quite well as honorary members of Mr. Whiffles' staff.

Dance scowled at them and at the boss. Dance had seen several claimants for damages that day, and had heard that several more had asked to see him. Mumbo the elephant seemed to be putting in a lot of activity, and he had not been captured yet.

The circus could not move on till Mumbo was brought to book; and in the meantime claims for damages were growing up like mushrooms.



The boss did not mind; but Mr. Dance minded very much. Hence the black scowl with which he regarded the tea-party.

Dance was very restive under the boss' expenditure on tuck. On such a matter it was useless to remonstrate; Bunter was deaf on that side of his head, so to speak.

On other points Bunter might make concessions; on that point he was adamant. A shortage of tuck would have driven Bunter away from the circus, and Dance could not afford to part with him.

It was true that Bunter supposed that he was lord and master, and monarch of all he surveyed. As a matter of fact, Dance looked on him as a tool, to be used so long as he was useful, and then kicked out. But he was not only useful now, but indispensable; without him to represent Mr. Whiffles, it was impossible for the manager to carry on, and handle the cash-box, and continue his will-o'-the-wisp hunt for winners.

"What's all this?" grunted Dance. "What are these schoolboys here for? What the dickens—"

Bunter gave him a blink.

"These fellows are my guests," he answered. "I'll trouble you to treat them respectfully, Dance. I don't allow my employees to be cheeky to my guests, or to me. Got that?"

Dance breathed hard.

In private he could tell the boss what he thought of him; but with other ears to hear he had to treat Bunter as Mr. Whiffles, for his own sake. It was quite a painful position for the manager, who had never longed to kick anybody so much as he longed to kick William George Bunter.

"The elephant's not been found yet!" he growled.

"And why not?" demanded Bunter. "Why haven't you found him, Dance? I don't pay you to leave my elephant wandering about loose!"

Dance gasped.

"Just see that it's done," said Bunter, with a wave of his fat hand. "I'm not satisfied with you, Dance. You're slack!"

"Look here—"

"That's enough!" interrupted Bunter. "No cheek! By the way, these chaps are staying with me. They're going to travel with the circus."

"What!" hooted Dance.

"Don't snort at a fellow like that, Dance! I don't like it. See that a tent is prepared for them. Fix it up comfortably—camp beds, and all that—never mind expense. I never consider expense in such matters. Everything of the very best. See?"

"You—you—hem—Mr. Whiffles—"

"You talk too much, Dance! It's your greatest fault," said Bunter. "I'm fairly well satisfied with you as manager, but you talk too much. Don't argue. I don't like it."

Dance suppressed his feelings with difficulty.

"What are these schoolboys coming with the circus for?" he demanded.

"Because I want them," said Bunter coolly. "That's enough! I've settled it. See that the tent is got ready. Have it pitched close by the door of my caravan—I shall use my own van again now I've got a body-guard. And see that that bill is paid—for their bikes. I'm not going to be mean about that. See that it's paid."

"If you're thinking of keeping these schoolboys hanging about the circus because you're afraid of that man Huggins—" hissed Dance.

"Once for all, I don't want any

cheek," roared Bunter. "If you want the sack, Dance, say so."

Dance controlled his feelings and walked away. Bunter grinned triumphantly. Sacking Dance was not practicable for Bunter, any more than kicking Bunter out was practicable for Dance. They were indispensable to one another, in the present peculiar state of affairs at the World-Famous Circus. But that was no reason why Bunter should not throw his weight about. And he threw it about.

The juniors exchanged glances. What the manager thought was not a matter of any great concern to them: indeed, Dance's remarks seemed to them extremely cheeky. It was for the boss of the circus to decide these matters.

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"That's how I keep 'em in order, you fellows," said Bunter complacently. "Don't you worry about Dance. The fellow doesn't quite know his place, you know. He's rather cheeky. But I make him toe the line. Like the cake?"

"Topping, Mr. Whiffles."

"The topfulness is terrific."

"By the way, Mr. Whiffles, is Bunter still here?" asked Wharton.

"Eh?"

"Billy Bunter, you know. Is he still with the circus?"

"Oh! Yes! No."

"We met Sammy Bunter yesterday going home, and we saw him to the station," said the captain of the Remove.

The boss started.

"Oh! Did—did he tell you anything? I say, you fellows, don't you believe a word Sammy tells you. He's untruthful."

"He didn't tell us anything—"

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter. For a moment, he had had a misgiving that Sammy had given him away.

"But what about Billy Bunter?" asked Harry. "If he's here—"

"Oh! No! Not at all."

"He's been with the circus, though," said Bob.

"Yes! But—but he's gone," said the Boss. "The—the fact is, he—he died suddenly last night—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, he—he didn't exactly die suddenly, but he was very ill, and—and I had him taken away to hospital—"

"Poor old Bunter!" said Nugent. "What was the matter with him—cating too much, I suppose?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"If he's on his beam-ends, we'd better go and see him," said Bob Cherry. "Where is he now, Mr. Whiffles? If he's in hospital, I suppose he's not very far away?"

"Oh! Yes! Miles! Hundreds of miles."

"What?"

"I—I mean, he—he got better and—and went home," stammered Bunter.

"That's what I meant to say. He—he went home with Sammy."

"But he wasn't with Sammy—"

"I mean, he went home after Sammy. He's not here! You can take my word for that! You won't see him here. Have some more cake."

"Then he isn't ill?" asked Wharton, staring blankly at Mr. Whiffles.

"Yes! I mean, no! Quite well, in fact! Don't you worry about him. I—I sent him home in a car."

"But you said he was ill—"

"Did I? That was only a—a figure of speech! He's all right! Have some of this coconut ice. It's ripping."

Why Mr. Whiffles was lying, the juniors could not guess. The mystery of Billy Bunter puzzled them extremely. That he was at the circus, or had recently been at the circus, they knew, and there seemed no reason why the Boss should prevaricate on the subject. But prevarication was evidently one more matter in which Mr. Whiffles resembled Bunter.

As the boss was obviously anxious to change the subject they let it drop, much to Bunter's relief. What the Famous Five would have thought, had they known that Billy Bunter was before them, disguised in the wig and beard and waxed moustache of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, the fat Owl could not guess. But certainly they were not likely to enter into the remarkable scheme he had concocted with the manager.

That night, before Bunter retired to his van, a tent was put up close by the door for the Famous Five. There was much curiosity in the circus on the subject of the juniors, but they found the whole company civil and agreeable, with the solitary exception of Mr. Dance. Dance had to make the best of it. When the circus turned in, Bunter rolled into the blue-and-red caravan, feeling more secure than he had felt for a long time.

"I say, you fellows, keep your eyes open, you know," he called out from the door of the van.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"How are we going to sleep with our eyes open, you know," he called out from the door of the van.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"We'll wake up all right, if there's any trouble," said Harry Wharton. "Lock your door and leave it to us, Mr. Whiffles."

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

They heard Mr. Whiffles lock his door. Before they turned in, they heard a deep snore proceeding from the blue-and-red caravan.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Couldn't you fellows swear we were in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars, listening to Bunter?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"He snores like Bunter, and he talks like Bunter—he's got nearly all Bunter's funny ways," he said. "He must be a near relation."

"Not a bad old bean, in his way," remarked Nugent. "It will be fun travelling with the circus."

"Yes, rather."

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

And leaving the door of the tent wide open, partly on account of the heat of the summer night, and partly to keep the steps of the caravan within view, the Famous Five turned into their camp beds. There was no doubt that they would awaken promptly enough if there was an alarm at Mr. Whiffles' caravan; and if the redoubtable Huggins blew in, they were prepared to handle him.

Silence and slumber descended on the circus camp.

It was Bob Cherry, who slept nearest the door, who awakened first, at a sound close at hand.

Bob sat up in bed and listened.

He was sleepy, and he did not want to turn out. But he was ready to keep his compact with Mr. Whiffles. If there was a midnight marauder in the camp, that marauder had to be dealt with, according to plan.

Bob listened intently.

There was an unmistakable creaking of the caravan steps under a tread.

Bob slipped quietly out of bed and awakened his comrades.

"Turn out, you fellows—" he whispered.

"What—"

"He's come!"

"Oh!"

The juniors turned out, and dragged on their trousers and shoes. They peered out from the opening of the tent, into pitchy darkness. Nothing was to be seen, save the dim outline of the big caravan. But from the blackness came the sound of somebody moving, and then, suddenly, the sound of a stumble and a fall.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Bagging Bunter:

"**B**EAST!" murmured Billy Bunter. Bunter sat up in his bed in the blue-and-red caravan, and groped by the bedside, and breathed wrath.

"I'll sack him!" he murmured.

If ever a fellow in the world deserved to be sacked, that fellow was George Mix.

Sacking, indeed, was not enough for him! Hanging, drawing, and quartering were nearer the mark; or something lingering with boiling oil in it.

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Bunter had changed back to his own van that night; and Bunter had distinctly told George Mix to make the usual arrangements for the night. The usual arrangements were a supply of tuck on the table beside Bunter's bed in the van.

At Greyfriars, if Bunter woke in the night, he woke, of course, hungry. But at Greyfriars he had no resource but to grunt and go to sleep again. Tuck in the Remove dormitory was strictly forbidden.

At the World-Famous Circus, matters were much better. There, Bunter was accustomed to keeping a large supply of tuck in his caravan. If Bunter waked in the night, he had only to stretch out a fat hand, to help himself to jam-tarts, or cake, or meringues, or all sorts of tasty and indigestible things. This was the sort of thing that made life really worth living; it made waking up in the night a luxury. And Bunter had dropped into the habit of waking about midnight, and taking in provender in bulk. It was fortunate that Bunter had the digestion of an ostrich.

Now, as he groped over the table, his fat fingers met only empty space. That slacker, that lazy boast, that iniquitous rotter, George, had neglected to place the usual supply ready to his hand. Perhaps George had forgotten that the boss had changed vans again. It would be like him to forget even important things. George had been into the town that afternoon for supplies, and had gone to bed when he came back. Perhaps he was tired—he was quite beast enough to go to bed because he was tired, regardless of important duties.

"I'll sack him!" breathed Bunter. "I'll sack the beast!"

Sacking George on the morrow might be a solace. But it did not fill the aching void at the present moment.

Bunter was hungry.

It was hours since he had fed; and he had eaten hardly enough for four. He had woken up famished.

And there was nothing eatable in the van! Bunter sat in bed and palpitated with wrath.

Calling George was no use, he knew that. George was not within hearing; and was absolutely certain to turn a deaf ear, even if he heard. Bunter thought of the Famous Five in the tent. They were there to guard him against Huggins; but certainly not there to act as waiters in the middle of the night. Bunter was aware that if he wakened them for that purpose, they would only tell him to go and eat coke. He wanted to eat, certainly, but not coke.

Bunter turned his head on his pillow and tried to sleep.

At Greyfriars he would have succeeded. But the knowledge that ample tuck was close at hand prevented slumber now. Bunter sat up again; then he rolled out of bed. If the mountain could not come to Mahomet, Mahomet could go to the mountain. It was not far to the refreshment tent.

But Bunter had not forgotten Bill Huggins. The whole camp was silent and sleeping; but Huggins might be lurking about. As Mr Whiffles, Bunter would not have dreamed of venturing out of the safety of the van. But that was not necessary. He dressed himself in his own clothes, which were kept in a bag in the van, and left Mr. Whiffles' wig and beard and moustache on the table. In his own person, he had nothing to fear from Mr. Huggins, even if that gentleman was lurking in the circus.

It was, therefore, in his original character as Billy Bunter, that the fat

junior unlocked the door of the van, and peered out into the darkness.

All was still.

Bunter descended the steps of the van cautiously. As Billy Bunter, he had no attack to fear from Huggins; but as Billy Bunter, he did not want to be seen by anyone in the circus.

He knew his way well enough. But it was very dark, and the darkness rather baffled him.

He stopped at the bottom of the steps, and blinked round him through his spectacles.

Only a few stars glimmered in the sky overhead. Dimly he made out the shapes of tents and vans.

Having got his bearings, the Owl of the Remove started. He made three or four steps, and then his foot caught in a tent-rope—which no fellow could have been expected to see in the dark—and he stumbled over.

"Ow!"

Bump!

"Oooooooooooh!" gasped Bunter.

There was a rush from the tent. The body-guard were all on the alert.

"Collar him!"

"Here he is!"

"At him!"

Bunter was scrambling up. He scrambled up in time to meet the rush of the Famous Five as they poured out of the tent.

Bob Cherry grasped a half-seen shadowy figure, and grappled with it.

"Got him!" he yelled. "Buck up!"

Crash!

The shadowy figure went crashing to the ground, with Bob sprawling over him.

"Yarooogh!"

It was a fearful yell from the shadowy figure, as it crumpled up under Bob's hefty attack.

At a less excited moment, Bob might have been surprised at flooring the muscular Mr. Huggins so easily. But he had no time to think of such things now.

He had not the slightest doubt that it was Huggins—who else could be creeping about the steps of Mr. Whiffles' caravan in the middle of the night, when all the camp was sleeping? It was Huggins or nobody!

"Got you, you villain!" gasped Bob. "Bear a hand, you fellows! Get hold of him! Get a light, somebody."

Wharton and Johnny Bull groped for a hold. Wharton got hold of the shadowy figure's arms, and held on to them. Johnny Bull got hold of his ears, and held them tenaciously. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh secured one of the thrashing legs, and clung to it. Frank Nugent rushed into the tent for his electric torch.

"Hold him!"

"Keep him down!"

"Yarooogh! Help! Yoop! Whoooop!" roared Bunter. "Beasts! Yaroooh!"

"Bring a light!" gasped Bob.

Nugent rushed out with the electric torch.

The light flashed on the face of the prisoner in the grasp of the Greyfriars juniors.

There was a yell of amazement, of stupefaction.

"Bunter!"

"Billy Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows! Leggo! Yoop! Beasts! I'll kick you out! Oh, lor'! Gerroff my neck! Ow!"

"Bunter!" gasped Bob Cherry dazedly.

The discovery fairly flabbergasted the Famous Five. They had had no doubt that it was Huggins whom they had collared. The discovery that it was



William George Bunter took them utterly aback.

The Owl of the Remove was released. He sat up, roaring.

"Ow! Beasts! Grooogh! Ow!" "Bunter!" yelled Johnny Bull. "You fat idiot, what are you doing here?" "Yow-ow-ow!"

There was a rush of footsteps; two or three lanterns glimmered on the scene. The whole circus had been aroused. Dance came running up, and he stared at Bunter in amazement. Although he had not hitherto seen the Owl of the Remove in his proper person, he did not need telling who he was. But George Mix gave a shout:

"That's the fat bloke I seed, along with the other fat bloke! 'Ow did he come here agin?"

"Yow-ow-ow!" "What does this disturbance mean?" rapped out Dance. "Why have you stupid boys woke up the whole place?"

"We thought it was Huggins," gasped Bob. "I heard him creeping about Mr. Whiffles' van——"

"Beast!" Bunter staggered to his feet. "Beasts!" he howled. "I'll sack you! I'll kick you out!"

"Wandering in his mind!" said Nugent.

"Mr. Whiffles' door is open!" said George Mix. "That fat bloke's been pinching something from the van!"

"You cheeky beast!" howled Bunter.

"I seed him in that van afore," said George. "He got away some'ow. I know that fat bloke."

"What are you doing here, Bunter?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You fat chump——"

Bunter made a rush for the steps of the blue-and-red caravan, but the Famous Five promptly interposed.

"You can't go in there, fathead!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"It's Mr. Whiffles' van, you ass!"

"You—you—you idiot! I'm going in!"

"You're jolly well not! We're here to see that nobody butts into Mr. Whiffles' van!" said Harry Wharton.

"You silly dummy!"

"He's been pinching!" said George. "That's 'ow it is! Pinching!"

"Go back to bed, all of you!" interposed Dance. "I'll deal with this fellow!"

The circus men went back to their quarters at the manager's order, but the Famous Five remained where they were. Dance frowned at them.

"Do you hear me?" he snapped.

"Quite!" said Harry Wharton coolly.

"Then do as I tell you!"

"We're not under your orders, Mr. Dance!" answered the captain of the Remove. "We're here to look after Mr. Whiffles! And before we go back to bed, we're going to find out what this means!"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

Frank Nugent ran up the steps of the van and flashed the light of his electric torch into it.

"Whiffles isn't here!" he shouted.

"What?"

"There's nobody in the van!"

"Great Scott!"

"What's happened to Whiffles, then?" Wharton looked into the van. Obviously, it was empty.

Mr. Whiffles must have left his van, though why he had done so and where he was now was a mystery.

"We must find him!" exclaimed Wharton. "Something may have happened to him. Bunter, have you seen Mr. Whiffles while you've been prowling about?"

"Eh?"

"You know Mr. Whiffles by sight, you fat ass?"

"Eh? Oh, yes!"

"Well, you've been prowling about, it seems!" exclaimed Wharton impatiently. "Have you seen anything of him?"

"Oh, no! Yes, yes," gasped Bunter. "I mean, no! Oh dear!"

"We've got to find him!" exclaimed Wharton. "Goodness knows what may have happened! I can't understand his leaving his van like this after fixing it up with us to keep guard! Something must have happened!"

"I—I was hungry!" stuttered Bunter.

"I—I mean—— I say, you fellows, you—you go and look for—for Whiffles! Better look for him at once! I—I—I'll stay in the van while you've gone!"

"You'll do nothing of the kind!" said Wharton curtly. "You're not butting into Mr. Whiffles' van, you fat bounder!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Rats!"

Wharton put the key of Mr. Whiffles' door on the outside, turned it, and then slipped the key into his pocket. Bunter watched that proceeding in utter dismay. From the point of view of the bodyguard, it was their duty to see that no unauthorised person butted into the boss' van. Certainly they did not intend to let Billy Bunter do so.

"I—I say, Wharton, you beast, gimme my key!" howled Bunter.

"Your key, you ass! What do you mean?"

"I—I—I mean——"

"Well, never mind what you mean! Come on, you men! We've got to find Mr. Whiffles!"

"Yes, rather! Come on!"

"Look here——" roared Dance, utterly dismayed by this turn of events.

But the Famous Five did not heed him. Mr. Whiffles had vanished mysteriously from his van, and nothing was to be seen or heard of him. The duty of the bodyguard was clear. They had to find him and see that he came to no harm. And they rushed away in search of Mr. Whiffles, leaving Billy Bunter and the manager staring at one another.

"Well, you fat fool," breathed Dance, "you've done it now!"

"Oh, really, you cheeky ass——"

"What did you leave the van for?"

"I was hungry——"

Dance snorted.

"Hadn't you sense enough to dress as Whiffles?"

"When I might have run into Huggins! No fear!"

"Fool!"

"Beast!"

"Will those schoolboys keep the secret if they are told?" whispered Dance.

"Not likely! They'd want to know what you're doing with old Whiffles' cash-box while he's away!"

"If I squared them——"

"You can't square Greyfriars

men, you ass! They'd jolly well punch your head if you offered them some of the loot! Think you could get a Public-school chap to come into your rotten schemes?" said Bunter.

Dance stared at him.

"Are they school friends of yours?" he hissed.

"Yes; in the same Form."

"And are they so much more particular than you are, you fat fool? You're keen enough to plunder Whiffles!"

Bunter started. Bunter's wonderful intellect had by no means realised that he was taking part in a questionable scheme.

"Why, you cheeky beast!" gasped Bunter. "Mean to make out that I've got a hand in your swindling? I've got nothing to do with it! I've left money matters entirely in your hands! You know I have! Why you beast——"

"Fool!"

Dance strode away savagely. Bunter blinked after him in great wrath. The suggestion that his own conduct was not absolutely above-board naturally roused his ire. Carping fellows might find some fault with what Bunter had been doing, but not Bunter. His fat conscience was quite at ease.

He blinked after Dance, and then blinked at the blue-and-red caravan. In the distance the Famous Five were shouting the name of Whiffles, anxiously searching for the vanished boss. Many of the circus people were joining in the search. So long as the key of Mr. Whiffles' van was in Wharton's pocket, Mr. Whiffles was not likely to be found. It was rather a trying situation for Bunter—had he let it worry him. But he didn't. He rolled away to the grub tent; and while Harry Wharton & Co. searched for the vanished Whiffles, Billy Bunter searched for something to eat. And it was Billy Bunter's search that was successful.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Amazing Disappearance of Mr. Whiffles.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" "Whiffles! Whiffles!" "Whiff! Whiff! Whiffles!" "Whiffy! Whiffles! Where are you, Whiffy?"

The Famous Five shouted the name of the circus boss with many variations as they searched up and down and round about for the vanished gentleman.

But no voice answered. Echoes from the darkness of the fields thundered back the name of Whiffles—merely that, and nothing more.

(Continued overleaf.)



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Nearly all the circus was up and busy now, forgetful of sleep. If anything had happened to the gov'nor it was a serious matter. Mr. Whiffles was not greatly loved in the circus since Bunter had assumed his name and place—Bunter had somehow succeeded in banishing his popularity. But popular or not, Mr. Whiffles was the most important cog in the wheel. Everybody in the world-famous circus wanted Mr. Whiffles to be there on pay-day, at least.

To the general surprise, Dance took no part in the search, and made no remark whatever on Mr. Whiffles' disappearance. As for Bunter—in his own person—he was not expected to be interested. George Mix, who was a sympathetic soul, was quite concerned. He forgot the many unpleasant traits in the boss' character, and remembered the many half-crowns that Mr. Whiffles had tipped him. If Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles had vanished into space, the stream of half-crowns would dry up at the source.

Still, it was scarcely possible that Mr. Whiffles had vanished into space; though where else he had vanished was a mystery.

As his van was known to be empty, it naturally did not occur to anyone to search it, so no one knew that his clothes remained there, not to mention his beard, his moustache and his wig. Had all these been discovered, without Mr. Whiffles in them the surprise would have been still greater. But it was, of course, taken for granted that, in leaving his caravan, Mr. Whiffles had dressed, and any gentleman would hardly have been supposed to leave his hair behind when he went for a walk.

Up and down and round about they sought Mr. Whiffles—they sought him, but they found him not.

Mr. Whiffles had vanished like a Hunter of the Snark suddenly confronted by a Boojum.

Harry Wharton & Co. stopped at last, completely puzzled and perplexed. They had searched the circus from end to end, and shouted the name of Whiffles in all directions outside the camp, only echo answering. Obviously they were not going to find the circus boss in the camp.

But it was inexplicable that he had ventured out of the camp. Well they knew his terror of the lurking Huggins. In fear of a nocturnal visit from Huggins, he had engaged them as a body-guard. It was unbelievable that he would have walked out of the camp alone, regardless of the danger of Huggins. Yet it he had not done so, where was he?

"It's a jolly old mystery," said Bob Cherry, rubbing his nose. "I suppose that man Huggins can't have kidnapped him and walked him off."

"The kidnapfulness could not have occurred without considerable yellfulness from the esteemed Whiffles," said Harree Singh.

"We should have heard him. I think all Surrey would have heard him!" said Wharton. "Besides, he must have left the van of his own accord. We heard him lock the door when he went to bed. Well! it was unlocked, and the lock wasn't damaged—it hadn't been forced or anyt'ing! Only Whiffles could have unlocked the door from inside."

"Well, it beats Banagher!" said Frank Nugent. "What on earth has become of the old donkey—I mean the old chap."

"Goodness knows!"

"I was afraid Huggins might have

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,073.

bashed him on the head, and we'd find him lying about damaged," said the captain of the Remove. "But the whole place has been searched. He's not here."

"He's gone out of the camp, young gents," said Nobby Nobbs. "P'raps he couldn't sleep and wanted a walk, and forgot about Huggins. I'm going back to bed."

And he went, and most of the others. But the Famous Five did not feel disposed to return to their tent. They felt responsible in the matter. Mr. Whiffles had not been exactly nice in their dealings with him—till all that afternoon. Since then they had quite liked him. Picking them out to act as a body-guard was, at least, a compliment. It showed that Whiffles had a good judgment, and knew plucky fellows when he saw them.

They had accepted the arrangements to camp in the circus, all expenses paid, in return for guarding Mr. Whiffles from danger. Mr. Whiffles had kept his part of the bargain. They could not fail to keep theirs. It was up to them. And though they were undoubtedly tired and sleepy, they did not intend to abandon the search till Mr. Whiffles was found.

That Mr. Whiffles—their Mr. Whiffles—would be better pleased if they let the matter drop, they naturally did not know. They could not be expected to guess that.

As they stood in discussion, debating their next move, there was a sudden shout, the voice of George Mix raised in tones of excitement in the refreshment-tent.

"Hallo, hallo hallo! Something's up!" exclaimed Bob. "Come on!"

The juniors ran to the tent, where the staff were accustomed to take their meals, and where the supplies were kept. A swinging lamp had been lighted in the tent, and in the illumination they beheld William George Bunter wriggling wildly in the grasp of George Mix.

"What's the row!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Caught him at it!" shouted George. "Caught this here fat cove burgling the grub! Scoffing everything he could lay his hands on."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "Bunter all over."

"Leggo! yelled Bunter. "I say, you fellows dragg'moff!"

"You fat chump!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Why can't you leave other people's thing alone? This isn't the Remove passage at Greyfriars! You can't scoff tuck here, you fat dummy."

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "I can do as I like here. I suppose!"

"Something wrong with your supposer, then," chuckled Bob. "You jolly well can't! What do you think Whiffles would say?"

"You—you—you ass!" gasped Bunter. "If you knew—"

"Eh? If I knew what?"

"Oh, nothing! Make this beast leggo! I'll sack him."

"Sack a bloke, will you?" exclaimed George wrathfully. "And who are you to sack a bloke you fat lump of suet?"

"I—I mean— Leggo!" howled Bunter.

"Scoffing the stuff right and left!" exclaimed George, justly indignant. "Jam tart and cakes, and all! Mr. Whiffles special tommy! Scoffing it like it belonged to 'im! Blessed if I know 'ow he knew where to find it! Looks to me as if he's an old 'and at this sort of thing."

"Ha, ha ha!"

"He's had a lot of practice at school," chuckled Nugent. "Nobody's tuck is safe from him at Greyfriars."

"Oh, really, Nugent! Yow-ow! Leggo, you cheeky beast!"

"Houtside!" roared George. "I'm answerable for this here grub, I am, and this means trouble with old Whiffles in the morning! By gum! I've a good mind to 'ave you run in for pinching! I 'ave that!"

"Oh crikey!"

"Houtside!"

"Yaroooh! Rescue! Yooop!"

Harry Wharton & Co. did not feel called upon to intervene, as George ran the spluttering Owl of the Remove out of the tent, and landed him with a bump on the ground. Bunter was a well-known grub-raider at Greyfriars; but he could not expect to be allowed to raid the grub at the World-Famous Circus. George landed him in a heap, and Billy Bunter sprawled and roared.

"Yaroooh! I say, you fellows—Yooop!"

"Shut it!" growled George. "'Ook it! That's what I'm telling you—'ook it! Get out of this here camp!"

"You silly chump— Ow!"

"If you're waiting to be kicked out, I'm your man!" said George.

"You—you—you silly idiot!" shrieked Bunter. "Of course I'm not going! I'll sack you! Oh dear! Keep off!"

"You don't belong 'ere!" said George. "Mr. Whiffles don't know nothing about your being 'ere! You're a pincher!"

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton. "Bunter can't start for home at two in the morning. Get into our tent, Bunter. You can stay there till daylight. Then you'd better clear."

"Well, if I find 'im near this 'ere tent again, I'll make a blooming himage of him!" said George.

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled away to the juniors' tent. Fortunately, he had stowed away a substantial supper before George discovered him. He was no longer in a state of famine. So he was ready to sleep. The present state of affairs, which threatened the sudden termination of his reign as boss of the circus, might have kept Bunter awake—had it been anybody but William George Bunter. As it was, he rolled on the nearest bed and went to sleep. In a few minutes his deep snore rumbled from the tent.

And the chums of the Remove, who had been struck by the resemblance of Mr. Whiffles' reverberating snore to Bunter's well-known efforts, were struck again by the resemblance of Bunter's snore to Mr. Whiffles'.

However, they had no time to think about snores. They had been searching for Mr. Whiffles half-dressed. Now they finished dressing and renewed the search. Leaving Bunter snoring in the tent, they started, utterly perplexed by the amazing disappearance of Mr. Whiffles, but dutifully determined not to rest until they had found him.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Prisoner of War!

"STRIKE me pink!"

"Oh! ejaculated Wharton. He knew the voice of Bill Huggins, as well as his accustomed elegant mode of expressing himself.

There was a glimmer of the early summer dawn in the sky.

Harry Wharton & Co., having drawn



the whole camp in vain for Mr. Whiffles, had extended their search through the adjoining fields.

It seemed clear by this time that Mr. Whiffles was out of the camp. That he had gone willingly seemed improbable; moreover, his absence had lasted for hours now, and he had not returned. Exactly what had happened they could not surmise; but they naturally put it down, whatever it was, to the circus boss' inveterate enemy, Bill Huggins. Huggins had somehow got at Whiffles—that seemed the only possible explanation. Knowing the ruffian's intentions towards his former boss, they were

"Huggins!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "The esteemed and preposterous Huggins! Collar him!" Before Bill Huggins could realise what was happening the Famous Five were upon him.

"'Ere, 'ands off!" roared Huggins, attempting to scramble up, and striving in vain. "Strike me pink and blue! 'Ands off, you coveys!"

"Collar the brute!"

"Pin him!"

Huggins struggled furiously.

But five pairs of hands were too much for him. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull kneeled on his brawny chest, while the

"You've done something with him, and we want to know where he is. Cough it up!"

Huggins stared and blinked at the juniors. His intentions towards Mr. Whiffles were of the most ferocious variety; but he had not been able to carry them out. So he was surprised.

"Wot! I tell you I ain't seen the old covey!" he snarled. "I ain't been near the blooming circus this 'ere night."

"That won't wash!" said Harry.

"I tell you I ain't!" howled Mr. Huggins. "If anything's 'appened to old Whiffles, I don't know nothing about it. I come looking round, and 'eard a row



"Bang his head on the ground, and see if that will make him remember what he's done with Whiffles!" suggested Johnny Bull. "Good egg!" "Look here—yarooooooop!" roared Mr. Huggins, as Bob Cherry, taking a strong grasp on the man's thick stock of hair, proceeded to bang his head on the hard ground. (See Chapter 13.)

fully prepared to find Mr. Whiffles in a seriously knocked-out state, perhaps with his nose bashed through the back of his head, as Huggins had threatened.

In the dawning light they searched the fields, and peered under trees and hedges, in search of some sign of Whiffles. They could not help feeling that they had rather failed as a body-guard. Certainly, they had taken it for granted that the boss would keep his door locked all night, and so they would hear if his enemy made an attempt to get at him. Still, they had failed; and they were anxious about Whiffles. They were going to find him, if he was to be found.

The sight of a shadowy figure lying in thick grass under a tree startled Wharton; and for a moment he thought he had found Mr. Whiffles, in a battered and knocked-out state, unable to move. The next moment he realised that the bulky figure in the grass could not be that of the little fat boss. And the next, as the figure moved and awakened, he recognised the voice of Bill Huggins.

Huggins sat up and rubbed his eyes and blinked at them.

other fellows captured his arms and legs and held them fast.

Huggins was reduced to a helpless state, only his voice remaining active. His limbs, like deponent verbs, were passive, with an active meaning. But his voice was very active indeed; and his language was sulphurous. Bob Cherry cut short the flow of eloquence by jamming a handful of turf into his mouth.

Mr. Huggins gurgled wildly.

"We've got the brute!" gasped Bob. "Now we'll make him tell us what he's done with Whiffles."

"Yes, rather! Where is Mr. Whiffles, you rotter?" demanded Wharton.

"Gorooooogh!" Mr. Huggins was still struggling with a mouthful of turf. "Ooooooh! Yuurrrgggh!"

"What have you done with Whiffles?"

"Ooooooh! I ain't done nothing with Whiffles!" gurgled Huggins. "I'm going to do something with him! I'm going to smash him! I'm going to bash him! I'm going to give 'im something wuss than three months'ard! You wait till I get 'old of that old covey!"

"You can chuck all that!" said Harry.

going on, and so I let it slide, and come back 'ere to sleep, if you want to know. I ain't seed him. Now, let a bloke alone!"

Wharton scrutinised the ruffian's face. Mr. Huggins was excited, and seemed very much in earnest. But the juniors were not likely to believe his denial. Mr. Whiffles' disappearance could only be accounted for on the theory that Bill Huggins had got at him. And here was Huggins, skulking within a short distance of the circus camp. With what intention he was there was clear; and in view of Mr. Whiffles' disappearance they were not likely to believe that he had not carried out his intention.

"Gammon!" said Bob Cherry. "He's had a hand in it, of course. You can tell whoppers till you're black in the face, Huggins; but we know that you've got at Mr. Whiffles, and we want to know where he is."

"Strike me pink—"

"You'll be struck black-and-blue, if you don't own up! Where's Whiffles?"

"I don't know nothing about him!" bawled Huggins. "I 'spose he's at the blinking circus, ain't he?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,073.



"No, he isn't. He's disappeared."  
 "Strike me pink! He's 'ooked it, has he?" hooted Huggins. "Well, I'll get after him, wherever he is!"  
 "You can can all that," said Wharton. "Where is he now? That's what we want to know, and you've got to tell us!"

"Strike me——"  
 "Where's Whiffles?" demanded Johnny Bull.  
 "I tell you I don't know nothing about him——"

"Bang his head on the ground, and see if that will make him remember what he's done with Whiffles," suggested Johnny Bull.

"Good egg!"  
 "Look 'ere—— Yoooop!" roared Mr. Huggins, as Bob Cherry, taking a strong grasp on his thick shock of hair, proceeded to bang his head on the hard, unsympathetic earth.

Bang, bang, bang!  
 "Oh crumbs! Oh crikey! Ow, ow, ow!"  
 "Now, where's Whiffles?" demanded Bob.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"  
 "What have you done with Whiffles?"  
 "Yow-ow-ow! I ain't done nothing!"  
 Bang, bang, bang!

Huggins yelled frantically. He made a terrific effort to throw the juniors off; and for some minutes the Famous Five had their hands full with him. But the five sturdy juniors were too much for Huggins, and he collapsed again in the grass, panting and gasping.

"Now will you tell us what you've done with Whiffles?" asked Bob.

"Ow! Strike me pink! I tell you I dunno nothing about Whiffles!" howled Bill Huggins. "Ow, my 'ead! Ow!"  
 "You came here after him," said Harry.

"I know I did—ow! But I ain't seed him! Wow! I tell you I found they was up and awake at the circus, and I sheered off! Yow! Oh, my 'ead! Ow!"

"Look here, Huggins. We know you've done something with Mr. Whiffles, and if you don't tell us where to find him you'll be run in."

"Ow, my head! Wow!"  
 "Take him back to the circus," said Harry. "We'll send word to the police-station at Greenleaf, and hand him over when a policeman comes for him. They'll make him own up fast enough."

"Another bang or two——"  
 "Yow-ow-ow! Stoppit! Whoop!"

Harry Wharton jerked off the unclean muffler from Mr. Huggins' neck, and tied the ruffian's wrists together with it. It was injudicious to allow Mr. Huggins the use of his hands, when he was allowed to get on his feet. He was altogether too dangerous for that.

Having fastened Huggins' hands securely behind his back, the juniors allowed him to rise. Huggins glared at them wolfishly.

"Now come along," said Harry. "You'll be kept at the circus till a constable is sent for. Get a move on!"  
 "I ain't going——"

"Give him a lift with your boot, Bob."

"What-ho!"  
 One lift with Bob Cherry's boot was enough for Mr. Huggins. He had stated that he was not going; but he decided all of a sudden that he was. And he went. With an expression on his face that might have excited the envy of a basilisk, Bill Huggins tramped away across the fields towards the circus

camp, with the body-guard round him—a prisoner.

Mr. Whiffles had not been found. But Mr. Whiffles' enemy had been found and captured, and the body-guard felt that they had done well. They found all the circus up when they arrived, and Bill Huggins was the cynosure of all eyes as he was marched into the camp.

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

### "Mr. Whiffles'" Return!

"WAKE up!"  
 Snore!  
 "You fat fool!"  
 Snore!  
 Shake, shake, shake!  
 "Groogh! 'Tain't rising-bell! Ger-away!" mumbled Billy Bunter.

"You fat dummy!" hissed Dance, shaking the Owl of the Remove. "Will you wake up? You unspeakable idiot!"

"Beast! I'm sleepy. Lemme alone!" snapped Bunter. "I—— Ow! Wow!" Billy Bunter's bullet head came in violent contact with a set of knuckles, and he woke up, quite wide awake at once. "Ow! You beast! Ow!"

Bunter sat up on the bed in the tent, blinking at Dance in the glimmering light of dawn, with fury in his blink.

"Look here, you cheeky beast——"  
 "Silence!" snarled Dance. "Get yourself awake, you idiot! Have you no sense at all? Is this a time for sleeping and snoring?"

"Yes, rather! I'm sleepy. Besides, I don't snore."  
 "Those schoolboys have gone out of the camp——"

"I don't care. Blow 'em!"  
 "They've gone searching for Whiffles and——"

"He, he, he!"  
 "Fool! The game is up unless you change back into Mr. Whiffles' clothes before they return," breathed Dance.

"How can I change back, you ass, when that beast Wharton has locked up the van, and I can't get at the things? Besides, I'm sleepy."

"Do you want to be kicked out of this circus?"

"Eh? Nunno. Look here——"  
 "Well, you can stay here as Whiffles, or you don't stay at all! If you're not Whiffles, you fat ass, you go—at the end of my boot. See?"

"Oh, really, you rotter——"  
 "I've brought you the things!" snarled Dance. "You can dress here. I'll watch outside the tent and keep those meddling schoolboys off if they come back before you've got ready. But lose no time."

Bunter blinked at him and rubbed his sleepy eyes, and blinked again.  
 "But the van was locked up. How could you get at the things in it?" he demanded.

"I have another key——"  
 "You've got a key to my van?" demanded Bunter indignantly.

"To Mr. Whiffles' van," said Dance.  
 "Yes. You're not Whiffles at present; at present you're a schoolboy, whom I am going to kick out of the circus if you don't change back at once."

"Look here, this is jolly fishy!" said Bunter. "I'll bet old Whiffles never knew you had a key to his lock. You must have sneaked it somehow. I'm afraid you're not honest, Dance."

"Will you get up and change before I wring your fat neck?" asked Dance in suppressed tones of fury.

"Oh, really, Dance——"  
 The manager drew back his fist, and Bunter squirmed off the bed just in

time to escape renewing his acquaintance with Dance's knuckles.

On the next bed lay the remarkable check clothes, the crimson waistcoat, the bell-brimmed silk hat, and the wig, moustache, and beard. Billy Bunter blinked at them. Certainly he wanted to carry on as Whiffles; he did not want to be kicked out as Bunter. Still, he was sleepy; early rising did not appeal to Bunter.

"Quick!" muttered Dance. "The boys may come back any time—or somebody may come butting in! Quick!"

"I'd rather leave it till I've had my sleep out," argued Bunter. "You see—— Keep off, you beast! I'm just going to change! Beast!"

Bunter proceeded to change.

Dance kept watch at the opening of the tent. He was in rather a nervy state, and in a frightfully bad temper. His whole scheme was threatened by what had happened; but the absence of Harry Wharton & Co. gave him a chance to save the situation, as the circus was not yet up and for the moment there were no inquisitive eyes about. But for the fact that he had a key to fit the lock of the blue-and-red caravan, the game would have been up. But now all was clear—if Bunter made haste. Bunter was totally disinclined to make haste—indeed, had Dance taken his eye off him the Owl would have gone back to bed. But Dance did not take his eye off him—and the eye he kept on Bunter gleamed with ferocity.

Bunter was changed at last. His movements were slow—exasperatingly slow to the anxious Dance. But at last he was finished, and he presented once more the accustomed aspect of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

His own clothes were packed in the bag, and Dance took it away, tossed it into Mr. Whiffles' van, and locked the door again.

When he came back to the tent he found "Mr. Whiffles" stretched on a camp-bed, already recommencing to snore.

That snore was cut short, however. Dance grasped the fat junior by one fat ear and tugged.

"Yarooogh!"  
 Once more Bunter came out of the land of dreams. He bounced off the bed and glared furiously at his manager.

"You cheeky rotter!" he roared.  
 "I'm going to sleep——"  
 "Get out of this tent!"  
 "Shan't!"

"You fool! Get out before they come back! You're supposed to have gone for a walk, or something; if they find you in here they may smell a rat! Get out of it!" hissed Dance. "And, look here, you're to send those schoolboys away! The sooner we're rid of them the better!"

"Cheese it!" said Bunter. "Once for all, Dance understand that I don't want any cheek from you! You're too bossy! I don't like it! Shut up!"

Bunter rolled out of the tent, however, and Dance followed him out. An anxious glance showed him that the Greyfriars juniors were not in sight.

"I'll go to bed in my van," said Bunter. "Open the door as you've got a key."

"You dummy! Wharton's got the key of the van, and he will expect to find it locked when he comes back."

"Let him expect! I don't care what he expects!"

"You've got to keep up appearances, you born idiot! Those schoolboys are





"Will you get up and change back into Whiffles' gear, before I wring your neck?" asked Dance. "Oh, really, Dance—" gasped Bunter. The manager drew back his fist, and Bunter squirmed off the bed just in time to escape renewing his acquaintance with Dance's knuckles. (See Chapter 14.)

not to be trusted with the secret. Haven't you any sense?"

"I suppose I've got to sleep somewhere!" hooted Bunter. That at the present moment was the most important consideration in the universe to Bunter.

"Fool! Silence! There is George Mix—"

"Blow George Mix!"

"Do you want him to guess, you dummy?"

"I'm going to sack him! All this wouldn't have happened if he hadn't forgotten the grub last night!" growled Bunter.

"Sack him if you like, but don't give the game away, you blithering jackass!"

"Look here—"

"Take care, you fool; he's coming over—"

George Mix had caught sight of the boss, and he stared at him in surprise and came up.

"Morning, guv'nor!" said George. "We thought something 'ad 'appened to you, sir; you couldn't be found anywhere—"

"I—I've been for a walk," said Bunter. "I suppose I can go for a walk if I like, fathhead!"

"Eh? Oh, yes, sir! But we thought that—"

"You're a fool, George! And a careless beast! You forgot to put the grub in my van last night!" said Bunter sternly. "I woke up hungry, and there was nothing there! You're sacked!"

"Oh, guv'nor!" said George.

"At least, you're sacked after breakfast," said Bunter. "I'll have breakfast before I sack you. You may as well get it now. Make yourself useful before you go."

George looked at him. If he was going he had no desire to make himself

useful before he went. He was more disposed, if he was going, to "dot" Mr. Whiffles in the eye before he departed.

"Look here, buck up with brekker, and perhaps I'll give you another chance," said Bunter, remembering that George was a good cook. "But, mind, if you ever forget the grub again, you go! See?"

"Yes, guv'nor," said George meekly. "You see, guv'nor, you never used to have grub put in the van, only jest lately—"

"That's enough! You talk too much!" said the boss.

"There's a fat bloke been here, guv'nor," said George. "I caught him at the grub last night. A fat bloke in specs, sir—a ugly-looking feller—scoffing the grub like anything, sir! Reg'lar pig! He's in that tent now, guv'nor! 'Orrible fat pig of a feller—"

"I don't want any cheek!" roared Bunter. "I—I mean that—that chap was a—a friend of mine. If—if you ever see him about the circus again, mind you treat him respectfully—just the same as you would me, in fact! Now, shut up and trot out my brekker!"

Sleep being unavoidably postponed, eating was the next best thing, so Bunter devoted himself to breakfast. The circus men were all turning out now from tent and caravan, and the word passed round that the boss had come back. The boss, in fact, was to be seen at breakfast, at a table set beside his van. Nobby Nobbs came up to greet him.

"Glad to see you safe, guv'nor! Them young gents have gone out hunting for you—"

Bunter grinned.

"We thought that fellow Huggins had got you at last, guv'nor," said Nobby,

"Oh! I—I went out to look for him," said Bunter. "I—I thought I heard somebody moving about, and—and went out to look!"

"Did you, sir?" exclaimed Nobby in amazement.

"Exactly."

"Here they come, guv'nor!" called out George. "Here they come, and they've got that man Huggins."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He jumped up in alarm, and blinked at the Famous Five as they marched their prisoner into the circus camp.

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Mysterious!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. jumped at the sight of "Mr. Whiffles" standing by the table, a tea-cup in one hand, and a slice of toast in the other. They had hunted for Mr. Whiffles far and wide, and had captured Bill Huggins in the belief that he had knocked out the boss; and here was the boss at breakfast. The Famous Five stared at him blankly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's here!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"The herefulness is terrific."

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Wharton. "So you're all right, after all, Mr. Whiffles."

"Keep him off!"

"What?"

"Hold him!"

"We've got the brute all right," chuckled Bob. "We've got his paws tied, Mr. Whiffles; he's safe enough."

"Strike me pink!" said Bill Huggins, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,073,



with a glare at the boss. "So you're 'ere, arter all, Whiffles, and they told me you'd 'ooked it. If my 'ands wasn't fixed up—"

"But they are," grinned Bob, "and you'll be fixed up by the police before long. We've got him safe, Mr. Whiffles, and you've only got to send for a bobby."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Exactly! Let him go—I mean—keep him safe! I—I'll send for a bobby after breakfast! Keep him safe. Look here, what the thump did you bring him here for?"

"Eh! We thought he'd knocked you out—"

"Rot!" said Bunter. "I'm not afraid of the brute! If he came near me, I'd knock him spinning! I could handle him easily enough."

"Oh, my hat! We'll let him go, then," said Harry.

"Oh! No! Keep hold of him!" roared Bunter in alarm. "Don't you let that beast go."

"Ha, hâ, ha!"

"Strike me pink! You wait till I get a chance at you, Whiffles!" said Bill Huggins. "You've got me now! Send for your peelers as soon as you like. I'll do another three months, and then I'll be arter you agin! You wait till I get a chance to bash you—"

"Hold him tight!" gasped Bunter.

"Look here, we may as well walk him into the town and hand him over to the police," said Harry Wharton. "You can come along and make a charge against him, Mr. Whiffles."

"Keep him safe while we've got him," said Johnny Bull.

"No fear! I mean, yes, exactly! I can't go now—I'm having breakfast! Hold him tight! After breakfast—"

"You can hand him over to me," broke in Dance quietly.

"Yes, that's it," gasped Bunter.

"Hand him over to Dance! You—you can let him go, Dance—"

"What?" exclaimed Wharton.

"I—I mean—let him go to the station, and—and give him in charge," stammered Bunter. "I say, you fellows, hand him over to Dance! Dance can take care of him!"

"We'll help get him to the station if you like, Mr. Dance," said the captain of the Remove.

"I shall not need assistance with him," said Dance. "You can leave him to me!" He took a grip on Huggins' arm. "Come with me, you ruffian."

"I'll bash yer—"

"Come!" snarled Dance. He was anxious to get Huggins away.

"I say, you fellows, you sit down to brekker," said the boss. "Never mind that beast—Dance will see that he doesn't get to the station—I mean, that he—he does get to the station. George!"

"Yes, guv'nor?"

"Don't loaf about there! Brekker! Sharp! Sit down, you fellows! Don't you worry about that man Huggins! He'll be all right. I say, you fellows, do sit down!"

"Oh, all right!" said Harry Wharton. The Famous Five sat down to breakfast with Mr. Whiffles, while Huggins was marched away by the manager, scowling blackly. It was a great relief to Billy Bunter to see him go.

"Is Bunter still here, Mr. Whiffles?" asked Harry.

"B-B-Bunter? Who's Bunter?"

"We found the fat bounder here last night," said Bob. "I'm afraid he's been scoffing the tuck, Mr. Whiffles—it's one of his little ways."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"He went to sleep in our tent," said Harry. "He can't be asleep now, though; I can't hear him snoring."

"You jolly well know I don't snore, you beast."

"Eh? I was speaking of Bunter—"

"Oh, yes! I—I see—" stammered the boss. "I—I mean—"

"He's gone, sir," said George. "I've looked for 'im, and he's gone. Must have cleared off before we turned out."

"What on earth was he doing here at all?" said Nugent.

"He, he, ho!"

"We were quite alarmed about you last night, Mr. Whiffles," said the captain of the Remove. "We couldn't imagine what had become of you."

"I—I—I went out, you know! I—I took a little walk to—to see the hills by moonlight, you know."

"But there wasn't a moon last night," said Bob Cherry in surprise.

"Oh, wasn't there? I—I mean, exactly! That—that's why I came back," said the boss. "Have some more rashers!"

"I took the key of your van, Mr. Whiffles," said Harry. "Here it is! I thought I'd better lock it as that fat bounder Bunter was going to nose in."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"He's a rather nosy little beast," explained Wharton.

"Not so nosy as some fellows, and chance it! I—I mean—exactly—all right! Have some more coffee."

"Thanks! But what about our going on with the circus?" asked Harry. "Now that that man Huggins is going to be locked up safe, will you want us with the circus, Mr. Whiffles?"

"We've done our job," grinned Bob.

"Oh, yes! Rather! You stick to me, you fellows!" exclaimed Bunter anxiously. "That beast will be prowling round again soon."

"Not if he's sent to chokey," said Bob. "You can get him six months for assault and battery."

"Oh, yes! Of course! But he may get away, you know! I—I think Dance may not get him safe to the station."

"Shall we go after them?"

"No fear! Oh, no, it's all right! But don't you fellows think of leaving the circus! I—I want you, you know! You're—you're so—so nice, you know."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The good opinion of the estocemod and preposterous Whiffles is grateful and comfortable," said Hurree Janset Ran Singh.

The Famous Five made a good breakfast with Mr. Whiffles. But they were in a puzzled mood. The strange appearance of Billy Bunter the previous night, followed by his equally strange disappearance from the circus, perplexed them. And they knew that their company at the circus was only required to guard against the man Huggins, and Huggins was now safe; yet Mr. Whiffles evidently wanted to retain his bodyguard. They remembered how on previous occasions he had refused to hand over Mr. Huggins into the safe keeping of the police, and yet at the same time it was clear that Huggins frightened him out of his fat wits. It was a very perplexing situation altogether, and they realised that there was something behind it, though they could not guess what it was. Still, they were quite keen to stick to the circus, so that was all right.

After breakfast the boss rolled into his van to sleep. That happy occupation was likely to keep him busy for some time. Nobby Nobbs and half a dozen men went out to search for the missing elephant. It was about half an hour later that Dance came back.

As he had not had time to reach the police station and return, the juniors guessed what had happened.

(Continued on page 23.)

## TREATS FOR NEXT WEEK!



Harry Wharton & Co. find it good fun acting as Bunter's bodyguard but all the same for that there are times when they would like to kick Mr. Whiffles—and kick him hard! Not for one moment do the Famous Five suspect that Mr. Whiffles is Billy Bunter in disguise; that revelation is to come.

All Magnetites will enjoy next Saturday's spanking yarn, for in addition to Harry Wharton & Co. from Greyfriars you'll meet Tom Merry & Co., the cheery chums of St. Jim's—and the one and only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

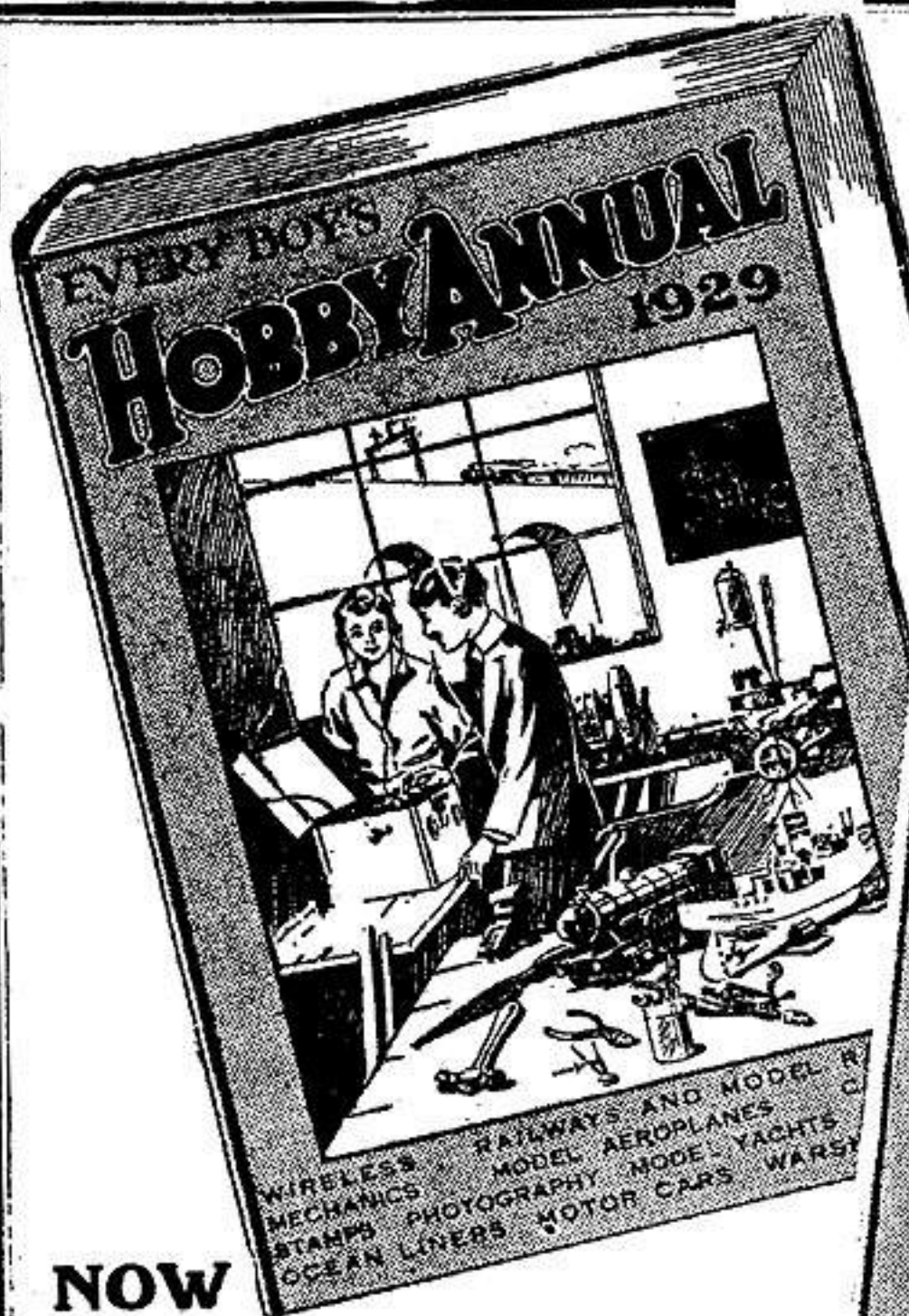
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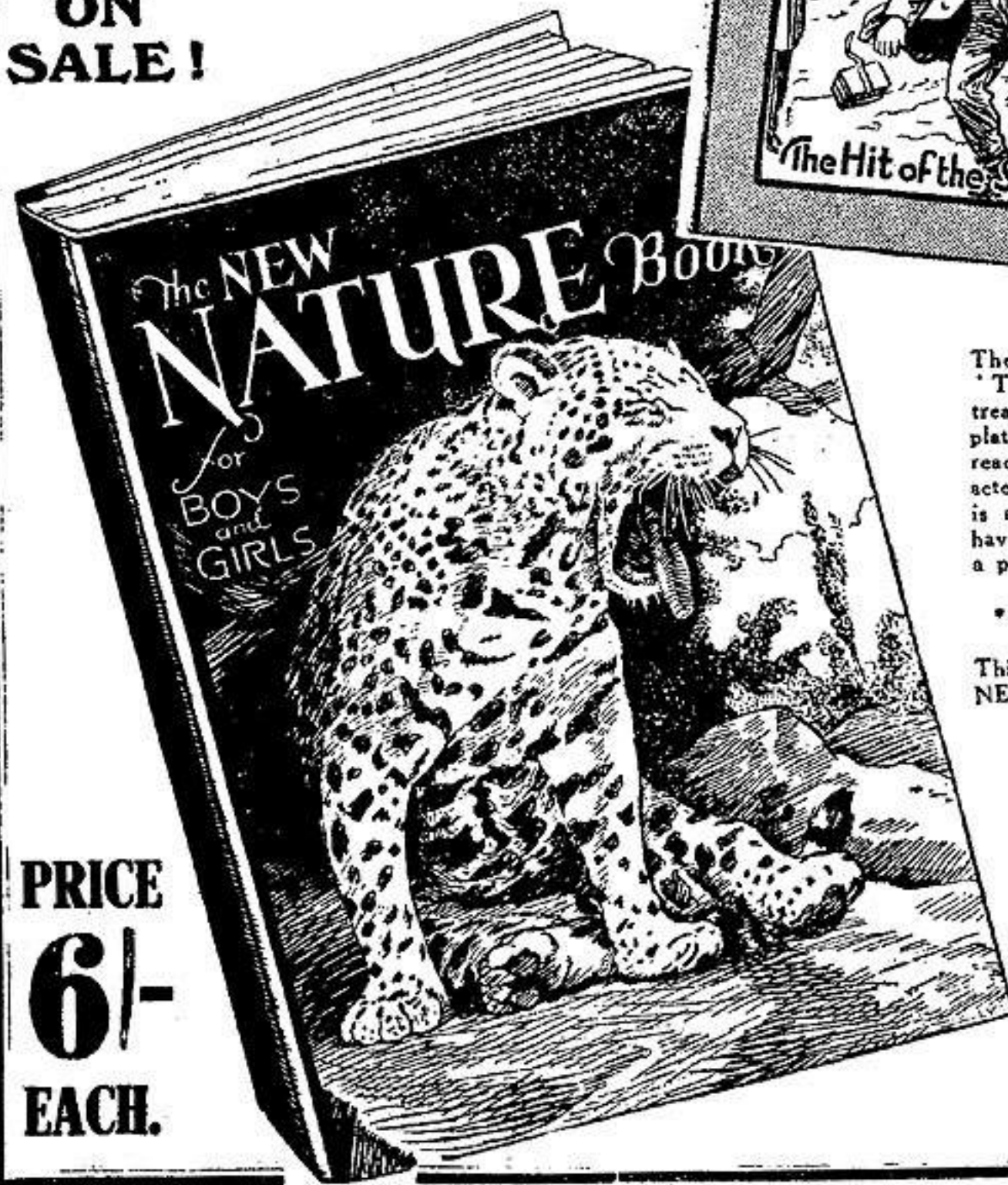
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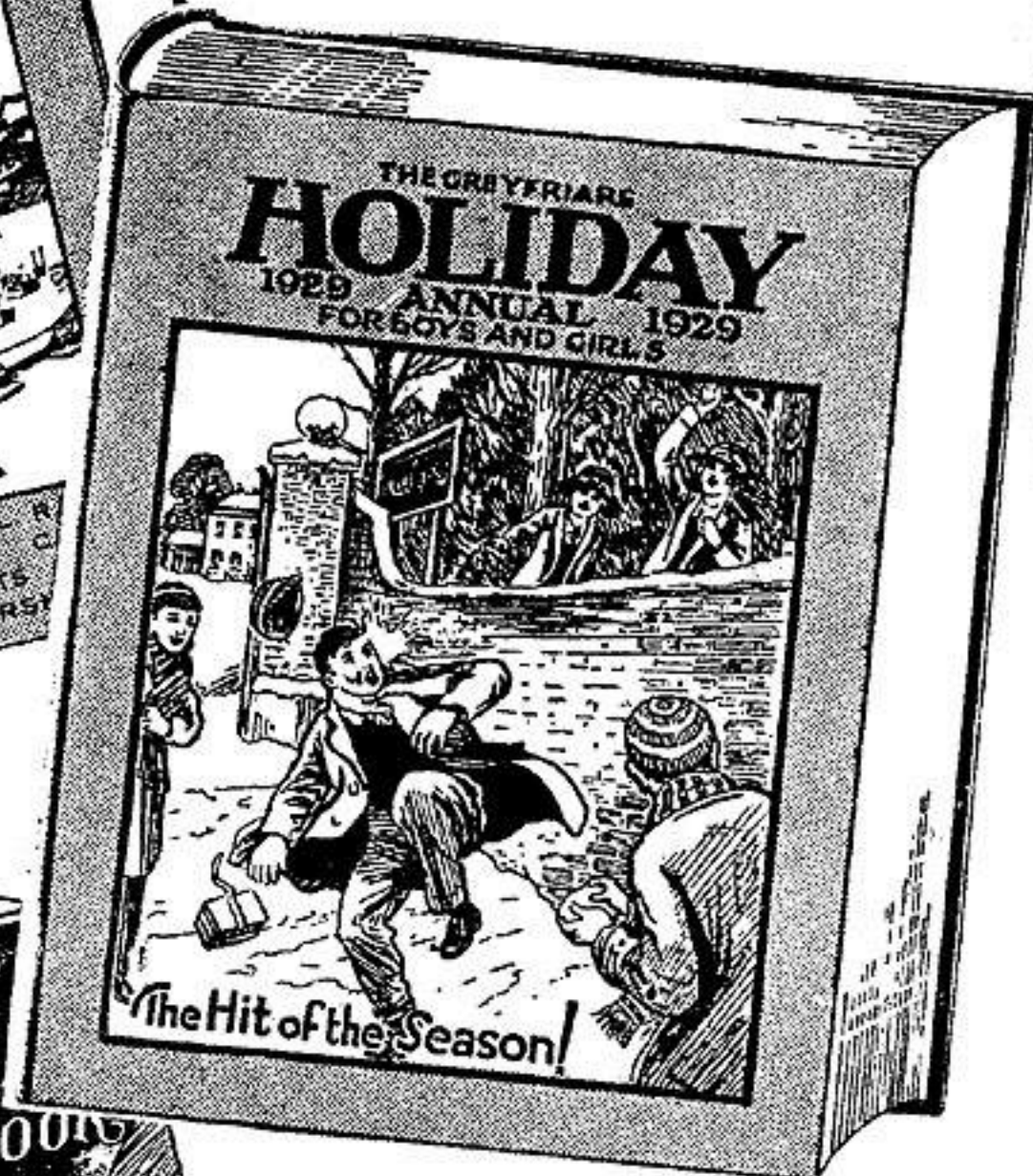
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**THE MAN FOR THE JOB!** They've destroyed Black Michael's stronghold; taken his pirates prisoners, but they haven't put the bracelets on Black Michael himself—that's a job for Ferrers Locke!

# THE LORD OF LOST ISLAND!



An Amazing Story of  
Detective Adventure,  
starring Ferrers Locke,  
and his assistant,  
Jack Drake.

## The Clue!

**S**TRANGELY silent and deserted lay Lost Island when Ferrers Locke stepped ashore from the boat which had brought him from the Hawk. There were no signs of life save here and there where an armed sailor stood on guard.

Making his way to the hut which had served Chalmers as living quarters whilst on Lost Island, Ferrers Locke began a thorough search of all the papers and paraphernalia which he found in the room which had served as an office, and in the bed-room behind it.

All day long he worked, steadily and methodically; but the papers were merely bills of lading, freightage sheets, log-books, pay-sheets, etc., which Chalmers had accumulated from the ships he had raided. There was little point in the pirate chief having kept them save as some record of his activities.

It was when the shadows of the coming night were creeping in through the windows of the hut that Ferrers Locke at length rose wearily to his feet. He had drawn a blank, as he had expected. Chalmers was not such a fool as to have left a clue as to where he intended going should a crash come.

A wireless message had been sent out to all shipping and coastal towns and villages, to keep a lookout for Chalmers' seaplane, but nothing had come through to say it had been sighted. Ferrers Locke had staked little on the machine being seen for there were hundreds of miles of lonely and desolate coastline where it could make a landing unobserved.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,073.

Switching on the light, for the dynamos were still running, Ferrers Locke crossed the floor to where a long, low bookcase stood against one wall. There were about fifty or more volumes in the case, works of fiction being jumbled haphazardly with shipping-lists and works on nautical navigation.

Idly Ferrers Locke stood scanning the titles, then suddenly a look of interest crept into his eyes. Bending down, he pulled a thin, well-read volume from the shelf. In gold lettering on the cover it bore the legend:

**"THE ART OF PLASTIC SURGERY.  
By Freville Cheam."**

Retracing his steps to the table, Ferrers Locke seated himself and opened the book. Inside the front cover were pencilled a few figures. The detective glanced at them, then continued to turn page after page, scrutinising each one with a more than passing interest.

Here and there someone had marked paragraphs with pencil as though for future reference. But the paragraphs were purely technical, and if the book had been bought second-hand they might have been marked by some former owner in the course of his studies.

At length Ferrers Locke reached the last page, then turned back to the figures pencilled inside the cover. Taking up a pen, he copied them out on to a sheet of paper. They were as follows:

50-8=2611813.

Leaning back in his chair he sat staring at them with brooding eyes.

They had not been scribbled in any idle moment. The minus sign and the equality sign gave token of that. Neither were they a medical formula in any shape or form, else they would have been interposed with abbreviations denoting the various chemical elements. The pencilling of the figures was fresher and more clearly defined than that of the marked paragraphs, and had obviously been done by a different hand.

As he sat poring over them there came a sudden glint to the eyes of Ferrers Locke. He hesitated a moment, then his pen raced across the paper in front of him. Ten minutes later he pushed back his chair and, rising to his feet, took down from a shelf a bundle of charts. He found the one he wanted—that which took in the northern part of the Chilian coast. He studied it intently for a few moments, then straightened up, and there was a grim smile on his firm lips.

Carefully destroying the paper upon which he had been writing, he switched off the light and, with the book in his pocket, quitted the hut. Bidding good-night to the sailor who stood on guard, he hurried through the darkness to the natural rock jetty where the boat was waiting to take him back to the Hawk.

"Back to the ship as quick as you can!" he said, jumping aboard.

Once aboard the great aircraft carrier, he made his way to Captain Milvain's state-room.

"Well, Mr. Locke," said the captain, with a smile, "I trust your investigations have proved satisfactory."

"They have," replied Ferrers Locke grimly. "I think I know just where I can lay my hands on Chalmers."



"You do?" said Captain Milvain, staring. "Where?"

"At Zarac Island, off the Chilian coast," replied the detective, "and, unless I'm greatly mistaken, he's got Freville Cheam there with him."

"Freville Cheam?" echoed the captain. "You mean the fellow whose disappearance was a nine days' wonder and caused such an upheaval in New York society?"

"Yes, that's the fellow!" replied Ferrers Locke. "The world knew him as the most brilliant facial surgeon of his day and was shocked when suddenly he vanished, completely and mysteriously. I'll tell you another side to him. He was a drug addict and a gambler. It was six months ago that he vanished—vanished when at the very apex of his fame and popularity!"

"You say he was a drug addict and a gambler?" questioned the captain, in astonishment. "Nothing of that ever got into the papers, Mr. Locke!"

"There's a lot the police don't tell the papers," replied Ferrers Locke grimly. "To the world, Freville Cheam was a straight, clean-living man. In reality he was rotten right through, and when he vanished he was a man ruined financially and on the verge of physical ruin owing to his drug habits!"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the captain. "I would never have thought it. I have dined with him more than once and took him at his face value!"

"As did most people!" replied Ferrers Locke. "There was nothing to be gained by giving his true character to the world after he went under, so the police kept to themselves what they know about him!"

"But how do you know that Chalmers is at Zarac and that Freville is with him?" demanded the captain.

"I have not the time in which to explain now," replied Ferrers Locke, with a smile. "Neither can I be absolutely certain that my theory is correct. But I must get to Zarac without delay. Can you let me have a machine?"

"Certainly! Flight Lieutenant Beverley is standing by. He will take all orders from you!"

"I am very much obliged to you! One thing more; what do you know of Zarac Island?"

"Nothing except that it is uninhabited and lies within three miles of the mainland!"

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Yes, I thought it was uninhabited, but I hope to find Chalmers there. I will get off at once!"

"I wish you luck, Mr. Locke," said Captain Milvain, shaking the detective heartily by the hand. "If you can round Black Michael up, you will have done the world a great service!"

### Through the Night!

**M**UFFLED in heavy flying kit, it was less than half an hour later that Ferrers Locke and Jack clambered up into the rear cockpit of the seaplane from the Hawk's boat.

Flight-Lieutenant Beverley was already seated in the pilot's cockpit, giving his engines a warming up. Waiting until the boat had pulled well away from the machine to avoid the backwash, Beverley turned to the Baker Street detective.

"Ready, sir?" he shouted, his voice audible above the beat of the quietly running engines.

"Yes!" replied Ferrers Locke. "You know your orders?"

Beverley nodded.

"As soon as I pick up Zarac Island, flying at the highest altitude which visibility will allow I am to shut my engines and glide down!"

"Yes, we don't want to advertise our arrival if we can possibly help it!" replied Ferrers Locke grimly. "You will try and land on the water close enough to the island to run in without opening up your engines!"

"Yes, sir, I understand!" replied Beverley.

He turned in his seat and, adjusting his goggles, glanced at the instruments on the dashboard in front of him. Then his gloved fingers closed on the throttle handle.

The roar of the engines increased to a thunderous pulsating rhythm, and the seaplane commenced to move forward with ever increasing impetus till it was tearing across the water leaving a long backwash of creamy foam in its wake.

Gently, Beverley pulled on the control stick and the machine took the air in a long upward glide. At two hundred feet, the youthful pilot banked and came roaring back over the great aircraft carrier lying at anchor on the grey waters below. Then pressing on the rudder bar until the compass needle flickered at one hundred and fifty-three degrees, he settled himself more comfortably in his seat and prepared for the long flight which lay before him and his two passengers.

Hour after hour he thundered on through the night, climbing slowly as he went. At twelve thousand feet, thin swirling wraiths of cloud blotted out the waste of waters below and he was forced to drop again to ten thousand feet.

It was bitterly cold at that altitude and all three aboard the seaplane felt it biting through heavy flying kit to the bone. Conversation between Ferrers Locke and Jack in the rear cockpit was rendered almost impossible by the thunder of the engines. Yet there were many questions Jack wanted to ask. But he knew that his gov'nor would explain in his own good time, and he was content to wait.

It was two hours before the dawn when Beverley's keen eyes saw far below, and ahead, the greyness of the sea separated from a dark land mass by a thin line of white and breaking water. It was the Chilean coast! His fingers

### INTRODUCTION.

*After overcoming innumerable difficulties and dangers, Ferrers Locke, the celebrated Baker Street detective, succeeds in capturing Black Michael, the modern Captain Kidd, who has been terrorising the western seaboard of South America. Aided by Jack Drake, his clever boy assistant, Ferrers Locke, at Chalmers' secret island stronghold, carries the pirate chief aboard his own seaplane. At the pistol's point, Chalmers' man, Federkiel, is forced to pilot the machine, but has to descend again owing to shortage of petrol. Thus handicapped, the Baker Street detective is obliged to transfer his prisoners aboard the Angatau, a passing trader, whose rascally skipper, Mackaw, readily falls to Chalmers' tempting bait of one hundred thousand pounds as the price of his freedom. During Federkiel's absence to fetch the ransom-money, Mackaw, leaving Locke and Drake bound in the cabin, goes ashore and makes merry. In the meantime, the cunning Federkiel, who has merely been hovering around in the seaplane, sneaks back to the Angatau, releases Black Michael, and then opens the seacocks, leaving Ferrers Locke and Drake to drown. Locke and Drake escape, however, and then enlist the aid of the Pacific Fleet of warships. Black Michael's island is raided, and his pirates are rounded up. But of the pirate chief himself, and of Federkiel, his pilot, there is no sign!*

(Now read on.)

moved to the throttle handle and he closed down his engines, shoving forward the control-stick to take the machine seawards in a glide.

Circling widely, as he dropped down out of the night, he scanned the waters below with anxious eyes. He knew that he had flown on an exact compass course, and Zarac Island should be somewhere within a few miles of him.

Then suddenly he stiffened in his seat, and his feet pressed the rudder-bar back into neutral. Standing out starkly against the grey background of the sea was an island about a mile in length and no more than a quarter of a mile in breadth, shaped somewhat like the sickle of a new moon. It was separated from the dark land mass by a wide strip of water. A white line of breaking, foaming water showed vividly on its seaward side.

Beverley was certain from its shape, size, and distance from the mainland that it was Zarac Island. He turned in his seat, pointing with gloved hand. Ferrers Locke nodded. He, also, was convinced that the island towards which they were gliding was—if his theory was correct—the one which sheltered Chalmers.

Beverley turned again to his controls, and his fingers snapped on the switch. The roar of the engines died away. Not a sound disturbed the stillness as the seaplane dropped seawards out of the night, save the whine of the wind through flying wires and struts.

Then, to the ears of the three aboard the machine, came the sullen boom of breaking seas as they thundered against that rocky and inhospitable coast, which can scarce be matched throughout the seven seas for dreary desolation.

At two thousand feet Beverley pressed on the rudder-bar and swung in towards the land. He passed over great beetling cliffs which reared themselves from the welter of waters below. Turning, with nose down on that long glide, he again passed out to sea, heading now straight towards the long, thin line which was Zarac Island.

The water although broken and choppy, was comparatively smooth in the lee of the island when compared with the seas which swept unhindered out of the night to hurl themselves against the cliffs of the mainland.

At five hundred feet, half a mile only lay between Zarac Island and the machine. Gently Beverley eased forward the control-stick. The nose of the seaplane dropped correspondingly. Foot by foot the machine glided down out of the night sky, its wings see-sawing wildly in the half-gale which blows almost perpetually in those waters. But Beverley's magic hands held it on its course, coaxing it along. His right hand was never far from the switch, ready to open up his engines should necessity warrant it.

At one hundred feet, the island seemed very close. Again Beverley eased forward the control-stick another fraction of an inch. Down and down dropped the seaplane. Then came a faint, almost imperceptible, jar. The next instant the seaplane was rocking wildly on the water as it surged in towards a rocky ledge. The slapping of the water against the floats sounded like the cracking of some great whip.

Jack, with mooring rope in his hand, poised himself on the edge of the cockpit. Then, as Beverley kicked on rudder and brought the machine swinging round before it completely lost way, Jack leapt outwards. The drop was not a big one and he sprawled, unhurt, on Zarac Island.

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## On Zarac Island!

"THERE is little we can do till dawn," said Ferrers Locke, when the seaplane had been safely moored and he and Beverley had joined Jack. "We have almost another hour before then, and I am going to have a look round. You two remain here with the machine. We've done our best to land unobserved, but we may not have succeeded so keep your guns handy!"

"Then you're sure Chalmers is here, sir?" asked Beverley, his voice dubious. "As certain as I can be, without actually having seen him here!" replied Ferrers Locke.

"But wasn't it a bit risky our coming alone?" said Beverley. "What I mean to say, I haven't got the wind up, you know, but won't Chalmers have a crowd with him?"

"No, I don't think so!" replied the detective. "If my theory is correct, Chalmers will have no more than one or two men with him."

Beverley looked about him in the darkness.

"I saw no light nor any sign of habitation when I was coming down," he said, "I kept a jolly good look-out as well, and—"

"And you are inclined to think that we are on a wild goose chase!" laughed Ferrers Locke, as the young pilot hesitated. "Well, I think before many hours have passed you will find that we are not. Keep your eyes and ears open. I will rejoin you here before the dawn!"

With that he moved quietly away and was swallowed up in the darkness.

"I say," said Beverley, turning to Jack, "I wonder what makes your guv'nor so jolly certain Chalmers is lurking about on this bally island somewhere?"

"I don't know!" replied Jack. "You see, the guv'nor never says very much. He just gets on with the job and I've never known him fail yet!"

"No, I'd often heard about him before I met him!" said Beverley. "But I never thought I'd find myself on a ghastly sort of island like this with him in the early hours of the morning."

Jack stared about him in the darkness. Nothing broke the stillness, save the sullen boom of the breakers on the seaward side of the island.

"It is a bit weird!" he admitted.

"Yes," prattled Beverley. "You know there's lots of chappies who, if they were standing on this island like us with a lot of bally pirates lurking about, would pretend they liked it. Well, I don't, and I don't mind admitting it. What I mean to say, I like to know what I am up against, what?"

"Yes," replied Jack. "But we've got our guns and—"

He broke off abruptly, head inclined in a listening attitude.

"What's wrong?" demanded Beverley. "What's the matter?"

"I thought I heard something moving over there!" replied Jack, in a low voice, and he pointed towards where huge boulders merged with the darkness.

"Did you?" said Beverley grimly. "Come on, we'll jolly well investigate then!"

With his gun in his hand he would have started forward, but Jack laid a detaining hand on his arm and whispered:

"Wait! There is something there, I'm certain!"

With straining eyes, he and Beverley peered through the darkness towards the

mass of boulders. Then, even as they watched, a huge grotesque form detached itself from the black shadows and moved slowly towards them.

Beverley gripped Jack by the arm.

"What is it?" he whispered tensely.

"Great Scott! There's another!"

Another form, huge, bulky, was moving slowly towards them in the wake of the first one. Jack's mouth felt suddenly dry and there came a strange tingling at the base of his scalp.

"Stop!" he cried hoarsely, raising his gun. "Stop, or—"

Bang! Bang!

He fired wildly, conscious that by his side Beverley's gun had also blazed into life. For, at the sound of his voice, the two grotesque forms had whirled into sudden, incredible activity. They came at him and Beverley with a rush.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Jack stood his ground, firing at the Thing which was rushing at him. But on it came, oblivious of the flaming gun. The boy had a vision of upraised arms outstretched to grasp him; he had a momentary glimpse of a white and ghastly face and there came to his nostrils a foul and fetid smell.

Then strong arms were wrapped about him. He struggled desperately, but the Thing held him in a merciless and bone-crushing grip. Then something struck him a smashing blow on the temple and he went limp.

## The Cave under the Sea!

WHEN Jack next opened his eyes, he found himself in what he took to be, at first glance, a large and luxuriously-furnished room. He tried to stir himself, and discovered that he was lashed to the chair on which he was seated.

As returning consciousness quickened his perception, he looked about him with dawning interest. It was not a room he was in, but a large and spacious cave. Thick pile rugs were strewn on the rocky floor, and heavy tapestries draped the black and glistening walls. Comfortable armchairs, settees, and polished tables stood here and there. A large and beautifully-fashioned bookcase ran almost the whole length of one wall, whilst against the opposite wall stood an exquisitely-carved sideboard, on which glistened an array of cut-glass.

The cave was brilliantly lighted by a cluster of powerful electric light bulbs suspended from the low, rocky ceiling. The atmosphere of the place was warm and languorous.

Beverley, also bound to a chair, was seated by Jack's side. He was apparently very much alive.

"Thank goodness you're all right!" he said, as he saw Jack taking stock of their surroundings with wondering eyes. "I thought the brute had killed you!"

"But where are we?" demanded the boy. "How the dickens did we get here?"

"My servants brought you here!" said a harsh voice behind him.

Turning his head, Jack saw a man clad in an immaculate lounge suit standing behind his chair. He was a clean-shaven fellow, with well-cut features, cold blue eyes, and cruel, thin-lipped mouth.

"There is a gentleman here," he went on sardonically, "who will be delighted to learn that you have recovered con-

sciousness. Pray excuse me whilst I call him!"

He departed with silent tread, and Jack turned to Beverley.

"Who the thump is that fellow?" he demanded.

"I dunno!" replied Beverley. "But I don't like his looks. I say, I think we're in a bit of a mess, what? It's up to your jolly old guv'nor—"

"Ssh!" said Jack warningly.

The warning was unnecessary, for Beverley had bitten off the words abruptly and was staring at a man who had entered the cave and was walking slowly towards him and Jack. The man was dressed in a lounge suit, but his head and face were completely swathed in a tight, white, linen face mask in which slits had been cut for the eyes and mouth.

With him were two other men, one of whom Jack recognised as Federkiel, Chalmers' pilot. The other was an intellectual-looking man, wearing the long white overall of a surgeon.

On came the man in the mask till he halted in front of Jack's chair and stood looking down at the boy in silence. Jack returned the stare steadily.

"Well, Chalmers?" he said.

"You know me, then?" replied the man in the mask, a hint of amusement in his voice.

"Yes, I know you!" replied Jack. "I'd know you anywhere, Chalmers, so you can take that mask off!"

Chalmers laughed softly and, turning, seated himself in an armchair near Jack and Beverley.

"Do you think, boy, that I have masked myself in order that you should not recognise me?" asked Chalmers.

"Yes, I suppose so!" replied Jack. "You haven't done it to amuse yourself!"

"No, I have not done it to amuse myself," replied Chalmers softly, "neither have I done it to prevent you from recognising me, although when I left you in the Angatau I thought I'd seen the last of you and your meddling chief!"

He leant forward in his chair, and his voice became suddenly very harsh.

"Tell me, how did you come to this island?" he demanded.

"You can find out!" retorted Jack.

"By seaplane!" remarked Federkiel.

"See, his companion wears the oil-stained kit of a pilot!"

Chalmers nodded.

"Yes, of course, by seaplane!" he said. "Tell me, boy, how many companions have you?"

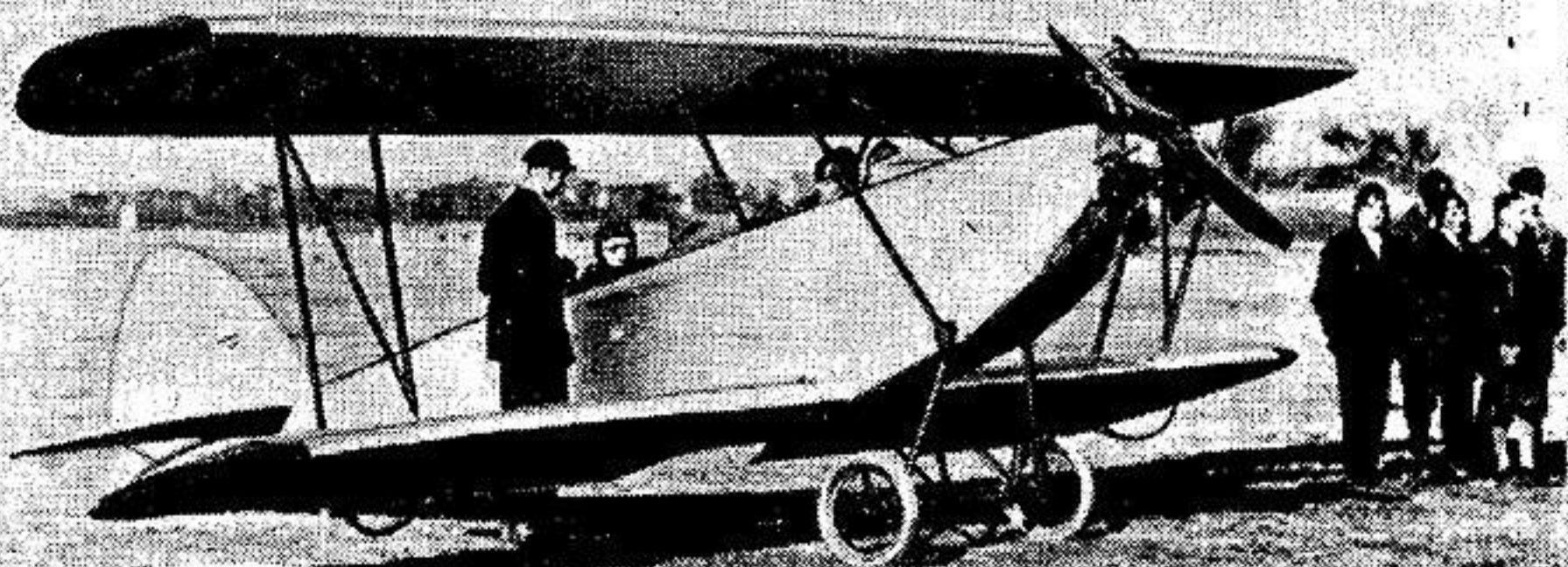
"I'll tell you nothing!" replied Jack doggedly.

Chalmers tapped the arm of his chair with long, tapering fingers. He seemed strangely unconcerned.

"However, how many they are, they will not find you. You see, this cave in which we are seated lies beneath the ocean bed. There is only one entrance to it, and that is a secret entrance which none could find. When you are missed, your companions on the island will wonder where you are and what has happened to you—but they will never know the truth, or the fate I have in store for you!"

*(Things look black for young Drake and Beverley, but they have every confidence in Ferrers Locke. Look out for the closing chapters of this yarn next Saturday, boys!)*





### THE ROCKET AEROPLANE!

Here is a photograph of the rocket aeroplane "Grasmuecke," in which the German-pilot Raab hopes to reach a height of about 12 miles, thereby breaking the world's existing record. The plane will be driven by a series of rocket explosions—similar in principle to the rocket car—and the pilot will be equipped with oxygen apparatus. It is hoped, too, that the Grasmuecke will be able to rise over the first air strata into a region which has hitherto been closed to mere mortals.



### BIRD SANCTUARIES!

You have heard of a bird sanctuary—woods and meadowland devoted by big landowners to the "housing" of our feathered friends. You may have had the opportunity of going through one of these woods, and seeing the artificial nests perched high in the branches of the trees. A pretty sight; pleasant, too, with all the birds twittering and chirruping happily. The picture shows men putting a nest—an ordinary wooden box covered with bark—into position.

### NOT FANCY DRESS!

Although, on the whole, the scenery of Holland is flat and therefore inclined to be uninteresting, there are, nevertheless, many picturesque spots, among them the quaint little fishing village of Volendam. Volendam is on the western shores of the Zuider Zee, where the men still cling to the old customs and incidentally the widest trousers and largest sabots in Holland. Here you see one of the village belles obliging the elderly gent with a light.





**THE POACHER POACHED!***(Continued from page 15.)*

whistle and call the Head Gamekeeper. One, two—"

"Stoppit!" yelled the Head frantically. "I'll sign!"

And sign he did!

"So far, so good!" remarked Jack Jolly, when that had been done. "And now, before we buzz off, sir, I'll just tell you what else we want from you."

"In the first place, we demand six good meals a day for the entire Skool for the rest of our stay in Camp."

"S-s-six good meals a day!" stuttered the Head. "Oh, grate pip! I shall be ruined!"

"Further," went on Jack, "we demand late-passes for the Fourth on rekwest."

"M-m-my hat!"

"And finally," concluded the kaptin of the Fourth, "we insist on being allowed the use of your private car whenever we happen to require it!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped the Head, quite limply. "And supposing I refuse?"

"In that case, this confession will be sent straight to Major Snorter, and you will face the giddy musick!"

Dr. Birchmall gulped.

"I suppose I have no hopshun in the matter!" he groaned. "Very well, Jolly! I give in! I agree to your terms!"

"Hip, hip hip—" yelled Jack Jolly.

"Hooray!" roared Merry and Bright.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" gasped Dr. Birchmall. "You'll attract the entire countryside here in a minnit! Let's buzz off immedately."

"With plezzure!" grinned Jack Jolly.

"I just feel like a good brekker of eggs and bacon. What about you chaps?"

"What-ho!"

Dr. Birchmall crawled back through the hedge, and tearing his hair and nashing his teeth with rage, started back to the camp. And Jack Jolly & Co. followed, rejoicing.

From that mourning onwards, life at the St. Sam's Camp became really worth living at last. Terrified at the thought that Jack Jolly might send his signed confession to Major Snorter, the Head did all he could to make things happy. And his efforts were soon crowned with success.

No longer did the fellows langwish and fade away on a diet of bread and water. Eggs and bacon, roast beef, plum-duffs, doenuts, and jinjer-pop were now the order of the day. And

instead of cowering under the crool dissiplin they had been used to, the chaps now did eggsactly as they pleased. Most of them rose at midday, spent the day plezzantly in feeding their faces and ragging the masters, and retired in the early hours of the mourning.

Thanks to Jack Jolly & Co., the St. Sam's Camp ended in a blaze of glory. And one and all—with the solitary eggseption of Dr. Birchmall—were only too sorry when the time came to leave Snorter Magnus and return to the old collidge once more.

THE END.

*(Look out for the first yarn of another Dicky Nugent series next week, chums!)*

**BUNTER'S BODY-GUARD!***(Continued from page 22.)*

"You've let Huggins get away?" exclaimed Wharton.

Dance gave him a look.

"He bolted!" he answered briefly.

"Then he's got away?"

"Yes."

"Oh!"

Dance went to his van. The chums of the Greyfriars Remove looked at one another queerly.

"I don't catch on to this," said Harry Wharton. "Old Whiffles has some reason—goodness knows what—for letting that man loose, and the manager is in it with him! He's let the man go."

"That's plain enough," said Bob. "That's why Whiffles made us hand him over to Dance—to let him go!"

"But why?"

"The whyfulness is a terrific mystery," remarked Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "The absurd Whiffles has some reason for not wanting to dispose of the execrable Huggins stone-jugfully."

"But he's scared to death of him!" said Nugent. "That's why he wants us with the circus."

"It's jolly fishy!" pronounced Johnny Bull.

"The fishfulness is terrific."

Harry Wharton's brow was very thoughtful.

"I can't understand it," he confessed. "Old Whiffles may be afraid to send the man to prison; he's in a blue funk. But that man Dance is in it, too! They're both in it to let Huggins go, and yet they know he may come along any night and bash old Whiffles! Letting him off like this is just encouraging him to do it. It beats me hollow! There's something going on here, you fellows—something jolly queer, and Billy Bunter's mixed up in it somehow, though I can't make out how. Still, I suppose it's not our business, and as old Whiffles wants us to stay, we'll stay."

"Yes, rather!"

Later that morning Nobby Nobbs came in with the recaptured Mumbo. In the afternoon the circus packed up to take the road again.

Once more the long procession of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus wound along high-road and by-road, and with it went Billy Bunter, still boss of the circus, and with Billy Bunter went Bunter's Bodyguard.

THE END.

*(Now you can look forward to "Chums of the Circus!"—next week's splendid Greyfriars story, and, in the meantime, why not read the topping story of Harry Wharton & Co. appearing in this week's "Popular"?)*

**EDITORIAL.**

Now that King Footer has deposed King Cricket, Magnetites interested in our grand winter game will be delighted to know that, starting with next week, a football expert will contribute to our pages a striking, informative article dealing with the different methods of Soccer stars. For instance, Dixie Dean, the record goal-scorer of last season, has his own particular way of scheming for openings to bring him goals. How does he do it? you may ask. Well, our football expert is going to tell you how, in his opinion, Dixie, of Everton, does the trick. From Dixie Dean, the centre-forward, he will then travel, to outside-right—the star outside-right being, in his opinion, Alec Jackson, of Huddersfield. Eleven positions—a complete team, in other words, will be dealt with from week to week. Each star's "tricks of the trade" will be made known to you, in interesting fashion, so no matter where *you* play in your team, there will be some tips for you to pick up that will undoubtedly improve your own footer. Like the idea, boys? Of course! Then look out for the first article, entitled:

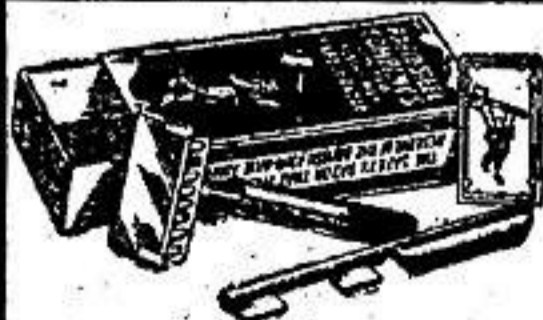
**"STARS AND THEIR METHODS!"**

By "Referee,"

which will appear in next week's bumper number. Still on the subject of footer—what about a football and detective serial? It's coming in a fortnight's time! How's that? Ferrers Locke and Drake are well to the fore, and the mystery they are called upon to solve is one of the strangest they have ever encountered. Mind you're "at the ground" when

**"THE TOUGHEST TEAM IN THE LEAGUE!"**

kick off. They're a goal-scoring team, and it's a goal-scoring yarn right bang from the first pheap of the whistle.—Ed.



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# The POACHERS

An "egg-citing" story of the boys of St. Sam's under canvas, dealing with the cute method adopted by Jack Jolly & Co. to bring relief to their suffering comrades in camp.



# POACHED!

Dicky NUGENT



**S**OME young gents wish to see you, sir!"

The footman made that announcement in the grate library of Snorter Lodge.

Major Snorter, stern old soldier, Justice of the Peace, and owner of the Skool had come for their camp, looked up from his comic paper with a frown.

"Who are they, James?" he rasped, in a soft voice.

"Name of Jack Jolly & Co.," answered back the footman, with a low bow.

"They say they are from the St. Sam's Camp, sir."

"Huh! Show them up, then. My horsewhip, revolvers, cudgel, and battle-axe are of use at hand, should I feel like using them?"

"They are all reddy on the table, sir," Major Snorter nodded, and flinging aside his comic paper, sat upright, and waited for his visitors.

The old military gentleman had some reason for not feeling altogether pleased at the prearrange of callers from the St. Sam's Camp.

Since the arrival of the Skool, many of the finest rabbits on his preserves had disappeared, and he had just been informed by his gamekeepers that the poachers were actually St. Sam's boys.

Major Snorter, of course, was ignorant of the fact that the crew culprit was the very man who had flogged the boys for the crime—Dr. Birchmell, Headmaster of St. Sam's.

The grate door of the library swung open, and Jack Jolly, the captain of the Fourth, walked boldly in, followed by his pals, Merry and Bright.

The three heroes of the Fourth still bore visible traces of the sever punishment they had received from their cruel Headmaster.

"What the merry dickens have you come to see me for?" he asked in more kindly accents.

"Because we want to be appointed gamekeepers on your rabbit preserves, sir," answered Jack Jolly, without hesitation.

The mention of rabbits to Major Snorter was like the waving of a red rag to a bull.

The old gentleman's dile went livid with rage, and a grating noise issued out on his forehead.

"Rabbits!" he roared. "By gad, if I ever set eyes on the scoundrels from your Camp who are pinching my giddy bunnies, I'll horsewhip them out of my estates! But what the thump are you getting at? Skoolboy gamekeepers, indeed! What next?"

"Well, why not?" asked the captain of the Fourth, undaunted. "We may be young, but we've got plenty of brains, sir. I can tell you!"

"Hear, hear!" cried Merry & Bright. "Besides," went on Jack Jolly, "as we belong to the St. Sam's Camp, we are in a much better position than your ordinary gamekeepers to find out who are the Camp poachers. That's obvious to the keenest intelligence. You can quite see the point yourself, can't you, sir?"

"Well, there's something in what you say, certainly," admitted Major Snorter, knitting his brows thoughtfully. "But is it not a fact that Dr. Birchmell has discovered the culprits, and punished them already?"

"He has punished some boys, sir, but I can give you my word of honor that they were not the guilty parties," said Jack earnestly.

"We happen to know that the fellows he flogged were splendid, upright fellows who would skorn to poach anything but eggs. In fact, they are the finest carriers at St. Sam's, aren't they, chaps?"

"Oh, rather!" said Merry and Bright heartily.

Jack Jolly & Co. didn't think it advisable, however, to explain that they themselves were the fellows in question.

"H'm!" said Major Snorter, eyeing the juniors in perplexity. "So you think if I make you assistant gamekeepers that you can lay your hands on the villains who are pinching my bunnies?"

"We are jolly sure we can put a stop to the poaching, anyway, sir," said Jack eagerly. "We have our suspicions as to the eye-identity of the guilty parties, and once we catch them, we'll see they don't trouble you again, sir."

Major Snorter, crossing over to his bureau, "I will present you with gamekeepers' badges bearing the coat-of-arms of the Snorter family, so that you may produce them as credentials if necessary."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" raved Jack Jolly & Co., ceasing their wild career, and holding out their hands eggspaciously.

"Here you are, my boys," said the Major. As he spoke he handed them three tin badges bearing the magnificent crest of the Snorters—a hog rampant, over crossed peashooters.

Jack Jolly & Co. took them and proudly pinned them inside their Eton jackets in places where they couldn't show. After that, Major Snorter rang for the footman, and told them to hop it—which they did, in the highest of spirits.

## II.

**R**ASH! Dawn broke over the St. Sam's Camp at Snorter Magnus. No other sound broke the stillness of the mourning air, save the loud snoring of three hundred boys and half

a dozen masters, as they slept the sleep of the just, and dreamed of pork-pies and jinger-pop, and the twittering of birds and braying fowls.

It was pretty certain, anyway, that such delicacies formed the subject of most of their dreams, for they hadn't seen the real thing since leaving the old Skool.

Dr. Birchmell, skimming as usual to enrich his own pocket at other people's eggspense, had reduced the daily rations to two slices of bread, and plenty of water.

The result was that the Camp to which everybody had looked forward so eagerly, had turned out a mizerable fiasco.

By this time, the boys of St. Sam's, from Burleigh of the Sixth down to Midgett Minor of the First, were completely starved and thoroughly fed-up.

Needless to say, the Head himself did not participate in the jeneral discomfort. Far from it!

While the fellows crawled about the Camp sunken-eyed and hollow-eyed, hoping for manner to drop from heaven, Dr. Birchmell, in the privacy of his canvas sanatorium, consumed enuff do-nuts, cream-buns, ham-patties, bulleeyes, and rabbit-pies to feed an army.

Rabbit-pies, in particular, figured largely on his menu—grate, jooey, savory pies, full of rabbits all powdered from Major Snorter's preserves!

That was the Head's grate secret—the mysterious poacher who had been prowling Major Snorter's estates was none other than Dr. Birchmell himself! He had preserved the secret well.

Only Mr. Lickham and Jack Jolly & Co. and all their pals knew, and even they, up till now, had been powerless to act.

But Nemymysis was at hand. If the Head had only known what was going to happen, he would not have ventured out on this particular mourning. Not being gifted with the profetic instinct, however, he didn't guess. Consequently,

when he quitted the camp with his poacher's sack slung over his shoulder, a cheery grin illuminated his dle and he whistled popular coursses of the day as he hobbled along.

Jack Jolly & Co. followed close on his heels—but the Head, of course, didn't know that. Jack Jolly & Co. were also grinning for very different reasons.

Alreddy they saw the trant of St. Sam's at their mercy, groveling on his hands and knees and begging them not to eggspose him.

Alreddy they saw him agreeing to any terms rather than be shown up in his trow cutlers—and our heroes had decided that their terms were going to be pretty stiff!

At last they arrived at the rabbit preserves. Dr. Birchmell, grasping his cudgel firmly in his hand, tipped through a gap in the hedge, and made a dive at a couple of rabbits that were taking it easy in the grass.

The poor creatures, with terrified barks, tried to dodge the crool weapon, but in vain.

With terrific force, Dr. Birchmell brought the cudgel down on their heads and drained them.

There was a simultaneous howl of pain and indignation from the little animals, then silence. The Poacher of St. Sam's had killed two birds with one stone—or, rather, two rabbits with one cudgel!

"Good egg!" merrered the Head. "The old hand has not lost its cunning yet!"

Jack Jolly & Co. heard him from the other side of the hedge. Then they acted. Springing over the hedge with agility of kangaroos, they pounced on the Head, flinging themselves at him just as he was transferring the rabbits to his sack.

Dr. Birchmell let out a wild yell of alarm and rage.

"Yaroooooopp! Gerroff my neck! I'll suffocate you in a minute if you don't leggo, you rotters!"

"Quiet, you doddering old idjit!" hissed Jack Jolly. "Do you want everyone for miles to hear you?"

"Nunno!" gasped the Head. "Who is it, then? Grate pip! Jolly, and Merry, and Bright again! You reckless young scamps, I'll simply pulverize you for this! I'll—"

"You'll shut up and listen to me, for a change!" snapped Jack Jolly. "You're not talking to meer juniors at St. Sam's now. You're talking to three gamekeepers attached to the Snorter Estates!"

"Wha-a-at?" yelled the Head incredulously. "Are you dotty, or meerly potty? Gamekeepers, indeed! Ha, ha, ha!"

And he larried till the tears streamed down his dle.

At a given signal from Jack Jolly, D.D., however, the three Fourth-Formers showed the historical Head their badges, and Dr. Birchmell quickly altered his tone then.

"Bless my sole!" he gasped, his jaw farley drooping. "The crest of the Snorters, if I'm not mistaken! Then you were speaking the trowth after all, Jolly!"

"Eggspactly!" rinned Jack coolly. "Jover get left, sir? And now what have you got to say for yourself?"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" merrered the Head. "I looks at this time, and no mistake! Whoever would have thought of juniors in my own giddy Skool turning against me like this?"

"What else can you eggspect, sir, after the injustice and ttrany with which you have treated us?" retorted Jack Jolly sternly. "Don't forget you hogged us for pinching rabbits, when you were the poacher yourself!"

"He, he, he! That was only my fun!" sniggered the Head. "Surely you can take a joke, Jolly?"

"What-ho!" grinned Jack. "And now we're going to see what your own sense of humour is like. Let's get down to brass tax. Understand, sir, that we are official gamekeepers to Major Snorter, and if we take you to him you're booked for T'ouble with a capital T."

"Merxy!" howled Dr. Birchmell. "On the other hand, I suppose we can keep mum over the bizney if we like, went on the kaplin of the Fourth, unheeding. "But in that case, of course, we shall eggspect something in return from you."

"I'll do anything—or anybody—if only you'll keep it dark, my dear boys!" cried the Head, in a state of complete pammick now. "Just name your terms, Jolly, and leave the rest to me."

"And allow you to get away scot-free, then snap your fingers at us afterwards! Not likely!" rinned Jack Jolly. "No, sir! This time we are going to make sure of you. We are going to get your signature to this confession!"

The kaplin of the Fourth then produced a paper which he had brought along with him. With eyes that almost bolted out of his head, Dr. Birchmell read the following:

"I, Alfred Birchmell, M.A., B.Sc., D.D., heartly confess that I have theved, pinched, purloined, or nicked a large number of rabbits from Major Snorter's preserves during the Skool's stay at Snorter Magnus."

"Great pip! Do you imagine I am going to sign that?" hooded the Head.

"Please yourself!" said Jack coolly. "If you don't sign it by the time I've counted 'ten, I'll blow this

canaly."

"(Continued on page 28.)

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