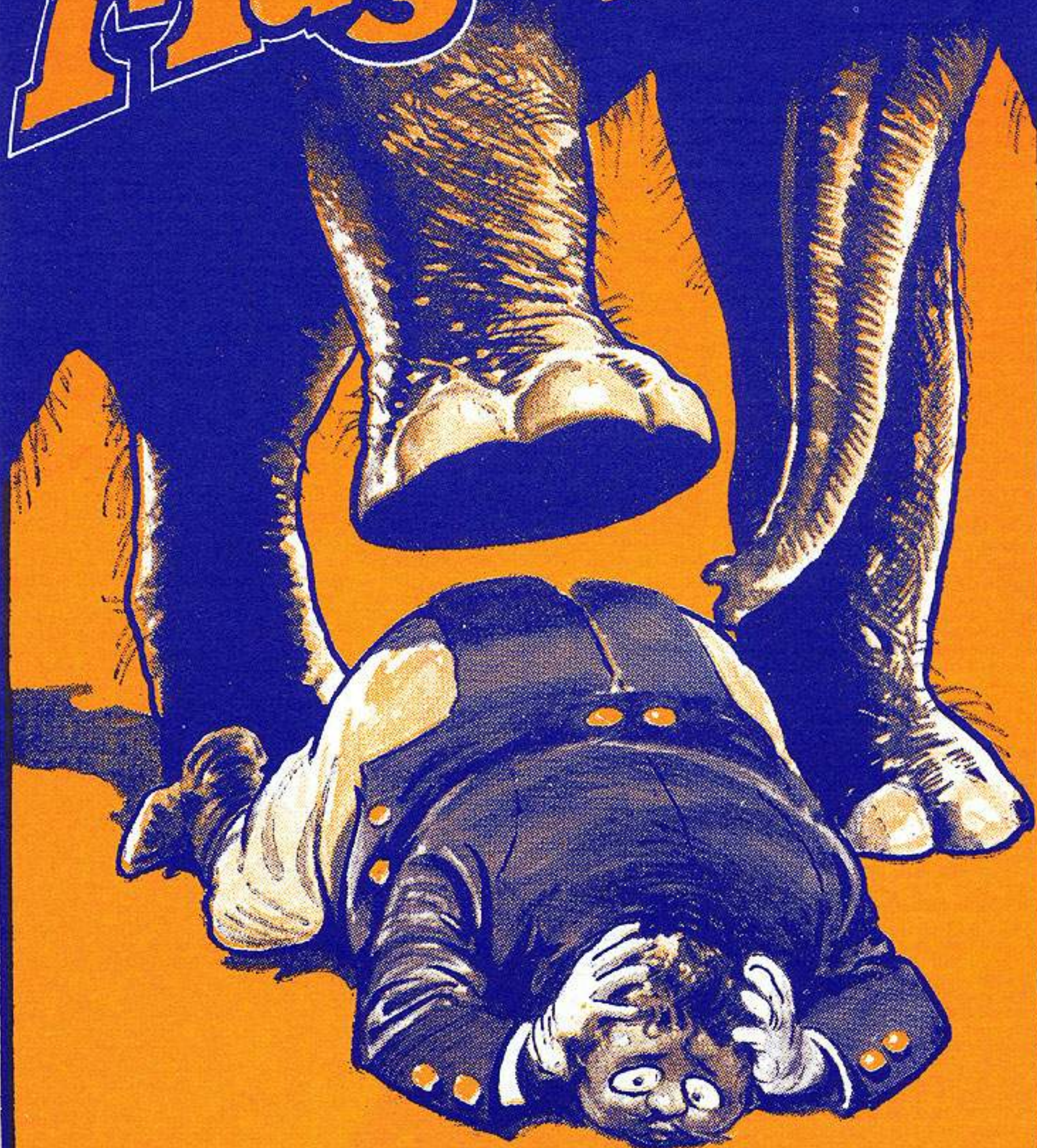


STARS AND THEIR METHODS! Special Football Feature Starts To-day!

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No. 1,074. Vol. XXXIV.

EVERY SATURDAY.

Week Ending September 15th, 1928.

IF THE ELEPHANT PUTS ITS FOOT DOWN . . . !
(An exciting five minutes for Billy Bunter, of Greyfriars, vividly described in the grand long tale of Harry Wharton & Co., inside.)

Our Special Football Feature!



By "REFEREE."

Commencing this week "Referee" will tell you about the match-winning methods of star performers in the world of football, taking each week a different position and the player who best fills it, until a complete team has been compiled. As a start "Referee" has selected "Dixie" Dean, the crack centre-forward of Everton who, it will be remembered, was top goal-scorer in English League football last season.

IN the football season before last George Camsell, the centre-forward of Middlesbrough, scored fifty-nine goals in League matches alone. This was by a long way the highest total ever scored in one season by a player with a first-class English League Club. Some people thought the record would stand for years. It stood for exactly twelve months, however. In the very last League match of last season William—known to everybody as "Dixie"—Dean, the centre-forward of Everton, scored three goals against Arsenal and brought his total of goals in League games for the season up to sixty. Thus did he beat the record made by Camsell a season earlier.

In the course of this feat Dean helped Everton to win the First Division championship, and he played for England in all her International games. These things give him the right to be considered the best centre-forward of modern football. And he only passed his twenty-first birthday in January of this year.

A Sharp Sprinter.

Not only the record of Dean, however, makes it right to refer to him as the best centre-forward in the game to-day. He has many special qualifications to which I shall refer, but the real secret of his success, and the reason why one is justified in referring to him as the best centre-forward as distinct from the best goal-scorer, is because he is an all-round footballer.

We have had centre-forwards who could dribble, but could not shoot. We have had centre-forwards who could keep the wings going, but could not get goals, and we have had many centre-forwards who could do practically nothing but get goals. Dean set up a new record because he could do all these things.

In the first place, he is built for the job—standing 5 ft. 10½ ins., and weighing 12st. 7lb. In one match last season I saw him get two goals in quick succession by exactly the same method. The ball was pushed up the middle by a member of Dean's side. Before the backs could get across, Dean had darted forward, and left the goalkeeper helpless with a fast, low shot. These goals showed the value of the sharp sprint in a centre-forward.

Drawing the Defence.

"Much of my training at Everton has been concentrated on short sprints," Dean told me not so long ago. Here is a valuable tip for my young centre-forward readers. Don't worry about how quickly you can do fifty or a hundred yards on the run. For the rising Dixie Dean the point that matters is how quickly he can get off the mark and do the first ten or fifteen yards.

It is the short sprint at top speed which carries a centre-forward past the backs; certainly it is the short sprint which enables Dean to slip through before the backs can get into position to tackle.

Obviously, no centre-forward could hope to score a lot of goals unless he

had help from his colleagues—passes of the right sort. Dean got that help from his Everton pals last season. But the difference between the star player and the ordinary player is the way they prepare themselves to receive the pass.

There is such a thing as beating your opponents before the ball is passed in your direction, and Dean is an expert at this aspect of the game.

Let me explain this point more fully. Obviously, when a player has a reputation as a goal-scorer, he is watched closely by his opponents. He must try to get away from them, preferably while the ball is still at the feet of one of his pals. You will see Dean start to run in one direction; the opponents will start to run the same way. Suddenly, Dean will twist back, and then call for the ball. He has dodged his opponent before the ball has come to him.

Left or Right!

People talk a lot about position play in football. Much of the art of position play lies in getting into a good position for a pass. Even a Dixie Dean could not make much use of a pass if the ball came to him when there were three opponents right close up.

Then, of course, he can hit the ball hard and true with either foot. He would not be a complete footballer otherwise. And, having watched him carefully, I am quite certain that he gets a lot of his goals because he shoots with what might be called the "wrong foot."

Once last season I saw him deceive a goalkeeper completely. The ball seemed to be running nicely to Dean's left-foot, and he even made as though he would shoot with that foot. The goalkeeper, anticipating the direction the ball would take from the left foot, stepped across goal. But Dean allowed the ball to run another yard, swayed over, and hit the ball with his right foot to the very opposite corner of the goal to which it would have gone if he had hit it with the left foot.

Actually, this was a risky thing to do. The ball might not have run kindly to the right-foot, or in changing his intention Dean might have lost his balance. But the Everton centre-forward was justified by results, and the lesson for the young centre-forward in this is easy to find; the goalkeeper is much more likely to stop the obvious shot than the deceptive one.

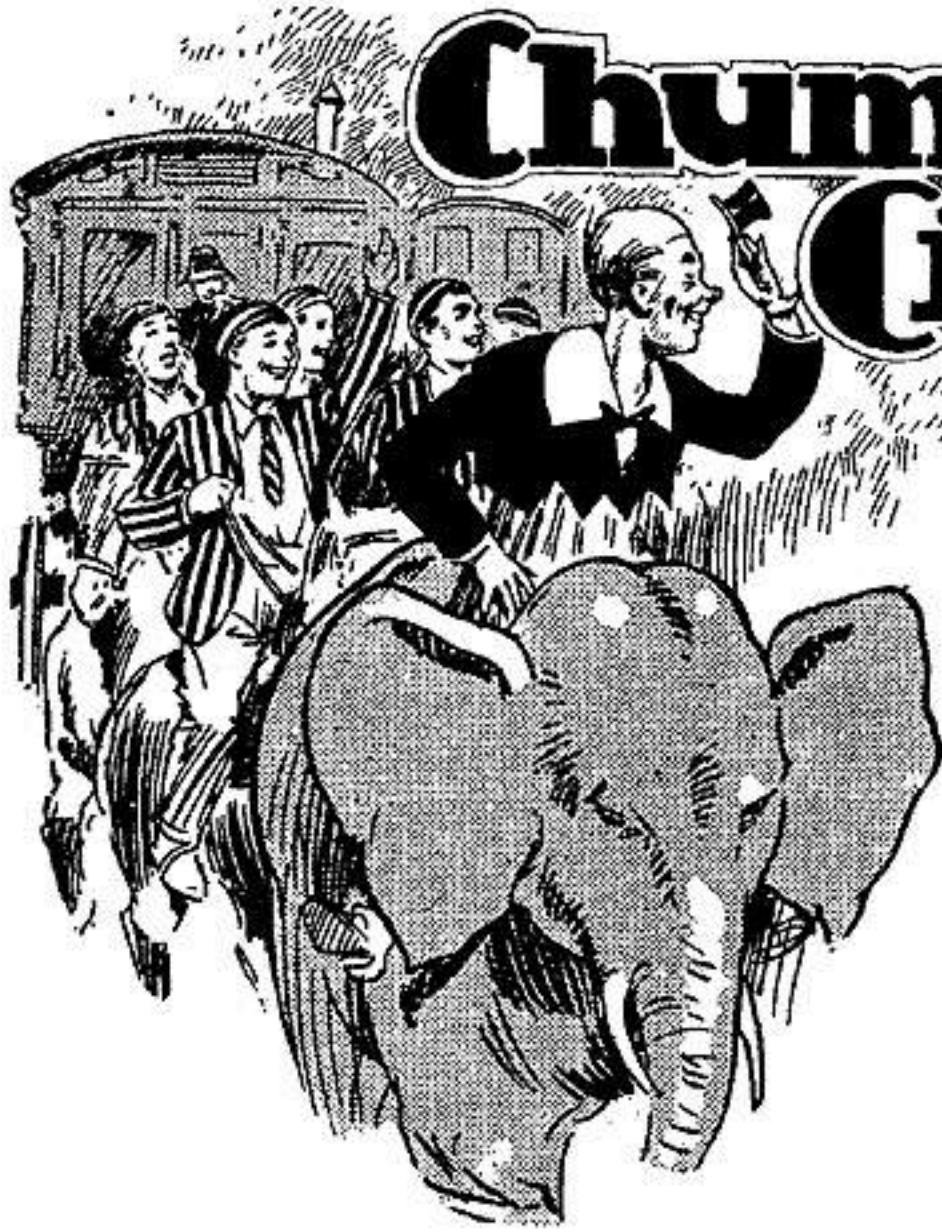
(Continued on page 26.)



"DIXIE" DEAN,
the world's best centre-forward, in action.

MR. WHIFFLES—ALIAS BILLY BUNTER! There are worse ways of spending a vacation than by joining a travelling circus, but a circus with Mr. Whiffles as the proprietor has its drawbacks, as Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, discover—although what they fail to discover is that "Mr. Whiffles" is really Billy Bunter, their truant school-fellow!

Chums of the Circus!



A stirring long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, dealing with the amazing adventures of Billy Bunter as boss of Whiffles' world-famous circus.

By
FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

On the Road!

"THE question is," said Bob Cherry, "where does he put it?"

And Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh remarked that the wherefulness was terrific.

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled.

It was a sunny September day, and Whiffles' World-Famous Circus was winding along a leafy Hampshire road.

Nobby Nobbs, the clown, led the way, in full war-paint, on the back of Mumbo, the elephant. Next came the blue-and-red caravan that belonged to Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles—or which, to speak more correctly, had belonged to him before Billy Bunter took possession.

Behind the gorgeous caravan, five Greyfriars juniors were riding on horse-back; and behind Harry Wharton & Co. the rest of the long procession tailed off along the dusty road.

Harry Wharton & Co. were looking merry and bright.

Had it been suggested, before Greyfriars broke up for the summer holidays, that the Famous Five would pass some weeks of the vacation travelling with a circus, they would have laughed at the idea. But it had come to pass, and the chums of the Remove were enjoying it.

True, they did not quite know what to make of Mr. Whiffles. They had not a very high opinion of Mr. Whiffles. They could not admire a gentleman whose manners and customs bore so striking a resemblance to the manners and customs of Billy Bunter of the Remove. Still, they had found that they could stand Mr. Whiffles.

As they rode, in a cheery row, behind the caravan, they had a full view of the "Boss."

The van door was wide open. The Boss sat inside on a camp-stool. On one fat knee rested a huge cake, which the Boss was demolishing in large

chunks. Beside him were several bottles of ginger-pop, mostly empty. Each huge chunk of cake was washed down by a copious draught.

It was remarkable to see a man, who looked about fifty, enjoying a cake and ginger-pop to that extent.

But appearances, as the proverb says, are deceptive.

The Boss of the World-Famous Circus was not so old as he looked.

Deprived of his curly wig, his pointed beard, and his waxed moustache, he would have looked much younger—and, indeed, would have been recognisable as William George Bunter, of Greyfriars.

But the Boss was careful not to be seen without those adornments, and the Famous Five little dreamed how near they were to the Owl of the Remove.

But though the Boss did not look anything like Billy Bunter except in circumference, his ways were remarkably like Bunter's. Harry Wharton & Co. had never seen any fellow but Bunter disposing of tuck at that rate. Where he put it was, as Bob Cherry remarked, a question—indeed, it was a deep mystery.

Huge chunk after chunk of cake had vanished, and draught after draught of ginger-beer had followed it down.

The fat face of the Boss glowed with happy satisfaction.

Bunter was enjoying life.

He only hoped that the real Mr. Whiffles would keep away till the end of the vacation; indeed, he would have liked to carry on as Boss of the circus all through the next term, instead of going back to Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced round at the smiling landscape of Hampshire as they rode behind the caravan. But the Boss did not bother about the landscape. His attention was fixed on the cake.

Chunk by chunk it went, till the last chunk was gone.

Bunter gave a deep and happy sigh. Mr. Whiffles' crimson waistcoat, with yellow spots, felt a little tight, ample as it was. Bunter gently unfastened the lowest button.

Then he blinked at the five grinning juniors.

"I say, you fellows!" he remarked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"That was a ripping cake!" Bunter looked at his watch—or rather, Mr. Whiffles' watch.

"An hour to tea!" he remarked. "Well, I can hold out till tea-time now, I think."

"Ye gods!" murmured Bob.

The Boss sorted over the ginger-beer bottles, and selected one that was still full.

The cheery liquor gurgled out into a glass.

Bunter raised it to his lips, leaned back his head a little, and tilted the tumbler.

Ginger-pop, grateful and comforting, flowed into his capacious mouth. It was an ecstatic moment.

It was by sheer ill-luck that the van jolted over a deep, hard, sunbaked rut in the road at that moment.

The caravan gave a heavy lurch.

Billy Bunter was beautifully balanced on his camp-stool, leaning back with the gurgling tumbler at his lips. Even a little jolt would have been enough to upset that delicate balance. And it was a big jolt that the caravan gave.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"Gurrrrrrrgghh!"

Bunter flew backwards off the stool, and the ginger-beer, instead of flowing gently into Bunter, shot into his open mouth in a sudden flood.

Two fat little legs kicked up in the air and, for the moment, all the view the Famous Five had of the Boss was his feet and his striped check trousers.

"Urrrgggghhh!"

Horrible sounds came from the caravan.

"He's choking!" ejaculated Frank Nugent.

"The chokefulness is terrific!"

"Oooooooooogggggghhh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mooooooooogggggghhh!"

The sounds from the sprawling Boss were really alarming.

Harry Wharton slid from the saddle, and made a spring into the open doorway of the jolting caravan. If the Boss of the Circus was choking, Wharton was ready to do all he could for him.

Bunter sprawled on his back, gasping and gurgling and guggling, with a crimson face. Bunter had always been short of breath; now he was shorter than ever. His crimson, fat face grew purple.

Wharton grasped him by the collar and jerked him into a sitting position.

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That required a powerful effort; the Boss' weight was considerable. He spluttered wildly as he was dragged up.

"Oooch! Goorhhhh! Moooooh!" Wharton smacked him heartily on the back. That, he had heard, was the most effective way of dealing with choking people.

Smack, smack, smack! Wharton put his beef into it. "Urrrgggh!" gurgled Bunter. "Moooggggghhh! Beast! Stoppit! Oooch! Wharrer you hitting me for? Mmmmmmm!"

"That's better!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove. "You'll be all right in a minute, Mr. Whiffles."

Smack, smack, smack! Perhaps that hefty smacking on the back revived the Boss. But if it did, it enraged him at the same time. As he recovered his breath, he turned on his rescuer, his eyes gleaming with wrath through his big spectacles.

"Beast!" he gasped. "Stoppit! Take that!"

"Oh!" roared Wharton, as he took it. "It" was a fat fist, which landed on his chin.

He staggered away, lost his footing, and rolled out of the caravan.

Bump! "Whoa!" gasped Bob Cherry, dragging in his horse.

"Oh, my hat!" Harry Wharton sprawled in the dusty road, and scrambled to his feet. He was hurt, and his face was red with wrath.

"He, he, he!" came from the caravan—the fat cachinnation that was so like Billy Bunter's fat chuckle.

"You silly chump!" roared Wharton. "He, he, he! Serve you right!" "My hat! I'll—"

Harry Wharton was a good-tempered fellow, as a rule. But that bump on the hard road might have spoiled any fellow's temper.

He made a rush after the van; and his expression indicated that the next item on the programme would be a serious case of assault and battery.

Bunter jumped up in alarm. "I say, you fellows, keep him off!" he yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Slam! The caravan door closed.

"Easy does it, old chap!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Here's your gee-gee! Jump on!"

"I've a jolly good mind—"

"Ride on, there!" shouted Dance, the manager, from the rear. "You're blocking the way!"

Harry Wharton grunted and climbed into the saddle again, and the Famous Five rode on after the rumbling caravan. Mingled with the rumbling of the wheels over the hard road came a deeper rumble—the snore of the Boss. Bunter had settled down on Mr. Whiffles' bed for a nap till tea-time. When he woke it would be for tea; after which, probably, he would have another little nap till supper. It was a happy life!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

An Old Acquaintance!

"B AI Jove! It's a circus!" That exclamation was uttered by an elegant youth, who jammed an eyeglass into his eye, and watched the procession as it came trailing along. He stood at the opening of the lane which led off the

high road towards the village of Easthorpe. He looked at the towering elephant, with Nobby Nobbs on his back; and Mr. Nobbs grinned and gracefully lifted his paper cap in salute. At which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, not to be outdone in politeness, lifted his handsome Panama hat with equal grace in salute to the clown. Whereat Mr. Nobbs grinned more broadly than before.

"Gweyfwiahs chaps, bai Jove!" added the elegant youth the next moment, as he saw the five riders in a row behind the caravan that followed the elephant. The St. Jim's junior stared at the Famous Five in amazement.

In that quiet corner of Hampshire circuses were unusual, and he was rather interested in the circus. But Greyfriars fellows riding in a circus procession were much more unusual; and D'Arcy was much more interested in them. He could scarcely believe his noble eye, even with the aid of the eyeglass, as he spotted Harry Wharton & Co.

The last time he had seen them had been on the occasion of the cricket match at Greyfriars, when St. Jim's had visited them; and he had not expected to see them again until the football fixtures came round. But here they were—riding with the circus, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy eyed them in astonishment.

"Bai Jove!" he repeated. Harry Wharton & Co., as they came past the end of the lane with the procession, glanced at the elegant figure standing there, and they recognised the St. Jim's junior immediately.

"D'Arcy!" exclaimed Wharton. "The one and only!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Let's stop!" "Yes, rather."

The five riders turned their horses out of the procession into the leafy lane, allowing the procession to pass them. They dismounted in the lane.

"Bai Jove? Is it weally you fellows?" exclaimed the St. Jim's junior. "I could weally hardly believe my eyes, you know, when I saw you widin' with the circus. How do you do, deah boys?"

And the swell of St. Jim's shook hands all round with the chums of Greyfriars.

"But what are you doing here, D'Arcy?" asked Bob.

"Takin' a little walk, deah boys. I'm home for the hols, now, you know."

"Are we near your place, then?" asked Nugent.

D'Arcy smiled. "Yaas, wathah! Half a mile. This lane leads to Easthorpe, which is quite neah Eastwood House."

"Well, it's jolly to run across you like this," said Harry. "I knew your place was in Hampshire, but I didn't know we were passing near it. You'll have to come and see the circus."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "You fellows givin' a show in the circus, or what?"

"Ha, ha! Not quite! We're looking after Mr. Whiffles."

"Bai Jove! Who is Mr. Whiffles?" "Boss and proprietor," explained Bob Cherry. "Fattest man ever known—except Billy Bunter of Greyfriars. Fatheadedest, too. We're his body-guard."

"Eh?" "Sort of Life-Guard!" chuckled Bob.

"Pullin' my leg?" asked Arthur Augustus, mystified.

"Not at all!" said Harry Wharton,

laughing. "You see, we started on a bike tour, and the circus elephant trod on our bikes, and they're laid up for repairs. Then Mr. Whiffles asked us to travel with the circus. He lives in terror of a man named Huggins, who is after his scalp; and we camp with the circus and keep Huggins off."

"Weally, you know—"

"Fact!" said Johnny Bull. "Whiffles sacked that man Huggins, and sent him to chokey for pinching; and Huggins is after his gore. Whiffles goes about in fear and trembling."

"He must be an awful funk!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Exactly what he is," agreed Bob. "But he's not a bad sort in his way. You should see the grub he provides."

"The funkfulness of the esteemed Whiffles is as terrific as his preposterous fatfulness," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But otherwisefully, he is an execrable good sort."

Arthur Augustus grinned.

"You see, we were rather at a loose end, with our bikes knocked out," said Harry. "And it's rather fun travelling with the circus. We have a tent to ourselves; and though Mr. Whiffles has a lot of funny ways, he does you remarkably well in the tuck line."

"It must be wathah nice," agreed Arthur Augustus. "I hope you are stoppin' in this neighbourhood."

"We stop a mile farther on—easy distance if you want to come to the circus," said Harry, with a smile. "Performance this evening—after that, twice daily so long as we stop!"

"Come and see Nobby Nobbs, the funniest clown in this universe or any other," said Bob Cherry gravely. "Come and see Mumbo, the elephant, the biggest bullifant in this world or the next. Come and see Samson, the strong man, lift terrific weights and throw them about. Come and see Mr. Whiffles throw his own weight about. Come and see Tomasso Tomsonio, the wonderful acrobat, and Texas Bill, the broncho buster. For other items see small bills!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Bai Jove! You're learnin' the business, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "I shall jollay well twot along this evenin', and bwing my fwiends. I've got a lot of St. Jim's fellows stayin' with me—you know Blake, and Hewwies, and Dig—"

"What-ho!" "And Tom Mewwy, and Mannahs, and Lowthah—"

"Yes, rather!" "And Levison, and Cardew, and Clive—"

"Oh, good! We'll be jolly glad to see them," said Harry. "We'll have a little supper in our tent after the show, if you're able to stay out so late."

"Yaas, wathah! Holiday-time, you know—the patah will stwetch a point. And you fellows can come along to-morrow, and see us at Eastwood House, if you can get off."

"Oh, we can get off as much as we like!" said Harry, laughing. "We're not on Mr. Whiffles' salary list; we're just travelling with the circus as guests and body-guard."

"Good! Then come along early and have some owicket," said Arthur Augustus. "You see, there's eleven of us, countin' my young bwothah Wally, and we've been playin' matches up and down and wound about. If you'd like to fix up a game, we'll woep in some fellows fwom somewah to make up youah side—"

"Bravo!" "Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Bob



The caravan gave a heavy lurch just as Billy Bunter was drinking the ginger-pop. The jolt sent him sprawling off the stool backwards, and the next moment the Famous Five had a view of a pair of fat legs waving in the air. "Urrrrggghhh! Oooooooghhhh!" "He's choking!" ejaculated Frank Nugent, as those sounds came from the caravan. (See Chapter 1.)

Cherry heartily. "You always were a chap for ideas, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, wathah; I wathah think of things, you know," admitted the swell of St. Jim's modestly. "It will be wippin' to have you fellows! The othah chaps will be jollay glad to heah that you are comin'. Any more Gweyfwiahs chaps with the circus?"

"No; we're the lot—unless Bunter's here," said Bob.

Arthur Augustus looked perplexed. "Buntah? That fat chap with the specs?" he asked.

"That's the chap." "But surely you know whethah he is with the circus or not?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"That's the queer thing—we don't," said Bob. "He cleared off from school just before the holidays, and we knew he had gone with the circus—but he couldn't be found there. He's turned up twice, and vanished again—we've seen him; but each time he has gone from our gaze like a beautiful dream; and whether he's still hanging about, we simply don't know. It's a giddy mystery."

"Bai Jove! That is wathah wemarkable," said Arthur Augustus. "But if he turns up to-morrow, bwing him along. I suppose he can play cwicket."

"Well, I believe he knows a bat from a ball, or at least has heard that there is a difference," grinned Bob.

"The evening show begins at seven, D'Arcy," said Wharton. "Bring all your crowd, if they'll come; and we'll fix up the royal box for you. It won't be wanted to-night—I suppose there isn't

any royalty knocking about in these parts, keen on circuses."

"Pwobably not, deah boy."

"It's settled, then?"

"Yaas, wathah."

And the Famous Five remounted their horses, and rode on after the tail of the circus; while Arthur Augustus walked gracefully away up the lane to Eastwood House, to carry the news to his numerous friends from St. Jim's.

Harry Wharton & Co. trotted after the circus, and soon overtook it. They brought up in the rear, after the baggage vans. The meeting with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had quite bucked them. They were quite enjoying travelling and camping with the circus; but the prospect of meeting a crowd of St. Jim's fellows, and fixing up a cricket match, was still more attractive. So they rode on in a very cheery mood; and followed the procession into the field where Whiffles' World-Famous Circus was to camp.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Boss is Wrathful!

"**W**OW!"

Billy Bunter woke suddenly from his nap, as the caravan bumped from the road into the field. The procession was following a muddy cart-track; and the mud was thick and baked hard in the summer sun. The van rocked down into a deep, wide rut, and rocked up on a ridge, and rocked down again, and rocked up again. In a swing-boat the

motion would have been quite the thing; but in a caravan it was unpleasant. Bunter woke with his head knocking against something hard, and sat up, and nearly pitched off the bed.

"Ow! Beasts!"

Then came another violent jolt, and he quite pitched off.

Bump!

Bunter sprawled on the floor of the van, and roared. But the van rocked on regardless; just as if the driver did not know, or did not care, how important a personage it contained.

Bunter scrambled up in great wrath. The van still rocked, and he had to hold on to keep his footing. His fat face was crimson with rage. As a matter of fact, he would have wakened in a bad temper, even without that severe jolt. The cake had been rather too large even for Billy Bunter's elastic inside. Whenever Bunter had an unlimited supply of tuck, he was liable to deal with it not wisely but too well.

He had eaten, perhaps, only a couple of pounds more than he could carry with comfort. But even that trifle caused discomfort. Bunter had the digestion of an ostrich; but even an ostrich has its limit. Bunter was feeling very uncomfortable; and when Bunter suffered, his temper suffered still more. He was cross—and the bump on the floor of the caravan made him crosser. His little round eyes glistened through his big spectacles, like the fiery eyes of a basilisk, as he rolled and scrambled to the door of the van, and hurled it open.

Bunter's intention was to stride out

of the van, the moment it came to a halt, and deal with the driver. First he was going to tell the driver what he thought of him; then he was going to sack him on the spot. Being boss of the circus, he could sack anybody he liked—excepting Dance, the manager, who knew he was not the genuine Whiffles. The sack, indeed, was hardly a sufficient punishment for a careless driver who had bumped him out of bed. Unfortunately, even the Boss' power was limited, and he could not order the offender to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.

The caravan halted.

The steps were tucked up; but the distance to the ground was short, and even Bunter could jump it. He prepared to do so; but, unluckily, the van backed just then. The driver—still iniquitously forgetful of the importance of the Boss—was backing the van into the position assigned for it in the camp. The sudden movement of the van took Bunter by surprise; and instead of jumping out of the van, he did it with a nose-dive.

"Yarooogh!"

Bunter dived into thick, soft grass, which was lucky for him. Still, he was hurt.

He sprawled on his hands and knees, and roared.

The driver, at the head of the horses, was still backing them, and the van backed on to Bunter as he sprawled, and gave him a jolt behind.

"Ow! Oh, crikely!"

Billy Bunter scrambled wildly away.

He gained his feet and glared round him through his spectacles. George Mix was at hand, and he grinned. He could not help grinning; but it was disrespectful to grin at the Boss. Bunter gave him a glare.

"George!"

"Yes, gov'nor!" said George, trying to compose his features.

"What are you grinning at?"

"W-w-w-was I grinning, gov'nor?" stammered the guilty George.

"You're sacked!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, gov'nor," said George.

"Sacked! Do you hear?"

"Yes, gov'nor," said George.

He did not seem much dismayed. As a matter of fact, Bunter had already sacked him five or six times; and he was getting used to it. George was the circus cook, and he was a good cook. A man who could make a pie like George was not to be lightly parted with. Bunter always rescinded the sentence of the sack before the next meal-time came round.

Having sacked George, for the sixth or seventh time, Bunter rolled along to deal with the driver.

"Slaney!" he hooted.

"Yes, gov'nor," said Slaney.

"You're sacked."

"Oh, my eye!" said Slaney.

"You pitched me out of the van!" roared Bunter. "You're a disrespectful menial! You're a rank rotter! You're a beast! You're sacked."

"Oh, I'm sacked, am I?" said Slaney disagreeably. "Well, I daresay I can find another boss, though it would be 'ard to find a fatter or a sillier one. 'And over my wages and I'll go."

"Don't be cheeky!"

"P'raps you don't know that my wages ain't been paid for two blinking weeks!" jeered Slaney. "Nor anybody else's neither in this blooming circus. 'And over the dibs, then."

"I decline to discuss such matters with an employee," said Bunter haughtily. "Go to Mr. Dance and ask for your wages. What do you think I employ a manager for?"

"Ain't I asked him twice already?"

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said Slaney. "The ghost ain't been walking for two weeks, so I tell you, gov'nor."

"Silence!" snapped Bunter.

"Silence yourself!" snorted Slaney.

Billy Bunter turned away. It was beneath his dignity to carry on an altercation like this with a cheeky employee. Sacking Slaney did not seem to bother Slaney much; indeed, it was possible that he had already thought of sacking himself, as the "ghost" was not walking.

Bunter rolled away wrathfully in search of Dance. He found the manager very busy giving directions for the camp and the erection of the big circus tent.

"Dance!" hooted Bunter.

"Don't bother now," said the manager.

"What?"

"Don't worry! I'm busy!"

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Bunter.

"I don't pay you to cheek me, Dance!"

"You don't pay me at all!" snapped

Dance. He lowered his voice, so that other ears should not hear, and added:

"Chuck it, you fat fool! You can play Whiffles to the others, but don't start it on me."

"Slaney says his wages haven't been paid—"

"That's right; they haven't," growled Dance. "Nobody else's, either!"

"Well, what do you mean by it?" demanded Bunter. "You've got charge of the cash-box. Pay the men all round to-day, do you hear?"

"Certainly—if you'll supply the cash," said Dance sarcastically. "There's nothing in the cash-box till we take some this evening."

"We've been taking lots of money. Where has it all gone?"

"Mostly on grub for you!"

"That's rot!" said Bunter. "It's not much I eat, and you know it. Besides, think I'm going to carry on here without enough to eat? My belief is that you're not honest, Dance."

The manager gave a sour grin. There was only one consideration that made him tolerate Billy Bunter as boss of the circus; and that was, that the cash-box was left in his hands, enabling him to pursue the elusive search for winners that had already exhausted all his own resources. He would have cut down the commissariat had he dared; but that was the one thing that Bunter never would have stood. But Mr. Dance's latest losers had run away with all the available cash; and as a result, wages and salaries were in arrear all through the World-Famous Circus.

"Look here, Dance, this won't do—"

"Shut up!" said Dance.

"What?" howled Bunter.

"Shut up!"

"I'll jolly well sack you!" gasped Bunter. "At least, I'll take the cash-box into my own hands after this. See?"

"Will you?" said Mr. Dance disagreeably. "Well, the minute you do so, Mr. Billy Bunter-Whiffles, that same minute you'll go out of this circus on your neck! I'm keeping you on here so that I can carry on the circus, and handle the takings. You've got nothing to grumble at so long as you're fed. I feed you well. Now shut up!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Now get out—I'm busy!"

Taking this sort of thing from an employee was very unpleasant; but Bunter had to take it. He turned his back on Dance; and looked round for some more amenable victim on whom to wreak his wrath. Sacking the hands was a rather difficult matter, as they would want to be paid before they left;

but the Owl of the Remove caught sight of Harry Wharton & Co. They, at least, could be told what he thought of them; and Bunter rolled up to the Famous Five to tell them.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious Mr. Whiffles!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were busy with the erection of their own special tent. Billy Bunter, now that he was boss and monarch of all he surveyed, never did anything for himself if he could help it. Had he been born to the purple, Bunter could not have exacted more attention and waiting on. The Famous Five, fortunately, were quite able to do things for themselves—not being such lofty youths as William George Bunter. So they were cheerily busy with camping, when the fat junior rolled up, his little round eyes glinting through his spectacles.

"You cheeky rotters!" he began.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What's biting you now, Mr. Whiffles?"

"Listen to me!" roared Bunter. "I don't want any cheek! I don't want any disobedience! See?"

"Anything else you don't want, old bird?" asked Bob. "Perhaps you don't want a dot in the eye? But you're asking for it!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Anything the matter, Mr. Whiffles?" asked Frank Nugent mildly.

"Yes!" roared Bunter.

"Give it an esteemed name, my excellent and preposterous Whiffles!" suggested Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I gave you fellows orders to keep close to my caravan!" hooted Bunter. "You're here to guard me from that beast Huggins! You cleared off! Suppose Huggins had butted in while you were gone? But that isn't all. I was jolted out of the van—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't cackle at me!" roared Bunter. "If you'd been on the spot it wouldn't have happened. I didn't take you on to mooch away whenever you like, and cackle at me afterwards! See?"

Harry Wharton finished fixing a tent-peg, then rose to his feet and looked the lord of the World-Famous Circus in the face.

"You didn't take us on, as you call it, at all, Mr. Whiffles," he said. "We're not on your salary-list, and you've no right to give us orders. If you're tired of our company, we'll clear at once."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"That man Huggins isn't likely to show up in the day-time," went on the captain of the Remove. "And so long as we're here, we'll see that he doesn't get at you after dark. We have no idea at all of hanging round at your orders all day, Mr. Whiffles."

"Not the least little bit in the wide world!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Not the smallest atom!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"In fact, we're going off early tomorrow for the whole day," said Harry Wharton coolly. "If you want us to keep on here, Mr. Whiffles, we'll be back before dark, and keep our arrangement. If not, we'll clear for good."

"Clear for good, and be blowed to you!" roared Bunter.

"Very well; that's that!" said Harry. "We needn't trouble to finish with this tent, you men. We'll walk into East-thorpe and put up at the inn."

"Right!" agreed Nugent.

"It will be more convenient for D'Arcy's place, too," added the captain of the Remove.

"Yes, rather!" agreed Bob.

Billy Bunter started.

"D'Arcy's place!" he repeated. "Are we anywhere near Eastwood House?"

"About a mile," answered Harry.

"Oh! I'll ask him to come to the circus," said Bunter. "I'll be jolly glad to see him again."

The Famous Five stared at the Boss.

"Mean to say you know D'Arcy?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Eh! Of course I do. What do you mean?" snorted Bunter. "I know him as well as you do; better, in fact. He's an old pal of mine."

"D'Arcy's an old pal of yours!" ejaculated Bob.

"Yes, rather; bosom chum."

"Oh, my hat! You're thinking of somebody else, I suppose. The D'Arcy we're speaking of is a Fourth Form chap at St. Jim's," said Bob. "So you can hardly know him, Mr. Whiffles."

"Oh! Yes! No—I—I mean—" stammered Bunter, remembering that he was Mr. Whiffles—a trifling matter that he was constantly forgetting. "I—I mean—yes—no—yes—yes—that is, I mean—no."

"If that's what you mean, you don't make your meaning quite clear, Mr. Whiffles," chuckled Bob. "Aren't you getting a little mixed?"

"The mixfulness is terrific."

"I—I mean—the fact is, I—I—are you fellows seeing D'Arcy?" stuttered Bunter.

"We've seen him, on the way here," said Harry. "He's bringing his friends to the circus this evening; and we want to engage the giddy Royal box for them. Of course, we shall pay for the box."

"Nothing of the kind!" said Bunter loftily. "You just tell D'Arcy that he's welcome to the Royal box, and I shall be glad to see him and his friends here. And—and you fellows needn't clear off."

"I think we'd better—"

"Nothing of the sort, old chap," said Bunter. "The fact is, I want you to stay. You're so nice, you know."

"Oh, my hat!"

"If I've said anything to offend you, forget it," said Bunter. "It's all right! As for cheek, I can overlook that—you kids always were cheeky! It's all right!"

And Bunter rolled back to his van, leaving it at that. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another quite blankly.

"Can anybody make that fat johnny out?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I give him up," said Harry. "The more I see of Whiffles, the more I can't make him out. Sometimes I think that it's Billy Bunter speaking—he's Bunter all over."

"His Bunterfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "But do we decide on the stayfulness or the gofulness, my esteemed chums?"

"Oh, let's stay, if he wants us," said Bob. "As he thinks we're so nice—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, we'll stay," said Harry. "He really needs to be guarded from that hooligan Huggins, as he seems to be afraid to have the man run in, for some reason. But—what can he know about D'Arcy? It's plain enough that he knows the name, at least."

"Perhaps Bunter's told him," said Bob. "As far as I can make out, he's some relation of Bunter's. Anyhow, as we're staying, let's get this tent up. I'm ready for tea, for one."

Mr. Whiffles had recovered his good temper at tea-time. George—regardless of having been sacked—served a magnificent tea, at which the Famous Five joined the Boss. Short as the funds

were in the cash-box, Mr. Dance never ventured to cut the tuck short; and Billy Bunter was feeding on the fat of the land, and his bodyguard shared it with him.

By the time tea was over, the band was beginning to play in the big tent, and the doors were open for the audience. Bunter rose from the tea-table with a satisfied grunt.

"I say, you fellows, I shall be in the Royal box to meet D'Arcy when he comes," he remarked. "You needn't trouble to be there. I shall do the honours of my own circus."

"But you don't know D'Arcy," said Harry, puzzled.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Well, do you know him?" demanded Bob.

Without answering that question, the Boss rolled away towards the circus tent.

"I suppose we must give him his head," said Harry Wharton. "Blessed if I know why he should be interested in Gussy. Let's get along the road and meet the St. Jim's men—we know they will come from Eastwood House."

"Let's!" agreed Bob.

And the juniors walked across the field to the road to meet the St. Jim's crowd on their way. As they came through the gate on the road, Wharton caught sight of a roughly-clad figure lurking in the shadow of the hedge. He knew that rough figure, the battered face and the broken nose, at a glance.

"Huggins!" he exclaimed.

"Collar him!"

Bill Huggins gave the Greyfriars juniors a stare, and then turned and bolted down the road at top speed. He was aware that, for some inexplicable reason, Mr. Whiffles did not choose to have him "run in"; but he did not want another handling from the Greyfriars fellows. So, like the guests in Macbeth, he stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once, and he vanished across the road and through a hedge.

The juniors did not follow.

"So he's still hanging about after the circus," remarked Johnny Bull. "Can any of you fellows guess why old Whiffles doesn't hand him over to the police?"

"Ask me another!" said Bob.

"It's jolly mysterious."

"The mysteryfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "But the esteemed and preposterous Boss is mysterious in many ways."

The juniors walked on down the road, keeping a wary eye open for Mr. Huggins. But the battered face and the broken nose were not seen again.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Gussy's Party!

"**W**EADY, you fellows?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, glancing round over his flock.

It was quite a numerous party of St. Jim's juniors who were gathered at Eastwood House, in the last weeks of the summer holidays.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were there—Levison and Clive and Cardew of the Fourth—as well as Gussy's own especial chums, Blake and Herries and Digby. Also there were D'Arcy minor of the Third, and his special friends Levison Minor and Manners minor.

Thirteen, in this case, was not an unlucky number, as it was an exceedingly merry party, and they kept the old house very lively, and probably exercised the patience of Lord Eastwood and his lady to a considerable extent.

If there was one fellow in the numerous band who was not wholly and com-

pletely satisfied, it was Cardew of the Fourth.

Ralph Reckness Cardew was a fastidious fellow, and he had many little likes and dislikes of his own. Among them, was a dislike of a crowd.

The other fellows did not mind at all going about in a sort of army, when the spirit moved them to do so, but Cardew privately confided to Levison that going about like a school treat was not to his taste. Levison had cheerily told him not to be an ass.

Now, Ralph Reckness Cardew was lounging in a very easy chair, looking very handsome in his well-fitting clothes, as elegant as the great Gussy himself, and more supercilious than Gussy could ever have looked—Gussy being a cheery and open-hearted fellow with all his dandified ways.

Tom Merry & Co. were all ready to start for the circus—excepting Cardew. Cardew made no movement.

He had picked up a book—but as he was holding it upside down, it did not appear that he was deeply interested in it.

Cardew did not mean to go to the circus.

He rather liked to think that he did not care for such simple entertainments; but, as a matter of fact, he would have liked to go. But he did not want to go in a large party, like a school treat, as he described it.

"Ready, O Chief?" said Monty Lowther.

"Waiting for you, Gus!" said D'Arcy minor. "It's taken you half an hour to put that necktie on."

"Weally, Wally—" said Arthur Augustus reprovingly.

"Don't you begin, old chap," said Wally of the Third. "If you start wagging your old chin, we shall never get to the circus at all. You know what you are."

"Bai Jove! I think—"

"Ready, old bean?" said Tom Merry laughing. "We're all here, I think."

"The whole jolly baker's dozen," said Blake. "Get a move on!"

"Come on, Cardew," said Levison of the Fourth, with a rather uneasy glance at his handsome chum in the chair.

Cardew glanced up.

"I don't think I'll come, you men," he said. "You don't mind? I've got hold of such a jolly rippin' book."

"Oh, come on!" said Clive.

"And I'm rather fagged with tennis," said Cardew. "You gave me such a fearfully hot time, Gussy."

"Bai Jove! I didn't mean to wear you out, old chap," said Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Not exactly worn out," smiled Cardew. "Just that pleasant sort of tired feelin' that makes a fellow want to sit in a chair over a really good book."

"Wight-ho, old fellow! Just as you like."

Monty Lowther glanced at Cardew's book in Cardew's hands, and grinned.

"The Philosophy of Kant, translated from the German, by Ein Dummkopf!" he read out. "Ripping book, what? Just the sort of light reading for a summer evening. Not a headache in a barrel of it."

Cardew coloured a little. He had picked up that volume by chance, without even looking at it. Certainly he was not interested personally in that abstruse subject.

"Look here, come on, Cardew," said Levison. "It will be jolly at the circus."

"My dear chap, I've said—"

"Oh rats!" Ernest Levison, at least, was quite aware of Cardew's real thoughts, and disliked them extremely.

"It's all wight, Levison, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "Every chap to his own taste."

"Right!" agreed Monty Lowther. "I was thinking of spending a happy evening with Liddell and Scott's Greek lexicon, but on the whole I think I'll come to the circus instead. If you get tired of that light reading, Cardew, you can have Liddell and Scott."

The juniors made a start; but Levison lingered for a moment to speak again to his wayward chum.

"Look here, don't be a silly ass, Cardew," he said, in a low voice. "Anybody but old Gussy would see that you are playing the giddy ox. Lucky that he doesn't."

"That's what I like about Gussy!" assented Cardew. "He can always be relied on never to see anythin' at all."

"Well, come along to the circus, and don't be an ass!"

"I never did like a school treat!" murmured Cardew.

"Fathead!"

"Same to you, old bean, and many of them," yawned Cardew. "Look here! You cut the circus, and stay in. I'll give you twenty-five, and beat you in a hundred up."

Levison shook his head.

"You know Gussy's told us that there are some Greyfriars fellows at the circus, and they've asked us all to supper. I was at Greyfriars once, and I like to see the chaps again."

"Meritorious, an' all that, to stick to old friends and never mind new!" said Cardew, with a faint sneer.

"Oh, rot! Naturally I want to see them. And you'd like to come to the circus, too, if you weren't a silly duffer!" said Levison crossly. "I never saw such a wrong-headed chump!"

"Right on the wicket!" assented Cardew. "A born chump, old bean. Look at my choice of friends, f'rinstance."

"You coming, Levison?" called out Sidney Clive.

"Yes!" And Levison hurried after his friends, leaving Ralph Reckness Cardew alone, and to the enjoyment—such as it was—of Kant's Philosophy.

Twelve fellows walked out of Eastwood House, and took the road to Easthorpe. From the village a footpath ran by a wide heath to the field where the circus was pitched. Arthur Augustus had already ascertained the precise location of Whiffles' World-Famous Circus—about a half-mile from the village. The heath was lonely in the evening, as a rule, but now there were a number of villagers traversing it, heading for the circus.

"I twust Cardew won't be bored while we're out," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked thoughtfully. "I never noticed befoah that he was a weadin' chap. But when a fellow gets weally keen on a book, he doesn't like to chuck it. I feel like that when I've got my 'Holiday Annual.'"

"Dear old bird!" said Blake affectionately.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Do you ever kick Cardew, in the study at St. Jim's, Levison?" asked Digby.

"Eh? No!"

"Well, you ought to."

"You ought!" agreed Herries.

"Often and hard!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "Why should Levison kick Cardew?"

"It would do him good," said

Manners. "This is a serious dereliction of duty on your part, Levison."

"Weally, Mannahs, I fail to see—"

"Oh, bow-wow!" interrupted Tom Merry. "Every man to his taste. And if a fellow likes to be an ass, let him get on with it. You'll be seeing some old schoolfellows of yours at the circus, Levison."

"Yes, rather, and I shall be jolly glad to see them!" said Levison. "It was lucky Gussy running into them to-day."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the talk changed to a more agreeable subject, Cardew being dismissed from mind. The numerous party walked on cheerily in the summer evening. There were many people going in the same direction; and from the distance, at last, they heard the blare of music on the wind from the World-Famous Circus. A figure came running from the road ahead, crossing the open grass towards the path, and the juniors glanced at the man. He passed them, and continued on his way, evidently in a hurry.

"Nice chap to meet on this path alone, late at night!" remarked Monty Lowther, looking after the hurrying figure. The man's battered face and broken nose did not look reassuring.

"Bai Jove! He looked wathah a wuffian!" said Arthur Augustus. "But we shall all be coming back together, so it will be all wight. Mind you don't wandah away fwom us, Wally."

"As if I'd trust you out alone, Gus!" answered D'Arcy minor.

"Weally, you young ass—"

"We'll look after you fellows," said Reggie Manners. "Don't be nervous."

"You don't wallop your young brother enough, Manners," remarked Blake.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a powerful voice from the road.

"Bai Jove! That's Bob Chewwy, I think."

"Either Bob Cherry, or a man with a megaphone," said Lowther.

It proved to be Bob Cherry. There was a cheery greeting as the Famous Five of Greyfriars met the St. Jim's party, and they walked on to the circus together.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

An Unrehearsed Turn!

BILLY BUNTER smiled genially. The Boss was standing at the entrance—the special entrance—to the boxes. The boxes were only canvas partitions; but had the Royal box at Whiffles' World-Famous Circus been the Royal box at Covent Garden, the manner of the Boss could not have been more impressive.

Bunter was in all his glory, in Mr. Whiffles' striking clothes, and very striking waistcoat and magnificent watch-chain, with Mr. Whiffles' wig adorning his bullet head, with its ample locks, and the waxed moustache and pointed beard completely hiding his identity. Bunter fancied himself in the part of Boss of the Circus, and he had played the part so long and so successfully that at times he almost imagined that he really was Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

Bunter felt impressive, and fondly believed that he looked impressive. But, as a matter of fact, there was an element of the comic about Bunter, just as there had been about the genuine Mr. Whiffles when his tubby person was encased in the same remarkable attire. The St. Jim's juniors looked at him with great interest, and smiling faces,

as they came up with the Greyfriars fellows.

"This isn't an alfresco show, is it?" asked Lowther.

"No," said Harry. "This is the way in."

"Then what is that performer doing outside?"

"That isn't a performer—that's the Boss!" said Wharton, laughing.

"Oh! My mistake!"

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass on the Boss. "Does the chap weally wear those clothes, you fellows?"

"He do—he does!" said Bob Cherry.

"Wenarkable!"

"The remarkablefulness is terrific!" observed Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Whiffles is a very remarkable and preposterous person!"

"Hallo, old chap!" said the Boss, as D'Arcy came within hearing. "Jolly glad to see you, Gussy!" Bunter had forgotten again.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Bai Jove! Have I evah met you befoah, sir?" he ejaculated.

"Oh, really, Gussy—"

"I am suah I should not have forgotten if I had met you, Mr. Whiffles," said the swell of St. Jim's, puzzled. He was quite sure, at least, that he would never have forgotten those clothes.

"Oh! I—I mean—the fact is—" Bunter remembered. "I—I mean—Come in! The show's just going to start. I'll show you into your box."

"You are vevy kind, Mr. Whiffles."

"Not at all, Gussy—I mean, not at all, old chap. This way in!" said the Boss. "Glad to see all you fellows again—I mean, glad to see you at my circus. This way! Hallo, Levison, you here?"

"Yes, I'm here," said Levison. "But how do you know my name, Mr. Whiffles?"

"Oh! I—I—I don't, you know—I mean—this way in!" stammered Bunter. "George! Where's that idiot George? Where's that fathead—"

"Ere, guv'nor!"

"Place the seats for my friends, George. Room for four in this box," said Bunter. "You come in, Gussy—I mean D'Arcy, and two other fellows. I've reserved all the boxes for you chaps!"

"That's jolly good of you, Mr. Whiffles!" said Tom Merry.

"Not at all, old chap," said Bunter affably. "It's ages since I've seen you, Tom Merry."

"Have you seen me before?" ejaculated Tom.

"Oh! Yes! No! I mean—here you are! Sit down! George!" bawled Bunter.

"Yes, guv'nor!"

"Show these gentlemen into the other boxes, and then bring refreshments. You fellows would like some ices, what?"

"You are weally vevy good, Mr. Whiffles."

"My dear chap, you're an old pal, you know."

"Great Scott! Am I?"

"I—I mean—here you are! Best seat for you, Gussy—I mean, D'Arcy. I'll sit beside you! You sit behind, Levison, and you, Clive! Isn't Cardew with you? I thought he was always with you fellows."

"Oh, cwumbs!"

"You know Cardew?" exclaimed Levison, mystified.

"Oh! Yes! No! George, bring those ices."

Mr. Whiffles' mysterious knowledgo

of St. Jim's fellows was really astonishing. The boss' guests could not make it out at all.

D'Arcy and Levison and Clive sat down in the Royal box with Mr. Whiffles, and the rest of the party were distributed among the other boxes. Harry Wharton & Co. grinned at one another rather ruefully. They had asked the St. Jim's party to the circus, but the Boss had coolly taken possession of them. However, all the numerous party were comfortably settled, and the indefatigable George brought ices, which were very welcome on a warm evening.

The show was starting now, with

on the sawdust, but his ears were taken possession of by Mr. Whiffles.

"I hear you're playing cricket at your place, to-morrow," Bunter remarked presently.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, his eyes on the active figure of Tomasso Tomsonio, the acrobat, who was swinging up to the high trapezo.

"I'm thinking of letting those Greyfriars fellows come, as you've asked them," said the Boss.

"Oh!"

"They're really in my employ, you know," said Bunter.

"Oh!"

"Sort of watchmen," said Bunter.

"I hardly know the chap, in fact," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "The othah fellows are fwiends of mine, but Buntah is nothin' of the sort."

William George Bunter breathed hard and deep.

"Look here, you cheeky ass!" he ejaculated.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Wha-a-t? What did you say, Mr. Whiffles?"

"I—I mean——" Bunter, remembering that he wanted very much to go to Eastwood House on the morrow, controlled his desire to tell Arthur Augustus what he thought of him. "I mean, look at the show! The elephant's



Cardew ran his hardest, with Huggins tearing along behind him. The light-footed junior might have escaped, but in the deep dusk he stumbled over a rut and fell. Before he could rise the pursuer was upon him! (See Chapter 7.)

horses galloping round the ring, and Nobby Nobbs turning somersaults. Mr. Dance, in evening-dress, with a long whip, was acting as ring-master. Dance glanced at the crowded boxes with a good deal of satisfaction. As a rule the cheaper seats were crowded, and the boxes had rather a vacant look. Mr. Dance was not yet aware that the boxes were crowded more cheaply than the other seats, on the present occasion.

Arthur Augustus gave his attention to the circus. Billy Bunter gave his attention to D'Arcy.

Lord Eastwood's son, though his manners were very unassuming, was a tremendous swell, and Bunter liked swells. The rest of the party were small beer in comparison, and Bunter wasted very little politeness on them. But the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in for Bunter's special attention.

As a matter of fact, D'Arcy had come there to see the show, and to have a chat with the Greyfriars fellows; not at all for the pleasure—or otherwise—of Mr. Whiffles' conversation. And he did not like being called "Gussy" by a stranger. But his manners were always polished, and he bore with the Boss patiently.

His eyes were on the turns proceeding

"I'm being very kind to them. I'll let them come along to-morrow."

"Oh!" D'Arcy seemed able to make only monosyllabic replies. He wished fervently that this fat gentleman would shut up.

"There'll be another Greyfriars man along with them," went on Bunter, coming to the point at last. "A fellow you know well, and like."

"Indeed?" said D'Arcy, a little interested now. "That's wathah wippin'. Who is it?"

"You remember me——"

"Eh?"

"I mean, you remember Bunter——"

"Buntah! Yaas, I wathah wemembah Buntah," said Arthur Augustus. "I saw him last time I went to Gweyfwiahs to play cwicket. Is he heah?"

"He will be on hand to-morrow," said the Boss, with a fat grin. "I knew you'd be jolly glad to see him."

"Not at all, Mr. Whiffles," answered Arthur Augustus. "I have no special desiah to see Buntah."

"Wha-a-t?"

"Of course, he will be vewy welcome to come along with the othah fellows. But he is not a fwiend of mine."

"Oh, really, D'Arcy——"

coming in—my special performing elephant! Picks you up in his trunk if you like——"

"Bai Jove! I don't think I should like to be picked up in his trunk," said Arthur Augustus, with a smile.

"Oh, it's as safe as houses," said Bunter. "It's a regular part of the show for Mumbo to pick up Mr. Whiffles in his trunk and walk round the ring with him."

"Eh?"

"I—I mean, me, you know," stammered Bunter. "When I say Mr. Whiffles, of course, I—I mean me."

"Yaas, I suppose you do," said Arthur Augustus, very much puzzled, and wondering whether the circus proprietor had been drinking.

"I'll let him pick you up——"

"Pway don't twouble."

"No trouble at all——"

"But weally, Mr. Whiffles——"

"That's all right." Bunter rose, and waved a fat hand to Nobby Nobbs, who was on the elephant's neck. Bunter's idea was that Gussy deserved something in return for stating that Bunter was not his friend—Bunter being absolutely determined to be the friend of the Honourable Arthur

Augustus. "Here! This way, Nobbs. Bring Mumbo over here."

Nobby Nobbs glanced round. He guided the elephant towards the Royal box.

Nobby had been rather surprised, during the last few weeks, at the accustomed turn being cut out. Bunter had been picked up by the elephant once, and he did not like it; so since he had played the part of Mr. Whiffles, Mr. Whiffles had carefully avoided Mumbo. Nobby supposed that the old turn was to be reintroduced now.

The great elephant towered in front of the royal box. Arthur Augustus regarded him with some slight uneasiness at such close quarters; though not for worlds would he have betrayed it.

"Make him pick up this gentleman, Nobby!" said the Boss.

"Weally, Mr. Whiffles—"

"It's quite a lark," said Bunter. "You'll like it! If he drops you and treads on you, of course, you're done for. But it seldom happens."

"Bai Jove! I should not like it to happen even once, in my case," exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's.

"Funky?" grinned Bunter. "Be a man, you know."

"Bai Jove! I weally think—"

"Do you hear me, Nobbs?" snapped Bunter. "Do as I tell you, at once."

"Yes, gov'nor," said Nobby.

The elephant lumbered closer to the box, and reached in with his long sinuous trunk. But either Mumbo misunderstood Nobby's guidance, or else his old habit of taking up Mr. Whiffles in his trunk asserted itself. The long trunk curled, not round the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, but round the fat form of the Boss.

"Here, I say—leggo!" roared Bunter. "Oh, crumbs! Oh, crikey! Help!"

Mumbo jerked the Boss out of the box, and with Bunter squirming and yelling in his trunk, proceeded to pace round the ring.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Yaroooh! Help! Whoop! Help! Rescue!" yelled Bunter. "I say, you fellows! Help! Whoooooop!"

Tent and audience swam before Bunter's dazzled eyes. He yelled and roared and struggled frantically.

"Make him leggo!" he shrieked. "I'll sack you! Do you hear? I'll sack you for this, Nobbs! Yarooogh."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nobby Nobbs signed to the elephant to let go. Mumbo was an obedient beast. He let go—quite suddenly.

Bunter uttered a terrific yell as he sat down in the sawdust. The sawdust was soft enough; but the earth under it was hard—very hard. All the wind was knocked out of William George Bunter by the contact.

"Ooooooooh!" he gurgled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo!" yelled the audience.

"Grooogh!"

Bunter found wind enough to howl with terror as the elephant stepped over him. Mumbo was too carefully trained to step on anybody. He stepped over Bunter with the greatest care. But the Owl of the Remove shrieked with horror as the gigantic animal towered over him, and the huge legs were lifted. When the elephant had passed on, the Boss scrambled to his feet, and made a wild rush to get back to the Royal Box; followed by yells of laughter from the people in front.

Bunter came headlong into the box,

diving. D'Arcy and Levison and Clive jumped out of the way, and he had room to fall. There was a resounding thump as he landed.

He sat up, and gasped, and glared.

"Bai Jove! Are you hurt, Mr. Whiffles?" stuttered Arthur Augustus.

"Beast!"

"Oh cwumbs!"

"Yah! Beast! You—you tailor's dummy!" howled Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind to give you a licking! Ow!"

"Weally, Mr. Whiffles—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Bunter scrambled up and limped out of the box. Arthur Augustus gazed after him through his eyeglass; and then looked at Levison and Clive, who were laughing.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I fear that Mr. Whiffles' mannahs leave vevy much to be desiahed, you fellows. I think we had bettah wetiah."

"Oh, bosh, let's see the show out," said Levison, sitting down again.

"But in the circus—"

"Never mind the circus—stick to the circus."

"Weally, you ass—"

"Sit down!" said Clive. "It's rather better without that fat old donkey."

"Oh, very well."

Arthur Augustus sat down again: and the performance proceeded without the further assistance of the Boss. The Boss was in his caravan, rubbing a large variety of bumps: and thereby—without intending it—making the entertainment much more agreeable to Harry Wharton & Co.'s guests.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Cardew Finds Trouble!

"O H, rotten!" Ralph Reckness Cardew made that remark in a tone of deep discontent.

Needless to say, Cardew had not perused the valuable volume with which he had been left. He had had his own way, and remained behind when the other fellows went to the circus. But like many wilful fellows who insist on having their own way, he found little satisfaction in it.

He read a newspaper for a long time, and then lounged away to the billiard room and knocked the balls about. Lord and Lady Eastwood were out that evening: and Lord Conway had gone with them: and excepting for the servants, Cardew was alone in the house. He did not want to read: he did not want to practise shots with a cue by himself: and as a matter of fact, he wanted to be with the cheery party at the circus.

Having "mooched" about the house discontentedly for a time, Cardew began to consider the idea of going to the circus, after all.

He avoided going like a "school treat," but there was no reason why he should not walk over to the circus and see the finish of the show, and come home with the other fellows. He was quite tired of his own company.

He made up his mind at last, in sheer boredom and discontent. He put on his cap and left the house, and lounged away moodily down the drive.

He felt a little more cheerful as he walked down to Easthorpe in the cool September evening. He knew where to find the circus, and leaving the village behind, he struck off across the footpath by the heath.

It was nearly dark now, and the heath was very solitary. Plenty of people had crossed it earlier in the

evening, going to the circus: but now there was no one to be seen.

Cardew was not nervous in any way, however, and he gave no thought to the loneliness of the route as he walked onward.

He was about half-way to the circus, when a shadowy figure loomed up in the thickening dusk on the heath. Cardew, glancing at a battered face and a broken nose, and a ragged cap pulled low over a beetling brow, quickened his pace a little. The muscular man who was loafing towards him over the grass looked an extremely undesirable person to meet in that lonely spot, far from any help.

"Old on!" said a husky voice.

The big man planted himself in the footpath in front of Cardew, and the St. Jim's junior halted, setting his lips.

Bill Huggins gave him a sour grin. Huggins had once been "sacked" from the circus for pilfering, and he had done "three months' hard" for that offence. Work never had appealed to Mr. Huggins: although rather a low fellow in many respects, he had a horror of work that could not have been beaten by the bluest-blooded aristocrat. For weeks, since he had come out of "chokey," as he called his late residence, Mr. Huggins had been haunting the World-Famous Circus, looking for a chance to "bash" his former employer.

That was an occupation that appealed to him, but there was, of course, no money in it: and Mr. Huggins was hard up. A series of petty pilferings had kept him going, so far, but he was fairly up against it now, and the awful prospect of work loomed before him like a spectre. In these circumstances, Mr. Huggins was naturally gratified to meet a well-dressed fellow on a lonely path at dark. It looked as if Mr. Huggins' exhausted exchequer was going to be replenished.

He was glad to see Cardew. All the gladness was on his side: Cardew did not share it at all. He backed away a few paces, watching the ruffian: and Huggins followed him up stealthily.

"Well, what do you want?" snapped Cardew, without a tremor in his voice. He knew that he was in danger, but he was not afraid.

Huggins chuckled hoarsely.

"I'm hard up, gov'nor," he said. "Wot price 'elping a cove on his way?"

"I dare say I can find half-a-crown," said Cardew carelessly.

"You're joking, gov'nor," chuckled Huggins. "Wot about a fiver?"

"I haven't a fiver, and I shouldn't give it to you, if I had."

"Not to save your blooming dial from being bashed through the back of your 'ead?" grinned Huggins. He came a little nearer. "Now then, 'and it over--all you've got."

Cardew clenched his hands hard.

"Keep off, you rotter!" he said contemptuously. "You'll get nothing from me."

"Won't I?" said Huggins.

He came on with a rush. Cardew leapt lightly aside, and struck out as the ruffian lurched past: and his fist caught Mr. Huggins on the side of the jaw. The unexpected blow sent the ruffian reeling, and he crashed over in the grass: and at the same moment, Cardew ran for it.

"Strike me pink!" gasped Bill Huggins, as he scrambled up. And he rushed in infuriated pursuit of the St. Jim's junior.

Cardew ran his hardest, with the ruffian tearing along behind him. The light-footed junior might have escaped

but in the deep dusk he stumbled over a rut, and fell. Before he could rise, the pursuer was upon him, and a pair of muscular arms closed on Cardew.

"Now then!" panted Bill Huggins.

Cardew struggled silently but fiercely. Twice his fists beat in the stubbly, battered face, each time eliciting a savage grunt from Huggins. Then a crashing blow from a heavy, clenched fist sent the junior half-stunned to the ground. The ruffian struck again, and again, as he lay: and Cardew sank helplessly into the grass, almost insensible.

He was unable to resist as the thievish hands groped through his pockets. Money, and watch and chain, and tie-pin were taken, and disappeared into Huggins' pockets. Cardew moaned faintly, and stirred, but he could not resist.

Having robbed him of everything he could find of value, Bill Huggins left him where he lay, and disappeared into the darkness of the heath.

For a long time Cardew lay dazed and dizzy. When he sat up at last, with swimming brain, the ruffian had long gone.

"Oh gad!" muttered Cardew.

He struggled to his feet. He passed his hand over his face: it came away wet. His nose was bleeding, and was badly swollen, and there was a cut on his forehead.

"Oh gad! What a night!" murmured Cardew. "Well, I rather asked for this! And that brute has asked for somethin' that he will get, if I can manage it—two years at least, I hope! Oh crumbs! I feel rocky."

He turned back wearily along the footpath. He was not thinking of the circus now; he did not want to show his battered face there. Above all, he did not want any pity or sympathy.

He moved along slowly, aching from head to foot, his brain still swimming. He was sinking with exhaustion when he got back into the village of Easthorpe.

There he was able to hire a cab to take him to Eastwood House; but it was like Cardew, spent as he was, to stop first at the village policeman's cottage, to give an account of what had happened on the heath, and a very careful and particular description of the footpad.

There was some solace in the thought that the ruffian would probably soon be captured, and sent to the punishment he deserved, though Cardew's bruised head ached none the less for that.

He was in bed—though not asleep—when Arthur Augustus and his friends returned from the circus. There was little sleep that night for Cardew.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Squeak for Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. entertained the St. Jim's party to supper, under the summer stars, after the circus show. The Boss, who had intended to take that matter off their hands, was not, after all, on the scene. His adventure with the elephant had rather damaged the Boss; and, after attending to his numerous bumps, Bunter had lain down on the bed in the blue-and-red caravan to take a little well-earned repose. The inevitable had followed. Once asleep, Billy Bunter was not likely to wake again in a hurry, and he snored away happily while the Greyfriars fellows entertained the St. Jim's crowd, and the supper was undoubtedly made a success by the fact that Bunter was not

there. He was still snoring when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy & Co. took their departure, and the Famous Five saw them off. All arrangements had been made for the morrow, to the general satisfaction.

The chums of the Remove would have been glad to walk part of the way back with the visitors, but they were mindful of their agreement with "Mr. Whiffles." So they saw the St. Jim's party off at the roadside, and then walked back to their own tent.

Their tent was pitched close to the steps of the blue-and-red van. From that van proceeded a deep and reverberating snore, showing that the Boss was still safe in the arms of Morpheus.

"May as well turn in," yawned Bob Cherry. "We shall wake up all right if the Huggins man comes along. I suppose Whiffles has locked his door, as usual."

"I suppose so," assented Harry. "Turn in now. We shall wake all right if anybody tries to butt into the van."

And the Famous Five turned in.

They were soon fast asleep, lulled, perhaps, by the deep and steady snore that proceeded from the caravan.

Bunter was still sleeping the sleep of the just.

He was still snoring at full pressure when a stealthy figure crept round the van and stopped by the steps.

Bill Huggins stood there, listening intently, with bent head.

Of Bunter's bodyguard he knew nothing, but he could hear the steady breathing of sleepers in the tent close at hand, and he was very wary.

He stood on the caravan step, and tried the door, and grinned.

Had the door been locked, Huggins could not have broken it in without considerable noise, and the bodyguard would have awakened at once and flown to the rescue.

They had taken it for granted that the door was locked, as usual, which would have made all safe. Bunter never neg-

lected to lock the door very carefully when he went to bed.

But he had not gone to bed now; he had simply lain down early in the evening to take a little nap, which, like so many of Bunter's naps, was prolonged into a very long nap. And so the door had not been locked.

Huggins grinned as he turned the handle and found that the door opened to his touch.

His hour had come at last, and the long-deferred bashing of his old Boss was about to take place.

Huggins was in rather a hurry to get it over and disappear, for the robbery of Cardew on the heath made it extremely perilous for him to linger in the vicinity. Robbery with violence was a serious matter, and penal servitude loomed before the ruffian, and before the morrow the hunt would be up. Only his fierce determination to "bash" Mr. Whiffles made him take the risk of lingering even for a few hours in the neighbourhood. Now it was all plain sailing. The door of the van opened to his hand, and the sleeper within was at his mercy.

He opened the door wide, put in his head, and listened, with a grinning face.

In the old days, when he had been employed at the circus, he had never heard the Boss snore like that. Still, he had no doubt that it was Mr. Whiffles who was sleeping in Mr. Whiffles' van.

He crept in, and groped his way to the bed where Billy Bunter lay, still dressed, having taken off only his coat before he took his nap.

"Guv'nor!" chuckled Huggins hoarsely.

Snore!

It was deep darkness inside the van. Huggins groped over the sleeper and shook him roughly. He did not care to strike a light, but a word would be enough to assure him that it was Mr. Whiffles who lay there. Bill Huggins did not mind very much if he bashed

(Continued on next page.)

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the wrong party—bashing was a trifle light as air to Mr. Huggins—but he did not want to give the alarm before getting hold of the right party.

He crunched Bunter's shoulder in a grasp like that of a vice, which was sufficient to wake even Bunter.

"Guv'nor!" he growled.

Bunter started into wakefulness.

He did not move.

As he felt that savage grip on him, and felt rather than saw a dark figure looming over him in the blackness, his terror was so extreme that he very nearly fainted.

He knew who it was, and knew that Huggins had him at last!

He lay petrified with fear.

"It's me, guv'nor!" growled Huggins. "Bill Huggins, what you sent to chokey, old covey! Bill Huggins come to bash your features through the back of your blinking 'ead! You 'ear me, Whiffles?"

"Ow!" Bunter gasped feebly. "I'm not Whiffles! Ow!"

"Liar!" said Mr. Huggins cheerfully. "What you doin' in this 'ere van if you ain't Whiffles?"

"I—I—I—"

"Can it!" grinned Huggins. "You're Whiffles, and I've got you! Now then—"

Bunter yelped.

"I ain't Whiffles! Oh dear! I—I—I'll tell you where he is, if you like. I—I—I say, honour bright, I ain't Whiffles!"

"I'll strike a blinking match to make sure," growled Huggins; and he fumbled in his pocket for a match-box. "You make a sound, and it's the last thing you'll ever do, strike me pink!"

Bunter quaked with horror, but the stress of terror set his brain working. In a few moments the match would light, and then—

A sudden inspiration saved Bunter.

He grabbed at the wig, the moustache, and the beard, and jerked them off in an instant and crammed them under him.

A few seconds later Huggins had found his matchbox, and a match glimmered out, held over Bunter's terrified face.

Huggins stared at him blankly.

He saw a face that was as fat as that of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, but which evidently was not that of the showman.

"Strike me pink!" ejaculated Huggins.

"I—I told you I wasn't Whiffles!" moaned Bunter.

"You got his blooming clobber on!" growled Huggins, noting the crimson waistcoat and the striped trousers. "What you doing in Whiffles' van, with his clobber on—what?"

"I—I—I just borrowed them."

"You're the fat bloke I dropped on afore, when I was arter Whiffles in this 'ere van!" growled Huggins. The match went out. "I've a good mind to bash yer, jest for luck! Look 'ere, where's Whiffles? Give it to me straight, afore I bust your nose in!"

"He—he's in that—that tent!" gasped Bunter. "You—you saw a tent close by the van—he's there—"

Huggins gave a rumbling growl.

"Sleeping in a blinking tent, jest to dodge me if I come along!" he snarled. "I ketch on! Well, I'll wake him up all right! I'd bash you, too, only I don't want to wake up the 'ole blinking show! But you make the least little sound, you fat covey, and I'll come back into the van and out yer! Strike me pink!"

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"I—I won't—"

"You'd better not!" snarled Huggins.

And to Bunter's immense relief, he crept away from the bedside, and disappeared from the van.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He lay where he was, not daring to utter a sound or make a movement. He would have liked to leap to the door, slam and lock it; but he knew he might not have time. He waited and listened, palpitating with terror, and making up his fat mind, for the sixth or seventh time, that this was the very, very last occasion in which he would play the perilous part of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Handling Huggins!

BILL HUGGINS stooped his head at the entrance of the tent, and listened. The tent doorway had been left open; partly because the night was warm, partly because the Famous Five were on guard over the blue-and-red caravan.

It was very dark in the tent; and Huggins, as he listened, could detect the breathing of more than one sleeper. He scowled blackly as he peered in. The "fat bloke" in the caravan had told him that Whiffles was there; but it was quite possible that he had merely said so in order to get rid of him, and Huggins did not feel sure. Still, as he was determined not to leave the circus camp without discovering, and bashing, Mr. Whiffles, it was as well to begin his search at this tent. He could see nothing; and his straining ears only told him that there were several sleepers there. He drew out his match-box at last, and struck a match; there was no other way.

The match flared out, and glimmered into the darkness of the tent.

Mr. Huggins had a dim and flickering view of a number of recumbent forms in blankets on ground-sheets, and found that he was nearly stepping on the nearest of them.

"Strike me pink!" hissed Huggins.

He glimpsed two or three of the slumbering faces, and knew that the sleepers were the Greyfriars fellows. And as he stood staring at them in the glimmer of the match, Bob Cherry's eyes opened wide and fixed on him.

The next instant Bob was on his feet with a bound.

"Wake up, you men!" he roared.

"Strike me pink!"

Huggins backed, dropping the match, and as he did so Bob rushed at him, with lowered head, and butted him where Mr. Huggins would have worn his watch-chain, had he worn one at all.

There was a gasp from Huggins, and he staggered backwards and sat down suddenly just outside the tent.

"What—" called out Wharton's voice.

"Huggins!" panted Bob.

"Oh, my hat! After him!"

"Back up!"

The Famous Five rushed out of the tent in their pyjamas. They almost fell over the sprawling, spluttering Huggins.

"Got him!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Collar the brute!"

"Give the terrific rotter jip!"

"Ow! Strike me pink!" howled Huggins, struggling wildly in the grasping hands of the Famous Five.

The uproar rang through the sleeping camp.

Huggins rolled on the ground,

struggling furiously, with every member of the body-guard grasping him.

Billy Bunter gasped with relief as he heard the uproar. With great astuteness, he had directed Huggins to the tent where the body-guard lay—as the safest way of disposing of him. As soon as he heard the sounds of strife Bunter rolled off the bed, jumped to the door, slammed it, and turned the key in the lock.

Some fellows would have rushed out to help the Famous Five, who had their hands full with the powerful ruffian. But that idea did not occur to William George Bunter. He was thinking wholly and solely of the safety of a fellow who was really important—W. G. Bunter.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter, as he sat down on the bed again. "Oh crumbs! Ow! Ow!"

Outside the van the struggle was going on with terrific vim. Half the circus had awakened and crowded to the spot.

Mr. Dance was the first to arrive.

In the glimmer of the summer stars he recognised the broken-nosed ruffian who was struggling fiercely with the Greyfriars juniors, and he scowled darkly.

Mr. Dance did not care very much whether Bill Huggins "bashed" the Boss or not; indeed, he would have rather liked to see Bunter bashed a little.

But he cared very much whether Huggins was made a prisoner—that would not have suited him at all.

Only so long as Huggins was free, and on the trail of vengeance, would the real Mr. Whiffles remain in hiding, leaving the spoof Mr. Whiffles in possession of the circus—and the unscrupulous manager in possession of the cash-box.

For a moment or two Dance stared at the scene, scowling; hoping to see Huggins break loose and run for it.

But, powerful as the ruffian was, the Famous Five were too hefty for him; and they had him down on his back now, with Johnny Bull sitting astride his chest.

"Hold on to him!" gasped Bob. "The brute's as strong as a horse. Here, lend a hand!" he shouted to Dance.

Dance rushed in, and threw himself into the struggle—knocking Johnny Bull in one direction, and Bob Cherry in another, and then grasping Harry Wharton and bearing him to the ground.

That unexpected assistance was all that Huggins needed.

In a moment he had shaken off Nugent and Hurrce Jamset Ram Singh, and leaped to his feet and darted away. Once more he had been baffled in his quest of Mr. Whiffles; but he had a chance to escape, and he made the most of it.

One or two of the circus men made an attempt to head him off; but he dodged them among the vans and tents, and vanished into the night.

"What the thump!" roared Bob Cherry in great wrath, as he scrambled to his feet.

Wharton hurled the manager off.

"What the dickens do you mean by this?" he shouted. "You've helped that ruffian to get away."

"I—I—I thought I had hold of him!" stammered Dance. "I—I was trying to help—"

"You were doing nothing of the sort!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove angrily. "You helped him



A fat cackle greeted Harry Wharton & Co. as they came up to the stile, and five heads were turned as one. "Bunter!" "I say, you fellows, I'm ready to go with you!" grinned Billy Bunter. "Where did you spring from?" ejaculated Bob Cherry. (See Chapter 10.)

to get away—as you did before, too—it was you lot him go last time!"

Dance stepped back, with a sneer on his face.

"You may think as you please, of course," he answered. "I am quite indifferent to a schoolboy's opinion."

And he walked back to his van, satisfied that Bill Huggins would not be captured that night, at all events.

"Look here, this isn't good enough!" growled Johnny Bull. "I've got half a dozen bruises from that brute, and he ought to be run in!"

Wharton stepped to the door of the van. He tried the handle and found it locked inside.

"You all right, Mr. Whiffles?" he called out.

Bunter grinned. He could afford to grin now.

"Right as rain," he answered. "I hope he's got away—I mean, I hope he hasn't! Has he?"

"Your manager Dance butted in, and he got away!" snapped Wharton.

"Oh, good!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, bad—very bad!" stammered Bunter. "I—I'll speak to Dance in the morning. Sure he's got clean away?"

"Yes, he's gone!" growled Wharton. "And we're all pretty well knocked about scrapping with him!"

"He, he, he!"

"Is that a laughing matter?" roared Wharton, greatly incensed.

"Yes—I—I mean, no! Awfully sorry, and all that! You fellows ain't much good at scrapping, are you? The fact is, I was just coming out to handle him myself! I could do it all right!"

"We'll give you a chance if he comes back again, then!" snapped Wharton, and he left the caravan.

The Famous Five returned to bed—

feeling considerably shaken up and knocked about; Bill Huggins was not an easy proposition even for five sturdy fellows. But they slept again at last; and Billy Bunter, safe behind a locked door, snored away comfortably until the September sun was shining once more over the fields and meadows of Hampshire.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Himself Again!

"I SAY, you fellows!" Wharton jumped—he could not help it. The greeting was so exactly like that of Billy Bunter of Greyfriars, that he could hardly believe that it was Mr. Whiffles who was speaking.

As a matter of fact, it wasn't! But Bunter was once more safely encased in the garments, the wig, the moustache, and the beard of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, and to the eyes, at least, he was that world-famous showman.

Harry Wharton & Co. had finished breakfast, and were considering making a start for Eastwood House. The Boss had breakfasted also—amply; and he rolled up to the Famous Five and interrupted them without ceremony.

"I say, you fellows! I understand that you want a day off to go and play cricket with the St. Jim's chaps?" said Bunter.

"There's no question of a day off," answered Harry Wharton curtly. "We're not in your employment, Mr. Whiffles."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"We're going to see our friends at Eastwood House," said Harry. "We shall be back by dark, if you still want us to travel with the circus. If you don't, say so, and we'll stay away."

"Of course, I want you, old chap,"

said Bunter. "You're rather a beast, but that brute Huggins may come back again."

"Look here, why don't you have that man Huggins run in, Mr. Whiffles?" demanded Johnny Bull gruffly.

"Because that would spoil the whole game, you ass—I—I mean, because—because—"

"What game?"

"Nothing! I—I'm not going to have him run in because—because I'm too tender-hearted. Never mind Huggins," said the Boss hastily. "Look here, I'm letting you fellows have a day off—"

"Rubbish!" interrupted Wharton. "You're doing nothing of the kind. We're going to Eastwood House. We can do as we please."

"Oh, don't be so jolly touchy," said Bunter. "You always were so jolly touchy, Wharton. You were touchy when you came to Greyfriars, and you've been touchy ever since."

"How the thump do you know what I was like at Greyfriars?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"I—I mean—I mean, you can have the day off; it's all right. I—I hope you'll have a ripping day. You can start at ten o'clock."

"We're going to start before that."

"Now, look here, I want you to stay here till ten," said the Boss. "I'm going out for a bit. You can stay till ten and then you can do as you jolly well like."

"Oh, all right!"

"That's settled, then," said the Boss. He went into his caravan, picked up a packed bag, and left again. Bag in hand, the Boss walked away from the circus.

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced after him rather curiously.

As it seemed quite probable that Bill

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(Continued from page 13.)

Huggins was still in the neighbourhood, they were surprised to see Mr. Whiffles going out on a walk by himself. Neither did they understand why he wished them to remain in camp till ten. However they were willing to oblige the Boss in that small matter, and they waited.

Billy Bunter grinned a fat grin as he rolled away across the field and passed through a gap in a hedge and disappeared.

He was not unmindful of the fact that Bill Huggins might still be somewhere in the offing, but he did not intend to go very far as Mr. Whiffles. His trip was to be continued as Billy Bunter.

At a distance, screened by the hedges from the circus, the Boss entered a little coppice. There, safely out of sight, he unpacked from the bag the clothes he had worn when he left Greyfriars.

Quickly he stripped off the striking attire of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles, folded the clothes, and packed them in the bag. On the clothes he placed the wig, the beard, and the moustache.

Then he fastened the bag, and hid it carefully under a bush.

His next proceeding was to dress himself in his own clothes. Once more he presented the customary aspect of the Owl of the Remove.

All he retained of Mr. Whiffles was his remarkable tie-pin, and his magnificent gold watch and chain. Bunter had a weakness for personal adornment, and he did not see why he should part with all his finery.

He blinked at his reflection in a pocket-mirror, and grinned.

Assured that nothing—except the jewellery—remained to associate him with Mr. Whiffles, Bunter rolled out of the coppice.

It still wanted five minutes to ten, when he rolled out into the road, by which the Famous Five had to pass to reach Easthorpe.

There he sat on a stile, to wait for the Greyfriars fellows to come along.

He chuckled at the sight of five youthful figures coming up the road from the direction of the circus.

Harry Wharton & Co. had left the camp on the stroke of ten, and started cheerfully on the walk to Eastwood House.

They were looking forward to the meeting with Arthur Augustus and his friends, but assuredly they were not looking forward to, or expecting, a meeting with William George Bunter of Greyfriars.

"He, he, he!"

That fat exclamation greeted them as they came along, and five heads turned as one.

"Bunter!"

"My hat!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm ready!" grinned Billy Bunter, slipping from the stile and joining the Famous Five in the road.

"Where did you spring from, Bunter?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"He, he, he!"

"And what are you doing here?" demanded Nugent.

"Eh! I'm going to Eastwood House with you fellows, of course!"

"How the merry dickens do you know we're going to Eastwood House?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"He, he, he!"

"Chuck cackling!" roared Bob. "You fat boulder, you've got a cackle so like old Whiffles' that any fellow would swear it was the same."

"He, he, he!"

"Why, he's got Whiffles' tie-pin on!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "Have you met Mr. Whiffles this morning, Bunter?"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. He really could not help it; the mystification of the Remove fellows entertained him so much.

"That's Whiffles' watch and chain, too," said Bob. "I'd know that cable anywhere. Have you been borrowing Whiffles' things, like you do the fellows' things as Greyfriars, Bunter?"

"He, he, he!"

"Blessed if I make this out," said Harry. "Bunter hasn't been at the circus all this time, or we should have seen him. I can't imagine how he's turned up here all of a sudden. How did you come here, Bunter?"

"We're wasting time, old chap," said Bunter. "You always were a fellow for jawing—like a sheep's head, you know; nearly all jaw. We don't want to be late for the cricket match with the St. Jim's chaps."

"What do you about the cricket match?" roared Bob. "How do you know anything about our affairs at all?"

"Oh, Whiffles told me all about it," said Bunter, with a fat grin. "He mentioned that D'Arcy had invited me along with you fellows. Of course, he would naturally want to see me, as I'm his pal. Come on."

The Famous Five looked at Bunter, and looked at one another. It was true that D'Arcy had said that Bunter was to come, too, if he was on the spot—and here he was, on the spot. Billy Bunter's fascinating society never seemed to give the pleasure that he naturally expected it to give. Still, there he was, and the chums of the Remove felt that they had to make the best of him.

"Oh, come on!" said Wharton. And they started along the road again, the Owl of the Remove rolling along with them.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, as they walked through the village. "I suppose D'Arcy will be able to lend us some things for the cricket."

"That's all arranged," said Harry. "But you don't come on in the cricket, fathead. You can't play cricket."

"That's what I'm coming to," said Bunter firmly. "I want this clearly understood before we get to Eastwood House. When we're at Greyfriars, Wharton, we let you swank about as cricket captain—"

"What?"

"We let you throw your weight about, and all that," said Bunter, blinking at him. "That's all very well; but we ain't at Greyfriars now. We're meeting an aristocratic old friend of mine, and playing cricket with his house-party. Well, in the circumstances, I want you to get it into your head that the less you throw your weight about the better."

"Why, you fat, cheeky villain—"

"I want you to leave this cricket match in my hands," explained Bunter. "It's only a friendly game; but we want to beat the St. Jim's chaps, all the same. We want Lord Eastwood to see

that Greyfriars fellows know something about the game. There's such a thing as keeping up appearances. See? So I want you to stand down and leave the thing in my hands. You can swank again when we get back to Greyfriars next term."

Harry Wharton breathed hard and deep.

"Ain't he a bute?" said Bob Cherry admiringly. "Ain't he a prize packet? How they must love him at home—and how nice it would be if he were there now!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Bump him!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"The bumpfulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "The morefulness the merrierfulness."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Dry up, Bunter!" said the captain of the Remove. "I don't want to kick you, but if you talk any more, look out for it!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut up!"

"I can jolly well say—Yaroooogh!" roared Bunter, as Bob Cherry gently tapped him with his boot. "Beast! Owl!"

"Have another?" asked Bob. "You've only got to go on wagging your fat chin, old bean."

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter did not wag his chin any more on the way to Eastwood House.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Unpleasant for Cardew!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY greeted his Greyfriars friends with his usual urbanity, but with a gravity of countenance that they noticed at once. He hardly seemed to notice that Bunter was with them; much to the fat Owl's irritation. D'Arcy evidently had something on his mind.

"You fellows will be sowwy to heah that a wathah wotten thing has happened," the swell of St. Jim's explained. "Cardew—you know Cardew—he was in our team last time we played Gwey fwiahs—"

"I remember him," said Harry. "He didn't come to the circus with you last night."

"No; he stayed in to finish a book he was deep in," said Arthur Augustus. "But it appears that he followed us later, to come to the circus aftah all. He was knocked down and wobbed by a feahful wuffian on Easthorpe Heath."

"That's rotten! Hurt much?"

"Well, he makes out that it's nothin' much, but, as a mattah of fact, he is wathah damaged, and has a pwize nose," said D'Arcy. "The patah is wathah wowwied about it. There's a police inspectah heah now, seein' Cardew, and takin' the particulabs. Of course, it won't make any diffewence to our match to-day; only Cardew will have to stand out."

"What rotten luck!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Have they got the man?" asked Bob.

"No; but Cardew has given a full description of him," said Arthur Augustus. "Fwom the description, it seems to be a feahful wuffian who passed us when we were goin' to the circus, neah the woad where we met you fellows. You may have seen him—a vevy hefty beast with a bwoken nose."

"What?" exclaimed Wharton.

"You've seen him?" asked D'Arcy.

"Yes, rather—it's Huggins."

"Bai Jove!"

"We saw the man only a little while before we met you," said Harry. "He dodged away across the heath. He came back to the circus last night after Mr. Whiffles. It must be the same man who robbed Cardew. Look here, we can help the police to get after him. We can fill in the description, and give his name."

"More than that," said Frank Nugent. "If it's Huggins, they can nab him by keeping an eye on the circus—he's following the circus wherever it goes to get after Mr. Whiffles."

"Bai Jove! This is wathah luckay," said Arthur Augustus. "The inspectah chap is speakin' to Cardew in the libwawy now, with my patah. Pewwaps you fellows will come in and tell him what you know about the man."

"Yes, rather."

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows, I don't know anything about him," exclaimed Billy Bunter, in alarm. "I say—"

"We know that; don't bother," said Harry.

The Greyfriars fellows followed D'Arcy to the library of Eastwood House; but Billy Bunter rolled after Wharton and caught him by the sleeve. Harry shook off the fat hand impatiently.

"Don't bother now, Bunter."

"Look here, you listen to me!" exclaimed Bunter. "It's important. Hold on a minute and just listen."

"Well, what is it?" demanded Wharton, lingering behind to hear what the Owl of the Remove had to say.

"Look here, you just shut up about Huggins, see?" said Bunter, in a low, cautious voice. "I dare say it wasn't Huggins at all who bashed Cardew—"

"It certainly was Huggins; though I don't see how you know anything about him," said Harry.

Bunter grinned.

"Well, I do know something about him," he answered. "More than you do, in fact. I know all about the man."

"Then you'd better come and tell the inspector what you know."

"No jolly fear! Look here, I don't want that man Huggins run in," said Bunter. "Understand that! You shut up about him! Cardew shouldn't have been such a fool as to get into a row with him. Blow Cardew! You just shut up about Huggins, and let him alone!"

Wharton stared blankly at the Owl of the Remove. He was too astonished to speak. That Mr. Whiffles and the manager, Dance, desired the ruffian to remain at liberty, he knew, though he could not guess why. But it was amazing to find that Billy Bunter shared their desire on that point.

"What do you mean?" gasped Wharton at last. "Have you gone off your silly rocker, you fat duffer?"

"I mean what I say!" grunted Bunter. "You let Huggins alone. Your job is to keep him away from the circus—not to get him run in. It would spoil everything. Just mind your own business, see?"

"If you're not wandering in your idiotic mind, I can't make you out," said Harry. "But I'm going to do the very best I can to get that brute run in for knocking a St. Jim's man about. Now shut up!"

"Look here, you beast—"

"Go and eat coke!"

Wharton hurried after his friends; leaving Billy Bunter in the hall of Eastwood House, in a state of great dismay. Only too well Bunter was aware that the real Mr. Whiffles was keeping a wary eye open, ready to return and resume

his rightful place when the danger of Huggins was removed. Once Mr. Huggins was safely "run in," Bunter's career as boss of the circus was at an end. He could only hope that Mr. Huggins had cleared out of the neighbourhood, out of the reach of arrest.

The Greyfriars fellows found Cardew in the library, with Lord Eastwood and the police-inspector. Cardew looked a rather sorry sight. His nose was swollen; one of his eyes was blackened, and there were several bruises and cuts on his handsome face. It was plain that Bill Huggins had "bashed" him with considerable vigour.

He grinned rather ruefully at the Famous Five. Cardew hated to be seen in such a state, and he hated to be the object of sympathy. The whole position was intolerable to him. All the more so, that reason, he was determined that the footpad should be brought to justice; that was his only solace. For what Huggins had robbed him of he cared little; but he cared very much for the spoiling of his good looks, and for the fuss that was inevitable.

Lord Eastwood was grave and troubled; though he greeted the Greyfriars fellows very urbanely. And he was evidently glad to hear that they had help to give in securing the footpad. The police-inspector was equally pleased; and he took down all the details that the chums could give him, with great attention.

There was no doubt, when notes were compared, that the footpad who had robbed Cardew, was Bill Huggins. That he had fled from the vicinity was fairly certain; but that his vengeful pursuit of Mr. Whiffles left his trail open to pursuit was assured. On that point Inspector Moles was very attentive. It

appeared probable that when the circus moved on to a different neighbourhood, Huggins would renew his attempt on Mr. Whiffles—and if that was so, and a watch was kept on the circus wherever it moved, Mr. Moles was very likely to get his man.

When the interview was over, Harry Wharton & Co. felt that they had helped a great deal towards bringing a dangerous ruffian to justice, which was very satisfactory to them, whatever it might be to Billy Bunter.

Cardew came out of the house with the rest of the party. He was deeply chagrined at having to stand out of the cricket; but he obviously was in no condition to play. He made light of his damages; but his face was very white except where the bruises showed black. Arthur Augustus gave him a sympathetic tap on the shoulder.

"Pewwaps we ought to cut the

match, in the circus," he remarked tentatively. "With you feelin' so vewy wotten, old bean—"

"I'm not feelin' rotten," said Cardew curtly.

"You are lookin' dweadfully wotten, old chap."

"You are always so complimentary, Gussy," said Cardew. "Tact is your long suit."

"Yaas, wathah; fellows genewally wegard me as a fellow of tact and judgment," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "Pewwaps you do not feel so wotten as you look, old fellow."

"Perhaps you are not such an ass as you seem!" remarked Cardew thoughtfully.

"Bai Jove! Weally, Cardew—"

"Let's get going," said Levison hastily. "Cardew can sit in a deck chair and watch the game."

"I'm quite able to stand, thanks," said Cardew. "Although I look such an object, I am not really on my last legs."

"I shall insist upon your sittin' down, in a vewy comfortable chair, with lots of pillows, old bean," said Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! don't walk away when a fellow's speakin' to you, Cardew. I say— Bai Jove! he seems to be deaf. I wondah whethah that thumpin' has affected his heavin' Pewwaps I had bettah insist on his seein' a doctah."

"Do—if you want him to give you an eye and a nose to match his own," agreed Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, come on," said Levison, "we shall never get going at this rate."

"Wight-ho, deah boy."

And the party proceeded to the cricket ground.

(Continued on next page.)

ATHLETES TRAIN ON IT



There is half a cup
of English full cream
milk in every

**CADBURY
BIG MILK
BAR 2^D**

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

W.G.B.—L.B.W.

"I SAY, you fellows—"
 "Shut up, Bunter."
 "But I say—"
 "Cheese it!"

"The talkfulness of the esteemed Bunter is too terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "He goes on for ever like the preposterous little brook."

"I want to know whether I'm opening the innings!" roared Bunter. "Fathead!"

Apparently Bunter was not opening the innings.

Harry Wharton & Co. had been accommodated with necessary things from the ample supply of Arthur Augustus. The flannels into which Bunter had squeezed himself seemed on the point of bursting. But, judging by the fat smirk on his face, the Owl of the Remove was quite satisfied with his appearance.

The St. Jim's team consisted of three Shell fellows, six of the Fourth, and Wally and Reggie Manners. Levison minor offered his services to the visitors, and was accepted. That made seven, including Bunter, and four members of the Easthorpe village team, who were employed on the estate, were added to make up the number. Greyfriars batted first; and Billy Bunter did not open the innings; he was booked to close it with a duck's egg. Cardew leaned on the trunk of an old elm to watch the game. He was feeling extremely "rocky," but he was determined not to be an invalid. As Levison went on to bowl against Harry Wharton, Bunter rolled away to join Cardew. As he was last man, he was not likely to be wanted for some time—indeed he was, as a matter of fact, not wanted at all. So he decided to bestow his fascinating company on Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"Rotten bowling, what?" remarked Bunter, as the captain of the Greyfriars Remove knocked the ball away, and crossed the pitch with Bob Cherry.

That was Bunter's tactful way of beginning. Levison was one of the best junior bowlers at St. Jim's, and Cardew's special chum. Cardew gave him a look.

"Think so?" he grunted.

"Not like the way we bowl at Greyfriars," said Bunter. "You should see me bowl! Not that I'm likely to get a chance in this match—there's a lot of jealousy in cricket, you know; those fellows hate being put in the shade by a really good man."

Cardew did not answer; but moved away from the elm, and took up his position under another tree.

Bunter blinked at him; and rolled after him.

"Feeling jolly seedy, what?" he resumed. "You look a regular picture, and no mistake! Your nose—he, he, he!"

Cardew moved off again; and this time Bunter kept in step with him. The sound of his own voice was always music to Bunter's ears, though to other ears it lacked charm.

"Tried beefsteak for your eye?" he asked. "My word! what an eye! Sorry I wasn't on the spot when that ruffian handled you."

"Same here," said Cardew. "I should have liked you to have had some of it."

"Eh! I mean, I'd have protected you," explained Bunter. "I'd have knocked the fellow spinning. Why didn't you?"

No answer.

"You St. Jim's fellows aren't much in the scrapping line, are you?" said Bunter.

"A Greyfriars man wouldn't have got knocked about like that, Cardew. Sorry to see you looking like a hospital case. My hat! Look at them—that's three! Does that chap Levison think he can bowl?"

"Levison's one of the best at St. Jim's," said Cardew, breathing hard.

"Oh, I dare say! All right for St. Jim's, no doubt," agreed Bunter. "You ain't much of a school at games, are you?"

Cardew walked on, and joined the waiting group of batsmen. Bunter followed him, rather puzzled, not realising that the delights of his conversation had palled on the St. Jim's junior.

"You fellows busy?" asked Cardew.

"Eh! Only watching the batting," answered Johnny Bull, turning his head.

"If you've got a minute to spare—"

"Certainly."

"Then would you mind killin' Bunter, and buryin' him somewhere in the park?" asked Cardew. "Or, if you object to that—though I don't see why you should—will you muzzle him, or knock him down an' sit on him?"

And Cardew limped away again; leaving Bunter blinking after him, and the other fellows grinning. Even Bunter realised that, for some inexplicable reason, Cardew was fed up with his cheery conversation.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, "that chap's a cheeky cad! I say, what rotten batting! Does Bob Cherry really think he's batting, or is he giving an imitation of a windmill, or Swedish drill, or what?"

"Shut up, Bunter."

"They call that running, I suppose," went on Bunter, as the batsmen crossed the pitch. "Crawling I should call it! I say, you fellows, put a bit of speed on—don't chuck the game away! Buck up! Don't crawl! I say—yaroooooogh!" Bunter ended with a yell, as the business end of Johnny Bull's bat clumped on Mr. Whiffles' watch chain and he sat down suddenly.

After which, it was some time before the dulcet tones of the Owl of the Remove were heard again.

As a matter of fact, both the batting and the bowling were very good, in spite of Bunter's strictures; and the innings was well fought out. But when last man in was called, Billy Bunter buckled on his pads, and rolled on, with the air of a fellow who was going to show the whole universe who was who, and what was what. Now there was a chance for some real cricket to be seen; and Bunter was glad to observe that Lord Eastwood had walked down from the house to give the game a look-in. He had arrived just in time to see Bunter display his cricketing powers.

Bunter took up his position with a straddle that did full justice to his podgy figure and fat little legs. Tom Merry glanced at him, and smiled. He did not think that this batsman was likely to last long.

"Go and put paid to him, Gussy!" he said.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus was only a change bowler, with none of the deadliness of Levison; but he was more than equal to a batsman like Bunter. Not that he had much chance of hitting the wicket, which was almost wholly screened by Bunter's podgy legs.

He did his best. The ball came down and Bunter whirled his bat in the air, and suddenly leaped from the earth with a terrific yell.

"Yaroooh!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"How's that, Conway—I mean, how's

that, umpiah?" called out Arthur Augustus.

Lord Conway, who was umpiring, grinned.

"Out!" he answered. "Leg before."

"Yooop! Beast! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked round him, and took up his position again, and blinked along the pitch.

"I'm ready!" he hooted. "Play!"

"Oh, cwikey!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled all the juniors.

"You're out!" roared Bob Cherry.

"The innings is over!"

"Tain't!" hooted Bunter. "I'm not out!"

"Leg before, you howling ass—out!"

"Rot! That was a wide!" said Bunter. "D'Arcy chucked the ball—he doesn't know how to bowl! My leg wasn't anywhere near the wicket."

"Fathead! Umpire's given you out!"

"Blow the umpire!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Eastwood stroked his chin, and gazed at Bunter. He was seeing some unusual cricket, as Bunter had intended that he should. But he was not overcome with admiration, as Bunter had expected. His lordship did not seem to know what to make of Bunter's style of play.

"You're out, kid," said Lord Conway good-humouredly.

"Rubbish!"

"Bunter, you fat idiot—" shouted Harry Wharton, in great exasperation.

"Shut up, Wharton! I'm waiting for that ass D'Arcy to bowl," said Bunter. "I decline to be out, after a silly dummy chucking a ball at me and calling it bowling."

"Oh, give him another ball," said Tom Merry, almost weeping with mirth at this sample of Greyfriars' cricket. "Give him another, Gussy."

"I weally do not mind," said Arthur Augustus. "If nobody objects, I will give him a cwash on the othah leg."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the bowler, but this time there was no danger of "leg before;" he stood well away. He stood so well away that his bat missed the leather by about a yard when it came, and his wicket was spread-eagled. Bunter blinked at it wrathfully.

"How's that, umpiah?"

"Out!" said Lord Conway, laughing. "Are you satisfied now, Bunter, or do you want to be out again?"

Bunter grunted.

"Oh, call it out!" he said. "I'm not used to this sort of bowling—if it is bowling! Absolutely rotten!"

However, even Bunter admitted that he was out, though he appeared to consider that the fall of his wicket was due to something peculiarly rotten in the bowling. The innings was over, and there was an adjournment for lunch at Eastwood House.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Bowls!

TOM MERRY and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy opened the innings for St. Jim's after lunch. Billy Bunter rolled down to the field with the Greyfriars fellows.

Bunter had planned to astonish the natives with his batting, but it had not, somehow, come off. It was hard cheese, because even that beast Wharton could not prevent him from batting as he was in the team. The beast could prevent him from bowling, so Bunter

had no chance of showing off his wonderful powers in that line. He had offered to bowl, and had been thanklessly refused; he had urged Wharton to let him bowl, and had been told to shut up; he had pointed out that, if he did not bowl, the game was as good as chucked away, and found that the captain of the Remove was more than willing to take the risk.

Bunter was no longer Boss—though, undoubtedly, he felt as bossy as ever. He was not in the least inclined to

bowler here, and the fellows are so jealous of him that they won't let him bowl."

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom.

"Weally, Buntah—" remonstrated Arthur Augustus.

"Where did that chap dig up his manners?" asked Monty Lowther, aside. "Why don't the other fellows muzzle him?"

"Goodness knows," said Blake.

"Go in and win," said Bunter disdainfully. "You don't know much

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood up to the bowler, with a smile on his aristocratic face. After Bunter's exhibition as a batsman, D'Arcy did not think he was likely to shine in the bowling line. Indeed, the Owl of the Remove could not see the length of the pitch very well, even with the aid of his big spectacles. Still, Bunter had no lack of confidence in his powers. He never had.

He took a little jerky run, and his fat hand shot up with the ball in it,



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sent the ball down, and Bunter whirled his bat in the air. Then suddenly he leaped from the earth with a terrific yell. "Yarooop!" "How's that, umpiah?" called out D'Arcy. "Out!" grinned the umpire. "Leg before!" "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 12.)

exert himself in the field. As a matter of fact, he had done not wisely, but too well at the luncheon table. Whatever Bunter was like as a cricketer, there was no doubt that he was really distinguished as a trencherman, and he had tucked in regardless of the Plimsoll line. So, far from feeling inclined to chase an elusive ball, Bunter was feeling strongly disposed to curl up in the shade and take a nap.

"I say, Wharton, where do you want me to field?" he asked snappishly. "I don't see that it matters much, as you're chucking the game away."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It doesn't matter much, certainly," he said. "You field like a stuffed dummy in any case."

"Look here, what am I to do?"

"Keep out of the way," suggested Bob Cherry.

"Beast!"

"Oh, go into the long-field," said Harry indifferently, "or go to Jericho, or go and eat coke, just as you like."

Bunter snorted.

"Mind, I'm ready to bowl, if you like," he said. "If you want the thing to be over short and sharp, I'm your man. A couple of hat tricks—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, have your own way," sneered Bunter. "I say, Tom Merry, you're in for an easy thing. There's one good

about cricket at St. Jim's, but, unless you're a set of hopeless duds, you'll pile up runs off the bowling you'll get here."

"My esteemed and idiotic Bunter—"

"You shut up, Inky! You think you can bowl! Your bowling is enough to make a donkey cack!"

"I have no objection to the esteemed Bunter cackling," said Hurree Singh mildly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry whispered in Wharton's ear.

"Let the fat idiot bowl an over! Those St. Jim's chaps might think there's something in his gas. This isn't a school match, you know."

Wharton frowned, but he nodded. He was feeling strongly inclined to run Bunter off the field at the end of a bat, but such a proceeding was not feasible, in the circumstances. Eastwood House was not Little Side at Greyfriars.

"Give Bunter the ball, Inky," he said. "Let him try his luck."

"Now that's sense," said the Owl of the Remove, beaming. "That's something like sense, old chap. Inky's not bad for a change bowler, but leave the wicket-getting to me! That's my advice."

"I'll ask for your advice when I want it, fathead! Get on!"

and the ball, of course, left his palm at a moment not intended by Bunter.

Where it went he did not know, until a fiendish yell from Bob Cherry, in the field, apprised him.

How Bunter landed that ball on the side of Bob's head was a mystery.

Certainly he could not have done it had he desired to do so. In that case he would have missed Bob by yards.

It was the unfortunate circumstance that Bob was yards and yards away from Bunter's objective that did it. As Bunter's ball was bound to go nowhere near the point aimed at, obviously it had to go somewhere else, and Bob Cherry's head was the somewhere.

"Whoooooop!"

Bob Cherry leaped clear of the ground, clutching his hapless head in both hands.

"Ow! Oh, my napper! Yooop! Ow!"

"Oh cwumbs!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

Billy Bunter blinked round.

"I say, you fellows! Where's that ball?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Oh, my napper! Wow!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You fat villain! You've nearly brained me! Yow-ow! I'll pulverise you!"

"Here, hold on!" roared Wharton, in alarm.

But Bob Cherry was too exasperated to hold on. He wanted vengeance, and he wanted it badly. He made a rush at Bunter, who blinked at him in alarm and surprise.

"I—I—I say!" gasped Bunter. "Keep off! I say—Yarooogh! Oh, my hat! Keep him off! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter fled for his life. After him went Bob Cherry, raging. The rest of the field roared with laughter. Tom Merry stood at his wicket almost weeping; Arthur Augustus like a fellow in a trance. The St. Jim's crowd yelled encouragement to the runners.

"Go it, Bunter!"

"Put it on, Cherry!"

"Bravo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter was not much of a sprinter as a rule. But there were times when he could sprint, and this was one of them. He knew the weight of Bob Cherry's foot. He had been there before, so to speak. He fairly flew.

"Bob!" shouted Wharton, as they raced off the field, both going strong.

Bob Cherry for once turned a deaf ear to his captain. He put on a spurt, and came within kicking distance of Bunter.

There was a fearful yell from the Owl of the Remove as the avenging foot landed.

"Yarooogh!"

William George Bunter sprawled headlong in the grass, roaring. Bob Cherry glared down at him as he roared.

"Get up, you fat villain! I want to kick you again!"

"Yow! Beast! Wow!"

"Will you get up?" yelled Bob.

"Ow! No! Wow! Yow! Keep off! Wow!"

"Then I'll jolly well jump on you!"

"Yarooop!"

Bunter got up in a great hurry, and ran for it. A lift from Bob's foot helped him on his way, and he fled, yelling. Bob, with a very red face, returned to the cricket-field. But Bunter did not return. In many matters Bunter never knew when he had had enough, and wanted more. On this occasion he knew that he had had enough, and did not want any more. He vanished from sight, and did not reappear.

Bob Cherry found all the cricketers in convulsions when he returned. Monty Lowther remarked to Manners that if this was the way Greyfriars played cricket they ought to be doing it for the front page of a comic paper. But gravity was restored at last, and the game resumed, and the Greyfriars fellows demonstrated that they were not cricketers in the style of Bunter by beating the St. Jim's men by a handsome margin of runs.

Billy Bunter was not seen again. He had realised that he was not, somehow, popular at Eastwood House, and he had a keen dislike for Bob Cherry's hefty foot at close quarters. Bunter shook the dust of Eastwood House from his feet, and rolled away to the coppice where he had left Mr. Whiffles' clothes hidden in the bag; and, having changed, he rolled back to the circus, Whiffles once more. There he indemnified himself for his many grievances and wrongs by hectoring the circus hands, and sacking George once more, and disposing of a tea to such an extent that it must have made a serious inroad into Mr. Dance's cash-box.

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After which he retired to the blue-and-red caravan, where he snored in peaceful slumber—a slumber from which he was destined to have a rather startling awakening.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

An Astounding Discovery!

"**W**HERE on earth's Bunter?" Bob Cherry asked that question as the chums of the Remove walked back across the heath in the dusk of the September evening.

"Echo answers, where!" said Nugent.

"The wherefulness is terrific!"

"The fat boulder seems to have performed another of his vanishing tricks," said Harry Wharton. "It's jolly queer!"

Billy Bunter did not matter very much, it was true; but the Famous Five could not help feeling perplexed.

Bunter had appeared mysteriously from nowhere in particular that morning. Now he seemed to have vanished into space.

That he had not turned up at Eastwood House for tea was really remarkable. Bunter was unreliable and unpunctual in all other matters, but he had never been known to miss a meal.

He must have tea'd somewhere, and anywhere else he presumably had to pay for his tea, and it was quite unlike Bunter to pay for anything if he could help it.

Bunter had come, and Bunter had gone, and both his coming and going were mysterious.

"I suppose nothing's happened to the fat duffer?" said Johnny Bull. "He can't have fallen in with Huggins, like that chap Cardew."

"Huggins has cleared off from this quarter," said Bob. "It stands to reason he wouldn't hang on here, with the police hunting him all over the shop. We shan't see him again till the circus has moved on."

"But what's become of Bunter?"

"Goodness knows!"

"I can't make it all out," Harry Wharton said thoughtfully. "It looks as if Bunter is somewhere about the circus all the time, the way he shows up at odd moments. But he can't be, or we should see him about. There's something mysterious about it."

"It's fishy," said Johnny Bull. "The whole thing's fishy. Why doesn't old Whiffles want Huggins run in, and why does the manager, Dance, want to let him go when we nail the brute? Something's going on behind the scenes, and it looks fishy to me, and I'm beginning to think that we'd better get out of the whole thing."

"I was thinking the same," confessed Wharton, "only we've agreed to stand by old Whiffles till the end of the holidays, at any rate."

"He hasn't kept his agreement with us," grunted Johnny Bull. "He agreed to pay for repairing the bikes that his blessed elephant trampled on, and he hasn't paid the bill, and he doesn't jolly well mean to."

"Well, we've saved expenses by travelling with the circus, so we can pay the bill ourselves," said Harry. "We can get the bikes sent on to the next town, and keep them with us. After Huggins is collared, old Whiffles won't want us any more, and we can clear."

"He doesn't want Huggins collared."

"That won't make any difference now. He's got to answer for what he's done to Cardew, and the next time we lay hands on the brute we'll make jolly sure

of him, Whiffles or no Whiffles," said the captain of the Remove. "I know that Inspector Moles means to keep an eye on the circus, and nab Huggins when he gets after Whiffles again, so it's not likely to be long before the brute is under lock and key."

"It's fishy, and Bunter's mixed up in it somehow," said Johnny Bull. "I don't like it at all. I like to see where I'm going."

"Well, we can't very well give Whiffles the go-by yet."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that another jolly old footpad?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

In the deepening dusk a figure had emerged from a clump of furze on the heath, and stood in the footpath, waiting for the juniors to come up.

The Famous Five looked at him as they advanced. He did not look like a footpad; but in that lonely place, after what had happened to Cardew the night before, they were on their guard.

The stranger was a little fat man—not so tall as any of the five juniors. But what he lacked vertically he made up horizontally. He was as fat as Billy Bunter or Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles.

He was dressed quietly in black, and wore a bowler hat jammed down tight on his round head. His face was clean-shaven; or at all events looked clean-shaven. In point of fact, it was one of those smooth faces on which hair is unwilling to grow. Little as the chums of Greyfriars suspected it, it was the face of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles himself—whose wig and beard and moustache and clothes and circus were all, at present, in the possession of William George Bunter.

The little fat gentleman held up a podgy hand, as the juniors drew near, and they stopped. He blinked at them through gold-rimmed glasses.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "What do you want?"

"Just a word with you," said a fat voice.

"Two if you like—or even three!" answered Bob.

"You schoolboys are going back to the circus?" asked the little fat man, blinking at them in the dusk.

"I don't see how you know—but we are," answered Harry Wharton. "What about it?"

"What are you doing at the circus at all?" demanded the fat man, with a tone of indignation in his voice.

"Eh, what? That's our business, I suppose."

"Nothing of the kind! I've been keeping an eye on you, and on the circus, and on that villainous impostor!" snorted the little man. "You young rascals—"

"What?"

"Don't deny it!" The little man wagged a fat finger accusingly at the astonished juniors. "You're staying at the circus to guard that villain."

"What villain?" gasped Bob.

"The villain who calls himself Whiffles!" said the little man. "The dastardly impostor—"

"The—the what?"

"The villainous impostor, who is no more Whiffles than you are! You are in the plot with him!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the little fat man blankly. They wondered whether they had fallen in with a lunatic. But he was evidently in deep earnest.

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Wharton sharply. "What plot are you talking about? Who are you?"



Bunter made a grab at the wig, missed his footing, and rolled out of the van. As he sat and roared, Harry Wharton pulled off his beard and Nugent jerked away the waxed moustache. Then they gave a yell of amazement. "Bunter!" (See Chapter 15.)

The little man peered at him.

"You mean to say that you know nothing of the plot?" he demanded. "You do not know that the man who calls himself Whiffles is an impostor, and not Whiffles at all?"

"My only hat! No fear."

"You do not know that the manager, Dance, is in the plot with him, keeping up the deception so as to keep his hands on the cash-box!" roared the little man, growing more and more excited.

"Great pip!"

"You do not know that you are helping in a deception—in a swindle?" yelled the little man.

"Oh, draw it mild," said Bob Cherry. "If you're wandering in your mind, old bean, go and wander somewhere else."

"Ha! You do not know! The villainous impostor has taken you in! Now you know, will you leave the circus, and let that dastard—that impostor—got his deserts?" The little man's manner was dramatic. "Leave him to his fate! Leave him to Huggins."

"Well, my hat!" said Nugent. "What the thump—"

"Look here, my man," said Harry Wharton, "if there's anything in this, make it clear. We're travelling with the circus to guard Mr. Whiffles against that man Huggins whom he sacked some time ago and sent to chokey for pilfering. No harm in that, I suppose?"

"I tell you he is not Whiffles!" roared the little man. "I tell you he is an impostor."

"What utter rot!" said Bob Cherry. "If he isn't Whiffles, where is Whiffles?"

The little man struck himself on the breast, more dramatically than ever.

"Here!" he answered.

"What!"

"I am Whiffles!"

"Poor chap—quite potty!" said Johnny Bull.

"The pottiffulness is terrific."

"I tell you I am Whiffles!" shrieked the little man. "I tell you that that villainous impostor stole my clothes, and—and other things, when I was bathing."

"Great Scott!"

Harry Wharton gave a start. He remembered that he had more than suspected that Mr. Whiffles wore a wig and a false beard and moustache. The stranger's amazing story was possibly true, at all events.

"But if you're Whiffles, as you say, why are you telling us all this, instead of denouncing that chap, and kicking him out of the circus?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

Mr. Whiffles blinked cautiously to right and left, into the shadows of the heath, as if in fear of some lurking figure in the falling darkness.

"Because of Huggins!" he said hoarsely.

"I don't see—"

"So long as that villain Huggins is free, I must remain in hiding!" panted Mr. Whiffles, "and so long as I remain in hiding, that villainous impostor and his confederate, Dance, keep my circus in their hands."

"Oh! My only uncle Christopher!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Mean to say you're hiding away from Huggins because you're afraid of him?"

"He—he is such a dangerous ruffian—"

"Well, of all the blessed funks!"

"I may not be a very brave man—"

mumbled Mr. Whiffles. "The bravefulness does not seem terrific," chuckled Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "The white-liverfulness is very great."

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the excited little man. The truth was dawning on their minds now. The

Boss' desire for Huggins to remain at liberty was explained, if this stranger's tale was true. Only so long as the pusillanimous Mr. Whiffles was frightened away by Huggins, could the deception be carried on.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "I knew it was all fishy! But have we really got landed into a swindle?"

"We'll jolly well have it out with Whiffles when we get back to the circus, anyhow," exclaimed Harry Wharton wrathfully.

"Leave him to Huggins!" exclaimed the little man.

Wharton looked at him.

"You seem to be playing a rather low-down game, Mr. Whiffles—if you are Mr. Whiffles," he said. "You're leaving another man to take your risks."

"A villainous impostor," snapped Mr. Whiffles. "I did not ask him to steal my clothes and—and other things—and my name! It is a plot between him and that scoundrel Dance. They are running my circus, and spending my money. While I—"

"While you're skulking out of sight, because you haven't the pluck of a bunny rabbit!" said Johnny Bull, gruffly.

Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles coloured. He was not, as he had admitted, a brave man. In fact, he was the very reverse of a brave man. The mere thought of Bill Huggins and his hefty fists made cold shivers run down the spine of Montgomery St. Leger Whiffles. He had the grace to be ashamed of his want of courage; but there it was, and he could not help it. Until Huggins was safe behind prison bars, Mr. Whiffles dared not resume his rightful name and place.

"Well, if this is true, we're done with the circus," said Harry Wharton. "We're certainly not taking part in a scheme

like that. If the man is an impostor, we're done with him. Who is he?"

"I don't know—I only know that he is a villainous impostor," said Mr. Whiffles. "Let him be bashed—"

"What?"
"Let Huggins bash him—smash him—anything! It does not matter. He deserves it! Above all, let Huggins be taken by the police! Once he is safe in the stone jug, it is all right for me."

"If that man is an impostor, we're done with him, and we shan't remain in the circus," said Harry. "But if you're telling the truth, come back to the circus with us."

Mr. Whiffles shook his head.
"Not till Huggins is safe—"

"Oh, rot! You're calling the fellow names, and making use of him all the time," exclaimed Wharton, "to take your danger off your own shoulders. You're a good bit of a worm, Mr. Whiffles! If you don't choose to show the man up, it's not our business to do so; but certainly we shall get clear of him if he is an impostor. You can go and eat coke!"

Wharton turned to his comrades.
"Come on, you fellows! The sooner we see the Boss, after this, the better!"

And the Famous Five, much astonished and perturbed by the startling news they had received, hurried on to the circus.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter I

SNORRRRRRRE!
That unmusical sound greeted the ears of the chums of Greyfriars, as they arrived at the blue-and-red caravan in the circus camp.

Evidently the Boss was there. It was yet early in the evening, and the usual circus performance had not ended. Strains of music echoed from the big tent, and the buzzing of a large audience. Mr. Dance was in charge of the show; Mr. Whiffles had retired to his van to rest. No doubt Bunter felt that he needed a rest after his exploits as a cricketer.

Wharton knocked at the door of the van, and received only a snore by way of reply. He tried the door, and found it locked, as he expected. After the previous night's happening, the Boss was not likely to leave it unlocked when he took a little nap.

"We've got to see him," said Harry. "This matter won't keep till the morning, you fellows!"

"No jolly fear!" said Johnny Bull emphatically. "If that man on the heath was telling the truth, the sooner we get out of this the better. And I believe he was."

Bang, bang, bang!
The juniors knocked loudly at the van door. But the knocking did not seem to disturb the sleeper within. He snored on regardless.

"My only hat!" said Bob. "Rip Van Winkle isn't in it with the Boss! Never knew anybody sleep so sound, except Billy Bunter!"

Bang, bang, bang!
Still the sleeping beauty did not wake. Wharton went to the van window; but it was closed and fastened inside. It must have been very hot and stuffy in the van; but Bunter did not care how stuffy it was, so long as it was safe.

"Mr. Whiffles!" roared Bob Cherry through the keyhole. "Whiffles, Whiffy! Whiff! Whiff! Whiff!"

But there was no reply, save Bunter's stentorian snore.

"Shift the van!" suggested Nugent. "We can do it, all shoving together. That will wake him all right."

"Good egg!"
And the Famous Five braced themselves to the task, and rolled the van along over the rutty ground. It bumped and rocked, and they heard a yelp from inside, as the sleeper was pitched nearly off the bed.

"Yow-ow-ow!"
Bunter was awake.

Wharton knocked at the door again. "Mr. Whiffles!" he shouted.

"Beast!"
"We want to speak to you!"

"Go and eat coke!"
"It's important!" said Harry.

"Yah! Go and eat coke! Shut up! Fathead! I say, you fellows, what's happened to this van? It was moving."

The juniors looked at one another. The amazing resemblance of the Boss' voice, and mode of speech, to Billy Bunter's, had often struck them before. But they were more struck by it than ever now.

"My hat! I could swear that that was Bunter in the van!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"It's Bunter! Are you there, Bunter?"

"Yes—no—certainly not! Go and eat coke!"

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"Look here. Open the door, or we'll jolly well roll the van over!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We've got to see you. I suppose you're not gone to bed yet, bother you!"

"I'm having a nap, you beast!"
"Well, chuck it!"

"Beast!"
"Over goes the caravan if you don't show up!" said Bob Cherry determinedly. "Take your choice."

"Yah! Beast! I'll sack you!" hooted Bunter. "Ow! Let this van alone, you rotters! I'm going to open the door, you beasts!"

And he opened it, and stood blinking down at the Famous Five, with a fat, wrathful countenance. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him. He was Mr. Whiffles, to all appearances. The man on the heath certainly was not Mr. Whiffles in appearance. But if certain outward adornments had been transferred from one to the other, that would account for it, if the man's tale was true.

"Well, what do you want?" hooted the Boss angrily. "What do you mean by waking me up, you beasts? I'm tired after playing cricket!"

"You've been playing cricket?" ejaculated Nugent.

"Eh! Yes! No! Mind your own business."

"We want to ask you a question, Mr. Whiffles," said Harry Wharton quietly. "We've just met a man who says that he is Mr. Whiffles, and that you are an impostor."

Bunter jumped.
"Oh, crumbs! Is that beast hanging about the circus, as well as Huggins?" he exclaimed in alarm. "I thought he was a long way off."

"Oh! You admit it, then?"

"Nothing of the kind. I'm Whiffles," said Bunter promptly. "That man you met is a spoofer. I dare say he'd like to make out that this hair and beard are false, and that I collared them while he was bathing. Don't you believe a word of it. It's all bunkum!"

"The bunkumfulness is a boot on the other leg, in my esteemed opinion!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "My excellent chums, this fat merchant is a preposterous spoofer!"

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"The man makes out," continued Wharton, "that he's leaving you to it, because he's afraid of Huggins, and won't come back till Huggins is run in. Is that why you refused to have Huggins run in?"

"Exactly—I mean, not at all! Mind your own business!" stammered Bunter. "You're jolly inquisitive. You always were!"

"We know where we stand now," said Johnny Bull. "This fat bounder is a fibber, but he hasn't sense enough to tell a good fib. The other man is Whiffles, and this chap is a spoofer!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Plain enough," said Harry Wharton. "Well, we can't have a hand in this, Mr. Whoever-you-are; we're clearing off!"

"I—I say, you fellows, you hang on!" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm. "You're my body-guard—you've got to keep that beast Huggins off, you know."

"Why can't you have Huggins arrested?"

"Because that beast would come back—I—I mean—"

"And you still make out you're Whiffles?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Eh! Yes! Certainly!"

"And isn't that a wig on your napper?" demanded Bob.

"Certainly not! Grows there," said Bunter. "You see—"

"I do!" chuckled Bob, making a sudden grab at the ample locks of Mr. Whiffles, and tugging. The ample locks came off in his grasp, revealing a round, cropped, bullet head.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

Without those overflowing, curly locks the face of the Boss was strangely altered. In spite of beard and moustache, it approximated much more to the well-known aspect of Billy Bunter. The juniors gazed at him incredulously. Bunter made a grab at the wig, missed his footing, and rolled out of the van. As he sat and roared, Harry Wharton pulled off the beard, and Nugent jerked away the waxed moustache.

Then they knew!

"Bunter!"
"Billy Bunter!"
"Great Christopher Columbus!"

They stared at him in stupefaction. Billy Bunter had been found at last—in the person of the Boss whom they had believed to be Mr. Whiffles.

"Bunter!" said Bob Cherry dazedly.

"Ow! I—I say, you fellows, I—I ain't Bunter! I—I mean— Oh dear! Gimme those things!" gasped the Owl

(Continued on page 28.)

THE END OF THE TRAIL! Thousands of miles has Ferrers Locke travelled to put paid to the account of a modern pirate, but patience and grit bring their own reward, and the end of the trail's in sight!

The LORD of LOST ISLAND



Introduction
on page 24.

The concluding chapters of our grand detective adventure story, featuring Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant, Jack Drake!

"Speak up, or . . . !"

YET our companions will not abandon us without a thorough search which might extend into weeks," said Jack. "In that time they will find the entrance to this cave."

"Oh, fool, that you are!" said Chalmers harshly. "They will never find it if they search for a year. I tell you none could find it unless they knew the secret!"

"But, I say, old chappie," chimed in Beverley, "you can't jolly well kid me that you and your precious pals can stay here for any length of time! Dash it all, you'll have to emerge some time, and then you'll be pinched—what?"

"We have provisions here to last us more than a year, if necessary," replied Chalmers grimly. "We can stay here indefinitely, none suspecting our existence. I tell you all this in order that you might realise the hopelessness of your position. Any searchers on the island, finding not the slightest trace of human occupation, will withdraw sooner or later, presuming that you, in the darkness, must have taken a false step and fallen into the sea."

"Wait a minute!" interjected Federkiel. "What if these two boys fired their guns when they were attacked?"

"Yes," said Chalmers slowly, "a good point that, my Federkiel. Bring Stahlheim here!"

Federkiel quitted the cave to reappear within a few moments, followed by the fellow who had first spoken to Jack when the boy recovered consciousness.

"Ah, Stahlheim," said Chalmers, "were any shots fired by these boys whilst resisting attack by your servants?"

"Yes," replied Stahlheim. "I was some distance away, but I distinctly heard shots fired."

"But you are sure, are you not"—and there was an anxious note in Chalmers' voice—"that your servants were not followed by anyone to the secret entrance of this cave?"

"I am perfectly certain that they were not followed," replied Stahlheim em-

phatically. "When my servants had passed through with their prisoners, I lingered behind. No one approached, no one was anywhere near at hand. Of that I am convinced."

"Yet the sounds of the shots would have attracted the attention of the companions of these boys," said Chalmers, albeit his voice gave token of his relief at what Stahlheim had said.

Stahlheim smiled and shook his head.

"My servants move quickly, and in silence," he said. "Anyone attracted to the scene of the shooting would find nothing there when they arrived, save just the darkness of the night. No, you can rest assured my servants were not followed to the secret entrance."

Jack was listening to the conversation in puzzled silence. Why did Chalmers continually say "your servants" to Stahlheim? Why did he not say "my servants," for obviously Stahlheim was one of his men? Therefore, any servant of Stahlheim would be servant of Chalmers.

It was the harsh voice of Chalmers which broke in on his thoughts—a voice which had become suddenly menacing.

"Listen to me—you two!" he said, turning his masked face towards Jack Drake and Beverley. "As I have told you, I am quite secure here in this cave. But I am going to ask you one question. If you answer it you will live. If you refuse, you will die—horribly!"

He paused and leant forward in his chair.

"There is one man I want!" he said passionately. "Ope man I some day intend to get! That man is Ferrers Locke. Is he on this island?"

"You can find out!" retorted Jack, whilst Beverley shook his head and chirped.

"Nothing doing, old bean! Better ask us another—what?"

"You mean you refuse to answer?" demanded Chalmers harshly.

"Yes, we will not answer any questions at all," replied Jack doggedly.

Without warning all self-control slipped from Chalmers. With an oath he leapt to his feet and rushed at Jack. His long, tapering fingers curled savagely round the boy's throat, and he shook him in a paroxysm of fury.

"Answer my question, curse you!" he screamed. "Answer my question, or, by thunder, you'll not live an hour!"

"Steady, man—steady!"

The man in the surgeon's overall had jumped to his feet and gripped Chalmers by the arm.

"Steady, man!" he repeated. "You'll kill the boy, and defeat your own ends!"

"Leave me alone, Cheam!" shouted Chalmers. "I'll choke the truth out of him!"

He shook the helpless boy savagely; but the man addressed as Cheam pulled resolutely at those clutching fingers on Jack's throat.

"Stop it, Chalmers!" he panted. "Stop it, man!"

Something of sanity seemed to return then to Chalmers. He dropped his hands and wheeled on Federkiel.

"Go on to the island and see what you can discover, Federkiel!" he said hoarsely. "Dawn will have broken by now; but be careful. Don't let anyone see you."

"I'm not a fool!" replied Federkiel stiffly, and quitted the cave.

Chalmers wheeled on Jack.

"I shall give you one more chance to answer my question," he said, in a
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quivering voice. "And if you refuse the alternative is—"

He broke off.

"Yes, the alternative is?" croaked Jack; for he could still feel the effect of Chalmers' fingers on his throat.

"I will show you!" replied Chalmers gratingly.

He turned to Stahlheim.

"Bring your servants here!" he said.

Stahlheim nodded and departed with his silent tread. Jack and Beverley sat wondering what was going to happen. Minutes passed, then Stahlheim returned. And behind him shuffled two of the most terrible creatures Jack had ever seen.

Stahlheim's Servants I

AT a sharp word from Stahlheim the two creatures came to a halt and stood motionless.

"Great pip!" gasped Beverley; and his voice was shaking.

Jack was silent, staring at the two Things which stood there so silent and so motionless. There was about them something so utterly horrible that the boy felt the cold hand of fear touch at his heart for a moment.

They were human, yet not human, those Things. Each was about the height of a man, but possessed of a terrific breadth of shoulder and arms which reached almost to the knee. The massive shoulders were strangely rounded and bent.

They wore grey turbans on their heads, and long, loosely-fitting coats of the same material which reached well below the knee, and which were tightly buttoned at the neck. Beneath the long coats they wore loose and baggy trousers gathered in at the ankles, and their feet were enclosed in flat, soled slippers.

Their hands were gloved, but it was their faces which held the boys' horrified gaze. They were faces deathly yellow, and utterly void of emotion or expression. There was no movement of the thin, almost colourless lips, and no twitching of the nostrils of the flat, squat noses. Only the eyes showed that these were not the faces of dead things—little black eyes which glanced neither to right nor to left, but were fastened on Stahlheim with unwavering gaze.

"You see them, boy?" Chalmers' voice was a purr. "Two of the most faithful servants in the world."

"What—what are they?" gasped Jack.

"Ah, ask Stahlheim that!" replied Chalmers. "He found them, and made them what they are."

He rose to his feet and crossed towards the Things; but Stahlheim put out a hand and stayed him with a gesture. And Stahlheim's eyes never left the two creatures who stood gazing at him in mute patience.

"Steady, Chalmers!" he said. "I do not trust Marx. He was hit by a bullet, and his temper is uncertain."

"But you can handle him?" questioned Chalmers sharply.

"Yes, I can handle him," replied Stahlheim. "But please keep your distance. May I suggest that you resume your seat?"

Chalmers retraced his steps to his chair and sat down. Not once did the creatures glance towards him, or, in fact, shift their gaze from Stahlheim.

"What do you want me to do, Chalmers?" asked Stahlheim, his eyes on the two horrible Things which were his servants.

"Show these two fools the strength

which lies in those arms," said Chalmers.

Stahlheim nodded and stretched out a hand. From a near-by table he took a large, bronze bowl. It was so heavy that he could scarce lift it with one hand.

"Marx!" he said sharply.

One of the creatures stirred restlessly, and its long arms began to swing slowly like great pendulums.

"Marx!" repeated Stahlheim harshly.

The creature shuffled forward a step hesitatingly. Then, as though gaining confidence, it advanced shufflingly to where Stahlheim was standing. Jack and Beverley watched fascinatedly.

Stahlheim held out the bronze bowl towards the creature, and it took it in its gloved hands. Not for an instant did its eyes leave Stahlheim's face.

"Quetschen—crush!" rapped Stahlheim sharply.

The creature folded its arms round the bronze bowl and hugged it close to its chest. It commenced to sway on its feet, and from its lips came a low, moaning croon.

"Quetschen!" repeated Stahlheim sharply. "Quetschen—crush!"

The creature loosened its arms. The bowl fell with a thud to the carpet. With an oath Stahlheim snatched up a long thonged whip from the table.

"Crush!" he snarled; and the long thong whistled through the air to wrap itself viciously round the massive shoulders of the creature. Once, twice, thrice, that wicked thong cut deeply. The Thing cowered away, then stooped, and gathered up the bowl in its arms.

Panting, Stahlheim stepped back. He held the whip raised, ready to strike. But slowly, remorselessly, the creature pressed the bowl tightly against his chest. He bent almost double as tighter and tighter his encircling arms pressed on the bowl of bronze. A grunt came from his lips, and he swayed sideways exerting all his strength.

Crack!

The heavy bowl had smashed into pieces beneath the terrific pressure of those arms. Dropping the whip Stahlheim stepped quickly forward. Crooning strange words he patted the creature on the shoulder. There was a relief in his every gesture which was not lost on Jack.

"You see, boy!" said Chalmers triumphantly. "You see the strength of

those arms—arms which bore you and your friend to this cave as though you were babies."

Jack nodded dumbly.

"I will give you just three minutes to answer my question," went on Chalmers. "If you refuse then those arms shall wrap themselves round you, and break every bone in your body before they finally crush the life out of you. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand," replied Jack hoarsely.

"I am glad of that," went on Chalmers. "There are lots of questions I might ask you. In the first place I am wondering how you escaped from the Angatau. Secondly, I am wondering if those poor fools on Lost Island have yet been captured. But these things I can discover at my leisure. What I wish to know at the moment is this. Is Ferrers Locke on this island, and, if not, where is he?"

Jack was silent.

"I will give you three minutes to answer that question," continued Chalmers. "And if you refuse you know the consequences."

Jack licked dry lips.

"I do refuse," he replied steadily. "I will tell you nothing."

Chalmers did not answer. He had pulled a watch from his pocket, and his eyes behind the white, linen face-mask were fixed on the dial.

"One minute!" he said suddenly.

Jack writhed in his bonds, but he knew he was tied without any hope of freeing himself.

"Two minutes!" said Chalmers harshly.

"You murderous brute!" burst out Beverley wildly. "By Jove, you'll jolly well pay for this, you blackguard! I'll—"

"The three minutes are up!" cut in Chalmers coldly. "I will ask you just once more. Is Ferrers Locke on this island?"

"I won't tell you!" shouted Jack. "You can jolly well find out, you rotter!"

"Very good!" replied Chalmers coldly.

He rose to his feet and turned to Stahlheim.

"Let them have him!" he said. "Perhaps when they've finished with him his chum will speak out."

Bravo, Locke!

STAHLHEIM nodded, and, touching on the arm the creature which he called Marx, he pointed towards Jack Drake.

"Quetschen—crush!" he crooned. "Quetschen—crush!"

The creature turned its head and stared at Jack. Then slowly, horribly, it started to advance towards the boy. Its arms went out in front of it something after the fashion of a wrestler preparing to grip his opponent.

On it came, step by step, its head thrust forward, its little black, glittering eyes fixed on the boy. Jack bit back a groan; but his face was white. Once the creature halted and stared at Chalmers who stood almost in its path.

"Back, man—back!" whispered Stahlheim urgently.

And Chalmers stepped hastily back.

Foot by foot, step by step, the horrible thing continued its advance on the boy. Jack watched it fascinatedly. Beverley was writhing in his bonds, shouting wild words at Chalmers. Then

READ THIS FIRST.

After overcoming innumerable difficulties and dangers, Ferrers Locke, the celebrated Baker Street detective, succeeds in raiding the stronghold of Black Michael—the modern Captain Kidd, who has been terrorising the western seaboard of South America—and capturing his gang of sea-crooks. But the chief pirate eludes the arm of the law and makes away with Federkiel, his pilot, to another secret lair. After a careful investigation of the pirate's stronghold, however, Ferrers Locke discovers clues of the whereabouts of his latest hiding-place, and forthwith sets out in search of it in a seaplane with his boy assistant, Jack Drake. After many hours in the air, they reach their destination, a deserted, rocky coast on which there is no sign of habitation. Leaving Jack and the pilot, Beverley, to keep guard on the machine, Locke sets out to scout for signs. Whilst he is away Drake and Beverley are attacked by two mysterious and horrible forms, overcome and carried to a secret cave which is underneath the sea. It proves to be Black Michael's hiding-place. With the pirate are Federkiel, Freville Cheam, a clever plastic surgeon, and Stahlheim, the anthropologist. Jack refuses to answer the questions of Black Michael, which infuriates the pirate. "It matters little, however, whom your companions are," he hisses, "or where they are, for they will never find you nor know the fate I have in store for you!"

(Now turn back to page 23.)



Ferrers Locke was looking for some secret entrance when the whole slab of rock swung back a few feet, and who should appear but Federkiel. Locke had him covered in a moment! (See this page.)

after what was but seconds, but what seemed ages to Jack, the creature reached him and paused in front of him.

There came to the boy's nostrils that same foul and fetid smell which he had been conscious of when he and Beverley had been captured. He stared in horror at the vile, yellow face so close to his, then closed his eyes as he saw the arms of the creature coming slowly out to enfold him in their crushing grip of death.

He was conscious of hot and fetid breath on his face and he felt sick to his very soul with the horror of it all. The groping arms were around him now, and he could feel them tightening. He bit his lip savagely to keep back a yell, for his nerve was almost at the breaking-point.

Bang!

The sharp bark of an automatic echoed through the cave. Simultaneously there came a deep-throated snarl of rage from the creature towering over Jack. Releasing its grip on the boy it wheeled with eyes aflame. Chalmers stood directly behind it.

Jack, opening his eyes, saw the creature clutch savagely at Chalmers with another snarl of fury. He heard Chalmers shriek just once, then go limp

in those powerful, crushing arms. Stahlheim leapt forward with whip upraised. The creature wheeled on him, its little eyes blazing with passion. Too late Stahlheim saw his danger. He dropped his whip, yanking frenziedly at his gun. But the Thing he called his servant was on him before he could raise the weapon.

Jack closed his eyes with a shudder. He was conscious of shots echoing deafeningly through the cave, then his world went black about him, and he drifted into merciful unconsciousness.

He opened his eyes to find himself lying on a settee with someone bathing his face with water. He blinked, then whispered incredulously:

"Guv'nor, is it you?"

"Yes, Jack," replied Ferrers Locke, with a grim smile. "But I was almost too late. I got here just in time."

"But how, gov'nor? Chalmers said this cave lay under the sea," said Jack weakly.

"It does," replied the detective. "I went back to the seaplane when I heard your shots, but you and Beverley had vanished. I could do nothing till dawn, and then I followed a trail of blood—there was a drop of it every few yards—till it ended abruptly against a wall of rock."

"Yes, go on," said Jack.

"It seemed to me that the trail led right into the rock itself," continued Ferrers Locke. "I was looking for some secret entrance when a whole slab of rock swung back a few feet, and who should appear but Federkiel!"

"Yes, Chalmers sent him to investigate," said Jack.

"I had him covered before he could go for his gun or dodge back," went on the detective. "I left him up there, handcuffed, and followed winding steps down into this cave. I got here just when that brute was going to grab you. I fired, wounded it, and in blind fury it turned on Chalmers, who was directly behind it."

"But what was it? What was the brute?" asked Jack. "It—it didn't seem human."

"It was nearly human, Jack," replied Ferrers Locke grimly. "It was a huge orang-outang trained by Stahlheim, who was once the most brilliant anthropologist in Europe. He worked with Freville Cheam whom you have seen here, and it was on those apes that Freville Cheam practised his plastic surgery and carried out his experiments."

"In what way, gov'nor?"

"He experimented in skin-grafting

and facial alterations. That accounted for the masks which the brutes wore. Those masks were really dressings for wounds which were not quite healed. It was a horrible fancy or whim on Stahlheim's part to dress them up as he did."

"And did the—the thing kill Chalmers?" demanded Jack.

"Yes. It killed him in a second—broke his back," replied Ferrers Locke grimly. "It got Stahlheim as well in its maddened rage. I shot the other one before it could do any damage."

"And what of Freville Cheam?"

"He gave no trouble at all. He was utterly unnerved. He is at the moment showing Beverley where Chalmers has the bullion stored. There's not a bit of kick left in him."

"Then the whole gang's broken up, and the leader dead, gov'nor?" said Jack.

"Yes, it is all over now, lad," replied Ferrers Locke quietly. "We will send Beverley back to the Hawk with a message, and when a cruiser comes here to take over the island and clear up the mess we will return to England—and home."

Jack lay silent for a few moments.

"But how did you know Chalmers was here, gov'nor?" he asked, at length.

"I found a book in his quarters," replied Ferrers Locke, "which gave me the clue. It was 'The Art of Plastic Surgery,' by Freville Cheam. I knew Cheam had disappeared from New York. I put myself in Chalmers' place. What would be the first thing such a man as Chalmers would require before returning to civilisation?"

"A thundering good disguise!" said Jack promptly.

"Yes, a permanent disguise," replied Ferrers Locke. "In other words, a facial operation whereby his features would be completely and permanently changed. Freville Cheam was the man who could do it. And I found Freville Cheam's book in Chalmers' room. That was the connecting link, but not such a thin one when one remembers Cheam had vanished, and that Cheam was not a straight fellow. Then in the book I found the following figures."

Ferrers Locke took a slip of paper from his pocket, and wrote the figures: 50—8=611813.

"At first I could make nothing of them," he went on, "and then I suddenly got the solution. By taking the 50 to represent the latitude 50 line, a study of the chart will show that the eighth island below, or south of, that line is Zarac. This is borne out by the figures which come after the equality sign, for they spell Zarac if you take 6 to be the letter Z, and 1 to be the letter A, and work on that principle. Chalmers obviously thought it essential to keep some note of where he was to go to earth finally, and be operated on by Cheam. That explains the linen mask he was wearing. Cheam has been working on him, and the mask was necessary to hold the grafted skin in place."

"And," said Jack slowly, "if we hadn't got him he would have been able to go anywhere he liked when his face had been altered by the skill of Freville Cheam, and none would have recognised him as Chalmers."

"Or is Black Michael," replied Fer-

rers Locke quietly. "Well, he is dead now, lad, and our job is done. I don't suppose you'll be sorry to see dear old London again?"

"You bet I won't gov'nor!" exclaimed Jack. "But I won't forget the Lord of Lost Island for some time."

"Yes, you will," said Ferrers Locke, with a smile, "for we'll have that holiday which this case caused us to forego."

THE END.

STARS AND THEIR METHODS!

(Continued from page 2.)

Dixie's Secret!

Low down and away from the goal-keeper seems to be always Dixie's main idea in taking a shot. Quite a fair percentage of his goals last season saw the ball go through off the goalpost. This shows how completely he was putting the ball away from the goal-keeper. "The art of successful shooting," so he has said, "lies in putting the ball where the goalkeeper is not!"

Lastly, he recognises that the head, as well as the feet, should be used in scoring goals. The goal against Arsenal which enabled him to beat Cammell's record—the last goal of last season—was scored with his head. The ball came across from the wing. A jerk of the head sent it sailing into the net. He watches the ball right on to his head—a thing which isn't easy, but which must be learnt.

Now let us see if we can sum up our answer to the question of why Dean is the best centre-forward in the world. He is well-built; can shoot with either foot; can also dribble; is a master of the art of position play; is quick off the mark in a sprint, and also plays with his head. Perhaps I ought to add that he is teetotal and a non-smoker.

Dixie Pulls Through!

During the summer of 1926, Dean met with an accident while motor-cycling which nearly put an end to his playing career. Many people thought at the time that it had actually done so, and it was almost a miracle that he recovered so completely from his injuries. When he was taken into hospital it was found that he had both jaw-bones broken, his skull fractured, and his cheekbone also broken, not to mention numerous cuts and bruises.

Thanks, however, to the great care which Dean received at both the hospital and the nursing home, he was soon on the way to recovery, and a month or two afterwards he had a trial run with the Everton reserves at Huddersfield. It was a very wet day, and the ball became as heavy as lead; during the match Dean's friends were calling out to him not to head the ball, fearing he might sustain some injury if he did. But Dean took the risk, and greatly to his joy found that he could head the leather as well as ever.

Soon after this game Dean was back again in the Everton first team, and thence onwards he has never looked back, going on from triumph to triumph, until to-day he is justly described as the "world's best centre-forward."

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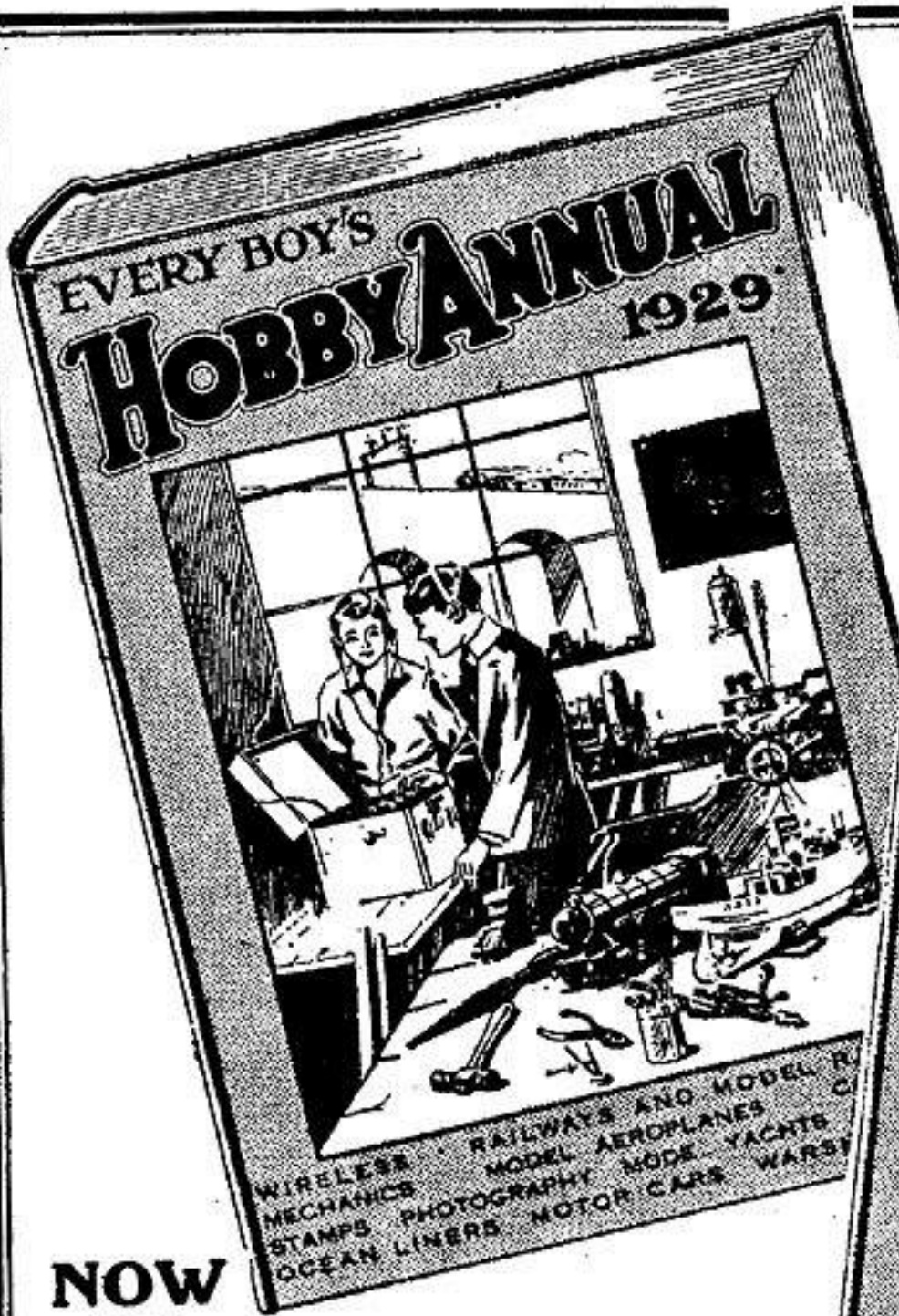
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Thrills!!!

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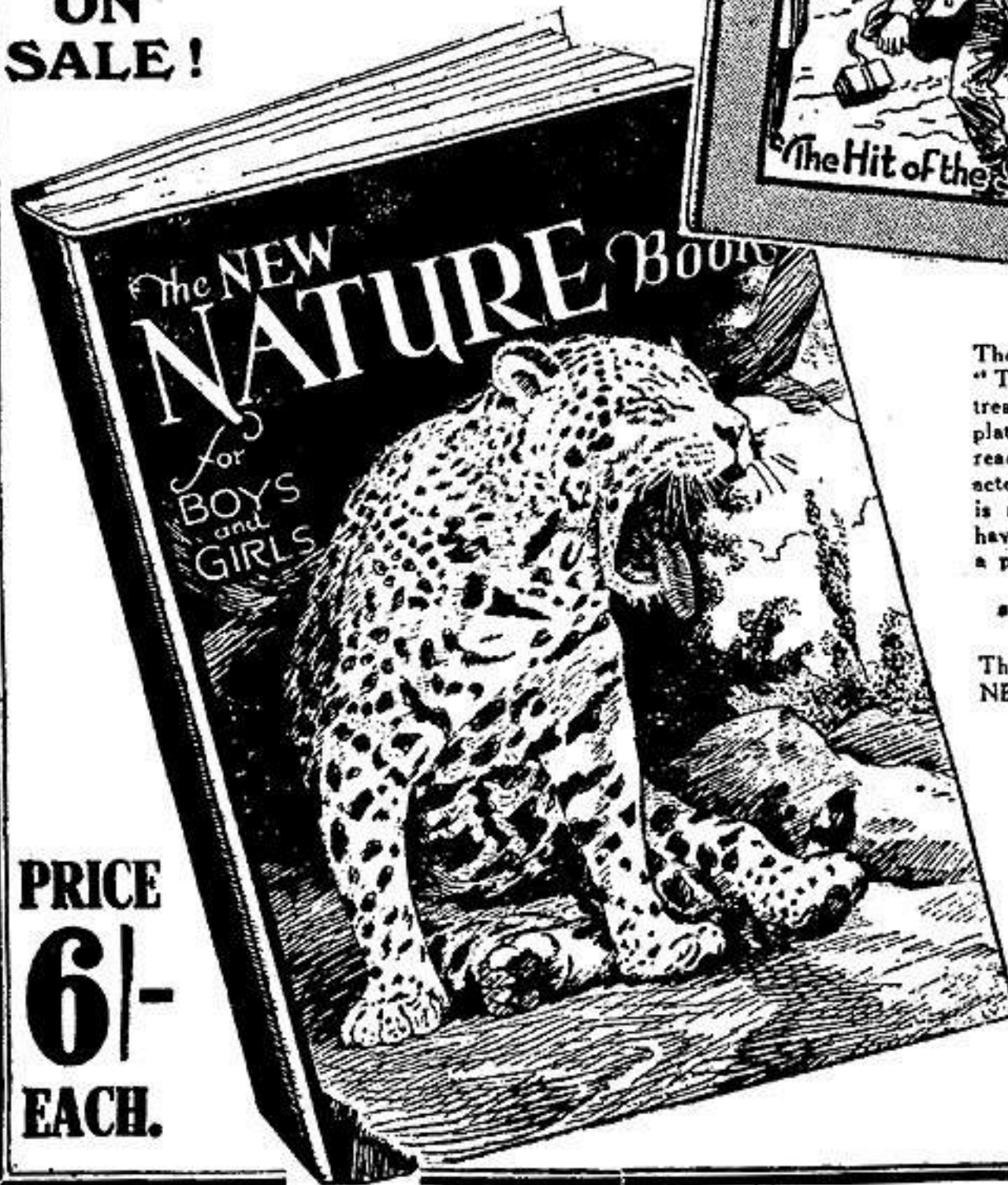
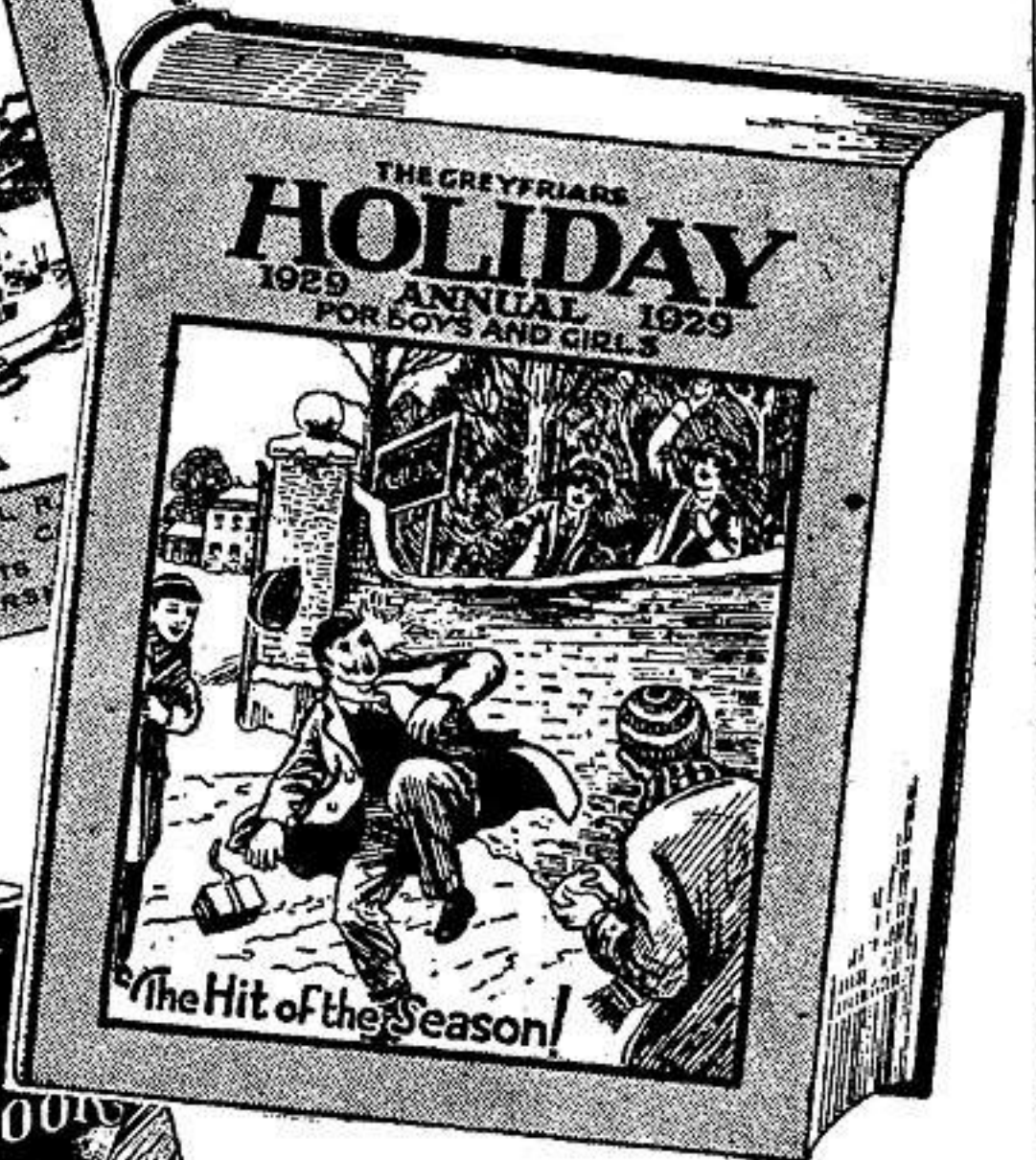
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CHUMS OF THE CIRCUS!*(Continued from page 22.)*

of the Remove. "Suppose they see me like this—they won't believe I'm Whiffles!"

"You spoofing, fat villain!" roared Bob Cherry. "You're Bunter—Billy Bunter all the time! That accounts for your funny vanishing tricks! Are you going to make out that you're still Whiffles?"

"Yes — no — oh dear!" Bunter scrambled up and plunged headlong into the van. "Chuck those things in, do you hear? I won't want to be seen without them, you beasts! Oh dear!"

"Bunter!" said Harry Wharton blankly. "That fat spoofer! To think that he's been pulling our leg all this time, and laughing in his sleeve—"

"He, he, he!"

"We ought to have spotted him," said Johnny Bull. "We kept on noticing how he talked like Bunter, and lots of things. Only—"

"Fancy Bunter having the nerve for a game like this!" said Nugent. "You fat chump, don't you know it's a swindle?"

"Nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "I ain't stopping Whiffles from coming back, if he likes, am I? I'm facing his danger for him, because—because I'm so plucky, you know."

"Well, you'll want your pluck, as you'll have to face it on your own after this!" said Harry Wharton. "We're getting out!"

"I say, you fellows, don't go! I—I'll put you on my salary list!" gasped Bunter.

"Do you think we'd touch Mr. Whiffles' money, you fat fraud? You may be put in chokey for touching it yourself."

"I haven't touched it!" roared Bunter. "The cash is entirely in Dance's hands. I'm afraid he's dishonest—in fact, I've told him so. But I hope I'm a perfectly honourable chap."

"Great pip!"

"I'm used to carping criticism from you fellows!" said Bunter scornfully. "You don't understand a really high-minded and honourable chap like me. I know you're not quite so particular as I am."

"Well, we're particular enough to clear off, now that we know what's going on!" said Harry, laughing. "If you've got the sense of a bunny rabbit,

Bunter, you'll chuck up this game, and come away with us here and now."

"I'm keeping it up till the end of the vac. Look what grub I'm getting here!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. That's jolly important. Look here, you beasts, throw those things into the van. 'Tain't your business, anyhow!"

Wharton hesitated a moment; then he threw the wig, the beard, and the moustache into the van. So long as the genuine Mr. Whiffles allowed that extraordinary imposture to be kept up, it was not the business of the Famous Five to intervene.

"You'd better come away, Bunter," he said.

"Rats!"

"We're going—"

"Beast!"

"You fat idiot!"

"Look here!" Bunter blinked cautiously from the van. "You can't go—you've got to keep Huggins off! See?"

"We'll stay till morning, and give you a chance to chuck up this game," said the captain of the Remove. "If you've got as much sense as a guinea-pig, you'll come away in the morning. Anyway, we're going. That's final!"

"I say, you fellows—"

The caravan door slammed, and was locked again. Harry Wharton & Co. went to their tent. Bunter, satisfied that he was safe for that night, at least, under the care of his body-guard, was soon snoring again. But it was long before the Famous Five slept. The amazing discovery of the missing Owl of the Remove, in the person of the supposed Mr. Whiffles, was too startling to be soon dismissed. The Boss was snoring long before the chums of the Remove turned in.

"We'll give him a chance to chuck it, and come away with us in the morning," said Harry Wharton. "If he's got the sense of a rabbit, he'll come. If not, we shall have to leave him to it."

And that was settled when the Famous Five went to sleep. It remained to be seen whether William George Bunter had the sense of a rabbit.

Probably he hadn't!

THE END.

(Billy's the sort of chap who likes to make the most of a good thing, but surely it's high time now that he "disappeared" from Whiffles' Circus. You'll scream with laughter when you read "The Order of the Boot!"—next week's Greyfriars yarn.)

The St. Sam's Sharpshooters!*(Continued from page 15.)*

Crackpott coward and was silent. "Just get this into your wooden noddle," went on the Head. "Your father's greatest wish is to see you win the Crackpott Cup, and, by hook or by crook, you're going to do it. He has even promised me a feed in the Skool tuckshop if you win—not that that affects me in the slightest degree. My motives are above such paltry considerations as free feeds, of course!"

"Oh, of course, sir!" mumbled Crackpott nervously.

"Nevertheless, Crackpott, for your father's sake, I am anxious to see you get the coveted trophy. And get it you shall! Savvy?"

"I savvy, sir."

"Very well, then! For the remainder of the time between now and next week you must practise like the very dickens, Crackpott. I will act as your coach myself. Every time you score a bull I will give you your dew praise. But when you miss I shan't hesitate to use my birch freely!"

Crackpott let out a miserable howl. "Oh dear! But I don't want to win the Cup, sir! And I can't score bulls-eyes for toffy!"

"So much the worse for you!" cried the Head savvidgely. "But enuff of this talk! Proceed with your practise at once!"

Crackpott groaned and proceeded. And for the next hour the St. Sam's Rifle Range fairly echoed with the unforchunit Fourth-Former's yells as the crool birch descended again and again on his trowsis.

By the time his rifle practise was over Crackpott hartily wished that rifle-ranges had never been invented. But Dr. Birchmall was rubbing his hands gleefully as he returned to the Skool House. Troo, Crackpott had not made much progress that evening. But the Head had unlimited confidence in the coaching powers of his birch, and already he saw himself having the feed of his life in the old tuckshop at General Crackpott's expense!

THE END.

(Dr. Birchmall's a wily old bird, isn't he, chums? Somehow or another Crackpott's simply got to win that cup. You'll read how Dr. Birchmall tries to "fix things" for him in next week's jolly story, entitled: "Shooting To Winn!")



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The ST. SAM'S

DICKY NUGENT.

SHARPshooters!

Here's another Dicky Nugent "shocker" which will provide you with many long laughs.

CRACKPOTT wanted, in the Bindin', the page, poking his head into the Fourth Form room.

"Very well, Bindin'! Hop it!" said Mr. Lickham; then, turning to the class, he roared: "Crackpot, stand fourth!"

Crackpot of the Fourth, an unjustified junior, whose only claim to fame was that he was the son of General Crackpot, the famous soldier, immediately quitted his place at the bottom of the class and stood next to Stedast's desk.

Mr. Lickham glared savagely. "What the dickens are you doing of, Crackpot? Didn't you hear me order you to stand fourth?"

"Yes, sir, isn't that what I'm doing?" asked Crackpot. "Jolly is at the first desk, Fearless at the second, and Stedast at the third, so I'm standing fourth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the class. "Silence!" roared Mr. Lickham above the din. "Crackpot, you're the most hopeless dunder in the Form. You've got no more brains than this toffy I'm chewing! When I say 'fourth' I mean 'fourth', not 'fourth', you silly young ass! Now buzz off to the Head's study, where it seems you are wanted. And, if you take my tip, you'll stuff some exercise books in your trousers!"

"He, ha, ha!" roared General Crackpot and the Head together. "And I'm getting on well in sport, too, dad!" went on Crackpot innocently. "I scored a lovely goal in the practises match yesterday. As it happened, it was against my own side, but it was a fine goal, all the same!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared General Crackpot and the Head together. "And now, what about your rifle-shooting, my boy?" asked General Crackpot, his expression suddenly becoming serious. "You know when you first started at St. Sam's I told you I should eggspot you to become a

marksmen worthy of your name. What have you done about it?" Crackpot hung his head.

"Not much, I'm afraid, pater. You see, they don't encourage us much to go in for shooting at St. Sam's."

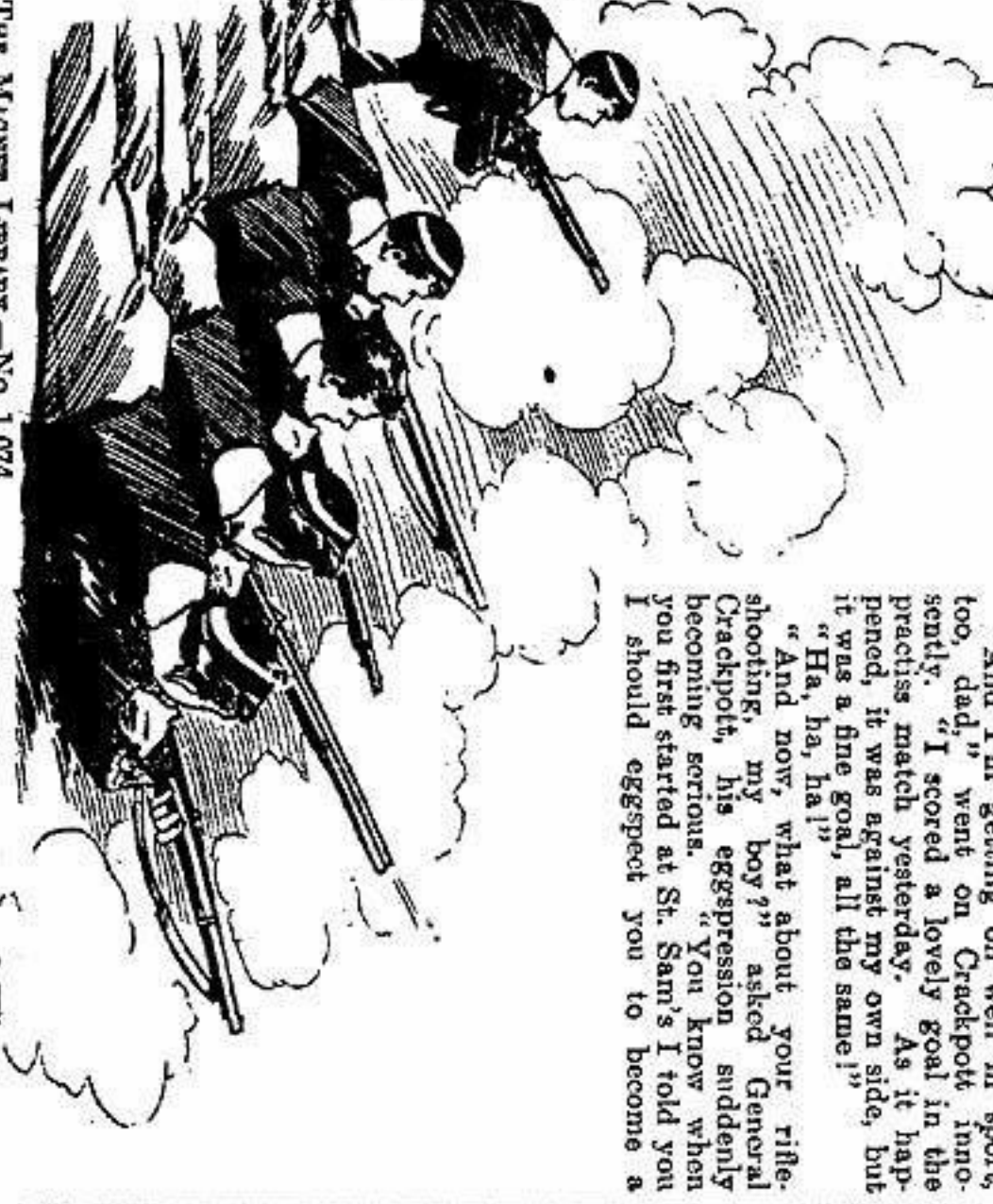
"What! Don't encourage rifle-shooting?" roared General Crackpot, his face going purple with rage. "Is that true, Birchmell?"

"I'm afraid it is, sir," answered the Head reluctantly. "You see, I've always thought that should be kept out of the hands of queer boys, in case they might be tempted to imitate the activities of the cow-boys on the pictures!"

"Rattas!" snorted the fiery old General scornfully. "Every schoolboy should learn how to use a gun, sir. The Battle of Eton was won on the playing-fields of Waterloo, as the poet trooly observed. If you decline to teach rifle-shooting at St. Sam's, I shall take my boy away, sir!"

"Oh crumbs! Pray don't do that, General Crackpot!" gasped the Head, fairly dismayed at the prospect of losing young Crackpot's stool fees. "I assure you I am all in favor of rifle-practises. When I was at Oxbridge I was a regular dab at it myself, and even to-day, during my frequent hours of study, I occasionally suck a bulleye!"

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"No, sir, for the boys to compete for!" roared General Crackpot. "The best shot in the school gets the cup. Savvy?"

"Oh, I see! Not a bad wheeze, either," remarked the Head, with a nod. "Very well, then, sir, consider it done. I'll have the giddy range fixed up right away, and I'll teach the boys of St. Sam's to shoot, or perish in the attempt. Rely on me!"

"I will," said General Crackpot as he rose to go. "And now, one last word. It's the greatest wish of my life to see my boy a champion marksman. If he by any chance happens to win the cup, I'll stand you a feed in the tuckshop, Birchmell, strike me pink if I won't!"

The Head opened his eyes wide at that statement. "Grate pip! You really mean it?" he asked.

"A real feed, with doonuts, and cream-puff, and stake-and-kidney pies, and jinger-pop?" General Crackpot grinned and nodded.

"Good snuff, then, pater!" cried Dr. Birchmell emphatically. "I promise you that without a shadow of doubt you'll son shall win the prize now, General! Alreddy I feel that I am hart and sole in the bizness!"

Crackpot, you will remain with me after your father has instructed you and I will instruct you in the elementary principles of rifle-shooting."

"Good egg!" chuckled Crackpot senior. "And now I'll leave you to get on with the washing. Ta-ta, sir! Cheerio, my son!"

General Crackpot then buzzed off. And that was how it was that rifle-shooting suddenly achieved such remarkable popularity at St. Sam's.

BANG! Crash! Bang! Bang! The St. Sam's Rifle Range echoed with the roar of many an ancient musket.

Events had moved rapidly since General Crackpot's visit to St. Sam's. Within a couple of days an old out-building, which had not been used since Fowdal times (when it had served as a bow-and-arrow range), was converted into a miniature rifle-range. The School Armoury had been raided, and every suitable weapon taken from it. Mr. Justiss of the Fifth had been appointed musket instructor. And now the Fourth Form were having their first practises.

"Bang! Boom! Bang!" The din was simply terrific. Grate clouds of smoke rolled across the range from the deadly weapons, and Mr. Justiss had to hop about like a cat on hot bricks to find out where the targets were being hit.

"A little higher, Jolly!" he roared. "Just a little higher, and you'll score a bull, without a doubt. Now, fire!"

"Yaroooooo!" Mr. Justiss leaped wildly up in the air, yelling with pangs as Jack Jolly's cartridge landed in his anatomy. The master of the Fifth hadn't allowed for the fact that Jack Jolly's gun had seen better days, and acted rather erratically now.

"Woooooo!" he roared in agony. "That better, sir?" asked the captain of the Fourth innocently. "Ha, ha, ra!" roared the Fourth. "Oh crickey! I'm punctured!" groaned Mr. Justiss. "Pray eggscuse me, boys, while I report to the Skool Sanny-torium."

"Right-ho, sir!" Mr. Justiss staggered away to the door to obtain medical advice. Dr. Birchmell, unfortunately, was just coming in at the same moment, and hashed right into him.

Crash! "Yooooooop!" Clapsed in affectionate embrace, the two whirled round and landed on the hard, unimpeachable floor with a concussion that shook the building.

"Yarooooo!" You clumsy idiot!" howled the Head, sitting up and jingeringly feeling himself to make sure that no bones were broken. "Where the thump do you think you were going?"

"Ow-ow!" To the sanny-torium, sir!" groaned Mr. Justiss. "Oh crickey! I'm injured all over!"

"Good job, too!" snorted Dr. Birchmell, getting on his feet again. "Buzz off, quickly, and don't come back, either!"

"But I thought I was to be musketry instructor, sir?"

"You can consider yourself sacked from that job on the spot!" roared the Head savagely. "I hereby appoint myself to the vacant post. Now get out, Justiss, before I order those juniors to sing you out on your neck!"

"Oh dear! Very well, sir," gasped the master of the Fifth; and with that he quitted the room.

"Now, boys," cried the Head, surveying the Fourth with a vicious scowl, "I want you to remember that I am boss of the range now, and what I say goes! In the first place, I have pleasure in announcing that an open competition in marksmanship will be held next week. General Crackpot has kindly presented a massive gold cup guaranteed to be worth at least three-and-innocence, to be given to the boy who makes the highest score out of ten shots."

"Hooley!" cried the Fourth excitedly. "Those who wish to practise must confine their practises to this range," went on the Head. "Nobody will be allowed to use the rifles in their studios or dormitories. Finally, I should strongly advise you all not to entertain any hope whatever of bagging the trophy, as I have already discovered in your Form a trooly marvellous shot who will undoubtedly win it with the greatest ease. I refer to Crackpot, the remarkable son of the donor of the cup!"

"Oh, grate pip!" murmured the Fourth, looking at Crackpot in surprise.

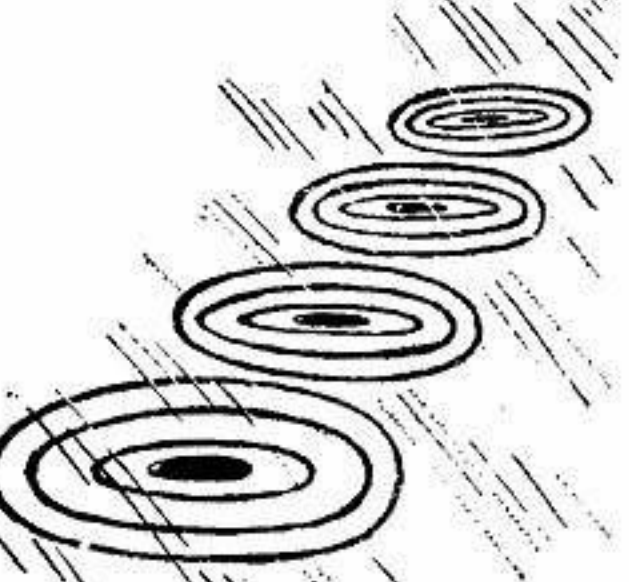
If the Head had named Frank Fearless, or Jack Jolly, the Fourth could have understood it. But that he should imagine Crackpot capable of winning anything but a ticket of admission to a home for idiots was certainly eggstrordinary! Naturally, they didn't know anything about the reward which Dr. Birchmell had been promised if Crackpot won, or they would have understood.

"Crackpot," continued Dr. Birchmell, has a positive genius for scoring a bull every time, and I am quite sure that nobody else in the Skool stands an earthly chance against him. Just to illustrate what I mean, I'll get him to fire a few sample shots. Take this rifle, Crackpot, and show them the kind of opposition they will have to face!"

Crackpot took the rifle with grate reluctance, for he knew jolly well that he was really a fearful dud at shooting. However, there was no getting out of it, so he stretched himself out on the matress in front of the Head, and took careful aim at the target at the other end of the range.

The Fourth looked on with grate interest, eggpecting to see a remarkable display. And they were not disappointed. Crackpot's first shot went through one of the windows at the side of the building. His second smashed a window on the other side. His third was a bulls-eye on the next target but one! And finally he came within an ace of killing Fossil's cat, which had been watching the scene from a perch up in the rafters.

The Fourth yelled with derision. "My giddy aunt! What a shot!" cried Jack Jolly. "I could do better blindfolded!" grined Frank Fearless. "Silence!" roared the Head, who was fairly nashing his teeth with rage at the mazzerable eggshibition his protegy had given. "Crackpot is a little off-coller to-night, that is all! Possibly he feels a bit nervous in front of so many. I think perhaps all the rest of you had better clear off, while this genius has a little quiet practise on his own."



"Oh crumbs! But we haven't finished yet. Half of us haven't practised at all, sir!" protested Jack Jolly. "Take five thousand lines for discipline!" thundered Dr. Birchmell ferociously. "And buzz off at once! I will stay and supervise the range, while Crackpot practises."

"But—" began Frank Fearless indignantly. Fearless! Another word from anybody, and I'll flog you all till you howl for mercy!"

The Fourth-Former hastily quitted the range, leaving the enraged Head and the tremoling Crackpot on their own.

When the door had slammed behind the last of them, Dr. Birchmell came close to Crackpot, and glared at him with a glare that almost shrivelled him up.

"Wretched boy!" he hissed. "Is this all the return I am to get for spending my valuable time teasing you how to aim straight?"

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(Continued on page 28.)