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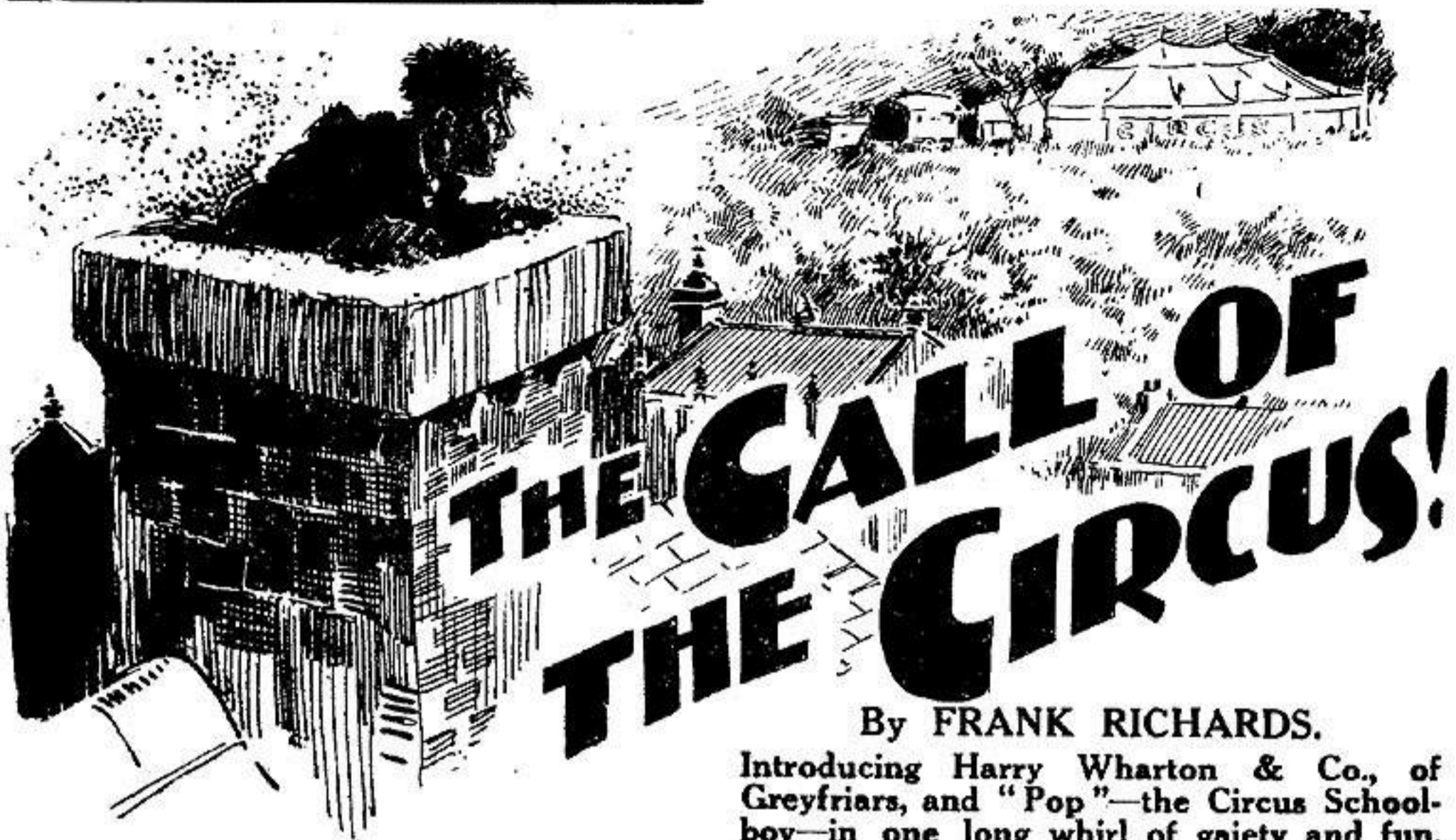
The **MAGNET**²

The advertisement features a large central illustration of a book titled "The MAGNET ALBUM OF TEST MATCH CRICKETERS 1930 TOUR". The cover of the album shows two figures holding a trophy labeled "ASHES". Below the title, it says "Presented with The MAGNET". To the right of the album, there are several smaller photographs of cricketers in various poses: one batting, one bowling, and one in a fielding position. A circular portrait of a man's face is also included in the collage.

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By FRANK RICHARDS.

Introducing Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, and "Pop"—the Circus School-boy—in one long whirl of gaiety and fun.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Pop Hears the Call!

THUMP!
Bang!
It was quite a startling sound in the quiet old quadrangle at Greyfriars.

Pom-pom-pom!
The Remove had just been dismissed for morning break. The bang of a big drum greeted their ears as they streamed out of the House.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What—"

"I say, you fellows, it's a circus!" exclaimed Billy Bunter.

Bang! Bang! Pom-pom-pom!
The notes of a trumpet, played with vigour though somewhat out of tune, accompanied the banging of the drum.

The music—which had charms, for junior schoolboys, at least—proceeded from the direction of the gates.

Apparently, a circus procession was passing the school, and, from the point of view of the Remove, it was fortunate that they had been dismissed for break at that opportune moment. Naturally, they wanted to see the procession. Indeed, it was probable that the Removees were much more interested in circuses than in the valuable knowledge that they had been absorbing from Mr. Quelch.

But there was one member of the Remove who was not merely pleased, but exuberantly delighted.

That member was Cecil Popper, the new boy, nephew of Sir Hilton Popper, of Popper Court, but in earlier days known as Pop of the Circus, the Wonderful Boy Acrobat.

Pop gave a yell of delight. "Hooray! Hoo-blinking-ray!" he shouted. "This 'ere is prime!"

Pop often forgot the careful English he had learned from the tutor who had prepared him for Greyfriars. He forgot it again now.

Pop started for the gates. Most of the Remove started in that direction. But the circus schoolboy proceeded in his own way—in a series of catherine-wheels, turning over and over with a

swiftness that was hardly to be followed by the eye.

And Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, looking out into the quad, frowned, and called to the new junior in sharp tones:

"Popper! Popper! Stop that at once! Do you hear me? How often have I told you that you must not play circus pranks here. Cease those antics immediately!"

Pop may have heard; but he did not heed. He catherine-wheeled away, leaving Mr. Quelch to frown.

He reached the gates, the Removees in a mob after him. The gates were open, and Pop revolved out into the road, and came to a halt, right end uppermost, as the head of the procession reached the spot.

His face was glowing.

Pop was an unwilling schoolboy; his heart was still with his old profession. To his ears the sound of a circus was like the scent of battle to an old war-horse. That morning Pop had been looking dismal in the Form-room. With all his efforts he could not fix his mind on Latin prose; his thoughts persisted in wandering to spangles and sawdust, to hoops and banners, to the high trapeze, where he had performed wonderful feats in his happy old days at Jimmy Walker's World-Famous Circus. But his face was not dismal now. It was as bright as the summer sunshine.

Harry Wharton & Co. joined him outside the gates, smiling. They rather liked the unusual new boy, and they sympathised with him, for they could see that at Greyfriars he was rather like a fish out of water. And they were pleased to see his glum face grow so bright.

"Enjoying life now, old bean?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Wot to!" said Pop. "I say, wouldn't you like to jump on one of them vans and hike off, and never see this blessed school agin?"

"No jolly fear!"

"The no-fearfulness is terrific, my esteemed Pop!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, shaking his dusky head.

"Why, blow me up a gum-tree!" yelled Pop, with sudden excitement.

"Wha-a-t?" ejaculated Frank Nugent.

"It's 'im!" yelled Pop.

"Him? Who?" asked Johnny Bull.

"'Im! Jimmy Walker! This 'ere circus is Walker's World-Famous! Jest fancy that!" gasped Pop.

"Oh, my hat!"

The circus procession, led by a great elephant, with a clown perched on his neck, swung past the school gates, and Pop waved to the clown. And the clown, evidently recognising Pop in the crowd of schoolboys, stared at him in amazement, and then waved his drumsticks in greeting.

A little farther back came a small car, with a fat and florid man sitting in it, with a cigar sticking out of the corner of a large mouth.

Pop made a rush towards the car.

"Old Jimmy!" he roared.

Mr. Walker, the plump proprietor of the World-Famous Circus, gave a jump. The cigar fell from his mouth as he leaped to his feet. The Buster Seven he was driving gave a sudden zigzag.

"Pop!" he gasped.

He jammed on the brakes. The car halted, and with some swaying and confusion, the procession behind came to a stop.

"Oh, my hat!" said Harry Wharton. "That's Jimmy Walker, right enough, you fellows. This is Walker's Circus. But—"

"Pop will get into a row!" said Johnny Bull.

Pop, heedless of Greyfriars, of Form masters, of his stern and snappish guardian—of all things, in fact, except his delight at seeing his old friend again, clambered on the Buster Seven. Jimmy Walker shook hands with him, not once, but many times. Mr. Walker's purple face was glowing; it was evident that the pleasure of the meeting was mutual. Jimmy stood in the car, working at Pop's arm, in fact, as if he mistook it for a pump-handle, grinning with glee.

"Fancy seeing you agin, old Jimmy!" gasped Pop.

"Fancy seeing you, you young linn!" said old Jimmy. "Wasn't you sent to a big school?"

"That there's the school," grinned Pop.

"Oh, my eye!" ejaculated Mr. Walker, staring at the great pile of Greyfriars. "Is that there your school, Pop?"

"You've hit it, Jimmy."

"My eye!"

Harry Wharton glanced round into the gateway rather anxiously. Plenty of Greyfriars fellows were coming along to see the circus, and he was anxious to see whether there was a master in the offing. For between Cecil Popper's present and the past there was a great gulf fixed, and he was strictly forbidden to hold any sort of communication with his former associates of the ring and the road. Indeed, Sir Hilton Popper would have made him forget them if he could have done so. He would have blotted Mr. Walker and his World-Famous Circus entirely from his nephew's mind.

"Oh, my hat! Here comes Quelch!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Rotten!" grunted Bob.

Wharton ran into the road.

"Pop, old bean! Quelch's coming!" he called out.

"Blow Quelch!" answered Pop recklessly.

"But, look here, old chap—"

"Rats!"

"I say, Pop, you better 'ook it!" said Mr. Walker anxiously. "You don't want to get into a row at your school, Pop."

"You fed-up with me already, old Jimmy?" asked Pop.

"You young limb, don't you talk out of the back of your 'ead," said Mr. Walker. "But—"

"But rats!" said Pop. "Start up, old Jimmy. I'm going on with the circus now. I'll come back later."

"But—" gasped Mr. Walker.

"Start up, you old image, you!" exclaimed Pop. "It's all right. Leave it to me. Don't you want to jaw to an old pal again?"

"But—" said Mr. Walker again.

"Have you forgotten how to start a Buster Seven?" demanded Pop. "Will you get a move on, before old sobersides nabs me, you old duffer, you?"

Thus adjured, Mr. Walker started up, and the Buster Seven glided on after the tall elephant that was now considerably in advance.

Behind the little car came the rest of the procession, rattling and jingling.

"Oh crumbs," said Harry Wharton blankly.

The Remove were out for break; in a short time they were due in the Form-room again for third school. And Pop, forgetful or regardless of third school, was going off with the circus.

"Pop!" shouted Nugent. "Come back, you ass."

"Put it on, Jimmy!" said Pop as a tall, angular figure surmounted by a mortar-board appeared in the school gateway.

"I—I say—" gasped Mr. Walker.

"Put it on, you old image, you."

Mr. Walker, evidently very much under the domination of his former boy acrobat, obediently put it on. Mr. Quelch stared into the road, and his eyes almost bulged at the sight of Popper of the Remove seated in the Buster Seven by the side of the circus proprietor.

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch. He waved his hand to the new junior.

"Popper! Come back at once! Popper! Stop! I command you—return immediately—immediately!"

Pop glanced back. He grinned and waved his hand to Henry Samuel

Quelch. Then the Buster Seven rushed on, and Pop disappeared from the gaze of his Form master—leaving Mr. Quelch standing like a statue of astonishment, glaring.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Old Pals!

"PRIME!" said Pop with a deep breath.

Mr. Walker shook his head doubtfully.

The circus procession had reached the pitch where the World-Famous was to camp. It was on Friardale Green, little more than a mile from Greyfriars.

That mile had not taken long to traverse; but it seemed to Pop to pass in a few seconds. The trampling of hoofs, the rumble of wheels, the banging of the drum, the blaring of the trumpet, were music to the ears of the circus schoolboy. Greyfriars fellows found life pleasant enough at Greyfriars; but to Pop of the Circus it seemed that he was living once more after a dismal interval that could scarcely be called existence. He had made friends at the school—he liked the cheery Co., he liked most of the fellows; but the circus came an easy first.

"Prime!" he repeated enthusiastically, standing with his hands in his

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pockets, surveying the pitching of the circus camp, and exchanging greetings with old acquaintances.

He grinned at Mr. Walker.

"You ain't so pleased as I am, by a long shot!" he said.

"Pleased ain't the word!" said Mr. Walker. "But it won't do, Pop. You'll get into a fearful row at the school."

"Who cares?" said Pop recklessly.

"Do they wallop you at the school?" asked Mr. Walker.

"Sometimes."

"Well, you're asking for it extra-special now, Pop."

"It's worth it," said Pop.

Mr. Walker shook his head again. He was seated on a slanting shaft of a van, his cigar in his mouth. His eyes dwelt affectionately on Pop; but he was obviously concerned and uneasy.

"I'd never have come this way if I'd knowed," he said. "I knowed you was at Greyfriars, but I never knowed where Greyfriars was."

"I'm glad you did!" said Pop. "It's a sight for sore eyes to see the circus again, and your ugly old mug, Jimmy."

He eyed the circus proprietor keenly. Jimmy Walker had a rubicund, cheery face; but there were many lines on it, and it seemed to Pop that his old friend was looking much older and more worn. And Pop's happy face became more serious.

"You ain't been getting full houses, Jimmy," he said.

"Circuses ain't what they was, Pop," answered Mr. Walker. "There ain't the money about that there used to be. Too many taxes these days. Taxes kills trade, and bad trade is bad for everybody—specially circuses. And—"

"You've felt a draught since you lost your Wonderful Boy Acrobat?" asked Pop.

"I ain't denying it," said Jimmy Walker. "You was the big draw of the show. Pop, your name on the bills used to bring them in! The World-Famous ain't one of the big circuses—we can't afford fancy salaries for fancy stars. We had one star, Pop, and that was you. And I ain't denying that the World-Famous has been going downhill since you left us, because you can see it for yourself by looking round at the show."

"I've noticed it," says Pop, his brow wrinkling, "and it's a rotten shame, Jimmy. I wish that bloke had never left me a fortune—leastways, I wish he hadn't made old Popper my guardian, and fixed him with three hundred a year for the job. That's where the shoe pinches. Old Popper let me rip long enough till that money was left me. He never remembered that my poor old dad was his brother till the spondulics came along."

Pop gave an angry snort.

"It's jest rotten," he said. "You saw my dad through when he was down on his luck, you fed me when I was a nipper. If it hadn't been for you, Jimmy, it would have been the work-house for me—and old Popper would never have lugged me out of it. And now I'm old enough to do you a good turn back for it, I'm took away and sent to school. It's a shame."

"It's for your good, Pop."

"Blow my good!" growled Pop. "I ain't thinking of my good, but your good, old Jimmy. Besides, it ain't for my good. The minute I'm my own master, old Jimmy, I'm coming back to the circus!"

"You'll change your mind afore then."

"Rot!" answered Pop. "Wasn't I born and bred in the sawdust? I tell you, when I heard the big drum this morning I felt like I was jest coming to life again after being dead a long time. I did that! But I could stand it," went on Pop, "if it wasn't for leaving you in the lurch. But letting you down after all you've done for me—"

"I was glad to do it, Pop, and I'd do it again, and joyful," said Mr. Walker affectionately. "You was always a good kid, and being myself a widder man with no nippers, why I jest jumped at taking you on when your poor dad left you on my 'ands."

"And now they're making me turn you down!" growled Pop savagely, "and you needing me, old Jimmy! Don't you go for to deny it, you old image, you—you know you need me to help the World-Famous pull through these bad times."

"I ain't denying it, Pop! But there's nothing doing, and it can't be 'elped," said Jimmy Walker. "Mebbe we'll do business 'ere this time! If I could jest put your name on the bills again, and 'ave you for the time we're staying 'ere—" Mr. Walker sighed.

Pop gave a whistle.

"Well, why shouldn't you?" he asked. "P'raps I could get leave from my Form master. He's crusty, but he's a

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good sort. Or I could nip out of school—"

"Don't you think of anything of the kind, Pop," said Mr. Walker, "because it ain't possible. I'd rather see the World-Famous sold up than get you into trouble with your guardian and your schoolmaster."

"Sold up!" repeated Pop. He started. "Old Jimmy, you don't mean that it might come to that."

Mr. Walker did not answer. But the lines of trouble on his purple face seemed to deepen. Pop set his lips.

"Old Jimmy!" he said quietly. "Ow long you stopping on this pitch?"

"We're booked for three days, Pop. But if there's good business we shall hang on."

"I'm going to do my turn same as I used for them three days, Jimmy," said the circus schoolboy. "You know it used to fill the house."

"Don't I know it!" sighed Jimmy Walker. "We ain't had hardly a full 'ouse since you left, Pop."

"Well, I'm going to fix it," said Pop. "Leave it to me 'ow—I'm going to manage it! Don't you worrit that old bean of yours. Leave it to me. I tell you, old Jimmy, you got to announce the Boy Acrobat again, and I'm going to do my stunts on the high trapeze."

"But it can't be did, Pop—" objected Jimmy, though the brightening of his troubled face told how much the idea appealed to him.

"It's got to be did!" said Pop, "and I'm telling you to leave it to me to fix it! Stick up the bills, old Jimmy—The Wonderful Boy Acrobat. The King of the Trapeze. Every Evening at the World-Famous."

"My eye!" ejaculated Jimmy Walker suddenly. He stared past Pop at the road that bordered the village green.

Pop glanced round. A tall gentleman in shooting clothes, with an eyeglass stuck in his right eye, was crossing the green from the road. Pop caught his breath. It was Sir Hilton Popper, his uncle and guardian.

"Oh my!" ejaculated Pop.

"Now the fat's in the fire!" said Jimmy Walker dismally.

"He ain't seen me," said Pop quickly.

The tall baronet was striding towards the circus encampment, with a deep frown on his brow.

But he was not looking towards the spot where Mr. Walker sat on the shaft, with Pop standing by him. He had not seen the circus schoolboy yet. The dark frown on his brow was due to some other cause.

"Get be'ind this 'ere van, Pop, quick," said Mr. Walker. The good-natured circus proprietor hated trouble of any sort, and he knew there would be trouble if Sir Hilton caught sight of Pop.

Pop stepped quietly back till he had placed the van between him and the advancing figure of the lord of Popper Court.

Little as he liked his guardian, he was deeply awed by him, and in Sir Hilton's presence his customary cool confidence deserted him. And he did not want to be taken by the collar and marched back to Greyfriars.

Sir Hilton paused near the camped vans and glanced about him. Then he came across to where Mr. Walker sat, and Pop moved a little farther round the van, a faint grin on his face. Obviously, Sir Hilton did not know that he was there; and there was a faint grin on Jimmy Walker's face, also, as he rose and touched his hat to the baronet.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Begs for It!

"QUELCHY'S got 'em!" remarked Skinner of the Remove.

Harold Skinner really need not have pointed it out.

All the Remove fellows were well aware that Mr. Quelch had "got 'em," as Skinner expressed it.

Third school that morning, in the Remove-room, had a tense atmosphere. Mr. Quelch's brow was wrinkled, and his gimlet eye glistened.

The amazing conduct of the circus schoolboy had stirred his deepest wrath. Under his very eyes, Cecil Popper had broken school bounds, cut class, and gone off with the circus people with whom he had been strictly forbidden to hold any communication whatsoever. It was such a defiance of authority as was scarcely known in Mr. Quelch's long experience as a schoolmaster, and it was not surprising that it stirred him to wrath.

In the case of any other fellow at Greyfriars, such defiance would have been followed by expulsion from the school. In Cecil Popper's case it could not be so followed.

For it was well known to Mr. Quelch, and to the Head, that Popper of the Remove desired nothing better than to be "sacked," in order that he might have a chance of rejoining the circus.

The "sack," in his case, would not have been a punishment, but a reward, as Sir Hilton had pointed out to the Head; and so Mr. Quelch was somewhat perplexed to know how he was going to deal with the truant.

Many times Pop had been caned, many times he had been flogged; but such punishments as these did not seem to have produced the desired effect on him, judging by his present actions.

Mr. Quelch was puzzled, perplexed, irritated, and exasperated. He was not the man to visit these feelings on those who did not deserve it; but all the Remove knew that they had to walk warily that morning.

And it was a very quiet and careful class that Henry Samuel Quelch dealt with in third school.

And in spite of the wary walking of the Removites, some of the fellows found trouble. Billy Bunter was spotted sucking toffee, and given a hundred lines. Lord Mauleverer woke out of a gentle doze to find himself the richer by two hundred lines. Bob Cherry was severely called to order for shuffling his feet; which really was hard, for Bob found it very difficult to keep still at any time. Vernon-Smith was caned for impertinence, though he only said "Thank you very much, sir!" when he was given lines for yawning.

The Remove were rather glad when they were dismissed that morning. Quelch was getting to be quite a worry.

Possibly Mr. Quelch had expected Pop to return during third school. But Pop had not returned. When the Remove men came out, they saw nothing of the circus schoolboy.

"The howling ass!" said Bob Cherry. "He's making a day of it! Quelch will be ready to bite him when he comes in."

"The bitfulness will probably be terrific," remarked Harroo Janset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Quelch is frightfully infuriated!"

"Well, it's enough to make any man waxy!" said Johnny Bull. "Popper ought to have more sense."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter."

"But I say, Quelch's in a frightful wax!" said Billy Bunter. "He's swearing like anything in his study—"

"What?" yelled the Famous Five.

"At least, I heard him say 'Goodness gracious me!'" said Bunter. "But you should have heard the way he said it!"

"You fat chump!"

"He was grinding his teeth," said Bunter. "At least, I'm sure he would have been grinding them, only of course he can't, because they ain't a fixture. He's simply foaming with rage. It's rather a lark, ain't it?"

"The larkfulness will not be great for the esteemed Pop when he comes in, my fat idiotic Bunter."

"Well, the sooner that fellow's sacked, the better," said the Owl of the Remove. "The Head ought never to have let him into Greyfriars. It's all very well his being a baronet's nephew; but it's jolly well known that he was brought up in a circus, and he's frightfully low. Mean, too! He refused to cash a postal order for me, the very day he came. A low bouncer like that is quite out of place here. I hardly dare to think what my titled relations would say, if they knew."

"Probably they'd faint!" suggested Bob Cherry. "The Duke de Bunter, and the Marquis de Bunter, and the Viscount Bunter would all collapse together in the bar of the Bunter Arms!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky beast, you know jolly well there ain't any Bunter Arms!" roared Bunter. "But as I was saying, that rank outsider, Popper, ought never to have been admitted to the school. It lets us down! I felt frightfully small when a Highcliffe man asked me if Popper was a Greyfriars chap, the other day."

"Just what we feel like, when somebody finds out that you are a Greyfriars chap, old fat bean," said Frank Nugent, with a nod.

"Just!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The justfulness is terrific."

"Of course, you fellows don't feel like I do about it," said Bunter disdainfully. "You don't know what a gentleman feels like when a low bouncer butts in."

"My dear chap, we do," said Harry Wharton, "for that's exactly what you make us feel like when you blow in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! Well, my opinion is, that the sooner Popper goes, the better," said Bunter. "The Head was an old donkey to let him into the school at all—"

"Shut up, you ass!" exclaimed Bob Cherry hurriedly, as he sighted Mr. Quelch coming out of the House.

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter. Bunter had his back to the doorway, and he had, of course, no eyes in the back of his bullet head. "I say that the Beak was an old donkey to let Popper into the school, and I mean it. He let old Popper bully him into it—that's the Head all over! If I were a headmaster, I'd jolly well tell an interfering old jossler of a governor to mind his own business, and send his blackguardly relations somewhere else. You needn't make faces at me, you fellows! As for Quelch, he ought to have told the Head he wouldn't have Popper in the Form at any price. I regard Quelch as having let the Form down—and acted jolly badly; and I wouldn't mind telling him so. What the thump are you fellows making faces at? I'm not afraid to say what I think of Quelch—he may frighten you, but he can't frighten me with his gargoyle face, the silly old duffer."

"Bunter!"

Billy Bunter jumped almost clear of the ground.

He understood now why the juniors had been making faces at him; trying to warn him of the peril in the rear.

Unfortunately Bunter had not understood till it was too late.

He spun round like a fat humming-top.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

His eyes almost bulged through his big spectacles at the sight of Henry Samuel Quelch.

Bunter had stated that Quelch could not frighten him with his gargoyle face. But Quelch's face looked more than ever like a gargoyle now—it was absolutely terrifying in its expression. And the fat knees of William George Bunter knocked together, and his jaw dropped, as he gazed at Quelch.

"Bunter!" gasped the Remove master.

"Oh lor'! I—I wasn't saying anything, sir—" stuttered Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I—I mean—"

"You—you—you disrespectful young rascal!" hooted Mr. Quelch. "Is that the way in which you speak of your Form master?"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I wasn't calling you an old duffer, sir!" groaned Bunter.

"Sister Anne, Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?" chirruped Bob Cherry.

And the juniors chuckled. But they were careful not to let Henry Samuel Quelch hear them chuckle.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Guardian and Ward!

SIR HILTON POPPER came to a halt, and his eyeglass, screwed under his wrinkled eyebrow, fixed on Mr. Jimmy Walker. The showman raised his hat respectfully; a salute acknowledged only by a

"Kindly do not be impertinent!" snapped Sir Hilton.

"Which nothing of the kind was meant, sir," said Mr. Walker, "and gentlemen as good as you have been pleased to see Walker's World-Famous afore now, sir, including Crowned 'Eads—"

"Nonsense! I disapprove of this kind of thing entirely," said Sir Hilton, frowning. "Such itinerant entertainments should not, in my opinion, be allowed on the roads at all. Above all, I disapprove of such shows being given here, in Friardale. I desire you to move on immediately."



"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Popper! Come back at once! I command you—return immediately!" Pop glanced round and grinned, and waved his hand to Henry Samuel Quelch.

"I—I was speaking of another old duffer, sir! Not you."

"Follow me to my study, Bunter."

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter gave the Famous Five a pathetic blink, and rolled dismally into the House after Mr. Quelch.

A minute later, sounds of woe were heard proceeding from the Remove master's study.

When William George Bunter was seen again, he was folded up like a pocket-knife, and uttering sounds that might have moved the heart of a stone statue.

Mr. Quelch reappeared in the quad, and walked down to the gates. There he stood looking out into the road.

"Looking for Popper?" remarked Nugent. "My hat! I don't envy Pop when he blows in!"

grunt from the baronet. Behind the van, Pop of the Remove kept carefully out of sight. As his guardian evidently knew nothing, so far, of his presence there, it was rather a puzzle why Sir Hilton had left the road and walked across to the circus camp. But the autocrat of Popper Court soon made that clear.

"What does this mean?" demanded Sir Hilton, with a wave of the hand indicating the circus camp.

Mr. Walker blinked at him in surprise.

"This here is my circus, sir!" he answered.

"What is it doing here?"

"Getting ready for a show this here evening, sir," answered Mr. Walker, "and if you'd care to see the show, sir—"

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

"This kind of thing," said Sir Hilton, "leads to disorder, and all kinds of lawlessness. I forbid any such performance to be given here. You understand me? You will move on at once."

"It's my living, sir!" said Mr. Walker, mildly.

The baronet gave a snort.

"I recommend you to try honest work, unpopular as it is in these modern days," he retorted.

"My eye!" said Mr. Walker. "If I may say so, sir, you don't look as if you've done much in the way of honest work yourself, sir."

"I desire no insolence!" boomed Sir Hilton. "I am not here to bandy words with a showman. I am lord of the manor in this village, and I am a

magistrate; and I order you to move on."

"I don't care tuppence," said Mr. Walker, with spirit, "if you're the Great High Lord Panjandrum hisself, sir! I got leave to camp here for three days and give my show, and I ain't moving on, to please you or nobody else. So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, sir."

Sir Hilton Popper's face crimsoned with anger.

The autocratic old gentleman was accustomed to obedience within the borders of Popper Court; and he often forgot that outside that domain, he was nobody in particular. His many tenants in the neighbourhood tolerated his fussy interference, because they had little choice in the matter; though what they said of him in private would probably have made Sir Hilton's ears burn, could he have heard it. But it was not uncommon for Sir Hilton to take a step too far, and meet with a rebuff; and now he had met with one more. For, as a matter of fact, great man as he was in the vicinity, he had no power whatever to order the circus to move on.

His eyes glistened at Mr. Walker, and as he looked at him more closely, recognition dawned in his face.

"You!" he exclaimed. "You! You are the man Walker—the circus person with whom my nephew Cecil was left by his father—"

"I am that!" assented Mr. Walker, "and I may say that my circus was your brother's 'ome for many years, sir, arter he was down on his luck; and a gentleman I always found him, sir, even when he was drunk, which was always when he had any money. And more'n once I advised him, as a friend—'Popper,' says I, 'why don't you get a 'elping 'and from that rich brother of yours, who's a baronet and a great pot,' I says. And he always larfed, and said, 'Jimmy,' he says, 'you don't know what a hunk that brother of mine is, or you wouldn't suggest it.' And he never would, sir."

Sir Hilton Popper compressed his lips. Perhaps he was aware that his conduct had not been exactly brotherly towards Pop's hapless father. But certainly he did not desire to hear Mr. Jimmy Walker on the subject.

"That is enough!" he said. "I find you here, within a mile of the school where my nephew has been placed. Does that mean that you are seeking to re-open communications with my nephew?"

"'Ow was I to know that he was here?" demanded Jimmy Walker. "I knowed he was at Greyfriars, but 'ow was I to know where Greyfriars was? You're talking out of your 'at, sir!"

"Then you have not seen my nephew since you came here?"

Jimmy Walker was silent.

It was by chance that he had pitched his camp in the vicinity of Greyfriars School. But certainly he could not say that he had not seen Pop; who at that moment was only three yards from his guardian—with a van between.

Sir Hilton's eyes glittered.

"Then you have seen him? You have communicated with him? You are acting in defiance of my wishes—of my orders! You are determined to drag the boy back, if you can, into the low and disreputable associations from which I have saved him."

Mr. Walker flushed hotly.

"You wasn't in a hurry to save him, sir," he retorted. "When his father

died in my van years ago, and left that little nipper without a bean, I wrote to you as in duty bound; and did you even answer the letter? You did not! You knowed the boy was with me, and you left him with me. I'd 'ave been sorry enough to lose him; but if you'd wanted, I'd have handed the kid over to you. You left him on my 'ands. You wasn't worrying then about disreputable associations; you was worrying about having a poor relation to keep, you was. You thought the circus was good enough for him then, and you left him to it." Mr. Walker grew bitterly sarcastic. "You remembered your duty all of a sudden, sir, when he was left a fortune, and you was left three hundred a year to act as his guardian! You took him away fast enough then!"

"Silence, you insolent rascal!" exclaimed the baronet, crimson with rage. "I refuse to bandy words with you! I will not allow you to contaminate a relative of mine; and I warn you—"

"I ain't the man to do Pop any 'arm, sir!" said Mr. Walker. "Though it was 'ard to lose him, me growing old, and him being like a son to me. But I reckoned it was for his good, and I let him go, cheerful. And I 'ope he'll be 'appy at the big school, like he always was at the circus. And don't you call a honest man names, sir, because I won't stand it."

"You—you tramping rogue!" exclaimed Sir Hilton, furiously. "Take care that I do not lay my riding-whip about you."

"I ain't so spry as I was in my young days," said Mr. Walker. "But if you try it on, sir, I fancy I'll alter your features for you a little."

Sir Hilton made a step towards him, purple with rage. Mr. Walker squared up to him defiantly. Three or four of the circus men gathered round, with grinning anticipation in their faces.

But the old gentleman, with an effort, restrained his anger; realising, perhaps, how ridiculous such a fracas would be. He made a threatening gesture, and turned and strode away past the van—so suddenly, that Pop, on the other side of the van, had no time to dodge, and was suddenly revealed to his sight.

Sir Hilton came to a dead stop, and stared at his nephew.

"Cecil! You are here!" he thundered.

Pop stood silent.

"You young rascal! I might have guessed it! Like your father, you have a natural taste for low associates."

Pop flushed crimson.

"Don't you say nothing agin my poor old dad, Sir 'Ilton Popper!" he snapped. "He was a better man nor you, any day in the week, and chance it."

Sir Hilton appeared on the point of choking.

"Leave a bloke alone!" continued Pop. "You left me in the circus when I was 'ard up! You let Jimmy Walker feed me when I was a nipper, and he never expected to get nothing back! You don't like me, any more'n you liked my father. You're on the make, you are."

This was not the kind of talk to which the lofty ears of Sir Hilton Popper were accustomed.

Sir Hilton seemed for some moments on the verge of apoplexy.

"Come!" he gasped, at last.

He dropped his hand on Pop's collar. The circus schoolboy's eyes gleamed, and he seemed about to resist. But

Jimmy Walker came round the van, with an anxious look on his face.

"It can't be 'elped, Pop!" he said. "Go quietly with your guardian, kid! He's got the right! Don't make a fuss, Pop! Go back to school."

"All right, old Jimmy!" said Pop.

"Come!" said Sir Hilton, between his teeth.

He almost dragged the schoolboy from the spot.

On the edge of the green, Pop came to a stubborn halt.

"Take your 'and from my collar, sir!" he said.

"Come!"

"You take your 'and from my collar, or I'll 'ack your shins and chance it!" said Pop savagely.

Sir Hilton gave him a bitter look.

"Can I trust you to follow me to the school?" he said. "I do not desire to lead you there like a recaptured criminal. Can I trust you?"

"I'm goin' back to school," said Pop, "and you can take my word or not, as you like; but you ain't going to hold my collar."

Sir Hilton hesitated a moment or two; then he released the schoolboy's collar, and strode on. And Pop followed him back to Greyfriars.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Up Against It!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What—"

"He's coming!" said Bob Cherry.

Bob was sitting astride the school wall, at a spot where the old elms screened him from general view, and keeping an eye on the road. He could see Mr. Quelch standing outside the gates, and had a view of a long stretch of the leafy lane towards Friardale.

"Here he comes!" said Bob to his comrades at the foot of the wall. "And old Popper's with him."

"Sir Hilton?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"That identical old codger."

"Poor old Pop!" said Harry.

Bob dropped from the wall; and the Famous Five strolled round to the gates to see Pop of the Remove come in.

Mr. Quelch had already seen him; and his face expressed a wrathful satisfaction at the sight of Pop. He was not so pleased to see Sir Hilton—nobody at Greyfriars ever was pleased to see that great man. Still, Mr. Quelch was glad that he had brought the truant back; and he had to take the bad with the good.

Pop eyed his Form master rather uneasily—perhaps a little furtively—as he came up. He was well aware that his conduct had been quite outrageous, in yielding to the irresistible call of the circus and disregarding the authority of his Form master. He was not exactly sorry for what he had done; but he was certainly uneasy as to the consequences; and he was doubtful about his chances of helping Jimmy Walker by reappearing in the ring as the Wonderful Boy Acrobat. On that, however, he was quite determined, whatever might be the outcome.

"Mr. Quelch!" said Sir Hilton, in a deep voice. "I found this boy out of school bounds at a circus on the village green. I need not ask whether he had leave."

"You need not sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "Certainly he had no leave. He has played truant."

"I had no doubt of it, sir! I brought him back immediately, to hand over to you."

"I am much obliged, sir." Mr. Quelch fixed his glinting eyes on Pop. "Go to my study, and wait for me there!"

"Yessir!" said Pop heavily. And he went in.

Harry Wharton & Co. joined him as he went to the House. They were sympathetic; and sympathy was something—but it was not much help to Pop. It was only too clear that he was "for it."

Mr. Quelch would gladly have followed the truant in; but Sir Hilton Popper was not quickly disposed of.

"I fail to understand, sir," said Sir Hilton, "how the boy came to be where I discovered him. It was clearly understood that he was to be kept away from all associations with his former life."

"Quite so. But—"

"I relied upon you, sir, as his Form master, and upon the Head—"

"The boy cannot be watched every moment of the day, Sir Hilton," said Mr. Quelch tartly. "He chose to absent himself; and all that I can do is to punish him for his transgression."

"A very severe flogging may help to bring the young rascal to his senses," said Sir Hilton. "He appears to be lost to all sense of shame; to be utterly indifferent to the disgrace he brings on his connections by associating with low, strolling vagrants—"

"I have expressed my opinion, sir, that a mistake was made in placing the boy at Greyfriars," said Mr. Quelch coldly. "I adhere to that opinion."

"Really, Mr. Quelch—" snorted Sir Hilton.

"The boy is to blame but there are extenuating circumstances," said the Remove master. "Had he been intended for Greyfriars he should certainly have been taken away from the circus at an earlier age. After so long a period with such associations, sir—"

"That is neither here nor there, sir!" interrupted Sir Hilton. "My nephew is at Greyfriars now and at Greyfriars he must remain. It is for you and his headmaster to see that he learns how to fill his proper position in life. Good-morning, sir!"

And Sir Hilton walked on.

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath, and turned away. He had plenty of trouble with Pop of the Remove; but he could not help feeling that the trouble was due rather to the uncle than to the nephew.

He walked back to the House, and went to his study.

Pop was waiting for him there.

The boy was standing by the window, looking out with a deeply clouded face; and he turned slowly to face his Form master.

Mr. Quelch was angry—justly angry—but a good deal of his anger faded away as he looked at the boy's clouded face.

"What have you to say for yourself, Popper?" he asked.

"Nothing, sir," answered Pop.

"You have left school without leave, and missed a class, and you deliberately took no notice of me when I called on you to return!" said the Remove master, raising his voice a little.

"I know, sir!" said Pop. He paused, and then went on: "I couldn't 'elp it, sir! I really couldn't! You don't know what the circus is to me, sir. When I saw old Jimmy, sir, I jest couldn't 'elp hiking along. I couldn't! I don't want to be disrespectful sir, but I'd do the same agin."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I ought never to have come 'ere, sir," said Pop. "I'm only a trouble to you, and I know you've been kind to me, and you think me ungrateful. I ain't that! But it's no use, sir! I've tried to make the best of it, but can't!"

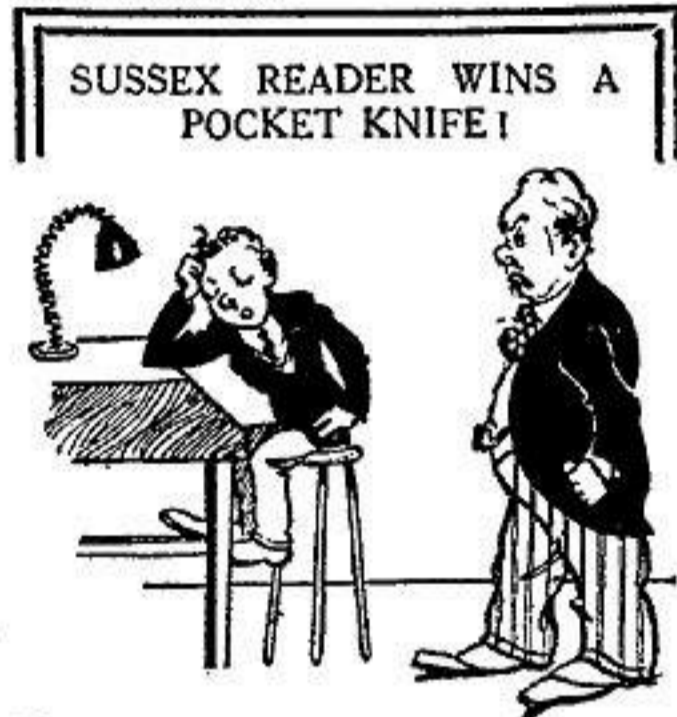
Mr. Quelch was silent.

"I know you're going to lick me, sir, and I ain't complaining," said Pop. "You've got your duty to do. I've been disrespectful, and you can't stand that. But I can't 'elp it. I belong to the circus, and I'm jest a fish out of water 'ere."

His voice faltered.

"Old Jimmy's fallen on 'ard times since I left him, sir," he said. "He never was well off; and he never had but one good turn in his circus, and that was me. And I was took away jest when I was beginning to pay him back for all he had done for me."

"You must think of your duty to your guardian, Popper," said Mr. Quelch, rather at a loss.



SUSSEX READER WINS A POCKET KNIFE!

QUICK AT SOMETHING!
Employer (to new boy): "You're the slowest youngster we've ever had. Aren't you quick at anything?"
Boy: "Yes, sir! Nobody can get tired as quickly as I can!"

Send in your joke and win a splendid knife like Reg. Withrington, of 37, Rutland Road, Hove, Sussex.

"Yessir, I s'pose you think so," said Pop. "But I was thinking of the bloke that stood by me when my uncle left me without a crust."

Mr. Quelch coughed.

"Certainly you are right to remember Mr. Walker with gratitude, Popper," he said. "But your position is now very much altered. When you are of age you will have a considerable fortune."

"Yessir; but it don't seem right to turn down the man what fed me when I was a hungry kid," said Pop.

Mr. Quelch coughed again.

Somehow or other, his wrath had faded away now.

"I have no desire to punish you, Popper," he said. "I can make many excuses for your conduct, outrageous as it has been. But you must surely see for yourself that such conduct cannot be tolerated. While you are at school you must submit to the discipline of the school."

"I know, sir. But—"

"I am willing to pass over the matter," said the Remove master, after a pause, "if you will give me your

word, Popper, to avoid any further contact with the circus."

Pop was silent.

"If you do not give me this assurance, Popper, you will be kept within gates, at least, so long as Mr. Walker's circus is in this vicinity," said Mr. Quelch. "I trust, however, that you will act sensibly in the matter."

Pop looked at him. Mr. Quelch's unexpected mildness raised a new hope in his breast.

"I—I was goin' to ask you, sir—" he faltered.

"What do you wish to ask, Popper?"

"Old Jimmy's 'ard up, sir! It would mean a lot of difference to him if he could put me on, even for a few nights. If you'd be kind enough to let me go to the circus, and act like I used, for a few times, while old Jimmy's pitched at Friardale—"

Mr. Quelch's amazed stare stopped the words on Pop's lips.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch. "Are you out of your senses, Popper? You seriously suggest that a Greyfriars boy should be allowed to join in a circus performance in the neighbourhood of the school! Bless my soul!"

"You see, sir—"

"You did not, I suppose, make this extraordinary suggestion to your guardian?"

"Oh my!" ejaculated Pop. "No fear, sir!"

"You will, of course, be allowed to do nothing of the sort!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "I require your promise, Popper, to avoid any further contact with Mr. Walker's circus."

Pop did not answer.

"You hear me, boy?"

"I 'ear you, sir."

"Will you give me the promise I require?"

"I can't, sir! I should only break it," said Pop.

Mr. Quelch's eyes glinted.

"Then you will be kept within gates," he said. "Until further orders, Popper, you are forbidden to go beyond the school precincts. In the event of disobedience, you will be reported to your headmaster for a flogging. You may go."

"Yessir."

Pop left the Form master's study.

Mr. Quelch was left in very deep thought. He was angry and irritated, yet somehow he could not help sympathising with the boy. But he had his duty to do, and his duty was to see that Pop of the Remove did not do what Pop was fully determined to do. There was trouble ahead for the circus schoolboy.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Out of Bounds!

"LICKED?"

"No!"

"Great Scott!"

The Famous Five stared in astonishment at Pop of the Remove.

"Not sacked?" asked Harry.

"Wish I was!" grunted Pop. "No!"

"Well, you're lucky," said Frank Nugent. "Quelchy looked as if he was going to break the record with your licking. Mean to say he's really let you off?"

"Oh, he's let me off the licking!" said Pop indifferently. Obviously Pop did not care very much about that.

"The luckfulness is terrific, my esteemed and preposterous Pop!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "For the excellent Quelch was infuriated!"

"Mad as a hatter," said Bob. "Can't

make out why he let you off without skinning you alive, Poppy."

"Well, what are you looking blue about, if you've got clear, after asking for a record licking?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Oh, blow the licking!" growled Pop. "I don't care much about that, one way or the other. I'm worried!"

The chums of the Remove were careful not to smile. When Cecil Popper was worried or disturbed he dropped right back into the English of his early years, and forgot all the expensive tuition he had received from a special tutor at Popper Court before coming to Greyfriars. At Greyfriars he might be worried, but at Walker's World-Famous Circus he would have been "worried," and that weird expression expressed his feelings.

"What about, old bean?" asked Bob. "Anything a man can do?"

"Not unless you can get me leave to act in the circus this evening from seven till nine," answered Pop.

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's what I want," said Pop, "and that's what's going to happen! But I'm worried to know how."

"I—I should think it rather a worry!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You ass! Do you think Quelch or the Head would allow you to act in the circus?"

"I know they won't. I've asked Quelch."

"You've asked him?" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Yes. And he said 'No.'"

"I wonder he didn't lick you for asking. You're the jolly old limit, and no mistake, Pop."

"Well, I'm going!" said Pop. "I never asked to come 'ere, and I don't want to stick 'ere; and if they asks for trouble, they can have it! I ain't turning down the man that saved me from the workhouse when I was a nipper, I know that!"

"But, my dear chap—" said Harry.

"Old Jimmy's 'ard up!" growled Pop. "I don't mind telling you blokes—you ain't burbling dummies like Bunter, or sneering oads like Skinner. You understand 'ow a feller feels. You know what old Jimmy Walker's done for me, and now—well, he's down on his luck, playing to an empty tent and taking next to nothing, and it's on the cards that he may be sold up. I got to 'elp him, like he 'elped me when I was up against it."

"That's right, of course," said Harry, puzzled. "But—"

"The butfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh, shaking his dusky head.

"Old Jimmy thinks, and I think, that if I put in my old turn on the high trapeze, it would make a 'eap of difference," said Pop. "I'm going to try it on, and I've told Jimmy so. But 'ow?"

"Prep is from seven till half-past eight now," said Bob. "Even if you could get out, it would mean cutting prep."

"Blow prep!"

"You'd be missed to a certainty!"

"I wouldn't care about that, only they might fetch me back," said Pop. "Anyhow, I'm chancing it and going. Once I get on the high trapeze, they wouldn't find it easy to get 'old of me."

"Look here, kid," said Nugent. "Leave it till to-morrow. It's a half-holiday to-morrow, and you might get a chance at the afternoon performance at the circus. But at night it's impossible."

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"I'm going to-morrow—and to-morrow night, too," said Pop; "and I'm going to-night!"

"But, look here—"

"P'raps you chaps had better not get mixed up in it," said Pop. "There'll be a row, of course, and I don't want to get you licked. But I'm going, if I have 'arf Greyfriars 'owling after me."

And with that Pop walked away, leaving the Famous Five looking at one another rather blankly.

"That kid's booked for trouble!" said Bob Cherry. And the Co. agreed that it looked like it.

In class that afternoon Pop of the Remove was very quiet and attentive. He seemed to be trying to make a good impression on his Form master, after his outrageous proceedings of the morning.

Mr. Quelch noticed it, and his manner was quite urbane to the circus schoolboy, rather to the surprise of the Removites, who had expected him to be down on Pop with a very heavy "down."

If the boy was trying to make amends, Mr. Quelch was the man to encourage him. But Harry Wharton & Co. could not help wondering whether Pop was seeking to lull the master's suspicions, with a view to carrying out his extraordinary scheme for that evening.

The Famous Five tea'd in Study No. 1, and Pop, as a member of the study, was there. But he spoke hardly a word during tea, and made no allusion whatever to his intentions.

After tea, the chums of the Remove went down to the nets for some cricket practice, but Pop remained in the study, working on the section of the first book of the Aeneid which the Remove had to prepare for morning school.

That was a proof that he intended to be absent during lock-up—the time devoted to evening prep.

At that time all fellows who worked in studies were supposed to be in their studies, and were liable to be called to account if they were seen anywhere else.

Between call-over and bed-time, it was possible for a fellow, with luck, to get out of the school undiscovered, without his absence being noted, but undoubtedly he would need a considerable amount of luck.

The Bounder had done it more than once, as all the Remove knew, for reasons much less meritorious than Pop's.

But the danger was greater in Pop's case, for suspicious eyes were upon him, and it was quite likely that Mr. Quelch would speak a word to the prefect on duty that evening.

Pop, if he went, was taking a long chance, and the Famous Five had little doubt that he would go. And so far as lay in their power, they were prepared to help him escape detection. They could not help feeling, like Pop himself, that his duty lay rather in Mr. Walker's direction than in Sir Hilton Popper's. Anyhow, they had made a friend of Pop, and if he was determined to hunt for trouble they were ready to save him from the consequences if they could.

When Wharton and Nugent came up to Study No. 1 for prep, they found the study empty. Pop was not there.

They sat down to work. Pop did not come in. The two juniors had no doubt that their study-mate was already outside Greyfriars.

"He's chancing it, Harry!" Nugent remarked.

The captain of the Remove nodded. "Looks like it!" he agreed.

"Loder's on duty to-night," said Nugent. "He doesn't like Pop. If he gets a chance to catch him out—"

"Loder's a slacker, though; he's not likely to take any trouble if he can help it."

"That's so!" agreed Nugent.

The juniors were feeling rather uneasy till prep was over. It was quite possible that Mr. Quelch might look in, but it was more probable that he had asked Loder to keep an eye open. Loder of the Sixth was not the kind of prefect who was keen on duty; in fact, he was quite likely to retire to his study for a quiet cigarette, and trust to the terror of his ashplant to keep order in the Lower Fourth studies during lock-up.

But it was a relief when prep was over and nothing had happened.

As Pop had not put in an appearance, it was evident by that time that he was not in the school. The performance at Walker's World-Famous Circus was going on, and Harry Wharton had no doubt that Pop was there doing his old stunts on the trapeze.

As the performance did not end till nine o'clock, Pop could not be back much before bed-time. After prep there was an hour in which he might be missed at any moment.

Wharton and Nugent went down after prep, the rest of the Co. joining them on the stairs. At the foot of the staircase the juniors sighted Loder of the Sixth, lounging and talking with Carne, another prefect. The Famous Five exchanged a glance. It was probable that Loder would ask them a question as they passed. If he had been asked to keep an eye on Pop, that would be near enough for Loder. Bob Cherry closed one eye at his comrades.

"Popper coming down?" he asked Wharton, as they came within hearing of the two prefects.

Wharton caught on at once.

"He hasn't finished prep!" he answered, which was a perfectly true statement, Pop's prep being far from finished.

"Look here, I'll cut back and tell him to hurry up," said Bob. "We've got something on in the Rag this evening, and we want him."

"Buck up, then."

Bob hurried up the stairs again.

From above his powerful voice was heard calling.

"Buck up, Pop! We want you in the Rag! Don't be all night about it."

Then he came down again and joined his chums, and they passed on, leaving Loder of the Sixth quite satisfied that Popper was in Study No. 1 in the Remove.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Wibley Comes in Useful!

"WIB, old man!" "Don't worry!" said Wibley.

"But look here—"

"Shut up!"

William Wibley of the Remove was busy.

He was seated at the table in the Rag with a heap of manuscript before him, a pen in his hand, a blob of ink on his nose, and a far-away look in his eyes.

Wibley, the chief and moving spirit of the Remove Dramatic Society, was not merely actor-manager in that distinguished company, but he was dramatist as well. Like other amateur dramatic societies, the Remove fellows found it difficult to get suitable plays. Wibley had solved this difficulty by writing the plays himself. His dramatic

works, perhaps, were not quite equal to Shakespeare's in some respects, but they were more suitable for the Lower Fourth. There was a lot more push and go in them than the immortal William Shakespeare ever thought of putting into his plays. The dialogue was some little distance short of perfection, but the action was continuous and thrilling.

Wibley was busy on his play now, unheeding the buzz of voices and other sounds that surrounded him in the Rag. And he snorted impatiently when Bob Cherry clapped him on the shoulder.

"Frightfully busy?" asked Bob, with a grin, as he looked at Wibley's manuscript. It seemed to consist chiefly of erasures and corrections.

"Yes! Shut up!"
 "We want you, old bean."
 "Go and eat coke!"
 "Young Popper's gone out of bounds."

"Blow young Popper!"
 "Quelchy's practically certain to look round for him before dorm."

"Blow Quelchy."
 "He will get a licking."
 "Let him!"
 "But it will be no end of a licking."

"I wish you were getting one, too!" howled Wibley. "Can't you let a man alone when he's busy?"

"But young Popper's a good sort," urged Bob. "We don't want him to be spotted, so we want you to make up."

"Eh?"
 Wibley was so surprised that he forgot the "Gallant Cavalier," which was the title of his new play, for a moment, and stared up at Bob.

"You're going to take the title-role in that play, old bean?" said Bob, with a nod towards the manuscript.

"Is there any other man in the Remove who could take it?" demanded Wibley.

"Well, I wouldn't mind—"
 "Fathead!"
 "Look here, ass—"

"When I write a play about a hippopotamus or a rhinoceros, you can take the title-role," said Wibley witheringly. "The Barging Hippopotamus' is a part that would suit you."

"My dear chap—"
 "Now shut up!"

Wibley turned back to his play. Bob gently caught him by the left ear, and drew his attention again—and the ear along with it.

"Look here, old bean—"

"Will you give a fellow a minute's peace?" hooted the Remove dramatist.

"Not this evening," said Bob. "You see, we want to see you made up as the Gallant Cavalier in the play."

"Oh," said Wibley. He jerked his ear away. "Well, I've got all the things here, and I don't mind—plenty of time before dorm. If the fellows are really keen to see how I look in the part—"

"Frightfully keen!" said Frank Nugent.

"The keenfulness is terrific, my esteemed Wibley."

"Well, I've got a lot to do to that play yet," said Wibley. "Still, I don't mind." He rose from the table. "But



"Come!" said Sir Hilton Popper between his teeth. "You take your 'and from my collar," said Pop savagely, "or I'll 'ack your shins and chance it!"

what's that got to do with young Popper?" he added. "You were mentioning young Popper."

"Lots," answered Bob. "That's the big idea! When you're made up as Sir Frump de Fozzie, the Gallant Cavalier—"

"Sir Fulke de Fortesque, fathead."
 "Well, Sir Fulke de Fortesque-Fathead, if you like," conceded Bob. "Any old thing. When you're made up as that Johnny, nobody would know you, I suppose?"

"Of course not, ass! I shall look thirty, and just as if I'd stepped out of the seventeenth century," snapped Wibley.

"Good! Well, that's the big idea," said Bob. "We've passed the word round to the fellows, and everybody's going to play up. You fix yourself up as Sir Frump—I mean, Sir Fulke—and get a recitation off your chest—you can talk as much as you like, and you're fond of that—"

"You silly ass!"
 "And we'll stand round cheering," said Bob. "And we're going to call you Popper."

"You're going to call me Popper!" repeated Wibley blankly.

"Just that."
 "What on earth for?"
 "In case anybody butts in looking for Popper" explained Bob. "When you've got all that stuff on your chivvy nobody will know whether you're Popper or not. See the point?"
 "Oh!" said Wibley.

"Exactly!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We're going to kill two birds with one stone, Wib! We're

frightfully keen to see you in the part—"

"Frightfully!" said Johnny Bull solemnly.

"And we want to keep young Popper out of a fearful row. So as soon as you can't be recognised you're going to be Popper—and keep it up till bed-time."

"Um!" said Wibley dubiously.
 "Play up, old bean!" said Peter Todd. "Young Popper's a silly ass; but we don't want him up for a flogging. And the sooner the quicker. Quelchy's suspicious of him, and he may start rooting after him any time."

"Oh, all right!"
 And the property-box was dragged out from under the table, and Wibley of the Remove got down to business.

Wibley was an old hand in these matters, and what he did not know about make-up, as he often told the Removites, was not worth knowing.

In a very short time Wibley was clad in the romantic garments of a cavalier of the seventeenth century, and his face was made up with grease-paints and a short beard, and a curling moustache, and long ringlets covered his head.

He grinned at the juniors.
 "I fancy nobody would know me now," he remarked.

"No fear!" said Bob. "Why, you look quite good-looking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You silly chump—"

"Now you can begin saying your piece," said Bob. "I suppose you're word-perfect in your part? It will last till bed-time, as you usually give yourself about nine-tenths of the play."

"Don't I have to give the business to the man who can do it?" demanded Wibley.

"Yes, old chap; of course!" said Bob soothingly. "Well, now you're made up as Sir Frump—"

"Sir Fulke, idiot!"

"I mean Sir Fulke-Idiot. Now you're made up, go ahead, in case anybody butts in."

The door of the Rag opened and William George Bunter rolled in. There was a gleam of excitement in Bunter's eyes behind his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But, I say, I believe that chap Popper's gone out of bounds!" exclaimed Bunter. "I've looked everywhere, and he's not in the House."

"What does it matter to you, fat-head?"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Shut up, anyhow!"

"Well, Quelch is sure to miss him!" said Bunter. "I saw him talking to Loder of the Sixth, and he mentioned Popper's name. I say, you fellows, what game's this?" added Bunter, blinking at Sir Fulke de Fortescue.

"Shut up, ass, and don't interrupt Popper."

"Popper!" ejaculated Bunter. "Is that Popper? I thought he'd gone out of bounds to the circus. I thought—"

"Gammon!" said Bob Cherry. "What have you got to think with, I'd like to know."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shut up! Go it, Popper!" shouted Bob Cherry, for the benefit of anyone who might be within hearing outside the Rag.

And William Wibley grinned under his grease-paint and "went it"; and as he recited his part in the play with great effect he was applauded on all sides. But for once he was, so to speak, hiding his light under a bushel. For the name of Wibley was not mentioned, and the Rag rang to shouts of "Bravo, Popper!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Quelch is Satisfied!

MR. QUELCH laid down his pen and glanced at the clock and left his study. It was a quarter to nine, and the Remove master was thinking of that troublesome member of his Form, Popper.

He had asked Loder of the Sixth to keep an eye on Popper during lock-up. But he felt it his duty to keep his own eye on him also.

Popper had been let off very lightly for his escapade of the morning—too lightly, as Mr. Quelch considered, on reflection. He had a good deal of sympathy with the boy placed in so strange and difficult a position; but it was clear, in the eyes of Henry Samuel Quelch, that discipline must be maintained.

He felt that a mistake had been made in placing Popper at Greyfriars, but so long as Popper was at Greyfriars it was obvious that he had to toe the line, and act as a Greyfriars man, not like a circus performer.

His request to be allowed to perform in the circus had been simply amazing, unnerving. His refusal to promise to keep away from Mr. Walker's show told what his intentions were.

Mr. Quelch had no doubt whatever that he would break bounds if he

could, reckless of the consequences, and visit the circus on Friardale Green.

That had to be prevented.

Mr. Quelch had no desire for a boy of his Form to be flogged by the Head, if it could be avoided. Prevention was better than cure; and it was doubtful whether floggings would cure the circus schoolboy.

Popper had to be kept under observation, at least, so long as Walker's World-Famous Circus was in the vicinity. So Mr. Quelch proceeded to ascertain how Popper was occupied. He sought Loder of the Sixth first, to hear what that doubtful prefect had to say.

"You have had no trouble with Popper, Loder?" he asked.

"No, sir," answered Loder.

"He has made no attempt to leave the House?"

"Not that I am aware of, sir," answered Loder. He did not mention that, having been discussing the prospects of a favourite "gee-gee" with Carne of the Sixth, he had almost forgotten Popper's existence. "He was certainly in his study during preparation. I made a point of ascertaining that, as you requested."

"Thank you, Loder!"

Mr. Quelch was not aware that Loder derived his information from the remarks some juniors had made in

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passing him. He walked away to look in at the Rag, which was the general meeting-place of the juniors after prep.

Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, bore down on him and detained him for ten weary minutes. But the Fifth Form master's conversation, for once, touched a subject that had interest for the Remove master.

"By the way," said Prout, after mentioning that he had just come in from an evening walk, and describing that walk in every detail. "By the way, Quelch, is there not a boy in your Form named Popper?"

"There is," said Mr. Quelch briefly.

"A new boy, I understand?"

"Quite so."

"I think I have heard something about the boy," said Prout. "Is it not the fact that he was some sort of a travelling or strolling player before his guardian sent him to Greyfriars?"

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips a little. Like many schoolmasters, he preferred his boys to be as like one another as peas out of the same pod, and disliked everything singular or remarkable. There had been too much talk about Pop of the Circus to please his Form master.

"I mention the matter, my dear Quelch, because in my walk this evening I passed a circus now performing on Friardale Green," explained Mr. Prout. "There was an illuminated sign over the tent, which announced that a

performer named Pop was giving some sort of an acrobatic display within—"

Mr. Quelch started.

"Pop?" he repeated.

"Exactly. From what I have heard of this very peculiar boy he was called Pop—an abbreviation of his surname—when he was a circus performer," said Mr. Prout. "Is not that the case?"

"I believe so."

"I was struck by the name," said Mr. Prout.

Mr. Quelch looked as if he wished that Mr. Prout had been struck by something more forcible. He edged away.

"One moment, my dear Quelch," said the Fifth Form master. "I thought I would mention this to you. Was not the circus to which this—this remarkable boy belonged called Walker's Circus?"

"I—I think so."

"Seeing this name displayed so prominently I asked a person what circus this was, and I learned that it was called Walker's Circus," said Mr. Prout. "It would appear that this is the same circus as that to which this boy in your Form once belonged, Quelch. I thought the whole matter very singular, and decided to mention it to you."

"I am much obliged, Mr. Prout!" said the Remove master, in freezing tones, and he escaped before the Fifth Form master could say more.

He hurried towards the Rag.

His eyes were glinting.

Was it possible that the boy, after all, had broken bounds—that he was appearing in the circus as an acrobat, after his impudent request had been refused, and he had been forbidden to leave the school precincts on any pretext? Or was it some other acrobat who was billed as "Pop" in the place of the star turn that Mr. Walker had lost?

The former supposition seemed the more probable of the two. And at that thought Mr. Quelch's wrath grew and grew. Such rank disobedience, such flagrant defiance of authority, was not to be tolerated. The boy had been let off lightly only that day, after an action that richly deserved a flogging—and this was the result!

Mr. Quelch's lips were set in a tight line.

He was going to ascertain beyond doubt whether Popper of the Remove was still in the House. If he was absent, there was no doubt where he had gone. And in that case the severest of floggings should be followed by three days in the punishment-room, which would perhaps bring that extraordinary boy to his senses and would at least keep him clear of Walker's World-Famous Circus.

Mr. Quelch, in a state of cold and deadly wrath, reached the Rag, turned the handle of the door, and threw it open.

A roar greeted him in the doorway.

"Bravo, Popper!"

"Well done, Pop!"

Mr. Quelch caught his breath.

If Popper was not in the Rag with the other juniors, he intended to search the House for him and place the matter beyond doubt. But it seemed that he was in the Rag after all. His name was on every tongue.

Mr. Quelch felt a deep relief.

He glanced round the crowded Rag.

At the upper end of the room a junior in the garb of a seventeenth century cavalier, was strutting and reciting lines in blank verse.

Who that junior was nobody could have told by looking at him, for his face was made up to look that of a

(Continued on page 12.)

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THE CALL OF THE CIRCUS!

(Continued from page 10.)

man of thirty. But who he was there could scarcely be any doubt judging by the shouts of the juniors who were watching him.

"My hat! Here's Quelch!" whispered Harry Wharton, as he caught sight of the angular figure in the doorway. "Go it!"

And the roar of applause was renewed with emphasis.

"Bravo Popper!"

"Well played, Pop!"

"I say, you fellows, he does it better than Wibley," said Billy Bunter. "I say, this will rather put Wibley's nose out of joint! He, he, he! Popper's ever so much better than Wibley! I say, you fellows, where's Wibley? I'll go and tell him to come and see Popper's acting."

"Go it, Popper!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Give us the rest, Pop! There's plenty of time before dorn."

Mr. Quelch stepped quietly back and closed the door of the Rag. He was relieved and satisfied. If Popper of the Remove was giving an amateur theatrical performance in the Rag, certainly Popper of the Remove could not be giving an acrobatic performance at Walker's World-Famous Circus on Friardale Green.

Mr. Quelch walked back to his study. "Ah, Quelch!" It was Mr. Prout again. "Far be it from me to intervene in the affairs of another master—that, as you know, is not my way. But with regard to that very peculiar boy in your Form, Popper—"

"Really, Mr. Prout—"

"Are you quite satisfied, Quelch, that this very singular boy is not, at this moment, out of school bounds, and engaged in a way that may bring opprobrium upon the school?"

"I am quite satisfied, Mr. Prout," answered the Remove master tartly.

"No doubt the boy is in the House?" asked the Fifth Form master.

"No doubt."

"Well, if you are sure of it—"

Mr. Prout really seemed to be a little disappointed.

"I am quite sure of it, sir, because he is now engaged in an amateur theatrical performance in the recreation-room, and I have just seen him!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh," said Mr. Prout, "indeed!"

"Yes," said Mr. Quelch, "indeed!"

And he whisked on to his study.

In the big circus tent on Friardale Green the performance of Pop, the Boy Acrobat and King of the Trapeze, was concluding, amid roars of applause. But in the Rag at Greyfriars the performance of William Wibley, alias Popper, went on till nearly bed-time. And in his study Mr. Quelch sat marking papers, his wrath appeased, and quite satisfied on the subject of Popper of the Remove.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

No Toffee for Bunter!

POP clambered in at a little window over a staircase, from a rain-pipe outside. The most venturesome cat-burglar might have hesitated to tackle that window, but it was little or nothing to the boy acrobat. He dropped within, scuttled down dark stairs, and in a few minutes found himself in the Remove passage. That passage was silent and deserted, but one of the studies was lighted. Mark Linley was working at a Greek paper, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,168.

while the rest of the Remove were gathered in the Rag, where the "Gallant Cavalier" was going strong.

Pop breathed rather hard.

His performance at Walker's Circus had been a strenuous one. After it he had had a hurried change into his own clothes, and a swift run through the shadowy lanes back to Greyfriars, then the climb up the rain-pipe. Most fellows would have been tired out—and Pop certainly was a little tired.

But his face was bright, his eyes were shining.

Every minute at the circus, every second on swinging rope and tilting trapeze, Pop had enjoyed to the full. The glaring lights, the smell of the lamps, the old familiar smell of the sawdust, the upturned faces watching and fixed eyes staring—the blare of the band—all had been a sheer delight to him—it was like the king coming into his own again after long exile.

And the applause in the circus tent had been music to his ears. It had not been a "full house" by any means—business was not brisk at Friardale. The takings were hardly more than sufficient to pay the night's expenses. But the audience had risen to Pop—he had lost none of his old dash and skill—none of his old appeal to the "people in front." They had roared applause, and it had been like wine to him. And it meant a bigger audience the next day—Jimmy Walker had told him so, but he knew it without being told. Well he remembered how the King of the Trapeze had been wont to fill the circus. He was doing Jimmy a good turn, helping a lame dog over a stile. If only he could contrive to turn up at the circus regularly while it was on the Friardale pitch!

He was determined that he would, somehow.

Bright and happy as Pop's face was as he came into the Remove passage, he was a little anxious at heart. If he had been missed there was severe punishment in store. But that was not the worst—he could stand punishment. Measures would be taken to keep him from visiting the circus again, if Quelch knew, and that was what was serious.

He thought of turning into his study and finishing his prep. But he was too tired for that, and it was too late. His head was still in a buzz with the noise, the glare, the excitement, the applause.

He was in no mood for Latin verse. He moved quietly along the Remove passage, wondering whether he had been missed: and a fat voice came to his ears, proceeding from the only lighted study in the Remove. It was the voice of William George Bunter.

"I say, Linley, haven't you seen Wibley?"

"No," came Mark's reply.

"Well, it's jolly queer," said Bunter. "I've been looking for him everywhere. I say, that new chap, Popper, is putting his nose out of joint. Popper's doing his part in the play—in the Rag, you know—and he's doing it ever so much better than Wibley."

Mark Linley grinned.

He was aware of Bob Cherry's remarkable stunt for saving Pop from detection, though Bunter evidently was not.

"I wanted Wib to see him," said Bunter discontentedly. "He's still going on, but it will be bed-time soon. I've looked everywhere for Wibley—he's not in his study. Don't you know where he is?"

"Have you looked in the Rag?" smiled Mark.

"He's not there," said Bunter. "I

fancy he would cut up rusty if he saw Popper doing his part, and all the fellows applauding. Wib wouldn't like it a little bit—he's conceited, you know. It would take him down a peg—make him quite green, in fact. I wish I could find him."

"Just to make him look green?"

"Well, it would do him good to take him down a peg," said Bunter. "I don't like conceited fellows. I offered to take the part of Sir Fulke myself, and he refused, making out that he could do it better than I could, you know. I'd just like him to see Popper doing the part, and all the fellows applauding. Where the dickens can he be?"

"Why not mind your own business?" suggested Mark.

"Oh, really, Linley—"

"Anyhow, buzz off; I'm busy."

"Yah!" retorted Bunter.

He rolled out of the study.

Pop, quite amazed by the words that reached his ears, was standing in the passage, and Bunter came on him, face to face, as he rolled out of Study No. 13.

The fat junior gave a jump.

Only a few minutes ago he had left Popper, as he supposed, in the Rag, got up as the Gallant Cavalier. And here was Pop in the Remove passage, in his ordinary clothes, and without a sign of grease-paint on him.

Bunter blinked at him in astonishment.

"Oh, you've finished!" he exclaimed. "I say, you've changed jolly quickly, Popper! Blessed if I know how you've managed it! I thought you were still going on in the Rag."

"Did you?" said Pop blankly.

He wondered what the Owl of the Remove was driving at.

"I say, Wibley will be wild," said Bunter.

"Will he?"

"Yes, rather! The fellows must have got him away somehow. He would be quite wild at your taking his part like that, and making up as the cavalier in the play. I can't make out where Wibley is. Have you seen him?"

Mark Linley came to the doorway of his study.

He was busy with a Greek paper, which he wanted to finish before dorn; but he left the Greek to take care of itself now.

As Bunter was unaware of the little game that was being played in the Rag, it was evidently better that he should remain unaware of it. Bunter's tongue was long, and seldom still.

Pop looked at the Lancashire junior inquiringly.

"What does this mean, Linley?" he asked. "What is that fat duffer gassing about?"

Linley made him a sign to be silent. Bunter, blinking round at him, caught the sign as it was made.

"I say, what are you making faces at Popper for, Linley?" he asked.

Pop looked more and more astonished.

"Well, I'm going down," said Bunter, as he started for the stairs.

As Wibley was still going strong in the Rag, that apartment was no place for Bunter—at present.

"Hold on, Bunter!" exclaimed Mark hastily.

Billy Bunter blinked round.

"What for?" he demanded.

"Will you help me?"

"No."

"To look for some toffee."

"Yes, old chap."

Bunter rolled back.

"Where is it?" he asked, blinking

Sir Hilton jumped away from the chimney with a roar as a deluge of soot landed in his eye. "Good gad! My eye! Oh gad! Ooooooh!" He gouged savagely at his sooty eye.



round Study No. 13 through his big spectacles.

"Let's look for it," said Mark cheerfully. "Look here, if you can find it, we'll go halves."

"I'm on," agreed Bunter.

He was not an obliging or industrious youth, but he was prepared to take a great deal of trouble in a search for foodstuffs.

"You must be a silly idiot to lose your toffee," he remarked, as he commenced rooting about Study No. 13.

"Well, we can't all have your brains, old chap," said Mark.

"Still, it's rather fatheaded to lose toffee," said Bunter. "But I'll find it all right. Look here, you can leave it to me to find it, if you like. You needn't trouble. Of course, I'll tell you at once if I find it. I shouldn't think of scoffing it without telling you, of course."

Mark chuckled.

"Right-ho!" he agreed.

He joined Popper in the passage, leaving Bunter busily rooting about the study. In a few whispered words he explained to the circus schoolboy what was going on in the Rag.

"Oh my!" murmured Pop.

"Better keep quiet in your study, while I go and give the fellows the tip that you've come in," whispered Mark.

"What-ho!" grinned Pop.

He went into Study No. 1, and Mark Linley hurried down to the Rag.

Wibley of the Remove was still going strong there, thoroughly enjoying the display of his histrionic powers. Fellows were still shouting "Bravo, Popper!" in the pause of Wib's performance.

But the show came to an end now when Mark whispered the news that Popper had returned, and was safe in the House.

Mark returned to his study in the Remove passage. Billy Bunter was still busy there.

"Found it?" asked Mark affably.

Bunter gave him an irritated blink through his big spectacles.

"No, blessed if I know where you can have put it! Look here, Linley, where do you think you put that toffee?"

"Can't imagine," said Mark.

"Well, you must be an ass!"

"Chuck it, if you're tired of looking for it," suggested Mark.

"Oh, I'll have another look!" grunted Bunter.

And he resumed his search—not with much chance of success—for there was, so far as Mark Linley knew, no toffee in the study. But the quest of the imaginary toffee kept Bunter busy till bed-time. It was a very cross and irritated Bunter who joined the Remove on their way to the dormitory.

"I never found that toffee, Linley," he snapped.

"Awfully sorry!" said Mark politely.

"I'll have another look to-morrow," said Bunter.

"I shouldn't trouble," said Mark.

"Why not?"

"Because there isn't any toffee there," explained Mark.

"Wha-aa-t!"

Billy Bunter gave him a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

"There isn't any toffee?" he gasped.

"Not that I know of."

"Why, you—you beast! Mean to say you were pulling my leg?" bawled Bunter.

"Exactly!"

"Why, you—you—you——" Words failed William George Bunter.

He found a little comfort, however, in chipping Wibley in the Remove dormitory. He found Wibley there at last.

"I say, Wibley, where have you been?" asked Bunter. "You missed a jolly good thing in the Rag. Popper's been doing your part in the play."

"Not really?" ejaculated Wibley.

"He jolly well has!" said Bunter. "And I can tell you that he beats you hollow as an actor."

"You don't say so!"

"I do," said Bunter. "He recites the lines ever so much better than you, Wibley, and he looks the part better. He's got a better figure for the part, you see. I fancy Popper will be given

gleaned. Some desperate thought of flight was in his mind, and was evident in his face, and Mr. Quelch's hand dropped promptly on his shoulder. The Remove master's face set like granite.

"Come with me!" he said.

"Look 'ere, sir—" muttered Pop. "Silence!"

Mr. Quelch led him away. A momentary hope rose in Pop's heart that he was to be locked in his study. Escape by the window of the study would have been possible to the acrobat. But Mr. Quelch had not forgotten the episode of Pop's climb out of the window of Study No 1 a week or more ago. A Remove study was not a safe place for a fellow who could climb like a monkey.

With his hand on the junior's shoulder, for Pop was obviously in a mood to bolt at the first opportunity, Mr. Quelch led him up the stairs and turned into a long passage that Pop had never traversed before. But he was aware that it led to the punishment-room; a room seldom used at Greyfriars in modern days, but which had an occasional occupant. Pop had seen the barred window of that secluded room, half hidden by ivy, and his heart sank. From a barred window there was no hope of escape.

Mr. Quelch unlocked the door of the punishment-room and led the hapless Pop into it.

Pop glanced round him dismally.

The window was small and barred with iron. The floor was bare, the furniture meagre, a chair, a table, a bedstead, and a few other things. The bed was not on the bedstead, and there was no sign of recent occupation in the room.

On the table were pen and ink, a Latin grammar, and a sheaf of paper. These were the only entertainments provided for any fellow unfortunate enough to be confined to the punishment-room.

Pop's face was deeply troubled and discouraged.

But there was no sign of relenting in his Form master's look. Mr. Quelch, indeed, had no choice in the matter. As the boy refused to remain within school bounds when ordered to do so, there was no alternative to locking him in. It was such a problem as Mr. Quelch had never had to solve before, but there was only one way of solving it.

"You will remain here, Popper, until calling-over!" said the Form master coldly. "I trust that you will reflect upon your conduct and make up your mind to act in a manner more becoming to a Greyfriars boy. While you are detained here, you will write out the whole conjugation of the verb 'sum', and of two regular and two irregular verbs, both in the active and the passive voice. I do not desire you to waste your time. If this imposition be not written out completely when I come here again, you will be caned."

With that, Mr. Quelch left the punishment-room, locked the door after him, put the key in his pocket, and walked away.

Pop stood staring at the locked door.

He was silent for a long time, his face dark and troubled.

"Oh, my hat!" he ejaculated at last.

He went to the window. It was high up, but by standing on the chair he was able to look out of it. He had a wide view of the scenery surrounding Greyfriars, which was not of much interest to him. He tested the bars with his hands, and found them, as he expected, quite immovable.

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He stepped down from the chair again and crossed to the door. He had heard the Remove master lock it and take away the key; but he wrenched at the lock with a faint hope that it might yield. That very faint hope soon left him.

"Oh my!" he exclaimed.

He sat on the edge of the bedstead, thinking. From the distant clock tower two strokes boomed out.

Pop gritted his teeth.

It was two o'clock, and at three the afternoon performance at Walker's World-Famous Circus was booked to commence.

Jimmy Walker would be expecting him, with his acrobatic outfit all ready for Pop to change. Jimmy had been very doubtful at first, but Pop's success the previous evening had changed all that. The night before Jimmy had not expected Pop, and Pop had come. This afternoon he would be expecting him, and relying on him.

And this time Pop would not come.

He jumped up at last, and moved about the room like a caged animal seeking an outlet to escape.

He would go—he had to go! He could not let Jimmy Walker down after promising him! Somehow or other he would get out and go.

Almost in desperation the circus school-boy approached the chimney. There had not been a fire in the grate for a long time, and in the fireplace there were some old cinders and an accumulation of fallen soot. Pop put his head under the chimney and stared up. The room was high up in the building, and there was no other above it. Far above Pop's upturned face was a blue patch at the top of the chimney-pot.

Pop's eyes gleamed at the circular blue patch of sky.

The chimney was an old-fashioned one, built in the days when chimneys were chimneys. It belonged to the period when chimneys were swept by small boys who clambered up into them from below. There was room for a climber—if a climber cared to face the horrors of the ancient soot, and the danger of emerging on the roof from the wide-mouthed, old chimney-pot. Probably no other fellow at Greyfriars would ever have thought of it, for even if he had succeeded in getting out of the chimney it would have been only to find himself on the roof, at least sixty feet from the ground, and with no visible means of descent.

That, however, which would have deterred any ordinary fellow, did not deter the schoolboy acrobat. The roof of Greyfriars School had no terrors for a performer on the high trapeze.

Pop drew a deep breath, and made up his mind to do it.

He squeezed his way into the chimney and worked upwards. The atmosphere inside was close and stuffy; but it became worse as Pop in his ascent dislodged masses of soot.

Soot slipped past him, spread in clouds around him, clothed him as with a garment of blackness.

He kept his mouth shut, breathed carefully through his nose, and clambered on. There were jutting supports inside the ancient chimney, made for the use of old-time chimney-sweeps, and he had plenty of foothold and handhold. Up he went in clouds of soot, breathing with difficulty, but grimly determined.

More than once it seemed to Pop that he was on the point of suffocating; that he must loose his hold and slip back the way he had come.

But with set teeth he kept grimly on. He gasped with relief when his head came out at last into the open air at the summit of the chimney and he could breathe freely.

Irregular red roofs surrounded him on all sides, and beyond there was a wide-spread panorama of the surrounding country. He could see the Sark winding through green meadows and woodlands in one direction, the smoke of Courtfield, in another the village green of Friardale. Nearer at hand his eyes fell on the playing-fields of Greyfriars, and he made out the figures, tiny in the distance, of the cricketers, where the First Eleven were playing a visiting team.

For some minutes he rested, his arms on the chimney-top, and when he had recovered his breath he clambered out.

The chimney jutted from a slanting roof of red tiles, and the edge of the slant looked over a drop of sixty feet. It might have made any fellow's head swim, but the boy acrobat was accustomed to dangerous heights. With a steady head, and a nerve that did not quiver, Pop crawled along the slanting roof, with certain and terrible death at his elbow if he made a slip. But he did not make a slip.

At a little distance was a small window that jutted from the roof, the window of some attic. Pop reached it and peered in through the dusty and cobwebby glass. The dust and cobwebs on the window showed that the attic was not used. Within, he could see nothing but a bare floor. The window was fastened within by an iron catch that had rusted in its place from disuse. But Pop was far enough from the occupied parts of the building to risk a little noise. With his elbow he knocked in a small pane, and the broken glass fell in a shower into the attic.

He reached through the opening and wrenched back the catch and opened the window.

A few moments more and he had dropped into the attic.

He crossed it quickly to the door; opened the door and looked out. Outside was a passage with a little winding staircase at a distance. It was a part of the building quite unknown to Pop. In his present state, covered with soot from head to foot, he was scarcely recognizable, but he knew that he could not descend the stairs and walk out of the House; one glimpse of him in his present state would have caused a sensation. His idea was to find a window in as secluded a spot as possible, from which he could descend by means of the ivy outside. And in the passage into which he was looking was a window, the sill outside a mass of clinging ivy.

He tiptoed softly from the attic.

In a few minutes the window was open, and he was leaning out. He looked down at a space behind the school buildings, and no one was in sight. He clambered out of the window, and trusted himself to the ivy. It was old and strong, and he clambered down it with the agility of a monkey. And the moment his feet were on the solid earth, he ran.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Sooty!

"I SAY you fellows!"

"Scat!"

"You're going to the circus!" said Billy Bunter accusingly.

He blinked severely at the Famous Five.

"Guilty, my lord!" said Bob Cherry. "You jolly well knew I would come, if you asked me!" declared Bunter. "Right on the wicket!" assented Johnny Bull. "That's why we didn't ask you, old fat man."

"Beast!" Harry Wharton & Co. walked on towards the gates. William George Bunter rolled after them.

He could not help feeling indignant. These fellows, who knew very well that he would like to go to the circus that afternoon, had evidently intended to walk off without mentioning to him that they were going. And if Bunter went it was necessary for him to go in company, for there was the little matter of a shilling for admission to be considered.

Bunter, for once, had a shilling in his possession. But he did not want to expend it on paying for admission to the circus. He had other and more important uses for his cash.

If a fellow's friends couldn't stand him the price of admission to a circus, what was the use of having friends at all? That was how William George Bunter looked at it.

So, indignant as he was, he attached himself to the Famous Five, and rolled out of the school gates with them.

"I say, you fellows, don't walk so fast!" grunted Bunter, as the chums of the Remove started for Friardale. "There's plenty of time for the circus. It doesn't begin till three."

"But you've begun already," said Bob. "Put it on, you men!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I hardly think you ought to go to the circus, Bunter," said Frank Nugent gravely. "Do you consider it safe?"

"Eh! Why shouldn't it be safe?" demanded Bunter.

"Well, I don't know whether they have a freak show at this circus; but if they have, they mayn't let you come away again."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You cheeky ass!" roared Bunter. "Well, you know what happened last time a circus came this way!" said Nugent. "They wanted you for the freak show; and we've all been mourning ever since that they didn't bag you."

Bunter, like the deep and dark blue ocean in the poem, rolled on. Apparently he was undeterred by the danger of being bagged by an enterprising circus proprietor for a freak show.

"I say, you fellows, which of you is going to stand me a bob for going in?" he asked.

"The whichfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bunter."

"I suppose my company's worth a bob!" said Bunter sarcastically.

"Something wrong with your supposer, then," said Bob Cherry. "You'd better get it oiled."

(Continued on next page.)

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!

FRIENDS, readers, and countrymen—as the immortal Bard might have said, but didn't—lend me your jolly old ears! In other words listen in to the

EXTRA SPECIAL NEWS

which I am broadcasting this week. Of course, I rather let the cat out of the bag last week, but it's possible that some of my readers might have missed it, and, anyway, you can't have too much of a good thing—and this is certainly *some* good thing! I am referring, of course, to next week's super issue—and the grand FREE GIFTS which each reader will get in that and the subsequent numbers. Think of it—an album complete with twenty-eight photographs of the English and Australian Test Match cricketers whose names are on the lips of everybody interested in the superlative summer sport—and who isn't? It's a gift worth having. A gift that will make your chums look at you with envy—unless they, of course, are sensible enough to join our happy band of readers without further delay.

Next week you'll have the first part of this magnificent gift in your hands. There'll be an album in every issue, and, in addition to the album, the first four "sticky-back" photographs of the collection—two English stars and two champion "Aussies." Then, in subsequent issues, there will be other photographs of the series—four in each issue. In seven weeks you'll have the finest souvenir of the Test Matches that could be published—and it will be a souvenir that will be well worth keeping, mark my words!

Now don't be selfish. When you know of a good thing—pass it on to a chum. Tell him what's happening in this little paper of ours next week, and urge him, too, to "get in on the ground floor," as Fisher T. Fish would say. Better still, hand him this issue when you have done with it, and let him read for himself. And if he doesn't thank you for putting him wise to this latest and greatest venture of ours—well, call me a Dutchman!

BUT there is much more in next week's issue besides the free gift album and photographs. I have arranged a brand new programme of features for you—features that

will put the MAGNET even further ahead of other boys' papers than it has so far been. First of all, a grand new series of Greyfriars yarns commence—and it is no exaggeration to say that these will be found to be amongst the funniest and yet, at the same time, most thrilling and dramatic of any that Frank Richards has written for you. The first of the series is entitled:

"THE HIDDEN HAND!"

Next on the list comes our fine new serial—a real tip-top yarn of flying adventure during the Great War. This is called:

"THE FLYING SPY!"

and when I tell you that the author is George E. Rochester—well, you know that you're in for a dashed fine, topping yarn of first-rate adventure. Rochester knows the things of which he writes, for he was a flying officer during the War. So look out for thrills!

Hundreds of readers have written and asked me if we could have another issue of the ever-popular "Greyfriars Herald." In response to these requests, I am giving, next week, a special "Herald" supplement, which is sure to please our old readers, while new readers will be delighted to make the acquaintance of the contributors to that sparkling little school journal.

But that doesn't exhaust our store of new features—not by a long chalk! Our Greyfriars rhymester has been sharpening up his pencil, and has turned in a new series of verses, dealing with various correspondents at the school. You'll find the first of these next week. And, in addition to all that, you'll have nutshell histories of the four cricketers whose photographs are presented with that issue! Needless to say, your Editor will still continue to invite you into the office, and there will be jokes and limcricks as usual.

How's that for a programme? I tell you, if any fellow misses getting next week's issue, he'll feel like kicking himself when he knows what he's missed! Take my tip, chums, and make sure of *your* copy

by getting your newsagent to order one specially for you!

Excuse me taking up so much space—but it was worth it, wasn't it?

However, now for a few

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES

to several queries which have been sent in this week.

"Interested," of Maidstone, wants to know how much it would cost to be fully educated at a public school? The fees range from £52 per year to £230 for boarders, but there are also optional subjects, for which extra fees are charged. Day boys' fees, in schools which take day boys, range from £9 to £90. Different schools have different ages of entry. Greyfriars is situated near Courtfield, in Kent.

"Regular Reader," of Mitcham, asks which city is the capital of the United States of America? Washington, in the district of Columbia, is the legislative capital. New York, however, is the commercial capital.

R. C. (no address) asks who are England's three wisest men. That depends! I should say: "Mr. X," of the MAGNET; The Oracle, of the "Gem"; and the "Would You Believe It?" man of the "Popular!"

He also asks where Gladstone was born? William Ewart Gladstone was born at 62, Rodney Street, Liverpool, on December 29th, 1809.

One of my puzzled readers wants to know this:

CAN YOU SPELL "SHAKESPEARE"?

Or, in other words, which is the correct way of spelling the poet's name? I must confess that I don't know—and neither does anyone! Shakespeare himself wrote it in many different ways, such as "Shackspere," "Shakspeare," and "Shaxpr." Some time ago an American worked out the many different ways in which the name could be spelled, and, as a result of his efforts, came to the conclusion that it could be spelled over four thousand different ways! My reader must try to puzzle them out for himself—and then spell the name whichever way he pleases.

A final word before I close: Don't forget to order next week's BUMPER FREE GIFT NUMBER as early as possible.

YOUR EDITOR

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"Oh, really, Cherry—"

The Famous Five walked on rather quickly. Billy Bunter panted after them. So far from appearing to realise that Bunter's company was worth at least a bob, the Famous Five did not appear to yearn for it even free, gratis, and for nothing!

"I say, you fellows—"

"Race you to Friardale Green, Bunter!" said Bob.

"Beast! Hold on!" gasped Bunter, as the chums of the Remove broke into a trot. "I'm not going to run. There's nothing to hurry for."

"There jolly well is!" said Bob.

"Well, what for, you ass?"

"You, old bean!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind to tell Quelch about the trick you played on him last night."

"Oh, what!"

"Think I don't know?" jeered Bunter. "Skinner told me this morning—"

"I'll punch Skinner's nose!" said Bob.

"It wasn't Popper in the Rag at all—it was Wibley all the time," said Bunter. "I jolly well know now! You were pulling Quelch's leg! He would jolly well skin you if he knew! Popper was out of bounds, and I fancy he was at the circus—just where that low bouncer would be."

"Well, it seems to attract low bouncers," said Bob, "as that's where you're heading yourself."

"Of course, I'm not going to tell Quelch," said Bunter. "I'm no sneak. I hope. But one good turn deserves another, see! Now, which of you is going to stand me—"

"Nobody here can stand you at any price," said Bob, shaking his head. "You're one of those things that no fellow could stand."

"I mean, which of you is going to stand me a bob?" roared Bunter.

"Echo answers which!"

There was a pattering of rapid footsteps in the leafy lane behind the juniors. They glanced round—and then stared at the strange figure that was coming up the road at a run.

At the first glance they took him for a chimney-sweep. From head to foot he was sooty—his clothes, his face, his hair, reeked with soot. He paused in his run as he came up with them, gasping a little, and a cloud of soot flew from him.

"Here, keep off!" yelled Bunter.

"What the dickens!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, staring blankly at the chimney-sweep.

In spite of the garment of soot, there seemed something familiar about him.

The strange figure gave them a sooty grin.

"My! Don't you know me?" asked a familiar voice.

"Pop!" gasped the Famous Five.

They knew the voice, if not the sooty face, of the circus schoolboy of Greyfriars.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton. "It's Pop! What the thump—"

"The popfulness is terrific, and the sootfulness is also great!" remarked the nabob of Bhanipur.

Pop grinned through the soot.

"Do I look a picture?" he asked.

"You jolly well do!" said Bob. "Blessed if I didn't take you for a relation of Inky's at first."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My esteemed idiotic Bob!" ejaculated Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Quelch locked me in, and I had to climb out of a chimbley!" explained THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,168.

Pop. "Keep it dark! I got to get to the circus!"

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Bunter, his eyes wide and round behind his big spectacles. "I say, you fellows, I can't be seen walking with a fellow like that! Look here, Popper, you clear off!"

Pop chuckled.

"I'm in a hurry!" he said. "I got to get ready for my show. If you fellows want to see the King of the Trapeze in his big act, you'd better roll up to Walker's World-Famous this afternoon."

"We're going there now," said Harry. "I—I say, kid, there'll be a fearful row about this! Did Quelch lock you in the punishment-room?"

"Just that!"

"Then he's bound to miss you, when he goes to let you out."

"Who cares?" said Pop. "He won't go till calling-over, and the show will be through by then."

"But—but afterwards—"

"Afterwards can take care of itself," said the circus schoolboy. "I got to help old Jimmy; I ain't going to let a man down! See you later!"

And Pop ran on, covering the ground at great speed in the direction of the village.

CAN YOU RHYME?

For submitting the following Greyfriars limerick, Miss Betty Vick, of 10, St. Botolph's Avenue, Sevenoaks, Kent, has been awarded a useful leather pocket wallet.

Mark Linley's a scholarship boy;
And work seems to be his chief joy.
He's won prizes galore—
And he's sure to win more!
For his brain he knows how to employ.

NOW YOU HAVE A TRY,
CHUM!

"Well, my only hat!" said Bob, with a deep breath.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"Shan't! You haven't settled yet which of you is going to stand me a bob at the circus."

"Go and eat coke!"

"If my company isn't valued," said Bunter with dignity, "I'll walk back to Greyfriars—"

"Good!"

"Of course, I'm not going to mention that I've seen Popper out of bounds. Still, it might slip out—"

"Come on, you fat frump!" said Bob gruffly. "We'll see you through at the circus. Only, shut up!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shut up!" roared Bob.

And Billy Bunter shut up. The important matter was settled now. Somebody was going to stand the necessary "bob." Who stood it was a matter of no consequence to William George Bunter, so long as it was not William George himself.

The juniors walked on towards the village green. Pop had already disappeared ahead.

"Hallo, ballo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "It's raining Poppers this afternoon! Here comes jolly old Sir Hilton, of that ilk."

Sir Hilton Popper came in sight from the direction of the village. The tall baronet was walking with great strides

and a frowning brow. He did not look in a good temper—but that was nothing new for Sir Hilton Popper. The lord of Popper Court seldom looked amiable.

The juniors glanced at him rather curiously. Pop—in his sooty disguise—must have passed the baronet in the lane; but the soot had stood him in good stead, for evidently Sir Hilton had not recognised his nephew. Had he recognised him, certainly he would not have allowed him to proceed on his way to the circus.

As the baronet came up the juniors capped him respectfully, as in duty bound to a governor of the school.

"I say, you fellows!" whispered Bunter. "He must have passed Popper—"

"Shut up, you ass!"

"He couldn't have known it was Popper, you know," said Bunter. "But suppose—Ow! Wow! What are you stamping on my foot for, you beast?"

Sir Hilton Popper came to a halt, and as he evidently desired to speak to the juniors, they halted also. Bob gave Bunter a ferocious glare, as a warning to be silent.

"Ah! Wharton!" said Sir Hilton Popper. "You are in my nephew's Form at Greyfriars, I think?"

"Yes, sir," answered Harry.

"Probably you know where my nephew is at the present moment," said Sir Hilton.

What Wharton knew on that subject he certainly had no intention of confiding to Sir Hilton Popper. He assumed a reflective look.

"I believe our Form master has gated him, sir," he said. "He's not allowed out of the school, for some reason, at present."

"Then he is in the school now?" asked Sir Hilton.

"I saw him in the quadrangle soon after dinner, sir," answered Harry. "We should have liked him to come out with us if he had been allowed."

"But in the present lamentable circumstances, sir, we were obligefully compelled to dispense with his charming and absurd company," said Hurree Singh.

Sir Hilton stared at the Nabob for a moment, and then turned to the captain of the Remove again.

"It is a very singular thing," he said. "I have passed the circus on the village green, and there are many prominent announcements that a performer named Pop is to appear in the ring. This was the name used by my nephew when he was—h'm!—attached to that wretched circus, as is, unfortunately, too well known. As you are my nephew's Form-fellows, you are probably acquainted with his movements, and you realise, of course, that it is your duty to give me any information in your power."

The chums of the Remove were very far indeed from realising anything of the sort. However, they did not say so.

"I can scarcely believe that even my unruly and disobedient nephew would venture to appear at the circus as a performer," said Sir Hilton. "Neither does it seem possible that the school authorities could be so careless as to allow him the opportunity. Nevertheless, it is very singular that the name under which he formerly appeared should now be placarded all over the village. It is very singular indeed."

"The singularity is terrific and preposterous, worthy sir," said Hurree Singh.

Sir Hilton stared at him again for a moment.

"Can you boys tell me anything on the subject?" he asked. "You should know, as my nephew's Form-fellows."

"I'm afraid we can't tell you anything, sir," said Harry politely.

Sir Hilton gave a grunt.

He was evidently not satisfied in his mind. However, as there was nothing to be got from the juniors, he gave them a curt nod and strode on.

They smiled at one another when his back was turned, and walked on to the village.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Gone!

MR. QUELCH sighed. It was the sight of a tall figure striding towards the House that drew the sigh from the Remove master.

Of all the members of the governing body of Greyfriars, Sir Hilton Popper was the one most frequently seen at the school, and least appreciated.

Since his nephew had been placed in the Remove Sir Hilton had been more in evidence than ever, and Mr. Quelch could not help feeling that he had altogether too much of both the nephew and the uncle.

Sir Hilton passed out of his view from his study window, and the Remove master comforted himself with the reflection that, after all, the visitor was most likely calling on the Head.

But the comfort derived from that reflection was of short duration.

About ten minutes later there came a tap at the door of the Remove master's study, and it opened to reveal the lord of Popper Court.

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet and begged his visitor to enter with all the politeness he could muster. With an effort he assumed the mechanical smile with which a schoolmaster greets parents and relations of his boys.

Sir Hilton, however, did not smile.

He was frowning. His greeting was brief and barely polite.

"No doubt you will guess the object of my call," he said. "My nephew—"

"Quite so," said Mr. Quelch, suppressing a groan. "And probably you will desire to see the Head—"

"I have seen the Head, and he has referred me to you, as my nephew's Form master."

"Ah! Yes—quite!" murmured Mr. Quelch. He could not help feeling that it was hardly cricket, on the Head's part, to land the visitor on him in this way. However, there was no help for it. "Pray be seated, Sir Hilton."

Sir Hilton, however, preferred to stand.

"I am somewhat disturbed and distressed," he declared. "My nephew has, as you know, given me considerable trouble. The story of his somewhat unsavoury past has somehow spread over the school, though I desired it to be kept a secret. He has sought more than once to renew his associations with the miserable circus to which

he once belonged. Only yesterday I found him at the place, and brought him back to the school."

"Yes! Quite!"

"It is scarcely fair to me," continued Sir Hilton, "that such a burden should be placed on my shoulders. Only a strong sense of duty prevents me from washing my hands entirely of this troublesome boy."

Mr. Quelch, perhaps, wondered inwardly whether three hundred a year had anything to do with it. Sir Hilton received that sum for his guardianship under the will of the relative who had left Pop a fortune.

Still, there was no doubt that the testy old gentleman was, to some extent, earning that three hundred a

"I have locked him up in the punishment-room, after an attempt to break boards," said Mr. Quelch.

Sir Hilton grunted approval.

"That was judicious!" he agreed. "You are sure that he is still there?"

"Quite sure!"

"The boy climbs like a monkey!" gasped Sir Hilton. "If there is any means of escape—"

"There is none!"

"I remember the room," said Sir Hilton. "I was, in fact, confined



"You ain't going to spoil Jimmy Walker's show, you ain't! You 'ook it afore something 'appens to you," said Pop. Panting with wrath, Sir Hilton made a cut at Pop with his riding-whip.

year. Moreover, in these days of reckless taxation, three hundred a year was really only two hundred a year, when the income-tax and sur-tax had done with it. Sir Hilton, perhaps, was beginning to think that the game was not worth the candle.

"Can you assure me," went on the baronet, "that the wretched boy is not at this moment disgracing himself, his school, and the name he bears by performing in that detestable circus?"

"Certainly!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I must tell you, sir, that the name he used when he was a circus performer is advertised all over the neighbourhood," snapped Sir Hilton. "It is undoubtedly the fact that an—an acrobat, under the name of 'Pop,' appeared in the circus last night."

"Some other person—"

"He is advertised to perform this afternoon. It is odd, at least, that another person should be advertised under the same name."

"No doubt. But—"

"Where is the boy now?"

there on one occasion, when I was a Greyfriars boy. I believe it is safe; yet perhaps you will be kind enough, Mr. Quelch, to visit the room with me while I am here, in order that I may see with my own eyes that the boy is not out of bounds."

"I assure you, sir—"

"No doubt, no doubt; but seeing is believing!" said Sir Hilton, with a snort. "I prefer to see with my own eyes."

Mr. Quelch, in silence, sorted out the key of the punishment-room. He had no desire to negotiate staircases and long passages. But it was, perhaps, the quickest way of getting rid of his unwelcome visitor.

"Please follow me," he said.

Sir Hilton was pleased to follow him. Mr. Quelch rustled away; and the tall baronet strode after him, and they arrived at the door of the punishment-room.

The key was inserted in the lock, and Mr. Quelch threw the door open.

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"Popper," he said, "your guardian has called—"

He broke off suddenly.

He blinked round the room in amazement.

It was empty.

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Remove master.

Sir Hilton, standing in the doorway, gave a snort. His eye glittered round the room through his eyeglass.

"Well?" he snorted. "Where is the boy?"

"He—he—he was here——" stammered Mr. Quelch.

"Is he here now?"

"Apparently not! I—I cannot understand——" Mr. Quelch gazed round him in bewilderment.

Sir Hilton set his lips in a tight line.

"My suspicion, then, was well founded," he said. "The boy was locked in here; but he has escaped——"

"It—it—it would appear so!" gasped the bewildered Remove master. "But I—I cannot understand—the door was locked, the bars on the window are intact—it is inexplicable——"

His eyes fell on a mass of soot in the firegrate. Understanding dawned on him at last.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "The boy must have climbed out by the chimney!"

"Good gad!" ejaculated Sir Hilton.

He stared at the sooty grate; then, approaching the fireplace, he bent his tall head, and stared up the wide old chimney. Perhaps he expected to see Pop still there, in the act of climbing out. He did not see Pop; he saw only a patch of blue sky over the chimney-top. Still, he was not wholly unrewarded, for a fragment of soot chose that inopportune moment for tumbling down the chimney, and Sir Hilton received it in the eye that was not protected by an eyeglass.

He jumped away from the chimney with a roar.

"Oh!" he spluttered. "Good gad! My eye! Oh gad! Ooooooh!" He gouged savagely at his sooty eye.

"Sir Hilton! What—Is the boy still there?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Ooooooh! No, sir! He is not there! Woooooh! But I have been blinded by falling soot!" shrieked Sir Hilton. "Good gad! I have soot in my eye—and soot in my—groogh—mouth! Good gad!"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch.

Sir Hilton gouged and glared.

Mr. Quelch waited politely for him to finish gouging and glaring. Where the baronet's face was not smeared with soot it was crimson with rage.

"The boy is gone!" he spluttered at last. "He is gone—gone to that disgraceful circus——"

"I doubt whether he could descend from the roof," said Mr. Quelch. "Probably he is still——"

"Nonsense!"

"Sir Hilton!"

"Nonsense, I repeat!" hooted the baronet. "The young rascal can climb anywhere, like a monkey. He has gone to the circus."

"I doubt——"

"Nonsense!" roared Sir Hilton. "I recall now that a boy passed me in Friardale Lane, running towards the village—a boy smothered in soot! I supposed at the time that it was some chimney-sweep, and was only careful to avoid coming into contact with him——"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I did not recognise him; but now I am perfectly well aware who he was!" roared Sir Hilton. "He was my nephew, sir, making for the circus——"

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after escaping from this room by the chimney, sir."

"It—it is possible——"

"It is not merely possible, sir; it is certain!" boomed Sir Hilton. "And I shall proceed immediately to the circus and bring him back, sir. I shall chastise him, sir, with the utmost severity, and then hand him over to you, and you will be kind enough to take more adequate precautions in the future——"

"Really, sir——"

"I will go immediately—at once——"

The baronet strode to the door.

"One moment, sir——" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"What? What? I cannot delay one moment, sir!" hooted Sir Hilton. "It is my intention to drag that wretched boy away——"

"But—but before you go—one moment——"

"Nonsense!"

"But—but your face——" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"My face——"

"Your face is smothered with soot, sir—you really cannot appear in public in that state——" stammered the Remove master.

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Quite so! Good gad! I—I had better—better wash, I suppose! Kindly show me——"

"Certainly; pray come with me."

Sir Hilton Popper had a hasty, but very necessary, wash; and then, in a newly-swept and garnished state, strode forth from Greyfriars.

Don't forget to order next week's amazing Free Gift Issue of the "Magnet" in good time. A regular order to your newsagent will eliminate the chance of disappointment!

Mr. Quelch watched him go. And he could not help thinking how much more peaceful his life as a Form master would be if Sir Hilton Popper, and Pop of the Remove, vanished into space together.

Unaware, and quite regardless, of Mr. Quelch's reflections, Sir Hilton Popper strode out of the gates and started for Friardale.

He knew now where his nephew was; he had no doubt of it. Pop the Boy Acrobat, advertised far and wide by the World-Famous Circus, was his nephew, Cecil Popper; and Pop of the Circus was, in those very moments, performing his old part in the ring. He had not the slightest doubt of it; and his wrath was at boiling point. He gripped his riding-whip in a convulsive hand as he strode along the lane. To judge by the black scowl on Sir Hilton's brow, and the glare in his glittering eyes, there was a hectic time in store for Pop of the Circus.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER,

Unrehearsed!

POM, pom, pom pom!

"Walk up, gents!"

Pom, pom, pom!

Harry Wharton & Co. walked up, in the midst of a throng heading across the village green to the big circus tent.

Outside the entrance stood a clown thumping on a drum, while from within the tent came the strains of more or less musical music. From somewhere

came the trumpeting of an elephant; and there was a sound of galloping hoofs from the arena. It was quite a cheerful scene, in the bright summer sunlight, and it looked as if Mr. Jimmy Walker was getting a "full house" on this occasion, at least.

There were plenty of Greyfriars fellows in the crowd, and fellows from Redoliffe and Highcliffe, and people from Friardale and Courtfield and the surrounding villages. And the name of "Pop" was on many tongues. Greyfriars fellows especially were interested in "Pop"; as they knew that Popper of the Remove had performed in that very circus under that very name. But only Harry Wharton & Co. knew that the acrobat was the same "Pop"; so far as the other fellows knew, Popper was locked up in the punishment-room at the school.

The Famous Five found good seats on the front benches, and Billy Bunter plumped down there with them. A little farther along was Coker of the Fifth, with Potter and Greene; and Coker gave the Remove chums a rather aggressive glare, apparently not pleased by the proximity of these fags. Bob Cherry waved his hand agreeably to Coker.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Horace!" he roared.

Coker flushed crimson. It was frightfully humiliating for the Fifth Form man to be recognised, and greeted, in public by a junior of the Lower Fourth—and especially called by his front name.

Coker looked another way, hoping that the assembling public had not noticed.

As a matter of fact, the assembling public were thinking of the circus performance, and not in the least of Horace Coker; but it was never easy for the great Coker to realise that he was not the cynosure of all eyes.

"Dear old Coker," chuckled Bob. "See his blushes! He's afraid people will think he knows Lower Fourth chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Horace!" went on Bob, in a voice like unto that of the Bull of Bashan. "Look this way, old chap. I say, Coker! Deaf, old bean? I say, has Prout whacked you this morning?"

Coker's face rivalled a beetroot in its hue.

Potter and Greene grinned.

"Gone deaf, Coker?" bawled Bob. "I say, a man told me your Form master had whacked you this morning for not washing your neck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker, goaded to fury, glared round at the cheery Bob.

"You cheeky little sweep!" he roared. "Do you want me to come over there and thrash you?"

"Dear, dear!" said Bob. "Coker seems quite cross."

"The crossfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurreo Singh.

"I suppose Prout laid it on hard?" said Bob. "But it was really your own fault, Coker. You should have washed your neck! We always wash our necks in the Lower Fourth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker jumped up. He started along the row of seats towards the group of Removites. But there was not much room between the rows of benches, and there were many knees in the way, and loud voices told Coker to sit down and to chuck it.

Coker gave it up, and returned to his seat, contenting himself with a homicidal glare at Bob.

"Shut up, old chap!" said Nugent. "The show's beginning."

And Bob transferred his attention from Coker to the ring. In the ring stood Mr. Jimmy Walker, resplendent in white waistcoat and silk hat, with a whip in his hand. Mr. Walker's fat and purple face wore a cheery smile as he watched the seats filling fast. He recognised Harry Wharton & Co. in the front row, and lifted his shining silk hat to them in respectful salute, and they waved back to him cheerily.

Horses were careering round the ring, and a clown was leaping through paper hoops. The chums of the Remove were prepared to enjoy the show from beginning to end; but it was the King of the Trapeze that they were most keen to see. And from the remarks they heard among the audience, it was easy to tell that their keenness was shared by the "people in front." Pop's performance the previous evening had made quite a sensation, and many people had come to see it a second time, and had brought their friends with them. There was no doubt that Pop was a very valuable asset to Walker's World-Famous Circus.

"Pop next!" said Harry Wharton at last, looking at his programme, as a juggling turn came to an end.

"Good!" said Bob. He glanced round the packed benches. "My hat! There's a lot of Greyfriars men here! Some of them are bound to know him!"

"Well, he will look different in his circus get-up," said Harry. "I hope he won't be spotted. I suppose he thinks he has a chance of getting back into the punishment-room before Quelchy goes to let him out at call-over."

"Precious little chance, I think," said Johnny Bull. "But I wish him luck. It's jolly decent of him to stand by an old pal like this."

"Yes, rather! But I'm afraid it's all up with him this time," said Harry.

"Let's hope for the best," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Hallo, hallo, hallo, here he comes, on that same bullifant we saw him on that time Bunter butted into the procession."

There was a shout of applause as Pop of the Circus entered the ring. He came in mounted on the neck of an enormous elephant, standing erect, a slim and lissome figure in tights and spangles.

The Famous Five joined in the roar of applause that greeted him, with all the power of their lungs.

The elephant trampled round the ring, the acrobat turning somersaults on his back, and Joey, the clown, evoking roars of laughter by affecting to imitate the performance, and coming a cropper each time.

Then the Wonderful Boy Acrobat swung himself to the trapeze, and all eyes followed him up to the summit of the great tent.

The performance that followed was breathless.

Harry Wharton & Co. watched it, spellbound, and there was a hush in the crowded tent. At a dizzy height Pop swung by his toes, and then by his heels, and then launched himself through the air and caught the lower trapeze, and swung on it, sitting, without holding, and lighting a cigarette. And then he flew through the air again, and this time it looked as if he must fall; but he landed in the tan in a series of somersaults, and stood bowing, amid thunders of applause.

Then the elephant picked him up in his trunk, and paraded round the ring with him, while the audience cheered and cheered.

As he passed the spot where the

Famous Five sat, curled in the elephant's trunk, Pop winked at them. The juniors grinned.

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES!

Once more our tame Rhymester bursts into song—result: PETER HAZELDENE characterised in verse.



PETER HAZELDENE'S a lad
Who's popular and jolly:
He's never really downright bad,
Though oft he stoops to folly.

When funds are high, this youthful blade

Will follow the wrong turning;
But when they're low he'll find he's strayed,

And to reform starts yearning.

The strait and narrow path he finds
Is much too dull to follow:
He much prefers a way that winds
Towards some bright To-morrow.
Our Peter is a wayward lad
Who treads where fancy pleases:
And yet, he's not entirely bad,
Nor full of crafty wheezes.

More likable than many chaps,
He's neither rogue nor "twister";
He gets the good in him, perhaps,
From Marjorie, his sister.
And so that Peter never shall
Bring down disgrace upon her,
Harry Wharton—loyal pal—
Oft feels he's bound in honour—

To Rescue Peter when he strays
In search of Pleasure's bubble,
And teaches him to mend his ways,
And hauls him out of trouble.
Then Peter's full of deep remorse,
And burdened down with sorrow:
He'll mend his wicked ways, of course—
'Till funds arrive to-morrow!

Young Hazel, if he took some care,
Would make a star at fielding:
For football, too, he has a flair—
A goalie—all unyielding.
For when it suits his purpose, he
Is good as any other—
And Marjorie has cause to be
Quite proud of her young brother.

Now one and all, pray raise a glass,
To drink a toast to Peter,
And Marjorie, that dainty lass,
You could not find a sweeter!
So swig it down, with cheers for each:
Young Peter's worth our toasting,
And Marjorie's a perfect peach—
And that's not idle boasting!

"My hat!" It was Coker's voice. "That acrobat fellow looks a lot like that kid Popper, you chaps!"

"Might be the same chap, on his looks!" remarked Potter.

"Well, it can't be, of course!" said Coker. "But really he looks a great deal like him! I suppose he was a success in the circus, and they've got another kid to carry on, under the same name."

"That's it!" agreed Potter.

And the Famous Five smiled as they heard these remarks.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up now?" ejaculated Bob Cherry, looking round, as there was a sound of disturbance behind.

"Here, you sit down—"

"You can't go in front—"

"Don't shove there!"

"Think you're going in front when you come in late? Cheek! You get to the back, old codger!"

Some person who had just entered was pushing down a narrow aisle between the benches to the front. Naturally, that proceeding evoked indignation on all sides, and many voices addressed the pushing person.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob. "The fat's in the jolly old fire now, you men. It's old Popper!"

"Great pip!"

The Famous Five stared round at the newcomer.

Sir Hilton Popper, his brows black and his eyes glinting, was tramping down between the benches, heedless of the irritated objurgations on all sides.

Certainly Sir Hilton had not come in to see the performance, and was not pushing for a front seat, as the people round him supposed.

Regardless of the excitement, the angry old gentleman pushed on, and reached the barrier of the ring.

Pop, in the elephant's trunk, was passing the spot he reached. A sudden change came over Pop's smiling face as he saw him.

Sir Hilton's fierce eye glittered at him. He recognised his nephew at once, though his aspect was very different from his appearance at Greyfriars.

Sir Hilton made a furious gesture to him.

"You young rascal!" he thundered. "Come away at once!"

The elephant lumbered on.

"Sit down!" came an angry roar from behind. "Get out of the light! You with the eyeglass! You with the mug! Get out! Sit down! Chuck him out!"

Sir Hilton did not heed. Indeed, possibly he did not realise that such remarks were made by common persons to so great a man as himself.

He shook his fist at the acrobat in the elephant's trunk.

"Boy, you hear me? I command you to come to me at once!" he roared.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "The game's up for poor old Pop now!"

"The upfulness is terrific!"

A circus attendant ran down the benches and touched Sir Hilton on the arm.

"Ere, you chuck this, sir!" he said. "You can't kick up a shindy 'ere!"

Sir Hilton's eyeglass turned on him, with a glare.

"What?" he roared. "What?"

"You keep quiet, you!" said the man warmly. "If you've been drinking, you should keep out of this 'ere circus! You behave!"

"Good gad!" gasped Sir Hilton Popper.

"Now, then, out of it!" said the circus man. "There's room behind for you! You can't stand 'ere in front! Get a move on!"

"You impudent rascal!" roared Sir Hilton. "I am here to take that boy away—my nephew—"

"You're drunk, you mean! Look 'ere! Are you going quiet, or ain't you going quiet?" demanded the circus man.

"Stand back, you ruffian!"

"That does it!" said the circus man. "Out you go!" And he grasped Sir Hilton Popper by the shoulder, forcibly.

The next moment he gave a yell as the enraged baronet struck, and the circus man rolled on the ground. There was a roar of excitement, and nearly all the audience were on their feet now. Sir Hilton glared round him, and glared at Pop in the ring.

Then he swung over the barrier and stepped into the sawdust.

Mr. Jimmy Walker hurried towards him.

"Look 'ere, sir—" expostulated Jimmy Walker.

"You rascal!" roared Sir Hilton. "My nephew is here—I have seen him! He has run away from school to play in this rascally circus! I am here to take him back! I demand that he be handed over to me instantly— instant!"

"Oh, my eye!" groaned Jimmy Walker. "This 'ere is a go!"

Sir Hilton pushed him roughly aside and strode across the tan. The elephant had come to a halt in the centre of the arena, and Pop, standing on the towering neck of the huge animal, was staring towards his guardian. The sudden irruption of Sir Hilton Popper on the scene had been a surprise to him, and had taken him quite aback. The King of the Trapeze had quite forgotten that he was Popper of the Remove, till the unexpected appearance of his guardian reminded him of it.

"Oh my!" murmured Pop.

Sir Hilton strode towards him.

He halted close to the huge elephant and glared at his nephew. Pop, for the moment, was out of his reach.

"Descend, you young scoundrel!" roared Sir Hilton.

Pop's eyes gleamed.

"Not 'arf!" he answered.

"I command you—"

"Stow it!"

"What? What? You—you young rascal—you insolent young villain—" Sir Hilton fairly spluttered.

Pop looked down at him grimly.

"You 'ook it!" he said. "You're interrupting the show. You ain't going to spoil Jimmy Walker's show, you ain't! You 'ook it afore someth'ing 'appens to you. Take my tip, and 'ook it!"

Sir Hilton, panting with wrath, made a cut at him with his riding-whip.

Pop set his lips.

"That does it!" he snapped.

He gave the elephant a touch and a muttered word. The well-trained animal obeyed at once.

Before Sir Hilton Popper realised what was about to happen, the elephant's trunk curled round him, and he was plucked off his feet.

His riding-whip went one way, his hat another, as he was lifted in the elephant's trunk, his arms and legs flying wildly in the air.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Oh crikey!" gurgled Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows—he, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The elephant lumbered round the ring, Pop standing on his neck, and the

amazed and bewildered baronet struggling and wriggling in his trunk. And from all the packed audience in the World-Famous Circus came a delighted roar.

"Bravo!"

"Hurrah!"

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Enough for Sir Hilton!

"BRAVO!"

"Hurrah!"

That unrehearsed "turn" seemed to have taken the audience of Walker's World-Famous Circus by storm.

Everyone was on his feet now, roaring with laughter and cheering. Sir Hilton Popper was known to most of the people present, but he was not popular. His autocratic manners and customs did not make him beloved. The sight of the lord of Popper Court struggling, and wriggling, and writhing, in the trunk of the circus elephant, was a sheer delight to the audience. They roared and cheered and stamped and yelled.

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my eye!" gasped Mr. Jimmy Walker, wiping his eyes. "Pop, you young limb, you— Oh, my eye! Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"He, he, he!" squeaked Billy Bunter, in great glee. "I say, you fellows, fancy old Popper giving a performance in a circus! He, he, he!"

"That's old Popper, you men!" gasped Coker of the Fifth. "That's a governor of Greyfriars! He must have been drinking! Letting the school down like that in public—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They ought to shift him off the governing board, after this!" said Coker indignantly. "Making a fool of himself in public like this—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "That kid Pop is some lad! Blessed if I should like to be his guardian."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There'll be an awful row about this!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"The rowfulness will be terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo! Go it, old Popper! Go it, Sir Hilton!" came a roar. "Hurrah!"

It seemed like the end of all things, the break-up of the universe, to the unfortunate lord of Popper Court.

His brain swam as he swung on round the ring, held high by the curling trunk that gripped him like a band of steel.

His eyeglass swung at the end of its cord, his eyes almost bulged from his head, his hair very nearly stood on end.

The expression on his face was extraordinary.

"Let me go!" he panted hoarsely. "Boy! Scoundrel! Villain! Release me from this—this beast! Boy!"

Pop grinned down at him serenely from the elephant's neck.

"Don't you be frightened," he said reassuringly. "The bullifant won't 'urt you! Bless you, he's used to carrying folks in his trunk. He's carried me many a time—now it's your turn."

"Wretch! Scoundrel! Villain—" stuttered the helpless baronet.

"You asked for it," said Pop. "You butted in where you wasn't wanted, old Popper, and now you got what you asked for. You ain't going to be let go."

"I—I—I—"

"Why, the people in front are fair rising to this!" grinned Pop. "They like it! Can't you 'ear them?"

You're getting the 'ands! Why, old bean, you've brought down the 'ouse."

"Hurrah! Bravo! Ha, ha, ha!" came the roar. The circus tent rang and echoed with the din.

"Pop, you young limb!" gasped Jimmy Walker. "You let the gent go! You 'ear me, you young sweep, you! Let him go!"

"You go and chop chips, old Jimmy," retorted Pop. "Didn't he ask for it? Now he's going to 'ave it!"

"Help!" shrieked Sir Hilton. "Help! Police! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo!"

Sir Hilton's bulging eyes glared at Pop, who grinned at him.

"Boy! Wretch! Dastard!" he gurgled. "Release me! I am done with you—I wash my hands of you! You shall be expelled from Greyfriars! You shall never enter my house again! I disown you! I cast you off! I will never hear your name mentioned again! Wretch! Villain!"

"You mean that, old codger?" asked Pop eagerly. "You mean you ain't going to worrit a bloke no more?"

"Rascal! I cast you off!" shrieked Sir Hilton. "I disown you! I am done with you! Release me!"

"Ear! 'Ear!" said Pop.

He gave the elephant a touch and a word. The huge animal came to a halt; the trunk uncurled, and Sir Hilton was set on his feet in the tan.

He stood crimson, breathless, gasping, hardly knowing whether he was on his heels or his head.

For some moments he could not speak. Then he shook his fist at the cheery boyish face that grinned down at him from the elephant.

"I am done with you!" he gurgled. "Do not dare to return to Greyfriars. You shall not be admitted there! I cast you off! I resign your guardianship! I will have nothing more to do with you! Never let me see your face again."

Pop chuckled.

"Ear, 'ear!" was his reply.

"'Ere's your 'at, sir!" said Mr. Jimmy Walker politely.

Sir Hilton Popper grabbed the hat from the ring-master, jammed it on his head, and strode away. A roar from the audience followed him, as he passed the barrier and tramped away furiously to the exit.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sir Hilton disappeared.

"Oh crumbs!" said Bob Cherry, wiping his eyes. "Oh scissors! Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, we shall never see another turn like that in a circus! This is positively Sir Hilton Popper's last appearance in the ring—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Pop!"

After that unexpected interlude, the circus performance was resumed. It was cheered to the end; but the Famous Five, and the rest of the audience, agreed that the best turn had been the unrehearsed turn of Sir Hilton Popper, baronet, who—for positively one occasion only—had shared the honours of the ring with his remarkable nephew, Pop of the Circus.

Pop was not seen at Greyfriars again. The following day, his belongings were sent to him; their destination being the circus camp on Friardale Green.

Sir Hilton had kept his word. He had cast off and disowned that troublesome relative; and never was a troublesome relative so glad to be disowned and cast off.

(Continued on page 27.)

THE TEST MATCH HOPE!



INTRODUCTION.

Owing to his amazing bowling feats, "Smiling" Bill Murray, a Severnshire County colt, is hailed on all sides as the hope of England in the coming Tests and is promised fifty pounds for every Test he plays in by a millionaire named Barr. Bill is highly elated at his success, for his one aim is to pay for an operation to cure his paralysed father who was "outed" when about to expose a coining gang, and has been unable to speak since. Fearing the possible consequences should John Murray regain his memory, Luke Thurston and the Weasel, who were Murray's assailants, cripple Bill midway through the first Test, with the result that the "Aussies" win by the very narrowest of margins. Bill is determined to bring his enemy to book, and in this respect he is assisted by Captain Sinclair, of Scotland Yard. Although Bill's injury lets him down badly in the second Test, England weigh in nobly and win. The third Test is "washed out" by rain. Bill is well guarded these days; but the Weasel and Thurston, decide on a last desperate throw. After the fourth Test which ends in a draw, the Weasel and his gang swoop down on the little house in Desford, collar Bill and his young brother, and leave John Murray at the mercy of the Weasel.

(Now read on.)

A Dramatic Awakening.

FOR a second the wild expression in John Murray's eyes, faintly glittering in the darkened room, frightened him. Under the frantic horror of the last few seconds, all the imprisoned life in the paralysed man shone in his glazed stare, and held his tormentor at bay.

Only for a time, however. By a big effort the Weasel threw off the spell. His claw-like hands closed pleasantly.

"Well, you interfering scum!" he purred, his eyes on a level with those of his victim. "Beat you all the way, ain't I? Got you fair and square—eh? That's the last you've seen of your cubs, you nark! Now, stay here and rot!"

And with all the cruelty in his warped soul he dashed his fist full into John Murray's face.

Full and square it landed. Driven by the terrible blow, the cripple's head crashed backwards against the chair behind, with a crisp smack that was heard outside. The double concussion held him stiffly upright for a long, aching second. Then he crumpled up quickly and fell across his desk in utter collapse.

Smiling pitilessly, the Weasel backed to the door. His groping finger turned the handle, and with a last sneer at his handiwork he vanished. Presently Luke Thurston's car purred into life and shot swiftly away down the road.

Silence complete and absolute fell on the cottage and the still, quiet figure in the parlour.

Minutes sped by; half an hour.

Within the cottage nothing moved save the curtain stirring before the open window. A rabbit squealed shrilly in the woods above, while from the sleeping village came the faint bark of a dog. All else was quiet.

And John Murray sprawled across his desk.

The brooding hush was broken at last by the deep note of the clock striking the hour; ten vibrant strokes that swelled out again and again, filling the tragic room with sound. Long after the last one had ceased the echoes seemed to hang in the air like an insistent challenge; an urgent call to action, before they, too, died away.

In the lull that followed someone sighed; long and drowsily, like a man awakening from a deep, torpid sleep. Gradually, clumsily at first, John Murray began to move!

His eyes opened, and his hands twitched, clutching feebly at the desk. A tremor shook his body from head to toe, wringing a faint groan from his stiffened lips; but by degrees, his eyes

peering glassily into the darkness, he pulled himself to his feet by the aid of the chair.

Almost at once a pain like a knife-stab shot through his head, making him reel blindly under the scaring, nerve-racking torture. The agony grew till he could bear it no longer, and he plunged forward, gasping. His uncertain legs cannoned against the chair, bringing him heavily to his hands and knees.

The fall shook him, and something snapped inside his brain. As if a wave had rolled away, the torrent grew less and less, leaving in its place only a dull, numbing ache. Presently he reached out a shaky hand and gripped the desk once more.

A minute later, for the first time in four years, John Murray stood upright on his feet unaided.

He looked round vaguely. Except for a queer frown of pain on his forehead, his face was blank, his eyes clouded. The strange room, seen dimly in the faint light, had no effect upon his still dormant brain; it was doubtful if he noticed it at all. But the familiar desk before him brought back a pale flicker of memory.

Instinctively his hand strayed to the hidden spring, and when the panel beneath the inkstand slid back he reached in and felt clumsily for his case-book, still lying in the shallow drawer exactly as he had left it. He fingered the edges of the thin leaves for some time, as though uncertain what to do next, until his fingers came into contact with the remaining automatic beside the book.

It was the final touch. A quick gleam lighted his eyes at the feel of the cold steel barrel, and his hand closed swiftly over the butt. He passed his other hand over his head, wincing as he touched the bruise caused by the Weasel's punch.

"I—I must have fallen asleep," he mumbled thickly. "I dreamt they'd got me. I must hurry!"

Moving with the clumsy abruptness of a sleep-walker, he drew out the gun and closed the drawer. The numbing fog was rising in his brain again, but, stimulated by excitement, he shook it off doggedly.

"Must hurry—must hurry!" he muttered, over and over again in a monotonous undertone.

Hatless, collarless, he blundered around until he lurched against the cottage door. If he had ever known anything of the past four years, he had forgotten now. His poor shattered brain had awakened almost at the point where it had stopped. The interval was wiped out.

That which surgeons had feared to attempt, the Weasel's bestial blow had accomplished. That fragment of bone no longer pierced the vital nerve centre. Lone John Murray was off once more on the journey he had started that stormy night in '26.

At first he swayed dizzily, but by the time he reached the gate his steps were stronger. Gun in hand, wide-eyed, he turned his face towards the silent Beacon Hills.

The gate clicked behind him softly.

A Shock for the Weasel!

IN the ordinary way, when he drove himself, Mr. Luke Thurston, of Woodside Hall and Severnsmouth, was as safe and cautious a driver as could be found. But now, as he left the Murray's cottage with his

grim cargo, he rammed the car homeward with a panicky rashness that made the Weasel curse him.

At headlong speed the dark blue Rolls raced into the hills; nor did its pace slacken until it quivered to a halt on the drive of Woodside. The moment the hum of the engine ceased the house door was flung open wide, and two footmen in livery came running down the stairs.

Everything was done neatly. Bill felt himself dragged out and carried quickly into the house, and the unconscious forms of Alec and Locker, the C.I.D. man, laid beside him. There followed the quick rustle of banknotes, muttered thanks, and a brisk patter of many feet disappearing down the drive and into the night. Only the leaders of the gang remained.

Left to themselves the Weasel and Hogan grinned at each other and at their captives, jeered openly at the shrinking Thurston, and took off their coats.

Once again Bill was lifted, and slung roughly over Hogan's shoulder. Down some stairs they went, through the servants' basement, then down and down again, deep into a network of vaults and cellars in the very foundations of the ancient Tudor manor. The air was stale and sickly with age. Presently it became charged with dust as well.

He felt Hogan step laboriously over some obstacle, and then he was dumped with a brutal carelessness that knocked

**HE'S GOT GREY
MATTER!
Who has?
Why, the fellow who has
ordered next week's stupendous
FREE GIFT NUMBER of "THE
MAGNET" TO-DAY!**

the breath out of him and set his head swimming. Before he had recovered Alec was thrown across his legs, and after that the policeman. The Weasel chuckled softly and began to light a row of candle-ends.

In the dim light Bill blinked. They were in a small, stuffy vault, dust, white and clogging, covered everything in a thick layer. A battered, untidy work-bench ran the length of one wall, while in a corner, partly hidden by a dirty cloth, stood what looked to be some sort of printing press. A line of shelves were laden with old cans, tools and bottles.

To his surprise he noticed that the lower half of the doorway through which they had entered was bricked up—obviously the obstacle Hogan had climbed just previous. A heap of newly-broken bricks lay scattered about.

Taking tight hold of his nerve Bill glanced coolly up at the three men standing over him. The Weasel and Hogan he knew. But his heart beat faster as he recognised the third, who kept in the background, for like everyone in Severnshire, he knew Luke Thurston by sight.

So Captain Monty had been right! In the underground, candle-lit vault his captors made a strange trio. The Weasel, with his shoulders hunched and a sinister leer of triumph on his wizened face, looked like a little evil gnome

against Hogan's sturdy bulk, while Luke Thurston was plainly scared to the teeth.

Bill noted with satisfaction that Hogan's forehead was badly bruised, and his eyes gleamed. The tough must have read his thoughts, for a heavy boot thudded into his ribs immediately.

The Weasel waved a hand in gentle protest.

"Now, don't hurt our guest, Jerry," he chided. "Had a good look round, son? Nice place, ain't it? It's where we used to work, all happy and peaceful-like before your sneaking father stuck his nose in—the fool!" He spat and kicked Bill contemptuously. "Still," he went on, "I've settled with him all right, I reckon."

Bill's blood boiled at the words. Futile though he knew the effort to be, he writhed in his bonds until they creaked.

The little man cackled with delight. Thurston muttered something fiercely, but Necker only grinned with deeper relish.

As for Bill some inkling of what was going to happen was beginning to dawn on him with dreadful clearness. The half-bricked doorway, the loose bricks, the men with their coats off, all took on a nightmare meaning. When those scattered bricks were cemented back into place, he and Alec and this other chap would be left—

In spite of his strong nerve he could not resist a slight shiver. Next moment, however, a desperate coolness forced him to meet the Weasel's mocking eyes with a long, disdainful stare.

The effect on the little crook was startling. At a stroke his face changed from ghoulish glee to a lined mask of insane fury. He sprang to his full height and threw out his arms wildly.

"But, by thunder, we're going to close it again now—for ever!" he screamed. "For ever—for ever, you cub! And you three with it, too! For four years this vault's been bricked up, Mr. Smiling Murray. And now it's going to be bricked up for four hundred and four—see! Now smile at that, curso you!"

As he fairly danced with rage he looked such a picture of fiendishness that Thurston wilted against the wall and covered his face, while even the tough Jerry Hogan eyed him askance.

"Ah, cut it out, Joe!" he snapped sulkily. "Let's finish and get clear. I'm sick o' this place already!"

Spinning round on his heel the Weasel glowered at him murderously, unable to speak. Hogan stiffened ominously and returned him look for look, so that for a moment Thurston held his breath. But something in the gunman's straight stare must have penetrated the little crook's madness, for abruptly, as quickly as it had risen, his passion died away, and his twisted smile came back bit by bit.

"Right, Jerry boy!" he chuckled at last. "Anything to oblige a pal! We'll do our little bricklaying job, and finish!"

To his captives, he turned and made a sarcastic bow.

"Good-night, Mr. Smiling Murray. I'll send your regards to Australia—and all your friends. We will now bid you and Alec a long and sad farewell!"

"Ye-es. But not this week!" drawled a quiet voice from the darkness.

The three men froze. A terrible silence filled the vault, such a dreadful stillness as follows a tropical thunder-storm. Yet the voice from the passage was soft and placid as it spoke again.

"Don't move!"

Mouth agape, hand on his heart, the Weasel stood petrified, half-bent in the middle of his bow. A dreary wail burst from Thurston's lips; but Hogan wheeled in a flash, his hand streaking towards his hip.

A red tongue darted through the door, followed by a thudding report and a scream of pain. Down went the gunman, clutching his shattered hand, while the echoes of the shot crashed within the confined vault.

"I warned you!" scolded the voice serenely. "Stick your hands up, Necker!"

Like one in a dream, the Weasel straightened himself, his hands going up slowly. There was no need to bother about his confederates; Thurston had fainted, and Hogan writhed and sobbed in the dust.

A police whistle shrilled piercingly, another replied faintly from far above their heads. Soon afterwards, Bill heard the tramp of many feet, growing louder as they came towards the cellars.

Captain Monty Sinclair climbed in through the door.

All Ready for The Raid!

AS the captain admitted later, it was the blindest luck that had led him to make his raid on Woodside Hall the very night the Weasel had swooped down on Bill and Alec.

Confident that the boys were safely guarded day and night, he had laid his plans accordingly, and just about the time Ted Locker had been put out of action in the Hunter Woods, ten picked men, under the leadership of a sergeant, had stolen out of the Beacon Hills and descended on Luke Thurston's house.

As usual, the place was in darkness, save for the hall light. Quickly and quietly, the raiders slipped into the heart of the shrubbery, where Captain Monty, gliding out from the blackest shadow, met them.

"All serene, sergeant?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Good. We're early. Thurston's not home from business yet apparently, and no one else has arrived. There are two new servants in the house; the others are gone. That's all!"

"Yes, sir!"

"I'm going to break in now. Send one man with me, and the others to their places right away. When you hear my whistle, get busy; but not until, whatever happens! O K?"

"O K it is, sir! Good luck!"

The sergeant turned, passed the orders to his men and all save one vanished. Only a very occasional rustle marked their passage through the grounds, and each knew his post, for the raid had been planned and rehearsed by one of the shrewdest brains in the police. Nothing had been left to chance; every loophole of escape was tightly guarded.

Just as smoothly, Captain Monty and his follower flitted through the trees and bushes until they came to the drive. Crossing quickly, they bent low, and prowled along the house wall to where the thick ivy began, and there the captain called a halt.

"This is where I leave you, Pike!" he whispered. "And I want you to stay here and not budge in case I need you! Savvy?"

The man grinned, and crouched beneath the ivy without a word. Sinclair nodded approvingly and began his climb.

Reaching the window of Thurston's study, he worked noiselessly with a flat tool for a few seconds, slid back the catch, and slipped into the room. The house was very quiet. He had not been in it up till now, yet before ten minutes had elapsed, he knew just how the land lay, and knew, too, that with the exception of the two servants lounging in the basement, Woodside Hall was empty.

Smiling to himself, he went back to the study landing. By thrusting his face close to the banisters he could cover most of the reception-hall below and the stairway leading up. The grounds were full of his men; the trap was laid and ready to be sprung.

He stretched himself comfortably on the landing—and waited.

But not for long. Within a quarter-of-an-hour, the sound of excited footsteps made him look down to see the two servants burst excitedly through the door leading up from the basement, and hurry across the hall out of sight. He heard them swing open the front door, and immediately afterwards the hum of a powerful car sweeping towards the house.

It stopped, then came brisk footsteps and a few whispered orders. Puzzled by the noise, the captain raised himself cautiously to his knees for a better view—just as the Weasel, with a crowd of men carrying dark swaying bundles between them, hurried into the hall.

The detective's lips pursed in a soft hiss of astonishment. He could not see yet what the burdens were, but he was busy counting the number in the party, and his handsome face darkened. Nine men there were in the hall now, including the two footmen.

"Nine! Great godfrey!" he murmured in dismay. "What's been happening?"

His whistle came up half-way to his mouth, then stopped; it was useless to blow it now. He had reckoned on taking Thurston, the Weasel, and perhaps Hogan only—certainly he had not reckoned on dealing with a gang of this size, and he was in a fever to know what they had been up to.

The bottom had fallen out of his plans completely, for he dared not risk an even-handed scrap at this time of night, up here among the wild dark hills, for fear the two men he specially wanted escaped in the confusion. He would have to wait. The other six crooks were only small fry after all, and could easily be pulled in afterwards. For the present he had to keep his eyes on the two leaders, Necker and Thurston.

Tense and alert, he watched the scene below. He was still unable to catch a glimpse of the loads the men had brought in and laid on the floor, for Thurston and Hogan stood in the way; but he saw the Weasel pull out a wad of notes and thrust them into eager hands, and heard the six men hasten through the front door and away down the steps.

There was a long pause when they had gone, during which Hogan and the little man grinned at Thurston, who seemed in

a bad way. But after a while both removed their coats. Hogan stepped aside—and Captain Sinclair had a full view of the mysterious bundles at last.

As soon as the first overwhelming shock had worn off and he could trust himself to look again his brain began to work at lightning speed. Very bitterly now he regretted he had not blown the signal for his men to rush the house and make a clean haul; while he was utterly stupefied by the completeness of the Weasel's coup.

It was no time, however, for vain regrets. He was only thankful he was on the spot—and ready.

Bill, he could see, was still conscious, but Alec and Ted Locker lay limp and lifeless. He waited until he saw them picked up and taken below, and as soon as the footsteps had ceased to blunder clumsily down the kitchen stairs he darted through the study to the window, "Pike!" he hissed. "Pike! Here—quickly!"

The ivy swayed a little as the plain-clothes man came up hand over fist.

"Sir?"

"Got your whistle? Then come in here. Right! There's a landing outside there. Lean over the banisters, and when you hear me let go, run to the front door—and whistle like blazes!"

Drawing his gun, he fled down the stairs on tiptoe, listened for a moment, then, with footsteps lighter than falling leaves, he followed the Weasel down into the vaults—just in time.

John Murray Steps In!

"**H**OLD hard, sir! There, that's right!"

A knife gleamed in a policeman's hand and sliced through the last rope that bound Bill Murray's wrists behind him. With the aid of the stalwart arm that had brought him up from the vault the youngster sat up and began to rub the circulation back to his cramped limbs and tenderly pat the bruises on his ribs where sundry kicks had fallen.

The sudden exertion made his head whirl, but he cleared it by a few vigorous shakes and looked around.

A crowd of burly men filled the reception-hall of Woodside. In the centre, handcuffed and closely guarded, stood the prisoners; and, strangely enough, of the three, Luke Thurston looked the calmest. His eyes had the fixed stare of a man who has reached his limit. Hogan still whimpered over his hand; and the Weasel crouched on the floor, sullen and dangerous as a captive wolf.

Already the sergeant had phoned Severn City regarding the six men who
(Continued on next page.)

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had walked out. They were all well-known sneak-thieves and roughs, mostly from Severnsmouth, and before long each would be taken up.

The sight of Alec sitting in a chair, white-faced but conscious, brought Bill clumsily to his feet. As he staggered over he saw a little group of men on their knees beside Ted Locker.

"Alec, how are you?"

The boy smiled feebly and nursed his head.

"Bearing up, Bill. Gosh, my bean hurts!"

"They've got the tyke who did it, though!" growled Bill, glancing across at the Weasel, who snarled at him in reply. "But, Alec, old son, I'm jolly worried about dad. He—I believe that devil hit him, too—or something!"

"Don't worry, lads," put in the

movement of his hand the men guarding them fell back. Thurston swayed a little, and the Weasel rose stiffly as the detective spoke with metallic coldness:

"Thurston and Necker, I want you for forging and uttering and on other charges. Hogan, I want you, too!"

He paused.

"Which of you hit Locker?" he asked, and his voice was very, very quiet.

"I did!" blazed the Weasel in reckless defiance. "Serve—"

"Then I arrest you for murder also!" said Sinclair. "He's dead!"

In that moment, for the first time in his life, the Weasel knew what fear meant. His seamed, yellow face turned livid, and a strangled gasp was torn out of him. For what seemed an eternity he stared wildly round at the stern men surrounding him; then,

Great News!

NEVER in all its history had the county of Severnshire undergone so many shocks as it received during the next few weeks.

As soon as the full story of the Murrys became known public feeling seethed. The cause of John Murray's four years of living death, and the constant persecution of Bill and Alec were speedily laid bare in the newspapers.

From first to last there was no hope for Luke Thurston and Hogan. Cornered at all points, the financier put up a frantic fight at his trial, but the evidence of Captain Sinclair, the underground printing-den, and, finally, John Murray's remorseless case-book, shattered his defence to atoms. The long sentence he received for his crimes knocked many business firms in Severnsmouth sideways for a time, but they were the only sufferers. After a brief and exciting trial, the prison gates clanged behind him, and he was forgotten.

Hogan and the rest of the gang followed. The Weasel! People shrugged their shoulders. He had cheated the hangman by dying at the hands of the man he had so terribly injured.

For Bill and Alec it was a hectic time and a terribly anxious one. Directly following his dramatic awakening, John Murray had mumbled the secret of his bureau to Captain Sinclair, and then collapsed once more—not thank goodness, into his former state, but to something perilously near.

It was then that James Barr butted in irresistibly. In response to a wire from the old sportsman, Sir Robert Fortesque, the famous surgeon, travelled down to Severnshire. Together with the local hospital experts, he conducted a long and patient examination, with the result that John Murray disappeared from view. A special ambulance took him carefully up to London and into Sir Robert's own house. All that the boys could do now was—wait!

On a certain August evening a week later, when the little cottage in Desford was packed to its limit, Mr. Barr sat at the head of a laden table with his irascible old face as flushed and happy as a schoolboy's. All around him, down the table, on the window-sill, and against the wall, was "poor little Severnshire," Nickalls, Hammett, Hall, all the cheerful, merry bunch who were fighting for the County Championship, and still hoped to land it.

For it was the eve of the fifth and final Test Match, and to-morrow they were all travelling up to the Oval to see the county's youngest star play Australia to a finish.

The feast was finished at last, and Captain Sinclair rose to his feet and turned to Smiling Bill Murray.

"William," he said solemnly, "we want you to accept this little present—from your friends. And we also want you to whack Australia to-morrow. And if you don't—" He shook his head warningly, and sat down to a cheer that raised the roof.

From beneath his chair, James Barr had suddenly whisked something that gleamed brilliantly, and which he set upon the table with a defiant bang. It was a perfect statuette in silver of Bill in the act of bowling, and a gasp of admiration filled the room. Slowly and triumphantly the millionaire took a cheque from his pocket, folded it, and

THE STORY OF THE YEAR!



BY
GEORGE E.
ROCHESTER

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BEGINS NEXT WEEK!

police-sergeant, looking up from the prostrate Locker. "The chief sent Pike and another man off to your cottage right away—in Thurston's car. If your father's hurt they'll take him straight to hospital. We'll soon know."

"Oh, thanks!"

There was nothing for it but to wait; and at that moment Captain Monty himself came into the hall through the basement door. His elegant clothes were smothered in dust; but he looked supremely happy, and beamed cheerily at the anxious boys.

"Hallo, old beans!" he chirped. "How goes it? All serene and so forth? Sergeant, how's Locker?"

For answer the sergeant looked up and quietly beckoned him to kneel down. Captain Monty's smile faded. There fell a sudden, expectant hush as he strode over and joined the group.

He straightened up at last, turned and studied his prisoners with eyes that were like steel points. At a quick

before anyone could prevent it, he had burst through the ring and was racing for the open door, handcuffed though he was.

Crack!

A flash lit up the dark porch, and from somewhere came the smack of a pistol-shot. Something came reeling backwards into the hall, and Captain Sinclair ran forward quickly.

He was just in time to catch the Weasel as he fell.

In dead silence, a strange figure stalked into the hall. His clothes were torn and stained by continuous falls on the rough hill paths, and an automatic smoked in his shaking right hand. He pointed first to the Weasel's body, then to Luke Thurston, and stared at the police with sleepy eyes.

"There's a counterfeiters' plant in his house!" he said simply. "And this man—and that—are working it. I—I'm John Murray!"

thrust it beneath the arm of the silver figure. Then it was passed down the table to Bill.

The youngster struggled up lamely. His hand trembled as he took the "little present," and when he saw the amount of the cheque he gulped.

"I—I don't know how to thank you all!" he stammered. "But—there's just one thing Alec and I have been s-saving up to tell you. We received this wire this afternoon from London!"

The smiling faces sobered as Bill brought out a crumpled telegram.

"My father turned the corner this afternoon!" he told them quietly. "He's on the road to—to a complete recovery!"

In the outburst that followed, Bill's broad smile returned—the first time for many days. And that smile helped considerably to keep the coveted Ashes in England when the two elevens met the following day, for Bill Murray played the game of his life. It was due principally to his amazing bowling that England won on the fifth day of the match by a comfortable margin.

And that night all England in general, and Severnshire in particular, went mad with excitement.

THE END.

THE CALL OF THE CIRCUS!

(Continued from page 22.)

The Head and Mr. Quelch had long ago agreed that Greyfriars was really no place for Pop; and Pop himself was still more strongly of that opinion. So now that Sir Hilton had withdrawn himself from his nephew's affairs, and declined to take any further responsibility for him, or even to hear his name mentioned, there was nothing to prevent the circus schoolboy from following the desire of his heart.

And that, naturally, led him to the World-Famous Circus.

Needless to say, Mr. Jimmy Walker was delighted to have his star turn back again, for keeps, as he expressed it. Pop was equally delighted; and Mr. Quelch, if not delighted, was at least relieved. So everybody was satisfied; except perhaps Sir Hilton Popper; and even that irascible old gentleman was glad to have his troublesome nephew off his hands.

Walker's World-Famous Circus stayed a week longer on Friardale Green; Mr. Walker was doing such good business there, that he was in no hurry to take the road again. Twice daily, Pop of the Circus, appeared in the ring; and on every possible occasion during that

week, there was a crowd of Greyfriars fellows to see the King of the Trapeze.

Harry Wharton & Co. were quite sorry when the circus moved on at last. They liked the cheery Pop; though they agreed that spangles and sawdust suited him better than classes at Greyfriars.

When the circus moved, the procession passed the gates of the school, on its way to seek fresh fields and pastures new. And an army of Greyfriars fellows gathered to see it pass; prominent among them the Famous Five. Pop led the procession, mounted on the neck of the elephant; and he waved his drumsticks and banged his drum, in greeting to his old friends at the school gates.

"Good-bye, Pop!" shouted the juniors.

"So-long, old beans!" yelled Pop. "See you again some day! I say, this is prime!"

Bang, bang, bang! Pom, pom, pom!

And the circus procession wound on, and Pop of the Circus passed from the gaze of Harry Wharton & Co.

THE END.

(Next week's bumper FREE GIFT number of the MAGNET will contain the first of a grand new series of Greyfriars yarns. Note the title: "THE HIDDEN HAND!" and be sure to order your copy WELL IN ADVANCE!)

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Your part when the play comes on after the way he showed up this evening. My dear man, you're not even in the same street with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wibley. "Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! It rather puts your nose out of joint, I fancy," jeered Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" jeered Bunter. Wibley did not look as if his nose had been put out of joint. He roared with laughter, and the other fellows roared. And Billy Bunter could only wonder what all the fellows were laughing at.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Gated!

"POPPER!"
"Yessir!"

The Remove were dismissed after morning class the following day, when Mr. Quelch called to Popper.

Pop remained behind as the Form filed out and stopped before the Remove master's desk.

He was feeling a little uneasy; but the expression on Mr. Quelch's face

Souvenirs You Cannot Afford To Miss!



was quite bland. Not the least suspicion had crossed the Form master's mind of Pop's escape the previous evening. Discovery would have been an absolute certainty, but for Bob Cherry's bright idea. But Bob had saved the situation for the circus schoolboy.

"It is a half-holiday this afternoon, Popper," said Mr. Quelch. "I learn that there is an afternoon performance at the—the circus at Firsdale, and probably many boys in my Form will be going there. I have, of course, no objection to that. But you must not go, Popper."

Pop stood silent.

"In the circumstances, I cannot, of course, allow it," said Mr. Quelch. "So long as Mr. Walker remains in this neighbourhood Popper, you are to remain within school bounds. I am sorry, my boy; but you see for yourself that I have no alternative."

"Yessir!" muttered Pop.

"It is very unfortunate that Mr. Walker should have selected this vicinity," said Mr. Quelch. "No doubt he will soon be gone. In the meantime, I have no choice but to see that the wishes of your guardian are duly observed. Can I trust you to obey my orders, Popper?"

No reply.

Mr. Quelch's brows contracted.

"I hope, Popper, that you are not thinking of leaving the school this afternoon, in disregard of my commands?" he said, raising his voice a little.

Pop's face set stubbornly.

He could not make a promise which he knew he would break at the first opportunity. But his silence was as food as a confession that it was his intention to break bounds as soon as the eyes of authority were no longer on him.

"You do not answer me," said Mr. Quelch, the old familiar glint coming into his glintle eye.

"Very well," said the Remove master, "The Mageser Library—No. 1,168.

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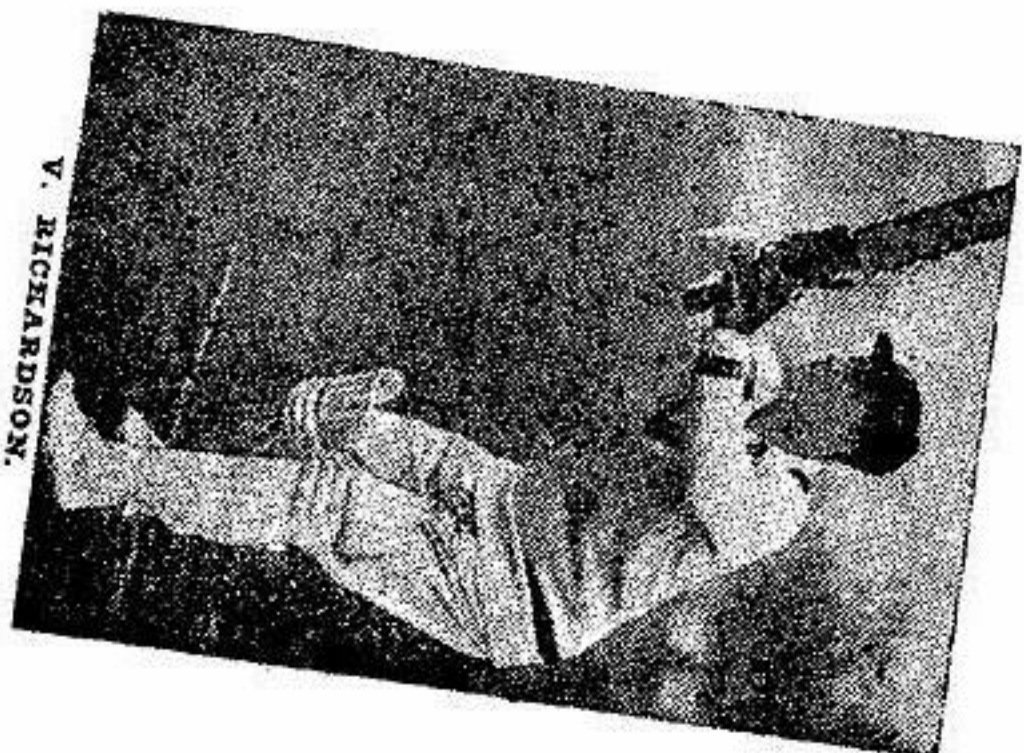


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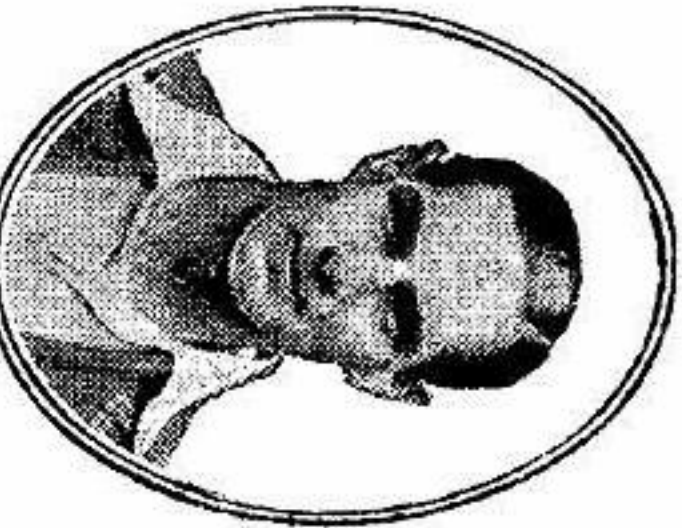
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J. HOBBS.

The people would come expecting to see Pop the Wonderful Acrobat—the only "turn" in the circus which was at all out of the common. If they were disappointed—

It meant trouble for Jimmy Walker. Many who came to see the "star" turn would probably demand their money back if the star turn did not materialise. Anyhow, it would be the end of Jimmy Walker's promised prosperity on his new pitch.

Pop set his teeth as he thought of it. He would go—by hook or by crook he would keep his word to Jimmy Walker. And yet he knew how little chance there was of escaping Mr. Quelch's jinx eyes that afternoon.

His face was moody when he came out after dinner.

Bob Cherry clapped him on the shoulder.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life?" boomed Bob.

Pop gave a grunt.

"Not 'arf'!" he said bitterly. "I got to get to the circus, and Quelch is going to watch me like a blessed old cat!"

Bob's face became grave.

"You're gated?" he asked.

"Yes," growled Pop.

"You'll have to give it a miss, old bean. We fixed it up all right for you last night; but it was a narrow shave. We couldn't work the same stunt again," said Bob.

"I know that! I'm going, all the same."

"I'm afraid you'll get spotted."

"You're going to chance it?"

"You see, if you bolt, they'll know where you're gone," said Bob. "Quelch would come down to the circus to hook you back."

"Ho wouldn't heek me off the high trapeze!" grinned Pop.

"My dear chap, Walker would have

to hand you over. It would get Walker into trouble with the law, if Quelch kicked up a shindy—and he would! You don't want that! You'll have to chuck it."

"Well, I ain't chucking it!" said Pop stubbornly. "I've told old jimmy that I'm doing my turn on the trapeze every time he gives a show 'ere, and I'm keeping my word. I got to work it somehow."

Pop tramped away in deep thought. Bob gave him a commiserating glance; but, so far as he could see, the case was hopeless. A happy conjunction of circumstances had seen the circus school-boy through the previous evening; but matters were different now.

A little later Pop strolled down to the gates with a casual air. Many Greyfriars fellows were passing out, and perhaps Pop hoped to pass unnoticed in the throng.

But the hope was ill-founded. Gosling came out of his lodge, like a lion from his lair, and barred the way.

"Which you know, that you ain't allowed out of gates, sir!" said Gosling severely.

"Oh, go and chop chips!" snipped Pop; but he turned and walked back into the quad.

There was no escape that way.

A quarter of an hour later Pop strolled into the old Cloisters. It was a secluded spot; and there was a secluded wall easy enough for an acrobat to negotiate.

Pop had a leg over the wall, when his other leg was grasped by a sudden hand; and he stared down savagely at the grinning face of Loder of the Sixth.

"Gah!" remarked Loder.

"Lodge my leg!" growled Pop.

"Come down, you young sweep!"

"Shan't!" Loder's eyes gleamed. A better-tempered prefect than Gerald Loder might have been angered by that reply. "Won't you?" he said grimly; and he tugged at Pop's leg.

Pop held on to the wall savagely. But the drag on his leg was too much for him, and he came slithering down. He landed in a rather breathless heap at Loder's feet; and the next moment the Sixth Form man's grip was on his collar.

"This way!" said Loder.

"'Ang you?" snarled Pop.

But he had to go.

Loder marched him back to the House with an iron grip on his collar. Many eyes turned on them as they passed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Loder's got him!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Poor old Pop! It's all UP for him to-day!"

"Oh, hard cheese!" said Harry Wharton.

"The hardness of the esteemed cheese is terrific!" remarked Harriet Janset Rann Singh. "But, as the proverb says, what cannot be cured must go longest to the well."

Many sympathetic glances followed Pop as he was marched into the House. But sympathy could not help the circus schoolboy. His face was dark and grim as Loder of the Sixth marched into his Form master's study.

Get Yours First—Then Tell Your Pals!

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THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Stone Walls Do Not a Prison Make!

Mr. QUELCH fixed his eyes on Popper of the Remove with a far from pleasant glance. He was not surprised to see Pop marched into his study by the prefects! But he was extremely irritated. Sir Hilton's nephew was taking up altogether too much of his time and attention; and the Remove master was at an end of his patience.

Pop stood with a glum, sullen face.

"What is it, Loder?" asked Mr. Quelch very quietly.

"I found Popper breaking bounds, sir!" said Loder. "He was climbing over the Cloister wall, and refused to come back when I called him. Fortunately, I caught him and pulled him back."

"Thank you very much, Loder! I am sorry that this boy in my Form should give so much trouble to the prefects."

"Not at all, sir!" said Loder politely, and he left the study, leaving the culprit to the tender mercies of Henry Samuel Quelch.

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet.

"You have attempted to disobey my strict instructions, Popper," he said coldly.

"Yes, sir!" muttered Pop.

"Very well! As you cannot be trusted at liberty, you will be placed under lock and key till evening call-over."

Pop drew a deep breath.

It was the finish! He made a backward step towards the door, and his eyes

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