

BILLY BUNTER HAS A GRAND TIME AS BOSS OF A BIG CIRCUS . . .



BILLY BUNTER'S CIRCUS



1. Of all the muddles that Billy Bunter ever got into, the grand circus muddle was about the muddiest. You see, Bunter had been kept in on the day that the circus came to Courtfield Common, and he had dodged out to see it. He'd come across an old boy bathing in the river, and he had pinched his clothes, to disguise himself. What's more, the old boy had a wig and false moustache, which he'd taken off to bathe, and Bunter was wearing these as well. So it wasn't surprising that everyone thought he was the old boy—Tomsonio, the circus owner!

2. Bunter stayed the night at the circus, having a rare old time. Quelch, his Form-master, didn't bother about him, at first—he just got out a new cane to be used when Bunter did come back. But when half the afternoon had gone, and there was still no sign of Bunter, he began to get a little worried. He dismissed the class and went out in search of the fattest schoolboy he'd ever tried to teach. Later in the evening, he was plodding through the woods towards Courtfield Common, when he suddenly spotted a fat man in a bathing towel coming towards him.



3. It was Tomsonio, the real circus owner! But Quelch thought that he was a lunatic, dashing about at night in a bath-towel, and he shooed him off with his stick. He never guessed he was driving away the one man who could tell him anything about what had happened to Bunter. Well, thinking that the fat schoolboy might be around the circus, Quelch went there. The first person he met was Bunter, only Quelch didn't know him!



4. Quelch, like everybody else, thought Bunter was Tomsonio! "I'm sorry to trouble you, Mr. Tomsonio," he said, "but I've lost a very fat, very foolish-looking schoolboy—have you seen him by any chance?" "Ah yes," chortled Bunter, so relieved that he hadn't been recognized. "You mean a very good-looking boy, named Bunter. I saw him in Folkestone this afternoon when I was in Canterbury. Er that is—"



5. Quelch didn't want to hear any more. He thought Tomsonio was the second lunatic he'd met that night. But he was a little puzzled, because nobody but Bunter himself would ever say that Bunter was good-looking. He decided to hang around. He was very interested a little later on to see the fake Tomsonio leaving the circus ground. Bunter had got the wind-up. He didn't like Quelch coming round looking for him!



6. But Billy Bunter didn't get far, because Quelch wasn't the only person who was watching the circus. The real Tomsonio was prowling around also. And as soon as he saw Bunter he let out a whoop like a Red Indian. "Stop—thief!" he yelled. "I'll teach you to steal my clothes!" Bunter scooted back to the circus as fast as his fat legs would carry him. "Oh crikey! It's the real Tomsonio!" he yelled.

(If you like Billy Bunter, you will find him in "The Magnet" every week as well.)



7. At the sight of the man they thought to be their boss running across the grounds like a two-year-old, all the circus hands came flocking around. "What's the matter, Mr. Tomsonio?" they cried. Bunter put his wig straight and then replied, "Oh crumbs!" he panted. "I've been chased by a lunatic—he's hanging about in the grounds somewhere. You men had better find him, and in the meantime bring me a big feed. Running makes me jolly hungry!"



9. Bunter got through the first lot of grub before the second lot arrived, so he went to Tomsonio's caravan, to find a two-pound jar of bullseyes, just to keep him going till the real grub arrived. And he got a big shock. No sooner had he got inside the caravan than the angry face of the real Tomsonio appeared at the door. "Wretch—thief! Give me my clothes back at once!" he bellowed. "Yow—HELP! It's Tomsonio again! HELP!" bellowed Bunter.



11. But Bunter being Bunter, he crammed down so much grub that it just sent him right off to sleep. Very drowsily he tottered to his caravan, and flopped into an armchair. Then Quelchly arrived. He quickly pulled off Bunter's disguise, and the game was up! Billy Bunter's brief reign as owner of a real circus was over. Quelch had found him out!



8. It wasn't long before a spread that would have satisfied anybody was in front of the fat boy. But it didn't nearly satisfy Bunter. Piggins is Bunter's middle name! "This isn't nearly enough!" he wailed. "Bring me two more chickens, a plate of tarts, and a case of ginger pop. I said I was hungry. I need something more than a mere snack like this!" Now Bunter didn't know it, but Quelch wasn't far off, and he recognized Bunter's voice.



10. His yells soon brought the circus hands running, and they grabbed the real Tomsonio, in spite of his protests that he was really their boss. You see, they had never seen him without his false whiskers before, and as he was wearing only a towel it wasn't very strange that they thought he was crazy. "Shut him up in a spare caravan till morning!" cried Bunter, and then he went back to his grub. "I'll have to dodge off during the night!" he thought.



12. One of the first things that Quelch did was to explain to the circus hands, and to get them to let the real Tomsonio out of the caravan where they had locked him. "I'll have the police on him!" cried Tomsonio. "Ah—well, I'd rather you didn't!" hummed Quelchly. "I do, assure you that the headmaster and myself can deal with him very well!"