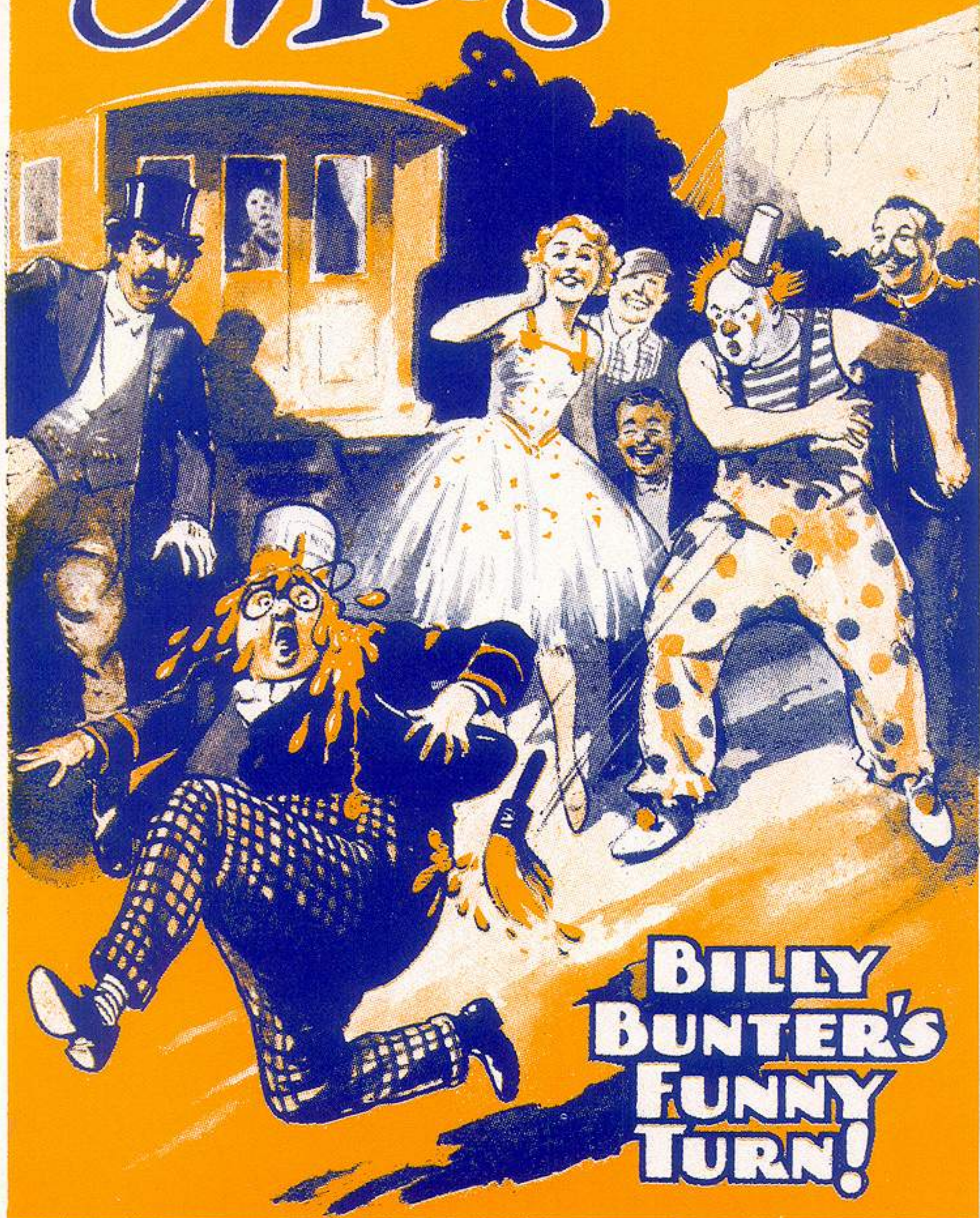


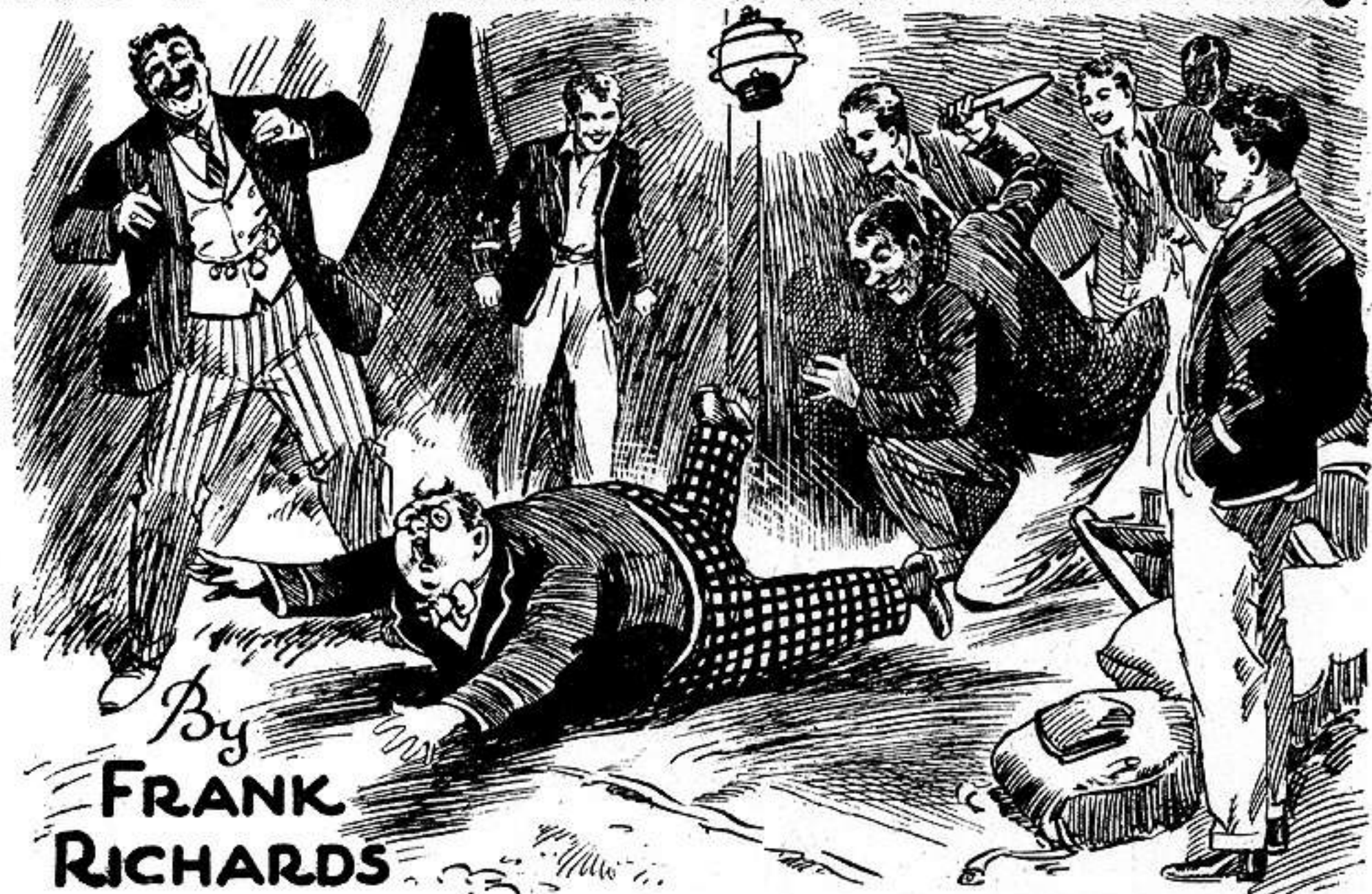
“NOT WANTED IN THE CIRCUS!” Read the Rib-Tickling, Extra-Long Yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. Inside!

The Magnet 2^D



**BILLY
BUNTER'S
FUNNY
TURN!**

NOT WANTED *in the* CIRCUS!



By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**

—Featuring the World-Renowned Billy Bunter and Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

An Unexpected Dip!

THEY'VE given this jolly old spot the wrong name!" said Bob Cherry.

"How's that?" asked Harry Wharton.

"They call 'em the downs, and they ought to be called the ups. We've had more ups than downs since we started this morning."

The chums of the Greyfriars Remove smiled. Really, it was too hot to laugh.

It was a glorious August day—perhaps a little too glorious for five fellows who were wheeling their bikes up a long, long dusty road in the South Downs.

It was hot. Bob Cherry calculated that it would have been about ninety degrees in the shade—if there had been any shade. There wasn't.

Every now and then they had a glimpse of the sea, far away on the right, rolling bright and blue. Overhead, the sky was a cobalt dome. The sun blazed from it. Underfoot there was dust, and the sun blazed from that also, reflected from the white road. And there was a hint of thunder in the air.

The road rose before them. It was not a very steep rise; but rather too steep for pedalling, under the blaze of the August sun. So the Famous Five of Greyfriars wheeled the jiggers, fanned themselves with straw hats as they wheeled, and swatted flies, and reflected that there was a lot to be said

for summer holidays in the North of Scotland, or, better still, in Greenland's icy mountains.

Only the dusky face of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shone with contentment. A spot of genuine tropical heat reminded the Nabob of Bhanipur of his happy native land. Bob Cherry's face, always rather ruddy, was as red as a pony. All the party looked, and felt, warm—very warm.

It had been hot at Brighton. The Famous Five had left Brighton, to follow the coast of Sussex and Kent, round to Margate on their bicycles, taking the trip by easy stages, and putting up at wayside inns. It was quite a jolly way of spending two or three weeks of the summer holidays. But it was hot—hotter than Brighton. They pushed the bikes, and perspired.

"Bother that fly!" grunted Johnny Bull.

He dabbed his nose. Perspiration trickled down Johnny's nose. Perhaps it attracted that persistent fly. For ten minutes or more Johnny Bull had been waging a running fight with that fly. He drove it off with frantic waves of his stray hat, but it came back, again and again. A dozen times he had hoped that it was gone. Each time that hope proved a delusion and a snare.

"Hold my bike a minute, Franky!"

Frank Nugent held the bike, and the juniors came to a halt, while Johnny made a determined frontal attack on the buzzing insect. He swatted, swiped, and smacked, brandishing his straw hat, growing redder and redder with his efforts.

"Blow it!" grunted Johnny. "There, I think the brute's gone now!"

Bob Cherry chuckled. "There it is, old chap—on the back of your head! Waiting for another chance at your boko!"

"Can't you swat it, then, fathead, instead of chortling like a hyena?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Right-ho! Hold my bike, Harry." Bob Cherry stepped behind Johnny Bull. There was the persistent fly, taking a rest on his hair. Up went Bob's hand.

Smack!

"Got it!" said Bob. "Yaroooooh!" roared Johnny Bull, as he tottered forward, and fell on his knees. "Ooop! You mad ass! Whoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Hot as it was, the chums of the Remove found energy enough to laugh.

That troublesome fly had disappeared from existence. There was no doubt about that. Bob Cherry's hefty smack had finished that fly. That fly was absolutely, definitely, and completely squashed. Unfortunately, Johnny's head was nearly in the same state. Bob had put quite a lot of beef into that smack. He had wanted to make sure of the fly.

"Ow!" roared Johnny Bull. "You blithering—Wow! Idiot! You potty—Yow-ow! Chump! Trying to knock my brains out! Yow-ow! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "My dear chap," said Bob warmly, "you asked me to swat that fly! Well, I've swatted it!"

"The swatfulness was terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Johnny Bull scrambled up. He rubbed the back of his head, and glared at his chum.

"You blithering ass!" he roared.

"But you asked me—"

"You dangerous maniac!"

"Well, you can swat your own flies after this!" declared Bob. "I jolly well won't swat another for you, if I see it right on your nose."

"You'd better not!" hissed Johnny Bull. "Not unless you want your own silly nose pushed through the back of your silly head! Wow!"

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "I can see a shady spot ahead; and it looks like a pond, too. What price a dip, if we can get one?"

"Priceless!" said Frank Nugent.

And the Famous Five pushed the bikes on, and up. Johnny Bull gave an occasional grunt, and an occasional rub to the back of his head. Still, he had to admit that that troublesome fly was done with.

"By gum, this looks jolly!" said Bob, coming to a halt at last.

The other fellows followed his example.

At this spot green woodlands grew at the edge of the road, with shady little paths running up among the trees.

Through the foliage there was a glimmer of shining water. It was a large pond, fed by a stream that trickled down from higher levels.

The place seemed absolutely solitary. No doubt it belonged to somebody; but the Greyfriars juniors hoped that that somebody was of a kindly and hospitable nature, and would not mind dusty wayfarers taking a dip in his pond.

They wheeled the machines off the road, and parked them in a thicket. Then they followed a shady little path to the enticing sheet of water. It lay not more than a hundred yards from the road.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's a jolly little hut here!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Nobody at home, I hope."

It was a small wooden hut, on the edge of the woodland lake, evidently constructed for the use of bathers. Wooden steps descended from it to the water. The door at the top of the steps was open.

"If anybody's about, we can ask leave," said Harry Wharton. "If not—"

"If not, we can take French leave," remarked Nugent.

"Exactly!"

Bob Cherry jumped on the steps, and put his head in at the open door. The interior of the hut was deeply dusky, after the blinding glare of the August sun outside.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Anybody here?"

There was a sound of a startled movement.

"Strike me pink!" ejaculated a startled voice.

A dingy figure was curled up on the floor of the hut. Evidently a tramp had taken possession of the hut to sleep in the heat of the day. Bob Cherry's cheery roar had awakened him. It might have awakened Rip Van Winkle, or the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus.

The dingy one sat up, set a battered bowler hat straight on a tousled head, and stared at Bob with red-lidded eyes set close together on either side of a slanting nose. It was not a pleasant face that glared at Bob from the dusk of the hut, and it was rendered still more unpleasant by a black scowl that

settled on it at sight of the cheery Greyfriars junior.

Jimmy Guggs, tramp, pilferer, and footpad, jumped to his feet.

"You agin!" he ejaculated.

He came with a rush to the door, hitting out. And Bob, taken quite by surprise by that sudden and unexpected attack, yelled, as a fist crashed on his nose, sending him staggering backwards.

"Look out!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Oh crumbs!"

Bob had no time to "look out." That sudden punch sent him spinning down the steps to the water. Under the startled eyes of his chums he went over backwards, and landed in the pool with a terrific splash. He had come there for a bath, and he was taking one, suddenly and unexpectedly, with his clothes on!

Splash!

"Great pip!"

"Bob—"

"What the thump—"

"Who the dickens—"

"Gurrrrgh!" came from Bob, wildly floundering in the pool. "Urrrrgh!"

Jimmy Guggs grinned from the doorway after him as he went in. But the grin died off his stubbly face at the sight of four other fellows and the sound of four startled voices. He became aware that Bob was not alone. He stared round at the four, jumped down from the hut, and started to run.

But the Co. were not likely to let him

ONCE A STAR TURN . . .

Billy Bunter has worn out his welcome at Signor Muccolini's Magnificent Circus, and nobody wants him. But how to get rid of the runaway schoolboy from Greyfriars is a problem!

. . . NOW A MERE NOBODY!

get away easily, after what he had done.

"Bag him!" shouted Harry Wharton.

The four juniors jumped at the tramp as if moved by the same spring, and Jimmy Guggs, with a howl, went down crashing. And the Co. pinned him down on the edge of the pool, while Bob scrambled drenched and dripping from the water.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Tit for Tat!

"U RRRREGH!" gasped Bob Cherry.

He shook himself, rather like a Newfoundland dog after a plunge, scattering drops of water in a shower.

He had gone right under, and he came out soaked from head to foot. Water ran down him in streams.

"Urrrrgh!" he gasped. "Hold that brute, you men! By gum, I'll give him some of the same! Urrrrgh! Keep him safe!"

"We've got him!" grinned Johnny Bull. Johnny had a sinewy knee planted on the tramp's chest, pinning him down. Wharton and Nugent had hold of his wrists, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh stood on his legs.

The ruffian wriggled and struggled, but there was no escape for him. By that time Jimmy Guggs was rather sorry that he had hit out so suddenly at

the sight of Bob's cheery visage—or, at all events, that he had not stopped to make sure that Bob was alone before he had hit out!

"The cheeky rotter!" gasped Bob. "He doesn't belong to the place—he's a tramp, from his looks. Knocking a fellow over—"

"What the dickens did he do it for?" asked Harry Wharton, puzzled. "Pitching into a stranger—"

"You leggo!" came from the tramp. "You 'ear me! Get off a bloke! You take your knee orf my bread-basket, blow yer!"

"He's not a stranger." Bob stared down at the stubbly face, with its red-lidded eyes and slanting nose. "I've seen that brute before. So have you fellows. It's the brute we found pitching into Bunter on the Brighton road a couple of weeks ago. Don't you remember?"

"Oh, I remember him now!" said Harry.

All the juniors recalled the ruffian. Guggs' nose, knocked out of the straight in some bygone scrap, was easy to remember.

It was a couple of weeks since the Famous Five, cycling to Brighton, had come on Billy Bunter, the fat ornament of the Greyfriars Remove, in trouble on the Brighton road. Bunter, left behind by Muccolini's Circus, had fallen into the clutches of the ruffian, and would undoubtedly have had a very hectic time had not the Famous Five come whizzing along on their jiggers. As it had turned out, it was Guggs who had had some rather hectic minutes.

Evidently he remembered the meeting, vengefully. That was why he had punched, without stopping to think, as soon as he saw Bob Cherry. But he had reason now for wishing that he had stopped to think!

"Will you leggo?" he hissed.

"Not just yet, my pippin!" answered Johnny Bull. "You can't punch a Greyfriars man's nose and get away with it."

"The punchfulness is now going to be a boot on the other leg, my esteemed and disgusting Weary Willio!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I've had a ducking," gasped Bob. "We'll give him the same. He wants a wash more than I do."

"Hear, hear!"

"Chuck him in!"

"Good egg!"

"Ere, you leggo!" yelled Guggs, struggling frantically as the schoolboys rolled him towards the water. "Don't you shove me into that there pond! 'Elp!"

"Roll him in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Guggs yelled, and howled, and struggled, and fairly shrieked.

Evidently he had a horror of water. Neither internally nor externally did he like it. But it was certain that he needed a wash, whether he wanted one or not. It was certain that his clothes required a wash. Jimmy Guggs, and everything that was his, needed washing—and had probably needed washing for years. Now he was going to get what he had so long needed.

Over he went on the grassy margin of the lake, struggling and kicking, till he was rolled into the water.

Splash!

"Groooooogh!" gurgled the tramp.

Jimmy Guggs splashed wildly in the water, clutching at reeds and rushes. Three or four feet, vigorously applied, helped him farther out.

He splashed and floundered and wallowed.

"Like it yourself?" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Gurrrrggh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Urrggh! Gug-gug-gug! Oooooch!"

"Getting wet?" asked Johnny Bull.

"The wetfulness is terrific!" chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Guggs came floundering back to the bank. The juniors, grinning, stood ready to push him in again.

Standing with the water washing round his armpits, and streams of it running down from his drenched tousled hair, the tramp glared at them, spluttering for breath.

"Will you let a bloke gerrout?" he howled.

"You're not clean yet," said Bob.

"You want a lot of washing. You haven't had a bath since the last time you were in chokey, from the look of you."

"Lemme gerrout!" spluttered Jimmy Guggs.

He plunged through the reeds and rushes, to clamber ashore. Five pairs of hands fastened on him at once, and he went whirling back into the water.

Splash!

"Ooooooogh!"

Jimmy Guggs went under, gurgling. He struggled right end uppermost again. If looks could have slain, the look that he gave the chuckling juniors would have stretched them on the grassy bank. Luckily, looks couldn't!

"Will you let a covey gerrout of this 'ere pond?" he shrieked.

"Not till you're clean!" answered Bob. "You're changing colour already—in a couple of hours or so, you'll be almost fit to touch. Get on with the good work."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Urrrggh!"

Jimmy Guggs, it was clear, had no desire to get on with the good work. But he had to give up the idea of struggling out of the lake on the side where the Greyfriars juniors stood.

He turned round and waded across to the farther side.

The water came up to his neck, but it was nowhere out of his depth, and he tramped and floundered and splashed away, the juniors yatching him with laughing faces.

The tramp reached the farther bank at last and dragged himself, dripping, from the lake. He stood drenched in a pool of water and shook his fist at the juniors across the lake, pouring out a breathless stream of abuse.

"After him!" shouted Bob. "Chuck him in again!"

"Come on!"

The Famous Five started running round the lake. It was some distance round—and Jimmy Guggs did not wait for them to circumnavigate it. Before they had taken a dozen steps, he was running, and he disappeared into the woods, panting and spluttering as he went.

When the trees swallowed him from sight, Harry Wharton & Co. walked back to the bathing hut.

They had it to themselves now, and they changed into their bathing costumes in the hut. Bob Cherry spread his drenched clothes on the steps outside to dry in the sun. Then the Famous Five plunged into the water and enjoyed a happy swim.

It was a sheer delight to swim in the cool lake, under the shadow of great branches, after a long fag up a dusty

road in the sun-glare. The chums of the Remove enjoyed it thoroughly.

By the time they came out of the water Bob's clothes had dried in the hot sun. They crowded into the little hut to towel down and dress, feeling no end bucked by the dip.

"Jolly nice of somebody to fix this up for dusty chaps on a bike trip!" remarked Bob Cherry, as he put on his boots.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That somebody mightn't be pleased if he dropped on us here," he said. "Still, we couldn't very well ask leave, as there was nobody about. If anybody turns up before we clear——"

"Hark!" murmured Nugent.

He held up his hand.

The juniors listened.

There was a sound of footsteps coming along the path through the wood from the high-road to the lake. Somebody was coming!

The Greyfriars fellows looked at one another. There was no harm, certainly, in taking a dip in the woodland lake. But on that point it was possible that the proprietor of the place might not see eye to eye with the dusty cyclists. If it was the proprietor who was coming along now, they hoped that he was a reasonable sort of chap and in a good temper!

The footsteps came tramping to the margin of the lake. The wooden steps in front of the bathing-hut creaked under a heavy tread.

The Greyfriars fellows were dressed now and ready to go, and they did not feel wholly at ease as they waited for the newcomer to appear. A dark shadow blotted the sunlight at the open doorway, and a harsh voice snapped:

"Are you there, Guggs? Gospetto! Why do you not speak, you fool?"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Mysterious Voice!

"ROTTER!" said Billy Bunter.

Tippity Tip, clown, conjurer, and ventriloquist of Muccolini's Magnificent Circus, glared at the fat junior.

Muccolini's Circus had halted on the road. It was camped on a stretch of common land beside the long white road that wound over the downs.

Why Signor Muccolini had ordered a halt at that spot, nobody but the signor knew. Men and beasts were no doubt glad of a rest after covering many miles on a dusty road under the glare of an August sun. But consideration for either man or beast was not one of "Mucky's" ways.

But the boss had given the order, and the circus had halted, and there it was in camp. There it was to remain till the following morning. It was nowhere near a town, or even a village, so there was going to be no performance that evening. Signor Muccolini was, apparently, wasting the best part of a day for nothing; but in the Magnificent Circus, Mucky's word was law, and that was that!

Billy Bunter was not in his best temper.

For one thing, it was hot. Billy Bunter felt the heat more than most fellows, having a much larger surface to feel it on. There was a constant trickle of perspiration down the fat face of the Owl of the Remove. For another thing, Bunter was irritated at what he regarded as a waste of time.

Wasting time was, as a rule, Bunter's long suit. At Greyfriars School he was

never known to be anxious to get to work.

But circumstances alter cases.

In Muccolini's Circus, Billy Bunter did a side-show as Guglielmo, the magic crystal-gazer, and during the stay at Brighton he had done very well out of the British public.

Plenty of people had been astonished and delighted to hear the voices of absent friends when they consulted Guglielmo. And it was easy for the fat ventriloquist of Greyfriars to produce mysterious voices.

Half-crowns had almost rained on Guglielmo. The fat spoofer had done remarkably well. But, as all Bunter's financial resources went the same way—in refreshment liquid and solid for the inner Bunter—the cash went almost as fast as it came. It seemed to be Billy Bunter's fate to fall, like the seed in the parable, in stony places.

Had Bunter had a job of work in the circus, he would not have been keen to get at it. But as he had a job of spoofing, he was quite keen.

He was anxious to get going again as Guglielmo with his magic crystal and see the cash coming in again. Instead of which, he had to mark time, like the rest of the circus company, till Signor Muccolini chose to give the word to resume the route and head for the next pitch.

Hence the frown that corrugated the fat brow of William George Bunter, and hence, too, his remark to Mr. Tip.

Tippity Tip was improving the shining hour by putting in some practice at ventriloquism. He was quite unaware that the fat schoolboy, blinking at him through a pair of big spectacles, could have ventriloquised his head off.

Billy Bunter's remarkable gift of ventriloquism was, so far, unknown in the circus. Even his stunt as Guglielmo had not caused the other members of the company to tumble to it. Nobody, on Bunter's looks, would have suspected that he could do anything out of the common.

Mr. Tip would have been greatly surprised to learn that his own ventriloquial powers, compared with Bunter's, were as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine.

Sitting in the shade of Marco's van, Mr. Tip had a ventriloquial doll on his knee, and was practising back-chat with the same. He paused to glare at Bunter as the fat junior expressed his uncomplimentary opinion.

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Marco, the lion-tamer, who was leaning on the side of his van watching Tippity.

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter.

The king of the lions made a movement with his foot, and Bunter backed out of reach.

"What I want to know is," said Mr. Tip, "why Mucky stands that fat porker about the circus. He ain't no use, and he ain't no ornament! What does Mucky let him hang on for, Marco?"

The lion-tamer shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Ask me another, Tippity!" he answered.

"He checks Mucky like he checks everybody!" said Mr. Tip. "It beats me 'oller! Why don't Mucky kick you out, Bunter?"

"I'd like to see a dago kick me!" said Bunter disdainfully. "Don't you be cheeky, Tip! I don't like cheek from circus clowns!"

Mr. Tip breathed hard and deep. "You 'ear that, Marco?" he said. "Well, I smacked his 'ead for his cheek when he was at Brighton, and Mucky jawed me afterwards. 'Ow he got Mucky to jaw me, I dunno, because

Mucky would like nothing better than to smack his cheeky head himself! But, jaw or no jaw, I'm going to smack his head again!"

"Leave him to me," said Marco. "Mucky won't jaw me, and I don't mind if he does! Now, Bunter, shut up! Another word, and I'll smack you!"

"Yah!" retorted Bunter. Marco detached himself from the van. Billy Bunter backed out of reach again, but this time the lion-tamer followed him, and smacked.

A large and heavy hand established contact with Billy Bunter's bullet head. There was a roar from Bunter.

He had asked for it. But, like many people in this world, he was not pleased at getting that for which he asked.

"Yaroo!" roared Bunter. "Ow! Beast! Wow!"

"Now shut up!" said Marco, leaning on the van again. "Any more from

triloquial squeak, in reply from the doll.

"Now tell me where I can see the ugliest man in the circus!" went on Mr. Tip.

The ventriloquial squeak, apparently from the doll, was about to answer: "Look in the glass!" But before Mr. Tip could put in the squeak, there came an answer from the doll:

"Look at Marco!"

It was Mr. Tip's own ventriloquial voice, reproduced to the very life by the fat Greyfriars ventriloquist. Bunter's gift in this peculiar line was really remarkable.

Marco frowned. He supposed that that answer came from the circus ventriloquist. As he had just smacked Bunter's head to oblige Mr. Tip, it was rather ungrateful.

Even Mr. Tip, who knew that he had not spoken, had not the faintest idea

Marco. "I don't like it, and I tell you so plain! It's not funny!"

"I never—" gasped Mr. Tip. "Who cares what you like, ugly mug?" came from the doll. "Why don't you wear a Guy Fawkes mask? Zara would think you better-looking in one!"

Marco's rugged face flushed scarlet with anger. Marco's big, broad, rugged face was not handsome, though it was a very pleasant and good-tempered face. It did not look good-tempered now.

"Zara and Marco—beauty and the beast!" went on the ventriloquial voice.

"That's enough of that!" roared Marco.

"I never—" stuttered Tippity Tip, almost dizzy with astonishment.

"Chuck it, I tell you! Do you want me to break your silly doll over your silly head?" roared Marco.

"You fancy Zara likes your ugly



Standing in the lake, with the water almost up to his armpits, Jimmy Guggs glared at Harry Wharton & Co., spluttering for breath. "Will you let a bloke gerrou?" he howled. "You're not clean!" said Bob Cherry. "You want a lot more washing yet!"

you, and I'll boot you across the camp!" Tippity Tip grinned.

Billy Bunter did not grin. He scowled ferociously and rubbed his head. Bunter was annoyed—all the more because Zara, the queen of the ring, was looking out of her van, and she smiled. Bunter saw nothing to smile at in the dashed cheek of a circus man smacking a Public school man's head.

Bunter would have liked to repay that smack with a punch on the lion-tamer's nose. But as he could not have reached Marco's nose without the aid of a step-ladder, that was not practical politics.

But there were other ways for a ventriloquist of Bunter's weird skill to get his own back. Bunter gave a fat little cough.

"Now, John," said Mr. Tip, getting on with his back-chat again and addressing the doll on his knee—"now, John, tell me where I can see the handsomest man in the circus!"

"Look at me!" came Mr. Tip's ven-

triloquial voice proceeded. He stared blankly at the doll.

"Look at Marco!" went on the squeak. "Did you ever see a face like that? Is it a face?"

"That's not funny, Tip!" said the lion-tamer gruffly. "And if you spring that in the ring, you'll hit trouble!"

"Holy pokers!" gasped Mr. Tip. "It's 'appened before, and now it's 'appening again! You think I made the doll say that, Marco?"

"Don't be an ass! I know you did!"

"And I tell you I didn't!" howled Mr. Tip. "I tell you, I never said a word of it! I tell you, as I've told you afore, this 'ere circus is haunted—haunted by a voice!"

"Oh, don't talk rot!" grunted Marco.

"Take your face away and bury it!" came the squeaky voice from the doll. "Let it out to a farmer to frighten the crows!"

"Look here, shut that, Tip!" snapped

mug?" went on the doll. "Don't you think it gives her a pain?"

Tippity Tip stared at his doll with bulging eyes. Unless the circus was, as he declared, haunted by a "voice," there was no understanding this! But it was no mystery to Marco, who supposed, of course, that the doll's voice came from the circus ventriloquist.

He made a stride at Tippity, with a brow of thunder. He grasped at the doll, whirled it in the air, and brought it down on Tippity's head, with a terrific crash.

There was a fearful yell from Tippity, as his hat was squashed in by the smite. He rolled over in the grass, roaring:

"Ow! Stoppit! I tell you I never—yaroooop!"

Swipe!

The ventriloquial doll descended on Tippity again, as he sprawled and roared. It was a mighty smite, and it

caused John, the doll, to fly into pieces, streaming sawdust over its unfortunate owner. Only its legs remained in Marco's angry grasp. He hurled the legs at the sprawling, yelling clown, and turned and stalked away.

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Billy Bunter.

And he rolled away from the spot, leaving Tippetty Tip to sprawl and splutter, chuckling as he went.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Zara is Angry!

SIGNOR MUCCOLINI stepped from his van and scowled at the fat figure that was coming towards him.

The bulky, beefy Italian, with his swarthy face and jetty eyes and bushy, black moustache, had an aggressive look and an overbearing manner. In the Magnificent Circus he was monarch of all he surveyed, and he threw his weight about without limit.

Only to a few special stars, like Marco and Zara, was he civil. Most of the company had to tolerate, the best they could, bully-ragging from the Italian circus-master. And of all the numerous members of the Magnificent Circus, Billy Bunter was the one whom the signor would have liked most to bully-rag! And the fact that he dared not do it, was an incessant irritation to him.

Often and often was he tempted to lay his swarthy hands on the fat Owl of Greyfriars and wallop him right and left. And the circus men, when they heard Bunter checking him, could only wonder why he did not do it. But he never did.

They did not know, or dream of sus-

pecting, the signor's secret—that he was a foreign spy, and that the travelling circus was a screen for his spy-work.

Neither, indeed, did Billy Bunter know or suspect it.

Bunter knew that the signor had taken secret photographs of an air camp, because he had spotted him at the work, and he knew that Muccolini was answerable to the law for what he had done. But that was all Bunter knew.

He had been quite surprised, in fact, to find the Italian so terribly anxious to keep it a secret. It was a serious matter; but not, so far as Bunter could see, so serious as all that!

Still, the Italian's terror of being given away, suited Bunter. It enabled him to hook on to the circus, whether Mucky liked it or not.

And it suited Bunter to hook on. He did not require a hearty, hospitable welcome. So long as he was not booted out, he was satisfied. And the signor dared not boot him out, so that was all right!

Coming up to the dark, scowling Italian, the fat junior of Greyfriars gave him a careless nod.

Muccolini's black eyes glittered at him.

How long, he asked himself savagely, was he to be troubled by this fat fool? Twice he had laid a cunning scheme for the fat Owl of Greyfriars to be "beaten up" by Jimmy Guggs. Each time Bunter had escaped by sheer luck. Without even suspecting that his danger came from the signor, Bunter had escaped it.

"What do you want?" muttered the signor. "I am going out. I have no time now for talk!"

"You'd better make time, then!" said Bunter coolly. "I've something to say."

Muccolini breathed hard.

"Look here! What are we hanging about here for all the afternoon?" demanded Bunter. "It's wasting time, so far as I can see."

"I am the master of this circus!" said the Italian, between his teeth. "I give orders here, Bunter!"

"That's all very well!" grunted Bunter. "But I don't see why we should waste time. We can't give any show here. You've got your next pitch booked, I suppose. Well, why not get on to it?"

"I am to visit a friend who lives in this neighbourhood," said Signor Muccolini, choking back his rage, and condescending to explain. "We take the road again to-morrow. We are in no hurry to reach our next pitch." A sudden gleam came into his black eyes.

"Perhaps you would like to come with me, Bunter? A very pleasant walk—"

"I'm not keen on walking in this heat!" grunted Bunter. "And no lonely walks for me, either. That brute of a tramp may be hanging about, for all I know."

"It is very unlikely that he has followed us from Brighton," said the signor, with a stealthy look at Bunter's fat face.

"Is it?" grunted Bunter. "I jolly well know that he followed us from Surrey to Brighton, so he may still be following us. The beast has a grudge against me."

"I should protect you, if—"

"Yes, I can see you doing it!" sneered Bunter. "More likely take to your heels and leave me to it."

"If you like, we will go in the car." "Thank you for nothing!" jeered Bunter. "You gave me a lift in your car on the Brighton road, and left me behind, and that brute of a tramp dropped on me. It would have been your fault if he'd knocked me out—and so he jolly well would have done if my friends hadn't come up!"

"But—" muttered the signor, biting his thick lip till it almost bled.

"You might leave me behind again!" sneered Bunter. "Catch me trusting a dago! Once bitten, twice shy, you know."

Signor Muccolini choked.

"As you like!" he muttered, and he turned his back on Bunter, and strode away. The fat junior blinked after him through his big spectacles, surlily.

The Italian circus-master walked out of the camp, and disappeared along the road by which the circus had travelled that morning. Billy Bunter rolled away in the direction of Zara's van. He gave no further thought to Signor Muccolini, little guessing who was the "friend" the signor was going to see, and what might have happened had he been in the signor's company when he met that friend!

Zara, the queen of the ring, was the only member of the circus company who looked on Bunter with a kindly eye.

She was keenly interested in the crystal-gazing of the "Great Guglielmo," in which she believed implicitly. With the superstition of her race, Zara believed that distant scenes could be read in the crystal. Billy Bunter was prepared to read in the crystal anything that anybody wanted to see there; and, in addition, to cause the voices of absent friends to whisper in their ears. It was by his ventriloquial trickery that he had convinced Zara of his powers.

Bunter heard a clink of teacups as he approached the gipsy girl's van. He hastened his steps.

Tea was going on, apparently, on the shady side of the caravan. Bunter was more than ready to join in that function.

CAMP and CARAVAN



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But as he drew near, a deep voice that reached his ears round the van, told him that there was already a guest on the spot. It was the voice of Marco.

The fat junior halted, frowning over his spectacles. What the gipsy girl could see in that beast, Marco, was a mystery to Bunter. But she seemed to like the big, rugged lion-tamer.

"It's all rubbish!" Marco was saying. "That fat young rascal is a fraud!"

Bunter's frown intensified.

He had no doubt that Marco was alluding to him! No doubt he realised that the description fitted.

"Beast!" breathed Bunter.

He remained where he was, to hear Zara's reply. The caravan was between him and the gipsy girl and her guest, and he could not see them; but he could hear their voices easily. And Billy Bunter had no scruples about listening to what was not intended for his fat ears.

"It is not rubbish, Marco!" came Zara's reply, with a sharp note in her voice. "The boy proved it. I tell you that he read the crystal, and made me hear the voice of my father, Barendro, speaking my name."

"But that is impossible, Zara!" urged Marco. "It must have been a trick of some kind."

"How could it have been a trick? I tell you, I heard my name spoken, and there was no one near!"

"Tippity plays such tricks," said Marco, laughing. "Perhaps Bunter had help from our ventriloquist, Zara."

"Tippity is no friend of his, and would not help him, especially in a trick to deceive me!" snapped the queen of the ring.

"That is true!" agreed Marco. "But"—he laughed again—"you do not believe in magic, Zara."

"The Romany believes in many things in which the house-dwellers do not believe," said Zara. "The boy has proved what he can do. Does he not, in the sideshow, read the crystal, and make the people hear the voices of their absent friends?"

"He has been playing some such trickery!" said the lion-tamer. "But there is no truth in it—there cannot be!"

"I have heard him, Marco!" said Zara positively.

"Then you have been deceived by some trick," answered Marco. "Perhaps he had someone concealed in his tent, to speak—"

"Nonsense!"

"Or Tippity may have helped him to—"

"That is nonsense also."

"But, my dear Zara—"

"You think I am a fool, to be deceived by a schoolboy!" exclaimed the queen of the ring angrily. "I will not speak to you again, Marco!"

"But—" exclaimed Marco, in dismay.

He broke off, as the gipsy girl went into her van and closed the door with a slam. The queen of the ring had a temper—and it was clear that she was very much angered by the lion-tamer's disbelief.

"Zara!" exclaimed Marco. He stepped to the door of the van, and tapped. "Zara!"

"Go away!" came a snap from within.

"But, my dear Zara—" urged Marco.

"I tell you, go away!"

Marco, with a clouded brow, walked away, forgetting his unfinished tea. Unfortunately for Bunter, he walked away on the side of the van where the fat junior stood.

Bunter was grinning; but he ceased to grin as the lion-tamer came suddenly on him. Marco's brows contracted as he saw the fat Owl.

"So you have been listening!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"You young rascal!"

"Look here, draw it mild!" said Bunter warmly. "I never heard a word you said to Zara! I'm not the fellow to listen, I hope! And I can tell you I don't think much of a fellow who runs a chap down behind his back!"

"So you heard what I said to Zara?"

"Oh, no! I never heard a word!"

Marco stared at him.

"You are a young rascal!" he said.

"But I think you are more fool than rascal! If I find you listening again, I will kick you, as you deserve. In fact, I will kick you now—"

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as the lion-tamer suited the action to the word.

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

And Billy Bunter departed in haste, barely dodging a second lunge of Marco's boot as he went.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Any Port in a Storm!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. stared at the beefy figure and the swarthy face that looked in at the doorway of the bathing-hut by the lake.

They had wondered, uneasily, whether it was the owner of the sylvan spot who had arrived; and they were rather glad to find that it was not.

But they were astonished to see the dark face of the Italian circus-master looking in; and still more by the words he uttered.

They knew Signor Muccolini at a glance. But they had last seen him when the Magnificent Circus was pitched at Brighton, and they were holiday-making at that attractive seaside resort. It was quite a surprise to run into him again in this solitary spot on the downs.

Evidently Signor Muccolini had come there expecting to see someone. And he would have seen the ruffian with the slanting nose, but for the arrival of the Greyfriars juniors, and the little trouble with Jimmy Guggs.

Why the circus-master should have made an appointment in that lonely spot, with the dingy, ruffianly tramp, was a mystery. But there was little doubt that he had.

Signor Muccolini, standing on the step outside, put his dusky head into the hut, staring round him. The sudden change from the blinding sunshine outside, to the dusky interior, prevented him from seeing the juniors for the moment, but he was aware that the hut was occupied—he had heard movements. And his harsh voice snapped again:

"You are here, fool? Why do you not answer me? What—" He broke off as he discerned the juniors, and started violently. "Dio mio! Who are you?"

"Good-afternoon, Signor Muccolini!" said Bob Cherry affably.

The Italian stared at him. As his eyes became used to the dusk inside, he recognised the Greyfriars fellows and scowled.

"Oh! You!" he muttered. "I—I thought—I—I came—"

"Expecting to see somebody else here?" asked Bob. "A sportsman with a nose that has a list to port?"

"Where is he?" snarled Muccolini. "If you have seen him, where is he?"

"Gone!" answered Bob. "We had a bit of a row with that Johnny, and he cleared off! We gave him a wash before he went! You'll hardly recognise him when you see him again—he looks almost clean."

And the juniors chuckled.

"Meddling fool!" muttered the Italian. He gave the Famous Five a dark look, and stepped back from the doorway and from the steps.

Harry Wharton & Co. came out of the hut.

Signor Muccolini stood by the margin of the lake, staring round him. It was plain that he was intensely annoyed and irritated by the departure of the man he had come there to see.

"Which way did he go?" he snarled, with another black look at the Greyfriars fellows.

Harry Wharton pointed across the lake.

"He cleared off that way," he answered. "We haven't seen him since he went. That was nearly an hour ago."

"Cospetto!"

The Italian, muttering to himself, started tramping round the lake. Harry Wharton & Co. looked after him as he went, and then looked at one another.

"Well, this beats me!" remarked Bob Cherry. "What the merry dickens can that dago want with that footpad?"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry Wharton. "He can't know that he's the man who attacked Bunter, I suppose, or he'd have nothing to do with him. It's jolly queer—but it's no business of ours, I suppose. Let's get going."

The chums of the Remove walked back along the shady path to the road. They stopped at the thicket where the bicycles had been parked out of sight, and wheeled the machines out.

"By gum! It's hot!" murmured Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton glanced rather anxiously at the sky as the juniors wheeled the bikes out from under the trees.

The heat was breathless; but the sky was no longer a cloudless blue. A heavy bank of dark cloud was rolling up from the sea, obscuring the sun that had been blazing over the downs.

"Looks like a thunderstorm coming!" said Harry. "We'd better push on. We're about a dozen miles from anywhere, here."

They pushed the bikes up the long white road.

Ahead of them, the rise continued for a good mile; and it was necessary to wheel the machines that distance before they could get into the saddle again.

Refreshed by the rest, and the dip in the cool lake, they pushed on vigorously, anxious to arrive somewhere where there was shelter, before the storm broke.

A flash of lightning whipped across the shadowed sky before they had covered half the distance. A distant rumble of thunder followed.

"Here it comes!" murmured Bob.

Large drops fell, spattering on the dusty road.

The setting sun was blotted out now by the thickening clouds. Heavy drops of rain spattered on straw hats.

"Nice!" murmured Bob.

"The niceness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "We shall soon get a wash like the esteemed and disgusting Guggs!"

"Looks like it," said Harry, "unless we can get some shelter."

"There's nothing on this road for miles!" said Frank Nugent. "We're

going to get wet, old beans! Shove on!"

They shoved on. Another flash of lightning split the clouds, followed by a heavier roll of thunder. Rain began to fall thickly.

There was nothing for it but to push on, regardless of the rain. Little episodes like this had to be expected on a cycling tour.

But the juniors kept a wary look-out along the road for any possible shelter; for it was clear that there was soon going to be a heavy downpour. Once at the top of the rise they could mount and put on speed. But they were not near the top of the rise yet.

Spatfer, spatter, spatter, came the rain. Roll on roll of heavy thunder awoke the echoes.

"It's getting cooler, anyhow!" remarked Bob Cherry. Bob was a fellow to see the bright side of anything—even of a thunderstorm on an open road over the downs.

"And wetter!" granted Johnny Bull. "The wetfulness is preposterous!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"What about getting under the trees?" asked Nugent.

"Too jolly dangerous with lightning about!" said Bob. "Better push on! We may spot a cottage or something, and some good Samaritan may take us in."

No cottage, however, came in sight. The Famous Five, getting wetter and wetter, pushed on manfully, with eager eyes open for any sort of a building that might offer shelter from the storm.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob suddenly.

"What——"

"Caravans—gipsies, I suppose. This way! Any port in a storm!"

The Famous Five came to a halt, staring through the dropping rain at the encampment by the roadside. A number of caravans could be seen, parked with many other vehicles, and some tents. At the first glance they took it for a gipsy encampment. But they soon saw what it was.

"The circus!" exclaimed Harry Wharton

"By gum, yes! There's the name on that van—Muccolini's Magnificent Circus!" exclaimed Nugent. "What the dickens can it have stopped here for?"

"Goodness knows!" said Harry, quite puzzled. "This isn't the spot where one would expect to drop on a circus. Still, we might have guessed that it wasn't far away, as we saw Muccolini a mile back. He wouldn't be here without his circus."

"Come on!" said Bob, turning his bike off the road. "If Bunter's still with the circus, he'll be glad to see us—perhaps!"

"The perhapsfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Oh, blow Bunter!" said Harry. "It doesn't matter about Bunter, but——"

"But what?" asked Bob. "Want to stand there till you get soaked?"

"No, ass! But——"

"But what, fathead?" grunted Johnny Bull. "Don't you want to get out of the rain?"

"Yes, but——" Wharton hesitated. "That dago sportsman, Muccolini, doesn't like us——"

"Nice as we are!" grinned Bob.

"Well, he doesn't. And I fancy he won't be pleased if he comes back and finds us in his camp."

"If he doesn't like it, he can lump it!" growled Johnny Bull. "I'm not sticking out in this rain because a dashed dago mayn't like my company!"

And Johnny pushed his bike off the road, and wheeled it towards the circus

camp. Bob Cherry followed him, and then Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Come on, Harry!" said Nugent. "Muccolini isn't at home now, anyhow, and in any case he can't mind if we get shelter from the rain in his blessed circus. Come on, fathead!"

Frank Nugent wheeled his bike after the others. Harry Wharton made up his mind to it. There was a roar of thunder that seemed almost to shake the downs, followed by a roar from Marco's lions, disturbed by the commotion of the elements. A down-rush of rain followed, splashing hard and fast, and the Greyfriars juniors hurried on, anxious to get out of it. It was a case of any port in a storm, and whether Signor Muccolini liked it or not, they were going to get out of the rain.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is not Pleased!

"IT'S wet!" remarked Mr. Tippetty Tip.

"Oh lor!" groaned Billy Bunter.

Mr. Tip glanced at the fat junior and grinned.

Rain was splashing down heavily on the circus camp. Everybody had rushed for shelter. A glorious August day was closing in a wild and stormy night. Those of the circus company who had good caravans parked themselves in the same, and were safe from the rain and the rising wind. Others, less fortunate, packed into tents, and some of the tents left much to be desired.

Tippetty Tip's tent was neither large nor commodious. Such as it was, he had to share it with Billy Bunter. Bunter did not like the clown as a tent-mate, and still less did Tippetty like Bunter. But the fat Owl had to be accommodated somewhere, since he had joined the circus and persisted in remaining hooked on to it, and he had to make the best of his quarters.

Billy Bunter's discomfort, and his consequent grouching, did not seem to distress Mr. Tip. Rather it seemed to amuse him.

"This rotten tent doesn't keep out the rain!" grunted Bunter. "I've had a splash down the back of my neck."

"It don't often get a wash, does it?" asked Tippetty.

"Beast! What did that fool Mucky want to stop here for?" hooted Bunter. "Where's the sense in camping out here in this beastly wilderness, I'd like to know?"

"Didn't Mucky ask your permission?" inquired Mr. Tip, winking at the falling raindrops outside the doorway of the tent.

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" snarled Bunter. "I'm jolly glad the beast's got caught in this himself! He will be jolly well soaked by the time he gets back. I hope he'll be jolly nearly drowned! Blow him!"

"Well, if he's out in this he will get wet," agreed Mr. Tip. "It's coming down—no mistake about that! Hallo! Who the dickens is this?"

Tippetty Tip stared at five fellows, wheeling bikes, with their collars turned up. The next moment he recognised the Famous Five of Greyfriars.

"My eye!" said Mr. Tip. "Here's some friends of yours, young Bunter."

"Eh?"

"Fellers from your school," said Tippetty.

"Rot!" grunted Bunter.

Tippetty put his head out into the rain and waved a hospitable and inviting hand to the drenched juniors.

"Here you are!" he shouted. "This way out of the rain! Hop in!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's Tip!"

"The esteemed and ludicrous Tip!"

The five wet ones halted in front of Tippetty's tent. Tippetty's round, chubby face beamed at them. He had met the Famous Five several times, and his feelings towards those cheery youths were very different from his feelings towards William George Bunter.

"Caught in the rain?" he said. "Hop in! There ain't a lot of room, but you're welcome to what there is! Pal of yours here, too!"

"You're awfully good, Mr. Tip!" said Harry Wharton gratefully.

"Oh, don't mench!" said Mr. Tip. "Hop in out of the rain! There's a lot more coming down. Feeling a bit damp—what?"

"The dampfulness is preposterous, esteemed Tip!"

Tippetty chuckled.

"I'll look after your jiggers," he said. "Come in. Make a bit more room, will you, Bunter? You can't squat over the whole tent when we've got visitors."

Billy Bunter blinked through his big spectacles at the five juniors, as they crowded into the limited space.

"I say, you fellows——" he squeaked.

"Jolly old Bunter!" said Bob. "Glad to see us again, old fat bean?"

"No, I'm jolly well not!" grunted Bunter. "Look here, you can't crowd me out of this tent! Go and shove in somewhere else, see?"

"You were glad enough to see us the night that footpad got hold of you, you fat freak!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Never mind Bunter!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "Bunter can't help being a pig, can you, Bunty, old bean?"

"The pigfulness is——"

"Terrific!" chuckled Bob.

"Look here——" hooted Bunter.

"You shut up, Bunter!" said Mr. Tip. "You 'car me—shut up! This 'ere is my tent, and if you don't like it you can get out! Now shut up!"

"Beast!"

Mr. Tip put a sack over his head, to shelter it from the rain, and went out to put the bicycles under cover. When he came back he had a couple of campstools under his arm.

"I've borrowed these from Marco," he explained. "There's a box some of you can sit on. Make the best of it. This ain't the Ritz, you know."

"It's jolly good of you to take us in, Mr. Tip!" said Harry. "We should have been soaked to the skin if we'd stayed out in that! We were jolly glad to spot the circus here, I can tell you!"

"But what are you doing here?" asked Bob. "Not going to give a performance to the sheep on the downs—what?"

Mr. Tip grinned.

"Blessed if I know!" he answered.

"Mucky gave the order to camp here, and that's that. He's gone to call on somebody, I believe——"

"Oh!" said Bob, with a glance at his friends.

"But why he couldn't have gone in his car and let the circus keep on, is a blinking mystery to me!" said Tippetty. "But Mucky gives orders here, and that's all about it. Here we are till he gives the order to move on."

"The silly idiot!" growled Bunter.

"He hadn't the sense even to camp near an inn, where a chap could have got a decent meal and a bed. I don't believe there's a house within a mile. The silly ass!"

"Five miles would be nearer the mark!" said Tippetty. "This rain don't look like stopping, does it?"

"It doesn't!" said Harry ruefully. "If



Guggs was helpless in the powerful hands of the lion-tamer. He sagged like a sack, his legs trailing on the ground. "Will you leggo?" he moaned. "I gives in! I'll go to the stone jug, if you like! I'll do anything! Only leggo! You're a-cracking my blinking bones! Oooh!" "I'm handing you over to the police first!" said Marco.

it keeps on we shall have to push through it somehow."

"You won't," said Mr. Tip, "not if you'd rather bunk down 'ere and chance it. It ain't the Grand Hotel at Brighton, but it will keep the rain off, and I can scrounge you some supper."

"We can't crowd you out of house and home like that, old bean!" said Bob.

"Bosh!" said the hospitable Tippity. "You're more'n welcome. I'll fix you up all right."

There was a howl from Bunter.

"And what about me?" he hooted. "Think I'm going to be crowded out?"

"You'll be pushed out on your neck if you don't shut up!" said Mr. Tip darkly. "You're asking for it, fatty!"

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another, and looked out at the weather.

The thunder was rolling heavily; the rain coming down almost in sheets. And it looked like lasting. After days and days of dry weather, Nature was making up for it with a swamping downpour.

Pushing on for miles through the wet was a far from attractive idea. Space, in Mr. Tip's quarters, was rather limited; but his hospitality was boundless. The chums of the Remove decided to accept Mr. Tip's kind offer. Bunter did not matter. It was Tippi's tent—and that settled it.

But it did not settle it for Bunter. Billy Bunter had no idea of being crowded and crammed, if he could help it. Neither Tippi, nor the Famous Five seemed to realise that Billy Bunter's personal comfort was the first of all considerations. Bunter realised it clearly.

Tippity Tip went out with the sack over his head again, and returned with a cup of hot coffee and two or three

tin cups. Harry Wharton & Co. sat on the camp-stools, and a box, and anything that came handy, and drank coffee, and talked to Mr. Tip, in quite a cheery mood.

Billy Bunter, squatting in a dusky corner, frowned over his spectacles, unheeded.

Suddenly, from outside the tent, came a sharp, barking voice—the well-known, harsh voice of Signor Muccolini.

"Tip! How dare you bring those young rascals into my circus? Turn them out at once! Do you hear? Turn them out?"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Once Too Often!

HARRY WHARTON crimsoned. He jumped to his feet. His comrades followed his example at once.

Mr. Tip looked utterly dismayed. Billy Bunter, in his dusky corner, grinned. The Greystriars ventriloquist had his own way of getting rid of that unwelcome crowd in the tent!

"Oh, my eye!" ejaculated Tippi. He peered out into the falling rain and thickening dusk.

"I say, signor—" he stammered.

"Turn them out, I tell you!" came the barking voice. "How dare you bring them here! I will not have them in my circus!"

"Look here, sir, they've stepped in out of the rain, and I ain't turning them ov.—so there!" exclaimed Tippi angrily.

He stared round in the dusky rain. He could not see Signor Muccolini. If he was at hand, he was not close at hand.

The juniors exchanged glances.

Wharton bit his lip, hard. He had felt very doubtful whether Signor Muccolini would be pleased or gratified by finding them there. Now there seemed no doubt on that point! He felt as if he could have kicked himself for seeking shelter in the circus at all! The rain was better than this!

"Let's get out, you men!" muttered the captain of the Remove.

"Look here, bother that cheeky dago!" growled Johnny Bull. "This is Tip's tent, and Muccolini has no right to order fellows out of it."

"We can't get Tip into a row with his boss."

"Well, no—that's so."

Tippity turned a worried, distressed face towards his guests. But worried and distressed as he was, he was resolute.

"You're not going, young gents!" he said. "Mucky can say what he likes, and be blowed to him! I dessay he's got wet in the rain, and come back in a bad temper. I don't care what he says! You're staying 'ere!"

"Mucky doesn't like us, old bean!" said Bob Cherry, with a faint grin. "We've had a row or two with him, you know. We'd better cut."

"The cutfulness is the proper caper, esteemed and absurd Tip!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I tell you, you ain't going, and Mucky can go and eat garlic!" said Tippi. "I can tell you, I've had enough lip from Mucky. He planted that fat frog here on me, as if it wasn't my own tent! But he ain't ordering you out in this 'ere rain—"

"Will you turn those young scoundrels out?" came the angry, barking voice. "Do you want to be sacked, Tip?"

"Let us go, for goodness' sake!" breathed Nugent.

"Come on!" said Bob.

All the juniors were anxious to go. They could feel for Mr. Tip, who was red with anger and annoyance. But they knew very well that it was a serious matter for the circus clown to enter into a dispute with his employer, especially an overbearing bully like Muccolini. They were not going to land Tippetty in trouble.

But Tippetty barred their way. Tippetty was a patient little man, and he had endured endless "lip" from Mucky. But there was a limit; and now the limit was reached. Tippetty was going to kick!

"You stay where you are, young gents!" said the clown. "I tell you this 'ere is my tent, and I've made you welcome to it, and you're sticking 'ere. I've had enough from that dago!"

"But——" said Harry, deeply uneasy.

"I tell you, I've stood cheek from that unwashed ice-cream blighter that no covey would have stood if his job wasn't at stake!" said Tippetty. "And I ain't standing this! An Englishman's house is his castle, ain't it? And this 'ere is my blooming tent."

"But——" said Bob.

"Do you hear me, Tip?" came the voice from without, barking savagely. "Turn those young rascals out at once, or you're sacked!"

Tippetty Tip's eyes gleamed.

"Sacked, am I?" he hooted.

"Yes, sacked!" came the angry bark. "Do you think you're any use in the circus? Sacked, unless you turn them out this instant!"

"That does it!" said Tippetty Tip between his teeth. "If I'm sacked, I'll give that cheeky dago what I've wanted to give him for donkeys' years!"

He spun round to the opening of the tent, his fists clenched, and his eyes blazing. For a long, long time the bullying Italian had treated Tippetty like a worm! Now the worm was turning!

"For goodness' sake——" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in alarm.

Tippetty Tip did not heed him.

Heedless of remonstrance, and heedless of the rain, he jumped out of the tent, his fists up and his eyes blazing. How many times he had yearned to punch the signor's swarthy face, Tippetty could not have counted. He was going to do it at last!

A figure loomed in the rain and dusk in front of the tent. Tippetty jumped at it, hitting out.

"That's for you, you snuff-coloured 'ound!" roared Tippetty as he hit. "You take that—and that——"

There was a roar of surprise. But it was not the voice of Signor Muccolini. It was the voice of Marco, the lion-tamer.

"Tip! You mad idiot! What are you up to?" roared Marco.

"Holy pokers!" gasped Tippetty. "Ain't you Mucky? I mean, where's Mucky? I thought it was Mucky——"

"You thumping ass!" roared Marco.

He grasped the clown by his collar, lifted him off his feet with a swing of his powerful arm, and strode into the tent, carrying Tippetty in bodily.

"Ooogh!" gurgled Tippetty. "Ooogh! Leggo, Marco, you hass! I tell you, I thought it was Mucky—— Ooogh!"

Marco set him on his feet, and glared at him. Then he rubbed his

chin, where Mr. Tip's knuckles had landed.

"Are you barmy?" he hooted. "Jumping at a man and punching his face? What do you mean?"

"I thought it was Mucky, I tell you!" gasped Mr. Tip. "He's jest been 'owling at me from outside——"

"Mad, I suppose," said Marco. "Mucky's not there! He hasn't come in! He went out before the storm came on, you silly ass!"

"I know he did! But he's come back——"

"He hasn't!"

"Didn't I 'ear him?" howled Tippetty. "I tell you, he was 'owling into the tent that I was to turn these young gents out in the rain, and I went out to punch his cheeky face, and I thought——"

"Oh, you're potty!" snapped Marco. "Mucky hasn't come in. Think he'd walk back through this downpour, you chump? He's in shelter somewhere."

"I tell you——" shrieked Tippetty.

"I came along to see if I could help in putting up these lads," said the lion-tamer, "and you meet me with a punch in the face, you dummy!"

"I thought it was Mucky!" raved Mr. Tip. "And, I tell you, Mucky is there, and he was 'owling at me——"

"We all heard him, Mr. Marco," said Harry Wharton. "He doesn't want us here—we had some trouble with him, you know, a little while back—and he told Mr. Tip to turn us out——"

"Are you all dreaming?" hooted Marco. "I tell you that Mucky hasn't come back, and if he'd been outside the tent, shouldn't I have seen him as I came along? Mucky's not in the camp."

The Famous Five could only stare. They knew the harsh voice of the circus-master well enough, and they had had no doubt that that angry voice came from Signor Muccolini. Marco's positive statement that the Italian was not in the camp, simply mystified them.

Tippetty Tip dashed out of the tent, regardless of the rain. He came back in a few moments, however, dripping and looking bewildered.

"Mucky ain't nowhere about!" he gasped.

"I told you he wasn't!" snapped Marco.

"But I tell you we all heard him!" exclaimed Bob.

"You couldn't have, as he's not in the camp," said the lion-tamer.

"Haunted!" said Tippetty. "This 'ere circus is haunted! Ain't I told you a dozen times and more, Marco, that this 'ere circus is haunted—haunted by a voice? Didn't you 'ear it only this afternoon and fancy that I was making the doll speak when I wasn't——"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Tippetty!" said Marco gruffly.

"I tell you this 'ere circus is haunted by a voice!" asserted Mr. Tip. "Now all these young gents can tell you the same! They heard Mucky jest as plain as I did—and he ain't there!"

"Haunted by a voice!" repeated Bob Cherry, turning a sudden glare on the fat Owl of the Remove in his dusky corner. "Bunter, you fat villain——"

"Bunter!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Bunter!" howled Nugent.

"That fat scoundrel——" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"That esteemed and rascally ventriloquist rotter!" yelled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It was not the ridiculous dago at all; it was Bunter!"

"Oh, really, you fellows!" gasped

Bunter in alarm. "I—I never said a word! I—I never——"

The Greyfriars ventriloquist rather repented of his latest trickery now.

He had nearly got away with it—very nearly! But for Tippetty's determination not to be bullied into inhospitality, the juniors would have gone. As it was, Bunter had done it once too often.

Mysterious, haunting voices might puzzle and bewilder Mr. Tip; but they did not puzzle Remove fellows, who knew of the fat Owl's weird gift of ventriloquism.

Often and often had Billy Bunter been kicked in the Remove passage at Greyfriars for that kind of trickery. Now that they knew that Signor Muccolini was not in the camp the Famous Five guessed what had happened.

They glared at Bunter.

"You fat rotter!" roared Johnny Bull.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I never——" gasped Bunter.

"How could it have been Bunter?" exclaimed Marco. "What do you mean?"

"Didn't you know the fat rotter was a ventriloquist?" bawled Bob.

"A ventriloquist—Bunter!" gasped the lion-tamer.

"Him!" gasped Tippetty Tip. "That fat idjit! He ain't got the brains for it!"

"It can't need brains, or Bunter couldn't do it," said Bob. "But it was Bunter all right. You fat sweep, you nearly got us turned out in the rain with your rotten trickery——"

"I didn't!" howled Bunter. "I never said a word! Besides, you jolly well know there's no room for you here! Not that I did it! I never——"

"Mean to say," gasped Tippetty Tip, "that that fat idjit—that object—that blithering hass could pull off a trick like that? My eye!"

"So that's where the haunting voice came from!" said Marco. "Nobody ever heard it before Bunter joined the circus!"

"Him!" said Tippetty. "Pulling our leg all the time! That's how he wangles his tricks as Guglielmo, I s'pose? And I never thought of it, him looking such a silly idjit——"

"And that's how he made Zara believe that she heard her father's voice speaking her name!" said Marco, with a grim look at the fat Owl.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows, don't you get making out that I'm a ventriloquist! I say, Zara would be fearfully waxy if she knew! I—I say, Marco, don't you believe a word of it! I never made that doll speak this afternoon! I—I couldn't! Besides, I wasn't there! You jolly well know that I wasn't there, as you saw me——"

"Him!" said Tippetty.

The clown made a jump at Billy Bunter.

The haunting voice that had mystified Mr. Tip so long was a mystery no longer. Often and often had that mysterious voice been put down to Mr. Tip, as the only ventriloquist in the circus. But the discovery that there was another ventriloquist on the spot elucidated the mystery. A few minutes ago Mr. Tip had been very keen to punch Mucky; now he was still more keen to punch Bunter. And this time his keenness was to be gratified.

He made a jump at Bunter, and Bunter made a jump to escape.

But there was no escape for Bunter. Bump!

Under a hefty swipe from Mr. Tip the fat Owl of Greyfriars bumped on the cold, cold ground: he roared as he bumped.

Tippity grabbed up a large wooden tentpeg; it was quite a handy weapon for Tippity's purpose.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Ow! Stoppit! Wow!" roared Bunter.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroo! Help! I say, you fellows, draggimoff!" shrieked Bunter.

"Give him a few for us, Mr. Tip!" said Bob.

"Ow! Beast! Wow! Yaroo!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Ow! Oh crikey! I tell you I never did it!" shrieked Bunter. "And it was only a joke! Just a jig-jig-joke! I—I wasn't going to say— Yaroooh! I was going to tell you it wasn't Mucky— Whoop! It was only a— Yow-ow-ow!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh crikey! Oh lor'! Will you stoppit?" raved the hapless ventriloquist.

Tippity wielded the tentpeg hard and often. Every whack rang like a pistol shot. Louder still rang Billy Bunter's roars.

With a terrific effort the fat Owl broke away at last. He bounded for the doorway of the tent. He had forgotten the rain—not that the rain mattered at that moment. Rain was better than a heavy tentpeg whacking on his tight trousers. He leaped for the open spaces.

Marco shot out a foot as he went.

It landed with a heavy thud fairly lifting Bunter off his feet. He shot out of the tent like a fat cannonball.

There was a heavy bump outside and a roar; then there was a gasping, a spluttering, and a sound of running feet.

Billy Bunter was gone.

No doubt he found shelter from the rain elsewhere in the circus. But he did not come back to Tippity Tip's tent. The tentpeg was ready for him if he did—and Billy Bunter had had enough of that tentpeg. Rain by the bucketful would not have driven him back within reach of Tippity and the tentpeg. Billy Bunter was gone—and he stayed gone!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Prowlers of the Night!

MARCO ducked his tall head and came into the little tent, dripping rain. A lantern swinging from a pole shed a dim light. By that dim light the Famous Five of Greyfriars were eating supper provided by the hospitality of Mr. Tip. Marco had left them there, and the juniors had not expected to see him again that night. Now, however, he came back with a good-humoured grin on his cheery, rugged face.

Since the supposed voice of the signor had turned out to be only a false alarm, the Greyfriars fellows were, of course, staying. They had accepted the hospitality of the circus clown, and they were grateful for it. Outside, the rain was coming down as heavily as ever—beating on tents and caravan roofs, running in streams in every rut. A dark and stormy night had set in—and a hospitable shelter had never been more welcome to the chums. But the question of sleeping accommodation was a difficult one.

The tent was small. There were two camp-beds in it—one belonged to Tippity; the other had hitherto been apportioned to Billy Bunter. Bunter had not come back—and Mr. Tip made no secret of his intention of kicking him out immediately if he did. Doubtless well aware of that intention of Mr. Tip's, the fat Owl of the Remove kept his distance. Bunter's bed, therefore, was available. But there was only one; and there was not much space when the two camp-beds were set up, even for camping on the ground. In point of fact, Mr. Tip's tent accommodated two, and could have accommodated three at a pinch; but how it was going to accommodate Tippity and five sturdy fellows in addition was a problem.

Tippity did not seem to be bothering about it, but the Famous Five could not help wondering how it was going to be managed. However, they were now to learn that that little matter had been arranged.

"I've fixed it up all right," said the lion-tamer, throwing a bundle down in the tent. "I've brought my things, Tippity."

"Right you are!" said Tippity.

The episode of the ventriloquial doll in the afternoon had caused rather strained relations between the clown and the lion-tamer. But the discovery of Bunter's trickery had enlightened them both, and they were the best of friends again—which was one happy result of the Famous Five's arrival at Muccolini's Magnificent Circus.

But Marco's remark and Tippity's reply made the chums of the Remove stare a little. They were already wondering how on earth that little tent was going to accommodate so many for the night. Now, it seemed, Marco was coming there to camp. If the problem had been difficult before, the

(Continued on next page.)

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addition of a fellow six feet high, and broad in proportion, made it insoluble. "Bunter won't be coming back!" added Marco.

"If he do," said Mr. Tip, "he'll wish he hadn't! Mucky can say what he likes, but I ain't having that young raskil in my tent no more! I dessay he's got into one of the baggage vans! Anyhow, he ain't coming back 'ere! I got a boot ready for him, if he do!"

"Then I'll take his bed!" said Marco. "Right as rain!"

The King of the Lions gave the juniors a cheery grin.

"I've fixed up my van for you!" he said. "It's a pretty roomy van, and you'll all be able to pack in. I can put up with Tippity for the night."

"Oh!" exclaimed the juniors. They understood now.

"But, my dear chap," exclaimed Harry Wharton, "we can't turn you out of your van like that—"

"You can't all camp in this tent!" said Marco. "There isn't room! It's all right—I've camped with Tippity before now, and I can do it again. You're welcome to my van for the night."

"You're awfully good," said the captain of the Remove gratefully. "But it's really too thick—"

"Rot!" said Marco, cheerfully. "I've taken the packs off your bikes into the van—you'll find all your things there. When you're ready, I'll take you along."

"You're a good chap, and no mistake!" said Bob.

"The goodness is terrific and preposterous!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, a remark that made the King of the Lions chuckle.

Supper over, the juniors said good-night to Tippity, and followed Marco from the clown's tent. Mr. Tip lent them a big, baggy umbrella, and they crowded under it, as they followed the lion-tamer.

After a hurried plunge through the rain, they reached the lion-tamer's van. The door stood open and a light burned within. It stood next to the big caravan belonging to Signor Muccolini. But the signor's van was dark and unoccupied; the circus-master had not yet returned.

"Good-night!" said Marco, from the foot of the steps.

"Good-night, and heaps of thanks."

The tall figure of the lion-tamer disappeared in the shadows as he plunged back through the rain in the direction of Tippity Tip's tent.

"Well, this is jolly old hospitality, and no mistake!" remarked Bob Cherry as he looked round the van. "Jolly glad we barged into this circus, you fellows."

"The gladfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Lucky for us that Mucky camped on this road!" remarked Nugent, "though goodness knows why he picked a spot like this."

"They seem jolly decent chaps, these circus men!" said Johnny Bull. "We shall be all right here."

"Right as rain!" said Harry.

Marco's caravan was roomy and comfortable. The space was, perhaps, rather limited for five occupants; still, there was room. There was only one bunk, but the lion-tamer had made up an extensive bed on the floor of the van for four of the juniors to share. And the solid roof, on which the rain pattered heavily, was undoubtedly a better protection than Tippity's tent.

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The juniors were tired, after a day of walking and pedalling, and they were not long in turning in.

The sound of steady breathing was soon mingling with the pattering of the rain-drops. Only Bob Cherry slept rather less soundly than usual. There was rather a pain in Bob's nose, where Guggs' fist had smitten it, and it was a little swollen.

Two or three times, Bob woke up and rubbed his nose. It was after midnight when, awakened once more by a painful twinge, Bob sat up and knew, by the silence, that the rain had stopped. There was no longer a pattering on the roof, and through the open window of the van came a glimmer of starlight from a clearing sky.

"Ooooooh!" murmured Bob, as he rubbed his damaged nose tenderly.

"Wharrer marrer?" came a sleepy murmur.

"Pain in my nose!"

"Oh, blow your nose!"

"Fathead!"

Bob Cherry rose to his feet and stepped to the little window of the van. It was stuffy in the caravan with five sleepers in the limited space, and the night was hot.

Bob put his head out at the window to draw in a few breaths of the fresh, sweet air, cool after the rain.

The circus-camp was sleeping.

A dog barked somewhere, but the bark immediately ceased, as if the animal had been soothed by a familiar voice.

Someone, apparently, was stirring, late as the hour was.

Bob wondered, without much interest, whether it was Signor Muccolini, returning to the circus-camp now that the storm was over.

He glanced carelessly towards the big, gaudily painted caravan, next to Marco's. That, he knew, was Muccolini's. It was as dark and silent as when he had seen it last, before turning in.

But a shifting shadow appeared at the end of the van, coming from the other side of it, which was towards the road. Bob saw the swarthy face and bushy moustache of Pietro Muccolini in the glimmer of the stars. Evidently the Italian circus-master had returned to camp, at that late hour.

But to Bob's surprise, another shadow joined him. It was a stocky, thick-set figure that appeared from beyond the van—with something vaguely familiar in its outlines.

Then, as there was a gleam of starlight on a stubbly face with a slanting nose, Bob recognised the footpad, Guggs.

For a moment or two he stared blankly. Then he backed quietly from the window.

It was strange enough that Signor Muccolini should have anything to do with a character like Guggs—a footpad of the roads. Stranger still, that he should have brought the ruffian to the circus-camp with him, in the darkness and stillness of the night.

Still, it was no business of Bob's, and he did not want Muccolini to spot him at the van window, and fancy that he was spying on him.

He lay down to sleep again, closed his eyes, and dismissed from his mind these shadows of the night. But he certainly would never have settled down so peacefully could he have heard the low whispers that passed between those two shadowy night-prowlers.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Precious Pair!

"I GET you!" muttered Jimmy Guggs. "Silenzio!" whispered the signor.

The circus-camp was sleeping. Only a dog had barked as Signor Muccolini came, and a soothing word from a voice he knew had quietened him. All was dark, silent; the camp was buried in slumber.

The Italian's keen, black eyes, searching and scanning, failed to detect a glimmer of a light in tent or van. All was safe! But he was cautious—caution was second nature to the scheming rascal, who had for so long played the part of a spy in the land that gave him shelter.

That a schoolboy had, for a moment, glimpsed him and his companion, from the window of a van, the signor never dreamed. He had no knowledge that the Greyfriars schoolboys were in the camp at all.

Standing in the shadow of his van, he pointed to a small tent at a little distance. Jimmy Guggs' eyes followed the direction of the pointing finger.

"That is Tip's tent." The signor's whisper was barely audible. "He shares it with Bunter. You understand?"

"I get you!" repeated Guggs.

"You know what you have to do. Do not fail me this time!"

"Leave that to me, guv'nor!"

Jimmy Guggs glanced sidelong at the swarthy face of the Italian, curiously. He was willing, more than willing, to earn the signor's pay, by "beating up" the fat schoolboy. But he could not help wondering.

All the circus company were puzzled by the signor permitting Bunter to remain with the Magnificent Circus, when obviously he did not want him there. But Jimmy Guggs was more puzzled than Marco or Tippity, Samson or Wiggles, or the rest. Why the circus-master should resort to this desperate and lawless expedient for getting rid of that fat schoolboy, was a deep mystery to Jimmy.

Twice already had Bunter narrowly escaped from the ruffian, without even suspecting that it was Signor Muccolini who brought the danger upon him. This time it seemed to Muccolini that there was no escape for the fat junior of Greyfriars who knew his secret.

He would have chosen the "beating up" to take place outside the circus at a distance. But since his narrow escapes, Bunter had been careful not to give the footpad another chance at him. Guggs had followed the circus when it left Brighton, but never once had Bunter wandered out of safety. That was why the signor had changed his plans.

He had halted the circus on a lonely road, to stay there for the night. During that night, what he had planned was to take place. A message to Guggs had told him where to meet the signor, to receive his instructions—the Italian was far too cunning to put anything of that kind into writing. Owing to the Famous Five, he had not found Jimmy at the bathing-hut by the lake in the wood, but he had looked for him, and found him lurking in the vicinity. The thunderstorm had delayed his return to the camp, but that suited his plans, for he did not want the ruffian to appear there before all eyes were closed. Now, it seemed to the plotting Italian, all was plain sailing!

His black eyes glittered in the starlight, at the tent shared by Tippity Tip and Billy Bunter.

"There are two in the tent," he



Zara snatched the crystal from Bunter's fat hands. Taking it in her left hand, she smacked the fat junior with her right. Smack! "Ow! Yow!" wailed Bunter. "Will you stoppit? Wow!" "I'm taking this crystal away!" snapped Zara. "You shall no longer use it to delude fools! You are a rascal!"

breathed, "Tip, the clown, and the boy Bunter. I shall call the clown away so that you will have the young scoundrel to yourself. You understand?"

"I get you, gov'nor."

"Keep in cover, behind the tent, till you hear the clown go. And then"—the blaze of ferocity in the Italian's eyes, startled even the hardened ruffian at his side—"then you will do your work."

"Leave it to me," muttered Guggs. He tapped the stick he carried under his arm. "When I've had a few licks at him with this 'ere, he will be a 'orspital case, and you can lay to that."

"Beat him black and blue!" hissed the signor. "Beat him so that he must be taken to a hospital, or to a doctor's—anything, so that he cannot travel any longer with my circus. He has a home somewhere—he may be taken to it—Cospetti, I will gladly pay for an ambulance to take him there, so that I see the last of him!"

The Italian's whisper came like the hiss of a snake.

"I get you!" murmured Guggs.

"There will be an alarm when he yells—but you will have time—plenty of time. Do not fail me, or I will pay nothing. Now, take your place—keep in cover by the tent—take care that Tip does not see you when I call him out."

"Leave it to me."

Jimmy Guggs, with his stick under his arm, trod softly over the wet ground, towards Tippet's tent.

The signor's glittering black eyes watched him, till he disappeared behind that tent.

Then the beefy Italian stepped in the same direction. He stopped in front of the tent, and drew the canvas flap at the entrance aside.

"Tip!" he snapped.

There was a movement within, and a startled sleepy voice.

"Hallo! Is that you, boss?"

"Si! Si! Yes! I have dropped the key of my van, Tip—come and help me look for it. I cannot open the van."

"Oh, holy pokers!" grunted Mr. Tip.

"I say—"

"Bring a torch, if you have one!" snapped the signor. "I tell you, I have dropped my key and cannot find it. Lose no time."

Signor Muccolini walked back to his van.

Tippet Tip breathed hard and deep. He was an obliging little man; but he did not like being called out of bed, in the middle of the night.

If the signor had carelessly dropped his key, it was Mr. Tip's idea that the signor ought to have looked for it himself, without disturbing anybody else. But the circus clown was not in a position to point that out to the boss of the circus. Grumbling under his breath, Tippet turned out, and groped for his trousers and boots and a flash-lamp.

There was a drowsy murmur from the other bed.

"What's the row, Tippet?"

"That blinking dago!" said Mr. Tip, in subdued but concentrated tones. "He's come back late, and dropped his silly key, and wants me to 'elp him find it. I'd rather push his face in for him."

And Mr. Tip, in boots and trousers and a very bad temper, issued from the tent, with a flash-lamp in his hand.

He crossed over to the signor's van.

Muccolini was standing there, peering about the steps. Tippet flashed on the light.

"Now where did you drop it?" he grunted.

"Here, somewhere, as I was putting it into the door!" snarled the signor. "I slipped on the steps—they are wet! Show the light."

Tippet snorted, and flashed the light

round the steps. A dozen keys might have lain out of sight, in the wet grass there. Tippet flashed the light round with one hand, and groped in the grass with the other. Muccolini made a pretence of helping him in the search. That the signor's key was safe in his pocket, and that the pretended loss was only a trick to get him away from his tent, naturally never occurred to Tippet for a moment.

"Blessed if I see anything of it, boss!" he grunted.

"It must be here somewhere!" snapped the signor. "Cospetto! Look for it! Am I never to get to bed? It is long past midnight!"

"That ain't my fault, is it?" grunted Mr. Tip.

"Dio mio! Hold your tongue, and look for the key!"

Breathing harder and deeper, Tippet held his tongue, and looked for the key. But he was suddenly interrupted by a loud and fearful yell that rang from the direction of his tent.

He straightened up, staring round in alarm and surprise.

"What the holy poker—" he ejaculated.

The Italian's teeth flashed in the starlight as he grinned. Signor Muccolini knew—or fancied he knew—the cause of that sudden outbreak of frantic yelling from Tippet's tent.

Tippet, in alarm, started back towards his tent, at a run. Perhaps by accident, Muccolini's foot was put in his way, and Tippet stumbled over it, and came down in the wet grass with a bump.

"Ow!" gasped Mr. Tip, as he rolled.

From the tent, yell on yell came ringing, waking every echo of the circus camp.

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NOT WANTED in the CIRCUS!

By
FRANK
RICHARDS

(Continued from page 13.)

THE TENTH CHAPTER.**The Wrong Man!**

LIFE is full of surprises. Probably Jimmy Guggs, in his career as tramp, pilferer, foot-pad, and rowdy, had had his share of them. But never had Jimmy Guggs been so surprised as he was now. It was a dumbfounding, devastating surprise that Jimmy found in Tippity Tip's tent.

It had seemed quite a simple and easy proposition to Jimmy. Tippity had been tricked out of the tent, and was at a distance, looking for a key that was not lost—leaving the other occupant of the tent at the mercy of Mr. Guggs. That other occupant was—or ought to have been—a fat schoolboy, absolutely helpless in Guggs' hefty grasp. Guggs, as he crept into the tent, had no doubt that he was on to a soft thing!

With his stick in his right hand, he groped over a camp-bed with his left, and found it empty. That was Tippity's bed. He turned from it, and peered in the darkness for the other. He heard a sound of breathing in the darkness, and it guided him.

His left hand hovered over the sleeper and clutched at a neck.

It was then that the surprises started. Jimmy Guggs' intention was to drag Bunter from the bed with his left, and lay on the stick with his right.

Had it been Bunter in the bed, no doubt that intention would have been carried out according to plan.

But, as it happened, it was not Bunter. It was not a short, fat, flabby schoolboy—it was a six-foot lion-tamer, and the difference was great.

Marco had half-awakened when Tippity got up and went out. He had dozed off again immediately. But that sudden grip in the darkness awakened him. He started out of slumber in amazement.

Taken by surprise, he was jerked half off the camp-bed, before he knew what was happening. The stick came down in the dark, crackling hard across his shoulder.

Then, instead of a fat schoolboy crumpling in the ruffian's grasp, and collapsing under a rain of blows from the stick, a mighty hand gripped Jimmy Guggs, and it was Guggs that crumpled up.

"What the thump—" gasped Marco. Guggs was a hefty ruffian. But he was little more than an infant in the grasp of the herculean lion-tamer.

He gave a yell of surprise and terror, as the powerful hands of the King of the Lions gripped him.

He was whirled over, and crashed on the earth.

He yelled frantically.

Those fearful yells that rang and echoed from Tippity's tent, did not, as the signor supposed, come from Billy Bunter. They came from Jimmy Guggs.

In utter terror Jimmy Guggs yelled and howled. His bones were almost cracking in the mighty grasp that fastened on him.

He hit the ground, and hit it hard, as Marco crashed him down, and lay wriggling, squirming, and yolling in a grasp that seemed to him like bands of triple steel.

Who it was that had grasped him, and so suddenly and unexpectedly put paid to his attack, he had not the faintest idea. But he knew that it could not be Bunter!

There was a mistake somewhere! He had got the wrong man in the dark—only too clearly he had got the wrong man!

"Ow! Leggo! Wow! Leggo!" shrieked Guggs. "You're a-cracking of my neck! You're a-breaking of my arm! The blooming bone's going! Yoo-hoooooh!"

Marco's iron grasp did not relax for a moment! He had been taken by surprise by that sudden, savage attack in the dark. But he had got his man—and he was keeping him.

"Tippity!" he shouted. "Bring a light here!"

"Oooogh! Leggo!" shrieked Guggs. "I tell you you're a-cracking of my blooming bones! I gives in! Oooo-oooooh-ooooer! Leggo!"

Instead of letting go, Marco planted a sinewy knee on the ruffian, pinning him to the ground.

"Tippity!" he shouted.

"Coming!" came back Tippity's voice.

The clown, picking himself up after his tumble, raced towards the tent.

He left Signor Muccolini standing as if rooted to the ground, staring after him.

Not for a moment, till then, had Muccolini doubted that that frantic, fearful yelling came from Billy Bunter, writhing under a rain of blows from Guggs' cudgel. But the shouting voice of Marco, the lion-tamer, reached his ears, and he wondered whether he were dreaming!

Marco was in Tippity's tent! What was Marco doing there? What had happened to defeat his cunningly laid scheme? It was clear that something was amiss.

Yell after yell came from the ruffian crumpling in the lion-tamer's grasp. But the signor realised now that it was not Bunter yelling.

"Cospetto!" he breathed. "What is—"

There were startled voices on all sides now; lights gleamed from tents and from the windows of caravans.

That terrific uproar in the middle of the night had awakened and alarmed the whole circus camp.

The door of Marco's van was hurled open, and Signor Muccolini stared with starting eyes at five half-dressed figures that tumbled out in haste.

"Something's up!"

"Come on!"

"Buck up, you fellows!"

Signor Muccolini stared at the Famous Five of Greyfriars as if he could hardly believe his eyes.

Like the rest of the camp, they had been awakened by the uproar, and they turned out at once. A dozen voices could be heard shouting to know what was up. The yelling came from Tippity's tent, and drew general attention in that direction.

"This way!" shouted Bob Cherry. "It's old Tippity—something's happening in his tent—"

The juniors rushed past the staring signor, not even seeing him, in their haste. If anything was happening to the kind and hospitable Mr. Tip they

were eager and anxious to go to the rescue.

"I say, you fellows." A startled, fat face, adorned by a large pair of spectacles, was put out of a baggage van. "I say, what's up? I say, is it a fire? I say—Beasts!"

Billy Bunter was passed unregarded—by the Famous Five, at least. But Signor Muccolini, at the sound of his voice, turned his head and stared at him. He stared at him with bulging eyes.

Bunter, blinking in alarm from the baggage van, spotted the staring face of the signor, and called to him:

"I say, Mucky, what's up? Is the place on fire, or what?"

Signor Muccolini gasped.

"You—Grasso porco, furfante! What are you doing there?" he panted. "Why are you not in your tent?"

"That beast Tip turned me out—I've been sleeping in this van!" answered Bunter. "But, I say, what's up?"

Signor Muccolini did not answer him. His rage and disappointment seemed to choke the Italian. Breathing fury, he stamped away towards Tippity's tent—now surrounded by an excited crowd of half-dressed circus men. And as he arrived there Tippity Tip was holding the canvas flap open, and Jimmy Guggs, crumpling and howling in the lion-tamer's mighty grasp, came whirling headlong out into the starlight.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.**A Startling Suspicion!**

"**H**ALLO, hallo, hallo! That rotter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"That jolly old tramp!" exclaimed Nugent.

"The esteemed and execrable Guggs!" ejaculated Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

The Famous Five stared at the gasping, gurgling ruffian in the grip of the lion-tamer. To most eyes in the circus camp he was a stranger; but the chums of the Remove knew him only too well.

"Will you leggo!" moaned the wretched Guggs. "I gives in! I'll go to the stone jug if you like! I'll do anything! Only leggo! You're a-cracking my blinking bones! Oooh!"

"Who the dickens is he, and what is he doing here?" exclaimed Tippity Tip. "How did he get here, Marco?"

The lion-tamer held Guggs by a grip on the back of his neck. Guggs sagged like a sack, his legs trailing on the ground. He was helpless in the powerful hands of the King of the Lions. He was not even thinking of resistance. He could only wriggle and moan and groan.

"Looks like a tramp!" said Wiggles, the contortionist. "Sneaked in to pinch something."

"Ow! Leggo! Ow!"

"It wasn't that!" said Marco. "He woke me up in the dark, pitching into me with a cudgel. I got one knock before I collared him. I've never seen him before that I remember; but I suppose he's got some grudge against me."

"Will you leggo?" moaned Guggs.

"Not likely!" answered the lion-tamer. "You're going to be handed over to the police for this!"

"And me over if you like—but leggo my neck!" moaned Guggs. "You're a-breakin' of it!"

"It's Guggs!" said Harry Wharton.

"You young gents seen that covey?" asked Tippity Tip.

"Yes, rather, more than once!" answered Harry. "He's the man who attacked Bunter the night he was left behind on the Brighton road."

"Olt! I 'eard about that!" said

Tippity. "Oh, my eye! Looks as if he followed the circus to have another crack at that fat covey! He wasn't after you, Marco."

"He gave me a crack with his cudgel!" grunted Marco.

"Yes, but 'ow would he know it was you in the dark?" grinned Tippity. "You was in Bunter's bed, and 'ow would he know?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Marco. He had been utterly puzzled by the savage, unprovoked attack from a man he had never seen before. But all the circus knew of Billy Bunter's narrow escapes from a ruffianly tramp who was supposed to have some grudge against the fat Owl.

"That's it!" said Harry. "He was after Bunter again, of course. I suppose he knew that was Bunter's tent, and never knew Bunter had changed quarters."

"That's it!" chuckled Tippity. "Lucky for that fat covey I booted him out! He would have got it 'ot!"

"Is that it, you rascal?" exclaimed the lion-tamer, giving his wriggling prisoner a rough shake. "Were you after that fat kid, Bunter?"

"Gurrgh! Urrgh!" gurgled Jimmy Guggs. "Leggo my neck! Urrhh!"

Signor Muccolini pushed forward. His swarthy face was a little pale. His plot had gone utterly wrong, and his hired ruffian was a prisoner. He was in terror of what Jimmy Guggs might say next.

"Enough of this!" snapped the signor. "The man is some prowling thief—he must be taken care of and handed over to the police. Bring him to one of the baggage vans, Marco, and I will lock him in till morning."

"Right-ho, boss!"

Jimmy Guggs' bulging eyes turned on the Italian. He seemed about to speak, but he checked himself.

With Marco's strong hand on his neck he was led after Signor Muccolini. The whole crowd was following, when Muccolini turned his head and snapped savagely:

"Get back to bed, all of you! There has been disturbance enough! Keep the man safe, Marco, till I lock him in. The rest of you get back to bed."

And the circus men went back to their quarters. Guggs was led to a van, and Signor Muccolini opened the door.

"Put him in!" he snarled.

With a swing of his powerful arm, Marco pitched the footpad headlong into the van. Guggs sprawled there, with a yell.

The signor slammed the door on him, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

"Safe there till the morning, boss!" said Marco.

"Si! Si! Yes, yes! Go back to your bed!" muttered the signor.

The lion-tamer gave him a curious look. The Italian's swarthy face was convulsed. He could hardly control the rage that possessed him. Why he was so enraged Marco could not guess. Certainly he was not likely to be much concerned about the damage Guggs might have done with his cudgel.

"Andiamo!" snarled Muccolini.

He turned away from the van, and Marco, without speaking again, walked away to Tippity's tent.

Signor Muccolini stamped away to his own van. He stared at Mr. Tip whom he found there, peering about the steps of the van, with a flash-lamp in his hand.

"Fool! What are you doing here?" he snapped.

Tippity stared at him.

"Looking for that there key?" he

answered. "You ain't found it I s'pose?"

"The—the key!" stammered the signor. He had forgotten for the moment, the trick by which he had drawn Tippity away from his tent. "Oh, yes! I have found it! It is all right! Go back to bed."

Tippity Tip joined Marco in his tent. Muccolini unlocked his van, tramped into it, and slammed the door. But he was not thinking of turning in, late as the hour was. Guggs was locked in, but the signor dared not let him be found there when morning came. Handed over to the police, the ruffian would certainly have told all he knew; and that would hardly have suited the plotting Italian. But he had to wait till the camp was sleeping again before he could act.

Harry Wharton & Co. went back to the lion-tamer's van. Billy Bunter's squeak reached them as they went.

"I say, you fellows, who—who was it? I say—"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"That jolly old tramp after you again, Bunter! He pitched into Marco by mistake—he was in your bed!"

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows, I—I think I'll come into that van with you—I ain't safe here—"

"Think again!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Beast! I say, you fellows—"

"You're safe enough, fathead!" said Harry Wharton. "The man's locked up for the night! Shut up, and go to sleep."

"Beast!"

"Hold on, though," said Bob Cherry, in a low voice, "I'm not so jolly sure that Bunter is safe."

"Guggs can't get through a locked door!" said Nugent.

"The door might get unlocked before morning!" said Bob.

His comrades stared at him.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What do you mean? Do you think anybody in the circus would let the brute out? Besides, Muccolini will be keeping the key."

Bob did not answer that. He stepped towards the van from which Billy Bunter was blinking through his big spectacles.

"There's a lock on this door, Bunter," he said. "Lock it on the inside—you'll be all right! I'll wait here till you've locked it."

Bunter closed the door and the key turned. Then Bob rejoined his friends, and they went back into Marco's van. Bob's face was very serious. But he did not speak till they were in the van and the door closed.

"I don't like the look of this, you fellows!" he said quietly. "It looks to me—" He paused.

"I can see you've got something in your mind," said Harry. "But what the merry dickens is—"

"This is the third time that that tramp has got after Bunter, that we know of," said Bob. "It's pretty clear that it was Bunter he was after to-night, isn't it?"

"Not much doubt about that," Harry Wharton laughed. "He didn't look as

if he would have tackled Marco, as a matter of choice."

"Well, it looks to me as if Muccolini has a hand in it!" said Bob abruptly.

"Muccolini! Great pip! Why?"

"That dago doesn't want Bunter at the circus. We know that, and we've heard from Tip that all the people here wonder why he lets him hang on. Goodness knows what his reason may be—but—"

"I suppose he could kick him out if he liked," said Johnny Bull.

"The queer thing is that he doesn't, and it's no secret that he would like to!" answered Bob. "I can't understand that. But—I can understand this much, because it's as clear as daylight. He put that tramp up to walloping Bunter."

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Nugent. "My dear chap—"

"You know how he ran into us to-day, at the lake—he was there to see that blighter, and called him by his name!" said Bob. "They had some business together."

"Ye-e-es—but—"

"But that isn't all!" said Bob quietly. "It was Muccolini brought him into the camp to-night!"

"Muccolini did!" exclaimed Harry.

"How do you know?" asked Nugent.

"Because I saw them together when I woke up and looked out of the window!" answered Bob.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I hadn't the faintest idea, of course, why he was here!" said Bob. "I suppose I should have thought that Muccolini was giving him a night's shelter, if I'd thought about it at all. But—well, what does it look like? He brought the man into the camp, and Tippity was got out of his tent—Muccolini must have fancied that Bunter was left there alone! And then—"

Harry Wharton gave a low whistle.

"It's pretty plain what it looks like!" he said. "But—Muccolini's locked him in a van—"

"If he's still there when we turn out in the morning, I shall be surprised!" answered Bob.

"Well, he won't be, if he's hand-in-glove with the dago, as you think. But—but—Blessed if I make it out! I dare say that dago's none too good for such a dirty game, but why doesn't he just kick Bunter out, if he doesn't want him here—and he hasn't kicked him out yet."

"That's true! But—well, it beats me!" said Harry. "If that ruffian's gone in the morning, there won't be much doubt about it. In that case, we'd

(Continued on next page.)

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better give Bunter a hint that he would be safer away from the circus."

"He's asking for it, sticking on where he's not wanted!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, that's Bunter all over." The chums of the Remove turned in again. They slept soundly till morning—a bright and sunny morning after the thunderstorm of the night. When they turned out, and joined Tippity at breakfast, they heard the news that they were more than half expecting to hear.

"That covey's 'ooked it!" Mr. Tip told them.

"Guggs?" asked Harry. "Is he gone?"

"'itted!" said Tippity. "'Ow he got hold of a key that fitted the lock, beats me—beats me 'oller! Must have been one lying in the van and he found it, I s'pose! Mucky thinks so."

"Muccolini thinks that, does he?" asked Bob.

"Well, what else can have 'appened?" said Tippity. "The door was found unlocked, and the man gone, at dawn. He's 'opped it."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another. There was no doubt left in their minds now.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Forewarned!

"**C**OSPETTO! Are you still here?" Signor Muccolini scowled blackly at five cheery faces.

Harry Wharton & Co. had breakfasted with Tippity Tip, and Marco, and Wiggles, and some others of the circus company. Now they were putting their packs on the jiggers, preparing to take the road again. The circus camp was a hive of activity: as the circus was also preparing to take the road.

Why Signor Muccolini had wasted a day by camping on that lonely road over the downs, nobody knew—though the juniors could not help suspecting. But whatever his reason might have been, he was moving on again that morning. Coming on the Famous Five, he gave them the blackest of black scowls. It was, as the signor knew now, owing to the arrival of those cheery schoolboys at the circus, that his cunning scheme had gone so dismally awry. He would have been glad to lay his circus whip around them before they departed.

"Just going, Mr. Muccolini!" said Harry, speaking as civilly as he could. It was not easy to be civil to a man whom, he could no longer doubt, had been a party to a dastardly plot.

"Go, then!" snapped the signor. "You are not welcome here! My circus is not a shelter for vagrants."

Wharton's eyes flashed, but he controlled his anger and made no answer. In silence he strapped his pack on the bike carrier.

The Italian stood scowling at them for a few moments. Then he turned and stalked away, still scowling.

"Nice man!" murmured Bob.

"Well, we seem rather to have dished him by coming here last night," said Harry, "but for that, that fat idiot, Bunter, would be going home in an ambulance, by this time."

"The dishfulness was terrific!" grinned Hurreo Jamsat Ram Singh. "We cannot expect the esteemed and dishonourable dago to be pleased."

"We've got to speak to Bunter before we go!" said the captain of the Remove. "We're bound to put the blithering idiot on his guard. If he chooses to stick on, after that, he will have to take his chance."

"He's not up yet!" said Bob. "We shall have to spoil his beauty sleep."

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The bikes being ready for the start, the juniors left them, and went to the baggage-van in which Bunter had passed the night. From that van, still locked, there came the sound of a deep snore.

Billy Bunter was not awake yet; and he was not likely to wake, till the circus was well on the road, if left to himself. But he was not going to be left to himself.

Bob Cherry banged at the door.

"Bunter!" he roared.

Snore!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Snore!

"You blithering fat idiot!" roared Bob.

Snore!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Beasts!" came a peevish voice from the van. "Go away! Can't you let a fellow sleep? Go away, you rotters!"

"We're just going to start, you fat chump—"

"Well, start, then, and be blowed! If you've come to say good-bye to me, you could have saved yourself the trouble! Clear off!"

"Get up, porpoise—"

"Shan't!"

"Look here, Bunter—"

Snore!

"Oh, leave him to it!" snorted Johnny Bull. "I'm fed-up with the fat rotter, for one! Let him take his chance, and be blowed to him!"

Snore!

"You blithering, burbling, balmy bandersnatch!" roared Bob. "We've got to speak to you before we go."

Snore!

The chums of the Remove exchanged exasperated looks. They wanted to get on the road, without any further unpleasantness with Muccolini. They wanted to see the last of Mucky, as soon as they could—and they wanted, quite as much, to see the last of Billy Bunter! But it was impossible to go without putting the fat and fatuous Owl on his guard, now that they knew his danger.

Bob banged at the door again.

"Beast!" came a howl from within. "Will you shut up? I'll call out to Mucky to turn you out, if you don't leave a fellow alone."

"Come out, you blithering idiot!" shrieked Bob. "We've got something to tell you that you've got to hear, you burbling bloater."

"We've got to speak to you, Bunter!" shouted Harry.

"Well, speak, then, and get it over!"

"Open the door!"

"Shan't!"

"I tell you, we've got to see you before we go—"

"Yes, and I jolly well know why! I'm not going to lend you anything."

"What!" yelled Wharton.

"You can't expect it! Only the last day before we broke up at Greyfriars you refused to cash a postal order for me! You jolly well know you did."

"You—you—you—" gasped the captain of the Remove.

"If you're hard up, you're jolly well not going to stick me! I dare say you've found out that I'm doing pretty well here! Well, I'm jolly well not going to lend you anything. That's flat!"

"Look here, I'm going!" roared Johnny Bull. And he turned and tramped away to the bicycles.

The other fellows were strongly tempted to follow him. But they resisted that temptation. Bob banged on the door again.

"Bunter, you benighted blitherer!" he roared.

"Will you clear off and let a fellow sleep?" howled Bunter. "I'm not getting up for hours yet. You jolly well know I was woke up in the night. I lost a lot of sleep! Why can't you clear off? You jolly well know you're not wanted here."

"What about tipping the van over?" asked Bob. "Line up along the side, and all shove together—"

There was a howl of alarm from within.

"You leave this van alone, you beasts! I'll get up, if you like! Leave the van alone, you rotters!"

There was a sound of movement within at last. Bunter was getting up—in a hurry. There was a good deal of baggage in that van, and the prospects of getting mixed up with it, if the van tipped over seemed to alarm the fat Owl.

The key turned, and the door opened. Bunter rolled out.

He was dressed—he had slept in his clothes, in a bed made up of rugs and coats and anything else he could lay his hands on. He jammed his spectacles on his fat little nose and gave the juniors a devastating blink.

"Now, you rotters, what do you want?" he hooted. "Mind, I'm not going to lend you anything! If it's that, you can shut up before you begin, see? If you think you're going to sponge on me, because I'm making money at the circus, I can jolly well say— Yaroooh! Whoop! Yow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter roared, as Bob Cherry grabbed his collar and banged his head on the van.

"Yow-ow-ow! Leggo! Beast! Wow!"

"Now, shut up, you fat toad!" gasped Bob.

"Ow! Beast! Ow!"

"Now, listen, Bunter—" began Harry.

"Beast! Wow!"

"We've got to put you on your guard, you fat chump, before we go!" said Harry. "You're in danger here, and—"

"Yah! Rotter! Ow!"

"Will you listen, you howling fat-head? That brute Guggs was after you last night, and you would have got knocked out, if you'd been in Tippity's tent as usual. Can't you understand that?"

"Fat lot you care!" grunted Bunter. "Mind your own business! They've got that beast safe enough now, anyhow."

"He's gone!" said Harry.

"Oh, rot!"

"He was let out, and he's gone," said the captain of the Remove impatiently. "Now, listen to this. It was Muccolini brought him here last night."

"Rubbish!" said Bunter.

"Bob saw them together—"

"Dreamed it, more likely."

"We haven't the slightest doubt that Muccolini set him on—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Muccolini doesn't want you here, and he's tipped that brute to knock you out. Now you know!" snapped Wharton.

"Oh, don't talk rot!" said Bunter. "Mucky's jolly glad to have me here! He wouldn't part with me for anything! I'm the biggest draw in the circus! People come miles to see me."

"You burbling chucklehead—"

"Beast!"

"We had to tell you before we went," said Harry. "It's perfectly clear that Muccolini let that brute loose in the night and that you haven't seen the last of him. You're not safe here! I can't understand why the dago doesn't kick

you out instead of setting that hooligan on to you—but there it is—”

“I’d like to see him kick me out!” sneered Bunter.

“Well, you know what to expect now!” said Harry. “If you haven’t sense enough to go while the going’s good, it’s your own look-out. You can depend on it that if you stick here, where you’re not wanted, Muccolini will get shot of you in a way you won’t like!”

“Sniff from Bunter. “That’s the sort of thing I might have expected from you fellows,” he said. “Jealousy, as usual! Rotten jealousy, because I’m a star of the circus! Just the same as it was at Greyfriars! It’s a bit sickening.”

“I tell you—” howled Wharton. “Oh, chuck it!” interrupted Bunter. “Just mind your own bizney, see? As for Mucky not wanting me here, I’m the apple of his eye! He jolly well knows who’s the big attraction at this circus. Nothing would induce him to part with me. You’d like to spoil my show here, wouldn’t you? It’s the sort of thing I expect from you, knowing you as I do! Yah!”

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at the fat Owl. They had given him his warning, as they had felt bound to do. It did not appear to have produced much effect on Bunter.

“If that’s the lot, you needn’t have waked me up!” went on the fat Owl. “Think you can pull my leg? Yah! The sooner you clear, the better! And if you think I’m going to lend you anything, you’re mistaken!”

With that, Billy Bunter turned to roll back into the van.

Four pairs of hands grasped him as if moved by the same spring.

Bump!
“Yaroooh!” roared Bunter, as he sat on Sussex with a bump that nearly shook that county. “Yooo-hoop!”

Bunter sat and roared. Leaving him to it, the juniors joined Johnny Bull and wheeled away the bicycles. They said a friendly good-bye to Tippetty Tip and Marco, and, followed by a black scowl from Signor Muccolini—took the road over the downs.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Puts his Foot Down!

“**V**OI camello—qui!” Signor Muccolini spat out the words as he stared into his caravan.

The “camel” he addressed was Billy Bunter!

The signor’s van was a large one, furnished gaudily, but very comfortably. Billy Bunter had often cast an envious blink at that van since he had been with the Magnificent Circus. Now he seemed to have taken possession of it.

There was an ottoman in the van, which was turned into a bed when Signor Muccolini occupied the van at night. On that ottoman Billy Bunter sat.

He did not stir as the Italian’s black eyes glinted in at the door. He gave the circus-master a blink through his big spectacles, and a careless nod.

“If you can’t speak English, Mucky, don’t speak to me at all!” he said. “I don’t know what you mean by kweo, and don’t want to!”

“Camello—porco—furfante! What do you here?” hissed the signor.

The circus was taking the road. The signor was about to lock his van before starting. He was going to travel in his car, ahead of the slow-moving

circus. Then he made the surprising and unpleasing discovery that the fat Owl of Greyfriars had ensconced himself in the van.

He glared at the fat junior. The ottoman on which Bunter sat was locked, with a patent lock and key. It contained secrets that would have caused the signor serious trouble, had they come to light.

How long Bunter had been in the van Mucky did not know. But there were signs that he had been rooting about the interior. The fat Owl of Greyfriars was as inquisitive as a jackdaw.

But the patent lock on the ottoman

had been too much for him, if Bunter had turned his attention to it. The secret photographs, and the secret correspondence, that would have earned Mucky a term of penal servitude, had they been revealed, were safe.

“What do you here, furfante?” repeated the angry Italian. “No one is allowed to enter my van, as you very well know.”

“You can turn me out if you don’t like me here!” sneered Bunter.

Muccolini made a step towards him, obviously very much inclined to take the fat Owl at his word.

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

“Writing verse is a poor way of earning a living, but an honest one,” says our long-haired poet. This week he “runs the rule” over

SIR JIMMY VIVIAN,

one time waif, but now a full-blown baronet.

(1)

Now here’s a youthful baronet
Whose past was wrapped in mystery.
Far in the slums the stage was set
Whereon this youthful baronet
Began his youthful history.
An urchin and a guttersnipe,
A ragamuffin true to type.

(2)

Within the bower of Carker’s Rents
He grew and blossomed happily.
He had a fund of common sense
With which to gain the paltry pence
Which kept him very scrappily.
But in his dress and other matters
He was a heap of rags and tatters.

(3)

Then Mauly’s Uncle Brooke dropped in
And spoke with great civility
To this young waif, who, with a grin,
Discovered that his origin
Was one of pure nobility.
Then said Sir James: “Well, blow me
tight!
Jest fancy me a Barrowknight!”

(4)

He came to Greyfriars in due course
To get some needful polishing.
And there he learned, and learned with
force,
A truth that filled him with remorse—
That masters want abolishing!
They didn’t like his native tongue,
And told him so, in words that stung!

(5)

And so, at long, long last, he ceased
To talk his gutter dialect;
He found his knowledge had in-
creased,
He learned new words, like “cad”
and “beast,”
And thus he joined the high elect,
Who can’t abide such words as
“Lumme!”
And don’t think every bloke is
“rummy!”



(6)

In general, he’s a decent sort,
Good-tempered, clean, and humorous.
He doesn’t shine at any sport,
But keeps on trying, and, in short,
•His qualities are numerous;
Although he sometimes calls us names,
Not quite becoming to Sir James.

(7)

I found him at the tennis net
In singles with Mauleverer.
One point required for game and set
Against Sir James, the baronet,
For Mauly was the cleverer.
He smashed Sir Jimmy’s service. Ping!
And yawned: “Begad! I’ve hit the
thing!”

(8)

Back came the ball with fearful vim,
But Mauly volleyed easily.
His features were not dour and grim,
For tennis didn’t worry him.
But James was panting wheezily.
He swung his tennis racquet. Biff!
This rally certainly was stiff.

(9)

Unthinkingly, I shouted: “Hi!”
Intent on interviewing him.
He turned round quickly at my cry,
And then the ball banged in his eye,
Effectually subduing him!
“Yaroooh!” howled James, the baronet.
While Mauly murmured: “Game and
set!”

(10)

“You blinkin’ owl! Lor’, luv a
duck!”
Yelled James, in his vernacular.
And then the fathead ran amuck!
I tried to dodge, but had no luck.
My exit was spectacular!
I fell across the net, in short,
And nearly smashed the tennis
court!



Bunter eyed him warily.

"I've heard that we're making for Hastings," he said. "Well, there's a police station there! Turn me out if you like."

The signor choked.

He could barely restrain his passionate Italian temper. But he had to restrain it. It was an inevitable consequence of his secret rascality that he had to tolerate Bunter, and Bunter's impudence.

"Leave my van!" he breathed. "Leave it at once!"

"Your van?" asked Bunter. "Mine now!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Don't I speak plain?" asked Bunter calmly.

The signor gazed at him.

This was quite a new departure for the fat Owl. Hitherto, he had hung on to the circus, in spite of the signor's longing to see the last of him. He had been cheeky. But he had been satisfied, so far, to travel in any vehicle that was available, and to camp in Tippet's tent at night.

Apparently, he was now planning to make a change for the better. Muccolini gazed at him, his breath almost taken away.

"Dio mio! What do you mean?" he panted at last.

"I'll tell you what I mean, Mucky!" said Bunter coolly. "I know your game. I know all about your fixing it up with that brute, Guggs."

"Cospetto!" breathed the Italian.

"If you want me to clear off," went on Bunter, "I'll clear. I'm not the fellow to stay where I'm not wanted, I hope. Of course, if I clear, I shan't keep your rotten secrets for you. You can't expect it! I shouldn't wonder if you could be sent to chokey for taking photographs of air camps, and things. You jolly well know it's against the law! I don't want to be hard on you, as you're an ignorant foreigner, and don't know how to behave when you get into a civilised country. But one good turn deserves another. If I go, I—"

"Stay, if you wish!" breathed Muccolini. "But—"

"And get knocked on the head by your pal Guggs next time we camp!" sneered Bunter. "Not good enough, thanks!"

"I know nothing—"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Bunter contemptuously. "Who brought that ruffian into the camp last night, I'd like to know."

The Italian caught his breath.

Up till now, Bunter had shown no suspicion whatever of the malevolent Italian's designs. Muccolini had regarded him as a fat fool, to be led like a sheep to the slaughter, as it were.

Now he realised that the fat fool was "wise" to him!

Harry Wharton & Co. had not given their warning in vain!

Billy Bunter had scoffed at it contemptuously. But he had not forgotten it.

Bunter was undoubtedly, as the signor regarded him, a fool! But even Bunter could see what was perfectly plain. Anyone but Bunter would have suspected the signor before this. He had only needed to put two and two together. And even the obtuse Owl of the Remove was enlightened now.

He wagged a fat forefinger at the staring Italian.

"You made out, when they collared that brute last night, that you knew nothing about him, and pretended to lock him up in a van!" he said. "And

it was you who brought him into camp! You didn't know you were spotted!"

"Cospetto! Then you were watching—" muttered the signor.

It did not occur to him that it was one of the Co. who had seen him with Guggs in the night, and that Bunter had been warned by the juniors before they left. And Bunter had no intention of telling him.

"I'm pretty wide awake, Mucky!" retorted Bunter. "I've had an eye on you for some time. I dare say you fancied you had pulled the wool over my eyes. I don't fancy a dago can take me in, though!"

"You—you think—"

"I don't think, I know!" answered Bunter coolly. "You put up that tramp to get after me. Just the sort of dirty trick a dago would play! Well, you try it on again, and see what will happen. I'm putting my foot down, I can tell you."

Signor Muccolini stood silent, gritting his teeth. Billy Bunter gave him a scornful blink.

"I'm not camping in a tent any more," he said. "I'm going to have a van to myself, that I can lock at night, if I stay with this circus. You can give me the key."

"Give you the key!" gasped the signor.

"Yes, and sharp!" said Bunter. "You jolly well deserve to go to chokey for the rotten trick you've played on me. I'm letting you off cheap. But I'm not taking any more risks, thanks. I'm going to have this van. You've only got yourself to blame. Like it or lump it!"

"Dio mio! I—I—I—"

"You'll get out of my van!" said Bunter. "I don't like greasy dagoes in my van! The dashed place smells of garlic already!"

Pietro Muccolini clenched his hands convulsively. It seemed, for a moment, that he would spring on the fat Owl like a tiger.

But he controlled his fury and stopped out of the van.

Bunter grinned.

"Chuck me that key!" he called out.

Muccolini did not seem to hear. The fat junior leaned out of the doorway of the van and shouted after him.

"Here, Mucky! Do you hear me, you dashed dago? If I'm going to have this van I want the key. Chuck me that key I tell you!"

A dozen pairs of ears, at least, heard Bunter's shout. A dozen pairs of eyes turned in astonishment on the enraged Italian, and on the fat junior leaning out of the caravan.

"Ear that, Wrig?" murmured Mr. Tip, to his friend the contortionist.

"You 'ear that? 'Ear it, Wrig?"

"I hear it," said the elastic man.

"What does Mucky stand it for? Why don't he pitch the young porpoise neck and crop out of his van?"

"He ain't going to, at any rate!" said Mr. Tip. "I tell you, Wrig, it beats me—beats me 'oller!"

"Mc, too!" said Wriggles.

"Do you hear me, Mucky?" roared Bunter. "Give me that key, or I won't have your van, and I'll leave your rotten circus this morning."

Signor Muccolini turned and strode back to the van. The look on his swarthy face was alarming. Billy Bunter quaked for a moment. But the Italian restrained his rage. No one in the circus but Bunter suspected his secret, and he did not want it shouted out for the crowd to hear.

He threw the key into the van and strode away again. He scowled savagely

at the staring, wondering face of Tippet Tip.

"What are you loafing about for, fool?" he snarled. "I do not pay you to hang about doing nothing."

Tippet Tip breathed hard as the signor stamped on. Bunter, grinning, picked up the key from the floor of the van. Tippet Tip came up to the door and glanced in.

"So you've got the boss' van, have you?" he asked.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Bunter cheerfully.

"And what's he letting you 'ave it for?"

"I've told him that I can't camp out in a tent with a clown!" explained Bunter. "It's a bit too much beneath a fellow's dignity. I'm an easy-going chap, but there's a limit, and that's it! Either I have this van or I leave the circus—see? You can have your rotten little poky tent to yourself!"

"Why Mucky don't boot you out," said Mr. Tip, "beats me. It beats me abso-bally-lootly 'oller!"

"I'm rather too valuable for him to part with," said Bunter. "It's not as if I was a low-down circus clown, you know."

Mr. Tip walked away without replying to that. He was not likely to believe that Bunter was too valuable for the circus-master to part with him. But no other explanation was available, and he was quite mystified. There was something behind it—he could see that—but he could not begin to guess what it was.

Regardless of Mr. Tip and what he might be thinking, the fat Owl of Greyfriars settled down comfortably in his new quarters.

Undoubtedly it was a change for the better. Instead of parking his fat person in an odd corner of a baggage-van, Bunter sprawled on a comfortable ottoman when the circus took the road. He was feeling quite satisfied with himself, and things generally—a feeling that was not shared in the least by Signor Muccolini. But the fat Owl was not bothering about Mucky.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Exit Guglielmo!

ZARA'S dark eyes were flashing. The queen of the ring had a temper. Now the flush in her dusky cheeks, and the flash in her dark eyes, looked as if that temper had the upper hand.

Her eyes were on Bunter; but Bunter's eyes, at the moment, were not on Zara; Bunter was busy.

The Magnificent Circus had reached its new pitch, in the neighbourhood of Hastings. Busy preparations were going on for the evening show. Billy Bunter was as busy as the rest.

The tent of the Great Guglielmo had been set up among the side shows. At Brighton the fat spoofer had made quite a harvest of half-crowns. He hoped to repeat that experience at Hastings. Crystal-gazing, and the whispering voices of absent friends, had been quite a success, so far. Bunter was going on with the good work—at least, he fancied so.

He had had no word with Mucky since taking possession of his van. The circus-master had settled down, apparently, to letting the fat Owl get away with it. At all events, he had kept his distance, only having removed some of his personal belongings from the van, which Bunter graciously



Lash, lash, lash! Time and again the riding-whip cut into Johnny Bull's shoulder. But the Greyfriars junior hung on like grim death to the horse's reins. "Back up!" he yelled. Bull's comrades came on with a rush, eyes blazing, dodging the riding-whip as best they could.

permitted. The fat Owl was not expecting trouble from Mucky.

If he had expected trouble at all, it certainly would not have been from Zara, the queen of the ring. But from the look on the gipsy girl's face as she came towards him, it looked as if a storm was brewing in that quarter.

Bunter was putting up a notice outside Guglielmo's tent, ready for a rush of custom when the circus opened to the public. He did not look round as Zara approached.

He remained unaware of her approach till he was suddenly apprised of it, in a startling and far from agreeable manner.

Smack!

Zara's hand was small. But there seemed to be a lot of force in it. The smack rang like a pistol-shot as it landed on Bunter's fat ear.

"Yaroo!" yelled Bunter.

He staggered under the smack, almost on his beam-ends. Then he spun round, yelling:

"Ow! Beast!"

Then he saw Zara, and realised that it was the gipsy girl who had smacked his head. Her hand was rising for another smack; and Bunter jumped back, his little round eyes almost popping through his big, round spectacles.

"Ow! Wharrer you up to?" he gasped. "I say, keep off, you know! Wharrer you smacking a fellow's head for?"

Zara's angry eyes flashed at him.

"You are a rascal!" she exclaimed. "You have deceived me—deluded me! You are a rogue!"

"Oh, really, Miss Zara—" gasped Bunter.

To do Bunter justice, he did not realise in the least that he was a rascal or a rogue. His fat brain moved in mysterious ways.

He was angry, and he was indignant. He was also alarmed. He backed away again as the gipsy girl made a forward movement, caught his foot in a tent-peg, and sat down.

"Ow!" spluttered Bunter.

The gipsy girl's eyes flashed down at him. She looked very pretty, with flushed face and flashing eyes. But Bunter had no eye for beauty at that moment. He blinked up at those flashing eyes in alarm.

"Give me the crystal!" snapped Zara.

"The—the crystal!" stammered Bunter.

"I gave you the gipsy crystal, because you pretended to read in it, and to make the voices of absent ones heard. It was a cheat. Now I know the truth, and you shall cheat no more!" exclaimed Zara.

"I—I say—" gasped Bunter. "I say, I—I want that crystal, you know! I—I can't carry on business without it. I say, I'll give it to you to-morrow! I can get another in the town—see?"

"You will not get another," said Zara. "You will not carry on with crystal-gazing. I will not permit it, now I know it is a cheat."

"Oh, really, you know—" gasped Bunter.

He blinked at Zara in dismay.

Billy Bunter who never thought of anything, had not thought of the inevitable consequences of the discovery that had been made in the camp on the downs.

True, there had been no more mysterious, haunting voices since it had become known that he was a ventriloquist. But it had not occurred to him that when it reached Zara's ears, she would realise how she had been tricked by the fat ventriloquist.

Evidently Zara had heard of it now. The knowledge that the fat spoofer

had taken advantage of her superstitious belief in the crystal to make a fool of her, had roused Zara's hot gipsy temper to boiling point.

"Get up!" she snapped. "Give me the crystal! I shall take it away. You shall no longer use it to delude fools. You are a rascal!"

"But I—I say—" stuttered Bunter.

Smack!

"Yoop!"

Smack!

"Wow! Leave off!" yelled Bunter. "I'm going to get it! I don't want it! Blow it! Oh crikey!"

He scrambled up and bolted into Guglielmo's tent. He came out with the magic crystal in his fat hands.

Zara snatched it from him. Taking it in her left hand, she smacked with her right. Bunter yelled:

"Ow! Wow! Will you stop it? Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a howl of laughter.

That remarkable scene in front of the Great Guglielmo's tent was attracting attention.

"Zara!" exclaimed Marco. "What are—"

"Go it, miss!" chuckled Tippetty Tip. "Give him a few more! Give him a few for me!"

Zara did not heed the onlookers. Her dark eyes flashed at the dismayed Owl of Greyfriars.

"Take down that notice!" she snapped.

"I—I say, I—I can't do any business without putting my notice up on the tent!" gasped Bunter. "They won't know where to find Guglielmo. Yaroo!"

Smack!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey! Leave off!" shrieked Bunter. "Look here, don't you be

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such a cat! I'm taking it down, ain't I?"

He jerked down the notice from the front of the tent. More and more of the circus people gathered round. There was a grin on every face. From a distance Signor Muccolini looked on with a sour smile.

Zara was not finished yet.

"Pull down that tent!" she said.

"Pip-pip-pull it down!" stuttered Bunter. "But I can't give a show without a tent to give it in! I say what—"

Smack!

"Ow! Wow!" yelled Bunter.

"You shall give no such show again," said Zara, stamping her foot. "There shall be no more Guglielmo, no more trickery and cheating!"

"Ear, ear!" grinned Mr. Tip.

"I—I say—" stuttered Bunter.

Smack!

"Wow! Keep off!" yelled the hapless fat Owl. "I—I say, Marco, make her keep off! Take her away!"

Marco laughed.

"You young rascal!" he said. "Your trickery is found out now. You deserve what you are getting, and more. I shall ask Signor Muccolini to turn you out of the circus."

"Beast!"

"I am waiting!" said Zara, stamping her foot again. "Pull down that tent! You shall give no more shows as Guglielmo! You shall be punished for your trickery! Will you do as I bid you?"

"Look here! You've no right to— Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as the gipsy girl smacked his head again.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

No doubt it was rather high-handed on the part of the queen of the ring. But certainly it was no more than the fat spoofer deserved. Anyhow, there was no help for Bunter.

Zara, evidently, was going on smacking his head till he obeyed. And Bunter's fat head was already buzzing like a hive of bees from so many smacks.

The fat Owl dragged out tent-pegs and loosened ropes, with Zara's dark eyes flashing at him, and a circle of onlookers chuckling and grinning. The tent in

which the Great Guglielmo gave his side-show, came down billowing.

"Now," said Zara, "that is finished! If there is any more of it, I will ask Marco to beat you with his lion whip! You will do that, Marco?"

"You won't have to ask me twice!" grinned Marco.

"I—I say—" gasped Bunter.

"That is enough!" snapped Zara.

"Now I will smack your head for your trickery."

"Oh crikey! I say— Whoop!"

Smack, smack, smack, smack!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yoo-hoop! Oh crumbs! Oh lor'!

Oh crikey! Ow!"

Smack, smack, smack!

"Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter fairly took to his heels. He dodged away, spluttering, a last ringing smack cracking like a pistol shot as he went.

A roar of laughter followed him as he flew. Tippity Tip doubled up with merriment. Zara, still frowning, walked away with Marco, who was grinning. Billy Bunter did not stop running till he reached his van—lately the signor's—and bolted in, and slammed the door.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter, as he collapsed on the ottoman. "Oh crumbs! What an awful cat! Oh jiminy!"

A blare of music announced that the circus was open. But Billy Bunter did not heed it. His fat head was singing, from the gipsy girl's smacks—and he did not want any more—very much indeed he did not want any more!

There was no Guglielmo in the side-shows that evening! And there was not going to be any more Guglielmo! That harvest of half-crowns was never going to be gathered. The Great Guglielmo and the Magic Crystal were done with!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Oh, my hat! Bunter!"

"Bunter's going to haunt us these hols!" said Bob Cherry resignedly.

THEIR BRONCO IS A BIKE!

"Our tandem cycle's got hosses licked," say Shorty Collins and Puddenhead Wilkins, the cycling cowboys. "She don't need to be led, she don't ever git tired, she don't put her foot in no pot-holes, and she don't ever bolt or stray Nossir, it takes wise guys like us to find them sort of things out!"

You'll roar with laughter at the scrapes Shorty and Puddenhead get into, as they cycle their way through the Wild West. Meet them in the grand new series of stories starting this week in THE PILOT!



The PILOT

On sale Friday, August 7th, at all Newsagents 2d

The August afternoon was warm. So was Billy Bunter! His fat face was red, and damp with perspiration. He took off his straw hat and fanned himself with it, as he blinked at the Famous Five through his big spectacles.

"Jolly glad to see you fellows!" said Bunter.

"You have the gladfulness all to your esteemed and absurd self!" remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Blow away, bluebottle!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Left the circus?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh, no! I'm still going strong—quite a star!" said Bunter. "I say, I'll have some of that ginger-pop, if you don't mind."

"If we do mind, will it make any difference?" inquired Frank Nugent.

Bunter did not reply to that question. He sat down on the bench and helped himself to ginger-pop. And the chums of the Remove gazed at him.

Harry Wharton & Co. had been exploring the ancient town of Battle, and Battle Abbey, rich in reminiscences of the Norman Conquest. Now they were taking a rest on a bench outside a wayside inn, refreshing themselves with ginger-beer.

They were not thinking of Billy Bunter—and had, in fact, rather forgotten the fat existence of that fascinating youth, and they did not look delighted when he blew in. A little of Billy Bunter went a long way.

Bunter, however, seemed pleased.

He had not been pleased to see the juniors at the circus when they took refuge there from the thunderstorm. And that was only two or three days ago. But he seemed quite bucked now.

"That's good!" said Bunter, setting down an empty glass. "I say, you fellows, are you having anything to eat?"

"No!"

"Well, I'm rather hungry."

"Are you ever anything else?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"May as well be getting along!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows, don't walk off when you've just met a pal!" said Bunter. "It's a real pleasure to see you fellows. I thought I might happen on you again, as we seem to be travelling in the same direction. Jolly lucky I took a stroll this afternoon, what? Having a good time?"

"Oh, fine!" said Johnny Bull. "We've been enjoying ourselves no end—up to the last few minutes."

"Oh, really, Bull! I say, you fellows, ain't it a pleasure to be together again like this, just like being in the study at Greyfriars!" said Bunter. "It's simply jolly, ain't it?"

"Oh, frightfully!" said Bob.

"The frightfulness is terrific!"

"Any more ginger-pop, you chaps?"

"No!"

"Well, there's the waiter! He will bring some, if you ask him."

Harry Wharton laughed. He called to the waiter, and a fresh supply of ginger-pop was placed on the table under the chestnut-tree.

"Might bring me some sandwiches," said Bunter. "And a cake!"

"Yes, sir."

"I had next to nothing for dinner," Bunter explained, when the waiter was gone for supplies. "I never eat much, as you fellows know—"

"Oh crikey!"

"And this hot weather takes away what appetite I have. I had a veal-and-ham pie, and half a cold chicken, and a few apples and bananas—nothing

else! So I can do with a snack before I go back to tea."

Bunter started on sandwiches.

"Are we staying here to watch Bunter guzzle?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Oh, sit it out!" said Bob. "We're getting it cheap! You have to pay at the Zoo to see the animals feed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" said Bunter. "I mean—Grooogh!" Some sandwich went down the wrong way, and Bunter gurgled. "I mean, I don't mind a little joke, dear old chap! He, he, he!"

Evidently Bunter was determined to be agreeable. It was rather a change, and the Famous Five could not help being surprised.

"What have you fellows been doing about here?" asked Bunter, as he started on the cake.

"Seeing the jolly old sights," answered Bob. "We've been over Battle Abbey. It's built right on the spot where Harold fell."

"Eh? Who's Harold?" asked Bunter.

A stay at Hastings had not, it appeared, caused Bunter to recall any of the knowledge he had absorbed in history class at Greyfriars School.

"Oh, my hat! Never heard of Harold?" grinned Bob.

"Do you mean Skinner?" asked Bunter.

"Eh?" gasped Bob.

"I don't know any Harold, except Skinner of the Remove! His name's Harold," said Bunter. "Is Skinner staying about here, these hols?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter, staring. "If you don't mean Skinner, who do you mean?"

"Ever heard of the battle of Hastings?" chuckled Nugent.

"Eh! Oh, yes! I know all about that," said Bunter. "There's not much history you fellows can teach me. I know all about King Alfred and the Danes."

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

"I—I mean, the Picts and Scots!" said Bunter hastily.

"Make it Normans and Saxons!" chuckled Bob. "Hastings, 1066—"

"Hastings, 1066," repeated Bunter.

"Is that a telephone number?"

"Oh crikey! Not quite! It's the date of the Battle of Hastings, fathead, sometimes called the Battle of Senlac, ass, where William the Norman came over with a lot of other undesirable aliens, and Harold got the K.O."

"Oh, yes, I remember," assented Bunter. "Harold's the chap who never smiled again, isn't he?"

"Oh crikey! He was killed at the Battle of Hastings—"

"Then it stands to reason that he never smiled again," said Bunter.

"He's the chap, all right! He said 'Kiss me, Hardy!'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or was that Wellington?" asked Bunter. "I know it happened at the Battle of Hastings, or—or some other battle. I'm pretty good at history. My family came over with the Conqueror, you know. Sir Bunter de Bunter was his right-hand man! He stood by his side at the Battle of Trafalgar—"

"Not the Battle of the Somme?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But never mind that," said Bunter. "You fellows don't want to learn history in the hols."

"The learnfulness from the esteemed Bunter would be terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well I'm rather a dab at it!" said Bunter. "I'm rather keen on battles

and things. You see, the Bunters were always a fighting race—"

"I don't know about the fighting," remarked Bob Cherry. "But I've no doubt there would be a race if that man Guggs turned up just now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gave a hasty blink round through his spectacles. Then he sniffed.

"I'm not afraid of Guggs!" he said.

"You fellows may be! I can tell you that dago won't dare to play any more tricks since I've had it out with him. He's too jolly afraid, I can tell you!"

"What is he afraid of, ass?"

"That's telling!" said Bunter. "I may be able to land him in chokey, and I may not! I know what I know!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked fixedly at the fat Owl of the Remove. They had wondered a good deal over the strange state of affairs at Muccolini's Magnificent Circus. It looked as if the fat Owl had some mysterious hold over the Italian circus-master. Now Bunter's words let in some light on the subject.

"Land him in chokey!" repeated Harry. "What do you mean by that?"

"Well, at first I thought he was only afraid of being fined," said Bunter.

"But I fancy there's more than that in it. He wouldn't be so jolly scared if it was only a matter of a fine, would he?"

"You awful rotter!" said Johnny Bull. "Mean to say that you've found out something about that man Muccolini and you're making use of it?"

"Oh, no! Nothing of the kind!" said Bunter, realising that he was talking a little too much. "I know nothing—absolutely nothing! So far as I know, he hasn't a camera at all, and doesn't hide it in a lunch-basket when he takes it out!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"As for taking photographs, I've never seen him do it. Besides, why shouldn't he if he likes?" said Bunter. "Not that he does, you know. If he does, I don't know anything about it."

"If you mean anything, you blithering cuckoo, what do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing! The fact is, Mucky wants me to stay at the circus—I'm jolly valuable," said Bunter. "He wouldn't part with me for my weight in gold!"

"And a ton of gold is worth £200,000!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"In fact, he's begged me to stay," said Bunter. "Not because I know anything about his little games, you know, but—but because I'm such a tremendous draw at the circus!"

"And that's why he set Guggs on you?" asked Bob.

"Yes—I mean, no, you ass! He jolly well won't dare to do it again, anyhow!" said Bunter. "I can tell you, I've put my foot down with that cheeky dago, and he will feed from my hand! I can handle a dago all right. Leave that to me."

"I suppose," said Harry Wharton slowly, "that you're more fool than rogue, Bunter—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"But what you're doing is roguery! Can't you see that?" said the captain of the Remove. "You're no right to stick on Muccolini because you've found out something about him."

"Well, one good turn deserves another!" argued Bunter. "Besides, I haven't found anything out—not a thing! I'm not going to tell you fellows anything about it. Besides, there isn't anything to tell—absolutely nothing! I say, you fellows, don't go yet. I've got something to say. It's rather important!"

"Cut it short, then!"

"The fact is—you'd hardly believe it.

but—but I'm hard-up," said Bunter—"actually short of money!"

"We guessed that one!" grinned Bob.

"Eh—how did you guess it?"

"Because you were so jolly glad to see us."

"Oh, really, Cherry, you see, I've had rather a row at the circus!" said Bunter. "That cat Zara found out that I was a ventriloquist, owing to you fellows gabbling, you know, and she's taken away the magic crystal, and smacked my head—"

"Good!"

"And she says she's going to keep on smacking it if I do any more Guglielmo business!"

"More power to her elbow!"

"She's got an awful temper!" said Bunter. "She seems fearfully waxy with me for some reason. I thought it would please her to make her hear her father's voice whispering from afar, and all that; but since she's found out that I'm a ventriloquist, it only seems to have got her rag out—"

"You spoofing porpoise!"

"Well, it's all you fellows' fault!" said Bunter. "I should never have been spotted, but for you! Now I can't play the magic crystal game any more, or that cat will begin on me again! She's absolutely no right to interfere, you know, but that won't stop her smacking my head!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle!" snapped Bunter. "But I'm let down now! What am I going to do?"

"Honesty is the best policy!" suggested Bob. "Try it for a change."

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter. "It's all your fault, and the least you can do is to lend me a few pounds till I get going again—see?"

The Famous Five rose from the bench. They knew now why Bunter had been so pleased to see them. But their pleasure in seeing Bunter was less, if possible, than ever.

"I say, you fellows, make it a pound!"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

The juniors walked back to their bicycles.

"I say," yelled Bunter, "hold on—Beasts! I say, you haven't paid for the sandwiches or the cake!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "We've got to pay to see the animal feed, after all!"

Harry Wharton called the waiter.

"I say, you fellows, I haven't finished yet!" squeaked Bunter.

"You have!" answered Harry.

And he paid the waiter, and the Famous Five wheeled their bikes away. They mounted in the road, Billy Bunter glaring after them with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. And as they rode away, in a cheery bunch, the fat junior's farewell echoed after them:

"Beasts!"

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Give and Take!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Look out!"

"The dangerous fool!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Is he mad?"

There was a loud ringing of bicycle-bells. But the horseman ahead of the five cyclists in the narrow Sussex lane did not heed.

Harry Wharton & Co. were about a mile from the inn where they had left Billy Bunter. They were following a lane that led, by rather winding ways, towards Hastings. It was a deep lane, with high banks of earth on either side.

crowned by thick hawthorn hedges. The level of the fields was far above their heads as they rode. Ahead of them a horseman suddenly appeared, coming towards them at a trot. The sunlight gleamed on a dark, swarthy face and a bushy, black moustache.

It was Signor Muccolini, and as he recognised the Greyfriars fellows, he gave them a black scowl, and gave his horse a cut with the whip. He gave it another cut, and another. With a savage hand on the rein, and the whip scoring its flanks, the horse plunged and pranced wildly, careering towards the cyclists with a wild clattering of hoofs.

In the deep, narrow lane it was necessary for the cyclists to string out in file to pass the horseman. But it was impossible to pass that madly prancing steed without an accident.

The juniors jammed on their brakes and slowed down, at the same time jingling their bells as a warning to the Italian.

But he did not heed the warning. His black eyes glittered at the juniors as he pranced down on them.

The chums of the Remove were well aware that the circus-master had no liking for them. His dislike, in the first place, had been founded on the fact that they were Billy Bunter's schoolfellows—which was unreasonable enough. But they could guess that what had happened at the circus camp on the downs had intensified his dislike. They had caused the failure of his rascally scheme for dealing with Bunter. Since then, though they were not aware of it, Bunter had thrown his fat weight about to a greater extent than ever—to the length of turning the signor out of his caravan and taking possession of it. The sight of them to the Italian was rather like a red rag to a bull. What he dared not give Bunter, he could give them—and he was going to.

With his teeth set under his black bush of a moustache and a savage glitter in his eyes he careered down on the bunch of cyclists.

"Look out, you dummy!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Jump down!" gasped Nugent.

It went sorely against the grain with the Greyfriars fellows to let the greasy Italian get away with his aggressive bullying. But, clearly, there was going to be an accident if the horse came prancing among the bikes. They had to get out of the way and let him prance by, or be knocked over right and left.

There was not much room for getting out of the way, and not much time to do it in, as the horseman came thundering and prancing on.

They swerved to the sides of the lane, jumping off their machines, and cramming themselves close to the steep banks.

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Johnny Bull, as the horseman came prancing up. "You—yaroooooooh!"

Slash!

Johnny let out a terrific yell as the Italian, leaning over in the saddle, cut at him with his riding-whip. The lash rang across Johnny's shoulders.

"You rotten rascal!" yelled Bob Cherry.

Slash! came the whip again, and this time Bob got it! He roared.

With a savage jerk on the rein, the Italian whirled the horse round. Harry Wharton, pressing into the bank to keep clear of the lashing hoofs, had no chance of avoiding the blow that came at him. The riding-whip fairly crashed on his shoulders.

Hurreo Jamsset Ram Singh, his dark face darker with rage, made a jump at the horseman. But he had to jump back as the horse swung round on him, and

as he jumped, the riding-whip caught him across his dusky face.

"Oh, you terrific rascal!" panted the Nabob of Bhanipur.

The Italian made a cut at Nugent. Then he whirled his horse again, to ride on his way.

In another moment he would have been gone at a gallop. But in that moment Johnny Bull jumped at the horse's head and hung on the reins.

Lash, lash, lash, came down savagely on Johnny as he dragged down the horse's head.

"Back up!" yelled Johnny.

The riding-whip rained blows on him. But Johnny Bull hung on like grim death.

At that moment Johnny rather resembled the "tyke" of his native county, which is said to bite alive or dead.

The bullying Italian had never doubted for a moment that he would ride on, after wreaking his malice on the Greyfriars juniors. But he was not going to ride on if Johnny Bull could stop him.

And his comrades were not slow to back up. Harry Wharton, his eyes blazing, reached the Italian and grasped at him. As he grasped, the riding-whip was turned on him, instead of Johnny, and twice it came down on head and shoulders.

But Muccolini had no time for more—for Bob Cherry grabbed at his arm and hung on it, and at the same time Hurreo Singh, on the other side of the horse, got the Italian's leg and heaved, and pitched him over the saddle.

With a yell of rage Muccolini came off the horse, sprawling headlong in the dust of the lane, dragging down Bob and Wharton as he went.

Johnny Bull, still grasping the reins, dragged the horse clear.

Signor Muccolini struggled to his feet, his swarthy face aflame with fury, dealing fierce blows right and left with the riding-whip at Wharton and Bob.

Leaving the horse, Johnny Bull rushed to the aid of his chums. Hurreo Singh and Nugent were not a moment behind him.

Slashing with the riding-whip, the beefy Italian was charged over, and went down in the dust again. Bob grasped the riding-whip from his hand.

"Now, you rotter, it's your turn!" he roared.

"Cospetto!" yelled Signor Muccolini, as his own riding-whip came down with a crash. "Dio mio! Ooooh!"

"Give him some more!" panted Wharton. "Give the cheeky rotter the thrashing he's asked for!"

Signor Muccolini scrambled wildly up.

The riding-whip caught him again as he gained his feet. He made a spring at Bob, to be met by the lash fairly across his savage, swarthy face. He sprang back faster than he had sprung forward.

For an instant he stood, panting, convulsed with fury; then, as Bob came at him, he dodged and ran after his horse. Another lick from the whip landed on his beefy back as he ran.

There was a clatter of hoofs up the lane. The horse, wildly excited and scared, was galloping off. Muccolini rushed after it desperately.

But he had no chance of catching the runaway.

With tossing head and jingling stirrups, the horse dashed away at full gallop, and disappeared up the winding lane. After it, panting and gasping and spluttering, the Italian disappeared in his turn.

"Well," gasped Bob Cherry, "we gave

that cheeky rotter as good as he handed out, that's a comfort."

"The bullying brute!" said Harry. "I wish we'd given him some more. Ow!"

"Wow!" said Bob.

"Ow—wow!" said Johnny Bull, rubbing his head.

"He won't catch that gee in a hurry, anyhow!" said Bob. "Ow! Bother the greasy brute! Let's get on!"

The Famous Five remounted their jiggers. They were feeling both sore and savage as they rode on, and for a considerable time their remarks were limited chiefly to "ow" and "wow" and "yow." Still, they had had rather the best of the shindy, which was a consolation—and by the time they pedalled into Hastings they had recovered their usual cheery spirits.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Muccolini's Surprising Welcome!

"O H ecrikey!" breathed Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter's movements were seldom rapid—and on a hot August afternoon he was not much disposed to move at all, let alone to move quickly. But as he uttered that ejaculation, the fat Owl of the Remove moved as swiftly as if he had received an electric shock. He fairly bounded from the bench on which he was seated, and blotted himself from sight behind the trunk of the big chestnut-tree that stood in front of the inn.

It was the sight of a dingy-looking man, with unshaven face and a slanting nose, coming up the road, that caused that unwonted activity on Bunter's part.

He had told the Famous Five that he was not afraid of Jimmy Guggs. Perhaps he even fancied that he wasn't. But anyone observing him at that moment would certainly have drawn the conclusion that he was afraid—in fact, terrified out of his fat wits.

Behind the tree-trunk he palpitated.

"That beast!" gasped Bunter. "Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter was very careful these days, very careful and cautious. Owing to the peculiar circumstances under which he had become a member of Muccolini's Magnificent Circus, he had to be careful and cautious. Never once since that obnoxious tramp had been on his trail, had the fat Owl strayed by lonely paths. He was not going to give Guggs another chance at him—not if he knew it!

He was on a public road now, sitting in front of an inn, and a moment's reflection might have told him that Guggs, lawless ruffian as he was, would scarcely venture on violence in such a spot. But Bunter, in his alarm, did not stop for a moment's reflection!

One glimpse of the unshaven face and the slanting nose was enough for him. He blotted himself out of sight behind the tree, and waited, palpitating, for the ruffian to pass on his way. He only hoped that Guggs had not seen him.

He listened, with fat, beating heart, not daring to peer round the trunk, lest the man with the slanting nose should spot his fat face.

Heavy tramping footsteps came off the road towards the inn, which lay a little distance back. Bunter quaked. Guggs was coming!

Had he seen him? He was almost sure that he hadn't, so swiftly had he popped out of sight. But the tramp was coming up to the inn, that was certain.

Possibly it was only for refreshment.



Lost to every consideration but rage and vengeance, Signor Muccolini hit, clawed, scratched and tore like a wild cat. Guggs had his hands full, but he was hitting out, all the time. In the thick branches above, Billy Bunter sat tight—and grinned.

Jimmy Guggs, if he had money in his pockets, was not the man to pass an inn without calling in! But if he saw Bunter there—

"Oh lor'!" breathed Bunter.

He gave a wild blink round through his spectacles. Nobody was to be seen at the door or windows of the inn. And in less than a minute that awful ruffian would be passing the big tree, and would spot him! Without stopping to think, Bunter clambered into the tree.

Bunter was no climber. But the gnarled old trunk was easy to climb, and the branches were low. Spurred on by the terror of a grasping hand behind, the fat junior clambered desperately, and almost in a twinkling he was safely hidden in thick, deep foliage.

Squatting on a thick branch, his fat back resting against the trunk, Bunter peered down through his spectacles. Through the foliage he had a glimpse of a battered bowler hat.

Guggs was seating himself on the bench Bunter had left.

He was not looking up; it was the dinted crown of his battered bowler that Bunter glimpsed. Evidently he had not seen the fat schoolboy, and had no idea that Bunter was there.

He rapped on the table, and rapped again. Then he rapped louder, with an angry grunt. Bunter breathed more freely. It was refreshment that Guggs wanted, and he was summoning the waiter. Bunter hoped that he would be quick about it and go.

The waiter was slow to come. There was nothing going on that drowsy, hot afternoon at the little wayside inn. Perhaps the waiter had been taking a little nap, having had nobody to serve since the Greyfriars cyclists had departed. But he came at last.

Bunter could not see him, but he could guess that the waiter's look did not

express approval of the new customer by Guggs' first remark.

"Staring at a bloke!" said Mr. Guggs. "Ain't my money as good as anybody else's?"

"Oh, yes, sir; certainly," said the waiter hurriedly. There was a nervous note in his voice. Clearly he did not want trouble with that truculent-looking ruffian. "What can I bring you, sir?"

Guggs grunted out a surly order, and the waiter brought out a tankard, set it on the table, and went back into the inn.

There was a sound beneath Bunter of gurgling and smacking of lips. Then the empty tankard jarred on the table.

Bunter waited for the man to go. But Guggs did not go. Having disposed of his ale, he leaned back on the bench, filled a black pipe, and lighted it. The smell of strong shag ascended to Bunter.

"Beast!" breathed the fat Owl.

It was not comfortable, perched in the tree. But Bunter dared not stir. It was in vain that he told himself that, in such a spot, the ruffian would not dare to lay a finger on him. Most likely he wouldn't; but there was, at least, a chance that he might. The fat Owl dared not risk it.

A quarter of an hour passed. He heard Guggs knock out his pipe and grunt. Nobody came along the road, and the waiter, indoors, was probably resuming an interrupted nap. Guggs grunted—and grunted again. He seemed to be getting impatient.

"Blow 'im! Keeping a cove waiting! Blow 'im!"

The brute was not going! Those muttered words revealed that he was there to meet somebody—who, it seemed, was late in coming.

The ruffian filled his pipe again, smoked it out, and knocked the bowl on the bench again, grunted and grumbled.

"Cheeky furriner! Keeping a bloke 'anging about!" grumbled Guggs.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bunter, under his breath.

He knew now for whom Jimmy Guggs was waiting.

There could not be any doubt about the "furriner" he had an appointment to meet at that little hedge inn. The tramp was not likely to have dealings with many foreigners.

It was Signor Muccolini for whom he was waiting! Bunter breathed hard as he realised it.

That dashed dago was still plotting against him, was he? He was still planning to have that unwelcome member of his circus "beaten up."

Bunter had supposed that Mucky would give up that game, after it was known. But if he had an appointment to meet Guggs that afternoon, it was clear that he had not given it up. Only for one purpose could he want to see Guggs.

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

He heard Guggs rise from the bench and walk down to the road. There he stood for some minutes, staring surlily along the dusty lane that would away in the direction of Hastings.

He came tramping back, and slumped on the bench again.

"'Aning about!" Bunter heard him mutter. "'Aning about more'n 'arf-an-hour for that blinking furriner! Strike me pink! I've more'n 'arf a mind to 'and 'im one on his tater-trap when he does come in, blow 'im!"

Bunter sat tight. The tramp was in an evil temper, that was plain. Very probably he had not quite recovered from the vigorous handling that Marco had given him a few days ago. And the weather was hot—and Mr. Guggs, no doubt, was thirsty. The fact that

he called for no more ale, hinted that his cash resources were limited. And he was beginning to doubt whether Muccolini was coming to keep the appointment at all!

Growl after growl reached Bunter's fat ears from below.

"I ain't waiting much longer, I know that!" came Guggs' growl. "Blinking furriner! Blow 'im!"

But a few minutes later the tramp half-rose, and Bunter heard his voice: "Ere he comes, blow 'im!"

Billy Bunter twisted round in the branches, and blinked towards the road.

The thick foliage shut off the view; but in a few moments he had a glimpse of an approaching figure through the branches.

It was, as he expected, Signor Muccolini.

But the circus-master did not look quite as usual. Generally the signor was very careful in his attire, and a bit of a dandy. Now he looked dusty and untidy; dusty from head to foot, with a crumpled collar and a red face clotted with perspiration.

A hot chase after his runaway horse had failed. Muccolini had had to continue his way on foot, leaving the runaway to its own devices. He was hot, tired, dusty, and in the worst of tempers. The latter fact was only too clear, from his gleaming eyes, his scowling brow, and the set of his thick lips under the black bush of a moustache.

He turned from the road and passed under the branches of the spreading chestnut-tree, towards the bench where Guggs sat—also scowling. And the Greyfriars ventriloquist, hidden above, gave a little fat cough.

Signor Muccolini did not speak as he approached the scowling tramp. But a voice that was a twin to his own spoke for him:

"Guggs, you scoundrel! You dirty rascal, get out of it! I'm done with you—do you hear? Get out of it before I knock you down!"

Jimmy Guggs gave quite a convulsive jump at that greeting.

He was already in an extremely bad temper. That extraordinary greeting from Signor Muccolini put the lid on.

The signor came to a halt under the tree, staring. He could see no one but Guggs, and he was wondering who could have spoken.

But Guggs was not wondering. He knew—or thought he did.

"Strike me pink!" he gasped.

"Dio mio!" ejaculated Muccolini. "Who—what—"

"You done with me, 'ave you?" gasped Jimmy Guggs. "Arfer me waiting 'ere nearly a hower, you blinking cheeky furriner! You—"

"Hold your tongue, you rascally ruffian! Get off that bench! Get out! Cospetto! I will knock you down, if you do not go at once, you dirty dog!" came from the unseen ventriloquist.

Signor Muccolini blinked in dizzy astonishment as he heard that. Jimmy Guggs leaped from the bench. He made another leap—at Signor Muccolini! An unwashed, knuckly fist crashed into the swarthy face, and the circus-master went staggering.

"Knock me down, will you?" roared Guggs. "Done with me, 'ave you? Well, I ain't done with you yet, you dirty dago! Take that—and that—and that—"

And the signor staggered right and left as he took them, and went down with a crash under the spreading chestnut-tree.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

When Rogues Fall Out!

"COSPETTO!" gasped Muccolini.

He sprawled on his beefy back, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels.

Jimmy Guggs, red with rage, danced round him.

"Git up!" he roared. "Git up and 'ave some more!"

"Oooogh! Dio mio! Scoundrel!" gasped the signor. "I—I—" He scrambled to his feet, blazing with fury. "Ruffian—rascal—oh! Ow!"

Guggs came at him with right and left.

Jimmy Guggs had waited nearly an hour for the Italian to keep that appointment. And the dago, when he came at last, came only to tell him that he was done with him, and would knock him down if he did not get out—at least, as the ruffian supposed. It was not surprising that Jimmy was infuriated. His temper had been already simmering. Now it was boiling over.

"You'll knock me down, will you?" howled Guggs. "Let's see you do it, you greasy dago!"

"Fool! Ruffian! Rascal!" spluttered the signor. "I—I— Oh! Ow! Fool! I tell you—I say—urrrgh! Ooooh!"

"Done with me, 'avo you?" howled Guggs, prancing round the staggering Italian and punching at him, as if he mistook the beefy circus-master for a punch-ball. "Well, if you've done with me, I'll give you something to remember me by! There's a oner for you—and there's another—"

"Oh! Ow! Dio mio! Fool! Madman! I—I— Oooogh!" spluttered Muccolini.

He crashed against the tree, as Guggs' fists flung him back. Crimson spurted from his nose, and ran from the corner of his mouth, and one of his eyes was shut! Panting, maddened with rage, he sprang at the ruffian like a tiger, hitting and clawing.

They closed in savage strife.

In the thick branches above, Billy Bunter sat tight—and grinned.

Bunter's idea was that, after this spot of trouble, the plotting Italian was not likely to have any further dealings with Guggs! No doubt Bunter was right!

Lost to every consideration but rage and vengeance, the signor hit and clawed and scratched and tore like a wild cat; and Guggs had his hands full with him for some time. But he was hitting all the time, and the Italian's beefy face began to resemble a raw beefsteak.

Panting, scuffling, trampling, yelling, the two rascals gave one another severe punishment.

The uproar brought the sleepy waiter to the door of the inn. He rubbed his eyes and stared at the scene.

A ruddy-checked landlord joined him there and stared, and a stableman came round the building and stood staring also. The little hedge inn had seemed asleep in the drowsy, hot afternoon; but the shindy had woke it up. Three

or four startled faces appeared at windows.

"It's a foight!" said the ruddy-cheeked landlord, after staring for a full minute.

And the waiter nodded and replied: "Roight—it's a foight!"

To which the stableman added,

"They're foight!"

The landlord stepped out.

"Here!" he said. "You can't foight here! Don't you coom here to foight! If you be toight, you go somewhere else to foight!"

Neither of the combatants heeded him.

Both had evil tempers, now fully roused. Both had sustained severe damage, which made their tempers worse. Jimmy Guggs was fiercely bent on giving the dago something to remember him by, now that he had done with him. And the Italian's clawing and scratching did not have a soothing effect on him.

Jimmy hit hard, and he hit often. And a terrific, jarring upper-cut fairly lifted the Italian at last, and sent him sprawling on his back.

Jimmy, hungry for more, danced round him, inviting him to get up. He gave that invitation at the top of his voice.

But the signor did not get up. With a swollen, streaming nose, and both eyes blackened, covered with bruises, Pietro Muccolini sprawled, and gasped, and panted.

"Help!" he gurgled. "Send for the police! Call a constable! I will give that scoundrel in charge for assault! Help!"

"You send for a blooming bobby," roared Guggs, "and I'll tell 'im you give me sipun for knocking out that fat young cove at the circus! You'd like the perlice to 'ear about that, you dirty dago!"

"Fool—rascal—villain—"

"Git up! I'm arsking you to git up!" roared Guggs. "I ain't done with you yet, you greasy dago! Git up!"

"Keep away! Go! Help!" gasped the Italian.

Landlord and waiter and stableman converged on Mr. Guggs.

"You goo away!" said the ruddy-cheeked landlord. "Don't you coom here to foight! You goo your way, mister."

Jimmy Guggs gave him a glare and a push, and the landlord sat down beside Muccolini with a gasp.

Now that he had got his hand in, as it were, the truculent tramp seemed inclined to "beat up" the whole company. The waiter jumped back. The stableman disappeared round the corner of the inn. But he reappeared, with a pitchfork in his hands.

"Now you goo, mister!" he said. "If you doan't goo—"

The pitchfork settled it. Jimmy Guggs decided at once to "goo." And with a last glare at the sprawling Italian, he went, mopping a bruised and clawed face with a red handkerchief, as he slouched away down the road.

Signor Muccolini staggered to his feet.

He had come there specially to see Jimmy Guggs, with a scheme already cut and dried for landing that truculent gentleman on Bunter at the circus camp. But he was glad to see him go. Never had he been so glad to see anybody's back, as he was to see Mr. Guggs'.

"Now you goo, too!" said the landlord. "You goo! Cooming and foighting at a respectable inn! You foight somewhere else."

"Fool!" snarled Muccolini.

"If he doan't goo, Jim, tootch him oop with that pitchvork!"

"O'll tootch him oop all roight, if he doan't goo!" said the stableman, and the Italian jumped away from a flourish of the pitchfork.

"Fool! Idiot! Furfante Inglese!"

he panted. But he went. The pitchfork was not to be argued with.

Gasping and panting, limping and tottering, the Italian tramped away up the road. As Guggs went in one direction, the circus-master went in the other.

Billy Bunter, in the spreading chestnut-tree, grinned. He waited till landlord and waiter and stableman were gone, and then slid down the tree.

In quite a cheery mood the fat Owl of the Remove rolled homeward. He flattered himself that he had put "paid"

to Muccolini's plotting and scheming with Guggs, and there was no doubt that he had.

At a little distance from the inn, he passed a wayside pond, and saw a beefy figure bent over it. Signor Muccolini was bathing his damaged countenance; trying, so far as he could, to remove the traces of his hectic encounter with Jimmy Guggs. But he did not have much success. Bunter had a glimpse of

(Continued on next page.)

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

WHAT is the chief attraction of the good old MAGNET? This is a point which my readers discuss freely in their numerous letters to me, and answer in many different ways. A large number say straight out: "Billy Bunter!"—and practically every one of the prominent characters have their special adherents, who regard them as the focal point of interest. For myself, I think perhaps the chief attraction lies not in any one particular character, but in the interplay of various characters, whereby each gets a share of the limelight. Frank Richards' vivid style of writing, with its frequent delicious touches of humour, makes the stories a joy to read.

In the present highly-popular series of stories Billy Bunter is very much to the fore, of course; but in the stories which will follow it, and which are now in preparation, other of the characters will have their turn in the public eye.

That reminds me that this week's GEM contains a specially amusing and interesting Greyfriars story by Frank Richards. It tells you how Harry Wharton—but there, I won't give the game away! I can only tell you that everyone of you ought to read it for himself or herself!

Now for next week's splendid programme.

You'll find Billy Bunter funnier than ever in next week's super-quality, extra-long yarn of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled:

"THE SIGNOR'S SECRET!"

By Frank Richards.

Broke to the wide, as usual, Bunter schemes to "rake in the ready," regardless of the feelings of Tippity Tip, the circus clown, and the great Signor Muccolini himself. Why the signor doesn't put a spoke in Bunter's wheel is a mystery to everyone at the circus. Little do they guess that the runaway schoolboy knows the secret of the Italian's spying and that Muccolini is in dread of a long term in an English prison if his villainy comes to light. Only by allowing Bunter to remain hooked on to the circus and tolerating the fat junior's impudence can Muccolini keep him from talking too much. Trust Bunter, then, to make the most of his chances. Boys, you'll laugh louder than you've ever done before when you read this uproariously funny yarn.

If you want to increase your circle of friends, now's the time. Introduce the MAGNET to them! They'll forever remember your good turn. Every week the "good old paper" is gaining more readers

—a sure proof of its popularity. Do your good deed for the day by enlisting, at least, one new reader for the MAGNET. Popular as our present series is proving, Frank Richards has heaps more wonderful wheezes "up his sleeve"!

IT'S really amazing what a wonderfully powerful "homing" instinct some animals possess. Carrier pigeons, of course, are the supreme example of "homers," but dogs and cats can run them close. Some years ago there was a song called

"THE CAT CAME BACK."

It dealt with the adventures of a cat and a man who tried to get rid of it. Whatever he did, he always returned home to find the cat sitting on the doorstep. Well, that song wasn't exaggerated. Here's the latest yarn of a cat that made a hundred-mile trek and found its way safely back home.

A family recently removed from Eastbourne to Bournemouth. The cat went with them, but apparently pussy didn't like the air of the new town, or didn't want to leave his pals behind. So he slipped out of the new house and started back over a hundred miles of country that he couldn't possibly know. Sure enough he turned up at the old house, which was then empty, and settled himself on the doorstep. Luckily, some neighbours recognised the cat, which seemed none the worse for its long tramp, and looked after it until the owners could go back for it. Not bad going for an ordinary cat, is it?

And while we're on the subject here's another queer story about pets. It concerns

AN AFFECTIONATE FISH

which lives in Hampstead, London. Some time ago a schoolboy there caught what he imagined to be a "tiddler." Actually it was a young trout. He took it home and put it in a bowl. As the fish grew up it began to distinguish its new master. Now, if he whistles, the fish comes to the surface and remains there while he talks to it. As soon as he enters the room the fish begins to take notice of him. But here's the most amazing part of the story. A little while ago it was decided to give the fish its freedom. It was taken to a small lake and then set loose in the water. But do you think it took advantage of its new-found liberty? Not on your life! It refused to swim away and remained on the surface, trying to swim after the lad who had let it free. He had to take it back again. And it's still swimming round and round in its bowl at Hampstead, and greeting its young master every time he enters the room or whistles! If you can beat that pet story send along your yarn!

MOTORING UNDER THE ALPS!

Before long motorists will be able to pass from France to Italy underneath the famous Mont Blanc. A road tunnel has been planned for some time and is expected to be commenced shortly. It will be eight miles in length and 27 ft. in

width. The total cost is expected to be about three and a half million pounds. At present the roads over the Alps are closed from November to May, but the tunnel will be open all the year round, and as it will take only a quarter of an hour to pass through, that means a saving of many hours.

Another motor road through the Alps is being constructed alongside the railway through the Simplon tunnel which, in future, will take both trains and motors. By means of these roads communications in Europe are going to be considerably speeded up.

Now for

A TICKLISH TEASER

for you to try on your chums. An Arab sheik died and left seventeen camels. He had three sons and in his will directed that the camels should be divided amongst them as follows:

The first son was to receive one half of the camels, the second son one-third, and the third son one-ninth. How were the camels divided? Try to puzzle it out, and then look at the answer given at the bottom of this Chat.

An interesting query comes this week from John Blain, of Southport. He wants to know

WHY NIAGARA WAS FROZEN,

and whether it freezes over every year? The freezing over of Niagara Falls is not very common; in fact, the earliest freeze-up on record was in 1848. And it did not freeze again until sixty-one years later. On seven other occasions it has been frozen over, but the last freezing was of record duration. Hitherto the American Falls have never been frozen for more than two days—the last freeze-up lasted for over a month. Even then, however, it was only the American Falls which froze over. The Horseshoe Falls, on the Canadian side, have never yet been frozen.

Many people might think that the freezing of the Niagara Falls shows that we are getting colder weather nowadays than we did years ago. But that is not the case. The freezing has actually been caused by mankind trying to make heat! Sounds amazing, doesn't it, but it's true. You see, the waters of the Niagara River have been diverted for the generation of electrical power. This has meant that the channel leading to the American Falls has become shallower. When ice breaks up on Lake Erie the wind carries it down the American side, the ice jams up the channel to the American Falls, and the Falls freeze over. It is considered that complete freezing of the Canadian Falls is highly improbable, owing to the large volume of water which flows over and the high velocity of the upper rapids.

Answer to "A Ticklish Teaser": First of all, another camel was borrowed, making eighteen. The first son took one-half, nine camels. The second son took one-third, six camels. The third son took one-ninth, two camels. That accounted for seventeen camels, and the eighteenth was then returned to the man from whom it had been borrowed.

YOUR EDITOR.

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a swollen nose and two black eyes. Signor Muccolini's aspect was likely to cause a sensation at the Magnificent Circus, when he returned there.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. And he rolled on, grinning.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

No Go!

"TIPPITY, old chap!"

Mr. Tip stared—as well he might.

Hitherto, Billy Bunter had treated him with the lofty and distant contempt which, in Bunter's opinion, was proper treatment, from a Public School man to a circus clown. The change to "old chap" was rather startling.

"Eh?" said Tippity.

"My dear fellow—" said Bunter.

"Nice and polite all of a sudden, ain't we?" said Mr. Tip sarcastically.

"Might a bloke ask what the game is?" Tippity Tip was busy when Bunter blew along, and interrupted him. He was adding some decorative touches to the canvas structure in which he gave his ventriloquial side-show, with the dolls, Jane and John.

A large can of bright orange paint stood on the ground, and Tippity had a large brush in his hand, laden with paint. But he ceased his painting operations, to stare at Bunter.

Bunter gave him his most agreeable grin.

"The fact is, I think we ought to be friends, old chap!" said Bunter, blinking at the astonished clown through his big spectacles. "And I'm jolly well going to do you a good turn, Tippity."

"Sez you!" remarked Mr. Tip. "I mean it!" said Bunter impressively. "You see, I've done with that Guglielmo stunt, with the magic crystal, since that cat—I mean, I've decided to chuck that! I've thought of a new wheeze—chiefly to benefit you."

"You're the cove to benefit other coves, you are!" said Mr. Tip, with a deep and withering sarcasm which was a sheer waste on William George Bunter.

"Exactly," assented Bunter. "The fact is, it's always been my weakness. I'm always thinking of others, never of myself—"

"My 'at!" said Tippity.

"I seldom or never get any gratitude, I know. But I go on—it's my nature, you see!" explained Bunter. "Well, this is the big idea, Tippity, old chap—I'm going to help you with your turn."

"Are you?" asked Mr. Tip, as if he doubted it.

"That's it," said Bunter. "You do a ventriloquial turn in this side-show, when you ain't on in the ring. Well, you can't ventriloquise for nuts, old chap!"

"Can't I?" asked Mr. Tip, breathing hard.

"What I mean is, your performance is absolutely rotten!" explained the fat Owl. "The wonder is, that the public don't shy things at you for it. I dare say you've often wondered that, yourself."

Mr. Tip gazed at Bunter.

The fat junior, evidently, had an axe

to grind, and for that reason he was making himself agreeable. But Billy Bunter had his own inimitable way of doing it!

"Now, I'm a first-class ventriloquist," went on the cheerful Owl. "You know all about that now, old fellow! I can ventriloquise your head off! As you know, all you can do is a silly squeaking that takes nobody in. That's all."

"That's all, is it?" gasped Tippity. "Yes! Now, my idea is for me to take it on," said Bunter, "as I'm jolly clever at it, and you're simply a dud."

"Oh!" "In fact, so far as the side-show's concerned, it would be better for you to stand out entirely, perhaps," said Bunter thoughtfully. "With me making it a top-hole turn, we don't want it spoiled by your butting in with your dud stuff, do we?"

Tippity Tip's grasp closed almost convulsively on the paint-brush in his hand. He gazed at Billy Bunter.

"As for the takings," went on Bunter, "we share them. That's fair! If you take, say, ten per cent—"

"Tit-tut-ten per cent!" gasped Mr. Tip.

"Yes, that's fair," said Bunter. "I believe in being scrupulously fair. Mucky will want to draw his bit, you know—and you take ten per cent—and I take the rest! With a really good show, instead of the rotten piffle you put up, the takings ought to be pretty good."

Tippity Tip stooped and dipped the brush into the can of paint.

"Don't bother about that now," said Bunter impatiently. "You can get on with your painting afterwards."

Without replying, Tippity drew the big brush, well loaded with paint, from the can. Then he gazed at Bunter again.

"Now, what about it?" asked Bunter briskly. "I've thought of this chiefly for your benefit, old chap, as I said; but it will be a good thing all round. People will come in crowds when they find it's a really first-class show, instead of your awful rot. You see the point?"

Tippity saw the point. Now that the crystal-gazing was a thing of the past, Billy Bunter was looking for a job. He had found one—Tippity's!

"Like the idea?" asked Bunter brightly.

"Like it?" repeated Mr. Tip.

"Look how the money will roll in! It's only got to get round that there's a first-class show, instead of the dud bosh you've been palming off on the public, old chap! They'll come in crowds. Once you're out of the show, it's bound to be a success. Don't you think so?"

Mr. Tip did not state what he thought on that point.

He did not answer Bunter in words. Perhaps he thought that words would be inadequate. Anyhow, he proceeded to actions.

His hand came up suddenly, with the well-laden paint brush in it.

Swoooooosh!

"Gurrrrrgh!" gurgled Bunter. "I say—wharrer you at? Keep that paint away from me, you silly idiot! Urrrrgh! Have you gig-gig-gone mad? Wurrgh! Wharrer you think you're doing? Oh crikey!"

Bunter staggered back, spluttering frantically.

Mr. Tip followed him up, dabbing with the paint brush.

There was a lot of paint on the brush. Most of it was transferred to Billy Bunter's fat face. That fat face glowed a brilliant orange. Some of the paint went into his mouth. It made Bunter gurgle horribly.

Tippity dabbed and dabbed.

"Urrgh! Keep off, will you?" shrieked Bunter. "Grooogh! Keep that paint away, you beast! Wurrgh!"

"What on earth's that game, Tippity?" exclaimed Marco, coming round the tent. The lion-tamer stared blankly at the excited clown wielding the paint-brush.

"Gurrrgh!" gurgled Bunter. "Urrgh! Beast! Wurrgh!"

"Tippity, old man!" gasped Marco. "He came along and asked for this!"

said Mr. Tip.

"Oooooogh! Keep off!" shrieked Bunter. He bounded frantically away, caught his foot in a rope, and sprawled.

"Yurrrrooogh!"

"And me that can!" yelled Tippity. "But—"

Tippity Tip grabbed up the can of paint. Bunter scrambled to his feet. He gave a howl as the clown rushed at him, with the paint can in his hands. His hat had fallen off, but he did not stop to pick it up. He bounded away.

After him bounded Tippity.

Slam!

The paint can, up-ended, came down on Bunter's head. It came down to his fat ears, fitting him like a hat. Paint ran in streams down his face and down his fat neck.

"Yurrrrooogh!"

"There!" gasped Mr. Tip. "You can 'ave the lot! That paint cost me four bob, but you can 'ave it! I wish I'd some more!"

"Urrrrgh!"

Billy Bunter fled. With the paint can on his head, the paint streaming, the fat junior careered away through the circus camp. Yells of laughter greeted him in his wild career. Zara looked from her van, and laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks. Even Signor Muccolini, peering out of a tent with a pair of blackened eyes, grinned. The whole circus roared.

It was agreed, on all hands, that this was the funniest turn ever seen in the Magnificent Circus. Only Bunter did not enjoy the performance!

For two or three days afterwards Billy Bunter was very orange about the neck and ears. When he came across Mr. Tip, he gave him glares that might almost have cracked his spectacles. And he did not repeat his generous offer to the circus ventriloquist.

Bunter was still with the circus, but he was still job-less, when the circus took the road again and rolled on to Folkestone. It was still a question what—or whom—he was going to do!

THE END.

(The next extra-long yarn in this popular circus series is entitled: "THE SIGNOR'S SECRET!" If you miss it, chum, you'll be missing the treat of the week!)

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OUT OF THE DEPTHS!

A Seaside Adventure
By DICKY NUGENT

Jolly and Merry and Bright and Fearless of the St. Sam's Fourth stood on the end of Winklesea Pier, shaking their fists at a fishing-smack as it sailed away towards the horizon.

Aboard that fishing-smack was Doctor Birchermall, their revered and majestic headmaster; and Jack Jolly & Co. were jolly wild to think that he had escaped their clutches. They had promised Molly Birchermall to do their utmost to take back her pop to the Hotel Posh. But just when it seemed that they had the matter well in hand, the Head had neatly slipped through their fingers. As they gazed out upon the deep, their feelings were too deep for words!

Frank Fearless' lip curled contemptibly, as he watched the diminishing outline of the vessel.

"We mite have eggpected it of him, I must say," he remarked. "He has taken the cowherd's way out and done a bunk. His skeem for raising the munny with which to pay his hotel bill having fallen flat, he has desended to sharp praktiss!"

"And left that poor, inersent girl to face the mowsiek on her own!" added Merry, indignantly. "It's a shame!"

"We shall hardly be able to look Miss Molly in the face when we go back—empty-handed," declared Bright.

Then Jack Jolly suddenly chuckled.

"Need we go back empty-handed, after all?" he asked. As he spoke he pointed significantly to the water below.

Merry and Bright and Fearless looked downwards. Their eyes gleamed as they caught sight of the object Jolly was indicating.

It was a speed-boat!

"Few!" wissled Fearless. "You're suggesting that we follow the Head in a speed-boat?"

"Why not?" grinned the kaptin of the Fourth. "We can soon catch up with that old tub—and it's ten to one in doonutts the crew will be only too glad to get rid of the Head!"

"That's trew enuff!" larfed Fearless. "In fakt, the more I think about the wheeze, the better I like it. Do you fellows agree?"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Merry and Bright.

"Then we'll do it! This way, chaps!"

And Fearless led the way down the iron steps leading to the speed-boat.

The pilot of the boat, who was at the bottom of

the steps, was quite willing to let Fearless take charge of it, and after a crisp, ruffling note had changed hands, the boys were soon tumbling into the boat.

Fearless sat at the wheel and pressed the self-starter, and, with a mitey roar, the engine started up. Half-a-jiffy later, they were moving away from the pier, and shortly after that they were going at top speed—cutting through the water like a nife cuts through butter.

The fishing-smack, which was a meer speck in the distance when they started, soon got nearer as they settled down to the chase. It wasn't long before they could discern men moving about the boat, and amongst them Jack Jolly spotted a very familiar figger, bizzily engaged in swabbing the deck.

"My hat!" he eggs-claimed. "They've evidently found the Head and they're making him work his passidge as a deck-hand!"

"Gammon!" Jolly chuckled.

"Well, I eggspsect it was the Head's only way of saving his bacon, anyway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give 'em a hail!" said Fearless, as they drew near the fishing-smack, and Jack Jolly & Co. made meggafoones of their hands and yelled:

"AHOY!"

The next instant, they saw Doctor Birchermall's head pop over the side of the vessel. He had lost the nigger minstrel's hat and collar, which he had been wearing when they saw him last, and his venerable beard, dragged out of its hiding-place inside his weskit, was once more waving about in the breeze. But the brown stain he had used to culler his fizz still remained and, what with that and the deck-mop he was holding, he looked so commical that the juniors couldn't help larfing.

"Anyone got a camera?" grinned Jack Jolly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the Head didn't seem to see the funny side of it. First he looked alarmed and then he skowled.

"How dare you follow me like this here?" he asked, with his usual faultless grammar.

"Go back to Winklesea! Do you here me?"

"We here you, sir, and we're going in a minnit

or two!" yelled back Jack Jolly. "But we're going to take you with us!"

An eggspression of fear came into the Head's greenish eyes.

"You're going to do nothing of the kind!" he roared. "Unless I have the munny to settle my bill at the Hotel Posh, I durstn't return to Winklesea! I'm staying here!"

"Ho, no, you're not!" said a stern, rasping voice behind the Head. "You're only a stowaway aboard this blinking boat, and if there's anyone willing to take you back, you're going!"

Jack Jolly & Co. grinned. They guessed that the tuff-looking speaker who was now looking over the gunwale was none other than the skipper of the fishing-smack.

"We'll take him back, sir, if you'll lower a ladder down the side," cride Jack Jolly.

The Head nashed his teeth with rage.



"I'm not going! I shall refuse to desend any ladder! I—"

The next instant, Doctor Birchermall received a shock. Ignoring his protests, the grinning skipper calmly began to fix a life-jacket round him and attached to it a length of stout rope.

"If you won't go home of your own accord, you can be blinking well towed home!" he growled. "Catch!"

He flung the other end of the rope over the side, and Jack Jolly caught it.

"What the merry dickens—!" began the Head, who had not yet quite caught on to the idea.

Then the skipper seized him and lifted him bodily over the gunwale and the Head gave a wild yell.

"Leggo, bust you! Help! Murder! Perlice! Yarooooo-ooooo!"

SPLASH!

With a splash that nearly swamped the speed-boat, the Head hit the surfiss of the water. He vannished from site for a few seconds, then bobbed up again, puffing and blowing like a grampus.

"Poof! Groooooo! Ooch! Poof!"

"Step on it, Fearless, old chap!" grinned Jack Jolly. "As the Head duzzent want to travel in the boat, we can only do as the skipper suggests and take him in tow!"

"All screen!" chuckled Fearless, and once again he stepped on the gas and sent the speed-boat flying through the water.

That jerney back to Winklesea Pier was the most commical eggsprience Jack Jolly & Co. had had for many a long day. One moment the Head would be flying in mid-air at the end of the rope, the next he would be bouncing on the foaming surfiss of the water, and the next he would be submerging like some yewman submarine.

The peer loomed up before them at last. Frank Fearless shut off the engine and the pilot at the landing-stage hawled in the speed-boat with a boathook. After that Jack Jolly & Co. hawled in Doctor Birchermall, and it was then that they got a serprize.

They were quite eggsppecting to see the Head looking as clean as a new pin after his dip. But, although they hadn't noticed it, they had passed through a drifting mass of seaweed just before they arrived at the pier; and the result was that the Head was covered from head to foot in ocean vegetation, not to mention an assortment of shrimps, lobsters and haddockes, which had got tangled up with his beard.

"M—m—my hat!" gasped Fearless. "Is it really Doctor Birchermall or the fabled King Neptune?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—!" spluttered the Head.

"This way, sir!" sang out Fearless. "Forchunittly, there are some private bathrooms upstairs!"

Doctor Birchermall was too weak and winded to offer any more resistance, and he allowed the Co. to lead him up on to the pier without another word.

Much to "unions' serprize, the person to greet them at the top of the steps was Moly Birchermall.

Despite the seaweed, she welcomed back her pater with open arms.

"Pop!" she trilled, joyfully. "I knew you'd come back in the end!"

Doctor Birchermall gave a hollow groan. He was thinking of that unpaid bill at the Hotel Posh and the awkward complications that would follow when the hotel manager found that he had squandered all his hollerday munny in the slot-machines on the pier!

But all the Head's trubbles were to vannish in a minnit, had he but known it.

As they walked on to the pier, they found that a fancy-dress carnival was in progress, and when the crowd spotted the Head, cheer after cheer rent the air.

"Hooray!"

"Here comes the winner! Hooray!"

"What the thump?" gasped the Head.

Then he realised that the Mayor of Winklesea was standing before him, holding out three five-pound notes.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" cride the Mayor. "I think it is your unanimous wish that the first prize of fifteen pounds should be awarded to the gentleman who has so brilliantly disguised himself as the Old Man of the Sea!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I therefore award him the prize here and now, and I call for three harty cheers for the winner!"

While the cheers rang out across the pier, the Head stared dazedly at the wealth that had been so suddenly and uneggspectedly placed in his hands.

"Bless my sole!" he gasped. "Fifteen pounds! And my bill at the Hotel Posh is only ten pounds! Whoopee!"

"All's well that ends well, sir!" said Jack Jolly. "You're properly out of the depths in two ways now!"

"And I have only you boys to thank for it," grinned Doctor Birchermall.

"I insist on your all coming back with me to the Hotel Posh and having a jolly good tuck-in at my eggspers!"

"An eggspellat idea, pop!" tinkled Miss Molly, giving Frank Fearless her most dazzling smile. "You'll come, Fearless, won't you?"

And Frank Fearless answered: "What-ho!"

troting along the front at Worthing, I bumped into dear old Alonzo Todd, sitting in a bathchair, all on his lonely own.

"What cheer, 'Lonzy old bean!" I greeted. "Is it too much of an effort to use your legs in your old age?"

"Really, my dear Brown, I can hardly be said accurately to have reached old age yet. I am still, comparatively speaking, a juvenile, and—"

"Cut it short, old chap! Why the bathchair, anyway?"

"Well, you see, I am recuperating from a severe attack of influenza and I do not yet feel sufficiently advanced in physical strength to utilize my pedal extremities for personal locomotion or—"

"Chuck it, 'Lonzy!' I grinned. "Leave the bathchair here and come along with me and have a bottle of pop!"

"Utterly impossible, my dear fellow!"

"Well, then, come along to the pier and watch the steamers."

"Much as I should like to, I fear that I cannot yet undertake activities of a pedestrian nature—"

"Then just stroll up and down with me for a few minutes and we'll have a yarn."

"I am sorry, my dear Brown, but—"

Then I had a sudden inspiration.

"Listen, 'Lonzy, have you heard that there's a lecture at the Town Hall in five minutes' time on the subject of conchology?"

"Lonzy flung aside his rug, jammed his hat tightly on his head, and then jumped out of the bathchair.

"In five minutes, did you say?" he gasped. "Goodness gracious! I shall hardly have time to get there! Many thanks, Brown!"

And off he went in the direction of the buses like a champion on the cinder-track. And that's how I cured 'Lonzy!

HOW I CURED 'LONZY!

By TOM BROWN.



WHY DO THEY FAVOUR HAZEL?

Asks SIDNEY JAMES SNOOP

What makes me wild about Remove chaps is the way they favour Hazeldene in comparison with me. Hazel gets away with anything, but with me it's a different story altogether.

A week or two back, when Wharton and his pals were out picnicking with Hazel's sister and some other Cliff House girls, they stumbled across Hazel playing cards under a tree with some Highcliffe men. What did they do to Hazel? Just nothing!

One day last week, however, Wharton and his pals came across me having a little flutter at penny nap with the same Highcliffe crowd. Did they treat me like Hazel? Not likely! They bumped me, rolled me in the dust, and then frog's-marched me all the way back to Greyfriars!

On another occasion at tennis (by a coincidence, Hazel's sister was there this time, too!), Hazel amused himself by making humorous remarks about the chaps' play. The chaps merely grinned sheepishly and put up with it. Yet when I did the same thing with the same fellows after Hazel's sister had gone, they nearly slaughtered me!

I could give you several other equally good examples of what I mean.

Why they should favour Hazel like they do is a real puzzle to me. He's not specially handsome, he's not overloaded with cash, and nobody can say he has a charming personality. Yet the things that earn me kicks galore, he gets away with every time. What's the explanation?

(No prize is offered for the answer to Snoopy's conundrum!—Ed.)

TREVOR LIKES TO TAKE THINGS EASY!

By HAROLD SKINNER.

"Care to stay at my place for a few days?" I asked Trevor, just before breaking-up. "I'm afraid it will be rather quiet, but—"

"My dear old chap, that's exactly what I'm looking for," beamed Trevor. "I'm in need of rest, nice, soothing surroundings, and no ties or obligations. In a word, I JUST WANT TO TAKE THINGS EASY!"

"Then it's a deal, old sport," I said. "I think you'll be able to take things easy right enough at my place."

Little did I know at that time what a devastating truth I was uttering! But I found it out afterwards!

Trevor took things easy from the moment he arrived. To begin with, he took my camera and busted it up without so much as a "By your leave!" Then he took my catapult and took a pot shot at a sparrow, smashing a pane of glass in my pater's tomato-frames in the process!

Then he took my tennis-racket to play with and left it out in a shower, completely ruining the dashed thing. After that, he took my cousin's motor-bike when nobody was looking and had a jaunt out into the country, colliding with a lamp-post on his return, and causing five quid's worth of damage to the bike!

Take things easy? I should jolly well think he did! In all my experience, I've never known anyone take things quite so easily as Trevor did! The easy way with which he took things took my breath away!

Next time a chap accepts an invitation to my show because he wants to take things easy, I shall ask him to explain just exactly what he means!

HIRE HOSKINS!

If you want your birthday party to go off with a bang, hire Hoskins! This star pianist scores a smashing success at every party he attends! One host writes: "I had a brand new piano, and I'm sure nobody else could have broken it in like Hoskins!" Another says: "His execution is all that can be desired!"