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WHEN ROME BURNED

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CONTINUING ANOTHER ORIGINAL ADVENTURE OF BILLY BUNTER OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOL

LION AT LARGE!

by FRANK RICHARDS

When Muccolini's Circus and Menagerie arrives in the district, things happen to Billy Bunter! Firstly, he meets Marco the lion-tamer, who takes him to the circus and shows him that Caesar the lion is as tame as a mouse. Bunter even goes into the cage, feeds the lion, and learns words of command which the animal obeys. But nobody at Greyfriars will believe the fat junior when he boasts of being a lion-tamer!

Secondly, a postal order arrives for Bunter. He is supposed to use it to take his sister Bessie and two of her friends at Cliff House School to the circus, but Bunter spends it on tuck. The afternoon of the circus visit arrives and Bunter is desperate. But Temple of the Fourth is in a fight in the quadrangle and a ticket falls from his pocket. Bunter picks it up and finds that it is a ticket for the Royal Box at the circus. His problem is solved!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were looking forward to their visit to the circus for two reasons. Firstly they had heard that it was a very good show. Secondly they wondered how on earth Billy Bunter was going to get out of his scrape.

He had spent the precious pound on tuck, but he was supposed to use the money to take his sister Bessie and her friends at Cliff House School to the circus!

They arrived and went into the shilling seats. The boxes all filled up, excepting the Royal Box.

"I'm dreaming!" Bob Cherry gasped suddenly. "Look!"

Billy Bunter and the girls were making straight for the box, Bunter handing over an admission ticket to an attendant on the way!

"How's he done it?" murmured Nugent "The fat porker hasn't a bean—and yet he's paid for the Royal Box!"

"The boxfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh. "The grinfulness of the esteemed and ridiculous Bunter is also great!"

Billy Bunter was enjoying himself, and a fat grin of triumph was on his face. It remained there for the whole of the show. Later, back at Greyfriars, when they challenged him he tilted his little fat nose.

"Thought you'd have the laugh on me, didn't you?" he said. "Well, you can go and eat coke!"

The next day, however, the fat junior began to look worried. For the story had gone around that Temple had lost a box ticket for the circus, and it could only be a matter of time before he found out who had occupied the box!

Bunter did not mind what Temple suspected, so long as suspicion did not turn on him personally. And with everybody talking about Bunter's antics at the circus, it was only too likely that Cecil Reginald would learn who had occupied the Royal Box on Wednesday afternoon. In which case, the fat Owl was likely to have some painful experiences at the hands of the indignant Cecil Reginald.

There was only one spot of silver lining to the cloud. The Famous Five were going over to Cliff House to tea after class that day—and Bunter was included in the invitation.

That was rather unusual, for Marjorie and Co. did not seem to pine for the company of William George Bunter, fascinating as it was. No doubt it was because Bunter had stood the box at the circus. They were far from being aware whose box he had stood!

After class, Bob Cherry tapped the fat junior on the shoulder.

"Start in half an hour, fatty," he said, "and if you take my tip, you'll hunt cover till we start. Temple of the Fourth lost a ticket yesterday——"

"What the thump should I know about Temple's ticket?" grunted Bunter.

"Well, he's looking for the chap who found it!" grinned Bob.

Bunter was almost fainting with terror. The lion reared on his hind legs and, to Bunter's dizzy amazement, extended a paw!

"Of course, I never found it!" said Bunter. "So far as I know, Temple never dropped it when Smithy was ragging him. I never saw it lying in the quad. Besides, I left it there, just where it was."

"Oh crikey! You'd better tell Temple that!" gasped Bob. "He may believe it—perhaps!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had been puzzled about Bunter's box. But when they learned of Temple's lost ticket, the mystery, of course, was elucidated. And by this time, it had reached Cecil Reginald's ears that Billy Bunter had occupied his box. So, after class, Temple looked for Bunter.

And when the fat junior spotted Temple in the quad, he rolled down to the gates, deciding to wait for the Famous Five outside till they started for Cliff House.

"Hold on!" came a shout behind him. Temple had spotted him.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter.

He ran!

So did Temple!

Bunter dodged out of the gates and scudded up the road. After him scudded Cecil Reginald Temple.

"Stop!" yelled Temple.

Bunter flew.

Down the road, from the direction of Courtfield Common, a man came running, in wild haste. He seemed to be in a tremendous hurry.

"Look out!" he shouted over his shoulder as he went past Bunter and Temple.

Then he vanished down the road towards Friardale.

Temple did not heed him. He saw nothing special to look out for. He scudded on after Bunter, and reached him as the fat Owl was staggering up.

"Now, you fat rotter!" roared Temple, as he clutched the Owl of the Remove by the collar. "Now, where's my ticket?"

"Ow! Leggo!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never had it! Besides, I didn't know it was yours! You shouldn't have dropped it in the quad! And I never——"

Billy Bunter broke off suddenly. From up the road, the direction from which the unknown man had come running, sounded a deep-throated roar. Bunter knew that roar. He spun round, his eyes starting through his spectacles.

"Oh gad!" gasped Temple.

He released Billy Bunter's collar and stood petrified, staring at the terrifying figure that came lumbering down the road.

It was a lion—a large size in lions! He knew now why that man had been running! It was an escaped lion from Muccolini's Magnificent Circus and Menagerie!

"Run!" panted Temple.

And he turned and fled.

Billy Bunter stood spellbound. He would willingly have run; but his fat knees were knocking together, and his feet seemed glued to the ground. Transfixed with terror, he stood blinking at the circus lion. The terrific beast reached him in another moment. Bunter, almost fainting with terror, gave a moan. The lion reared on his hind legs, and, to Bunter's dizzy amazement, extended a paw.

The next moment he understood—as he recognized Caesar.

Caesar, evidently, knew Bunter again, and remembered the fellow who had fed him, shaken hands with him, and ridden on his back. Bunter gave a gasp of relief. The lion lumbered on, leaving the fat Owl standing in the road, blinking after him.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He stared after the lion. Three or four fellows, looking out of the school gates, yelled and darted in, as the lion appeared. Caesar halted a moment, and blinked in at the gates, as if thinking of going in. Then he lumbered on, and disappeared through a hedge, cheerfully continuing his travels.

"Oh crikey!" repeated Bunter.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Amazing!

"LION!"

"Escaped lion!"

"Look out!"

"Run for your lives!"

There was wild excitement in the Greyfriars quad. Temple of the Fourth was the first to give the alarm as he scudded across the quad and bolted into the House, yelling to the fellows to look out. Other fellows, who had seen the lion pass the gates, added their voices to the uproar.

"But, Bunter—he's gone out——" gasped Bob. "Temple was after him. Temple's got in; but Bunter——"

Harry Wharton ran down to the gates, followed by his chums. Facing an escaped lion was not a light matter; but if Bunter was out in the road they were not going to hunt cover and leave him there.

On the road there was no sign of a lion to be seen. Caesar had already taken to the fields and was lumbering away towards Pegg. But .Billy Bunter could be seen. He was standing in the middle of the road, and, to the astonishment of the Famous Five, showed no signs of terror.

"There's an escaped lion loose from the circus, you fat idiot!" howled Harry Wharton.

"Oh, I know that!" said Bunter calmly. "He passed me a few minutes ago! You should have seen Temple cut! He, he, he!"

"He—he passed you!" stuttered the captain of the Remove. "He doesn't seem to have hurt you."

"Oh, I just looked at him!" said Bunter carelessly. "The power of the eye, you know! I'm not afraid of lions!"

The Famous Five stared at him. Temple of the Fourth was no funk, but his feet had hardly touched the ground as he ran. And Bunter had not run! He was not even in a hurry to go in, though the escaped lion was at hand—and might have appeared at any moment from behind a hedge or a fence.

The quad was in a roar now. Gosling, at the alarm of an escaped lion in the vicinity, ought to have shut the gates promptly. Instead of which—Gosling had shut himself in his lodge and bolted the door. And the gates still stood wide open. Several masters were in the quad, ordering the boys into the House—an order that most of them were glad to obey with unusual promptness.

"You fat ass!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Come in! Come in at once!"

"Oh don't jaw!" said Bunter. "Look here, as soon as Quelch hears about that lion being loose, he will gate us—the Head will gate the whole school. That means we shan't be able to go over to Cliff House."

"Who wants to go over now?" gasped Nugent.

"Eh? I jolly well do!" said Bunter. "They always stand a decent tea at Cliff House—old Miss Primrose lets them have a jolly big cake——"

"We're dreaming this!" gasped Bob.

"If you've got cold feet," continued Bunter cheerfully, "you can cut in and hide under the beds in the dorm! He, he, he! I'll tell Marjorie and Clara that you were afraid to come!"

And Bunter, with perfect coolness, rolled off down the road, leaving the Famous Five rooted with amazement, staring after him.

He reached the gap in the hedge through which the lion had gone, and glanced back at the petrified juniors.

"Funks!" he howled.

And he plunged through the gap and rolled off across the fields, the way Caesar had gone, which led towards the village of Pegg and Cliff House School.

"He—he—he's gone!" gasped Bob.

"Is he mad?" stuttered Wharton. "What the dickens——"

"Well, he's gone," said Johnny Bull grimly, "and I'm going, too!"

Johnny started down the road. His friends rushed after him.

"You can't!" exclaimed Nugent. "The lion——"

"Nobody's going to call me a funk!" said Johnny Bull. "I'm going, if all the lions in Africa were just round the corner."

Bob Cherry nodded.

"Bunter's not going to get away with that!" he said. "I can't understand it—but if Bunter's not afraid of the jolly old lion, I'm jolly well not! I'm going as far as Bunter does, and chance it!"

"It's rot!" said Harry.

"The rotfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But this esteemed Co. never backs down. Come on-fully, my absurd chums!"

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

ANSWERS (from page 18)

Science

(1) *Mercury.* (2) *They are minute forms of vegetable life found in the sea.* (3) *Methane.*

History

(1) *Warren Hastings.* (2) *Henry VII.* (3) *Cardinal John Henry Newman.*

Geography

(1) *Nairobi.* (2) *Italy.* (3) *It is the highest peak in the Harz mountains in Germany.*

Words

(1) *(a).* (2) *£ s. d.* (3) *Metric system.*

Natural History

(1) *Six.* (2) *A layer of corky cells formed across the base of a leaf-stalk before the leaf falls.* (3) *On the ground.*

Counties

(1) *Huntingdonshire.* (2) *Brentford.* (3) *Merionethshire.*

Nursery Rhymes

(1) *To London to see the Queen.* (2) *Friday's child is loving and giving.* (3) *Tommy Green.*

ANSWERS TO PICTURE QUIZ

1. The Bridge of Sighs.
2. Robert E. Peary.
3. Homer.
4. Papoose.
5. Laika.
6. Copenhagen.

SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD (from page 18)

ACROSS: 1. Alice; 4. Welsh; 9. Cuttle; 10. Trough; 12. Linum; 13. Unravel; 14. Contour; 20. Palomar; 22. Exact; 23. Orchid; 24. Bunter; 25. Aspen; 26. Ultra.

DOWN: 2. Lutine; 3. Colombo; 5. Error; 6. Scurvy; 7. Scull (skull); 8. Whale; 11. Vulture; 15. Unequal; 16. Spoor; 17. Blacks; 18. Canter; 19. Stork; 21. Maize (maze).