

How to be Strong, by  Billy Bunter.

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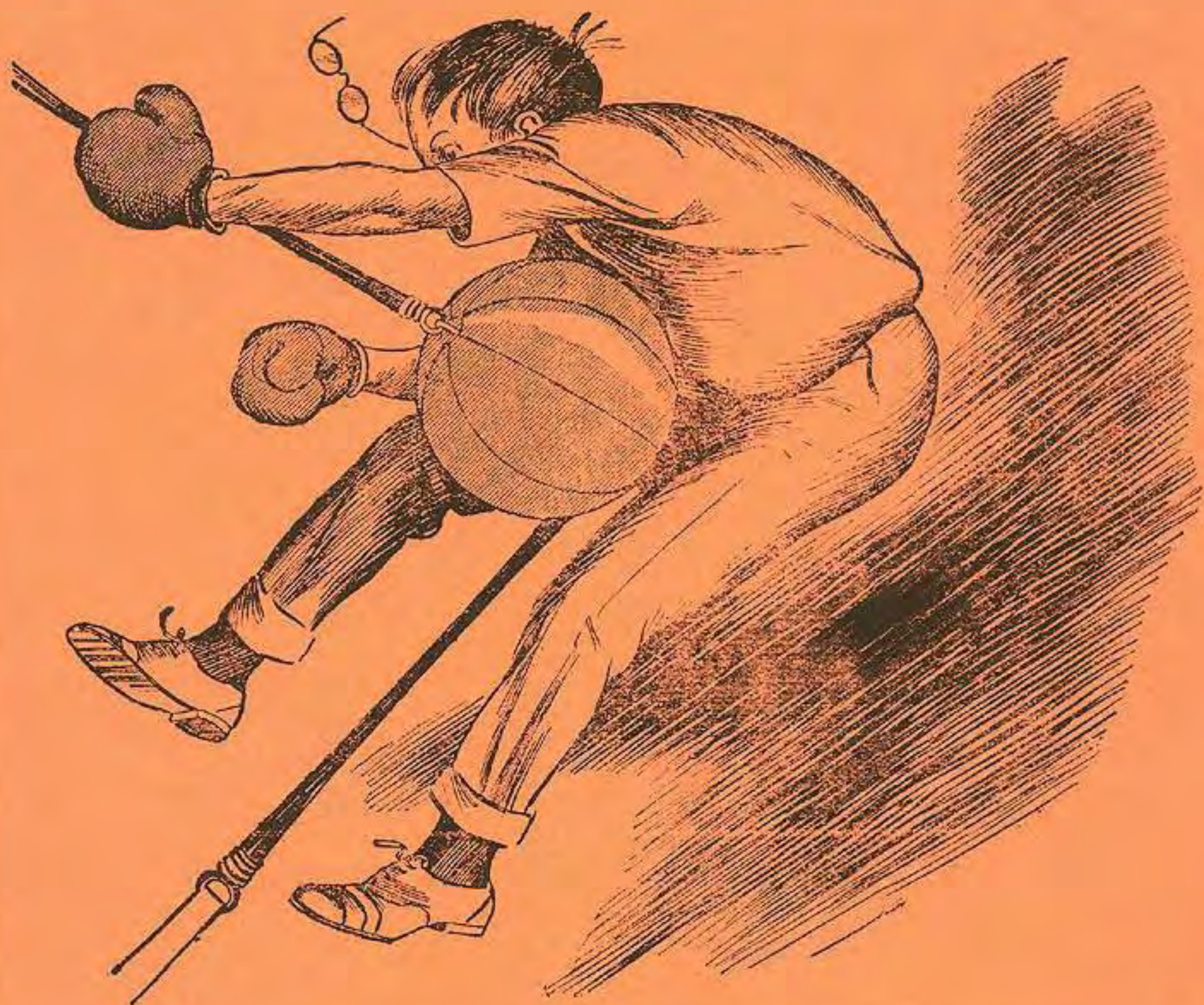
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BILLY'S BOOM.

By
FRANK
RICHARDS



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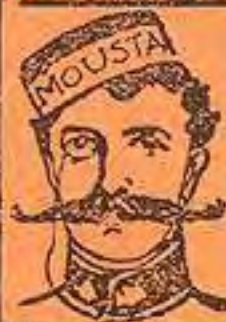
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BILLY'S BOOM!

A TALE OF THE . . .
. . . GREYFRIARS CHUMS.

BY

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Physical Culture.

"I SAY, Wharton——"
Harry Wharton, of the Remove at Greyfriars, came quickly into Study No. 1, and crossed to the corner where his cricket-bat stood, nearly knocking over little Billy Bunter in his haste.

"I say, Wharton——"
"Sorry, Billy; I'm in a hurry."

"I say——"
Wharton picked up his bat and turned to the door again. Billy Bunter set his spectacles straight, and caught him by the arm.

"I say, Wharton——"
"What is it?" asked Harry, stopping impatiently. "Cherry and Nugent are waiting for me, and there's not much more light for cricket."

"I want to speak to you."
"Buck up, then!"
There was reason for Harry Wharton's impatience. Billy Bunter was the slowest and lengthiest talker in the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars. Wharton had run in for his bat, and was in a hurry to get down to the cricket-pitch, and he had no time to waste.

"I've got a new idea, Wharton——"
"Can't you tell me some other time?"
"Well, you see, it's rather important. I've been thinking——"

"Buck up!"
"I've been thinking of taking up physie——"
"Taking physie! Are you ill?"
"Ill? No. I didn't mean——"
"If you want physie, go to the matron," said Wharton.

"I haven't any physie. What on earth's the good of bothering me about it?"

"I didn't say physie. I said——"
"Look here, is there anything the matter with you?"
"No. I've been thinking——"

"Well, I'm sorry if it's hurt you," said Harry. "You shouldn't start these things too suddenly, that's all. I must be off."

And he jerked his arm free, and darted out of the study. Billy Bunter blinked after him.

"That's rather rude of Wharton!" he murmured. "He ought to be interested in a fellow taking up physical culture, as he's so strong on athletics himself. I don't see why he couldn't have listened. I could have explained in ten minutes or so. I suppose I had better look out for Nugent or Cherry."

And Billy Bunter adjusted his spectacles and left the study. Bunter was an extremely short-sighted youth, and the enormous pair of spectacles he wore did not seem to help him much, for he was always making ludicrous mistakes owing to his impaired vision.

The Greyfriars Remove had nicknamed him the Owl. The chums of Study No. 1 were usually very patient with him, though Billy was sometimes very trying.

The Owl of the Remove left the School House, and blinked in the sunshine of the April afternoon. School was over, and the Greyfriars fellows had flocked with almost one accord down to the fields for cricket practice.

The playing-fields at Greyfriars were extensive, and each Form had its own ground. Greyfriars was a cricketing college, and practice at the nets was compulsory, though, as a matter of fact, few of the fellows had to be urged to turn up there after school.

The Remove, which had lately started an independent

cricket club "on its own," was especially enthusiastic just now. Nearly the whole form had gone, or was going, down to the Lower Fourth ground for practice, and Billy Bunter followed the stream.

Wharton was already at the wicket, and Nugent was bowling to him. Harry Wharton was cricket captain of the Remove, and he shaped splendidly at the wicket. Nugent was a good bowler, but he did not seem to be able to pass Wharton's bat.

Whatever he sent down Wharton sent back, and gave the fieldsmen never a chance of a catch. Bob Cherry was looking on, and he grinned with delight at the form his chum was showing.

"My hat!" Bob Cherry exclaimed, as Harry Wharton sent the ball to a far corner of the field with a mighty swipe. "Talk about Fry! Why, we shall wipe up the ground with the Upper Fourth when we meet them on the cricket-field!"

"The wipefulness will be terrific!" said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, the Hindu member of the Greyfriars Remove. "The chancefulness of the Upper Fourth will be nilful. We shall make the esteemed rotters sing small with their diminished heads."

"Ha, ha! So we will! Why—"

"I say, Cherry—"

"Hallo, Bunter! What's the trouble?"

"I want to speak to you for a few minutes."

"Go ahead, then! No law against it that I know of. You don't mind if I don't listen, do you?"

"I say, Cherry—"

"Bravo, Harry!" cried Bob Cherry, as the ball was sent upon its journey again. "That was a swipe, if you like. I shall be glad to see Wharton facing Temple's bowling."

"The swipefulness is great!" purred Hurree Singh. "The honourable Upper Fourth will receive an esteemed licking when we meet them cricketfully. We—"

"I say, Cherry—"

"Hallo! Are you still there, Billy?"

"Yes, I'm still here. I want to speak to you. I've been thinking—"

"What with?" asked Bob Cherry, with an inquiring glance at Billy Bunter's head. "I didn't know you had anything there to think with!"

"Oh, don't rot, Cherry! This is rather an important matter. You know, I've never taken really sufficient exercise—"

"Quite right, Billy! The best thing you can do is to take up sprinting," said Bob Cherry. "Let's see how long it will take you now to sprint round the cloisters and back."

"Look here, Cherry—"

"Can't. I'm looking at the game. Bravo, Wharton! Well hit, sir!"

"I say, Cherry—"

"Oh, cheese it, Billy! Why don't you take a run?"

"Oh, very well, if you don't want to listen!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "I say, Hurree Singh—"

"What is your honourable pleasure?" asked the Nabob of Bhanipur, who was famous for his politeness, which had never been known to fail under the most trying circumstances. "Pray proceed, my worthy chum!"

"You see, Hurree Singh, I've been thinking of taking up physical—"

"Hurree Singh—Hurree Singh! Where's that confounded Inky?"

"I am here, my respectable friend."

"You're wanted to bowl. Get on!"

"But Bunter is just honouring me with the addressful remarks—"

"Go on and bowl, ass!"

"Pray excuse me, Bunter, if I take leave of you Frenchfully," said Hurree Singh. "I am required by my respectable and honoured cricketful friends to play bowfully."

And Hurree Singh took the ball and went on to bowl against Wharton's wicket. Nugent joined Bob Cherry. He looked rather red with his exertions.

"Playing up strong, ain't he?" said Nugent, with a grimace. "Nothing in the Upper Fourth to touch his wicket, I think."

Bob Cherry grinned gleefully.

"You're right, Nugent. Bravo, Wharton!"

"I say, Nugent—"

"Hallo, Billy! Don't bother."

"I want to speak to you particularly!"

"Can't you go and speak to Bulstrode? He's standing over there, with his hands in his pockets, doing nothing. There's Hazeldene, too."

"I say, Nugent—"

"Now, Billy, be a good fellow, and take a little run," said Nugent good-naturedly. And he took the Owl by the shoulders and gently turned him round, and started him off with a gentle push.

"Really, Nugent—"

"Keep straight on, Billy, and don't come back, whatever you do," said Nugent.

Billy Bunter blinked, and drifted on.

"That's awfully rude of Nugent!" he murmured. "They all seem to be rude to-day. I suppose it's the effect of the cricket. I wonder if it would be any good speaking to Bulstrode or Hazeldene? I suppose I might as well try."

Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, was standing with his hands in his trousers' pockets looking on at the cricket. There was an unpleasant expression upon Bulstrode's face. He had been cock of the Remove before Wharton came to Greyfriars, and he had considered himself fittest to become cricket captain. The Remove had thought otherwise.

"They make a silly lot of fuss about that chap Wharton," he remarked to Hazeldene. "Blessed if I can see it myself. He can bat a little, but as for making him captain of the Remove eleven—well, my hat!"

"Quite right!" said Hazeldene, who agreed with everybody while he was with them, and compensated himself for the trouble by sneering at them behind their backs. "I can't see so much in Wharton's play. He's gone up like a rocket, and he'll come down like the stick, I expect."

"I say, Bulstrode—"

"Hallo! What do you want, Owl?"

"I want to speak to you. I've been thinking of taking up physical culture, you know."

"I don't know."

"Well, you do now that I tell you. I've thought it out very carefully. I don't take enough exercise, you know."

"You exercise your lower jaw pretty well, I think."

Bunter gave a sickly smile.

"Ha, ha! But really, Bulstrode—"

"Well, I don't see why you can't take up physical culture without bothering me about it," said Bulstrode. "You can physical-cult all day and all night for all I care."

"Yes, but there's a difficulty—"

"Is there really?"

"Yes. You see, I'm usually rather short of money—"

"Yes, I think I've noticed that," said Bulstrode sarcastically, and Hazeldene giggled. "When I was in your study, instead of Bob Cherry I used to have to fork out pretty frequently. I suppose Cherry does it now?"

"Well, he's rather a decent chap," said Bunter. "But his people are not rich, you know. Besides, he won't listen to me now. I've been trying to get a loan, but nobody seems to take much interest in the matter."

"Curious!" said Hazeldene.

"Yes, isn't it, Vaseline?" said Billy, unconscious of the sarcasm. "It's rather an important matter, you know. I really think physical culture will make a new man of me. I've read through Professor Kramm's book on the subject, and I can see that it is just what I need, and the things he supplies are just what I want."

Bulstrode grinned.

"Then why don't you send him an order for the lot?"

"That's just what I was thinking of doing," said Bunter eagerly. "But, you see, I happen to be stony just now. I'm expecting a postal order shortly—in fact, it ought to have been here before this, but there seems to have been some delay in the post. When it comes I shall be able to settle up, of course, so if you could lend me a couple of pounds, Bulstrode—"

"A couple of what?" ejaculated Bulstrode.

"Pounds!"

"Well, of all the counfounded nerve! Pounds—two pounds! Why, you young ass, where do you think I am to get two pounds from?" exclaimed Bulstrode, in amazement.

"Well, you usually have money—"

"Yes; but not to that tune," said Bulstrode. "And if I had it, I shouldn't lend it to you, you can bet your boots on that, kid!"

"I don't think you ought to be disoblighing, Bulstrode."

"You can borrow it of your study-mates," said Bulstrode, with a sneer. "I remember you were awfully pleased to have Cherry instead of me in Study No. 1."

"Oh, no, Bulstrode, that's quite a mistake! I always had a very strong regard for you," said Billy Bunter. "Hazeldene can testify to that."

"I know you always borrowed money of him, if that's what you mean," said Hazeldene.

"That's not a nice way to put it, Vaseline, and, besides, you've borrowed a great deal of him yourself."

Hazeldene turned red.

"Well, I'm not going to stand you two pounds, Billy," grinned Bulstrode. "You had better ask Hurree Jampot yonder. He's rolling in money."

"I've tried to, but—"

"Ask Wharton to pawn his diamond," suggested Hazeldene.

Bunter shook his head.

"That diamond is in the Head's keeping now, Vaseline. Besides, he wouldn't. I say, Bulstrode, if you liked to lend

me that little bit of money, I'd settle up the moment my postal-order came."

"Somewhere about the Day of Judgment, I suppose?" grinned Bulstrode. "But, I say, there goes Wingate; he takes an awfully deep interest in physical development, and I've no doubt he'd lend you the tin like a shot!"

Bunter glanced towards Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, rather dubiously. It was a little unusual for a Fourth-Former to attempt to borrow money of a Sixth-Form senior, especially the captain of the school.

"Do you really think so, Bulstrode?" he asked.

"Yes, rather. What do you think, Vaseline?"

"I don't see how he could very well refuse," said Hazeldene solemnly.

"Well, if you think so, I suppose there's no harm in asking him," said Bunter thoughtfully. "Thanks for the tip!"

And the Owl hurried to intercept the Greyfriars captain, leaving Bulstrode and Hazeldene nearly choking with suppressed laughter.

"I say, Wingate!"

Wingate stopped. The big, rugged, athletic captain of Greyfriars looked down at the weedy Owl of the Remove with a good-natured nod.

"Can I speak to you a minute, Wingate?"

"Yes; buck up!"

"I haven't been taking enough exercise lately, Wingate."

"You look like it," said Wingate. "Take some, then!"

"I've had Professor Kramm's book on physical culture sent to me," went on Bunter. "I can see now that physical culture is what I want to make a new man of me."

"It's a good thing," said Wingate. "I've never heard of Professor Kramm. Nugent or Cherry would show you some simple exercises that would do you good."

"Professor Kramm says it's best to take the thing up thoroughly, and he supplies all the necessary apparatus at a low price," said Billy. "His things are the best on the market, and sold at the lowest possible price."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, it says so in the book!"

Wingate laughed.

"You'd better not swallow everything you read in that book, youngster, or spend your money without taking advice," he said.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Bunter confidently. "The things will suit me down to the ground, you know, and a couple of pounds would be enough—"

"My hat! You had better think a little before you spend two pounds on anything!" said Wingate. "I should have to!"

"Oh, I've thought about it a lot!"

"But where are you going to get two pounds from?" said Wingate curiously. "It's a large sum for a kid in the Lower Fourth."

"I haven't got it!"

"You haven't! Then how—"

"I was going to ask you to lend it to me, Wingate."

The captain of Greyfriars gave quite a jump.

"You were going to ask me to lend you two pounds!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, Wingate. Of course, I should pay you back! I am expecting a postal-order for a considerable amount every day, and—"

Wingate gave him a peculiar look.

"I won't lick you for your cheek, Bunter," he said.

"You deserve it, though. Cut off!"

"But, I say, Wingate!"

"Cut off, I tell you!"

And Billy Bunter thought he had better obey.

"Well, did he lend it to you?" grinned Bulstrode.

Billy shook his head disconsolately.

"No. He seemed to think it was cheek my asking him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Bulstrode and Hazeldene together.

"Really, Bulstrode—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly. It dawned upon him that he had been made a fool of, but his indignation only seemed to add to the merriment of Bulstrode and Hazeldene. Bunter turned on his heel and marched off, followed by a shout of laughter.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Lost Ball.

HARRY WHARTON was still batting on the Remove pitch. Although it was not a regular match, but simply batting practice against a succession of bowlers, Harry's long stay at the wicket was attracting general attention. All the bowlers in the Remove had tried their skill upon him in turn, and there were at least half a dozen fellows in the Form who could handle the ball in first-class style for juniors.

The Upper Fourth eleven were at practice on their pitch, which adjoined that of the Remove, and Temple, Dabney,

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Fry, and others of the Form glanced over more than once towards the hero of the Remove.

"That chap's batting rather well, Dab," Temple remarked, in the tone of patronage in which the Upper Fourth usually referred to the Remove.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"He seems to be sticking it out well," went on Temple. "But, of course, he's only standing up to Remove bowlers."

"It would be a bit different against our bowling, of course," assented Dab.

"Yes, I think it would," chimed in Fry. "It will be a bit different when we play them in the Form match, you mark my words!"

Temple looked at him suspiciously.

"Do you mean to say you think they will be able to play us, Fry?" he snapped.

"Yes, I do," said Fry coolly. "And they'll put up a good show, too; and if we don't take jolly good care, they'll lick us!"

"Oh, that's rot, of course!"

"Is it? You'll see when the time comes. My idea all along was that you were taking the matter altogether too easily."

"Oh, rats!" said Temple.

"Well, you'll see!"

"He does but well," said Castle, joining in. "Look at him swiping that ball! Hallo, it's coming this way! Look out!"

Harry Wharton had given the ball a terrific swipe, and it came with a whiz towards the group of Upper Fourth fellows.

As a rule, the hitting was not hard enough to send the ball over the rival ground, but Harry had put his "beef" into it this time, and the ball came along like a four point seven shell.

"Look out!"

The Upper Fourth fellows dodged.

Temple was hardly in time. The whizzing ball passed so close to his head that it flicked his cap, and he gave a whoop.

"Hallo! Hurt?" exclaimed Fry.

"N-no-no," stammered Temple, rubbing his head.—"It came jolly close, though!"

"Well, I don't see what you wanted to yell out for if you were not hurt," said Fry.

"Oh, rats to you!"

"Here they come for their ball," said Dabney. "I don't think we ought to let them have it. Like their cheek to send it over our ground!"

"Right-ho!"

"Good!" exclaimed Giddy. "They've no right on the Upper Fourth ground. I certainly think they oughtn't to have the ball."

"It's our property now," Fry remarked. "Found on our ground, you know. It's treasure trove, or something of that sort."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, coming up breathless. "Have you seen our ball, you chaps?"

"Your ball! What are you talking about?"

"Our ball. Wharton drove it over this way."

"Rats! This is our ground!"

"I know it is. Anybody would know this was the Upper Fourth ground by the kind of batting they can see here!" exclaimed Bob.

"None of your cheek, Cherry!"

"Bosh! Where's our ball?"

"It's not here!"

"I know it is here!"

"Any ball lying in the grass about here belongs to us," said Temple. "As members of the Upper Fourth, we are bound to stand upon our rights."

"Is it one of your rights to steal a fellow's cricket-ball?" asked Bob Cherry sarcastically.

Temple turned rather red.

"Haven't you ever heard of treasure trove?" he said loftily. "Any ball found on our ground becomes our property, by the law of—of—of nations, I think—anyway. I jolly well know that it becomes our property."

"Rather!" chimed in Dabney and Fry.

"And we can't allow you kids on our ground, either," said Temple. "Clear off, will you?"

"I'm not going without our ball!"

"You're not going with it! Travel!"

"Why, there's that rotter Castle picking it up! Castle, give us our ball!"

"Rats!" said Castle cheerfully.

"I tell you I'm going to—"

"Hallo! How long are you going to be fielding that ball?" roared Nugent from the distance.

"They won't give it up!" shouted back Bob Cherry.

"Won't they! My hat! Do you hear that, kids?"

"Throw over that ball!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Go and eat coke!" shouted back Temple.

"We'll come and fetch it!"

"I'd like to see you do it!"

"We jolly soon will, then!"

And the Removites crowded over the border. Bob Cherry had made a rush at Castle, and the two juniors were struggling for the possession of the cricket-ball. Temple and Fry seized Bob Cherry and dragged him down into the grass.

"Frog's-march him back to his own side!" exclaimed Dabney.

"Good wheeze!"

"Let me alone!" roared Bob Cherry. "Rescue, Remove!"

"Ha, ha! If they come, we'll serve them the same!"

"Rescue, Remove!"

It was a cry that was never heard in vain by a member of the Greyfriars Remove. The Remove were a fighting form, and always especially ready for a row with the Upper Fourth.

"Come on!" shouted Harry Wharton.

And the Remove came on.

They swarmed over the Upper Fourth ground, some of the more thoughtful of them bringing bats and cricket stumps to aid in the tussle. The rush of the Remove sent the Upper Fourth reeling away, and Bob Cherry was quickly released and set upon his feet.

"Now wipe up the ground with them while we're here," exclaimed Nugent.

"Hurrah! Let the wipefulness be terrific!" exclaimed Hurree Singh. "Give it to them sockfully, my worthy chums!"

And the Remove waded in with a vengeance.

Temple, Dabney & Co. put up a good fight, but they were outnumbered, and they were driven back right across their pitch to the boundary.

"Look out for Castle!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "He's got the ball!"

"Collar Castle!" shouted Harry Wharton.

Hurree Singh, who was nearest the purloiner of the ball, made a dash at him. Castle, seeing defeat certain, had determined to save the ball at least, and he was cutting off with it at full speed.

Temple put out his foot, and the Nabob of Bhanipur went rolling over in the grass, and Castle dashed on.

"Hook it, Castle!" yelled Temple.

"Save the ball!" yelled Dabney.

"What-ho!" shouted back Castle.

"After him!"

"The cad's taking our ball away!"

"Collar him!"

Harry Wharton broke into a desperate dash after the Upper Fourth fellow, who was running like a deer. Wharton put on a spurt, and gained on the fugitive inch by inch. Castle would certainly have been captured, but in the nick of time Billy Bunter came blundering in Harry's way. The short-sighted Removite did not observe the chase, and he crossed the course at the unluckiest moment.

"You ass—clear—ow—" gasped Harry.

He ran right into Billy Bunter, and they rolled on the ground together. Castle, with a breathless crow of triumph, disappeared into the School House with the Remove ball still safe in his possession. Harry Wharton staggered to his feet, looking and feeling rather dazed. Billy Bunter still lay on his back, gasping like a newly-landed fish. He sat up and adjusted his spectacles.

"What do you mean by running into me like that, Bulstrode?" he exclaimed.

"You ass, I'm not Bulstrode! Why couldn't you see where you were going?"

"Oh, is it you, Wharton? Now, you know I'm short-sighted, and you really ought to be more careful. By the way, I want to speak to you. Can you lend me two pounds until my postal-order comes— Why, he's gone!"

Harry Wharton had not waited for any more. He rejoined his chums. They had beaten the Upper Fourth hollow in the scrimmage, but the ball was lost.

"Never mind," said Bob Cherry. "We shall get it back—and it was a jolly row, anyway, and we made the Upper Fourth run. Let's get back to practice."

THE THIRD CHAPTER. In Deadly Earnest.

THERE was an unusually serious shade upon Billy Bunter's face when the chums of the Remove came in to tea. It usually fell to Bunter to get tea in the study, because he never went in for athletic games, and, as Bob Cherry said, a fellow had to do something or he would get rusty. Besides, Bunter was a good cook, and in spite of his short sight, he was a keen bargainer in the school shop, and always obtained the best possible quality for the lowest possible price, as he described it himself. Moreover, Billy contributed little or nothing to the study

funds, while he had by far the largest appetite of the five, and so it was only fair that he should put in most of the work. Billy did not grumble; he liked it. But new ideas were working in Bunter's mind about this time.

He had a really fine tea prepared for the hungry cricketers when they came in. He saw them from the window, and made the tea just in time. The fragrant aroma of best Touchong greeted the famous four as they came into the study, and Bob Cherry sniffed appreciatively. Nugent looked at the well-spread table, and slapped Billy Bunter cordially on the shoulder.

"Jolly good, Billy!" he remarked. "I suppose this means a fresh score chalked up against some of us in the shop, but—"

"Well, you see," said Billy Bunter, blinking at him over the teapot, "my postal-order hasn't come yet. I wanted to stand treat myself, but it was no good asking for credit in my own name. Nobody seems to want to give me credit!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"That's rather remarkable, when you come to think of it, Billy," he observed. "I should think shopkeepers would rush to get a customer like you. You would make them all rich when your postal-order came. I say, pour out the tea, kiddy!"

"Certainly, Cherry—"

"Look out!" yelled Nugent, as Billy Bunter whisked the teapot round and sent a spurt of the hot fluid over his legs. Bunter blinked at him.

"What's the matter, Nugent?"

"Ass! Villain! You've scalded me!"

"I'm sincerely sorry, Nugent!" said Bunter, whisking the teapot away and sending a spurt over Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "I can't see very well, you know. It's my short sight. I— Is anything the matter with you, Hurree Singh?"

"Oh!" groaned the Nabob of Bhanipur, hopping on one leg and cursing the other in both hands. "The scaldfulness is terrific!"

"Have I scalded you, too? I'm sincerely sorry. It's due to my short sight. I find it a great affliction."

"So do others, I should imagine!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, grinning. "Keep off with that teapot, you ass! You're too dangerous at close quarters."

"You needn't get up, Cherry. I will try not to scald you—"

"You—you—" Bob Cherry squirmed out of the way. "You'll try, will you? And suppose you don't succeed?"

"Accidents will happen—"

"An accident will happen to you if you spill any hot tea over me!" growled Bob Cherry. "That's a fair warning!"

"I'm sincerely sorry that I've scalded anybody," said Bunter. "I shall have to put some more water in the pot now. Hand me the kettle, will you, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton laughed as he picked up the kettle.

"I'll put it in myself," he said. "You're not safe with a boiling kettle!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Here you are!"

The teapot was replenished, and the chums of the Remove sat down to tea. Hurree Singh ruefully rubbed his leg. It wasn't a bad scald, but it was painful for the time. Billy Bunter adjusted his enormous spectacles and beamed at the chums over the tea-table.

"Have you all got what you want?" he asked. "I've taken a lot of trouble with this feed, because I want you to have a good time."

"Oh, I'm happy!" said Bob Cherry. "I've no fault to find with this veal-and-ham pie, Billy. I commend your taste."

"And these sardines are all right," Nugent remarked. "I'll trouble somebody for the pepper, please."

"I like this tongue," said Harry Wharton. "Billy, you are a shopper in a thousand. Did you get this at the school shop?"

"Yes, rather!" said the gratified Billy.

"Good! You shall always do our shopping."

"Thank you, Wharton, but—"

"These bananas are niceful," Hurree Singh remarked. "The nicefulness of the bananas is only equalled by the jolly goodness of the esteemed Bunter in preparing the feed for his chumful friends."

"I'm glad you like them, Hurree Jampot—"

"Jamset, my respectable chum. Jamset, if you will have the gracious kindness!" purred the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"My mis-ake. I say, chaps, if you've all got what you want, I want to speak to you—"

"We've all got what we want," said Bob Cherry. "But don't give us anything we don't want, there's a good chap!"

"It's rather an important matter."

"I hope you're well, Billy!" said Harry Wharton, looking

at him across the table. "I remember you told me a while ago that you were going to take physic—"

"Not physic, Wharton—"

"Yes, I'm certain you said physic—"

"Not at all. I'm going to take up physical culture—"

"Oh, I see!"

"I have been studying Professor Kramm's book on the subject," Bunter explained. "He describes all the symptoms of a chap who is in want of physical culture, and most of the symptoms tally exactly with mine."

"I expect they're worked out to fit anybody."

"Still, you must admit that physical culture is a jolly good thing for anybody to take up," said Billy persuasively.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Wharton heartily. "If you want to take exercise, Billy, we'll all back you up. We should like to see you improve."

"Right-ho!" said Bob Cherry. "You are a lazy, unhealthy little worm, and good physical exercises would do you a lot of good."

"Quite right," assented Nugent. "Bunter wants shaking up out of the lethargic state he has fallen into through laziness and over-feeding—"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"The shakefulness is greatly required," said Hurree Singh. "Perhaps the lickfulness with a cricket-stump would be goodfully beneficial to the esteemed Bunter. If he wishes try the experiment, I should be happy to bestow the required lickfulness."

"Oh, no, not at all!" exclaimed Billy hastily. "Don't be an ass, you know! I'm going to take up physical culture—punching-balls, and dumb-bells, and that sort of thing, you know. Professor Kramm says that it makes a new man of you."

"You're not a man at all yet," Bob Cherry remarked. "Still, if it makes a new donkey of you, I suppose that's something."

"It's a good idea," said Wharton. "As a matter of fact, I'm going in for a punching-ball, and we can have it rigged up in the study here, and you can use it, Billy, as much as you like."

"Thank you, Wharton, that's really kind of you!" said Bunter. "It will save me the expense of a punching-ball. Though, really, Professor Kramm specially recommends his own punching-ball as being the most suitable—"

"Rats!"

"But I shall require dumb-bells, too, and Indian clubs," said Billy Bunter. "I shall want some more things, too—"

"You can borrow the clubs from the gym."

"Yes, I suppose so—"

"If Bunter is going to monkey around with Indian clubs, he's got to do it in the gym!" exclaimed Nugent emphatically. "He'll be braining some of us."

"That's so!"

"I don't want to take my physical culture too much in public," Bunter observed. "The fellows think I shall never make an athlete—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Curious!"

"And I don't want to be laughed at by silly asses—"

"Why, what do you mean, you young—"

"So I shall prefer the study," explained Bunter. "As for the Indian clubs, I might exercise with them in the class-room after lessons. But the dumb-bells—"

"Well, you can use the dumb-bells here when we're out."

"Yes; but—"

"Hang it! You don't particularly want to brain anybody, do you?"

"Oh, no, Nugent, not at all! I should be sincerely sorry to brain anybody; but before I can use the dumb-bells, you know, I have to purchase them."

"Well, purchase them, then."

"Yes, that's a good idea; but my postal-order hasn't arrived."

"Oh, I see! Same old game!"

"You see, I'm stony," explained Billy Bunter. "I could wait till my postal order came, but I'd rather commence physical culture at once."

"Well, if it's going to make a new man of you—"

"Yes, that's what Professor Kramm says."

"While waiting for the postal-order would make an old man of you."

"Oh, don't be so funny, Nugent! It's pretty certain to come to-morrow morning by the first post, but in case it doesn't—"

"Yes, of course, it might not!"

"I want you fellows to lend me two pounds for a few days."

"Why don't you say two hundred?" asked Bob Cherry, with gentle sarcasm. "I'd like to know the kid in the Remove who has two pounds to lend."

"I could stump up half-a-crown," said Nugent thoughtfully. "Do you think you could get a complete athletic outfit for half-a-crown, Bunter?"

"I say, Nugent—"

"I could make it three bob," Harry Wharton remarked.

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"But that's just about as much good. But, as a matter of fact, Billy, there's no need to take Professor Kramm's advice too literally."

"But it says in the book—"

"Never mind what it says in the book. There are lots of silly things in books. Professor Kramm can go on kramming. You can use my punching-ball, and borrow Indian clubs from the gym, and as for dumb-bells—"

"You see, I want a pair that can be increased in weight as I increase in strength," explained Bunter. "I expect to get awfully strong by physical culture. Physical culture will do wonders even for the weakest persons. It says in the book—"

"Blow the book!"

"It's a jolly good book, Cherry, and tells you how Professor Kramm himself used to be awfully weak, and became as strong as Hercules, or Samson, or somebody—I forget whom—all through using his own system of physical culture, and the things he has to sell. No others are half as good for the purpose."

"Ha, ha! I believe you will be the death of me yet, Billy!"

"I can't see anything to cackle at. But about those dumb-bells?"

"I wish you were like the bells, Bunt!"

"How?"

"Dumb, you know."

"Oh, really, Cherry! You won't let me finish! I want a pair about sixteen pounds' weight, increasing up to thirty by putting shot into them, you know."

"Better have 'em fifty, increasing up to half a ton."

"I wish you'd be serious, Cherry."

"How long do you think it will be before you can lift thirty-pound dumb-bells?" Bob Cherry demanded.

"Upon Professor Kramm's system, I ought to be able to handle them in about a week. It says in the book—"

"Rats! You'd better get a pair of four or five-pound dumb-bells, and stick to them."

"Really, Cherry—"

"Come, Billy," said Wharton kindly, "you'll bust something if you start too suddenly, you know. Have something light to start with."

"Well, perhaps I will; but—"

"I've an old pair of dumb-bells that will just about suit you," said Nugent. "I'll lend them to you with pleasure."

"Thank you, Nugent; but I want the ones I was speaking of, too, ready for when I'm stronger."

"He won't be happy till he gets them!" grinned Wharton. "Have them, by all means, Billy, and sleep with 'em under your pillow."

"But they cost a guinea."

"Never mind, it's all for the good of the cause."

"But I haven't the guinea. I've only fourpence at present," said Bunter. "I can do without the other things, at present, at any rate, if I can get the dumb-bells."

"Who says they cost a guinea?"

"That's the price of Professor Kramm's."

"You can get them quite good enough for fifteen bob."

"But it says in the book—"

"Look here, Billy, if you mention that book again, I'll—I'll make you eat it! You are not going to buy a guinea on a pair of Kramm's dumb-bells. You are going to get them for fifteen bob."

"Well, I don't mind, Wharton. Thank you so much for offering to lend me fifteen bob."

"My dear chap, you're under a slight misapprehension. I haven't offered to do anything of the kind."

"But you said—"

"Really, Billy, I'd lend it to you with pleasure, but I haven't it. I may be able to manage it in a week or two."

"I want to start my physical culture at once."

"If you will extend to me the permissiveness, I will make the loanful gift of the respectable fifteen shillings," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"You're a really good sort, Hurree Singh, and I'm awfully obliged," said Billy Bunter. "If you've got it about you—"

"The goodful cash is in my pocket at the presentful moment, my worthy chum."

"Thank you, Hurree Singh!"

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, who was usually rolling in money, so to speak, was flush of cash on the present occasion. He extracted half-a-sovereign and five shillings from his waistcoat-pocket, and laid them on the table.

Billy Bunter's eyes glistened.

"I say, Hurree Singh, that's jolly good of you, you know."

"Not at all, my respectable friend."

"Of course, I shall repay you this little loan when my postal-order comes," said Bunter, pocketing the coins.

The nabob grinned.

"Do not trouble your brainful mind about the payfulness,

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my respectable chum," he exclaimed. "That is an un-momentful matter."

Billy Bunter shook his head.

"I'm afraid I can't accept the loan on those terms, Hurree Singh," he said, without, however, making any movement to reproduce the money from his pocket. "I could not possibly sponge on you, you know. Unless you regard it as a loan, to be repaid the moment my postal-order comes, I can't accept the fifteen bob."

"I consider it regardfully as a loanful sum," the nabob assured him. "As your famous poet Shakespeare says, What's in a nameful designation? A rose by any other name would be more in heaven and earth than your philosophy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Is that Shakespeare, Hurree Singh?"

"Certainly, my uproarious and ludicrous chum. It is in the great poet Shakespeare's works, which I studied under my esteemed native instructor in Bengal, before I had the honourable happiness to visit these shores of Albion."

"Well, I rather think your esteemed native instructor was an esteemed ass. You've got it fearfully mixed."

Hurree Singh shook his head gently. He was the best-tempered and most placable junior at Greyfriars, but he could be firm. And he was always especially firm upon his knowledge of the English language and the works of the British poets.

"I think you are slightly mistaken, my esteemed Cherry," he remarked. "That is how I learned it under my respectable native instructor. I have noticed that many English people have not the deepful and thoroughpacing knowledge of the famous and justly-esteemed Shakespeare. I have studied his works in Bengal, from the Tradesman of Venice to Dreamful Summer Midnight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I also studied the poetical works of the esteemed Milton, and learned by heart a large quantity of his great poem, 'Paradise Misaid.'"

"Ha, ha, ha! Don't!"

"And then the renowned poems of your great Herbert Spencer."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The Faerie Queen and the Coster's Serenade."

"Ha, ha, ha! Jampot, old man, your esteemed instructor in Bengal ought to have been presented with a tin medal and a prize thick ear."

"I think I will go down to the village and see about ordering those dumb-bells," Billy Bunter remarked. "Oh, there's one thing more I wanted to say."

"Say it quick, then, and cut it short."

"That's rather rude, Cherry."

"Rats! Cut it short!"

"Well, as I am going to devote a large amount of time to physical culture, and I don't want to risk overworking myself, I am afraid I sha'n't be able to get tea in the study any more," said Billy Bunter. "I'm sincerely sorry for this."

"Oh, Billy, we shall miss you!"

"Yes, I dare say you will; but it will be a compensation when I bring great credit on the college by my feats of strength."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"I know you won't mind," said Bunter. "You can take it in turns to get the tea, you know, and you can always depend upon me to have tea with you."

"Oh, you needn't bother!" said Nugent, in his blandest tone. "So long as you're going in for physical culture, we'll have tea in the hall."

Bunter looked rather blank.

"But I greatly prefer to have tea with you in the study, you know!" he exclaimed. "The tea in the hall is rather rotten."

"Oh, chaps can take in what they like!"

"Yes; but until my postal-order comes, I am stony."

"That's rather hard on you, isn't it, Billy?"

"Yes, it really is, Nugent. I'd much rather you kept on having tea in the study."

"Ha, ha! I dare say you would! But there's an ancient saying, Bunter: he that will not work, neither shall he eat."

"Oh, I say, Nugent!"

"Tea in the hall, chaps," said Nugent. "This is our last feed here, so long as Bunter is ambitious of becoming a strong, strong man."

"Upon second thoughts, Nugent, I think I shall be able to find time to get tea as usual," said Bunter thoughtfully.

"Oh, don't bother!"

"But, really—"

"We should like to have our tea in the hall with the Form for a change, and it would come cheaper, too!"

"Yes; but—"

"We'll try it, anyway."

"Good exclaimed Bob Cherry heartily. "We mustn't take up any of Bunter's time now that he's going in for

athletics. Besides, he will have to give up eating cream puffs and tarts and things."

"I say, you fellows—"

"It's all settled, Bunter. We have tea in the hall—"

"No, you don't. You'll have it here as usual, and I shall get it," said Billy Bunter. "You'll have to pay for the things, so you may as well come and eat them. I shall have lots of time, when I come to think of it."

"Well, if you insist, Bunter, you shall have your way."

And that important point having been settled, Billy Bunter went off to order his dumb-bells.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Billy Tackles the Punching Ball.

BILLY BUNTER had never been exactly a leading personage in the Greyfriars Remove. But just now he was certainly going strong.

He had taken up physical culture in deadly earnest, and though most of the fellows took it as a joke, that did not worry Billy Bunter.

Nearly all the Remove took a friendly interest in the matter, in the hope of extracting some fun from it, and Billy Bunter found himself famous.

It was Bunter's "boom," as Bob Cherry expressed it, and Billy was going ahead.

There was no doubt that physical culture would do Billy good, as he was, in point of fact, rather inclined to over-eating and laziness. The chums of the Remove watched his progress with great interest.

Harry Wharton's punching-ball had been put up in the study. Billy Bunter punched away at it valiantly time and time again. If he sometimes received a biff on the nose, that did not discourage him. He had to take his spectacles off usually for the exercise, in case the rebounding ball should break them. As he was nearly sightless without his glasses, his antics round the punching-ball were decidedly comical as a rule.

"I'm getting on finely, Wharton," he remarked to Harry, as the Remove came out of their class-room the next day. "You can see the improvement, can't you?"

Harry glanced at him.

Billy's face looked perhaps a trifle less fat and puffy than usual, so Harry gave him an encouraging nod.

"Yes, I fancy you look a bit different, Billy."

"I haven't got the dumb-bells yet," Billy observed. "It's the punching-ball does it. I'm going to go and have a go—"

"You're what?" broke in Bob Cherry. "That sounds to me the merest trifle mixed."

"I'm going to go and have a go at the punching-ball now," repeated Billy Bunter. "Professor Kramm says in his book that there's science in a thing like that, you know. There's a way to punch the ball, and a way not to punch it. You have to be in the know, you know. I think I am getting on to the thing now. If you'd like to see some really scientific ball-punching you can come along to the study."

The famous four grinned at one another.

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "That's really the one thing I've been looking forward to for a long time, seeing some really scientific ball-punching."

"The remark of my esteemed friend exactly expresses my sentiments," said Hurree Singh. "I have the yearning to behold the scientific punchfulness of the esteemed ball."

"Good!" said Nugent. "We'll come and watch you, Billy, and collect up the pieces."

"My hat!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "So will we—eh, Vaseline?"

"Right-ho!" said Hazeldene.

Some more of the Removites were also curious to see Billy Bunter physical culturing. Quite a little crowd went along to No. 1 Study, and Billy Bunter felt a glow of importance. He flattered himself that the introduction of really scientific and thorough-going physical culture into Greyfriars would mark a new era in the history of the Remove.

"I'm jolly glad to see all you chaps taking such an interest in the matter," he remarked. "It's a really important one, you know. Physical exercise clears the body of—of something or other, and clears the brain of—of something else, I forget exactly what, but it's very beneficial. It says so in the book."

And Billy marched into the study.

"Going to put on the gloves?" asked Bulstrode, following him in. "You might hurt the ball, you know. You must be careful before you put forth your terrific strength."

Billy Bunter deigned no reply.

"Will you hook up the ball, Wharton?" he said, as he began to peel his tight little Eton jacket off. Billy Bunter's jackets were always tight for him, or he was tight for the jackets, whichever it might be.

"Certainly," said Harry.

He soon had the punching-ball taut on its straps between the hooks. Billy Bunter rubbed his fat little hands together. "Now, stand back, Wharton, will you?"

"Right-ho!"

The four chums got at a safe distance from Billy Bunter. It was necessary to be careful when Bunter took off his glasses and began hitting out. Bulstrode was not so cautious. He stood quite near the ball, his hands in his pockets, and a grin on his face.

"Now look out for the show!" he remarked.

"This isn't exactly a show, Bulstrode," said Billy.

"This is really an exhibition of how to punch the ball scientifically——"

"Go hon! Let's see you do it!"

"Will you hold my glasses, Cherry?"

"That's right," said Bulstrode. "Take your blinkers off——"

"I'll hold them certainly," said Bob Cherry, taking the big glasses. "Shut up, Bulstrode! Now then, go ahead, Billy."

Billy walked up to the punching-ball.

Like most persons accustomed to the use of glasses, he was especially short-sighted the moment of taking them off, and, as a matter of fact, the study was in a fog round him, and he could hardly see the punching-ball at all.

But he knew it was there, and he did not like to hesitate with so many eyes upon him, all watching him with interest.

"Go it, Billy!"

"Punch the ball!"

"Wire in!"

"Certainly!" said Bunter. "Now watch me!"

"We're watching!"

"The watchfulness is very great, my worthy chum."

Billy put up his fists in a scientific manner, and let drive at the ball. The ball swayed away.

"You see," explained Billy, "you have to catch it as it comes back, and keep it going, like that——"

He hit the ball again, and then hit out again, and there was a terrific yell from Bulstrode. The next moment the ball swung back in Billy Bunter's face, and sent him flying. A yell of laughter shook the study.

Bunter sat up, and looked bewildered.

"How—how—how did that happen?" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hit the ball——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And yet it biffed me on the nose——"

"Ha, ha, ha! You didn't hit the ball that time!" roared Bob Cherry.

"What did I hit, then? I am sure I hit something!"

"Ha, ha, ha! It was Bulstrode's nose!"

"Bulstrode's nose! Dear me!"

"You young villain!" roared Bulstrode, clasping both hands to his nose. "You did that on purpose."

Billy Bunter staggered to his feet.

"I'm sincerely sorry, Bulstrode. I'm very sorry indeed that I hit your nose instead of the ball, as I have hurt my knuckles——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought it was very hard for the ball, and it was your face after all. It would be a funny thing, only I have hurt my knuckles——"

"What about my nose, you young maniac?"

"I'm sincerely sorry——"

"I'll make you sorrier!" howled Bulstrode, darting towards Bunter. Harry Wharton quietly stepped in the way.

"Hold on, Bulstrode! It was an accident——"

"Mind your own business!"

"You know how short-sighted Billy is, and what a blithering ass he is, anyway——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"I'm going to break his neck!" snarled Bulstrode. "Do you think I'm going to have a dangerous lunatic bashing my nose for nothing?"

"You shouldn't put your nose so near the punching-ball!"

"I'm sincerely sorry, Bulstrode," said Bunter. "If you're not satisfied, I will fight you in a few weeks time, when I have developed my strength——"

"Ha, ha! There's your chance, Bulstrode," said Nugent. "Now, keep the peace, or we shall have to sling you out of the study, and that will spoil the harmony of the meeting."

Bulstrode growled, and subsided. The four were ready to throw him out, and, after all, he knew it was an accident. So he growled, and stepped back.

"Now then, Billy, get on with the washing!" said Hazeldene encouragingly.

"I am about to proceed, Vaseline. I hope none of you will stand too near the punching-ball again——"

"Ha, ha, ha! I don't think that's likely."

"Better have your blinkers back, Billy."

"Thank you, Cherry."

"Here, get on with the washing!" exclaimed Russell. "We're waiting for the giddy entertainment, you know."

"The washfulness should proceed," murmured Hurreo Singh. "We are waiting with the terrific impatience for the washfulness."

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"I'm just going to begin."

"Oyez, oyez, oyez!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "He's just going to begin! Ladies and gentlemen, Billy Bunter is just going to begin——"

"Stand back, there! Not too close! He's dangerous!"

"Now then, watch me——"

"The watchfulness is great, my worthy comrade."

Billy Bunter squared up to the punching-ball again. Bulstrode was careful to keep out of reach this time.

Bang! bang! went Billy Bunter's fists.

"Good!"

"Bravo!"

Bunter was hitting out in fine style.

He caught the ball on the rebound each time, and kept it going at a fine rate till he got excited. Then the catastrophe came!

"Watch me!" gasped Billy Bunter. "Watch—— Ow!"

He was jumping at the ball, and hitting out wildly. He missed, and the ball sprang back and caught him fairly in the region vulgarly known as the bread-basket.

There was a fearful gasp from Billy as nearly every atom of wind was knocked out of his body by the concussion.

"Ow!"

The next moment he was lying on his back on the carpet, staring dizzily up at the ceiling of No. 1 Study.

The Removites yelled with laughter.

The ball swayed and swung, and settled, but Billy Bunter still lay gasping on the floor like a newly-landed fish.

"Ow! What the—how the——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nugent lent Bunter a hand to rise. Billy staggered up, puffing and blowing like a grampus.

"I—I—I feel rather winded!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha! No wonder!"

"It was hardly fair of the ball," said Hazeldene gravely. "It hit Bunter below the belt, you know. Go for it again, Billy!"

"N-no!" gasped Billy. "I think I'll give the thing a rest, you know. Physical culture is a jolly good thing, but it's no good over-doing it at the start."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better to take it slowly and steadily. It says so in the book——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it has been a rather jolly show," said Bulstrode, turning to the door. "Never mind that punch on the nose. I'll come and see you go for the ball again another time, Billy, but I'll get behind you when I do."

And the Removites left the study, laughing like hyenas. Billy Bunter rubbed himself tenderly in the place where the ball had given him that terrible punch.

"I feel rather hurt," he murmured. "I have lost all my wind. I really don't see anything comical in the incident myself."

But the Remove did, to judge by the way they laughed and chuckled over it.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bowls.

SCHOOL was over, and the April afternoon bright and dry and sunny. The chums of the Remove came out of the school-house in white flannels, with bats under their arms, and a ball—a new one—in Bob Cherry's hand. The lost ball had not yet been recaptured from the Upper Fourth.

Billy Bunter was standing in a thoughtful attitude under the big elm-tree near the doorway. He was leaning back against the trunk, his hands in his trousers pockets, and his chubby brow corrugated with the lines of thought. He look up at the sight of the Four, and came towards them.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo! Have you been staggering humanity with the punching-ball exercise again?" asked Nugent.

"Well, no, I'm letting that alone for a bit."

"The stingerfulness has been the esteemed Bunter's, so far," the Nabob of Bhanipur remarked. "I was quite tired with the extreme laughfulness of this afternoon."

"It wasn't really a laughing matter, Inky."

"You are in a minority of one on that point, Bunt," remarked Harry Wharton, laughing. "But what's on now? If you want to talk, come down to the ground with us."

"That's just what I want," said Bunter, trotting along by the side of the stalwart junior whom the Remove had selected for the Form cricket captain. "I have rather neglected athletics in more ways than one."

"To make the judgefulness by the appearance, that is extremely true," remarked Hurreo Singh. "You look what is called weediful."

"Oh, that's chiefly appearances, you know! I am a jolly strong chap, and you can't judge wholly by appearances."

"No, that is correctful. As your esteemed English proverb

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says, 'you cannot judge cigars by the picture on the honourable box.'"

"But as I was saying, I have neglected athletics in more ways than one, and I really think I ought to have devoted more attention to football," said Bunter. "It's too late for football now, so I am going to go in for cricket in dead earnest."

"My only turban! I shall be glad to see you taking up the cricketful exercises in the deadly earnestness, Bunter."

"So shall I," said Harry Wharton. "It's a good idea. Stick to it! Don't kill anybody with the ball if you can help it."

"Or brain anybody with the bat unless it's absolutely impossible to avoid it," said Bob Cherry solemnly.

"You see, the funeral expenses will come heavy," Nugent remarked. "Though if you play cricket a lot, I've no doubt you could get a reduction for quantities."

"Now, don't rot, you fellows," said Bunter reproachfully. "I should have thought you'd be glad to back a chap up in playing the game."

"So we are, Billy. Only——"

"The trouble is, where will the ball go when you start bowling?" said Bob Cherry. "If you brained a fieldsmen with it, he would get angry——"

"And if you killed a batsman, he would be annoyed."

"I don't see why I shouldn't try. I've played cricket before. They won't let me do it at home. Father says glass is too expensive. But there are no windows near the Remove pitch, and so——"

"There are some cricketers near it, though, and you know——"

"Then you won't help me?"

The chums of the Remove looked at one another in some perplexity. It was a laudable desire on any lad's part to want to become a good cricketer; in fact, it was only natural to suppose that there was something wrong with any lad who did not take to the grand old game.

But with the Owl's extreme short sight, and his general habit of doing the wrong thing in the wrong way at the wrong time, he was likely to be a dangerous bowler—not in the usual sense of that expression.

"I have bowled and batted before," said Billy Bunter.

"My idea is that I ought to practice hard, and then you can put me in the Remove eleven when the Form match comes off with the Upper Fourth."

The Removites grinned.

"Yes, I can see myself doing that," Harry Wharton remarked. "I'm afraid you'd be about the last recruit I should select for the Form eleven, Billy."

"I don't see why you shouldn't give me a chance."

"Well, you see——"

"Just you back me up a bit at practice, and I'll jolly soon show you what I can do. Why, Cherry was saying only the other day that cricket was what I wanted to make me buck up."

"Something in that. But——"

"Well, if you won't give me a trial——"

"Oh, we'll give you a trial!" said Wharton resignedly.

"Come on, Billy! You can bat if you like."

"Well, as a matter of fact, Wharton, I rather fancy myself at bowling. I think I'll bowl first. If you can keep up your wicket against me——"

"I think perhaps I can manage it, with a tremendous effort, of course. Here we are. Give him the ball, Cherry."

Bob Cherry grinned, and tossed the ball to Billy Bunter.

"Catch!"

Bunter tried to catch and missed, and the ball plumped on Nugent's shoulder. Nugent gave a jump.

"Who the—what did you chuck that ball at me for, you ass?"

"I threw it to Bunter, but the silly butterfingers missed it," said Bob Cherry, in disgust. "Pick it up, Bunt!"

"I can't exactly see it."

"There it is under your nose, close to your hoof!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Dear me, so it is! Shall I bowl now, Wharton?"

"Yes, if you like."

"If you'd really rather I didn't——"

"Oh, go on and bowl!"

"Certainly, to oblige you, Wharton."

And Billy Bunter toddled down the pitch. There were several other wickets up along the nets, and there was a general glare of the Removites on the ground as Billy Bunter took up his position to bowl.

"Here, what are you up to?" roared Herring, of the Remove. "What is that Owl going to do with that ball?"

"I am going to bowl to Wharton, Herring," said Bunter.

"You young villain! You'll brain somebody! Here, get out of the way, chaps, before he chucks it!"

"There is no danger, Herring, I assure you."

"Isn't there? Wharton, what do you mean by letting him have the ball? You ought to know better. Why——"

"You will put me off my bowling if you go on calling out like that, Herring."

Billy Bunter clutched the ball hard, and took a little run, and turned himself into a kind of catherine-wheel, and the ball flew from his hand. His spectacles fell off, and he made a clutch at them and sat down in the grass. But where was the ball?

Harry Wharton did not know; it came nowhere near his wicket. A sudden yell from the distance announced where it was. Every eye turned in the direction of the yell. Carberry of the Sixth had been passing at least a dozen yards away, arrayed in a resplendent silk hat to go down to the village. Alas for the silk hat! The ball had taken it in the side, and it had been carried fairly off the Sixth Former's head.

Carberry stared at his damaged hat and the cricket-ball that had fallen beside it. Then he glared round in search of the culprit. Carberry was the worst-tempered prefect at Greyfriars, and all who witnessed the incident looked for trouble.

"Who threw that ball?" yelled Carberry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I threw it, Wingate," said Billy Bunter, getting up and adjusting his spectacles. "Oh, it isn't Wingate, it's Baker; is it Baker or Carberry?"

"You threw it, you young scoundrel!"

"Yes. Will you kindly return it to me, Carberry?"

"I'll break your confounded neck!" yelled Carberry, making a rush across the field at the junior.

"Really, Carberry, I hope the ball did not strike you."

"It has busted my hat!"

"I'm sincerely sorry!" gasped Billy Bunter, dodging.

"Please don't be angry, Carberry. As you know, it was due to my extremely short sight, and I'm sincerely sorry."

Bunter dodged along the pitch, and got behind Harry Wharton. The young captain of the Remove stood in the Sixth Former's way.

"Hold on, Carberry," he said quietly.

"Get out of my way, Wharton!"

"You can let Bunter alone——"

"He has busted my hat!"

"It was an accident."

"I don't care whether it was an accident or not. I'm going to give him the thrashing of his life for doing it."

"Some of us will pay for the hat, if that's what bothers you," said Harry Wharton scornfully. "You are not going to bully Bunter."

"Will you stand out of the way?"

"Don't stand out of the way, Wharton," whimpered Bunter. "Carberry looks angry, and I am sure he is going to be very rough."

"I won't!"

"Then I'll give you the hiding instead of Bunter!" roared the bully of the Sixth.

"Perhaps that would be better, Wharton, if you don't mind; you can stand it much better than I can," murmured Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton lifted his bat.

"You won't touch me, Carberry," he said quietly.

The Sixth Former glared at him.

"Do you mean to say you would use that bat?"

"Yes, I do! If you lay a finger on me I'll knock you flying, prefect or no prefect!" said Harry Wharton, between his teeth.

It was something of Harry Wharton's old nature peeping out now; the old hard look was coming back to his face.



"I-I c-can't lift them," stammered Billy Bunter. "I don't know what's the matter with them. They seem to be heavier than they were yesterday."

And he meant what he said. If Carberry had touched him then, the prefect would have been sent flying with the cricket-bat.

And Carberry knew it, and he weakened. Like most bullies, he was not brave. Besides, the Removites were gathering round. The Remove, as the seniors at Greyfriars often complained, were as thick as thieves when it came to quarrelling with anybody outside the Form; though among themselves they fought without end.

"Oh, cut it, Carberry!" said Trevor, ostentatiously displaying the sharp end of a cricket-stump. "You're interrupting the practice."

"Well, if Bunter says it was an accident——" said Carberry, climbing down.

"I give you my word, honour bright!" said Billy. "You see, I'm a little short-sighted."

"You confounded, blind owl! Why, you bowled at right angles with the pitch!" exclaimed Carberry.

"Did I? I'm sincerely sorry."

"If you choose to pay for the hat, Wharton, as you said, I'll say no more about the matter," said Carberry. "It's sixteen-and-six. You can bring the tin to my study."

And the prefect walked away.

"Mean beast!" said Bob Cherry. "Fancy letting us pay for his old topper!"

"Mean enough!" agreed Nugent. "Still, it's no joke to have one's topper bashed in by a dangerous lunatic with a cricket-ball."

"Oh, I say, Nugent!"

"I know jolly well for a fact that he only gives twelve-and-six for a topper," said Herring. "You can rely on that, Wharton."

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, he can have the sixteen-and-six if he likes!" he said. "I can get the money. I'm not going to haggle with him."

"Well, you're an ass, then!"

"I say, where's the ball, though?" said Billy Bunter. "I'd like to get on with my bowling, if you fellows are ready."

"I'm afraid we shall never be ready, then," said Harry, laughing. "Your first ball has cost sixteen-and-six, and if you keep on you'd want a millionaire to stand it. You have done bowling, Buntv."

"Well, that's rather hard, Wharton."

"You see, expense is an object."

"But, really, I don't suppose I should bash anybody with the next ball."

"Ha, ha!" howled Bob Cherry. "He doesn't suppose! My hat! He isn't sure, but he doesn't suppose! Billy, my son, you're too funny to live!"

"Well, I think this is rather mean of you, not letting me have any cricket practice," said Billy, shaking his head. "Cricket is an important branch of physical culture."

"Oh, you can have the bat for a bit if you like," said Harry Wharton resignedly.

and——

"Thank you, Wharton. Will you bowl?"

"Oh, I'll bowl!" said Harry, taking the ball and going down the pitch. And Billy Bunter plumped the bat upon the crease and stood ready.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter as a Batsman.

"ARE you ready?"

"Did you call me, Wharton?"

"Yes, ass! I said, are you ready?"

"Yes, I think so. No, wait a minute; I haven't any pads on."

"Oh, get them on, then, and do look sharp!"

"As a matter of fact, I haven't any. If you will lend me yours, Nugent—"

"Oh, certainly!" said Nugent. "They won't fit those skinny pipe-stems you call legs, but you can strap them in. Put them on him, Cherry."

"Certainly, I'll lend a hand."

"Don't be so rough, you fellows!"

"Buck up!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Don't hurry them, Wharton, please; they are shaking me very much, and—"

"There you are, Billy!"

"Thank you! I feel quite breathless, and the pads don't seem quite comfortable. Still, I dare say they are all right."

"Of course they are. Go on and bat."

"I am quite ready to do so, only—"

"Are you ready?" called out Wharton.

"Oh, yes, quite. No, wait just a minute, I haven't any batting-gloves."

"Lend him some batting-gloves, somebody, for goodness' sake!"

"Here you are!" said Bob Cherry.

"I'm afraid they're much too big, Cherry; they won't fit me."

"Try mine, my esteemed friend," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I think they will give you a fit."

"I'll give him a fit if he doesn't buck up," said Wharton.

"It will be dark soon, and our practice will be spoilt."

"Thank you, Hurree Singh. I think they will be all right."

"If you would exercise the greater quickfulness, Bunter—"

"It's bad for the health to be in a hurry over anything," said Billy Bunter, shaking his head. "I can tell you what Professor Kramm says on that subject. It's very interesting and instructive. It says in the book—"

"Are you ready?" roared Wharton.

"Quite ready, Wharton. I was just saying to Hurree Jampot—"

"I am going to bowl."

"I am practically ready. Wait a moment! Now, then."

Billy Bunter plumped his bat down on the crease again, and stood looking towards the bowler with nervous watchfulness.

"Mind, you chuck batting as soon as you're out!" said Nugent. "We can't have this rot hanging about all the time. It is serious for us to miss practice."

"It is necessary for me to become a good cricketer, Nugent, if I am to take my place in the Form eleven."

"Oh, cheese it! Play!"

Harry Wharton bowled, carelessly enough. It was as easy to hit Billy Bunter's wicket as to hit the side of a house, as a matter of fact.

Bunter swiped at the ball, and his bat described a circle in the air, and he nearly lost his footing. The willow struck nothing but air, and while it was still swinging there was a crash of a falling wicket.

"Out!" yelled Nugent.

Billy Bunter recovered himself, and stared at the wrecked wicket.

"Did anybody see where the ball went?" he asked.

"You ass! Can't you see your wicket's down?"

"Bless me, so it is! Did the ball do that?"

"Did the ball do it!" howled Nugent. "I should say it did."

"Throw the ball back to Wharton, will you?"

"But you're out!"

"Out! What do you mean?"

"You're out!" shrieked Nugent. "Can't you see your wicket's in little pieces? Ass! You're out! OUT!"

"The outfulness is perfectly plain," said Hurree Jampot Ram Singh. "If there were an umpirical person on the spot, he would declare that the batting sahib was perfectly out."

"Well, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "Travel along, Billy."

Bunter did not move from the wicket.

"I say, you fellows, you ought to know more about cricket than that," he said, in a tone of mild remonstrance.

"Eh? What are you getting at?"

"Well, you ought to know that a batsman can't be out to a trial ball."

"Trial ball! Trial be sugared!"

"There was no trialfulness about that ball," said the nabob. "The outfulness is complete, my ludicrous friend."

"Of course it was a trial ball!" said Bunter obstinately.

"Wasn't it a trial ball, now, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Oh, call it a trial if you like!" he said. "Chuck us the ball, Nugent, and I'll give him another hop."

"Don't bowl too quickly, or perhaps I sha'n't see the ball. I never saw it at all that time," said Bunter, in an aggrieved tone.

"Ha, ha! Shall I send you a slow?"

"Not too slow, or I may miss it, you know."

"I'll give you a medium—"

"Well, not too medium," began the anxious batsman.

"Ha, ha, ha! Look out, it's coming!"

Harry gave the batsman the easiest ball he could. Bunter made another swipe, and by some curious chance the bat struck the ball, and sent it flying. Bob Cherry's right hand came out of his pocket and went into the air, there was a faint click, and the ball was caught.

"How's that?" exclaimed Bob.

"Out!"

"Where's that ball?" asked Billy Bunter, looking round.

"Here it is," said Bob Cherry, thrusting it under his nose. "Look at it! This is it! You're caught out."

"Did you catch the ball?"

"Yes," roared Bob Cherry.

"Well, I must say I think that was rather inconsiderate of you, Cherry, when it would very likely have been a boundary."

"Oh, kill him, somebody!"

"Throw the ball back to Wharton, will you?"

"But you're out!"

"Now, don't be an ass, Cherry. This isn't a regular game, of course, and so fielding doesn't count."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "He won't give up that bat till somebody takes it and brains him with it."

"I say, you fellows, play the game, you know."

"Oh, chuck the ball over again!" said Harry Wharton.

"Mind, Billy, if your wicket goes this time, you go too."

"I don't think you'll get my wicket so easily," said Billy Bunter, swinging round his bat. "Hallo, what's that? The wicket seems to be down."

"Ass! You've just knocked it down with your bat."

"Have I, really?"

"Yes, you have, really, and that's out."

"Oh, nothing of the sort! That doesn't count, of course."

"It seems to me that there is to be no countfulness in this affair, my worthy chums," purred Hurree Singh.

"Play!" said Nugent.

Harry Wharton bowled again.

There was a clatter, as the bails went down, and two stumps assumed strange angles in the ground.

"How's that?" laughed Harry.

"Out!"

"Does that count?" asked Bob Cherry sarcastically.

"Well, I'd rather have it over again," said Bunter doubtfully.

"Ha, ha!" Nugent gently extracted the bat from his reluctant hand. "Bunty, old man, it's time for you to take a run."

"But I can't take runs unless I hit the ball."

"I don't mean that sort of a run. Take a run towards the Cloisters; don't look back, but keep straight on."

"Oh, I say, Nugent!"

"Anyway, get off the grass. You are giving us a tired feeling, and we've got to practise. Your chances of getting into the Form eleven this week are very small, so there's no hurry for you to study the game. Travel, dear boy."

And Billy Bunter reluctantly travelled.

The chums of the Remove settled down to half an hour's vigorous practice, while the Owl strolled off the field rather disconsolately. He was startled out of a brown study by a shake of the shoulder, and looked up to see Hazeldene.

"Hallo, Vaseline! Don't shake me like that, you might make my spectacles fall off; and if you were to break them I should expect you to pay for them, and you are such a rotter you very likely wouldn't, and—"

"Don't you ever have to take breath, Billy?" asked Hazeldene.

"Well, I was only making a remark."

"A jolly long one. But, I say, I hear you've been taking up cricket, and staggering humanity with your batting and bowling."

"Well, I don't know about that," said Bunter modestly.

"I'm taking up the game, and I think I'm getting on pretty well, but there's a lot of jealousy about a fellow getting into the Form eleven."

Hazeldene chuckled.

"You see, Wharton and his friends have the matter really in their hands, and they're not likely to let me in," said Billy Bunter. "I'm sorry, because, you see, I know I am cut out for a jolly good batsman, and I want the Remove to beat the Upper Fourth, and so I should like to be in the eleven. But—"

"I see. By the way, I hear you're flush of tin lately."

"Oh, no. I've only got sixpence."

"But you've just ordered an expensive pair of dumb-bells."

"Oh, no; only fifteen shillings."

"When are you going to have them?"

"To-morrow afternoon."

"Have you got the tin to pay for them?"

"Oh, yes. Hurree Singh lent me the fifteen bob."

"Then you've got it about you?"

"Yes, it's in my pocket," said Bunter unsuspiciously.

"Would you mind lending me ten shillings till to-morrow, Bunter? I want it particularly, and, of course, it's all the same to you so long as you have it back by the afternoon."

Bunter looked extremely dubious.

"Ye-es, I suppose so," he said.

"You see, I should be sure to pay you then, so it would be all right. I really only require the ten bob as a—matter of form. It will be a real convenience to me, and I should be ever so much obliged."

"You're sure you'll let me have it back after dinner to-morrow?"

"Absolutely certain."

"Well, here you are, then," said the simple Billy, handing over the half-sovereign Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had given him. "I rely upon you, you know."

For a moment Hazeldene hesitated. He was not a conscientious boy, but even to him there seemed something unusually mean in taking advantage of Bunter's simplicity. But it was only for a moment.

Then he took the little golden coin, and slipped it into his waistcoat-pocket, and, with a muttered word of thanks, turned away.

Bunter looked after him, rather uneasily. He was the most unsuspicious of juniors, but he knew Hazeldene. But it was too late now. Hazeldene had gone straight down to the gates, almost at a run, as if fearful that Billy would change his mind. And Bunter, simple as he was, felt an uneasy foreboding that he had looked his last upon the half-sovereign.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Parcel for Bunter.

PARCEL for Master Bunter!

It was Gosling, the school porter, who spoke, as he opened the door of Study No. 1, Remove. He had a parcel on his shoulder, and from the way he carried it it was evident that it weighed a great deal, although not of large bulk.

Bunter looked up from the tea-table. The chums of the Remove were in the study at tea. It was twenty-four hours after Billy's attempt to become a great bowler and batsman. Bunter had been anxiously expecting the arrival of his dumb-bells; all the more anxiously because Hazeldene had as yet made no sign of repaying the ten shillings.

"Hallo! That's for you, Billy," said Harry Wharton.

"What on earth is it?" asked Bob Cherry. "Gosling looks as if he were performing the champion weight-lifting act."

The porter set the parcel down on the floor with a bump and a grunt—the bump from the parcel, and the grunt from himself.

"Which it is heavy," he said.

"Thank you very much, Gosling!" said Bunter. "I should reward you with threepence, but I am, unfortunately, out of money, owing to the delay in the arrival of a postal-order I have been expecting for some time."

The porter made a sarcastic grimace.

"Oh, of course. You are always so liberal, sir."

"I am extremely sorry—"

"The porterman expects the tipfulness," Hurree Jamset Ram Singh remarked, "and his observation that the parcel is heavy seems to be borne out by the weight of it, which is certainly terrific. Will you accept this shilling, my esteemed porterful friend, although the bestowfulness does not proceed from Bunter?"

Gosling accepted the shilling.

"You're a gentleman, sir!" he said.

"Thank you!" said the nabob. "It is pleasant to have one's perhaps doubtful claims to that distinction confirmed by a judgeful personage such as the worthy porterman. Thank you, my esteemed and ludicrous friend!"

The porter looked somewhat puzzled.

"Thank you, Gosling!" said Billy Bunter. "You may go."

"Which the boy as brought the parcel is waiting."

"Oh, tell him he needn't wait."

Gosling sniffed expressively.

"He says there's fifteen shillings to pay, and his instructions is not to leave the goods without the money, and 'ere's his bill."

"Thank you, Gosling!" said Bunter, taking the bill. "It will be necessary for me to—to examine this before paying it—"

"Then he'll take the goods away."

"No, I can hardly consent to that. You see, these are my dumb-bells, which I require for my physical culture."

"The boy says as how he ain't to leave 'em without the money," said Gosling. "And I'm a busy man, Master Bunter. I've got my work to do."

"Tell the boy—"

"I'll send 'im up 'ere," said Gosling. "You may tell

EVERY TUESDAY, **The "Magnet."** ONE HALFPENNY.

him what you like, but my belief is that he's not to be done."

"Done!" exclaimed Bunter. "What do you mean, Gosling? Do you dare to insinuate—?"

"You had no right to say that, Gosling!" said Harry Wharton sternly. "You ought to be kicked out of the study!"

"Beggin' your pardon, young gentlemen, but Master Bunter is well known—"

"Well, in pointfulness of fact, why don't you bestow the payfulness upon the waiting youth?" asked Hurree Singh.

"You have the cashfulness, and the examination of the purchased goods will not occupy great lengths of time."

Billy Bunter turned red.

"You see, I—I—"

"You must pay for the dumb-bells!" exclaimed Wharton. "What do you mean? Hurree Singh gave you the money yesterday to do so."

"I—I—"

"Which I said—" began Gosling impertinently.

Harry Wharton gave him a cold glance.

"You can go, Gosling," he said. "Tell the boy to wait, and don't come back yourself."

"I says—"

"Oh, get out!"

Gosling got out. When the door had closed the chums of the Remove rose from the tea-table, and came round Billy Bunter, who looked decidedly nervous.

"Now, then," said Bob Cherry, "what does this mean? Do you mean to say that you have blued Hurree Jamset's fifteen bob, and can't pay for the dumb-bells?"

"You see, I can't pay for them at present."

"Then they will have to go back," said Wharton.

"Oh, no, they can't go back, Wharton. You see, I particularly want them for my physical culture."

"If you can't pay for them now you never will be able to. There's a carelessness in money matters, Billy, which is awfully like dishonesty—"

"Oh, Wharton!"

"They will have to go back. Anyway, if you don't pay the boy who brought them, he will demand the parcel back; and if you don't give it to him, he will go to the Head, and then you will have to."

"Oh dear! But I can pay next week, Wharton."

"Where will you get the tin from?"

"I'm expecting a postal-order."

"You young ass! You'll pay for them now, or they'll go back. What have you done with Hurree Singh's money? You had no right to spend it on anything else."

"I—I haven't—"

"Then where is it?"

"Here's five bob of it," said Billy, dolefully turning the five shillings out upon the table. "The rest—"

"Well, the rest is somewhere; I suppose?"

"I—I—I lent it to Hazeldene."

Nugent gave a whistle.

"You young lunatic! Hazeldene never pays his debts. He's nearly as bad as you yourself in that respect."

"Oh, I say, Nugent—"

"Hazeldene had no right to borrow it," said Wharton, with knitted brows. "It was horrible meanness to take advantage of Billy's stupidity."

"Oh, I say, Wharton, you can't call me stupid, you know. Hazeldene promised faithfully to let me have it back this afternoon for certain."

"And you see how he has kept the promise."

"Yes, it is mean of him, and no mistake. I've been trying to speak to him, but he's been dodging me. He doesn't mean to pay up, I believe."

"He should be forced to perform the payfulness," said the nabob. "If he does not report with the money, he is what you English call a scotcher."

"A what?"

"A scotcher—or is it a welsher? I forget."

"Ha, ha! Never mind whether it's a scotcher or a welsher," grinned Bob Cherry. "He certainly ought to be made to dub up. He's a rotter to take advantage of this young duffer. Meanwhile, the boy's waiting for his tin."

"One of you go down and tell him we won't keep him long," said Wharton. "I'll go and speak to Hazeldene."

"I will go," said the nabob. "The boy has had to carry a heavy parcel from the village, and is probably in want of refreshfulness. I will take him into the school shop and fill him up with grubful supplies."

"Good! You others come with me."

The chums of the Remove left the study. Billy Bunter remained, and began to unfasten the parcel. Bunter was so accustomed to being got out of his difficulties by others that he had already ceased to worry. He knew the matter would be managed somehow.

While the nabob was, in his generous way, attending to the tired lad who had brought the dumb-bells from the

village, Wharton, Nugent, and Cherry proceeded in search of Hazeldene. Hazeldene shared Bulstrode's study, and it was there that the chums of the Remove found him, alone.

Hazeldene was standing at the window, looking gloomily out into the Close. He turned as the chums came in, with such a haggard look upon his face that the anger they were feeling almost died away.

"What do you want?"

Hazeldene's voice was low and husky.

"We want to see fair play," said Wharton quietly. "You took ten shillings from Billy Bunter yesterday, promising to return it this afternoon. Where is it? His dumb-bells have been sent home, and he hasn't the money to pay for them."

"I might have known you would meddle in the matter. I suppose."

"Yes, you might have known it," broke in Nugent hotly. "as we are called upon to pay the money you have borrowed—or stolen would be a better word."

"Let the things go back—"

"The tradesman has got them down from London specially. There would be a row. He would have to be paid something, anyhow. You promised to pay Bunter this afternoon," said Wharton quietly. "Why haven't you done so?"

"I haven't the money."

"That's not much of an excuse. You oughtn't to have borrowed it, then—"

"Do you always do what you ought to do when you are in a fix?" asked Hazeldene, with a wretched sneer. "I don't."

"Do you mean to say that you took the money from Bunter knowing well that you couldn't let him have it back to-day?"

"Yes, I did, if you want to know."

"Then— But I won't tell you what I think of that sort of conduct, Hazeldene. But the matter can't rest where it is. You understand that?"

"Do your worst!"

Wharton looked at him attentively.

"Is there anything the matter, Hazeldene?" he asked, not unkindly. "If you've got something on your mind—"

"Well, I have!" muttered Hazeldene. "I—I had to have the money. I—I tell you I had to have it. I couldn't help it. I knew I couldn't pay Bunter. Now you can show me up to the Form, or to the doctor, if you like. I don't care!"

Wharton gave him another keen look. Then he turned quietly to the door.

"Come away, chaps," he said.

Hazeldene made a quick step after them.

"What are you going to do?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing? But—"

"We are going to make up the money for the dumb-bells," said Wharton. "I don't know what your motive was for swindling Billy Bunter, but you don't look very happy about it. We shall say nothing. If you've got any decency you'll pay up the money some time. That's all. Come along, kids!"

The chums of the Remove left the study. They left Hazeldene staring after them with mingled relief and misery in his face.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Goes Ahead.

BILLY BUNTER was busy when the chums of the Remove returned to the study. Bob Cherry was the first to enter, and he jumped back with a startled exclamation.

"You ass! Look out!"

"You should have some lookfulness yourself," said Hurreo Singh. "You have trodden on my toe, my worthy chum."

"Well, that young ass nearly brained me!"

"Ha, ha!" ejaculated Nugent. "He's got the dumb-bells going!"

"I nearly got a cosh on the napper with them!" growled Bob Cherry. "Mind what you're at, you dangerous lunatic."

"Please keep out of the way a little," said Billy Bunter.

"I'm awfully busy just now, you know!"

The chums of the Remove stood in the doorway and looked at him. Billy Bunter was wielding a pair of dumb-bells much too heavy for him, swinging them slowly to and fro with evident effort.

It would have been no joke to receive a knock from one of them, and Bob Cherry had really had an escape.

Bunter set down the dumb-bells at last. He was gasping. "Had enough?" asked Harry Wharton, coming into the study.

"For the present, yes," said Bunter, sinking into a chair. "I think perhaps sixteen pounds is a bit too heavy for me to start."

"Six pounds would be nearer the mark."

"I will practise a little with lighter dumb-bells," said Bunter. "I will use those of yours. On second thoughts, I shall not take up cricket."

"Oh, think twice about that!" implored Bob Cherry. "Think what a loss you will be to the cricketing world. Billy!"

"Think of the Remove team, and the college eleven, to say nothing of the county!" said Nugent. "You ought really to keep on at the game."

"I've got an idea that you are joking," said Billy Bunter, peering at them through his big spectacles. "Anyway, I'm not going to keep on the cricket. I prefer a kind of athletics that can be stuck to in all weathers. You can't play cricket when it rains. Now, with Indian clubs and dumb-bells you can be always at it."

"Yes, if you can get your study-mates to stand it," said Nugent.

"Oh, of course, you fellows wouldn't think of putting difficulties in the way of my physical development!"

"We'll put difficulties in the way of your braining us with your giddy dumb-bells, though!" growled Bob Cherry.

"I'm sincerely sorry, Cherry—"

"Oh, rats! Keep those dumb-bells away, that's all."

"I am not going to use them again just yet. I must get over this tired feeling. By the way, did Hazeldene pay the ten shillings?"

"No, he didn't."

"Do you know, Wharton, I had a feeling that he wouldn't," said Bunter confidentially. "I'm afraid that ten bob's gone!"

"Well, it's Inky's loss, not yours!" grunted Bob.

"Oh, of course, I shall pay Inky! I have reason to expect that my postal-order will arrive this evening."

"Oh, get off that, Billy. Between your physical culture and your postal-order you'll make us old men before our time."

"But, I say, you fellows, I hope you have settled satisfactorily with the boy from the dealer's."

"We've paid him."

"I'm really very much obliged to you. Which of you do I owe the money to?" asked the Owl, blinking round at them.

"Oh, never mind that!"

"I'm sorry, Wharton, but I must mind that," said Billy Bunter firmly. "I cannot possibly accept the money except as a loan. If Hazeldene does not pay up the loss will be mine. Which of you paid for the dumb-bells?"

"We made it up between us."

"Then I shall repay you all the exact sums when my postal-order comes. Of course, I shouldn't mind being under obligations to you, really, but you know that short reckonings make long friends, and so I can only take the money as a loan."

"There's something else you can do for us, Bunt," said Bob Cherry.

"What is it, Cherry?"

"You can leave off talking for a bit, so that we can get our preparation done," said Bob Cherry, sitting down at the table.

"Really, Cherry, you seem to think I am a talkative chap. I've noticed a lot of fellows think that. I don't know why. I say, you fellows, you haven't looked at my dumb-bells yet. You ought to look at them."

"They're a nice pair," said Wharton, glancing at them.

"Yes. And do you see, you unscrew this little nut, and pour shot into the hole, till you make them the weight you want. It will be some time, I expect, before I can lift thirty-pound dumb-bells—"

"Ha, ha! I should say so!"

"Oh, not so very long, Cherry! They are rather heavy for me now, but I shall stick to it. I suppose I sha'n't interrupt you if I go on with the dumb-bell practice now, shall I?"

Bob Cherry rose and seized a ruler.

"If you touch those dumb-bells again while I am in the study, Billy Bunter, there will be a dead ass in the Remove," he said darkly.

"But really, Cherry—"

"Scat! Get out!"

"But I am really going in quite seriously for physical culture—"

"Will you shut up?"

"And I can't afford to waste time—"

Bob made a dash at him with the ruler. Billy Bunter skipped out of the study with surprising agility, and bolted into someone who was coming along the passage.

"Here, get out of the way!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "You silly fathead, what do you mean by running into me like that?"

"What's that?" demanded the voice of Wingate, as the captain of Greyfriars took the short-sighted junior by the ear. "What are you calling me?"

"Oh, I'm sincerely sorry, Wingate!" said Billy, recognising the voice. "If I had known it was you, I should certainly not have called you a fathead. I never say what I think to a senior. Ow, ow!"

Wingate released his ear, which Billy began to rub ruefully.

"Better look where you're going next time!" said Wingate, going on down the passage.

Billy blinked reproachfully into the study.

"That was all your fault, Cherry. I think——"

Crash went the ruler against the door, and Bunter, thinking it was meant for him, bolted along the passage like a rabbit.

And the chums of the Remove laughed, and settled down to their work.

"I say," said Bob Cherry, rising and stretching himself when his work was finished, "these are jolly good dumb-bells, you know. They're dangerous things for Billy to play with, though."

He picked up the dumb-bells and swung them over his head.

Nugent looked at him, and a sudden chuckle escaped him. "Let me see, they load up to thirty pounds, don't they?" he remarked.

"That's it!"

"At that weight Billy couldn't shift them off the ground."

"I fancy he couldn't shift one of them."

"It would be rather a good wheeze to fill them up for him one time when he's going to practise without letting him know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh chuckled appreciatively.

"The funniness of the wheeze is terrific," he remarked. "I should like to be presentful to behold the efforts of the esteemed Bunter."

Billy Bunter looked into the study.

"Hallo, have you finished, you chaps? I want to do some exercise."

"Harry Wharton laughed as he rose from the table.

"Yes, we're finished. You'll have to postpone the wheeze a bit, Bob."

"I say, has Cherry got a wheeze on?"

"You'll know all about it in good time, Billy. Come along to the common-room, kids, and let's have a go at the chess!"

"Right you are!"

The Removites quitted the study. Billy Bunter grasped the heavy dumb-bells at once, and began to swing them.

The chums of the Remove had reached the end of the corridor, and were about to go downstairs, when Harry Wharton suddenly halted with an exclamation.

"What was that?"

It was a terrific crash from behind them.

"Sounded as if it came from the study," said Nugent. "Is it possible that the young ass has let a dumb-bell go?"

"My hat! Let's go and see!"

The Removites raced back along the passage. They reached the door of the study in a few moments, and Harry Wharton threw it open. Billy Bunter was standing with one dumb-bell in his hand in a state of dismay. The other was lying in the fender.

The glass over the mantelpiece, bought by a whip-round among the Remove chums, was shattered to atoms. The dumb-bell had evidently crashed into the centre of it, with a terrific concussion, too, for the back was broken as well as the glass.

"You young lunatic!" shouted Bob Cherry, grasping Bunter by the shoulder and shaking him. "What have you — Ow!"

There was a bump as the startled Billy let the other dumb-bell fall from his hand. It bumped on the floor within an inch of Bob's foot.

Bob shook the Owl in his exasperation.

"You little villain! You might have lamed me!"

"You startled me, Cherry!"

"You—you—you——"

"I say, you fellows, don't let him shake me like that. It disturbs my nerves, and my spectacles might fall off. If they get broken you will have to pay for them."

Bob Cherry gave him a final shake.

"What did you smash that glass for?"

"It was an accident, Cherry. I was swinging round the dumb-bell, and somehow it slipped from my hand, and flew against the glass. I'm sincerely sorry."

"If we had been in the study, it might have brained one of us."

"Yes, I think that's quite likely, and I should have been sincerely sorry. Not that you need be afraid of its happening again, you know. I shall keep a better hold in future, and there's not one chance in a hundred that I shall brain any of you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Nugent. "It's no good talking to him. As he's smashed the glass there's no more damage he can do, unless he smashes himself, and the sooner he does that, the better. Let's get along."

So the aspiring athlete was left to his own devices. But

though the famous four did not remain, there were soon a goodly number of the Removites at the door watching the progress of Bunter's physical culture. Bunter was "booming," to use an Americanism, and his movements were regarded with great interest by the fellows of the Greyfriars Remove. They watched him; but when a dumb-bell flew from Bunter's hand again, they sought safer quarters, and Billy Bunter was left to continue his physical development without a grinning crowd for an audience.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry's Little Joke.

"HOW'S the physical culture getting on, Billy?" It was Bulstrode who asked the question the next day. Billy Bunter looked up with a cheerful grin. The breaking of the glass the previous evening did not worry him much. As he was stony, he could not be expected to pay for it.

"First rate, Bulstrode," he said. "I expect I shall be breaking records soon——"

"To say nothing of looking-glasses."

"Oh, that was an accident!"

"Ha, ha! I'm not sorry I have changed out of that study!" grinned Bulstrode. "Any casualties yet?"

"Not likely to be. They won't let me practise when they're in the study," said Bunter. "I'm afraid there's some trifle of jealousy in the matter. I have been going rather ahead lately, and, naturally, the Remove is beginning to look up to a fellow who can make new men of them by showing them the right way to take up physical culture."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at in that remark, Bulstrode—I don't, really. Physical culture makes a new man of you, and there's a right way and a wrong way to do these things; and I can show you the right way."

"Well, you furnish us with some fun, anyway, so keep on. You ought to give an exhibition of physical culture, Billy—how to do the things, and how not to do them."

"I was thinking of that," said Bunter modestly. "You see, I have carefully studied Professor Kramm's book, and I know the whole thing from start to finish. I feel that I ought to impart my knowledge to the Form. They will be grateful to me when I make new men of them. I was thinking of asking some of the fellows to come along to the study this evening, after those chaps have done their prep—they won't let me go on exercising while they're doing their prep."

"Too bad!"

"Yes, it is rather selfish of them; but it's no good expecting too much in this world. I'm beginning to learn that," said Bunter, with a wise shake of the head. "Would you care to come along and see a show of how to handle the dumb-bells, Bulstrode?"

"Oh, yes, I'll be there!" grinned Bulstrode.

"And I, rather," said Trevor and Russell.

"Oh, yes!" chuckled Herring. "We'll come and see the fun!"

"There won't be any fun," explained Billy Bunter. "It's quite serious business—an exhibition of dumb-bell exercises, you see."

"It may be funnier than you expect. Anyway, we'll come."

"It will really do you good," said Billy. "You can pick up a lot in the way of physical culture by watching one who knows. It says in the book——"

But Billy Bunter suddenly found himself without listeners, so he was not able to impart what was said in the book, and that valuable knowledge was lost to the Greyfriars Remove.

The famous four soon learned of Billy Bunter's project, and some of them were inclined to growl. Nugent remarked that now the glass was gone, there was nothing much to smash. Wharton's desk could be put out of the way. Hurree Singh was inclined to let Billy Bunter have his way, with his usual good nature. Bob Cherry grinned gleefully, as if scenting fun.

"Don't be alarmed!" he exclaimed. "I don't suppose Bunter will even lift the dumb-bells off the floor. This is where I come on."

And the famous four chuckled.

Bunter's boom was still on the go. Billy was the most famous fellow in the Form at the present moment, and he bore his blushing honours thick upon him, to tell the truth, in a rather cocky manner. His physical culture was regarded by the Remove as the biggest joke of the season; but Bunter was far from looking at it in that light. He was in deadly earnest.

After tea the chums of the Remove did their prep. Billy Bunter brought out the big dumb-bells, and looked dubiously at the four.

"Would you fellows mind if I went through the exercises

now, as a sort of prelim.?" he said. "I want to be quite up to it when the chaps come."

"Do you want to be painlessly killed?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, no, Cherry, not at all; only——"

"Then get out of this study until we have done our prep."

"But I say——"

"Get out!" roared Bob Cherry. "If you pick up those dumb-bells, I'll knock you on the head with one of them. You can come back at eight o'clock."

"Oh, very well! I am not going to do my prep now. I think I had better go and have a turn with the Indian clubs in the gym., to get into form. You can have the study to yourselves until eight o'clock. I suppose you'll stop and watch the show?"

Bob Cherry grinned expansively.

"Oh, yes, we shall stop and watch the show!"

So Billy Bunter went out. He went to the gym., and handled the Indian clubs there, the other fellows giving him a wide berth. Naturally, he let one of them fly from his hand, and Wingate descended upon him wrathfully.

"You young ass!" shouted the Greyfriars captain. "You——"

"Please don't get excited, Wingate," said Billy Bunter meekly. "It was quite an accident. I am sincerely sorry."

"I'd make you sorrier if that club had hit anybody. You're not to use them again in here, Bunter. Do you hear?"

"But really, Wingate, it's part of my physical culture. The Indian clubs play an important part in physical development. It says in the book——"

"Oh, shut up!" said Wingate, walking away.

"Wingate is rather rude," murmured Billy Bunter. "It's surprising how impatient some people get with a fellow who's only trying to develop himself physically. But I suppose I'd better not use the clubs in here again, as Wingate doesn't like it. Hallo, there's eight striking! Are you fellows coming along?"

"Rather!" said half a dozen Removites.

And they marched off with Billy to Study No. 1. Billy opened the door. The big dumb-bells were lying on the floor, and the chums of the Remove had pushed back the table out of the way, to make all ready for the physical culture exhibition.

"Good!" said Billy Bunter. "That's really thoughtful of you. You fellows can stand round. Don't get too near."

"You needn't tell us that," grinned Bulstrode. "We're not likely to get too near when you're swinging dumb-bells."

"Oh, there's no danger, you know. I am not likely to let one fly from my hand again, and if I did, it is really very improbable that it would actually kill the person whom it struck. What are you grinning at, Cherry?"

"Was I grinning? I'm waiting for the exhibition."

"It is just going to begin. A little later, you fellows, I hope to give you an exhibition with much heavier dumb-bells than these. These will load up to thirty pounds, by unscrewing the nut and pouring in shot. I have no shot, now but I am going to purchase some when a postal-order comes that I have been expecting for some time. Now, I'm just going to begin."

Billy Bunter stooped down and grasped the dumb-bells. He remained stooping. He grasped the dumb-bells easily enough. There was no difficulty about that. But he could not lift them from the floor.

The Removites watched him curiously.

"Well, why don't you lift them?" asked Bulstrode.

Billy Bunter strained and panted and tugged at the dumb-bells.

"I—I c-can't," he stammered. "I don't know what's the matter with them. They seem to be heavier than they were yesterday."

"Are you going to lift those dumb-bells?"

"Don't be impatient, Bulstrode. This is really very curious."

The joke had dawned upon most of the Removites, though not upon Billy Bunter. There were broad grins upon every face as Billy tugged at the dumb-bells. He could move them, but he could not lift them. He grew red in the face, and panted with his exertions.

"This is most curious!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not comical, Bulstrode. Cherry, I really don't see why you should keep on laughing. I think there must be something wrong with the dumb-bells, or else I have exhausted myself exercising with the Indian clubs. Dear me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites were rocking with laughter. Billy Bunter's endeavours to lift the loaded dumb-bells were comical in the extreme. Bunter could see nothing funny in the matter, but the spectators seemed to.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter gave a last desperate drag at the dumb-bells. But they would not lift.

"Oh, I'm not going to stay here and see a chap fooling with dumb-bells he can't even lift!" said Bob Cherry.

"I'm off!"

"Don't hurry away, Cherry. I'm sincerely sorry, but there seems to be something wrong with the dumb-bells."

"Perhaps there is. Perhaps there's something wrong with you. I'm off."

And Bob Cherry marched out.

"Keep it up, Billy," said Nugent encouragingly, and he followed Bob. Harry Wharton tapped Bunter on the shoulder.

"Stick to it," he said cheerfully, as he followed his chums.

"The endeavourfulness is certainful to receive its rewardfulness," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, in his soft voice.

"Keep to it with resolute stickfulness, my worthy chum."

And the nabob, too, disappeared. And the other Removites, laughing like hyenas, followed, and Billy was left alone with the dumb-bells. He stared at them in amazed dismay, and an idea suddenly occurred to him. He unscrewed one of the nuts, and rolled over the dumb-bell. A stream of small shot poured out of the opening upon the floor.

"The—the horrid bounders!" murmured Billy. "They've loaded the dumb-bells, and never told me. I think—— Is that you, Cherry?" Bob was looking into the study. "I really think, Cherry——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"You put the shot in the dumb-bells!"

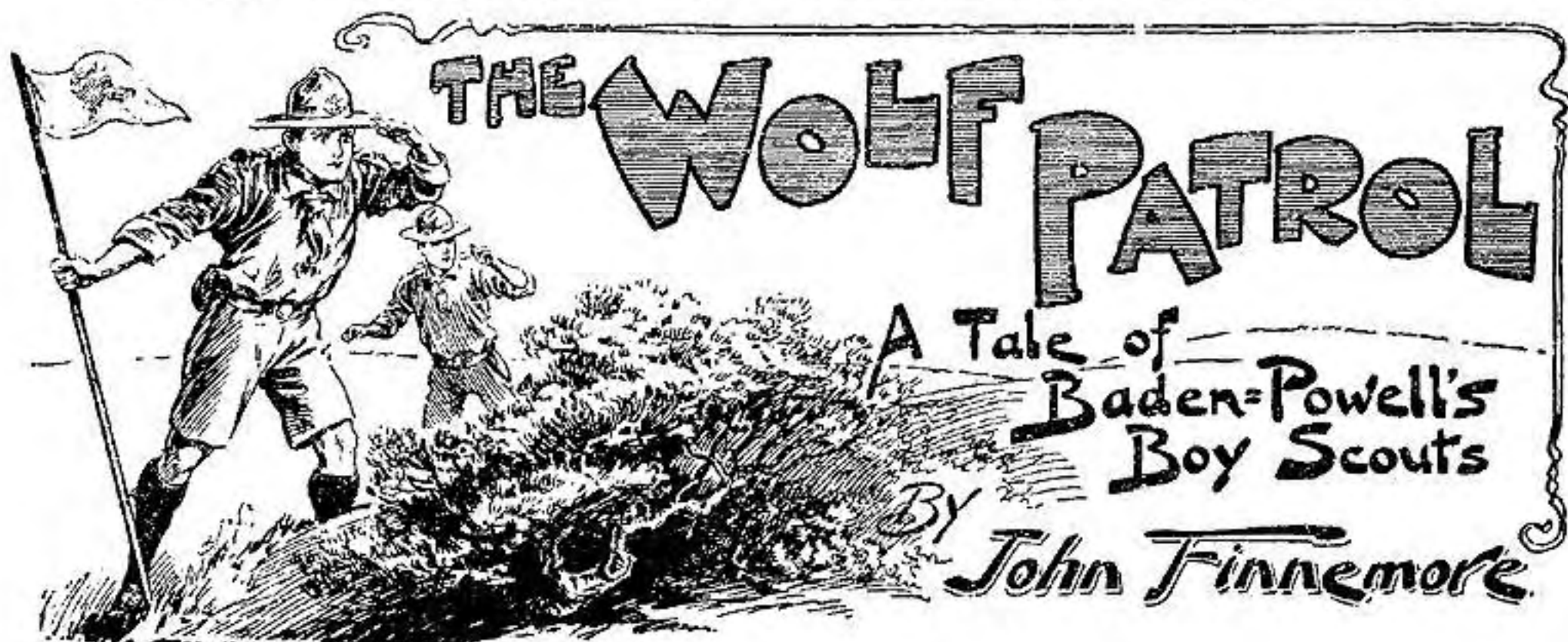
"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bob Cherry went down the passage yelling with laughter. The whole Remove was soon yelling over the story, too. Billy Bunter did not give up physical culture, but he sold those dumb-bells cheap the next day to a fellow in the Sixth.

THE END.

(Another tale of Harry Wharton and his chums next Tuesday, entitled "Harry's Sacrifice," by Frank Richards.)

JUST STARTING IN "THE BOYS' HERALD."





NEW STORY SHOWING HOW TWO BOYS BECOME DETECTIVES.

By LEWIS HOCKLEY.

GLANCE OVER THIS FIRST.

Frank Dennis and Bob Lomax, two City clerks, are thrown out of employment. Having no prospects they decide to make the detective business their profession, and assume the name of "Maxenniss."

Grip, their dog, in a strange manner is instrumental in getting their first client—a Mrs. Brewer—who is continually receiving threatening picture post-cards from Leigh-on-Sea, from a man evidently aware that his victim is coming into a legacy. Lomax visits Leigh, and pursues his investigations among the regular senders of picture post cards in the district. Meanwhile, Dennis by chance acquires a post card addressed to their client, which is picked up by Grip, after having fallen from the pocket of one "Sleeping" Macdonald, a pugilist lodging with Mrs. Brewer. When Lomax returns from Leigh, Dennis shows his chum the postcard.

A Visit from "Sleeping" Macdonald.

Sitting down, Lomax put his elbows on the table and his chin on his hands, and stared fixedly at the card for several minutes. Suddenly he looked up.

"They're stopping all these cards from Leigh, with a view to finding out who is the sender," he said; "the post-office authorities are taking action. Have you seen Mrs. Brewer?"

"I didn't try. I wanted to find out about her, and so went to her friend and neighbour, Mrs. Biddlecombe."

"Did you learn anything?"

"Nothing of any importance. Have you?"

"Not yet. There's one frequent sender of these sorts of cards so I found out, whom I haven't seen yet—a kid at a local school. But what he's got to do with it is beyond me."

Silence for a few moments; then Dennis:

"Mrs. Biddlecombe thinks it's Anarchists who send these cards—she knows all about them."

Lomax laughed shortly but said nothing. Presently Dennis spoke again:

"I've seen Baxter this evening," he remarked.

"Oh!" Lomax didn't seem interested.

"Yes; he made a good suggestion."

"What was it?"

"That as we'd got a case, he'd write it and us up in one of his papers if we like. It ought to do us a lot of good—a good advertisement."

"For him; also good for his pocket. Where do we come in?"

"We get the advertisement. Also we might derive some help from the publicity given."

"Don't see it," growled Lomax. "If it's all the same to you, Frank, we'll do this job on our own."

"All right. By the way, this card you're looking at was not written by the same person that wrote the others."

Lomax slowly raised his eyes from the card in question and looked fixedly at his chum.

"What makes you think so?" he asked slowly.

"Difference in the writing. You can't see it with the naked eye, but it's plain beneath the magnifier. Have a squint at it through the glass, and then compare it with one of those you have."

Lomax took the glass, carefully examined every scrap of penmanship on the card, and then, taking one of the other cards from his bag, did the same with that. Then he looked across at Dennis.

"I believe you're right. But what then?"

"Still further complicates matters, doesn't it?"

"So it seems to me."

Lomax fished out other cards and put them under the magnifier.

"There are differences," he said, after a while. "The

strokes here are not as fine and straight, less clean, and a bit shaky."

"That's what I think. Bob, this card I found is a forgery—that is to say, an imitation of those others."

"Well?"

"Someone's been trying to copy them."

"Why should anyone?"

"Ah, that's what we want to find out! I think——"

"Well?"

"That we might do so if we interviewed Mr. McDonald, from whose pocket the card fell. He's a professional boxer."

"How can he help us?"

"We can ask him to call here, and then demand from him an explanation as to his possession of the card. I wouldn't be surprised if you went through all the batch of cards you'd find others—the later ones—are forgeries."

Lomax suddenly got on his feet and stamped to and fro across the room.

"What's in your mind, Frank?" he asked impatiently, stopping and facing his partner. "What is it you're thinking of?"

"Don't feel quite sure, old man," Dennis answered frankly. "I've got an idea, but it's hazy and indefinite. But suppose we send a note to McDonald?"

"All right; though I don't see what good it's going to do," the elder partner answered.

So a letter was written and despatched that evening to "Sleeping" McDonald, informing that gentleman that if he turned up at the office of Maxenniss next morning at mid-day he would hear of something greatly to his advantage.

"What d'you think we're going to get out of this if McDonald does show up?" inquired Lomax, when the letter was sealed and stamped.

"I don't know, I tell you," was the answer. "But we might be able to get McDonald into betraying what connection he has with the postcard business—and it appears quite evident he has some; persuade or threaten him into revealing how and why this forged card came into his possession."

"Might!" commented Lomax, but it was a very dubious tone of voice in which he spoke. "Well, anyway, I'm going to act on your hint, and go over all the cards with this magnifier."

Lomax sat up until late over his job, and the result he communicated to his partner next morning.

"You were right, Frank," he said, as they set about preparations for their breakfast.

It will be recollected that the same room which served as an office also did duty as bed and sitting-room for the budding detectives. A couple of small folding beds had been purchased, and these were stowed away in one corner during the day-time, Lomax having rigged up some curtains on an iron rod, so that they might be concealed from the eyes of possible visitors.

For such meals as they had so far taken in their abode they were themselves responsible. He's a poor sort of young man of twenty who does not know how to make tea, fry rashers of bacon, or cook a steak or sausages, and to the class who don't, neither Lomax nor Dennis belonged. Their culinary skill might not have been sufficient to have brought them to the post of chef at the Hotel Cecil, but they were quite at home at such cooking as suited themselves. They had only themselves to please, and in such circumstances one is seldom found serving a hard taskmaster.

Bread and butter, eggs and marmalade, cheese, and other aids against the pangs of hunger, were easily obtainable in the immediate neighbourhood, and, so far at least, neither had expressed any decided depreciation of their own efforts as compared with those of their late landlady, Mrs. Williams.

Meals became even a greater pleasure when they had only themselves to depend upon for the cooking thereof.

Dennis looked up from the careful measuring of the proper quantity of tea into the teapot, and, in reply to his chum's remark, observed airily:

"Don't apologise; I knew I was. What are you talking about?"

"The cards," replied Bob, deftly turning on the little iron dish before the fire two substantial rashers of bacon. This done, he continued his toast-making operations. "There's about seven of the latest our client received which would appear to be written by a different person—the glass shows it plainly."

"I felt sure you'd find it so."

No more was said until breakfast preparations were completed, and the two young men sat down, each with a smoking rasher of bacon on his plate, a big cup of tea beside it, and a huge pile of dry toast, which was common property. Four boiled eggs—rather small, for Lomax said eggs were eggs, and to pay the price demanded for selected new laid ones was an extravagance their means did not entitle them to—a half-slaughtered loaf of bread, butter, and a three-pound jar of marmalade awaited attention when the bacon should be disposed of.

But when the keen edge had been taken off their appetites and the initial cup of tea disposed of, Lomax suddenly turned on his chum.

"You're an irritating sort of brute, you know, Dennis," he began.

"What's the matter now?"

"Why, it's plain as—plain as Mr. Harvey J. Baxter's face, and I should call him downright ugly, that you've got some idea, something fresh, concerning this blessed case in your brain; you hint at it, and suggest it, and talk round it, but you'll say nothing. Why on earth can't you say what it is. Here I'm groping altogether in the dark. Tell me what it is you mean, and I might be of some help. Two heads are always better than one—even when that one is yours!"

"My dear chap," Dennis replied. "I've already said I can't tell you; really there's nothing to tell. All I suspect is that this boxing fellow, McDonald, knows something about the business; what that something may be I can't even form a suspicion; but if he doesn't, why that postcard in his pocket?"

"Sure it did come out of his pocket?"

"Couldn't have come from anywhere else, so far as I can see; the postman didn't drop it, that's self-evident. But we'll soon see if there's anything in what I say."

They did see, and several hours earlier than they suspected, for while "Maxennis" was engaged in clearing away the fragments of their eight-thirty breakfast there came a knock at the door, and immediately after it was opened the knocker walked in without waiting for permission.

It was "Sleeping" McDonald, and his face betrayed the feeling of much inward excitement and pleasurable anticipation. He was nearly three hours in advance of the appointed time. The words "something greatly to his advantage" had whetted his curiosity and filled him with lively expectation. He reckoned he'd come upon a good thing, and he was taking care that it should not be lost through tardiness in seizing the opportunity. Immediately on reading the letter he had donned his best clothes and started out for Fleet Street, unable to wait patiently until midday.

He entered the room with a light, active step, the movement of a man to whom the quickness in the use of his feet has become a matter of everyday habit; and in his eyes, as he looked inquiringly from Dennis to Lomax, was pleasurable anticipation.

"Right for Maxennis, guv'nor?" he asked, with an ingratiating grin on his very solid features. He had not recognised Frank Dennis.

"Yes; you are—" answered Lomax.

"My name's McDonald, Alexander McDonald!" the pugilist answered, with a certain pride in his voice. In the boxing world Alexander McDonald was somebody, and the owner of the name didn't forget it.

Robert Lomax looked the visitor up and down, and mentally decided that he was a "hard case." He didn't look the sort of fellow who might be easily persuaded, still less did he have the appearance of one who might be coerced. His was a typical face of those of his class. The forehead was not so very low and somewhat broad, the eyes, small and set somewhat close together, seemed as if they could look wickedly dangerous, and an expression of fierceness was given by the eyebrows, which formed a thick, continuous line above the bridge of his nose, which organ, by the way, had evidently suffered an alteration of its natural shape.

There was courage, animal courage, in the wide nostrils, and resolution in the thin, firmly-shut lips, broad chin, and square jaw. He didn't look the sort of man who it is necessary shall be boxed up in a corner before he will show fight. Very much the reverse, in fact. As many of his ring opponents could have borne witness, he was as ready to fight in his antagonist's corner as in his own, preferred it, to tell the truth.

"Yer wrote to me," he went on.

"We did; you're a little before your time."

Lomax was spokesman, for Dennis, who did not wish for his recognition to have a prejudicial effect upon the results of the interview, had turned his face to the window, and so out of McDonald's vision.

"Yus, guv'nor; but when it's good news the sooner yer gets to it the better, I says!"

"Quite true," Lomax assented. "Your coming a trifle in advance is no inconvenience. Will you sit down?"

McDonald sat down, recollecting himself, and removing from his close-cropped head his shepherd's-plaid golf-cap.

"Say, guv'nor," he said easily, putting his heels on the front rail of the chair; "wot's Maxennis?"

"The name of the firm."

"Yer're boxin' promoters or managers, I reckon!"

"Oh, no!" Lomax did not even smile.

McDonald's face fell a trifle.

"Ain't yer connected with boxin'?" he asked. "I thought yer was goin' to offer me a new match; or find me another backer."

"No; we have nothing to do with boxing."

The pugilist was obviously disappointed.

"Are yer solicitors?" he asked, after a short pause.

The second of two ideas which the receipt of the letter had originated in his brain occurred to him.

"No; nor solicitors either."

"Well, guv'nor, what bloomin' business is yours?" he asked, a trifle irritably; his imagination had quite failed him.

"Well," Lomax replied. "'Maxennis' is an investigator."

The word was evidently new to McDonald—detective he would have understood. He looked puzzled.

"Well, guv'nor, let's hear what yer've got to say, anyway!" he cried.

"Well, Mr. McDonald," began Lomax—he scarcely knew what he was going to say to the man, for there had been no opportunity for him to discuss with his partner on what lines the interview with McDonald was to be conducted—"well, Mr. McDonald, the business of Maxennis is that of finding solutions to the many mysteries which are continually coming into existence. Maxennis traces lost persons, undertakes the finding of criminals, gets down to the why and the wherefore and the identity of the perpetrators of robberies, murders, etc.; in short, Maxennis is, as I have said, an investigator of every curious, mysterious, secret, and incomprehensible happening which individual or public exigencies require should be inquired into."

(Another long instalment of this fine serial next week.)

For Next Week

The Editor, "MAGNET" Library, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, will be glad to hear from you.

"HARRY'S SACRIFICE."

Harry Wharton is becoming quite a strong favourite, despite his "beastly temper," and next Tuesday's tale will deal with a very pleasing side of Harry's character. Need I say that the story on the whole is highly interesting.

P.S.—What do you think of Hazeldene now?

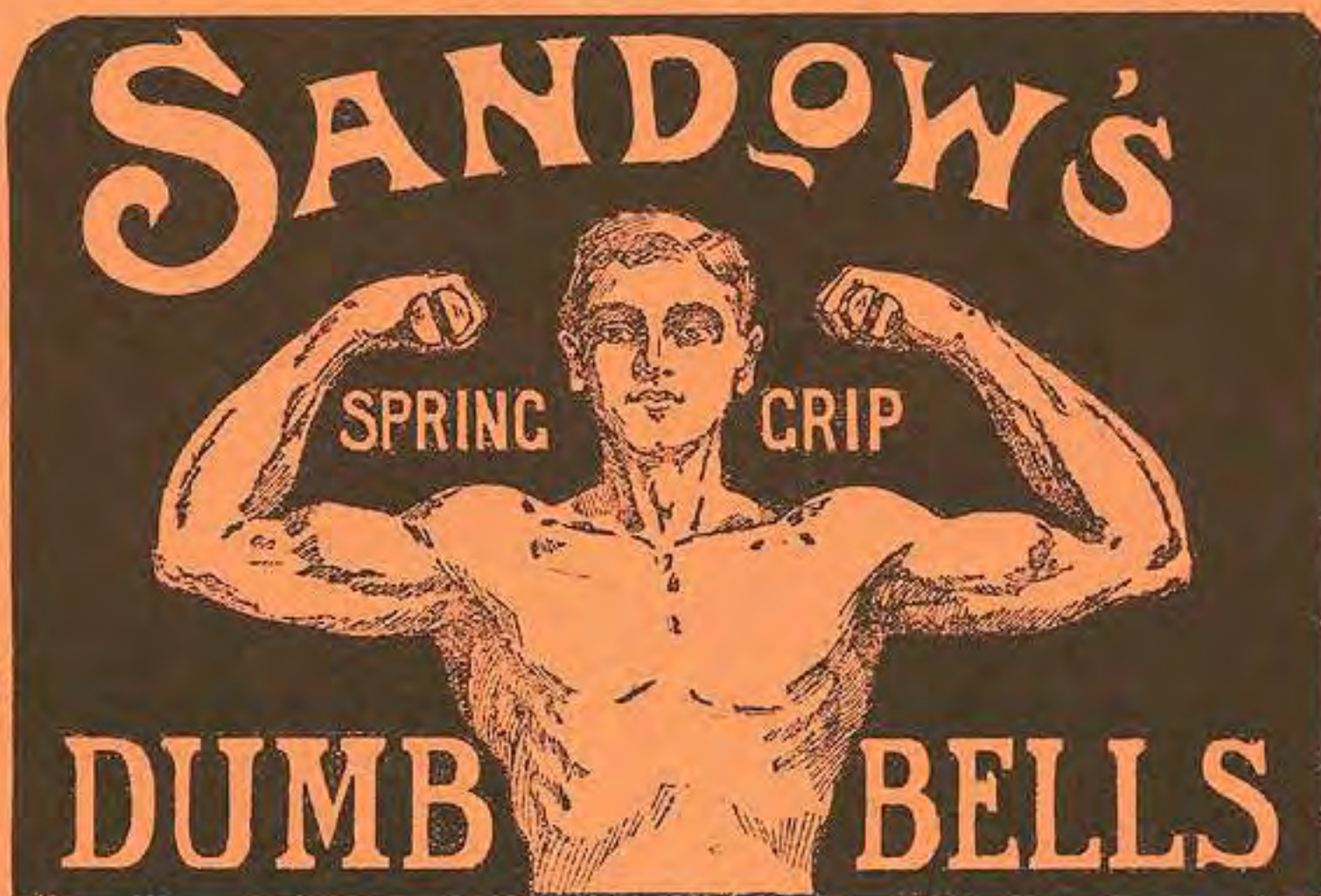
THE EDITOR.



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**Next
Tuesday's
Cover!**

**THE
'Magnet'
LIBRARY.**



**Hazeldene gazed into
vacancy—miserable and
silent.**

*(An incident in "HARRY'S SACRIFICE," next Tuesday's
Splendid Long, Complete Tale.)*