

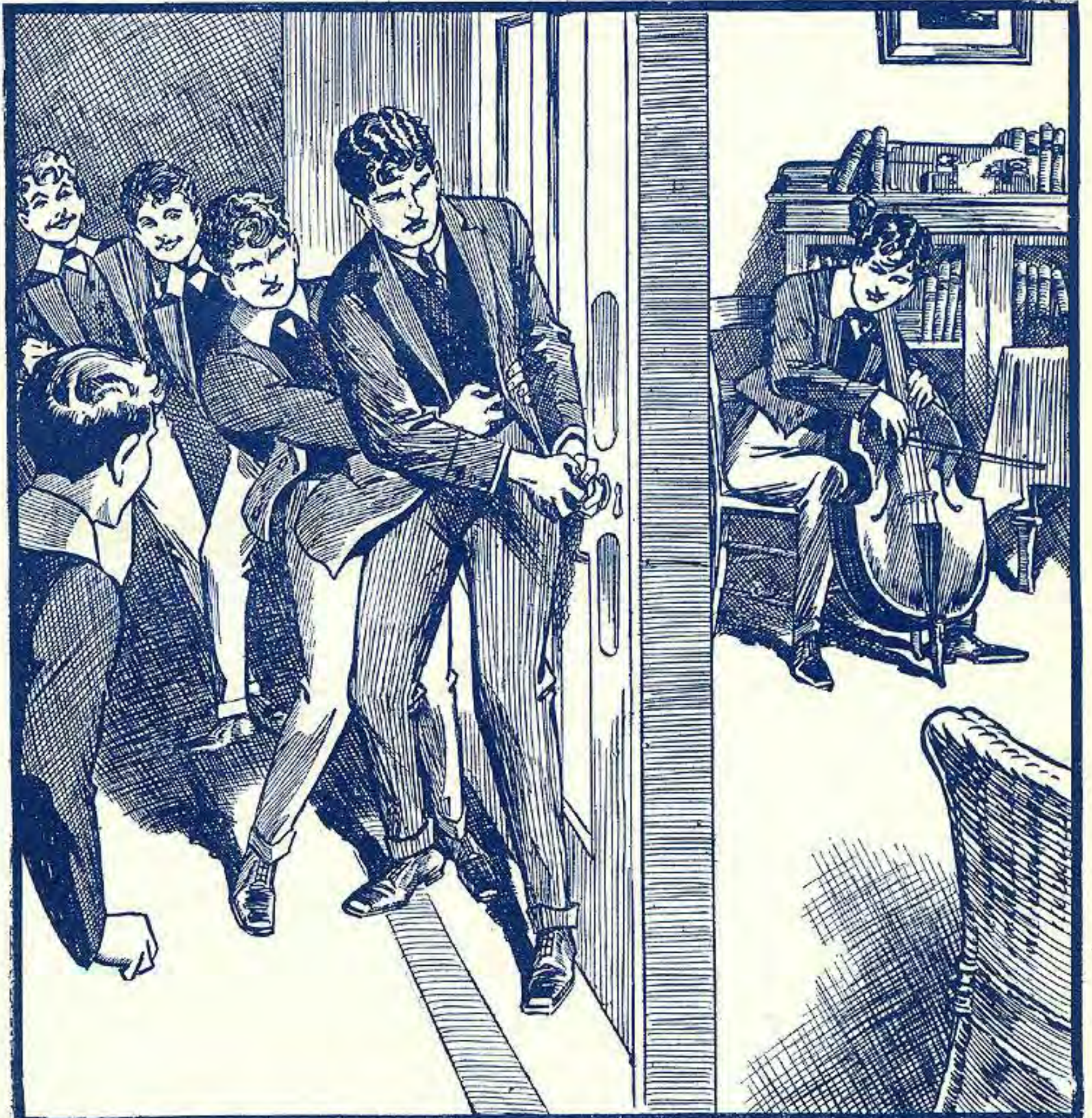


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HOSKINS' CHANCE!



HOSKINS BORROWS THE SIXTH-FORMER'S 'CELLO!

(An Amusing Scene in the Long, Complete School Tale contained in This Number.) 22-3-19



Hoskins' Chance!

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Story dealing
with the Adventures of
HARRY WHARTON & Co. AT GREYFRIARS SCHOOL.
By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Throes of Composition!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Locked in!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. Bob rattled at the door-handle of Study No. 1 in the Remove.

"Anybody at home?" he roared.

There was a sound of movement in the study, and a rustle as of paper; but there came no reply.

"You there, Wharton? You there, Nugent?"

Still no answer.

Bob shook the door-handle vigorously. It was clear that there must be somebody in Study No. 1, or the door couldn't have been locked on the inside. And certainly none but Wharton and Nugent, the owners of the study, had a right to lock themselves in No. 1.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Bob, in astonishment.

"What's the row?" asked Johnny Bull, coming along the Remove passage.

"Somebody's locked in here," said Bob. "Can't be Wharton or Nugent, or they'd answer."

"Bunter, after the grub, perhaps," suggested Johnny Bull.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Open this door!"

Hurree Janset Ram Singh came along and joined his chums outside Study No. 1.

"My esteemed Bob, the uproarfulness is terrific!" he remarked.

"Well, why can't they answer?" demanded Bob warmly.

"Wharton! Nugent! Silly asses! Are you coming down to footer? Can't you speak?"

"Hallo, are you trying to break our door in, Bob?"

Harry Wharton came along from the staircase with Nugent.

Bob spun round from the door and stared at them.

"So you're not in the study!" he exclaimed.

"Well, I think not!" said Frank Nugent, laughing.

"Somebody is! And the door's locked!"

"Bunter, after our cake!" exclaimed Frank Nugent, laughing.

A fat face and a pair of spectacles glimmered from the doorway of Study No. 7 up the passage.

"I'm not after your cake, you silly asses! I'm here! Bother your cake!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's Bunter!" said Bob Cherry. "It's somebody else—up to something, I should say, or he wouldn't have the door locked. Never mind; as you fellows are here, we may as well go down to footer."

"Can't be done!" said Wharton. "We've got lines to do. And we jolly well want to get into our study, too!"

Harry Wharton thumped on the door. "Who's in there?"

No answer.

"Somebody's writing," said Nugent. "I can hear a pen scratching."

"Well, my hat!"

The Famous Five of the Remove were astonished. It was rather a new thing for anybody to take possession of a study and lock its owners out. Wharton rapped again with his knuckles energetically.

"Open this door, you cheeky worm!"

Then there came an answer at last, in loud and wrathful tones:

"For goodness' sake, cut off, you fellows! You're interrupting me frightfully! Be quiet!"

"Hoskins!" yelled Bob.

The Remove fellows knew that voice; it was the voice of Claude Hoskins of the Shell. Hoskins, the amateur musician, the youthful composer who was destined to outshine Beethoven and Brahms—perhaps—was often known to lock himself in the music-room, and bid defiance to furious students whose turn it was to "thump" the piano. But why he should lock himself in Study No. 1 was a deep mystery. Certainly there was no piano there, and no musical instruments at all—unless Nugent's tin whistle was a musical instrument.

"Look here, Hoskins!" shouted Wharton, through the keyhole. "Let us into our study, you ass! Open this door at once!"

"For goodness' sake, clear off, and be quiet!" came Claude Hoskins' irritated tones.

"Let us in!" shouted Nugent. "What the thump do you mean by locking yourself in our study?"

Pong!

The sudden sound of a music-fork came from within No. 1.

"Good!" Hoskins was heard to murmur. "That's all right—A. It's dashed worrying composing without a piano; but that villain Scott won't give up the music-room. I can manage, anyway. Jolly lucky I've cultivated pitch. Now I—"

His voice became an unintelligible murmur.

"He's composing!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "Another giddy march in F, I suppose, or a sonata in X Y Z. Fancy bagging another chap's study to compose in! I'd decompose him!"

Thump, thump!

"Hoskins, you ass—"

"Will you be quiet?" shrieked Hoskins.

"How can I hear this in my head with that thundering row going on?"

"We want our study!"

"Shut up!"

"Will you let us in? We've got lines to do for Loder!" howled Nugent.

"Oh, my hat!" Hoskins exclaimed, in great exasperation. "I came here to be quiet, as Hobson was making such a row in my study! Can't you fags go and play football, or marbles, or something?"

"Lines!" shouted Wharton. "We've got lines to do!"

"Go and play football instead!"

"You silly ass! Can we tell Loder of the Sixth that we've played footer instead of doing lines?"

"Bother Loder of the Sixth!"

"Will you let us in?" demanded Wharton, shaking the door-handle.

"No! I'm sorry, Wharton, but it can't be done!" answered Hoskins decidedly.

"I've got to get on with this; it's my 'Peace March,' you know. Hobson's jawing to Stewart in my study, and Scott's in the music-room, and old Prout is wagging his chin in the library with Quelch—you see, a chap must work somewhere. I'm sorry, but there it is! Go and play football, or tip-cat, or something! And, for mercy's sake, be quiet!"

"Well, my word!" said Wharton.

Pong!

The music-fork sounded again. Hoskins was evidently getting his pitch right once more after the interruption.

"You cheeky idiot!" shouted Nugent through the keyhole. "Do you think you have a right to bag another chap's study?"

"I can't worry about silly details like that, Nugent, when I've got work to do! If you knew anything about artists, you'd know that they never respect the rights of property, or rot of that kind! Why, old chap, I'd set your study on fire if it would help me with these minor ninths!"

"Would you?" gasped Nugent.

"Certainly! Now go away and be quiet. I sha'n't do any harm here; I'm only using your impot paper, and the ink's got upset over some of your books. There's nothing damaged but the clock!"

"You villain, what have you done to the clock?"

"Only pushed the poker into it! I can't compose with a clock ticking in my ears. I had to stop it. But I dare say you can get it mended later. I hope so, I'm sure!"

The Famous Five simply blinked. Hoskins had some weird manners and customs, as they knew. Hoskins was aware of it himself, and he put it down to his being a musical genius. The other fellows put it down to his being a born idiot. Opinions differed on the point.

A faint mumble was heard in the study. Hoskins was at work again, heedless of the Removites outside.

Bang!

"Are you still there?" howled Hoskins, as the door shook. "Go away! You unmusical ruffians—go away!"

"Will you let us in to do our lines?"

"Do them somewhere else! Go and eat coke! Travel! You crass idiots, you're mucking up my minor ninths!" howled Hoskins.

"I'll minor ninths you, you born dummy!" yelled Wharton. "Mind, you're going to be jolly well ragged for this!"

"Go away!"

"We'll scalp you!"

"Go away!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"You chaps had better go and do your lines in my study," he remarked. "There's no shifting Hoskins when he's started on his sharps and flats and things. I'm going down to get some footer before it's dark."

Harry Wharton bestowed a final kick on the door, reckless of the result to Hoskins' minor ninths, and went up the passage with Nugent. The lines for Loder were done in No. 13, while Bob and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh were making the most of what light was left on Little Side.

In Study No. 1 Hoskins of the Shell settled down to work in blissful peace. Fellows who passed the study occasionally heard pleased ejaculations within, which seemed to indicate that Claude Hoskins was getting on famously with his minor ninths.

At tea-time, the lines having been duly handed in to Loder of the Sixth, Wharton and Nugent applied at Study No. 1 again. An irritated howl answered them.

"Go away! Go away! Be quiet!"

"We'll scalp you!" yelled Nugent.

"Quiet!"

Kick! Thump! Bang!

The owners of the study retired defeated. They had tea in No. 14, with Johnny Bull and Squiff and Fisher T. Fish. After tea they borrowed a couple of cricket-stumps, and posted themselves outside Study No. 1—to wait for Hoskins to emerge. There was to be an hour of reckoning for the musical genius of Greyfriars.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Happy Hoskins!

"SPLENDID!"

That ejaculation, in tones of supreme satisfaction, came from within Study No. 1.

Evidently Hoskins was pleased.

Harry Wharton and Nugent exchanged glances, and grasped their stumps a little more tightly.

"The silly ass has finished!" murmured Wharton.

"He won't think it so splendid in a minute or two!" remarked Nugent.

There were footsteps audible from the study.

Hoskins was pacing to and fro, to the accompaniment of a low, melodious buzz—apparently going through his latest composition.

"Rotten!" he was heard to ejaculate suddenly.

"Right there, anyway!" murmured Nugent.

"Beastly! I simply must get a tuba somehow! Fancy a school without a tuba! Rotten!"

"What on earth's a tuba?" whispered Nugent.

"Something in the musical line, I suppose."

"That bit on the tuba will be ripping—simply ripping! But I've got to try it over, somehow," went on Hoskins' mutter. "I can borrow Gwynne's violoncello for the 'cello part. He won't lend it to me, but I can manage it when he's out. Angel's flute will come in useful; and I've got a clarinet. But I simply must hear that bit on the tuba, somehow! I really want a double-bass, too. What I really want is a whole set of orchestral instruments handy. I could get a set for about two hundred and fifty pounds. No good asking the pater for a sum like that—he would only stare."

"My hat!" murmured Wharton. "I should think he would!"

And Nugent chuckled.

They could picture the face of Mr.

Hoskins if his hopeful son asked him for two hundred and fifty pounds to purchase a set of instruments.

"I shall have to manage it for myself," went on Hoskins, unconscious of the hearers outside, who were thus becoming acquainted with his inmost thoughts. "They can scarcely offer me less than two hundred and fifty for my 'Peace March.' In fact, I won't take less!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I must try this over on the piano, somehow. If Scott's still in the music-room I'll scrag him!"

The study door was unlocked.

The moment the key turned, Harry Wharton grasped the door and drove it open, and strode into the study, followed by Nugent.

There was a howl from Claude Hoskins. His nose had had a narrow escape from the suddenly opened door.

"You ass!" he exclaimed.

Wharton closed the door. Hoskins wasn't to leave Study No. 1 till the cricket-stumps had done their duty.

"Now, you chump!" said Wharton.

"Oh, you can have your study now!" remarked Hoskins carelessly. "Sorry to have kept you out of it! Couldn't be helped, you know!"

"You'll be sorrier soon!" remarked the captain of the Remove.

"Much!" assented Nugent.

Hoskins did not heed.

He turned to the table, upon which were sheets and sheets of music, some of them with the ink still wet. He began to gather them up with great care.

As he leaned over the table he was remarkably well placed for punishment, and Wharton considered it a good idea to begin with the stump.

Whack!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Hoskins, jumping.

He spun round.

"You silly ass, what are you up to?" he roared. "Don't play your fag jokes on me. You've made me smudge my tuba part!"

"That's only a beginning," explained Wharton. "You're going to have a dozen like that."

"Look here, don't be a silly ass! I've said I'm sorry to have kept you out of your study. I'll pay for the clock to be mended—when I get some money. I haven't any at present; it's all gone on music-paper. Music-paper's a frightful price now!" said Hoskins. "Profiteering, I suppose. You'd think even a profiteer would have a limit, wouldn't you? I can understand them putting up prices on grub and clothes and things; but fancy making a chap pay high prices for his music-paper."

"Oh, my hat! Only fancy!" gasped Nugent.

"Why, I've had to do a lot of composing on impot-paper!" said Hoskins warmly. "Difficult, you know; but luckily I get that for nothing. I believe you dabble in music, Nugent? If you've got any music-paper, I'll borrow it, if you like."

"Look here, Hoskins——"

"I'll tell you what," said Hoskins. "It was rather hard on you fellows, being shut out of your own study; though, of course, it couldn't be helped in the circumstances. I'll make it up to you. If you like, you can come along to the music-room and hear me try this over."

Hoskins' manner was quite magnanimous as he made that generous offer.

Wharton and Nugent blinked at him.

Really, it was a little difficult to know what to say to Claude Hoskins.

"I don't mind telling you about it," went on Hoskins, as the chums of the Remove stood and stared. "This is my 'Peace March,' you know—to celebrate

peace. I'm practically throwing it away for——"

"Best thing you could do with it!" assented Wharton.

"I mean, I'm going to sell it for two hundred and fifty pounds—practically throwing it away!" explained Hoskins.

"Great pip! Who's going to buy it?" howled Nugent.

"Man in Courtfield."

"Wha-a-a-at?"

"Man named Blimper," said Hoskins.

"You—you—you've had an offer for it?" exclaimed Wharton blankly.

"Not exactly an offer. The man is advertising for a 'Peace March,'" Hoskins explained. "I'm going to send mine in. I shall ask two hundred and fifty pounds for it, because I require that amount to get a set of instruments. I don't care about the rotten money itself, of course. The composition will be worth, say, ten thousand pounds——"

"Ten thousand which?"

"Pounds; that is to say, if the value can be computed in money at all. It will be a splendid bargain for Mr. Blimper. But I don't care. What I want is to get before the public. Then commissions will roll in."

"Oh!"

Harry Wharton pitched his cricket-stump into a corner of the study. Nugent, grinning, followed his example.

Even after Hoskins' cool nerve in bagging their study they felt that they could not stump him. What he really wanted, in their opinion, was not a stumping, but a strait-jacket.

"Besides, though Blimper will bag the profits, I shall have the fame!" added Hoskins.

"Oh, you'll have the fame!" stuttered Wharton.

"Yes. I fully expect this 'Peace March' to make my name resound in all the corners of the kingdom. People talk about Beethoven in his later period! In future they will talk about Hoskins in his earlier period!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"I don't mind telling you," went on Hoskins, beaming, "that this march is about the best march that ever was composed."

"Oh!"

"The only drawback is, that I'm composing for the full orchestra, and I'm not fully acquainted with all the instruments," said Hoskins. "That's really a handicap."

"I—I suppose it is."

"It seems incredible that a set of instruments ain't provided at Greyfriars—simply incredible. But they ain't! I suppose you're not thinking of buying a tuba, Wharton?"

"Not exactly."

"That's at pity; I could borrow it, if you did," said Hoskins regretfully. "You're not thinking of buying a double-bass, Nugent?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"There isn't a chap in the school that's got a double-bass," said Hoskins. "People are talking about the public school system. I should jolly well think so, when there's a public school without a double-bass within the four walls of it. What I want to know is, how the Head expects me to compose for a double-bass when I don't have a chance of touching the blessed instrument?"

"Perhaps he doesn't expect you to?" suggested Wharton.

"But I can manage," said Hoskins, unheeding. "I've got a wonderful ear, you know."

"In size, do you mean?"

"No," roared Hoskins, "I don't mean in size!"

The genius of the Shell began to gather up the sheets again.

He paused suddenly.

A rapt look came over his face, and he grabbed a blank sheet of paper and a quill pen.

Wharton and Nugent stared at him as he began to dab mysterious-looking hieroglyphics on the paper.

"What are you up to now?" demanded Frank.

"Shush!"

"What?"

"Quiet! I've thought of a variation on the clarinet. Hush! I've got to get it down at once!"

"How long will it take?"

"Oh, dry up! Ten minutes, perhaps—perhaps an hour! What does it matter? Quiet! Go out of the study, will you? Don't slam the door."

"Well, my only hat!" said Harry Wharton. "This is where the chopper comes down, I think, Franky!"

"I think so," chuckled Nugent.

Claude Hoskins was deep in the variations for the clarinet when two pairs of hands were laid on him.

He was jerked away from the table, roaring.

The next moment he bumped on the carpet.

Wharton pinned him there, struggling, while Nugent rolled up the music and jammed it down the back of Hoskins' neck.

Then the genius of the Shell was lifted out of the study, and rolled along the passage, with a succession of terrific yells.

The Removites left him on the landing, and went back to their study, chuckling. Hoskins gasped and spluttered, in a state of dazed breathlessness. Those variations on the clarinet had to be postponed. For some time Claude Hoskins was doing variations on his top notes, with a choice of language that was more emphatic than elegant.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not Bunter!

"BUNTER!"

Gwynne of the Sixth looked in the junior Common-room later that evening with wrath on his countenance.

Patrick Gwynne was generally a very good-tempered fellow; but he could be wrathful on occasion, and this was evidently an occasion! The prefect looked, indeed, in a towering rage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Trouble for fatty!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Hobson of the Shell, who was there talking to Wharton, glanced round with a rather curious look at Gwynne, but he did not speak. Hobson seemed to have an idea of what was the matter.

"Bunter!" roared Gwynne.

Bunter of the Remove was sitting in an armchair reading a letter from his cousin at St. Jim's.

He did not seem to hear.

Gwynne's shout was certainly loud enough to be heard at a considerable distance; but the fat junior's thoughts were busy.

His eyes were lingering on a line in the letter he held in his fat hand.

"Unless you can manage a pound I don't see how I can keep this up any longer. I don't like St. Jim's as much as I thought I should, and—"

"Bunter!"

Still Wally Bunter did not heed.

For the letter he held in his hand was from Billy Bunter, who had gone to St. Jim's in his name, leaving him at Greyfriars. No one suspected, so far, the exchange the two Bunters had made; unless Snoop of the Remove had a vague suspicion. To all Greyfriars Wally Bunter was Billy Bunter; but, to judge

by the letter he held in his hand, it looked as if Billy Bunter, the genuine William George, wasn't quite satisfied with the result of the exchange of identity.

"BUNTER!"

Squiff reached out his foot and gave the fat junior a drive to call his attention.

"Ow-wow!"

Bunter of the Remove looked up at last.

Gwynne had sighted him now, and was striding towards him.

Wally Bunter jumped up.

Evidently Gwynne was wrathful, and he was the object of the prefect's wrath, though he could not guess the reason. He wondered whether some more of Billy Bunter's sins had come to light, to be laid to his charge.

"Hallo?" he said.

"You fat rascal!"

"Eh?"

"Where's my 'cello?"

"Your what?" ejaculated Wally.

"My violoncello!"

"How on earth should I know?" exclaimed Wally, in amazement. "I never even knew you had a violoncello."

"Don't tell lies!"

"Look here, Gwynne—"

"Niver even knew I had a 'cello, when I've thrashed you for taking it out of the case and mucking it up!" roared Gwynne.

"Oh!" gasped Wally.

"Lying again, Bunter," said Peter Todd warningly. "Why don't you give it up? You've told a lot of truth lately, and it hasn't hurt you. Why don't you stick to it?"

Wally did not answer that.

He had told the truth—he wasn't aware that Gwynne possessed a 'cello. Billy Bunter had been well aware of it, of course; and the Owl of the Remove had taken the liberty on one occasion of borrowing it to try his luck on it, with disastrous results to the 'cello. Bunter had broken a couple of strings and a peg, trodden on the bow, and thrown the owner of the instrument into a state that was more than Hunnish.

So it was no wonder that Gwynne of the Sixth came in search of Bunter when he missed the violoncello from his study.

He grasped the fat junior by the shoulder and shook him.

"Where's my 'cello?" he roared.

"I give it up," answered Wally.

"It's not in my study."

"Not my fault!"

"Have you been playing it again?"

"No. Stop shaking me, you ass!" roared Wally.

Shake, shake, shake!

"Sure, I want to know where that 'cello is," said Gwynne. "It was you that had it last time."

"It wasn't—I—I mean—"

"You lying porpoise!" roared Gwynne. "Didn't I catch you with it in me study, and didn't you fall over it when you saw me?"

"No, I didn't—That is to say—"

"Where is it now?"

"I don't know!" howled Wally. "Leggo, or I'll kick your shins! Bother your silly old 'cello, and you, too!"

Shake, shake, shake!

"I'm going to have that 'cello before it's damaged," said Gwynne, putting all his vigour, which was considerable, into the shaking. "Now, you fat spalpeen, where—"

"Yaroo! Leggo!"

"Sure, I'll lick ye—"

"Hold on, Gwynne!" exclaimed Hobson of the Shell. "I—I don't think Bunter's had your 'cello."

Gwynne stared round at him.

"What do you know about it, Hobson? Have you had it?"

"Nunne! But—"

"Well, then, it was Bunter! Bunter had it last time, and nearly ruined it. I'll lick the fat, cheeky fag till—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Hark!"

Gwynne ceased suddenly.

From the distance there came a sound of inharmonious wailing, energetic, though decidedly out of tune. It was the sound of a violoncello, performed upon by someone whose education as a 'celloist had been neglected.

"That sounds like your gidy 'cello, Gwynne," grinned Vernon-Smith.

"Faith, and it does! Some villain is playing it out of tune!" exclaimed Gwynne.

He released Bunter and rushed to the door.

"You silly ass!" howled Bunter, gasping for breath and setting his collar straight.

There was a shout from Bob Cherry.

"Hoskins, of course! It's Hoskins!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I thought it was!" mumbled James Hobson. "He said he was going— Oh, my hat, Gwynne will slaughter him!"

"Serve him right for kicking up that awful row with it!" said the Bounder.

"The rowfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Hoskins is producing horrid discords!"

"That may be the latest thing in modern music," grinned Bob Cherry.

"You have to produce a horrid row, or you're old-fashioned! He may be playing Debussy or Richard Strauss. Let's go and see Gwynne slaughter him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a rush from the Common-room on the track of Patrick Gwynne. Apparently the juniors looked on the slaughter of Claude Hoskins in the light of an entertainment.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Chance of a Lifetime!

BANG!

Gwynne of the Sixth had reached the door of the music-room, from which the weird strains proceeded. Someone inside that apartment was sawing away at the 'cello as if for a wager.

Possibly the amateur 'celloist thought that he was eliciting something resembling a tune. But he wasn't! The 'cello was growling and howling with a horrid concatenation of discordant sounds.

Gwynne had wrenched at the door, but it was locked inside. Hoskins had a way of locking the door when he was being musical. It was safer.

"Is that my 'cello?" roared Gwynne.

"Hallo!"

"Open this dure!"

"Go away!"

"Hoskins, you cheeky fag, you've got my 'cello!"

"I had to borrow it, Gwynne, as I haven't one of my own. I expect to have a whole set of orchestral instruments shortly. At present I'm bound to borrow your 'cello."

"You—you—you—"

"It's all right, Gwynne! When I get my set I'll lend them to you if you like—if you're careful with them, of course."

"Will you open this dure?"

"Not at present. I'm trying over the 'cello part in my 'Peace March.'"

"I'll 'Peace March' you!" yelled Gwynne. "I'll squash you! I'll pulverise you! I'll spifficate you!"

"Go away!"

"What?"

"You're putting me out! It's all

right, Gwynne! I sha'n't hurt the 'cello!"

"Sure, I want it for me practice," shouted the Sixth-Former.

"I suppose you're not ass enough, Gwynne, to set your practice on a par with my composing?"

"Why, I—I—I—"

Gwynne stuttered with wrath.

He was a prefect of the Sixth, and Hoskins was a junior in the Shell. But such distinctions mattered nothing to the amateur musician. Hoskins would have borrowed the 'cello if it had belonged to the Head himself.

"Are you going to open this dure, Hoskins?" breathed Gwynne at last.

"Certainly not till I've finished!"

"I tell you I want my 'cello to practise!"

"You're simply repeating yourself, Gwynne. You've said that before!"

"I—I—I—"

"Do go away and be quiet! You don't seem to have any consideration for a fellow doing a difficult bit of music."

"Oh, howly mother av Moses!" gasped Gwynne.

He bestowed a tremendous kick on the door, and retired. There was no getting at Claude Hoskins without breaking in the door of the music-room, and that was not to be thought of. But Gwynne of the Sixth was promising all sorts of things to Hoskins when they came to close quarters.

Hobson of the Shell tapped at the door. He was rather alarmed for his chum.

"Hosky, old man," he said through the keyhole.

"Hallo?"

"Let me take the 'cello back to Gwynne's study, old fellow. He's in an awful wax!"

"I've not finished with it, Hobby."

"But it's his, you know."

"What rot! What difference does that make?"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I should have thought it made a little bit of difference, myself."

"Not to a giddy musician like Hoskins!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"I'm getting on fine!" went on Hoskins cheerfully. "Listen to this bit, Hobby! You can hear it out there. It's a bit of counterpoint I'm introducing on the 'cello."

A weird and wild wailing came from within the music-room.

It might have been counterpoint, but if so it was certainly in the style of the very latest and most modern German composers. It drove the juniors from the door in a terrific hurry. They stopped their ears and fled.

"There!" exclaimed Hoskins at last.

"What do you think of that, Hobby?"

But answer came there none. James Hobson was far away.

Harry Wharton & Co. escaped into the Common-room and closed the door. The hoarse wailing of the 'cello was faint in the distance now.

"My only hat!" murmured Nugent. "What will life be like if Hosky ever gets his full set of instruments! Fancy him on the double-bass!"

"And the tuba!" said Wharton, laughing.

"Oh, my hat!"

"And the cymbals and the giddy clarinet!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "And the big drum!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's Hoskins playing this game for?" asked Skinner. "He used to thump out his rot on the piano. Now he seems to be taking in the whole menagerie."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"He seems to be composing a march for full orchestra, to sell to a man in Courtfield named Blimper," he

answered. "The man has advertised for a Peace March, Hoskins says. I hardly think he's advertising for one like Hosky's."

"He will get more than he's advertised for if he gets that!" chuckled Squiff.

"I don't think he'll get it. Hoskins doesn't mean to let it go under two hundred and fifty pounds."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I dare say it's worth it," said Hobson of the Shell loyally. "Hoskins is awfully clever at music. I don't understand much of what he says myself, but he can talk for hours, and use awfully jaw-cracking words. He's jolly clever, you know!"

The juniors chuckled. James Hobson admired his musical chum immensely; but his admiration was chiefly founded upon the fact that he didn't understand what Hoskins was driving at.

Hobson often had an engagement elsewhere when Hoskins was playing the clarinet in the study they shared, but that did not detract from his admira-

"Manuscripts to be submitted to Blimper & Co., Music Publishers, High Street, Courtfield."

"That'll start a lot of amateur Wagners on the go!" remarked Vernon-Smith, with a grin. "It's the chance of a lifetime for Hoskins. I wonder whether it's genuine. Of course, Hoskins wouldn't think of a little thing like that!"

"Blessed if I should, either," said Harry Wharton. "I suppose it's genuine enough. It looks like it. What's the matter with it, Smithy?"

The Bounder smiled.

"Well, there's lots of advertisements like that," he answered. "Music publishers who really want a grand march aren't likely to advertise for one in a country-town paper, I should think. They'll be flooded with a lot of amateur rubbish they couldn't possibly use; and I don't suppose a real composer would waste his time on a spec like that."

"But they must want a march, if they



Hoskins sat on the music-stool, his head bent a little, his artistic curl hanging over his eyes, and he looked surprised at first, then wondering, and then enraptured. Evidently Claude Hoskins found something agreeable in the dreadful noises Bunter was producing from the flute.

tion. He attributed it to his own want of ear.

Indeed, he would not have been at all surprised if Hoskins had received a handsome cheque some day for some of his compositions. And he quite respected Claude for his declared intention of refusing the O.B.E. when it was offered to him. The date of the offer was as yet uncertain.

"Here's the advertisement," said Wally Bunter.

There was a crowding at once round the fat junior, who was the happy possessor of a copy of the "Courtfield Times."

The juniors read the advertisement with much curiosity. It was this that had started Claude Hoskins on his new "stunt." It ran:

"TO COMPOSERS!"

"We are prepared to receive and consider, and if suitable, publish on equitable terms, a Grand March for full orchestra, to be entitled 'The Victory Peace March.'

advertise for one," said Hobson of the Shell.

"More likely they want a mug," answered the Bounder.

"I don't see it! You're rather an ass, Smithy!"

"Right-ho! I'm an ass, if you like," agreed the Bounder. "Anyhow, I don't want to dash Hosky's hopes. Let him get on with his merry march and finish it—if he doesn't get assassinated before the end!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

When Harry Wharton & Co. were shepherd off to the Remove dormitory that night by Wingate, they heard sounds of uproar from the Shell dormitory. The voice of Gwynne of the Sixth was heard—and also the voice of Claude Hoskins, raised in anguish. And there was a sound of an ashplant.

"Poor old Hosky!" murmured Bob Cherry. "There are a lot of difficulties in the way of a musical genius!"

Gwynne was looking rather red and breathless as he came away from the

Shell dormitory; but he had a satisfied look. Whether Claude Hoskins was equally satisfied the Remove fellows did not know; but they thought it improbable.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Is Required!

"BOB CHERRY!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob cheerily.

"I want you to do me a favour," said Hoskins.

"Give it a name, old nut!" answered Bob. "Anything but listen to your music!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the following day, and the Remove had just been dismissed after morning lessons. The Shell were already out, and Claude Hoskins was waiting in the corridor for the Remove.

"You could lick Angel of the Fourth, I believe?" went on Hoskins, unheeding Bob's remark.

Bob stared.

"I dare say I could," he answered. "Snoop licked him once, so I suppose I could. Why?"

"Then, come on!" said Hoskins, taking Bob's arm.

"Hold on, though—come on where?"

"To see Angel."

"What for?"

"To lick him, of course!" answered Hoskins impatiently. "Haven't I just told you?"

Bob Cherry jerked his arm away. He did not like Aubrey Angel of the Fourth by any means, and had a considerable contempt for him, but he was not disposed to commit assault and battery upon the dandy of the Fourth without just cause.

"Suppose you explain first what I'm to lick him for?" he suggested. "Do you think I'm a blessed German conscript, that can be set on anybody like a dog?"

"He's a sneaking worm!"

"Very likely; but I'm not out to lick all the sneaking worms in the wide world," answered Bob. "Why don't you lick him yourself, if you want him licked?"

"I would, only fighting has a disturbing effect on me, and spoils my form for composition," explained Hoskins. "I've got to keep clear of scraps till I've finished my 'Peace March'."

"Why not ask your pal Hobson, then?" inquired Harry Wharton.

"I've asked him," said Hoskins warily, "and he's refused! He says that Angel has a right to refuse to play his flute for me, if he chooses!"

"Wha-a-a-at?"

"And hasn't he?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Certainly not! I've been composing quite a difficult part for the flute," explained Hoskins patiently. "I've asked Angel to play it over—I should want it played over dozens of times, of course. Angel plays the flute fairly well—not so well as I want, but well enough when I can't get anything better. I've explained that to him. I should want him most of the evening, and some other evenings. He's refused for some reason to—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sheer selfishness. I suppose," said Hoskins. "He made some insulting remarks about my music, too. But, of course, he's got to do it. What's the good of my writing a flute-part without hearing it tried over on the instrument? Of course, I can do it in my head; but it's ever so much better to have it played over. Angel ought to feel honoured. Instead of that, he has refused, as well as saying rude and ill-

bred things about my composing. A jolly good licking will bring him to his senses!"

Bob Cherry stared at the Shell fellow blankly.

This seemed rather extraordinary, even in Claude Hoskins.

"So Angel's to be licked till he consents to play your stuff over on his flute?" he ejaculated.

"That's it!"

"Oh crumbs! And you've selected me for the job?"

"Just so! I asked Hobson first, but he wouldn't. It wasn't chummy; but there you are, he wouldn't! So I had to find some prize-fighter sort of chap—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Prize-fighter sort of chap to do it. Come on!"

Bob Cherry gasped.

"So I'm a prize-fighter sort of chap, am I?" he breathed.

"That's it! Come on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Harry Wharton. "Now, you know what you are, Bob!"

"My—my hat! I'll spifflicate him!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I'll prize-fighter sort of chap him! Hoskins, you howling idiot—"

"You're wasting time," said Hoskins impatiently. "Do come on! I want you to thrash Angel before dinner. Then he'll play the flute for me before afternoon classes. If he won't, you can thrash him after dinner. Sec?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, I don't quite see!" answered Bob, in great wrath. "I'm not going to thrash Angel, Hoskins—"

"Now, look here, Cherry—"

"But I'm going to thrash you!"

"Wha-at?"

"And that's for a beginning!"

"Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hoskins, apparently greatly astonished, as well as annoyed, backed away as Bob Cherry advanced on him, giving him a series of taps on his features.

"Stop it!" gasped Hoskins. "Wharrer you at? What's the matter? I wasn't asking you to fight me, you idiot! I was asking you to fight Angel of the Fourth— Yaroooooh!"

Bump!

A rather heavy tap on the chest landed Claude Hoskins in a sitting posture on the floor.

He sat there and gasped.

"Want any more?" demanded Bob wrathfully. "I'm a prize-fighter sort of chap, you know, so I can give you all you want!"

"Yow-ow-ow! You silly ass, you don't understand. I want you to lick Angel—not me!" gasped Hoskins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. strolled out into the quadrangle, leaving the unfortunate composer still gasping on the floor. Bob Cherry was looking rather ruffled. Certainly, the genius of the Shell had been rather lacking in tact.

Wally Bunter kindly came along to give the hapless musician a hand-up. Hoskins staggered to his feet, gasping.

"The silly chump!" he stuttered. "Fancy completely misunderstanding a fellow like that! I was asking him to thrash Angel, and he pitched into me instead! Did you ever hear of such a silly idiot?"

Wally Bunter chuckled.

"It's not a laughing matter!" snapped Hoskins. "I'd go after him and mop up the quad with him, only it would put me off my form for composing. It's necessary to keep perfectly calm and equable to turn out good work. By the way, Bunter—"

"Anything I can do?" grinned Wally.

"Yes," said Hoskins, quite cordially. "You're a silly fat duffer, of course—"

"Eh?"

"Nobody would think you were a fighting-man, to see you—fat, and clumsy, and in blinkers," continued Hoskins. "But I remember now you licked Angel of the Fourth once. Well, if you did it once you could do it again. Will you?"

"No, you silly ass!" answered Wally. "I won't!"

"Why not?"

"Ha, ha! Because I won't," said Wally chuckling. "But I'll tell you what I will do, if you like. I'll play the flute for you."

Hoskins snorted.

"Don't be an ass!" he answered.

"You can't play the flute!"

"But I can, old nut, pretty well. If you've got a flute, I'll play it for you—not all the evening, though."

Hoskins regarded him very doubtfully. Bunter of the Remove was supposed to be a duffer at all things; but Hoskins remembered that of late Bunter had not been living up to that character. He had shown himself a good swimmer and a good footballer, as well as a good fighting-man, much to the astonishment of all the Remove. It was barely possible that he had musical gifts as well.

"Well, I'll give you a trial," said Hoskins, after consideration. "Come to the music-room after dinner. Got a flute?"

"No; I didn't bring it to Greyfriars."

"You're such a bragging ass!" said Hoskins doubtfully. "I don't suppose you really know one end of a flute from the other!"

"Look here—"

"If you're spoofing me, I'll scalp you!"

"Why, you—"

"Anyhow, come to the music-room after dinner, and we'll see. I'll have a flute ready for you, and if you can't play it, I'll jolly well bump you till you burst!"

Wally Bunter glared at him over Billy Bunter's glasses. This way of accepting his kind offer was apparently not at all to his taste.

"You silly ass!" he exclaimed. "I won't come to the music-room, and you can go and eat coke!"

And the fat junior rolled out into the quadrangle, leaving Claude Hoskins staring.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a March!

AFTER dinner Harry Wharton & Co. were in the quadrangle, when Hoskins of the Shell bore down upon them. Five voices addressed Claude Hoskins in unison.

"No, thanks!"

Hoskins stared at them.

"No what?" he asked. "What do you mean?"

"Weren't you going to ask us to hear your march?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"You duffer, no!" snapped Hoskins. "I haven't finished it yet. I was going to ask you if any of you can play the flute."

"I can play the scale on it," said Wharton, laughing.

"What's the good of that?" grunted Hoskins. "Don't you play the flute, Nugent? You dabble in music. You ought to learn the flute."

"Should I master it in time to help you out with your march?" asked Nugent, with a grin. "If not, what's the use?"

"Yes, that's very true," assented Hoskins. "But the trouble is, I want a flautist. I simply must have a flautist. I'm introducing a very considerable flute part in my 'Victory Peace March.' And I

don't play the dashed thing myself, you know. I play the 'cello all right!"

"My hat! Do you?"

"And the clarinet a treat!"

"A treat for deaf men!" murmured Bob Cherry. "But they'd have to be very deaf to enjoy it thoroughly."

"And I'm a master of the piano," continued the modest musician. "I may say that nobody at Greyfriars plays the piano as I do."

"Quite right!" assented Nugent.

"True, O king!"

"But the esteemed Gosling approaches it," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Gosling?" repeated Claude Hoskins. "The porter? He doesn't play the piano, does he?"

"Perhaps not; but when he is breaking coke it is very like the esteemed piano-playing of the ludicrous Hoskins."

"Oh, you're a silly chump!" said Hoskins, regarding the Nabob of Bhanipur with much disfavour. "I suppose in your country they play tom-toms and things. You don't know anything about music. But, as I was saying, I play the piano, and the clarinet, and the 'cello quite well, but I haven't had much practice with the flute. I want a flautist."

"Get somebody to lick Angel," suggested Nugent, with a grin.

"I've asked several fellows, and they all refuse. It's dashed hard lines on a chap who's trying to make his school famous," said Hoskins, more in sorrow than in anger. "In future days Greyfriars will be known as the place where I was trained—"

"Ye gods!"

"It will reflect no end of credit on the school, and yet I'm stopped by these paltry difficulties at the very beginning of my career. But it's always so with musical geniuses!" said Hoskins bitterly. "Look at Mozart—he never even had enough to eat! Not that Mozart's music is on a level with mine, of course—I don't mean that. Poor old Mozart would look pretty green if he could hear my march."

"So would anybody, I should think—and blue and crimson, too!" said Bob Cherry.

"Fathead! Do any of you chaps know a chap who's got a tuba?"

"Certainly," said Bob.

Hoskins brightened up.

"Near Greyfriars?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes, in the village."

"Who is it?"

"Jones, the greengrocer."

"My only hat! I never knew the greengrocer was musical!" exclaimed Hoskins. "Are you sure, Cherry?"

"I don't know about his being musical, but I know he's got lots of tubers," said Bob. "He's got every kind of potato, I believe."

"You silly ass!" shrieked Hoskins. "I didn't say a tuber; I said a tuba!"

"Well, that's lucid, at all events. What's the difference?"

Claude Hoskins did not undertake to explain to Bob the difference between a tuba and a tuber. He snorted.

"You're supposed to get music here, if you pay extra for it," he said. "And—would anybody believe it?—there's not a tuba in the school!"

"The tuba's that thing in the orchestra that grunts like a rhinoceros, isn't it?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I dare say that's how you'd describe it," answered Hoskins, with a sniff. "Fine effects can be produced on the tuba. Wagner uses it a good deal. I've got quite a new idea about using the tuba. The whole plan of my 'Victory Peace March' is a corker. I don't mind saying so plain. I know what I can do, and there's no false modesty about me."

"There isn't!" agreed the Famous Five cordially. "Not a bit—not even a little bit!"

"You see," went on Hoskins, "my march isn't going to be merely a row—like Wagner's march in 'Tannhauser,' for example. Nor mere thumping and bumping like the Burgher's March in the 'Meistersinger.'"

"Something a bit livelier?" suggested Bob Cherry. "Something like Sousa—"

Hoskins shrieked. "Eh? Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter now?" exclaimed Bob, in astonishment.

"You silly chump!" shrieked Hoskins. "What do you mean by talking about Sousa when I'm talking about music?"

"Oh!"

"My composition," resumed Hoskins, more calmly, "will express a good deal more than a mere march of triumph. Of course, there'll be that in it—triumph over the Huns. And a beautiful little pastoral bit on the piccolo—expressive of peace and serenity. But I'm working in more than that. There'll be the Peace Conference—"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Wharton. "Can you put the Peace Conference into music?"

"And the strikes and riots!" said Hoskins.

"Great pip! In music?"

"Certainly. Anything can be expressed in music. A sort of incessant running chirping on the piccolo, to indicate the chattering of the politicians at the Conference—see? And a deep, rolling swell from the tuba and the double-bass, picturing the riots and the strikes, and discontent, and all that. You catch the idea? Like a canary bird chirping while a house is on fire. That's the effect I want to catch."

"My word!" murmured Bob. "The merry old politicians would feel no end flattered at being compared to canaries chirping while a house is on fire. But perhaps they won't hear your march, Hosky."

"The perhapsfulness is terrific!"

"And I've written a splendid bit for the flute," continued Hoskins. "I don't want to brag—"

"You don't?" ejaculated Bob.

"No," roared Hoskins. "I don't! But I must say that my bit for the flute is a corker—a regular corker. It might remind you a bit of the obbligate in 'Lucia.' But it's better—no comparison, in fact. I've introduced some rather daring effects. But I must have a flautist to play them over for me. That's essential. I could hire one, of course, but it would cost pounds. I suppose you chaps can't lend me ten pounds? I'll let you have it back out of what I get for the march."

"Tenpence do?"

"No, you ass!"

"Then I'm afraid we can't oblige."

"I shall have to try Bunter, then."

"Bunter!" yelled the Famous Five.

"Bunter a flautist!"

"Well, he told me he could play the flute. But he's got offended about something—perhaps because I called him a bragging ass—"

"Well, a very sensitive chap might be offended at that, perhaps!" said Bob Cherry gravely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I'm going to try him. Will you chaps find him and bring him to the music-room?" asked Hoskins. "I've got to bag that piano before that beast Scott gets hold of it. You know what Scott is. He plays terrific rot, and never leaves off once he's started."

"Sure you're speaking of Scott?" asked Wharton laughing. "There's a chap in the Shell who answers to that description!"

"Eh? I don't know whom you mean, then!" said Hoskins. "But never mind! Will you find Bunter and bring him along? Drag him, if he won't come! I can't be baulked because he mayn't want to play. Tell him I've got Angel's flute. It's a really good one."

"Does Angel know?" grinned Bob.

"Bother Angel! Will you bring Bunter?"

"Oh, yes, rather! If Bunter's a flautist, we'll hear him flaut!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five obligingly went in search of Bunter, while Hoskins hurried away to secure the music-room before Scott of the Fourth could forestall him.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Hoskins is Pleased!

"BUNTY!"

"My fat tulip!"

"Falstaff, you're wanted!"

Wally Bunter looked up.

Wally had had a very good dinner. He enjoyed a good dinner almost as much as his cousin Billy did, and he was taking his ease on a bench under the trees in the quad when the Famous Five spotted him and bore down on him.

"What's wanted?" he yawned.

"You are!" answered Bob Cherry. "We hear that you're a great musician, among your many gifts."

"Bosh! I play the flute a little," said Wally.

"The littleness is probably great!" remarked the nabob.

"You've never let on before that you played the flute, Billy," said Harry Wharton, eyeing the fat junior curiously. "You seem to have saved up all your wonderful gifts to surprise us with them all at once."

Wally grinned.

He wondered whether the cumulative effect, so to speak, of all these surprises would some day make the juniors suspect that it was not Billy Bunter they had to deal with at all.

"Well, Hoskins is waiting for you in the music-room," said Nugent. "He's bagged the piano from Scott, and a flute from Aubrey Angel, and he's ready to begin making day hideous. So come on!"

"Hoskins is a silly chump!" grunted Bunter.

"Passed unanimously," said Bob. "But he's authorised us to carry you if you won't come! He hasn't lent us a steam crane, though, so we sha'n't do it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rot!" said Bunter, rising. "I'll come; I don't mind. I don't know whether I can play Hoskins' stuff, though. I don't believe he can write for the flute."

The fat junior trotted away with the Famous Five, who all accompanied him to the music-room.

As a rule, wild horses would not have dragged them to the music-room when Claude Hoskins was there; but they were curious to see Bunter as a flautist. It was very odd, if Bunter could play the flute, that they had never heard of it before. Billy Bunter was much given to bragging about the things he couldn't do; certainly not to keeping dark the things he could do.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that an air-raid delayed in transit?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as they approached Hoskins' stronghold.

It really sounded a great deal like one. Claude Hoskins was able to produce, from a grand piano, sounds of such horrid discord that a modern German composer

would have turned green with envy if he had heard them.

The uproar ceased as the Famous Five came in with Bunter, much to their relief.

"Oh, here you are!" said Hoskins. "There's Angel's flute, Bunter. Let's see what you can do before we begin."

Bob Cherry grinned. He hadn't the least faith in Bunter's powers as a flautist, and his want of faith was shared by the others. Bunter blinked at them over his glasses.

"You don't think I can play?" he asked.

"Ahem!"

Bunter sniffed.

"You think it's just swank—what?" he asked.

"Well, you see, you're such an awful swanker, Billy," said Wharton. "But we're prepared to be convinced. There's the merry flute. Pile in!"

"Keep the door open!" murmured Bob.

"What do you want the door open for?" asked Hoskins.

"Might be necessary to bolt!"

"I'm jolly well going to lick Bunter if he can't play!" declared Hoskins. "I can't be fooled about. Now, then, Bunter, try it on!"

Bunter took up Angel's flute, which was a very handsome and expensive one, like most of Aubrey Angel's belongings. His round eyes glimmered over his glasses as he examined it. It looked as if he knew a good instrument when he saw one, and he certainly seemed pleased with this.

"You have to make a queer mouth to begin," said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "Sort of tie your face up in a sailor's knot!"

"Bosh!" said Wally.

And he began.

A shrill shriek came from the flute, and the juniors jumped. It was followed by another and another.

The shrieks were in all tones except agreeable ones, and the juniors turned almost pale as they listened.

But Hoskins didn't!

Hoskins sat on the music-stool, his head bent a little, his artistic curl hanging over his eyes, and he looked surprised at first, then wondering, and then enraptured. Evidently Claude Hoskins found something agreeable in the dreadful noises Bunter was producing from the flute.

"Great pip! I can't stand this!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Come on!"

He rushed for the door, with his chums at his heels.

Wild shrieks from the flute followed the Famous Five as they fled. They stopped their ears and raced along the corridor.

Their hurried footsteps died away in the distance.

Then Wally took the flute from his mouth and grinned at Hoskins.

"Mado 'em wriggle a bit—what?" he remarked. "That was for not believing that I could play the flute."

Hoskins did not even hear him. He beamed rapturously on the fat junior.

"Splendid!" he exclaimed.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Gorgeous!"

Wally blinked at him.

"Goog-goog-gorgeous!" he repeated.

"Amazing!" said Hoskins breathlessly.

"Oh, my only aunt!" stuttered Wally.

He stared blankly at Hoskins. He had been producing discordant shrieks on the flute as a punishment for the Famous Five's doubt in his powers. He had driven them away in horror. Certainly he had not expected this enthusiastic praise from Hoskins for the horrid sounds he had been producing.

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"What piece was that?" continued Hoskins. "Is it Debussy?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"No, it's too advanced for Debussy," agreed Hoskins. "Is it Richard Strauss?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Wally. "No, it's not Richard Strauss."

"Whose was it, then?" asked Hoskins. "I thought I was pretty well up in modern composers; but that's new to me. It's not Wagner, I think."

"Ha, ha! Not Wagner!" agreed Wally.

"Not Elgar!" exclaimed Hoskins. "Elgar couldn't do it!"

"I don't think he could, Hosky. I hope he couldn't, anyway."

"Then whose work was it?" exclaimed Hoskins, forgetting even his "Victory Peace March" in his eagerness to know. Wally nearly doubled up.

"I don't see anything to chortle at!" said Hoskins, eyeing him in surprise. "I simply asked you who was the composer of that fantasia you played."

"Ha, ha, ha! I wasn't playing a fantasia, or anything else!" yelled Wally. "It wasn't Wagner, or Debussy, or Richard Strauss. I was only making the unholyest row it was possible to make on a flute, to make those fellows sit up."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Hoskins impatiently. "I tell you it was ripping! In the very latest style, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, tell me, who was the composer?"

"Ha, ha! I was!"

Read
'THE RIVAL ENTERTAINERS!'
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Story of Tom Merry & Co.
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"Gammon!" said Hoskins. "I don't see why you can't tell me. It's not unlike some of the effects I've introduced into my 'Peace March.' Blessed if I knew you were such a flautist, Bunter; playing a difficult composition like that from memory!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll do," said Hoskins. "Now chuck your eye over this."

He turned to the piano again. There was a stack of scribbled music-paper on the desk. It looked as if innumerable flies, after swimming in ink, had walked over the paper several times. But apparently the mysterious signs conveyed some meaning to Hoskins' musical mind.

"Now, here's your part," said Hoskins. "I've got to thump out the rest on the piano. It's a crying shame that I can't have a full orchestra at my orders; but I haven't. I'll do the best I can on the piano, while you put in the flute. See?"

"I see!" grinned Wally.

And they started.

What seemed like a ferocious air-raid was soon in progress. Wally Bunter's round eyes grew rounder as he played the flute part. The sounds he produced were a good deal like the shrieks he had routed the Famous Five with. But he played as it was written, and Hoskins was satisfied. Claude's face was simply beaming when he ceased thumping at last.

"Splendid!" he said. "You can play the flute, and no mistake! Now, I ask you, Bunter, did you ever hear anything like that?"

"Never!" said Wally truthfully.

"Have you ever come across a flute part written like that?"

"Never!"

"And look at this—this is where the oboes come in," said Hoskins. "Just listen once more."

The air-raid recommenced.

"There!" gasped Hoskins, when he had finished. "What do you think of that?"

But there was no reply.

Wally Bunter had vanished. As a statesman once remarked, there was a limit to human endurance. And Wally had reached it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Great Expectations!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

The Famous Five halted as they met Claude Hoskins near the gates on the following day.

Hoskins had a parcel under his arm—a good-sized parcel, wrapped carefully in brown paper, tied up, and sealed with big blobs of red sealing-wax. It was addressed, and it was labelled, and evidently intended for the post.

Hoskins smiled genially at the chums of the Remove.

"Finished at last!" he said.

"And that's the 'Victory Peace March'?" asked Wharton, looking at the bulky parcel, and suppressing a grin.

"That's it."

"Congratulations!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"It's been hard work," said Hoskins.

"Even now I'm not wholly satisfied with the part I've written for the cor Anglais. Still, it's original. Blimper will see that it's original."

"Not the slightest doubt about that," said Johnny Bull. "I'd bet anything it's original enough!"

"The originality is probably terrific!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I don't know this man Blimper," went on Hoskins. "But as he's a music publisher I suppose he knows music when he sees it. If he does, I'm all right. I'm pretty certain nobody else is sending him a march like this."

"I think that's a cert!" agreed Bob Cherry. "I don't suppose there's anybody else who could do it, Hosky."

"Quite right! I don't want to brag, but the actual fact is, that there are very few musicians like me," said Hoskins. "In fact, in composing this very march I've developed powers that surprised myself. Look at the oboe part, for instance. I've used the oboes as they've never been used before. I can tell you, it would make old Wagner stare!"

"I'm sure it would!"

"Make him turn in his grave, I dare say," murmured Nugent.

"I sha'n't let it go under two hundred and fifty pounds," continued Hoskins. "That's practically giving it away. Of course, I may be offered a thousand. If so, I shall accept it."

"I—I should!" gasped Wharton.

"I dare say it will seem rather queer to you kids to see the name of Greyfriars in all the papers," said Hoskins, smiling. "The poor old school hasn't produced much so far—county cricketers, and some International footballers, and an author, and a poet or two, and a few painters. But this time, I feel convinced, Greyfriars is going to become really famous. You fellows, in later life, will be able to say to people that you were at school with me."

"Oh, my hat! Shall we?"

"That will be rather a distinction," said Wharton, as gravely as he could.

"That's it. A distinction!" assented Hoskins. "Like having been at school with Homer or Shakespeare, you know."

"Oh!"

"I shall probably be offered medals and things. Most likely they'll want to give me a title," remarked Hoskins. "I shall refuse the O.B.E. I've decided on that already."

"Nothing like making up your mind in time," said Bob.

"If it's a question of being knighted, I don't know," said Hoskins thoughtfully. "Of course, knighthoods are not nowadays—you buy them. Still, a knighthood conferred for a thing like this stands on a rather different footing. Don't you think so?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Of—of course."

"The fact is, I haven't quite decided whether I shall refuse the knighthood, if offered."

"If!" murmured Bob.

"People laugh at titles now, because any bounder can get one," said Hoskins. "But they always put a few decent names in the Honours List, to make it look as respectable as possible. That's what they'll want to do with mine, of course. The question is, shall I let them?"

And Hoskins looked at the Famous Five with owl-like gravity. The chums of the Remove looked as grave as they could.

"Don't accept anything under a dukedom," suggested Bob Cherry. "I've heard that the dukeries are still reserved for really distinguished people."

Hoskins nodded.

"That's a good suggestion," he replied. "I shall turn that over in my mind. Well, I must be getting along, to catch the post before school. Ta-ta!"

And Hoskins trotted away cheerfully towards Friardale with his big bundle.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

With heroic efforts they did not laugh till Claude Hoskins was out of hearing.

Then they roared.

"Dear old Hosky!" murmured Bob Cherry. "He believes in counting his chickens early enough, doesn't he? It will be rather a catch having a duke in the Shell at Greyfriars. I should certainly refuse the O.B.E.—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Claude Hoskins was rather late for afternoon classes, and Mr. Hacker of the Shell gave him fifty lines.

Hoskins smiled in a superior way.

He was amused.

Here was Mr. Hacker giving him lines just as if he were a common or garden Shell fellow, totally oblivious of the fact that Fame was about to burst in dazzling glory on Hosky's head, and on Greyfriars, because he belonged to it.

Even Mr. Hacker himself would come in for a share of reflected glory, from having been Hoskins' Form-master.

Hoskins could imagine Mr. Hacker remarking—later:

"Yes, the boy was in my Form—my brightest pupil. Bless me, didn't you know that Hoskins—the celebrated Claude Hoskins, I mean—was in my Form in his school days? Oh, certainly!"

And Mr. Hacker would be a person of consequence, because of that, and would no doubt pat himself considerably on the back!

son. "I'm sure it takes the cake, Hosky. Still, hadn't you better do your prep?"

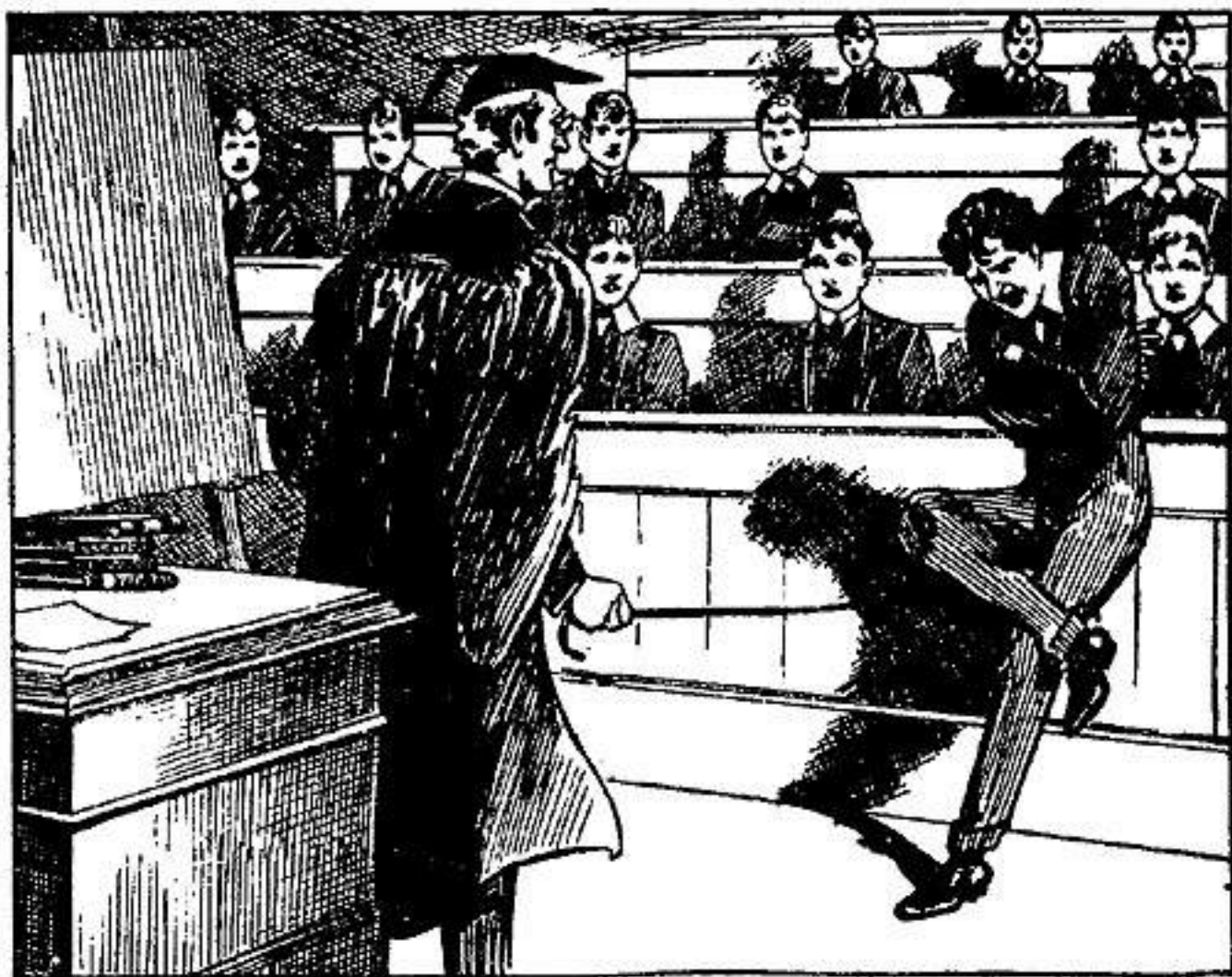
"The fact is, when I'm a recognised composer, I sha'n't do much school work. It's really a waste of time for a fellow like me. In fact, I think I shall leave Greyfriars and go to a music college."

"Oh, I say!"

"I shall be sorry to part with you, old chap," said Hoskins. "But, of course, I sha'n't forget old friends when I'm famous. I shall remember how you encouraged me in my early days, Hobby. You're really the only chap at Greyfriars who likes to listen to my music. The others are all Philistines."

Hobson looked rather guilty. He had a feeling that, if Hosky had known the actual facts, he would have classed Hobby also among the Philistines.

"I may get a letter from them tomorrow," said Hoskins, rising and walking about the study. "They can't fail to be struck, as soon as they see the stuff. Even the opening bars are striking. I get an effect on the oboes—"



Mr. Hacker didn't know that Hoskins was expecting a new instrument; and he didn't know what that meant to an enthusiastic musician. Mr. Hacker used his cane twice that morning, and on each occasion Claude Hoskins had the benefit of it.

With such reflections in his mind, Hoskins could afford to smile when he received fifty lines from the still unconscious Mr. Hacker.

After lessons that day Hoskins might have been seen—and, in fact, was seen—walking on air.

He held his head very high, and smiled tolerantly at fellows who spoke to him, and answered absent-mindedly.

It was rather difficult for him to bring his mind down to mundane matters. He toyed with his prep in the study that evening.

"Better pile in, old chap!" James Hobson ventured to suggest. "You know what old Hacker is in the morning."

"The fact is I can't put my mind into it," said Hoskins. "Blimper's have my music by this time, Hobby."

"I hope they'll print it, old fellow."

"Not much doubt about that, I think," said Hoskins, with a smile. "I hardly think they'll be offered anything else like it."

"I'm sure not," said the loyal Hob-

"What about prep, old chap?"

"Oh, bother prep!"

And Hosky's prep was sacrificed; Hobson doing his as well as he could while Hoskins told him about the wonderful effects he had got on the oboes. Hobson did not even know what an oboe was, but he did not venture to say so.

In the morning Mr. Hacker was very sharp with Hoskins—but Hosky bore it patiently. He felt that he could afford to be patient—in the circumstances. Even when he was detained for an hour after lessons, he only smiled tolerantly.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Glorious News!

"NEWS, old scout?"

Harry Wharton asked the question as he came on Hoskins in the passage with a letter in his hand.

Hoskins' face was like unto the sun at midday for brightness.

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He glanced at the captain of the Remove, and smiled.

"Yes; just a line from my publisher," he answered, with studied carelessness.

"From your—your what?"

"My music publisher."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Read it, my boy!" said Hoskins, and he tossed the letter to Wharton.

Harry read it, with very considerable interest.

Certainly nobody at Greyfriars, unless it was James Hobson, believed that there was anything in Hoskins' famous "Victory Peace March," or that it would produce him anything more than a polite refusal.

But a letter of refusal would assuredly not have brought that beam into the countenance of Claude Hoskins.

The letter was headed: "Blimper & Co., Music Publishers, Courtfield." And it ran:

"Dear Sir,—We are in receipt of your composition, entitled 'The Victory Peace March.' We have placed this in the hands of our musical editor for examination. You will be apprised of his decision at any early date.

"We may, however, inform you that, at the first glance, we are favourably impressed with your work.

"Your truly,
"BLIMPER & Co."

Harry Wharton opened his eyes wide. Hoskins smiled at him.

"Rather agreeable—what?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!" gasped Harry.

"You seem surprised?"

"Ahem! I—I—"

"My dear fellow, I had no doubts," said Hoskins. "It all depended upon whether the Blimper people had any knowledge of what good music really is. If they had a hopeless dud for musical editor, my work might have come back, 'Declined with thanks.' Not otherwise."

"Oh!"

"They seem to have a good man," remarked Hoskins. "If the man understands his business, there's no doubt in the matter. I wonder what it is, though, that's favourably-impressed them at the first glance? Perhaps the way I've handled the oboes."

"Perhaps!" murmured Wharton.

"Or the flute part—the flute part is simply stunning, though I say it myself."

"I should have thought the whole lot was rather stunning."

"So it is," answered Hoskins, oblivious of the meaning Wharton was attaching to the word. "Simply stunning. I shouldn't like anybody to think me conceited, but I really consider that my 'Victory Peace March' is the biggest thing that's been done since Beethoven. In fact, I doubt if Beethoven could quite have done it. I must show this letter to Hobby."

And Claude Hoskins trotted off in search of Hobson of the Shell, to tell him the good news; which naturally delighted Hobson's honest heart.

Harry Wharton rubbed his nose, hard.

Was it possible that Claude Hoskins was a musical genius after all, and that all Greyfriars had done him injustice? Was it possible that musically-trained people would be willing to listen, without compulsion, to the horrid uproar Hoskins was accustomed to make in the music-room?

If not, what did this letter mean?

Blimper & Co. certainly wouldn't spend their money on the publication of Hoskins' works unless they saw a certain return of the cash with a profit attached. Music publishers were not wont to cast their bread on the waters, unless they believed it would come back, after many days, buttered.

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It was really perplexing.

Harry Wharton conveyed the news to his chums; and their astonishment was not exactly flattering to Hoskins.

"They can't be pulling his leg, I suppose," remarked Bob Cherry.

"Why should they?"

"Well, I can't see why they should," confessed Bob. "But—but—but they can't be going to print Hoskins' awful rot. Blessed if I shouldn't expect it to bust the printing-press!"

"It is awful rot!" said Wharton decidedly. "I'm not a musician, but I've got an ear, and I know jolly well that Hoskins' stuff is a horrid row, and nothing else. But fashions change, and people may like a horrid row instead of music. Same as Cubism in painting, you know—and Vorticism, and all that rot. People who can't paint go in for that silly stuff, and call it advanced art. Perhaps Hosky's music is advanced art?"

"Well, if they pay him for it, it must be worth something, from a cash point of view at least," said Bob. "I hope he'll see the colour of their money, anyway."

That day, Claude Hoskins was the cynosure of all eyes in the Lower School at Greyfriars.

The letter from Blimper & Co. had passed from hand to hand, and had been read by all the juniors, and some of the seniors.

It caused general amazement.

What Blimper & Co. could see in Hoskins' rot was a mystery to the Greyfriars fellows; but the more modest ones were willing to believe it possible that Hoskins' "art" was beyond their understanding, instead of beneath it, as they had always supposed.

As for Hoskins, he was like unto the gentleman of ancient times who came near to striking the stars with his sublime head.

He hardly seemed to be walking on the common earth in these happy hours.

Many times that day he referred carelessly to Blimper & Co. as "my publishers," and was not grinned at.

James Hobson felt that it was an honour to him to take Hosky's arm in the quad, and he looked it.

Hosky was very gracious to his old chum.

He assured him that he didn't forget, and never would forget, how Hobby had stood by him, through thick and thin, when he most needed encouragement.

"It was your pleasure in listening to my music, old chap, that helped me to stick to it and pull through," said Hoskins. "I shall never forget that!"

And Hobson almost believed that he had found pleasure in listening to old Hosky's music. At least, he tried hard to believe it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Dirt Cheap!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Hosky looks in high feather."

Claude Hoskins came in at the school gates so hastily that he nearly ran into the Famous Five.

Hoskins' face was beaming.

"Got it?" asked Harry Wharton.

"No; but it's at the shop," answered Hoskins.

"My hat! Then it's really genuine?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Genuine!" repeated Hoskins. "Of course. I suppose I know a cor Anglais when I see one?"

"Eh?"

"It's a real corker," said Hoskins enthusiastically.

"What are you talking about?" inquired Wharton.

"Eh? A cor Anglais, of course!"

Harry Wharton laughed. He had concluded, from Hoskins' beaming face as he came back from Courtfield, that Hosky had interviewed Blimper & Co. with satisfactory results.

That was not the case apparently. Hoskins' satisfaction had some other cause.

"You haven't seen Blimpers, then?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Blimper's? No!"

"I thought by your looks you had been collecting your cheque from them," said Harry.

Hoskins shook his head.

"Oh, no! It's only three days since I had their note. I may hear from them again by any post; but, of course, the musical editor Johnny must be given some time. I dare say he's got a lot of Peace Marches to go through, though I'm pretty certain he won't find another one to equal mine. But, I say, I've just seen a cor Anglais at old Lazarus' second-hand shop."

"What is a cor Anglais?" asked Johnny Bull innocently.

Hoskins gave him a pitying look.

"It's a cor Anglais," he answered.

"Go hon!" murmured Bob.

"What beats me," said Hoskins, "is this, that you fellows are satisfied to go, day after day, thinking about such things as cricket and footer and rowing, and so on, without taking any interest in the things that really matter. A cor Anglais is something like an oboe—"

"What's an oboe?"

"Oh, my hat! It's a wind instrument. I've just seen a cor Anglais cheap at Lazarus'. I'm going to bag it. I've wanted a cor Anglais for donkey's years," said Hoskins. "It's cheap. They're almost giving it away."

"Five bob?"

"Five bob!" said Hoskins, in a tone of pitying contempt. "No. Not five bob! Sixteen pounds!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Sixteen pounds!" said Harry Wharton. "You're going to give sixteen pounds for a giddy instrument?"

"Dirt cheap at the price, too!"

"But where are you going to get the sixteen pounds?" asked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

That was really a rather important point. Shell fellows at Greyfriars did not, as a rule, know where to lay their hands on such a sum at short notice—or long notice, for that matter.

"That's a minor point," answered Hoskins. "You see, the prices of these things have advanced. Chaps who used to make them have been killing Huns instead. I don't say that wasn't necessary; but it seems a pity, doesn't it? However, I shall bag this one. Think how old Hobby will be pleased when I play it in the study!"

"Oh! Will he?"

"Of course he will—overjoyed, in fact. Old Hobby is a splendid chap," said Hoskins. "He gives me the study to myself when I'm practising the clarinet. I often tell him he needn't clear off. In fact, I'd like him to remain; but he's determined not to risk bothering me when I'm at work. Considerate, isn't it?"

"Awfully!"

"The awfulness of the consideration is terrific!"

Hoskins rubbed his hands.

"I've had no end of difficulties through not having a set of instruments," he said. "When I get my cheque from Blimper & Co. I'm going the whole giddy unicorn—complete set from the triangles to the double-bass. Won't that be ripping? I'm getting this cor Anglais as a start. Only sixteen pounds."

"I'm going to pay for it out of my cheque from Blimper's."

"I—I say, hadn't you better get the cheque first?" murmured Wharton.

"You see, I want to bag the instrument while I've got the chance. There's no doubt about the cheque, of course."

"But—but if anything should go wrong, you'd be landed with a bill you couldn't possibly pay!" hinted Wharton.

"What rot!"

"Ahem!"

"The trouble is, old Lazarus will expect his bill to be paid," said Hoskins. "I've ordered the instrument to be delivered. I suppose you fellows couldn't lend me sixteen pounds?"

"Great pip! Not quite."

"I'd let you hear me play it," said Hoskins. "It's a topping instrument. It's the cor Anglais that comes in in 'Siegfried,' you know."

"What's that?"

"Oh crikey! One of Wagner's operas, of course. Music-dramas, he called them, being rather an ass! You know where the wood-bird comes in, and Siegfried imitates him on a reed he's cut for himself—"

"Blessed if I do!"

Hoskins snorted.

"Well, you know now. Well, Wagner makes Siegfried tootle on that little reed, about a foot long. But the sound is really produced in the orchestra on the cor Anglais. That shows what an ass Wagner really was!"

"D-d-does it?"

"Of course it does. He makes Siegfried tootle on a thing a foot or so long, and produce notes that can only be produced on an instrument three feet long. That shows that Wagner was a German-headed ass, though he's got his good points," said Hoskins. "I'll explain further—"

"My dear chap, we'll take your word for it," said Wharton hastily.

"As for his theory of the unending melody—" resumed Hoskins. "I say, where are you fellows going?"

The Famous Five did not explain where they were going.

They went.

Hoskins looked surprised.

The Co. had lost an opportunity of hearing all about Hoskins' views on Wagner's theory of unending melody, which was really reckless on their part.

Perhaps it was because Hoskins, like the melody in question, was unending.

Claude Hoskins gave a sniff of disdain, and hurried on to the School House. His new instrument was to be delivered after lessons that day, and the bill was to come with it.

Hoskins' financial resources amounted to threepence just then, which was simply useless as part-payment of a bill of sixteen pounds.

He hastened to find Hobson, and consult with him.

To his surprise, James Hobson did not share his joy at that discovery of a cor Anglais that could be secured for the paltry sum of sixteen pounds.

His jaw dropped when Hoskins told him of the forthcoming delivery of the instrument.

"But—but you can't pay for it, old chap!" he gasped.

"No; that's a difficulty," admitted Hoskins. "Old Lazarus is simply a business man—in fact, a Philistine. He will want to be paid."

"People generally want to be paid for the things they sell, don't they?" murmured Hobson.

Hoskins sniffed.

"It's rather soulless," he said. "But they do. The question is, how are we going to do it, Hobby?"

"I've got ten bob," said the loyal Hobby.

"That only leaves fifteen pounds ten!"

"Only!" murmured Hobson.

"I might ask Hacker—"

"D-d-don't, old chap! Old Hacker is a bit soulless, too, I'm afraid."

Hoskins nodded thoughtfully. Like many great artists, he felt how painful it was to be hedged in, as it were, by such a pitiful consideration as want of money. But there it was!

"I know!" he exclaimed suddenly.

"Well?" said Hobson, not very hopefully.

"I'll be out when the man comes," said Hoskins. "You'll tell the man I'm out, Hobby, and tell him I'll send on the money. He'll leave the goods right enough; Lazarus knows his money is safe at Greyfriars. Besides, he won't want to lug the thing back to Courtfield. You can give him a tip—give him five bob."

"But—but—"

"It's all right!" said Hoskins confidently. "He'll leave it; I know that. The money can be sent on."

"W-w-w-when?"

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"When I get my cheque from Blimper's, of course."

James Hobson drew a deep breath. His belief in his chum was great; in fact, almost touching. But—there was a "but."

"I—I say, Hosky, suppose—just suppose—that Blimper's don't accept your 'Peace March' after all?"

"Oh, that's all right!"

"But suppose—"

"You're supposing that their musical editor is a silly chump without any taste in music, Hobson. Why should you suppose that?"

"Oh!"

"It will be all right," said Hoskins. "You leave it to me. And I'll tell you what, Hobby; I'll play it to you this evening in the study, instead of doing any prep. We'll chance it with Hacker in the morning."

Still Hobson did not look joyful.

"Come up to the study now," said Hoskins; "I want you to listen to a little thing I've written for the clarinet. Come on!"

For some reason, never explained, James Hobson walked rapidly in the opposite direction.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Friend in Need!

"TROT in, old infant!" Harry Wharton & Co. had gathered to tea in Study No. 1 when James Hobson of the Shell looked in.

The Co. greeted him quite cordially. They rather liked Hobson of the Shell; his faith in Claude Hoskins, and his loyal devotion to that genius, moved their admiration for his heart, if not for his head.

Hobson wore a worried look.

He "trotted" in, but shook his head when Bob Cherry pulled out a box for him.

"Thanks! I haven't come to tea," he said. "You fellow go on, don't mind me. I was thinking of asking your opinion."

"Go ahead!" said Harry Wharton cheerily. "Good advice on tap in this study!"

"It's about old Hoskins," said the Shell fellow. "He's ordered a cor something or other—"

"A cor Anglais," said Harry, laughing. "Only sixteen pounds! Dirt cheap at the price!"

"Oh, you know all about it!" said Hobson. "Well, it's going to be delivered this evening, and Hoskins is going to leave the bill over till he gets his cheque from Blimper's. Of course, old Lazarus won't mind waiting a few days. But—but—but—"

"The butfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Hoskins is an awfully clever chap, but you can't call him business-like," resumed Hobson. "If anything happens, and he doesn't get a cheque from Blimper's, he will be in an awful hole. His people will never pay sixteen pounds for a cor—what-d'-y-e-call-it, and, of course, old Hosky can't pay it. You've got some sense, Wharton. Do you think he's likely to get a lot of money from the music people?"

Wharton hesitated.

"Tell me what you think," said Hobson. "I want to prevent Claude from being landed in an awful scrape!"

"Well," said Wharton frankly, "I don't think Hoskins will get a lot of money from Blimper's. Smithy thinks that advertisement for a 'Victory Peace March' is some kind of catchpenny spoof, and Smithy's very keen. And—and I can't really believe that Hoskins' music is worth a lot of money."

"Same here!" murmured Nugent.

"The samefulness is terrific!"

"Well, I really think it's worth a lot of money," said Hobson. "But the question is, will Hosky get what it's worth? Doesn't it seem rather too good to be true?"

"It does, rather."

"Most likely the cheque will come along, perhaps; but if it doesn't—and it mightn't—" said Hobson.

"It mightn't, certainly!" said Johnny Bull, with a grin.

"Then Hoskins will be landed. What do you think a pal of his ought to do in the cires?" asked Hobson.

"Well, the goods oughtn't to be delivered till Hoskins has the money to pay for them," said Harry. "Can't you persuade him to leave it over till he's heard again from Blimper's?"

"I've tried. Nothing doing."

"Cancel the order for him," suggested Johnny Bull.

"That's a good idea," said Harry. "Telephone to Lazarus, and ask him not to deliver the instrument till further notice."

"Hoskins would feel awfully disappointed if it didn't come."

"Not so bad as if it did come and the

cheque didn't, and he couldn't pay for it."

"That's so."

"And, while you're on the job, 'phone to Blimper's and ask them when they're going to let Hoskins know," said Frank Nugent. "Hoskins is an ass——"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean he's not business-like, and it's up to his pal to see that he doesn't wander into trouble. See that the cor Anglais don't come home before the cheque from Blimper's."

Hobson nodded, evidently relieved by this sage advice.

"I'll go and 'phone now," he said. "Hacker's gone out, so I can use his telephone."

"Let's know the news," said Harry.

"Yes, rather; I'll come back."

James Hobson left the study, and the Famous Five went on with their tea, with smiling faces. They sympathised with Hobson, who had good cause to feel alarmed for his chum. Hoskins was counting his chickens before they were hatched, and that was his own business; but when he began spending Blimper's cheque before it arrived it was time for his friends to step in.

Once the goods had been delivered at Greyfriars Mr. Lazarus was not likely to take them back; and the prospect of being dunned for a debt of sixteen pounds might have terrified any fellow but Claude Hoskins.

James Hobson came back to the Remove study in about twenty minutes. He was looking less worried now.

"All serene!" he said. "I tried Blimper's first, and they said Hoskins would get their letter to-morrow."

"Oh, good!"

"And I've told Lazarus not to deliver the cor thingummy till to-morrow evening," said Hobson. "Don't you fellows tell Hosky. He would never forgive me!"

"Not a syllable!" said the Famous Five solemnly.

They chuckled when Hobson was gone.

Hoskins, blissfully unconscious of the fact that he had been saved from a scrape by his loyal chum, was expecting the arrival of the cor Anglais that evening. When the Famous Five came down after tea, they found the musical junior haunting the doorway, evidently in a state of great expectation.

He was prepared to fill up the time by telling the Famous Five all about a wonderful thing he was composing for his new instrument; but they had a pressing engagement, and escaped.

Claude Hoskins was like unto an unquiet ghost that evening.

Hobson urged him to do his prep; but Hoskins shook his head. He couldn't put his mind into prep.

As bed-time drew near, and the cor anglais had not arrived, Hoskins grew very bitter.

The remarks he made about Mr. Lazarus would have made that old gentleman's hair stand on end if he could have heard them.

"I—I wonder if I could buzz down to Courtfield on my bike before dorm?" Hoskins remarked at nine o'clock.

"You'd want a pass out," murmured Hobson.

"Well, I should think Wingate would give me a pass when I told him what it was for."

"He wouldn't, old chap. Besides, Lazarus will be shut up."

"I could wake him up," said Hoskins.

"Dash it all! Fancy keeping a chap waiting like this for the cor Anglais! It's simply brutal!"

"Horrid!" said Hobson, with a very guilty feeling.

"Just as if he wasn't sure of his

money, the old hunk!" said Hoskins indignantly.

"Oh!"

"I'll talk to him pretty plainly to-morrow," said Hoskins. "I'll buzz off, and see him immediately after morning lessons."

"I—I shouldn't, old chap."

"I certainly shall," said Hoskins decidedly. "Now I sha'n't be able to play it to you in the study this evening, Hobby."

"That's a shame!" murmured Hobson. "I—I—I was looking forward to it, too. But—but as it hasn't come, suppose you do your prep."

"Oh, I can't be bothered about prep now."

"But Hacker——"

"Hang Hacker!"

Hobson gave it up.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Not a Cheque!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were down early the next morning; but they found Hoskins of the Shell was down earlier.

He was wandering quietly in the quad when they came out.

Perhaps he had a hope that the cor Anglais had arrived overnight, or would turn up first thing in the morning.

It hadn't, and it didn't.

Hoskins looked very wrathful at breakfast. In the Shell Form-room that morning he taxed the patience of Mr. Hacker to the uttermost. Mr. Hacker didn't know that Hoskins was expecting a new instrument, and he didn't know what that meant to an enthusiastic musician. Mr. Hacker used his cane twice that morning, and on each occasion Claude Hoskins had the benefit of it.

After morning lessons, when the Remove came out, Hobson came up to Harry Wharton & Co. with a dismayed face.

"Letter come from Blimper's yet?" asked Wharton.

"No; and all the fat's in the fire," said Hobson glumly. "He's gone for his bike. He's going down to see Lazarus about the cor thingummy."

"He mustn't," said Harry.

"But he's going."

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said the captain of the Remove, "this is where we sacrifice ourselves for the good of the cause. Let's go and see Hoskins, and start him on Wagner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With that generous resolve the Famous Five hurried down to the bike-shed, where they found Hoskins wheeling out his machine.

"Hoskins, old fellow——" began Wharton.

"Can't stop."

"You were going to tell us about the unbeginning melody——"

"The unending melody, you mean," said Hoskins, stopping.

"Yes, I—I meant the unending melody. Do you really know much about that, Hoskins?" asked Wharton innocently.

"Do I?" answered Hoskins disdainfully. "I've been into the thing from start to finish. Listen to me!"

The juniors listened.

They did not understand in the least what the cheery Hoskins was talking about, and they wondered a little whether Hoskins himself understood. But they listened.

Hoskins was still going strong when the dinner-bell rang.

"My hat! I shall have to see Lazarus after dinner now," remarked Hoskins.

And they went in to dinner.

After dinner, as Claude Hoskins was making for the bike-shed, Harry Wharton joined him, and asked him whether he would let him hear that little thing on the clarinet.

Hoskins let him hear it willingly.

It lasted till afternoon classes.

Wharton had an expression of suffering on his face when he left Hoskins' study, but he had the satisfaction of having done a painful duty well.

Hoskins was safe for the afternoon now.

After school the genius of the Shell intended to run down and see Mr. Lazarus before tea. It was, as he told Hobson, inexplicable that the cor Anglais hadn't been delivered. Hobson agreed that it was inexplicable, but suggested that Hoskins should wait till the post came in. There might be a cheque from Blimper & Co. for the "Victory Peace March," which he might take down with him and get Mr. Lazarus to cash.

Hoskins agreed to wait for the post, and quite a number of fellows waited with him. It had been learned, somehow, that a reply from Blimper & Co. was expected that day. Fellows were anxious to see the cheque; and Skinner, and some fellows like Skinner, had their sweetest smiles all ready to turn on for Hoskins if there really was a cheque.

The excitement was great when the post came in. And it intensified when it was found that there was a letter for Hoskins. And it became simply white-hot when the news spread that the style and title of Blimper & Co. were printed on the outside of the envelope.

It was the letter from Blimper's at last!

Hoskins stood in the centre of a little crowd with the letter in his hand. He seemed in no hurry to open it. He enjoyed that moment.

"Let's see it, Hosky!" exclaimed Hobson.

"Let's see the cheque, old chap!" murmured Skinner.

"Yes, I specially want to see the cheque," remarked Vernon-Smith, with a grin. "Buck up, Hoskins!"

"You are keeping us on the tender hooks, my esteemed and ridiculous Hoskins!" murmured Hurree Singh.

Claude Hoskins opened the envelope.

All eyes were upon him as he drew out the enclosure, unfolded it, and read it.

No cheque was visible.

Skinner's sweet smile faded away, and was replaced by a sneering grin.

"Well?" said Harry Wharton, as a puzzled look came over Hoskins' face.

"Good news, I hope?" murmured Hobson.

"Blessed if I quite understand them," said Hoskins, perplexed. "If I wanted to pay for the publication of my music myself I shouldn't bother to send it to them, should I? Besides, I haven't the money."

"What?"

"Read the letter."

Quite a crowd read the letter at once, craning over one another's shoulders. The letter ran:

"Dear Sir,—Our musical editor has reported favourably upon your work, the 'Victory Peace March.' We are prepared to publish this upon specially favourable terms. The cost of producing a fairly large edition will be, approximately, £50. If you are prepared to furnish this sum, to cover the cost of production, we shall be pleased to put the publication of the 'Victory Peace March' in hand forthwith.

Awaiting your reply, we remain,

"Yours faithfully,
"BLIMPER & Co."

"My only Aunt Sempronia!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath. "The rotten spoofers! It was a catchpenny trick, as Smithy said. They only want poor old Hosky's money."

"Lucky for him he hasn't any!" murmured Vernon-Smith.

Claude Hoskins' face was a study.

Hobson put his arm through his chum's and led him away. And the juniors, with really generous consideration for poor old Hosky's feelings, did not chortle till he was out of hearing.

That evening Hoskins of the Shell wrote to Messrs. Blimper & Co. and told

them what he thought of them. The next day the "Victory Peace March" came home by post. Hobson obligingly biked down to Mr. Lazarus' to cancel the order for the cor Anglais for his chum. Even Hoskins realised how jolly lucky it was that that instrument hadn't been delivered, dirt cheap as it was at sixteen pounds.

Harry Wharton & Co. could not help chortling over the result of the chance of a lifetime which had come Hoskins' way. But they were sympathetic. And when Hoskins came along to borrow stamps, to send that great work off to a London publisher, they went through

their pockets, and handed Hosky all the stamps they could find. And when it came back again there was another collection of stamps to send it on its travels once more. After that Hoskins was requested to provide his own stamps, with the result that the "Victory Peace March" found quiet and well-earned repose in a drawer in his study.

THE END.

(DON'T MISS "GIANTS AT GRIPS!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)



Goggs, Grammarian

By Richard Randolph

SYNOPSIS.

Four new boys—Goggs, Blount, Trickett, and Waters—come to Rylcombe Grammar School from Franklingham, which has been burnt down. Goggs, the real leader of the four, ventriloquist, ju-jitsu expert, and all-round sportsman, looks particularly simple, and intends, with the help of his chums, to hoodwink the Rylcombe fellows into thinking him simple. Goggs & Co. fall foul of Larking, Carpenter, and Snipe, three of the "smart set" at Rylcombe, and Goggs uses his ventriloquism to mystify them.

The Franklingham four share Study No. 3, and are assigned to Dormitory No. 29, which they share with Tadpole, who fancies himself an artist, Weird, who talks in rhyme, and Larking & Co. There is a fight between Larking and Frank Monk, in which Larking fouls, but is hopelessly beaten.

Goggs again uses his ventriloquism, and Larking & Co. suspect that a ventriloquist is at work, though they suspect Blount or Trickett, thinking Goggs too simple.

(Now read on.)

Very Little Change Going.

"HALLO! What's this mean?" asked Bags, as a dozen or more of the Fourth, headed by Gordon Gay and Frank Monk, trooped into Dormitory No. 29.

The light of a single candle, held by Harry Wootton, illuminated the procession.

"Look here, if you bounders have come to try on any sort of fool games with me," said Larking, "I'll—"

"Kick us all in the tum-tums, I suppose?" said Jack Wootton, with the ring of contempt in his voice. "But we're not after you, as it happens."

"Larking was afraid he was going to be tried by the Form for his beastly foul," Carboy suggested.

"You're a liar!" snarled Larking.

"Get out of bed and say that again!" snapped Carboy.

"Oh, leave the fellow alone!" said Gordon Gay. "You must allow him a week or two for repairs before he takes on a warrior part again. It's not you we're after, Larking, nor you, Carpenter. We don't even want Snipe. Tadpole can stay between the sheets, and Weird has no weird to dree this night. But unto each of the new bounders I say—'Come forth!'"

"Pardon me, Joy, my dear fellow—"

"Gay!" snapped the owner of that name.

"Surely it's easy enough to remember?"

"Very well indeed, by the method of association of ideas, which I commonly

practise. But it is just that which leads me astray. I think of Joyful, and that naturally suggests—"

"Oh, cheese it! Call me what you like as long as it's not uncivil, but do cheese it! You were going to say something else. Say it and shin out! Cut it short, too; we don't propose to spend the whole night listening to your chinwag."

"You're such a silent chap yourself, aren't you, Gay, old bird?" said Tricks, with a chuckle.

"I've a right to talk."

"We haven't, I suppose?" said Bags meekly.

"No! New chaps should be seen and not heard. In some cases I'm not sure that they should even be seen; but none of you bounders is quite as bad as that. A fellow can look at you without getting pains inside."

"Thanks! Sorry we can't return the compliment," said Wagtail.

"You'll be getting pains outside if you're not jolly careful, Waters! Now then, Goggs! You were about to remark that—"

"That you are requiring of us a sheer impossibility, my dear Joyful," said Goggs mildly.

"How's that?"

"You say that each of us is to come fourth. Now, how can that be done? For that any one among us should come fourth necessitates that the other three should be first, second, and—Gurrrrrgh!"

Wootton minor's hand had been clapped over Goggs' mouth, to stop the flow of speech that issued therefrom as issues the water from a fountain in first-class working order.

But, in his haste to stop that flow, Wootton minor had forgotten that he still held the candle. The consequences of his action were that the dormitory was plunged into darkness and that Goggs got a mouthful of hot wax.

"You silly ass, Harry!" snapped Jack Wootton.

"Gurrrrrgh! That did not taste at all nice," said Goggs. "Moreover, I was not hungry."

Somebody struck a match. Goggs, sitting up in bed, gouged wax from the corners of his mouth. But even in so doing he kept his temper, and, in some queer way, his dignity, too. The Fourth were not particular about dignity, and possibly they did not think of it in that way; but that was what it amounted to.

Everyone except the three who knew him so well thought of Goggs as a butt.

But he never was that. It was easy to sneer at his pedantic speech and his plain face and his supposed inability to do most of the things a boy cares about doing. But it was not so easy to score over him, though

as yet the difficulty of it had not been realised; and it seemed impossible to disturb seriously his serene temper.

"Light the candle, chum!" said Gay impatiently.

"Can't! Goggs has eaten it," replied Wootton minor. But he did.

"I am very sorry indeed if that is the case," said Goggs. "But I assure you that if it is so, my friend Hottentot—beg pardon—Wooden—I shall think of your head in future, and so avoid these silly mistakes—I'm always making them! Er—where was I? Oh, yes! My friend—"

"A bit less of—" began Wootton minor.

"A very queer name indeed; sounds quite Bolshevik," struck in Goggs, with his blandest smile. "Still, you should know best. My friend Abbtlessoff was at fault for his clumsiness, not I for a greediness which is, I hope and trust, foreign to my nature. I understand that in the Far North the Eskimo—"

"Oh, gag the clump, or we shall never get anything done!" groaned Lane.

"Come out of it, you chaps!" ordered Gay.

"Whaffor?" growled Waters.

But he could guess what for, and Bags and Tricks were already out of bed. They had been through this sort of thing before, and they knew that it had no terrors for the fellow who could take it lightly.

Goggs was not out yet. He had taken his spectacles from his waistcoat-pocket, and was carefully putting them on.

"Here, you don't need those things," said Frank Monk.

As he spoke it struck him that the eyes of Goggs, seen without the glasses, were not at all what one would have expected. They were very blue, and there was in them a humorous gleam; moreover, they did not look in the least short-sighted.

But it was only a glimpse he got of them. Then the glasses went on.

"I really feel so very barefaced without them, my dear Moukey," said Goggs confidentially.

He got out, and Waters followed, a little inclined to grumble. Wagtail was by far the most touchy of the quartet from Franklingham.

"Take a blanket—take a Goggles; put the Goggles in the blanket, then heave-ho!" said Gay, grinning.

"Oh, how nice!" cried Goggs, clasping his hands in rapture. "Ever so much better than ride-a-cock-horse, which I loved in my childish days, or the swing-boats at the fair! I did not guess that you had such charming games here. I thought you only

played cricket and marbles and rough sports of that kind."

Frank Monk looked sharply at him. Somehow that speech seemed out of keeping with those keen blue eyes of which he had caught a glimpse.

But Goggs in his glasses and pyjamas looked absurd enough for anything.

"I'm hanged if I'm going to be tossed in a blanket!" said Wagtail crossly. "I've been through all that before, and I don't see going through it again. We're not raw kids."

"You're new chaps here," said Gay. "And it's always done."

"And you're wrong," added Wootton major. "You won't be hanged if you're tossed in a blanket, but you'll be licked if you're not, and you'll be tossed after you've been licked."

"Don't be a fathead, Wagtail!" whispered Bags.

"Oh, come on! Do come on!" cried Goggs, clapping his hands and doing a jig in his pretended excitement. "Me first, please! It will be like being a bird. How very kind it is of you fellows to give your new school-mates such a delicious treat!"

"We'll be after makin' the spalpeen fetch some of the plaster off the ceiling," murmured Nicky O'Donnell in the ear of Donaldson. "Sure, it's no such trate he'll be thinkin' it then!"

"I'm no' that sure," said the Scot. "Nicky, my son, there's more in yon whey-faced loon than meets the eye!"

A blanket was taken from Goggs' bed. He seemed all impatience to be in it; and in his haste he grabbed O'Donnell round the neck, and brought that youth to the floor with a bump. Goggs also bumped, but as he bumped upon Nicky he was less hurt than the Irish junior.

"Oh, bedad, I'll—"

"Get up, ass! Now, then, Goggles!"

This time Goggs was got into the blanket without mishap—unless his jabbing the rather prominent nose of Carboy with his foot was a mishap—and Bags & Co. had their doubts as to whether it was an accident, anyway.

"Whooooop!" yelled Goggs, as he shot upwards.

"Stop that row, you frabious idiot, or we shall have a prefect up!"

"Oh, stop, do stop! My dear Joyful—Ooooooh!"

Goggs went up again—almost to the ceiling this time.

"I did not know that this game—Ooooooh!" he spluttered.

Up he went once more.

"Was unauthorised or improper. I imagined that—Ooooooh!"

Again he shot upwards. But as he touched the blanket again he continued his plaintive objections.

"I must beg of you to desist! I do not like to break—Ooooooh!"

"One more for the spalpeen, and make it a good one!" cried O'Donnell.

"Send the silly rotter up through the ceiling!" snarled Larking.

Perhaps Larking would have done better to avoid that suggestion.

It may have been purely an accident that Goggs left the blanket that time in quite a different fashion—and did not come back to it at all!

It may have been purely an accident that he described a kind of parabola in the air, his thin, pyjama-clad legs fluttering wildly.

And it may have been purely an accident that his wild flight ended upon Larking's bed, and upon Larking's body.

But Bags and Tricks and Waters fancied that it was not.

"Ooooooh! Grrrrgh! You mad fool!" gurgled Larking.

Goggs sat up—on that portion of Larking's anatomy immediately below his chest—and calmly readjusted his glasses.

"I trust that I have not at all incommoded you, my dear fellow?" he said anxiously.

"Gerroff! Incommoded—oh, you silly, potty, raving lunatic!" howled Larking. "What are you fatheaded imbeciles cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the rest.

"Do it again, Goggs, me darlint!" urged Nicky O'Donnell.

Goggs shook his head, seating himself more firmly upon the body of Larking as he did so.

"I regret that I cannot oblige you, my

dear fellow," he said. "I might fall next time upon someone who really mattered. Or I might even descend upon the floor, and hurt myself."

"Gerroff! Someone who matters—hang you, don't I matter?" stormed Larking.

"Not to any extent worth mentioning," replied Goggs. "As a concession to politeness I have apologised to you, but—"

His speech was cut short by a mighty heave on Larking's part. That heave sent Goggs off the bed. But he landed on his feet, and it struck Frank Monk that his doing so was not exactly accidental. Bags & Co., well aware that their chum was as active as a cat, knew that it was not.

"Come along, Blount!" said Gay.

"Right-ho!" answered Bags cheerily.

But he was only tossed twice.

There really is not much to be got out of tossing a fellow in a blanket when the fellow takes it as coolly as though he were in the habit of going through it nightly. And Tricks, like Bags, took it that way.

Out of Wagtail the invaders of No. 29 managed to get a little more fun. He did not resist, but he was sulky, and muttered things about silly rot.

So they gave him half a dozen vigorous tosses. It would have been better for two or three of them if they had kept the number down to five, for Wagtail made a wild clutch at the neck of Carboy as he came down for the last time; and Carboy, floundering, dragged down Donaldson, and Donaldson barged into Gordon Gay, and sent him crashing against a bedpost.

"Clumsy idiot!" roared Donaldson.

"Yow! You put your beastly elbow in my eye!" howled Carboy.

"Look at my nose! Oh, crumbs!" gasped Gordon Gay. Gay's nose was quite a nicely-shaped one, but contact with the bedpost had not improved it.

"Serve you right, asses!" growled Wagtail.

"Oh, slay the cheeky rotter!" hooted Carboy.

"If you don't stop that row in there I shall come along with my ashplant!" spoke a voice, apparently from the corridor.

It sounded like Delamere's voice, and the invaders made an instant scuttle for shelter under the beds.

"Put out that candle, fathead!"

"Ow! That's my napper!"

"Where are you barging to, chump?"

Stifled protests and adjurations came from under nearly every bed.

Beneath that of Goggs three juniors were wedged in—Lane, Gay, and Morgan. There was really not room for three, and they were squirming frantically. If Delamere had come in at that moment he must have spotted them. But as he was two floors below, and quite ignorant of the fact that anything special was going on in No. 29, it was not likely he would come in.

Upon the stretched pyjamas of the trio a hand fell—hard!

Slap, slap, slap!

"Who's that? Stop it!" hissed Gay.

Slap, slap, slap!

"I'll jolly well spifficate someone for this!" spluttered Lane.

"Dashed if I believe that was Delamere at all!" said Frank Monk. "It's not like him to call out from the corridor and let it go at that."

A general scramble from under the beds ensued. Wootton minor, still clinging to the candle-end, which was very much the worse for wear by this time, managed to relight it.

Gordon Gay glared at Goggs.

"Was that you?" he demanded sternly.

"Was which—Really, I fear that I do not take your meaning, Joyful! Was—er— which I?"

"Some cheeky ass spanked us as we were shinning under the bed!" said Lane hotly.

"But surely you do not imagine that it could have been I?" asked Goggs, looking quite shocked. "Apart from the fact that 'silly ass' is really not a description that I can recognise as applying to myself, you surely cannot think that I could be guilty of so audacious a liberty?"

"Indeed, whatever, and I wouldn't trust you not to," said Morgan.

"You pain me extremely," replied Goggs. "I should regard anything of the sort you suggest as almost improper. In fact, I am not sure that the garb in which you have appeared here is quite adequate or—er—decorous."

"Oh, you image! I say, we'd better clear, you fellows!" said Gay.

They cleared.

"We didn't get a lot of change out of that," remarked Wootton major, as they left No. 29.

"That chap Goggs—"

Frank Monk broke off.

"Well, what about him?" asked Gay.

"Oh, nothing! I'm only wondering, that's all."

"Wondering what, old top?"

"Whether he really is the outside edge in silly asses, or whether— But he can't be that."

"Can't be what, Monkey?" asked Wootton minor.

"The deepest, craftiest bounder who ever blew in here!" answered Monk.

Overhearing a Plot!

SILENCE had fallen upon No. 29.

It lasted for quite half an hour. Then the voice of Larking broke it.

"Any of you chaps awake?" asked Larking.

No one replied. Goggs heard; but he did not consider that it was any affair of Larking's whether he was awake or asleep.

"Snipey!"

"Aw-yaw-aw!" mumbled Snipe drowsily.

"Wake up, you bounder! I want to talk to you."

"I'm awake."

"Come over here, then!"

"Why can't you come over here? I don't see getting out of bed for the sake of yarn-ing with you."

"Oh, come here, you idiot!"

"Oh, all right!"

Snipe got out of bed and crossed over to Larking.

Goggs was about to cough discreetly. He had no wish to listen to the conversation of these two.

But then he heard something that induced him to keep silence.

What he heard was his own name.

Now, when the enemy are talking about you, it is really not off the rails to listen. So Goggs thought, at least; and his standard of honour was a high one.

"It was that chap Goggs!" said Snipe.

"What was Goggs?"

"The voice that sounded like Delamere's."

"Oh, rats! There's nothing at all to prove that it wasn't Delamere's."

"I'm absolutely certain it wasn't."

"Then it was one of the other three!" growled Larking.

"Well, yes, it may have been; but I don't think so. The Goggs beast is the chap I've got my eye on now. He's not so soft as he looks, Lark!"

"He's a dashed long way off being soft at all when he tumbles on top of a chap!" growled Larking.

Goggs smiled in the darkness.

"That wasn't any accident," Snipe said.

"Think not? I was inclined to think the same; but—"

"I don't think—I'm jolly sure."

"All right! Let him look out for himself—that's all! I'll make the rotter sit up!"

And Larking's tone was very vengeful indeed.

But again Goggs smiled.

"We'll leave Goggs for a bit—he'll keep," said Snipe. "I'm as keen as you are for a cut at him—I hate the whole blessed crowd of them! But it's Monk we've to think about now."

"Yes, it's Monk!" hissed Larking. And he added a lurid curse.

This time Goggs did not smile. But he was neither surprised nor shocked. He had already realised that Larking and Snipe were not the kind of fellows to take a licking or a set-back nicely.

"I've a dodge," Snipe said eagerly.

"Out with it, then!"

"Let's rag their study—"

"Oh, that's old and stale—old as the hills and stale as last week's bread!"

"And put the dark deed on to Goggs and that gang," added Snipe, with a low, jeering laugh.

Goggs was all attention now. But he would have been even without Snipe's suggestion for inculcating him and his chums.

He liked Frank Monk and Gordon Gay and the Woottons and the rest of their set. He could foresee a time when he and his chums

would be the best of friends with them. But Goggs & Co. would never be chummy with Larking and Snipe.

"That's better!" said Larking.

"I thought you would say that!" chuckled Snipe. "Killing two birds with one stone—what?"

"But we've got to find a way to do it, Snipey."

"You leave that to me. I'll find a way to do it all serene, you bet! But you'll have to take your share of the doing."

"Yes, I fancy I shall have to take more than my share. That's generally the way of it!" sneered Larking.

"Well, I have to do more than my share of the giddy thinking, and you know very well that rough and tumbles aren't in my line. There ought not to be anything of that sort in this, though."

"Oh, yes, there ought, old gun!"

"What, if we put it on to that crowd?"

"Yes. There ought to be a dashed rough house for them."

"That's different. I agree to that all right. I do hate that chap Goggs, and the rest of them aren't much better."

Goggs wondered what he had done to incur Snipe's venomous hatred. There had certainly been nothing for which he would have thought of hating anyone had it been done to him.

And yet he found himself very close indeed to hating Snipe. He decided that their natures must be antipathetic—an explanation which Wagtail would have wanted explained.

"You haven't thought of a dodge yet, I suppose?" said Larking.

"I've half a notion, but I'm not going to say anything until I've really thought it out."

"What about Carpenter?"

"Oh, we'd better have him in it!" said Snipe. "Make it more respectable, you know. The Form doesn't turn up its nose at Carp quite as it does at you and me."

"I should hope it doesn't class me with you!" said Larking roughly.

"On the whole, I should hope not!" replied Snipe.

But it did not seem that he meant exactly the same as Larking did.

"I'm not sure about Carp," Larking said.

"No. He did make a silly fuss about your kicking Monkey in the tummy, didn't he?"

"Dry up! You've done a heap worse things than that!"

"Can't remember them," said Snipe. "No, don't trouble to remind me of the ghastly details. I'll bet they'll all be forgotten long before that foul of yours was! Kicking chaps in the tummy is so silly, because it's so giddy unpopular, dear boy!"

And with that parting shot Snipe returned to his bed.

Goggs heard Larking turn over restlessly and give a stifled groan.

He felt almost sorry for the fellow. His remorse hardly went deep, it was to be feared; but to have to endure the sneers of a creature like Snipe was in itself no light punishment.

The Arrival of Goggs' Grandmother.

"I HAVE the greatest pleasure in informing you, my dear schoolmates, that my beloved and revered grandmother proposes to arrive here some time to-day," announced Goggs to a crowd of the Fourth in the quad next morning.

"Why, you only wrote to her yesterday!" said Wootton minor, staring at him.

"If he wrote to her at all," Frank Monk said.

"But why should you doubt that I wrote to her, Monkey?" asked Goggs, as if in surprise.

"Must be in a jolly hurry to see you again!" growled Carboy.

"I am her only grandson," replied Goggs pathetically.

"Lucky for her!" said Wootton major.

"Two like you—oh, my only sainted aunt!"

"Was your aunt canonised, Wooden?" inquired Goggs eagerly. "Do tell me all about it, and whether she was at all like you! I should imagine not, on the whole. But I did not know that they canonised anyone nowadays."

"Brrrrrr!" growled Wootton major.

"Brrrrrrrr!" came a growl from behind him, and he whipped round in some alarm. It sounded exactly like a dog at close quarters, and by no means a good-tempered dog, either.

But no dog was there.

"Sure, you couldn't have been after hearin'!"

(Continued on page 16.)

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

THE MAGNET. THE GEM. THE BOYS' FRIEND. CHUCKLES. THE PENNY POPULAR.
Every Monday. Every Wed. Every Monday. Every Friday. Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

For Next Monday:

"GIANTS AT GRIPS!"

By Frank Richards.

When Mr. Frank Richards gave us "School and Sport" he established a type of story which gained immediate and world-wide popularity. Our next long complete story of Greyfriars School belongs to this type, though, of course, its plot is materially different.

George Wingate, the popular captain of Greyfriars, considers it is high time that the seniors proved their worth on the playing-fields by challenging and putting to rout their rivals of St. Jim's in a great Sports Tournament. Wingate's big task is not lessened by the arrival in the Greyfriars Sixth of a black sheep named Wilding, who sets out to deprive Wingate of the captaincy. To this end he and Loder join forces, and many exciting incidents occur before, during, and after the sports—incidents which make the story a breathless one from start to finish.

Those readers who appreciate an occasional yarn with the seniors in the limelight will vote next week's story a winner all the way!

BACK IN HARNESS!

Your Editor and His Staff Come Marching Home.

The Controller of the Companion Papers and his staff—with one exception—have now resumed the duties arrested by the advent of war.

The exception is Mr. F. J. Coombes, who has made the supreme sacrifice. So far as the rest of us are concerned, I am thankful to record that, although active service has left its mark on some of us, we are sufficiently sound and strong to carry on the task we have so dearly at heart, namely, that of providing for our readers the finest stories and features it is possible to procure.

From the infantry, from the Royal Air Force, from the death-dealing Tanks and the thunderous artillery, we are returning—roughened and toughened, perhaps, by the storm and stress of modern warfare—but as keen and determined as ever that our loyal army of readers shall miss none of the feasts of fiction which the future holds in store.

THE MEN WHO CARRIED ON.

And how, you will ask, have the Companion Papers been kept going during the war? In reply to this conundrum, let me state that they have been kept alive by a mere handful of men—men who, although ineligible for military service, have spared no effort to keep the flag flying until such time as the original staff came back. Of these men let the record stand in these pages, as the highest praise it is possible to give, that they sacrificed every comfort, and put pleasure at arm's length, for the benefit of others. Had they swerved for one moment from the task, the Companion Papers might have shared the fate of some of their unfortunate contemporaries and closed down.

GREAT THINGS IN STORE!

Well, here we are again! And as we have played our part in frustrating the knavish tricks of the Huns, so shall we play our part in the future by seeing that our loyal readers are given the best—and nothing but the best—of everything. I shall have something more to say on this subject next week. Meanwhile, will my readers, one and all, accept my heartfelt thanks for their staunch support of the Companion Papers during the critical times through which we have passed?

It is my dearest wish that the bond of

friendship which has always existed between my readers and myself may be still further strengthened.

In conclusion, let me add that when you are in doubt or difficulty on any subject,

WRITE TO YOUR EDITOR ABOUT IT!

He will understand. He is your friend, and he will stand your friend through thick and thin!

NOTICES.

Football.

ROWDITCH SWIFTS—13-14—Home and away; 5 miles.—Geo. R. Eland, 70, Bedford Street, Derby.

CASTLETON TUESDAY.—Players wanted—14-15.—Geo. Entwistle, 1122, Manchester Road, Castleton, Lancs.

Cricket.

DULWICH ATHLETIC and DULWICH INVICTA CRICKET CLUBS—Home and away.—Geo. E. Wells, 14, Theodore Road, Hither Green, S.E.

Correspondence, etc.

Launcelot Willis, Box 143, Chapleau, Ont., Canada—with readers in British Isles, 13-14.

Harry Cleminson, 495, Stretford Road, Old Trafford, Manchester—with readers abroad, 15-17.

Jas. Burke, 37, Queen Mary Street, Middlesbrough, Yorks—with readers, 16-17, overseas.

Miss D. Preston, 121, Bedford Street, Cardiff, Glam, South Wales—with girl readers, 16, preferably in the Colonies.

J. Rice, Jun., 14, Queen's Row, Walsworth, S.E. 17, wants members for the C.P.C.C.

T. Fry, 1, Niblett's Hill, St. George, Bristol—with reader interested in rocks and fossil remains.

Miss Mary Mascoll, Clyde Cottage, Wellington Road, Bitterne Park, Southampton, would like to hear from her aunt, Mrs. Macmillan, last heard of at the Rob Roy Hotel, Sydney, Australia. Mrs. Macmillan's daughter, Mrs. Sponberg, is a professional pianist, and her other daughter, is Miss Dorothy Macmillan.

Miss P. Meek, 4, Beaconsfield Street, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire—with readers anywhere to exchange postcards.

C. Scratcher, 55, Swinebank Cottages, Dawson, Seaham Harbour, co. Durham—with readers in England, Scotland, and Canada.

Raymond Halkyard, 50, Denton Lane, Chaderton, Oldham, Lancs, wants to hear from readers interested in his amateur magazine, 2jd., post free.

C. Walker, P.O. Box 311, Port Elizabeth, South Africa—with readers in the United Kingdom, 16-19.

Harold Shepley, 556, Oldham Road, Bardsley, Ashton-under-Lyne, wants correspondents for the Wide World Correspondence Club; magazine, 2jd., post free; 1s. 3d. six months.

R. Griffin, 10, Marriott's Court, Brown Street, Manchester—with readers anywhere.

N. Kennedy, P.O. Box 41, Port Elizabeth, South Africa—with readers in Canada, 17-18.

Laurence Huddleston, 63, George Street, Romford, Essex, wants members for his correspondence club.

Miss Gladys Beeney, 17, Langton Park, Southville, Bristol—with readers, 22 and upwards.

CLEARING THE AIR!

One of my Repton chums, whose poetical outbursts have frequently appeared on this page in the good old days, lifts up his voice, again next week. He has something to say, and he says it in his usual breezy, outspoken manner. He raises several important points which directly concern all my readers, so make a special point of reading next week's Chat, which will clear the air with regard to many outstanding queries concerning the Companion Papers.

H. A. H. (YOUR EDITOR.)

from the dear old lady yet, Goggles," said Nicky O'Donnell.

Goggs flourished a pink flimsy—rather the worse for wear, had anyone examined it closely. But no one had the chance to do that.

"Have you people in Ireland not yet heard of the electric telegraph, O'Donnell?" he asked.

"Sure, an' how were ye after knowin' that I am Irish?" demanded Nicky.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Everyone but Goggs joined in the laugh that greeted that query.

Nicky had never been more wholly Irish than when he asked it.

Goggs regarded him gravely and critically. "Perhaps it was rather clever of me to discover that," he said. "But I am very bright at times. I am not quite sure how I discovered it; but, on the whole, I think that it was by the shape of your nose."

"Bedad, an' what's the matter with my nose at all, at all?" hooted Nicky.

"I am not prepared to say exactly what is the matter with it. In fact, I should hesitate to say that there was anything in particular the matter with it, my dear fellow. As noses go, and having regard to the fact that there are not enough really first-class ones to go round"—Goggs looked around him as he spoke, and a dozen hands went up to the noses of their owners, and felt them thoughtfully—"I should say that you have no reason to be acutely dissatisfied with it."

"It's the cheek of Ould Scratch ye have, ye spalpeen!" roared Nicky, looking warlike.

"Pardon me! I do not know the gentleman with the curious name, my dear O'Flannigan, but I think I can say with safety that I have nothing whatever of his."

The crowd roared again. The Rylcombe Fourth had already got into the way of according to Goggs' long speeches an attention that Tadpole's had never received from them.

Goggs amused the Fourth. He seemed so very innocent and simple, and yet he usually came out of any argument, verbal or physical, right end up.

Already there were a few fellows in the Fourth, however, who suspected him of not being quite so simple and innocent as he seemed—besides his three chums from Franklingham, who knew that he was not.

Nicky O'Donnell, who was really a very good-tempered fellow, did not push the dispute as far as a resort to fist-cuffs—which was as well for Nicky, whom Goggs could have licked with one hand tied behind him. It was also as well for Goggs, whose plans did not include Rylcombe's discovery just yet that he was a boxer of uncommon calibre.

"When's the dear old lady coming?" asked Gordon Gay.

"Some time to-day," replied Goggs. "I really am not quite clear when. Perhaps some of you can help me with information about the trains."

"Shall we all go with you to meet her?" asked Carboy, winking at his chums.

"It is really very kind of you to suggest that course, my dear Carbuncle, but—"

"Carboy, fathead!"

"My dear Carboy fathead—but I am in doubt whether she would really care for that. Besides, we might meet with some of those very rude and rough St. James' boys on the return journey. They do not know me as an enemy, and so I and my dear grandmother would pass unmolested, whereas the presence of any of you—"

"Ass!" snapped Wootton major. "You don't suppose the St. Jim's chaps would meddle with an old lady even if we were all with her, do you?"

"Would they not? I am really very pleased to hear that they are not such utter hooligans—"

"They're not hooligans at all, you burbling maniac!" said Gordon Gay.

"They're as decent chaps as you'd find anywhere," added Lane.

"You surprise me! Why, then, do you fight with them?"

"Because we like it, I suppose!" growled Carboy.

"How very savage and unrefined! I do sincerely trust that the stay of my grandmother in our midst will have an ameliorating effect upon the tone of this school."

"Let's hope so!" answered Gordon Gay, grinning. "I dare say we shall all be knitting antimacassars or doing crochet when she's been here a week or two."

"But she won't stay a week or two," said Wootton minor. "The Head won't let her. 'Tain't sense!"

"I trust that you are wrong, Wooden. I think that you underrate the kindness of the Head's heart."

"Don't you think you overrate the softness of the Head's head?" asked Wootton major.

"I am going to consult a time-table," said Goggs, ignoring that query. "I beg that you will not carry out your idea of going to the station to escort my grandmother hither. I feel sure that she would not care about that. Anything in the way of a triumphal arch at the gates and a double file of the school across the quad to greet her in respectful silence would be more consonant with her wishes, and more proper as a welcome to a lady of somewhat advanced age, I consider."

"Think she'd like a band?" said Carboy.

Goggs seized his hand.

"My dear—er—Boil—"

"Carboy, you silly chump!"

"My dear Carboy, you silly chump, I thank you with all my heart! A band would indeed be an excellent notion. Do you play the big drum in the band, my dear—er—Wart, you absolute ass— Oh, beg pardon—my silly mistake; I'm always making them!"

"Leggo my hand, you idiot!" yelled Carboy, trying in vain to extricate his fingers from a grip such as he could never have believed Goggs was capable of giving.

"But do you play the big drum, my dear Boil? I think you must be the big drummer; the role seems so eminently suited to your style. Please play the big drum when the band meets my dear grandmother, Carbuncle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carboy wrenched his hand free at last. He was very near to foaming at the mouth.

"I'll give you big drum!" he hooted. "If you were up to my weight I'd jolly well see if I could improve the shape of your nose! Nothing anyone could do to it would make it worse. And if you call me out of my name again I'll—"

"Really, my dear Wart, you should remember how very difficult the allocation of correct names to so many faces of no special distinction must be to so forgetful an individual as myself. I fear that you have not a truly pacific temper, Carbuncle!"

And Goggs turned away again, apparently oblivious of the fact that Carboy was on the verge of going for him.

"You're overdoing it, old top!" said Blount, turning away with him. "Some of the chaps are getting on to you, I'm sure. There's Monk, for one. He didn't say a blessed word all the time you were gassing, but he was watching you like a cat watching a mousehole. Sooner we get this grandmother wheeze worked off the better; it will be too late for it in a day or two."

"Well, a jape can't last for ever, Bags," said Goggs, dropping for once into the speech of the average schoolboy, which was a thing he seldom did, even when alone with his chums. "But I fancy we can carry this on for a bit yet—unless they find out that granny's me, which I shall take care they don't."

"There's a danger in that," Bags returned. "It will seem queer that you and granny shouldn't be seen together."

"But that can't be helped, as none of you three is willing to take on the part," replied Goggs.

"I'm jolly well not, I can tell you! If I'm going to be mobbed, I'll be mobbed without a giddy skirt and bonnet on! And Tricks is dead off it, too. Wagtail might be willing, but he couldn't."

"There are two fellows at St. Jim's who could take on the part, and wouldn't mind doing it, either," Goggs said. "But their assistance is out of the question. They would have to break bounds—"

"Rats! They'd chance that all serene, if they're as good sports as you make them out to be."

"Yes, they'd chance that, I'm sure. But to ask them would be to give away to St. Jim's the fact that I am here; and it has occurred to me that after we have finished japing the home crowd we might get something out of japing the St. Jim's fellows—if only they can be brought to believe that I am a complete stranger to them."

"My hat! That's a gorgeous idea. Worst of it is, though, that some of the rotters here would go giving it away directly."

"I think not. As far as I have gathered, the feud is a matter which concerns such fellows as Larking and Snipe and Carker and Lacy very little. It is quite a healthy and sporting feud, and they naturally take very slight interest in it. When they are in-

volved in it, accident is the cause. I think that something might be done before they got on to the wheeze and gave it away."

"And, of course, they don't know you have ever visited St. Jim's; there's a lot in that," said Bags thoughtfully.

"By the way, my dear Bagshaw, I should be obliged if you could keep an eye on the sweet Snipe and the lamblike Larking. They are plotting something."

"Against us?"

"Indirectly—well, it's hardly that. But though we come in, it is chiefly against Monk and his crowd."

"Can't you tell me a bit more than that? I'm jolly sure you know more!"

"I have no secrets from you, my dear Bagshaw. The plot is to rag the study of Monk & Co., and thereafter to make it appear that it was we who did the deed."

"Dirty wheeze!"

"I agree with you. It needs defeating, and we must defeat it. But to-day I shall be so busy playing grandmother that I cannot give the matter my undivided attention. I would suggest that you hand over at least some part of the watching to our ingenious Waters."

"Wagtail would muck it up."

"He might. But if you also are on the qui vive I do not imagine he can—er—muck it up finally, conclusively, and comprehensively. And it will be good exercise for his brains. Our dear Wagtail is so well satisfied with the quality of his brains that he considers the use of them rather superfluous."

"I've noticed that," admitted Bags. "I'll put him on to it. I say, how are you going to wangle the granny bizney?"

"I have already deposited in a safe place, a quarter of a mile or so away, a bag containing the needful—er—feminine apparel. I shall fade out as soon after classes as practicable. When my dear grandmother comes along without me it will be assumed that my simplicity of nature has led me to go to the wrong place to meet her—possibly the police-station instead of the railway-station."

"I say, though, Goggles, I don't believe most of them think you are half such a mug—"

"As they take me to be? They are right. Bagshaw; I am not. But I do not think they will grieve for the simple Johnny when once Johnny's revered grandmother appears upon the scene. She will provide them with enough to keep their youthful minds interested."

Bags grinned. Goggs' face was as solemn as though he were discussing a sermon.

There were no classes that afternoon, as it was a half-holiday. After dinner Goggs "faded out," as he had put it. No one who mattered saw him go; no one thought particularly about him.

Bags and Tricks went to footer practice. Gordon Gay inquired after the other two, but seemed quite satisfied when told that they did not feel like footer that afternoon.

"I suppose Goggles doesn't often feel like footer?" he said. "He doesn't look much like it, anyway."

"You may have a surprise when you see him play," replied Bags.

"Ha, ha! Does he kick the ball with both feet at once? Now the other chap—Waters—does look a bit more like it. But we can see what his form's like another day."

Bags and Tricks winked at one another. Wagtail was quite useful at footer; but he was not up to their standard, and compared with Goggs he was, in the words of the poet, "as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine."

It was as well Goggs should not show up on the Rylcombe footer-field yet. Once he began to play he could not help giving away the fact that he was no duffer. He was too keen for that. And if the Fourth saw him at his best in the forward line, streaking down the field with the speed of a hare, dodging like a fox, swerving like a swallow in flight, shooting like a four-point-seven gun—well, it would be very hard for the Fourth to believe any longer in his pretended ineptitude.

Wagtail was on the watch. He had grumbled at being cut out of footer for the day; but when Bags diplomatically told him that Goggs had wanted him to do the watching his grumbling had ceased at once.

Carpenter was playing. Larking and Snipe were not. Other absentees were Carker, the aristocratic Algernon Lacy, the French junior, Gustave Blanc, commonly known as Mont Blanc, Tadpole, and Jasper Weird.

(To be continued next week.)