

READ: "THE MAD MUSICIAN OF GREYFRIARS!"

(This Week's Magnificent School Story of Harry Wharton & CO.)

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The MAGNET 2^D



**THE MAD
MUSICIAN!**

THE MAD MUSICIAN OF GREYFRIARS!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Man in Possession!

"O II!" roared Harry Wharton. He staggered back from the door of Study No. 1 in the Remove passage, clasping both hands to his nose.

His nose was hurt. It was really a case of more haste and less speed.

Class was over at Greyfriars. The Remove were out rather late. Mr. Quelch, the master of that Form, had detained his Form for half an hour beyond the usual time. He had been annoyed by finding the House dame's cat in his desk. The whole Remove had had to suffer for the sins of one fellow with a misdirected sense of humour.

There was little daylight left; but after the stuffy Form-room and the drone of Quelch's voice, the idea of punting about a footer in the fresh, keen wind was grateful and comforting. Harry Wharton rushed up to the Remove passage to fetch an old footer from his study.

He did the Remove staircase two at a time. He shot across the landing and whizzed into the Remove passage. He grasped the door-handle of Study No. 1, turned it, pushed at the door, and barged on, to enter the study all in one movement.

All would have been well had the door opened, as the door ought to have done. But the study door, like other things in this wicked world, left undone that which it ought to have done.

It did not open. It was, as a matter of fact, locked on the inside. No fellow could possibly have foreseen that his own study door would be locked on the inside when he wanted to enter in a

hurry. Wharton never dreamed of such a thing till his nose hit the door.

His nose hit the door hard. It was quite a crash. Staggering back across the Remove passage, with both hands clasped to his agonised nose, Wharton roared.

"Oh! Ow! Wow! Ooooh! Oh, my nose! Ooooh!" He forgot the footer in Study No. 1. He forgot that there was little daylight left for the punt-about. He forgot everything but his nose. His nose felt as if it had been jammed right through to the back of his head. It hadn't, of course, but it felt like it.

"Oh! Ow! Wow!" roared the captain of the Remove! "Oh, my hat! Oh, my nose! Ow! What villain's locked my study door! Whoop!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came Bob Cherry's voice from the landing below. "Are you bringing that ball?"

"Ow! Wow!" "Waiting for you, old chap!" called out Frank Nugent.

"Yow-ow!" "The waitfulness is terrific!" came the voice of Hurree Jamsct Ram Singh up the staircase.

"Whooh—hoop!" "Something's the matter," said Johnny Bull. "Let's go and see."

And the Co. came up the Remove staircase.

They stared in astonishment at the sight of the captain of the Remove clasping his nose, with a thin, red line oozing between his fingers.

"Knocked your nose?" asked Bob. "Wow!"

"It must have been a terrific knockfulness!" said Hurree Singh sympathetically. "But whyfully did you knock your esteemed and absurd nose?" "Yow-ow!" Harry Wharton removed

the clasping hands from his nose at last. Like that of Shakespeare's Marian, it was red and raw. He dabbed it with his handkerchief. "Ow! I banged it on the study door! Wow!"

"What for?" asked Johnny Bull, in surprise.

Wharton glared at him. "You unspeakable idiot!" he said. "Do you think I did it on purpose? Wow!"

"Well, I don't see why you should bang your boko on the study door," said Johnny.

"You frabjous ass!" roared Wharton. "I was going in in a hurry—"

"Not without opening the door, I suppose?"

"You piffing dummy! Some villain's locked the door! How was I to know it was locked? Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Co., suddenly and involuntarily.

"You cackling asses! Is it funny?" roared Wharton.

"Nunno!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Not at all! Ha, ha! Not a bit funny! Ha, ha, ha! It's too jolly bad! Ha, ha!"

"I'll jolly well scalp the silly idiot who locked that door!" hooted Wharton. "Who was it? If that ass Valentine has locked himself in—"

"Valentine isn't there," said Nugent. "He's waiting on the stairs."

"Then who the dickens can be in the study?" asked Bob. "Bunter, perhaps, if there's any tuck about."

"I'll burst him if he is!"

A Shell fellow came across the landing and glanced at the group of Lower Fourth fellows. It was James Hobson, the captain of the Shell.

"You men seen Hoskins?" he asked. "Blow Hoskins!" grunted Wharton.

"Well, I'm looking for old Claude," said Hobson. "We couldn't stand the

row he was making in our study, and he was rather shirty about it, and—”

“Bother him, and bother you!”

“Well, you needn't snap a man's head off!” said Hobson. “What's the matter with you? What have you been doing to your nose?”

Wharton did not answer that question. He turned to the study door and banged on it. Somebody was in that study, where he certainly had no right to be, and had locked the door against interruption, with unfortunate results to Wharton's nose. Unless it was Billy Bunter, investigating the contents of the study cupboard, it was hard to guess who it might be.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

“Bunter, you fat scoundrel!” roared Wharton. “Bunter, you pilfering porpoise! Open this door, you fat frump! I'm going to burst you all over the Remove passage! Do you hear, you fooling, fat freak?”

No reply.

“Bunter!” roared the captain of the Remove. “Bunter, you fat rotter—”

“Oh, really, Wharton—” came a voice from behind the captain of the Remove.

Wharton spun round from the study door.

A fat junior had just come up the stairs. He blinked at Wharton indignantly through a big pair of spectacles. Wharton stared at him. Evidently it was not Billy Bunter who was locked in Study No. 1.

“Calling a fellow names!” said Bunter warmly. “I'd like to know what you're calling me names for, you beast!”

“I thought you were in my study, you fat bouncer! There's a cake in the cupboard, and the door's locked!”

“Locked!” ejaculated Bunter. “I say, you fellows, get that door open! What cheeky ass has locked it? I say, you fellows, make him open the door! It's some rotter after the cake! I say, that cake will be gone!”

Evidently Bunter was deeply interested in the cake.

“Is that what you came up for?” grinned Bob Cherry.

“Oh, really, Cherry, I never knew Wharton had a cake! I didn't hear him mention to Nugent that his Aunt Amy has sent him one. And if I'd known, I suppose I'm not the fellow to touch a fellow's cake! I came up here just to—to see if it was safe! There's fellows in the Remove who would think nothing of scoffing a fellow's cake—”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

It was clear that only the fact that the Remove had been kept in after their usual time had saved the cake from Bunter. Some other fellow, apparently, in some other Form was ahead of him.

Wharton was banging and thumping on the door, adding a kick or two on the lower panels. He was not so anxious about the cake as to get hold of the fellow who had locked the door and caused that pain in his nose.

“Will you let me in?” he roared. “Who's there?”

Pong!

There was no verbal answer from within. But a twanging musical note suddenly sounded from the study. It was made by a tuning-fork being struck on the study table. Hobson of the Shell gave a gasp.

“Oh, my hat! It's Hoskins! That's where he is! It's Hoskins!”

“Hoskins!” gasped Wharton. “The cheeky ass, locking himself in a Remove study! I'll boil him in oil!” He banged on the door again. “Hoskins,

you ass! Hoskins, you fathead! Hoskins, you blithering idiot! Let me in, you dummy!”

Bang, bang, bang! Thump! Bang! And the only answer from within the study came in the twang of a tuning-fork!

Pong, pong!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

No Admittance!

CLAUDE HOSKINS of the Shell sat at the table in Study No. 1.

The table was covered with sheets of music-paper.

Hoskins had cleared off books and papers belonging to Wharton, Nugent, and Valentine by the simple process of tipping the lot into the armchair.

Hoskins had a pen in one hand and a tuning-fork in the other; and a far-away look in his eyes.

His hair was untidy from his fingers having been run through it in the throes of composition.

Hoskins of the Shell was musical.

He was, in fact, a musical genius. The Greyfriars fellows knew this, because Hoskins had told them so.

Mr. Flatt, the music master who visited Greyfriars on set days, had a

Claude Hoskins lives, dreams, moves, and has his being in music! What he doesn't know about “minor ninths” and “major ninths” isn't worth knowing. And what he does know about them isn't worth knowing either, in the opinion of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars!

very keen pupil in Hoskins of the Shell. But he was seldom pleased with that pupil; Hoskins having a conviction that he had forgotten more about music than the music master had ever known. There was no false modesty about Claude Hoskins. If a fellow knew that he was a genius, why shouldn't a fellow state the facts? That was how Hoskins looked at it.

Hoskins was hard at work now, and extremely irritated by the banging at the study door that interrupted his labours. He was busy on one of his own original works which he was pleased to call a Fantasia in D minor. He had had to get out of his own study, Study No. 5, in the Shell because Hobson and Stewart persisted in talking there. He had marched off in wrath with his music-papers, seeking a quiet spot where a musical genius could write down the wonderful things that flashed into his melodious brain without interruption. But the life of a genius is always a troubled one. Now Hoskins was interrupted again.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Thump!

Hoskins was driven to speech at last. “Will you clear off?” he shouted angrily. “Can't you give a man a minute's peace, you noisy fags!”

“You piffing lunatic!” came Wharton's voice through the keyhole. “What have you locked my study door for?”

“I can't be interrupted!”

“You howling maniac! What have you stuck yourself in my study for?” yelled Wharton.

“Eh? Is it your study? It was the first in the passage, and it was empty, that's why!”

“I say, you fellows, he's scoffing the cake!” squeaked Billy Bunter.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Pong! Pong! Pong! Hoskins rapped with the tuning-fork. This was what he called getting his note. Properly speaking, he should have had at least a piano when he was composing—though he would have preferred a full orchestra. But the piano in the music-room had been bagged by Gwynne of the Sixth, who had regular practice to do. Hoskins had looked in there, and Gwynne had left off for a moment to help him out, and Hoskins still felt a slight ache from Gwynne's help.

“Claude, old man,” called Hobson through the keyhole, “let these fellows have their study, old chap.”

“Don't talk now, Hobby.”

“Look here, old fellow—”

“Do be quiet!” said Hoskins. He

laid down the tuning-fork, dipped his pen into the ink, and began to inscribe weird characters on his music-paper, which perhaps bore some distant family resemblance to the old notation. No doubt they meant something to Hoskins.

“It's no good, you men,” said Hobson, turning away from the door. “When old Claude gets going on music he's like a horse with the bit between his teeth. You'll have to leave him to it.”

“Look at my nose!” roared Wharton.

“Ha, ha, ha!” chortled Hobson, as he looked. “Bit over-ripe, what?”

“Well, I'm going to make Hoskins' nose the same, and yours, too, if you cackle, you giggling Shell-fish! Hoskins, you rotter, open this door!”

Bang! Bang! Thump! Kick!

There was no answer from within. Even the tuning-fork was silent. Only the pen scratched. Hoskins' left hand clawed his hair, which he wore rather long to show that he was a genius. He always clawed his hair when he was composing music. Now it was almost standing on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine.

“The cheeky idiot!” gasped Wharton. “Bagging a fellow's study to scribble his silly idiocy in! I'll pulverise him into small pieces.”

“I'll get a footer out of my study,” said Bob Cherry, laughing. “It will be dark in two ticks.”

“Pulverise him afterwards!” said Frank Nugent.

“I say, you fellows, suppose he scoffs the cake—”

“Fathead! He's not after the cake! He's only mad,” said Bob. “Come on, let's get my footer and get out.”

Harry Wharton hesitated. His nose was red and raw and had a pain in it. He had a natural desire to reduce Claude Hoskins' nose to the same state. “I'll tell you what,” said James Hobson, “you fellows might keep quiet! Old Claude hates a row going on when he's composing music.”

Wharton, who was about to give a final bang at the door, paused, and glared almost speechlessly at Hobson of the Shell.

“What?” he gasped.

Hobby of the Shell was a great admirer of his musical chum. He really believed that Claude was a jolly old genius, and that some day people would be talking about Hoskins' Earlier Period, just as now they talked about Beethoven's Later Period! Only he couldn't stand the row in his own study when Hoskins was composing. He couldn't stand having to keep as still and quiet as a mouse while Claude was jotting down his inspirations. No fellow

could stand it, as he told Stewart of the Shell, and Stewart fully agreed that no fellow could—or would, anyhow!

Still, Hobson liked to give his musical pal a chance. At a safe distance from his own study it was all right.

"Just keep quiet, see?" said Hobson. "Get out of doors, or something! I don't make a row and interrupt a chap! See? Look here, Wharton, you jolly well stop banging on that door!"

"I—I—I'll jolly well bang the door!" gasped Wharton. "And I'll jolly well bang it with a lump of wood! Lend a hand here, Bob."

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Bob. "Hold on—I mean, let go!" roared Hobson, struggling as the two Removites grasped him. "Look here—Oh, my napper—Yaroooooh!"

Bang!
It was James Hobson's head that banged on the door of Study No. 1. That was what Wharton described as banging it with a lump of wood!

Bang! Bang!
"Oh crikey! Leave off!" shrieked Hobson frantically. "You're braining me—Yaroooooh!"

"No danger—can't brain a fellow who hasn't the necessary article!" chuckled Bob. "Give him another!"

Bang!
"Whooooooop!"
"Will you shut up that row?" came a shriek from the study. "What are you yelling for, Hobson? You might keep quiet, at least!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Yarooooh! Leggo! I'll spifficate you—Whooooop!"

"Now kick him out of our passage!" gasped the captain of the Remove, and five pairs of feet helped Hobson of the Shell across the landing. It was a breathless and dishevelled Hobson that staggered into the Shell passage.

Wharton delivered a final bang on the door of Study No. 1.

"Hoskins, you potty ass—"
"Minor ninths!" came a murmuring voice from the study. Hoskins, deep in composition, was talking to himself. "Yes, rather—minor ninths! Old Flatt can say what he likes about minor ninths—he's an old ass!"

"You potty piffler—"
"Oh, do be quiet!"

"I'll give you minor ninths, and major tenths, when I collar you!" roared Wharton. And with a last kick at the door he went up the passage with Bob, and a football was obtained from Study No. 13, with which the chums of the Remove hurried down to the quadrangle.

There was not much daylight left for a punt-about, but the Famous Five made the most of it, and for the present, at least, they forgot about Claude Hoskins and all his works.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Strategy!

"H E, he, he!"
Billy Bunter let that chortle off suddenly like a cracker. Peter Todd, his study-mate in Study No. 7, stared at him. Something apparently of a comic nature had struck Bunter suddenly. His fat face was wreathed by an extensive grin, and he chortled explosively.

Bunter had lingered outside Study No. 1 for a few minutes, trying his persuasive powers on Claude Hoskins through the keyhole. Deaf to the voice of the charmer, Hoskins had gone on with his minor ninths, whatever they were, and vouchsafed no reply. Then

Bunter rolled into Study No. 7 to see whether Toddy was thinking of tea. Toddy was getting through some lines which he had to get done before tea, and had no time to waste on Bunter. The fat Owl blinked at him and sat down in the armchair to wait, his thoughts running on the cake in Study No. 1.

He knew that it was a nice cake—a jolly good cake; when Miss Wharton sent her nephew at school a cake, it was always a jolly good one. Bunter had been there before, so to speak. He knew those cakes, and had a keen appreciation thereof. But with Claude Hoskins locked in the study, deep in minor ninths, the cake, though so near, was far like the tempting viands which, of old, tantalised the famished Tantalus—always just out of his reach.

Mental exertion was not much in Billy Bunter's line; but he could exert his fat intellect at times—and now he exerted it on the pressing problem, how to get into Study No. 1 before a lot of greedy fellows got there and wolfed that cake.

Hence Bunter's sudden chuckle. Bunter had got it! He rose from the armchair, with a grinning face.

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter. "Got a pain?" asked Peter Todd.

"Eh? No!"
"Then what are you squeaking about?"

"Yah! I jolly well shan't let you have any of the cake!" said Bunter. "You keep a fellow waiting for his tea, while you do rotten lines!"

"What cake?" asked Toddy.
"Oh! Nothing! There isn't a cake, really," said Bunter hastily. "You needn't mention to Wharton that I said anything about a cake. He might think it was his cake, Peter. You know how suspicious fellows are."

"You fat owl!"
"The fact is, I'm going to get that cheeky ass Hoskins out of Wharton's study, just to oblige my pals," explained Bunter. "Awful cheek locking himself in another man's study, you know. But I fancy I know how to get him out—he, he, he!" Bunter chuckled. "You know what a wonderful ventriloquist I am, Peter."

"I know what a babbling ass you are!"

"Yah!"
Billy Bunter rolled out of Study No. 7, leaving Toddy to his lines. He rolled along to Study No. 1. The door was still locked, and a sound of a "pong" came from within. Hoskins was apparently "getting his note" again.

Billy Bunter gave a fat little cough. Any Remove fellow who had been near would have recognised that fat little cough. It was the preliminary to some of Bunter's ventriloquism.

Billy Bunter could imitate any fellow's voice, if it had any marked characteristics. Often he had made fellows jump by reproducing the bark of their respected Form master, Mr. Quelch, and even the deep tones of the Head. Now it was in the voice of Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, that Billy Bunter intended to speak.

Hacker's voice was sharp, acid, testy. Shell fellows had often compared it to the filing of a saw. It had a note in it like a hinge that needed oiling. It was quite a distinctive voice—certainly not melodious, but easily recognisable. Having cleared his fat throat with a fat cough, Billy Bunter knocked on the door, and proceeded to talk in tones that Mr. Hacker might have believed to be his own.

Rap, rap, rap!

"Oh, go away!" came a peevish voice from within the study. "Can't you give a fellow a rest, you silly ass?"

"Hoskins!" barked Bunter sharply. "How dare you?"

In the study, Hoskins jumped, so suddenly that he dropped a shower of blots from his pen. They dropped all over his Fantasia in D minor, and transposed some of his minor ninths into augmented sevenths on the spot. Hoskins gave a yelp of dismay.

"Answer me!" barked the acid voice.

"Oh! Yes! I—I didn't know it was you, sir!" gasped Hoskins, nothing doubting that it was his Form master outside the study door. "I—I—"

"How dare you lock yourself in a Remove study, Hoskins?"

"I—I— There was a row going on in my study, sir, and—and—"

"That is no excuse!" barked Mr. Hacker's voice from the mouth of William George Bunter. "Leave this study at once, Hoskins! Do you hear me? I shall return in a few minutes, and if you are not gone, I shall cane you severely!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Hoskins.

Billy Bunter grinned as he heard the hapless musician fumbling with his music papers. He backed away and dodged into Study No. 2, which was vacant, Hazeldene and Tom Brown being in the quad with the fellows who were punting the footer. He did not want Hoskins to see him when he emerged.

Claude Hoskins gathered up his musical works in a great hurry. He had passed unheeded the oburgations of the Removites; but he had to heed the voice of his Form master—or what he at least believed to be the voice of his Form master. If Hacker came back and found him there, after ordering him to go, the result would be too painful. Hacker had a sharp temper as well as a sharp voice, and a heavy hand with a cane.

Laden with music sheets, some blank, others covered with what looked like crawling ants and dancing spiders, Hoskins unlocked the door of the study, and tramped out.

He glanced round for Hacker, and was glad not to see him. Hacker, apparently, was already gone.

Hoskins of the Shell gave a snort, and tramped away towards the stairs. It was frightfully irritating to be interrupted in the midst of fixing up an arrangement of minor ninths, which, Hoskins flattered himself, was something rather new in the musical line. That arrangement of minor ninths was calculated to give an audience, not merely a headache like most modern music, but actual neuralgia! And Hoskins had to leave it unfinished till he could find some other refuge wherein to rest his weary head.

Had he guessed that it was not Hacker, but Billy Bunter, who had hooked him out of Study No. 1, Bunter's fat life might have been in danger. Fortunately, Hoskins did not guess anything of the sort.

He stamped away angrily and indignantly: and as soon as he was gone, a grinning fat Owl came out of Study No. 2, chuckled, and rolled into Study No. 1.

Bunter made a jump for the study cupboard.

A moment more and the cake which

had been packed and dispatched to Greyfriars by the affectionate hands of Aunt Amy, was in the fat paws of Billy Bunter.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter ecstatically, as he tore off the wrappings, and blinked at it.

It was a large cake—a luscious cake—a gorgeous cake—a ripping cake! There was enough to make a meal for half a dozen fellows—quite enough to take the keen edge off Billy Bunter's appetite.

He sat down in the chair that Hoskins had vacated. He munched and crunched and gobbled. He hardly paused to take breath. The February dusk was falling, and Harry Wharton could not be long before he came in. Bunter had no time to lose.

Gobble, gobble, gobble!

rest. But it was not safe to linger. Those fellows might come in any minute now. If they found Bunter in the study, smothered with crumbs, in the midst of a sea of crumbs, they would accuse him of having scooped the cake! It would be just like them!

Billy Bunter beat a prompt retreat from the study. Breathing rather stertorously, he rolled along to Study No. 7. Peter Todd had finished his lines, and was at tea with Tom Dutton there.

"You're late, fatty," he remarked.

Unheeding, Bunter rolled across to the armchair. He sat down heavily. Leaning back in the chair, he breathed like a grampus.

"Don't you want any tea?" asked Peter, staring at him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Ordered Off!

MR. QUELCH frowned angrily. The master of the Remove was not in the best of tempers that afternoon.

No Form master's temper was likely to be improved by the discovery of a cat in his desk, for one thing. Having failed to pick out the practical joker, Quelch had detained his Form for half an hour—invariably detaining himself also! Extra Latin for the Remove was extra Latin for the Remove master; and if the juniors were tired of Quelch, there was no doubt that Quelch was tired of the juniors.

He had been cross, snappy, acid. He had given Bob Cherry lines for shuffling his feet; Maulverer lines for yawning.



Mr. Quelch strode straight at Nosey Clark and swiped with his umbrella. It crashed down on the crook's bowler hat and Nosey yelled. A Fifth Form fellow, hurrying along the road to get in for lock-up, stopped and stared at the scene. It was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form; and what he saw made Coker break into a run!

Crunch, crunch, crunch! Crumbs smothered Bunter! His fat face grew shiny—his eyes bulged behind his big spectacles. He gasped, he puffed, and he blew. But he paused not! Large as it was, the cake grew smaller by degrees, and beautifully less. Where Bunter packed it all was rather a mystery. But somewhere within his extensive circumference he found room for it.

Gobble, gobble! Gurg!o!

It was a race against time. The cake vanished! Bunter rose from the chair, rather slowly and heavily.

He had done well—perhaps a little too well. He was feeling the effect of his exertions. He was not hungry now! Even Billy Bunter was not hungry after packing away that cake.

He would have been glad to sink into the study armchair for a much-needed

"No, thanks! Keep your measly sardines," answered Bunter. "The fact is, I'm not really hungry. It's not much I eat, as you know."

"Oh, my hat!" said Peter.

"I haven't had anything, you know," added Bunter cautiously. "Not a cake, or anything of that kind, Toddy. If Wharton makes out that there's a cake gone from his study, I fancy Hoskins must have had it—he was in the study, you know—locked in."

"Did all those crumbs come from the cake you haven't had?" asked Toddy.

"Oh!"

Bunter took out a far from spotless handkerchief and brushed off crumbs, and Peter Todd chuckled.

For once Billy Bunter did not annex the lion's share of tea in Study No. 7. Even Bunter had no room for more.

Had rapped the Bounder's knuckles for winking at Redwing; and had even snapped peevishly at Valentine, the fellow in the Remove to whom he was invariably kind and considerate. After which, Form and Form master were mutually relieved when, at long last, dismissal came.

Quelch donned hat and coat to walk to Courtfield after classes; and no doubt a walk through the keen, frosty air would soon have restored his equanimity. A sharp walk is always the best cure for a bad temper, a grievance, a sense of being put upon, or anything uncomfortable of that sort. But Quelch's temper had not had time to improve with walking when he sighted a man with a nose like a vulture's beak, and frowned; and his frown was dark and angry and ominous. Indeed, Quelch's

frown might have been described as resembling that of the Lord High Executioner in the play, which was frightful and fearful and frantic.

Henry Samuel Quelch closed his long fingers on the handle of his umbrella as if with the intention of using that useful article as a weapon of offence.

His gimlet eyes gleamed at the man with the beaky nose.

There was a little lane from the high road which ran between the ancient Cloister wall and a fir plantation. It was a secluded spot, seldom trodden. People were not supposed to loiter there; nobody had any business there. But a thin man with glinting, black eyes and a beaky nose was loitering there, smoking a black cigar, and he stared at the Form master as, coming along the road, Mr. Quelch saw him and glanced at him.

Quelch halted.

Few people who had ever seen Nosey Clark forgot him. His prominent proboscis was a reminder.

Quelch had seen him only once, but he remembered him, and the sight of him loitering round Greyfriars was disturbing and irritating.

In a cross temper already, Quelch was crosser than ever; and was, in fact, just in the mood to deal with Nosey Clark as that gentleman deserved.

Only once had Mr. Quelch seen the man—speaking to Jim Valentine in Friardale Lane, weeks ago. Mr. Quelch's acquaintance with the underworld was very distant, but he knew a rogue when he saw one. And Valentine had admitted that the man was an old associate; one of the crooked gang from whom the boy had fled when the Greyfriars Form master befriended him. He believed Valentine's statement that the rascal had spoken to him against his will; that he was trying to keep clear of him if the man would only let him.

And now he was hanging about the school. Anyone belonging to Greyfriars might have seen him and remarked on it. Probably he had already been seen and his presence commented on. Mr. Quelch did not regret having befriended Jim Valentine, but it was a little too

much for the boy's former associates to hang about the school seeking to communicate with him. And it amounted to persecution.

Mr. Quelch turned from the road, stepped into the lane by the Cloister wall, and faced Mr. Compton Clark with a glitter in his gimlet eyes and his grasp very hard on his umbrella.

"What are you doing here?" he snapped.

"No harm, sir!" answered Nosey Clark, his black eyes scanning the Remove master's face with a peculiar gleam in them.

"I will be plain with you, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "I recognise you as the man who spoke to Valentine, of my Form, some time ago. You are, I believe, called by the name of Nosey Clark, and I believe that the police are in search of you."

Nosey Clark smiled.

"I can guess why you are here, Mr. Clark," went on the Form master. "You are, in point of fact, persecuting the boy I have taken under my protection, and who is determined to have nothing further to do with you. You can have no other motive for being here."

"It won't hurt Jim to have a word with an old friend, sir," said Nosey Clark smoothly.

"I refuse to allow you to speak a single word to the boy!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I refuse to allow you to loiter about the school."

Nosey shrugged his shoulders.

"Ain't this a public path?" he asked. "No, sir!" said Mr. Quelch. "This lane is a part of the school precincts; there is a right of way, but it is not a loitering-place for doubtful characters. You will take your departure this instant."

"I'll suit myself about that, sir!" said Nosey Clark pleasantly.

"You will do nothing of the kind," said Mr. Quelch. "As I have said, I believe that the police have some charge against you. Inspector Grimes of Courtfield would be glad to interview you, sir. He has told me as much; indeed, he has questioned the boy Valentine concerning you."

Nosey grinned.

"Jim wouldn't give away an old pal," he said.

"Your presence here," said Mr. Quelch, "amounts to persecution of an upright lad, who was once unfortunate enough to be in association with you. If a constable were at hand I should give you in charge. As it is, I shall see that you go, and go at once! I order you to go!"

The sneering grin on Nosey's hard face gave the finishing touch to Mr. Quelch's irritation.

He dropped his hand on Nosey's shoulder, grasped him, and spun him out into the road.

Nosey staggered.

There was unexpected strength in the grasp of the schoolmaster. Quelch, angular as he was, was sinewy.

"Now go!" rapped Mr. Quelch, raising his umbrella.

"Shades of Hades!" gasped Nosey Clark. "You old fool—"

He broke off the next moment with a yell. Mr. Quelch's umbrella came down across his shoulders with a crash.

Nosey Clark jumped away, gritting his teeth.

He turned on the Form master like a tiger, his hands clenched, his eyes glittering like a snake's. For a moment he seemed about to spring at the Remove master.

Mr. Quelch strode straight at him, swiping with the rolled-up umbrella. It crashed down on Nosey's bowler hat, and again he jumped away. Grim and determined, Mr. Quelch followed him up. If ever a man deserved a horse-whipping, this man did, in Mr. Quelch's opinion; and, having no horsewhip at hand, Mr. Quelch used his umbrella, handling it quite effectively.

Swipe! Swipe! Swipe!

Nosey yelled and dodged; and then, making a spring, grabbed at the umbrella and caught hold of it. Mr. Quelch tugged at it angrily. Nosey held on, and for some moments there was a struggle for the possession of the umbrella, like that for the body of Patroclus by the walls of Troy.

A Fifth Form fellow, hurrying along the road to get in for lock-up, stared at the scene and stopped. It was Horace Coker of the Fifth Form.

"My hat!" ejaculated Coker.

Mr. Quelch called to him hastily.

"Coker, kindly give me your assistance!"

"What-ho!" said Coker, with a grin. Coker of the Fifth weighed in at once. He rushed on Mr. Clark and grasped him by the collar.

Nosey Clark let go the umbrella as Coker whirled him away. Nosey was a strong and wiry man; but Coker of the Fifth was very hefty, and he almost crumpled in Coker's grip.

Mr. Quelch panted for breath. He was quite determined to see Mr. Clark off, but certainly he did not like the idea of a rough-and-tumble. He was quite glad that the burly Coker had arrived on the scene.

"Coker! That man is a bad character; a lawless character," he said. "He is loitering about the school with no good object. I should be obliged, Coker, if you would see that he departs immediately."

"Leave him to me, sir!" said Coker. "Let go, you fool!" hissed Nosey Clark. "I'm going, you fool!"

"Fool, am I?" said Coker. "Well, I'd rather be a fool than a rogue; and you look a pretty thorough rascal, my man! Anyhow, you're going, and I'm going to see that you do."

Coker spun the crook round in his powerful grasp, and planted the heaviest boot at Greyfriars behind him, Nosey fairly flew.



There's high jinks at Grimslade School this week, boys! Donkeys by the dozen overrun the quadrangle—fat donkeys, lean donkeys; small ones, big ones—and their owners are all trying to sell their steeds to Mr. White, the dignified Housemaster! Of course, it's a jape—but what a jape! Never

has Grimslade known such a sensation—and Jim Dainty and his chums enjoy it to the full. YOU'LL enjoy this rollicking story, too, which is written by popular Frank Richards, creator of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. Don't miss this grand story in

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He crashed on the frosty road with a howl.

Coker of the Fifth followed him up. He jammed the toe of his boot in the sprawling man's ribs.

"Hook it!" said Coker. "If you want me to kick you again, I'm ready. I've no objection at all. Hook it!"

Nosey Clark scrambled to his feet. He gave Coker a savage glare and ran. Coker let out a boot to help him on his way, and there was another howl from Mr. Clark. He disappeared into the path through the wood to the river and vanished from sight.

"Gone, sir!" said Coker cheerfully.

Mr. Quelch smiled faintly. "I am much obliged to you, Coker," he said.

"Not at all, sir," answered Coker. And he walked on to the gates, leaving Mr. Quelch to pursue his way to Courtfield, his brows knitted in thought as he went.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Six for Six!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. came into the House in a cheery bunch.

They had punted the footer till it was too dark to punt it any longer, and were feeling much better for the strenuous exercise in the keen, frosty air. Likewise they were feeling quite ready for tea. The Famous Five and Jim Valentine came up to the Remove passage in a cheery little crowd, ready to deal with the cake in Study No. 1.

"If that howling ass Hoskins is still there—" said Harry.

"If he is, we'll jolly well bust in the door!" said Bob Cherry. He grasped the door handle of Study No. 1, turned it, and hurled the door open. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's not locked! He's gone!"

The study was deserted. The six juniors tramped in. "The cheeky ass!" exclaimed Jim Valentine, glancing at the pile of books and papers in the armchair. "Look at our things!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! I thought he was doing his music stunts here!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Looks as if he's been feeding."

He pointed to an ocean of crumbs on the table, and the adjacent floor. They were the crumbs of a cake. The juniors stared at them.

"Great pip! If he's scoffed the cake—" exclaimed Nugent.

"He wouldn't!" said Johnny Bull. "Hoskins is only potty. He wouldn't scoff a fellow's cake."

"Looks as if he has." Harry Wharton ran to the study cupboard. He glared into it. The wrappings of the cake were there. But the cake was not. The cake had vanished, save for the crumbs scattered over the study.

"Gone," roared Wharton.

"The gonefulness is terrific!" "He's scoffed the cake!" roared the captain of the Remove. "Keeping us locked out of our study while he scoffed our cake!"

"Well, that's jolly thick!" said Johnny Bull.

"The thickfulness is preposterous."

"The rotter—" "The grub-raiding rotter! We'll scalp him!"

There was deep wrath in Study No. 1. All the half-dozen juniors were hungry. They wanted their tea. There were other things for tea—certainly; but the cake was the chief thing, the piece-de-resistance. And it seemed clear enough

that Hoskins had had it. Nobody else had been there, so far as the juniors knew. Hoskins of the Shell had been locked in the study. Now he was gone, and the cake was gone. What was a fellow to think?

"Making out that he was only mad, when he was scoffing our cake all the time!" exclaimed Nugent indignantly.

"Let's get after him. If we can't get the cake, we'll take it out of him in kicking!" said the captain of the Remove wrathfully.

"Hear, hear!" "Let's!"

Six exasperated juniors rushed out of Study No. 1, and headed for the Shell quarters. They wanted their tea; but the greater part of tea was gone, and the rest had to wait while they dealt with the musical genius of Greyfriars.

The door of Hobson's study in the Shell was hurled open, as if a battering-ram had struck it. Six angry juniors crowded in the doorway.

Hobson and Stewart were in the study, and they jumped up in alarm.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Hobson.

"Where's that tick Hoskins?" roared Wharton.

the corridor that led to the music-room. That room was in a rather secluded quarter. In that room was the piano on which fellows who were taking music lessons did their practice. The more secluded that room was, the better the rest of Greyfriars liked it.

If Hoskins of the Shell was missing at any time, it was always safe to look for him in the music-room, just as it was safe to look for Billy Bunter in the tuckshop.

It was his favourite haunt.

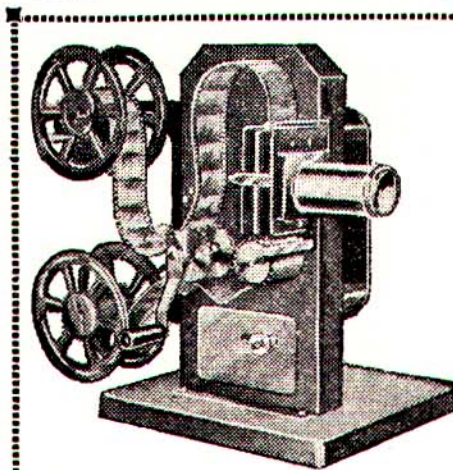
Often and often Claude Hoskins was found there by fellows who had to do their piano practice, and hot arguments would ensue. Hoskins might be in the middle of a conglomeration of minor ninths or augmented sevenths, and at such moments was liable to get excited if interrupted.

That somebody was in the music-room, was assured, as the juniors ran down the corridor, for the thumping on the piano was loud and emphatic. Somebody, it was certain, was putting the piano to the torture.

"Got him!" breathed Wharton.

"Quiet, though. Don't give him a chance to lock the door!"

"Quiet!"



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One glance revealed the fact that Claude Hoskins was not in his study.

"Eh! Isn't he in your study?" asked Hobson. "I thought—"

"Haven't you seen him since?" "No. Thought he was still there. What do you want him for?"

"Better not look for him," advised Stewart. "You might find him, and then ten-to-one he would tell you all about his latest composition, and perhaps play it over to you. Believe me, it's no catch!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Wharton. "He's not here. We've got to find him. We'll jolly well ram his minor ninths down after the cake."

The Removites crowded away, leaving Hobson and Stewart laughing. They paused on the landing to consider their next step. Where was Hoskins?

"Seen Hoskins, Temple?" called out Wharton, catching sight of Cecil Reginald Temple of the Fourth. "That idiot Hoskins, of the Shell?"

"No. And don't want to," answered Temple. "Want him?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, I haven't seen him; but there's a fearful row going on in the music-room."

"The music-room, of course!" exclaimed Wharton. "Come on!"

The chums of the Remove rushed down the stairs. They scudded along

And the six juniors slowed down, and tiptoed towards the door of the music-room. Hoskins was going to be caught napping this time.

Silently they reached the door. But really it was not necessary to be very cautious, for the din from the music-room was almost deafening. Whoever was punching the piano had a hefty punch.

Wharton turned the door handle. "Now all together, and collar him!" he whispered.

"What-ho!"

Wharton threw the door suddenly open. With a rush the Removites hurled themselves on the figure seated on the music stool, thumping the piano. They collared it and dragged it backwards off the stool to the floor with a terrific concussion.

Crash! Bump! "Whooop!" roared the victim.

"Tare and 'ounds! Howly mother av Moses! Howly Saint Patrick! What the—"

"Oh crikey! It isn't Hoskins—"

"Oh crumbs! It's Gwynne!"

"Oh lor, it's a prefect!"

"Phew!"

Gwynne of the Sixth, sprawling on his back on the floor of the music-room, roared wildly. Never had Gwynne of the Sixth been taken so by surprise.

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Musical!

The juniors released him as if he had become suddenly red-hot as they saw that they had made a little mistake—a natural mistake, perhaps, but rather unfortunate, as the victim thereof happened to be a prefect of the Sixth Form!

Gwynne sat up, spluttering. "Ye omadhauhs!" he roared. "Phwat's the game entirely?" Gwynne was always more than usually Irish when he was excited, and he was excited now—frightfully excited. "Phwat ye mane? Is it mad ye are entirely?" "Oh dear!" gasped Nugent. "Oh crikey!"

"The crikeyfulness is terrific!" Gwynne of the Sixth scrambled up. He was wild and wrathful, which was not really surprising in the circumstances.

His official ashplant stood leaning against the piano. Gwynne grabbed it, and the Removites jumped away.

"Playing your fag tricks on a prefect, bedad!" roared Gwynne. "Faith, and now I'll be playing some tricks meself wid this illigant stick intirely!"

"It—it—it was a mistake!" gasped Wharton. "We're after Hoskins—"

"Hoskins of the Shell, you know!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"We thought—"

"You see, Gwynne—"

"We thought it was Hoskins kicking up that row, you know!" gasped Nugent.

Gwynne of the Sixth flourished the ashplant. Nugent's remark did not pour oil on the troubled waters.

Gwynne did not regard his piano practice as a "row."

"Bend over, the lot of you!" roared Gwynne. "Sure I'll tache ye to handle a prefect entirely, ye spalpeens, and me hard at work! Bend over!"

"We—we—we mad—rather a mistake—" gasped Wharton.

"Sure ye did—and ye'll make another mistake if ye don't bend over quick! Ye'll get a dozen instead of six, intirely!" roared Gwynne.

There was no help for it. A Sixth Form prefect could not be dragged backwards and crashed on the floor without painful results to follow.

The results, undoubtedly, were painful. Six juniors bent over in turn, and each received six of the best. Gwynne had a hefty and heavy hand with the piano; he seemed to have a still heavier one with an ashplant. There was a sound like carpet-beating.

"Now, hook it, ye thaves of the worruld," said Gwynne. "Sure if ye ain't gone in two ticks, I'll give ye another six all round."

The juniors were gone in one tick! Gwynne slammed the door after them and resumed piano-punching. Six hapless juniors wriggled away down the corridor.

"Owl! Owl! Ow! Wow! Yowl! Owl!"

Such were their remarks as they went.

"We'll scalp Hoskins!" gasped Wharton. "We'll lynch him! We'll boil him in oil! We'll get him in his study after prep, and strow him in small pieces all over Greyfriars! Wow!"

The hapless six wriggled their way back to the Remove passage. They had rather a frugal meal. Over tea the conversation was limited mostly to such remarks as "Wow, wow, wow!"

Hoskins of the Shell had to wait. But the wrath of the wrathful juniors, like wine, improved with keeping. They were sure to catch Hoskins in his study after prep—and when they caught him Hoskins was going to have the time of his life. There was solace in the prospect.

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"PREP!" said Claude Hoskins bitterly.

"Well," said Hobson, "prep's prep!"

"Give a fellow room on that blessed table!" said Stewart.

Hoskins sniffed.

Prep, as James Hobson declared, was prep. It was one of those things which, like the rain and the hail, fell alike on the just and the unjust.

The study table in Study No. 5 in the Shell was littered with music paper. Claude Hoskins spent quite a considerable portion of his pocket-money on music-paper—which he immediately proceeded to deprive of its market value by writing music on it!

Blank, it was worth what Hoskins gave for it. But with a Fantasia in D minor sprawling over it, it was just litter—in the opinion of Stewart of the Shell, at least, though in Hoskins' belief it was priceless, and his loyal chum, Hobson, tried to believe the same.

What looked like sprawling spiders and demented ants decorated those sheets of paper! Hobson had once, in an unlucky moment, asked Hoskins why he didn't write his music in the old notation. It turned out that those sprawling spiders and demented ants were the old notation! Hoskins jotted them down with a hurried hand—and to Hoskins they meant something! To their meaning, if any, no other fellow had a clue.

"Prep!" repeated Hoskins, in the same bitter tone. "Talk about Nero fiddling while Rome burned! Prep!"

"Well, look here, old chap, you'd better do some prep," said Hobson. "Old Hacker's been jolly shirty with you lately."

"Anyhow, we've got to do ours!" said Stewart, beginning to gather up the sheets of spiders and ants. "These things any good?"

"Let them alone!" shrieked Hoskins. "If you get them mixed—"

"Yes, let 'em alone, old chap," said Hobson. "It wouldn't do to get the minor nineteenth mixed with the—the major seventeenth. Are they minor ninths or nineteenths, Claude?"

"Ninths, fathad! And I can tell you fellows," said Hoskins, "that the way I handle minor ninths will make some noise in the world some day."

"It does now, when you get going in the music-room," said Stewart. "A fearful noise, if you ask me!"

Snort from Hoskins! Only a snort was adequate in reply to a remark like that!

Claude gathered up his music-sheets with careful attention. He took them up tenderly, treated them with care.

At the moment, Hoskins was only Hoskins of the Shell, who had to leave off working at a masterpiece to do prep, like any other Shell fellow. But that was only for the moment. When that Fantasia in D minor burst on a dazzled world, Hoskins was going to be the great Hoskins, the celebrated Hoskins, the Hoskins who was the composer of Hoskins' Fantasia in D minor, a work fairly bristling with minor ninths.

Fame was coming to Hoskins. It had not arrived yet, but it was on the way—at least, Hoskins believed so.

The table being cleared, the three Shell fellows sat down to preparation. Hoskins worked at his prep in a desultory way.

It was difficult for Hoskins to bring

his great mind down to such things as algebra and Latin irregular verbs.

It had to be done—Fame not yet having arrived. But it was tiresome to a fellow whose brain-box—in Hoskins' case a musical-box—was buzzing with an epoch-making arrangement of minor ninths.

Hoskins, like all musical composers, had his hours of inspiration. He had one now.

These inspirations had to be put down on paper before they vanished. They were elusive things. A silly ass barging a fellow over, for instance, might knock his inspiration entirely out of his head. Once gone, they were hard to recapture.

With musical inspirations buzzing in his head like bees in a hive, Hoskins had really had a hard time that day.

Cackle in his own study had driven him to seek refuge elsewhere; and then a lot of fags had banged on the door of the study he had annexed—regardless of inspirations and minor ninths. Since then Hoskins had worked on an upturned box, in a box-room, and his feet had got frightfully cold, his fingers ditto, and his ants and spiders had become more spidery and anty than ever.

Genius always has to struggle with difficulties. Hoskins was no exception to the rule. He bore it manfully. After all, Fame was coming—practically just round the corner!

Still, he was glad to get back into a warm study. But then came prep! No wonder Hoskins was bitter!

Inspirations had to be set aside while he did his prep! How was he to put his mind into such stuff? His mind ran on music, and he came very near modulating an isosceles triangle into the key of G major, and transposing a Latin irregular verb into the key of D.

He shoved his books aside at last. He had done enough to satisfy Hacker in the morning; at least, he hoped he had! If Hacker was not satisfied, Hacker had to remain unsatisfied—and that was that! Blow Hacker, anyhow!

While Hobson and Stewart, unwilling to "blow" Hacker, worked on, Hoskins drew music-sheets towards him and restarted after the interval, as it were.

With a corrugated brow, a smudge of ink on the tip of his nose, his hand running through his hair till his hair stood on end, Claude Hoskins mentally wrestled with minor ninths.

Cold feet in the box-room, and prep in the study, had had a rather disastrous effect on his inspirations. They were rather scattered. Hoskins had to gather them again, and get them written down, before it was too late. On the morrow, as likely as not they would be gone entirely. A masterpiece would be lost to the world. The world might not have noticed it or missed it; but Hoskins was not going to let the world suffer this great loss if he could help it.

"If a fellow had a piano—merely a piano in the study!" said Hoskins.

Hobson and Stewart shuddered simultaneously. To them it was a ghastly idea.

"Not that a piano's what I really want!" said Hoskins. "For work like this a man needs an orchestra at his beck and call. Look at this bit for the horns, for instance—I'll hum it over—"

"Shut up!" roared Stewart.

"Oh, give a man a chance!" said the loyal Hobby. "We can stand it for a few minutes! Dash it all, we had an electric drill going on the road a few days ago, and we had to stand it! Go ahead, Claude, old chap!"

Hoskins did not go ahead. Hobby



“Hold him, you fellows,” said Johnny Bull, “and let’s shove his rotten musical works down his neck!” Hoskins resisted wildly, he struggled frantically, he wriggled like an eel, he howled like a hyena. But he had to have it—and he had it! Crumpled sheets, inky and smudgy, were crammed down his back, and driven well home.

was loyal; but, really it was not flattering to compare that “bit for the horns” with the din made by an electric drill on the road. Hoskins snorted and went on scribbling in silence.

He was glad when Stewart and Hobson had finished prep and left the study. It was peace at last.

“Coming down, old fellow?” asked Hobson, lingering in the doorway.

“I’ve got this to finish,” answered Hoskins. “I may get it done by bedtime. Not a minute to lose. Cut off!”

Hobson cut off after Stewart. Hobby was a really good chap. He had been in deadly terror lest Hoskins should keep him there, telling him about it, and humming over the choice bits for the various instruments. Friendship would have stood the strain; still, James Hobson was glad to go. He cut after Stewart with a light heart.

Left alone in his study, Claude Hoskins breathed more freely. He had a good hour of peace before him; and that was time enough to get that brilliant inspiration down—to get it in black-and-white, safe as an insect on a pin, or a rat in a trap; cutting it off, as it were, from any possibility of escape.

With tense face and far-away eyes, inky fingers and ruffled hair, the musical genius of Greyfriars struggled with minor ninths.

Half an hour passed—a happy half-hour! Hoskins’ hair grew more ruffled, his fingers more inky, and his sheets of music-paper more and more covered with weird hieroglyphics that may have meant something—though more probably not! It looked as much like tonic sol-fa as the old notation; and as much like an enlarged photograph

of excited germs, as either! Such as it was, it made Hoskins happy, and his eyes shone with delight as his Fantasia in D minor, like the little peach in the orchard, grew and grew and grew.

He enlarged and improved that bit for the horns. He put in little wiggly bits for the piccolo. He put in stuff for the violins, which, if there had been violins there to play it, would probably have driven all Greyfriars into flight, with their fingers to their ears.

He put in impressive things for the trumpets and the drums. He was not composing for one of those little tin-pot bands. A full orchestra would have been required to play Hoskins’ works! If it had got going it might have lifted the ancient roofs of Greyfriars. Luckily, no orchestra was at Hoskins’ disposal.

There was a tramp of feet in the passage.

Hoskins did not heed it.

He did not even hear it.

The study door was hurled open. Six juniors tramped in.

“Got him!” exclaimed Bob Cherry.

“Shut the door!”

“Lock it! Hoskins likes a door locked.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Now collar him!”

“Get out!” shrieked Hoskins. “You’re interrupting me! You’re—yow-ow!—leggo my ears—wow!—leggo my hair—wow-wow!”

Bump!

Claude Hoskins sat on his study carpet, with a bump that nearly shook the study, and for the moment he forgot even the Fantasia in D minor.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Horrid for Hoskins!

“BUMP him!”
 “Rag him!”
 “Mop him up!”
 “Scrag him!”

Harry Wharton & Co. had expected to find Hoskins in his study after prep. Now they had found him. Still in the belief that Hoskins of the Shell had scooped the cake in Study No. 1, they were there to make Hoskins sorry for himself.

They could have forgiven him for locking them out of the study—allowances could be made for a musical genius. Wharton could have forgiven him for that bang on the nose, now that the agony had abated. But scoffing the cake was the limit.

A fellow could be potty if he liked, but a fellow couldn’t scoff another fellow’s cake! Not without painful results—such as were now happening to Hoskins.

They rolled Hoskins on the carpet. His already ruffled hair was ruffled still more wildly. They stretched him across the study table—heedless of the musical works that lay there.

Harry Wharton picked up a roll of music-paper and wielded it as a weapon. The six Romovites had had “six” each from Gwynne. It was only fair for Hoskins to get six! Wharton gave him six with the roll of music-paper!

Whack, whack, whack!

Hoskins struggled frantically. He roared. He made almost as much noise as an orchestra could have made with his Fantasia in D minor.

But it booted not! He was in the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,304.

hands of the Amalekites, and that was that!

Whack, whack, whack!
"Yaroooh!" roared Hoskins. "You potty idiots—you cheeky fags—you blithering owls—you—you—you—Yaroooh!"

Crash went the inkpot, as Hoskins knocked it over in his struggles. A stream of ink shot over the table and the music sheets! Hoskins gave a howl of dismay and anguish. Innumerable spiders and ants were obliterated by that swamp of ink!

"Ow! My music!" howled Hoskins. "My composition— Oh lor! Wow! Leggo, you villains! Wharrior you at?" "That's six!" said Harry Wharton. "We had six each from Gwynne when we got after you in the music-room!"

"Wow! I wish he'd given you sixty!" shrieked Hoskins. "I wish he'd given you six hundred! Wow!"

"Now stuff his rubbish down his back," said Frank Nugent. "That will be a lesson to him to keep out of other fellows' studies! He fancies that tripe is some good—goodness knows why!"

"Good egg!"
"Let my music alone!" raved Hoskins. "Oh, you Goths! You Vandals! Huns! You—you—you cannibals!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Hold him!" gasped Johnny Bull. "He's getting excited about something!"

"The excitableness is terrific!" chortled Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "Hold the esteemed ass armfully and legfully!"

Hoskins struggled frantically. He could stand a whopping; but he could not stand having his musical works stuffed down his back. It was not his back he was worrying about; but his musical works! No Fantasia in D minor, or in D major for that matter, could ever be the same again, after being stuffed down its composer's back.

Six stout lads were holding Hoskins; but they had a lot of work to do. He was getting frantic. A lioness robbed of her cubs, a citizen of the United States done out of ten cents, did not feel like a music composer deprived of his musical works! Hoskins seemed to have the strength of three or four fellows.

Thud!
He got a foot free and landed out. Jim Valentine caught the foot with his chin! He caught it hard.

"Yooop!" roared Valentine.
He sat down quite suddenly. He sat and clasped his chin with both hands, and rocked himself and moaned.

"Hold him!" gasped Bob. "He's getting dangerous!"

Hoskins' free leg was recaptured.
"Wow, wow, wow!" groaned Valentine nursing his chin. He was hors de combat for a time! "Wow! Ow! My chin! Oh, wow!"

"Leggo!" yelled Hoskins. "Ow! Leggo, I tell you!"

There were footsteps in the passage. Hoskins' wild howls had been heard in other studies. Somebody thumped at the door.

"Hallo! What's this row?" shouted Carr of the Shell.

"Ow! Rescue!" yelled Hoskins. "Remove cads! Wow! Rescue!"

Thump, thump, thump! came at the door. Shell fellows were gathering there, quite ready for a row with the Remove. But the raiders had locked the door, and they thumped in vain.

"Here, hold him!" yelled Bob. Hoskins, with a supreme effort, tore

himself loose. He bounded at the fender, and grasped at the poker.

Probably Hoskins would have done some damage with that poker had he got hold of it. Fortunately, he didn't.

Many hands were on him before he reached the poker, and Hoskins went over, in the midst of a sprawling heap. Still he struggled.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob. "He's game!"

"The gamefulness is terrific!"
"Sit on him!"

"Get hold of his hair—it's long enough!"

"Grip his ears!"
"Lend a hand, Valentine!"

"Wow, wow!" answered Valentine. He was still caressing his chin.

But the Famous Five handled Hoskins effectively. In spite of his prowess he was pinned at last and safely held. Excited Shell fellows, in the passage, thumped and kicked on the door.

"Here, open this door!" It was Hobson's voice. The din had drawn the captain of the Shell back to his study.

"Here, you cheeky Remove ticks, what are you up to in my study? What? What are you up to?"

"Snuff?" answered Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Now, here goes!" said Johnny Bull, grabbing up handfuls of musical works.

"Leave the blank paper alone—tain't right to waste anything. But all this scribbled stuff is no good!"

The scribbled stuff—otherwise, the Fantasia in D minor—was jammed down the back of Claude Hoskins' neck. He resisted wildly, he struggled frantically, he wriggled like an eel, he squirmed like a cat, he howled like a hyena. But he had to have it—and he had it!

Crumpled sheets, inky and smudgy, were crammed down his back and driven well home. Crumpled sheet after sheet was crammed down, till Hoskins looked rather like a camel with an outside in humps.

Down went that bit for the horns, down went the wiggly bit for the piccolos, down went those impressive passages for the trumpets and the drums. Down they all went, inky and crumpled, crammed down Hoskins' back!

"There!" gasped Wharton. "I think that will do! That's a tip, Hoskins."

"Urrrrrrgggh!" gurgled Hoskins.

"If you barge into our study again we'll pay you another visit—"

"Yurrrrrgh!"
"Come on!" said Bob. "We shall have a scrap when we open the door. Shoulder to shoulder, you men!"

"Come on, Valentine!"

"Wow! All right! Wow!"

Harry Wharton unlocked the door and threw it open. Outside nine or ten Shell fellows were gathered, ready for trouble. The six Removeites rushed together.

"Sock it at 'em!" roared Hobson.
"Back up, Remove!"

Six fellows, shoulder to shoulder, drove a way through. There was a running fight down the Shell passage. But the charge of the sturdy six carried them to the landing at the end. There, more Removeites came on the scene—Mark Linley and Vernon-Smith, Peter Todd and Tom Brown and Lord Maulverer and three or four more. And the Shell, after a terrific scrap were driven back into their own passage.

Hobson looked into his study, with one eye winking and blinking, and his nose streaming red. Hoskins was sitting on the floor, grabbing wildly at the back of his neck, gasping and gurgling as he grabbed.

"We've mopped 'em up, old man!" said Hobson.

Claude Hoskins did not answer. He hardly heard. He sat and clawed at his back. The mopping-up of the Remove—even if they had been mopped up, which was not quite accurate—was a trifling light as air to a fellow who had a Fantasia in D minor crammed down the back of his neck.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Only Way!

MR. HACKER gave a grunt. The master of the Shell was seeing lights out for his Form that night. One fellow had not

come up.
Hence Mr. Hacker's grunt. Hacker was not a good-tempered gentleman, neither did he like having his time wasted.

"One boy—Hoskins, I think—is not here!" snapped Mr. Hacker. "Hobson, why is Hoskins not here?"

"I—I think he's in his study, sir," said Hobson.

As a matter of fact, the captain of the Shell knew that Hoskins was in his study. He had called him, but in vain, for dorm. Hoskins, bent on repairing the damage to his Fantasia in D minor, had merely glanced at him with a far-away eye and taken no notice.

"Go down at once, Hobson, and tell him to come!" snapped Mr. Hacker.

"Yes, sir."

James Hobson went down to the studies.

There was still a light burning in Study No. 5 in the Shell, where all lights should have been out. In that study Claude Hoskins sat at the table, pen in hand, with ruffled hair, hard at work.

"Hosky, old bean——" said Hobson, in the doorway.

Hoskins waved an impatient pen at him.

"Go away! Don't interrupt!"
"Dorm, old man—and Hacker——"

"I'm getting it back," said Hoskins, apparently alluding to the inspiration, "it will be gone again if you jaw! Cut!"

"You really must come, old chap," said Hobson. "Hacker's sent me down for you, old fellow."

"Blow Hacker!"

"He'll come himself!" urged Hobson. "That means a whopping! Do come, old son, and—and I'll help you with that stuff. I—I don't quite know what a minor ninty-ninth is, but I'll do my best."

"Idiot!" answered Hoskins ungratefully.

But he rose. It was useless to wait till Hacker came for him with a cane. Beethoven himself, or Mozart, or Mendelssohn could not have composed with a Form master's cane whacking at them at the same time. Still, he could not have composed under the discomposing effect of a whacking cane. He had to chuck it. Bitterly he laid down his pen and chucked it.

"It may be lost to-morrow," he said darkly.

"Oh, that's all right, old man!" said Hobson encouragingly. "Leave it on the table. Nobody will touch it. Something was pinched in Temple's study in the Fourth last week, but nobody will pinch your music, old man. They—they don't know its value."

"Idiot!" repeated Hoskins. He had been alluding to the inspiration. But solid, stolid old Hobson knew nothing about inspirations.

Still, even at the risk of losing that

inspiration, Hoskins had to go to his dormitory. He went.

"How dare you keep me waiting, Hoskins!" said Hacker. "Take a hundred lines! Now go to bed at once!"

Hoskins, in a bitterly sardonic mood, went to bed. This was the sort of encouragement a genius received at Greyfriars. Unluckily, Mr. Hacker did not know that Hoskins was a genius. He thought that he was a fool! A lot of fellows in the Shell thought so, too.

Lights out, the Shell settled down. Fellows talked from bed to bed, chiefly about football. Hoskins listened to them sardonically. Art had no appeal to these Goths and Vandals. They thought more of bunging a leather ball into a goal than of the most striking and original arrangement of minor ninths. They did not even know what a minor ninth was, and did not want to know.

If Hoskins had tried to enlighten them, very likely they would have kicked him. Yet in the future Greyfriars would be known as the school where Claude Hoskins, the great composer, had been educated! Long after their footing football triumphs were forgotten Claude Hoskins' Fantasia in D minor would be performed repeatedly in the Albert Hall—if, indeed, the roof of that edifice survived the first performance!

Even Hobby, his faithful and admiring friend, was only thinking of a game they were going to play with the Fifth, and seemed to have already forgotten the disaster that had happened to the Fantasia in D minor at the hands of the reckless Removites.

The talk died away at last, and the fellows slept—all except Claude Hoskins. Hoskins could not sleep.

A fellow was not likely to sleep when his inspirations, carefully written down in characters resembling ants and spiders, had been ruthlessly stuffed down his neck and recovered in a crumpled, inky, smudgy, smeared, and illegible state!

If the thing was not written down it might be gone by the morrow! Fellows slept and snored round him as if it didn't matter. Claude Hoskins knew only too well how much it mattered.

Eleven boomed out from the clock tower, and Hoskins sat up in bed.

"Hobby!" he called out.

Steady breathing from Hobson, in the next bed, was the only reply.

Claude reached out for a boot beside his bed, and dropped it neatly on the sleeping head of the captain of the Shell. Hobson awoke at that quite suddenly.

"Wow!" he ejaculated. "What—Ow! What—Ooogh! What—"

"Only me, old chap," said Hoskins. "I wanted to speak to you. I say, do you think the beaks would notice a light in the study if I went down?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Hobson.

"I've simply got to get that thing done," said Hoskins. "But I don't want some fool of a beak barging in and interrupting me. Hacker generally goes to bed at eleven, doesn't he?"

"For goodness' sake don't be such an ass, old chap!" said Hobson, rubbing the place where the boot had dropped. "If you break dorm bounds—"

"That's nothing."

"Coker of the Fifth got a thousand lines for it a week or two ago."

"Don't be an ass, Hobby! Think they'd notice a light in the study? I could draw the curtains. Nobody would see from the quad, even if any silly ass of a beak was out of doors."

"Ten to one you'd be spotted and whopped."

"Perhaps I'd better leave it till a bit later," sighed Hoskins.

"Better go to sleep, old chap."

"Don't be a silly ass, Hobson!"

"Well, I'm going to sleep," said Hobson; and he did. Once more Claude Hoskins was the only wakeful one in a slumbering dormitory.

He was not at all sleepy. Perhaps the ragging in Study No. 5 in the Shell had helped to banish slumber. Anyhow, he was not thinking of sleep. He was thinking of his unfinished Fantasia in his study. It was safer to leave it till later. He realised that. He could screen the study window, but the light would still show under the door, and if any beak was prowling about—as beaks sometimes did—he would be spotted. A whopping did not matter, but an interruption did. Hoskins waited, with what patience he could muster—for twelve to strike.

It seemed an age before the witching time of night arrived. But twelve deep strokes boomed out from the clock tower at last. Hoskins stepped out of bed and dressed in the dark.

At midnight all Greyfriars was deep in slumber. The last door was closed, the last light was out. No prowling

was, in fact, the voice of Mrs. Kebble's cat, Thomas, roaming the tiles.

Even that was irritating to a musician, faint as it was. Hoskins, in the throes of composition, preferred absolute silence—which he seldom obtained.

He would have liked a sound-proof room, like that constructed for the great Carlyle, the eminent Sage of Chelsea, who, thus protected, was able to write thirty long volumes, to prove the value of brevity.

Concentrating on some wiggly, twiddly passages for the piccolos, Hoskins, was naturally disconcerted by the melody of Thomas, which mingled with the melodies running in his musical brain-box and put him off his stroke.

But Thomas wandered away, and his top note ceased from troubling, and the weary were at rest.

Forgetful of time and space, Hoskins worked at the Fantasia in D minor, and once again, like the little peach in the orchard, it grew and grew. No sound came to him now, save the occasional boom from the clock tower, which he heard, but heeded not.

One—two—three!

Even Hoskins was sleepy at three in the morning. He nodded a little over his labours, and the Fantasia was getting a little more fantastic than the composer had intended. But his work was done. He had recaptured and written out those invaluable inspirations, which had been blotted and obliterated by the stuffing down his neck. He would have liked to continue, to put in a few more touches, but he realised that he was sleepy and liable to mix the twiddly bits for the piccolo with the stately passages for the trumpets and the drums—which, of course, would never have done.

So he gave it up at last.

He laid down his pen, gathered up his priceless papers, and put them away, yawning deeply, and put out the light.

Silently he stepped from the study.

He crept down the passage to the big landing, sleepy, but satisfied. And then he gave a jump and a gasp, as, through the openings of the landing balustrade, he saw a light gleaming in the hall below.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

In the Small Hours!

NOSEY CLARK drew in a quick, hissing breath and gripped his companion by the arm. Nutty Nixon, the cracksman, hardly breathed.

In the blackness of the night the two crooks were fitting silently under the old Greyfriars elms. No sound had reached their ears, but a black shadow loomed against the gloom, and they stopped suddenly, realising that they had almost run into a man who was blotted from sight under the trees. Nosey's heart thumped against his ribs.

He knew who it was, though it was only a blur in the blackness. He was well aware that Inspector Grimes of Courtfield watched the school at night, admitting himself with a key to Master's gate. It was of Jim Valentine, the boy who had fled from the crooks, that Mr. Grimes was suspicious; but since the night when he had caught Nutty in the quad and very nearly captured him, he had been very wary for prowlers outside the school. Now, in the darkness, he was scarce six feet from the crooks,

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LEATHER POCKET WALLETS FOR BUDDING POETS!

Compose a Greyfriars limerick like the following and win one of these useful prizes:

**Mark Linley's a studious boy,
Who finds learning Greek a sheer joy.**

**Latin verses (it's true)
He just loves to construe;
And a "crib" he would scorn to employ!**

The above effort was sent in by
Ray Mallett, of 20, Unity Street,
Ipswich, Suffolk.

beak could possibly spot Hoskins at that hour. And in the middle of the night all was quiet—no sound of running feet or brawling voices, no silly asses barging in on a fellow. The conditions were ideal, in fact, for a music composer. Hoskins dressed hastily and crept to the door of the Shell dormitory.

He opened the door, stepped out softly, and closed the door again without a sound. Groping his way in black darkness, he stole along the passage. The interior of the House was as black as the inside of a hat, only a dim glimmer of wintry starlight falling in here or there from a high window. Hoskins crept down the staircase to the next floor below, where the studies were. Silently and stealthily as a Red Indian on the warpath, Hoskins reached the Shell passage and crept into his study, shutting the door softly.

Carefully he drew the blinds over the window. He did not want light to stream forth over the dusky quad, to catch the eye of any wakeful beak or prefect who might look from another window.

Having blocked the window carefully he switched on the light in the study and sat down to his table.

Everybody else in Greyfriars was fast asleep. The silence was profound. Only from a distant roof came a faint wailing sound, which might have been the top note of an operatic tenor, but which

and they knew that they were discovered.

Silent and still as a stone they stood in the darkness, the black shadow limping before them. Had he heard them?

There was a sudden flash of light. An electric torch in the inspector's hand gleamed on the two startled, pale faces. And as it gleamed the two desperate rascals acted together, leaping like tigers.

Inspector Grimes had an instant's glimpse of them as they leaped; and then he went down heavily under their grasp.

The stout inspector gave a breathless grunt as he dropped. His mouth was open for a shout, but that shout was never uttered. A hand closed over his mouth, choking it back.

Mr. Grimes struggled fiercely.

He knew in whose hands he was. He had discovered already that Jim Valentine's former associates haunted the school; one of them he had had his hands upon once. Whether the boy was acting in collusion with them or not the inspector did not know, but he suspected it strongly. Several burglaries had occurred in the vicinity since Jim Valentine had come to Greyfriars, and Mr. Grimes had little doubt that the school was marked down as a "crib" to be "cracked"—doubtless with the aid of the young rascal inside the building.

Night after night the patient Mr. Grimes had watched, through weary hours, and now—now he was down on his back, with a hand gripping over his mouth, a knee planted in his stomach, his wrists held—helpless, at the mercy of the crooks. That was not what Mr. Grimes had intended—but it was what was happening.

"Keep him quiet!"

It was Nosey's hissing voice.

"Not that!" added Nosey, the next moment, and Mr. Grimes knew that the other man had grasped a jemmy to strike. "No need of that!"

"Safer," breathed Nutty.

"No, I tell you."

The cracksman gave a grunt and let the jemmy slip back into his pocket. Mr. Grimes was still resisting, but he knew that he had had a narrow escape of having his head cracked by a savage blow. There was, as Nosey said, no need. He was powerless in the grasp of the two crooks who had him down, and Nosey was not the man to incur unnecessary risks.

A folded handkerchief was stuffed into his mouth, almost choking him. He breathed stertorously through his nose. Quick hands wound a cord round and round his head, binding the gag in place.

Silently, swiftly the crooks acted. A cord was knotted round Mr. Grimes' ankles, another round his arms. He was as helpless now as a trussed turkey.

His eyes fairly burned at the crooks.

He had been watching for them, but he had not got them. They had got him! While he lay helpless, silent, the robbery was to be carried out—he knew that. He would hear all about it in the morning. It was an unenviable position for a keen police officer!

"Safe as houses!" panted Nosey, breathing hard. "Listen! If there are any others—Listen!"

Crouching over the prostrate officer, the crooks listened for long minutes. But there was no sound, no movement, nothing stirred. Inspector Grimes had been alone keeping his watch.

Nosey Clark drew a deep breath of relief.

"All safe!" he said.

"Bet on it!" agreed Nutty.

The helpless police officer was now rolled into the deepest and darkest shadow of the elms. There, for additional security, another cord fastened him to the trunk of a tree. There he was left, with feelings more easily imagined than described.

In silence, Nosey Clark and Nutty Nixon flitted through the shadows towards the sleeping House.

They had had to take the risk of the watch that was kept on the school; but they had eluded the danger. The watchful Mr. Grimes could not interfere with them now. The crib was at their mercy.

It was not for the sake of the valuables in the Head's safe that they were there, though those valuables were to pay them for their trouble. This visit to Greyfriars, in the small hours, was Nosey's latest move in his scheme for driving Jim Valentine from the school—by forcing "Dick the Penman" to come back to the gang.

Thrice had he tried, and failed. Thrice, by that cunning hand of Nutty Nixon, there had been a theft in the school, with clues left to lead to Jim Valentine. And every time the scheme had failed. How, Nosey Clark did not know, and could not guess. Chance, it seemed, had favoured the persecuted boy. Or was it that evil, in the long run, was powerless in the struggle with good? Nosey Clark almost began to think so as he registered failure after failure.

Now his plan was changed.

Three failures were enough for Nosey, and he had given up the hope of succeeding in that line. This time it was not to be a surreptitious theft in a dormitory or study, to be laid to Jim's account. This time the "crib" was to be cracked, the Head's safe to be cleared of all it contained—a burglary that would make a sensation and inevitably bring the police on the scene.

No sign would be found of entrance from without. Nutty Nixon knew his cracksman's business. It would look like an "inside job." Already the police had their suspicions of Jim Valentine. And when the Head's safe was found "cracked," without a sign that the House had been entered, what would the police believe? What but that the thief had been admitted by someone inside the House? What would the headmaster believe—and even Mr. Quelch, the kind-hearted man who had befriended the boy of whom he knew so little?

This time, Nosey Clark told himself, he could not fail.

It was for that reason that the crook had loitered about the school that day. More than one Greyfriars fellow had seen him loitering there—as well as the gardener and the chauffeur. Mr. Quelch himself had seen him and ordered him off—and that was, from Nosey's point of view, sheer luck—although he had a rather painful remembrance of Mr. Quelch's umbrella and Coker's boot.

After the robbery it would be remembered and known that he had been seen loitering there, and Mr. Grimes, at least, would not need telling that he had been there to communicate with his confederate inside the school. Even Mr. Quelch could hardly fail to think so.

The net was closing round Jim Valentine. After this—after the morrow—he could not remain at Greyfriars. He might be arrested on suspicion; at all events, he would have to get out of the school. That was a certainty. And

when Greyfriars was closed to him he would have one refuge left—and one only—Nosey Clark's gang. Dick the Penman would be back at his old work again.

This time all was safe!

Such were the thoughts that passed in Nosey's cunning brain while his companion was seeking for a favourable spot to enter the building.

A door at the back, which was locked but not bolted, gave Nutty the chance he wanted.

The door opened to a skeleton key.

It gave access to the kitchen quarters—dark, silent, solitary at three in the morning.

Nutty Nixon gave an inaudible chuckle.

"All clear, gov'nor!" he muttered.

The man with the vulture's beak nodded.

"Wait here!" breathed Nutty.

Nosey Clark nodded again, and the cracksman entered, closing the door silently. In the porch outside Nosey Clark waited. Cracksman's work was not in his line—he left that to Nutty's practised hand. Silent, like a snake in the darkness, he waited for his confederate to get through and emerge with his plunder.

Within the House, Nutty moved silently in his rubber shoes. All was silent and still; he had no fear of anyone being awake at that hour. From moment to moment he shot a beam of light from his electric torch to pick his way. He emerged from the kitchen stairs into a silent, sleeping House. He stood near the big staircase listening.

His quick ears had caught some faint sound, as if something had stirred above. He listened like a hunted fox.

But all was silent.

The cracksman, reassured, flashed on his light to pick his way to the corridor leading to the Head's study.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

"Burglars!"

CLAUDE HOSKINS hardly breathed.

Standing transfixed on the landing above, he stared blankly through the interstices of the heavy oak balustrade at the light that gleamed in the darkness below.

His heart pounded.

He forgot that he was sleepy. He forgot even the Fantasia in D minor. He forgot everything but that glittering beam of light.

It moved—glided—vanished.

Hoskins rubbed his eyes.

He almost wondered for a moment or two whether he was dreaming.

Who was stirring in the building at three in the morning? It could hardly be a beak on the prowl at such an hour. Neither would a beak glide with noiseless steps; and not the faintest sound of a footfall came to his ears. Hardly a couple of weeks ago there had been a burglar in the school, who, as he fled, had been nearly captured by Inspector Grimes. Hoskins shuddered with a mingling of excitement and terror.

Hoskins was considered rather an ass in the Shell. But if he was a little "potty," as the Shell believed, in musical matters, in other matters he was level-headed enough, and he had plenty of pluck. He knew that it was a thousand to one that the light he had seen was carried in the hand of a midnight thief. But he hesitated to raise an alarm. If, after all, it should turn out to be only a beak, or perhaps a prefect



"Let us go, gentlemen," said Prout, breathless but valiant. "If there is indeed a burglar, and if I get one blow at him with this alpenstock—" Mr. Prout brandished the stock, and Mr. Quelch and Mr. Hacker bounded out of the way. "Please keep that for the burglar," said Mr. Hacker. "There's no occasion whatever for endangering the lives of your colleagues!"

who had some reason for being up at that hour—

Hoskins shook his head. It was practically certain that it was a burglar, but Hoskins did not want a risk making a fool of himself by raising an alarm in the middle of the night for nothing.

The matter was easily settled. He crept down the staircase cautiously step by step, his slippers making no sound.

Looking over the banisters, he spotted the light again. It vanished round a corner.

A few moments later Hoskins was at that corner, peering round the angle of the wall, breathing hard with excitement.

Far along the broad corridor the light gleamed.

It stopped at the door of the Head's study.

Hoskins could see that it was directed on the lock of the door. It beamed on a black-gloved hand that turned the door-handle. That was proof enough; no master, up late at night, would have donned black gloves.

The door of the Head's study opened without a sound; the light vanished within; again without a sound, the door closed.

Hoskins panted.

All Greyfriars knew that the Head's safe was sunk in the wall of the study. No outsider should have known—unless someone in the school had told him, or unless perhaps he had already explored the interior of the building and learned his way about. Was it, after all, an

outsider—a thief? Suppose the Head had woke up and wanted something he had left in his study—

It was improbable enough. But Hoskins decided to make sure. He tiptoed down the corridor.

The study door was closed. There was no sound within. Hoskins applied his eye to the keyhole.

Within the large, lofty room all was dark save in one spot. In that spot the beam of light gleamed.

A section of bookcase that moved on hinges had been turned aside. In the revealed wall was a steel door—the door of the safe.

It was on the dull metal that the light gleamed.

But the torch was not now held in a hand. It was lodged on a corner of the Head's writing-table, the light directed on the safe.

Between the light and the safe a figure moved.

Hoskins had a glimpse of a slim, dark form, of a face that was hidden by a black crepe mask, and of black-gloved hands.

That was enough!

With thumping heart, the Shell fellow stepped back from the door and tiptoed away along the corridor.

A masked man was in the Head's study—already at work on the safe! There was no doubt now, and there was no time to lose.

"Oh crikey!" murmured Claude Hoskins to himself, as he mounted the stairs as softly and silently as Nutty Nixon himself could have done.

On the landing above he paused. Then he headed for his Form master's bedroom. Now that he knew what was going on, it was a matter for a master to deal with.

He groped in the dark for the handle of Mr. Hacker's door and opened it. Within he could hear the deep breathing of the master of the Shell, fast asleep.

"Mr. Hacker!" gasped Hoskins, putting his head in.

He dared not call aloud for fear of alarming the cracksman downstairs, though the distance was considerable. He stepped into the room and shut the door after him. Mr. Hacker had not awakened.

Hoskins groped to the bedside.

"Mr. Hacker!" he repeated. "Wake up! I say, sir, wake up!"

He bent over the sleeper and shook him by the shoulder. Mr. Hacker came out of slumber with a jump.

He started up in bed in amazement and alarm. It was rather unfortunate that Hoskins was bending over him.

Crack!

The top of Mr. Hacker's head smote the tip of Claude Hoskins' nose, and the Shell fellow gave a howl.

"Ow! Wow! Oh!"

"What—what—" gasped Mr. Hacker. "What—who—what—"

"Ow! Oh, my nose! Wow!" wailed Hoskins. "Oh crikey!"

"Who—who—who is that?" Mr. Hacker switched on his bedstead light.

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

"Upon my word! Hoskins, what—what—"

In angry amazement, the awakened Form master stared at Hoskins, who was clapping his injured nose in anguish.

"What does this mean, Hoskins? Are you mad? What—"

"Ow! It's burglars, sir!" gasped Hoskins.

"Nonsense!"

"A masked man, sir—"

"Rubbish!"

"I saw him—"

"You absurd boy, go back to bed at once!" snarled Mr. Hacker. "I will deal with you in the morning. Go!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Hoskins. "I tell you, sir, I saw him—I tell you I saw him with my own eyes, sir, through the keyhole! He's in the Head's study this blessed minute, sir, at the safe—"

Mr. Hacker glared at him in angry doubt.

"If you are not dreaming, Hoskins, I—"

"He's there, sir—I saw him!" gasped Hoskins.

"And what were you doing out of bed at this hour, pray?" demanded Mr. Hacker, still doubting.

"I—I went to my study for—for something, sir, and—saw his light; then I saw him go into the Head's study!" gasped Hoskins. "For goodness' sake, sir, get up—the Head will be robbed, sir—"

Hoskins' earnestness impressed the Shell master. He grunted.

"I will ascertain, Hoskins, whether such is the case, if not—"

"I tell you, sir—"

"That will do. Wait for me at the door."

Hoskins crept out. Mr. Hacker grunted, and turned out of bed. He donned a dressing-gown and slippers, and picked up a golf-club—which he thought might be needed if Hoskins' information turned out to be well-founded. In a few minutes he joined the Shell fellow in the passage.

"Hadn't you better call Quelch, sir, and—Prout?" breathed Hoskins. "He—he may have a revolver, sir—"

Mr. Hacker paused. His first intention had been to go down and ascertain whether there really was a burglar. But he realised that if there really was, it was not a one-man job!

"Hoskins, if you are absolutely certain of what you say—"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"If you have given a false alarm you will be flogged."

"I swear, sir!" gasped Hoskins. "He—he's at the Head's safe now, sir—he will get away if we ain't quick—"

"Very well!" barked Hacker.

He stepped along to Mr. Quelch's room. He opened the door and stepped in.

"Mr. Quelch, pray wake up—"

"I am awake, sir!" came the calm voice of the Remove master from the darkness. "What is the matter?"

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"Hoskins, of my Form, has been downstairs, for some extraordinary reason, and he informs me that there is a burglar in the House!" snarled Mr. Hacker. "I am bound to make an investigation, and if you care to accompany me—"

"Certainly, sir! I will join you in a moment!"

Mr. Hacker stepped out again, leaving Quelch groping for dressing-gown and slippers. He stepped along to Prout's room and stepped in. A deep snore, which might have reminded Hoskins of his most impressive passage for the trumpets and the drums, greeted him.

"Mr. Prout—"

Snore! came from the Fifth Form master.

"Mr. Prout—" boomed Hacker.

"Bless my soul! What—what?" Prout sat up in bed and peered through the gloom. "What? Is the House on fire? What?"

"No, sir, but a boy has told me that there is a burglar downstairs, and if you care to accompany me to investigate, I—"

"Most assuredly, sir!" said Prout, bouncing out of bed. "Where are my trousers? Where are my slippers? One moment, sir, while I find my slousers and trippers—I mean, my trousers and slippers—"

Hacker stepped out again. Mr. Quelch was already in the passage, with a poker in his hand. Prout came puffing out, armed with an alpenstock which in other days had assisted Prout up the Alps.

"Let us go, gentlemen," said Prout, breathless but valiant. "If there is indeed a burglar, and if I get one blow at him with this stick—" Mr. Prout brandished the alpenstock, and Mr. Quelch and Mr. Hacker bounded out of the way like two very active though elderly kangaroos.

"For goodness' sake, sir, be careful with that weapon!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, with asperity.

"Please keep it for the burglar, if there is a burglar, sir," said the bitter Mr. Hacker. "There is no occasion whatever for endangering the lives of your colleagues."

"Really, sir—"

"Shall I call the fellows, sir?" gasped Hoskins. He was rather keen to rouse out the Shell and lead an army down after the masters.

"Do nothing of the sort!" snarled Hacker. "If a single boy is awakened, I shall cane you with the utmost severity, Hoskins. Remain where you are, and be silent."

"Oh!" said Hoskins.

He remained where he was, and was silent. Mr. Hacker, golf club in hand, led the way downstairs; Mr. Quelch followed him, his right hand grasping the poker, his left holding up the trailing volumes of his dressing-gown; Prout bringing up the rear, puffing for breath, which was always rather short with Prout, but as full of valour as in the ancient days when he had hunted the wild and woolly grizzly in the Rocky Mountains.

Hoskins stared over the banisters after them. Hacker, in the lead, switched on lights as he went. In warlike procession the three masters entered Head's Corridor. Breathing hard, but treading quietly, they moved down the corridor, and as they neared the door of the Head's study a low, faint sound came to their ears—and they all started and gasped a little. It was the sound of a tool at work on metal, low and faint, but audible in the silence now that they were close to the study where the safe was.

"Upon my word!" whispered Mr. Quelch. "Undoubtedly—"

"Undoubtedly!" breathed Prout.

Hacker set his thin lips and snapped his teeth. His grip tightened on his golf club. Hacker was not a good-tempered man, and wakened in the middle of the night he was worse-tempered than ever. He was simply longing to "have a go" at somebody with that golf club. The burglar who had spoiled Hacker's beauty sleep was not likely to get much mercy at Horace Hacker's hands.

"Follow me!" said Hacker.

And he led on, and grasped the door-handle of the Head's study.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Hand-to-Hand I

NUTTY NIXON grinned.

The steel door of the Head's safe was open.

It had not taken the cracksmen long. No safe was secure from the slim, skilled fingers of Nutty, and Dr. Locke's safe was not of the most modern or scientific construction. It was just "pic" to Nutty.

Through the eye-holes of his mask the cracksmen's fishy eyes gleamed into the open safe.

Documents and bundles of papers were there, and Nutty stared in contempt and derision at one precious parchment written in the "Low Latin" of the Middle Ages, referring to early days of Greyfriars. Low Latin and classical Latin were all the same to Nutty—he did not understand a word of either, or want to. It was not for that sort of loot that he was there.

He groped in the safe with his gloved fingers, which left no trace to be compared with the finger-prints registered by his enemies the police.

His eyes gleamed as he hooked a bundle of bonds out of a pigeon-hole; bearer bonds, of which Nosey Clark, the "fence" and master crook, would have no difficulty in disposing.

A bundle of currency notes in an elastic band rewarded him next. Then he fingered a cheque-book belonging to the Head.

A single slip from that book would have been a valued prize had the gang still commanded the services of Dick the Penman, the boy with the strange gift of penmanship, who could imitate any hand so accurately as to deceive the keenest eye.

But Dick the Penman, alias Jim Valentine, was fast asleep in the Remove dormitory, and, if he was dreaming, never dreaming that one of the gang was filching in the headmaster's study.

Nutty laid the cheque-book down again. A stolen cheque would be useful if Dick the Penman came back to the gang—as surely he would have to do after this night's work. Nutty considered for a moment or two—and then opened the book to detach the last cheque but one, the least likely to be missed by the owner. But before he could do so a sound reached his sharp ears, and he swung round from the safe, his breath catching in his throat, his eyes burning from the holes in his mask like those of a savage cornered beast.

The study door was hurled open.

A hand pressed the switch within, and the large room, hitherto glimmering in the beam of Nutty's torch, was suddenly flooded with light.

Three masters of Greyfriars rushed in. Nutty's hand shot to his hip.

Nutty was not a gunman when he could help it; a crack with a jemmy was good enough for Nutty, as a rule, at close quarters. But he was a desperate

scoundrel, and he was hopelessly cornered now, and his liberty was at stake. His slim fingers gripped the automatic in his hip-pocket, and it was fortunate that he had no time to use it. Hardly had his fingers touched it when Hacker was on him, swiping out with the golf club. Nutty instinctively dodged the blow—it missed his head, crashed on his shoulder, and sent him reeling.

He spat out a curse, and his hand jerked out with the automatic in it—only to be sent spinning by a lunge from Mr. Quelch's poker. The pistol clattered on the floor.

"Surrender, you scoundrel!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Hacker did not speak. He followed Nutty up, swiping with the golf club.

Nutty backed and dodged and twisted, and was driven into a corner, panting and cursing.

His eyes blazed.

He was cornered—there were three against him; his weapon lay on the floor, his arm was numbed by the crash of the golf-club. He backed into the corner like a wolf at bay, white-lipped and desperate.

"Scoundrel!" boomed Prout, dodging behind Hacker and Quelch, anxious to get in one with the alpenstock.

"Villain! Pray let me pass, Hacker—give me room, Quelch! One blow at the scoundrel—"

"Hold on, guv'nor!" panted Nutty. "I give in! Give a man a chance! I give in, gents, so help me."

"You had better, you rascal!" said Hacker sourly. "I will brain you if you attempt to resist."

"You got me, guv'nor!" panted Nutty.

"He must be secured!" boomed Prout. "A cord—a rope! Where is that boy Hoskins? A cord—a rope! Boy!"

Hacker stepped up to Nutty and grasped him by one shoulder; Quelch grasped him by the other. Nutty surrendered submissively—for the moment. But it was only for the moment. With a sudden twist that surprised both the masters—less used to such situations than Nutty—he stooped, and twisted between them, and leaped for the doorway. Hacker and Quelch, clutching

(Continued on next page.)

HINTS TO GOALKEEPERS!

ONE of the reasons why I enjoy these talks to readers of the MAGNET is that they are all so obviously eager to learn more and more about the game of football. I have a whole batch of letters in my post-bag this week from readers who are anxious to get on in the game—to improve their play. As there must be many others "in the same boat" who have not written to me, the replies to these letters should prove of general interest.

One letter rouses my sympathy, as well as my appreciation for the candour of the writer. "I am a goalkeeper," he says, "but our captain declares that I am not good enough for the first team. Will you please tell me what I shall do to improve my play?" Being just as frank as my correspondent, I have to confess that I don't know of any short cut to real improvement in goalkeeping—to such improvement as will justify the captain of the side deciding that a player is good enough for the first team.

In respect of goalkeeping, however, perhaps more than any other position on the field, I believe that practice is the only way. Take every possible chance you can get of standing between the posts while other lads fire in the shots from all angles.

Perhaps this particular reader shows a weakness in dealing with certain types of shots, in which case the object should be to get as much practice as possible with that particular type of shot. Some goalkeepers are good at low ones, and others are specially good at high ones. The complete goalkeeper has to be good at all sorts.

There must be some thinking about the position, too, as well as skill. The difference between good goalkeepers and ordinary goalkeepers is often just a matter of intelligent anticipation.

DEVELOP THE ART OF ANTICIPATION!

YOU may remember that one of the finest goalkeepers the game has ever known was a player called Sam Hardy, who retired a short while ago. It used to be said of Hardy that goalkeeping was easy to him because he seemed, somehow, to mesmerise his opponents into placing the ball straight at him, so that most of his saves were of the easy kind.

Actually, of course, there was nothing of the mesmerism about Hardy's goalkeeping; the people who said that of him were paying him a very nice compliment.

Goalkeeping was easy to him because he had developed the art of anticipation to a marked extent.

SOCCER QUERIES ANSWERED HERE.

"LINESMAN CALLING!"



Post your Soccer queries to "Linesman," c/o MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. It's his job and his pleasure to answer knotty problems from readers.

He seemed to sense where a forward in possession of the ball would shoot, and with this intuition he would get to the right place before the shot was made, and thus the stopping of the ball would be comparatively easy.

Several first-class goalkeepers of my acquaintance spend a certain amount of their practice time every week, not keeping goal at all, but shooting in at some other goalkeeper. The object of this practice is that shooting themselves helps them to realise more clearly where a forward in possession of the ball is likely to try to put it from given positions.

That practice between the posts is the one real way to success, however, is shown by the fact that more than one of the goalkeepers who have risen to the top of the tree in professional football have spent some of their early years between the posts at fairs and pleasure-grounds. On the staff of the Blackpool club at the present time there is a very good reserve goalkeeper named Roxburgh. Now, as you may know, there is a pleasure beach at Blackpool, and included among the "shows" was a goal-kicking affair. Two shots a penny, with a prize for the scorer. Roxburgh used to stand between the posts hour after hour stopping those shots. And the practice which he got helped to make him a good goalkeeper.

FOGGING THE OPPOSITION!

ONE reader wants some hints on playing at right-half, and another wants to know his best position.

I think I can answer these two letters at the same time. The qualifications of the player who asks for the position most likely to suit him are as follows: "I can dribble a bit, kick well with my right foot, and a bit with my left, while I seem to have the knack of seeing a move ahead."

Now it seems to me that the right-half position is the one for which this young footballer is well qualified.

Ability to dribble is useful in a wing half, as it will enable him to draw and beat an opponent before he makes a pass. Then the right foot kicking strength is useful for the effective football move of banging the ball across to the other wing. This is one of the best moves in football; it shifts the point of attack in a way which may fog the opposition.

The "knack" of seeing a move ahead is very useful to the wing half-back, too. He can anticipate the pass, and be in a position to tackle an opponent quickly. In making a tackle, keep the eye on the ball. That is the advice which was given to me by Austin Campbell, the International wing half-back of Huddersfield Town. Don't look at the player, he said, because a clever opponent will "kid" you.

Another reader asks for hints on back-healing the ball; that is, bringing it over the head from behind with the heel of the boot. I hope this reader won't be offended if I say that if I were in his position I should not waste too much time on perfecting the art of back-healing. How often does it happen, in ordinary play, that real help can be given to a side by a player back-healing the ball? Very seldom, in my experience.

In this connection I saw an amusing little incident a few weeks ago. Tottenham Hotspur signed on a new player from Notts County, named Hall. A very good player, too. Just before the start of Hall's first match at Tottenham a photographer approached and asked him to back-heel the ball while he took a "snap." Three times did Hall make the attempt to back-heel the ball before he managed to do it convincingly, strengthening my impression that back-healing is seldom called for in ordinary football. It looks pretty, of course, but is seldom effective.

"LINESMAN."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,304.

after him, collided and staggered. Nutty fairly bounded.

But for Prout, he would have succeeded. But this was Prout's chance. Prout's alpen-stock swung round, knocked a reading-lamp off the Head's table, and caught the cracksman on the side of the head.

Nutty staggered and almost fell. Prout rushed at him, lunging with the alpen-stock. That long, heavy stick was iron-shod, and it almost punctured Nutty as Prout drove it at him. The hapless Nutty yelled frantically, and dodged like an eel.

"Seize him!" boomed Prout. Hacker and Quelch had hold of the elusive rascal again before he could recover from that prod.

There was no surrender about Nutty now. This was his last chance; and he struggled and fought and bit and scratched like a wildcat.

"Good heavens! The ruffian! Down with him!" panted Hacker, as his nose was clawed. "The brutal ruffian! Wow!"

"Let me get one blow at him!" gasped Prout.

"Mind my head!" shrieked Quelch.

"My dear sir—"

"Help, help! Seize him!"

It was a terrific struggle. Fortunately for Hacker and Quelch, Prout did not swipe with the alpen-stock; there was no telling whose head he might have cracked. Dropping that fearsome weapon, Prout laid his plump grasp on Nutty. In three pairs of hands, the wiry rascal still struggled furiously, and he was by no means caught. Hacker regretted bitterly that he had not stunned him to begin with. But it was too late to think of that now. The combat was hand-to-hand—and it was work that Nutty was used to, and the elderly Form masters were not. It went on wildly.

"Help, help!" Prout was booming.

High up in the sleeping House, Hoskins of the Shell was shouting, too. His Form master had told him to remain where he was and keep silent; and Hoskins had obeyed, till the sounds of strife and shouts for help, came ringing and echoing through the House. Then Hoskins added his voice to the din, and tore away to the Shell dormitory to call his friends.

"Help, help!" yelled Hoskins. "Burglars! Hacker's got 'em! They're killing old Hacker! Help!"

He roared into the Shell dormitory. Hobson leaped out of bed like a Jack-in-the-box.

"What?" he gasped.

"Burglars! Help! Come on!"

"Great pip!"

Doors were opening right and left. From the Remove dormitory came a shout.

"What's the row?"

"Burglars!"

"Wake up, you men—come on!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Rescue, Remove!" yelled Bob Cherry.

A crash from below thundered through the House. Nutty and the three masters, rolling wildly about the Head's study, had crashed into Dr. Locke's writing-table, and sent it spinning. Inkstand and books and other things rained on the floor, and in the midst of them, Nutty, almost at his last gasp, was still struggling like a wildcat.

It was wild work for schoolmasters, no longer young. Perhaps it was not surprising that Nutty, though only one

against three, tore loose, and leaped away.

He bounded to the door, leaving three gentlemen sprawling and panting.

"Stop him!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Seize him!" boomed Prout.

"Help!" raved Hacker.

Nutty bounded through the doorway. He bounded fairly into three Sixth Form men who were racing down the corridor in their pyjamas—Wingate, Gwynne, and Sykes of the Sixth. All Greyfriars was up now. Behind the three prefects came a mob—Sixth and Fifth, Shell and Fourth, and Remove; and the stairs were crowded with yelling fags. Wingate, Gwynne, and Sykes grasped Nutty all at once, and had him down on the floor before he knew what was happening.

But he twisted like an eel, and tore loose, and leaped up again—wild-eyed, desperate, his mask hanging from one ear, his pasty face ablaze. They grabbed at him a second too late, and he rushed on—and Harry Wharton flung himself into the way, and grappled with him. There was a jemmy in Nutty Nixon's hand now; and it would have fared ill with the captain of the Remove had not Jim Valentine leaped in and struck. His fist caught the cracksman on the point of the jaw, and Nutty went over backwards with a crash.

It was the finish for Nutty! Hobson and Hoskins of the Shell jumped on him at the same moment; Vernon-Smith of the Remove piled in, and then a whole crowd. Nutty vanished under them. Wingate and Gwynne, coming up to collar him, had to shove the juniors aside. Hacker and Quelch and Prout came tottering out of the Head's study.

"Seize him!" gasped Prout. "Seize him!"

"We've got him, sir!" panted Wingate.

"The gotfulness is terrific!" gasped Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "Here is the ridiculous rascal!"

Head's corridor was packed, crammed. If Nutty had got loose, he could hardly have got through the crowd. But he had no chance of getting loose now. He was dragged to his feet, Wingate holding one arm, Gwynne the other, Sykes his collar. Hobson and Hoskins his ears—one each. Harry Wharton his hair, and Jim Valentine his shoulder. Other fellows were grabbing at him, but there was really not enough of Nutty to go round.

"The scoundrel is a prisoner!" gasped Prout. "Good—very good! Keep him secure—do not let him go!"

"No fear, sir!" said Hobson.

But there was one who held Nutty that let go. In the excitement, Jim Valentine had hardly looked at him—but he looked at him now. The mask hung loose, the pasty face was clearly revealed in the light that flooded the corridor. Jim's hand fell from the cracksman's shoulder, and his face paled like chalk, and for a moment his head swam. And Nutty, breathless, panting, beaten, snarling like a captured wild animal, turned his fishy eyes on Jim Valentine, and they glittered as they fell on the schoolboy's stricken face.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Way Out!

SILENCE reigned once more in Greyfriars School.

Jim Valentine, sleepless in the Remove dormitory, heard five boom dully from the clock-tower. His eyes had not closed.

He was not likely to sleep.

The wildest excitement had reigned in the House for a time. But once the midnight intruder was secured, masters and prefects drove the buzzing throng of boys back to their dormitories.

Nutty Nixon, with his hands bound behind his back, had been locked in the punishment-room, there to await the dawn and the police. Not for a moment did anyone in the school suspect that a police officer lay bound and gagged in the blackness under the elms outside. Nutty was not likely to tell them.

The House had been searched—the unlocked door found below; but Nosey Clark had not been found. Nosey Clark had heard the uproar in the House, and seen the flashing on of lights, and knew that once more he had failed; and that this time the cracksman had been caught at his evil work. Nosey Clark, listening in terror and fury in the darkness without, had hunted cover long before the unlocked door was found, and secured.

The captured cracksman was locked in a room from which there was no escape; and masters and boys had gone back to bed, though it was long before any of them slept.

They slept again at last, but not Jim Valentine. With sleepless eyes, and haggard face, the boy with a past stirred and stirred, unresting.

Nutty Nixon had not spoken.

When the crook's evil eyes fell on him, in the midst of the crowd in the lighted corridor, Jim had feared that it was coming. The crooks dared not betray Dick the Penman, because in his turn the hapless boy could have handed them over to justice—that was why they had let his miserable secret remain a secret at Greyfriars. But that reason no longer held good with Nutty, now that justice had its grasp on him.

Jim had read the threat in the crook's evil eyes—he had read, in Nutty's evil look, what no one else had dreamed of reading.

Nutty had not spoken—and Jim knew why.

The cracksman still hoped.

Had he been taken away immediately to the police-station, Jim did not doubt that he would have spoken, if only for the revengeful satisfaction of having Dick the Penman taken along with him. But he was still in the school; locked up safely till the morning. That had stayed his malicious tongue. He still hoped.

His hope was in Jim Valentine.

Only too well Jim knew what the crook's evil look had meant. If Jim did not help him out, he would speak.

Twice as he was led away to the room where he now lay bound, his eyes had singled out Jim in the crowd.

He had not addressed him; that would have spoiled Nutty's game. But his eyes told the boy enough.

"Sink or swim together," was what Nutty's look had said.

It was not likely that slumber would visit Jim Valentine's eyes that night. He had listened to the excited talk in the dormitory, without taking part in it. The Remove fellows slept at last and there was silence. The whole house was silent now. Five heavy strokes boomed through the night and Jim shuddered, as he realised that the dawn was coming.

If he was to act, he had to act in the dark.

What could he do? His brain seemed to swim as he tried to think.

In the morning there would be the police! Nutty Nixon would be taken away with the handcuffs on his wrists. And with him would be taken Dick



With a sudden twist that surprised both Mr. Quelch and Mr. Haeker, Nutty Nixon stooped, twisted between them, and then leaped for the doorway. Wallop! Mr. Prout swung his alpen-stock round, knocked a reading-lamp off the Head's table, and caught the cracksman a stinging blow on the side of the head!

the Penman, for the rascal would speak then—Jim did not doubt it. That was not the worst. The worst was, that all Greyfriars would know who and what Valentine of the Remove had been. Wharton and Nugent already suspected, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh knew a little—but to the rest of the school it would come like a bombshell. He shuddered at the thought of it.

And Mr. Quelch, who had taken him up and befriended him, knowing so little of him, yet trusting him—he would know!

Valentine groaned aloud at that thought.

And whether prison awaited him or not, it was the end of Greyfriars. He had always felt that it was too good to last—that the past could never be shaken off. It was the end—with a crash!

He wondered what would have happened had he not awakened and gone down with the rest; had he not even known that the captured thief was one of the old gang. It would have made no difference. Nutty, once in the hands of the police, was not likely to hold his tongue. He might even hope to gain a lighter sentence by helping the authorities to lay their hands on Dick the Penman—whom they wanted much more than they wanted Nutty. Anyhow, it was too late to think of that. He knew that Nutty was there—and Nutty, even now, was waiting and listening for him, relying upon the unhappy boy to save him, for the sake of saving himself!

As he lay sleepless in his bed, his thoughts were with the cracksman, caged like a wild beast in the room with the barred window—waiting, listening!

Jim could follow Nutty's thoughts, as clearly as if they were passing through his own brain.

What was he to do?

To steal down in the darkness, and effect the cracksman's release? To act the part of an accomplice? He knew that that was what Nutty expected, what he was waiting and listening for.

He could not—and he would not; not to save his liberty, not to save his life, would he betray his benefactor's trust in him.

But—to see that kind benefactor turn from him in horror—to see disgust and scorn in a swarm of faces, as he was led away by the police—to leave Greyfriars, and leave behind him a name of scorn! He could not face that!

The half-hour chimed.

What was he to do? The question hammered in his aching brain. The time was drawing short—he had to decide one way or the other. Betrayal of those who trusted him—or overwhelming shame, and the end of all things that made life worth living.

He slipped from his bed at last, and dressed himself. His mind was not made up—he could not make it up. But he dressed in the darkness, and he left the sleeping dormitory silent as a thief in the night.

It would not be long to dawn now—and at dawn it would be too late. But it was still the blackest hour of the night. Silently, he shut the door of the dormitory, and stood in the darkness of the passage, a prey to tormenting indecision.

He crept to the stairs at last.

His face was white in the gloom. He tried to think, but his brain was in a

whirl, he could not think consecutively. It was almost his own cognizance that he found himself in the dark passage that led to the punishment-room.

Was he going to help Nutty—to free the cracksman, and to save himself by freeing him? He did not know.

He leaned on the wall in the darkness, trying to think. Faintly through the silence he heard the quarter chime.

And then, suddenly, his mind seemed to clear. There was a way out. To free the prisoner in the punishment-room was to betray the trust in him. Never that! To leave him to his fate, was to share his fate when morning came—to sink under a load of shame. But if he was not at Greyfriars when morning came—!

That was the way out! Unless he freed Nutty, he had to go—when the villain's evil tongue betrayed him. Better go at once—and save that scene of shame and misery—save the school from the disgrace of the arrest of a Greyfriars fellow! It was the way out—and the only way.

Nutty Nixon, listening in the room where he was locked and barred in, heard a sound in the dark passage outside—and his eyes gleamed and his heart leaped. He had counted on it. But that sound was followed by silence; and the cracksman, in doubt and savage rage, listened in vain.

Jim Valentine was gone.

By a back door, silent in the darkness, the unhappy boy left the House. He closed the door softly after him. The cold wind blew on his face as he crept away into the night.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

At the Eleventh Hour!

"JIM!"

It was a whisper in the darkness, and Jim Valentine started violently. A shadow moved by his side, in the shadows of the old elms: he caught the glint of black shiny eyes, and a glimpse of a nose like a vulture's beak. The hand that gripped his arm was the hand of Nosey Clark.

He stopped, staring in the gloom. "Jim!" breathed Nosey. "You!" Valentine found his voice. "You hound! Let me go! I'm not afraid of you now, you villain! You can't hurt me any longer! Let me go, or—"

His fist was clenched, his eyes blazing. "Keep cool, Jim! Keep cool!" whispered Nosey. "What's happened yonder—tell me what's happened?"

Jim's lip curled. "I'll tell you what's happened," he muttered savagely. "Natty's nailed—locked safely in a room he can't get out of, slippery as he is—and I helped to nail him—he's got my mark on his jaw now."

"You!" hissed Nosey. "You mad young fool! When the police come for him, do you think he'll hold his tongue?"

"That's why I'm going, you fool!" "Oh!" breathed Nosey. "I wondered what—"

His grasp was still on the boy's arm. He peered at Jim in the deep gloom. Since the alarm in the House, Nosey had lurked in deep cover, waiting, watching, with unenviable feelings. He could hardly doubt that Natty had been made a prisoner; but he had a faint hope that the slippery crackman might get away—he was ready to help him

if he had a chance. Clark, as well as Jim, had reason to fear if Natty 'squealed' in the hands of the police.

"Leave go!" muttered Jim. "I'm done with Greyfriars now, Nosey—and done with you more than ever! You've ruined me here—much good may it do you! Leave go, you hound, or I'll smash your face in!"

Nosey breathed hard through his vulture's beak.

"Don't be a fool, Jim! Keep cool! You're going—you're leaving the school?"

"Yes."

Nosey peered at him.

It was what he had schemed for, what he had planned. It was to drive the boy from his last refuge, that he and his confederate were there. But Natty's capture had made all the difference. It was little use to drive Jim from the school, to get Dick the Penman back to the gang. If Natty 'squealed,' the game was up for the whole of the lawless crew.

"We've got to get him out, Jim!" whispered Nosey.

Jim laughed, a hard, grim laugh.

"You've turned us down, Jim—but you had a good time, when you were one of us," breathed Clark. "We stood by you, when you stood by us."

"You took me, a mere kid, penniless and friendless!" said the boy bitterly.

"You found out that gift I had with the pen—that was your reason. You know what you made of me—what it makes me sick to think of! I got away from you, and you couldn't leave me alone! Do you think I don't know what's worrying you? Natty's a cur, and he will squeal! He would send you all up for ten years to get a month off his own sentence! You've done for me, and you've done for yourself, Nosey Clark!"

Now you can take what's coming to you! I wouldn't stir a finger to save Natty! I'd stir both hands, and quick, to keep him where he is!"

He wrenched his arm free.

"Jim!" Nosey Clark panted. "Hold on, Jim! If you're going, I can't stop you! But hold on, and let me speak!"

The boy paused.

"Cut it short, then!" he snapped. "I'd as soon drive my fist into your face as not, Nosey Clark!"

"I'm not asking you to loose Natty. Take me where he is, and I can do the rest. They're all asleep again now. It's easy."

"Quite easy!" said Jim coolly. "And I won't do it!"

"For your own sake, Jim! Natty will squeal. He's a cur, as you say. The game's up for all of us if you get him! Get him out—let me get him out—and I'll do as you want, Jim! I never really believed that you were done with the gang; I never believed you wanted to steer clear. I believe it now. I think you're a fool, but I can see that you mean it. Stand by me now, Jim, and I'm done. I'll leave you alone. You'll never see me again."

Jim Valentine stood very still.

For a long minute there was silence, while Nosey Clark peered at him in the gloom under the old trees.

"You mean that?" muttered Jim at last huskily.

"I mean it!"

Jim Valentine's heart beat thickly.

Free of the gang—free of that black shadow of the past—if Nosey kept faith with him! And why should he not? This night's happenings must have convinced even the hardened crook, with his seared and doubting mind, that Dick the Penman would never be dragged back into crime. Why should Nosey go on playing a losing game?

To save himself—No! But to save his kind friend and benefactor from knowing the truth.

It was he, after all, who had caused Natty's capture. But for the blow he had struck, the crackman would have cleared his way with the crashing jemmy and, as likely as not, got clear. Did that give him some right in the matter? He tried to think that it did.

In bitter torment of thought, he had fought the matter out and taken his decision. But now his mind was swaying in doubt again. Cleared of the burden of the past; to face the future carefree, a Greyfriars fellow like the rest; to forget, in time, that he had ever been anything else—It was a terrible temptation.

"Jim," Nosey Clark whispered again, "stand by us this one time, and you're done with us for good! You're not a copper's mark, Jim—not you! Honour among thieves—"

Jim shuddered.

There was something in the crook's appeal that touched him. After all, what right had he to set up in judgment on Natty? What had he been himself not so long ago?

"We've got a claim on you, Jim—at least, to let us alone, if we let you alone. It's the last time, Jim!"

Jim Valentine drew a deep breath.

Whether he was choosing the right or the wrong, he hardly knew; his mind was too worn out with tormenting doubt and indecision. But it seemed to him that there was something in what Nosey said. If they let him alone, it was not for him to harm them. And with his whole soul, he longed to stay at the school—if only he could stay free from the shadow of the past. He pressed his hand to his burning brow.

"Come!" he muttered.



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He heard the crook pant with relief. A few minutes more, and they were at the door by which Jim had left. His hand on Nosey's arm guided the crook through dark staircases and passages. They stopped at a thick oak door, barred and locked. Jim whispered, "That's the door. You can handle a lock. I give you five minutes. More than that, and I rouse the House, and you and Nutty can take what's coming to you!"

He disappeared. In feverish haste, Nosey Clark removed the bars. The door was locked and the key gone; but Nosey, though no cracksman, could pick a lock. The door of the punishment-room swung open.

"Jim!" came a deep breath from the darkness.

"It's me—Nosey! Quick!"

"By gum! What—"

"Quick, you fool! It's a matter of minutes!"

Only too well Nosey knew that Jim would keep his word. The crooks were to have no chance of loot before they went.

"I'm tied—my arms!" muttered Nutty Nixon.

Nosey flashed on a light for a second. Then his knife cut through the cracksman's bonds. He drew Nutty from the room.

"Quick!" he breathed.

"Not empty-handed!" muttered Nutty. "Not without—"

He suppressed a cry of pain as Nosey Clark's grip tightened on his arm.

"Fool! In another minute the House will be roused! Quick!"

Nutty said no more. They did not see Jim Valentine as they groped in the dark. But when they emerged from the doorway at the back of the House, the door was closed behind them, and they heard the key turn in the lock. Nutty gritted his teeth.

"Quick!" hissed Nosey.

There was a glimmer of dawn in the cloudy sky. Like shadows the rascals flitted away in the gloom.

Within the dark House, Jim Valentine stood long without moving. What had he done? It was not till a glimmer at a window warned him that the winter dawn was at hand that he stirred. Then he crept away to the stairs, to the dormitory. A pale light was dawning at the high windows as he crept in. But all was silent and still; every fellow in the Remove was fast asleep. Swiftly, silently, he threw off his clothes and crept into bed.

What had he done?

It was useless to think of that. Right or wrong, he had done it. His aching brain refused to think further, and sheer weariness overcame him at last, and he slept.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Luck for Grimes!

GOSLING jumped. "My eye!" ejaculated the school porter.

It was enough to make an ancient gentleman jump.

Gosling had never seen anything like it before. During the alarm of the night Gosling had snored in his lodge, regardless. But at what his eyes beheld now, William Gosling, the ancient porter of Greyfriars School, sat up and took notice.

It was almost by chance that he had come on Inspector Grimes. Passing by the elm path, after finishing his morning task with the rising-bell, Gosling heard a rustling and wriggling and a

faint mumbling. He looked to see what it was, and he jumped as he looked.

For a full minute Gosling stood staring down at the Courtfield inspector blankly. Mr. Grimes, half-frozen, blue with cold, gazed at him speechlessly. He had chewed and chewed and chewed on the gag. But the crooks knew how to do their work; he had not got rid of it. All he could utter was a mumble. Luckily, that mumble had reached Gosling, or Mr. Grimes might have remained there till the school came out. And Mr. Grimes was far from wishing to be found in that peculiar situation by a mob of staring schoolboys.

His look was eloquent. But Gosling was too astounded to stir. He stood and stared.

Mumble! Mumble!

**OTHERS ARE WINNING
USEFUL PRIZES—WHY NOT
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For the following rousing rib-tickler, Miss Violet L. Neville, of 38, Howley Road, Croydon, Surrey, has been awarded one of this week's useful penknives:



Little Johnny: "I can't find my rubber collar, mother."
Fond Parent: "I've just washed it, dear!"
Little Johnny: "That's done it! I had all my homework sums worked out on it!"

Note: All jokes and Greyfriars limericks should be addressed to "Limericks and Jokes," Editor, c/o MACNET, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

Gosling moved at last. He bent over the hapless police officer.

"Wot's all this 'ere?" asked Gosling.

The gagged inspector could not reply. He glared at Gosling as if he would have liked to bite him. Mentally he was calling Gosling all sorts of names for not releasing him instantly. But Gosling's ancient wits moved slowly.

It dawned on him, however, that a gagged man could not speak. He got the gag away at last.

"Wot I says is this 'ere!" remarked Gosling. "This 'ere takes the cake, this 'ere do—yes!"

"Get me loose!" hissed the inspector.

He could hardly speak, with his numbed lips. But Gosling understood and nodded, and slowly produced a clasp-knife, which he opened, and then sawed at the officer's bonds.

Mr. Grimes was free at last. He had

to have a helping hand from Gosling to rise. He leaned heavily on the old porter.

"But wot—" asked the perplexed Gosling.

Mr. Grimes did not attempt to explain. He chafed his frozen hands, he jerked his stiffened legs, to restore the circulation. Gosling left him to it at last, trudging away, in a state of great astonishment and bewilderment.

For a long time Mr. Grimes did physical jerks till the blood circulated again in his stiffened limbs, and he felt better. That night out had told on the stout inspector. But his chief feeling was one of deadly rage.

True he was thankful that it was the school porter who had found him, and not a crowd of schoolboys. But he had had an awful time during those long, long hours of cold and darkness. And he had been beaten—handled like a baby by the crooks for whom he had watched. He knew that there had been an alarm in the night; he had seen the flashing of lights, heard distant sounds. But that was all he knew.

As he jerked his stiffened limbs, and gasped for breath, he was thinking of Jim Valentine—the boy who was acting in collusion with the crooks. If the crooks were gone, the boy was still there. If it turned out to be an "inside job," the inspector knew what he was going to do.

In a flash of his torch he had seen two faces—one, Nutty's, he knew, and the other, the beaky man's, he knew by description. The men who had seized him in the night were Jim Valentine's old associates. That he knew.

He tramped away towards the House at last.

The great door was open. Early housemaids were to be seen, though the boys were not yet down from the dormitories. Mr. Quelch, an early bird, met the inspector as he stepped in, and regarded him with surprise.

"Mr. Grimes!" he exclaimed. "I am glad to see you, sir! I intended to ring you up very shortly. You appear to have heard—"

"What has happened here, sir?" barked the inspector.

"There was a burglary in the night. The Head's safe was broken open. Fortunately a boy was awake, and gave the alarm," said Mr. Quelch. "Nothing has been lost. The burglar was captured—"

"Captured!" repeated Mr. Grimes.

"He is now a prisoner, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "I locked him in the punishment-room here, intending to ring you up early in the morning, to take him into custody. He is quite safe."

"One, or both?"

"There was only one man—"

"There were two, sir," grunted the inspector. "They seized me last night in the quadrangle, overpowered me, and I have lain bound and gagged until released by Gosling ten minutes ago."

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"If I had known—"

"Naturally you could not know," said Inspector Grimes.

He was sorry that Mr. Quelch had to know now, as a matter of fact. Willingly enough Mr. Grimes would have kept that episode dark. Really it did not reflect credit on him. But as Gosling knew, there was no help for it.

"Nothing was seen of a second man," said the Remove master. "Certainly only one man entered the House. A very thorough search was made."

"No doubt the other was on the watch outside, and escaped. How was the entrance effected?"

"A door was found unlocked."

"From within?"

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Mr. Quelch's face hardened. "That is impossible, Mr. Grimes. There is no one in this building who, by any possibility, could be supposed to be in collusion with law breakers." His eyes glistened for a moment. "If you are thinking of the boy Valentine, as I suppose is the case, I beg you to put the idea out of your mind entirely."

"We shall see," grunted the inspector. "If the man you speak of is still secure, no doubt he will tell us how he entered. Honour among thieves, sir, is a fiction. Let me see the man, if he is here."

"As he is locked and barred in a room from which there is no escape, he is undoubtedly still here!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Not if he had a confederate in the House, sir," said Mr. Grimes grimly.

"Absurd! Follow me, and I will take you to the man at once!"

"I shall be glad to see him," said the inspector sourly.

Mr. Quelch, with a knitted brow, whisked away. The Courtfield inspector followed him. They arrived at the door of the punishment-room, and Mr. Quelch gave a violent start as he saw that the bars were down. The inspector gave a grim snort. He had expected that, if Mr. Quelch had not. With a strange expression on his face Mr. Quelch inserted the key in the lock. But it was unnecessary; the door was already unlocked.

He threw it open. The room was empty.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch faintly.

"Well, sir, where is the man?" rapped the inspector.

"It seems that—that—that he is—gone."

"You did not expect that, sir," said Mr. Grimes sarcastically. "Well, sir, I will tell you that I expected it. I will tell you, sir that I had an instant's glimpse last night of the two thieves, and recognised them. One was the man whom I nearly captured a couple of weeks ago. The other, the man whose description is unmistakable—Nosey Clark. These men, sir were the former associates of the boy Valentine."

"Mr. Grimes!"

"There is no mistake about that, sir. And when you told me that the man was locked up here, I had no doubt that he would be gone when we arrived, sir, for it was certain that the boy would not allow him to remain a prisoner, to tell us who admitted him to the House last night."

The inspector rapped out the words almost savagely.

Mr. Quelch stood overwhelmed. "Let the boy be called!" grunted Inspector Grimes. "If he is still in the school, he may have run—"

"Mr. Grimes!" The Remove master recovered himself. "I refuse—I refuse utterly to believe anything of the kind! Dr. Locke is in his study, sir. He has examined his safe—nothing is missing. If a confederate within the House released this rascal, would he have gone empty handed?"

"He was released, sir—"

"You have yourself said that there was another man on the scene. Doubtless this man obtained entrance, and released his associate."

Grunt from the inspector. "Come with me, sir," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "You shall hear something, sir, that I think may convince you that you do this boy injustice."

He led the inspector away from the punishment-room. By this time the boys were down, and there was a crowd in the quad, most of them excitedly discussing the happenings of the night.

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In a crowd of Remove fellows Jim Valentine was to be seen, and Mr. Quelch pointed him out to the inspector, with a dry smile.

"The boy is not gone, Mr. Grimes," he said acidly. "But come with me."

He led Mr. Grimes to Wingate's study. The captain of Greyfriars was there, and he looked in surprise at the Form master and the inspector.

"Wingate," said Mr. Quelch, "you have, I presume, an accurate recollection of what passed last night in the Head's corridor?"

"Certainly, sir!" answered Wingate. "You and two other prefects seized the burglar after he broke loose from us in the study."

"That is so, sir."

"Did he break away from you?"

"Yes, sir. You saw it from the study doorway," answered Wingate, in surprise. "He was like an eel."

"What followed, Wingate?"

"He rushed down the corridor, sir—into a mob of juniors, and Wharton collared him."

"And then?"

"He snatched out a jemmy, sir. I thought for a second that Wharton would be knocked down with a cracked head."

"But another boy knocked the ruffian down in time?"

"That is so, sir."

"And this led to his capture?"

"Yes, sir. I fancy he might have cleared a way through, otherwise."

"Who was the boy who struck him down, and caused his capture?"

"You saw him, sir. It was Valentine of the Remove," answered Wingate, wondering why the Remove master was asking him to describe what Mr. Quelch had seen with his own eyes.

"Will you make a note of that, sir?" asked Mr. Quelch, addressing the Courtfield inspector.

Mr. Grimes did not answer. He followed the Remove master from the Greyfriars captain's study.

"I am aware, sir," said Mr. Quelch, "that you regard the boy Valentine with distrust. I must not expect you to share my faith in this boy. But I will ask you, sir, whether it appears probable that a confederate within the House, who admitted the thief, would knock him down and cause his capture when he was on the point of making his escape?"

Really there was no reply to be made to that. When Inspector Grimes left Greyfriars he was beginning to wonder whether, after all, he had misjudged the boy who had once been in association with Nosey Clark's gang.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

HOSKINS—

"That potty ass Hoskins!"

"Even potty asses have their uses," remarked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

After breakfast there was a crowd round Claude Hoskins of the Shell in the quadrangle.

Hoskins had the limelight. Whether fame was likely to come to Claude Hoskins on account of his Fantasia in D minor might be doubtful; but, at any rate, he was the cynosure of all eyes in Greyfriars School for the present.

Hoskins, for the moment, was the goods.

How any fellow could be ass enough to go down on a cold night to scribble music in a study was a mystery that no Greyfriars fellow could hope to fathom. But it was very fortunate that Hoskins had been potty enough to per-

form that strange performance. There was no doubt about that.

Fifty times at least Hoskins had already told the tale. Now he told it over again. Fellows listened with the keenest interest. James Hobson was quite proud of his chum. There was no doubt that old Claude had shown pluck. Hobson thought more of pluck than of any number of minor ninths. So did the other fellows.

Harry Wharton & Co. joined the crowd round Hoskins. They were quite sorry they had ragged him so severely the previous evening, earnestly as he had asked for it. Still, as Bob Cherry pointed out, it was rather lucky they had. If they hadn't mucked up that Fantasia in D minor by stuffing it down its composer's back, Hoskins would never have gone down in the middle of the night to jot it down again. Then he wouldn't have spotted the cracksman, and the Head's safe would have been cleared. That seemed certain.

There would have been another result, of which no fellow present even dreamed. But for the alarm Nosey Clark's scheme would have been a success, with dire results to Jim Valentine. As it was, the master-crook had registered one more failure, more dangerous and disastrous than his earlier failures. But of that the Greyfriars fellows knew nothing. Even Jim Valentine did not know how much he owed to the musical genius of the Shell.

"Jolly lucky you went down, and no mistake, Hosky!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, wasn't it?" said Hoskins innocently. "I might have lost the whole thing if I'd left it till morning. As it was, I got it down. My fantasia is practically finished now. And there was that burglar, too—lucky I spotted him."

The juniors gazed at Hoskins. Evidently Hoskins regarded his recaptured inspirations as coming first, and the baffling of the burglar as coming second.

The latter, in fact, was a trifle light as air compared with the former, in Claude Hoskins' opinion.

"Look here, you needn't cackle," said the loyal Hobby. "Old Claude may be a bit potty about music, but he jolly well did the trick! Hundreds of pounds, very likely, and that thief had his paws on it—"

"Hacker looks a bit seedy this morning," said Stewart. "Scrapping with burglars doesn't agree with him."

"He's given me two hundred lines for going down," said Hoskins. "I call that a bit thick! I told him I simply had to get the fantasia done, and he told me to hold my silly tongue—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he might have let you off as you spotted the jolly old cracksman," said Frank Nugent. "Perhaps he won't ask you for the lines when he feels better."

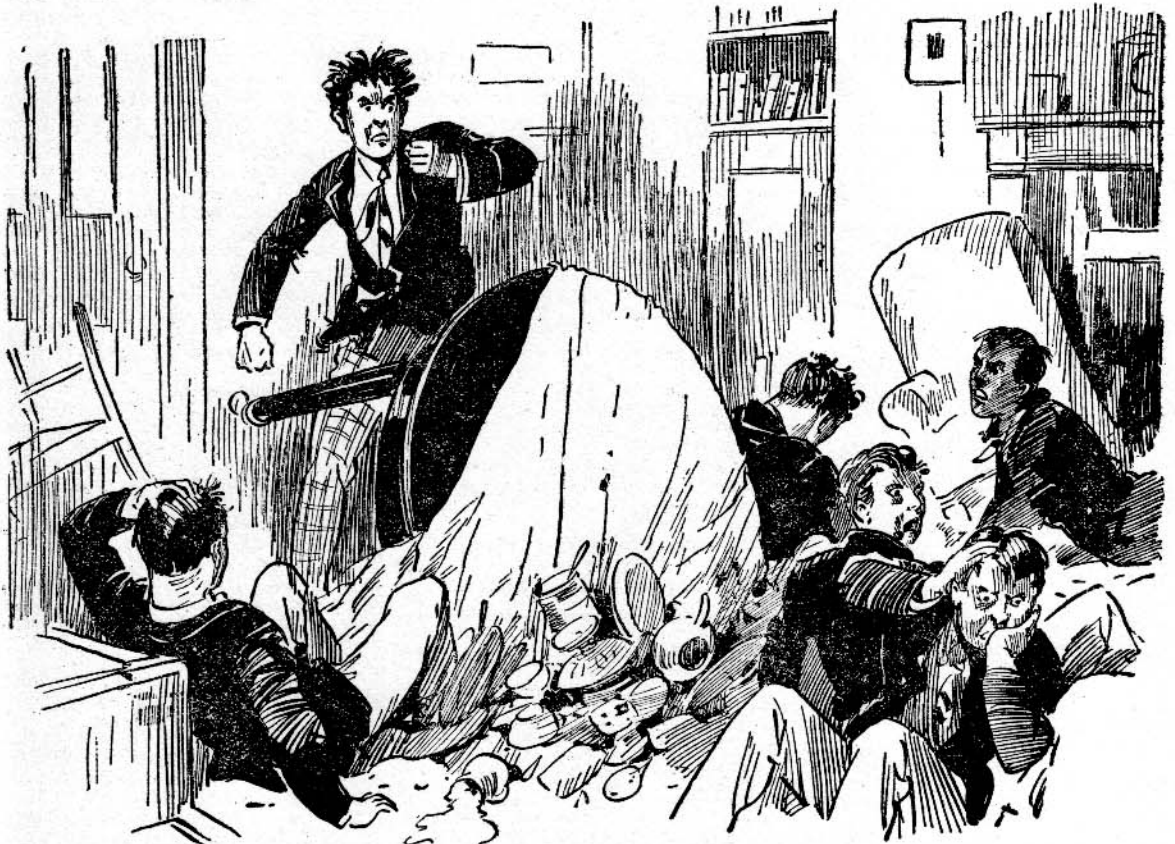
"There are three beaks this morning looking frightfully peaky!" grinned the Bouncer. "Late hours don't agree with beaks."

"I say, you fellows, Quelch is awful ratty," said Billy Bunter. "He will be an awful beast in class this morning. He looked like a gargoyle at brekker, and wouldn't let me have a third egg."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The cracksman seems to have got away, after all," said Hobson. "Lot of good old Claude spotting him and Valentine flooring him, when they let him get away before old Grimey came for him. Still, I think the Head ought to thank old Claude for what he did. Hundreds of pounds—"

"Well, he ought to thank us, too!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "If we hadn't



"I'll smash you! I'll mop you up all round! I'll—I'll—I'll——" Words failed Hoskins and he took to actions. He rushed right at the amazed Removites, hitting out right and left. "Here, look out!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Hold him!" The table rocked, and crockery shot right and left, and for the first time in the history of Greyfriars, the Famous Five had been floored by one fellow!

mucked up Hosky's tripe, Hosky wouldn't have gone down to dish it up again. Wasn't it jolly lucky we stuffed it down your neck, Hosky?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly idiot!" said Hoskins. "I might have lost the whole thing! These inspirations——"

"Minor nineteenth, you know," said the loyal Hobby, who knew as much about music as about Sanskrit.

"Fathead!" said Hoskins, ungratefully. "Minor ninth, you ass! I dare say it was lucky I spotted the burglar, but I might have lost the whole thing through these silly fags coming ragging in my study——"

"What did you fellows rag Hoskins for?" asked Peter Todd.

"Well, he begged for it," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Bagging a fellow's cake is too thick! Still, you can keep the cake now, Hoskins—reward of valour!"

"Cake!" repeated Hoskins. "What cake?"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Nugent. "You locked yourself in our study yesterday and scoffed our cake——"

"I didn't!" roared Hoskins indignantly. "I was in the study, but I never touched your silly cake——"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Peter. "Was that it? It was Bunter who had that cake?"

"Bunter!" yelled the Famous Five.

Billy Bunter looked alarmed.

"I say, you fellows, I never had the cake! I wasn't there! If you think I imitated old Hacker's voice through the keyhole and got Hoskins out, you're jolly well mistaken. The fact is, I couldn't do it. I never knew there was

a cake in the study. You fellows know that. You remember we were speaking about it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I may have had some crumbs on me," said Bunter. "But those crumbs Toddy saw were—were from a—a bun! I'd had a bun! Just a bun! As for a cake, I haven't tasted a cake for weeks. I don't care for plum cake, anyhow."

"And how do you know it was plum cake?" demanded Wharton.

Bunter started.

"Oh, I didn't know! I mean——"

"You fat villain!" roared Bob Cherry. "You bagged that cake and let us go and rag Hoskins for it——"

"I never knew you were going to rag Hoskins when I had the cake, did I?" hooted Bunter. "Besides, I never had the cake! I hope I'm not a fellow to touch another fellow's cake! And I was going to leave some for you, too; but—but if you'd found part of the cake gone, you'd have fancied that I'd had it! You know what a suspicious lot you are!"

"Ye gods!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Not that I touched it, you know! I never knew the cake was there, and I saw that it hadn't been touched when I left the study, and I wasn't in the study at all. And I believe Hoskins scoffed it before I got there, too."

"Oh erikay!"

"Just like you fellows to make out that a fellow's scoffed your cake!" said Bunter indignantly. "My belief is that there never was a cake, and Wharton was only swanking about getting a cake from home."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Hoskins, old bean, we seem to

have ragged you for nothing," said Wharton. "Now we'll rag Bunter for something and set it right."

"I say, you fellows—— Yaroooh! Why, you beasts! I've told you I never had the cake!" shrieked Bunter. "Leggo! Whooop! Yoop! Yarooop!"

Billy Bunter fled for his fat life, with the Famous Five in pursuit. Claude Hoskins told his thrilling tale over again to an enthralled crowd, while the Famous Five dealt with William George Bunter. And that fat and fatuous youth had quite a hectic time till the bell rang for school and he found a refuge and a much-needed rest in the Form-room.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

By Whose Hand?

THERE was a scurry of hurried footsteps in the Remove passage.

Harry Wharton & Co., at tea in Study No. 1, looked round towards the door, wondering who was coming up the stairs in such a terrific hurry, and why.

The Famous Five, over tea, were chatting cheerily. Last night's wild happenings had rather died away as a topic after a day of discussion, and the chums of the Remove were talking football—a perennial topic in that study. They hardly noticed that Jim Valentine uttered scarcely a word, and that his face wore a clouded look of thought.

Valentine had much to think of that day; regretting, perhaps, that he had yielded to Nosey Clark's urgings and aided in the release of the prisoner from the punishment-room, and yet scarcely

able to regret that he was still at Greyfriars and freed from the shadow of the past. If only Nosey kept faith; and the boy believed that he would—that he must.

But the Famous Five ceased to think of football, of Jim, and the vulture-nosed crook, as that hurried beat of footsteps came up the Remove staircase and along the Remove passage. They wondered who and why it was; but they did not wonder long. The door of Study No. 1 was hurled wide open and a breathless, crimson-faced figure rushed wildly in.

It was Hoskins of the Shell.
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What the thump—"

Hoskins was in a state of frantic excitement. That was evident at a glance. He was also in a state of fury. He brandished his fists at the astonished Removites and stuttered with rage.

"Rotters! Villains! Blighters!" gasped Hoskins. "Give it to me! At once! I'll smash you! I—I—I'll—"

He gurgled.
"Pottier than ever!" said Johnny Bull. "If it's minor ninths that does this, you'd better chuck minor ninths, Hosky, and take up submerged tenths, or something."

"Give it to me!" shrieked Hoskins.
"We'll give it to you if you don't hop out of this study," assented Harry Wharton. "Where will you have it?"

"The giftfulness will be terrific, my esteemed Potty Hoskins."

"Rotters! Rascals! Goths! Vandals! Cannibals! Hooligans!"

Hoskins fairly barked out that stream of compliments.

"What on earth—" exclaimed Valentine.

"Give it to me!" shrieked Hoskins. "I'll smash you! I'll mop you up all round! I'll—I'll—I'll—"

Words failed Hoskins again, and he took to actions. He rushed straight at the amazed Removites, hitting out right and left. It was evident that there was something very much the matter with Hoskins.

"Here, look out—" yelled Bob.

"Hold him!"

"Scrag him!"

"Oh, my hat! Keep off, you maniac!"

The table rocked, and crockery shot right and left. Harry Wharton spun over with a fist in his eye, Frank Nugent staggered under a swinging left. Bob Cherry, jumping at the invader, caught a hook to the jaw and roared and rolled. Nugent and Hurree Singh grabbed Hoskins together; but Hoskins fought like a Berserker, and he knocked out to the right and the other to the left. Never had it been known in the history of Greyfriars that the Famous Five of the Remove had been flogged, all at once, by one fellow, single-handed. Now it had happened. Certainly, they had been taken by surprise—but there it was! Five fellows, roaring, sprawled all over the study, and Hoskins jumped at Jim Valentine, to add a sixth.

Valentine grappled with him and struggled. But Hoskins had the strength of two or three fellows, just then, and Jim would have joined the others, had not the others scrambled up and hurled themselves at Claude Hoskins.

"Collar him!" shrieked Bob.

Hoskins was collared on all sides. In the grasp of six infuriated fellows, he still struggled frantically. He showed no disposition whatever to retreat, or to break off the combat. Apparently, he was there for vengeance, and wanted it badly—though why, was a mystery.

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"Floor him!"

"Sit on him!"

"I'll smash you!" shrieked Hoskins. "Rotters! Pigs! Hooligans! Savages! Yaroooh! Goths! Vandals! Yarooop!"

"Sit on his head. Oh crikey!"
"Mad as a hatter! Hold him! I've seen this coming on, you know," gasped Johnny Bull. "He was always potty, and now he's dangerous! Mind he doesn't get hold of a poker—"

"Urrrrgh!" spluttered Hoskins, as the Removites secured him on the floor. Even with the strength of three or four fellows, Hoskins could not stand up to the odds, when they got fairly going on him.

On the floor they had him safe. They stood and sat on him, and Hoskins was safely pinned. Still he struggled, spluttering with rage.

"Now what's the matter with you?" roared Wharton. "If you're not off your silly rocker, what's the trouble?"

"Give it to me!" raved Hoskins. "If you've damaged it again I'll spifficate you! Give it to me!"

"Haven't we given you enough," demanded Bob. "We'll give you some more if you want it. Bump him!"

"THE MYSTERY FOOTBALLER!"

By Martin Clifford

is a grand, long school yarn which tells how news reaches Jack Blake, the leader of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, that his brother has mysteriously left home for an unknown destination. Blake is greatly perturbed, especially when ugly rumours spread round the school about his brother's honesty, and there and then determines to clear his brother's name. How he sets about it, and the startling outcome of his efforts, round off a plot that is a hundred per cent winner. Be sure you get a copy of

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Which is now on sale everywhere, and read this top-notch school yarn!

"Give it to me—my Fantasia!" yelled Hoskins.

"Your whatter?" gasped the juniors.

"Rotters! Villains! Where is it? What have you done with it? Give it to me!" Hoskins spluttered and choked.
"I'll go to Hacker—I'll go to Quelch—I'll go to the Head—I'll go to the police—"

"You can go to Jericho, while you're about it, if you like," said Bob. "Mean to say something's happened to your tripe? Have the minor ninths bunked, or what?"

"G-g-give it to me!" stuttered Hoskins. "I'll overlook it if you hand it back undamaged. Goths! Vandals! Pigs! He heaved under the Removites like a billow of the mighty deep, and they hardly held him down. He roared and raved. "Rotters! You don't know the harm you're doing. I may lose the whole thing for good—my Fantasia in D minor—Ow! Gerroff! Ow!"

There was a crowd of Remove fellows round the doorway of Study No. 1 by this time. The uproar had been heard far and wide.

"What on earth's the row?" called out Peter Todd.

"Can't make it out," gasped Wharton. "This potty ass suddenly rushed in on us like a goddy lunatic—"

"I say, you fellows!" squeaked Billy Bunter, from the passage. "Here comes Quelch!"

"Oh, my hat! Let the fathead get up!" exclaimed Wharton.

The chums of the Remove released Hoskins. Mr. Quelch was coming up the Remove staircase, and they did not want him to arrive and find them sitting on Hoskins. They supposed that even Hoskins would quieten down when a Form master was coming. But they were mistaken. As soon as he was released Claude Hoskins bounded to his feet like an indiarubber ball, and charged at them, hitting out right and left.

"Take that! Rotters! Take that! Blighters! Take that!" yelled Hoskins. "I'll smash the lot of you! I'll—"

"Oh crikey! Bag him!"
"Here's Quelch!" gasped the Bouncer, at the door.

Quelch or no Quelch, the Famous Five had to handle Hoskins. They could not let him knock them over like skittles. Hoskins was regardless of Form masters, and the Removites had to play up. They grabbed the enraged genius of the Shell, bumped him on the floor again, and held him there, struggling and squirming like a wild cat.

That was the startling scene that greeted the eyes of Henry Samuel Quelch as he arrived in the study doorway—with a thunderous frown on his brow and a cane in his hand.

"Boys!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"We—we've got to hold him, sir!" panted Bob Cherry. "He's potty!"

"The pottiffulness is terrific!"

"Boys! Cease this at once! Hoskins, what are you doing here? Release that boy!" thundered the Remove master. "Now, Hoskins—"

The juniors released Hoskins at once, rather reluctantly, and backed away. Really, it did not seem quite safe to let him go. Nor was it. For even under the glare of the Remove master, Hoskins jumped up and clenched his fists, and would certainly have renewed the combat had not Mr. Quelch strode into study and pushed him back.

"Hoskins! Are you out of your senses?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"If any!" murmured the Bouncer, and there was a chuckle in the passage.

"They've got it!" howled Hoskins. "Make them give it back to me. They'll damage it. They don't understand it's value. I don't care, so long as they give it back to me—"

"Have you taken anything from this Shell boy?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"Nothing, sir!"

"My Fantasia!" shrieked Hoskins. "They came ragging in my study yesterday and stuffed it down my back—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the passage.

"Silence! If you have missed anything from your study, Hoskins, even nonsense of no value—"

"What? You don't know what you're talking about, sir!" roared Hoskins. "I'm speaking of my Fantasia in D minor. They've bagged it—"

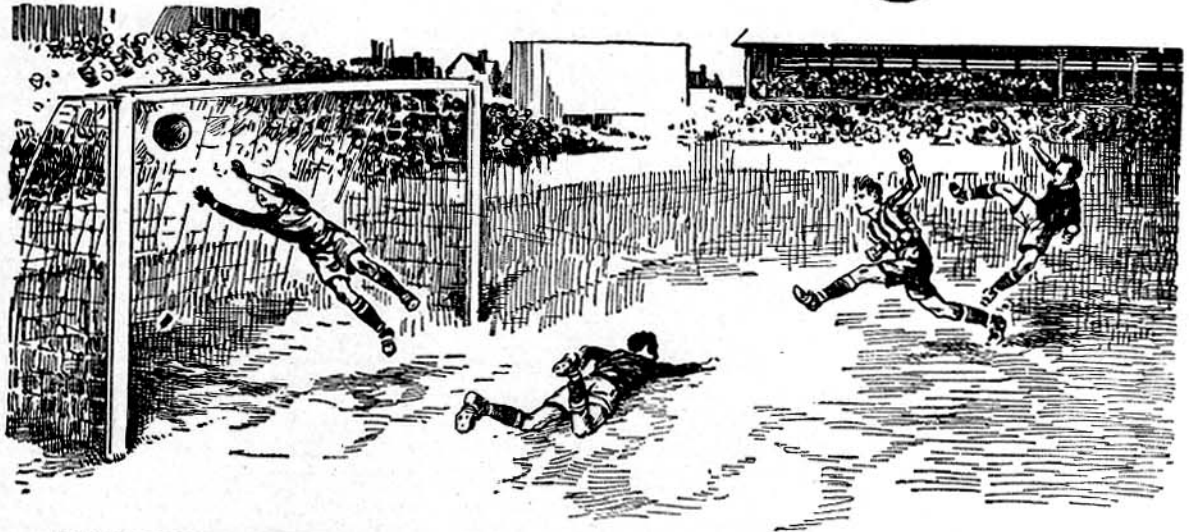
"We haven't!" roared Wharton. "We haven't been near your study. We wouldn't touch your silly rot with a barge-pole."

"Where is it, then?" shouted Hoskins. "It's gone! Of course, I thought it was you, after what you did yesterday. If it wasn't you, who was it?"

"You silly ass!" roared Bob Cherry. It was clear now. Hoskins' wonderful musical work was missing, and after yesterday's events he had suspected the Famous Five of another rag. This time, however, they were quite innocent.

(Continued on page 23.)

NOBBY, the 'Shooting Star'!



HOW THE STORY STARTED.

Having run away from Don Carlos' circus, Nobby, a sixteen-year-old walf, meets Fe rers Locke, the detective, who introduces him to Lord Douglas Weatherstone, chairman of the Perriton Rovers F.C. From ground-boy, Nobby very soon becomes a full-blown professional. Later, he falls foul of Lord Douglas' rascally nephew, Daniel Willoughby Thundersley, the famous amateur forward of the Rovers, who, in league with the Don, determines to bring about his downfall. Receiving a telegram from a mysterious Martin Hunt who claims to know his real name, Nobby boards a train bound for Horley. En route, however, he is chloroformed by four onion-sellers, bound to two poles, and then covered over with countless strings of onions. Alighting at the first stopping-place, the onion-sellers mcke for the station exit bearing their strange burden.

(Now read on.)

The Prisoner of the Bungalow!

PASSENGERS and railway officials gave the onion-sellers a wide berth, the smell of their wares providing a right of way which would have caused considerable envy to those unfortunates who have to travel at rush hours. Outside the station the four marched on, slovenly and apparently without object after the manner of their kind, until the houses en route began to show up at long and infrequent intervals.

By this time Nobby was returning to consciousness. He became aware first of the fact that he was gagged; secondly, that he was strung up helplessly; thirdly, that he couldn't see anything but onions—couldn't smell anything but onions.

How he was being transported he was at a loss to fathom just then.

Suddenly the onion-sellers stopped. Nobby did not know it, but they stopped beside a grey saloon car, out of which stepped a familiar figure—the Don!

The nearest house was a quarter of a mile away. The nearest pedestrian, other than himself and the onion-sellers, was roughly a hundred yards away. With pantomimic gestures, the Don appeared to bargain with the onion-sellers. They responded in like

fashion, so that, to all intents and purposes, the tall, dark Spaniard was bartering for the entire stock of onions they carried. Eventually the onions—and Nobby—were dumped into the back of the car. Money changed hands. Then the four onion-sellers mooched off back to the station, what time the car sped silently and smoothly in the opposite direction.

For an hour the saloon hummed along the roads at an average speed of forty-five miles an hour before the brakes were applied. In front of the Don, as he climbed from the driving-seat, was a small, brick-built bungalow standing in a desolate spot.

The Don clapped his hands twice impatiently, and the door of the bungalow opened. Two burly labourers hastened to greet him.

"Look sharp!" snarled the Don. "The—the onions, my friends, are in the back. You will take them to the cellars—yes?"

Nobby strained his ears to identify the speaker, but the closed saloon made that impossible. As before, he felt himself picked up and carried a number of paces. Then by the angle at which he lay he knew he was being taken below stairs—somewhere.

The onions were torn from him, the cords binding him to the poles were cut, and by a flickering oil-lamp Nobby made out the vague shapes of the two labourers who were absolute strangers to him.

"You'll be comfy there, mate!" said one, grinning evilly, and showing a row of broken tobacco-stained teeth in the process. "An' you can shout as loud as you like when I take the gag orf you."

With that he wrenched the gag from Nobby's mouth and kicked the youngster with brutal playfulness.

"No tricks, mind, or I'll have to fix you up with a bit more rope," he cautioned.

"What's the game?" cried Nobby. "Who are you? What do you want me for?"

The man with the broken teeth wagged a dirty finger under Nobby's nose.

"Like to know, wouldn't you? Well, I'm saying nothing, see?"

"But look here," began Nobby desperately. "I'm due at Horley Hospital. It's most important! I'll give everything in the world that I've got if you'll let me go."

"You'll give everything, eh? Fino talk for a bloke who hasn't even got a name!" guffawed his captor.

Nobby felt sick with the shock of it all. He realised now, with a sinking of the heart, that the telegram must have been a cruel ruse to get him away from Derham Street. It must have been, he told himself, or else this kidnapping which obviously had been well schemed from beginning to end, could never have been carried out. And this burly, ugly-looking devil who leered at him now in the gleam of the oil-lamp! He knew that the youngster had not even a name. As these things became clear to Nobby, he sensed the hand of the Don behind it all.

Where he was he hadn't very much idea, for the car journey could have taken him fifty miles or more from where the train had made its first stop on that run to Horley.

"You'll be sorry for this when I get free, you curs!" flared Nobby, as the two men made to leave him. "My friends will find me sooner or later—you see!"

"Your friends?" sneered the man with the broken teeth. "Ave you got any? But don't worry about them, sonny. They won't see you any more."

He laughed horribly, pushed his silent companion out of the cellar, closed the stout wooden door, bolted it, and slouched up the creaking wooden stairs.

Nobby, in utter darkness, relaxed. Meanwhile, the Don, seated before a cosy fire in the lounge of the bungalow, was interviewing the two men. That interview saw the exchange of a sum of money, with which the Don obviously was reluctant to part.

"You will keep him here—yes," he said, smiling greasily, "until I send for him."

"Okay with us, guv," said the man with the broken teeth, "as long as you pay for his—his keep." He chuckled. "I hear, at least, Bill here 'ears that

you've taken this bung for three months. Never thought we should get a holiday so soon after leaving the jug, did we, Bill?"

Bill laughed coarsely and shook his head. They looked what they were in that incongruous setting—incongruous so far as they were concerned—gaolbirds whose sentences had just expired.

The Don, glancing about the cosy lounge, allowed his dark eyes to rest on his two accomplices. The sight of them made him wince. The thought of the money he had paid them—and was to pay them in the future made him, inwardly, more uncomfortable still. The money, however—he consoled himself with the reflection—came from Daniel Willoughby Thundersley. And this strange "deal" meant a profit for the Don. He saw to that!

"No talkings anywhere, you understand," he said, as he rose to go. "That cub has some powerful friends. One of them is Meester Ferrers Locke—"

"What?"

It was an exclamation in unison.

"The detective," smiled the Don. "He is a very clever man—yes. So no talkings in your cups. Keep the brat until I am ready to leave the country—yes."

But the two men were hardly listening to that instruction. Both their faces expressed the deepest alarm.

"Ferrers Locke!" gasped the man with the broken teeth. "Lor! Wouldn't have taken on this job if I'd known that at first. Why, that blighter shovled me away last time for a five years' stretch! Bill, here, too!"

And Bill, more dejected than ever now, nodded his contribution.

The Don flashed them a scornful smile. "Oh, you need not worry!" he said. "This has been planned perfectly. No one will ever guess. But no talks—yes? Good-day, gentlemen!"

And the "gentlemen" were still so taken aback as to allow the farewell to pass unanswered. Through the windows they watched the Don stalk back to his car; saw it disappear round a turn in the road, then faced each other.

"I don't like the look of this, Bill," said the man with the broken teeth. "I know the Don of old. He's as artful as a wagon load of monkeys. I know Mister bloomin' Ferrers Locke, too. He's uncanny. Wish we'd never tackled this 'oliday job. Might turn out to be a rest cure back at Dartmoor."

"Let's go out an' 'ave a drink," was Bill's retort.

And the pair of them, two minutes later, were heading for the Goose and Feather, three quarters of a mile distant.

On the Trail!

OLD Sandy was in another bad temper. He had arrived at Nobby's lodgings only to be told by Mrs. Sullivan that the youngster had sped off for Horley.

"Begorrah, 'twas a telegram that did it," explained Mrs. Sullivan.

"Who from? Ye don't know!" snapped Sandy.

"'Tis meself that knows nothin' more than that," pouted the landlady. "And I'll be after tellin' ye, Mr. What's-ye-name, that I am not responsible for the comings and goings of my boarders."

"But, my good woman, I must see the boy," explained Sandy, in a more conciliatory tone. "Can ye no tell me who sent him the wire?"

"I cannot. But I remember Mister

Nobby saying to the telegraph-boy. He said, bejabbers—"

"Yes, yes!" broke in Sandy eagerly.

Mrs. Sullivan paused to consider.

"Bejabbers, I'm almost after forgetting what he did say. Wait—wait. He said to the telegraph-boy 'say I'm coming at once!'"

Sandy almost tore his scanty locks.

"Coming at once—where? Going where, I mean?"

"Horley Hospital," said Mrs. Sullivan. "But look here, seeing as you're his friend, sorr, I'll let you have a look at the telegram. Fair staggerer it is, too."

With that, the buxom landlady embarked on a slow climb of the stairs, to return to a fuming trainer-manager with the telegram.

"The dear boy left it on the table," explained Mrs. Sullivan, "so I took the liberty of reading it, begorrah, in case he forgot what was in it at all, at all."

Sandy Macfarland almost snatched the telegram from the landlady's plump fingers. He jumped as he read the contents. Then his face settled into its habitual frown.

"It's a great thing to happen to the boy," he confided. "But all the same, I must get him back here this afternoon by three o'clock. It's important, ma'am, ye ken?"

Mrs. Sullivan nodded knowingly.

"Then why don't ye phone the hospital, sorr—"

But Sandy wasn't waiting for advice. He backed away from the door, straddled his ancient bicycle, and started to pedal off to the nearest post office.

But he received a severe blow to his hopes of getting Nobby for the match that afternoon when, eventually, he was put through to Horley Hospital and asked for Martin Hunt. Apparently no such inmate, member of the staff, or known visitor, went by that name, whereat Sandy became frightfully agitated, slammed down the receiver, dashed out of the phone box, and cycled at full speed to Ferrers Locke's chambers.

"There's somethin' mighty fishy about this," he told himself, as he jammed at the pedals. "If Ferrers Locke won't look into it, by heck, I'll wake up Scotland Yard!"

But there was no need for Sandy to go to that extreme. Ferrers Locke was only too ready to lend his assistance.

"I like that boy, Sandy, as you know. Now, sir, let me have a look at that telegram."

Sandy pulled a much-soiled strip of paper from his pocket. The detective studied it carefully, noted what time it was handed in, and, most important of all, that it had been handed in in London. A call through to the post office in question brought no startling information, however. The sender of the telegram had been merely one of a crowd at a rush hour.

Unperturbed by this initial set-back, Locke called out to Drake, who was busy filing papers away in a cabinet, to get out the car.

"We'll take a run down to Horley," he said to Sandy. "We shall be there before twelve o'clock. But first we'll inquire at Waterloo Station booking office whether Nobby took a ticket there."

The car was soon speeding Locke, Drake, and Sandy to Waterloo. At the booking-office the detective interviewed the clerk who had been on duty at the

approximate time Nobby would have presented himself. The clerk remembered him perfectly by reason of his red hair, his excitement, and the fact that the four onion-sellers had followed immediately behind him.

"Onion-sellers!" said Locke. "Brittany men, you mean, with poles festooned with onions?"

"Yes, sir. They took tickets to Westcomb. That's the first stop on the nine-five to Horley, which is the train your red-headed friend caught, I expect. Never seen so many onions in my life, sir—"

But Locke wasn't listening to that. He was hastening to the nearest phone, where he phoned various people before he made tracks for the car again at a rapid rate.

With Drake at the wheel, the Rolls purred out of London and was soon nearing Westcomb, the while the detective regaled his companions with what he had discovered at the booking-office.

Inquiry at Westcomb drew nothing more than the fact that four onion-sellers had alighted—two of them carrying two poles between them, loaded to the full with particularly strong onions, the other two carrying smaller poles similarly laden, but of much smaller bulk—and half a dozen other passengers, none of whom resembled Nobby.

On to the next station down the line went the Rolls, where a similar inquiry was put, much to Sandy's astonishment. "Why, mon, we're wasting time. We know the lad's gone to Horley."

Locke smiled and shook his head.

"You're wrong, Sandy. I phoned from Waterloo, and not a solitary passenger alighted from the nine-five from Waterloo. There's a chance we shall pick up the trail from the stations in between. That's what I'm relying on, anyway."

But a careful inquiry at each station drew nothing helpful. No young man of Nobby's description had been seen to alight.

Back to Westcomb, the first stop, went the Rolls.

Followed by Sandy and Drake, Ferrers Locke entered the station and asked for the stationmaster.

"They tell me at Horley," he said to that official, having presented his card, "that the nine-five pulls in here on its return journey and is shunted on to a siding."

"Correct, sir," answered the stationmaster. "The coaches are cleaned out then, ready for the afternoon rush hour."

"I'd like to inspect those coaches, if I may," said Ferrers Locke.

"By all means, sir. The train'll be in a quarter of an hour."

"Good! I'll fill in the time with a coffee. Thank you, stationmaster."

And, to Sandy's growing annoyance, the detective strode off to the buffet and ordered coffee for three.

"What's the idea, mon?" asked Sandy, unable to restrain his impatience any longer.

"The idea, Sandy," replied the detective, "is that Nobby never got off this train at any station along the entire circuit—of his own accord, at any rate. I've phoned all the stations beyond Horley, but the answer is a blank every time. As the first stop was at this place, there is a chance that we can pick up a clue."

"You mean—"

"Nothing more than that until I've inspected the coaches," said Locke, and refused to discuss the matter further.

The fifteen minutes passed, and the

stationmaster himself came to inform Locke that the empty train had now been shunted on to a siding. From door to door of that train went Ferrers Locke, making a close examination of every compartment.

There was a frown on his brow as he entered one which still carried the faint odour of onions—onions and some other vague perfume.

"Come inside, Jack," said Locke quietly. "Smell anything?"

"Onions," grinned Jack; and then his face tensed, his nostrils twitched. "Faint whiff of some chemical like—like—"

"Chloroform?" suggested Locke, whereat Drake's eyes opened wide with excitement.

"I believe you're right, gov'nor. You know how the stuff hangs about for hours. I believe—"

He began to nose about the cushions of the seats.

Two places he paid particular attention to. One a corner seat, just about

where the head of a person sitting would rest, the other on the opposite seat.

"It's chloroform all right, gov'nor," cried Drake excitedly. "I'd stake my life on it!"

"No need to do that, young 'un," smiled Locke. "I know you're right. Now, I'll tell you something—and you, Sandy. Why on earth should four onion-sellers take a train to a place like Westcomb to sell their onions when they've got all London and its near suburbs to sell them in?"

"Seems a bit rummy," conceded Drake.

"Exactly! And when you consider that tickets for four cost ten shillings the single journey, it wants a bit of believing. The discovery of chloroform in this carriage in which our four friends travelled is peculiar, to say the least. If it's merely coincidence I shall be a very disappointed man. Now I think we'll get on the track of our dusky four."

The trio were soon seated in the car and making a tour of Westcomb, and after half an hour's persistent questioning learned that the four onion-sellers had caught a Green Line coach back to London—without their onions. Still more questioning brought to light the single pedestrian who had seen the onion-men sell their wares to a man in a car, and that the car proceeded along the Portsmouth road in the direction of Milford, Witley, and Hazlemere.

"We're getting warmer," said Locke, as this time he took a turn at the wheel. "Keep your eyes skinned for a grey saloon car."

But no grey saloon car came in sight, and with the passing of the minutes old Sandy's impatience grew to breaking point.

(*Ferrers Locke will have to look sharp if he's going to rescue Nobby in time for the afternoon's match, won't he? He's hot on the trail, anyway! Don't miss next week's exciting chapters, whatever you do, chums!*)

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

MY British readers will notice that, although our Free Gift Picture Stamps scheme ended a few weeks ago, I am still presenting more stamps. This is in order to help out any of you who may still have a few vacant spaces in your album, and who have not been able to "swop" all your duplicates for stamps which you required to complete your collection. I hope that by this time you will have managed to do so, for I can assure you that your album will prove to be a most valuable reference book for you in the future. My only regret is that I have been unable to include overseas readers in this "extra" free gift surprise.

IMPORTANT!

By the way, all readers who entered the simple HOME CINEMA Competition which appeared in The MAGNET and its companion papers a few weeks back, should get a copy of the GEM—on sale next Wednesday, February 8th—and check their entries by the CORRECT SOLUTION which appears in it. As competitors with six errors or less have to send in a claim it is of the greatest importance that they should first see the correct solution of this competition, which appears only in the GEM of the date given above.

Quite a number of letters have accumulated on my desk from various readers who have asked me to solve problems for them. I have already answered a large number by post, but many of my readers do not give their addresses. I think the best thing I can do, therefore, is to get down straight away to a bunch of

RAPID-FIRE REPLIES.

A Map of Greyfriars ("Magnetite," of Leicester).—Yes, a map appeared some years ago in the "Holiday Annual." I will keep your suggestion by me, and see what I can do in the near future. The Remove is the name given to the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars. The names of Forms vary with different schools.

To Exhibit at the Royal Academy ("Regular Reader," of Worthing).—You are certainly ambitious! Good luck to

you! The Secretary, Royal Academy, Burlington House, London, W.1, will give you particulars of their exhibitions. It might be better for you, however, if you called on the curator of some local art gallery and asked him for information regarding local exhibitions of "young peoples'" paintings.

Greyfriars Garb (William Fitzgerald, of Brookline, Mass.).—The trousers worn by the Greyfriars boys are grey. The jackets are navy blue, edged with orange braid.

An Artistic Reader ("Tempus Fugit," of South Shields).—You must get into touch with some art agency in your neighbourhood, and take them some specimens of your work. If they can make use of them they will do so. You might also try sending some of your best sketches to your local newspapers.

HERE is a query that requires a little more space to answer:

HOW DO SOUND FILMS WORK?

Jack Saunders, of Norwich, would like to know. There are two methods in use, one of which merely consists of synchronising an electric gramophone in such a manner that it keeps pace with the film. The other consists of printing on the side of the film a series of light rays which represent sound. By means of intricate apparatus these rays are turned back into sound in the operating chamber, and are then amplified by loud-speakers behind the screen.

But a film does not move slowly through the projector. Actually it moves in a series of jerks, at a rate of about sixteen jerks to the second. Consequently the "talkie" apparatus is fixed below the cinema in such a manner that the film has ceased to jerk and is moving smoothly at the time it passes through this. That is why there is no "jerk" in the sound. When you see a character say "No" on the film, that portion of the sound film has already passed through the projector and is already in the "talkie" apparatus.

So, although the sound strip alongside the photograph does not absolutely

correspond with it, the distance between projection chamber and "talkie" apparatus is so arranged that it gives a perfectly synchronised picture.

Would you believe that

THE HUMAN VOICE CAN BE DRAWN?

A sound film is just like a succession of small jagged peaks, and a clever artist can actually draw these peaks so life-like that they reproduce the human voice exactly? Roars of animals, sounds of trains, wind, rain, etc., can all be drawn on a special sound film, and afterwards transferred to the ordinary film. The result is that a "talkie" can actually be made without anyone doing any talking at all!

That is just one of the many miracles which have been brought into being by the "talkies," and before long you will see such tremendous strides in them that the present films, good as they are, will be hopeless "back numbers"!

WELL, chums, let me see what I have in store for you next week. In the long complete yarn of the chums of Greyfriars, which is entitled:

"BLACK MAGIC!"

Frank Richards has really "let himself go." It's a yarn that you won't want to put down once you have commenced it. Just recently I have had shoals of letters congratulating me upon this fine author's latest stories. You all seem to be unanimous in saying that they are the best which Frank Richards has ever written. Well, you'll say the same thing about next week's story—and the next, and the next, and so on! Frank R. is like the fellow in the poem, "Excelsior." No sooner do you think he has reached the absolute highest peak in story-telling than he comes along with another even better! Anyway, see if you don't agree with me when you have read next week's top-notch tale!

Our footer and detective story, too, is proving—as I expected—to be one of the greatest we have ever published. There are thrills galore for you in the next instalment, so don't miss it!

There'll be chuckles, too, in the special issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," as well as a selection of funny tales and limericks sent in by my readers. Don't forget that I am still handing out penknives and pocket wallets for jokes and limericks sent in by readers. Keep the ball rolling, chums—and don't forget to drop me a line whenever you feel inclined!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1.304.

THE MAD MUSICIAN OF GREYFRIARS!

(Continued from page 24.)

"Calm yourself, Hoskins, you absurd boy!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Are you sure that the—the absurdity is missing from your study?"

"It isn't an absurdity!" snorted Hoskins. "It's a masterpiece that will make them sit up when I get it performed. Nobody will be idiot enough to listen to Beethoven again, after hearing it. I tell you—"

"Are you sure it is missing?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Of course I'm sure! I went down last night and finished it, to get it through before I lost the inspiration," said Hoskins, almost tearfully. "I got two hundred lines from Hacker for going down. I don't care for that. Now it's gone! I was going to play it over, so far as it's possible on a piano—in the music-room, to Hobson and Stewart. Of course, I really want an orchestra—"

"Keep to the point!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"That is the point," answered Hoskins. "I need a whole orchestra to play it over. But I can give the idea of the thing on the piano, and I was going to give Hobson and Stewart a treat, only they disappeared somewhere—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the passage.

Perhaps the Remove fellows guessed why Stewart and Hobson had disappeared somewhere, though Hoskins didn't.

"I left it on the study table," went on Hoskins, "and went to look for Hobby and Stewart. Several times today I've been going to play it over to them, but they always seemed to have something or other to do, and it never came off. Well, I couldn't find them. I hunted everywhere; and when I got back to the study it was gone. And if these fellows have damaged it—"

"We haven't seen the silly rubbish!" hooted Bob. "Nobody here has done anything with it."

"Then who has?" roared Hoskins. "It's gone!"

"I will go to your study with you, Hoskins," said Mr. Quelch, "and ascertain whether your—hem!—property is really missing. I shall certainly not allow boys of my Form to play foolish practical jokes on another Form. Wharton, you may follow me."

"Very well, sir!" Mr. Quelch rustled away, with Hoskins at his heels. Harry Wharton & Co. followed, and a good many other fellows followed behind them. They arrived at Study No. 5 in the Shell passage.

Hobson and Stewart were there now—they were no longer, evidently, in a state of disappearance! They were sitting down to tea; but they jumped up at the sight of the Remove master and the wild-eyed Hoskins.

Hobson glanced at his musical chum, and it seemed to Harry Wharton & Co., as they spotted that glance, that James Hobson had a guilty look. On Stewart's face a faint grin was to be detected.

"Hobson! Hoskins declares that a—a piece of music is missing from this study, and declares that boys from my Form have removed it for a practical joke," said Mr. Quelch. "Do you know anything of it?"

"Oh!" gasped Hobson.

"I had it all ready, old chap!" said Hoskins. "If you and Stewart hadn't gone off somewhere I should be playing it to you this very minute in the music-room! Somebody bagged it while I was looking for you! I knew it was those Remove ticks, and I jolly well pitched into them—"

"You—you—you pitched into them!" gasped Hobson. "Oh, my only Aunt Jemima!"

"I should jolly well think so!" exclaimed Hoskins hotly. "I know they've got it—"

"I—I—I don't think they've got it—" stammered Hobson.

"I know they have!" hooted Hoskins. "Look what they did yesterday—stuffing it down a fellow's neck! If I hadn't come down last night and done it over again, it might have been lost—lost entirely, and nobody would ever have known what a man can really do with the minor ninths!"

"Wharton, if you know anything—" said Mr. Quelch.

"I know nothing, sir!" gasped Harry. "It was true that he knew nothing; but, looking at Hobson's guilty face and Stewart's grinning one, he suspected a great deal."

"Gammon!" shouted Hoskins. "If you won't own up, I'll go to the Head! I'll go to Dr. Locke at once! I'll have all Greyfriars searched! I'll—"

Hoskins swung to the door.

"Hold on!" gasped Hobson. "I—I—I wouldn't go to the Head, old chap! I—I—I really wouldn't!"

"I'm going!"

"Perhaps you had better go to your headmaster, Hoskins, if you really attach any value to this—this—this thing!" said Mr. Quelch.

"I'm jolly well going!"

"Stop!" gasped Hobson. "I—I think it's in the study all the time, Hosky."

"Rot!"

"You silly ass!" shouted Stewart. "Stop! Stop him, you fellows. It's in the study, you silly owl—it's hidden under the sofa, you fathead!"

Hoskins spun round.

"Hidden under the sofa! How could it be hidden under the sofa? And, if it is, how the thump do you know it's hidden under the sofa, I'd like to know?"

"Because I jolly well put it there!" yelled Stewart. "See? So you needn't go to the Head, you silly ass! I jolly well put it there, see, or else you'd have played it over to Hobby and me—see? And I couldn't stand it, and I jolly well wasn't going to let Hobby stand it—see? Now you know!"

Hoskins stood dumb. But the Remove fellows were not dumb. They yelled. They almost shrieked. Even Mr. Quelch's grin face melted into something resembling a grin, and he rather hurriedly left the study, and something like a chuckle floated back as he went. The Removees roared and howled.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Hoskins still stood dumb.

"You—you see, old chap," pleaded the loyal Hobby, "we—we—we don't catch on to music a lot, we—we don't appreciate it a lot—we—we— But, look here, I—I—I'll go with you to the music-room this blessed minute, and— and listen to the whole dashed thing from beginning to end! There!"

Which was really heroic of the loyal Hobby!

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

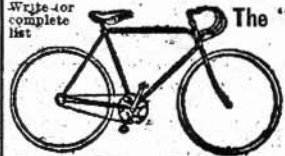
Hoskins said no word. Silently he went to the study sofa, stooped, groped, and dragged out his stack of music—the whole Fantasia in D minor, complete and undamaged, minor ninths and all! Still in silence, he marched out of the study with his treasure, heedless of the repentant Hobby, the grinning Stewart, and the yelling Removees. Silently, scornfully he went. And Harry Wharton & Co., doubled up with merriment, almost crawled back to the Remove passage.

The loyal Hobby was rather sorry that old Claude had got his back up. But when, a little later, he and other members of the Shell looked in at the door of the music-room, where the "mad" musician was punching out the Fantasia in D minor on the piano on his lonely own, he was rather glad of it. For the row was such as to send the juniors running away at top speed with their fingers in their ears, what time Hoskins thumped and thumped at the ivories regardless.

THE END.

(Next Saturday's MAGNET will contain another grand long yarn of Jim Valentine and the chums of Greyfriars, entitled: "BLACK MAGIC!" together with another strip of picture stamps. See that you order your copy in good time, chums!)

Write for complete list



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All applications for Advertisement Space in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, UNION JACK SERIES, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

BANANA-EATING IN PUBLIC

Whereas a Governor of the School, to wit, Sir Hilton Popper, recently damaged his nasal organ in the quadrangle consequent upon stepping upon a banana-skin, it is hereby ordered that for the future all boys eating bananas in public shall consume the skins as well as the fruit.

By Order, HILTON POPPER,
Governor.

AS OTHERS SEE THEM

What I Think of Harold Skinner

By William Wibley

Harold Skinner is a meekly, creepy, crawling worm with about one-fifth of the brains, courage, and character of the average thing you see wriggling out of a piece of mouldy cheese. This dingy, smoky, contemptible apology for a human being tries to make up for a lack of manliness by spine-like imitations of some of man's little weaknesses. By so doing, however, he merely becomes a more loathsome toad than ever in the eyes of decent fellows.

All this being so, I naturally treat the rotter's aspirations on my acting abilities with utter scorn and contempt. To those of you who read his vile libels on me in last week's issue, I say, "Restrain yourselves. Do not hurt yourself on the wretch and tear him limb from limb; he's not worth all that trouble!"

Skinner's vile character can be judged by his own admissions. In last week's libellous peroration, that he in "Hamlet"! Almost takes your breath away, doesn't it?

THIS WEEK'S SHOCKER

Blud! It was everywhere. Blud blud-spattered in no time. Blud drenched the poughed fields. The entire country-side seemed to ooze with blud.

Forty blud-covered schoolboys set out from Greyfriars. Their faces, optimistic at first, soon became harel, grim, and despairing. The blud slowed them down, cramped their style. Shoes and socks that

DICKY NUGENT'S WEEKLY WISDOM

Fish is a fishy sort of fellow. Some chaps call him a cheap skate and others say there's a lot of cod about him. Personally, I think he's simply a shark!

STRANGE, BUT TRUE

The noise made by moblike police, clashing a hold-up man scared a burglar who was trying to break into Mrs. A. Mable's truck along this week. Which inspires the following brain-wave from our Staff Lunatic: Q. Why didn't the burglar burglar her? A. Because the bandit banded her!

THE NEW
Greyfriars Herald
EXTRA GOOD EDITION

No. 19 (New Series),
EDITED BY FARRY WHARTON.
February 11th, 1933.

PAINTER'S BLOWLAMP SAVES SMITTHY

It was Wharton's fault in the first place. He was sitting in the editorial chair going through a pile of MSS submitted by hopeful young would-be journalists when he gave a yell. "My hat! That's done it!" "Something wrong?" "Wharton set back in his chair, looking quite white. "Wrong! I should say there is something wrong! That feature article you wrote, called 'The Truth



groaned. "I told you I thought I'd written lines short and could it back, but he said look at it himself in a few minutes and let me know what sort of a piece he wanted any more." "What sort of a piece he in?" "Inquired Smithy. "Not too good, I'm afraid," replied Wharton. "I've got the painters and decorators in his room and keep on opening the window. He's irritable."

"No time to spare. I've got to see Wibley. The Boulder rushed leaving the Editor of Herald" starting. About ten minutes later in overall started a blowlamp by using a blowlamp at the window-frame at the back of his desk. The blowlamp roared. He did more than smother soon afterwards, was just about to pick up the "impot" Wharton so unhappily left with his attention from one of the windows to the other and in doing so, gave the "impot" with blowlamp flame!

GRAND BOXING TOURNAMENT

THE GYM, WEDNESDAY NEXT, 8.15 p.m. Sensational Six-round Fight BATTILING BOLSOVER IN

DICK ("RED") RUSSELL Four Other Bloodthirsty Hours! Nervous fellows are advised to keep away. Local residents are advised to stuff their ears with cotton-wool to shut out the howls of agony! Admission: 1s., 2s., 3s., and 6s. Proceeds will be devoted to the Leunguo to Prospero Peace.

OUR AMAZING FREE GIFT—PHEW!

The binding and red down a merciless inferno of searing, shimmering heat. The scorching sand blistered and boiled like molten metal. Vexation shrivelled up and died at the touch of the burning, lifeless air and the hand wore the look of a red-cold cauliflower from which the last drain of moisture had been expelled away.

The above unique Winter Warner is presented free, gratis, and for nothing to every reader of this week's "Greyfriars Herald." Directors for using: Keep hanging from the ceiling, and read rapidly several times in succession. A warm glow will very quickly ensue the entire body!

Horace As Usual

Colker destroyed a possible reprint class in a slimy over and smearing to over on the floor two out-glass portraits a recent burglar Colker always was a sallow to look over the trees!

Appropriate

After a recent American "Jagan" solo in Study No. 14, Johnny Bull compelled Wisher to divide up all the profits between the customers. We're told that Fishy has had a "splitting" headache over since!

We Hope Fell Give 'em Gip, See?

Scott, in protest against Redwing representing Greyfriars at the forthcoming "Fags" race, says that Redwing is nothing better than a gippy. Well, it's the best we can hope Roddy Romney Greyfriars skills to victory!

ECCENTRIC PROFESSOR AT HIGHCLIFFE

Arrival Causes Riot

The long-expected visit of Professor Kerr-Nollige to Highcliffe (writes our Highcliffe correspondent) took place this week, and led to riotous scenes in the quad. As is well-known, the professor is a somewhat eccentric gentleman, whose stupendous studies have resulted in his becoming detached from the habits and everyday customs of lesser mortals. Highcliffe was not particularly surprised, therefore, when the professor bowed through the gateway on an ancient peany-farting bicycle with the largest front wheel ever seen outside a cyclist's nightmare. This was more or less as expected. What was not expected was that the professor's eccentricity would take the form of extreme and unreasonable violence against Highcliffe in general and the Fourth in particular. But that was what happened. Highcliffe blinked when the professor started racing round the quad, scattering fellows in all directions. Highcliffe rubbed his eyes when the professor took a ripe tomato from his satchel and hurled it with deadly aim at Poisony's face. Highcliffe gasped when the professor "crowned" Mr. Mob, the Fourth master, with an egg of uncertain age. And when, finally, the professor turned his tour into a terrific bombardment, directed against all corners and consisting of eggs, tomatoes, fruit, and soot "bombs," Highcliffe yelled with fear and rushed for cover.



There were quite a large number of casualties, but the principal sufferers, strangely enough, were the four hand-in-glove "gay dogs" of the Fourth—Fonsoby, Gadsby, Morrison, and Vaynour. Ron, one up now, with a vengeance, and many an old score has been repaid by "Professor Kerr-Nollige" (—Ed.)

This Week's Court News

In the Box-room Bench Division, William George Bunter was charged with shooting a Sixth Form prefect, known as Carne, in a field adjoining the Cross Keys, Prindle.

Bunter, who defended himself, said that he had thought he would be quite in order in shooting Carne, as there was a printed notice at the entrance to the field, stating: "Rubbish May Be Shot Here!" The magistrates conferred, and having obtained Bunter's admission that he had discharged the gun, ordered that Bunter should be discharged.

GREYFRIARS FACTS WHILE YOU WAIT!

Though Mr. Frost is peacefully said, he is very "tony" about it, and she and brushes the few remaining wars, with great care!

SITUATIONS WANTED

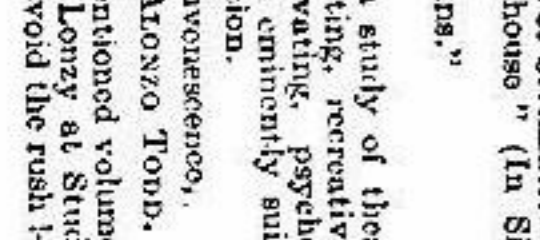
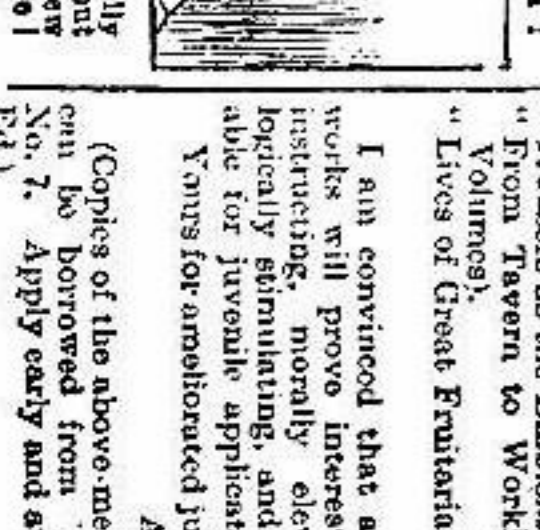
Skooboy, fed up with class work, is willing to lead expedition against cannibals, savidges or pirats on the Spanish Main or elsewhere. Egg-plorers and others interested please rite "DICKY" c/o "GREYFRIARS HERALD."

Lonzy's Little Letters

Dear Editor—It is to me a source of perennial lugubriousness and occasional facial embarrassment to find my colleagues at this juvenile educational establishment so preternaturally disposed to authors who so liberally frondecence takes the form of stories of practical enterprise and sanguinary encounter. Might I recommend to such misguided adolescents a perusal of the following volumes:

- "The Story of a Potato."
- "Promoters as the Emblem of Civilisation."
- "From Tavern to Workhouse" (In Six Volumes).
- "Lives of Great Fruitarians."

I am convinced that a study of these works will prove interesting, recreative, instructive, morally elevating, psychologically stimulating, and eminently suitable for juvenile application. Yours for ameliorated juvenescence, ALONZO TOWP.



WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

A fall of snow enabled a party of Friars to engage a party of High-school boys in a snow fight, the Friars winning by 83 hits to 82.

William Gosling, the school porter, claims to have tolled the ringing-bell over 16,000 times—and he is still going strong!

One of the school's conduct fanatics is that he will cut a dancing girl's hair in a room in the wild West!

Bunter's "spears" bear a charmed life, the same pair having survived unannounced "fags" for several!

The Remore recently gave an exhibition of Swedish drill—both the shell and Fourth judges a select committee of judges and winning a silver cup!

Though Mr. Frost is peacefully said, he is very "tony" about it, and she and brushes the few remaining wars, with great care!

Copies of the above-mentioned volumes can be borrowed from Lonzy at Study No. 7. Apply early and avoid the rush!

ALONZO TOWP.