

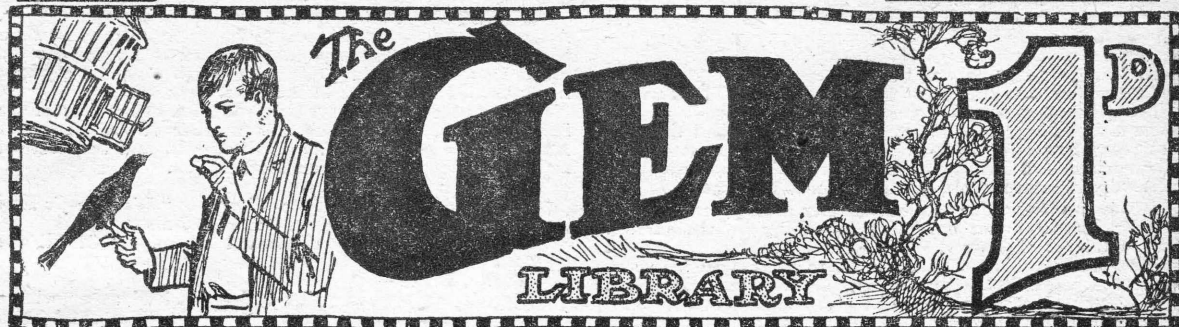
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WEDNESDAY:

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CHAPTER 1.  
Brand New.

TOM MERRY, of the Shell, smiled a cheerful smile as he came out of the Form-room at St. Jim's. Manners and Lowther looked very cheerful, too.

The Terrible Three, in fact, were in exuberant spirits.

It was the last day of the term at St. Jim's, and last lesson was over. Form work had become a thing of the past—holidays filled all thoughts—and the chums of the Shell had special plans for that special vacation.

Hence their joyous smiles.

"Good-bye, Julius Cæsar!" trilled Monty Lowther, as he executed a skilful "punt" with his Gallic War, sending the valuable volume spinning along the Form-room passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

An elegant junior had just come out of the Fourth Form-room, and the spinning volume caught him just under the ear as he emerged into the passage. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped clear of the floor in his astonishment as he felt that sudden smite, and the Shell fellows roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy groped for his eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye, and looked round for his assailant. "What silly ass thwew that silly book at me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you boundahs—"  
"Sorry, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther. "Quite an accident! If I'd known you were coming I wouldn't have punted the Gallic War at you—"

"Vewy well, if that is the case, Lowthah—"

"Certainly, it is the case!" said Monty Lowther solemnly.

Next Wednesday:

"THE STRIKE AT ST. JIM'S!" AND "SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE!"

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THE —  
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of St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"If I'd known you were coming I'd have punted the Latin grammar instead! It's heavier!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Lowthah!" said Arthur Augustus, rubbing his ear. "If I were not pussed for time just now, I should give you a feahful thwashin'! But I am expectin' my twunk to awvive, and I must go and see aftah it."

And as he had no time to give the humorist of the Shell the fearful thrashing he, undoubtedly deserved, D'Arcy picked up the volume, and punted it back at its owner.

Monty Lowther promptly dodged, and the book flew over his shoulder.

But every bullet, they say, has a billet, and that volume of Julius Cæsar found one, for Skimpole of the Shell was coming out of the Form-room, and it caught him under the chin.

Skimpole staggered back in surprise, and sat down in the Form-room doorway.

"Dear me!" gasped Skimpole. "What is that?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Try again, Gussy!" roared Monty Lowther.

And the Terrible Three walked out into the quadrangle, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to explain to Skimpole. D'Arcy rushed up to Skimpole with a very contrite expression upon his aristocratic face, and gave him a hand to rise.

"I'm feahfully sowwy, Skimmay!" he exclaimed. "I intended that book for Lowthah, you know, and the howwid boundah dodged it!"

"Ow!" gasped Skimpole. "Never mind, my dear D'Arcy. I was looking for you, D'Arcy; I have something rather important to say to you. I hear that you are going to Italy for the vacation."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Good! I was going to suggest that I should come with you," said Skimpole, beaming at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy through his big glasses. "You would find me a very useful companion, and I should have an opportunity of studying—Where are you going, my dear D'Arcy?"

But his dear D'Arcy was gone.

Arthur Augustus hurried out into the quad. The Terrible Three grinned at him cheerfully, and Arthur Augustus gave them a withering glance through his eyeglass. But they did not seem, somehow, to be withered in the slightest degree. They grinned all the more, and D'Arcy, with his aristocratic nose very high in the air, walked down to the gates.

It was the time when the local carrier usually arrived, and Arthur Augustus was expecting something by the carrier. The carrier had been and gone, and Taggles, the school porter, was standing outside his lodge, regarding with surprise the article that the carrier had delivered. It was a huge trunk—a trunk of the most gigantic dimensions—built of solid leather, studded with nails, and with metal corners. The weight of that trunk, when empty, would have taxed a strong man's strength. When it was full it would probably have defied the efforts of a steam-crane. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face lighted up at the sight of it.

"Bai Jove! It's awvived!"

Taggles, the porter, turned his eyes upon D'Arcy. Taggles did not look pleased. It was the duty of Taggles, the porter, to carry that trunk in. Taggles evidently did not relish the task.

"This 'ere is for you, Master D'Arcy!" he said severely.

"Yaas, wathah, Taggy, deah boy! Take it in, please!"

"Take it in!" said Taggles.

"Yaas."

"Which it weighs somethin'," said Taggles. "Wot might you 'ave in that there trunk, Master D'Arcy?"

"Nothin' at all, so far, Taggles. It's a bwand new twunk I've ordahed for my twip to Italy," Arthur Augustus explained. "I shall have to take a lot of things with me, and I am goin' to pack them in that twunk."

Taggles stared.

"If it's hempty now, I don't see as you're goin' to move it at hall when it's full," he said. "I'd better get Toby to lend me a 'and with it."

"Great Christopher Columbus!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three came up and surveyed the trunk. "Does that belong to you, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What's the idea?" asked Monty Lowther. "Are you laying in an ark in case of another flood?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy sniffed.

"I suppose I cannot tavel without a twunk, Lowthah?"

"Don't see why not," said Lowther. "I suppose you're not an elephant."

"Pway don't be funnay, deah boy. I have ordahed that bwand-new twunk specially for our twip in the holidays."

"What!" roared the Terrible Three with one voice.

"I twust I speak plainly, deah boys. I shall require a lot of things in Italy, and I heah that it is not a good place for shoppin'. I suppose you wemembah the time when I wan out of silk hats on a twip abwoad? Once bitten, twice shy, you know. I am goin' to make sure this time of havin' all the things I want."

"You're thinking of taking that trunk with you—with us?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Hold me, somebody!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Gussy will be the death of me yet. I know he will."

"I wogard you as an ass, Lowthah. Pway take that twunk into the School House, Taggy! I have to begin packin' to-day."

Taggles regarded the trunk with misgivings. Finally he called Toby, the page, to his aid, and between them they lifted the huge trunk, and staggered away with it towards the School House. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy followed them,

keeping an eye on the trunk. He did not want the brand-new trunk bumped or damaged.

The Terrible Three followed, too, grinning joyfully. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was to be their companion in a trip that vacation, strange countries for to see, as the old ballad says. But the idea of starting forth with that gigantic trunk tickled the chums of the Shell very much.

Blake, of the Fourth, met the procession at the door of the School House. Jack Blake was another of the party for Italy. Blake gazed blankly at the trunk, and then turned an inquiring glance upon the Shell fellows.

"What is it?" he inquired.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry. "It's Gussy's new twunk. He's going to take that trunk to Italy."

"My only chapeau!" ejaculated Blake. "Of all the frabjous chumps—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Do you think we're going to let you load us up with a trunk like that?" roared Blake. "You—you fathead! You duffer! How much money have you wasted on that trunk?"

"I have not wasted any money. My patah is goin' to pay for it," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with dignity. "It was weally a bargain—only twenty pounds! And it will do splendidly for our little twip. I may be able to let you fellows put some things in it. I will see when I'm doin' the packin'."

"You're jolly well not going to take that trunk, you ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Blake, and I shall certainly insist upon takin' that twunk. I have bought it specially for the twip."

"Oh, my hat!"

Taggles and Toby negotiated the doorway with success, and staggered into the House with the trunk. Quite a crowd of fellows had gathered round now to see Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's latest acquisition, and there was a general chuckle. Sarcastic voices inquired if D'Arcy had bought it to live in.

D'Arcy disdained to reply to such frivolous questions. He superintended the carrying of the trunk up the first staircase. Taggles bumped it heavily on the stairs, and leaned on it, and panted.

"Pway get on, Taggles, deah boy!"

"Which it's 'eavy!" grunted the school-porter.

"Oh, put your beef into it, deah boy!"

Bump, bump!

The trunk was taken up one step at a time, bumping heavily upon each. The crowd of juniors yelled with laughter. Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, came out of his study to see what that terrific bumping was about. He gazed at the Broddingnagian trunk in amazement.

"Dear me!" he ejaculated. "What—what is that for?"

"It's my new twunk, sir," said D'Arcy.

"Dear me!" said the astonished Housemaster. "What ever have you sent for that trunk for, D'Arcy? What possible use can you have for a trunk that size?"

"It's to take with me to Italy for the vac., sir."

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Railton. And he smiled and went back into his study. Arthur Augustus cast a puzzled look after him.

"I weally do not see anythin' funnay in gettin' a new twunk to take to Italy," he said. "I wogard it as quite ness. Pway get on, Taggles, and pway don't make such a fealful wow!"

"It's 'eavy!" grunted Taggles.

"Yaas, it's solid leathah, you know. It will stand a lot of bumpin' about by weckless wailway portahs."

"More likely to bump the reckless wailway porters about, if they handle it!" grinned Monty Lowther. "But I don't believe you'll find any wailway porter reckless enough to try to move that trunk."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump, bump, bump!

The trunk reached the landing at last. With a final effort, Taggles and Toby landed it there. Then it shrieked along the passage on its castors.

"Take it into my studay, deah boys!" said D'Arcy.

Herries and Digby were in Study No. 6. They came to the doorway in amazement as the great trunk rolled up.

"What on earth—" began Herries.

"What the dickens—" said Digby.

"Pway, get out of the way, deah boys—the twunk's got to come in!"

"You're not bringing that trunk in here!" roared Herries. "Why, you ass, there won't be room to move!"

"It must come in, Hewwies, deah-boy! I've got to pack it."

"You—you ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass. Pway stand aside! Now, shove at it, deah boys, and woll it in!" said D'Arcy encouragingly.

Taggles and Toby shoved manfully at the trunk. One corner of it rolled into the doorway, and Herries and Digby jumped back. Then there was a jamb, and the trunk stuck fast. It

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(See column 2, page 26 of this issue.)

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Bump! Figgins and Kerr raised Levison in their arms, and tossed him into a carriage. He fell there among the feet of the astonished passengers—astonished and angry; and Figgins & Co. left him to explain. (See Chapter 5.)

was too big to enter the study doorway. Junior studies in the School House of St. Jim's were not planned for trunks that size.

"Which it won't go in!" gasped Taggles, resting from his labours and mopping his brow. "It won't go in, Master D'Arcy! Ow!"

D'Arcy turned a perplexed frown upon the trunk. Certainly it wouldn't go into the study. The juniors shrieked.

"Pway don't cackle, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus testily. "There is nothin' whatevah to cackle at, so fah as I can see."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"I'm afraid it will have to be taken up to the dormitoway aftah all," said D'Arcy. "Take it up, Taggles!"

Taggles fixed a stony glare upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Taggles had expended all his available energy on getting the trunk thus far. To negotiate two more flights of stairs with it was far beyond Taggles's intentions.

"Into the dormitory!" he repeated.  
"Yaas! It can't be left in the passage, you know."

"Can't it?" said Taggles. "Look 'ere, Master D'Arcy, I've only got one neck, and I ain't going to break it under that there trunk. You 'ear me?"

"Pway do not be impertinent, Taggles."

Taggles snorted.  
"Himpertinent or not, I've 'ad enough of that there trunk!" he said. "I'm done!"

And Taggles, breathing like a grampus, strode away. The juniors roared. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked after Taggles in dismay.

"Taggles, my dear chap. You can't leave the twunk here, you know. It blocks up the beastly passage, you know. Pway come and take it upstairs, deah boy, and I will give you five shillin's."

"Not for five pounds!" grunted Taggles. And he staggered down the stairs, still breathing like very old bellows badly in want of repair.

"Toby, deah boy—" But Toby, the page, had discreetly vanished. He did not want to be disobliging, but he, too, had had enough of that terrific trunk.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake. "You can leave it there, Gussy! As soon as a master falls over it, or a prefect barks his shins on it, you'll be told what to do with it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Pway help me, deah boys. I shall have to cawwy it up to the dormitoway myself," said D'Arcy.

"Oh, crumbs! Ha, ha, ha!"  
The idea of the slim and elegant Arthur Augustus carrying that trunk up the stairs made the juniors scream.

"Will you lend me a hand, Tom Mewwy—" "It isn't a hand you want, Gussy—it's a crane or a derrick!" gasped Tom Merry. "I'm not equal to the job. Really!"

"Pway help me, Blake—"

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"THE STRIKE AT ST. JIM'S!"

A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.  
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"I've got only one neck, like Taggles, old man!"

"Kangawoo, deah boy—"

"Not this evening," grinned the Cornstalk junior. "Ask me something easier, Gussy."

"Bai Jove! What am I goin' to do, then?"

"Sit on it, and see that nobody comes and slips off with it when you're not looking," suggested Monty Lowther humorously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors streamed away, chuckling; and Arthur Augustus was left regarding his trunk with dismay. Evidently nobody was willing to lend him a hand. The swell of St. Jim's made up his mind at last.

"I shall have to tackle it by myself, I suppose," he murmured.

And he did. He exerted his strength upon the trunk, and moved it nearly an inch. Then he gave it up. Herries and Digby regarded him from inside the study.

"Bai Jove! I can't do it, you know."

"Go hon!" said Dig.

"I shall have to leave it there till I can get somebody to move it—"

"Leave it there!" roared Herries indignantly. "How are we going to get in and out of the study, with that blessed thing in the doorway, you frabjous ass!"

D'Arcy reflected for a moment.

"I weally do not know," he replied finally.

And he walked away, leaving Herries in a state of feeling too deep for words.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Monty Lowther's Little Joke.

**T**OM MERRY & Co. chuckled as they went into their study. They had had vacations with D'Arcy of the Fourth before, and the question of luggage had always been a thorny one. Arthur Augustus had never really succeeded in taking all the luggage that he considered really necessary. This time he did not mean to run any risk on the matter; and certainly, if he took that Brobdingnagian trunk with him, he would be amply provided. But his comrades had their own ideas about that trunk.

"Good old Gussy!" murmured Monty Lowther. "I think sometimes that he's too funny to live. Imagine starting on a holiday with a trunk that size! When it's full up, I suppose it will weigh about half a ton."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy is an obstinate beggar, though!" grinned Manners. "He will stick to that trunk if we let him."

"We jolly well sha'n't let him!" said Tom Merry.

"It's all right," said Lowther. "The trunk's in the passage at present. Gussy's gone to find somebody to carry it upstairs—he won't find anybody in a hurry. I'm going to suggest to him to pack it in the passage. Only while he's gone, I've got a little favour to do him."

Lowther opened his tool-box, and took out several long screws, and a screw-driver, and a big gimlet. Tom Merry and Manners watched him in surprise.

"What on earth is that for?" asked Manners.

"Follow your uncle, and you'll see," said Lowther serenely.

Lowther quitted the study, and Tom Merry and Manners followed him curiously. The gigantic trunk was in the Fourth-Form passages. Herries and Digby had contrived to shove it out of the doorway, so that they could leave the study. But it more than half-filled the width of the passage, as it stood there backed against the wall opposite the study door. The key was in the lock, and Lowther opened the lid, and removed the tray. The vast interior of the trunk was exposed to view.

"You fellows keep an eye open for Gussy!" said Lowther. "Whistle if you see him coming."

And Monty Lowther jammed the gimlet into the floor of the trunk, and calmly commenced to bore.

Tom Merry and Manners shrieked.

They understood now the scheme of the humorist of the Shell.

Manners went to the head of the stairs to keep an eye open for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Monty Lowther calmly bored four holes in the bottom of the trunk and in the floor beneath.

Then he began to drive in screws.

It was not an easy task, for the floor was hard, and the screws long and thick. But Monty Lowther laboured away nobly and manfully at his task. Screw after screw was driven in up to the head, and when they were quite in, the heads of the screws were almost invisible in the lining of the trunk.

There was a whistle from Manners at the head of the stairs. Lowther jammed in the tray, shut down the lid, and locked the GEM LIBRARY.—No. 276.

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it, and sat on the trunk, looking quite innocent as Arthur Augustus came along the passage.

D'Arcy glanced at the chums of the Shell. The screw-driver and gimlet had disappeared into Lowther's pockets, and there was nothing to awaken the suspicion of the swell of St. Jim's.

"This is wathah wotten, deah boys," Arthur Augustus remarked. "I've asked a lot of fellows to come and help me, but they decline."

"Go hon!"

"Half a dozen fellows ought to be able to cawwy that twunk, all togethah," said Arthur Augustus. "As it is, I shall have to leave it in the passage till I get somebody."

"Why not pack it in the passage?" suggested Lowther sweetly. "Save all the trouble of getting it upstairs and down again."

"A pwefect might waise objection to havin' it left there," said D'Arcy doubtfully.

"Then let him shift it."

D'Arcy grinned.

"Yaas, that's a good ideah. Aftah all, we're goin' to-morrow mornin', and it won't be for long. I'll take your advice, deah boy, and pack it in the passage."

"Good egg!" said Lowther genially.

And he got off the box. Within five minutes Arthur Augustus was at work packing. He came down from the dormitory with an armful of shirts, and put them in the box. Suits of clothes, and all sorts and conditions of other garments followed. Arthur Augustus had a most extensive wardrobe, and he was always adding to it. He seemed to have made up his mind to take the greater part of it to Italy with him.

The Terrible Three returned chuckling to their study. When that box was full, it would be very heavy, and quite immovable, for reasons apart from its weight.

"It will be quite interesting when Gussy brings in his strong men to move that box to-morrow morning!" yawned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I fancy those screws will settle the question of taking the trunk to Italy with us."

And Tom Merry and Manners grinned, and agreed that it would.

The Terrible Three prepared tea in the study with unusual elaboration. It was the last tea in the study until next term, and it was a very special one, too. The party for Italy were all to have tea together, and they were expecting a visitor. Tom Merry & Co. considered themselves quite able to look after themselves in a trip to Italy, or to the North Pole, for that matter. But that opinion was not shared by their elders. In fact, their people had only given permission, because D'Arcy's former tutor, Mr. Mopps, was to go in charge of the party. Under the guidance of Artemus Mopps, M.A., the juniors would be all right, and D'Arcy had assured his chums that Mr. Mopps would not be very much trouble.

Blake and Herries and Digby came in to tea. Herries and Digby were already booked for the vacation, and could not accompany the party abroad. But Jack Blake was coming, the total party numbering five—Blake, and D'Arcy, and the Terrible Three. Certainly it would have been quite easy to make it up to fifty. Heaps of fellows would willingly have joined in the excursion, especially if the question of finances could have been satisfactorily arranged. Tom Merry & Co. had had many kind offers, all of which they had declined with thanks.

"Mopps here yet?" asked Blake, as he came into the study with his chums.

"Not yet!" said Tom Merry. "May be here any minute, though. You fellows, remember we've got to be very civil to Mopps. We've got to get him interested in the giddy treasure trove we're going to look for."

"I fancy he won't take much stock in that," said Blake.

"We shall have to talk him round. He's got to agree to take us to Venice, or there will be trouble," said Tom Merry flatly.

The study door opened again, and Figgins & Co., of the New House, came in with cheery smiles. House rows were off on the last day of the term, and Figgins and Kerr and Wynn were on the best of terms with the chums of the School House.

"Here we are!" announced Figgins. "Your visitor come yet?"

# ANSWERS



"He's coming," said Tom Merry. "You won't forget what I told you about being very, very nice to him."

Figgins chuckled.

"I'll treat him like a favourite uncle," he declared.

"Here's Gussy! Finished your packing, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was breathing rather hard as he came in. The exertion of going up and down stairs, to and from the dormitory, was telling on him.

"No, deah boys, I haven't finished yet," he said. "I'm goin' to have a west, and get it finished aftah tea. I've awwanged about movin' the twunk. To-morrow mornin' Taggles and the coachman and the stableman are comin' to get it down."

Lowther chuckled.

"Bet you they won't be able to move it," he said.

"Wats!"

"Jolly lucky of you chaps to be going to Italy for the vac.," Figgins. "If we weren't booked, we'd come and look after you."

"Where are you going?" asked Tom Merry.

"Going up North with Kerr," said Figgins. "Land of cakes, you know."

"I'm going to try the haggis when I'm at Kerr's place," said Fatty Wynn confidentially. "I've never tasted a haggis. Kerr says they're ripping."

"What's this yarn about a giddy document, and a treasure buried somewhere in Italy or somewhere?" demanded Figgins. "I've heard about it. Levison and Mellish have been spreading the yarn. Nothing in it, of course?"

"That's where you make a mistake," grinned Tom Merry.

"We've got a giddy document, written in Italian—"

"Then how the dooce do you know what it means?"

"Brooke, of the Fourth, translated it for us. You'll hear all about it when we tell Mopps, and I'll show you the giddy clue to the treasure."

"I'd like to see that treasure!" said Kerr sceptically.

"So should we. That's what we're going to Italy for."

"I remember you chaps searching for hidden treasure once before!" said Figgins blandly.

The New House fellows chuckled. Figgins was referring to a great jape of the New House juniors on Tom Merry & Co. But the School House fellows only laughed.

"This one is the genuine article," said Tom Merry.

The door opened again, and Levison, of the Fourth, looked in. The juniors gave him a grim look. They had not forgotten Levison's attempts to get hold of the document which Tom Merry hoped would guide him to the buried treasure in the far-off land of Italy. But Levison had a very genial expression now.

"Hallo, you fellows!" he said. "I see you're keeping it up."

"Yes," said Tom Merry shortly.

"We've been having some rows lately," said Levison, his good humour undiminished by Tom Merry's abrupt manner. "But as it's the last day of the term, I'd like to say good-bye. I'm going to-night, you know, not waiting till to-morrow."

Tom Merry relented. After all, they were going to part for a good long time, and at that moment he could feel genial even towards Levison, of the Fourth.

"Well, good-bye!" he said, holding out his hand.

Levison shook hands with him.

"By the way, about that document of yours," he said. "I should like to see it, just out of curiosity, you know."

"I do not regard curiosity as a thing that should be gwatified," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Levison—" began Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Order!" said Blake. "No ragging on the last day of the term. But you can't see the giddy document—can he, Tommy?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Sorry, Levison," he said politely. "But I'm not going to show anybody the document—any but my own friends, I mean."

"These chaps are going to see it, I suppose?" said Levison, with a gesture towards the New House juniors.

"That's different."

"You mean you don't trust me?" said Levison, with a sneer.

"Well, if you want me to be quite frank, that's so," said Tom Merry bluntly. "Figgins and Kerr and Wynn will say nothing about it after they've seen it, and they won't try to collar it—and you would."

Levison gritted his teeth.

"Then you won't show it to me?"

"No. You couldn't read it if I did."

"I mean the translation."

"Can't be done!"

"Well, I think you're a rotter," said Levison, in a tone of deliberate insult, "and for two pins I'd give you a licking now, Tom Merry, to last you over the holidays."

Tom Merry stared at Levison. It was a sudden change of manner, certainly. Some of the juniors chuckled at the idea of Levison licking Tom Merry, the champion athlete of the junior Forms.

"You'd better get out, Levison," said Tom quietly.

"I think you're a cad."

"Very well, now go."

"And a funk, too," said Levison tauntingly.

Tom Merry jumped up.

"Look here, I don't want to lay hands on you, the last day of the term!" he exclaimed. "But if you don't get out of this study, Levison, I shall chuck you out on your neck!"

"You couldn't."

"What!"

"You heard what I said."

Tom Merry flushed with anger.

"If you've come here to look for trouble, Levison, you'll jolly soon find some," he said. "Will you clear out?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then I shall chuck you out!"

"Rats!"

That was a little too much for the captain of the Shell. He had been very patient with Levison, but he had come to the end of his patience now. He made a rush at the cad of the Fourth, and grasped him.

Levison returned grasp for grasp, and struggled fiercely.

They whirled round in the crowded study, the other fellows stumbling out of their way, and then they went whirling through the doorway into the passage. Tom Merry wrenched loose Levison's grasp, and hurled him down the passage.

Bump!

"Ow!"

Tom Merry stood with blazing eyes fixed upon the cad of the Fourth as he sprawled in the passage.

"Do you want any more?" he demanded.

"Ow! No!"

And Levison picked himself up and staggered away, grunting.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### A Startling Discovery.

TOM MERRY came back into the study with a flushed face.

"Sorry this has happened just now, you chaps!" he said. "But I couldn't stand any more from that rotter."

"You stood more than I'd have stood," said Blake. "What on earth did Levison come here to kick up a row for, I wonder? He must have come intending it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Lucky Mopps wasn't coming in just at that minute!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove! Yaas!"

All the juniors lent a hand at getting tea ready for the arrival of Mr. Mopps, and Levison and his peculiar conduct were soon forgotten.

Darkness had fallen upon St. Jim's, and the lights from the windows gleamed out into the old quadrangle.

A fire blazed merrily in the study grate, and the gas was lighted, and it gleamed upon a white cloth and shining crockery and piles of good things to eat. It was a very cosy and comfortable scene, and the juniors were prepared to enjoy themselves in the last study brew of the term.

Suddenly, from the passage, there came the sound of a wild yell and a bump.

"Great Scott!"

"What's that?"

"Ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "It's Gussy's box! Somebody's fallen over it!"

"My hat!"

Tom Merry & Co. rushed out of the study.

The lights were not yet lit in the passage, and it was very shadowy there. From the dusk came a series of gasps and groans.

"D-d-dear me! M-m-my word!"

The juniors rushed down the passage.

A little, thin man in a frock-coat was sitting on the floor close to D'Arcy's famous trunk, gasping. He was rubbing his shins as he sat.

"Oh—oh, d-d-dear! Grooh! Oh!"

"Bai Jove! It's Moppy!"

The juniors ran to pick Mr. Mopps up.

The tutor staggered to his feet with their aid. He was still gasping very painfully.

"Oh, d-d-dear!" he stammered. "I—I walked into something! How exceedingly k-k-careless to leave a large b-b-box in the passage!"

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A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.  
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT  
WEDNESDAY:

"THE STRIKE AT ST. JIM'S!"

"Bai Jove!"

"This way, sir," said Tom Merry, sympathetically. "Come into my study. So sorry you took a tumble!"

"D-d-dear me!"

Mr. Mopps allowed himself to be led on. Tom Merry lighted the gas, so that there should be no further mishaps. The juniors were full of sympathy as they conducted Mr. Mopps into the study. The little gentleman was very much disturbed. Arthur Augustus had described his old tutor to the St. Jim's fellows as a tame little man with a stutter, and the description fitted Mr. Mopps exactly. He had a pale, scholarly face, with an absent-minded expression, and pale-blue eyes that blinked and winked behind strong glasses.

"D-d-dear me! G-g-goodness gracious!" stuttered Mr. Mopps. "The person who left that large box in the passage must have been a dud-dud-dud—"

"Dumny, sir?" suggested Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"A dud-dud-dreadfully careless person!" finished Mr. Mopps.

"Quite right, sir," said Manners. "He's the biggest ass in the School House, sir."

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"An awful duffer, sir," said Blake solemnly. "Chap who's really not to be trusted out by himself."

"Blake, you ass—"

"I hope you're not much hurt, sir?" said Tom Merry, with great solicitude. "We've got a ripping tea ready, sir."

Mr. Mopps smiled a beaming smile.

"The anguish has abated," he said. "Never mind. It is all r-right. I shall be very pip-pip-pleased to join you, my boys!"

"Thank you, Mr. Mopps!"

"It will be an honour, sir!"

"A vewy gweat honah, Moppay, old man!"

Mr. Mopps purred with pleasure. He had felt some slight doubts about undertaking the charge of a merry party of juniors. He had, in fact, come to St. Jim's to sample Tom Merry & Co. before he took them away. Tom Merry & Co. were quite aware of that, hence their skilful "buttering up" of Mr. Mopps. If Mr. Mopps was not pleased with them he might decline the charge, and in that case the excursion to Italy for the vacation might fall through, which would have been too great a calamity.

"Pway sit down, Mr. Mopps."

"It's rather a crowd, sir, but so many fellows were anxious to make your acquaintance," said Monty Lowther. "Of course, everybody's heard of you at St. Jim's."

The fellows stared at Lowther. They did not remember ever hearing of Mr. Mopps, excepting casually as the tutor who had prepared Arthur Augustus D'Arcy for his entrance into the famous school.

"Indeed!" purred Mr. Mopps.

"Indeed, sir. We know all about your prize poem at Oxford, sir," said Monty Lowther, who had indeed extracted that item of information from D'Arcy.

"D-d-dear me!" said Mr. Mopps.

"We want you to recite it to us after tea, sir," said Manners.

"That's why we're all here, sir," said Figgins, entering cheerfully into the game of pulling Mr. Mopps' respected leg. "We're very keen about it, sir."

Mr. Mopps beamed.

"You are very kik-kik-kik—"

"Eh?"

"Kind," said Mr. Mopps.

"Oh! Not at all, sir! It will improve our minds," said Lowther. "Will you have tea now, sir?"

"I shall have the pip—"

"What?"

"I shall have the pip—the pip—"

"I hope nothing will happen here to give you the pip, sir?" said Lowther.

"I shall have the pip-pip-pleasure of reciting my pi-pip-poem after tea, certainly, since you desire it," said Mr. Mopps, sitting down. "I am sure you are very kik-kik-kind, and we shall get on very well together in our little excursion. Yes, thank you, I will take muffins—yes, and tea. Weak tea, please. I like my tit-tit-tea quite we-we-weak."

And the feed commenced with great good-humour on all sides, Mr. Mopps having quite got over his misadventure with the trunk. Mr. Mopps felt that he had seldom or never met such nice, quiet, pleasant, and appreciative young persons as Tom Merry & Co. Their interest in his Oxford prize poem touched him to the heart. It showed such an appreciation and respect for his learning, and it was very pleasant, too, to know that his fame had reached the great public school.

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"THE PENNY POPULAR"  
Every Friday.

"While on our journey," said Mr. Mopps, beaming over his glasses, "I shall have the pi-pip—"

"Oh, sir!"

"I shall have the pip-pleasure of giving you some instruction in the Italian tongue," said Mr. Mopps. "I am an Italian scholar myself. You are doubtless aware that my prime object in going to Italy is to collect material for my book on early Italian poets. The study of the early Italian poets is most interesting, my young friends."

"Are the Italian poets earlier than English poets, sir?" asked Monty Lowther, innocently. "I suppose in a sunny country like Italy they get up earlier?"

Tom Merry kicked at Monty Lowther's foot under the table.

"D-d-dear me!" said Mr. Mopps, in surprise. "Is there a dog in the room?"

"Nunno, sir."

"Something knocked against my leg," said Mr. Mopps, peering through his glasses.

Tom Merry turned crimson. It was evidently not Monty Lowther that he had kicked.

"May I fill your cup again, sir?" said Manners hurriedly.

"Pip-pip-please do, my dear boy!" said Mr. Mopps.

"Pray remember that I drink my tit-tit-tea very wee-wee-weak."

"Certainly, sir."

"Talking about Italian," said Tom Merry, seizing the opportunity, "I have a paper to show you, sir, that will interest you. It's in Italian."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Mopps.

"I got it in a rather a curious way, sir," said Tom Merry.

"It's about a buried treasure in Italy."

"G-g-g-good gracious!" said Mr. Mopps. "That is very interesting!"

"It was an Italian chap gave it to me," said Tom Merry.

"Chap named Marco Frulo. He said he had a secret about a lot of money being buried near Venice. There was an American chap after him—an awful bounder named Hiram Finn—and Frulo was dodging him. This Yankee chap wanted to kidnap him, and make him show him where the money was hidden."

"What an extraordinary story!" said Mr. Mopps, in astonishment. "Are you sure that you have not been the victim of a jig—"

"A what?"

"A jig-jig-joke," said Mr. Mopps.

"Oh, yes, sir, it's all fair and square. I want you to read the paper and tell us what you think of it. I know you can read Italian like anything, sir."

"Quite so, quite so," said Mr. Mopps.

"Frulo gave me the paper, sir, because he thought Hiram Finn would collar him, and he said if he didn't reclaim the paper, the secret was mine," said Tom Merry. "He hasn't reclaimed it, so—"

"Have you been able to read this extraordinary paper?" asked Mr. Mopps.

"I got a chap to translate it, sir. I've burnt the translation now in case anybody should get hold of it. I know it by heart," Tom Merry explained. "I've got the original paper in my pocket. I carry it tied up in the corner of my handkerchief for safety. There's a fellow at this school who knows about it, and has been trying to pinch it."

"To what?" asked Mr. Mopps, who was evidently unacquainted with the meaning of the modern verb to pinch.

"Ahem! I mean to collar it," explained Tom Merry.

"I see. I am afraid it will turn out to be a jig-jig-joke," said Mr. Mopps, with a shake of the head. "But I shall certainly be very glad to see the paper, my young friend."

"Here it is, sir."

Tom Merry put his hand into his pocket for the handkerchief in which the document was tied. Then a startled look came over his face.

"My hat!"

The juniors looked at him anxiously.

"Bai Jove, you haven't lost it, Tom Mewwy!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus in dismay.

Tom Merry felt in all his pockets.

"I told you it would be safah with me, deah boy."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It's gone!" said Tom Merry in dismay. "I—I must have dropped it in the study here somewhere. But—"

"Sure you had it about you?" asked Kerr.

"Yes—I had it in my pocket. I looked, to make sure, only half an hour before Mr. Mopps came," said Tom Merry in wonder. "I say, I suppose this isn't a joke of one of you chaps?"

"No fear!"

"Then what on earth has become of it. I couldn't have



dropped a handkerchief from an inside pocket; besides, where is it, if I did?"

"Bai Jove!"

Monty Lowther gave a sudden yell.

"Levison!"

"What!"

"Levison!" yelled Lowther excitedly. "That's what he came here for! You know what a giddy conjurer he is. He's always performing sleight of hand tricks. That's why he got up a row with you. He boned the paper when you chucked him out."

"Great Scott!"

"The rotter!"

"I'll jolly soon have it back!" exclaimed Tom Merry, starting for the door.

"Too late!" yelled Blake. "He's gone. Levison was leaving this evening, and he's gone and taken the paper with him!"

"Oh!"

For a moment dismay fell upon the juniors. Levison was gone, and he had taken the paper upon which Marco Frulo had written down the clue to the buried treasure.

There was no doubt about it.

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"What train was Levison catching?" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Anybody know?"

"Must have been the seven-thirty."

"Then it's not gone yet. Might get to the station in time."

"After him!" yelled Blake.

With a rush the juniors were gone from the study. In the excitement of the moment they had completely forgotten the astonished Mr. Mopps.

In a moment Mr. Mopps was alone in the study. Tom Merry & Co. were dashing helter-skelter down the stairs.

The astounded tutor gazed after them, and gazed round the empty study. His impression of Tom Merry & Co. as nice, quiet, orderly good boys had received a rude shock. Mr. Mopps gazed at the open doorway for some minutes in amazed silence. Then he said:

"G-Goo-goo-goodness gracious!"

## CHAPTER 4.

### Too Late,

LEVISON was gone!

It did not take Tom Merry & Co. many minutes to discover that.

Levison and his box had been taken down to Rylcombe for the seven-thirty train; and Taggles, who had taken him, had just returned with the trap.

It was twenty minutes past seven now. Levison had made sure of being in good time for the train; and, doubtless, with the paper once in his possession, he had been anxious to get out of the school as soon as possible.

"The awful rotter!" said Figgins. "Why, this is actual stealing, you know!"

Tom Merry set his teeth.

"I'm going to have that paper back!" he exclaimed. "Come on, you fellows, and sprint as you've never sprinted before."

And the School House chums streamed out of the gates.

Figgins called to Kerr and Wynn, who were following; and the New House juniors stopped.

"Aren't you going, Figgy?" asked Kerr in surprise.

Figgins shook his head.

"But, dash it all, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn warmly, "it's up to us to lend Tom Merry a hand, when that rotten cad's boned his giddy document."

"My dear chaps," said the great Figgins serenely, "you stay with your uncle! This is where the New House scores over the School House."

"Figgy, this isn't a matter for a House row!"

"By George, I'm shocked at you, Figgy!"

Figgins chuckled.

"Don't be an ass," he said politely, "or, at any rate, don't be more asinine than you can help!"

"But, I say—"

"We're going to get that paper back for Tom Merry, fat-head," said Figgins; "that is how we are going to score."

"Oh!" said the Co. together.

"They can't get to the station in ten minutes," said Figgins. "Even if the train's late in starting, they can't catch Levison."

"That's no reason why we should stay behind, that I can see. There's a chance."

"It's a mighty poor chance, and not good enough for us," said Figgins. "Tom Merry's too excited to think about it. But all trains from Rylcombe have to change at Wayland, as that's the end of the local line."

"But what—"

"They won't catch him at Rylcombe, but there's a chance of catching him at Wayland when he changes trains," said Figgins.

"But Wayland's four times as far off as Rylcombe."

"Yes, ass; but the train is a slow one—a slow, local train—and we're going to get to Wayland by the time the train gets there," said Figgins calmly.

"But we can't," said Fatty Wynn. "We could never run the distance in the time. Why, we should have to break all the running records twice over."

Figgins gave him a pitying look.

"We're not going to run it," he said. "Have you never heard of such things as bikes?"

"Oh, I see!"

"Time you did!" grunted Figgins. "Now, then, sharp's the word. Come and get the bikes out, and scorch like thunder!"

"Good egg!" said the Co. heartily.

And they had their bicycles out in a marvellously short time, and mounted in the road, and scorched off for Wayland at top speed.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. were racing down the lane to Rylcombe.

There was a chance of catching the train—a bare chance. Trains at the little local station seldom started exactly to time. Tom Merry was a good runner; he had won prizes on the cinder-path. He forged ahead of his comrades, though they were all running well.

Tom Merry's face was dark with angry determination as he ran.

Levison had made more than one underhand attempt to get hold of the Italian document, and to learn the secret of Marco Frulo.

He had failed each time; and seemed to have given up the scheme. Tom Merry understood now that the cad of the Fourth had only been biding his time. The spy of the School House had discovered that Tom Merry carried the paper about with him, tied up in a handkerchief. And he had left his attempt till the last day of the term, so that he could get clear away with the paper when he had taken it. He had come to Tom Merry's study that evening on purpose, and he had succeeded. But for Tom Merry's wishing to show the document to Mr. Mopps, he might not have discovered the loss for hours—perhaps not that night at all; and then Levison would have been safe away with the paper. But now there was a chance of recapturing it—a bare chance! Tom Merry ran as he had never run in his life before.

One by one the panting juniors dropped behind. Blake was the last to keep company with Tom Merry; and even he dropped behind by the time they entered the old High Street of Rylcombe.

Without a pause, Tom Merry dashed on to the railway-station.

The half-hour chimed out from the church as he came in sight of the station in the distance.

Seven-thirty!

Tom Merry panted, and put on a desperate spurt.

He almost reeled into the station vestibule.

He could hear a train puffing in the station; it was a minute past time, and it had not started yet.

Tom Merry pushed the astonished porter aside at the barrier, and dashed up the steps to the platform.

The train was there; the guard had just slammed the last door, and given the signal to start.

"Stand back there!" he shouted, as Tom Merry rushed for the train.

Tom Merry's eyes swept the carriage windows.

He caught a glimpse of a startled face at the window further down the train, and dashed desperately for that carriage. The train was moving.

"Old back, there!"

Tom Merry dashed on. Levison's face at the train window turned white. Trumble, the porter, caught Tom Merry by the shoulders and dragged him back.

"Let me go!" shouted Tom.

"Master Merry—"

"Let me go!"

Tom Merry wrenched himself away from the grasp of the porter.

But it was too late.

The train was already buzzing out of the station. Levison's carriage was past the end of the platform.

Tom Merry caught one glimpse of the face of the cad of the Fourth—wreathed now with a triumphant, sneering grin.

Then it vanished; the train was gone.

Tom Merry reeled back panting.

"You might have been hurt, Master Merry," said old Trumble reproachfully. "You shouldn't be so reckless!"

Tom Merry did not reply.

He felt a sickening sense of defeat. Levison was gone—

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and the document was gone with him. The juniors came panting on the platform one by one.

"Gone!" exclaimed Lowther.

"Yes!"

"Did you see him, deah boy?"

"Yes—he was in the train—I was a minute too late!"

"Wotten!"

"The awful cad!" said Blake between his teeth. "He's got the paper! But we'll get it back, Tom—it's ours, and he can't keep it! He'll be made to give it up!"

Tom Merry smiled bitterly.

"Can't! The only chance was to catch him with it on him—now he'll be able to hide it, and deny that he knows anything about it. We can't prove that he took it."

"Bai Jove, that's so, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "It's wotten!"

"But what use can he make of it?" said Lowther, after a pause.

Tom Merry smiled bitterly.

"The same use that we were going to. "He'll get it translated, and I know he and Mellish had some scheme for getting out to Italy in the vac. and searching for the treasure. Levison's father has business connections out there, and he could work it. The cad! If he does, it will be a race between us!"

"The awful wottah! It's stealin'!"

"Oh, Levison doesn't mind that!"

And with grim faces the juniors started back to St. Jim's.

## CHAPTER 5. Figgins Does It!

"MY score this time!"  
Levison muttered the words with a grin of triumph.

The cad of the Fourth was alone in the carriage. A sharp fear had gripped him as he saw Tom Merry racing down the platform. But his fear was gone now. He had tried before, in vain, to obtain possession of. He had succeeded—he had beaten Tom Merry & Co. at the finish, and there was much satisfaction in that knowledge to the cad of the Fourth.

"Beaten them hollow!" he murmured, as the train rushed on through the gloom. "Beaten them to the wide! The paper's mine, and I'll get the pater to take me out to Italy with him this time, and while I'm there, I'll handle the stuff—what-ho! Those duffers won't get there before me—I'll bet on that!"

Levison fumbled in his pocket. He took out Tom Merry's handkerchief, and untied the corner, where the precious paper was secured.

He had not ventured to look at it yet. He knew that it was there; he had felt the paper in his fingers. But he had waited till he was safe in the train before looking at it. He took out the folded paper, and tossed the handkerchief from the window of the rushing train. He did not want to keep about him any evidence of the theft.

Levison felt quite secure. If Tom Merry accused him, and made any effort to reclaim the paper, Levison was safe. He simply had to deny knowing anything at all about any paper belonging to Tom Merry. And once he was safe home, he could conceal the paper—no search would unearth it then.

Levison unfolded the paper with fingers that trembled with excitement.

He spread it out to read, and he read it, without, however, understanding a word of it. Levison's gifts did not extend to the knowledge of the Italian tongue. There it was, the hurried scrawl in the unknown language—hurriedly scrawled by Marco Frulo on that wild night when Tom Merry had saved him from the clutches of Hiram Finn and his gang—written as a clue to the treasure, for the benefit of his school-boy rescuer, in case Frulo should not succeed in escaping his enemies.

And now it was Levison's! The cad of the Fourth read and re-read the paper, trying to extract some meaning from the strange words.

"La cassa di danaroe sepolta fra le rovine della capella di Santa Maria dell'isola, presso Burano, nella grande Laguna di Venezia. La pietra e segnata d'una croce rossa.

"MARCO FRULO."

What did it mean?

It was a clue to the hidden money, and Levison could make out, at least, that it alluded to the Grand Lagoon of Venice.

That was all he could understand.

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Every Monday.

But it would be easy enough to get the document translated—that would be facile. And then—"

Levison's eyes glittered with triumph.

"I'll copy it out, and have each sentence translated separately by a different man," he muttered. "It will cost a bit more, but it will make the secret quite safe! It won't do to let anybody get on to this."

And he chuckled.

He put the paper carefully in his pocket-book, and stowed it away in an inside pocket. The train seemed to crawl. Levison was anxious to get home, above all, to get further and further away from St. Jim's.

Wayland at last! The train ran into the junction, and Levison looked out of the window. He had to change trains here, then he would be in the express, speeding away with his prize at fifty miles an hour.

He opened the carriage door and stepped out, and hurried down the platform, towards the adjoining platform where the express was due.

He would have only one minute to wait.

And then—

"Hallo, Levison!"

The cad of the Fourth started, and turned a sickly colour. Three juniors, dusty and breathless, came down the platform, and joined him. Levison tried to calm himself as he recognised Figgins & Co.

Were they after him? Did they know? How had they got to Wayland? The cad of the Fourth ground his teeth as he tried to smile.

"Hallo!" he said. "You going to-night, too?"

"Oh, no!" said Figgins airily. "Just come to see you off, you know. So jolly glad to see the last of you, you know."

"Here comes the express!" said Kerr pleasantly.

"Sorry I can't stop to talk to you," muttered Levison.

"I've only got one minute before the train goes!"

Figgins nodded.

"Then you've got just one minute to hand Tom Merry's paper over to me," he said casually.

Levison started.

"I don't understand you," he faltered.

"Something gone wrong with your understander?" asked Figgins sympathetically. "What I mean is, we've cycled over here in a deuce of a hurry, to get the paper you've stolen from Tom Merry."

"The—the paper!"

"Yes, the—the paper!" mimicked Figgins. "Do you want to catch this express?"

"Yee-es!"

"Then you'd better hand the paper over, for you're not going to get into the train till I've got it," said Figgins cheerfully.

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Levison desperately. "I don't know anything about any paper."

"I've only got one minute before the train goes!"

"So accustomed to pinching other fellows' props, that he forgets any particular theft," grinned Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going in this train," said Levison, as the express halted by the platform.

Figgins & Co. barred him off the train.

"Not till I've got the paper!" said Figgins calmly.

"Let me pass!"

"Some other evening!"

"Will you let me pass?" yelled Levison.

"When you've handed me the paper—"

"I'll call for help. I'll—"

"You'll need a lot of help to get out of our paws with that paper," said Figgins, with undiminished good-humour.

"Call away."

Levison made a rush. In a moment the three heroes of the New House had seized him, and dragged him back.

"No, you don't!" said Figgins genially.

"Let me go!" shrieked Levison.

"No fear! Now, look here, Levison; if you get a crowd round, we shall call a policeman, and accuse you of stealing that paper. You'll be taken to the police-station and searched. Tom Merry and others can identify the paper. Is that what you want?"

Levison gasped with fear and rage. There was no doubt about it. He had the paper still upon him. If he could have reached his home with it, the matter would have been different. But Figgins & Co. had been too quick for him.

"Look here," muttered Levison hoarsely, "I—I'll go halves with you—"

"Very generous for a thief, I must say!" said Figgins. "But we're not looking out for shares in a robbery, thanks!"

"I—I tell you—"

"The express goes in one minute," said Figgins. "If you want to lose it, you've only got to keep on like this."

Levison panted.



There was no help for it. Losing the express would not help him; he was in the hands of the enemy—and he dared not face the trial of the police-station. He dragged out his pocket-book, and took out the paper with trembling fingers.

"There it is—hang you—hang you!"

Figgins took the paper. He looked at it carefully; it was written in Italian, and he was satisfied. Levison could not have prepared a "spoof" paper in anticipation—and he could not have written one in Italian. Figgins knew that this was the right paper.

"Thanks!" he said easily. "You ought to be thankful that I've saved you from becoming a thief, Levison."

"Hang you!"

"There's gratitude for you!" said Figgins. "Chaps, let's put Levison safely into his train. We came here to see him off, you know."

"Ow—leggo—let me go—yow!"

Bump!

Figgins and Kerr raised Levison in their arms, and tossed him into a carriage. He fell there among the feet of astonished passengers—astonished and angry. Figgins & Co. left Levison to explain. They hurried out of the station.

"Got it!" said Figgins, with great satisfaction. "This is where the New House scores, my sons!"

"Hurrah!" said the Co. heartily.

And Figgins & Co. mounted their bicycles and rode off in great spirits.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Good Old Figgins.

TOM MERRY & CO. were feeling decidedly glum. They had returned to St. Jim's tired and troubled in mind, after their unsuccessful chase to the station.

Levison was gone, and Marco Frulo's document was gone with him; and it was a great blow to the juniors who had intended to be the sole seekers of the hidden treasure of the Venetian lagoon.

True, Tom Merry had by heart the English translation of the paper; and he could easily make a copy of it, so far as that went. But there would be a rival in the search—a cunning rival, whose cunning had already beaten him once. The happy holiday in Italy, varied by the adventure of a treasure hunt, would be changed into a hasty scramble to get at the buried chest before Levison could get at it. And if Mr. Mopps declined to be hurried at top speed, as was very probable, it was quite likely that Levison would get there first. As for making a claim against Levison for the paper, that would be useless. If he got clear away with it, it could never be proved that he had taken it; and, in any case, even if he had to give it up, he would have time to take a copy of it, which he could get translated at his leisure.

Quite ignorant of the rapid ride of Figgins & Co. to Wayland Junction, Tom Merry & Co. came back to their study with glum faces, thinking with angry exasperation of the way the cad of the Fourth had "done them."

Mr. Mopps had finished his tea alone. Until they came back into the study, the juniors did not remember the existence of Mr. Artemus Mopps, so much were they occupied with the missing document. But at the sight of him, they realised that they had not been exactly what would be called polite in thus deserting their guest without a word.

Mr. Mopps blinked at them over his glasses with his mild blue eyes.

"G-g-good gracious!" he said. "How dusty you look, my did-did-dear boys! What ever was the cause of that sudden and inexplicable commotion?"

"Bai Jove! I'm afraid we owe you an apology, sir!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his graceful way. "I twust you will excuse us for wushin' off like that."

"Very sorry, sir!" said Blake.

"The fact is, I've lost that paper I was going to show you," said Tom Merry. "A chap has collared it, and he's gone home—and he got off before we could nail him."

"N-n-nail him!" repeated Mr. Mopps.

"Collar him, sir!"

"Ah, you went after him to ki-ki-kik—"

"Oh, no; we shouldn't have kicked him, sir! But we should have given him a jolly good hiding!" said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! I should have wegarded it as a dutay to administah a feahful thwashin'."

"To kik-kik-collar him!" said Mr. Mopps.

"Oh, yes, sir! We went to collar him," said Monty Lowther, "but he got away!"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Mopps. "And the paper is gone—that most interesting paper."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"N-n-never wind!" said Mr. Mopps comfortingly. "I am sure that it was only a jig-jig-joke, my dear boys!"

The juniors did not argue the point with Mr. Mopps. They could not show him Marco Frulo's paper now, and there was an end of it. They sat down glumly to their tea. Mr. Mopps had finished his, and he had a paper and a pencil on the corner of the table. The juniors observed that he had been scribbling in Latin; and they remembered the Oxford prize poem.

The prizeman, like many prizemen, knew his prize poem by heart, and he had taken advantage of the absence of the juniors to write down the hexameters which had gained him that enviable distinction in his college days. The juniors groaned inwardly; but they had already been wanting in politeness once, and they felt that they were bound to go through with a good grace. After all, Mr. Mopps was, as Monty Lowther murmured, a good little ass, and it would do no harm to stroke his ears.

"By the way, where are those New House bounders?" asked Tom Merry. "They didn't come to Rylocombe with us."

"Bai Jove, no! They came down as fah as the gates!" said D'Arcy.

"Gone back to their House, I suppose."

"Queer that Fatty Wynn didn't come back to finish his tea."

"Ha, ha! Very queer!"

"Yaas, that was vevy queeah indeed!" said Arthur Augustus. "Only somethin' vevy important would keep Fatty Wynn fwom finishin' his tea."

"Right there, Gussy!" said a cheerful voice.

And Figgins & Co., looking very red and dusty, came into the study.

"Hallo! Where have you bounders been?" asked Blake.

"On a little run!" explained Figgins. "I suppose you didn't catch Levison at Rylocombe Station, did you?"

"No; the rotter was in the train, and it was starting as we got there," said Tom Merry.

"And the paper—"

"He's got it with him."

"Pity somebody didn't think of cutting across to Wayland on a bike, and intercepting him when he changed trains," remarked Figgins airily.

Tom Merry grunted.

"I thought of that as we were coming back," he said. "It was too late."

"Yes, you School House chaps are generally a little late in the day, ain't you?" said Figgins agreeably.

"Oh, rats!"

"Yaas, wathah, Figgay; wats, and many of them! This is not a time for House waggin's," said Arthur Augustus severely.

"Bless your little heart! I'm not ragging," said Figgins. "Only pointing out that you School House chaps are generally a day behind the fair, and that when there's anything to be done quick, the New House has to take it in hand."

And the Co. chuckled.

Tom Merry gave Figgins a quick look. Something in Figg's tone raised his hopes. It would not be like Figgins to chip him in a moment of misfortune, unless he had good news.

"Figgins!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Have you—"

"You've lost a giddy document?" said Figgins.

"Yes!"

"Written in Italian?"

"Yes, yes!"

"I suppose you could identify it if you saw it?" went on Figgins, in the same airy way.

"Of course I could. Have you—"

"Was it anything like this?"

Figgins laid a scribbled sheet of paper on the table. Tom Merry caught it up; his eyes danced as he read the familiar though incomprehensible words:

"La cassa di danaro e sepolta fra le rovine della capella di Santa Maria dell'isola, presso Burano, nella Grande Laguna di Venezia. La pietra e segnata d'una croce rossa.

"MARCO FRULO."

"Figgins! My hat! How did you get it?" shouted Tom Merry.

Figgins grinned.

"Oh, we know how to do these things in the New House, you know—"

"Oh, come off!" said Blake. "How did you get it, ass?"

"Yaas, wathah! How did you get it, Figgay, deah boy? I wegard it as vevy remarkable that you should get it when I did not succeed in doin' so," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in considerable surprise.

"Buzzed over to Wayland on our bikes, and caught Levison as he changed trains," said Figgins cheerfully. "Bumped him into the train, and brought back the giddy document, and here it is—and here we are—hungry!"

"Very hungry!" said Fatty Wynn.

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"Pile in, my infants!" said Tom Merry. "Figgy, old man, you're a brick; and you can call the New House the cock-house of St. Jim's if you like—till next term."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard Figgy as havin' played up vewy well."

And Figgins & Co., very pleased themselves at the pleasure they had given, sat down to tea in great spirits. Tom Merry turned towards Mr. Mopps with the document, but Mr. Mopps, too, had a document in his hand—the Latin prize poem.

"Let's get that ovah first, deah boy!" murmured D'Arcy in Tom Merry's ear. "Wespect for age, you know."

Tom Merry grinned. Mr. Mopps was nearly thirty, and probably he would not have been very pleased at being respected for his age. But the juniors were all anxious to get the prize poem over, so they pressed Mr. Mopps to read it out.

Mr. Mopps was somewhat coy at first. He had written out the poem from memory with the deliberate and ruthless intention of reading it out; but he had to be pressed very considerably before he cleared his throat and began.

The juniors listened with dutiful attention and appreciation to Mr. Mopps's rolling hexameters. When he had finished, they expressed their wonder and admiration in terms that went straight to Mr. Mopps' heart.

While Mr. Mopps purred his contentment, the juniors felt a slight uneasiness as to whether he might have any more poems about him.

But he hadn't; and he came good-naturedly down from the heights of Olympus to read Tom Merry's document.

Mr. Mopps adjusted his gold-rimmed glasses over his pale-blue eyes, and read the document written by Marco Frulo with great interest.

"Did-did-dear me!" said Mr. Mopps, when he had perused it carefully. "This is written as if quite sincerely, and in g-g-good earnest! The mum-mum-man writes as if he really believes in the existence of the toot-toot-treasure!"

"I am sure he did, sir," said Tom Merry; "and I can't help believing in it myself. If you'd seen that man Hiram Finn, who was after him, you would think so. He was an awfully keen and sharp beast, and he wouldn't be hunting a mare's nest, I think."

"Wathah not!"

Mr. Mopps read over the paper again, and scribbled a translation of it, with an ease which the juniors admired much more than they had admired the Latin hexameters.

"The chest of money is buried among the ruins of the chapel of Santa Maria of the island, near Burano, in the Grand Lagoon of Venice. The stone is marked with a red cross."

"It is certainly very explicit," said Mr. Mopps. "It will be quite easy to take a gondola from Venice to this island near Burano, and visit the ruins of the chapel of Santa Maria. And if the chest is buried under a stone marked with a red cross, it should be easy to find it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Mopps beamed upon the juniors over his gold-rimmed glasses.

"I suppose you are very eager to undertake this search, my dear boys?"

"Yes, rather sir!"

"What ho!"

"Then we will make Venice the starting-point of our little excursion," said the good-natured Mr. Mopps, "and we will see if this chest of money exists."

"Bravo!"

"Oh, ripping!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn.

Tom Merry clapped the fat Fourth-Former on the shoulder. "Good for you, Fatty! It's jolly good of you to wish us success—"

"Eh?" said Fatty Wynn. "What are you talking about?"

"Didn't you say it was ripping?"

"Yes, and so it is—so tender—"

"Eh?"

"Simply melts in the mouth—"

"What—"

"Simply ripping!" said Fatty Wynn. "Spiffing!"

"What are you jawing about, you ass?"

"Eh? I was speaking of this cold chicken!" said Fatty, in wonder. "What did you think I was talking about?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn looked puzzled. All his attention had been given to the cold chicken, and he had not heard a word about the treasure of the Venetian lagoon. But he did not ask for an explanation. There was another cold chicken, and Fatty Wynn started on that. A bird in hand, it is said, is worth two in the bush; and to Fatty Wynn, a cold chicken on the table before him was worth any number of buried treasures on islands in the Grand Lagoon of Venice.

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, Every Monday.

CHAPTER 7.

Off!

TOM MERRY & CO. turned out the following morning in great spirits. Mr. Mopps had stayed the night at St. Jim's; he had brought his bags down with him, and a start was to be made direct from the old school for Newhaven, where the party were to cross for Dieppe, and start their journey.

Tom Merry & Co. had their packing done very early. They had travelled before, and they knew what to take, and what was more important—what to leave behind. With the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Arthur Augustus was obstinately bent on taking the big, brand-new trunk. He had packed it full to overflowing, and he confided joyously to Blake that there would be not the slightest danger of running out of ties, waistcoats, or silk hats. Inside the great trunk he had placed an extra hat-box, in addition to the big leather hat-box which held two toppers and a straw and a Panama and a Homburg and a set of caps. Blake only smiled; Lowther had confided to him his little joke about the screws, and he was content.

A brake arrived in the morning to take the five juniors and Mr. Mopps and their baggage to the station. It was a splendid spring morning, and all St. Jim's was in high spirits. They were fond of the old school, but holidays were always welcome. When the brake drew up outside the School House, and Taggles and Toby carried down the bags to place in it, Arthur Augustus turned his attention to his big trunk. Taggles was remarkably polite that morning—he did not err, as a rule, on the side of over-politeness, but when the school broke up, Taggles's manners were always charming. Shillings and half-crowns, and even half-sovereigns came Taggles's way on days like that, to such an extent that he was able to reckon upon being plentifully supplied with gin-and-water for the whole of the vacation.

Taggles was specially polite to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was rolling in money, as usual on such occasions. His pater had been very generous, D'Arcy having explained that he would want a lot of money in an expensive country like Italy. Taggles had impressed into the service the coachman, and the stableman, and the gardener, and Toby the page. The five of them gathered round D'Arcy's trunk, and the fellows who knew that it was screwed to the floor gathered round it, too, to watch events.

"Pway be vewy careful-with it, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "There are some vewy valuable things in it; you know."

"Orlright, Master D'Arcy!" said Taggles. "We'll 'andle it as if it was the happle of our heye, sir."

"How do you handle the apple of your eye, Taggy?" asked Monty Lowther, with an innocent desire for information.

Taggles only grunted. He had already had a half-crown from Lowther, so he did not feel called upon to appreciate the Shell fellow's humour.

"Now, then, lay 'old!" said Taggles.

The coachman and the stableman and the gardener and Toby and Taggles laid hold. They laid hold and exerted themselves. The trunk did not move.

"My heye!" said Taggles. "It's 'eavy!"

"Yaas, it's wathah heavy," agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But the five of you ought to be able to manage it, weally!"

"Oh, we'll get it down, sir!" said the coachman.

"Lay 'old agin!" said Taggles.

And they laid hold again.

But the trunk remained stationary. It is probable that if Hercules had made a thirteenth labour of moving that trunk, he would not have succeeded so well as he did with his famous twelve tasks.

Taggles and Toby and the coachman and the stableman and the gardener exerted themselves manfully.

But it was in vain.

The trunk remained as firmly fixed as if it were clamped to the floor—or screwed!

There was a giggle from the crowd of fellows looking on.

"Put your beef into it!" said Kangaroo, of the Shell.

"You're not half trying, Taggy!"

"All together!" said Reilly. "Faith, don't let it bate you, you know!"

"Go it, Taggles!"

"Shove!"

Taggles went it—and shoved. But the trunk declined to move. The unhappy porter relaxed his efforts at last, and mopped his streaming brow.

"You must have put too many things in it, Master D'Arcy!" he gasped. "I s'pose you ain't loaded it up with brick-bats by any chance?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It simply contains articles of attire," said Arthur



Augustus. "It is wathah heavy, I know, but weally it ought not to give all that twouble."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the row here?" asked Kildare, of the Sixth, coming along the passage.

"Gussy's trunk," said Monty Lowther blandly. "Gussy has put in so many fancy waistcoats that they can't move it."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"It's neckties!" said Lumley-Lumley. "I guess it's the neckties that have done it. How many gross have you put in, Gussy?"

"Weally, Lumlay—"

"I'll give you a hand!" said the captain of St. Jim's good-naturally.

"Thank you kindly, sir!" said Taggles. "But I think it will want a lot of 'ands to move that trunk. And 'ow the railway porters is going to carry it, sir, is a mystery to me!"

"Lay hold all together!" said Kildare, laughing.

And Kildare lent his aid. The captain of St. Jim's was a powerful fellow, and certainly the trunk, heavy as it was, ought to have moved with six strong pair of hands upon it. But it didn't! Kildare, breathing hard, rose from his labours with a look of astonishment upon his face.

Mr. Mopps came up the passage, taking out his watch.

"We are all ready, D'Arcy!" he said mildly. "The brake is ready to start. I am afraid we cannot delay longer without losing the train, and in that case we should miss the boat at Newhaven."

"Yaas, sir; it's all wight—my twunk's comin'!"

Mr. Mopps gazed at the trunk.

"You are not thinking of bub-bub-bringing that tit-tit-trunk with you, D'Arcy?" he exclaimed, in horrified astonishment.

"Yaas, Mr. Mopps."

"B-b-but it is quite impossible, D'Arcy! You could not possibly travel with a trunk that size," said Mr. Mopps, in distress. "You must gig-gig-gig—"

"Eh?"

"You must gig-give up the idea, D'Arcy. Pray come now; the brake is waiting."

"But all my things are in that twunk, sir," explained D'Arcy. "I have nothin' else but one bag, sir."

"But, really, D'Arcy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "You'll have to make the bag do, Gussy. Come on!"

"I cannot come without my twunk, deah boy."

"Try again!" grinned Manners.

Taggles & Co. tried again. Kildare helped, and two or three more fellows lent a hand, but the trunk did not move.

"There's some joke in this," said Kildare suspiciously.

"The trunk must be fastened to the floor in some way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, Gussy!" shouted Tom Merry from the stairs.

"The brake's going to start!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

Blake and Lowther and Manners dashed downstairs and took their places in the brake. Tom Merry called to Arthur Augustus again, and followed them. Mr. Mopps looked at his watch in great distress.

"D'Arcy, we shall lose the toot-tott-train!"

"But my twunk, sir—"

"You must come without it."

"It's fastened to the floor," said Kildare.

"My heye!" said Taggles.

"Bai Jove! It is a twick—a wotten twick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to go without my twunk! I—"

"D'Arcy, we must hurry!"

"Come on, Mr. Mopps!" shouted Tom Merry, reappearing on the stairs. "We've only got just time for the train!"

"Did-did-dear me!"

"Bai Jove! I shall have to unpack the twunk, and get it loose, and pack it again!"

"But there is no time!" gasped Mr. Mopps. "Really—"

"But weally, Mr. Mopps—"

Tom Merry slipped his arm through Mr. Mopps', and led him away to the stairs.

"Good-bye, Gussy!" he called out.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It's all right. You can stay here with the trunk. We'll send you some picture-postcards from Italy!" called back Tom Merry, as he disappeared down the stairs with the bewildered Mr. Mopps.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus looked at the trunk. The crowd in the passage roared with laughter.

D'Arcy ran down the stairs into the quadrangle. The brake, with Tom Merry & Co. on board, was starting for the gates. D'Arcy dashed after it.

"Stop, you boundahs! Stop, you wottahs! You can't leave me behind!"

"Can't lose the train!" yelled Blake.

"But my twunk—"

"Pray get into the brake, D'Arcy!" gasped Mr. Mopps.

"We really must not lose the train!"

"But my twunk—"

"We'll send you some picture-postcards, Gussy, and a telegram if we find the giddy treasure!" yelled Lowther.

"Lowthah, I wegard you as a beast! I suspect you of havin' fastened my twunk to the floor! I considah you a wank outsidah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good-bye, Gussy!"

The brake rolled on. Arthur Augustus jumped on the step, to continue the argument. His eyeglass dangled at the end of its cord, and his silk hat tilted to one side with quite a rakish look. His aristocratic face was wildly excited, and never had he lacked so conspicuously the repose which should stamp the caste of Vere de Vere.

"Jump in, Gussy!"

"There's still time!"

"But my twunk—my luggage—"

"Jump in!"

"If I come without my twunk, I shall insist upon stoppin' a few days in Pawis to do some shoppin'!"

"No law against that," said Blake. "You can insist upon anything you like. No harm in a chap insisting till he's black in the face."

"You uttah wottah!"

"Jump in!"

The brake was at the gateway now. Arthur Augustus jumped in. Then the brake halted in the gateway. Taggles and Toby, and the gardener, and the stableman, and the coachman had followed it to the gates. In the hurry of the moment, Arthur Augustus had forgotten the tips; but they had remembered.

"Taggles & Co. want to speak to you, Gussy," said Lowther blandly.

"Bai Jove! Yaas. Pway excuse me for havin' forgotten you, deah boys," said D'Arcy, fumbling in his pocket for half-sovereigns. "I have been the victim of a wotten twick! Taggles, pway take care of my twunk while I am gone."

"Cert'nly, sir!" said Taggles, as his honest horny hand closed with much

satisfaction upon a sovereign. "Like the happle of my heye, sir. 'Ope you'll 'ave a good time, sir!"

And the brake rolled out.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy set his silk topper straight, and jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and turned a withering glance upon his grinning comrades.

"You fwightful wottahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as beasts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I feel vewy doubtful whethah I can continue to considah you as fwields—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to speak to you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you wottahs, it seems quite imposs. to make you feel pwopahly ashamed of yourselves!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was evidently quite impossible, and Arthur Augustus gave it up.

## CHAPTER 8.

### In the Chops of the Channel.

"NEWHAVEN!" said Tom Merry.

The party from St. Jim's poured out of the train in great spirits.

The boat for Dieppe was waiting for the train. Porters carried the bags away in a procession, and the juniors and Mr. Mopps followed. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had recovered his good-humour by this time. The prospect of shopping in Paris consoled him—though his comrades had their own ideas about that. To travel to Italy with a single bag, containing only about twice as many things as any other fellow would

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"THE STRIKE AT ST. JIM'S!"

A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.  
BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

have taken, appeared a sheer impossibility to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The only resource was a stay of a few days in Paris to replenish the supply. D'Arcy consoled himself with that thought; and he even admitted that the brand-new trunk which had been so unfortunately left behind would have been rather awkward to get on the boat. Arthur Augustus kindly declared that he would buy a smaller one in Paris. Whereat Tom Merry & Co. smiled. They meant to keep a very sharp eye on Arthur Augustus, and to take excellent care that no trunks were added to the party en route to Venice.

"Aftah all," remarked D'Arcy, as they walked down to the boat, "it is quite possible to get what you want in Pawis. You fellows shall come with me to do some shoppin' in the Wue de la Paix."

"I don't think!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

The party walked on the steamer. It was a fine sunny day, and there was the prospect of a good crossing. Which was a great satisfaction to Mr. Mopps, who was not a good sailor.

"I hope you lads will not be ill in the bow-bow-bow—"

"We're goin' to be aft, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"You're more likely to be ill in the bow, sir."

"In the bow-bow-boat," concluded Mr. Mopps.

"Oh, that's all wight, sir; we're good sailahs. We've been on the watah before," said D'Arcy. "I trust you will be all wight."

"Ye-es," said Mr. Mopps, as the steamer moved out. "It looks like a kik-kik-kik-calm sea. I think I shall remain on deck."

"I don't think it will be wuff, sir," said D'Arcy encouragingly.

The sea was not what a sailor would call rough, by any means. But before they were a mile from land it appeared to Mr. Mopps that the boat was rolling in the most horrible manner. He sat on his deck-chair, with his complexion gradually changing to a scholarly pallor, and then to an art shade in green.

"Did-did-dear me!" murmured Mr. Mopps. "I tut-tut-trust I am not goin' to be ill!"

"Bwace yourself, sir."

"There are lots of remedies for sea-sickness, sir," said Monty Lowther kindly. "Have you ever tried chewing a little bit of fat pork—"

"Grooooh!"

"Shut up, Monty, you ass!" said Tom Merry.

"Grooooh!" said Mr. Mopps faintly. "I—I think upon the whole it would have been a jew-jew-jew—"

"I don't quite compwehend, sir. Who would have been a Jew?"

"It would have been a jew-jew-jew—"

"Bai Jove! I—"

"A jew-jew-judicious thing to cross by Calais, as the sea route is so much shorter," murmured Mr. Mopps. "I really think so—now."

"Too late, Mr. Mopps," said D'Arcy. "But it's not a vewy long crossoin'—only about three hours—"

"Oh, did-did-dear!"

Mr. Mopps was silent for a long time—silent and unhappy. The steamer churned on into the chops of the Channel. Mr. Mopps grew more and more unhappy. He would have given Tom Merry's treasure, and all the other treasures in the world, with the "Early Italian Poets" thrown in, to have his feet on dry land again at that moment. He wondered—as many unhappy Channel passengers wonder in the moment of anguish—how any man who was safe on land could be lunatic enough to trust himself upon water. But Mr. Mopps was soon in no state to wonder about anything. His complexion grew greener and greener, and all his efforts were directed towards mastering the extraordinary sensations he felt inside.

Passengers strolled up and down the deck chatting cheerfully. Mr. Mopps looked upon them with a lack-lustre eye. Probably not one of them could have rendered a translation of the "Early Italian Poets"; but Mr. Mopps would have given all his scholastic attainments at that moment to be rid of the dreadful feelings that were rising within him.

The juniors were very sympathetic. Even Monty Lowther did not make any funny remarks about fat pork. Mr. Mopps' silent anguish would have touched the heart of a Grand Inquisitor or a tax-collector. An attendant came along the deck with a large basin, which he planted conspicuously before Mr. Mopps. Mr. Mopps groaned and shook his head.

"I—I don't want that!" he murmured.

"Never mind. You will, sir," said the man consolingly.

"Grooh!"

And Mr. Mopps did.

A fat Frenchman with a fat cigar halted near Mr. Mopps, smoking contentedly as he looked away towards La Belle

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France. A whiff of his cigar smote Mr. Mopps like a discharge of artillery. Mr. Mopps groaned. He reached out a feeble hand and pushed the Frenchman, who stared down at him in astonishment. Then he understood and sympathised.

"Pauvre garcon!" he said. And he took himself and his cigar further away.

The steamer plunged on.

"Oh, did-did-dear!" murmured Mr. Mopps. "How did-did-dreadfully the ship is rolling! I suppose it would be no use speaking to the captain to ask him if he can do something to stut-stut-stop the ship rolling?"

"I'm afraid not, sir," said Tom Merry gravely.

"We shall be in soon, sir," said Manners. "We're nearly in the middle of the Channel now."

"Nearly!" groaned Mr. Mopps.

"Quite!" said Tom Merry. "We shall be able to see Dieppe soon, sir. Buck up!"

"Groogh!"

Another half-hour—about twenty centuries long to Mr. Mopps! Then he gently touched D'Arcy on the arm, and D'Arcy leaned down to hear his faint, expiring murmur:

"I am dud-dud-dreadfully ill!" murmured Mr. Mopps. "I fuf-fuf-feel that I am going to die! I am sus-sus-sorry that your holiday will be spoiled by such a fatality, D'Arcy. I—I wish to be buried in England."

"My deah chap—"

"You will have my body taken back to England for interment, won't you?" groaned Mr. Mopps. "Promise me that!"

"Yaas, sir," said D'Arcy. "Honah bwight, sir!"

"T-t-thank you!"

And Mr. Mopps closed his eyes.

"Poor old chap!" murmured Tom Merry. "Worst case I've ever seen! Do you remember Fatty Wynn after a big feed on a steamer one vacation, you chaps—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Mopps was insensible to his surroundings now. Years of anguish rolled by—at least, so it seemed to Mr. Mopps. But Mr. Mopps, somewhat to his astonishment, did not die. A shake of the shoulder brought him back suddenly from the Valley of the Shadow of Death. He opened his eyes languidly.

"Dieppe, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"Groogh!"

"We're getting into harbour, sir."

"Grooh!"

"On land in a few minutes now, Mr. Mopps."

"Grooh!"

The steamer was still at last. Then the juniors raised Mr. Mopps to his feet. The tutor gazed round him with lack-lustre eyes. But as he felt no further motion beneath his feet, he revived.

"We—we are really there at last!" he murmured.

"Really, Mr. Mopps."

"Thank go-go-go-goodness!"

They piloted Mr. Mopps gently ashore, accompanied by an army of "facteurs" with bags.

With the firm land under his feet, Mr. Mopps recovered wonderfully. He even smiled a little as he took his seat in the train for Paris.

"It was a dud-dud-dreadful crossing!" he murmured.

"But I think I stood it pretty well—pretty well—eh?"

"Wemarkably, sir."

"After all," said Mr. Mopps, "the sea is the natural element of the Briton. By braving the terrors of the waves, my boys, we have made England what she is."

"We have, sir," said Tom Merry solemnly.

"Other nations," said Mr. Mopps, "lack our hardy strength, for that reason. We have always been the rulers of the sea, because we have defied and scoffed at its terrors. As Britons, we are at home upon the blue water. We do not fear when the stormy winds do blow—eh?"

"Not a bit, sir!"

The train started, with that delightful swing-boat movement peculiar to French trains. Mr. Mopps turned pale again.

"Did-did-dear me!" he said. "I—I wish the train would not rock so! It makes me feel as if I were on that dud-dud-dreadful boat again!"

"Never mind, sir," said Monty Lowther. "It's a comfort to feel that we belong to a race of hardy Britons, who have always ruled the giddy waves, sir!"

But Mr. Mopps did not reply. He was wrestling, once more with the inward demon, and he did not seem himself again till Paris was reached.



## CHAPTER 9.

## In Italy.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY made his plans overnight for a gigantic shopping expedition, which was to despoil the Rue de la Paix and the Avenue de l'Opera of their most valuable possessions. Tom Merry & Co. also made their plans. The latter were carried out, and Arthur Augustus found himself the next morning in the express for the South, with the shopping undone. The kind offer of the juniors to leave him behind to shop, and to send him picture-postcards from Italy, was refused with indignation by the swell of St. Jim's. Chiefly, as he assured them, because he was quite sure that they would get into trouble in Italy if he were not there to look after them.

Mr. Mopps had fortunately got over his train-sickness and his sea-sickness, and was quite cheerful again.

The express dashed away to the sunny south. Mr. Mopps had chosen the Simplon route. The juniors, from the train windows, watched the massive Alps rise into view. They stopped a night in Lausanne, and the next day took the train for Italy.

The wonderful beauty of the Lake of Geneva burst upon them as the train ran on by the shores of the inland sea.

"By Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This is a wippin' place! We shall weally have to have a vacation in Switzerland some time, you chaps!"

"Makes you feel quite poetic," said Monty Lowther.

"What are those lines of Byron—"

"Yaas," said D'Arcy; "I know:

"'Woll on, thou deep and dark-blue ocean, woll!'"

"Not that, fathead! This isn't an ocean, it's a lake!" said Lowther. "Something about scalps—"

"I am sure Bywon nevah w'ote any poems about scalps, deah boy!"

"Yes he did—I've got it!" exclaimed Lowther.

"'Before me are the Alps,  
Lifting sublime their snowy scalps!'"

"Is that poetry?" asked D'Arcy doubtfully.

"Of course it is, ass! Scalps rhymes with Alps, doesn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It must be jollay easy to make up poetry if wymes are all that are wanted," said Arthur Augustus. "Fwinstance:

"'Before me is a fweak,  
Liftin' sublime his awful cheek!'"

"Why, you silly ass!" said Lowther warmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then there's the 'Prisoner of Chillon,'" said Manners, who knew his Byron, having a youthful taste for that great poet. "We shall see the Castle of Chillon from the train. They call it Shee-yong here. You remember:

"'My hair is grey, but not with years,  
Nor grew it white in a single night—'"

"Sure that's right?" asked Blake, thoughtfully.

"Of course I am," said Manners warmly.

"Well, I think it goes differently," said Blake obstinately.

"'My hair is white, but not with fright  
Nor grew it grey in a single day—'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bywon w'ote some stuff about Venice, too, in 'Childs Hawold,'" said D'Arcy. "We shall be able to vewify his statements about Venice when we get there. Chap who's been there told me that Bywon had got it all w'ong. You wemembah the lines:

"'I stood in Venice on the Bwidge of Sighs—'"

"What size?" asked Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I'll bet they haven't got a bridge there the size of the Forth Bridge, whether it's a bridge of size or not!" said Lowther.

"It is not that kind of size, you ass! You must have heard of the Bridge of Sighs. They call it the Ponte Dei Sospiri in Italian. Vewy poetical.

"'I stood in Venice on the Bwidge of Sighs,  
A palace and a pwison on each hand—'"

"Must have been an awful strong chap!" said Lowther.

"Why, you ass?"

"To have a palace and a prison on each hand," explained Lowther. "Blessed if I see how he managed it! They must have weighed a lot."

"You awful ass! It means a palace and a pwison on each side—"

"Then why doesn't it say so?" demanded Lowther.

"Because side wouldn't rhyme—"

"Then he ought to have done it in blank verse," said Lowther, with a shake of the head. "Even poets ought to say what they mean, when they know. Hallo, what does this chap want?"

An attendant had put his head into the carriage from the corridor.

"Leave him to me, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "I'll pitch it to him in Fwench. What do you want, deah boy—vous desivez quelque-chose?"

"Le dejeuner est servi."

"Yaas, it's a jolly fine day," said Arthur Augustus. "Vewy nice and polite of you to come and say so."

Mr. Mopps rose.

"Come on, my boys!" he said.

"Where, sir?"

"To the dining-car, D'Arcy," said Mr. Mopps. "Lunch is ready."

"Bai Jove! Is it?"

"Yes; the man has just said so."

"Oh!" said Arthur Augustus.

And the juniors chuckled.

Some time after lunch the train plunged into the Simplon Tunnel. Windows were closed with great care, to keep out the foul fumes of the tunnel. The train rushed on in darkness. For twenty or twenty-five minutes the express thundered on under the great mass of the Alps, the atmosphere growing hotter and hotter, and closer and closer. The juniors gasped with relief when the train ran out at last into the sunlight again.

"We shall have to descend at Domodossola," said Mr. Mopps, "the examination of luggage for Italy takes place there."

"Bai Jove! Are we weally in Italy now, sir?"

"Yes!" said Mr. Mopps, with a smile.

The juniors gazed from the train windows in wonder and awe. Italy, the land of dreams, was before them at last. Italy, the spoiled child of the sunny south! The prize for which so many successive conquerors had contended—descending in wave after wave from the Alps as the centuries rolled by!

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in almost a hushed voice. "It's weally Italy, you know—place where Julius Caesar lived! He was a weal man, you know—though it doesn't seem like it when you wead his stuff at school!"

"Domodossola!" said Mr. Mopps.

And the party descended for the examination of baggage. That was not much trouble—in graceful politeness the Italian customs officials are not to be excelled.

Then the train rolled on towards Milan.

The juniors gazed from the windows. They were a little disappointed—as most travellers are who enter Italy for the first time by the Simplon Tunnel. But D'Arcy remarked that it would probably improve further on.

"Bai Jove! It's warmah here," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I say, I've got an Italian gwammah in my pocket. I'm goin' to give you chaps some tips—"

"Better keep 'em for the hotel waiters," said Monty Lowther. "I've heard that the Italians are awfully keen after tips."

"Some tips about the language, you ass!" said D'Arcy, taking out his valuable volume. "Now, we're in Italy, we ought to talk Italian as much as possible."

"I know some words already," said Lowther modestly.

"Pway tell me what you know, deah boy."

Lowther reflected.

"Ice cream!" he began.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Saffronnillo!" went on Lowther cheerfully. "Soho! Greek Streeto!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weward you as an ass, Lowthah! Now, take the verb essere, to be," said D'Arcy. "Essere, to be—Io sono, I am—tu sei, thou art—"

"Hold on!" said Lowther. "Let's get it in! Io sono, I am—"

"Yaas!"

"Tu sei—thou beast—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weally considah that you might keep your funnay bizney for the 'Weekly' at St. Jim's, Lowthah, you duffah. Avete il cappello nero del mio padre?" demanded D'Arcy.

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"What!"  
 "Have you the black hat of my father?"  
 "Certainly not. I've got my own cap!"  
 "You uttah ass—it's an exercise!" shrieked D'Arcy.  
 "No, signore, non ho il cappello nero del vostro padre—ho suo cappello bianco."  
 "What does that mean?"  
 "It means I have not your father's black hat, I have his white hat."  
 "But you haven't got my father's white hat!" objected Lowther.  
 "I wegard you as a chump, Lowthah. When I say I have your father's white hat, I don't mean that I have it—I mean—"  
 "You mean you have his black hat?"  
 "No, you ass! I mean—it's a lesson—"  
 "The more it lessens, the better I shall like it!" yawned Lowther.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Now you have to wepeat in Italian," said D'Arcy.  
 "Have you my father's black hat?"  
 "But I don't know the Italian word for cat."  
 "Cat! I was not sayin' anythin' about a cat!"  
 "Didn't you ask me if I have your father's black cat?" asked Lowther innocently.  
 "You—you—you—I wefuse to give you any instwuction in the Italian language, you uttah ass," said Arthur Augustus, closing his volume with a snap.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 And Monty Lowther remained in a state of cheerful ignorance upon that subject.  
 "Milan!" said Mr. Mopps at last.  
 And the juniors descended in Milan—il stazione di Milano, as D'Arcy explained.

**CHAPTER 10.**  
**A Day in Milan.**

**A**FTER tea at the hotel, the St. Jim's juniors enjoyed a ramble through Milan, under the gentle guidance of Mr. Mopps. Mr. Mopps did not know the city, but he had a huge guide-book under his arm, to which he constantly referred. In that great industrial city, the centre of the modern industrial movement in Italy, the juniors saw busy scenes that were not much in keeping with their ideas of the soft and sunny life of the sleepy south.

Narrow streets and narrow pavements, bustling crowds, gigantic buildings—roaring traffic and clanging trams—and over all the spires of the wonderful cathedral. And noise—noise—noise!

When Mr. Mopps stopped to consult his guide-book amid the bustling crowds, and was pushed off the kerb, and jostled and shoved, it was quite interesting—and once or twice the juniors had to rescue him from falling under a rushing tram, or under the charging horses which Milan drivers urge to reckless speed in the narrow streets.

But it was a very pleasant evening to the juniors. They had had holidays in France; but it was a new experience to be further afield, and to hear the Italian tongue spoken round them.

Many other languages, too, may be heard in the busy streets of Milan—German and French and English and Russian. It is a cosmopolitan city.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as they waited at a corner for an interminable stream of traffic to pass. "If this is the dolce fah niente they speak of, I should think a chap would wequire a west cure aftah it!"

"The dolchey far what?" asked Lowther.  
 "The dolce far niente, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "The sweet-to-do-nothin', you know—doesn't look much like it here. Isn't it wippin' to hear them talkin' Italian?"

"What language would you expect them to talk here, then?" asked Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"  
 "From this corner," said Mr. Mopps, "you obtain a magnificent view of the famous Gothic cathedral. The cathedral was founded by—"

Tom Merry dragged him out of reach of a tram.  
 "Dud-dud-dear me!" said Mr. Mopps. "Thank you very much, Merry. How very fast the trams go! And what a dud-dud-dreadful noise they make!"

"It's wemarkably intewestian' to observe a foweign crowd," said Arthur Augustus. "You see all sorts of types here, you know. Now look at that fat Italian chap there—you'd never know he was an Italian if you met him in London!"

The juniors looked at the gentleman in question. He certainly did not look much like an Italian, being a big, ponderous gentleman in check tweeds, with a fat, ruddy face.

"Most Italians are wathah good-lookin'," continued D'Arcy wisely. "You vevy seldom see a weally ugly one like that chap—"

A most terrific change came over the fat gentleman's face. "Shut up, you ass!" whispered Blake hurriedly. "He understands English."

"Underrstands English, is ut?" roared the fat gentleman, with an accent that was certainly not Italian. "Sure, ye saucy little spalpeen, it's meself that'll give ye a clump on yere silly head for yere cheek intirely."

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "I—I—"  
 "Ye miserable leetle omadhaun—"

"Gweat Scott!"  
 "Sure, and did ye lave yere manners at home, ye—"

"Oh, I'm sure I weally beg your pardon, my deah sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I am weally gweatly distwessed. I took you for an Italian—"

"And, faith, I took ye for a silly monkey, by the same token," said the fat gentleman. "And sure, I wasn't the one that made a mistake."

Tom Merry, choking with laughter, dragged Arthur Augustus away.

The swell of St. Jim's was crimson.

**NUMBER 3.**

**"THE GEM" LIBRARY**

**PORTRAIT GALLERY.**

**No. 4. NEXT WEDNESDAY.**

**Herbert Skimpole, George Gore, Robert Digby.**



**1. FRANK KERR.**

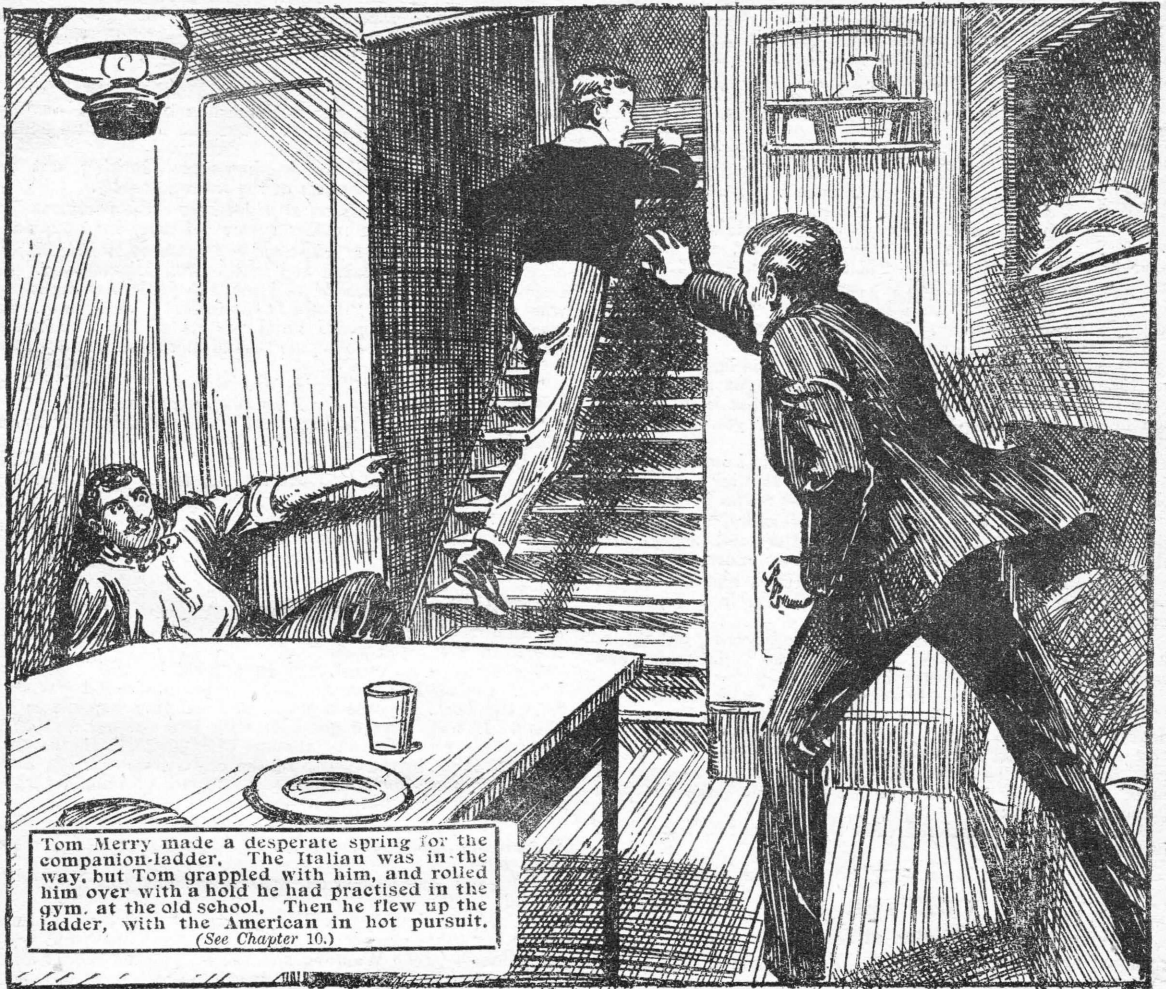


**2. "FATTY" WYNN.**



**3. GEORGE FIGGINS.**





Tom Merry made a desperate spring for the companion-ladder. The Italian was in the way, but Tom grappled with him, and rolled him over with a hold he had practised in the gym at the old school. Then he flew up the ladder, with the American in hot pursuit.  
(See Chapter 10.)

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake. "You put your foot in it that time, Gussy! Make sure your Italians aren't Irish next time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It's howwid!" moaned D'Arcy. "The gentleman will think me a wude cad—"

"Go hon!"

"I had better go back and apologise to him—"

"Keep off the grass!" grinned Monty Lowther. "It won't be safe to go near him. Of all the silly chumps that ever chumped—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"We will now see the cathedral," said Mr. Mopps, as Manners dragged him from almost under another tram. "Dud-dud-dear me, what a number of trams there are!"

The party entered the great cathedral, which, as D'Arcy explained, was called *Il Duomo* in Italian, and ascended the endless stairs to the top, where they had a wonderful view of Milan in the sunset, and the great plains of Lombardy in the distance.

"Dud-dud-dear me! What a great number of steps!" said Mr. Mopps. "But it is very, very interesting. After our excursion to Venice, I shall spend some time in Milan, making my investigations into the subject of the early Italian poets. Milan is a most interesting city. In almost every street, you will find some ass—ass—ass—"

"We've got one with us," remarked Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Some ass—association of great historical interest," said Mr. Mopps. "The cathedral, for instance, was founded in the year—"

"What does this chap want?" asked D'Arcy. They were leaving the cathedral now, and one of the cathedral guides who had followed in their footsteps was taking off his hat and bowing like clockwork.

"Not very hard to guess," murmured Monty Lowther, with a grin.

"What do you want, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy, and then put in Italian. "Che volete, cawo wagazzo?"

The *Duomo* guide stared, as well he might. "*Caro ragazzo*" certainly means dear boy in Italian, but it is not a usual form of address there. As the man was old enough to be D'Arcy's grandfather, it struck him as peculiar to be called a boy.

"I generosi signori danno qualchecosa," said the guide.

D'Arcy looked puzzled for a moment.

"Hold on, cawo wagazzo!" he said. "Wait a minute till I look in my gwammah, and I'll talk to you like anythin'. Danno is a plural verb, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatever to cackle at, deah boys. I could talk to these Italian chaps like anythin' if they'd give me time to look out the verbs in the gwammah."

"I generosi signori—"

"That means generous gentlemen," said D'Arcy. "I know that already. Danno is a plural verb—I feel quite sure of that. What's the infinitive, I wondah?"

"I generosi signori—"

"Danno!" said D'Arcy, hurriedly turning the pages of his grammar. "I can't find it. I'm sowwy! Non capisco, deah boy—I don't understand, cawo wagazzo."

"Generosi signori! Signorini generosissimi!"

"Signowini generosissimi!" said D'Arcy. "That means most generous young gentlemen. I wondah what he is payin' us compliments for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Me guide!" the Italian got out.

"Yaas, I'm aware of that, deah boy—cawo wagazzo."

"No forget guide!"

"Certainly not, deah boy! I'll wemembah you with pleasure. Come on, deah boys; I'm gettin' weady for suppah!"

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

"I fail to see any cause for laughtah—"

Mr. Mopps slid a five-lire piece into the guide's hand, and

that gentleman ceased his wild attempts to speak English, and bowed and bowed and smiled.

"Now we will return to the hotel," said Mr. Mopps, leading the way in the wrong direction. "Keep near me, my lads, in case you should get lost."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"I do not think we are very far from the hotel," said Mr. Mopps.

"It's a good distance going that way, sir," said Lowther.

"Indeed! Do you know how far it is, Lowther?"

"Yes, sir; about twenty-four thousand miles."

"W-w-what!" ejaculated Mr. Mopps.

"The hotel's just behind us, sir," explained Lowther blandly. "If you keep on in that direction, sir, we shall have to go right round the world to get to it—and it will be necessary to cross Africa and the South Pole—"

"Dud-dud-dear me!" said Mr. Mopps. "I believe I was taking the wrong turning. I will look in the guide-book—"

Tom Merry rescued him from a tram.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Mopps, when he was landed gasping on the narrow pavement, like a newly-caught fish. "How very many trams there are! Yes, indeed, that is the way to the hotel. Pray, keep close to me, in case you should lose the way!"

And Mr. Mopps led his flock triumphantly home.

The juniors slept soundly enough that night, with the clangour of Milan going on to a late hour round them.

In the morning they breakfasted cheerfully, and left for the station. The baggage was sent by the hotel porters, and they walked cheerfully to the station, to see more of the city.

Mr. Mopps was rescued from three trams and five or six horses en route, and he reached the station in a breathless condition.

After getting into two wrong trains, and getting out again, he was dragged almost by force into the right train, and settled down for the journey to Venice.

"Ah, now we are really off!" he said, with satisfaction.

"Thank g-g-goodness there are no trams in Venice. My dear boys, you will enjoy sight-seeing in that wonderful city—but you must always be careful to keep close to me, in case you should lose your way, or fall into any mishap. I have promised D'Arcy's respected father to take the best possible care of you."

And Mr. Mopps wondered what the juniors saw to smile at in that remark.

CHAPTER 11. Venice at Last.

TOM MERRY & CO. grew more and more excited as the train rushed on to its journey's end. Venice—the Queen of the Adriatic—was before them—Venice, the wonderful land—and in a few hours they were to tread its streets, and wander by the banks of its canals.

The train was speeding on over the level plains of Lombardy.

Glimpses to the north of white-capped mountains, in the far distance, and round them the level green, the far-famed plains of Lombardy where, in the old days, Goth and Hun had met in strife for the fragments of the Roman Empire.

The very names of the towns, as they passed them, were like music to the ear—Milano, Desenzana, Verona! At Verona, of course, they quoted to one another from Shakespeare, and Arthur Augustus astonished several passengers by demanding:

"Oh, Womeo, Womeo, wherefore art thou Womeo?"

And now the Great Lagoon was in sight.

Across the wide, shallow lagoon to Venice the train ran upon a bridge supported by piles driven deep in the mud.

Round them gleamed the waters of the lagoon.

Venice at last!

Venice, the city of dreams—the city where the streets are waterways—where the foot of a horse never treads, and where the gracefully-gliding gondolas take the place of the cabs of other cities.

The juniors descended from the train in the huge station at the head of the Grand Canal.

Facchini—for the porter in England, who becomes a facteur in France, further develops into a facchino in Italy—carried the bags out of the station.

Then the juniors gazed about them with wide eyes.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "It's remarkable to see a station without any cabs. Where are we goin' to get a taxi, Mr. Mopps?"

Mr. Mopps smiled genially.

"There are no taxis here, D'Arcy," he replied.

"Really, sir!" said Lowther. "Why, I've heard that the taxes are very high in Italy, sir."

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, Every Monday.

"Pway don't be funny, Lowthah! How are we goin' to get to our hotel, Mr. Mopps, if there are no cabs?"

"We shall take a gondola."

"Bai Jove, that's wippin'! Just like being at an exhibish, deah boys!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And indeed, D'Arcy was not the only traveller whose first impression of Venice was that it was like being at an exhibition.

Gondoliers crowded the landing-stage, looking out for victims with all the keenness of the average cabby.

Big felt hats came off on all sides before the party, as Mr. Mopps considered the matter before selecting his gondola.

A fat gentleman in a gold-laced cap came up to Mr. Mopps, and raised the gold-laced cap and bowed impressively. He looked like an ambassador at least, the juniors thought, till they read the words, "Hotel D'Inghilterra" on his cap. He was one of the gorgeous hotel porters of the Continental hotels whose magnificence puts that of mere dukes and princes far into the shade.

"Dud-dud-dear me!" said Mr. Mopps. "I wonder what the man wants? I wonder if he can speak English?"

"I'll twy him in Italian, sir!" said D'Arcy. "Buono giorno, amico!"

"Good-afternoon!" replied the resplendent individual, in perfect English. "If you are for the Hotel d'Inghilterra, I have a gondola ready."

"Oh!"

"Yes, that is our hotel," said Mr. Mopps. "Hotel d'Inghilterra. Thank you very much! Please see the baggage into the gondola."

"Yes, sir."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "The chap's an hotel portah! I had an ideah that he must be the Lord Mayor of Venice, at least!"

The bags were transferred to a gondola, which drew up beside the landing-stage. The juniors descended the steps into the boat. It was a novel and exciting experience for them. It was a large gondola, with two rowers, and there was ample room for any amount of luggage. In the little covered cabin in the centre of the craft there was not much room for five; but the juniors preferred to remain outside it, to watch their novel surroundings.

Mr. Mopps sat in the cabin as a shelter from the sun, and the juniors stood up among the bags, gazing round them with wide eyes.

The gondoliers pushed off, and the gondola glided down the Grand Canal.

"Venice at last!" said Tom Merry. "We're really here! What a ripping place!"

"Cross between Wapping and the Shepherd's Bush Exhibition," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Lowthah, you are an iwweverend beast," said Arthur Augustus. "It's simply wippin'! I wondah if we shall pass the Bwidge of Sighs!"

"Niffs, doesn't it?" said Lowther.

"You must expect a canal to smell a little, deah boy. In fact, when you come to think of it, the smell is wathah pleasant."

Arthur Augustus was evidently determined to be satisfied. The gondoliers emitted weird cries as they rowed the boat on. They did not row in the way the juniors were accustomed to rowing. They stood upright at either end of the boat, on a raised platform level with the gunwale, each armed with a single oar of immense length. Their movements were slow and leisurely, a change after the hurry and bustle of Milan. Milan is the new Italy; Venice is still the old Italy; and there is a marked difference.

The Grand Canal, in the form of a letter S, winds through the whole length of the city, from the railway-station to the Grand Lagoon.

Houses built flush with the water's edge, piles dripping with moisture, doors opening on the canal instead of upon a street—all was strange and new to the eyes of the St. Jim's juniors.

"Bai Jove! There's a bwidge!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I wondah if that is the Bwidge of Sighs. They called it the Bwidge of Sighs, deah boys, because condemned pwisoners were taken across it to pwison. Gondolier!"

The rower in the bow looked round.

"Is that the Bwidge of Sighs?"

"Signore!"

"Bai Jove! I forgot you didn't understand English. E questo il ponte dei Sospiri?" asked Arthur Augustus, in his best Italian.

The gondolier grinned.

"No, signore. E il Rialto."

"Bai Jove! It's the Wialto!" exclaimed D'Arcy, in great excitement. "You wemembah the Wialto in the



'Merchant of Venice,' deah boys? What news on the Wialto?"

The Rialto!

Once the centre of the commerce of Venice, when Venice was the greatest trading sea-city in the world.

Now a site chiefly for tourists, and deeply interesting and quaint, with its shops and its motley crowds of all nations.

"The Rialto, by Jove!" said Tom Merry. "Might almost expect to see old Shylock trotting along there, looking for Antonio and his pound of flesh."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The gondola glided under the Rialto, and rocked on its way to the sea. The gondolier, according to Venetian custom, called out the names of historic buildings and palaces as he passed them, but as he called out in Italian—the provincial Italian of Venice—the juniors were not much the wiser.

But Mr. Mopps, who had studied his guide-book to advantage, and could speak fluent Italian, asked questions, and pointed out places of interest to the boys. The house where Lord Byron had lived attracted their glances—the house where Wagner had died, too. Then Santa Maria della Salute, rising grandly at the end of the canal where it joins the lagoon—the great church which was a building when King Charles the First's head was still safe upon his shoulders. Then the broad lagoon—and the sea-front—the vast quay of the Riva dei Schiavoni—backed by the Doge's Palace—magnificent relic of the days when Venice was the Queen of the Adriatic, and was ruled by her powerful Doges and the mysterious and terrible Council of Ten—and the Square of Saint Mark—la piazza de San Marco—and the wonderful cathedral.

Venice, in all its glory, burst now upon the eyes of the juniors.

They gazed about them breathlessly.

Along the Riva were moored innumerable gondolas, and on the Riva itself their owners basked in the sun as they waited for customers—as their ancestors had done in the days of the Foscari and old Dandolo, the conqueror of Constantinople.

Out in the lagoon ships lay at anchor—trading vessels and coasting craft and a great warship.

Fronting the canal and the lagoon, great palaces turned now into hotels. The gondola turned in towards the embarkment. The Hotel d'Inghilterra—English hotel—was before them—a vast building, once the palace of a Venetian nobleman.

"Oh, bai Jove! It's wonderful—wonderful!" said D'Arcy. "We'll have a wamble ovah this place to-morrow, deah boys, and blow the giddy tweasure!"

"Yes, rather!"

They landed on the great granite quay. The smiling and genial gondoliers extracted from Mr. Mopps twice their legal due, and asked, with gentle smiles, for "sigarro."

Mr. Mopps shook his head.

He explained in Italian that he did not smoke, and had no cigars about him. Whereat the gondoliers smiled still more broadly, and asked for "pane." Mr. Mopps was still more puzzled; he had no bread about him, either. Then one of them jerked out the French word "pourboire," and he understood, and handed out the tips. In Italy there are many names for tips, and a traveller, unaccustomed to the ways of the gentle Italian, is a little puzzled at first at being asked for cigars, or bread, or macaroni.

Across the great quay was the imposing facade of the palatial hotel.

The party entered a wide vestibule, and a magnificent individual bowed before them.

He might have been a Royal Chamberlain in a Royal palace, but, as a matter of fact, he was the hotel concierge.

Half an hour later, the juniors were sitting down to a big dinner in a vast dining-room, with windows overlooking the canal and the lagoon, Arthur Augustus insisting upon having macaroni for one of the courses, assuring his comrades that when in Wome it was a good ideah to do as Womans do.

## CHAPTER 12.

### Old Foes.

TOM Merry was the first to wake in the morning.

The juniors had slept soundly after their journey, and it was a late hour in the morning when Tom Merry sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

He had missed the accustomed sound of the rising-bell at St. Jim's.

The large windows of the bed-room looked out upon the Riva and the great lagoon, with the Lido and the blue Adriatic far beyond.

Pigeons fluttered on the window-sills, and the voices of the gondoliers could be heard without.

Tom Merry pulled aside the mosquito-net and jumped out of bed.

There was another bed in the room, with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asleep in it. Tom Merry squeezed a wet sponge over his aristocratic features, and the swell of St. Jim's woke up quite suddenly.

"Bai Jove! It's wainin'!" he exclaimed.

"Time to get up, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus sat up in bed and dabbed his face.

"You uttah ass, Tom Mewwy! I thought I was out in the wain for a moment. Bai Jove! What time is it?"

"Nearly eleven."

"Gweat Scott!" D'Arcy tumbled out of bed. "This won't do, you know. I can't have you kids gettin' into lazy habits now we're on a holiday. 'Early to bed, and early to wize,' you know. Wing for hot watah, deah boy."

Blake and Lowther and Manners were in the adjoining room, and they were quickly roused out.

The juniors looked from the windows at the blue lagoon and the gliding gondolas and the craft anchored out on the calm water. Some of the vessels were so close in that they could make out the features of the dark-faced men lounging on the decks. A handsome schooner was almost directly opposite the hotel, and a couple of swarthy Italians were smoking cigars on the deck, as they lazily watched the lazy scene around them. Tom Merry's eyes turned upon the schooner, and he gave a little start.

"Have you got your glasses with you, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hand them over."

Arthur Augustus handed over an eyeglass.

"Fathead—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I mean your field-glasses, you ass!"

"Oh, I see! I undahstood that you alluded to my eyeglass. Of course, I have brought a supply of eyeglasses with me, in case they should get bwocken. I wemembah once I was twavellin' with one eyeglass, and it got bwocken, and I was several hours without one. I wegarded that as—"

"Will you hand me your field-glasses, you chump?" roared Tom Merry.

"They are packed up in my bag, deah boy. And I wefuse to be called a chump—"

"Get them out—quick!"

"Certainly, deah boy," said D'Arcy, bending over his bag and rummaging among the neatly-packed contents.

"But what's the huwwy?"

"I think I recognise one of those chaps on that schooner," said Tom Merry excitedly.

"Bai Jove! I didn't know you had fwiends in Venice."

"Ass! It's not a friend—it's an enemy. You remember those two Italian chaps who were with Hiram Finn in England, who were helping him to chase poor old Marco Frulo. I believe one of them is on that schooner yonder—or both."

"Gweat Scott!"

The juniors rushed to the window, while D'Arcy rummaged for the glasses. The two Italians on the schooner were in full view, but one of them had his face turned away. The other, Tom Merry was almost certain, was Beppo, Hiram Finn's follower; and if one was Beppo, the other was no doubt Pietro, and Hiram Finn himself was probably on the vessel. The thought of meeting their old enemies on the very scene of the treasure-hunt gave the juniors a thrill.

"Buck up with those glasses!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Quick!"

"Bai Jove! They're not here!" said D'Arcy, in dismay. "I wemembah now I packed them in the new twunk. They've been left behind."

"Well, you ass!"

"It is Lowthah's fault, for sewewin' down my twunk," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm sowwy. I'll lend you my eyeglass if you like."

"Oh, rats!"

The man on the schooner lounged below, and Tom Merry turned away from the window, disappointed. He had only seen the man once, on a dark night in Rylcombe Wood, and then it was only a glimpse. But he was almost sure that he recognised him.

"I remember now hearing Hiram Finn speak about a schooner," said Tom Merry. "His game was to kidnap Marco Frulo, and make him guide him to the place where the chest of money is buried. Frulo may be a prisoner on that schooner at this minute."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Manners, staring at the

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schooner from the window. "I haven't seen any of the rotters, so I can't say. But, look! There's a chap going on board who looks like a Yank!"

Tom Merry ran to the window again. A boat had pulled out from the quay, and in the stern sat a man of powerful frame, with high cheekbones and little grey eyes set close together, and a sharp nose like a knife-blade. Tom Merry gave a shout.

"It's Hiram Finn!"  
"Gweat Scott!"  
Tom Merry bounded to the door.  
"Hold on!" roared Blake. "You can't go downstairs in your pyjams."

"My hat! No," said Tom Merry, halting.  
"And you couldn't do anything if you did," said Lowther.  
"Hiram Finn hasn't done anything you could tackle him for. They wouldn't allow you to go on board the schooner to look for Marco Frulo. You haven't any evidence you could lay before the authorities for a search to be made."

"And it's really not at all likely that he's there, you know," said Manners.

"I suppose not," admitted Tom Merry. "I suppose that's a trading schooner—it looks like it—and Finn may be simply here on his usual business. But it's queer seeing him here when we're here, too, looking for the treasure. It looks as if that's what he's come here for, don't you think?"

"In that case, Frulo must have told him."  
"He might have made him tell."

"Yaas, wathah. The man is an awful beast, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "In any case, the sooner we get to the twasure, the bettah. I think we ought to go to-day."

"We'll tackle Moppy on the subject," said Tom Merry. "It isn't very far out to the island of Burano, and the paper says that the isle of the treasure is close to Burano. We can get there in a gondola in an hour, I dare say. But so long as that schooner's at anchor there, Finn can't be looking for the giddy treasure; so it's pretty plain that he doesn't know where it is, so far."

"Might have roped it in already," suggested Blake.  
Tom Merry shook his head.

"Not likely! He wouldn't stay in Venice if he had it. The Italian Government would have a claim to part of it if they knew. And he would clear off as quick as he could if he had laid hands on it."

"Yaas, wathah!"  
"Most likely he's nosed out that it's somewhere near Venice, and he's here just on spec," Blake suggested.

"Well, I suppose that's most likely."  
Tom Merry looked at the schooner again. There was no sign of activity on board. The crew had evidently no intention of putting to sea. An Italian was sitting on the hatch, rolling and smoking cigarettes as if he had no other business in life. Was it possible that a prisoner was being kept there—concealed on the schooner? It was really not probable. But even if it had been probable, Tom Merry was helpless. The port authorities would hardly have taken notice of such a surmise to the extent of searching the schooner, if he had demanded it; and the formalities to be gone through in a foreign country for such a purpose would have taken any length of time, and Finn would certainly have taken the alarm, and sailed—if he indeed had Marco Frulo a captive on board the schooner.

The juniors dressed, and Tom Merry tapped at the door of Mr. Mopps.

"Half-past eleven, sir!" he called out.

"Please do not wait for me, Merry!" called back Mr. Mopps, in a faint voice. "I am very fat-fat-fat—"

"My hat! You've changed since yesterday, then!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Very fat-fatigued with the journey," said Mr. Mopps. "I shall not rise yet. Unfortunately, I still feel the effects of the tut-tut-tut—"

"The what, sir?"  
"The tut-tut-train," said Mr. Mopps. "And I am rather sisisisick. Go down to breakfast, my dear boy, and don't wait."

"I suppose we can go out and look at the town, sir, after brekker?"

"Yes, Merry. But do not go in a gondola. You may meet with some accident if I am not there to take care of you."

Tom Merry smiled.

"Right-ho, sir!"  
And the juniors went down to breakfast.

From the windows of the salle-a-manger they could still see the graceful masts of the schooner anchored out in the lagoon. Tom Merry called the attention of the waiter to it.

"Is that an Italian vessel?" he asked.  
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The waiter looked out of the window.  
"It is an American," he said. Like most hotel waiters in Italy, he spoke English.

"You have seen it before?"  
"Yes, it comes here to trade," said the waiter. "I have seen it many times."

"That settles it," said Blake, when the waiter was gone. "Finn is here just in the way of business. He's misst Frulo and his treasure, and gone back to work."

"Yaas, wathah!"  
"But what has become of Frulo, then, I wonder?"

"Goodness knows!"  
The juniors had almost finished their breakfast, when there was a terrific report, which seemed to shake the whole hotel.

Boom!

Pigeons flew down in crowds with a rush of wings. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was just raising a cup of tea to his lips, and his arm jumped, and the tea was deposited upon his beautiful waistcoat.

"Bai Jove! Oh!"  
"What on earth—"

"It was a giddy cannon!" said Blake.  
"Bai Jove! My waistcoat!"

"Buck up, Gussy!" exclaimed Blake excitedly. "It's a Turkish battleship, and they're bombarding Venice! Run for it!"

The swell of St. Jim's jumped up.  
"Gweat Scott!"

"Down into the cellar—quick! It's the only safe place in a bombardment!" shouted Monty Lowther.

"I wufuse to go into the cellah! A D'Arcy nevah wuns away from dangah!"

"Quick—quick! Suppose a cannon-ball struck you in the chest! It would utterly ruin your waistcoat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"They are not finw' any more," said Arthur Augustus suspiciously. "I do not believe it is a bombardment at all. Besides, the war with Turkey is ovah a long time ago. I believe you are wottin', you wottah! Waitah, what was that feahful wow about?"

"The mid-day gun, sir," said the waiter, grinning.

"Bai Jove! Do they always make that feahful wow at mid-day?"

"Si, signore."

Arthur Augustus sat down to his breakfast again. He mopped his waistcoat with his handkerchief, and turned his eyeglass severely upon Blake.

"Never mind, Gussy," grinned Tom Merry. "You have proved that a D'Arcy never runs away from danger when they fire the mid-day gun."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Wats!"

And D'Arcy finished his breakfast with an air of extreme dignity. Breakfast finished, the juniors sallied forth to see the town. As they left the hotel the schooner was still lying quietly at anchor in the lagoon, and the Italian seaman was still sitting on the hatch, rolling and smoking cigarettes.

CHAPTER 13.  
A Day in Venice.

BLAZING sunshine poured down upon the wide quay, and upon the narrow streets and sluggish canals of the sea-city.

The juniors strolled along the Riva dei Schiavoni, past the colonnade of the Doge's Palace, and into the great Square of St. Mark.

"Gondola, signori?"  
"Buon' gondola!"

"You go for little sail?"  
"Me very cheap."

But the juniors resisted the allurements of the gondoliers, in Italian and English, and walked into the great Piazza di San Marco.

The great square, the heart of Venice, the scene of many a stirring episode in the old days, lay blistering in the blaze of sun.

Pigeons innumerable fluttered round the old buildings, and collected in crowds in the square, feeding from the hands of passers-by.

Gondoliers basked in the sun on the water-steps; beggars lay reclining by the pillars of the Doge's Palace and the old Cathedral of St. Mark.

Under the famous Clock Tower, the juniors turned into the Merceria, the great business street of Venice—so narrow that passers continually jostled one another in moving, and one had necessarily to wait for room to pass.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I undahstand now



why they don't have any cabs or things here. It would be wathah a joke to see a taxi comin' down this street at a good speed."

They walked on, crossing endless little bridges over sluggish canals, threading shadowy alleys that were cold and chilly wherever the sun did not reach.

Then they emerged into the great square again, into the blaze of sun. It was like getting out of a cellar into an oven, as Monty Lowther remarked.

Businesslike dealers in curiosities kindly invited them to step into their shops and view the contents, which were to be purchased at a great bargain for ten times their value. Almost every other shop seemed to be stocked with grotesque jewellery and with souvenirs of Venice for happy visitors to take away.

A persistent dealer in lace—one of the staple products of Venice—followed the juniors quite a little distance in his earnest endeavours to show them his goods.

"You come in, gentlemen," he said. "It will cost you anything."

He evidently meant "nothing," but his English was not perfect.

Then by chilly by-streets, to the Grand Canal and the Rialto.

It was with a thrill that the juniors found themselves walking over the actual Rialto, with the name of which they had been familiar ever since they were old enough to know Shakespeare.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, whose courtesy was inexhaustible, purchased something at almost every shop. When he had got to the end of his Italian money, the dealers showed perfect readiness to change English sovereigns; and when they were all gone, he had no difficulty whatever in changing banknotes.

By the time they had "done" the Rialto, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was loaded up with a multiplicity of small parcels, the contents of which he did not remember.

"By Jove!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "I think some of you fellows might cawwy some of these things. What an I to do with them?"

"Chuck them into the canal!" suggested Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I have parted with about fifteen pounds for these things—"

"And they're probably worth nearly a quid!" grinned Lowther.

"Wats! I have a daggah here that belonged to Doge Dandolo himself—the dealah chap told me so! I wegard it as vevy cheap at ten francs."

"Made in Birmingham, most likely."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"More likely in Milan," said Tom Merry, grinning.

"Milan is a great manufacturing city. They manufacture ancient coins, and Roman antiquities, and things."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"May as well get lunch out," said Blake. "I don't suppose Moppy is down yet. This place will do."

They entered a small restaurant near the Rialto.

"English Spoken!" said a notice in the window. But the waiter who came to attend to their wants was evidently not the person referred to. He spoke in Italian with a strong accent of the province, quite beyond D'Arcy's powers of comprehension.

"You speak English?" asked Tom Merry.

The waiter smiled and shook his head.

"Fwench?" asked D'Arcy.

Another smile and another shake of the head.

"Parlate Italiano solaments?" asked D'Arcy.

"Si, signore."

"Tell him we want lunch," said Blake. "Put it in Italian—luncho or grubbo, or some Italian word like that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They sat down at a table and pointed to the menu, and the man understood. They were served with dejeuner, D'Arcy vainly trying to read the illegible names of the dishes on the menu. The waiter cheerfully told them in Italian what they were eating, and they were none the wiser. Like many Italian waiters, he was keen to learn English, and asked in turn the names of the things in English. He would tap the article he had brought with a fork, and inquire—"So chiama in Inglese?"

"Blessed if I know what to tell him we call this!" said Lowther, surveying very suspiciously a peculiar-looking dish, which seemed to be a stew of some sort, and had a weird smell. "What is it in Italian, I wonder?"

"What is this called, waitah?"

The good man tried to explain, without making himself clear. Finally he tapped his head.

D'Arcy stared at him in astonishment.

"E quello?" he demanded.

"Si, signore."

"I weally don't undahstand it. They can't be cannibals here," said Arthur Augustus, in perplexity.

"He means it's made of the head of some animal, ass!" said Tom Merry. "Blessed if I'm going to touch it!"

"Let's have macawoni instead, deah boys. The macawoni here is vevy good, and when in Wome, do as the Womans do, you know."

"But we're not in Rome; we're in Venice," objected Lowther.

"I was usin' a figure of speech, deah boy!" explained D'Arcy.

"Go hon!"

"So chiama in Inglese?" asked the waiter, pointing to the suspicious dish, and anxious for information.

"He wants the name of it in English," said Blake. "Blessed if I know!"

"Muck!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mook?" repeated the waiter.

"Muck!" corrected Lowther.

"Mack?" said the waiter, trying to get the pronunciation.

"No! Muck!"

"Ecco! Muck!" said the waiter, getting it right at last.

"Yes; that's it! Muck!" said Lowther solemnly.

"Zank you, signore!" said the waiter, breaking out into unexpected English. "Muck! So chiama in Inglese, muck! Grazie!"

And the waiter departed quite cheerfully, having thus added to his knowledge of the English language. The juniors chuckled, but Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass very severely upon the humorist of St. Jim's.

"I wegard it as wathah wotten to take the poor chap in in that way, Lowthah!" he said.

"Well, he wanted to know," said Lowther. "I gave him the right word, didn't I?"

"Yaas; but—"

"Hallo! He's serving somebody else with the same stuff!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors glanced across at the next table. A stout Englishman, clad in the grey knickers and Norfolk jacket of the tourist, had come in for lunch, and the waiter was handing him that mysterious dish which had made the St. Jim's fellows so suspicious.

The big tourist glanced at it suspiciously, as the juniors had done.

"What do you call this?" he demanded.

"In Inglese, muck," said the waiter cheerfully.

The tourist's face was a study.

"What!" he gasped.

"Muck, signore."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Muck!" shrieked the waiter emphatically.

The tourist regarded the waiter for some moments with a deadly glare, and then rose and stalked out of the restaurant without having any lunch. The unfortunate waiter gazed after him in astonishment. He did not see any reason why the traveller should be so disgusted at having the name of the dish explained to him in his own language.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lowther. "I'll bet that's the first time the waiter's ever told the truth about that stuff."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But he's lost a customah," said Arthur Augustus. "It was vevy funny, but I considah that it is up to Lowthah to tip him a soveveign."

"Catch me!" said Monty Lowther. "I haven't got any quids to chuck away. I'll make it two francs."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Or, as Gussy is in charge of the party, and responsible for our behaviour, he shall tip the waiter a quid," said Lowther.

"That's a jolly good idea!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"It's up to you, Gussy," said Tom Merry solemnly.

"You're responsible for your flock. No good having an elderly gentleman seeing us about if he isn't responsible for what we do! Pay up and look cheerful!"

And Arthur Augustus paid up and looked cheerful.

## CHAPTER 14.

### The Bridge of Sighs.

"I WANT to see the Bwidge of Sighs," Arthur Augustus remarked as they left the restaurant and walked along the Grand Canal. "I particularly want to see the Bwidge of Sighs. I have been weadin' up Bywon in the twain yestahday, and I want to see whether his description is cowwect. Chap who had been to Venice told me that Bywon had got it all w'ong."

"Well, we ought to see the Bridge of Sighs!" said Tom Merry. "Where is it?"

"Ask somebody, deah boy."

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Monty Lowther stopped the nearest passer-by, with a tap on the arm.

"Bridge of Sighs, please!" he said.

The Italian gazed at him in wonder.

"Bridge of Sighs!" repeated Lowther. "Any size will do, so long as it's a bridge of size."

"You uttah ass! The man will think you are pottay!" said Arthur Augustus. "Let me pitch it to him in Italian." And he raised his hat with much grace, and asked, in his best Italian: "Prego dov' eil Ponte dei Sospivi?"

Then the Italian gentleman smiled, and comprehended. He gave the juniors, in the politest way in the world, full instructions for finding the Bridge of Sighs; but, as they did not understand a word of it, the benefit of the instruction was not great. Then he raised his hat with true Italian politeness, and D'Arcy raised his hat in return, and they parted amicably.

"Well, where is the Bridge of Sighs?" asked Blake.

"I weally do not know, Blake."

"Didn't that chap tell you?"

"Yaas, I fancy so; but I didn't quite compwehend. But it's all wight. You leave it to me," said D'Arcy confidently.

"Chap who had been to Venice told me——"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"Chap who had been to Venice told me," pursued D'Arcy calmly, "that whenever you want to find a place, you ask some chap to guide you, and give him a fwanc. Lots of sweet awabs in Venice earn their livin' that way, you know, by guidin' stwangs about. Luckily, I can speak to them in Italian."

"What's the good of that if you can't understand what they answer?" queried Lowther.

Arthur Augustus did not reply to that question. He jammed his monocle into his eye, and looked round for a street arab. Street arabs are not difficult to find in Venice.

"Here's a little wagamuffin who will do," said Arthur Augustus, his eyes falling upon a youth whose sole garments appeared to be a pair of ancient and perforated trousers and a fragment of shirt. "Come here, little boy! Venite, wagazzo!"

The ragazzo detached himself from the building he was leaning against, and come up, with a broad grin upon his handsome swarthy face.

"Signore?"

"Ponte dei Sospivi!" said Arthur Augustus. "Capite?"

"Si, signore!"

"Voglio vedere!" said Arthur Augustus, rather doubtfully.

"Si, signore!"

"Andiamo."

"Si, signore!"

And the little ragamuffin trotted off in advance of the party, evidently having understood that the Ingleso wanted to see the Bridge of Sighs. Arthur Augustus turned a triumphant glance upon his comrades.

"I wathah think that's worked the owacle!" he remarked.

"We'll see," said Lowther.

They followed the little ragamuffin. He led them by the Grand Canal, then through by-streets into the Piazza of St. Mark. They crossed the great square once more, in the wake of the lad, and came out upon the Riva degli Schiavoni.

"My hat! He's leading us back to our hotel!" exclaimed Blake.

"Pewpaws the Bridge of Sighs is neah our hotel, deah boys!"

The ragamuffin halted at a little bridge, by which the quay was continued over a canal that entered the lagoon at this point. The canal ran between the great wall of the Doge's Palace and the next building separating them. The boy grinned and pointed along the canal between the two great buildings. Raised high above the water, from one building to the other, was a little bridge, covered by a roof, and with little windows in the walls. There were no possible means of reaching it from where the juniors stood.

"Is that the Bridge of Sighs?" said Blake.

D'Arcy questioned the boy:

"E il ponte die Sospivi?" he asked.

"Si, signore!"

"But how on earth are we to get to it?" demanded Monty Lowther. "I suppose you don't happen to have an aeroplane in your trousers-pockets, do you, Gussy?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

The little ragamuffin held out a grimy hand.

"Macaroni!" he remarked.

"Bai Jove! He wants me to give him some macawoni!" said D'Arcy. "How can he possibly think that I cawwy macawoni about with me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "That's the Italian name for a tip. They ask you for a drink in England, and for something to eat in Italy; but it means the same thing!"

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"Oh, I see! But I want him to guide us to the Bwidge of Sighs!"

"You told him you wanted to see it," grinned Monty Lowther. "Well, you can see it from here. Getting on it is another matter. That wasn't in the contract."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm afwaid he's a young fathead," said D'Arcy severely.

"Ha, ha! It isn't the kid who's the fathead!"

"Voglio entrare in ponte dei Sospivi, sawo wagazzo," said Arthur Augustus.

"Si, signore!"

The little ragamuffin turned round, and led them back the way they had come.

"My hat! We shall see Venice at this rate!" said Manners.

"I wonder whether he's going to lead us back to the Rialto?" Fortunately, the little ragamuffin did not take them so far. He stopped outside the Doge's Palace and pointed to the entrance.

"Oh, I compwehend!" said D'Arcy. "You have to entah the Bwidge of Sighs fwom inside the Doge's Palace, deah boys. The kid is weally intelligent, aftah all. Give him a five-fwanc piece, somebody; I've won out of money."

Tom Merry bestowed a piece of five lire upon the ragamuffin, who almost fell down in his astonishment at receiving so magnificent a tip.

"Grazie, grazie tanto, signore!"

And he bolted with the five-franc piece at top speed.

"You have to pay for admission here," said Tom Merry. "It's one of the show places of Venice. It isn't much—half a franc, I think."

The juniors paid and entered.

A guide presented himself at once, with a graceful bow.

"Ponte dei Sospivi!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Si, signore!"

But the juniors learned that these things were done by rule. It was the regular custom for visitors to see the dungeons first, and to the dungeons they were taken. Then they mounted to the Ponte dei Sospiri.

It was a narrow bridge, high over the waters of the canal, covered in, and with little windows blinking out upon the canal, and the great walls that bordered it. Looking towards the sea, the juniors could see a strip of the lagoon, a narrow patch of the Riva degli Schiavoni, and a portion of some building in the distance. Arthur Augustus looked very puzzled.

"You wemembah what Bywon says, deah boys?" he remarked.

"Oh, blow Byron!" said Blake. "Let's get back to tea!"

"Bywon says——"

"Rats!"

"Nothin' of the sort. He says:

"I stood in Venice on the Bwidge of Sighs,

A palace and a pwison on each hand.

I watched fwom out of the deep her structures wise

"Cheese it!" howled the juniors. "We didn't come here to hear you recite Byron!"

"I was callin' your attention to the fact that Bywon had got it all w'ong, just as I was told by the chap who'd been to Venice," said D'Arcy. "He says that he watched fwom out the deep her structures wise, while he was standin' on the Bwidge of Sighs. Now, you fellows can see for yourselves how much you can see of Venice fwom the Bwidge of Sighs. Just a little stwip of the lagoon and the quay. You can't see Venice at all—Venice is wound the cornah. I weward Bywon as not havin' played the game."

And Arthur Augustus shook his head very seriously over that delinquency of the great poet.

"Well, 'structures rise' rhymes with 'Bridge of Sighs,'" said Monty Lowther. "I suppose that's why they do these things; it's poet's licence, you know. Poets have a licence, same as dogs——"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Let's ask the chap about the famous prisoners who've crossed this bridge, and sighed," said Manners. "He speaks English."

The guide was only too ready to give information. Like many guides in that delightful country, he allowed politeness to outweigh accuracy, and he agreed cheerfully that all the persons they mentioned had passed over the Bridge of Sighs, to be executed in the adjoining prison.

"Guy Fawkes, I suppose?" asked Lowther facetiously.

The guide nodded.

"Si, signore!"

Lowther jumped.

"Guy Fawkes passed over this giddy bridge?" he demanded.

"Si, signore."



"Oh, my hat! And I suppose William the Conqueror passed over it, too?"

"Si, signore."

"And George Washington?"

"Si, signore."

"And—and Henry Irving?"

"Si, signore."

"And C. B. Fry?"

"Si, signore."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, waking the gloomy recesses of the Bridge of Sighs to sounds of merriment, much to the astonishment of the guide.

"You can get a jolly lot of information by questioning the giddy guides," grinned Monty Lowther, as they emerged from the Doge's Palace. "If I'd asked him if Figgins of the New House passed over that bridge to execution, he'd have said 'Si, signore!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors went in to tea. Tom Merry glanced over the lagoon, and saw that the schooner was still at anchor there.

## CHAPTER 15.

### Arthur Augustus Does Not Buy a Revolver

**M**R. MOPPS was in the tea-room when the juniors came in. He was regaling himself with dry toast and weak tea, and a volume of "Early Italian Poets," and looked quite cheerful.

"Dud-dud-dear me!" said Mr. Mopps. "I was beginning to fear that you had been lost, my dear boys. I hope you have had a pleasant ramble, and gained some information about this delightful city."

"We have, sir," said Monty Lowther; "especially about the famous prisoners who crossed the Bridge of Sighs."

"Very, very good!" said Mr. Mopps. "I suppose you would like something more than toast for tea, my lads!"

"Ye-e-es, please!"

"So I have ordered a high tea to be served immediately you came in," said Mr. Mopps, with a beaming smile. "It is my aim to make you kik-kik-kik—"

"To make us what, sir?"

"Kik-kik-comfortable," said Mr. Mopps. "Here comes the tea. Now, my dear boys, I have made some plans for the excursion to-morrow."

"Oh, good, sir!"

"You have heard of the famous library of Venice—"

The juniors' faces fell. They had not heard of it, as a matter of fact; and they had been thinking of an excursion in quest of the treasure island.

"The—the library, sir!"

"Yes. It is a very famous library, and I have obtained permission to make my researches there," said Mr. Mopps genially. "You boys shall come with me, and you shall look at the books and pictures while I am making my researches."

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jovo!"

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to keep that for a rainy day, sir?" ventured Blake. "We have been taught to save up for a rainy day, and I wouldn't mind saving up the library for—a week or two—"

"Or a thousand years or so!" murmured Lowther.

"We want you to take us in a gondola, Mr. Mopps," said Tom Merry diffidently. "You know we've got to pay a visit to that island near Burano."

"Dud-dud-dear me, I had quite forgotten!" said Mr. Mopps, coming with a start out of the "Early Italian Poets." "You had a paper or something—some joke about a treasure or something, I think—"

"Forgotten it!" murmured Blake. "Oh!"

Tom Merry had wisely decided to say nothing to Mr. Mopps about having seen Hiram Finn. The tutor would have probably have taken the alarm at once, and he would not have been likely to countenance a visit to the Isle of Santa Maria if he knew that it was possible that the dangerous ruffian would be encountered there. As for the danger, the juniors did not even think of it; but Mr. Mopps, being responsible for the party, would certainly have taken a different view.

Mr. Mopps looked thoughtful for a moment.

"Now I come to think of it," he said, "you boys would doubtless rather pay a visit to that island, wherever it is, than study the volumes and pictures in the library?"

"Just a little bit, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Very well," said Mr. Mopps. "We will take a gondola to the island to-morrow. I have no doubt that it will be very interesting to explore the ruined chapel, though—ha, ha!—I doubt whether we shall find a treasure there."

"You needn't waste time on the island, sir," Blake suggested thoughtfully. "You could go into the library, while

we go out in the gondola—kill two birds with one stone that way, Mr. Mopps."

"I fear you would not be safe without me, my dear boys." "Oh, gondolas are safe enough, and the lagoon's as smooth as a looking-glass, sir. Besides, we should have the gondolier with us."

"Yes; that is true," admitted Mr. Mopps. "If I select an old and experienced gondolier, I have no doubt that he could look after you."

"And it would save your time, and you could get on with the 'Early Italian Poets,'" said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"Quite so—quite so!"

Mr. Mopps was evidently very much tempted. He did not like the water, and the trip in the gondola would have been far from enjoyable to him. And he would have been thinking about the "Early Italian Poets" all the time, and wishing himself in the dusky recesses of the library among the musty volumes.

"I really think it is a good idea," he said at last. "I am really anxious to get to work. You boys will be quite safe with an old and experienced gondolier. Of course, you must not get into any tub-tub-tub—"

"Oh, no, sir! We'll select the gondola very carefully."

"Into any tub-tub-tub—"

"Some of them are old tubs, but some of them are really ripping craft," said Blake. "We'll pick out a good one."

"Into any tub-tub-trouble!" gasped Mr. Mopps.

"Oh!"

"You will not get into any trouble," said Mr. Mopps.

"Oh, sir!" said the juniors all at once, as if getting into trouble of any sort was the very last thing they had ever thought of in their lives.

"Very well," said Mr. Mopps. "I will arrange with the hotel proprietor to have a gondola here in the morning, with an old and experienced gondolier, and you shall go."

"Good egg!"

After tea Mr. Mopps, being buried in "Early Italian Poets," Tom Merry & Co. discussed their plans for the morrow.

"We shall want a crowbar and a pick-axe and a spade," said Tom Merry. "We shall have to smuggle them into the gondola without everybody seeing them. We don't want them to guess what we're after. And I believe making excavations is not allowed; but we shall have to allow them ourselves."

"Hear, hear!"

"I suppose it's weally poss. that that wascal Finn may see us and get on the twack?" said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "We might meet him there?"

"Quite possible."

"Then we ought to be weady. We shall have to go out and buy the spade and the pick-axe and the crowbar. I think I had better buy a wevolvah."

"A which?"

"A wevolvah," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "We may be in danger—"

"We're pretty certain to be in danger if you carry a revolver!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it's a danger we're not going to run into, either," said Tom Merry. "Revolvers are barred, Gussy. You can buy a toy pistol if you like, or a catapult—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You ought to have thought of this before you left England, Gussy," said Monty Lowther severely. "Then you could have brought one of those swords your aunt's sisters used to slash about with in the Middle Ages—as you've told us—"

"You uttah ass! I said my ancestahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weally think I had better get a wevolvah—"

"Think again!"

"I shall insist upon gettin' a wevolvah!" said D'Arcy firmly.

And when the juniors sallied forth, and went into the Merceria to make their purchases, Arthur Augustus looked out for a gunsmith's shop. And when the spade and the pick-axe and the crowbar had been purchased, and wrapped up so carefully that they could not be recognised, the juniors laid violent hands upon Arthur Augustus and marched him back to the hotel—without the revolver.

## CHAPTER 16.

### A Wild Night's Adventure.

**T**OM MERRY sat up in bed. Midnight had tolled out. Venice was sleeping.

Even the great square of St. Mark was deserted, and the Riva degli Schiavoni echoed only occasionally to the footsteps of a belated passer.

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Tom Merry stepped quietly from his bed, and moved to the window. He looked out. Stars twinkled in the deep blue of the Italian sky, and were reflected in the waters of the lagoon. Dimly the shapes of the anchored vessels were made out, looming up in the gloom. Along the quay were rows of moored gondolas, deserted for the night. The schooner of Hiram Finn was still at anchor.

Tom Merry dressed himself quietly. He had made his own plans for that night, but he had not told his chums. They would not have wanted him to go alone, and he knew that a crowd might have made his intended expedition impossible. He glanced at Arthur Augustus, sleeping peacefully in bed. The lips of the sleeping junior moved, and a murmur was audible:

"Wed stwipes, with spots, please, Mr. Bunn."

Tom Merry smiled. Arthur Augustus was evidently dreaming that he was back in Rylcombe, ordering a new fancy waistcoat from Mr. Bunn the tailor.

Tom Merry quitted the bedroom quietly.

The hotel was very silent as he went downstairs.

Only the porter was in the hall, and he looked rather curiously at the junior. Tom Merry gave him a nod, and went out with a careless air, as if simply for a stroll on the Riva degli Schiavoni.

But as soon as he was outside the hotel his pace quickened. He crossed the Riva to the water's edge, and paused on the steps down to the lagoon, and gazed out towards the anchored schooner.

Tom Merry intended to pay Hiram Finn's vessel a visit under cover of the darkness, and to discover, if he could, whether Marco Frulo was a prisoner there.

Two lights burned dimly on the schooner, fore and aft, as she rocked gently on the almost motionless water of the lagoon.

Tom Merry stepped into one of the outermost gondolas, intending to borrow it for the crossing to the schooner. There was a movement in the gondola, and he started as a dark form rose into view.

"Signore!"

It was the owner of the craft, who had evidently been sleeping in the gondola. Tom Merry was a little taken aback. He was willing, of course, to pay for the use of the gondola, but the presence of the owner was awkward, as his visit was to be paid secretly to the schooner. But he had to make the best of it.

"You go for little sail, sotto le stelle?" said the gondolier, always ready to do business, late as the hour was.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Buono, signore!"

"You will take me?"

"Si, signore."

"You speak English?"

The gondolier showed his gleaming teeth in a grin.

"Leetle small English," he said.

"I want to go out to that schooner," said Tom Merry, pointing to the dim shape of the vessel on the lagoon.

The Italian understood the gesture, if not the words.

"Si, signore," he said, the inevitable reply.

"But I do not want them to see me," said Tom Merry, speaking very slowly so that the Italian should understand. "It is a secret."

The gondolier looked puzzled, as well he might. But he could not suspect the handsome, well-dressed young English signor of wishing to visit the trading schooner secretly for any dishonest purpose; and, after all, it was not his business.

"I'll give you twenty francs," said Tom Merry—"venti lire."

The gondolier's eyes sparkled.

"Buono!"

"You take me?"

"Si, signore."

"Go quietly. Don't wake them. Piano, piano," said Tom Merry, remembering in time the Italian word for "softly."

The gondolier grinned.

"Si, signore."

And he loosened his craft. The gondola glided silently out into the still waters of the lagoon. The long, heavy oar made hardly a sound as it swept through the water. The gondola glided out towards the schooner.

Tom Merry kept his eyes fixed anxiously upon the vessel. The gondola drew closer and closer, and ranged alongside. If there was a watch being kept on deck Tom Merry would be disappointed; but he had seen no sign of a watchman.

There were people on board, but they were below. Tom Merry scanned the deck, and then, whispering to the gondolier to wait for him, he leaped lightly on board.

His heart beat fast as he felt the deck under his feet.

He was on board Hiram Finn's vessel. If the adventurer discovered him—especially if he had some guilty secret to hide—what would be the result? Tom Merry remembered

the hard, desperate face of the man, and he realised that he was going into deadly danger. But he did not hesitate.

He crept silently to the companion-hatch. It was open, and a light glimmered in the little cuddy at the foot of the ladder; a smoky swinging lamp burnt there.

There was no sign of anyone in the cuddy, and Tom Merry crept silently down the steps. He started as he reached the foot. A man was lolling upon a seat by the table, leaning heavily on the table with his eyes closed. A bottle was before him, showing the cause of his heavy slumber.

Tom Merry knew the hard, dark face. It was that of Beppo, one of the Italians he had seen in the wood at Rylcombe with Hiram Finn.

There was a light in the adjoining cabin, and a murmur of a voice. Tom Merry crept to the half-open door. This placed the sleeping man between him and the ladder, and if Beppo should awaken his retreat was cut off.

But there was no help for it. He had known that he was going into danger, and now that he had found the danger he did not hesitate.

He peered into the cabin through the slit between the door and the jamb. He had a view of half the interior. He could see a bunk, with a man's form partly visible in it—a man fully dressed. The man lay in an uncomfortable attitude, and Tom Merry could see that cords were tightly tied about his wrists. Doubtless his feet were equally well secured, but the junior could not see. A heavy cloth was bound over the mouth, concealing the chin, but the upper part of the face was visible.

Tom Merry breathed hard.

He knew the face! He was looking upon Marco Frulo, the man who had given him the clue to the hidden gold on the Venetian island.

His suspicions had been well-founded. Marco Frulo had told him that if he did not reclaim the paper it would be because he had fallen into the hands of Hiram Finn and his gang. And he had evidently fallen into Hiram Finn's hands. He was a prisoner on board the schooner, and kept evidently with the greatest care.

His big black eyes were burning, and his swarthy face was pale and wan.

The unfortunate Italian was helpless, at the mercy of the adventurer. He had given Tom Merry the clue to the treasure in fear of this—partly, doubtless, in gratitude to the boy for having rescued him once—partly in order that the buried gold might never fall into Hiram Finn's hands. Better that anybody should have it than that the unscrupulous adventurer should be the gainer—that was how Frulo had looked at it.

The voice Tom Merry could hear speaking was that of Hiram Finn; but he could not see the adventurer without opening the door further. He heard the low, sharp, metallic voice of Finn, and realised the threat contained in those hard tones.

"Not asleep, Marco, my old chum? No, I guess not. You kinder wouldn't sleep tied up like that. It's your own fault, Marco."

The Italian's eyes burned.

"You're going to tell me where those dollars are buried, Marco, I reckon. Somewhere near Venice—eh? I guess I'm on to that much. And I guess I'm going to know the rest. You're going to tell me, Marco Frulo."

The Italian shook his head.

"We're in Venice now," went on Hiram Finn calmly. "We've been here two days, and I guess I'm running out of my stock of patience, Marco. You haven't told me the secret, Marco, but you've told others—eh? Guess whom I saw in Venice to-day—guess! A schoolboy, Marco; mighty like a young whippersnapper I caught a glimpse of once in a wood at a time when you got away from me, Marco. I guess I can put two and two together. You've told him something, and he's here—after you or after the treasure, Marco."

A sudden gleam came into the bound man's eyes. Hope, perhaps, had revived in him. The American adventurer doubtless saw it too.

Tom Merry heard the unseen man give a scoffing laugh.

"You won't be found here, Marco. The brat didn't see me, and he doesn't know I'm here; doesn't know the schooner from Adam, Marco. You're in my hands, I guess; but I've not got any more time to waste over you. Are you going to talk?"

Another shake of the head.

"It's your last night, Marco," said the adventurer, the tone of menace growing deeper in his voice. "I guess I've been easy with you. Beppo and Pietro would have made you talk before this eh? But I guess it's the end of the tether now. You're going to talk, Marco, or I'm going to make you. We leave Venice to-morrow morning; I'm finished here. We sail before dawn, Marco; and we're going



down the Adriatic—round to Naples, I guess. I've got business to do, and I can't afford to waste time. I guess I wasted enough getting you back from England when you slipped me on an English ship. Marco Frulo, my friend, you are going to talk at dawn, if not before!"

Marco Frulo shook his head again.

"I guess I shall make you, then. I guess an iron bolt heated red-hot and slipped down your back will make you willing to give up all the treasures in the wide world if you'd got 'em in your trousers-pocket, Marco."

The man in the bunk made no sign.

"Nod your head if you'll talk. I guess I'm not going to let you open your mouth. We're too near the quay for that!"

Marco Frulo did not move.

"Obstinate dog!" said Hiram Finn, with deep anger in his voice. "I guess I mean business about that iron bolt, Marco. You'll larn in the morning, when we up anchor and get away from Venice. There's a right breeze for us, and we're going—savvy? I guess—"

The American broke off.

There was a sound in the cuddy as Beppo yawned and awoke. And then there was a shout, as the seaman's startled eyes rested upon Tom Merry.

"Il ragazzo!" he shouted. "Un ragazzo Inglese!"

"What!"

Hiram Finn was at the door of the cabin with a bound. Tom Merry made a desperate spring for the ladder.

The Italian was in the way, but he was heavy from sleep, and his brain was still reeling from his drinking.

Tom Merry grappled with him, and rolled him over with a throw he had often practised in the gym. at the old school. Beppo crashed on the floor.

"Signor! Un spia—un ragazzo—"

He yelled as he went down. Tom Merry sprang over him and ran up the ladder. But the Yankee, big and heavy as he was, was out of the cabin in the twinkling of an eye, and springing in pursuit.

His grasp just missed Tom Merry's ankle as the junior dashed up the ladder. With his heart thumping, the junior reached the deck and rushed for the side.

Hiram Finn leaped after him.

Tom Merry made a flying leap for the gondola floating in the darkness by the side of the schooner. And as he leaped Hiram Finn smote him, and he missed the gondola, and plunged heavily into the water.

Splash!

From the rail the Yankee adventurer looked down with anxious eyes. Fresh from the lighted cabin, he found it difficult to see in the gloom. The gleam of the water caught his eye. He saw the gondola a moment later, and a dripping form dragging itself in.

## CHAPTER 17.

### A Council of War.

TOM MERRY dragged himself into the gondola with the aid of the boatman.

His brain was reeling, and as he climbed into the gondola he sank down exhausted, the water dripping from his drenched clothes and forming a pool round him.

"Signore! Signorino!" spluttered the gondolier.

Tom Merry panted, and struggled to his feet.

"Shore—quick!" he exclaimed. "Quick—subito! Riva degli Schiavoni!"

"St, signore."

The gondolier swung out the long oar, and the gondola glided back to the quay.

As it bumped on the steps Tom Merry jumped out.

The water ran down him as he stood.

He looked out into the lagoon towards the schooner. A moving shadow in the starlight caught his eyes. The schooner was in motion; the mainsail had filled out before the breeze that blew off the shore, and the vessel was gliding away towards the Lido and the wide Adriatic beyond.

Tom Merry clenched his hands.

His first idea had been to call help—to rouse the police, the port watchmen, anybody—to get help to rescue Marco Frulo.

But it was too late.

What was he to do?

To leave Marco Frulo in the hands of the unscrupulous adventurer? Yet if he told his story, would the police believe it? Would not they think it was some wild, boyish fancy—a dream, or an invention? And the schooner was gone. To search her it would be necessary to send a vessel in pursuit. Tom Merry knew that it was hopeless. The voice of the gondolier interrupted his hurried reflections. He took out his purse, and placed a couple of gold louis in the man's dusky hand, and, without waiting for his profuse thanks, he hurried back to the hotel.

The hall-porter looked at him in amazement.

"The signorino has fallen in the water!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Tom Merry, and he hurried up to his room without further explanation. He turned on the electric light, and hurriedly stripped off his wet clothes and towelled himself down. Arthur Augustus awoke, and sat up in bed, and blinked at him.

"Bai Jove! Where have you been, Tom Mewwy? What have you been up to, you boundah?"

"Call the other fellows, Gussy. We want a council of war."

"Vewy well, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus, amazed as he was, could see that it was a serious matter. He tumbled out of bed, and called Blake and Manners and Lowther from the adjoining room. The three juniors came in in amazement. They saw Tom Merry towelling himself down, and simply stared.

"What on earth have you been doing?" demanded Lowther.

"Tumbling into the lagoon," said Tom Merry grimly.

"Great Scott! You might have been drowned!" ejaculated Blake.

"I came jolly near it."

"How on earth did you come to tumble in?"

"Hiram Finn's fist helped me."

"Hiram Finn!" exclaimed all the juniors together.

"Yes," Tom Merry hurriedly explained. "I got aboard the schooner. I wanted to see whether Marco Frulo was there."

"You cheeky ass to go without us!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Don't chip now, you chaps; it's too serious. I got on board from a gondola, and got down below, and there was Marco Frulo tied up in a bunk like a giddy turkey for Christmas. Hiram Finn and the two Italians were there, on the schooner. Finn was in the cabin with poor old Frulo. He's seen us in Venice to-day, and smelt danger. He was threatening to put Frulo to the torture to make him give away the secret."

"The rotter!"

"They found me there, and nearly had me." Tom Merry shivered. "If Finn had got hold of me, I don't think I should have got off the schooner alive. I expected him to fire after me in the water, but he didn't. He knocked me into the sea as I jumped for the gondola. The gondolier pulled me in, or—"

"My hat!"

"What's going to be done now, you chaps?"

"Call the police, and collar the schooner!"

"She's gone!"

"Gone!" exclaimed all the juniors together.

"Yes. They must have cut the cable. She was whisking away down the lagoon before I got to the quay."

"Then it's all up!" said Blake, with a whistle.

"All the same," said Tom, "I don't think Finn will go far away. I heard him talking. He knows the treasure is somewhere near Venice; that's why he's here. Frulo hasn't told him yet, but if they torture him he will—he's bound to,

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poor chap, if Finn does as he's threatened to do. Look here! Finn knows he has no time to lose now, and he will put pressure on Frulo, and we shall find him at the island of Santa Maria—unless we get there first."

"Yaas, wathah!"  
"I suppose so," said Lowther thoughtfully. "We'd better get off first thing in the morning, without waiting for Moppy to come down. Then he can't ask any questions."

"That's so," said Blake.  
"You all agree to that?" asked Tom Merry.  
"Yaas, wathah!"

CHAPTER 18.  
Victory.

**D**AWN flushed up in pink and rose over the wide lagoon, and lighted the towers and roofs of the Queen of the Adriatic.

In the first rays of the sun the five juniors quietly left the hotel.

They had a bundle of rolls with them for breakfast in the gondola. It was all they needed. They left Mr. Mopps sound asleep in his room, little dreaming of the wild adventure his charges were entering into. The juniors wished fervently that they had old Kildare of St. Jim's with them, or even their old rivals, Figgins & Co. But Mr. Mopps would have been quite useless. They had to depend on themselves. The spade and the pickaxe and the crowbar were placed in the gondola Tom Merry engaged, and the juniors had each taken a stout stick. The gondolier—the same man who had rowed Tom Merry out to the schooner the previous night—asked no questions. The young English signors desired a "promenade" on the lagoon to see the sun rise over Venice—not an uncommon excursion. That was all, the gondolier thought.

"Burano," said Tom Merry to the Italian; and the gondolier shoved out the long oar, and the little craft swept away over the still, shadowy waters of the lagoon.

Tom Merry & Co. looked about them as the gondola glided on. There was no sign of the schooner. But they had not expected to see her. The gondola moved on over the lagoon, and Venice became a blur of white buildings behind in the rising sun.

The gondolier pointed to an island ahead.  
"Burano?" asked Tom Merry.  
"Si, signore."

"You know the island of Santa Maria, near Burano?"  
"Andiamo al isola-di Santa Maria, presso Burano," said Arthur Augustus.

And the gondolier nodded. He evidently understood, and knew the islet.

The gondola approached the little island. There were vestiges of buildings upon it. It had evidently been inhabited at some earlier date; but, like many of the environs of the sea-city, it had fallen into ruin and solitude with the dark days that had come upon the one-time Queen of the Sea.

The gondola plunged her bows into deep mud, and the gondolier made her fast.

"Andiamo in isola," said D'Arcy, in as good Italian as he could muster. "Voi attendate qui."

"Si, signore."  
The juniors plunged ashore through the mud.

They did not need to ask where were the ruins of the old chapel of Santa Maria. Across the island they could see fragments of a building—the only one that had been of any size. They tramped across the little island, a rising crest of land hiding them from the gondola. The gondolier was not likely to be curious. He was too accustomed to the manners and customs of tourists, who seek all kinds of things, in all kinds of places, that totally lack interest to the natives. The gondolier sat down to roll cigarettes and smoke until the juniors returned, in the comfortable consciousness that he was to be paid by the hour.

The juniors tramped into the ruins.  
The sun was higher in the heavens now, and the rays were bright and warm. They fell into the ruins of the old chapel—masses of masonry overgrown with weeds, close by a choked-up canal full of foul odours.

The juniors' hearts were beating hard.  
Tom Merry paused in the shattered gateway of the chapel and looked seaward, and uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Look!"  
In the far distance a sail appeared, and the juniors could make out the graceful form of a schooner beating up to the isle against the wind.

"The schoonah!" ejaculated D'Arcy.  
"So Hiram Finn is coming!"  
"He'll be too late!" said Tom Merry. "But we've got no time to lose. Buck up!"

"Look for a cross marked in red on a stone!" said Blake.

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"Yaas, wathah!"  
They searched through the ruins of the old "capella."  
Blake gave a sudden shout.  
"This way!"

In an obscure corner, shadowed by a fragment of the shattered wall, Blake had come upon one of the flagstones of the floor, upon which appeared the graven form of a cross in dull red. Excepting for the "croce rossa," the flagstone was exactly like all the others that formed the ancient floor of the chapel.

The juniors gathered round the spot with shining eyes.  
They had found it!

There could be no doubt about it; it was the "pietra segnata d'una croce rossa," as Marco Frulo had written it down.

Tom Merry stepped back from the marked stone, and glanced seaward again. The schooner was less than a mile away, struggling with the adverse wind. And she was approaching the side of the island upon which the ruined chapel lay—a sure sign that Hiram Finn was on the track.

"Quick! the word!" said Tom Merry.  
He unwrapped the crowbar and set to work.

He jammed the end of the crowbar into the interstice between the marked flagstone and the next, and dragged upon it with all his strength.

The flat, thick stone slowly rose.  
Tom Merry tilted it back. Underneath was the soft earth, with no sign that beneath it a treasure lay concealed.

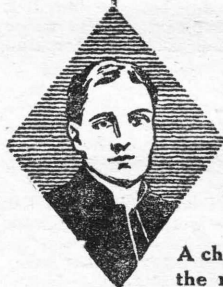
"The spade!" said Tom Merry.  
Blake handed him the spade. The pick was not needed. Tom Merry shovelled out the soft, muddy earth with feverish haste. There was a sudden shock of the spade.

"It's here!"  
The spade had struck something harder than earth. Tom Merry hastily shovelled the earth away, and the top of a wooden chest was revealed. Then all the juniors bent themselves to it, and the chest was dragged out upon the flagstones.

It was a sea-chest, about two feet long, made of oak, and it was very heavy. The lid was locked down, but a blow of the pick shattered the lock. Tom Merry raised the lid.

"My hat!"  
The story was true—Marco Frulo had not deceived them,

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and he had not been deceived himself by the tale of the dying seaman in Leghorn.

The chest was crammed to the very brim with money—gold pieces of twenty francs and twenty lire, English sovereigns, German twenty-mark pieces, and coins of other kinds with strange inscriptions, Greek and Russian, that the juniors could not even read.

Gold—the treasure at last!

Prepared as they were for the sight, the juniors could hardly believe their eyes.

Blake knelt by the chest, and ran the coins in golden cascades through his fingers breathlessly.

"My only hat!" he said. "It's true! Real gold! The giddy treasure!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Must be thousands of quids!" said Monty Lowther.

"Soveveigns, deah boy—"

"Quids—"

"Soveveigns—"

"Sovereigns or quids, it's a jolly good haul!" said Tom Merry. "Only I'm afraid it doesn't belong to us, you chaps!"

"Oh!" said all the juniors together.

And their faces fell a little.

In the excitement of the discovery they had forgotten that little fact.

"I suppose you're right," said Blake, after a pause.

"After all, the secret was Marco Frulo's—he gave you the secret, but it would be a bit thick to hold him to it if he can get away from Hiram Finn. Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, we've had the fun, and Frulo takes the filthy lucre—that's agreed."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry looked out to sea. The schooner was close in shore now. It would not be long before the rival treasure-seekers were on the scene. Tom Merry spoke a few hurried words. The juniors closed the chest again, and hid it from sight with chunks of masonry and loose bricks. The chest was hidden—safe from the eyes of Hiram Finn, even if he had learned the secret of the stone marked with a "croce rossa."

Then the marked flagstone was replaced, and the signs of the excavations cleared away. All looked as it had been before the juniors came to the ruined chapel.

"We could clear off now and take the giddy treasure with us," said Tom Merry. "But that's not the programme. We're going to rescue Marco Frulo if we can."

"What-ho!"

Keeping close in cover among the masses of masonry, the St. Jim's juniors watched the schooner with eager eyes. The vessel glided close up to the shore, and the sails dropped. Three men could be seen moving on her deck, and the juniors watched them bring a fourth man up from below, evidently bound, and place him in a boat. The boat was lowered; Hiram Finn and Beppo took the oars, and pulled to the shore. Pietro remained alone on board the schooner.

Tom Merry set his teeth.

"They're coming," he said; "and they're bringing Frulo with them, as I expected. Lie low! This is where Hiram Finn gets the surprise of his life!"

The boat plunged bows into the mud, and disappeared from the eyes of the juniors hidden in the ruins. There was a sound of heavy footsteps crunching the old stones, and two men came into the ruined chapel, leading between them a third—whose arms were bound behind his back. It was Marco Frulo. His face was pale and anguished. Hiram Finn looked round with a grin of triumph. The juniors lay very low in their cover, grasping their cudgels, and waiting for the word from Tom Merry.

"I kinder guess that we scoop the deck here, Marco, my old chum," said Hiram Finn, with a chuckle. "You didn't need that hot iron, but it's still time, if you're obstinate. I guess you're going to point out where the chest is buried now."

"A thousand curses!" muttered Frulo, between his teeth.

Finn laughed.

"I reckon you can do your swearing afterwards, Marco, my chum. Beppo, give him an inch of your knife—and another inch if he doesn't chatter!"

"Maldetto! E sotto la pietra segnata d'una croce rossa!" groaned Frulo.

"Thunder—and I guess I'm almost standing on it!" said Hiram Finn, staring down at the marked flagstone. "We'll soon see if he's told the truth. Heave that stone up, Beppo!"

The seaman bent over the stone. Tom Merry gave his companions a quick whisper. There was a sudden rush of feet in the old ruins.

Hiram Finn swung round with an oath.

But even as he spun round, clutching out his revolver, Tom Merry's cudgel descended upon his head with stunning force,

and the Yankee adventurer gave one faint groan and fell like a log.

He was stunned.

Beppo leaped up with a snarl like a cat, knife in hand, but a stick smote his knife, and sent it whirling. Another crashed upon his head, another across his arm, and he yelled with anguish and fell.

"Done 'em!" roared Blake. "Hurrah for St. Jim's!"

Marco Frulo gazed at the juniors like a man in a dream.

Tom Merry opened his pocket-knife, and cut the Italian's bonds.

"It's all right, old son!" he exclaimed. "Allo righto, in Italian—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're a free man now, and we've found the giddy treasure for you—"

"Tutto va bene, e il tesoro e twovato," chirruped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. And Marco Frulo gasped in astonishment and joy.

"And it's all yours," said Tom Merry. "We're not going to touch it; and we'll lend you our gondola to get it away—"

"Oh, signore—"

"Tie those chaps up," said Tom Merry. "There's enough rope here—they used plenty of rope on poor old Frulo. The other rotter on the schooner will come to look for them sooner or later, and he can look after them."

And Hiram Finn and Beppo were bound hand and foot. Then the treasure-chest was dragged out, and Marco Frulo, still dazed with joy and gratitude, feasted his eyes upon the contents—the heaps and piles of gold coins. Then he began to talk in rapid Italian with excited gestures. The juniors did not follow the words, but they understood what he meant, and they shook their heads.

"No; we're not going to take it, or any of it," said Tom Merry decidedly. "It's yours, Frulo—all yours. That's settled."

"Oh, signore! Quel generosita—"

The chest was fastened up, and Marco Frulo carried it across the little island to the gondola. The gondolier stared at the sight of the stranger, and Frulo talked to him in fluent Italian.

The juniors would have been surprised if they had known that he was airily explaining to the gondolier that he had been on the island the day before, searching for mineral specimens for the young English strangers, and that he had a box full of stones of no use to anybody but a tourist. Knowing the ways of tourists, the gondolier was quite satisfied, and he simply shrugged his shoulders at this one more sample of the mad ways of those English!

The gondola glided away from the island. As they swept away into the lagoon, the juniors caught a glimpse of the schooner, and of Pietro staring anxiously shoreward, evidently wondering what had become of his comrades. Doubtless he discovered, in the long run, but Tom Merry & Co. did not wait to see. They lost no time in getting back to Venice, and it was still morning when the gondola touched the granite steps of the Riva degli Schiavoni, and the gondolier was dismissed with a tip that made him open his eyes wide.

Mr. Mopps had missed the juniors, and he was waiting anxiously for them when they came in. His breath was taken away when he heard of the adventure they had been through.

Marco Frulo deposited his treasure in Tom Merry's room, whence he removed it in bags lent him by the juniors, taking it away to some place of safety best known to himself. The juniors asked no questions; it was no business of theirs.

The Italian was deeply earnest in his endeavours to persuade the English boys to take one-half of the treasure, but they would not. At last, to gratify the grateful seaman, they agreed to take a hundred pounds.

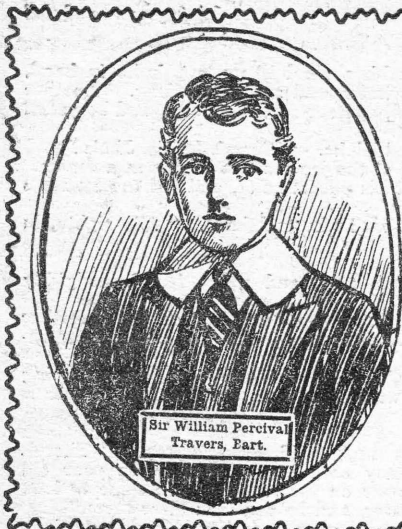
Mr. Mopps kept a very careful eye upon his charges after that. But the dangerous adventures were past, and when the holiday was over they came back to St. Jim's, with wondrous tales to tell their schoolfellows there.

Indeed, on the first day of the new term, what was left of the hundred pounds—it was not much—was spent in a royal feed in Tom Merry's study, to which came Figgins & Co. and a crowd of other fellows, to discuss the good things provided by the returned travellers, and to listen with intense interest to the story of Tom Merry's trip.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of the Chums of St. Jim's next Wednesday, entitled "THE STRIKE AT ST. JIM'S," by Martin Clifford. Order your copy of "The Gem" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

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## SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE!

*A Splendid Serial Story dealing with Public-School Life.*

By R. S. WARREN BELL.

### READ THIS FIRST.

Sir William Percival Travers, Bart.—to give him his full title—is a slight, fair lad of twelve when he is first sent to "Fighting Greyhouse" by his guardian. His Form-fellows in the Lower Fourth are considerably older than "Sir Billy," as the youngster is soon nicknamed, and he has to put up with a good deal of bullying. His great hero is Wardour, the captain of the school.

One hot summer evening, Browne major, of Middle House—otherwise known as Mary Anne—is poring over his Euclid in the class-room after the rest of the House is in bed, when he finally yields to drowsiness and falls sound asleep. The window above his head is propped wide open with a cricket-bat, and presently the head and shoulders of a man appears at the opening—a man whose dress bears the mark of the broad arrow.

(Read on from here.)

### Caught!

The convict—for an escaped convict from Petershall Gaol it was—had removed his shoes, and so, as he clambered over the window-sill, he made no noise. Mary Anne snored; the convict glanced towards his corner. The convict's face lit up. As lightly and noiselessly as a cat he stole over the intervening desks and effectually awoke Mary Anne by clapping a huge, rough hand over the sleeper's wide-open mouth. Mary Anne tried to yell, but the convict's hand stifled the cry.

"Stop that! D'yer 'ear?" And the ruffian backed up his command by placing his disengaged fingers round Mary Anne's windpipe.

When the boy was almost black in the face the convict relaxed his grip—slowly and reluctantly. He had it in his mind to throttle Mary Anne—this being a quick and sure way of silencing him—but second thoughts prevailed. He saw that he could put the lad to a variety of uses.

"Not a sound—d'yer 'ear? Breathe a word and I'll murder yer. Now, off with them togs—quick! You're wide, and so am I! 'Urry up, and keep yer tongue quiet."

Before Mary Anne quite knew where he was or what he was doing, he was standing in his shirt and stockings, and the convict, having rid himself of his prison dress, was hastily donning Mary Anne's clothes, which he found a tight fit—a very tight fit. In fact, he only got them on after a tremendous struggle.

"Sharp, now!" said the man. "You know the run of the place. I want grub, and anything that's worth taking. Lead the way. One sound from you," he added savagely, placing his lips close to Mary Anne's ear, "and I'll corpse you!"

Trembling with terror, Mary Anne led the way and showed the convict where the pantry was. The convict regaled himself like a famished wolf. Then Mary Anne conducted the convict into Mr. Donnithorne's study.

At intervals of two minutes the convict repeated his ferocious threat, and each time Mary Anne's hair stood on end. Meanwhile, the convict crammed his pockets full of all the valuables that would go into them. At length he was satisfied and bade Mary Anne conduct him back to the class-room—an order which Mary Anne obeyed with alacrity.

"Now, young feller," growled the visitor a little thickly—

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for he had flirted extensively with the beer-barrel in the pantry—"look you 'ere!"

With a massive forefinger and thumb he embraced Mary Anne's neck. Mary Anne blinked, and stood perfectly still.

"I'm going to do a guy now, See?"

"Yes, sir," quavered Mary Anne.

"But befaw I goes I want to give you a word of warnin'. If you stirs out of this room one inch, or raises any alarm wotever, I'll nip back and keep my previous promise. What did I say I'd do?"

"You said you'd 'corpse' me, sir."

"Ay," chuckled the convict, "so I did; an' I mean it now. Well, just to see that you stay 'ere I'm goin' to stick by the wall and watch yer. See?"

"I sha'n't move, sir," said Mary Anne hurriedly.

"If you runs I can 'op through an' catch yer hup in no time. You've got a soft neck," he added, increasing the pressure of his thumb and finger, "and you'd throttle nice. Now—not a sound."

Releasing Mary Anne, the convict proceeded to stow everything he had taken securely in his pockets. Meanwhile, Mary Anne shivered in his shirt.

"That's all c'rect," muttered the convict; "so I'll be trotting. If, young feller," he added, again applying that affectionate pressure to the nape of Mary Anne's neck, "you so much as say a word concerning my visit, I'll come back and kill yer; I don't say when, but I'll come!"

So saying, he picked up his discarded prison dress and crammed it into a book-locker near by.

"Time I was gittin'," he muttered, shooting a final menacing glance at Mary Anne ere he leaned over the window-sill and proceeded, in this attitude, to peer into the garden.

Mary Anne had left off shivering; the blood was coursing furiously through his veins. More even than the convict's appalling threats he feared the morning chaff of his school-fellows. He pictured the frown which would decorate the face of Mr. Donnithorne when that gentleman found that all the smaller valuables in his study had been stolen. He, Mary Anne, was responsible for the whole job. He had gone to sleep and left the window open, and had shown the convict round the place like a professional guide! He—he was responsible; on his shoulders would rest the entire blame!

Then—agonising reflection!—what would the fellows say when it was noised all over Greyhouse that he had deliberately stripped off his clothes and given them to an escaped convict?—he, a great strapping fellow of seventeen!

Perish the thought! He wouldn't stand it! Life wasn't very sweet to him, and he didn't care much if he gave up living. He felt that he would rather die than face his school-fellows in the morning.

His eyes roved wildly round the class-room in search of a weapon. He could see nothing but books and ink-wells. At last—the convict was still leaning out of the window and gazing intently into the garden—Mary Anne's desperate glance fell on the cricket-bat with which he had propped up the lower sash of the window.

Without a moment's hesitation he dashed forward and grabbed the bat.

Crash! Down came the great window, bang on to the convict, catching him, in the middle of his spine. Such was the weight of the frame that it pinned the ruffian to the window-sill. As he was guarding his pockets with his hands, the window imprisoned his arms as well.

With muffled imprecations he struggled with all his might to free himself. But, powerfully built as he was, the window was too heavy for him.

Mary Anne was surprised—astounded—delighted! He had not contemplated this result of his hasty snatching away of the bat. For several seconds he gazed upon the panting, furious scoundrel, and then rushed into the passage, uttering yell after yell. So shrill and piercing were his cries that masters and boys came trooping downstairs, all agog to find out the cause of the uproar.

"What's up?" cried a score of voices.  
"A—a man! A villain! A robber!" howled Mary Anne.  
This story is continued on page 111 of the cover, where the Free Correspondence Exchange will also be found this week.

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