

THRILLING COVER-TO-COVER YARN OF TOM MERRY & CO. IN ITALY!—INSIDE.

The GEM

2^d



The Treasure of Santa Maria!

The TREASURE of SANTA MARIA!



The gondola headed for the little island in the distance, upon which the St. Jim's juniors hoped to find the buried treasure!

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 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 his ear as he emerged into the passage. Arthur Augustus jumped clear of the floor in his astonishment as he felt that sudden smite, and the Shell fellows roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"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!"

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

"Certainly it is the case," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "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 pweessed for time just now, I should give you a feaful thwashin'! But I am expectin' my twunk to awvive, and I must go and see atah 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 to 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, gasping.

"Dear me! 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 feafully sowwy, Skimmy!" 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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

his eyeglass. But they did not seem somehow to be withered at all. 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 awwived!"

Taggles, the porter, turned his eyes upon D'Arcy. Taggles did not look pleased. It was the duty of Taggles to carry that trunk in, and he 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 all when it's full," he said. "I'd better get Toby to lend 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 big 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 twavel 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 in one voice.

"I twust I speak plainly, deah boys. I shall wequial 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 abwod? 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 wegard you as an ass, Lowthah. Pway take that twunk into the School House, Taggy. I have to bogin 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 on 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

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*Hidden on a deserted island in the Grand Lagoon of Venice was the vast treasure of Santa Maria! And to the island came Tom Merry & Co. from far-off St. Jim's, to seek that secret fortune and save it from unscrupulous hands!*

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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 trunk. He's going to take that trunk to Italy."

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

"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, 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 wufuse 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!"

Toby and Taggles 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 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 to his study.

Arthur Augustus cast a puzzled look after him.

"I weally do not see anythin' funny in gettin' a new twunk to take to Italy," he said. "I wegard it as quite necessary. Pway get on, Taggles, and pway don't make such a feahful wowl!"

"It's 'eavy!" grunted Taggles.

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

"More likely to bump the reckless railway about, if they handle it!" grinned Monty Lowther. "But I don't believe you'll find any railway porter reckless enough to try and 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 study, 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, Hawwies, deah boy. I've got to pack it!"

"You—you ass—"

"I wufuse to be called an ass. Pway stand aside. Now, shove it, deah

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**Turn to Page Seven and See the Important Announcement About the  
WONDERFUL SCHOOL STORY  
Starting Next Week!**





"Ow—leggo—let me go—ow!" roared Levison, as Figgins and Kerr grabbed him and whirled him off his feet. Bump! Next moment the cad of the Fourth was tossed into the carriage, and he sprawled there among the feet of the astonished passengers.

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 on a trip to Italy, or to the North Pole, for that matter. But that opinion was not shared by their elders. Italy was at war, and, though there was no danger in that country, 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, 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 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'm afraid 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, 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?"

"He's coming," said Tom Merry. "You won't forget what I told you about being 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 downstairs, 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 wash, and get it finished aftah tea. I've awwanged about movin' the twunk.

To-morrow mornin' Taggles and the Head's gardener and chauffeur 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," said 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 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  
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# The Story You Have Been Waiting For!

Telling of the Early Adventures of  
Harry Wharton at Greyfriars  
STARTS NEXT WEEK!

## THE MAKING OF HARRY WHARTON!

You'll Revel in Reading About Harry Wharton, the Obstinate, Hot-headed New Boy of Greyfriars!



Spread the Good News Around Among Your Friends. They'll Want to Read This Grand Story, Too!

To follow the fine series of Rookwood stories which concluded in our last issue, I have pleasure in announcing a new feature which I know will have a very special interest for all "Gemites"—"THE MAKING OF HARRY WHARTON!" This grand story, written, of course, by the inimitable Frank Richards, will relate the very earliest adventures of Harry Wharton, from the time when he first entered the great Public school, Greyfriars, as a new boy—and what an unusual type of new boy he was!

Every lover of Tom Merry & Co. will be familiar with the famous characters created by Martin Clifford's companion-author, Frank Richards, and featured every week in our great companion paper, "The Magnet."

I felt that I could not give my loyal chums of the GEM and "The Magnet" alike a greater treat than this magnificent yarn, which will answer the questions which pour in upon me every week from hundreds of companion-paper readers. What were Harry Wharton, Billy Bunter, Frank Nugent, and Bob Cherry like in those early days? How was the famous Co., now known as Harry Wharton & Co., first formed?

These, and many other similar questions, will be answered by Frank Richards himself in "THE MAKING OF HARRY WHARTON!"—which will, I promise you, be a real treat for all who read it, and will knit closer the ties which unite the readers and the Editor of the famous companion papers in a common bond of loyalty and good fellowship.

THE EDITOR.

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 pip-pip-poem after tea, certainly, if 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 on our little excursion. Yes, thank you, I will take muffins—yes, and tea. Weak tea, please. I like my t-t-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.

"While on our journey," said Mr. Mopps, beaming over his glasses, "I shall have the pip—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 the English poets, sir?" asked Monty Lowther innocently. "I suppose in a sunny country like Italy they get up earlier?"

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

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

"N-no, 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 t-t-tea very we-we-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 is in Italian."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Mopps.

"I got it in a rather 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 Maro Luigi. He said he had a secret about a lot of money being buried near Venice. There was an American chap after him—an awful bouncer named Hiram Finn—and Luigi 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.

"Luigi 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, though—"

"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.

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"You might 'ave been 'urt, 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—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.

A Short-lived Triumph!

"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 the document. Now 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. "The paper's mine, and I'll get the pater to take me out to Italy 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 con-

ceal the paper. No search would unearth it.

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 Maro Luigi 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 schoolboy rescuer, in case Luigi 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 danaro e sepolta fra le rovine della capella di Santa Maria dell'isola, presso Burano, nela Grande Laguna de Venezia. La pietra o segnata d'una croce rossa."

"MARO LUIGI."

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.

But it would be easy enough to get the document translated. 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 into his pocket-book, and stowed it away in an inside pocket. The train seemed to crawl. Levison was anxious to get home, and, above all, to get farther 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!"

"Here comes the express," said Keer 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.

Levison started.

(Continued on the next page.)



Make the Jester smile and Win a MATCH FOOTBALL!

Send your Joke to The GEM Jester, 1, Tallis House, John Carpenter Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

LETTING THE LION HAVE IT!

Big-Game Hunter (angrily): "Why did you throw your rifle away when the lion charged?"

Companion: "Well, you told me to let him have it!"

A football has been awarded to J. McClan, 3, Coronation Road, Ipswich.

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AN ADMIRAL IN THE MAKING!

"My big brother," said John, "is going to be an admiral."

"Oh!" said the visitor. "He's a cadet at present, I suppose?"

"Well," said John, after a pause, "he hasn't got that far yet, but he's going to have an anchor tattooed on his arm!"

A football has been awarded to N. Yates, 41, Lancaster Place, Leicester.

\* \* \*

NOT SO GOOD!

Father: "How did you get on at the examination, Willie?"

Willie: "All right, dad. I only had one sum wrong."

"Very good, my boy! So you got all the others right?"

"No; I only did one."

A football has been awarded to P. Brown, 16, Wentworth Park, Finchley, London, N.3.

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THE RUSTIC'S RETORT!

Motorist: "Which is the way to London?"

Rustic: "Dunno."

"Where does this lane lead?"

"Dunno."

"Which is the way to the main road?"

"Dunno."

"You seem to be a fool!"

"Well, I ain't lost!"

A football has been awarded to K. Foreman, Swiss Cottage, Winsor, nr. Southampton.

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HELPFUL ADVICE!

It was on a local train. The ancient engine wheezed laboriously over equally ancient rails, and jolted to a stop at no place in particular. Time passed tediously. Some of the passengers looked wearily out of the windows, while others drew their hats over their eyes and tried to sleep. When half an hour had elapsed the guard came along.

"Hi, guard!" exclaimed one passenger. "What's the trouble?"

"We're taking in water," was the explanation.

"Well," retorted the other, "why on earth don't you use another teaspoon?"

A special prize has been awarded to Miss D. Meche, 83, Gold Street, Johannesburg, South Africa.

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"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 dooce 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?"

"Ye-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 our 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—"

"I'll call for help. I'll—"

"You'll need a lot of help to get out of our paws with that paper," Figgins said, 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 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!"

Figgins took the paper. He looked at it carefully. It was written in Italian, and he was satisfied. Levison could not have prepared a "spoo" 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."

"Owl! Leggo! Let me go—wow!"

Bump!

Figgins and Kerr grabbed Levison, whirled him off his feet, 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!

**T**OM 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 Maro Luigi'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 knew 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 make 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, in his graceful way. "I twust you will excuse us for wushin' off like that."

"Very sorry, sir!" said Blake.

"The fact is, I have lost that paper I was going to show you," said Tom Merry. "A chap 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 regarded it as a duty 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 mind!" 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 Maro Luigi'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 prize man, like many prize men, 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 listen to the poem 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 Rylcombe with us."

"Bai Jove, no! They came down as far 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, ha! Very queer!"

"Yaas, that was vewy queeah indeed," said Arthur Augustus. "Only somethin' vewy 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 Rylcombe 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, aren't you?" said Figgins agreeably.

"Oh, rats!"

"Yaas, wathah, Figgy; wats, and many of 'em! This is not a time for House waggins'," 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 Figgins'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."  
"MARIO LUIGI."

"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, Figgy, deah boy? I wegard it as vewy 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, and brought back the giddy document, and here it is—and here we are—hungry!"

"Very hungry!" said Fatty Wynn.

"File 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 forty, 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' 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 Mario Luigi 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 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 on 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



The gardener, the chauffeur, and Toby and Taggles laid hold of D'Arcy's trunk and exerted all their strength to lift it. But that trunk would not budge! "My heye!" gasped Taggles. "It's 'eavy!" Little did they know it had been screwed to the floor!

of the Chapel of Santa Maria. And 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 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.

"Spilling!"

"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 any 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.

## CHAPTER 7.

### OH!

**T**OM 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, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, they knew what to take, and what was more important—what to leave behind. 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 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 jontent.

A big car had 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

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all St. Jim's was in high spirits. They were fond of the old school, but holidays were always welcome. When the car 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' manners were always charming. Shillings and half-crowns, and even ten-shilling notes, came Taggles' way on days like that.

Taggles was specially polite to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was rolling in money as usual on such an occasion. 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 pressed into service the Head's gardener, the chauffeur, and Toby, the page. The four 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, Taggles?" 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 gardener, the chauffeur, and Toby and Taggles laid hold. They laid hold and exerted themselves. The trunk did not move.

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

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

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

"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, Toby, the Head's chauffeur, 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 wewally 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 ties and socks that they can't move it."

"Wewally, Lowthab——"

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

"Wewally, Lumley——"

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

"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 goin' 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 five strong pairs of hands upon it. But it wouldn'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 car 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 t-t-trunk with you, D'Arcy?" he asked, 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-gig-give up the idea, D'Arcy. Pray come now; the car 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 car's going to start!"

"Wewally, Tom Mewwy——"

Blake, Lowther, and Manners dashed downstairs and took their places in the car. 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 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's a twick—a wotten twick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "I wufuse to go without my twunk!"  
 "D'Arcy, we must hurry!"  
 "Come on, Mr. Mopps!" shouted Tom Merry, reappearing on the stairs. "We've only just got 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 car, 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 car, D'Arcy!" gasped Mr. Mopps. "We really must not lose the train."  
 "But my twunk—"

"We'll send you some picture post-cards, 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 car ran slowly on.

Arthur Augustus caught up with it and jumped on the running-board, 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 Vero 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 car was at the gateway now. Arthur Augustus opened the door and jumped in. Then the car halted in the gateway. Taggles and Toby and the Head's gardener and chauffeur 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! Pway excuse me for havin' forgotten you, deah boys!" said D'Arcy, fumbling in his pocket for a pound note. "I have been the victim of a wotion twick! Taggles, pway take care of my twunk while I am gone."

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

# JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling!



Hallo, everybody!  
 Why was your nose put in the middle of your face? Because it's the scenter.

Well, what most becomes a man? A boy, of course.

Now try this: Why is a pair of skates like a banana skin? Surely you're not going to "fall" for that!

It was young Gibson who, asked by Mr. Selby to define the word "suffix," said it was a county in the south of England!

Then there was the fisherman who thought he was pretty hot, but all he caught was a cold.

*Monocles are coming back into favour, says Gussy. In the public eye again?*

Mr. Linton reminds us that money is a controlling force. With us it's usually a "spent" force!

"Youth Must Be Served," reads a headline. If not, it simply helps itself!

I hear that while Fatty Wynn was making a cake, Figgins accidentally dropped some glue into the mixture. If caused no end of a "stir"!

Remember, you needn't go abroad next winter. You can get plenty of it here.

A Wayland man who is a hundred

and three says: "Just keep smiling." Ho who laughs lasts!

I know a business man who lives on the fat of the land. He's invented a successful slimming course!

'Nother chap will trace your next-of-kin. The heir restorer.

Brief one: "D'you like moving pictures, Bill?" asked his mate. "Not 'arf!" "Then just help me move half a dozen from the attic, will you?"

*A serial film, when completed, was found to be a foot too short. The villain had got away by inches!*

Query: "How can I collect stamps?" asks a reader. Travel by Tube in the rush hour, old chap.

Mr. Selby was holding forth in the Third Form Room. "And when we go out on a cold winter's morning, what do we see on every hand?" he asked. "Gloves!" answered Wally D'Arcy.

They were giving auditions for a charity concert, and Gussy had to go along. "They didn't offah me an engagement, but they agweed my voice was heavenly," said Gussy, on his return. "Are you sure?" asked Blake. "Well, deah boy, they said it was unearthly!" admitted Gussy.

News: Rhyl bargees are on strike. They won't touch work with a barge pole.

As the science master said, operating an electrical device: "You boys will notice that this machine is worked by a crank." That "started" them laughing!

Very last: A lady traveller at a Wild West station ordered a cup of tea, but hadn't time to drink it before the train restarted. A cowboy said: "Please take mine, lady—it's already sauced and blowed!" Western courtesy! After you, chaps!

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

And the car drove on. 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 fwithful wottahs—"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as beasts—"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I feel vevy doubtful whethah I can continue to considah you as fwiends—"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wufuse to speak to you—"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

## CHAPTER 3.

In the Chops of the Channel!

"NEW HAVEN!" said Tom Merry.

The party from St. Jim's poured out from 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 have taken, appeared a sheer impossibility to Arthur Augustus. 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 Wuo 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 going to be aft, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "You're more likely to be ill in the bow, sir."

"In the bow-wow-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 twust 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 in 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 t-t-trust I am not going 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—"

"Groogh!"

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

"Groo-ogh!" 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 Jovo!"

"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 vevy long cwossin'—only about thwee 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 at 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 of 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 more funny remarks about fat pork. Mr. Mopps' silent anguish would have touched the heart of 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.

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"Groogh!"

And Mr. Mopps did.

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

"Peauvre garçon!" he said.

And he took himself and his cigar farther 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 bravely.

"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'm 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!"

"Th-th-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."

"Groogh!"

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

"Groogh!"

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



"Understands English, is ut!" roared the fat gentleman, ye saucy little spalpeen, it's meself that'll give ye a clump D'Arcy.

further motion beneath his feet, he revived.

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

"Really, Mr. Mopps!"

"Thank g-g-goodness!"

They piloted Mr. Mopps ashore, accompanied by an army of "facteurs" with their 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 well, 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 the French trains. Mr. Mopps turned pale again.

"Did-did-dea. 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



with an accent that was certainly not Italian. "Sure, on yere head for yere cheek!" "Bai Jove!" gasped

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!

**A**RTHUR 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 la 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 trainsickness and his seasickness, 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 at 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.

"Bai 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 Lowther. "What are those lings 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 poem 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 poetwy?" asked D'Arcy doubtfully.

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It must be jolly easy to make up poetwy if whymes are all that are wanted," said Arthur Augustus. "F'winstance:

"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 'Childe 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 remember 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. Vowy poetical.

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

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

"Why, you ass?"

"To hold 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 the darkness. For twenty or twenty-five minutes the express thundered on under the great mass of the Alps, the atmosphere growing hotter and hotter. 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 luggago 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, in almost a hushed voice. "It's weally Italy, you know—place where Julius Caesar lived! Ho 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 luggago. There was not much trouble—in graceful politeness the Italian Customs officers are not to be excelled.

Then the train rolled on towards Milan.

The juniors gazed from the windows.







Let the Editor be your pal. Write to him to-day, addressing your letters :  
The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,  
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

**H**ALLO, chums! Seen the announcement on page seven? Great news, isn't it? I'm sure all GEM readers, most of whom, I know, read our popular companion paper, "The Magnet," will welcome the appearance in our pages of Harry Wharton & Co., the cheery chums of Greyfriars. These schoolboy characters, first created by Frank Richards twenty-eight years ago, are as firm favourites with all school-story readers as Tom Merry & Co., and to have the adventures of both featured in the GEM is a big scoop for the old paper.

The epic story, which will begin next week, is entitled:

#### "THE MAKING OF HARRY WHARTON!"

It is written, of course, by Frank Richards, and deals with the early adventures of Harry Wharton at Greyfriars—how, as an untamed, spoilt, obstinate boy who has been allowed to run wild by an over-indulgent aunt, he is sent to Greyfriars against his will by his uncle; how he first meets Nugent en route, and, after fighting with him in the train, saves his life; and how his headstrong reckless behaviour lands him into serious trouble with his Form fellows. This amazing story of Wharton's coming to Greyfriars, and his adventures there, will greatly appeal to all GEM readers, and the early glimpses of Nugent, Billy Bunter, Bulstrode, and many other well-known characters will be an added source of interest and enjoyment.

Every boy in England—and most of the girls—will be eager to read this wonderful yarn, which is of really unique interest. So take good care, chums, that your GEM is reserved for you next week—there'll be a big rush for it!

#### "TOM MERRY'S BIG FIGHT!"

On such an important occasion as the appearance of the Greyfriars characters in the GEM, an extra-good yarn of Tom Merry & Co. is indicated. This we have in next week's thrilling story of fun, adventure, and boxing.

Tom Merry, on his way to the Wayland Empire to join his chums, is set on by footpads; but, fortunately for Tom, Tiny Tim, a boxer appearing in a turn at the music hall, wades in and promptly gives the k.o. to the schoolboy's attackers. A friendship is formed between Tom and his rescuer, which, later, is to have a happy outcome for both. For Tom is afforded the opportunity of repaying his debt of gratitude to the boxer by deputising for him in a boxing bout on the stage!

"Tom Merry's Big Fight!" will be read with enthusiasm by all "Gemites," and with "Just My Fun!" and the Jester's selection of readers' football winning jokes, which are all illustrated, completes a programme second to none.

#### THE GUN SILENCER.

"What is the principle on which gun silencers work?" asks Jack Baines, of Coventry. "Does a weapon fitted with one make any sound when fired?" The answer to your second question is "No," Jack. Authors of crime stories very often describe the sound of a silenced gun as "plop" or "phut," but actually it is incorrect, for if the silencer is in working order, the only sound to be heard is the click of the trigger.

The silencer works on a similar principle to the exhaust of a motor-bike, but is much more effective in silencing the explosion, of course. It is a tube about six inches long, and fits on the barrel of the gun. Inside it are several pierced discs, like the baffle plates in a motor-bike silencer. When the shot is fired the expanding gases caused by the explosion of the shell are turned back into the barrel by these discs, while the bullet goes out.

Now, before another shot can be fired, those gases must be released, and this is done by removing the spent shell from the gun. If the silencer is used on an automatic, it is almost impossible to fire more than one shot.

In the States, I believe, there are silencers which function satisfactorily on machine-guns, and permit of incessant firing. But, of course, they are obviously too large to be fitted to an ordinary automatic.

#### THE FASTEST GAME IN THE WORLD!

The success a little while ago of the British ice-hockey team in the Olympic Games, when our side won the world championship, has prompted a reader to write for some facts about the game.

Ice hockey is played by six aside, Fred Payne, of Brixton, each team comprising a goalkeeper, two backs, and three forwards. In addition, each side has three substitutes to take the place of injured players. A match lasts forty-five minutes, which is split up into three fifteen-minute periods, with an interval of ten minutes between each. The play is so tremendously fast that naturally injuries are frequent, and even the ref. sometimes

gets into the wars. That is why there are substitutes ready to take the places of those injured; but no team may have more than six men in play at a time. The ball is called a puck, and is a flat circular disc of vulcanised rubber.

It is perhaps not generally known, but ice hockey originated in Canada as long ago as 1750, and it was some British soldiers, fighting under General Wolfe, who started it. Having nothing to do, they began a game of football, but on an ice-bound surface it was difficult enough to keep the feet, without trying to play football. So they gave it up and tried playing the game with sticks instead of kicking the ball. This was no more successful—until some Indians, who were watching the soldiers' efforts, offered them their skates. And that's how ice hockey began.

#### AMAZING HIKE!

Averaging nearly nineteen miles a day, an engineer in America has been hiking along railway tracks for twenty-six years! It began with a wager when the engineer was twenty-five. He bet one of America's railroad kings that he could walk over the whole of his railway system in thirty years. So far, he has covered 178,000 miles in twenty-six years, and to win the wager of £20,000 he has to hike 12,000 miles in four years. If he keeps up his present average he will be through with his hike in less than two years. During his marathon walk he has had to renew his shoes eight hundred times!

Another amazing hike was that accomplished by Cookie, a cat living in Chicago. Eight months ago she was sent away by her mistress to a relative in Wilber, Nebraska. But Cookie pined for the old home, apparently, for recently she turned up there again, dirty, tired, and hungry—but happy! Somehow or other, she had found her way back from Nebraska, a distance of 600 miles!

## PEN PALS

B. Hills, 40a, Beatty Avenue, Toronto, Canada; age 14-17; films, sports.

Brian Locke, 71, Cromwell Road, South Wimbledon, London, S.W.19.

Leslie Robey, 102, Cromwell Road, Kensington, London, S.W.7; United Services Hotel; age 16-18.

Wm. Brock, 26, High Street, Potters Bar, Middlesex; age 12-16; overseas; boxing, swimming, war curios.

Miss Kathleen Cooper, 16, Cleveland Road, Bitterne Park, Southampton; girl correspondents; age 13-15; horses, music, painting, GEM characters.

Miss Elsie Lowes, 30, Albert Road, Aston, Birmingham; girl correspondents; overseas; films, sports.

Miss Dorothy Galloway, 98, Granton Road, Edinburgh 5; girl correspondents; overseas; ago 11 upwards; sports, animals.

Desmond Sale, 31, Viewfield Road, Southfields, London, S.W.18; age 11-12; stamps; Central America.

Miss Joan Morrish, 122, Victoria Road, Farnborough, Hants; girl correspondents; age 15-17; overseas; farming.

Miss Mary Waters, 6, Tudor Street, Devonport, Auckland, New Zealand; girl correspondents; sports, reading.

#### TAILPIECE.

Waiter: "Your coffee, sir—a special new brand from South America!"  
Diner: "Oh, so that's where you've been!"

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS COUPON  
18-4-36



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

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

Now a sight 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 embankment. 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!" said D'Arcy. "We'll have a wamble ovah this place to-morrow, deah boys, and blow the giddy tweasuah!"

"Yes, rather!"  
They landed on the great granite quay. The smiling and genial gondoliers extracted from 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 were 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 insisted upon having macaroni for one of the courses, assuring his comrades that when in Wome it was a good ideal to do as Womans do.

**CHAPTER 12.  
Old Foes!**

**T**OM 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 in 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 asleep in it. Tom Merry squeezed a wet sponge on 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, 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 eye-glass.

"Fathead—"  
"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

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

"Oh, I see! I undabstood that you alluded to my eyeglass. Of course, I have bwrought a supply of eyeglasses with me, in case they should get bwoken. I wemembah once I was twavellin' with one eyeglass, and it got bwoken, and I was several hours without one. I werged 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 hawwy?"  
"I think I recognise one of those chaps on that schooner," said Tom excitedly.

"Bai Jove! I didn't know you had fwends 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 Maro Luigi? I believe one of them is on that schooner yonder—or both."

"Gweat Scott!"

**The White Knight Rides Again**



Through all the hustle and bustle of England's twentieth century civilisation rides a strange, phantom figure—a knight dressed from head to foot in gleaming armour! He is the White Knight, one of the famous knights of King Arthur's Round Table, and mounted on a white charger, he rides with couched lance to fulfil the vows he made 1400 years ago!

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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 incessantly 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 stweat at a good speed!"

They walked on, crossing endless little

"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

dealah chap told me so. I wegard it as vevy cheap at ten fwances."

"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."

"English Spoken," said a notice in the window.

But the waiter who came to attend to



As Tom Merry dashed for the ladder, he hit out and knocked the Italian flying. Beppo crashed to the floor, but Hiram Finn was out of the cabin in a twinkling, and springing in pursuit of the junior.

bridges over sluggish canals, treading 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 the 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.

readiness to change English money; and when that was 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.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "I think some of you fellows might cawwy some of these things. What am I to do with them?"

"Chuck them into the canal," suggested Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I have parted with about five pounds for these things, and—"

"And they're probably worth a quid!" grinned Lowther.

"Wats! I have a daggah here that belonged to Doge Dandolo himself—the

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 grubo, 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 the 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.

"Sì, 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 vewy 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 figuah 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 to know 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 flannels and sports 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.

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"What?" he gasped.

"Muck, signore."

"Wh-what?"

"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 very funny, but I considah that it is up to Lowthah to tip him a pound."

"Catch me," said Monty Lowther. "I haven't 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.

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## 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 was weading up Bywon in the twain yestahday, and I want to see whethah his descowption 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." 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 potty!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Let me pitch it to him in Italiano." And he raised his hat with much grace, and asked in his best Italian:

"Prego dov'oil 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 instructions 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 wright. You leave it to me," said D'Arcy confidently. "Chap who had been to Venice told me—"

"Br-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 swanc. Lots of stweat awabs in Venice earn their livin' that way, you know, by guidin' swangahs 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 came up with a broad grin upon his handsome, swarthy face.

"Signore?"

"Ponte dei Sospivi," said Arthur Augustus. "Capite?"

"Sì, signore!"

"Voglio vedere!" said Arthur Augustus, rather doubtfully.

"Sì, signore!"

"Andiamo."

"Sì, signore!"

And the little ragamuffin trotted off in advance of the party, evidently



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 probably have taken alarm at once, and he would not have been likely to countenance a visit to the island 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 tomorrow. I have no doubt that it will be very interesting to explore the ruined chapel, though—ha, 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’re out in the gondola—kill two birds with one stone that way, Mr. Mopps.”

“I fear you would not be safe without me, my 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.

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 dusty recesses of the library among the musty volumes.

“I really think it is a good idea,” he said, at last. “I am 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—”

“Oh, no, sir! We’ll select the gondola very carefully.”

“Into any 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, 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 pickaxe, and a couple of spades,” said Tom Merry. “We shall have to smuggle them into the gondola without anybody 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 spades and the pickaxes and the crowbar. I think I had better buy a wevolvah.”

“A which?”

“A wevolvah,” said Arthur Augustus firmly. “We may be in dangah—”

“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 sister used to slash about 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 spades and the pickaxe 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.

Augustus, sleeping peacefully in bed. Then he quitted the bed-room 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 Maro Luigi 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 a 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.

“Lectle 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 signore of wishing to visit the trading schooner secretly for any dishonourable 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,” 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.

### CHAPTER 16.

#### A Wild Night’s Adventure!

TOM 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.

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 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





Even as Hiram Finn spun round, clutching his revolver, Tom Merry's cudgel descended upon his head, and the Yankee fell like a log. At the same moment Beppo leaped at the Juniors with a knife in his hand. But a stick smote the knife and sent it flying. "Done 'em!" roared Blake. "Hurrah for St. Jim's!"

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 realized 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 lamp swinging 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 Maro Luigi, the man who had given him the clue to the hidden gold on the Venetian island.

His suspicions had been well founded. Maro Luigi 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 Luigi had looked at it.

The voice Tom Merry could hear speaking was that of Hiram Finn; but he could not see the American without opening the door farther. He heard the low, sharp, metallic voice of Finn, and realized the threat contained in those hard tones.

"Not asleep, Luigi? No, I guess not. You kinda wouldn't sleep tied up like that. It's your own fault, Maro."

The Italian's eyes burned.

"You're going to tell me where those dollars are buried, 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, Maro Luigi."

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. You haven't told me the secret, but you've told others—eh? Guess whom I saw in Venice to-day? A schoolboy, Maro. Mighty like a young whippersnapper I caught a glimpse of in a wood at a



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 spades, 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.

"Sì, 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 it had now fallen into ruin and solitude.

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 attendete qui."

"Sì, 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 native. 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 fast. Tom Merry paused in the shattered gateway of the chapel, and looked seaward, and uttered an 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.

"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.

"Quick's the word!" said Tom Merry.

He unwrapped the tools 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.

"A spade!" said Tom Merry.

Blake handed him a 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 three 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—Maro Luigi had not deceived them, 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!

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!"

"Only I'm afraid it doesn't belong to us, you chaps," said Tom Merry.

"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 Maro Luigi'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."

"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



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