

THE BEST PAPER FOR SCHOOLBOYS!

The
**Penny
Popular**

Week Ending
December 29th, 1917.

No.
273.

Three Complete Stories of—
HARRY WHARTON & Co.—JIMMY SILVER & Co.—TOM MERRY & Co.



A PRISONER IN THE CRYPT!

(A Scene from the Magnificent Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., contained in this issue!)

BULSTRODE'S PREDICAMENT!

A Magnificent Long Complete Story, dealing with the Early Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Caught!

BULSTRODE! The Remove bully looked round. Wun Lung, the Chinese, was coming towards him in a curious fashion. He evidently wanted to speak to Bulstrode, and at the same time he did not care to venture too near.

He came towards the Remove bully as he might have approached a Lion's cage if the door were unfastened. As Bulstrode turned round, he popped back two or three paces with a sudden jump. The Remove bully chuckled.

"What do you want, you yellow-skinned worm?" he said, in his usual scurrilous manner.

"Me wantee speakee!"

"Well, speak then, dummy!"

"Bulstrode knowee bontee treasure in old chapel?" said Wun Lung. "Savvy?"

"What?"

"Suppose Wun Lung findee?"

Bulstrode started. The story that there was a treasure buried under the ruined chapel of Greyfriars was as old as the school itself. It was a treasure buried by the monks at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries.

It was a sum of gold hidden by the Cavaliers from the Roundheads when they captured Greyfriars. It was a chest of ingots stranded from a wrecked galleon of the Spanish Armada.

All three stories were current, and several other variations; but all agreed upon one point—that there was a treasure hidden somewhere among the ruins of the ancient chapel.

Many a half-holiday had the Greyfriars juniors spent in grubbing among moss-grown masonry and dark, damp passages, in search of the treasure.

There was hardly a fellow at the school, from the head of the Sixth to the smallest fag, who had not had a "go" at it at one time or another. Bulstrode, among the rest, had several times hunted for it—needless to say, without success.

His eyes glistened as he caught on to what the Chinese said. Wun Lung was such a deep and cunning little rascal that it was quite possible that he had discovered what was hidden from all the others.

"You've found it, Wun Lung?" ejaculated the burly Removite, coming closer to the little Chinese in his excitement.

"Suppose Wun Lung findee," said the Celestial; "suppose in big chest. Wun Lung not able to move, Bulstrode help? What you tinkee?"

"Of course I'll help!" exclaimed Bulstrode eagerly. "Mind, this isn't a jape, is it? If it is, I'll skin you alive!"

"No savvy!"

"Look here, you're not stuffing me up?" exclaimed Bulstrode suspiciously.

"No savvy!"

"You've really found the treasure?"

"Findee big chest—no open," said Wun Lung mysteriously. "What you tinkee? Suppose Bulstrode comee help, we findee goldsee."

The Remove bully hesitated for a moment.

"Bulstrode comee?" asked the little Celestial, watching him with glistening eyes. The Remove bully nodded.

"I'll come."

"Well plenty good!"

"Lead the way; and, mind, if it's a jape I'll smash you!"

"No savvy."

Wun Lung glided off in the direction of the ruined chapel, and Bulstrode followed him.

The ruins were at some distance from the school buildings, in the grounds. The place

was lonely, except when the juniors were seeking through the ruins on a half-holiday. This generally happened, however, on occasions when the ground was not fit for play.

Now, while merry shouts rang from the football-ground, there was not a soul to be seen among the broken walls and shattered casements of the ruined chapel. Save for the faint echo of the shouting from a distance, the juniors might have been in some deserted ruin far from all human habitations.

"Now, then, where is it?" asked Bulstrode eagerly.

"Follow me."

Wun Lung stepped down the narrow stone stair leading into the crypt. At the bottom was a strong wooden door, which had been repaired in modern times, and was generally kept locked to keep boys from venturing into the crypt.

The doctor did not consider it safe for them without a senior in the party. But as Gosling, the porter, had the key, and kept it hung up in a conspicuous place in his lodge, it was not difficult for anybody to obtain it. A tip to Gosling would always make him blind and deaf on such occasions.

"Is it in the crypt?" asked Bulstrode, as he followed Wun Lung down the steps.

"Savvy soon."

"But about the key."

"Allee lightsee."

Wun Lung produced the key from a recess in his loose clothing, and inserted it in the lock. The door creaked slowly and heavily open.

A damp breath of air from the crypt greeted them.

Bulstrode shivered slightly. The crypt was ventilated by air passages in the stone walls, but these did not let in a gleam of light. In the broadest day the crypt was as black as ink.

Bulstrode blinked into the gloom.

"We shall want a light," he said abruptly.

"Allee lightsee."

"Ah, you've got a lantern!"

"What you tinkee?"

Wun Lung lighted the lantern, and stepped into the crypt. Bulstrode followed him.

Round them lay blackness, with stone pillars supporting a vaulted roof dimly visible in the faintest light.

There was a scuttling sound as a crowd of rats fled from the light and the footsteps. Bulstrode uttered an exclamation as one knocked against his feet.

Wun Lung looked round.

"What you tinkee?"

"Nothing. Lead on."

"You followsee me."

"All right."

Wun Lung held up the lantern, and advanced into the crypt. Suddenly he halted, flashed the light round, and listened. He stood for a moment or two in an attitude of intense listening, his lips parted, his breath coming and going quickly.

"What is it?" whispered Bulstrode.

"You hear nothing?"

"Nothing."

"You tinkee we followed?"

"I don't think so."

"You holdsee lantern minute—me see—soon savvy."

Bulstrode took the lantern, and the little Chinese, who seemed to possess a cat-like faculty for seeing in the dark, darted away towards the door. Bulstrode waited with the lantern in his hand.

A sound boomed through the stillness of the crypt—it was the sound of a closing door.

The Removite gave a jump.

"What did it mean? What on earth was Wun Lung closing the door of the crypt for?"

A sudden suspicion shot through Bulstrode's mind like a flash.

He ran swiftly towards the door of the crypt.

He reached it in a few seconds. It was closed, and Wun Lung was not to be seen. The little Chinese was evidently on the other side of it.

Bulstrode dragged at the door. It was fast.

He hammered on it furiously with his fist, and shouted to the Chinese, "Open this door! You young hound! Open this door! I'll—I'll lick you! Open this door, do you hear?"

Faintly through the thick oak came the sound of a chuckle from without. Then silence.

Bulstrode thought he could detect the sound of a light footstep retreating up the stone steps to the upper air.

After that, silence as of the tomb.

Bulstrode hammered on the door and yelled. But only the booming of his own voice in the crypt answered him.

He was a prisoner!

He desisted his useless efforts at last, and stood silent, panting. He was a prisoner. How long was he to remain so? He remembered his past treatment of the little Chinese, and he stood overcome with dismay.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Swell of St. Jim's.

BALL Jove! Well kicked, dead boy!" It was an appreciative voice from the ropes round the junior football-ground.

A youth in the most elegant Etons, relieved by a fancy waistcoat, in the most glossy of silk hats, the shiniest of boots, and the stattiest of spats, stood there, with a gold-rimmed eyeglass jammed in his right eye, watching the game.

Harry Wharton & Co. were playing. They had resisted the temptations for about ten minutes. But the afternoon was so crisp and fine, and the time of D'Arcy's arrival was so uncertain, that they had finally decided to join Bob Cherry on the field.

And then, chasing the elusive leather, they had naturally forgotten all about Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's.

They did not see the elegant junior step from the station back at the gates of Greyfriars, and stroll in with an elegant saunter, after paying the cabman double his fare.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked round through his eyeglass, spotted the juniors playing, and walked over to the ground.

He stood looking on, with a keen and appreciative eye.

For all his elegant ways, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a good footballer, and he often surprised strangers by his form on the football-field.

His looks certainly did not indicate the fact that he was one of the fastest and most reliable of the junior forwards at St. Jim's, and that he could kick a ball from midfield for the very centre of goal.

Harry Wharton had just slammed the ball into the net, and the swell of St. Jim's clapped his hands with an energy that was somewhat perilous for his lavender kid gloves. "Bwavo, Wunlron! Well kicked!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I hear a familiar voice."

"The familiarity of the voice is great!"

"Well kicked, dead boy!"

The humus of the Remove came over, warm and glowing, to shake hands with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I'm sorry I'm late," said D'Arcy, as he raised his hat most gracefully. "The fact is, it's a tewplicity long journey. I missed the train, but, by luwwywn! back to bwush my hat, I'm forgotten it in the haste of the moment."

"That was rough!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically.

"Yaas, wathah, I wegarded it as wathah

wuff, but I am glad you fellows have had a good game, all the same," said D'Arcy. "Pway don't leave off now. I shall weally enjoy watchin' you, you know."

"We're done," said Harry. "It was only a scratch match to fill up time. We'll be off and get changed in a jiffy, if you'll excuse us."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look after D'Arcy while we're changing, will you, Linley?"

Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire, nodded cheerily. He had not been playing, owing to the effect of a severe kick on the ankle in a game the day before.

"I think I have met you before, dear boy," said D'Arcy, as the footballers hurried away to get into their everyday clothes. "By the way, I met a chap named Linley somewhere. I forget where, and I think I forget when, but I wememba I met him. He was a friend of a chap I know, whose name I can't wreat at the present moment. I wememba he was a wrelation of Lord Linley. You know the Linleys of Warwickshire? Fewwaps you are a connection of that family."

Mark Linley smiled. The fact that he was a "scholarship boy," that he had worked for his living in a factory before coming to Greyfriars, was well known all over the school, but a fellow from St. Jim's naturally did not know anything about it.

Mark wondered what the son of Lord Eastwood would say if he knew. Mark made no secret of it, but, on the other hand, he did not make it a point of thrusting the fact

"I think it will be a good one," said Mark.

"Well, what do you want, Snoop?"

Snoop, the sneak of the Remove, had just come up.

"Mr. Quelch wants you, Linley."

Linley looked embarrassed.

"You'll excuse me, D'Arcy. Mr. Quelch is my Form-master, you know."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! I'll have a look wround."

Mark Linley hurried away. Snoop gave a chuckle, and Arthur Augustus looked at him curiously. Snoop seemed to be greatly tickled about something.

"Do you know who that chap is?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah! His name's Linley."

"Yes; but do you know where he comes from?"

"Yaas, he told me—Lancashire."

"I don't mean that," said Snoop. "He's a scholarship boy—he came here with a blessed scholarship—Bishop Mowbray's Scholarship for poor kids, you know. He hasn't any tin, and only two suits of clothes. He, he, he!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle very carefully into his eye, and looked at Snoop without replying. Snoop, who had an idea that he was making himself very agreeable to the swell of St. Jim's, proceeded, with another chuckle:

"They're as poor as church mice, you know. Linley used to work in a factory, y-you'd see it now if you looked at his hands. He's awfully careful with them, you know; but he can't help it showing. He never joins in

attempt to ingratiate himself with the son of Lord Eastwood having thus signally failed.

It was some minutes before the frown vanished from the brow of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. If there was anything the swell of St. Jim's loathed, it was snobbishness; and he had observed the curious fact that snobbishness is strongest in people of lower social station.

Snoop made him feel quite uncomfortable, and he was seriously turning it over in his mind whether his position as a guest in Greyfriars really forbade him to give the cad of the Remove a "feahful thwashing."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" A heavy hand descended upon the shoulder of Arthur Augustus, and he started, and his eye-glass fell to the end of his cord. "Wherefore that worried look, my son?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Sorry! Did I startle you?"

"Oh, not at all!" said D'Arcy, recovering his equanimity. "I wreat that gweetin' as wathah wuff, but it is all right. I was fswowin', I am awfraid. I have just met a feahful cad. I twest that person is not a friend of yours—in fact, I feel that it is impos for him to be a friend of decent fellows."

Wharton followed D'Arcy's gesture with his eyes.

"Snoop! Oh, no; he's a worm!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wreat him as a beast," said D'Arcy. "Howevah, it is all right. I hope I have not put you fellows out a lot by awewin' so late."

"Not at all. You're in good time for tea."

NUMBER 3.
THE "PENNY POPULAR"
PORTRAIT GALLERY.



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1

- 1—GEORGE KERR.
- 2—FATTY WYNN.
- 3—GEORGE FIGGINS.

No. 4 NEXT FRIDAY.
Robert Digby, George Core,
Herbert Skimpole.



3

upon people's attention. He smiled and shook his head.

"I can hardly be a connection of that family," he said. "I come from Lancashire."

Arthur Augustus looked thoughtful.

"I do not know any Lancashire Linleys," he remarked. "Do you happen to know the Ponsobys? They are in Lancashire—very old friends of mine—Sir Gwald Ponsoby, you know."

Mark smiled again.

"I certainly have heard the name," he said. "Sir Gerald Ponsoby was the owner of a factory near where I lived."

"Yaas, I believe he owns factories, or mines, or somethin'. Quite an old sport," said Arthur Augustus.

"I did not know him, however."

Mark did not add that he had worked in one of Sir Gerald's factories. There was no need to shock the prejudices of a visitor. And Mark liked the elegant junior of St. Jim's very much, and he would have been sorry to see D'Arcy stiffen up and draw away from him.

Not that he would have blamed him for doing so.

Mark had learned to be patient, and to avoid judging people harshly even for unreasonable prejudices. Prejudices are usually a matter of training, after all, and are imbibed unconsciously.

"That was jolly good game of football," said D'Arcy. "You chaps play vewy well. I am wathah lookin' forward to our next match with you."

any of the things going on, you know, because he only has sixpence a week pocket-money. He, he, he!"

"Indeed!"

"He used to work in a factory in Lancashire before he won that rotten scholarship," said Snoop, "he did. Used to work for his living, and take the money home on a Saturday night, you know—about ten bob, I expect. He, he, he!"

"You an uthah worm!" said Arthur Augustus, his gathering wrath breaking through his chilly politeness at last. "You feahful cad!"

Snoop started.

"Eh! What's that?" he answered.

"I wreat myself as bein' bound by the fact that I am a guest here," said D'Arcy, "othahwise, I should immediately collah you, and give you a feahful thwashin'."

"I wreat Linley with gweat wespact. You are a howwid toad! I weally wish I were not a guest here, because I shuld enjoy thwashin' you vewy much."

Snoop turned very red, and stared in amazement at D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's, with his nose very high in the air, walked away. Snoop stared after him dazedly.

"Well, I'm blessed," he murmured—"I'm blessed! He's the son of a lord, I know—I heard Nugent say so. Fancy his taking it liko that! Blessed if I can understand it! I think the House of Lords ought to be jolly well abolished."

And Snoop drifted away discontentedly, his

said Harry. "Billy Hunter has been making preparations for the last hour, and it will be call-over. We've got to attend afternoon call-over—we all have to show up there unless we've got passes out—and then we can get to the study."

"Come into the hall with us. Wingate's taking call-over, and so it won't take more than a few minutes."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors went in to call-over. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked on while the Remove answered to their names.

There was one junior who did not answer when Wingate called:

"Bulstrode!"

The captain of Greyfriars looked up and found.

"Bulstrode!"

Not a word.

"Is Bulstrode there?"

"No, Wingate."

"Very well."

Wingate marked Bulstrode down as absent, and finished the roll-call. There was no one else missing; Wun Lung answering on his face. Had Wharton observed him then he would have guessed that something was "on," but at the present moment the captain of the Remove was occupied with his guest.

Call-over finished, the juniors dispersed in various directions.



"Whate mattel?" said Wun Lung, as Bulstrode uttered an exclamation as one of the rats knocked against his feet.

The Famous Four made their way to Study No. 1, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy accompanied them.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bulstrode is Missed.

"A NOTHER cup of tea, D'Arcy?"
 "Thank you, deah boy!"
 "Try the cake?"
 "I can recommend that cake," said Billy Bunter. "I had a snack of it myself while I was getting tea, D'Arcy. It's prime!"
 "Vewy good, deah boy!"

There was a tap at the door, and Mark Linley put his head in. He gave Arthur Augustus a cordial nod.
 "Have any of you fellows seen Bulstrode?" he asked.

"Bulstrode? No," said Harry. "He was missing at afternoon call-over."
 "Yes, Mr. Quelch has been asking for him. He was to show up an imposition by tea-time, and he hasn't appeared."

"Trouble in store for Bulstrode," said Bob Cherry, with a shake of the head. "I can't understand his being such an ass. He knows that Quelch means business."

"Nothing can have happened to him, I suppose," said Nugent, remembering the disappearance of Wun Lung the week before. "He hasn't been ass enough to try to skate go the Sark now, I hope. The ice won't bear."

"It's vewy curious," said Mark. "I think I shall have a stroll round and look for him." "Oh, he's all right!" said Harry. "He'll turn up. Better stay here and have tea with us, Linley."

But Mark smiled and shook his head, and left the study.
 "I vewally like that chap," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the door closed behind the Lancashire lad.

"Good!" said Harry. "That's Mark Linley, one of the best—the vewy best! I wonder what's become of Bulstrode? I suppose he's all right, though."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked thoughtful. A slight wrinkle appeared in his brow, and he screwed his monocle more tightly into his eye.

It seemed that deep thoughts were working in his brain, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh offered him a new supply of cake without even attracting his attention.

"More tea?" asked Bob Cherry loudly. Arthur Augustus started out of his reverie.

"No, thank you, deah boy."
 "Try the cream puffs."
 "Thanks, but I am vewally finished. I was

thinkin' deah boys," said D'Arcy. "This chap Bulstrode—I think I remembah him—a big fellah, vewy stwong—"

"That's the chap."
 "He seems to have disappeared."
 Harry Wharton laughed.
 "Oh, he'll turn up all right!"
 "You nevah know," said Arthur Augustus seriously. "I disappeared myself once, and I did not turn up again till I was found. You see, I was kidnapped by a set of wottahs, who shut me up in a howld place where I could not even get a wash or a change of linen, and kept a pwiseonah for a wansom."
 "That's not likely to happen to Bulstrode."

"You nevah know, you know. Anythin' may have happened. Pewpaws you fellahs are not aware that in my spare moments I have studied the methods of Sherlock Holmes, and have become a vewally wiploek' amateur detective."

"Weally?"
 "Yaas, wathah! Now, if Bulstrode does not turn up, I should be quite willin' to look for him in my capacity as amateur detective, you know. I have not the slightest doubt that I should find him, and pewpaws save his life frowm the wottahs who are holdin' him to wansom."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Weally, Chewwy—"

"Excuse me, but I don't suppose for a moment that anybody has kidnapped him and is holding him to ransom," chuckled Bob Cherry. "It's really too rich, you know."
 "The richfulness is terrific."

"You nevah know, you know. If Bulstrode does not turn up by dark I suppose you will begin to look for him?"
 "I suppose so. The gates are locked by dark."

"In that case, I shall ofah my services as an amateur detective," said Arthur Augustus. "I have had great success in that line at St. Jim's, and I should vewally like to give you fellahs a little exhibish of my powahs."

The chums of the Remove smiled, but they did not gainsay Arthur Augustus. Dark was falling now, and tea being finished, the juniors quitted the study, and descended to the Common-room to learn whether anything had been seen of Bulstrode.

Nothing had been learned of him. It was known that Bulstrode was fond of skating, and that the ice on the Sark was quite unsafe, and so a certain amount of anxiety was felt on that score. Fellows had been along the river looking for him, but had found no sign of him there.

It was vewy curious that he had not returned by dusk. To stay out after locking up without a pass was a serious matter. But

the prefects, questioned by Mr. Quelch, told him that they had not given Bulstrode a pass.

The Remove-master was anxious. He was in the hall when the chums of the Remove came down, and he came over at once towards them, and addressed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You are D'Arcy, I suppose?" he said.
 "Yaas, wathah, sir."
 "Skinner tells me that Bulstrode—a boy in my form here—intended to meet you at the railway-station," said Mr. Quelch. "Did he meet you?"

D'Arcy shook his head.
 "No, sir."
 "Have you seen him?"
 "Not to-day, sir."
 "Thank you!"

Mr. Quelch walked away, looking somewhat disturbed. He had questioned many boys in the Remove, among others, Skinner. And Skinner, thinking that the matter might be serious, had told him of what he knew of Bulstrode's intentions.

Bulstrode had evidently not carried out his intention of meeting D'Arcy at the station, and Skinner wondered why. It seemed to him that only some serious happening could have kept Bulstrode from perpetrating an intended trick.

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful as the Remove-master left the juniors.

"I don't quite make this out," he exclaimed. "Why should Bulstrode go to the station to meet D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah! I hardly knew the chap," said Arthur Augustus. "It was certainly vewy polite of him, and all the more vewy when I should discovah him and wescue him if he is kept a pwiseonah somewhah to be held to wansom."

"Most likely he intended some rotten jape," said Bob Cherry. "That would be more like Bulstrode."

"The likefulness would be terrific."
 "But he didn't go to the railway-station," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "The probability is that he disappeared somewhere between the coll and the station."

"Possibly."
 "I vewally think we ought to look for him, deah boys. It will be time for me to return to St. Jim's shortly, and I should like to place my services as an amateur detective at your disposal till then."

Wharton smiled.
 "Vewy well. I'm beginning to feel a little uneasy about Bulstrode myself. I'll get permission from Wingate to go out and look for him."

"Wight-ho!"
 The Greyfriars captain willingly gave the chums of the Remove a pass out of gates to look for Bulstrode. Taking lanterns to light their way, the juniors started, and they hunted along the lane towards Friardale.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Fairly on the Track.

"B Al Jove!"
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo! What is it?"
 "A footpint, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was on his knees now, with the light of an acetylene bicycle-lantern streaming on the ground before him. In the excitement of the moment, the swell of St. Jim's had even forgotten the damage the knees of his trousers might sustain, a convincing proof of the deadly earnest he was in.

The chums of the Remove gathered round him.

D'Arcy was kneeling on the belt of grass that ran beside the road at the side of the Friardale lane. Harry Wharton & Co. did not think there was anything remarkable in finding a footpint there.

There might have been a hundred. But the amateur detective of St. Jim's was greatly excited, and evidently believed that he had hit upon a most valuable clue.

The bright light of the acetylene lantern streamed down the footpint.

There it was—a large size in footprints, vewy clearly marked in the grass.

"You see it, deah boys?"
 "Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."
 "I wogard it as a clue."

"'B you don't know who made it."
 "I wathah think it is the footpint of a kidnapah."

Bob Cherry suppressed a chuckle.

"This sounds awfully like Sherlock Holmes," he remarked. "Can you tell the colour of his eyes and the shape of his nose from that footpint?"

"Pway don't be fivoolous, Chewwy."
 "I was asking for information."
 "The chap who made this footprint," said D'Arcy, screwing his eyeglass into his eye, and scanning the print once more, "was a chap who was capable of almost anything."
 "By George!"
 "He was a vewy big man, and waggedly dressed, had vewy bad taste, and a vewy strong constitution. He was a man lost to all wading of what is pwoah and seemly, and therefore was vewy probably a kidnappah."
 "But how on earth do you make that out?" demanded Harry Wharton.
 "The swell of St. Jim's gave a superior smile. "Pway observe, dear boys, and I will explain. You see that the impression is deep on one side than on the othah. I take that to mean that the boot was worn down on one side, and had not been repaired. A man who goes about with unweapired boots would naturally be in a wathah wotten state generally as regards attiah. Therefore, I deduce that he was waggedly dressed."
 "Good!"
 "The depth of the impression shows that there was a vewy great weight on the boot; that is to say, that the walkah was a big and like man."
 "Ripping!"
 "You observe this cigawette-end which I have picked up to the footprint," said D'Arcy holding it up for inspection. "It is a 'Wosey-Posey' cigawette, and they are sold twenty for three-halfpence to silly kids. Now, the chap who could smoke a cheap cigawette like this must have vewy bad taste. He must also have had a strong constitution to be able to stand it."
 "Splendid!"
 "Now, a man who goes about with boots worn down on one side, and smokin' cheap and waten cigawettes, is a suspicious chawactah, and vewy probably a kidnappah," said D'Arcy, rising to his feet with quite the air of Sherlock Holmes.
 Nugent clapped his hands.
 "Bravo!"
 "Thanks, dear boys," said D'Arcy with a bow. "I really think that my deductions are wathah good, don't you know."
 "They're amazing!"
 "But suppose the cigarette-end was chucked there by somebody in passing?" suggested Nugent innocently.
 "I decline to suppose anythin' of the sort. As a detective, I deal in facts, and not in suppositions."
 "Good!" said Bob Cherry. "You can consider yourself out of court, Nugent, with your blessed suppositions. The only question now is—how are we to follow up this clue?"
 "Oh, don't be funny!"
 "Chewwy is not bein' funnny," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "He is quite wight. We're goin' to follow up this clue. You see by the direction of the footprint that the chap who made it was leavin' the woad to get through the hedge."
 "What about that?"
 "It shows that he was goin' across the field."
 "And then?"
 "Well, we must ascertain what he was up to. I wathah think that this is the spot where Bulstowde was pacaphed by the kidnappahs, and they probabally carwied him through the hedge."
 The Remowites exchanged a grin as D'Arcy went towards the hedge with the lantern in his hand, and his monocle firmly jammed in his eye.
 "We may as well look in the fields," said Wharton, in a low voice. "It won't do any harm to look round, and we're in no hurry to get back to Greyfriars. This is better than evening prep, anyway."
 Bob Cherry chuckled.
 "Yes, rather! We'll stick to it."
 "But the clue—" said Nugent.
 "That's rot, of course."
 "The restfulness is terrific."
 "Come on, dear boys!"
 "Found anything more?"
 "Yaas, wathah! The footprints are wepated here in the mud, and they lead wight across the field."
 "Amazing!"
 "Seems to show that the chap crossed the field," said Nugent gravely. "That's suspicious in itself. Of course, chaps have crossed fields before."
 "Yes, I've seen 'em doing it," said Bob Cherry, with a wise shake of the head. "I've done it myself."
 "Yaas, but why did this chap cross the field?" demanded D'Arcy.
 "To reach the other side, perhaps."

"Yaas, but why? My theory is that he had kidnapped Bulstowde, and was crossin' o'vah to the woad to get out of sight, you see."
 "I shouldn't wonder—I don't think," murmured Bob Cherry.
 "Bulstowde is somewhere, anyway," said Nugent. "Let's look in the woad. It won't do any harm."
 D'Arcy followed the track across the field, bent down in a stooping attitude, and keeping the streaming light of the acetylator before him.
 He gave a little chirp of satisfaction whenever he discovered a new footprint.
 On the other side of the field was a woad, and on the borders of the woad a muddy ditch. In the damp soil by the ditch D'Arcy found the footprint again, repeated several times, and suddenly he gave quite a chirrup.
 "Bai Jove!"
 "What is it now?" asked Wharton.
 "Anothah footprint, dear boy."
 "By George!"
 "Yaas, wathah! Look here!"
 A smaller footprint, but of a vewy roughly made and badly worn boot, appeared in the mud of the ditch close by the track.
 D'Arcy's eyes were blazing with excitement now.
 "Bai Jove, I'd like Blake and Dig and Hewwies to be here to see this!" he muttered. "Hewwies always maintains that his wotten bulldog, Towshah, can follow twacks, and that I can't, you know. I should like him to see this."
 Harry Wharton grinned.
 "What do you deduce from that?" he asked.
 The villain joined his accomplice here, and between them they carwied their victim into the woad," said D'Arcy.
 He moved off along the ditch, scanning the ground.
 "This is getting richer and richer," said Bob Cherry. "What do you think really happened here, Harry?"
 Wharton smiled.
 "Well, judging by the kind of boots, I should say that the fellows who have been here were a couple of tramps. Probably they were going to camp for the night in the woad. Perhaps the chap in the lane caught sight of the chap here, and came over to join him."

"Likely enough. And the kidnapping—" "That's all rot, I imagine."
 "Same here?"
 "Still, you never know," said Nugent. "Marjorie Hazeldene was kidnapped once, you know, by some gipsy chaps."
 "Yes, but—"
 "Come on, dear boys!"
 "Where are you going now?"
 "Acwoss into the woad. Do you chaps know that woad at all?"
 "Oh, yes! It's the prery woad, and we know pretty nearly every inch of it," said Wharton. "That's all right."
 "Good! Follow me."
 "Look out! There's a jolly wide ditch to jump!"
 "Oh, that's all wight, dear boy!"
 D'Arcy retreated a few paces, took a run towards the ditch, and jumped. He flew through the air, and landed, but the jump was really a little too wide for him.
 There was a horrid squelch, and D'Arcy, falling a foot or more short of the firm earth, plunged up to the knees in thick, slimy mud.
 "Ow! Bai Jove!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry involuntarily. "I—I mean, I'm sorry!"
 "Help! Wescue!"
 D'Arcy made a desperate effort to drag himself out of the mud, but the effort only pushed him further in, and the swell of St. Jim's sank to his waist.
 "Wescue!"
 But for the moment the juniors of Greyfriars were too convulsed to go to the rescue.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Light Ahead!

"Wescue, dear boys!"
 "Come on, lend a hand!" gasped Harry Wharton.
 He took a flying leap across the ditch; and, warned by D'Arcy's experience, was careful to clear it well. The others followed him, and landed safely upon terra firma.
 The lantern in D'Arcy's hand showed them light. The face of the elegant junior of St. Jim's was a study.
 His trousers had disappeared in the mud, and the tail of his jacket was dipping into



"Open the door!" shouted Bulstowde. "You young hound, open this door! I'll—I'll lick you! Open this door! Do you hear?"

it, and there were splashes of mud on his sleeves.

"Horror is in every feature," he repeated faintly. "Bai Jove! My tussahs are ruined! Bai Jove!"

"Lend a hand, you chaps!" "Right-ho!"

Wharton took the lantern from D'Arcy's hand, and set it on the ground. Then he grasped D'Arcy's jacket-collar firmly, and Bob Cherry and Nugent took each one of his hands. They pulled together—hard.

For some moments D'Arcy resisted their efforts, being stuck too fast in the mud to move; and at last he began to shift. "Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Don't e-choke me, Wharton, dear boy! Don't pull my arms right out, you chaps!"

"It's all right. You're coming."
"Yaas, wathah! Ow!"
"Another tug, and it's done!"
"Yes! Wow! Gwoow!"

With a sudden rush at last, D'Arcy came out of the mud like a cork out of a bottle, and the Greyfriars juniors, not expecting him quite so suddenly, went staggering back, and fell. The four of them rolled on the muddy ground, and D'Arcy collapsed on Nugent's legs.

"Gweat Scott!"
"Phew!"
"Gerroff!"
"I'm muddy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I think we're all a little muddy. Look at D'Arcy's tucks! My only hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
The juniors picked themselves up. They were all in a rather muddy state; but the condition of D'Arcy's clothes was what Hurree Janset Ram Singh would have described justly as "terrific."

He was simply caked with mud from his boots to his waist, and there was a considerable quantity of it splashed over his sleeves and his waistcoat.

His look, as he glanced down at his trowsers, made the juniors shrik.

"Bai Jove, it's no laughin' mattah, dear boy. I'm in a feahful state."
"We'd better get back to Greyfriars," said Harry.

"But we've not found Bulstwode, dear boy."
"We've found all we're likely to find, and that's mud," grinned Bob Cherry. "Let's buzz off to Greyfriars now."

"Yes, ratler. But mud for one night," remarked Nugent; and the Naloh, or Bhanpur murmured that the 'nuf-fulness was terrific.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head.

"You fellows can go back if you like," he said. "I am goin' on—"

"But, my dear chap—"
"I came out here to find Bulstwode, and I'm goin' to find him, find boys. I'm not goin' to give in, especially now that I am on the track."

"But your trowsers?"
"It can't be helped, as Tom Mewwy says when things go wong. Aftah all, a pair of trowsers are not so much to sewifice for the sake of wescuin' an unfortunate chap from the gwip of the kidnappahs."

"But you're wet."
"Well, pewapps it is a little damp," admitted D'Arcy. "It is not weally wet, howehar. In any case, I shud keep on."
"Well, if you keep on, I shud keep on with you," said Harry. "So shall we all. It's all right; I was only thinking of you."

"Thank you vewy much, dear boy; but I don't want to chuck a thing up when I'm so close on the track, you know."
"Let's get on, then."
"First of all, howehar, I will swappo off as much of this mud as poss."
"I'll lend you a hand."

With grass and fragments of wood they rubbed down the swell of St. Jim's, and rearranged the worst of the mud. But D'Arcy's trowsers were still in a shocking state when they had finished. However, as D'Arcy said, it could not be helped. He took up the lantern and led the way into the wood.

Here the ground was harder, and tangled with creepers and thickets, and the guiding footprints disappeared.

Arthur Augustus was at fault.
He went up and down and round about for some time, the Greyfriars juniors patiently following his lead, and waiting till he should be tired out.

And he stopped at last.
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It had been clear for some time that he was going quite at random, and at length he confessed it.

"I'm afraid we've lost the track, dear boys!"

"Looks like it," said Wharton.
"You see, the ground here wetains no twaces of footprints, and so it's wathah hard to keep on the track."
"Yes, rather!"

"Howehar, we are close to the kidnappin' wascals: I am sure of that. You see, havin' captured Bulstwode and taken him into the wood, they would naturally look round for some place to hold him a prisonah while they obtained his wansom."

"Naturally," agreed Wharton gravely, while Bob Cherry was taken with a sudden fit of coughing.

"Arcy glanced at him.
"Now, you chaps know this wood well," he said. "Of course, I'm a stwaghah hell; do you know any place in the wood where a chap could be kept prisonah quietly? I suppose there are lots of such places?"

"Well, there's the old priory," said Nugent. "A chap was really shut up there once, not so long ago, by an escaped lunatic."
"Just the place!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"Where is the pwioy?"
"About a quarter of a mile from here."
"We'll go and look at it."
"But—"

"Bettah go and examine that place first, before we waste any more time wunnin' round," said D'Arcy. "It's just the place the wascally kidnappahs would select, you know, to keep Bulstwode a prisonah in, and it may save a lot of time. I have vewy little doubt but that we shall find them there."

"Oh, we'll go and look."
"Kindly lead the way, dear boy."
It did not take the juniors long to reach the ruin in the wood.

Suddenly Arthur Augustus blew out the lantern.

"What on earth—" began Nugent.
"I saw a light!"
"A light! Where?"
"In the wains!"

The next-morn lamp began to give out a ghastly smell. Carbide of calcium has a most delightful odour when damp, and that odour made its presence felt. The juniors sniffed, not to say snorted, and retreated from D'Arcy.

"What's the mattah, dear boys?" asked the swell of St. Jim's, looking round.
"That blessed niff!"
"Oh, that's nothin'!"
"Isn't it?" said Bob Cherry indignantly.

"It's—it's, unwearily!"
"Phew! Drown that blessed lamp, for goodness' sake!"
"Weally—ahem!" D'Arcy caught a whiff from the lamp himself, and paused. "Upon the whole, I think I will lay it down on the ground."

And he did so, and the juniors moved off from the spot for a few minutes till the fumes should clear off.

Then Bob Cherry, to whom the lamp belonged, recovered it.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was creeping cautiously towards the ruined priory.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated suddenly.
"What is it?"
"I told you I saw a light. Look!"
D'Arcy pointed, and the juniors started as they saw the red gleam of a light showing up against the darkness of the night.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Tracked Down.

HERE they are, dear boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in a tense whisper.

The juniors crept closer to the ruins, till they had a clearer view of the light. It came from a fire, that was evident, and in a few minutes they were in full sight of the fire. It was a fire of sticks and twigs, and it burned cheerfully in the ruins. The night, though cold, was clear, and the flame ascended directly towards the sky.

The fire was built upon the stone flags of the old priory hall. Close by it a couple of men sat. They had evidently just finished a meal, and each of them had cooked at the fire. Fragments of food and dirty utensils lay about them.

The men were both raggedly dressed, unkempt, and frowsy. One of them, a slightly-built man with a very red nose, was chewing tobacco. The other, a larger man, but only medium-sized, was smoking a short, black pipe.

It was clear enough that the two men were tramps, and that they had camped out for the night, taking advantage of the fine weather. D'Arcy saved the price of a lodging. By the fragments round the fire, too, it was pretty clear that they had found a free supper in the wood by snaring a rabbit.

The juniors watched them in silence, the two tramps totally unaware of their presence. D'Arcy's eyes gleamed through his monocle.

"There they are, dear boys!"
"Well, I suppose they're the chaps whose tracks we followed," agreed Wharton.

"Yaas, wathah!"
"But one of them isn't a big man," clucked Bob Cherry, "and they're not smoking cheap cigarettes, either."
"Of course, a detective cannot expect to be absolutely wight in ewery twiffin' detail," said D'Arcy loftily. "I have no doubt what-ehav that these boundahs are the kidnappahs, we are lookin' for, and that's the principal thing."

"But where's Bulstrode?"
"You don't expect to see him standin' there talkin' to them, I suppose. Of course, he is hidden somewhere in the wains. I suppose there are vaults or somethin'."
"Oh, yes!"

"Then we shall have to take those chaps prisonahs, and then search for Bulstwode in the vaults, dear boys."
"Phew!"

"There are five of us, and we shall be a match for them, I suppose. I wathah wish we had brought Bwown and Linley along with us, but we shall manage all wight."
"But—"

"Surely you don't feel nervous about tacklin' them, dear boy?"
"No, not."

"Then come on."
"Yes, but—"
"It may be wisky, but we came out to the wesebe of Bulstwode."

"It's not that," said Wharton, half laughing and half vexed. "Do let me speak. I don't feel inclined to attack those chaps when there isn't the slightest reason to suppose that they've ever seen Bulstrode in their lives."

"Ha, ha! That's how I feel about it!" grinned Bob Cherry.
"But they are the kidnappahs!"
"How do you know?"

"Unless my theories are incowwect, they are the kidnappahs!" said D'Arcy firmly. "I am goin' to make them prisonahs, and then search for the vaults. You can back me up, or not, as you like."

"Of course we shall back you up!" said Wharton. "That's all right. But to go for a couple of harmless tramps—"

"Kidnappahs, dear boy!"
"Well, I suppose we can make it up to them afterwards," said Nugent. "We'll stand them a substantial tip if D'Arcy's making a mistake."

"Yaas, wathah! But I assure you that a chap of my experience and tact is not at all likely to make a howlah."
But Arthur Augustus led the way towards the fire.

"Now, follow me," he whispered; "when I say 'Go!' make a sudden wush and seize them."
"Right-ho!"

The two tramps looked up suddenly as D'Arcy stepped over a stone. They sprang to their feet with looks of alarm. No doubt the fear was in their minds that a keeper had come upon them, and that they were to be called to account for the rabbit that had furnished their supper. At sight of the five schoolboys they simply stood and stared. Arthur Augustus was his hand.

"Collah them, dear boys!"
The juniors rushed upon the tramps. The two men seemed too astounded to make any resistance. They were collared and dragged down, and in a few seconds there were each of them sitting on each of them, and D'Arcy was surveying the scene in triumph through his eyeglasses.

"Bwavo! Bwavo!"
"Wot's the row, gwunor?" gasped the tramp with the red nose, upon whose chest Wharton was sitting. "I swear we found

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that there rabbit dead! Didn't we, 'Erbert?"

"I on my solemn davy, we did, 'Enry!" said 'Erbert.

"'Am not lookin' afah any wotten wabbits," said D'Arcy loftily. "We are lookin' for your pwisonah, you wascals!"

"'Prisoner!" gasped 'Erbert faintly.

"'Yaas, wathah!"

"'E's orf 'is onion, 'Enry!"

"'Clean orf it, 'Erbert!"

"'Ordah!" said D'Arcy. "Shut up, you wascal. I shall shortly hand you ovah to the police to be sent to penal servitude. If you wufuse to give me any information, I shall have you bound hand and foot, while I search for your wictim!"

"'I ope he doesn't bite," said 'Enry. Arthur Augustus waved his hand.

"'Bind them, deah boys!"

"'Look 'ere," began 'Erbert, in hot protest. "I'll 'ave the law of yer. I tell you, young gents, I'll 'ave the law of yer!"

"'We'll risk that," said Bob Cherry. "If we're making a mistake, as I'm jolly certain we are, we'll stand you half a sov apiece to make up for it."

"'Erbert's expression changed at once. He had never picked up a half-sovereign as easily as that—not honestly, at any rate.

"'Now you're talkin'!" he declared. "Go ahead, and do just as you like. Mind you don't spoil my evening-dress, that's all."

And the two tramps were solemnly bound, hand and foot, with their own belts, braces, and neckerchiefs. Then they lay by the fire and grinned at one another, while D'Arcy relighted the acetylene lantern, and the juniors descended into the vaults.

Dark and gloomy looked the vaults under the old priory. The bright, white light of the acetylene lantern cut like a knife through the blackness.

D'Arcy flashed the light round on the dark stone walls and pillars.

"'Bulstwod is there, somewehah!" he exclaimed. "We'd bettah shut, and see if we can attract his attention, deah boys."

"'Oh, all right!"

"'Now, then, altogether—'Hallo!"

"'Good!"

"'Ho, hallo, hallo!"

The shout rang through the vaults with a tremendous noise, echoing and booming far away. The sound died down, and the juniors listened.

Faintly, as from afar, came a reply.

"'Help!"

"'M-m-m-my only hah!" gasped Bob Cherry. The Greyfriars juniors stood transfixed. For it was Bulstwod's voice.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Trifling Error.

"BULSTWODE!"

The Greyfriars juniors simply gasped out the name. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not seem at all surprised. He had no reason to be. He had expected it.

"'Is that Bulstwod's voice, deah boys?"

"'Yes."

"'Good!"

"'Help!"

The cry was repeated, faintly but distinctly. There was no doubt that it was the voice of the bully of the Remove.

The juniors gazed at one another.

Was it possible, then, that D'Arcy had been right all the time—that Bulstwod had been kidnapped, and that he was hidden here in these gloomy vaults?

Wharton did not know what to think. D'Arcy was the first to act.

"'Come on, deah boys!" he exclaimed. He lit up the lantern, and marched on in the direction of the voice. The cry was repeated again and again.

"'It sounds loudest here, deah boys," exclaimed D'Arcy, stopping at the stone wall,

and looking at it with a puzzled expression. "There does not seem to be any door, howehah."

"'It's one of those blessed revolving stones," said Augustus. "There are several of them in this old place, and I've opened one myself."

"'Pway look, and see."

"'D'Arcy tapped on the stone.

"'Are you there, deah boy?"

"'From behind the stone wall, muffled by the thickness of it, came faintly the voice of Bulstwod.

"'I am here! Help!"

"'What do you think now, deah boys?" said Arthur Augustus, with pardonable elation.

"'Well, we've found him."

"'Nugent was feeling orf the stone wall. His fingers came upon a depression in the stone, and he pressed it hard.

There was a faint grinding sound, and the heavy mass slowly revolved.

A dark, narrow aperture was revealed. D'Arcy flashed the lantern light into it, and a white face showed up from the blackness—the face of Bulstwod.

"'Bulstwod!"

The Remove Bully staggered out. He was white, faint, exhausted, and covered with grime.

"'Wharton! D'Arcy! What! How did you find me?"

"'I tracked you down, deah boy, and we've capchahed the kidnappahs!" said D'Arcy, with great satisfaction. "They're pwisonahs, deah boy!"

Bulstwod stared at him.

"'What kidnappers?"

"'The wullans who captured you, deah boy, and shut you up here to hold you to ransom."

"'You're orf your rocker," said Bulstwod. "I want to shut up here. Wun Lung, the Chinese, shut me up in the crypt at Greyfriars, for a rotten joke on me, and I got here along the tunnel underground."

"'Gwent Scott!"

"'That's your case as the end of the tunnel," said Bulstwod. "I couldn't get out. I was too exhausted to go back, and I sat there. I'm blessed if I know how long. Then I heard your shouting, and I can tell you I was jolly glad to hear it."

D'Arcy's face was a study.

The amateur detective of St. Jim's had never been so overwhelmed in his life.

Out of sheer pity the Greyfriars juniors avoided looking at him.

"'Bat Jove!" said Arthur Augustus faintly. "I'll break that heathen's neck when I get back to Greyfriars," growled Bulstwod.

"'Then—then you weren't kidnapped at all?" faltered D'Arcy.

"'Of course I wasn't! What on earth made you think I was kidnapped?"

"'I found a clue—"

"'Well, I wasn't, anyway."

The juniors left the vaults in silence.

Bulstwod was so grim and ungracious that it was impossible to feel much sympathy for him. They returned to the upper air, where the two tramps looked at them curiously, and stared with astonishment at the sight of Bulstwod.

"'I'm sowwy we collahed you, deah boys," said D'Arcy awkwardly. "Pwavy wulase them, will you? I will give you a half-sovereign each, and I hope that will make it all right. There was a—jolly good a joke in all our little lives, sir. Haw, haw, haw!"

"'He, he, he!" cackled 'Enry.

"'Good-night!" said Wharton.

"'Good-night, sir; and we're willing to be captured again any night you like on the same terms, sir!" 'Erbert called after the juniors. And 'Enry chimed in with "He, he, he!"

The juniors returned to Greyfriars. Arthur

Augustus D'Arcy was very silent during the return. There was no doubt that the amateur detective of St. Jim's had been considerably off the track, though by a strange coincidence his investigations had led to the discovery of Bulstwod.

The juniors reached the school, and Mr. Quelch, who met them as they went in, stared in amazement at Bulstwod.

"'Bulstwod! So you have returned?"

"'Yes, sir," said Bulstwod suitably. "Where have you been?"

"'I was shut up in the crypt, sir, for a lark."

"'That is rather too serious a matter for a lark," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Who shut you up?"

Bulstwod hesitated.

"'Answer me, Bulstwod!"

Bulstwod looked uneasy and disturbed. He did not want to sneak, and he assuredly did not want the truth to come out regarding Wun Lung's reasons for punishing him.

It occurred to him very forcibly that if he gave the Chinese junior away, the investigations on the subject would end in more harm to him than to Wun Lung.

"'If—I if you please, sir," he said haltingly. "I—I don't want the chap punished. I—I don't want to complain, sir."

"'That is generous of you, Bulstwod," said Mr. Quelch, eyeing the Remove bully narrowly. "and I must say unexpected, too. But the whole school has been thrown into a state of disturbance, and I must insist upon knowing the name of the culprit."

"'Wun Lung, sir," said Bulstwod reluctantly.

"'Send Wun Lung to my study, Wharton."

"'Yes, sir."

Wharton found Wun Lung, who nearly fell upon the floor at the sight of Bulstwod, and sent him to the Form-master's study.

Lung was in there for ten minutes. When he came out he seemed to be tying himself up into knots, or trying to do so. Wharton met him in the Remove passage.

"'Hurt, old chap?" he asked.

"'Me cuttee into stips, me tinkee," groaned the Chinese. "Quelche layce it on hald."

"'What's you tinkee?"

"'Come into the ruddy and sit down."

"'Tankee, tankee, but me no sittee down," said Wun Lung, with a wry face.

"'I'm sorry for you," said Harry. "But why on earth did you play such a mad trick on Bulstwod? You must have known there would be a row."

Wun Lung nodded.

"'Playce tlick, plenvette Bulstwod playce tlick on Massee D'Arcy," he said. "Payco beastly bully out, too, you zavvy?"

Wharton's brow darkened.

"'I think I see. It serves Bulstwod jolly well, is it right, if he was going to jape a gust of ours, though you went too far, Wun Lung. But you've had your gruel, and he shan't touch you, I promise you that."

And Bulstwod, who had promised himself the satisfaction of licking the Chinese lick and blue, was warned off so seriously by the Famous Four, that, with a view to his own comfort, he let the little Celestial severely alone.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stayed that night at Greyfriars. He had quite recovered his assurance and satisfaction by the time he left by an early train on the following morning.

"'You see, deah boys," he explained to Harry Wharton & Co., "the best of detectives cannot be quite so to twilfin' details."

I started out to find the missin' chap, and I found him, and that was weally all that was required. Any twilfin' ewash in workin' out the theory of the case was no gweat mattah.

The Greyfriars chums grinned, and agreed that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was quite right.

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Classics' Victory.

BR-R-R-R!"

With an expressive snort Jimmy Silver entered the end study at Rookwood School.

Jimmy's face bore a healthy look. He wore a thick overcoat, turned up at the neck, and the cakes of snow on his thick boots bore evidence to the fact that he had been out of doors.

Jimmy Silver's chums—Lovell, Raby, and Newcome—were seated round a roaring fire reading, and Jimmy Silver's snort in no way disturbed them from their books.

"Slackers!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, with an air of disgust.

Lovell, Raby, and Newcome made no reply. "Heavily slackers!" grunted Jimmy Silver. Still no reply.

"Lovell!" roared Jimmy Silver.

Lovell looked up slowly.

"Hallo, Jimmy, old son!" he said cheerily.

"Get a book and take a seat. We've got a ripping fire going. Nothing like a good fire when it's freezing."

"Fine lot of slackers you are!" remarked Jimmy Silver.

"Eh?"

"Fancy sitting round a fire on a ripping day like this!"

"Must keep warm, old scout."

Jimmy Silver grunted.

"Oh, rot!" he exclaimed. "Exercise is the thing to keep you warm. What you want is a good snowball fight. Why, there's Tommy Dodd & Co. out there in the quad, chucking snowballs about for—"

"Hang Tommy Dodd & Co.!"

"But—"

"Get a book and sit down, Jimmy!" urged Lovell.

"No fear!" exclaimed Jimmy. "We're going to have a snowball fight!"

"Well, if that's the case you might as well get on with it!" said Lovell impatiently.

"I'll get on with my book and—"

"You won't!" declared Jimmy forcibly.

"You're coming out with me. Chuck that book away!"

"No fear!"

"Biff!"

Out shot Jimmy Silver's foot, and Lovell's book sailed up towards the ceiling.

"Here, what—" began Lovell indignantly.

"Biff! Biff!"

Jimmy Silver's foot shot out twice in quick succession, and Raby and Newcome gave their leader a savage glare as their books were hurled out of their grasp.

In another instant Jimmy had gathered up the three books and locked them away in the cupboard.

"Look here, Jimmy—" began Newcome wrathfully.

"Get your coats on," said Jimmy calmly.

"You can read those rotten books this—"

"No, no, they're rotten books?" roared Raby.

"The 'Magnets' a tipping paper, and I'll dot you one on the nose if you ask it isn't."

"Oh, it's all right at the right time!" said Jimmy complacently.

"The time for reading books is the evening. It's afternoon now, and I want you kids are coming out of doors."

"Some other time, Jimmy," said Lovell.

"Do you want Tommy Dodd & Co. to crow over the end study?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Er—no," faltered Lovell.

"Well, tumble out, then!" commanded Jimmy Silver.

Tommy Dodd and a whole crowd of Moderns are pitching in our lot no end, and if we don't go to the rescue the Classics will get a jolly good whacking!"

"But—"

Jimmy Silver made an impatient gesture.

"Come on, do!" he urged. "And don't stand there like a lot of hotted owls!"

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"Oh, all right!" said Lovell resignedly. "If you insist—"

"I do!" said Jimmy Silver emphatically.

"Come on, Newcome, and you, too, Raby! Can't have any slackness in the end study."

Lovell & Co. slipped on their coats and caps, and then Jimmy Silver led the way out into the snow-covered quad.

Snow had been falling hard for several days, and the whole country-side was enveloped in a white mantle.

The quad at Rookwood was literally alive with juniors, and snowballs flew through the air in large numbers.

A battle royal was taking place between Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern side and the Classical juniors, led, not exactly successfully, by Adolphus Smythe, the dandy of the Shell.

At one time Smythe had held the honoured post of leader of the Classical juniors, but Jimmy Silver's arrival at Rookwood had caused the fall of the dandy in his high position.

Smythe still maintained that he was the right person to command the Classics, and whenever opportunity offered itself he lost no time in taking the position of honour.

Adolphus was never a successful leader, and the present case was no exception to the rule.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were overwhelming the Classics.

"Give 'em socks!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, hurling a snowball at the head of the dandy of the Shell.

Jimmy Silver took in the situation at a glance, and clutched his chums quickly by the arms.

"Come on, you kids!" he cried. "Pile in for all you're worth! Mustn't let those Modern rotters beat us!"

The Fistical Four broke into a run, and had to pass a portion of the quad commanded by Wegg & Co. of the Third.

Wegg and his chums were aiming snowballs furiously at Fisher and his chums of the Second.

Neither the Third-Formers nor those belonging to the Second could be considered good shots.

The result was that snowballs were flying in all directions.

The greater majority of them missed their targets altogether, and sailed towards the Fistical Four.

One caught Lovell on the ear, and he turned round, with a wrathful expression on his face.

"Hi, you fags, look where you're throwing your beastly snowballs!" he exclaimed.

"Yah! Fourth-Form rotters!" exclaimed Wegg. "Give 'em beans!"

"What-ho!" said Jones minimus of the Second.

In another moment the rivalry between the Third and the Second had entirely disappeared.

They united their forces for the purpose of attacking the Fistical Four.

"Come on, Lovell!" urged Jimmy Silver. "Never mind these youngsters. Smythe & Co. want our help, and—"

"If he says that, Jimmy!" said Lovell, pitching a snowball towards the cheating fags.

"Kim on, old son!" said Jimmy Silver; and he dragged Lovell forward.

Lovell protested, but he simply had to go. The Fistical Four ran the gauntlet, and although the chums of the faggery aimed shower upon shower of snowballs at their heads, the majority of them flew wide.

Jimmy Silver & Co. escaped damage, and joining up with Smythe and his set, who were gradually being beaten across the quad by the excited Moderns, they helped to stem the tide.

The Fistical Four were, amongst the best

cricketers at Rookwood, and they knew how to aim straight.

At lightning speed they made snowballs and hurled them at the attackers.

Jimmy Silver caught Tommy Dodd full in the eye with one, and Lovell managed to score a bulleye on Tommy Cook's nose.

Newcome and Raby both declared that they sent Tommy Doyle reeling backwards from a splendid shot.

Which was right was never proved; but the fact remains that within a minute of Jimmy Silver & Co.'s entry into the battle the leaders of the Modern side had been put out of action.

"Ow! Yow! Yaroooogh!" spluttered Tommy Dodd, wiping the snow from off his face.

"Grooogh! Yow!" mumbled Tommy Cook, rubbing his nose ruefully.

"Yow-ow! Faith, an' the snow's creeping down my neck!" growled Tommy Doyle.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Fistical Four hilariously.

"Pile in, you fellows!" bade Jimmy Silver. "Get 'em on the run!"

The snowballs whizzed through the air; and, ably led by Jimmy Silver, the Classics gradually got the mastery over their rivals.

The Moderns were forced backwards. Tommy Dodd tried hard to rally his forces, but it was no good.

The Fistical Four aimed two snowballs for every one received from the other side, and Tommy Dodd and his followers were slowly driven towards the gate.

The Moderns were forced into a corner, and there the Classics pelted them mercilessly.

"Give in whenever you like, Duddy!" said Jimmy Silver blandly.

"Yah! Classical rotters!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "Back up, you— Ow! Yow! Yaroooogh!"

Right into Tommy Dodd's mouth went a snowball, and the Modern junior spluttered furiously.

"Better give in, Duddy!"

"I won't! I— Yaroooogh!"

"Going—"

"No! I— Ow! Yow! Grooogh!"

"Will you give in?"

"No! I— Ow! Yow! Yes, I give in! Chuck it, you chaps!"

"Oh, good!" said Jimmy Silver slyly. "You might have known you'd be wacked as soon as little us came to the rescue."

"We'll get our own back to-morrow!" mumbled Tommy Dodd, gouging the snow out of his neck.

"Any time you like, old son!" said Jimmy Silver. And then he turned to his chums.

"Come on, kids! Time we get back to tea."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

An Unlucky Shot.

MY hat! There'll be some damage done soon!"

Thus Jimmy Silver as he and his chums wended their way in the direction of the House.

Jimmy pointed to where the battle royal was still taking place between the Third and Second Forms.

"The kids can't aim for toffee!" remarked Lovell.

"If they're aiming at one another, they're pretty rotten shots!" said Jimmy Silver.

"But if they're trying for the windows, they're doing jolly well!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Lovell. "There's one that's gone through one of the prefect's windows!"

"There goes another!" cried Newcome. "My hat!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver concernedly. "They ought not to be so near the House!"

"No bizzny of ours," said Lovell. "No, but— My giddy aunt! They've got

that window again! I'm jolly sorry for them if they're caught! Beaumont's show! Hi, young Webb! Stop it! You'll do some damage in a minute if you're not careful!"

But "Young Webb" took no notice of Jimmy Silver's remark.

He was endeavouring to put Fisher of the Second out of action, but as Jimmy Silver said, had Fisher been twelve times as large as he was, Webb would not have hit him.

"Webb!" bawled Jimmy Silver.

The Third-Former did not deign to reply.

"My hat!" exclaimed Lovell suddenly.

"Look who's coming out of the House!"

"Beaumont!" cried Jimmy Silver and his chums in one voice.

Beaumont, the bullying prefect, came rushing out of the House, a look of bitter rage on his face.

The Sixth-Former clutched at the nearest Third-Former, and cuffed him savagely on the ears.

"I'll teach you to throw snowballs through my window!" he growled. "Take that—and that—and that!"

Three times the prefect brought his fist down on the fag's face.

Then he flung the youngster aside, and made a grab at Webb.

In an instant the snowball fight was brought to an abrupt conclusion, and many of the juniors darted into the House.

About four members of the Third Form remained—Stacey, Grant, Pipkin, and Webb.

The latter struggled fiercely in the prefect's grasp.

"Let me go!" he exclaimed furiously. "I—Ow! Yow! Yaroooogh!"

"You beastly little fag!" roared Beaumont.

"What do you mean by throwing your rotten snowballs into my window?"

"I'm sorry, Beaumont, I—"

"Take that!"

"Ow! Yow!"

Beaumont hit out right and left at the youngsters, and they were sent sprawling into the snow.

As fast as one jumped to his feet Beaumont, in a fearful rage, sent him down again.

"My hat!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver to his chums. "The beastly bully!"

Beaumont looked up at the sound of Jimmy Silver's voice.

"What did you say, Silver?" he exclaimed.

"I said you were a beastly bully!" cried Jimmy Silver angrily. "You've no right to hit those fags like that!"

"What! You dare to talk to me! You—you—"

Beaumont spluttered furiously.

Jimmy Silver held his ground.

"I'll talk to you as I like," he said calmly. "And what's more, if you don't leave those fags alone, you'll have us to deal with!"

"What—what—"

"I mean what I say!" declared Jimmy Silver heatedly. "You touch one of those youngsters again, and we'll all pile in on you!"

"What-ho!" agreed Lovell & Co.

Beaumont gave them a savage glare, and then sent Webb of the Third flying from a stinging left-hander.

"Come on, you fellows!" urged Jimmy Silver. "Time we took a hand!"

"Hear, hear!"

The Fistical Four leaped forward, and grasped the bullying prefect in a most unceremonious manner.

"Silver," bellowed Beaumont, "let me go this instant!"

"No jolly fear!" said Jimmy Silver relentlessly. "You're going to be ragged for biting into those fags!"

"I'll—"

"You won't!" said Jimmy Silver blandly. "You'll keep quiet like a good little boy!"

"I'll give you the hiding of your life!"

"You'd like to, you mean!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I—I—I—"

Beaumont was in a fit of uncontrollable rage, and words were choked in his throat.

"Roll him into the snow!" ordered Jimmy Silver.

"Good biz!" said Lovell & Co. And between them the Fistical Four got the bully into a recumbent position.

Beaumont struggled and kicked savagely, but he was no match for the determined juniors.

Jimmy Silver rubbed the prefect's face into the snow.

Lovell took the trouble to shove a large quantity of snow down the bully's neck, whilst Raby and Newcome forced snow up his sleeves.

The fags looked on and grinned. Many a time had they suffered at Beaumont's hands, and it was a source of great satisfaction to them to see the bully treated in such a manner.

At length Jimmy Silver turned to his chums.

"I think we might let him go now," he said mildly.

"Well, we don't want to rob him of any enjoyment," said Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha! He looks as though he's enjoying himself!"

"I think we should let him go now," he said warningly. "We're out to one, you know, and we'll shove you into the snow again if you get saucy!"

"I'll complain to the Head!" roared Beaumont. "I'll get you expelled from Rookwood!"

"Get up!"

"Go ahead!" said Jimmy Silver. "The Head may be pleased to learn of the brutal manner in which one of his prefects treats the kids in the Third."

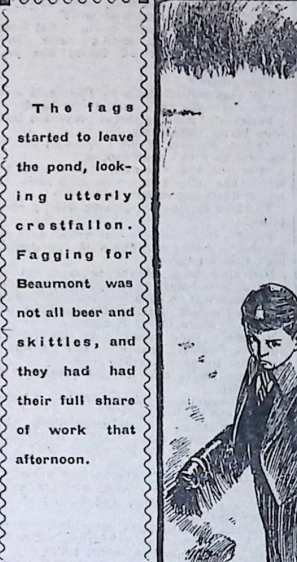
"You—you—"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

The fags started to leave the pond, looking utterly crestfallen.

Fagging for Beaumont was not all beer and skittles, and they had had their full share of work that afternoon.

Jimmy Silver laughed.



Tommy Dodd & Co. had made up their minds to spend an afternoon's skating on the river.

Webb & Co. of the Third had also decided to wend their way in the same direction.

But the Third-Formers' hopes were doomed to be shattered.

Directly after dinner, Beaumont called Webb into his study.

"Come here, you little beast!" he exclaimed harshly. "What did you intend to do this afternoon?"

"We were going skating on the river," said Webb feebly.

"Oh, you were, eh?" Beaumont laughed cynically. "Well, I'm very sorry to interfere with your arrangements, but I can keep you busy this afternoon. You know Squire Heath's place?"

"Y-y-yes, Beaumont."

"You know the pond in the grounds?"

"Yes—yes."

"Well, I want you and Stacey, and Grant and Pipkin, and Lucas and Hamley to go there at once and sweep all the snow off the ice," explained Beaumont.

"But we're going on the river, Beaumont," said the boys simply.

Beaumont glared at the youngsters.

"You're going where I send you," he declared. "And if you don't do as you're told, I shall go straight to the Head and tell

him that you deliberately threw snowballs into my study yesterday."

"But we didn't throw them deliberately, Beaumont," protested Webb.

"Don't argue with me!" snapped the prefect. "I say you did, and that's an end of it. Now get along. You'll be able to obtain brooms and brushes from Mack. I've given him instructions to hand them over to you."

The fag gave Beaumont a pleading look.

"I say, Beaumont," he said. "Can't you get some of the village kids to do the job for you?"

"No, I can't!" growled the prefect. "Clear off at once, and if you haven't swept the pond clear by the time I come down, I'll flog you alive!"

"But—"

"Clear out!" exclaimed Beaumont; and, picking up a cane, he strode towards the fag.

"Oh, all right, Beaumont, I'm going!" said Webb dejectedly; and, turning quickly on his heel, he left the Sixth-Former's study.

A quarter of an hour later six miserable-looking fags presented themselves at the old porter's lodge, and were supplied with the necessary brooms and brushes.

Then they set out for the pond in Squire Heath's grounds.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Paid in Full.

THE next day was Wednesday, a half-holiday at Rookwood.

Snow still lay as thick as ever on the ground, and, of course, football was out of the question.

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not mind.

It was with much regret that they cancelled the footer-match, but, all the same, they were anxiously looking forward to skating on the river that afternoon.

Not being very wide, the river did not offer much freedom of movement, but, as Jimmy Silver said, it was something to have a stretch of ice, no matter its width.

They had not gone far down the road when they were overtaken by Jimmy Silver & Co., who, with their skates under their arms, were making for the river.

"Hallo, young Webb!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Coming to sweep the river for us?"

"No," replied Webb sorrowfully. "We're going to sweep the pond in old Heath's grounds."

"Sweep the pond?"

"Yes."

"Who for?"

"Beaumont."

"Pshaw!" whistled Jimmy Silver. "Who ever's given Beaumont permission to use the pond?"

"I don't know, Silver," faltered the fag; "but Beaumont's ordered us to sweep it. I told him we were going skating on the river, and he threatened to complain to the Head for what happened yesterday if we didn't do as we were told."

"The rotten outsider!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver hotly. "There's no limit to that chap's bullying."

The leader of the Fistical Four knitted his brows for a moment.

"Hallo! What's the matter with you?" asked Lovell.

"I'm thinking," said Jimmy Silver seriously. "If Beaumont can use the pond, why shouldn't we?"

"I don't know," said Lovell.

"Well, I'm going to find out," said Jimmy Silver promptly. "You fags had better get along." Jimmy Silver turned in the direction of the school. "Come on, you fellows," he added. "I'm going to look into this matter."

"Better come down to the river," urged Lovell.

"I'm going to see Bulkeley," declared Jimmy Silver firmly. "Come on!"

Jimmy Silver started back towards the school, and Lovell & Co. unwillingly followed him.

The leader of the Fistical Four went upstairs to the Sixth Form passage, and entered Bulkeley's study.

"Sorry to trouble you, Bulkeley," said Jimmy Silver, entering the captain's room boldly. "But I want to chat to you about a matter of great importance."

"Oh!" said Bulkeley.

"I understand that Beaumont's got permission to use the pond in Squire Heath's grounds," went on Jimmy Silver.

"That is so, Silver."

"I suppose the permission is extended to the whole school," said Jimmy Silver.

Bulkeley laughed good-naturedly.

"You suppose wrong, Silver," he said generally. "Squire Heath went away yesterday, and I understand that before he went Beaumont asked for permission to use the pond. The squire gave it willingly, and—"

"Well, there's no reason why we shouldn't take advantage of his kindness," said Jimmy Silver. "We were never told that permission had been granted for us to skate on the pond."

"And neither has it."

"But you said Beaumont had—"

"Yes," said Bulkeley. "I said Beaumont had been granted permission for him and four of his chums—Knowles, Catesby, Frampton, and Medway—to use the pond, but nobody else. Even I have not been asked."

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"Blessed sauce!" he said fervently.

"Well, it can't be helped, Silver," said Bulkeley. "You'd better get along to the river before it gets too crowded."

"All right, Bulkeley; sorry to have troubled you."

Jimmy Silver left the captain's study, and, deep in thought, he went downstairs to where his chums were waiting for him.

"We!" said Lovell questioningly.

"No go," said Jimmy Silver, and he related to his chums what Bulkeley had told him.

"Confounded impudence!" said Lovell wrathfully. "I bet that if permission had been asked for the whole school to use the pond, the old squire would have granted it."

"Quite so."

"And now those blessed rotters have got the whole pond to themselves, with nobody to interfere with them!"

"Sure?" asked Jimmy Silver, looking up.

"Well, who's going to do it?"

"Us!"

"Oh, rot!"

"Come along to the study," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "I've thought of a little wheeze for getting our own back on Beaumont & Co."

"Oh, good!"

Lovell & Co. followed Jimmy Silver up to the end study, anxious to learn their leader's scheme for getting even with the bullying prefect.

Meanwhile, Webb & Co. of the Third trudged wearily towards the pond.

"No light task which Beaumont had set them.

But it had got to be done, and they started sweeping operations, grumbling to themselves.

After about half an hour the fags had swept the centre of the pond clear, and little mounds of snow could be seen all round the banks.

"I say, Webb, old son," said Stacey, at length. "Can't we knock off now?"

"Wish we could," said Webb. "But Beaumont told me to wait until he came. He'll lay us if we clear off before the job's finished."

"The rotter!"

The fags settled down to their task once more, and really they worked very hard.

Beaumont's cunning threat prevented them from taking things easy.

At last, however, Webb announced that he thought they had done enough.

"Come on, kids," he said. "We'll make our way to the gate. I expect we shall meet that rotter Beaumont coming in."

The fags started off, looking utterly crestfallen.

Paging for Beaumont was not all beer and skittles, and they had had their full share of work that afternoon.

Had they been allowed to skate on the pond, it would have been different, but they knew there was no chance of that. Beaumont was not the sort of fellow to give them permission to skate in his company.

Beaumont came along with his friends, Knowles, Catesby, Frampton, and Medway. He gave the fags a savage glare.

"I hope you've done the job properly," he said curtly.

"Yes, Beaumont," faltered Webb. "I suppose we can go back now."

"No, you can't!" snapped the prefect. "I'm going to do some figure skating, and I shall want you to keep the ice well swept."

"Oh!"

The fags groaned in chorus, but Beaumont took no notice. He walked on with his chums. The fags stood aside, and looked at one another miserably.

In another five minutes, Beaumont and the other Sixth-Formers were whirling across the ice, enjoying themselves to the full.

Beaumont started figure skating, and when he came to grief, and the fags sniggered, the bullying prefect gave them a glare that boded them no good.

The Sixth-Former, however, was on his feet again in a twinkling, and continued his fancy skating.

Beaumont certainly knew how to skate, and some of his movements were very graceful.

"This is far better than skating on the river with a rotten lot of fags," remarked Knowles.

"Rather!" replied Beaumont. "Jolly decent of the squire to let us—Hallo, here he comes!"

The Sixth-Formers looked round to see a

portly old gentleman, with grey whiskers and spectacles, making towards them.

The seniors continued their skating, whilst the squire, with a look on his face that could hardly be described as friendly, strode towards them.

The six fags gave him one glance, and then shot off at a run towards the school. They saw trouble coming for the Sixth-Formers.

"Huh!" grunted the squire, as he stopped before Beaumont, who was hard at work cutting figure eights. "What's the meaning of this?"

"Good-afternoon, sir!" said Beaumont politely, gazing at the squire in surprise.

"This is a ripping stretch of ice."

"It's in!" muttered the squire. "This is effrontery on your part, boy. Who gave you permission to use this pond?"

Beaumont gasped.

"Y-you did, sir," he replied meekly.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the squire. "I should never dream of such a thing. Allow a parcel of boys to use my pond! Am I dreaming—am I mad? You are either under a delusion, boy, or else you are guilty of taking an unheard-of liberty!"

"You gave me permission to use the pond," faltered Beaumont.

"Nonsense, boy!" said the squire, in a deep voice. "Do you take me for a lunatic? My pond is my own property, and I allow no one to use it except my special friends."

"By gad!" gasped the prefect, dumb-founded. "But—"

"Not a word!" snapped the squire. "I will listen to no explanation. Unlawful young rascals. Take your departure this instant, and never let me see you in my grounds again!"

"But, squire—" protested Beaumont helplessly.

"I refuse to listen to one word more!" exclaimed the squire, with a wave of the hand. "If you are not gone within five minutes, I will give you in charge for trespass. D'you hear?"

Beaumont heard all right, and, what is more, he heeded.

The next minute or two the Sixth-Formers were busily engaged in uncrewing their skates.

Without wishing the squire good-day, they turned and walked in the direction of the school.

They were firmly convinced that the squire was either addicted to drinking, or that he had gone wrong in the head.

They little knew, however, that it was not Squire Heath who had ordered them off the "premises," but Jimmy Silver in disguise!

Jimmy Silver & Co. met Webb of the Third in the corridor a little later that day.

"Well, how did you like the giddy squire?" asked Jimmy Silver, with a twinkle in his eye.

"What do you know about the squire, Silver?" asked Webb, in surprise. "You weren't there?"

"Wasn't I?" replied Jimmy Silver. "Suppose I told you I was the squire."

"But—, I say, Silver, surely it wasn't you in disguise?"

"It might have been," said Jimmy. "But keep it dark, young Webb. We don't want it to leak out, you know. I reckon I've got even with that rotter Beaumont for you, though."

"My aunt!" exclaimed the fag. "It was jolly good, Silver. You did the job fine. You can't trust me not to say anything. I suppose I can tell my chums. They'll keep mum!"

"Oh, all right!" said Jimmy Silver, and he walked on towards the end study.

There was no doubt whatever that Jimmy Silver had played his part well, and that he had got his own back on the fags' foe!

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER. Great Excitement.

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 excellent spirits.

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

Hence their joyous smiles. The Terrible Three prepared tea in the study with unusual elaboration. It was the last tea in the study until next term, and it was a very special one, too.

The party for Italy were all to have tea together, and they were expecting a visitor.

Tom Merry & Co. considered themselves quite able to look after themselves in a trip to Italy, or to the North Pole, for that matter. But that opinion was not shared by their elders. In fact, their people had only given permission because D'Arcy's former tutor, Mr. Mopps, was to go in charge of the party.

Under the guidance of Artemus Mopps, M.A., the juniors would be all right, and D'Arcy had assured his chums that Mr. Mopps would not be very much trouble.

Blake and Herries and Digby came in to tea. Herries and Digby were already booked for the vacation, and could not accompany the party abroad. But Jack Blake was coming, the total party numbering five—Blake and D'Arcy, and the Terrible Three.

Certainly it would have been quite easy to make it up to fifty, dozens of fellows would willingly have joined in the excursion, especially if the question of finances could have been satisfactorily arranged. Tom Merry & Co. had had many kind offers, all of which they had declined with thanks.

"Mopps here yet?" asked Blake, as he came into the study with his chums. "Not yet," said Tom Merry. "May be here any minute, though. You fellows, remember, we've got to be very civil to Mopps. We've got to get him interested in the giddy treasure trove we're going to look for."

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

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

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

"Jolly lucky of you chaps to be going to Italy for the year," demanded 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 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. 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 do you know what it means?" "Brooke of the Fourth translated it for

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

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

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

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

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

"This one is the genuine article," said Tom Merry. "It— Hallo, who's this coming in?"

The door of the study opened, and next instant the form of Mr. Mopps was revealed. "Come in, Mr. Mopps!" said Tom Merry politely.

"T-t-thank you so much!" said Mr. Mopps, entering the study.

Mr. Mopps was of a rather nervous disposition, and stammered considerably.

"Pray sit down, Mr. Mopps," said Tom Merry.

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

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

"D-d-dear me!" said Mr. Mopps. "We want you to recite it to us after tea, sir," said Manners.

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

"Mr. Mopps beamed. "You are very kik-kik-kik—" "Eh?"

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

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

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

And the feed commenced with great good-humour on all sides. Mr. Mopps felt that he had seldom or never met such nice, quiet, pleasant, and appreciative young persons as Tom Merry & Co.

"The 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 to Italy," 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 principle has been going to Italy to collect material for my book on early Italian poets. The

study of the early Italian poets is most interesting, my young friends."

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

"Indeed!" said Mr. Mopps. "I got it in a rather curious way, sir," said Tom Merry. "It's about a buried treasure in Italy."

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

"It was an Italian chap gave it to me," said Tom Merry. "Chap named Marco Frulo. He said he had a secret about a lot of money being buried in Venice. There was a sailor chap after him, named Joe Harker, an awful bounder, and Frulo was dodging him. This sailor chap wanted to kidnap the Italian, and make him show him where the money was hidden."

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

"A what?" "A jig-joke," said Mr. Mopps. "Oh, yes, sir, it's all fair and square. I want you to read the paper and tell us what you think of it. I know you can read Italian like anything, sir."

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

"Have you been able to read this extraordinary paper?" asked Mr. Mopps. "I got a chap to translate it, sir. I've burnt the translation now in case anybody should get hold of it. I know it by heart."

Tom Merry explained. "I've got the original paper in my pocket. I carried it tied up in the corner of my handkerchief for safety."

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

"Here it is, sir." Tom Merry put his hand into his pocket, and brought to view the handkerchief in which the document was tied. In another moment the mysterious paper was placed on the table before Mr. Mopps. Tom Merry gazed at the words once again, which ran:

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

"MARCO FRULO."

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

"Did-d-d-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 too-too-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 Harker, 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."

"Whatnah not!" Mr. Mopps read over the paper again, and scribbled a translation of it, with an exclamation that the tutor admired much more than they had admired the Latin hexameters.

"The chest of money is buried among the

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"But you haven't got my father's white hat!" objected Lowther.

"I regard you as a chump, Lowthab. When I say I have your father's white hat, I don't mean that I have it—I mean—"

"You mean you have his black hat?"

"No, you ass! I mean—it's a lesson—"

"The more it lessens, the better I shall like it!" yawned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, you have to weepat it in Italian," said D'Arcy. "Have you my father's black hat?"

"But I don't know the Italian word for cat."

"Cat! I was not sayin' anything about a cat."

"Didn't you ask me if I have your father's black cat?" asked Lowther innocently.

"You—you—you—I refuse to give you any instruction in the Italian language, you uttah ass!" said Arthur Augustus, closing his volume with a snap.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Monty Lowther remained in a state of cheerful ignorance upon the subject.

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

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

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

The very names of the towns, as they passed them, were like manna to the ears.

Milano, Deszenza, Verona! At Verona, of course, they quoted to one another from Shakespeare, and Arthur Augustus astonished several passengers by demanding:

"Oh, Womeco, Womeco, wherefore art thou Womeco?"

And now the Great Lagoon was in sight.

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

Round them gleamed the waters of the lagoon.

Venice at last!

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

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

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

The bags were transferred to a gondola, which drew up beside the landing-stage. The juniors descended the steps into the boat. It was a novel and exciting experience for them.

It was a large gondola, with two rowers, and there was ample room for any amount of luggage. In the little covered cabin in the centre of the craft there was not much room for legs; but the juniors preferred to remain outside it, to watch their novel surroundings.

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

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

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

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

"Lowthab, you are an iwwerevered beast!" said Arthur Augustus. "It's simply wondrous! I wondah if we shall pass the Bewidge of Sighra!"

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

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

Arthur Augustus was evidently determined to be satisfied.

The gondoliers emitted weird cries as they rowed on. They did not row in the way the juniors were accustomed to rowing. They stood upright at either end of the boat, on a raised platform level with the gunwale, each armed with a single oar of immense length.

The Grand Canal, in the form of a letter S, winds through the whole length of the

city, from the railway-station to the Grand Lagoon.

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

The gondola 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.

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—wonderful!" said D'Arcy. "We'll have a wamble owh this place to-morrow, deah boys, and blow the giddy twearise!"

"Yes, rather!"

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

Mr. Mops 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. Mops was still more puzzled; he had no bread about him, either.

Then one of them jerked out the French word "pouboire," and he understood, and handed out the tips. In Italy there are many names for tips, and a traveller, unaccustomed to the ways of the gentle Italian, is a little puzzled at first at being asked for cigars, or bread, or macaroni.

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

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

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

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

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Old Foes.

TOM MERRY was the first to wake in the morning.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Time to get up, Gussy."

Arthur Augustus sat up in bed and dabbed his face.

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

"Nearly eleven."

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

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

The juniors looked from the windows at the big lagoon and the gliding gondolas and the craft anchored out on the calm water. Some



His brain reeling, Tom Merry was dragged into the gondola with the aid of the boatman.

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?"

"They are packed up in my bag, deah boy."

"Get them out—quick!"

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

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

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

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

"Gweat Scott!"

The juniors rushed to the window, while D'Arcy rummaged for the glasses. The two Italians on the schooner were in full view, but one of them had his face turned away.

The other, Tom Merry was almost certain,

He was on board Joe Harker's vessel. If the adventurer discovered him—especially if he had some guilty secret to hide—what would be the result? Tom Merry remembered the hard, desperate face of the man, and he realised that he was going into deadly danger. But he did not hesitate.

He crept silently to the companion-hatch. It was open, and a light glimmered in the little cuddy at the top of the ladder; a smoky swinging lamp burnt there.

There was no sign of anyone in the cuddy, and Tom Merry crept silently down the steps. He started as he reached the foot. A man was leaning upon his wrist at 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 dark, bald face. It was that of Beppo, one of the Italians he had seen in the wood at Kylecombe with Joe Harker.

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 not 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, and saw 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 upon 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 cloth, but the upper part of the face was visible.

Tom Merry breathed hard. He knew the face! He was looking upon Marco Frulo, the man who had given him the clue to the hidden gold on the Venetian island.

His suspicions had been well-founded. Marco Frulo had told him that if he did not reclaim the paper it would be because he had fallen into the hands of Joe Harker and his gang. And he had evidently fallen into Joe Harker's hands, and 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 Joe Harker's hands. Better that anybody should have it than that the unscrupulous adventurer should be the gainer. That was how Frulo had looked at it.

The voice Tom Merry could hear speaking was that of Joe Harker. He could not see the adventurer without opening the door farther. He heard the low, sharp, metallic voice of Harker, and realised the threat contained in those hard tones.

"Not asleep, Marco, my old chum? No; I guess not. You kinder wouldn't sleep tied up like that. It's your own fault, Marco."

The Italian's eyes burned.

"You're going to tell me where those dollars are buried, Marco. I reckon. Somewhere near Venice—eh? I guess I'm on to that much. And I guess I'm going to know the rest. You're going to tell me, Marco Frulo."

The Italian shook his head.

"We're in Venice now," went on Joe Harker calmly. "We've been here two days, and I guess I'm running out of my stock of patience, Marco. You haven't told me the secret, Marco, but you've told others—eh? Guess whom I saw in Venice to-day—guess! A schoolboy, Marco; mighty like a young whippersnapper I caught a glimpse of once in a wood at Kylecombe. You haven't told me, Marco. I guess I haven't told you and you together. You've told him something, and he's here—after you or after the treasure, Marco."

A sudden gleam came into the bound man's eyes. Hope, despair, and revived him. The adventurer, doubtless, saw it, too.

Tom Merry heard the unseen man give a scolding laugh.

"You won't be found here, Marco. The boy that saw me, and he doesn't know I'm here; doesn't know the schooner from Adam, Marco. You're in my hands, I guess, but I've not got any more time to waste over you. Are you going to talk?"

Another shake of the head.

"It's your last night, Marco," said the adventurer, the tone of menace growing deeper in his voice. "I guess I've been easy on you, Beppo, and Pietro would have made you talk before this—eh? But I guess it's the end of the tether now. You're going to talk, Marco, or I'm going to make you. We leave Venice to-morrow morning. I'm finished here. We sail before dawn, Marco. You're going down the Adriatic—round to Naples, I guess. I've got business to do, and I can't afford to waste time. I guess I wasted enough getting you back from England when you slipped me on an English ship. Marco Frulo, my friend, you are going to talk at dawn, if not before!"

Marco Frulo shook his head again.

"I guess I shall make you, then. I guess an iron bolt heated red-hot and slipped down your back will make you willing to give up all the treasures in the wide world if you'd got 'em in your trousers-pocket, Marco."

The man in the bunk made no sign.

"Nod your head if you'll talk. I guess I'm not going to let you open your mouth. We're not to be the target of that."

Marco Frulo did not move.

"Obstinate dog!" said Joe Harker, with deep anger in his voice. "I guess I mean business about that iron bolt, Marco. You'll learn in the morning when we up anchor and sail away from Venice. There's a right breeze for us, and we're going—savvy? I guess—"

The man broke off.

There was a sound in the cuddy as Beppo yawned and awoke. And then there was a shout as the seaman's startled eyes rested upon Tom Merry.

"Il ragazzo!" he shouted. "Un ragazzo inglese!"

"What?"

Joe Harker was at the door of the cabin with a bound.

Tom Merry made a desperate spring for the ladder.

The Italian was in the way, but he was heavy from sleep, and his brain was still reeling from his drink.

Tom Merry grappled with him, and rolled him over with a throw he had often practised in the gym at the old school.

Beppo crashed on the floor.

"Signor! Un spia—in ragazzo—"

He yelled as he went down.

Tom Merry sprang over him and ran up the ladder. But the sailorman, big and heavy as he was, was out of the cabin in the twinkling of an eye, and springing in pursuit.

His grasp just missed Tom Merry's ankle as the junior dashed up the ladder. With his heart thumping, the junior reached the deck and rushed for the side.

Joe Harker leaped after him.

Tom Merry made a flying leap for the gondola floating in the darkness by the side of the schooner. And as he leaped Harker snote him, and he missed the gondola, and plunged heavily into the water.

Splash!

From the rail the adventurer looked down with anxious eyes. Fresh from the heated cabin, he found it difficult to see in the gloom. The gleam of the water caught his eye. He saw the gondola a moment later, and a dripping form dragging itself in.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Council of War.

TOM MERRY dragged himself into the gondola with the aid of the boatman. His brain was reeling, and as he climbed into the gondola he sank down exhausted, the water dripping from his drenched clothes and forming a pool round him.

"Signor! Signorino!" spluttered the gondolier.

Tom Merry panted, and struggled to his feet.

"Shore—quick!" he exclaimed. "Quick—sunto!—Voga degli Schiavoni!"

"S—signor!"

The gondolier swung out the long oar, and the gondola glided back to the quay.

As it bumped on the steps Tom Merry jumped out.

The water ran down him as he stood. He looked out in the lagoon towards the schooner. A moving shadow in the starlight caught his eyes. The schooner was in motion; the mainsail had filled out before the breeze that blew off the shore, and the vessel was gliding away towards the Lido and the wide Adriatic beyond.

Tom Merry clenched his hands.

His first idea had been to call help—to

rouse the police, the port-watchmen, anybody—to get help to rescue Marco Frulo.

But it was too late!

What was he to do, search her it would be necessary to send a vessel in pursuit. Tom Merry knew that it was hopeless. The voice of the gondolier interrupted his hurried reflections. He took out his purse, and placed a couple of gold louis in the man's dusty hand, and, without waiting for his profuse thanks, he hurried back to the hotel.

The hall-porter looked at him in amazement.

"The signorino has fallen in the water!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Tom Merry, and he hurried up to his room without further explanation. He turned on the electric light, and hurriedly stripped off his wet clothes and towelled himself down. Arthur Augustus awoke, and sat up in bed, and looked at him.

"Bai Jove! Where have you been, Tom Mewy? What have you been up to, you boundh?"

"Call the other fellows, Gussy. We want a council of war."

"Vewy well, dear boy."

Arthur Augustus, amazed as he was, could see that it was a serious matter. He tumbled out of bed, and called Blake and Manners and Lowther from the adjoining room. The three juniors came in in amazement, they saw Tom Merry towelling himself down, and simply stared.

"What on earth have you been doing?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

"Tumbling into the lagoon," said Tom Merry grimly.

"Great Scott! You might have been drowned!" ejaculated Blake.

"I came jelly near it."

"How on earth did you come to tumble in?"

"Joe Harker's fist helped me."

"Joe Harker!" exclaimed all the juniors together.

"Yes," Tom Merry hurriedly explained. "I got together Marco Frulo and was there."

"You cheeky ass to go without us!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Don't chip now, you chaps; it's too serious. I got on board from a gondola, and got down below, and there was Marco Frulo tied up in a bunk like a giddy turkey."

Frulo tied up in a bunk like a giddy turkey for Christmas. Joe Harker and the other Italians were there on the schooner. He was in the cabin with poor old Frulo. He's seen us in Venice to-day, and smelt danger. He was threatening to put Frulo to the torture to make him give away the secret."

"They found me there, and nearly had me." Tom Merry shivered. "If Harker had got hold of me, I don't think I should have got off the schooner alive. I expected him to fire after me in the water, but he didn't. He tossed me into the sea, and I jumped for the gondola. The gondolier pulled me in, or—"

"My hat!"

"What's going to be done now, you chaps?"

"Call the police, and collar the schooner!"

"She's gone!"

"Gone!" exclaimed all the juniors together. "Yes. They must have cut the cable. She was whisking away down the lagoon before I got to the quay."

"Then it's all up!" said Blake, with a whistle.

"All the same," said Tom. "I don't think Harker will go far away. I heard him talking. He knew hisASURE is somewhere near Venice; that's why he's here. Frulo hasn't told him yet, but if they torture him he will—he's bound to, poor chap. I wonder how he's threatened to do. Look here, Harker knows he has no time to lose now. He'll be in the lagoon, and we shall find him on the island of Santa Maria—unless we get there first."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I suppose so," said Lowther thoughtfully. "We'd better get off first thing in the morning, without waiting for Moppy to come down. Then he can't ask any questions."

"That's all right, Blake!"

"You all agree to that?" asked Tom Merry. "Yaas, wathah!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Victory!

DAWN flushed up pink and rose over the wide lagoon, and lighted the towers and roofs of the Queen of the Adriatic.

In the first rays of the sun the five juniors quietly left the hotel.

They had a bundle of rolls with them for breakfast in the gondola. It was all they needed.

The spade and the pickaxe and the crowbar were placed in the gondola Tom Merry engaged, and the juniors had each taken a stout stick. The gondolier—the same man who had rowed Tom Merry out to the schooner the previous night—asked no questions. The young English signors desired a "promenade" on the lagoon to see the sun rise over Venice—not an uncommon excursion. That was all, the gondolier thought.

"Burano," said Tom Merry to the Italian, and the gondolier shoved out the long oar, and the little craft swept away over the still, shadowy waters of the lagoon.

Tom Merry & Co. looked about them as the gondola glided on. There was no sign of the schooner. But they had not expected to see her. The gondola moved on over the lagoon, and Venice became a blur of white buildings behind in the rising sun.

The gondolier pointed to an island ahead.

"Burano?" asked Tom Merry.

"Si, signor."

"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 no signs of buildings upon it. It had evidently been inhabited at some earlier date; but, like many of the environs of the sea-city, it had fallen into ruin and solitude with the dark days that had come upon the one-time Queen of the Sea.

The gondola plunged her prow into deep mud, and the gondolier made her fast.

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, the more they lack interest to the natives.

The gondolier sat down to roll cigarettes and smoke until the juniors returned, in the comfortable consciousness that he was to be paid by the hour.

The juniors tramped into the ruins.

The sun was higher in the heavens now, and the rays were bright and warm. They fell into the ruins of the old chapel—masses of masonry overgrown with weeds, close by a choked-up canal full of foul odours.

The juniors' hearts were beating hard.

Tom Merry paused in the shattered gateway of the chapel and looked seaward, and uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Look!"

In the far distance a sail appeared, and the juniors could make out the graceful form of a schooner beating up to the isle against the wind.

"The schooner!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"So Joe Harker 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.

"They found it!"

There could be no doubt about it; it was

the "pietra segnata d'una croce rossa," as Marco Frulo had written it down.

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

He unwrapped the crowbar and set to work.

He jammed the end of the crowbar into the interspace between the marked flagstone and 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.

"Blake handed!" said Tom Merry.

"The spade!" said the spade. The pick was not needed. Tom Merry shovelled out the soft, muddy earth with feverish haste. There was a sudden shock of the spade.

"It's here!"

The spade had struck something harder than earth. Tom Merry hastily shoved the earth away, and the top of a wooden chest was revealed. Then all the juniors bent themselves to it, and the chest was dragged out upon the flagstones.

It was a sea-chest, about two feet long, made of oak, and it was very heavy. The lid was locked down, but the end of the pick struck the lock. Tom Merry raised the lid.

"My hat!"

The story was true—Marco Frulo 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. The juniors could not even read.

Gold—the treasure at last!

Prepared as they were for the sight, the juniors could hardly believe their eyes.

Blake knelt by the chest, and ran the coins in golden cascades through his fingers breathlessly.

"My only hat!" he said. "It's true! Real gold! The giddy treasure!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry looked out to sea.

The schooner was close inshore now. It would not be long before the rival treasure-seekers would be on the scene. Tom Merry spoke a few hurried words.

The juniors closed the chest again, and hid it from sight with chunks of masonry and loose bricks. The chest was hidden safe from the eyes of Joe Harker, even if he had learned the secret of the stone marked with a "croce rossa."

Then the marked flagstone was replaced, and the signs of the excavations cleared away. All looked as it had been before the juniors came to the ruined chapel.

"We could clear off the chest and take the giddy treasure with us," said Tom Merry. "But this is not the programme. We're going to rescue Marco Frulo if we can."

"What-ho!"

Keeping close in cover among the masses of masonry, the St. Jim's juniors watched the schooner creep by the eyes. The vessel glided close up to the shore, and the sails dropped.

Three men could be seen moving on her deck, and the juniors watched them bring a fourth man up from below, evidently bound, and place him in a boat. The boat was lowered; Joe Harker and Beppo took the oars, and pushed to the shore. Pietro remained alone on board the schooner.

Tom Merry set his teeth.

"They're coming," he said; "and they're bringing Frulo with them, as I expected. Lie low! This is where Joe Harker gets the surprise of his life!"

The boat plunged bows into the mud, and disappeared from the eyes of the juniors hidden in the ruins. There was a sound of heavy footsteps crunching the old stones, and two men came into the ruined chapel, leading between them a third—whose arms were bound behind his back.

It was Marco Frulo. His face was pale and anguished.

Joe Harker looked round with a grin of triumph.

The juniors lay very low in their cover, grasping their cudgels, and waiting for the word from Tom Merry.

Joe Harker stared down at the marked flagstone.

"He'll soon see if he's told the truth," he said. "Heave that stone up, Beppo!"

The seaman bent over the stone.

Tom Merry gave his companions a quick

whisper. There was a sudden rush of feet to the old ruins.

Joe Harker swung round with an oath.

But even as he spun round, clutching out his revolver, Tom Merry's bullet descended upon his head with stunning force, and the adventurer gave one faint groan and fell like a log.

He was stunned.

Beppo leaped up with a snarl like a cat, knife in hand. But a stick smote his knife, and sent it flying. Another crashed upon his head, and another across his arm, and he yelled with anguish and fell.

"Done 'em!" roared Blake. "Hurrah for St. Jim's!"

Marco Frulo gazed at the juniors like a man in a dream.

Tom Merry opened his pocket-knife, and cut the Italian's bonds.

"It's all right, old son!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, signor—"

"The chaps up," said Tom Merry.

"There's enough rope here—they used plenty of rope on the old Frulo. The other rotter on the schooner will come to look for them sooner or later, and he can look after them."

And Joe Harker and Beppo were bound hand and foot.

Then the treasure-chest was dragged out, and Marco Frulo, still dazed with joy and gratitude, feasted his eyes upon the contents—the heaps and piles of gold coins. Then he began to talk in rapid Italian with excited gestures.

The juniors did not follow the words, but they understood what he meant, and they shook their heads.

"No; we're not going to take it, or any of it," said Tom Merry decidedly. "It's yours, Frulo—all yours. That's settled."

"Oh, signor! Quel generosita!"

The chest was fastened up, and Marco Frulo carried it across the little island to the gondola. The gondolier stared at the sight of the stranger, and Frulo talked to him in fluent Italian.

The juniors would have been surprised if they had known that he was airily explaining to the gondolier that he had been on the island the day before, searching for mineral specimens for the young English strangers, and that he had a box full of stones of no use to anybody but a tourist.

Knowing the ways of tourists, the gondolier was quite satisfied, and he simply shrugged his shoulders at this one more sample of the mad ways of those English!

Mr. Mopps had missed the juniors, and he was waiting anxiously for them when they came in. His breath was taken away when he heard of the adventure they had been through.

Tom Merry deposited his treasure in Tom Merry's room, whence he removed it in bags lent him by the juniors, taking it away to some place of safety best known to himself. The juniors asked no questions; it was no business of theirs.

The Italian was deeply earnest in his endeavours to persuade the English boys to take one-half of the treasure, but they would not. At last, to gratify the grateful seaman, they agreed to take a hundred pounds.

Mr. Mopps kept a very careful eye upon his charges after that. But the dangerous adventures were past, and when the holiday was over they came back to St. Jim's, with wondrous tales to tell their schoolfellows there.

Indeed, on the first day of the new term, what was left of the hundred pounds—it was not much—was spent in a royal feast in Tom Merry's study, to which came Figgins & Co. and were paid of, and when they discuss the good things provided by the returned travellers, and to listen with intense interest to the story of Tom Merry's trip.

THE END.

Next Friday's Grand Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

is entitled:

"HIS FALSE POSITION!"

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