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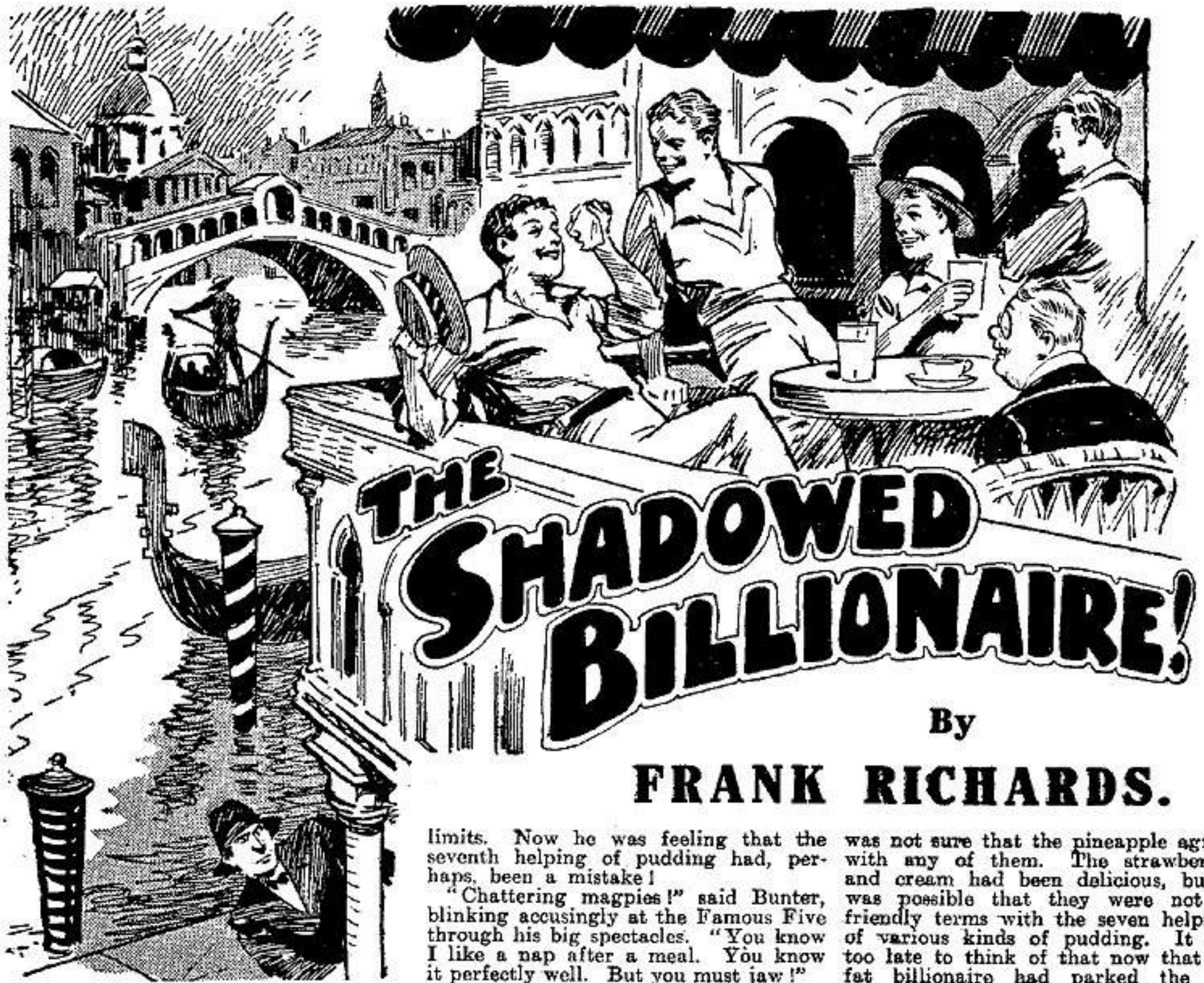
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THE SHADOWED BILLIONAIRE!

By

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Dropping!

"SHUT up!"
 "But—"
 "I said shut up!" said Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at Bunter.

They were Bunter's guests. In the best circles a host did not tell his guests to shut up.

But William George Bunter, the fat ornament of the Greyfriars Remove, had manners and customs of his own.

Billy Bunter had improved, in some ways, since he had become a billionaire. In other ways he hadn't. Sometimes his manners lacked polish.

That lack of polish was very much in evidence when Bunter was in a bad temper. He was in a bad temper now.

Bunter had dined, not wisely, but too well!

The fare on board the Kingfisher plane was of the very best. Bunter's man, Jarvis, had seen to that. Otherwise, he would have incurred the deep wrath of the Greyfriars billionaire.

The Famous Five had dined also. But they had had only one dinner each. Bunter had had several, one after another. There were many courses to the dinner, and it was Bunter's way to make a meal at each course. Where he parked it all was a puzzle to the steward of the Kingfisher. Indigestion supervened.

Generally, Bunter had the digestion of an ostrich. But even Bunter had his

limits. Now he was feeling that the seventh helping of pudding had, perhaps, been a mistake!

"Chattering magpies!" said Bunter, blinking accusingly at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. "You know I like a nap after a meal. You know it perfectly well. But you must jaw!"

"You fat, frabjous, fozzling, footling fathead—" began Bob Cherry.

"Shut up!"

"You flabby, frowsy freak!" said Johnny Bull.

"Shut up!"

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter—" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Shut up!" roared Bunter.

"You blithering, bloated, bandersnatch—" said Frank Nugent.

"That's what you fellows call manners, I suppose!" said Bunter, with a curl of his fat lip. "That's how you talk to a chap who's standing you an expensive holiday, in an expensive plane, regardless of expense. I'd like you to remember that you're not in the Remove passage at Greyfriars now. And shut up!"

"Look here, Bunter—" said Harry Wharton.

"When I say shut up I mean shut up!" said Billy Bunter. "Silence, see? Not a word! Just shut up!"

Billy Bunter leaned back in his seat and closed his eyes behind his big spectacles. As he had said, he wanted a nap after a meal. The trouble was that he couldn't get one. Hence his irritable temper. Really, it was not the conversation of the Famous Five that, like Macbeth, "murdered sleep." It was the dinner.

Not only had that seventh helping of pudding been a mistake. There had been other mistakes. Bunter doubted whether the pate-de-foie-gras wholly agreed with the turbot, and whether they both agreed with the cold chicken, the sausages, and the green peas. He

was not sure that the pineapple agreed with any of them. The strawberries and cream had been delicious, but it was possible that they were not on friendly terms with the seven helpings of various kinds of pudding. It was too late to think of that now that the fat billionaire had parked the lot. Anyhow, Bunter was feeling very uncomfortable, and slumber's chain refused to bind him.

The Famous Five shut up, as requested. They suppressed their feelings. They did not want to have to kick Bunter, if it could possibly be avoided.

For the umpteenth time since they had joined Bunter on that holiday trip they felt rather inclined to kick themselves for having done so.

But they could not take their leave of that hospitable host.

Had they been in Bunter's magnificent mansion they could have walked out. Had they been in one of his equally magnificent cars they could have told the chauffeur to stop. But they could not very well step out of an aeroplane at a height of 2,000 feet!

So, having shut up, they contented themselves with looking from the windows, and found plenty of interest in watching the vast panorama spread below.

The Kingfisher, flying steadily and sweetly, was approaching Venice. Only that morning it had left Paris. It had been a splendid day for the Famous Five. Bunter had not looked out once. He was not interested in a bird's-eye view of Europe. The Alps, to Bunter, were only a beastly range of mountains that he had had to mug up in geography class, with old Quelch, at Greyfriars. A view of the Dolomites did not attract him. He had never heard of the Dolomites, and didn't want to.

Venice, in the distance, looked like a tiny map, with the blue Adriatic beyond. Bunter loathed maps, or anything like maps. As for the Adriatic, it

was only a sea, and he had seen the sea at Margate. And, in point of fact, Bunter was funky of looking down from a plane. It gave him a sinking in his podgy inside to think of the remote possibility of falling. Even Bunter realised that a plane was at least as safe as any other method of travelling—safer than most. Still, he did not choose to look out.

"That's jolly old Venice!" said Bob Cherry, forgetting, for the moment, Bunter's stern injunction. "We shall be able to make out the Piazza soon, and the Doge's Palace, and—"

"Shut up!" from Bunter.
"And the Cathedral of San Marco."
"Shut up!"

Bob Cherry breathed hard, and shut up.

"Jaw, jaw, jaw!" said Bunter crossly. He closed his eyes again. But sleep refused to visit them. He had unfastened three buttons of his well-filled waistcoat without relief. He no longer had the slightest doubt that the seventh helping of pudding had been a mistake. He wondered, indeed, whether the sixth had.

"That's the jolly old lagoon!" Bob Cherry forgot again. "Can't see any of the giddy gondolas yet—"

"Shut up!"
There was silence.

The juniors could see the aerodrome now, and were aware that the Kingfisher was about to land. Bunter was unaware of that, or of anything else, except the trouble that was going on under his fat waistcoat between the turbot and the pate-de-foie-gras, or between the cold chicken and the strawberries and cream—or among the lot of them.

Gracefully as a bird, the big plane circled down.

Harry Wharton turned his head towards the fat junior sprawling in the seat.

"Bunter—"
"Shut up!"
"I was going to say—"
"Shut up!"
"But we're—"
"Jaw, jaw, jaw! Shut up!"

Bob Cherry, who had been frowning, grinned instead. He closed one eye at his comrades. They looked at him inquiringly. Bob's expression hinted that a jape was coming. They waited in silence while the Kingfisher, with a steady drone, settled down. When Bob spoke, at last, it was in a whisper.

"Hush! He's asleep! Don't wake him! Better for him to be asleep when it happens! Stand ready to jump when we bump! There's a chance of getting off alive if we jump quick! Never mind Bunter!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter, leaping up from his seat like a jack-in-the-box. He forgot indigestion now. "I say, you fellows, are we falling?"

"We're dropping."
"The dropfulness is terrific!"
"Ow! Wow! Help! I say, you fellows, save me—save me! Oh crikey! Oh, lor! Ow! Wow! Help!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Saving Bunter!

THE Kingfisher was dropping. There was no doubt about that. It had to drop, to reach the landing-place. That did not occur to Billy Bunter's fat brain. The word was full of terrors for Bunter. He roared.

"Help! Hold me! Get me a peashooter—I mean a parachute! Hasn't that fool Jarvis got a parachute ready? I'll sack him! Help!"

"Buck up, Bunter!" gasped Harry Wharton. "We—"

"Help!" roared Bunter. "Ow! We're falling! I can feel it going! Ow! Wow! I say, you fellows—Ooogh!"

The Kingfisher gave a little dip. Even the best of planes, chartered regardless of expense, could not run all the time as smoothly as a billiards ball. That little dip elicited a fearful howl from Bunter.

"Yarooooh!"
"Bunter, you ass—"
"Help! Jarvis! Where's that fool Jarvis? I want a parapet—I mean a parachute! Gimme a parachute! I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, my hat! There isn't a parachute handy!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What about an umbrella?"

"Ow! Help!"
"Buck up, Bunter!" gasped Nugent. "We're not dropping fast—lots of time—we'll save you yet!"

"The savefulness will be terrific."
"I say, you fellows, help me!" squealed Bunter. "After all I've done for you, you know! Shave me—I mean save me! I'll give you a million pounds if you shave my wife—"

"Oh crikey!"
"I mean save my life! Help!"
"Steady, the Buffs!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Lots of time, Bunter; the

Billy Bunter, in his impecunious days at Greyfriars School, had oftentimes heard of the worries of wealth, and thought that it was all rot! But he now discovers that being a billionaire is not all jam, when there are gangsters like "Tiger" Bronx at large!

pilot's doing his best. We've got five minutes at least."

"Sure of that?" gasped Bunter.
"Quite! Honest Injun! Time to get an umbrella for you to use as a parachute. Keep your pecker up! I'll answer for it that you'll land perfectly safely with an umbrella."

"Sure thing!" said Johnny Bull. "But what about us?"

"Don't you be a selfish beast, Bull!" howled Bunter. "Thinking of yourself, as usual! I—I say, you fellows, do you really think we've got five minutes?"

"Quite that," said Harry Wharton.
"There ought to be a parachute ready. I'll complain to the company! I'll sack that fool Jarvis! I'll—I'll—"

"An umbrella will do," stammered Bob. "Keep cool, old man. I tell you an umbrella will land you safe as houses! It's as good as a parachute, in these circumstances—"

"In these circumstances, certainly," said Wharton. "Not the slightest doubt about that!"

"Get me an umbrella, then! I say, Jarvis—That idiot Jarvis—I'll sack the fool! Jarvis—"

"Sir!"
Mr. Jarvis came along to the cabin. The sleek, soft-footed, smooth-faced manservant was generally as calm and composed as a sleek cat. Now he looked astonished and bewildered. Bunter's frantic roars almost drowned the drone of the engines. Why he was so wildly excited when the Kingfisher was making a perfect and easy landing was a mystery to Jarvis. He could only blink at his master.

"Get me an umbrella!" yelled Bunter. "Quick!"

"But it is not raining, sir!" Jarvis naturally supposed that Bunter thought it was raining at the aerodrome. Why he should think so when a gorgeous sunset was glowing in a bright September sky was a puzzle. But there seemed no other reason for wanting an umbrella.

"Fool!" roared Bunter.
"Sir!"
"Idiot!"
"Master William!"

"Get me an umbrella—quick! The biggest umbrella you can get hold of—quick, quick, quick!"

"Oh, certainly, sir!" gasped the bewildered Jarvis.

Jarvis was the perfect manservant. To hear was to obey. He dashed away, and came whizzing back with an umbrella in his smooth, sleek hand. Billy Bunter grabbed it from him.

"We shall want a rope!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Get a rope, Jarvis! You fool, you idiot, get a rope—quick! I'll sack you! Get a rope—get a rope! Hurry—quick!"

Jarvis darted away again, and darted back once more with a coil of cord from the baggage compartment. He seemed more bewildered than ever.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Lend a hand, you men!" gurgled Bob Cherry. "We've got to save Bunter! Never mind about ourselves; Bunter's the goods! Keep cool, old fat man; lots of time to get you fixed before we—we drop! Help here, you fellows!"

All the fellows helped. The big umbrella was set up behind Bunter's head, the handle jammed to the back of his fat neck.

Round his collar and round his podgy shoulders Bob Cherry wound the cord and knotted it securely.

No doubt had Bunter fallen the umbrella would have opened like a parachute, though it was extremely doubtful whether it would have acted like a parachute in any other respect.

But as Bunter was in no danger of falling that really did not matter.

With swift and efficient hands the juniors fastened that umbrella upright behind Bunter's fat head.

Jarvis gazed at them like a man mesmerised by the strange sight.

"Gentlemen," he gasped, "what—what—"

"It's all right, Jarvis," said Bob; "we're saving Bunter's life. I suppose you know that the plane is dropping?"

"Certainly, sir! But—"
"Well, Bunter will land alive and safe and sound when we've fixed him up."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Jarvis.

He backed out of the cabin. He contrived to control his well-trained features till he was out of Bunter's sight, but a gurgle floated back as he disappeared.

Bunter did not hear it or heed it. This was not, so far as Bunter could see, a laughing matter.

There was a light bump. The landing-wheels were on the ground, and the plane taxiing on the drome. Bunter yelled as he felt the bump.

"Ow! We're falling—"
"Keep cool—"

"Quick! Quick, you beasts! I say, you fellows, have you got it on tight? Are you sure it won't come off? I say, do you think we'd better open it—"

"It's all right; I've unfastened the catch; it will open when you jump!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Safe as houses, Bunter."

"Oh lor'! I'll never travel in a plane again! Oh crikey! I—I say, you fellows, do you feel sure it's safe?"

"Absolutely safe!"
"The safefulness is terrific."
"Oh dear! Oh lor'! Oh crumbs! Ow!"

The plane had come to a standstill. The steward came along to open the cabin door for the passengers to get out.

His eyes fell on Bunter and he jumped almost clear of the floor. The sight of a passenger with a big umbrella tied upright behind the back of his neck was rather a startling one. The steward of the Kingfisher had seen all sorts of passengers in his time, but never one got up like this before.

His eyes fairly goggled at Bunter. "Get the door open, steward!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Buck up!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped the man. He opened the door. Bob Cherry glanced out; he turned back again.

"All serene, Bunter! Quite easy! Keep your pecker up! Jump first, you men, to show him how easy it is. Get on—jump for your jolly old lives! I'll stay and help Bunter."

The juniors jumped one after another. As they only jumped on the steps from the cabin door to the drome it was not really a frightfully risky proceeding. They disappeared one after another from Bunter's sight till Wharton, Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were gone. Bob Cherry heroically stayed to help Bunter out.

"Go it, old fat bean!"
"Oh lor'!"
"Easy as winking! Now then—"
"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter blinked out of the doorway. His eyes almost popped through his big spectacles as he blinked and saw the drome buildings and the Italian staff and the steps, and ascertained that the plane was motionless on the ground.

"Go it!" said Bob.
"I—I say—"
"Jump!"
"But—but we're not falling—"
gasped Bunter.

"Who said we were falling?"
"You did, you beast!" yelled Bunter.
"I said dropping," corrected Bob, "and we were dropping—and now we've dropped! And I said you'd land safely with that jolly old umbrella—and so you will! Get on with it."
"You—you—you—"

Bob twirled the fat junior outside the doorway; then he gave the umbrella a shove and opened it, and it spread out over Bunter's head. Billy Bunter stumbled down the steps, red with rage. He realised now that his fat leg had been pulled. He did not realise that he had asked for it.

There was a shout of astonishment on the drome. Dark-skinned Italian mechanics and attendants and officials stared at Billy Bunter in utter wonder.

"Che cosa e'?"
"A che cosa serve?"
"E pazzo—e pazzo il signore!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Greyfriars juniors.

"Beast! Get this thing off! Rotters! Take it off! Oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Billy Bunter tottered down the steps, the umbrella wide open above his head.

He arrived on the ground, the cynosure of all eyes. He grabbed frantically at the improvised parachute. He had made a perfectly safe landing in it, as Bob had told him that he would. Certainly he would have made an equally safe landing without it! Now he chiefly wanted to get rid of it. But the open umbrella was beyond the reach of

his fat hands. The stick was firmly tied to his back. Bunter could no more get rid of it by his own unaided efforts than a dog could get rid of a can tied to its tail!

"I say you fellows—" he yelled.
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

"Beasts!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I jolly well knew there wasn't any danger!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Will you take this thing off?" shrieked Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Jarvish—where's that fool Jarvish—I'll sack him—Jarvish, come and get this thing off—you idiot, Jarvish—oh crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The Famous Five strolled off and left the billionaire to it. Surrounded by a grinning circle of Italian faces, Bunter had to remain with the umbrella on till Jarvish arrived at last to the rescue.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

In Venice!

"WARM!" said Bob Cherry.
"The warmth is grateful and comforting."

"But jolly!"
"No end jolly!" agreed Johnny Bull. Harry Wharton fanned himself with his straw hat. There was rather a thoughtful expression on the face of the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

The Famous Five were sitting in the balcony of the Hotel Palazzo in the sea-city of Venice. An awning kept off the direct rays of the blazing Italian sun. But it was hot. Before them was the Grand Canal with gondolas gliding up and down its sluggish waters, and the more or less musical cries of the dark-skinned gondoliers reached them as they sat. They had a glimpse in one direction of the Piazza of St. Mark with its famous Campanile and its swarming crowds; in another of the Rialto, that famous bridge where Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice walked and talked. Endless buildings, rising from the banks of endless canals, greeted the eyes in all directions, and beyond was the lagoon, and the Lido, and the blue Adriatic stretching away to the sky. Venice was lovely to look at, but in the early days of September it was warm—very warm!

The juniors were waiting for Bunter.

They had been glad of a rest after the long trip in the plane the previous day, and had not turned out quite so early as usual in the morning. Bunter, who never turned out early, was asleep—and indeed they fancied that they could hear him snoring from his room till it turned out that it was a tug hooting on the lagoon. Having breakfasted, the chums of the Remove had no objection to looking on the vivid scene from the high hotel balcony that almost overhung the Grand Canal, while they waited for Bunter. Still, they were not prepared to spend a whole morning sitting on the balcony.

"Penny for 'em, Harry!" said Frank Nugent with a smiling glance at the thoughtful face of the captain of the Remove.

Wharton smiled, too.
"I was thinking," he said. "I suppose I'm not the only fellow here a bit fed up with Bunter."

"Hardly!" grinned Bob.
"Fed up to the chin!" grunted Johnny Bull. "We were silly asses to come along! I said so all the time."

"It's a bit of a problem," said Harry slowly. "Bunter asked us to come with him on this trip because he's afraid of that lanky American man, Bronx. He really seems to have something to be afraid of, for there's no doubt that the man followed him to Paris and got hold of him there. I can't make it out, but there it is."

"It's something to do with his money!" said Bob.

"Of course! That's another jolly old mystery—where Bunter's got stacks of money from! Not our bizney exactly, but—"

"But jolly queer!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The queerfulness is truly terrific!" assented the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"And that man Jarvish has something to do with it," went on Wharton. "Bunter's let things drop which make it look as if he got all that money from Jarvish! Though how a manservant ever got hold of it beats me, and why he should give it to Bunter is a mystery that might beat Sherlock Holmes."

"It's fishy!" said Johnny Bull, tentatively.

"It must be Bunter's billions at the bottom of the trouble," said Harry. "We know that Bronx was after Jarvish at first, and frightened him out of his wits! Now he's leaving Jarvish alone, and he's after Bunter! But the fat duffer thinks he's dodged him by flying from Paris to Venice. I dare say he's right. If he's safe, he doesn't need us hanging on. But—"

"If he wants us, he can be civil, I suppose!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Musn't ask too much of Bunter!" grinned Bob. "He was a bit cross after dinner yesterday, but anybody who parked that dinner might have been cross afterwards. And he never had any manners."

"And he's doing us well!" said Nugent with a smile. "Trips in planes, and the fat of the land!"

"The fact is," said Harry, "if I thought that Bunter was quite safe from that lanky American, I'd suggest chucking it. We could have a few quiet, nice days in Venice without the help of Bunter's billions. We really don't want his jolly old billions. On the other hand, if it turned out that he was in any danger, we should feel that we'd let him down. So I really don't know what we'd better do."

"Stick it as long as we can," suggested Bob Cherry. "The fact is, we're bound to stick to Bunter if he's in danger. And he was in danger in Paris—and may be again if that American finds out that he's here."

Harry Wharton nodded.
"The stickfulness is the proper caper!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"As long as we can stand it!" grunted Johnny Bull. "But I shall kick him, sooner or later—I feel sure of that!"

Harry Wharton looked at his watch. It was eleven. The juniors had received a message, through Jarvish, that Bunter would be ready to go out presently, and that they were to wait! They had waited! Now they considered that they had waited long enough.

"We can't spend the whole morning waiting for Bunter!" remarked the captain of the Remove. "Better send him a message! There's the waiter—he can go and tell Bunter."

A waiter had brought out coffee for another guest on the balcony. He came up bowing at a sign from Wharton.

"Anybody speak Italian?" asked Harry.

"Not a lot!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I can say ice-creamo and Saffronillo,

and tutti frutti and macaroni. But that's not enough of the language to travel on."

"Spick English, sar!" said the waiter cheerfully. "All garzoni in zis hotel speak small English."

"Oh, good! Go up to Mr. Bunter's room—"

"Il ricco signore!" said the waiter. "Si, signore! Il signore Buntero!"

The whole of the gigantic Hotel Palazzo knew that Billy Bunter was a ricco signore—a rich gentleman! Bunter was not likely to leave anybody in doubt on that point.

"That's it—the signore Buntero!" said Harry with a smile. "Go and tell him we've waited for him, and now we're going out."

"Si, signore!"

The waiter departed. The juniors

Bunter with his unlimited financial resources.

The waiter came back. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him inquiringly. The man seemed to hesitate to deliver Bunter's answer to their message.

"Seen Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Si, signore!"

"Well, what did he say?"

The waiter coughed.

"The signore say—hem—he say—um—he say you wait till he shall be ready, also that you shut up, sir!" stammered the garzone.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Dear old Bunter!" said Bob.

"Well, that's that!" said Harry.

"Come on! I fancy Bunter thinks that he's safe from the lanky American now, and that he can be checky! We'll give him a rest for a bit. Let's get out."

through his big spectacles for the Grayfriars fellows. Bunter had sent back a message by the waiter that they could wait till he was ready, and shut up; this, Bunter considered, would do them good! Apparently, he expected to find them waiting, in a shut-up state. Instead of which, they were not to be seen.

"I say, you fellows, where are you?" hooted Bunter. "Jarvish! Where's that fool Jarvish? Oh, here you are! Where are the fellows, Jarvish?"

"I think the young gentlemen have left the hotel, sir!" said Jarvish.

"Gone out!" ejaculated Bunter.

"I think so, sir."

"But I told them to wait!"

"Indeed, sir!"

"I distinctly told them to wait!" said the fat billionaire. "Do you mean to



With the umbrella wide open above his fat head, Billy Bunter stumbled down the landing steps, red with rage. There was a shout of astonishment on the 'drome, as he arrived on the ground, the cynosure of all eyes. "I say, you fellows!" shrieked Bunter. "Take this thing off!" "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

left their seats and stood by the balustrade looking down from the balcony on the canal and its craft, while they waited for the man to return. Below there was a gondola hooked on, and Jarvish was standing in conversation with a Venetian gondolier. A few words floated up to them, but they did not understand them, as the valet was speaking in Italian.

Jarvish was undoubtedly a model manservant and very useful to a rich young gentleman like Bunter on his travels. In Paris he had spoken French like a native. Here he was speaking Italian. It was really surprising that that excellent valet, with so many gifts, should have no ambition beyond serving William George Bunter. So far as the Famous Five could see, Billy Bunter was not the kind of master to endear himself to any manservant. Jarvish, however, appeared to be inseparably attached to him. It was still more surprising, if, as the juniors suspected, it was Jarvish who was supplying

The juniors went down. Jarvish had disappeared into the hotel; but the gondolier he had been speaking with was still there, smoking a cigarette, as he stood by his craft.

"Here's a gondola!" said Bob. "Jump in!"

But the waiting gondolier, with incomprehensible Italian but comprehensible gestures, made them understand that that particular gondola was engaged. No doubt Jarvish had engaged it for Bunter—when it should please that lordly youth to stir forth. However, there were plenty of gondolas to be had—and Bob waved a hand to one that was passing, looking for custom.

The gondolier, wielding his enormous oar, swerved in to the landing-place, and the chums of the Remove stepped aboard the long, low craft. It glided away down the Grand Canal.

Half an hour later Billy Bunter rolled out into the balcony of the Hotel Palazzo, and blinked round him

say, Jarvish, that they've had the neck to go out on their own, after I distinctly told them to wait?"

"It appears so, sir!"

Billy Bunter breathed hard and deep.

"I'll talk to 'em at lunch!" he said.

But Billy Bunter did not talk to them at lunch. Lunch-time came—but the Famous Five did not come. Lunch was over, and still they had not returned.

Bunter, as usual, napped after lunch—and then inquired whether the beasts had come in. The beasts hadn't. The beasts, apparently, had lunched on their own somewhere in Venice, regardless of the fact that they were missing first-class fare, provided by a billionaire regardless of expense. And Billy Bunter, at last, rolled into his gondola, and went out to look for them—with the intention of telling them in the plainest language, when he found them, what he thought of them.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Left!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Five fellows, with their straw hats on the backs of their heads, were looking up at the Campanile in the square of St. Mark. The Piazza of San Marco shimmered in the hot sunshine. Under the awnings of innumerable cafes round the great Place people sat at little tables, sipping cooling drinks. Pigeons hopped about; the calling of the gondoliers came from the lagoon and the canals; overhead, an aeroplane buzzed—a sight which, as Bob Cherry remarked, would have surprised the ancient Doges of Venice, could they have come back and beheld it.

Harry Wharton & Co. had had quite a pleasant day, so far, rooting about the ancient City of the Sea. They had lunched in a little Italian trattoria, at the cost of a few lire; and really did not miss the Greyfriars billionaire and his billions. It was, in fact, quite a relief to be at a safe distance from both the billionaire and the billions.

But as the mountain did not come to Mahomet, Mahomet had come to the mountain. As they stood admiring the graceful Campanile, the fat voice of the Greyfriars billionaire fell on their ears from behind.

They looked round.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" groaned Bob Cherry.

"Oh dear!" said Frank Nugent.

"Turned up again!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The turnupfulness is preposterous!"

"Oh! You, fatty!" said Harry Wharton.

This greeting could not be considered enthusiastic.

Billy Bunter blinked severely at the Famous Five.

"I've been looking for you fellows!" he said accusingly. "It's pretty thick, I think, to give a fellow the trouble of looking for you! I call it cheek!"

"You fat ass—"

"Shut up, Cherry!"

"You blithering dummy—"

"Shut up, Bull! I'm speaking!"

"You generally are!" remarked Wharton.

"Shut up, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Come on, you men!" he said, and the Famous Five sauntered across the square, in the direction of the Doge's Palace.

"I say, you fellows! Don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you!" roared Bunter.

The juniors walked on. Bunter blinked after them with a wrathful blink, and rolled in pursuit. He had the vials of wrath all ready to be poured on their devoted heads; but the chums of the Remove did not appear interested in what Bunter thought of them. Like Felix, they kept on walking.

"Hold on, you beasts!" howled Bunter, puffing and blowing in the hot sunshine. "Hold on, I tell you!"

The five accelerated.

"Cheeky beasts!" hooted Bunter.

He puffed and blew in pursuit. At the Doge's Palace he overtook them. His fat face was red, and bedewed with perspiration. But he had no breath left with which to tell the quintet what he thought of them for the moment. He could only gasp and grunt as he rolled into the Doge's Palace after them.

The sights of that ancient palace of the old rulers of Venice were interesting enough to the Famous Five. A

guide immediately attached himself to the party; that was inevitable. Billy Bunter was not keenly interested in that relic of the ancient glories of Venice; but he was glad to get out of the sunshine, at least. But Bunter did not like stairs.

"I say, you fellows, wharrer we going up all these beastly steps for?" he demanded.

"We're going to see the jolly old Bridge of Sighs!" answered Bob Cherry.

"Si, signore!" said the guide. "Ponte dei Sospiri—ze bridge of ze sighs—by zat bridge ze prisoners pass from ze Palazzo to ze prison—"

"Never heard of it!" grunted Bunter. "Time you did, then!" remarked Nugent.

"I've got something to say to you fellows—"

"Keep it bottled up."

"Beast!"

The juniors arrived at—or rather, in—the Bridge of Sighs. It was covered in, with windows that gave a brief view of the canal below. It had been a tragic spot in old days, well deserving its name; and the juniors thought of the many weary feet that had passed over those old stones, passing from judgment in the Doge's Palace to the grim prison on the other side of the canal. Bunter blinked round disdainfully.

"Is this it?" he demanded.

"The very identical article!" said Bob.

"It's small!" said Bunter. "What the thump do they mean by calling it a bridge of size? It's no size at all."

"Oh, my hat! Not size—sighs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh? What's the difference between size and size?" snorted Bunter. "From the name, you'd think it was something like the Forth Bridge. No size at all—beastly poky little place."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed it I see anything to cackle at! If you fellows are going to cackle at everything I say—"

"S-I-G-H-S, sighs!" howled Bob. "The sportsmen are supposed to have sighed a lot when they were pushed across this spot. Got it now?"

"What rot!" said Bunter.

"That old merchant Casanova must have come across here," remarked Johnny Bull.

"Who was Casanova?" grunted Bunter.

"Celebrated bad character who got away from the Doge's prison in the jolly old days when Venice was a republic."

"Oh! Was it ever a republic?" asked Bunter.

"Yes, ass!"

"Isn't it now?"

"Oh crikey! No, it isn't now; it's part of the kingdom of Italy."

"Oh! Is Italy a kingdom?" asked Bunter. "I thought Mussolini was boss."

"So he is," grinned Bob. "Kings play second fiddles in these days."

"Well, we've seen enough of this!" said Bunter. "Let's go and see the Doge."

"The whatter?" yelled Bob.

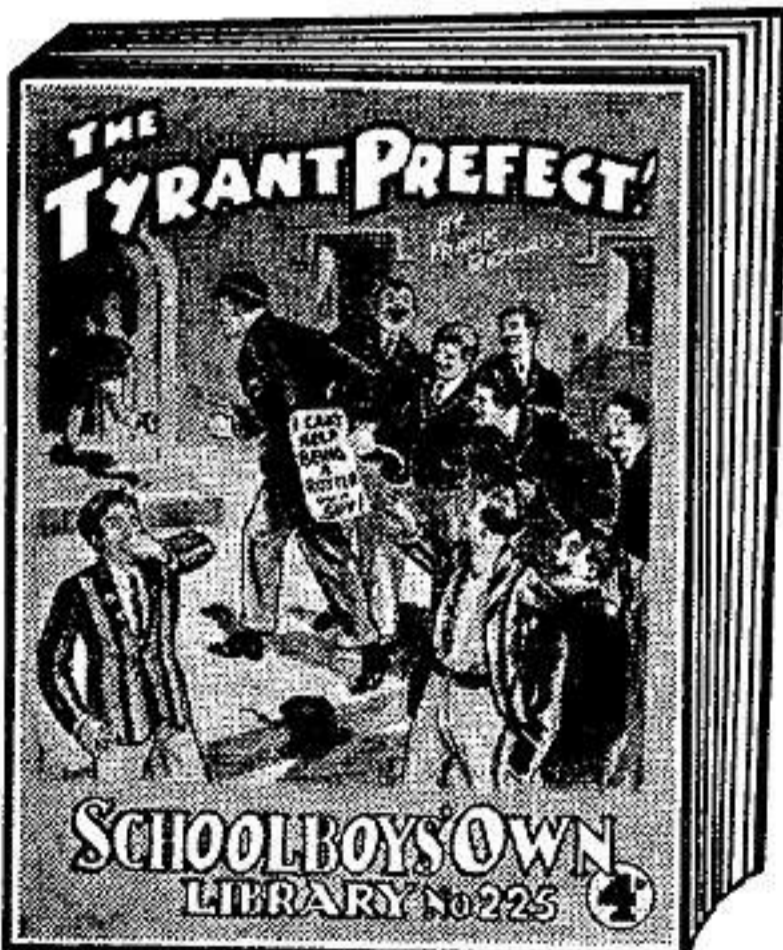
"The Doge," said Bunter, blinking at him. "I suppose you've heard of the Doge of Venice. It's in Shakespeare."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cackling again!" sneered Bunter. "I can tell you that you're only showing your ignorance! I know all about the Doge of Venice. I'm not going to leave without seeing the Doge."

"You'll have to go back, then!" grinned Nugent.

"Well, let's go back! I'm ready to



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go back! I'm fed-up with this stuffy hole!"

"I mean, you'll have to go back on a time machine!" chuckled Nugent. "There hasn't been a Doge of Venice for about a century and a half."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

He realised that he had arrived in Venice rather too late to see the Doge!

"Well, look here, you fellows, let's go and have tea!" said Bunter.

"We haven't seen the prisons yet."

"I don't want to see the prisons!"

"We do!"

"Now, look here, if you're going to be cheeky——"

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton.

"Just you listen to me!" said Billy Bunter. "I've got something to say to you fellows! I'm fed-up with you!"

"Same here!"

"The samefulness is terrific!"

"I'm standing you a splendid and expensive holiday!" said Bunter, with a devastating blink at the Famous Five. "Expense is no object to me; I'm rolling in money, and I'm a generous chap, as you well know! Still, facts are facts. I'm standing you——"

"And we're standing you!" remarked Johnny Bull. "And you're not an easy chap to stand, Bunter!"

"Don't be cheeky, Bull! We've got to have this clear!" said Bunter. "I'm standing you a magnificent holiday! Everything of the best! Expense no object! If you want it to go on, you've got to be civil! You've got to do as you're told! I insist on that!"

"Is that the lot?"

"You cleared off this morning when I sent you orders to wait! You needn't deny it—you did! That mustn't happen again!"

"Finished?"

"No! You make out," continued Bunter scornfully, "that I want fellows to protect me because that lanky American is after me! Well, that beast Bronx was left in Paris, and he won't know where I'm gone. Not that I'm afraid of him. I've got pluck, I hope."

"'Hopo springs eternal in the human breast'!" said Bob Cherry gravely.

"Anyhow, we're done with him now. If you fellows are trying to make out that I want you, you can wash it out—see? I'm going on treating you kindly and generously, but only on condition—the strict condition—that you do as you're told! Take it or leave it!"

"Right!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll leave it! Good-bye!"

"Mind, I mean it!" roared Bunter.

"So do we! Ta-ta, old fat bean!"

The Famous Five followed the guide across the Bridge of Sighs. Billy Bunter was left blinking after them through his big spectacles. He rolled away at last in search of tea. When he took his gondola back to the Hotel Palazzo, he took it by himself. That evening the Greyfriars billionaire dined in solitary state.

It was quite a puzzle to Bunter. Apart from his own charms and fascinations, there were the billions! He concluded that the cheeky beasts would turn up for bed-time. But the cheeky beasts didn't. And when, in the morning, he asked Jarvis where they were, Jarvis could only reply that he didn't know. Amazing and incredible as it was, it looked as if the Famous Five had turned down the Greyfriars billionaire, and turned him down for good. Bunter had told them to take it or leave it—and they had left it!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

On the Lagoon at Night!

"ARROSTO di manzo! Si! Bistocca! Si, si!"

Signor Grubbi, patron of the Albergo Oriente, had little English. But he knew the ways of the English. He knew that those strange islanders subsisted almost wholly on roast beef, which they ate nearly raw in their land of eternal fog. He bowed, smiled, and spread out both dusky hands, which were rather in need of a wash, to show that he understood perfectly.

GREYFRIARS CARTOONS

By HAROLD SKINNER.

No. 14.—MONSIEUR HENRI CHARPENTIER.

(French Master at Greyfriars.)

Be it masters, seniors or fags, our lightning artist is equal to the occasion. The subject of this week's effort is Monsieur Charpentier—more commonly known as "Froggy"!



As soon as the French lesson starts The Juniors begin cutting capers. Mossoo has the kindest of hearts, Which makes him fair game to the japers.

He pleads till his features are black, And his eyes nearly burst from their sockets. But still they pin cards on his back, Or drop rats and mice in his pockets!

"Now, I wonder," remarked Bob Cherry, "what he's talking about?"

"The wonderfulness is terrific!" "Si, signore! Molto arrosto di manzo!" said Signor Grubbi; and he streamed Italian at the waiter, who was even more in need of a wash than the patron.

The juniors smiled, and waited. The Albergo Oriente was not an hotel on the same lines as the gorgeous building in which Bunter the Billionaire occupied the best suite.

It was quite a small hotel, with a view of the lagoon, and a smell of cooking that permeated every part.

But the Famous Five had selected it as their abode during their stay in Venice. They were not billionaires, and

not even billionaires, and they had to consider ways and means.

Certainly they could not afford the immense bills of the Hotel Palazzo, trifling as they were to Bunter the Billionaire.

Moreover, they agreed that, while they were in Italy, it was a good wheeze to do as the Italians did—to some extent, at least; a big hotel, almost entirely populated by tourists, was hardly a sample of the country.

At the Hotel Oriente there was no electric light, no lift, no gold-laced head porter, no army of uniformed attendants. On the other hand, there was no Bunter! That compensated for all other deficiencies.

Billy Bunter, in the belief that the mysterious gangster from Chicago had lost his track, had considered that he was in a position to put on "side."

The Famous Five, on the other hand, in the belief that Bunter was no longer in danger, considered that they were in a position to leave the fat billionaire to his own devices.

If Bunter did not want them, certainly they did not want Bunter; on that point there was "no shadow of doubt—no possible, probable shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever!"

So, after a day among the countless attractions of Venice, they had looked for a cheap hotel and found one; and here they were, sitting at a table, with a rather dingy cloth on it, in the "sala di pranzo," and more than ready for the "pranzo" when it was served.

And they had not "dressed" for dinner, which would have horrified Bunter the Billionaire. Evening dress would have been as much out of place at the Albergo Oriente as a pullover at the Hotel Palazzo. And they did not mind at all—in fact, they were rather glad to get out of the trouble of changing.

A "facchino" had fetched their bags from the Hotel Palazzo; they had only one suitcase each, not being encumbered with an infinitude of baggage like the Greyfriars billionaire. Two rooms had been engaged, one with two beds and one with three. The appointments were of the plainest—which was a tremendous change after "billionairing" with Bunter. Nevertheless, the chums of the Remove were looking and feeling very merry and bright.

"Here it comes, whatever it is!" remarked Frank Nugent.

Beppo, the waiter, arrived with a large dish. Something on it was smoking hot. Signor Grubbi smiled and bowed and gesticulated.

"Arrosto di manzo!" he beamed. "Va bene, non e vero? Si!"

"Bistocca Inglese!" said Beppo. "Rosbif!" Signor Grubbi broke into what he fondly believed to be English.

"Yes! Rosbif! All English love! Si! Bistocca!"

"Oh! Roast beef!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Si, si! Rosbif!" smiled Signor Grubbi. "In Italiano, arrosto di manzo! In Engleesh, ros-bif!"

"Bistocca," said Beppo. "Biff-teck!" The juniors looked at that roast beef. From motives of politeness, as became strangers in a strange land, they even tried to eat some.

"I didn't know they had horses in Venice, except the bronze horses sticking up over the Piazza!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"We know now!" said Johnny Bull. If it were beef—which the Greyfriars tourists could not help doubting—it did not bear even the most distant family

resemblance to the roast beef of Old England.

To the surprise of Signor Grubbi, the juniors discarded the rosbif! But they made an excellent dinner of fish fresh from the sea, macaroni with tomato sauce, and omelet with jam; and gratified Signor Grubbi and Beppo by pronouncing that it was "eccelente."

After which, they walked out to see Venice by night, taking a gondola which bore them up one canal and down another in the strange city where, for the most part, canals took the place of streets.

That night they slept as soundly in their rooms at the Albergo Oriente, as they had slept the previous night in the magnificent apartments of the Hotel Palazzo.

They turned out bright and cheerful in the sunny morning.

That morning they "did" the Rialto; and after lunch hired a gondola to take them out to the Lido.

The Lido was a blaze of burning sunshine, and the chums of the Remove joined the innumerable swarm of bathers. Then there was tea, and the gondola back to Venice in the cool of the evening.

By that time the Famous Five had almost forgotten the existence of Bunter the Billionaire. But they were fated to be reminded of him.

"Jolly, isn't it?" said Bob Cherry as the gondola floated slowly under the glimmering stars in the summer sky. The tall figure of the gondolier, handling his huge oar, stood black against the lights of Venice.

"Topping!" agreed Harry Wharton. "Makes a fellow feel poetical, what?" said Bob. "Listen to the jolly old music!"

There were many gondolas on the dusky waters. The lights gleamed like fireflies in the summer dusk. From one that floated near came the music of a mandolin and a voice singing:

"Belle nuit, O nuit d'amour
Souris a nos ivresses!"

Music and voice passed on.

"That's the jolly old barcarole from Hoffmann," said Bob Cherry. "I'd sing it, if I remembered the words and the music."

"There's a lot to be said for a bad memory!" remarked Johnny Bull reflectively.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fathead!" said Bob cheerfully. "I do remember one song about Venice—it goes like this—"

And Bob burst into melody.

"Lights are gleaming on the Grand Canal,
Come, oh come, and see the carnival!
Music echoes through the summer night,
And Venice rings with a wild delight."

"I forget the rest!" said Bob regretfully.

"We're in luck!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"The luckfulness is terrific."

"Unpoetical blighter!" said Bob. "A chap could make up poetry on a night like this! Lagoon and moon, stars and silvery bars, you know. What about this?"

"Drifting and swinging,
Across the lagoon,
Floating and singing—"

"A lot out of tune!" suggested Johnny Bull, as the poet paused for the

last line, which did not seem to come readily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fathead! Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob forgot all about poetry as a gondola loomed out of the dusk and bumped on the side of the juniors' craft, which rocked violently, breaking up the reflection of the stars in the lagoon into myriads of glittering fragments.

"Look out—"

"What the thump—"

There was a shout from the gondolier.

"Abbate cura!"

The juniors were all on their feet. They supposed for a moment that the collision had been an accident. But a pair of hands from the other gondola were holding the two boats together, and they floated side by side. A slouch-hatted head rose in the dusk, and there was a glimmer of metal. And a nasal voice, that the Greyfriars juniors remembered only too well, drawled, in cool but menacing tones:

"I guess you're the bunch I been hunting! Say, I want that fat gink, Bunter! Hand him over, or I'll say there's going to be a spot of trouble, and somebody is going to get hurt. Just a few!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bronx!"

It was the Chicago gangster!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Man Overboard!

"TIGER" BRONX towered over the low gunwale of the gondola.

Two dark-skinned men in his craft were holding on now, and the juniors' gondolier stared at them blankly.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood staring at the lean, long-limbed man from Chicago. They could make out his hard, lean face, and glittering slits of eyes, the unlighted cigar stuck in the corner of his gash of a mouth, under the brim of his slouched hat. They had almost forgotten Bunter, and quite forgotten Mr. Bronx. This sudden reminder was rather unpleasant.

There was a revolver in the gangster's hand, and its muzzle bore full on the group of Greyfriars fellows. They were far out from land; the lights of Venice winked from a distance across the dusky lagoon. Taken utterly by surprise by the sudden apparition of the gangster, whom they had last seen in Paris, the chums of the Remove could only stare at him blankly.

"You hear me whisper!" said Mr. Bronx. "You hear me coo? I'm mentioning that I want that fat geck!"

"You thundering rascal!" began Johnny Bull.

"Can it!" interrupted Mr. Bronx. "I'll say I've got no use for chewing the rag! I want Bunter."

"So you've followed us to Italy?" said Harry Wharton.

"You've said it!" agreed Mr. Bronx. "I guess that fat clam had the wind up a few, and then some, lighting out like that in the plane! But I'll tell a man that Tiger Bronx isn't the guy to be left! Nope! Not so's you'd notice it."

"You ruffianly rotter," said Bob. "If Bunter was here, you wouldn't get him, gun or no gun! But he's not here, thank goodness!"

"Guess agin!" said Mr. Bronx derisively. "I've sure got it clear that the whole bunch of you arrove at the drome by the plane! Yep! I been hunting you ever since, and you was kind enough to sing out and tell me where to pick you up! Now you're cinched, and don't you forget it."

Evidently the voices of the Greyfriars fellows had reached the gangster in the silence of the lagoon. Bob Cherry's vocal efforts, no doubt, had drawn him in the direction of their gondola.

Knowing nothing of the parting between the Greyfriars billionaire and the Famous Five, Bronx naturally expected to find the fat junior with them.

Had Bunter been there this assuredly was the chance Bronx had been looking for; far from the shore, on the lagoon at night, far from help.

Fortunately, Bunter the Billionaire was not there.

"I'm waiting!" said Bronx, in a menacing voice. "I guess I ain't waiting long! You handing over the goods?"

"Signore!" The gondolier found his voice. "Che cosa e? Che—"

"Can it!" snapped Bronx, and he made a gesture with his revolver at the startled gondolier. "You sit this one out, Pietro!"

"Dio mio!" gasped the gondolier, and he jumped away from the threatening barrel. In amazed alarm, he retreated to the furthest extremity of the gondola.

"Now, then, where's that fat jay?" demanded Mr. Bronx.

"If he was here," said Harry Wharton quietly, "we'd take the chance of your gun, you rascal! But he's not here."

"I guess if you take the chance of this gat, honey, you won't live long enough to write home about it!" said the gangster. "I'll say I'm coming to collect the goods."

He rapped out a few words in Italian to the men in his craft, apparently an order to hold on. Then he jumped into the juniors' gondola.

In the starlight it was easy enough to see that Bunter was not with the Famous Five. The gangster concluded that he was hiding in the little cabin amidships. He glared into it. The interior was dark.

"Say, you Bunter!" he rapped. "You want to get a move on! You want to hop out, and you want to do it quick! You hear me chirp?"

There was no answer.

The gangster plunged into the little cabin and groped. But he groped in vain. There was nobody in the cabin.

He emerged again into the starlight, his brows knitted blackly under the slouched hat. He had to believe now that Bunter the Billionaire was not on board the gondola.

His slits of eyes glittered at the Greyfriars juniors, over the half-raised revolver.

"Say, you, Wharton, where's that gink Bunter?" he snapped.

"Find out!" answered the captain of the Greyfriars Remove curtly.

"You don't want to give me any back-chat," said the gangster, in a tone of menace. "I've plugged guys for less'n that, back in Chicago. I reckoned I'd find that all-fired fat clam along with you. I want Bunter!"

"No accounting for tastes!" said Bob Cherry.

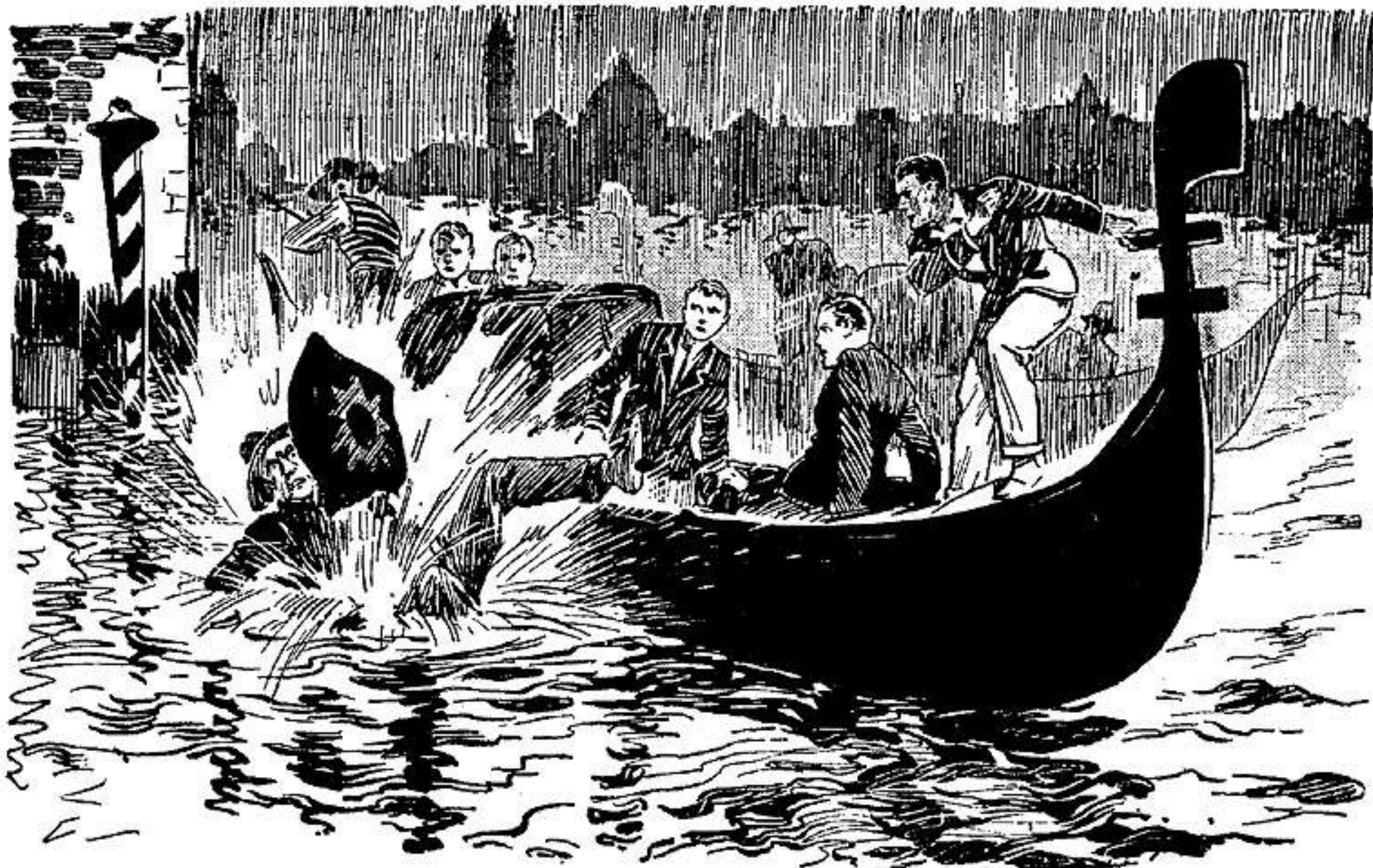
"Hay?" barked Bronx.

"Never heard of anybody else wanting him!" explained Bob.

"The wantfulness of the esteemed Bunter is not terrifically general!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Tiger Bronx set his thin lips hard. He had taken it for granted that the fat billionaire was with the other Greyfriars fellows, and the disappointment was unexpected and disconcerting. He had no use for the Famous Five—it was Bunter the Billionaire he wanted.

He stood eyeing the juniors. Gathered at the stern in a group, they eyed him in return. The gondolier was in the tip of the bow, blinking in



Hurree Singh's dusky hand came from behind him, with the leather cushion in it. Whiz! Before the gangster knew what was happening, the cushion crashed on the side of his head. Bronx went over sideways, staggering helplessly, and pitched over the low gunwale of the gondola. "Good old Inky!" gasped Harry Wharton.

alarmed astonishment at the gangster. There was no help from him, if the schoolboys had needed it.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh had picked up a leather cushion from the stern seat while the gangster was groping in the cabin. Now, as he stood, he held it behind him, his dark eyes watching Bronx like a cat's.

"I guess," said Bronx, in a low, savage tone, "that you're going to put me wise where to cinch that fat guy, Bunter! You've left him ashore in Venice—"

"That was an easy one to guess!" remarked Bob.

"Where'd you leave him?"

"On shore!" answered Bob.

"Whereabouts on shore, you geck?"

"You want to know exactly where he is?"

"Yep!"

"Then I'd better tell you—"

"You better!" agreed Bronx, with a scowl. "I'll say it won't be healthy for you if you don't put me wise."

"Shut up, you ass!" growled Johnny Bull. "You're not going to send that scoundrel after Bunter."

"Can it, you!" snarled Bronx. "You get on with it, big boy!"

"You want to know exactly where Bunter is—" said Bob.

"Sure!"

"The very identical spot?"

"Yep! Get on with it!" snapped Bronx. "Where is he?"

"In his skin!" said Bob gravely.

"Wha-a-a-t?" ejaculated the gangster. "In his what?"

"Skin!"

The gangster stared blankly at Bob Cherry for a moment or two. Then as he realised that the cheery Bob was pulling his leg, a black and savage look came over his hard, lean face.

"I guess you don't want to give me guff!" he said menacingly. "It ain't healthy, not a whole heap, to hand out

back-chat to Tiger Bronx! Nope! I guess you'll talk turkey when I've held your cabeza under water for a few seconds—hay?"

He made a stride at Bob Cherry, and grasped at him with his left hand, the revolver in his right.

Bob jumped back to the extreme after-end of the gondola, and the gangster, grasping at him, followed him up.

Hurree Singh's dusky hand came from behind him, with the leather cushion in it.

Whiz!

The Nabob of Bhanipur was only a few feet from the gangster as he buzzed the cushion at him. Before Bronx knew what was happening, it crashed on the side of his head.

He went over sideways, staggering helplessly, and pitched over the low gunwale of the gondola.

Splash!

The juniors had a view of a pair of long legs whisking in the air, and then Tiger Bronx shot out of view in the waters of the lagoon.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Good old Inky!"

"Good man!" gasped Bob.

There was a shout from the two boatmen in the other craft.

The man from Chicago had gone in deep and disappeared from sight. To the relief of the juniors, however, his head came up a few yards away. His slouched hat floated away over the water. His dripping head emerged, and he struggled and swam. The two boatmen let go the gondola, and pulled to his rescue.

"Get going!" shouted Harry Wharton to the gondolier.

"Andante avanti!" called out Nugent, who had already picked up the Italian for "go on!"

The gondolier swept his enormous oar through the water. The gondola glided

on towards the winking lights of Venice. It moved with unusual swiftness. The gondolier was rather anxious to get away from the spot.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked back.

They saw the drenched and dripping gangster dragged from the lagoon by his two boatmen. He sprawled into his boat and they heard his panting gasps.

But that was the last they saw and heard of him.

The gondola glided on, and the gangster's boat disappeared into the dusk of the lagoon astern.

Whether Bronx pursued them or not, they never knew. A quarter of an hour later they landed at the Riva Schiavone, having seen nothing more of the lean man from Chicago.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Sees It All!

"MASTER WILLIAM—"
"Toast!" said Bunter.
"Certainly, sir! But—"
"Toast!" repeated Bunter severely.

It was morning, and Bunter was breakfasting in bed. The tall windows of his magnificent apartment were open, letting in a flood of sunshine. From below came the calling of gondoliers on the Grand Canal.

Propped up on pillows and cushions, taking his fat ease, the Greyfriars billionaire was enjoying life in his own way.

A "cameriere" stood at attention, supplying his wants—which were many and various.

Bunter's breakfast tray was well laden. The cameriere had two more trays at hand, also well laden. Brekker with Bunter was no mere snack! He believed in laying a solid foundation to begin the day on.

Jarvis had gone into the adjoining dressing-room, where a telephone-bell had rung. He came back in time to hear that Bunter wanted more toast.

"Pane tostato!" said Jarvis to the cameriere.

"Si, signore!"

More toast was provided. Bunter munched it with satisfaction. Then he gave Jarvis gracious permission to speak.

"The telephone, sir——" said Jarvis.

"Who is it?" yawned Bunter. "I wasn't expecting a call! Perhaps some of my titled relations may be in Venice, though."

"Master Wharton is on the phone, sir——"

"That cheeky ass!"

"Yes, sir! He desires to speak to you——"

"I can hardly speak to him, Jarvis, when I am breakfasting!" said the fat billionaire. "Tell him to ring up again in half an hour."

"Very good, sir."

Jarvis went back to the dressing-room with that reply. There was an extension of the telephone to Bunter's bedside, and he had only to stretch out a fat hand and take the receiver. That, however, would have meant interrupting breakfast which was hardly to be thought of. Moreover, the fat billionaire considered that it was rather a good idea to keep the cheeky beast waiting.

Bunter grinned over his breakfast.

During the whole of the previous day he had heard nothing of the Famous Five. But he was not surprised to hear from them.

Not at all! He had no doubt that they had, by this time, deeply repented of their folly in turning down a billionaire. So far from being surprised at their wishing to get in touch with him again, he was only surprised at their having left it so long.

Obviously—to Bunter—no fellows would be duffers enough to let a billionaire go if they could help it.

They were sorry for their cheek, and wanted Bunter to take them up again: that was the idea! And Bunter, of course, was going to be very haughty! He was not going to forgive them in a hurry! Not Bunter!

Breakfast was over at last, and the fat billionaire leaned back on his pillows, breathing hard. The cameriere, with the help of a couple more, carried away the trays and the wreck of the breakfast.

Buzzzz! came from the adjoining room.

"I suppose that's Wharton again!" drawled Bunter. "You can put me through this time, Jarvis."

"Very good, sir."

Jarvis went to take the call. It was Harry Wharton's voice that came through, perhaps to Jarvis's surprise. Bunter fully expected the Famous Five to come after the billions; but his "man" had judged them rather differently. Jarvis was both surprised and interested; and having put Bunter through, he remained in the dressing-room to overhear what was said at the instrument there.

Bunter, with a receiver in his fat

hand, chuckled. He put it to a fat ear, and Wharton's voice was heard.

"That you, Bunter?"

"Oh, yes!" drawled Bunter. "Anything wanted?"

"Why the thump couldn't you answer me before, you lazy, fat ass?" snapped the captain of the Remove. "Do you think I want to waste a whole morning hanging about a telephone box?"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You fat duffer! Look here——"

"I decline to listen to this sort of thing, Wharton! If you want to speak to me, you'd better be civil!" said Bunter into the mouthpiece. "I may overlook your dashed cheek, and I may not! I'll think it over, at any rate! If you're going to apologise——"

"You born idiot!"

"Otherwise, you can't expect me to take you up again!" said Bunter firmly. "I'm prepared to be kind to you, and generous to you. I've a kind heart, and I always was a generous chap, as you know. But——"

"Will you listen to me?"

"Wait till I've finished! I've treated you well—I may say, magnificently. You've been ungrateful, just as Toddy was when I gave him a splendid time at Margate. I'm accustomed to ingratitude——"

"Oh, you blitherer——"

"But there's a limit! The limit has been reached! Make a proper apology, and agree to behave yourselves, and I may take you up again! As for making out that you were protecting me from that man Bronx, I don't want any more of that! I'm quite able to protect myself, I hope."

"Bunter——"

"Let me finish, please," said Bunter calmly. "You fellows made out that I wanted you to look after me. Well, that man Bronx was left behind in Paris, and I shan't see any more of him. Not that I care if I do! I'd knock him down as soon as look at him! You've got to chuck that sort of thing up entirely."

"Will you listen to me?" hissed the voice at the other end.

"I can give you a couple of minutes."

"Bronx is in Venice——"

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Bunter.

"What are you cackling at, you fat dummy?"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"You'd like me to believe that, wouldn't you? He, he, he! Bit too thin, old chap!"

Bunter chuckled with great amusement. Evidently—to Bunter—the cheeky beasts didn't want to climb down and apologise for their cheek, as was their duty. They were going to make out that Bunter was in danger again, and that he needed their protection! Bunter saw it all!

"What do you mean, you blithering owl?" came Wharton's exasperated voice along the wires. "I tell you we've seen Bronx."

"He, he, he!"

"He met us in a boat, last night, as we were coming back from the Lido in a gondola——"

"He, he, he!"

"He was after you, of course——"

"He, he, he!"

"I'd have come to the Hotel Palazzo to tell you, but it's possible that he may be watching, and if he followed me, he would spot you," said Wharton. "That's why I'm telephoning."

"He, he, he!"

"Oh! You find it amusing, do you? Well, that's all right, then! I've put you on your guard, and you can go and eat coke!"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "I say, old chap, it's really a bit too thin. You don't expect me to believe that, do you?"

"You howling idiot, I tell you we saw the man, in a boat on the lagoon——"

"Gammon!"

"What?" roared Wharton.

"You can't pull my leg to that extent, you know," chuckled Bunter. "Hardly! You see, I jolly well know that Bronx isn't within hundreds of miles of Venice."

"I tell you——"

"You can tell me whoppers till you're black in the face, but you can't pull my leg!" chuckled Bunter. "I'm rather wide, you know!"

"The man's in Venice!" hooted Wharton. "I've warned you."

"He, he, he! If he was, I shouldn't be afraid of him. I'm not funky like you, Wharton! Hardly!"

"Oh, you fat, cheeky rotter! I wish you were near enough to be kicked!" exclaimed the exasperated captain of the Remove.

"He, he, he! Give it a miss, old chap!" chuckled Bunter. "You can't scare me, you know! I've got pluck, I hope. If that lanky American turns up, I—I'll eat him! He, he, he!"

"Well, I've told you——"

"Try to make up a better one next time!" suggested Bunter. "Now, I'll tell you what, Wharton! If you want me to take you up again——"

"You blithering owl!"

"If you want me to take you up again, you've got to apologise for your cheek, all round. You've got to toe the line. You've got to remember that, kind and generous as I am, I'm boss, and mean to be boss! As for spinning me yarns about that American man, you can cut that right out! You see, I'm a bit too fly for that! I see it all! He, he, he!"

There was a whir on the wires. Harry Wharton had cut off, apparently rather suddenly.

Bunter put down the receiver, chuckling.

"He, he, he!"

Jarvis came back from the dressing-room. There was quite a peculiar expression on his smooth, sleek face, as he looked at his master. Billy Bunter was grinning serenely.

"What's the time, Jarvis?" yawned the fat billionaire.

"Eleven o'clock, sir."

"I shall be getting up in half an hour!" yawned Bunter. "Fix up something for me to do this morning, Jarvis."

"Very good, sir."

"Those fellows have been trying to pull my leg, Jarvis."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Making out that that man Bronx has followed me to Venice! I fancy he never found out where my plane went, when we flew from Paris."

"It seems improbable, sir."

"How could he?" argued Bunter.

"How indeed, sir?"

"There's nothing in it, Jarvis! Not that I'm afraid of the man, of course! I never cleared out of Paris because he turned up there! I'm hardly likely to consider such a person, in making my plans."

"Scarcely, sir!"

"I fancy I'm not the sort of person

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to be taken in!" said Bunter complacently. "You can call me in half an hour, Jarvish!"

"Very good, sir."

And Bunter leaned back on his pillows, for his after-breakfast nap! There was no tincture of alarm in his fat breast! Bunter was not the fellow to be taken in by a cock-and-bull story like this! Not Bunter! Bunter saw it all!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

An Old Familiar Friend!

WHAT news on the Rialto?" grinned Bob Cherry, quoting Shakespeare.

The Co. were feeding the pigeons, in the Place of St. Mark, when Harry Wharton rejoined them, after getting off the telephone.

Wharton was frowning. It was easy for his chums to see that that talk on the telephone, with the Greyfriars billionaire, had not had a grateful or comforting effect on the captain of the Remove.

"The blithering idiot!" growled Wharton.

"Didn't you get his nibs?" asked Johnny Bull. "You've been a jolly long time about it."

Wharton breathed very hard.

"I had to wait—the dear man was gorging, I suppose! My hat! I wish I'd been near enough to him to kick him across the Grand Canal."

"Well, you've given the howling ass the tip?" asked Frank Nugent.

"I've told him what happened on the lagoon last night. But—he doesn't swallow it." Wharton's eyes gleamed. "The howling ass—the blithering idiot—the frabjous dummy—thinks I was pulling his leg. He thinks it was a dodge to get back into his good graces."

"What?" yelled the Co.

"Isn't that Bunter all over?" snorted the captain of the Remove.

"The fat dummy!"

"The bloated bandersnatch!"

"The terrific and preposterous idiot!"

"Well, that tears it!" said Johnny Bull. "We've given him the tip! I was afraid that he would want us to join up again, and that you'd agree. Now let the fat dummy go and eat coke!"

Harry Wharton nodded. He was intensely angry, and had never been more powerfully inclined to kick the fat billionaire. But at the same time he was worried. If the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove was in actual danger, it was not a time to give way to resentment.

And there could be little doubt about the danger, now that the man from Chicago had tracked the Greyfriars party to Venice. Bronx's proceedings on the lagoon the previous night showed only too plainly that the gangster meant business.

Whatever his motive for getting after the Greyfriars billionaire, there was no doubt that he was after him in deadly earnest. Irritating as Bunter was, it went against the grain to leave him to his fate.

"Well, we can't do anything," said Harry at last. "I'd like to kick him, but that wouldn't do any good, I suppose!"

"Well, it might!" grinned Bob. "Kicking's good for Bunter! Still, I don't suppose he'll be frightfully grateful if we walk round to his hotel just to kick him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him rip!" growled Johnny Bull. "We can't do anything else. I suppose we're not going to hang about after the fat boulder, letting him think that we're after his putrid money?"

"No fear!" said Nugent, emphatically.

"Besides, that brute Bronx may have an eye on us all the while," said Bob. "He doesn't know where Bunter is, and doesn't know that we've chucked him. If we keep clear of Bunter now, it's all the safer for him."

"Yes, that's so," agreed Wharton, relieved.

He glanced round, over the crowd that passed and repassed incessantly in the Piazza—the centre of life in Venice.

There were innumerable tourists, with red-covered guide-books—English, French, Americans, Germans, as well as dusky Italians in swarms.

Among that cosmopolitan crowd it was very likely that the lean man from Chicago was on the prowl, looking for the party he had lost after his ducking in the lagoon.

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS.

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

LITTLE as the space at my disposal is this week, I feel that I cannot let this chat go by without a mention of the "Holiday Annual" and the "Popular Book of Boys' Stories." The former contains an extra-special long complete story of your old favourites—Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars; a topping book-length tale of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's; a rattling fine yarn of Jimmy Silver & Co., at Rookwood; and other splendid features too numerous to mention here. This great Wonder Book is now obtainable at all newsagents—price 5s.

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Here are a few

RAPID FIRE REPLIES

to queries from various readers:

What is the Meaning of K.G., G.C.V.O., LL.D.? ("Regular Reader," of Liverpool): The man who has these initials after his name is a Knight of the Order of the Carter, a Knight Grand Cross of the Victorian Order, and a Doctor of Laws.

When was Prince George born? (same reader): On December 20th, 1902. His full name is George Edward Alexander Edmund.

Bronx was not to be seen, but he was likely to keep out of sight if he could. It was very probable that if he spotted the five schoolboys he would watch and follow them, in the hope of being led to Bunter. And it was easy enough to spot a party of five, who spent nearly all their time out of doors.

"Let's trot along and look at the ships!" said Bob. "Beppo said this morning that there was an English yacht in the harbour. Let's go down and have a squint at it."

"Right-ho!"

The chums of the Remove sauntered away across the square. Every now and then Harry Wharton glanced round, wondering whether a tall head would be seen over the crowd. The glimmer of a white Panama hat caught his eyes, and he stopped and turned. He had a moment's glimpse of a lean, hard face under the brim of the Panama, and then the tall man disappeared in the crowd.

"He's spotted us!" said Wharton quietly.

(Continued on next page.)

Addresses Wanted (various readers): For the address of Prince Habert and Prince Frederick, "Potsdam, Germany," is sufficient to find them. I believe that Rockefeller, the American millionaire, has an office in New York. In any case, he is so well known that a letter addressed there would certainly reach him.

Why do we call a sailor a "Tar"? ("Curious," of Hove): In the old days a considerable amount of tar was used in the rigging of a ship. This, naturally, was transferred to the hands and clothes of the sailors. Therefore they became known as "Jack Tars."

How did the London street called Hatton Garden get its name? ("Enquirer," of Islington): It actually was a garden several hundreds of years ago. It was attached to the palace of the Bishop of Ely, but the only remaining part of the former garden is the churchyard in Ely Place.

Which is the smallest country in the world? (E. H., of Bristol): This distinction is held by the Principality of Monaco. It consists only of four square miles, and has a population of only 23,000.

"THE BOY WHO CAME BACK!"

Sensational—thrilling—dramatic! Such is my opinion, chums, of the amazing school story which appears in this week's "Gem," our grand companion paper. It features the adventures of a new boy to St. Jim's, and the sensational discovery he made in connection with a junior who had "died." Every MAGNET reader simply must get this unusual yarn. It's on sale now, price 2d.

It's time I was telling you what is in store for next week. The extra-long, complete yarn of Greyfriars is entitled:

"BAGGED BY BANDITS!"

By Frank Richards,

and it deals with the further exciting holiday adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., and Billy Bunter the Billionaire. It is what our Australian friends would call a "Bonza," and it will hold your interest from beginning to end. You will enjoy, too, the ripping number of the "Greyfriars Herald." As usual "Linesman" will be answering more Soccer queries, while I shall be in the office to have a word with you.

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,385.

"Jolly old Bronx?" asked Bob.

"Yes. He's got a new hat—I suppose he lost his own in the laguna last night. But I knew his face."

The juniors glanced round. But the tall man in the Panama was no longer to be seen.

"Well, if he's shadowing us, all the more reason for keeping clear of Bunter," said Johnny Bull. "We can give him a day of it, and if he watches us go back to the Albergo Oriente, he will fancy Bunter's there. Let him keep on with it!"

"Good egg!" chuckled Bob.

It was rather an entertaining idea to give the man from Chicago a day's shadowing for nothing. The juniors smiled as they sauntered along. A little later they stopped under the awning outside one of the shops fronting on the Piazza, where curios and antiquities were sold to tourists.

All sorts of ancient Venetian relics—most of them made quite recently in Germany—were for sale to the unsophisticated. The chums of the Remove were not specially interested in those very modern antiquities; but they were interested to see whether Bronx was following them, and they gave him a chance to keep them in view.

There was an open window, rather like a stall in a market, with bronzes displayed, and the juniors looked them over, keeping an eye at the same time on the square.

"Spot that tito!" murmured Bob.

A white Panama hat glanced in the sunshine, and passed on. The Greyfriars fellows exchanged a grin.

"No doubt that he's after us!" chuckled Bob. "We'll lead him a jolly old dance! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Who—what—"

Inside the dusky shop a rather slim and elegant figure, in a beautiful straw hat, was standing. Its back was to the juniors at the window, and they had not noticed it particularly; but the voice that proceeded from it was quite familiar.

They stared in surprise into the shop, as the well-known accents fell on their ears.

"Bai Jove! Is that bwonze weally the weal work of Cellini—are you suah of it, deah fellow? Bai Jove!"

"Tutto vero, signore—Benvenuto Cellini—"

"Bai Jove! You weally surprisise me!"

"My hat!" murmured Harry Wharton. "I'd know that jolly old toot anywhere! That's a St. Jim's chap—"

"D'Arcy, of St. Jim's!" said Nugent.

"Just the chap these dago shopkeepers like to see!" murmured Johnny Bull. "The man's selling him a Cellini bronze—I don't think!"

The Famous Five smiled.

The last time they had heard the voice of D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, was at Greyfriars School, on the occasion of a cricket match. They remembered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stating that it was "wathah wemarkable" that his wicket had gone down to Smithy's bowling. They were not likely to forget the dulcet tones of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Tutto vero, signore!" A little fat shiny Italian was holding a bronze figure for the St. Jim's junior's inspection. "Wonderful work of the grand Benvenuto Cellini—si, signore!"

"But are you weally sellin' it for a hundwed live?"

"Si, signore! Cento lire—one hundred of lire—to the noble signore Inglese—cento lire, signore, and it is yours!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,386.

"But, weally, you know, you're wobbin' yourself!"

"Here, sir, everything is cheap price to noble Engleesh tourist!" said the fat man, his dusky face beaming.

"Yaas, but it's fwightfully cheap, you know. A bwonze by Cellini is worth a feahful lot of money!"

"Cento lire, signore—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, in at the open window. "Hallo, hallo, hallo, Gussy! Enjoying life, old bean?"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spun round in surprise. He jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and stared at five smiling faces. Then he gracefully raised his straw hat in salute.

"Fancy meetin' you men heah!" he ejaculated. "What are you Gweyfwiahs fellows doin' in Venice? Jollay glad to see you!"

And Harry Wharton & Co. entered the shop, and shook hands all round with the swell of St. Jim's. It was a very agreeable meeting on all sides.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Not a Sale!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY beamed on the chums of Greyfriars through his celebrated eyeglass. Evidently he was very glad to see them.

The little fat man watched the schoolboys exchanging greetings—rather impatiently! He was anxious to get on with the sale of that rare work of the great Cellini, which he was offering to the unsuspecting swell of St. Jim's for the absurd sum of a hundred lire—only a little over thirty shillings at the current rate of exchange.

Any tourist who secured a work of Benvenuto Cellini for thirty shillings—or thirty pounds, for that matter—could consider himself in great luck! From which fact the Greyfriars fellows deduced that that bronze figure had no more to do with Benvenuto Cellini than with Christopher Columbus or George Washington. But the elegant junior from St. Jim's had no suspicions. He was, as Johnny Bull had remarked, the kind of fellow that a dealer in curios liked to meet!

"Aw'ly wippin' to meet you fellows!" said Arthur Augustus, forgetting for the moment the shopkeeper and the terrific bargain he was offering, in his delight at meeting his old friends. "I'm feahfully bucked to see you, you know! I'm pwactically heah on my own—at least, my eldah bwothah is awound—old Conway, you know—"

"Noblissimo signore—" murmured the fat man with the work of art.

But Arthur Augustus did not even hear.

"You see, old Conway was wunnin' out this way with his yacht," he explained to the Greyfriars fellows, "and he asked me if I would like a wun! Blake and Hewwies and Dig couldn't vevy well come with me, as they had gone to stay with Tom Mewwy—you wemembah Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry, with a smile.

"I was goin' to join them there, you know, when old Conway barged in, so I put it off till latah," explained Arthur Augustus. "I'm wathah anxious about those fellows wunnin' loose in the hols, you know, without my eye on them. But I shall be back next week. Pewwaps you've seen old Conway's yacht in the harbour—the Silver Foam—"

"Why, that must be the English yacht

Beppo mentioned at brekker this mornin'!" exclaimed Bob. "We were going to squint at it, never dreaming that it was yours, old bean."

"Not exactly mine—my bwothah Conway's!" said Arthur Augustus. "Old Conway has gone off this mornin' with some Italian naval officers, and I was takin' a walk awound on my own. So you see it's weally wippin' to wun into you chaps. I haven't seen you since we played cwicket at Gweyfwiahs, you know, when my wicket went down in that wathah wemarkable way. I could not help thinkin' at the time that the umpiah was wathah in ewwor—"

"Signore—" implored the fat man.

"What about lunchin' together, you men?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Wathah a good ideah—what?"

"First-rate!" agreed Bob.

"The goodfulness of the esteemed idea is truly terrific!" declared Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh solemnly.

Arthur Augustus grinned.

The Greyfriars fellows had recognised him by his noble voice and accent. On his side, Gussy certainly would not have failed to recognise the remarkable English that Hurree Singh had learned from the wisest moonshee in Bhanipur.

"Signore—noblissimo signore!" squealed the fat man. "Cento lire—"

"Bai Jove, I was forgettin'!" Arthur Augustus turned back to the fat merchant. "Sowwy, and all that! Pway hold up that bwonze for my fwriends to look at! Look at that, you fellows."

The merchant held up the bronze.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at it.

They had seen a good many like it in the shops. It was a little figure worth, perhaps, fifteen shillings.

That, however, they did not feel disposed to tell Arthur Augustus. Certainly they did not want to see him swindled. Still, they felt a certain delicacy about telling him that he was rather an ass!

There was no doubt that the second son of Lord Eastwood was the kind of fellow the shopkeepers liked to see! He had swallowed whole the statement that the bronze was the work of that celebrated artist Benvenuto Cellini. It seemed impossible for Gussy to suspect anyone of telling him untruths. But really this was a little too steep. Even Billy Bunter would not have been taken in by such a tale.

"Wathah wippin', isn't it?" said Arthur Augustus. "My bwothah Conway would jump wathah if I came back with a genuine Cellini—what?"

"I fancy he would!" said Nugent.

"But—" "The jumpfulness would probably be terrific!" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "But—"

"But what, deah boys?"

"Well, you want to be sure it's genuine, you know!" murmured Nugent.

"Lots of spoof about!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "But this is all wight!"

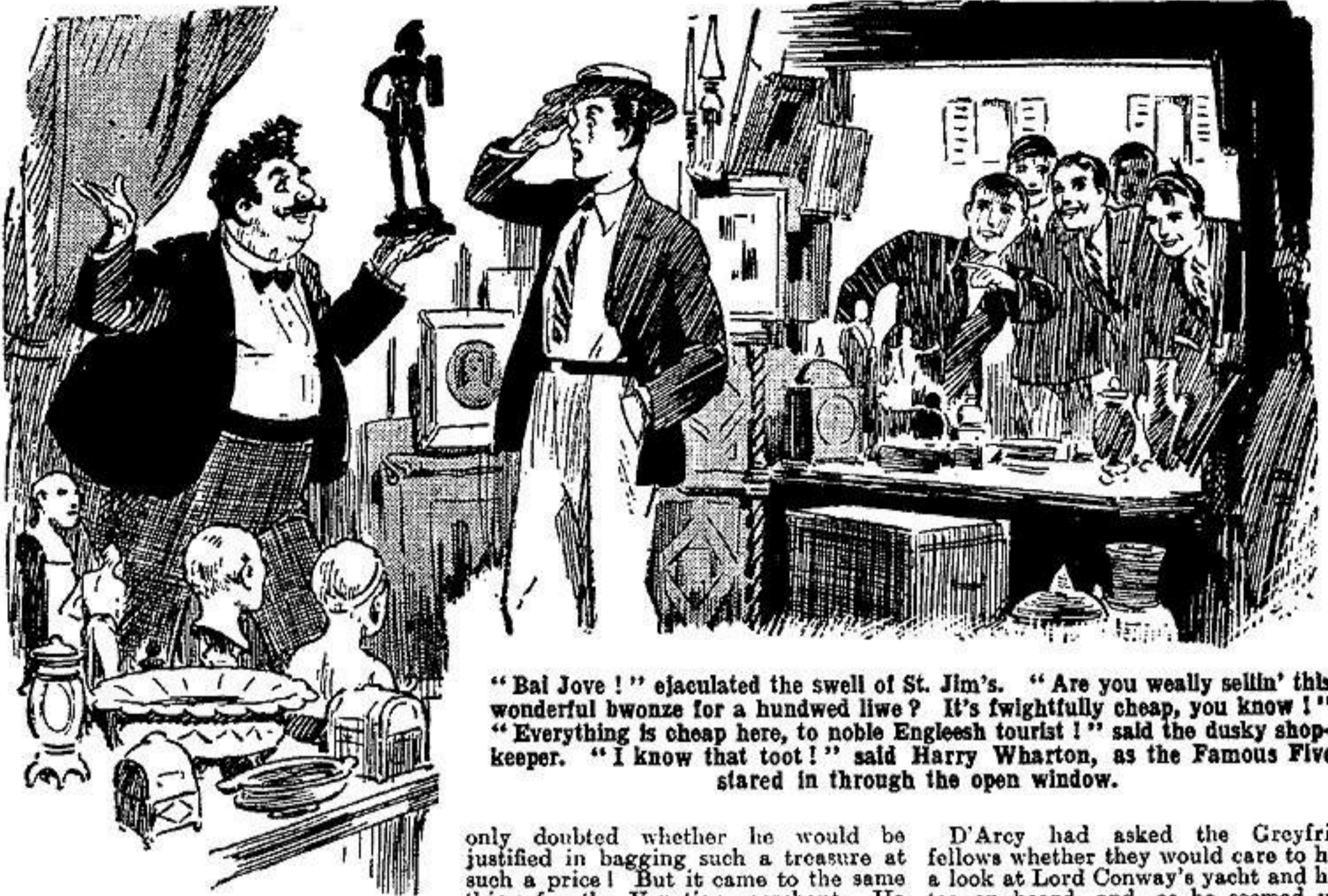
"Oh, if you're certain of that!" said Johnny, rather taken aback. "I didn't know you were well up in such things."

"Neither am I, deah boy! But this chap is," explained Arthur Augustus, with a nod towards the fat man. "It stands to weason that he knows whethah the bwonze is genuine Cellini or not, doesn't it?"

"Oh!" gasped the Famous Five.

"Tutto vero—all true—real and genuine work of grand artist Cellini!" said the fat man. "You take? Yes! Cento lire! Si?"

Arthur Augustus regarded the little figure with a very keen eye and eyeglass. The chums of the Remove could



“Bai Jove!” ejaculated the swell of St. Jim’s. “Are you weally sellin’ this wonderful bwonze for a hundwed liwe? It’s fwightfully cheap, you know!” “Everything is cheap here, to noble Engleesh tourist!” said the dusky shopkeeper. “I know that toot!” said Harry Wharton, as the Famous Five stared in through the open window.

see that he was strongly tempted. But he seemed to be resisting temptation.

They exchanged a dubious glance. They had given him a hint to be on his guard against “spoo,” and did not feel that they could urge the point further. After all, thirty shillings was not very much to Gussy, even if he chucked it away.

“I am bound to point out to you, my deah man, that a bwonze by Benvenuto Cellini is worth a feahful lot of money!” said Arthur Augustus slowly. “You are simply wobbin’ yourself. sellin’ it for a hundwed liwe.”

“Va bene, signore! You take?” Arthur Augustus hesitated.

“Bai Jove, I should aw’fly like to take it!” he said. “But—” He shook his noble head slowly. “You see, my deah man, I can’t let you wob yourself like that! A bwonze by Cellini is worth at least a hundwed pounds, not a hundwed liwe. I can’t afford a hundwed pounds, of course—”

“Cento lire—hundwed lire!” urged the merchant of Venice.

“No! It’s a feahful temptation, but a fellow is bound to play the game!” said Arthur Augustus. “I’m not goin’ to wob a man like that! It would west on my conscience, you know, if I bagged a thing fwom you for thirty bob that’s worth a hundwed pounds! Nothin’ doin’!”

“Signore—” gasped the shopkeeper. “Come on, you men—let’s get out!” said Arthur Augustus. “If I remain heah I shall be feahfully tempted to buy that Cellini bwonze, and it would be wobbin’ the man, you know! Good-mornin’, my deah fellow—I mean, buon giorno!”

And Arthur Augustus walked out of the shop. Harry Wharton & Co., suppressing their emotions with difficulty, walked out with him.

The merchant of Venice was left with the bronze in his hand, staring.

Possibly he regretted having stated it was a “Cellini.” Arthur Augustus had not doubted that statement. He had

only doubted whether he would be justified in bagging such a treasure at such a price! But it came to the same thing for the Venetian merchant. He was left with his antique Cellini bronze—made in Nuremburg—on his fat, shiny hands!

“Camello!” he gasped as the juniors went out.

If Arthur Augustus heard that remark he did not heed it. He was unaware that “camel” was a term of opprobrium in that country.

The schoolboys emerged into the bright sunshine of Piazza—five of them smiling. Harry Wharton & Co. were glad, at all events, that Gussy had not bought that made-in-Germany antique, whatever his extraordinary reason.

“What about tottewin’ along to lunch, you fellows?” asked Arthur Augustus. “I know a wippin’ place, where you can get what’s-its-name in the native Italian style, and Thingummy, and What-do-you-call-it—”

“Hear, hear!” said Bob Cherry gravely. “I’m getting rather peckish, and I’ll be glad to sample the What’s-its-name and the Thingummy.”

“This way, then,” said Arthur Augustus. “Tottah along, deah boys!”

The dear boys tottered along, and D’Arcy led them to a palatial restaurant across the Piazza. When they went in, the Greyfriars fellows had a glimpse of a Panama hat on a tall head, passing the doorway. Tiger Bronx was still keeping them under observation. And they charitably hoped that he would enjoy hanging about outside the restaurant while they were having their lunch within!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Jarvis’s Little Game!

“HALLO, hallo, hallo!”
“Jarvis!”
“Bai Jove! Who’s Jarvis?” asked Arthur Augustus D’Arcy.

“Bunter’s man!” said Harry. The Famous Five and their St. Jim’s comrade had emerged from the restaurant after lunch.

D’Arcy had asked the Greyfriars fellows whether they would care to have a look at Lord Conway’s yacht and have tea on board, and, as he seemed very keen for them to accept, and as they were quite keen to do so, they agreed at once. They were walking across the Piazza in the direction of the sea when the juniors sighted the rather plump, sleek figuro of James Jarvis, Bunter’s incomparable valet.

Jarvis was standing in the square, looking up at the Campanile.

If Bunter’s valet was free from his master’s service for the time, and had a desire to look round Venice, it was natural enough for him to stop and admire that graceful tower. At the same time, if he had wished to make himself conspicuous, he could hardly have chosen a better spot.

Harry Wharton frowned a little. Bronx was not to be seen; but he had no doubt that the gangster was still shadowing. It did not matter in the least how long the man shadowed the Famous Five, as they were going nowhere near the Greyfriars billionaire. But if he shadowed Jarvis, he would be led back to Bunter. And if he was in the Place of St. Mark at all, he could hardly fail to spot the man.

“Better give him the tip, I think,” said Harry, and his chums nodded assent, and they bore down on Jarvis.

Arthur Augustus lingered a little behind. Perhaps he had a fear that Billy Bunter might be in the offing. Over lunch the juniors had told him about Bunter and his billions, which D’Arcy justly pronounced to be “wemarkable.” They had not told him precisely why they had separated from the fat billionaire; but probably Gussy could guess. And though he was very pleased to meet the Famous Five, he was not at all keen to encounter William George Bunter. He had seen something of W. G. B. at Greyfriars, and a little of him went a long way.

However, Bunter was not in the offing. Jarvis did not seem to observe the juniors, though they had a suspicion that his sharp, shifty eyes had spotted

(Continued on page 16.)



(Continued from page 13.)

them, all the same. They did not feel very trustful towards the incomparable manservant.

Wharton tapped him on the arm and drew his attention, and Jarvis looked round and touched his hat very respectfully.

"Is Bunter about?" asked Harry.

"My master, sir, is taking his accustomed rest after lunch," said Jarvis. "I have taken the opportunity, when he does not require my services, to take a little walk, sir. I trust that you young gentlemen are enjoying your holiday."

"Oh, yes, thanks! But look here, Jarvis, I phoned Bunter this morning to tell him that that American man, Bronx, has turned up here!" said Harry. "You remember you took the call—"

"Oh, quite, sir!"

"The fat ass—I mean Bunter—thought I was pulling his leg," said Harry.

"So I gathered, sir, from his remarks."

"Well, it's honest Injun. Bronx is here, and he's following us about to get after Bunter again, of course."

"Indeed, sir."

"It doesn't matter twopence how long he follows us," said Harry. "In fact, we're leading him a dance. But if he sees you, Jarvis, he will very likely follow you instead—see?"

"Do you think so, sir?"

"Well, it's jolly likely. In the circumstances, I thought I'd give you the tip," said Wharton. "Keep out of his sight, and don't let him spot Bunter through you."

"I shall take every care, sir," said Jarvis. "You are sure that the man is in Venice? My young master thinks it very improbable."

"We've seen him—last night, and two or three times to-day," said Bob Cherry.

"Then there can be no doubt, sir, unless you have been deceived by some resemblance," suggested Jarvis.

"Nothing of the kind," said Harry Wharton, rather sharply. "He jumped into our gondola last night with a pistol in his hand, thinking that Bunter was with us. No room for a mistake there, I suppose?"

"It appears not, sir," said Jarvis smoothly.

"Well, hadn't you better get back to your hotel?" asked Harry. "That American gangster may trickle along here any minute."

"I was admiring this Campanile, sir, when you honoured me with your notice," said Jarvis smoothly. "It is a very interesting sight, sir. I understand that it fell down some years ago, after standing for centuries, and was restored very skilfully to its original position. A very graceful architectural work, sir."

"Yes—yes; but hadn't you better go—"

"The restoration seems to have been carried out with great skill, sir," said Jarvis. "Do you not think so?"

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Harry Wharton looked at the man. Jarvis's tone was smooth, his manner deferential, but there was a rather peculiar glimmer in his eyes. It seemed almost impossible to suspect so well trained a manservant of impertinence. But it dawned on Wharton that Jarvis, in a smooth and deferential way, was being cheeky. The captain of the Remove compressed his lips.

"Look here, Jarvis!" he said quietly. "You know that your master is in danger from that Chicago ruffian."

"My master does not appear to think so, sir. Indeed, he assured me only this morning that he had no fear of him whatever."

"Don't be an ass, Jarvis!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You know he cleared out of Paris in the plane because he was frightened of Bronx."

"On the contrary, sir, my master has informed me that the man Bronx had nothing whatever to do with his leaving Paris," said Jarvis.

"That's rot, and you know it!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Indeed, sir!"

"Will you get out of this, and prevent that man Bronx shadowing you back to Bunter?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"With all respect to you, sir, I do not feel it incumbent upon me to do so," said Jarvis calmly. "My master very kindly allows me to take a walk while he rests after lunch; and I have not very many opportunities of taking exercise, sir. And, as I have ventured to observe, sir, I am extremely interested in this Campanile—"

"You mean that you won't go," said Wharton curtly.

There was no doubt now that the man in his sleek deferential way was checking him.

"I should not care to put it like that, sir—it would be unbecoming to a man in my position," said Jarvis blandly. "I should prefer to say, sir, that having my master's permission to walk in the square, it is my intention to continue my walk."

Wharton turned away from him without another word. He was strongly inclined to squash Mr. Jarvis's hat over his sleek head, as a reward for his cheek; but he resisted that temptation. The juniors walked on, leaving Jarvis standing with his head thrown back, gazing up at the Campanile, and evidently intending to remain there.

"Bronx will spot him," said Bob.

"Does he want that?" asked Wharton, very quietly. "The whole business is fearfully queer, and I don't trust that sleek rotter an inch. It looks to me as if Jarvis has somehow landed Bronx on Bunter, and is rather keen for the man to get on with it."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"He must be an awfully treacherous rotter in that case," he said.

"Well, it jolly well looks like it."

At a little distance the juniors looked back. The stoutish, sleek form of James Jarvis was in full view—still admiring the Campanile. And a little farther back a white Panama hat showed in the sunshine.

"That's Bronx!" said Nugent.

A number of people were between the juniors and the wearer of the white hat. But they had no doubt whatever that it was on the tall head of the Chicago gangster. Neither had they any doubt that he was spotting the sleek valet standing by the Campanile.

Wharton set his lips.

But there was nothing to be done; and they walked on towards the Riva, where they were going to take a gondola to the yacht. Looking back a few

minutes later they spotted the white hat again, and saw that it had come to a halt. But its back was to them now—the gangster was staring straight at James Jarvis.

Rather to the surprise of the juniors, however, the gangster turned again, and the Panama hat dogged them down to the water.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"He's sticking to us," he said. "He's seen Jarvis; but he's sticking to us, all the same. I suppose the brute didn't quite know which party to follow, and he's decided on us, after all."

Jarvis was seen again. Apparently he had tired of admiring the beauties of the Campanile, for he was walking away in the direction of the Grand Canal—no doubt on his way back to the Hotel Palazzo. He disappeared in a throng of people as the juniors looked after him.

But the white hat did not follow Jarvis. It followed the schoolboys. And they grinned as they went down to the embankment.

Strange as the suspicion was, it looked as if Bunter's valet was deliberately offering himself as a guide to Bunter. But that suspicion evidently was not in the mind of the gangster, or he would have taken Jarvis as a guide. Instead of doing that he was sticking to the trail of the Famous Five.

"Still after us," grinned Bob Cherry, glancing round at a distant white hat as Wharton waved his hand to a gondolier.

"Good egg!" said the captain of the Remove. "Let him get on with it as long as he likes."

The six schoolboys stepped into a gondola, and the gondolier pushed off. A few minutes later, as they glided over the sunny lagoon, they were not surprised to see another gondola astern, with a white Panama hat gleaming from it in the sunshine. Tiger Bronx was still on the track of the Famous Five, and, so far as they were concerned, he was more than welcome to get on with it.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Shadowed!

"**B**AI Jove, that boundah's aftah you, deah boys!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Aroy, turning his eyeglass on the craft astern. "Stickin' to you like jollay old glue—what?"

"The gluefulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"What about givin' him a little wun?" suggested the swell of St. Jim's. "We can take him wight wound the lagoon—lots of time to get to the Silver Foam for tea—what?"

"Good egg!" assented the Famous Five.

With a mixture of words and gestures the gondolier was made to understand what his passengers wanted. He swung his long oar, and the gondola glided on, making a wide sweep away from the shore.

There were a good many gondolas and other craft about. But the pursuer did not lose sight of the Greyfriars boat. Keeping at the same distance the Panama hat glimmered behind. Two or three times the juniors saw the tall, lean figure rise from the seat, and the slits of eyes stare after them. It was probable that Mr. Bronx was puzzled by the course taken. Perhaps it dawned upon him that the juniors were "leading him a dance" over the

sunny lagoon. If so, it made no difference to his determination to keep them in sight.

Obviously he believed that sooner or later they would lead him to Bunter the Billionaire. He had no suspicion, so far, that they were done with that lordly youth, and had no intention of going anywhere near him.

Several times as they glided about they passed within easy sight of the Silver Foam, a handsome motor-yacht, and once Arthur Augustus waved his hand to a tall young man who stared at him over the rail.

"That's old Conway," he remarked. "I dare say he is wondewin' what we are wandewin' awound for. Let's go wound that felucca, and then pull in—what?"

At a little distance from the yacht a felucca was anchored, the big lateen sails down. Three or four dusky men could be seen on her deck, and they were watching the Greyfriars party, and the boat astern of them. They

seemed to be rather interested in what was going on.

Passing by the felucca, the juniors read the name painted on her, the "Colombo."

"Those sportsmen seem rather interested in us!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

It was evident that the swarthy crew of the felucca were interested. They had been watching the two gondolas from the port side of the Colombo, and when the boats had passed, all four of them crossed to the starboard side to continue watching.

Right round the anchored felucca, at a distance, the gondola went, with Bronx following on astern.

Then the dusky crew crossed the deck back to the port side, to keep their eyes on the peculiar chase.

One of them called out, as Bronx's gondola passed, apparently hailing the gangster.

The juniors heard the hail, though they did not catch what was said, and

they saw Bronx make a gesture to the man on the felucca, who had hailed.

"Pals of his!" remarked Bob.

"Yaas, it looks as if he knows that ewew," said D'Arcy. "They look wathah a wuff old lot!"

Leaving the anchored felucca behind, the gondola glided on, with the gangster still in pursuit.

Arthur Augustus called to the gondolier to head for the yacht now. After a couple of hours, gliding up and down and round about, the juniors were tired of leading Mr. Bronx a dance, and it was time for tea.

The gondola glided under the yacht's rail, and the tall young man looked down from above.

"What's this game, Arthur?" he inquired.

Arthur Augustus grinned cheerfully.

"Pullin' the leg of a blightah who's followin' us, Conway," he answered. "You know these Gweyfwiahs fellows! I've bwrought them to tea."

(Continued on next page.)



If you are in doubt over any Soccer problem write to, "Linesman," c/o The MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4., and then watch for his reply in this weekly feature.

THROWING IN THE BALL!

ALTHOUGH there are no real changes in the rules of Soccer about which we need bother our heads this season, there has been some little alteration made during the summer regarding the "throw-in" rule.

While the alteration is not likely to affect the game materially, it is just as well to bear it in mind in case the question arises. It has been thought desirable to make it clear in the rules that a goal cannot be scored direct from a throw-in.

When the ball is thrown from touch it must be played by another player before a goal can be scored.

It is not surprising that it was only quite recently considered necessary to make such a rule. During the last two or three seasons some of our wing half-backs have become so proficient in the art of throwing the ball from touch that they can even get so far as to cause the goalkeeper trouble. Fellows like Weaver, of Newcastle United, Crayston, the new Arsenal man from Bradford City, and Gardner, of the Villa, are experts in this throwing business.

And I think it will become increasingly common for half-backs so to practise the throw during the new season that there will soon be quite a lot of them who can land the ball from the touch-line well inside the penalty area.

If you saw last season's Cup Final you would probably notice that it is not only half-backs who can throw the ball a long way. Little Eric Brook, the outside-left of Manchester City, frequently picked up the ball when it had gone over the line, and threw it quite a long way towards the middle.

For all the members of a football team who may be called upon to throw the ball

in, a little practice in the art of throwing is very desirable, and proficiency very helpful to the side. I don't like to see the other members of a team waiting while a wing half-back travels almost half the length of the field to throw in the ball.

A quick throw by some other player, who happens to be on the spot when the ball goes out, will often start an attack which may produce a goal!

TRY THIS!

I WANT my young readers to give a little time to this throw-in business. It is all a matter of perseverance, and the beauty of this sort of practice is that it can be done with only two people present; somebody to throw the ball, and somebody else to kick it back to the thrower. Get the right foot well back, and bend the body back as the ball is taken behind the head. Then let the whole body come forward, and the weight transferred to the left foot at the moment of throwing. In other words the secret of a long throw, like the secret of strong kicking, is timing, with everything in—body and all—at the precise moment.

The value of a long throw does not lie in doing it every time. If you can do it, keep it as a surprise, and work it to a plan prearranged with your colleagues.

I have mentioned some of the players whose throwing prowess has been responsible for the alteration in the rule. From time to time other players have become so proficient in certain arts of the game that they have caused the rules to be altered. Some of you may remember that it was the masterly way in which Bill McCracken, the full-back of Newcastle and now manager of Millwall, put opponents offside, that the rule was altered.

The most recent penalty kick change—that which compels a goalkeeper to stand still on the line when a penalty kick is being taken, was due to the action of a goalkeeper named Farquharson, who played for Cardiff City. He conceived the idea, on these penalty kick occasions, of going right back into the net and then rushing forward just as the kick was being taken.

STIFFNESS OF THE MUSCLES!

THERE is an indication of the serious and eager way the big football clubs are looking for promising young players in the development and extension of the nursery club idea. Quite a number of first-class clubs now have these nursery teams where they can put out the young players to be coached by experts. Arsenal have just established Margate as their nursery club, and the players there are under the charge of an experienced professional.

No footballer is allowed to sign on for any club as a professional until he is seventeen years of age. But the big clubs have a way of getting over this difficulty. If they see a specially promising boy who is too young to become a "pro," they find him some sort of job, and while he is doing that job, they develop his football. The nursery clubs help them to do this.

Two or three of my readers have already written to me regarding the stiffness which has followed their first bit of training or their first football game. This stiffness, which comes from the use of muscles which have not been so actively employed for some time past, is quite natural, and though even first-class players suffer from it there is quite a simple way of keeping it down so that it becomes only a very slight inconvenience which soon passes away.

The best way to dodge this stiffness of the muscles is to take a very hot bath immediately following the first turn-out. Don't wait till you get home if you can possibly avoid doing so. Have the bath immediately, and following the bath use a fairly stiff towel in rubbing the leg muscles.

Put some energy into the rubbing, too. If you do this, you won't get that feeling from which I often suffered in the old days which may be described thus: When I was sitting down I didn't want to get up, and when I was up I didn't want to sit down.

"LINESMAN."

"They are very welcome!" said Lord Conway, with a smile and a nod to the famous Five.

The ladder was let down, and the juniors clambered on board. The gondolier was paid off and pulled away for the distant shore.

Lord Conway shook hands with the chums of the Remove, and made them welcome on board the Silver Foam. But he seemed rather puzzled.

"What the dickens do you mean by a man following you about, Arthur?" he asked. "Have you been gettin' into trouble, as usual, on shore?"

"Weally, Conway—" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Our fault, I'm afraid," said Harry Wharton. "The man's after us, not after D'Arcy! He's stopped."

The juniors grinned as they looked over the yacht's rail at Bronx. He had come to a stop, between the felucca and the yacht, and was standing up, staring at the Silver Foam.

He had not expected them to go aboard any craft in the harbour, and it was clear that he was perplexed.

Lord Conway took a long and keen look at him as he stood. His brows knitted a little.

"That man looks rather a tough character," he said.

"Tough as they make 'em," said Bob Cherry. "He's got a gun packed away somewhere."

"The toughness is terrific, my esteemed noble lord!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Lord Conway smiled.

"Well, what does it all mean?" he asked. "If you young fellows have been landing yourselves in trouble with a bad character in a foreign country—"

"Not exactly," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We'll tell you all about it, if you're interested. I dare say you remember Billy Bunter—he barged in to see D'Arcy once, I believe, at Eastwood House—"

"I remember him."

"He's a jolly old billionaire now, and that lanky American seems to be after his billions."

"Pulling my leg?" inquired the viscount.

"Not at all! I fancy that rotter thinks that Bunter is on board this yacht, as we've come here; he's stopping to watch, anyhow."

The strange tale of Bunter the Billionaire, already related to D'Arcy, was related once more to D'Arcy's brother. Lord Conway listened in astonishment, his eyes on the lean man in the gondola.

There was little doubt that the gangster concluded that Billy Bunter was on board the yacht.

His gondolier was keeping the boat in the same spot, half-way between the yacht and the felucca, steadying it with an occasional sweep of his oar. Evidently Bronx had settled down to watch.

"Well, I suppose we can't prevent the man sticking there if he wants to," said Conway. "He's welcome to watch the yacht as long as he likes, if it comes to that! Come this way, my boys!"

The juniors went down into the saloon. Lord Conway spoke to the mate before he went below with his guests.

"Keep an eye on the man in that gondola, Mr. Rogers, and call me if he should come alongside."

"Yes, my lord!"

"Bai Jove, you know," grinned Arthur Augustus, as he sat down to tea with his guests, "I wondah how long it will take that boundah to wealise that Buntah isn't on board? Pwobably he is wantin' his own tea by this time, what?"

"Very likely!" said Bob Cherry, with

a chuckle. "He's been after us a jolly long time, and I should think he was getting hungry."

It was a very agreeable tea, and the Greyfriars fellows enjoyed it, as well as the equally agreeable company of Arthur Augustus and his brother.

When they went on deck afterwards, they looked at once for the gangster.

The gondola had disappeared.

"Halla, hallo, hallo, he's gone!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "He's not such a jolly old sticker as we thought."

"The gonefulness is terrific!"

"He has not gone very far, young gentlemen," said Mr. Rogers, the mate of the Silver Foam, with a smile. "I fancy he is still watching."

"Eh? But where?"

Mr. Rogers made a gesture towards the felucca.

"He went on board that craft! If you look, you'll see his gondola tied on under her quarter."

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors fixed their eyes on the Colombo. Now that Mr. Rogers drew their attention to it, they could make out the gondola tied on there. The gondolier was sitting on the roof of the little central cabin, smoking cigarettes while he waited. The distance was considerable, but they could make out the figures of the dusky crew on the felucca, and a gleam in the sunshine caught their eyes.

"He's got a glass on us!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Evidently, as the juniors had suspected, there was some connection between the gangster and the crew of the felucca. He had tired of sitting in the blaze of sunshine in the boat, and it was very probable that he wanted a meal by that time. As the Greyfriars party showed no sign of leaving the yacht, he had gone on board the felucca, and now he was keeping watch on the Silver Foam with a pair of binoculars.

No doubt the glasses showed him the group on the Silver Foam quite clearly, and no doubt he was trying to pick out Bunter among them.

The juniors chuckled at the idea. Had Bronx decided to follow Jarvish, he would have run down his fat quarry long since. Harry Wharton & Co. were well satisfied that he should continue to waste his time watching them—for nothing!

"Jolly old Patience on a jolly old monument!" remarked Johnny Bull. "And nothing to come of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him wip!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "You fellows like to have a look oveh the yacht?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Tottah along, then, deah boys."

And the Greyfriars fellows proceeded to explore the yacht, while the gangster, on the felucca, continued to watch—like Patience on a monument, as Johnny Bull remarked; though it was probable that he was not feeling very patient.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Begs for It!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. spent a cheery hour or two in rooting over Lord Conway's handsome motor-yacht.

Like most British boys, they were rather keen on ships and the sea. And the Silver Foam was really a beautiful yacht.

Lord Conway had gone ashore to look for some friends he expected to arrive by the steamer from Trieste, and Arthur Augustus guided his guests over the vessel, playing the part of cicerone.

They descended long, steel ladders, to look at the engines; and the engine-room was a perfect mine of interest and wonder. An engineer appeared from nowhere to show them round, and Arthur Augustus pointed out many objects of interest—though, as he generally referred to them as What's-its-name or What-do-you-call-it, the visitors did not derive a lot of information from him.

"No steam, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "No feahful wow! You see, the what's-its-name is wun on thingummy, just like a motah-cah, you know, and I told Conway that I weally considah that what-do-you-call-it is vevy supewiah to thingumbob, for a yacht just the same as for a cah. What?"

"The esteemed what-do-you-call-it is terrifically superior to the common or garden thingummy!" agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

And the other fellows smiled.

They climbed steep steel ladders again and emerged into the sunlight. The sun was setting over the mainland, and Venice lay spread before them in a golden glow. Dusk was creeping up from the distant Dalmatian shore.

Lord Conway had returned on board, alone. The expected friends had not arrived by the Trieste steamer. Apparently the Silver Foam was waiting at Venice till they arrived, which might be in another day or two. The viscount gave the Greyfriars juniors a cheery nod as they came back to the deck with Arthur Augustus. Glancing in the direction of the felucca, they saw it lying still at anchor, black against the sunset with its slanting masts. And the glimmer of a glass on the felucca's deck showed that the gangster was still there, and still lifting his binoculars every now and then to scan the yacht.

"I dare say he's puzzled, by this time, at having seen nothing of Bunter," remarked Frank Nugent, with a grin.

"Well, if Bunter was here he would keep out of sight, with that blighter in the offing," said Bob. "Bronx would guess that. He fancies that Bunter's keeping below, or in a cabin."

The juniors chuckled. There was something very entertaining in the idea of the Tiger watching, and watching, and watching for the fellow who was not there.

"You fellows are stayin' to dinnah," said Arthur Augustus. "We'll fix up a show aftahwards, what? There's a vevy good theatre in Venice, called the What's-its-name, and they're performin' Thingumbob to-night, and I believe it is quite worth seein'."

And, Lord Conway cordially weighing in, the juniors accepted.

"And what about staying on board to-night?" added his lordship. "We can send a message to your hotel that you won't be back."

"There's rather a crowd of us," said Harry, with a smile.

"That's all right. All the cabins are empty, at present. My friends from Trieste won't arrive till the day after to-morrow."

"Then we'll be jolly glad!"

"The gladfulness will be terrific, esteemed and absurd lord!" declared the Nabob of Bhanipur.

After dinner a gondola was called and the whole party went ashore. In the dusk, on the lagoon, the juniors glimpsed the shape of a following boat and chuckled. The gangster was on the trail!

There was a performance of "Otello" that evening. As it was, of course, in Italian, the juniors did not understand much of it, but, as Arthur Augustus sagely remarked, music was the same in all languages, and they



"Why, you—you cheeky ruffian!" gasped Bunter, as Bob Cherry grasped Jarvis and sat him down in the box. "I'll jolly well have you chucked out—yaroooh!" He broke off with a roar, as the exasperated Bob grasped him, in his turn, and sent him sprawling on top of Jarvis, with a heavy concussion. Bump! "Whoop!" spluttered the fat billionaire.

enjoyed the show, and Verdi's music. Lord Conway had engaged a box for the party. After the first act the juniors scanned the house, wondering whether they would see Bronx in the audience. They had little doubt of picking out the long, lean figure, if it was there. But nothing was to be seen of Bronx. Possibly he had noted that Bunter had not landed with the rest, and had gone back to keep watch on the yacht—an idea that made the juniors chuckle.

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

"Bronx—"

"No—Bunter!"

"Oh, my hat!"

In the opposite box, across the width of the stage, a fat form was visible. It was that of Bunter the Billionaire!

He had missed the first act, and had just come in. Billy Bunter was not keen on music, but no doubt he considered it up to a billionaire to take a box at the opera.

There was a vast expanse of white shirt-front over his ample frontage. An enormous diamond glittered from it.

Standing in the box, Bunter blinked over the theatre with the air of a fellow who owned the place—or could have owned it, if he had liked!

Suddenly his eyes, and his spectacles, fell on the smiling party in the opposite box.

He blinked at them, as if surprised to see them there. Then he turned up his fat little nose with an air of ineffable disdain.

The expression of disdain and contempt that came over Bunter's fat face was really remarkable.

"Bai Jove! That's Bunter!" remarked Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass on the fat billionaire. "What is he makin' faces for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How vewy extwaordinawy that he should be standin' there makin' those wemarkable faces!" said the puzzled swell of St. Jim's. "Pewwaps he has

been bitten on the nose by a mosquito, or somethin'."

The juniors chortled. They were aware that Bunter was expressing disdain by that remarkable contortion of his fat features. But to Gussy's puzzled eyes he was only making faces.

"The silly ass!" said Harry Wharton. "If he knew that Bronx was in Venice he wouldn't be showing himself in public like this."

"The man may follow us into the theatre," said Bob. "Might as well give the fat duffer the tip."

Wharton grunted.

"I gave him the tip on the phone this morning. No good talking to the blithering ass!"

"Well, word of mouth might work the oracle," said the good-natured Bob.

"There's plenty of time before the next act. I think I'll trickle round and speak to him."

Bob Cherry left the box, and by long passages made his way round to the box on the opposite side. The door was open when he arrived there, and the sleek form of Jarvis was standing in the doorway. Bunter's man was in attendance on him at the theatre. And Bunter's fat voice was audible.

"Jarvis!"

"Sir!"

"I shall want some refreshments in the interval. See that they bring something to my box."

"Very good, sir!"

Bob Cherry looked into the box over Jarvis's shoulder.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he greeted.

Bunter blinked at him. His very spectacles gleamed with disdain as he blinked.

"Have you come here to apologise, Cherry?" he demanded haughtily.

"You fat ass!" answered Bob.

Bunter waved a fat hand.

"That's enough! Get out!"

"I came here to—"

"Turn that fellow out, Jarvis!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Bob's blue eyes gleamed.

"Better not try it on, my man!" he said quietly. "Bunter, you blithering owl, I came here to—"

"Oh, I know why you came here!" sneered the fat billionaire. "You want me to take you up again. I expected that. I know what you're after. None better. But it won't wash, see? If I take you up again—"

"You howling ass!"

"If I take you up again," pursued Bunter calmly, "first of all, you've got to apologise, all round. Then you've got to agree to behave yourselves, and do as you're told. Then I'll consider it. I promise nothing! But you can rely on me to treat you with my usual generosity."

"You unspeakable idiot!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I came here to tell you what Wharton told you on the phone. That blighter, Bronx—"

"Chuck it!" said Bunter contemptuously. "Do you think you can scare me? Do you think I'm a fellow to be scared?"

"He's been watching us all day, looking for you—"

"Rats!"

"Jarvis has seen him, too," snapped Bob. "He saw Jarvis in the Place of St. Mark this afternoon, and Jarvis must have seen him."

Bunter started a little. Had he believed that Tiger Bronx really was in Venice, watching for a chance to get at him, there was no doubt that the fat billionaire's fat confidence would have departed very suddenly.

"Jarvis!" he gasped. "You never told me—"

"I have seen nothing of the man, sir," said Jarvis smoothly. "If he was in the Piazza I certainly did not see him."

Bunter gasped with relief.

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"I jolly well knew he wasn't here! You beast, Cherry—"

"I wouldn't swear that Jarvish saw him," said Bob. "But I jolly well believe that he did!"

"Yah!"

"I tell you he's been following us about all day—"

"Gammon!"

"You fat dummy!" roared Bob. "I've a jolly good mind to dot you one on your silly fat nose."

"Turn that fellow out of my box, Jarvish!"

Jarvish placed his sleek, smooth hand on Bob's shoulder. Possibly it suited Mr. Jarvish's mysterious plans to see trouble between Bunter and his protectors. He gave Bob Cherry a push.

That tore it, so to speak! Bob, with a blaze in his eyes, turned on the sleek man, grasped him by the shoulders with both hands, and sat him down in the box.

Bump!

"Oh!" gasped Jarvish. "Ow! Oooh!" Probably he had not expected Bob to handle him so easily.

"Why, you—you cheeky ruffian!" gasped Bunter. "You—you hooligan! I'll jolly well call the attendants and have you chucked out— Yaroooh!"

He roared, as the exasperated Bob grasped him in his turn. "I say, leggo—yaroooh—beast— Wow! Ow! I say— Yarooop!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat on the sprawling Jarvish with a heavy concussion.

"Whoop!" spluttered Bunter.

There was a squeak of anguish from Jarvish. Under Billy Bunter's terrific weight he collapsed on the carpet of the box, all the wind knocked out of him. Bunter sat on him and roared.

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

Bob Cherry tramped out of the box and slammed the door after him. Bunter and his man were left to sort themselves out at their leisure.

Bob's face was rather red as he came back into Lord Conway's box. The fellows there were grinning! They had watched Bob's proceedings across the theatre.

"Bunter glad to see you, old bean?" asked Nugent, laughing.

Snort from Bob.

"Bai Jove, you know, it was weally more entertainin' than the show!" remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The curtain went up again, and the Greyfriars party dismissed Bunter the Billionaire from their minds.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Like a Thief in the Night!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were rather late in getting back to the Silver Foam that night.

But it was a merry party that glided over the starlit lagoon in a leisurely gondola, and clambered up the ladder to the yacht.

In the distance, in the glimmering dusk of the Venetian night, they saw the riding-lights of the felucca still at anchor in the same position. They wondered whether Bronx was there, still on the watch. The schoolboys remained chatting on deck for a time before turning in; but they went to their state-rooms at last. Their quarters on Lord Conway's yacht were a good deal more luxurious than their rooms at the Albergo Oriente, and it was an agreeable change.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bade good-night to his guests, and saw them to their rooms and went to his own bunk and was soon fast asleep. The Famous

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Five had had a long and fairly tiring day, and four of them, at least, were quite prepared to follow Gussy's example. But there was a very thoughtful expression on the dusky face of Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh; the Nabob of Bhanipur was not thinking of sleep.

He tapped at Wharton's door as the captain of the Remove was sitting on the edge of his bunk to take his boots off, and looked in.

"My esteemed Wharton—" he murmured.

"Not sleepy, Inky?" asked Harry.

"Quitefully so; but I have been thinking," said the nabob. "The esteemed and ridiculous Bronx has got it fixed in his absurd mind that the idiotic Bunter is on this yacht."

"He can't think anything else, I suppose, as he doesn't know that we've parted with the fat image," said Harry. "What about it? He can watch us from the felucca as long as he likes."

"I do not thinkfully opine that he will be satisfied with watching us, my esteemed chum!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur quietly. "He is after the ridiculous Bunter, and he thinks that the esteemed ass is here."

Wharton started.

"Oh, my hat! You think he may come—"

"That is my absurd opinion," assented the nabob. "When the shades of night have fallen fast, as the absurd poet expresses it, I think that the execrable Bronx will drop infully."

Wharton ceased operations on his boots and whistled.

"It would be jolly risky for him to try to butt in on the yacht," he said. "There will be a watch kept on the deck, I suppose. Still, he seems to be the sort of sportsman to take risks."

He rose from his bunk.

"We're jolly well going to keep our eyes open, Inky! No need to bother the other fellows—they're all sleepy! But we two—"

"That is the esteemed idea."

Wharton turned off the light in his state-room.

The door opened on the deck; and outside was a warm glimmer of Italian starlight. The juniors placed two deck-chairs just within the cabin.

There, they were out of sight in the dark interior and could wait at their ease and watch and listen.

The more Wharton thought of it, the more likely it seemed to him that the nabob was right.

It could not be doubted that Bronx believed that Bunter the Billionaire was on board the Silver Foam. He had been watching the yacht all day to see if the fat billionaire left it.

He was not likely to be satisfied merely with watching Bunter's supposed lair! He wanted Bunter!

No doubt it was a risky proceeding to attempt to board the yacht in the night, and get hold of the Greyfriars billionaire. But there was nothing else for Bronx to do unless he gave up the game.

That he was exceedingly unlikely to do.

As the night wore on, Harry Wharton felt more and more certain that the gangster would come.

He was sleepy, and he nodded more than once; but he managed to keep awake. Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh watched with unwinking dark eyes.

The other fellows were fast asleep in their rooms; Lord Conway and D'Arcy were slumbering soundly, as were most of the crew.

There was one man keeping watch on the boat-deck, but the night was dark, in spite of the glimmer of the stars in the velvety expanse above.

Bronx, if he came, was certain to come

silently; and it was likely enough that he might contrive to climb on the yacht without alarming the watchman.

Midnight passed; and the night grew older. Light after light went out on shore, though here and there lights still twinkled. The riding-lights of the yacht made little difference to the gloom.

Harry Wharton rubbed his eyes.

"I wish he would buck up, if he's coming, Inky!" he whispered.

The nabob pressed his arm as a sign of silence.

There was a faint sound from the dark waters.

"Listen!" breathed Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

Wharton listened intently.

If it was a boat in the darkness it made hardly a sound. Certainly the watchman on the boat-deck heard and saw nothing.

Hurrec Singh rose silently and stepped out of the cabin. Wharton followed him on tiptoe, his heart beating.

They crossed quickly to the side and stopped in the deep shadow of the boat-deck, which completely hid them from sight.

Thus in cover, they were able to look over the rail without revealing themselves to anyone below on the sea.

Although he was more than half-expecting it, Wharton gave a violent start as he discerned the shape of a boat under the rail, almost hugging the hull of the yacht.

Two men stood up in her, one holding on with a boathook hooked to a stanchion above, the other fending off with his hands to prevent the boat bumping on the yacht. These two men, from their dark skins, were Italians, doubtless members of the felucca's crew.

There was a third man in the boat whose face the juniors could not distinguish in the gloom, but whose long, lean figure they knew at once.

While his two followers kept the boat still and steady, Tiger Bronx was essaying to climb on board the Silver Foam. Standing on a thwart, and taking full advantage of his unusual length of limb, the gangster reached up and evidently found a hold, for the juniors, as they watched, saw the long, lean figure rise slowly and silently from the boat.

Bronx was coming up the side.

Wharton caught his breath, his eyes turning on the dusky face beside him. He caught the gleam of the nabob's dark eyes in the gloom.

Hurrec Singh made him a sign to be silent.

Listening intently, they heard a faint sound as the gangster, by sheer strength of muscle, pulled himself up the side to the rail. A head appeared over the rail. It was covered by a dark cap, and was hardly more than a shadow among shadows. But the watching juniors spotted it.

The lean man rested his elbows on the polished rail, and hung there, evidently listening. Satisfied that there was no alarm, he began to worm his way silently over.

It was obvious that the watchman on the boat-deck had no suspicion, and but for the fact that the two juniors were on the alert, Bronx would undoubtedly have boarded the Silver Foam unperceived and unsuspected. His next proceeding, no doubt, would have been to peer into cabin after cabin, in search of the fat billionaire!

Certainly he was not likely to find him; but he was not aware of that. But, as it happened, Tiger Bronx was not given the opportunity of making the search.

He was half-over the rail when the nabob made his comrade a sign.

"Now!" he whispered. "Bag the esteemed scoundrel!"

The two juniors ran out of the cover of the boat-deck. In a twinkling they reached the gangster on the rail.

"Bag him!" gasped Wharton. Before Bronx knew that they were there, they had seized him. He pitched back bodily over the rail, and would have fallen into the boat below, but the juniors had tight hold of him by his lean arms. They held his arms jammed on the rail, and he hung there, helplessly, his long legs thrashing wildly—and there was a howl from below, as one of his boots came in contact with a head!

"Got him!" gasped Wharton. "Hold on!"

"The hold-fulness is terrific!" "Wake snakes!" gasped Tiger Bronx. "Ooogh! Let up, you ginks! You're sure twisting my arms fierce! Ow! Ooogh! Let up!" His voice rose to a yell. "By the great horned toad, if I could get at a gun—"

"But you jolly well can't!" grinned Wharton. "Hold on to the brute, Inky! We've got you, you rascal!"

They had got him, there was no doubt about that. Hanging on the rail, with the two sturdy juniors grasping his arms, Tiger Bronx was unable either to advance or retreat. His slits of eyes blazed with rage, as he glared at them; but his rage had no terrors for the Greyfriars juniors. They held on and shouted to their comrades, and in a few seconds the yacht was buzzing with voices and footsteps and flashing with lights.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Black Time for Bronx!

"**W**HAT'S the row here?" It was Lord Conway's deep voice.

"Bai Jove! What's the jollay old mattah, deah boys?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" "What the thump—"

"Bronx!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Lend us a hand!" shouted Wharton. "He's wriggling like a jolly old eel!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Bob Cherry and Nugent and Johnny Bull rushed to lend a hand—many hands. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was only a moment after them.

Four pairs of hands grasped the gangster, fastening on collar, hair, ears, and anything else that gave a hold.

Tiger Bronx was wriggling and struggling; but he had not the remotest chance of getting away. He hung over the yacht's rail, helpless.

His hard, lean face was convulsed with rage. If he could have reached his "gun" at that moment there was little doubt that he would have used it with utter recklessness. But he had no chance of getting at his gun.

"By gad!" Lord Conway stared at the lean, savage face. The deck was in a blaze of electric lights now, as light as day. Rogers had come up and five or six of the crew. Every eye was fixed on the gangster.

The boat was no longer below him. The two Italian seamen had pushed off, realising that their leader was captured. The boat disappeared into the dusk of the sea, and Bronx hung over the water.

"Will you let up!" yelled Bronx desperately.

"Hold the rascal, my lads!" said Lord Conway, with a smile. "This is rather a surprise visit. I suppose some of you were on the watch for him?"

"It was Inky's idea," said Wharton. "He thought the rotter might come after Bunter, so we stayed up for him. Sorry to disturb you in the middle of the night—"

"Not at all!" said the viscount, laughing. "I wouldn't have missed this for worlds! Hang on to him. I think perhaps we can signal for a police boat to take charge of him."

"Forget it!" snarled Bronx. "What are you going to charge a guy with, I'd like to know? You figure that I was moseying along to pinch your silver spoons?"

"Perhaps you will explain what you did come for?" suggested Lord Conway.

"Sure! I guess I wanted to speak to Mr. Jarvish—a guy I knew in the United States. I guess he's on board this packet, and I just wanted a word with him."

"You didn't come after Bunter?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Nope! I guess you wouldn't find it easy to prove I did, either!" snarled Bronx. "And I ain't stepped on board, neither! I'll say the law's on my side, handling a man like this here, when he's coming out to a ship to pass a word with an old acquaintance!"

"Bai Jove! That wottah has a feahful neck!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard you as a lyn' wottah, Mr. Bwonn!"

"Aw, can it!" snarled the gangster.

"Let up, I'm telling you! You figure that you can keep me hanging here all the dog-goned night?"

"We'll keep you just as long as we jolly well want you, at any rate!" answered Harry Wharton coolly. "I don't know whether you could be handed over to the police for trying to sneak on board at night—but I know you're going to have a lesson!"

"I guess—"

"This isn't a guessing game!" said Bob Cherry. "Dry up, old bean!"

"What do you want to do with the rascal?" asked Lord Conway, with a laugh. "I'll leave it to you."

"Can we have a bucket of tar?" asked Harry.

"Certainly."

"I guess—" howled Bronx.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mr. Rogers, let one of the men bring a bucket of tar, with a brush in it," said Lord Conway.

"Ay, ay, sir!" grinned the mate of the Silver Foam.

A grinning seaman brought the bucket of tar. Harry Wharton took the brush, and dipped it into the sticky black liquid.

There was a yell from Bronx. Whether a charge could have been made out against him, if he had been handed over to the police of Venice, was perhaps doubtful. Certainly, the gangster would have preferred that to what he was now going to get. He would have preferred it very much indeed. But Mr. Bronx's preferences in the matter were completely disregarded.

He wriggled and struggled wildly, and ducked his head, as the captain of the Remove lifted the brush, thickly laden with tar.

"Aw! Can it! Let up! I'll say I'll soak you for this!" he roared. "Keep that brush away, you 'gink!"

"Hold him steady!" said Wharton.

"Yaas, wathah!" chortled Arthur Augustus.

"Steady, the Buffs!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

The gangster made a desperate effort to tear loose and drop into the sea. But he was too securely held for that. Bob Cherry took hold of his sharp chin, and tilted his lean face up. He held it in a favourable position for painting, and Wharton got on with the decorative work.

A wild howl rang out from Bronx as the tarbrush dabbed on his face. There was another howl of laughter from the crowd on the deck of the

(Continued on next page.)

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Silver Foam. Wharton dabbed again and again, loading the big brush for every dab.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gurrgh! I guess— Urrgh! I'll say— Groogh!" spluttered the hapless gangster, as the tar thickened on his face.

In a few minutes he was blacker than the blackest inhabitant of Central Africa. His eyes gleamed and glittered wildly from a sable countenance. But there was a lot of tar left yet—and Wharton proceeded to ladle it over his hair, his ears, and down the back of his neck.

"Oh! Ow! Groogh! By the great horned toad— Ooooh!" Bronx spluttered frantically as some of the tar oozed into his mouth.

"Better keep your mouth shut, old thing!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Bronx acted on that excellent advice. Tar outside was bad enough; but taken internally it was worse.

"Bai Jove! He looks weally weird, you know," remarked Arthur Augustus, "and he is fwightfully stickay!"

"The stickiness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's the lot," said Harry Wharton at last. "I hope you can swim, Mr. Bronx, because we're going to drop you into the lagoon!"

"Urrrgggh!"

The juniors were aware that Mr. Bronx could swim. They had already given him one swim in the lagoon. Now he was going to get another.

"Good bye, little blackbird!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him drop!"

The holding hands released the gangster. He shot down the side into the sea, and disappeared from sight.

"He wants a wash," remarked Bob Cherry. "He's getting it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A face black as the ace of spades appeared on the water, in the gleam of electric light from the yacht. Tiger Bronx was seen swimming, and a yell of laughter followed him as he went.

He disappeared into the dusk of the lagoon.

"That's that!" remarked Bob Cherry, wiping his eyes. "I fancy that sportsman will get fed up with Greyfriars fellows, in the long run."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we shall not see any more of him to-night, at all events," said Lord Conway, laughing. "So we may as well get back to bed."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the Greyfriars fellows went back to bed, and slept soundly for the remainder of the night—which Mr. Bronx did not! It was probable that Mr. Bronx was busy scraping off tar till long after the sun had risen on the lagoon of Venice.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Rather Mysterious!

A BOAT from the Silver Foam landed the Greyfriars fellows, after breakfast the following morning.

As the yacht was remaining at Venice till the next day, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had one more day to spend in the City of the Sea; and he was going to spend it in the company of the Famous Five. So the swell of St. Jim's went ashore with them.

When the boat pulled in to the landing-place at the Riva, another craft—a

rather dingy boat badly in need of paint—was tying up there. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dark eyes turned on the two dusky Italian seamen in the dingy boat, with a gleam of recognition in them. The two swarthy men stared at the juniors and scowled, but otherwise took no notice of them.

"Our esteemed friends of last night!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Those are the two ludicrous dagoes who were with the execrable Bronx."

"They seem to know us!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Then that's the boat from the felucca!" said Harry, glancing at it. "Looks as if Bronx has got the tar off, and gone ashore."

"Keeping an eye open for us, I suppose!" said Johnny Bull. "Well, we'll handle him again, if he's keen on it."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

Nothing was seen of the lean American, however, when the juniors landed. If he was ashore and watching for them, he was contriving to keep out of view.

But as they walked along the Riva, they spotted a familiar face—the sleek, smooth countenance of James Jarvis.

Mr. Jarvis was standing by a pile of baggage that had been landed from a steamer, and looking towards the dingy boat by which the two Italian seamen lounged.

He seemed interested in the boat from the felucca. Wharton, as he noted the valet's intent look, wondered whether Jarvis had seen the gangster land from that boat.

Jarvis perceived the juniors the next moment, and immediately saluted them with his usual deferential respect.

He seemed to have forgotten the episode at the theatre the previous evening, when Bob Cherry had sat him down in Bunter's box and sat Bunter down on him.

"Good-morning, gentlemen!" said Mr. Jarvis, in his smooth tones, as he touched his hat.

Harry Wharton stopped to speak to him.

"Where's Bunter?" he asked.

"My young master is not up yet, sir!" answered Jarvis. "He does not usually rise till about eleven, as no doubt you remember. I am taking the opportunity of getting a little exercise, sir."

"You've seen Bronx?"

Jarvis raised his eyebrows.

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Didn't he land from that boat?"

"What boat, sir?"

"The one you were staring at a moment ago!" said Wharton sharply.

"Don't try to pull my leg, Jarvis! I'm not an ass like Bunter."

"Oh, that boat!" said Jarvis easily. "I was interested, sir, in the somewhat picturesque costume of the sailors, sir! Those red handkerchiefs tied round their heads give them a somewhat piratical look, sir; but no doubt they are quite honest and harmless seamen."

"They're nothing of the sort," said Harry. "They're in Bronx's pay, and birds of the same feather."

"Indeed, sir!" said Jarvis, with a peculiar glimmer in his eyes. "Do you really think so, sir?"

"There's no doubt about it, as we've seen him with them," said Harry. "Look here, Jarvis, I can't quite make you out; but whatever you are, you are no fool."

"You are very good, sir."

"Well, then," said Harry, "you know jolly well that Bronx is in Venice! We've told you so, and you know it's true. Keep Bunter out of his way."

"I shall certainly endeavour to do so,

sir, as my young master appears to be in some danger from that very disagreeable character," answered the valet. "But Master William, sir, does not believe that Bronx is anywhere near at hand, and I am, of course, completely under his orders."

Wharton set his lips.

"What's your game, Jarvis?" he snapped.

"Game, sir?" repeated Jarvis, raising his eyebrows again.

"You're up to something!"

"Oh, sir!"

"It looks to me," said Wharton quietly and deliberately, "as if you've got some game on, Jarvis, and it would suit you for that American gangster to get his claws on Bunter."

"You do me injustice, sir!" said Jarvis, with an appearance of great earnestness. "I am devoted to my master, sir, in every possible way. But he is, as you will remember, a somewhat obstinate young gentleman, and it is useless for me to argue with him—even if I could so far forget my place as to venture to do so."

Wharton looked at him very dubiously. There was no actual evidence that the sleek man was "double-crossing" the Greyfriars billionaire, yet Wharton felt a deep distrust of him.

"Well, I've warned you," he said curtly. "Bronx is hand-in-glove with those fellows in the red caps, and they belong to a felucca anchored out in the lagoon. We've seen Bronx on board the vessel. It looks to me as if he's hired it, and its crew, to get Bunter away, if he succeeds in getting hold of him. You can keep Bunter safe if you choose, Jarvis."

"I shall certainly do my best, sir."

Jarvis's manner was as respectful as could be wished. But there was a glimmer of mockery in his shifty eyes, which the captain of the Remove did not fail to observe.

He said no more, but walked on after his friends and rejoined them. Mr. Jarvis smiled at the back of his head as he went.

The sleek man waited till the school-boys were out of sight in the crowds in the Place of St. Mark, and then he strolled along to the two red-capped seamen who were lounging by the tied-up boat, and entered into talk with them in their own language.

Had Wharton observed that proceeding, he could hardly have doubted that his suspicions of Mr. Jarvis were well-founded.

After a conversation in Italian with the two seamen, Mr. Jarvis left them, and walked back by the Grand Canal to the Hotel Palazzo.

When he was gone, the two men of the felucca looked at one another, and grinned.

"Va bene, Carlo!" said one of them to the other.

"Benissimo, Pietro mio!" grinned Carlo.

"Andiamo cercare il signore."

"Si, si, presto!"

Leaving the boat where it lay, the two seamen mingled with the crowds in the Piazza.

Meanwhile, Harry Wharton & Co. were taking a stroll round the Piazza of San Marco. They stopped at a cafe for coffee, and then walked in the direction of the cathedral.

Arthur Augustus was keen to see the celebrated bronze horses of St. Mark at close quarters. These celebrated animals could be seen from the Place, high up in their lofty position; but to see them at close quarters it was necessary to enter the building and ascend innumerable stairs. As the Famous Five had not yet "done" that particular sight of Venice,



Thrust into the dingy cabin, Billy Bunter blinked round him in the dusky light. He gave a sudden jump of terror, as a long lean form rose from a locker in the shadowy corner. "I'll say I'm powerful glad to see you!" drawled the voice of Tiger Bronx. "I'll sure tell a man! I'll tell the world that this is the opossum's eyelids!" "Oh, lor'!" groaned Bunter.

they willingly assented, and the six schoolboys strolled across the Place together. There were a great many people about, and the juniors had nearly reached the cathedral before they observed a tall head in a Panama hat, overtopping most of the crowd.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here we are again!" cried Bob Cherry, as he pointed it out to his comrades.

"Bai Jove! That ass is still watchin' us!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Does he think we've got Buntah in our pockets, I wondah?"

The juniors grinned. The white hat followed them as they went towards the entrance of the cathedral. Evidently Bronx was still in hope that they would ultimately lead him to Bunter.

Looking round before they entered the building, they saw the long, lean gangster at a little distance behind.

He had cleaned off the tar, but there were still traces of it sticking to his hair and his ears.

He caught their eyes on him, and gave them a savage scowl.

Apparently, he had not yet quite recovered from his unpleasant experiences while hanging on the rail of the Silver Foam the previous night.

"What about collaring the cheeky rotter and bumping him—Greyfriars style?" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, let him get on with it!" said Harry. "The longer he sticks to us, the less likely he is to drop on Bunter."

"Yes, that's so."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's one of the sportsmen in the red caps!" said Bob, as a seaman came through the crowd outside the cathedral and approached the gangster.

It was one of the men who had been

waiting with the felucca's boat at the waterside.

The juniors saw him speak to Bronx in a low, rapid voice, and saw the gangster start. Then, evidently losing all interest in the Greyfriars fellows on the spot, Bronx turned and hurried away with the Italian seaman.

They disappeared from sight in a moment or two.

"Giving us the go-by!" said Bob Cherry. "Well, I'm not sorry to see the last of his lean mug!"

And the Greyfriars fellows went into the cathedral, no longer shadowed by the lean shadower who had stuck to their trail so long. A guide captured them at once, and proceeded to show them the wonders of the Cathedral of St. Mark, and, in exploring that highly coloured and extremely decorative edifice, they forgot all about the man from Chicago.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Trapped!

"WHAT am I doing to-day, Jarvis?" yawned Bunter the Billionaire.

Billy Bunter was taking his ease in an easy-chair in the balcony of the Hotel Palazzo, over the Grand Canal.

He had breakfasted, as usual, in bed; taken his little nap after breakfast, also as usual; but finally he had summed up energy enough to get out of bed.

Having dressed with the assistance of Jarvis—Bunter the Billionaire being absolutely incapable of dressing himself!—he had descended to the balcony, where he honoured the Grand Canal with a blink through his big spectacles. But he wasted only a blink or two

on the Grand Canal. On a little table beside Bunter's chair there were light refreshments. Bunter had room for just a little more inside. That available space he was now packing to capacity with luscious grapes.

Mr. Jarvis stood before his master in his usual attitude of deep respect, winding his smooth hands together.

"You've made some arrangements, Jarvis, I suppose?" yawned Bunter.

"Certainly, sir!"

It pleased Bunter the Billionaire to leave everything to his "man." It saved him the trouble of thinking, a process for which his fat intellect had not been well planned by Nature. And it made him feel like a billionaire!

"Well, what am I doing?" drawled Bunter. "Somebody was speaking last night about some celebrated bronze horses or something sticking up in the air on top of a cathedral or something. Have I seen them yet, Jarvis?"

"You have seen them from the square, sir," said Jarvis. "To see them close at hand, it will be necessary to ascend a number of staircases——"

"Isn't there a lift?"

"H'm! No, sir!"

"Well, if I've seen them from the square, that's all right," said Bunter. "I'm not keen on a lot of stairs, Jarvis."

"Quite so, sir! I have ventured to make an arrangement for your morning, sir, subject to your approval," said Jarvis smoothly. "There is a very interesting vessel in the harbour which you might care to see. It is called a felucca, sir."

"What's a felucca?"

"It is a vessel, sir, much used in the Mediterranean, and has very large sails of the kind called lateen."

Bunter yawned, and attacked the grapes again. He did not seem to be deeply interested in feluccas and their lateen sails.

"As this kind of vessel is never seen in English waters, sir, I thought you might care to inspect it," murmured Jarvis.

"Well, perhaps I might!" yawned Bunter.

"A boat belonging to it is now at the landing place, sir, and I have ventured to engage the services of the two seamen in charge of it," said Jarvis. "They have been waiting some time——"

"Let them wait!" said the fat billionaire.

"Oh, certainly, sir! They will certainly wait till you are ready," assented Jarvis. "I may say they feel very keenly, sir, the honour of being of service to you."

"That's right!" said Bunter, with a

gracious nod. "That's how they ought to feel, Jarvish. I hope you're paying them well. I can't bother about such things myself, of course; but I like people who serve me, and who know how to keep their place, to be well paid. See to that, Jarvish!"

Billy Bunter at that moment might have been Nero commanding: "See to it, Tigellinus!"

"Certainly, sir! I am aware of your wishes in that respect, and my only object is to carry them out, sir."

"You're a good servant, Jarvish!" said Bunter graciously.

"Thank you, sir!"

"I don't mind saying that you are the best valet I've ever had!" said Bunter—which was strictly true, as Bunter had never had a valet at all before Mr. Jarvish happened!

"You are very, very kind, sir!" said Jarvish, with a gratified look. "You indeed overwhelm me, sir!"

"Tell somebody to call a gondola!" said Bunter. "By the way, you haven't seen anything of that beast Bronx?"

"Nothing, sir."

"You've kept your eyes open?"

"Wide open, sir."

"I jolly well knew those beasts were trying to pull my leg!" grunted Bunter.

"Trying to scare a chap, you know, just to make out that they'd be useful if a chap took them up again. I'm not a fellow to be fooled, I hope."

"I hope not, sir!" said Jarvish—a statement that was very far from the truth.

Being engaged at that moment in fooling Bunter, Mr. Jarvish could hardly share his hope that he was not a fellow to be fooled!

"They won't find it so jolly easy to pull my leg!" said the fatuous Owl.

"I'm rather wide, I fancy!"

"I will tell a cameriere to call a gondola, sir."

In a few minutes a gondola was at the steps waiting for Bunter. He rolled down to it through bowing waiters and porters. The head porter himself, a glorious being in gold lace, escorted him to the gondola, Jarvish following respectfully behind. Bunter

the Billionaire was a person whom all the Hotel Palazzo delighted to honour.

The gondola pushed off from the hotel steps.

Bunter sat in the little "cabino" out of the sun, Jarvish respectfully seating himself at the bows.

They glided away down the Grand Canal at the usual leisurely pace. They landed near the Place of St. Mark, and two red-capped seamen who had been loafing about came up at once.

Billy Bunter blinked at them.

"These the men, Jarvish?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!"

"Blessed if I like their looks much!"

"They are very honest men, sir. Their costume is simply the custom of the country. Something like characters on the films, sir."

"Well, where's the boat?" yawned Bunter.

"Here, sir!"

Bunter was led to the waiting boat. Jarvish carefully and respectfully helped his lordly master into it. The two seamen took their places.

"Perhaps you'd better come, too, Jarvish," said Bunter, as the valet stood back on the landing place.

Perhaps the fat billionaire felt a twinge of uneasiness. There were plenty of seamen to be seen in Venice, Italian and Maltese, in red caps, but the pair in Bunter's boat certainly did not look very favourable specimens.

"I will await your return, certainly, sir," said Jarvish, apparently misunderstanding what Bunter said.

One of the seamen pushed off.

"Eh—I said you were to come, too, Jarvish!" exclaimed Bunter.

But the boat had shot off under the shove of the oar, and Jarvish was no longer in hearing.

Bunter grunted angrily.

"Silly ass!" he growled. "Here, you fellows, get back! I want my servant to come with me! Get the boat back at once!"

Carlo and Pietro grinned and shook their heads, intimating that they did not understand English.

Both of them sat to the oars, and the boat glided further out.

"Look here, I want to go back for my man, see?" shouted Bunter. "What the thump does he mean by sticking me here with silly idiots who don't understand me! Go backo at once-o!"

That variety of Italian had no effect on Carlo and Pietro. They had pulled on, and the boat glided away towards the anchorage of the felucca.

Bunter had to give it up.

He frowned, but the Italian seamen paid no heed to his frowns, as they pulled steadily on. The boat ran under the quarter of the Colombo, and two swarthy faces looked down over the side. An accommodation ladder was let down and the fat billionaire helped on board. A fat man in a dingy peaked cap, evidently the padrone or skipper of the felucca, greeted him on deck with a low bow and a broad grin.

"Se vi piace!" he said, which Bunter had already learned meant "If you please"; and he took the fat junior's arm and led him towards the dingy steps that gave access to a dusky cabin.

"I don't want to go below!" grunted Bunter.

"Se vi piace!" repeated the padrone, and he tightened his grip on the fat arm and led Bunter down the narrow, steep ladder.

"Look here, you leggo, blow you!" exclaimed Bunter. "I tell you I don't want to go below! Look here—" A vague feeling of alarm was coming over the fat billionaire. As he went down with the padrone, he heard the boat being hoisted in, just as if the seamen did not expect him to be leaving the vessel again!

"Andiamo!" said the padrone, grinning.

He pushed Bunter into the dingy, dusky cabin, and immediately leaving him, hurried back to the deck. Bunter blinked round him in the dusky light, and gave a sudden jump of terror as a long, lean form rose from a locker in a shadowy corner.

"I'll say I'm powerful glad to see you!" drawled the voice of Tiger Bronx. "I'll sure tell a man! I'll tell the world that this is the opossum's eyelids!"

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Bagged Billionaire!

"JOLLY old geeees!" said Bob Cherry.

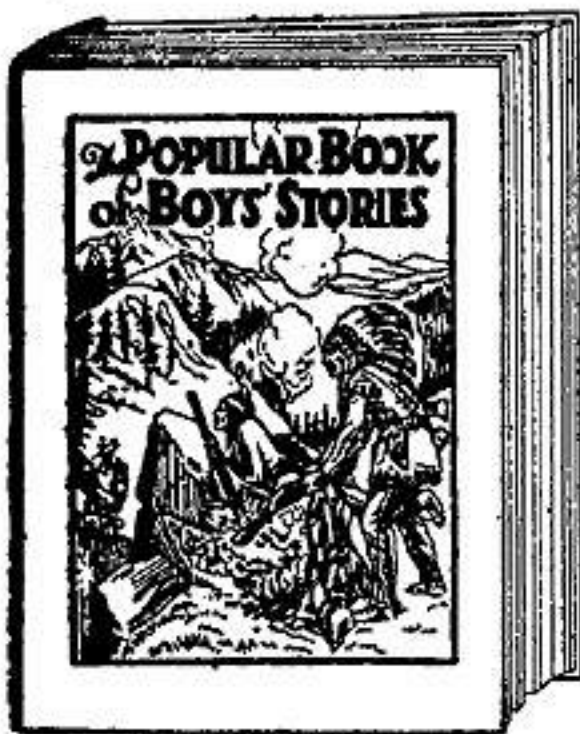
"Wemarkable!" agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The schoolboys had ascended countless stairs, and they were standing on the high platform where the celebrated "Quadriga," the four bronze horses of St. Mark reared their graceful forms high over the sunlit square.

There were several other tourists on the spot, one of them taking photographs. A young lady from Boston was telling somebody that the bronzes were "just-too cute!" A gentleman from New York was trying to calculate how much they must have cost to cast, and what would be their exact value in "dullers" if put on the market. While a stout German gentleman said, "Wunderbar! Wunderbar!" over and over again as if he were reciting a lesson.

Having had a look at the famous steeds riding in air, the juniors turned their attention to the square below. People dotted about looked almost like ants in the distance.

"Wippin' view fwom heah!" remarked Arthur Augustus, unslinging his field-glasses. "You can look wight ovah Venice, you know, fwom What-do-you-call-it as fah as What's-its-name. Like to twy the glasses, old beans?"



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"After you," said Harry, with a smile.

And the swell of St. Jim's opened the beautiful nickel-plated glasses and put them to his noble eyes and scanned the scene stretched out below.

"Oh cwikey!" he ejaculated suddenly. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob. "What's up?"

Something startling, it was certain, must have caught Gussy's eyes to make him ejaculate "Oh cwikey!" instead of "Bai Jove!"

"Gweat Scott!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's.

His eyes, and field-glasses, were fixed on the distant lagoon, part of which could be discerned from that elevated coign of vantage.

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced in the same direction. They could see a number of gondolas and other craft, but not closely enough to make out the people in them.

"What the dickens——" exclaimed Nugent.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus in great excitement. "They've got him!"

"Who's got whom?" yelled Bob.

"Buntah!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Look!" Arthur Augustus pushed the glasses into Harry Wharton's hand. "Look—that boat goin' out with two wed caps in it——"

Greatly startled, Harry Wharton swept the scene below with the glasses, and soon got them focused on the boat D'Arcy had seen.

To the naked eye, it was little more than a blur in the distance, but the field-glasses brought it close and clear.

Wharton caught his breath.

Sitting at the oars in the dingy boat, rowing fast, were the two red-capped seamen belonging to the felucca. Sitting in the stern with a frowning fat visage was Bunter the Billionaire!

There was no mistaking him! Even if his fat features had not come out so clearly in the glasses, his circumference was hardly to be mistaken!

It was Billy Bunter—and he was going out in the boat belonging to the felucca! Judging by his looks, he was going of his own accord, but that did not make it less alarming. The Famous Five knew, if Bunter did not, that the felucca and its crew were hired by the gangster.

"My hat!" breathed Wharton.

"Let's have a squint!" said Bob.

The glasses passed from hand to hand. Every one of the juniors had seen Bunter in the boat by the time it passed out of the range of vision.

"That's wathah sewious, you fellows!" remarked Arthur Augustus, as he shut the glasses and slipped them back into the leather case. "That feahful wottah Bwong has got the sillay ass now."

"There can't be any doubt about it," said Harry, setting his lips. "I can't imagine why Bunter should go in that boat—unless Jarvis has been tricking him somehow! If they get him to the felucca——"

"That's why that seaman came and called Bronx away an hour ago!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You remember——"

"We've got to stop him! Come on!"

It had taken the juniors some time to ascend to the platform where the bronze horses of St. Mark rode high over the Piazza. But the descent did not take them long. They almost flew.

They ran out hurriedly into the square in the blaze of sunshine. Without stopping they ran down to the landing-place.

Bunter's folly and absurdity was forgotten now! He was in the hands of

the desperado from Chicago. What Tiger Bronx intended to do with the fat and fatuous billionaire they did not know, but it was obvious that the gangster meant him harm. The chums of the Remove were only thinking of saving him—if they could.

At the waterside, they stared after the boat. But it was gone! It had reached the felucca, long before the panting juniors reached the water.

They could see the felucca, far out in the distance. But it was not at anchor now.

The huge lateen sails were up, and the vessel was moving away, the land breeze filling the great sails and pushing her rapidly on towards the open Adriatic.

Harry Wharton clenched his hands. A gondolier came up, calling to the juniors from his boat. But they did not heed him. It was useless to attempt to get after the felucca in a gondola.

The Colombo was moving out of the harbour, and once in the open sea, it would be as swift as a sea-bird in its flight. Even as the dismayed juniors stared after it, it was growing smaller in the distance.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, panting up after the Famous Five. "We're wathah too late, deah boys!"

"Is anything the matter, sir?" asked a smooth voice.

The juniors stared round at Mr. Jarvis, who touched his hat respectfully.

Wharton's eyes gleamed at the sleek face.

"You've let Bunter go to that felucca, Jarvis——"

"Oh, quite, sir!" said Jarvis. "Master William desired to inspect that vessel, sir—a rig that is not seen in our home waters, sir! I am waiting for him to return, sir!"

"I'm pretty certain that you don't expect him to return!" said Wharton savagely. "I've told you Bronx is on that felucca."

"Really, sir, I hardly think it possible——"

"You can see they're making sail!"

"Oh, quite sir! No doubt my young master has hired them to take him on a trip round the lagoon," said Jarvis. "I assure you, sir, that there is no cause for alarm."

Wharton looked at the man hard. It was difficult to read the sleek face, but he could not credit that Jarvis believed what he was saying. Anyhow, whether Jarvis had been treacherous or not, there was no doubt that Bunter the Billionaire, had fallen into the grip of the gangster.

"We've got to get him back!" breathed Wharton, turning away from Jarvis. "We've got to rescue the fat fool somehow!"

"Yaas, wathah! Jump into this gondola, deah boys!"

"What's the good, old chap? We can't get anywhere near the felucca in a gondola."

"We can get to the Silvah Foam, deah boy."

"Oh!"

"Old Conway will play up like a shot when we tell him. And I wathah think that gas will beat canvas in a wace," smiled Arthur Augustus.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton again.

"My dear sir!" exclaimed Jarvis. He was alarmed now, if he had not been alarmed before. "I assure you—I really assure you——"

Nobody listened to Jarvis. The schoolboys jumped into the gondola, pointed to the yacht at its anchorage, and shouted "Presto!" to the gondolier. Jarvis was left staring after them.

But it was ten long minutes before the gondola brought them to the yacht. Lord Conway eyed them with surprise as they came scrambling on board, their faces crimson with haste and excitement.

But as they panted out an explanation, the viscount's face became very grave.

He shot a swift glance after the felucca, fading into the distance. Then he called to Mr. Rogers, and instantly a signal was rung to the engine-room. The Silver Foam, a minute ago riding the calm water in slumberous inactivity, was transformed into a buzzing hive.

"Oh, good man—good man!" panted Bob Cherry, smacking Arthur Augustus on his noble back as the motor-yacht glided away from its anchorage. "You're a jolly old prize-packet, and no mistake."

"Ow! Wow!" roared Arthur Augustus. Bob's smack was hearty, and rather hefty. "Bai Jove! All wight, deah boy! But don't bweak my beastly back, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll get them!" said Harry Wharton, between his teeth, his eyes on the patched lateen sail against the blue.

"Yaas, wathah! We'll bag the wottahs all wight!"

The swift throb of the engines was like music to the ears of the Famous Five. And their hearts beat a little faster when Lord Conway stepped into his state-room, and came back with a revolver in his hand.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

In Chase!

BUNTER the Billionaire sprawled on a dirty locker, in a dirty, dingy cabin, and quaked with dread.

He could feel the felucca in motion. There was a trampling of feet on the deck above him, a jarring of heavy spars, a booming of canvas.

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

Tiger Bronx sat on the edge of a little table in the cabin. He stretched out his long legs and grinned at Bunter.

The Tiger seemed in great spirits—rather contrasting with the fat billicaire in that respect.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles in dismay and horror.

In his fatuous self-satisfaction he had declined to believe that the gangster had tracked him to Venice. But he could hardly doubt any longer when he found himself in the rascal's presence.

From the bottom of his fat heart he wished that he had listened to the juniors' warning. He wished that he had not been ass enough, idiot enough, to part with the fellows who would have protected him. But it was rather too late to wish all that now. Tiger Bronx, who had pursued him from England, had nearly got him in Paris; and quite got him in Venice. And now the felucca was sailing away into the Adriatic Sea—far from help and rescue, even if anyone had known that he was in danger.

Bunter groaned aloud.

"Oh lor'! Oh crikey! Ow!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp! came on the deck overhead. The padrone and his dusky crew were busy. The felucca leaned over to the wind as it filled the immense lateen sails. Bunter might have wondered whether the vessel was about to capsize, had he had leisure to be frightened by anything but the long, lean man who was grinning at him in triumph.

"I'll say it's the opossum's eyelids," declared Mr. Bronx. "Here's me, following that bunch of all-fired jays about, day and night, trying to get after you; and here's you, dropping into my mouth like a ripe plum. If that isn't the opossum's eyelids, I should smile!"

"I—I say——" groaned Bunter.

"Don't you worry a whole lot," grinned Mr. Bronx. "Nobody ain't going to hurt you, if you do as you're told, like a good little man. You're taking a trip in this hyer shebang along with Tiger Bronx for the good of your health. I guess you won't see Venice agin for awhile—nope! I'll say I've got you where I want you. Sure! I'll tell a man that this is the bee's knee."

Leaving Bunter sprawling dismally on the lockers, Mr. Bronx tramped up the narrow steep stair to the deck. No doubt he wanted to be safe out of sight of land before he dealt further with his captive.

"Oh lor'!" groaned Bunter.

He dragged himself from the lockers. He was not thinking of trying to escape. There was only one way out of the cabin—up the steps to the deck, the way Bronx had gone. There was no escape for the hapless billionaire.

He rolled to the little stern window of the cabin.

It was thick with dirt, and looked as if it had not been cleaned since the building of the Colombo. Bunter rubbed a patch of the glass clear with his sleeve, and blinked back astern.

Venice was already out of sight.

The wind was strong off the land, and the felucca's great sails were full of it. The Colombo was racing through the water.

Bunter had a glimpse of the islands, and that was all. The rest was sea and sky.

Here and there in the distance were sails. Far away was the smoke of a steamer coming from Trieste. But nearer at hand, with the prow directly towards the felucca, was a handsome yacht.

Bunter blinked at it.

He did not know that it was D'Arcy's brother's yacht, and certainly it did not cross his fat mind that the Famous Five were on board, or that the yacht was in chase of the felucca. But the sight of her ensign flying in the wind gave him a momentary feeling of comfort.

It did not have that effect on Mr. Bronx, who was staring back on deck with an uneasy frown on his brow, almost biting through his cigar in his irritation and alarm.

The felucca was making great speed, slanting to the wind, with the wide, open spaces of the Adriatic round her. The Italian shores were dropping from sight. Mr. Bronx had left his prisoner and come up on deck, with the belief that the game was entirely in his hands, and feeling as if he was monarch of all he surveyed. The sight of the swift-gliding motor-yacht astern quite changed the current of his thoughts.

"Say, you Sasso!" he called to the padrone. "I guess you want to get on top gear. I'll say that packet's nosing after us."

The padrone looked back at the yacht. He answered carelessly in Italian; and Bronx shook his head.

"I'll say she ain't jest running out promiscuous!" he snapped. "I'll tell a man she's after us."

"Ecco!" ejaculated the padrone, shrugging his shoulders.

"You want to beat her!"

"Cio e impossibilie!" answered the padrone, with another shrug.

It was hardly necessary for him to tell Bronx that it was impossible for a sailing-ship to beat a yacht running on petrol. If the Silver Foam was indeed in chase, it was only a matter of time before she overhauled the felucca.

"Stick on some more of your rags!" snarled Bronx. "By the great horned toad, I guess you got to beat her somehow! Beat her across to Istria, you jay, and run your packet ashore—that'll see me through! Capite?"

"Si, signore!"

The padrone rapped a word to the man at the helm, and shouted to his dusky red-capped crew. The felucca slanted to the east, her great lateen sails swinging round to the wind on her quarter. On that tack she sailed as fast as before the wind. But there was not the remotest chance of reaching the eastern shore of the Adriatic before the Silver Foam came up, and the crew knew it, if Bronx did not choose to realise it.

The yacht, in fact, was now coming up hand over fist. Bronx, staring savagely over the taffrail, could make out every line of her, and the figures on her deck. Perhaps he had nourished a faint hope that the yacht was simply putting to sea, unconcerned with him. If so, that hope had to be abandoned when he picked out the figures of Harry Wharton & Co. on board. He knew now beyond a doubt that it was pursuit.

He shook a savage fist at the Silver Foam.

"I'll say it's fierce!" he snarled. "How'd them guys get wise to it? They wasn't nowhere around when that fat gink moseyed along. I'll tell a man that it's sure fierce."

His hand went to his hip-pocket. A revolver glimmered in the sunlight. The padrone's eyes turned on him, rolling in alarm.

"Signore!" he gasped.

"Aw, can it!" snarled Bronx. "You figure that I'm letting them guys get that all-fired gink off me! Forget it!"

The padrone rolled his eyes, and waved his unwashed, dusky hands in alarm. He had been willing to hire out his ship for a kidnapping enterprise. But he was not prepared for shooting and bloodshed on the high seas. Signor Sasso had dabbled in smuggling and petty thievery; but piracy was rather too big an order. Moreover, in a conflict, the half-dozen ruffians on the felucca had no chance against an English yachting crew.

Bronx scowled at him.

"Pack a sticker, don't you?" he snarled. "Your guys here have got knives in their rags, I reckon! Stand by me, and we'll beat them off. Double pay if we get clear with the fat gink! You hear me talk?"

"Impossible, signore—non posso—ho paura—non posso—non posso!" burred the alarmed padrone.

"Posso, be jiggered! Stand by me or not, you're going to hear gun-play if they run us down!" roared the gangster. "I guess I'll handle this gun to the queen's taste, and then some!"

And the gangster gripped the gun in his hand, a desperate glitter in his eyes, as the Silver Foam ran the felucca down.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Rescue I

"**H**EAVE to!" shouted Lord Conway.

Standing on the boat-deck of the Silver Foam, he looked down on the felucca. The yacht had run within easy hail, and was now keeping alongside, at the distance of a few fathoms.

On the main-deck stood Harry Wharton & Co. and D'Arcy, their eyes eagerly on the felucca. The yacht's crew were equally eager—not at all averse from a "scrap" with a bunch of "dagoes," if their captain gave the order.

"There's Bronx!" breathed Wharton.

"If the scoundrel shoots——"

"We've got him, anyhow!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Bronx's savage voice came ringing back:

"Steer clear, you popinjay! Sáy, what are you running down this packet for?"

"You've got a kidnapped prisoner on board——"

"Forget it!"

"Are you willing to be searched?"

"Say, you belong to the Italian navy? Or has Mussolini made you Lord High Admiral of the Adriatic? Steer clear! You run me aboard, and you'll hear this barker bark!"

"I'm coming aboard you!" answered Lord Conway coolly. "If you use that weapon, Mr. Bronx, you'll answer for it with your neck!"

The gangster raised the revolver. "Steer clear, or you get yours!" he yelled.

Lord Conway gave him a look of cool contempt. The yacht edged nearer to the felucca. Harry Wharton & Co. stood with beating hearts. For the moment it looked like coming tragedy under the blue, smiling sky of the Adriatic.

But Bronx, in his desperation, had counted without the padrone and his crew.

The dusky ruffians had no idea whatever of sharing in such desperate measures, and facing long terms of imprisonment on the gangster's account. Shooting an English yachtsman was altogether too serious a matter for Signor Sasso and his men to have a hand in it.

As the gangster lifted the revolver, the padrone made a sign to his men.

Carlo and Pietro leaped on Bronx from behind, and dragged him over on the felucca's deck.

He went down with a yell and a crash, and the padrone snatched the revolver from his hand and tossed it into the sea.

"Say, you let up!" yelled Bronx, struggling madly. "You gol-darned dagoes, you double-crossing, gecks, I'm saying let up!"

But the dusky ruffians grasping him did not "let up." They pinned him to the deck, while the padrone shouted to the other hands to take in sail. Down came the great lateens, and the felucca hove-to.

"Our game, I think!" drawled Lord Conway.

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"Good egg!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The goodfulness of the esteemed egg is terrific!"

The Silver Foam glided in, and the engines shut off. She lay with her rail almost touching the felucca. Lord Conway jumped down on board, and D'Arcy



"Steer clear, you popinjay!" roared Bronx savagely. "Say, what are you running down this packet for?" "You've got a kidnapped prisoner on board!" answered Lord Conway coolly. "I'm coming aboard you! If you use that weapon, Mr. Bronx, you'll answer for it with your neck!"

and the Famous Five jumped after him. Bronx, on his back on the dingy deck, was howling and wriggling—with the two grinning Italians sitting on him and keeping him there.

The padrone met the newcomers with bows and anxious smiles, waving his greasy hands, and pouring out a flood of apologetic Italian.

If the padrone was to be believed, he was the most innocent and honest of all sailormen in existence. He had never even guessed what a "bad man" Bronx was, and he had firmly believed that the "ricco signore" in the cabin had come aboard entirely of his own accord.

Bob Cherry ran to the companion and roared down:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter!"

"Bunter!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Bunter—Bunty—Bunt!" bellowed Johnny Bull.

There was a startled squeak from below.

"Oh crikey! I say, you fellows—"

"Tumble up!" roared Bob.

A fat figure appeared on the steep ladder. Billy Bunter, his little round eyes almost popping through his big round spectacles in his amazement, rolled on deck.

He blinked at the chums of the Remove, as if he could hardly believe either his eyes or his spectacles!

"Oh lor'! I—I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say—oh lor'! Oh crikey! Is—is—is it really you? Oh scissors!"

"Really us, old fat bean!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"The realfulness is terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter. "I say, that beast Bronx—he got me—that silly idiot, Jarvis, let me come here, and that beast was waiting for me! I'll

sack him—the minute I get back I'll sack him!"

"All serene now, old fat man!" said Harry soothingly.

"I—I say, where's Bronx?"

"There he is, with those dagoes sitting on him!" chuckled Bob.

"Oh lor'!" gasped the alarmed billionaire. "I—I say, is—is he safe?"

"Ha, ha! Safe as houses! This way, old porpoise. You're getting a lift on Lord Conway's yacht back to Venice."

"Glad to find you safe and sound, Bunter!" said Lord Conway, with a rather curious look at the fat billionaire.

"I gather you came on this vessel of your own accord; but I think a charge of kidnapping would stand if we take that gentleman from Chicago back with us in the yacht—"

"Oh! No!" howled Bunter. "Keep him away! Let him go! Chuck him overboard! Don't let him come on the yacht! Leave him here! Make 'em hold him tight till I get away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Help me out of this, can't you?" roared Bunter. "Leave that beast there! I say, you fellows—"

The fat billionaire was helped on board the yacht. The other fellows followed.

Lord Conway hesitated, with his eyes on the savage, scowling face of the gangster. Finally, however, he followed the juniors, and the yacht throbbed away on the blue Adriatic with the rescued billionaire.

Looking back, as it went, Harry Wharton & Co. had a last glimpse of the gangster, leaning over the side of the felucca, and shaking a fist after them.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Ta-ta, old fat man!"

"Stop!" howled Bunter.

Safe in Venice once more, the Famous

Five had walked with Bunter to the Hotel Palazzo, to see him safe home. There they were going to leave him.

But Bunter, it appeared, was not going to be left!

"Hold on! I say, you fellows—stop! I—I want you to stay with me! You're not going to let a fellow down! I—I say, I—I was only j-j-joking when I said I wanted you to apologise! Look here! I'll apologise instead! See?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm getting out of this beastly place!" gasped Bunter. "I'm going to make Jarvis phone to the aerodrome. We'll start for Rome this very afternoon. You fellows would like to see Rome? Lots of ruins, and things, and that chap Mussolini—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do come!" urged Bunter. "I—I don't feel safe! Oh lor'! I say, you fellows, do come! There's a place in Rome where you can get lovely cakes—those sticky, creamy ones—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That settles it!" said Bob Cherry gravely.

It was settled, anyhow. Jarvis being needed to pack, Bunter decided not to sack him for the moment. Harry Wharton & Co. went to say good-bye to Arthur Augustus, gathered their belongings from the Albergo Oriente, and joined up with the Greyfriars billionaire once more. Whether the gangster turned up in Venice again or not they never knew. The Queen of the Adriatic dropped out of sight, and the plane soared away over the Apennines.

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss next week's full-of-thrills cover-to-cover yarn of Billy Bunter and the chums of Greyfriars. It's entitled: "BAGGED BY BANDITS!" You'll vote it one of Frank Richards' finest stories.)

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1/6

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2/6



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3/11

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1/4

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1/4

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1/4



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2/6

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6/6

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