

**SCHOOLBOY DAYS  
IN ITALY, OR, TITO,  
THE FLORENTINE**

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Schoolboy Days in Italy, or, Tito, the Florentine by André Laurie

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**ANDRÉ LAURIE**

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## SCHOOLBOY DAYS IN ITALY.

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### CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH DR. JULIUS BOLLMANN EXPLORES THE  
CLOACA MAXIMA.

ONE of the oldest squares, perhaps, indeed, the very oldest public square in Rome, is a sort of nameless crossroads a few steps from the Tiber, behind Santa Maria in Cosmedin and the ruined temple of Fortuna Virilis, in that quarter of the town known as the Bocca della Verità.

Close by stands the house of Cola di Rienzi, the last of the Tribunes, and a three minutes' walk up the Palatine Hill brings one to the ruins of the palace of the Cæsars.

Despite its historic surroundings, however, it is a squalid place, which both in its dimensions and condition would

be a disgrace to the poorest village. So irregular in shape that it seems to bid defiance to all geometrical laws, its surface is neither level, sloping, hollow, nor undulating, but partakes of all these characteristics. Dust or mud abounds, according to the season. Straw, fruit-rinds, and decayed vegetables lie there fraternally side by side, clearly revealing to the eye of the passer-by the process by which the Rome of Numa has been covered by thirty feet of soil.

Some of the surrounding buildings face the square, some stand with their backs to it, while others only present one corner to it; but they all possess the same characteristics, inasmuch as all are equally dingy and dilapidated, and all display from the sort of loop-holes which serve as windows the same extraordinary collection of ragged garments hung out to dry.

About noon one October day, the threshold of one of these dwellings was occupied by two youths seated fraternally side by side, and engaged in devouring with the best of appetites a frugal breakfast of lupines.<sup>1</sup>

One was about fourteen, the other about fifteen or sixteen years of age; and both were shabbily dressed in suits of light-brown velveteen which seemed to have been worn by several successive generations already.

The elder had a pale, thoughtful face, as if his youthful brain had been prematurely oppressed by a heavy burden of care and anxiety; but his companion's face was round and ruddy and sunburnt; his big eyes sparkled with mischief beneath his thick, curling locks, and an ever-ready smile was continually revealing sudden glimpses of dazzling white teeth.

He soon finished his lupines, and making a ball of the

<sup>1</sup> A leguminous plant, the seeds of which are eaten by the Italians.



HOUSE OF COLA DI RIENZI.