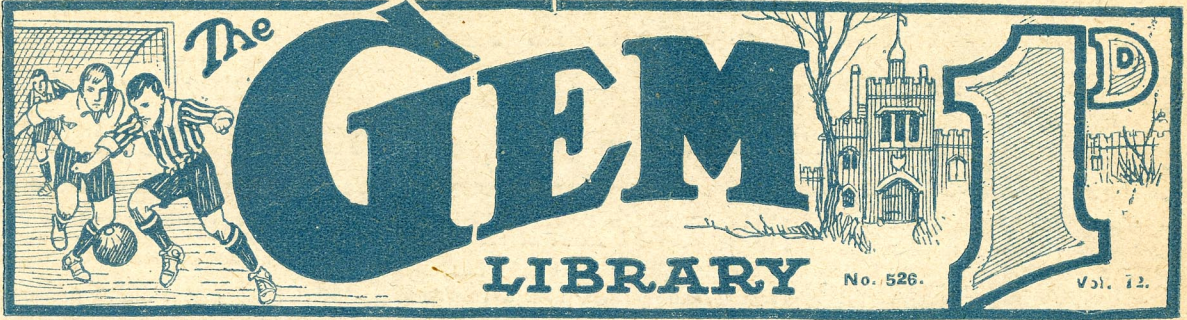


# THE ST. JIM'S RUINS!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



## A VALUABLE ANTIQUITARIAN FIND!

# THE ST. JIM'S RUINS!

A Magnificent, New, Long,  
Complete School Story  
of Tom Merry & Co.  
at St. Jim's.

By  
**MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

## CHAPTER 1.

### Taggles on His Mettle.

"TAGGLES," said Monty Lowther, "looks agitated."  
"Blow Taggles!" growled Manners.

"You might blow Taggles some," said Monty Lowther, "but you couldn't blow him far."

Manners flashed a look of wrath at his humorous chum. He had been engaged in a fruitless endeavour to impart some of his enthusiasm for photography to his chums, when Monty Lowther interrupted with the remark about Taggles.

"I was talking about photography," said Manners sharply. "You might let a chap finish!"

"Oh, hadn't you finished?" inquired Monty Lowther blandly. "I didn't notice. How far had you got?"

"Rats!" retorted Manners, deciding to drop the conversation.

"Rats?" said Lowther. "I wasn't aware that they had much to do with photography. It's about the last stage that you see rats, isn't it? Have you seen 'em yet?"

Manners grunted. Monty Lowther grinned.

"Does that grunt mean that your dinner's upset you?" he asked. "Or does it signify that you wish to hold no further conversation?"

Manners did not reply. Tom Merry grinned at he looked at him.

"I tell you what, Manners," he said, "why don't you take a photo of Taggles now? That'll please you, and it'll please Taggles, too!"

"Hang Taggles!" snapped Manners. "Who wants to photograph him?"

"I don't," said Lowther. "I was just remarking that he looks agitated. I think the air-raid the other night upset him. When he heard the guns firing he hid himself to the spirit stronghold, and proceeded to make himself proof against any fears. But it didn't do him any good."

"No?"

"He saw pink rats and blue monkeys dropping bombs instead!" said Lowther gravely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He certainly was rather seedy the next day," observed Manners, unbending a little.

"And he hasn't got over it yet," added Tom Merry. "I believe, as a matter of fact, that he was above a bit scared. From what Gore says, he got very jolly by the time the raid was over."

"Yes?"

"And he took a candle out and looked all round the Head's garden!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Fact!" grinned Tom Merry. "He said he wasn't afraid of the Gothas, and he was going to look for them. He was singing something about the roses round the door making him love the old garden wall, or some tosh like that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three regarded Taggles with a new interest. He had certainly not been quite himself for the last two or three days. Perhaps sober reflection

had reminded him that he had laid himself open to the action of the Defence of the Realm Act.

"Let's go over and have a yarn with him," said Lowther, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Going to pull his leg?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, no! Not at all! Just a nice little friendly chat, you know. Come on!"

The Terrible Three sauntered across in the direction of Taggles' lodge. The porter was busy trying to fit a very large number of potatoes into a very small space in his little garden. He started up guiltily as Lowther hailed him.

"I say, Taggles!"

"Hallo! Wet do you want?" grunted the porter.

"Getting on all right with the spuds?" inquired Lowther.

"Yes!"

"It's spud a little way of helping to win the war!" said Lowther.

Taggles continued to dig. Puns were wasted on Taggles.

"They're getting very keen on the war down this way, now, you know," pursued Lowther.

Grunt!

"And chaps who try to help the enemy are getting shot every day!"

Grunt!

"Spies are being dealt with very severely!"

"And serve them right, too!" said Tom Merry heartily.

Taggles grunted again, affecting not to hear.

Lowther winked at his chums before proceeding.

"I've heard they've got their eyes on a spy round this way," said Lowther slowly. "I hope they catch him."

"So do I!" murmured Taggles.

"A dashed audacious fellow!" remarked Lowther. "He's supposed to have been signalling to the Gothas the other night."

Grunt! Taggles went on digging furiously.

"The chap actually went out to signal with a candle—so the soldiers say," continued Lowther blandly.

Taggles suddenly stopped, and straightened himself.

"Are—are that a fact?" he demanded. Monty Lowther nodded.

"W-w-wot do you think they'll do to the chap if—if they catch him?" the porter asked huskily.

"They'll drop on to him like a giddy thousand of bricks!" said Tom Merry.

Taggles went a sickly green with alarm. The Terrible Three restrained their grins with an effort. They knew, as a matter of fact, that Taggles would have heard long ago if the military authorities had known anything about his adventure with the candle; but that, as it happened, had never been likely.

Mrs. Taggles, rising to the occasion, had dragged her festive spouse indoors again almost as soon as he got out, and in the bright moonlight the adventure had passed unnoticed.

But Taggles had done a very silly thing, and he needed a lesson. He would have been in an awkward position if his

action had been witnessed, and the Terrible Three intended to give him a wholesome fear of the Defence of the Realm Act.

"Would they shoot him?" demanded Taggles at length.

"If they couldn't do anything worse," said Manners.

"Oh, lawsk!"

Taggles looked furtively round him.

"What worse could they do?" he demanded.

"All sorts of things," said Lowther easily. "But the blessed spy-fellow will find out soon enough."

"Quite so," said Taggles, wiping a dirty hand across his heated brow. "But suppose the fellow wasn't a spy? Would—would they show him any mercy?"

"He must be a spy," said Tom Merry confidently. "No one would go signalling with a candle for fun."

"He—he might not 'ave been signalin'!"

"Of course not!" said Lowther sarcastically. "No doubt he was looking for his collar-stud!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the chap might 'ave been—Which I meantsay 'e might not 'ave been very well," said Taggles confusedly.

"That wouldn't make him do a thing like that," replied Lowther gravely.

Taggles positively shivered.

"Yes, it would," he said. "Look 'ere, I'm goin' to let you into a secret. But don't you say anything about it."

"Yes?"

"Sure you won't tell anyone?"

"No."

"Not a single soul?"

"Of course not," said Tom Merry.

"What is it?"

"Well," said the cautious Taggles, "I may 'ave been out with a candle meself that night."

"May 'ave been?" queried Tom Merry. "Can't you remember?"

"I believe I were," said Taggles.

"Then perhaps you're the fellow they want!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in mock alarm. "How on earth shall we get on without you?"

"W-w-w-w-without me-m-me!" gasped Taggles.

"Yes; if they arrest you," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned the porter. "I'm never goin' to touch no more medicine when there's an air raid on. I'm—Look there! What are they doin' of?"

Taggles pointed through the gate along the road which led to Rylcombe. His staring eyes were fixed on half-a-dozen soldiers marching in the direction of the school, under the charge of a corporal. They had no rifles with them, but each carried a spade.

"Surely they haven't come to take old Taggles!" said Lowther, seizing the opportunity for further leg-pulling. "And yet—it looks funny, doesn't it?"

Taggles shivered.

"W-w-wot 'ave they g-g-got the sp-sp-spades for?" he burbled.

"Probably to bury the spy!" said Monty Lowther easily. "These soldier chaps are always ready for emergencies."

Taggles pulled himself together with a sudden effort.

"You knows I'm innocent, don't you?" he shouted, turning appealingly to the Terrible Three. "You knows as I wouldn't signal to no Gotha?"

"Rather!" said Tom Merry.

"Then I won't never be taken alive!" shrieked Taggles, suddenly raising his voice and dashing towards the gates. "I'll die fightin'! I'm as innocent as a new-born babe, an' if I'm to die I'll die fightin' like a—a Nero!"

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Digging Party.

"MY hat!" gasped Manners. Taggles had swung the great gates to and bolted them, and, shouldering the spade, took up a defiant attitude behind. "Is he potty?" gasped Tom Merry. "Look at the silly old ass now! He's getting ready to slay someone!"

Taggles was marching up and down with a very warlike air. He certainly looked like business now. Monty Lowther's humorous remarks had had far more effect upon him than that worthy had anticipated. He approached Taggles and tapped him quietly on the shoulder.

"Look here, Taggles," he said, "don't be an old chump! They're not coming for you!"

"I know they are!" said Taggles, with a warlike swing of the spade.

"I tell you they're not! I don't suppose they know anything about it."

"Then wot 'ave they got them spades for, if it ain't to bury me?" retorted Taggles.

"Perhaps they're not coming here at all."

"They are!" said Taggles, with the firm conviction of a thorough pessimist.

"Don't be an old ass!"

"I'll die fightin'!" shouted Taggles. "Britons never sha'n't be slaves! I'm ready for anyone wot calls me a spy!"

"Rats!"

"Well, I'm ready for 'em, anyway!"

And Taggles resumed his interrupted patrol.

Monty Lowther eyed him curiously. It seemed probable that Taggles, despite his lesson of a few nights before, had been again seeking to fortify his courage with strong liquor. He had got into his head the idea that he was about to entertain a shooting party, and was not to be convinced that it was wrong.

The men in khaki marched up to the gates, and then, to the surprise of the Terrible Three, halted.

"Anyone about?" called the corporal.

Taggles appeared from round the corner, holding his spade in front of him, as though he was about to repel a swarm of Boches.

"I'm 'ere!" he said truculently.

"Well, open the gate!" commanded the corporal.

Taggles cackled.

"No bloomin' fear!" he said. "I'll see your shootin' party 'anged first!"

"What?"

"Don't you come round 'ere accusin' of innocent people wot never did 'elp the 'Uns!" said Taggles.

"Eh?"

"You ain't got no proof wot it was me as did it!"

The corporal scratched his head.

"We've come here in accordance with orders," he said. "You'd better open the gate quickly or you'll hear further about this!"

"You'll only come in 'ere over my dead body!" shouted Taggles.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three laughed as Taggles struck a dramatic attitude, only spoilt by his jabbing the edge of the spade into his neck.



The Warlike Taggles!  
(See Chapter 2.)

"'Oo done that?" demanded the porter, wheeling round fiercely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The corporal grinned.

"Now, then, open the gate," he said, good-humouredly. "We've got a job to do, and we want to get it done quickly."

"'Oo give you your orders, anyway?" asked Taggles.

"My commanding officer."

"Then go back and tell your commanding officer to 'ang 'issell!"

"What?"

"And then to drown 'issell!"

"Eh?"

"And—then, if 'e wants to see me, to come round 'issell, and not send a blessed digging party first."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The corporal looked as though he was trying to convince himself that he was not dreaming.

"What on earth are you talking about?" he demanded. "Open the gate at once, or there will be trouble."

"Hadn't we better take a hand?" Tom asked. "That old chump will go and get run in if he's not careful. He's not responsible for his actions—or his speech, anyway!"

"But what on earth have they come for?" asked Manners.

"Dunno!" said Tom. "But it's certainly not Taggles that they're after. Let's see what the matter is!"

He went up to the gate as he spoke, and Lowther and Manners followed him.

"Come away from there!" shouted Taggles. "I wasn't signallin', and I ain't a-goin' to be shot—not for nobody!"

"What's the matter, corporal?" asked Tom Merry. "The old chap often gets taken like that," he added, indicating Taggles.

"Well, we've come here in accordance with orders," said the corporal, rather brusquely now. "There's a shell to be dug up, isn't there?"

"Oh, yes!" said Tom Merry. "One did fall here during the raid the other

night. It's railed off now—just on the edge of Big Side."

"Open the gate, then!" said the corporal. "I've waited here long enough!"

"Right you are!" said Tom cheerfully.

He reached down to pull up the bolt. But as he did so, Taggles made a furious dash forward, and clutched at his hand.

"They ain't comin' in to 'ave me!" he shouted. "I've got me wife and family to think of!"

"Shut up!" said Tom.

"I tell you I never 'ad no candle at all t'other night!" protested Taggles.

"I'm a Briton, and I'm proud of it! One of the bull-dog breed, that's wot I am, an' Ephraim Taggles is my name!"

Tom Merry grinned, and gripped Taggles. Monty Lowther and Manners lent a hand as well, and between them they ran him to his little lodge, and pushed him through the door. Then Manners stayed to hold the door, so that he could not escape again, while Tom went and unbolted the gate.

"I'll show you the way down there, corporal," he said. "It's straight on. There's only a little hole to show where the shell went in, but it's jolly deep. The place hasn't been touched since it fell."

"Thanks," said the corporal, as he beckoned his party over. "By the way, what was that tame madman gassing about all the time?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"He thought you'd come to arrest him!" he explained. "I don't think he's quite himself to-day! Hallo! He's still keeping it up!"

He grinned as the sounds of very untuneful music came to his ears. Taggles, behind the closed door, was singing

"Rule Britannia," with occasional variations into "Dixie," when he forgot how the tune went.

Tom Merry led the way down to Big Side. The shell-hole was railed off by a few stakes driven in the ground, and

strict orders had been issued that no one was to touch them.

A ring of curious onlookers watched the soldiers as they set to work digging. As it soon became evident that a fairly deep hole would have to be made, they started in a good, wide circle at the top, and then commenced to throw the earth out.

Baggy Trimble, very curious, got rather too near, and received a shovelful in the face. He let out a yell, and retired amidst a chorus of laughter.

The soldiers were in earnest, and wanted to get their task finished. The earth began to fly rapidly, and soon the hole was a couple of feet deep. It was then that one of the shovels struck something hard.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### The Ruins.

"THEY'VE struck something!" Grundy made that announcement as he heard the shovel ring.

"Never!" said Tom Merry solemnly. "I tell you I heard the shovel hit something!" returned Grundy. "I expect it was the shell."

"Not the Fourth?" asked Lowther. "Eh? Oh, don't try to be funny!" snapped Grundy. "I meant the shell from the plane, not the Shell Form."

"Go hon!"

"That isn't what the shell will do, is it, Grundy?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well," said Lowther explanatorily, "the shell won't go on. It will go off. See? Can't you hear it fizzing now?"

"F-fizzing?" gasped Trimble, who had joined the crowd again.

"Yes."

"Mum-mum-my hat!"

Trimble did not wait any longer. He spun round, and dashed away at top speed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Tom Merry, as he eyed the retreating figure. "No need for him to worry about getting blown up. It's the good who die young. Trimble will have grey whiskers before he kicks the bucket!"

The corporal jumped down into the hole.

"You haven't got brickwork down here, have you?" he asked.

"Looks like it," said one of the privates, scraping with his spade. "Yes, there's certainly something like a wall here."

"Then the shell can't have gone far, after all," said the corporal. "Just dig down where the hole was. We shall probably find that it has brought up against something."

The soldiers commenced digging amongst what were obviously the remains of a brick building. When they had to ease up at last, the hole which the projectile had made was still visible. One of the soldiers lay down flat, and thrust his hand into the hole.

"Can you feel anything?" asked the corporal, as he rose.

The other shook his head.

"I got my hand down two feet or more," he said, "but there's no sign of anything there. For all I can tell, the hole goes down a long way."

The corporal scratched his head.

The brickwork had certainly made an unexpected difficulty. It was in the way of more digging, for the shell seemed to have gone down what looked rather like an old chimney-shaft.

In addition, there were signs of old brickwork everywhere else in the circle. One might have fancied that a house had been buried there.

"We shall have to blast this brick-

work away," said the corporal. "If we don't do that, it will mean work for picks. We can't do any more with spades."

"Try clubs!" said Cardew, with a very serious face.

The corporal laughed as he scrambled out of the hole.

"Chuck it!" he said to the digging squad. "We can't do any more here. That shell is going to be a bit of a nuisance before it's done with. I expect we shall have to use picks. It will be rather too dangerous to blast it, with a live shell at the bottom."

Skimpole elbowed his way through the crowd, and touched the corporal on the arm.

"Excuse me," he said, "but you can surely determine the depth of the projectile, can't you?"

"Eh? How?"

"I should imagine," said Skimpole learnedly, "that the velocity of descent could be determined from the ballistic tables. A comparison with the comparative density of the earth would yield the square root of the co-efficient of—"

"That would be a sight more hard work than digging it out, I think," said the corporal. "Besides, I don't see your square root. There's a square chimney here."

Skimpole blinked.

"The square root, corporal," he explained hastily, "is the mathematical expression for that portion of a given number which, when multiplied by itself, gives—"

"The colour of the engine-driver's hair," finished Cardew, grinning.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole turned on Cardew with a frown.

"I fear, Cardew," he said, "that you do not appreciate the gravity of the situation. I was suggesting a reasonable hypothesis for determining the whereabouts of the projectile."

"Were you, really?"

"I anticipated that you would understand that."

"I'm afraid I'm very dense, Skimmy," yawned Cardew. "But I've got a toppin' suggestion to make. It's much better than yours, really."

"I am ready to hear," said Skimpole gravely.

"Well, you take a ferret—one of those long, thin, crawlip' brutes, you know," explained Cardew—"and send him down the hole. Before he goes you put a little bit of gum on his tail. Then what happens?"

"I fear I cannot say," said Skimpole.

"The rest is simple," said Cardew. "When the dashed ferret gets as far as the projectile, he finds he can't get any farther. So he just turns round and comes back. But as he does so his tail sticks on the projectile, and brings that out, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They'll be making you president of the Inventions Board, old pal!" laughed the corporal, as he ordered his men to fall in. "Well, you'd better all keep clear of that hole. It's under our charge now, and it isn't to be touched. So-long!"

The soldiers marched off. But the crowd of juniors still lingered round the hole. The ancient brickwork had a curious fascination for them.

They had all heard of old, historic ruins being discovered by accident, and it certainly looked as though some such discovery had been made here.

"This is a real find!" said Figgins. "Who would have thought that there were old ruins like this buried here?"

"St. Jim's is a jolly old place, you know," remarked Jack Blake.

### CHAPTER 4.

#### War!

"I WONDER if it's Roman?" said Julian.

"It certainly is vewy old," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pway do not elbow me in that mannah, Blake! I want to adjust my monocle." "Hang your monocle!" growled Blake.

"But I desiah to have a closah look at the wuins, deah boy," protested D'Arcy, edging forward.

"What do you know about ruins?" snapped Blake. "You wouldn't know a Roman from a Gotha."

Gussy screwed his monocle into his eye, and regarded his chum severely through it.

"I twust that I should, Blake," he said frigidly. "A Gotha is one of those blessed Hun waiders. I fail to see the connection between them and wuins."

"Ass!"

"Weally, Blake," said Gussy warmly, "I twust that you were not applying that remark to me!"

"I am," said Blake cheerfully. "They call some ruins Gothas because they're made by bombs from Gothas."

"The word you are twying to wemembah is Gothic," said Gussy innocently. "Theah is no connection what-evaah between Gothic wuins and waidahs. An', in point of fact, G-o-t-h-a is pwo-nounced Goatah."

"What do you mean by waders?"

"The Hun 'planes that come waidin' heah."

"But I thought you usually waded in the water. You can't wade on the land."

"I said waidahs, not wadahs," said Gussy, with dignity.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gussy glared, and gave up the attempt to impart knowledge to the dense Blake. He turned to Tom Merry.

"I should think it's Woman."

"Roman," said Tom Merry, with a grin. "It isn't roamin'; it's standing still."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy," protested D'Arcy, "I think you are howbilly dense to-day! I mean the ancient Wuomans—Julius Cesaah, and that cwoad."

"Go hon!"

Gussy stared for a moment. Then it dawned upon him that they were trying to pull his aristocratic leg.

"Well, this is a find, anyway," said Levison. "It will be jolly interesting to see what the place is when the soldiers have finished messing about with it."

"Faith," said Reilly excitedly, "an' if it's not Roman it's bound to be something else entirely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There may be skeletons!" said Bates in an awed manner.

"Or grub!" said Baggy Trimble, who had joined the crowd again, having come to the conclusion that the shell would not explode, after all, as no one else seemed afraid of it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There might be grub," said Trimble, sticking to his point. "I've heard about them finding corn and stuff when they unearthed the things in Egypt and— and Pompus."

"Pompui you mean, don't you?"

"Something like that," said Baggy.

"Anyway, there might be tins of sausages, and all that sort of thing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble blinked.

"Can't see what you duffers are laughing at!" he growled.

"Why, you silly ass," said Noble, "they didn't have tinned things in those days!"

"How do you know?" demanded the hopeful Baggy, not to be discouraged. "We might find all sorts of things there."

"St. Jim's will be in the papers," said Clive. "There'll be columns about the old Roman villa unearthed here, and they'll be coming down to take our photos."

"They can have mine," said Grundy generously. "I really discovered it."

"What?"

"I heard the spades striking bricks first," explained Grundy importantly. "If it hadn't been for me they might never have found it. What are you cackling at, you silly idiots?"

"If they took your photo, Grundy," said Monty Lowther, "everybody would fancy you were one of the finds. You'd probably get identified as Julius Caesar!" Grundy glared.

"I wish you wouldn't make such feeble jokes, Lowther," he growled. "I don't see any likeness between Cæsar and me."

"Except that you are what Cæsar was—first among men!" said Lowther blandly.

"You fellows don't seem used to discoveries of this sort," went on Grundy. "Now, you know the first thing to do, don't you?"

"Yes," answered Lowther. "Everybody knows that."

"Well, what is it?" snapped Grundy. "Warn the ruin that anything it says will be taken down and used in evidence against it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass!" howled Grundy.

"Shut up!" whispered Wilkins, nudging him. "They're pulling your leg, you duffer!"

It was Lawrence of the New House who made the next suggestion.

"There may be buried treasure there," he said practically. "You often find gold in these places."

"By Jove! Perhaps you're right!"

"And jewels, too!" said Lawrence. "There might be all sorts of things there."

"My hat!" exclaimed Levison. "This may turn out a tremendous find. But who gets the cash, if there is any?"

"I believe the State takes most as treasure trove," said Talbot. "But I dare say there would be some left over."

Trimble clutched Lawrence's arm. "Do you really think there can be money there?" he asked.

"Might be," said Lawrence.

"Then it will be necessary to have someone to look after it!" said Trimble. "I offer to act as treasurer. It could all be looked up at Trimble Hall until things were settled."

"Wouldn't be safe, Baggy!" chuckled Manners.

"Why not?"

"Well, the money would never get locked up," explained Manners. "But you might, if you got your paws on it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why not start digging now?" asked Figgins. "We'll soon know then if there's anything worth finding in the hole."

"Can't," said Tom Merry. "The authorities won't let us until they've got the shell out."

"And to do that they're going to knock our old ruin all to bits!" growled Figgins. "Can't he help?" said Tom Merry.

"If the shell was left there, and it went off, it might knock a few of us to bits!"

"It's quite safe now," said Figgins, "or else they wouldn't leave it there at all."

"That's no odds!" said Tom Merry. "We've got to obey orders."

"Well, I'm going to form a New House Exploration Society," said Figgins. "We'll start work as soon as we can, and I'm going to get Ratty's permission. Then you School House fellows will have

to take a giddy back seat while we dig up the jewels."

"Oh, are you?" retorted Tom Merry. "Then I'm going to form a School House Exploration Society."

"You can't do that!" yelled Figgins.

"I thought of the wheeze first!"

"It's like your blessed cheek to think you can monopolise the ruins!" retorted Tom Merry. "This hole is common property. But if you're going to Ratty, we're going to Railton."

Figgins rallied his supporters quickly. War was in the air, and war never found Figgins wanting.

"At 'em!" roared Figgins. "Give these School House boudners something for their giddy nerve!"

"Rally!" shouted Tom Merry.

The two bands joined issue. The ruins were completely forgotten in the new excitement. Baggy Trimble found himself between the advancing parties.

"Help!" he yelled. "I'm neutral. I'm the treasurer of the lot that finds the money first. I'm—Yarooogh!"

Baggy was being squashed as the opposing forces clashed. He tried to get away, but he was hemmed in too completely for that.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Funds for the Treasurer.

"GROOOOGH!"

Baggy Trimble made that remark. He followed it up with a series of ear-splitting yells and groans.

"Yarooogh! Ooo-er! Stoppit!" Figgins & Co. heeded not the noise of Trimble in distress. Neither did Tom Merry & Co.

"At 'em!" roared Figgins.

And Tom Merry yelled:

"Give 'em socks!"

The juniors were hard at it now, punching and struggling, and they did not need the rallying of their leaders. School House and New House were always ready to join battle.

"I'll give you what-for!" growled Figgins, as he closed with Tom Merry. "That's for your cheek!"

The blow in question landed on Tom Merry's neck. He did not stop, however, to tell Figgins that he had missed his aim. He returned the blow with interest just below Figgins' left eye.

The New House leader was doing his best to retaliate, when Baggy Trimble, in an effort to escape from the crowd, rolled between the two combatants.

Rough luck for Baggy! Tom Merry and Figgins were both endeavouring to reach each other's faces, and a hefty fist caught Trimble on each ear.

"Yarooogh!" roared Baggy, wondering if his head had changed shape at all. "You cads! Grooogh! Ooo-er!"

Tom Merry grinned, but he did not ease up in his attack on Figgins. Trimble made a bolt for safety, and took to his heels. He had suffered more punishment than any of the combatants.

"What's this row mean?"

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, had just come upon the scene.

"A—little difference of opinion, Kildare," said Tom Merry. "We've—just been arguing the point."

"It looks like that!" retorted Kildare. "What is all the fuss about?"

"It—it was over this hole here, you know," said Tom Merry. "You see, we've discovered the ruins of an old castle, or something like that. And we couldn't decide, really, to whom it belonged."

"Castle?" said Kildare, raising his brows. "Where?"

Tom Merry led the way across to the hole. Kildare studied the brickwork interestedly.

"So that's what you were scrapping

over—eh?" he said. "It certainly looks as if it might prove interesting. 'We'll have to dig it out—form a sort of society for the object.'

"We're going to do that—we New House fellows, Kildare," said Figgins, in hot haste.

"School House are going to do it!" retorted Tom Merry quickly.

Kildare grinned. "No more war, kids," he said good-humouredly, "or there will be trouble for the lot of you. I've struck the nail on the head, have I?"

Tom Merry nodded. "We were having a little difference about who should run the society," he admitted.

"Well, you can ease your consciences about that," said the skipper. "You won't be able to do anything without a master in charge."

"Mr. Ratchiff can take charge," said Figgins.

"Mr. Railton would be better!" snapped Tom Merry.

"Look here, you two," Kildare said, with a twinkle in his eye, "if you can't keep quiet, I'll have to lick the pair of you! I've told you that I don't want any more ragging, and you're lucky to get off so lightly."

Figgins shook his fist at Tom Merry. Though he was not meant to, Kildare spotted the gesture.

"Enough of that!" he said sharply. "All of you juniors clear off to the school. It's quite time you started your prep. Clear off!"

"But, I say, Kildare," commenced Baggy Trimble. "I'm going—"

"You're going to clear off at once!" said the skipper firmly.

"I only wanted to tell you that the fellows have elected me to be treasurer!" howled Baggy. "You can't stop that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare looked at the laughing juniors for a second, and then he laughed, too. Baggy Trimble scowled, and followed the rest in the direction of the school.

Tom Merry & Co., after a few whispered words with Figgins & Co., made their way up to their study. But they did not feel inclined for prep.

"Figgy will go to Ratty and get him to take the thing up," said Tom, as he shut the door. "We'll have to do something!"

"Why worry about them?" said Manners. "They can't do anything until the military people have dug up the shell."

"No. But first in the field counts, you know," said Tom wisely. "If Ratty goes to the Head, and gets permission to form a society, he'll have full power to carry on with things. And that will be a score for the New House."

Lowther nodded.

"I guess Railton will be on the same game," he said. "Kildare is sure to spread the yarn among the seniors, and it will be all over the school in half an hour. They'll all be wanting to go down and dig."

"Likely enough," said Tom. "Figgy will probably find himself quite out of the limelight, even if Ratty does take things over, and it's pretty certain that Ratty will, if he gets the chance."

"Why?"

"Well, everyone knows that he doesn't like Railton. It'll be a score for him if the New House gets all the kudos for unearthing the merry old Roman villa."

The Terrible Three relapsed into silence, thinking. It was rather a ticklish problem.

"Suppose we went to Railton and asked him to form a society?" suggested Manners at length. "Would it be playing the game?"

"Why?"

"Well, everyone knows that he doesn't like Railton. It'll be a score for him if the New House gets all the kudos for unearthing the merry old Roman villa."

The Terrible Three relapsed into silence, thinking. It was rather a ticklish problem.

"Suppose we went to Railton and asked him to form a society?" suggested Manners at length. "Would it be playing the game?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Hardly!" he said. "That's pinching Figgy's idea. And they may not go to Ratty, after all."

"They're bound to go to Ratty," grumbled Manners. "You don't catch Figgy dropping anything so easily."

"Well, Kildare might go to Railton," said Tom Merry. "He spoke about a giddy society, too."

"But he may not," said Manners. "Then Ratty will step in and take charge of operations, and then where are we?"

"Out of it!" said Tom Merry, with a grimace. "Still, it won't hurt those New House bounders to do a bit of digging, and it might turn out a frost, after all."

There was a knock on the study door, and Baggy Trimble came into the room.

"I say, Tom Merry," he said, with an affectionate smirk. "I wonder if you could advance me half-a-crown?"

"What! Hungry again?"

"N-no!"

"Then go away! We haven't had any tea. We're food economising."

"That's very good news."

"Why?"

"Well," said Baggy, "you see, well-built fellows like myself simply can't exist on the Food Controller's rations. If it wasn't for self-sacrificing fellows like you, we should simply have to die of hunger."

"Will you have our whack in future?" inquired Lowther sarcastically.

Trimble gave a sickly grin.

"I—I'd like the half-crown now," he said. "You see, as treasurer of the exploration Society, I must have books to—keep the records in, you know. I want the cash to get them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble glared. It was clear to him that he was not going to get that half-crown. He slammed the door hard as he went out.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Ratty Means Business.

"COME in!" Mr. Railton snapped the words as he heard a tap on his door.

He was not feeling very cheerful at the moment. His arm, which the Huns had damaged for him on the plains in Flanders, had been very painful, and he had had a worrying day.

He looked up to see Mr. Ratcliff, the sour-tempered master of the New House.

"Good-evening!" said Mr. Railton, with as much politeness as he could muster.

Mr. Ratcliff returned the greeting in acid tones, and took a seat. He was feeling liversish.

"I have just had an interview with the Head, Railton," he said.

"Yes?" said his colleague, without showing any great interest.

"It concerned the ruins which have been unearthed in Big Side," went on Mr. Ratcliff. "I received a deputation from some juniors in my House to-night, requesting me to form a society whose object will be to study archaeology. As an interesting start for the society they propose to excavate the ruin."

"No use, Ratcliff!" said Mr. Railton. "The military authorities won't allow it yet."

"I know that. But the idea struck me as a good one, for all that, to be carried out when the military have finished. It would be a distinct advertisement for St. Jim's if we made a real discovery there."

"And also for you personally," said Mr. Railton, with a slight sarcastic touch.

"What! Hungry again?"

"N-no!"

"Then go away! We haven't had any tea. We're food economising."

"I was not thinking about that," said Mr. Ratcliff acidly. "I consider that the society would be beneficial to the school. I therefore suggested the idea to the Head."

Mr. Railton nodded. He rather anticipated, from the other's manner, that Mr. Ratcliff had hoped to be appointed president of the society at once. But it was very evident that he had not been.

Mr. Railton was in an unusually short-tempered mood, and there was little love lost between him and the sour-tempered master of the New House. So, with perfect gravity, he asked a question.

"And I suppose the Head asked you to undertake the running of the society?" he said. "It will certainly be an onerous task."

"On the contrary," said Mr. Ratcliff bitterly. "The Head said that he would prefer you to run the society if you were willing."

"Oh?"

Mr. Railton drew thoughtfully at his pipe for a minute before speaking. Then he turned to his colleague.

"I should prefer that someone else did it," he said. "I am very busy at present, and I really haven't any great enthusiasm for archaeology."

"Quite so—quite so, Railton," said Mr. Ratcliff, with the pale ghost of a smile.

"Would you be willing to accept the presidency, Ratcliff?"

"Certainly," said the other quickly. "In the event of your refusing, that duty would devolve on me. But the Head wished me to let you know his views."

"Thank you! I will see him presently, and explain the situation. There is nothing else, is there?"

"No," said Mr. Ratcliff, rising. "I will make preparations for starting this society."

"Exactly. Good-night!"

Mr. Ratcliff left the study, and made his way over to the New House, with a satisfied smile on his face.

On the way to his study he encountered Figgins.

"Oh, Figgins," he said, in a far more amiable tone than usual, "I have obtained permission to start the archaeological society which you proposed. Tell Monteith that I would like to speak to him."

"Yes, sir," said Figgins, in great glee.

For the next half-hour Mr. Ratcliff and Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, discussed ways and means of starting the great society. At the end of that time Monteith emerged from the study with two notices, in Mr. Ratcliff's crabbed handwriting, in his hand.

It was nearly bed-time, but Figgins & Co. were on the qui vive, and they crowded round to read as soon as one of the notices was pinned to the board.

What they saw ran as follows:

"St. James' College Archaeological Society."

President:  
Horace Ratcliff, Esq., M.A.

"This society is being formed for the benefit of boys interested in the study of archaeology. Meetings will be held once a week, on Tuesday evenings, in the New House. Trips will be arranged to study local places of archaeological interest."

"Intending members should give in their names to the head prefect without delay."

"Although the society is thus being set on foot in the New House, those in the School House are also eligible as members."

(Sd.) HORACE RATCLIFF."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Figgins, rubbing his hands. "That's one in the eye for the School House!"

"My hat! I should think it is! We've scored this time!" cried Kerr.

"Won't the bounders be waxy now?" said Lawrence. "This leaves them fairly in the cart!"

"And suppose we discover something absolutely staggering," said Patty Wynn, with great glee, "they'll be so sick about it that they'll never hold up their heads again!"

"And if there's any cash found, we share it!" said Jimson.

"Oh, hang the cash!" exclaimed Figgins. "Look what a score it is!"

"They won't join the society, you bet!" said Redfern. "It tells 'em pretty pointedly that they're not really wanted, and they'll take the tip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The New House fellows roared with glee as they stood around the notice-board. They seemed to have scored heavily over the School House fellows—so far. Mr. Ratcliff had risen to the occasion, and he had got permission to start his society before the School House woke up. That, anyway, was how the New House fellows read the notice.

"Don't kick up such a row here!" said Monteith. "It's time for bed. You'd better all be getting off!"

"Going to stick the other one up in the School House?" queried Kerr.

"Yes. But they won't see it to-night. The juniors will all have gone up to bed."

"Never mind!" said Figgins. "They'll see it in the morning. My word! They won't have long mugs—oh, dear, no!"

Monteith crossed over to the School House with a smile on his face. He was not an enemy of Kildare's now, and the time had passed when he would have gloated over such a score. But he was certainly pleased to think that the New House were scoring over their rivals.

He pinned the sheet of paper on the School House notice-board, and went back to his own study.

## CHAPTER 7.

### Mr. Selby Takes a Hand.

"OF all the howling cheek!" Grundy gasped for breath as he read the notice on the School House notice-board.

The juniors had just started coming downstairs from the dormitories, but a crowd had already collected round the board. Grundy's indignation was reflected on the faces of nearly all as they read Mr. Ratcliff's notice.

"Ratty deserves to be bumped!"

"Also hanged, drawn, and quartered!"

Manners turned upon Tom Merry, who had just come up.

"You ought to have gone to Railton last night!" he said. "Those bounders have been to Ratty, and there's the result!"

Tom Merry read the notice through, and gave a low whistle of astonishment.

"That's a giddy insult!" he exclaimed. "I wonder if Railton knows about it?"

"He must do," said Manners. "Ratty would never dare to do it without consulting him."

"And look at that!" howled Blake. "We can't take that lying down! What are we going to do?"

"Sing small, or keep out of it!" said Digby angrily.

"We're certainly not going to sing small!"

"My hat! No!"

As to that, everyone was agreed. But no one seemed to know quite what was to be done.

The juniors scattered, but the notice on the board was the principal item of

conversation. When breakfast was over, a crowd of fellows swarmed round the board again.

The comments suddenly ceased as the figure of Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, appeared. He approached the board, and the juniors made a lane for him.

He scanned the notice, and his face flushed angrily.

Without a word, he strode off.

A minute later Mr. Railton heard a decided tap on his door, and Mr. Selby strode into the room.

"Good-morning, Railton!" he said.

Mr. Railton looked up in surprise. The Third Form-master's thin, rather unpleasant face was flushed with rage.

"What is the matter, Selby?" asked Mr. Railton.

Mr. Selby threw himself into a chair.

"I have just read a notice on the board," he said. "I think it is perfectly disgraceful! Have you seen it yet?"

"No. What is it?"

"An announcement in Mr. Ratcliff's handwriting," said the Third Form-master. And in his own words he told the purport of the announcement of the Archaeological Society.

Mr. Railton frowned.

"It is certainly not very polite to our House," he said, "but I have refused the position of president myself, and left it to Ratcliff. I did not foresee that he would make it a House affair. It seems too late now to do anything."

"I think it is disgraceful!" snapped Mr. Selby.

"The School House boys are at liberty to join the society if they care to," Mr. Railton pointed out. "They are invited to do so by the notice."

"I do not think that many of them will," said Mr. Selby. "From the remarks I heard, they intend to keep out of it altogether."

"Indeed?"

"And that means that if anything important is found the credit will belong to the New House."

"They will deserve it if they do the work."

"But it is hardly fair to this House!"

"Our boys are invited to work with the others. I don't see that I can do anything now. But it is certainly rather unfortunate. I should have done something different if I had foreseen this."

"Quite so!" said Mr. Selby. "But I think that something ought to be done. Otherwise there will be very bad blood between the two Houses."

Mr. Railton nodded thoughtfully.

"I fear there will," he said. "This foolish rivalry in everything is exceedingly annoying at times. Of course, one likes one's House to keep its end up, but the boys are prone to carry it too far."

The Third Form master nodded.

"This is not going to do any good to the House," he said. "I have come here to make a suggestion which the notice suggested at once. That is, that you form an Archaeological Society for the School House."

"That is impossible."

"I do not agree with you. Ratcliff has so worded that notice as to cast the slur of inferiority upon us. And it is intentional—of that I am absolutely certain!"

"We cannot interfere with him now, Selby."

"He could not object to a notice framed in the same terms as his own," said Mr. Selby. "I do not consider that he has gone out of his way to be polite on this occasion."

"Perhaps he has not," said Mr. Railton, slowly and thoughtfully. "But he came and told me yesterday that the Head wished me to assume the presidency of this society. I refused, as I am far

too busy; not, as I have said before, foreseeing what might happen. I cannot very well start a society now, having once refused to."

"Quite so!"

"But it might be done if you are willing yourself to take the matter up."

Mr. Selby smiled. That, as a matter of fact, was what he had been driving at all along.

"I should be pleased to do so," he said graciously. "It will certainly be the best thing in the circumstances."

"Thank you," said Mr. Railton. "I will explain matters to the Head. I take it you will attend to details?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Selby, as he rose. "I will draw up a notice at once."

The result of Mr. Selby's labours appeared on the notice-board at dinner-time.

It was a notice worded in much the same language as Mr. Ratcliff's had been, and a crowd surged round to see it at once. But Mr. Selby's name at the foot scarcely gave joy.

"Why on earth couldn't Railton take it on?" growled Digby.

"It's not so bad," said Blake. "At worst it will let old Ratty see that we can be independent."

"That's my opinion," said Clifton Dane. "I'm rather keen on digging up this ruin. We may find all sorts of things."

"Hear, hear!"

"And it will be great fun trying to cut Ratty's party out."

"I wonder how we shall manage?" speculated Gunn. "Selby's a sour old beast, and he doesn't love Ratty a great deal. He'll certainly try to score one off him."

"Rather!"

The majority of the fellows welcomed the announcement. Anything, they argued, was better than having to watch the New House get all the kudos. But Tom Merry & Co. were not very satisfied. They conferred alone in Study No. 10.

"Look here," said Tom Merry, "Selby's not at all the sort of old bird we want as president. We'd better join as a matter of form; but it's bound to be a fiasco, so we might as well get a bit of fun out of it."

"Rather!" said Lowther.

"We'll be in at the death," said Manners, with a grin. "But the men in khaki haven't turned up to-day yet. That probably means that they'll be some time before they dig the shell out. We'll see that things are not slow until then!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leave it to your uncle if you're in doubt!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Ratty and Selby won't find things slow!"

## CHAPTER 8.

### The First Meeting.

MR. RATCLIFF emerged from the New House with a swish of his gown, feeling his importance most fully.

Behind him trooped the New House Archaeological Society, quite forty strong. Monteith headed the procession, but Figgins and Kerr were not far behind, smiling the superior smiles of those who feel that they have done well in getting front-row seats.

They had not scored over the School House quite as they anticipated doing. But they were first in the field. Mr. Ratcliff, with the enthusiasm of all great explorers, had decided to hold the first meeting of his society round the hole in Big Side.

Mr. Selby was crossing the quad as the party emerged. He stopped for a second, wondering what was on foot. Then, as

understanding came to him, he gave Mr. Ratcliff an acid smile.

"We are just off to study the contour of the ruins, Mr. Selby," said the New House master airily.

"So I observe," said Mr. Selby. "But I do not think that you will discover much there. I have just been to inspect."

"Perhaps we shall have better luck," said Mr. Ratcliff, with veiled sarcasm. "Quite unimportant signs are often enough to put the real student of archaeology on the trail."

"No doubt, no doubt!" said the Third Form master. "I wish you luck. Our own society will be visiting the spot when we have had some preliminary study to enable all of us to appreciate the—the small points you mention."

Mr. Selby swept on, and the New House party moved off towards the hole in Big Side. They had sacrificed the time between classes and dinner willingly in order to steal a march on the rival side.

Mr. Ratcliff led the way to the scene of the excavation, and formed his party in a semi-circle round the hole.

"The first thing that we have to observe, boys," he said in his rasping voice, "is the structure. We can see here the tops of quite a number of walls, and they all appear very close together. I should imagine that we have discovered the tower of a very large building, the building having simply sunk into the ground owing to a subsidence."

"A what, sir?" asked Figgins.

"Subsidence, Figgins!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "It means that the ground has moved, either through the action of marshes near by, or by becoming a marsh itself."

"Do you think that we shall sink, too, sir, if we start digging?" asked Figgins solemnly.

"No; of course not!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "The ground is quite firm now. But it is of the utmost importance that we do not ruin this tower in the process of excavating it. I do not remember seeing one quite like it. It may even have been built by savages, and such a thing would certainly be—original."

"Aboriginal!" muttered Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff frowned.

"This is not a place for humour, Figgins!" he said harshly. "You will write me a hundred lines!"

"My hat!" gasped Figgins.

"Hat-trocious!" murmured Kerr.

Mr. Ratcliff's sharp ears caught the word.

"You will do the same, too, Kerr!" he said.

Fatty Wynn grinned. Even the punishment could not prevent him making a further pun.

"Do be Kerr-ful!" he muttered.

"You will also write one hundred lines, Wynn!" Mr. Ratcliff barked. "I forbid any more of this levity!"

The three New House chums exchanged glances. This was certainly far from funny, and far from exciting.

Mr. Ratcliff continued his remarks to a very subdued audience. The New House fellows were feeling rather fed-up, and, had it not been for the House rivalry, they would have chuckled up the whole affair right away.

As it was, they listened in silence while Mr. Ratcliff talked in his driest manner about arches, catacombs, structures, periods, and dozens of other things which he had hastily "swotted up" from an elementary manual on the subject. As a matter of fact, he was almost as profoundly ignorant of archaeology as the boys. But he did not wish to admit the fact when there seemed an opportunity

for him to gain fame as the discoverer of a notable ruin.

The New House juniors stood first on one leg, then on the other, and, for lack of a third to stand on, resorted again to the first. But they were getting bored stiff, and they welcomed with open arms the interruption which suddenly came.

The corporal, with a party of six soldiers armed with pickaxes and other tools, arrived on the scene.

Mr. Ratcliff was in the middle of one of his impressive passages. He turned, and bestowed one sour glance on the soldiers, then continued his oration, ignoring them completely.

The corporal gazed speechlessly for a couple of minutes. It was scarcely courteous. Mr. Ratcliff, in his enthusiasm, had got right into the hole, and was pointing about him excitedly. He must have been quite aware of the soldiers' errand; but he did not intend to move for them. Apparently he imagined that they would wait his pleasure.

"The intrinsic worth of such a record is immeasurable," Mr. Ratcliff was saying. "With its discovery a new epoch will—"

"Hi, you!" shouted the corporal.

Mr. Ratcliff turned round abruptly, flushing crimson.

"D-did you address that—that remark to me?" he gasped.

The corporal nodded cheerfully.

"I did," he said. "I've waited long enough. Will you come away, please?"

Mr. Ratcliff drew himself up to his full height.

"I should like to remind you that you are interrupting me in a lecture!" he barked. "You will kindly wait till I have finished. Now," he added, turning back to the juniors, "I was just saying—"

"Hi!" shouted the corporal in a louder tone.

The juniors giggled. Mr. Ratcliff turned round angrily.

"Go away, fellow!" he said harshly.

The corporal gave him a contemptuous smile.

"Go away yourself, fellow!" he said, with a note of command. "There's plenty of room for you and the picnic-party at the other side of the field."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you know whom you are addressing?" demanded the master.

"No."

"I am Mr. Ratcliff, of the New House."

"Then go away, Mr. Rat—whatever it is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff scowled.

"Kindly account for your extremely impertinent behaviour at once!" he snapped.

"Certainly," said the corporal. "That piece of ground you stand on is under my charge. You are committing a serious offence under the Defence of the Realm Act. For all I know, you may be a spy. Unless you move at once you may consider yourself my prisoner!"

"Pup-pup-prisoner!" howled Mr. Ratcliff, jumping out of the hole as though he had been shot.

"That is what I said," said the corporal. "I shall certainly report you for putting obstructions in the way of my doing my duty."

Mr. Ratcliff gulped. He was a coward to the core.

"I—I am very sorry if I have delayed your operations," he said hurriedly.

"Then you are sorry?" said the corporal, who had summed up Mr. Ratcliff pretty accurately.

"Y-yes, corporal."

"Right you are, Mr. Mousie! Please

take your boys away, so that we can get to work smashing up this brickwork."

"S-s-s-smashing up the brickwork!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff, in absolute horror.

"Certainly."

"But it is absolutely preposterous!"

"I'm carrying out orders."

"Then I protest!" said Mr. Ratcliff hotly. "In the name of science, I forbid you to 'desecrate these ruins!'"

The corporal grinned.

"Don't know the gent on whose behalf you are acting," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"Bloke called Science."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff frowned.

"You surely do not intend to wreck what may be the oldest ruin in the British Isles?" he exclaimed.

"Orders are orders," said the corporal. "I shall carry out my instructions."

"Then I shall protest to your commanding-officer!" rejoined Mr. Ratcliff.

"And I shall interview Dr. Holmes at once!"

## CHAPTER 9.

### Speeding Things Up.

"COME in!"

Mr. Ratcliff entered the Head's study in response to the invitation. His face was flushed, but he had sufficient sense to

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realise that he must keep some command over his temper now, if he was to gain his point.

"Excuse me, sir," said the House-master, closing the door. "I have come to ask you if you can—er—intervene?"

"In what?" asked the Head, raising his brows slightly.

"It is with regard to the ruin which I— which we, I should say—have discovered in Big Side. A party of soldiers have just arrived to demolish the brickwork."

"Really?"

"Yes," said Mr. Ratcliff warmly. "I consider, sir, that such a thing is preposterous, and that every endeavour should be made to prevent such—such sacrilege!"

Dr. Holmes coughed.

"It would certainly be rather a pity," he said. "But we have no evidence as yet that the ruin has any real value in the archaeological sense."

"On the contrary, sir," said Mr. Ratcliff, with dignity, "I give it as my firm conviction that the ruin is very old and quite historic. In addition, it is in excellent preservation."

"You really think so?"

"Most certainly."

"H'm!" Dr. Holmes stroked his chin thoughtfully. "In that case, I might be able to request the military authorities to allow us a little time for further examination. Probably they are quite

ignorant of the exact nature of our find."

"I should certainly judge that they are," replied Mr. Ratcliff.

"I must come down and look into this myself," said the Head, as he rose to his feet. "But first I will telephone to headquarters. No doubt I shall be able to explain things."

He took the receiver of the telephone in his hand, and asked for a number. After some delay he was connected up with the commanding-officer at Abbotsford, and explained. Mr. Ratcliff waited with an expression of gnawing impatience on his thin, unpleasant features.

Dr. Holmes hung up the receiver at last, and turned with a smile.

"I have instructions for the corporal and his party to return," he said. "The commanding-officer informs me that there is no particular hurry to excavate the shell. They will give us two more days, and will then excavate as carefully as possible, damaging no more of the masonry than need be."

Mr. Ratcliff's features expanded into the shadow of a smile.

"I am very much obliged to you, sir, for the trouble you have taken," he said. "Will you come down now, and speak to the corporal?"

"Certainly, certainly!"

A few minutes later the two masters reached the scene. To their relief, they saw that, so far, the brickwork had not been touched, but the hole had been deepened in several places, making visible more of the ruin.

Dr. Holmes delivered his verbal instructions, and the corporal marched off his men.

Then did Mr. Ratcliff breathe a great sigh of relief. He was very glad to see the back of the corporal.

He could not continue his lecture, however. It was nearly time for dinner, and the juniors were already trooping back.

Dr. Holmes stayed to look at the ruins critically before he returned. He did not seem half as impressed with them as Mr. Ratcliff had been.

"The bricks seem modern, Ratcliff," he said. "Of course, it is difficult to judge at present. But I do not think that we shall be justified in raising more obstacles than necessary. We shall be the laughing-stock of the neighbourhood if it turns out to be nothing of interest."

"There is little fear of that, sir," said Mr. Ratcliff quickly. What appealed to him was the fame which would be his if the ruin were really of antiquarian importance. "I have studied it very carefully, and I am convinced that it is very old."

"Very well," said the Head. "I will leave it in your hands. You had better consult Mr. Selby, who also seems to be an expert on the subject."

He turned and walked away, leaving the New House master with an uncomfortable suspicion that there had been some sarcasm in the Head's last remark.

A subdued buzz of excitement stirred the school during the afternoon. The masters found their Forms restless.

Even Mr. Selby was excited. He was exceedingly annoyed that Mr. Ratcliff had stolen a march on him, and he intended to lead his own party across to survey the spot immediately after tea. He realised that Mr. Ratcliff had saved the situation in getting the excavations postponed, but he felt no gratitude.

Mr. Selby's gathering, however, turned out to be even more boring than Mr. Ratcliff's had been. He read extracts from a thin paper-covered pamphlet camouflaged by a big book, in which it had been secretly gummed to make it look more impressive. It was not at all interesting to the auditors.



The Terrible Three came away feeling quite fed-up.

"I'm hanged if I want to listen to all the jaw that some silly old jossler has written about famous ruins!" growled Tom Merry as they made their way to the study.

"I thought we were going to make it interesting!" growled Lowther. "This is too melancholy for anything. Why on earth don't they set about digging out the ruin before they spout about what it is or may be? Ratty and Selby know no more about it than my boots!"

"Boots!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with a grin.

Manners looked at him in surprise. "Boots?" he queried. "What about them?"

"The scheme ought to work," said Tom.

"What scheme?"

"It would liven things up a bit, anyway."

"What on earth are you gassing about?" snapped Manners.

"Boots!"

"Chuck one at him, Monty!" snapped Manners. "Then he'll be happy."

Lowther grinned, and, picking up an old boot, slung it across the study. Tom Merry caught it deftly, and, to the surprise of his wondering chums, examined it minutely.

"Just the thing!" he muttered.

"What thing?"

"It's old enough."

Manners gasped.

"Throw the other one, for goodness' sake!" he howled. "And hit his silly napper this time!"

"Pax!" said Tom Merry with a grin. "I only want one boot. I'll explain if you fellows won't be so impatient. We'll—hallo, someone wants us!"

The knock on the door was repeated, and Baggy Trimble looked in.

CHAPTER 10.

Relics Made on the Premises.

"WHEN love," chanted Tom Merry, "comes knocking at the door, just fling it open wide."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble's eyes opened, and he looked at the Terrible Three rather uncertainly.

"When Trimble knocks upon the door," sang Monty Lowther, to the same tune, "just fling him right outside!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble began to retreat hastily.

"Come in, Baggy," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "We're feeling depressed. Come right in and tell us some funny stories. I always like that one about your bootlace coming undone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tain't a funny story," growled Trimble. "I have a lot of trouble with my bootlaces. I just dropped in to know whether you fellows happen to have any tin about you."

"Not funny enough, Baggy," said Monty Lowther. "Try another one."

Baggy glared.

"As secretary and treasurer of the two societies," proceeded Baggy Trimble, "I must buy some books. If I don't have some I can't be expected to keep my accounts properly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What on earth are you laughing at?"

"That funny story!"

"Tain't a funny story!" howled Trimble.

"Well, what is it?"

"It's a fact!"

"Oh!"

"The Terrible Three regarded Trimble with very serious faces.

"I thought you'd come in to amuse us," said Tom Merry. "Do do something to make our dull lives gay!"



The Enthusiastic Ratty!  
(See Chapter 8.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble frowned.

"Going to lend me some money?" he growled.

"Who is?"

"You are, aren't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the matter with you tonight?" howled Trimble.

"Aren't you telling us another funny story?" demanded Tom Merry.

"No!" howled Trimble. "I want to buy my books. I want to keep an exact record of things, so that no one can say I ever cheated them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble glared speechlessly. He could not get the Terrible Three to take him seriously at any price.

"Jolly good, Trimble!" gurgled Lowther at length. "I'll get you to write my funny column in the 'Weekly,' when I can't think of any bright remarks myself."

"I tell you I'm not telling funny stories!" roared Trimble.

"But you are," said Tom Merry, wiping the tears from his eyes. "You're a born humorist, Trimble. Don't do it any more. You'll make me feel painful."

"If you fellows won't give me a reasonable answer I'm going to leave you. There's heaps of fellows who would be only too pleased to lend me anything if I lowered myself to ask them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's the best one of the lot!" sobbed Manners. "Trimble, Trimble, be merciful!"

Trimble stared speechlessly at the convulsed juniors.

"It's not funny!" he roared at length.

"No?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's absolutely necessary."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble turned and dashed out of the study, slamming the door with a resounding bag. Tom Merry wiped his eyes.

"Poor old Baggy!" he gasped. "I think

we took the wind out of his sails that time!"

"We did!" said Manners. "As a matter of fact, though, I was waiting to see you sling that old boot at him. What on earth are you cuddling that thing for?" Tom Merry looked at the boot and grinned. It was very old, and caked with dirt and mud.

"I was going to explain," he said. "Well, lend me a pocket-knife, and I'll soon show you the idea."

Manners produced a knife.

Tom Merry took hold of the handle and commenced to work on the boot. On one side he carved in straggling letters:

JULIUS CÆSAR."

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

"And on my boot, too!" exclaimed Lowther.

"Hist!" warned Tom Merry. "The boot's done with, so you needn't make a fuss. We'll going to bury that in the ruins, with just the top of it showing. Some intellectual ass will come along and dig it out, and think he's got no end of a find."

Manners and Lowther chortled.

"I'll tell you what, though," said Manners suddenly. "We'd better give Trimble, or some other potty idiot, the tip to find it first. It wouldn't take Ratty in if he saw it. But if Baggy found it, and we told him it was jolly valuable, he'd take good care that it didn't get out of his fat paws."

"My hat! Yes."

"Well, look here!" said Tom Merry. "It's getting pretty dark now. I'll slip out and bury the boot. No one will see me. Then, while I'm out, you two can let Trimble overhear a bit of conversation."

"How do you mean?"

"Get near him, and talk in mysterious whispers," said Tom, with a grin. "Trimble will hearken and give ear. You

can say that you are positive you saw a boot just protruding from the ground, and that you're going to slip down early in the morning to dig it up. That will be enough for Baggy. He'll be out to-night to get it."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Then I'll go and inter this relic of Cæsar Julius Cæsar!" laughed Tom. "So-long!"

He put the boot under his jacket, and slipped out into the darkened quad. He made his way across to the scene of the excavations, and placed the boot in the hole. Then he heaped earth round it with his hands until only a portion of the heel was showing.

"That should do it!" Tom grinned, as he stamped the earth down. "Looks real enough for Baggy. He won't stop to ask questions if he thinks he's on a good thing."

He returned to the School House, and met Monty Lowther and Manners as they were coming out of the Common-room.

"Any luck?" he grinned.

Manners nodded.

"Trimble heard us all right," he said. "I don't think he'll fail in the emergency."

The Terrible Three drew to one side of the passage and waited. It was nearly bed-time, but there were still a few minutes in which Trimble could find the treasure if he was sufficiently keen.

In a minute or two Trimble appeared. He glanced furtively around him, then made a bee-line for the door.

"The sleuthhound is hot on the scent!" grinned Tom Merry. "Let's watch the giddy panto!"

The Terrible Three followed to the doorway, and gazed out into the darkened quad. They could not see Trimble's figure, but they could hear him as he stumbled along in the darkness.

After ten minutes or so a faint light glowed through the gloom for a few seconds, then went out. Another followed, and after that a third.

"He's striking matches," said Monty Lowther. "What a terrible waste at a matchless time!"

The third match flickered out. No more were struck. The Terrible Three waited a minute, then turned and went back into the Common-room. It was just on bed-time.

"He'll just get in in time with his treasure!" grinned Tom Merry. "I suppose he'll hide it in the study. My hat! Won't he be swanky to-morrow!"

"He may even carry out his threat of not speaking to us!" said Manners, with a grin. "I shall feel horribly hurt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three made their way to the dormitory cheerfully. The morrow promised some excitement.

## CHAPTER 11.

### No Luck for Trimble.

TRIMBLE entered the Fourth-Form dormitory wearing a smile of great satisfaction.

"Found some grub, Baggy?" yawned Cardew, as he peeled off his coat. "You look uncommon cheerful."

"I might have found something better!" said Baggy mysteriously. Cardew laughed.

"Didn't know there was anything better," he said.

The fat junior eyed Cardew disdainfully.

"It may be the only thing that appeals to you, Cardew," he returned loftily. "But there are other things which an intelligent fellow takes an interest in."

"Really!" said Cardew.

Trimble nodded his head wisely.

"Ever heard of the chap called Julius Cæsar?" he asked.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 526.

Cardew nodded.

"But what on earth has he got to do with grub?" he asked, with a puzzled expression. "You can't eat Julius Cæsar, can you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course you can't!" roared Baggy, as the fellows laughed. "I suppose eating is about the only thing you think of."

"Not at all," yawned Cardew. "I didn't know you could talk about anything else. But it will certainly be a change. Tell us all about Julius Cæsar."

"I—I haven't got time for that," said Baggy. "But I've found out this much. He used to be at St. Jim's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Twimble," said D'Arcy seriously, "that is wathah as absurd statement!"

"I tell you I've got proof!" retorted Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cannot have pwoof of anythin' so impos!" said D'Arcy. "You are womancin', as usual, Twimble. You cannot expect us to believe that Julius Cæsar was evah at St. Jim's!"

Trimble snorted.

"That's where you're wrong!" he said. "You all think you're jolly clever. But I can prove it. I've got his boot!"

"His—his boot?" gasped Levison.

"Yes."

"My hat!"

"No, not your hat; Julius Cæsar's boot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble flushed. He had expected honour; instead, he was getting disbelief and sarcasm.

"Look here, you chumps!" he howled. "I'm not pulling your legs! I tell you I've discovered Julius Cæsar's boot in the hole!"

"But, my deah Twimble," protested D'Arcy, "how on earth do you know that it is his boot?"

"Cos it's got his name on it!" said Trimble triumphantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared with laughter. It was evident that Baggy was quite in earnest about his discovery.

"There's nothing to laugh at!" Baggy was howling, when the door opened, and Kildare looked in.

"Quite time you were all in bed," he said, reaching for the gas-jet. "Trimble, you'll have to get in without a light. Good-night!"

"Good-night, Kildare!" echoed the juniors, as the room was plunged in darkness.

A few subdued chuckles sounded as the door closed, but Trimble did not reply. He had closed up like an oyster. As a matter of fact, the fat junior was sorry that he had said so much. He had intended to keep his great discovery a secret.

The juniors went to sleep one by one, and Trimble's snores presently announced that his fertile brain was free to dream of the marvellous possibilities of his discovery.

Several of the fellows began chipping the fat junior about his great find on the following morning, but they found that Trimble had evidently decided to drop the subject.

After breakfast, however, Baggy slipped off to his study. A couple of minutes later he emerged with a large brown-paper parcel, and made his way to Mr. Selby's study.

"Come in!" called the master, in response to his knock.

Trimble entered, closing the door very carefully. Then he glanced mysteriously round him, and crossed to the table.

"Excuse me, sir," said Baggy hastily. "Can I speak to you alone?"

"We are alone, you foolish boy!"

"You are sure there is—is no one hidden, sir?"

"What makes you ask such a ridiculous question, Trimble?"

Trimble coughed.

"I have a very valuable article here, sir," he said. "If thieves heard of it they would be here in swarms to try and steal it."

"Really?" said Mr. Selby. "What is it?"

"You will not try to collar it, sir, when I show it?"

"Trimble!"

"I—I mean, sir," said Trimble hastily, "that is, of course, I shall be allowed to keep it, considering that I found it?"

Mr. Selby frowned.

"I do not understand what you are talking about!" he snapped. "What is it that you have in that parcel?"

"It—it is something which I found in the hole in Big Side."

"Oh!"

"And I brought it here because I thought you might be interested, sir."

"Yes?"

Trimble paused. He wanted to get guarantees that he would be allowed to keep the valuable boot. But he realised that he would have to be careful what he said. He decided to chance everything.

"As a matter of fact, sir," he said proudly, "I have found Julius Cæsar's boot!"

"What?" exclaimed the master.

Trimble unwrapped his find proudly. As he did so, a shower of dirt poured on to the floor. But Trimble did not heed that. He was holding up the boot, pointing out the scratched autograph to the astounded master.

"Where did you get that?" gasped Mr. Selby at last.

"I found it in the hole, sir," explained Trimble.

"And you have the impertinence to come in here with a dirty old boot, litter my floor, and offer impudence of that sort!" cried Mr. Selby, giving way to his feelings at last.

"Im-im-impudence, sir!" gasped Trimble. "I-I-look at the name on it!"

"I said impudence!" snapped the master hotly. "If you think I am so easily deceived you will find yourself disagreeably surprised. You will write me five hundred lines for your gross conduct. Now get out of here!"

"Fuf-fuf-five hundred lines!" puffed Trimble.

"I meant six hundred!" said Mr. Selby, with brilliant repartee.

Trimble stood for a second like one transfixed. Then, remembering that Mr. Selby might realise at any moment that he had meant a thousand lines, he picked up the boot and bolted from the study.

"Beast!" he growled, as he scudded along the passage. "He's envious, I suppose. He wanted me to think that the boot wasn't any good, and then he could collar it himself!"

He pulled up, and thought for a moment.

"I know what!" he said suddenly. "I'll go and show it to Ratty! It'll make old Selby jolly wild that he didn't treat me better. Ratty will get all the glory now!"

Trimble bundled the paper round the old boot, and scudded across the quad. He slipped along the passage which led to Mr. Ratcliff's room in the New House, and rapped on the door.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, entering.

"I—I wish to show you something in confidence."

"Oh!" snapped the New House master. "What is it?"

"Have I your word of honour as a gentleman, sir, that you will not tell a

living soul about this until it is safely locked up?"

Mr. Ratcliff stared.

"Caution is always necessary in a case like this, sir," Trimble explained.

"Perhaps you will tell me what you are talking about!" snapped the House-master.

"It is something which I found in the ruins, sir," explained Trimble. "It is very historic, I think that it will amaze the world."

"Oh!"

Trimble unwrapped the parcel proudly, and pointed to the dirty contents with the air of one who had just performed a miracle.

"Julius Cæsar!" he said. "Julius Cæsar's boot, sir!"

The New House master stared for a second. Then, picking up the boot, he clumped Trimble's head smartly with it.

"Ow!" roared Trimble. "Stop it! Yarooogh!"

"That is for your impertinence, boy!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff. "I shall certainly report this unprecedented insult! Go at once!"

Trimble did not wait any longer. He turned and fled, leaving the precious boot in the hands of the enemy.

## CHAPTER 12.

### Discovered!

"HALF-HOLIDAY for the Archaeological Societies!"

There was a cheer as Tom Merry made the statement.

It was the morning following Trimble's adventure with the boot, and the whole school was simply seething with excitement. The soldiers were due to arrive in about half an hour, and then the digging-up of the famous ruin would commence.

What added to the excitement was the fact that, by some means, the fact had leaked out to the press, and all the morning papers had a paragraph relating to the strange discovery which a certain Mr. Ratcliff had made at St. James's College.

The School House fellows suspected that Redfern, inspired by Mr. Ratcliff, had written an article on the subject and given it to Mr. Piper, who was responsible for the "Rylcombe Gazette," and who, in turn, had probably sent it to the London papers.

Naturally enough, the School House juniors were annoyed that the New House should receive all the kudos for the discovery. But that did not alter the fact that the school was mentioned in the papers, and that the Head had granted a half-holiday for those interested to watch the excavations.

"Spouse old Selby leads us down by the hand and does some more spouting!" observed Manners. "My Hat! It's worth a half-holiday to listen to him!"

"Yes; but it's a holiday, all the same!" said Bates.

Trimble looked on moodily. He was the only one who was not satisfied.

"Ratty's still got my boot, the old Hun!" he scowled. "Now his name's in the paper, and he'll be able to sell it. I call it beastly unfair. I'm going to complain to the Head!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can't see anything to cackle at!" growled Trimble. "I've been swindled out of a fortune!"

"Can't you see they've been pulling your leg, you potty fat duffer?" snarled Mellish, who shared Trimble's study, and had heard enough of old boots to last him a lifetime.

"That's what you would be sure to say!" snapped Trimble. "I——"

"Shh!"

Trimble subsided as Mr. Selby swept along the passage.

"All members of the School House Archaeological Society will wait for me in the quadrangle!" he said. "I shall be out in a minute. We must have a little preliminary study of the place first."

"Very good, sir!"

The School House juniors repaired to the spot at a run. There was an unusually large gathering of the society's members—in fact, practically the whole school was in it.

Mr. Ratcliff was forming up his band on the other side of the quad, outside the New House. Tom Merry & Co. shook their fists at Piggins & Co., to signify that they intended to avenge the insult which the School House had suffered.

Mr. Selby arrived just at the moment when the New House party moved off, and he followed with his enthusiasts in the wake of the others.

Five minutes later Messrs. Ratcliff and Selby were lifting up their voices and addressing their respective followers on the subject of ruins. No one listened, but that did not affect the eloquence of the two masters. Mr. Ratcliff was listening with one ear to what his rival said, and endeavouring to improve on him; the Third Form master, on the other hand, was doing his best to make so much noise that Mr. Ratcliff's words would be wasted on the desert air.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry approvingly. "Aren't they going it!"

Lowther grinned.

"Selby's winning," he said. "He's just got old Ratty beautifully tied up. He was talking about the 'thief ching' instead of the 'chief thing.'"

The two masters had just reached the top of their form when the soldiers appeared, filing through the gate.

"Thank goodness for that!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Now we get on with the business. Suppose it all turns out to be a do!"

"My hat!"

"Quite likely it will," said Tom Merry. "Ratty and Selby don't know anything about ruins. They've simply got excited over it in rivalry and swank. It might turn out to be anything."

The Terrible Three grinned. The soldiers came upon the scene plentifully equipped with spades and picks. They started work without delay, and Messrs. Ratcliff and Selby drew closer to offer their advice.

"Don't spoil it!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff, as a chip of brick flew off from a blow with a pick.

"Be careful— Yarooogh!" roared Mr. Selby, as a second chip flew up and caught him on the side of the head.

The juniors grinned. Mr. Ratcliff's thin features twisted into a slight smile at his rival's discomfort. But his triumph was short-lived. As he stepped back he trod on the blade of a spade, and the tool, flying up, caught him a thump on the back.

"Who did that?" he roared, spinning round.

Then he lost his footing, and plunged head first into the hole!

"Groooogh!" he yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, unable to keep their merriment suppressed any longer.

The New House master crawled out of the hole with a face like that of a Hun, and a big bump on his forehead.

"Who dared to laugh?" he demanded angrily.

No one spoke, but the soldiers, who were not under his orders, gave vent to their merriment in no uncertain manner. Mr. Ratcliff eyed them speechlessly. But he realised that he would do himself no good by protesting.

As the soldiers re-commenced their work the two masters stepped back. Occasionally they put in remarks, which passed unheeded, and after a little they kept silent altogether.

The soldiers were digging round the square piece of masonry down which the projectile had gone, in the hope of finding an opening lower down. In doing so, they uncovered more of the bricks, and the ruin was quickly being exposed to the gaze of the onlookers.

An hour passed, and then, for the first time, a chill thought struck Mr. Ratcliff. Even to his amateurish eyes the ruin did not look like the ancient edifice he had expected. He turned to Mr. Selby.

"Do—do you think it possible that we may have made a mistake?" he whispered.

Mr. Selby did not reply for a second.

"It certainly does not look as—as promising as it did at first," he said. "I am rather glad that my name did not appear in the papers, Ratcliff. You have all the credit of this—er—remarkable discovery!"

The New House master scowled, and said nothing. But he noticed that some of the boys were beginning to giggle. Evidently the same suspicion had struck them.

Suddenly one of the soldiers struck something solid. He announced his discovery, and all hands at once turned on to clearing the spot.

In ten minutes they had unearthed an old stone trough.

The corporal looked up with a grin.

"I know what it is now," he said.

"What is it?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff huskily.

"The corporal grinned still more.

"I was making inquiries in the village yesterday," he said. "I met a man who seemed to know all about this part. There used to be a farm here."

"Yes."

"And when the college bought more ground they took on part of the farm."

"Oh?"

"There was a hollow just here," said the corporal calmly, "and a small pigsty was built in it. So when they came to level the field they simply filled the pig-sty in!"

"A—a—a what?"

"What we've been unearthing," said the corporal, with quiet sarcasm, "is the ancient pig-sty of Farmer Jenkins!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter from the boys, in which even Trimble joined. It had gradually been borne in on his mind that he had, after all, been the victim of a hoax. But the sight of the faces of the two tyrants rewarded him now for what he had suffered at their hands.

Mr. Ratcliff had gone a dull red with shame and rage, while Mr. Selby stood with averted eyes, looking as though he wished the buried projectile would explode and blow him into a thousand pieces.

"Pup-pup-perhaps there has been some mistake, after all!" stammered Mr. Ratcliff at length.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" rasped the unfortunate master. "I will not have this noise!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff glared impotently at the crowd. But everyone was laughing, and it was impossible to punish a crowd of over a hundred boys. He turned suddenly on his heel, and, followed by Mr. Selby, strode back in the direction of the school.

The hilarious juniors remained. They had been given a half-holiday, and they stood, laughing till their sides ached, while the soldiers demolished the ruins

of Farmer Jenkins' pig-sty and recovered the unexploded shell.

There were a few sarcastic paragraphs in the morning papers the next day announcing the fiasco of the supposed ancient ruin, and after that silence.

But the two unfortunate masters had no chance to forget the incident for many days. The Head made a few pointed remarks, which ended the matter as far as he was concerned, but did not leave

happy recollections in the minds of the two victims.

Mr. Ratcliff carried the bump on his head for some days, and it served as a constant reminder to those who saw of the New House Archaeological Society.

As for the boot which Trimble found, doubtless it was burned in Mr. Ratcliff's grate. No more inquiries were made by its discoverer, and he forgot to do the lines which it had earned him. Moreover, Mr. Selby, in his hour of trial,

never had the heart to ask for them. It would have awakened far from pleasant memories of the St. Jim's Ruins, which Messrs. Ratcliff and Selby alike hoped would soon be forgotten.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"RIVAL FORMS!" by Martin Clifford.)

## Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"RIVAL FORMS!"

By Martin Clifford.

Next week's story is pretty sure to prove popular, for it deals with a subject that a large proportion of our readers are very keen upon—sport!

We have had series of contests between rival schools and rival Houses. Now—at Blake's suggestion—rival Forms go in for the same sort of thing at St. Jim's. But there is a decided element of novelty in the latest contest. The notion is to get every member of the two Forms concerned—the Shell and the Fourth—up to the scratch in at least one contest; and for each member of either Form who remains obdurate to the last points will be lost by his side!

Such a scheme is sure to lead to many complications, and, moreover, it affords room for considerable strategy. No one can expect that Racke and Crooke will willingly do anything—even lose a race—for the sake of the Shell. Problem: How to induce them to do it? Physical force will not serve. Threats might avail with Baggy Trimble and Mellish—hardly with Racke and Crooke.

Apart from the duffers and the third-raters, you will have exciting contests between the good all-round men of both Forms. The Fourth has more members, and perhaps more players of ability at footer and cricket, more runners and jumpers. But the Shell has quality of the highest in such as Tom Merry, Talbot, and Kangaroo.

Will Blake & Co., hefty men all four, Figgins & Co., a rare trio, Redfern & Co., and Levison & Co., prove too much for the talent of the Shell? At a glance one can see that it will be easier for the Fourth to pick a capable footer team than for Tom Merry. But footer is not everything, and the Shell, while they may pull off that, are pretty certain to come out on top in the boxing and a number of the athletic events. Wait and see!

### AMATEUR MAGAZINES.

There has been quite an epidemic of these lately, and I have in hand a number of notices sent by boys who have started, or who want to start, such things. Those notices cannot appear at once; it may be a considerable time before there is room for some of them. If I had not told the senders that they should appear when possible, I should be inclined to cancel them all.

For this is not the right time for such things. Paper is becoming scarcer every day. Here we treasure carefully every scrap of waste paper for repulping, I may tell you. Without it we might find ourselves in a very queer position before the war ends. It all helps.

And, for that matter, amateur magazines soon become waste paper. But they often get burned instead of going back into circulation as paper. And one objection I have to them is that, judging from some specimens I have seen lately, they are no better than waste paper at any stage of their progress.

Don't start an amateur magazine with the idea of making money! There is no money in it. You may get some of your fellow-readers to send along stamps for one issue, but very few of them will ever want a second. Why should they? There is very little reading in the average amateur magazine, and what little there may be is doubtfully worth reading.

Your Editor.

## Cadet Notes.

A LARGE number of our readers are responding to the invitation to write and ask for information about the Cadet Movement. We are very glad to receive and reply to all such inquiries; but perhaps we might make one or two suggestions to readers which would be of assistance to them and to us:

(a) Do not write anonymous letters. We have received a number signed "Would-Be Cadet," "A 'Gem' Reader," "A Regular Reader," and so on. These are quite useless, as it is impossible for us to act upon such communications.

(b) If any reader, wishing to join a Cadet corps, is aware that there is no such body in his own district, it would help us considerably if he would get a number of other lads to join with him in signing a letter to us, stating that they would be willing to become cadets if a corps was formed in the neighbourhood. We would then at once take steps to see what could be done to get a suitable company or unit started forthwith. It is difficult for us to act on the initiative of one boy in a town only, but if a dozen or so were to write to us jointly, it would be much easier for us to act. Address all communications to the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments, Judges' Quadrangle, Royal Courts of Justice, W.C.

A very interesting ceremony took place on the parade-ground of Wellington Barracks a few weeks ago, when the Secretary for Scotland presented King's Colours to the 1st Cadet Battalion of the London Scottish. There was a very large gathering of the public to witness the ceremony, and the lads attended in great force, accompanied by their mascot, a retriever named "Laddie." In addressing the Cadets, Mr. Munro, the Secretary for Scotland, stated that no fewer than five hundred Cadets, all of Scottish descent, had already joined the battalion, and of these more than a hundred had passed into the London Scottish Territorial Regiment. This is a splendid record for the short period of the battalion's existence. Every boy in London who comes of Scottish family, and is not already a member of some other Cadet Corps, ought to rally up and join this excellent battalion.

Another London corps that is progressing by leaps and bounds is the South-West London Battalion. From the report of a recent meeting of the officers we learn that the Battersea Company of the corps is now of sufficient strength to form a 2nd Company, and that recruits are flowing into the new headquarters in large numbers. It has been arranged that the corps should go into camp at Easter at Bromley Common, from Thursday night to Tuesday morning, when the lads will be billeted in adjacent cottages. A summer camp is also arranged to be held at Wargrave, on the River Thames, in Berkshire, for fourteen days in August, which will be spent under canvas. These arrangements open out a splendid prospect to lads living in South-West London who are not already members of a Cadet Corps. They ought to lose no time in getting into touch with this battalion, with a view to joining in the camping arrangements for the forthcoming spring and summer.

Readers of the GEM who reside in Lewisham and its neighbourhood, and are over 17 years of age, may be interested to learn that the 17th (Lewisham) Battalion of the London Volunteer Regiment is now engaged in organising a special Cadet Platoon, open

to lads of 17 years of age and upwards. There must be large numbers of our readers of this age who find themselves too old to join the ordinary Cadet Corps, and yet would like to be associated with the movement in some form. To such as these the formation of special platoons or companies in connection with the Volunteer Movement offers the best means for achieving their desires. We should be pleased to put any such lads into communication with the headquarters of the Volunteers if they will write to us about the matter at the Headquarters of the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments.

The Liverpool Battalion Church Lads' Brigade, which is a unit of the West Lancashire Territorial Force, held a concert recently for the purpose of raising funds to enable them to purchase additional uniform and equipment. In the course of the proceedings it was stated that the battalion is nine hundred strong at the present time, and, in addition, five hundred members had joined the Army, of whom some two hundred are at the Front. This is a splendid record for the corps, and, in view of such facts, there ought to be no difficulty in raising the funds necessary for keeping the battalion well and properly equipped.

Another of the well-known Territorial Regiments in London has just taken steps to form a Cadet Corps in connection with itself. We refer to the well-known Artists' Rifle Corps, which has recently formed a Cadet Corps to give spare-time training to the members, fitting them for transference to the Officers' Training Corps when they arrive at the proper age. Recruits over 16 and under 18 are invited, but must provide their own uniform and pay an annual subscription. Drills and class, physical training, boxing and athletics are arranged for, and the headquarters of the corps will be at those of the Artists' Rifles. We wish the corps every success in its career.

It is only occasionally that we are able to secure items of news about the Naval Cadets for these notes; but from a recent report we learn that the Wimbledon Boys' Naval Brigade is doing good work and making excellent progress. Besides the usual drill, etc., shooting, signalling, and seamanship are taught to the boys in the brigade. It also possesses a real 7-pounder, lent by the Admiralty, and a sea-boat on the Thames, and altogether offers a splendid time to lads who have a natural aptitude for sea-life.

The Mortlake Company of the King's Royal Rifle Corps (C.L.B.) gave their annual display a week or so ago. Some spirited boxing bouts took place, and there was also an exhibition of signalling by the semaphore and signalling section, which was carried out with promptitude and accuracy, as was also the physical drill, which the whole corps went through. The whole occasion was a great success.

A Harrogate reader of the GEM tells us that he has been for two years a member of the Church Lads' Brigade, which has recently become the King's Royal Rifle Cadets. We have not space to quote much from his letter, but he makes it quite clear that he has derived both benefit and enjoyment from his membership. At Harrogate they have only a miniature rifle-range, but this is good practice, and four of our correspondent's team, including himself, have won the Marksman's Badge.

# THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

## No. 7.—George Alfred Grundy.

**I**F you do not like Grundy—some readers don't, I know—you will probably look upon him as a mere conceited ass.

He is conceited. He is an ass. But he is much more; and you are not doing him justice if you do not try to see what else he is.

Tom Merry, and the rest of the fellows at St. Jim's, would gladly have Grundy changed. They see his good points. It is plain to them that if he could only have the swank knocked out of him the great George Alfred would be a first-class fellow.

But I don't want him changed, and I do not think most of you do. For if he lost his conceit he would cease to be amusing. And he is no end amusing now. I think he outrivals Coker of Greyfriars, with whom he has much in common.

His conceit is simply stupendous. He calls it by another name, of course. It is to Grundy a proper appreciation of his own enormous capabilities for doing anything and everything that he chooses to put his hand to.

But if one could disentangle from the threads of conceit the strand of asininity, I am not sure that one would find George Alfred a much bigger ass than many another fellow. He is often shrewd enough in matters that do not touch himself too closely. That dodge of his to make Mr. Pepper pay rent for his tenancy of the barn during an air-raid was really quite smart. And that is not the only occasion upon which Grundy has shown that he has a fair amount of commonsense in ordinary matters.

He never will have the conceit knocked out of him at St. Jim's, I am sure. It is by no means certain that the rough handling of the world in later life will knock it out, for one does meet men who have all Grundy's colossal self-conceit, with not a whit more than Grundy's ability to back it up. Such men are to be found even in high places, for it is sometimes easier to impose upon grown-up people than upon boys. Seldom does it happen that boys value a fellow for his birth or wealth; but those accidents carry a great deal of weight in the big world.

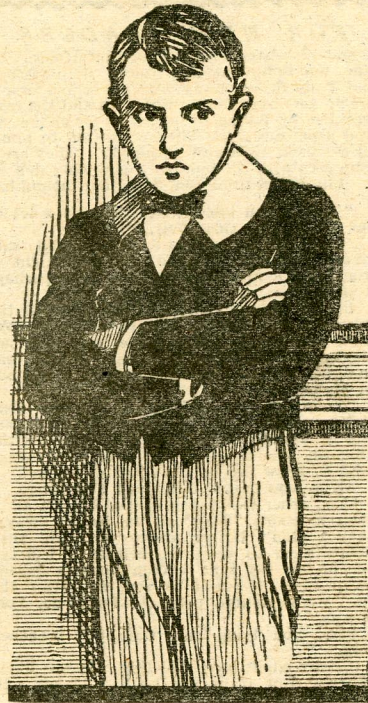
Grundy came to St. Jim's from Redclyffe, whence he had been expelled for "whopping a prefect." There is no need to cast doubt upon the story. Grundy, in spite of his tendency to magnify his own abilities, is in general a truth-teller, and, duffer as he is at footer and cricket, he can use his great fists effectively. He had every intention of fighting his way to the front at his new school. If anyone got in his august way he would "whop" them. If he considered anything his due, and those who had the disposal of it did not see eye to eye with him—well, he would "whop" them. Grundy quite sincerely believed that one can get all one wants by being ready to "whop" all and sundry. It is too rough a rule to be really a good one; and it has one big defect—the fellow who adopts it may very soon find himself up against someone whom he cannot "whop." Then the supposed irresistible force, meeting the immovable body, is shown to be not really irresistible. If there is something that nothing on earth can shift, then nothing on earth is irresistible, because of that immovable thing. And very early in his career at St. Jim's Grundy found his "immovable body."

He licked Gussy at the station to start with. But that was a mere incident. Grundy, who was to be in the Shell, looked upon a Fourth-Form boy as no better than a fag. He has learned better since—or he ought to have learned better. But when he tumbled Gussy over for refusing to obey his orders, he considered that he was justifiably chastising an unruly fag.

Then he had a tussle with Cutts of the Fifth. That encounter was indecisive, for Mr. Linton came upon the scene. Next he picked up Wally of the Third, who had been cheeky, and carried him into the School House, in spite of all the struggles and protests of the leader of the fag tribe. In Grundy's hands Wally was little better than

an infant. Yet there are fellows in the Fourth—possibly one or two in the Shell—whom Wally could stand up to with at least a chance of success.

Blake was his next victim. Grundy approved of Jack Blake, who put up a good fight, though palpably overmatched. Grundy looked round the Shell studies, to decide which one he would have. He had no doubt about getting the one he wanted—by "whopping," of course. Talbot took his intrusion as a joke; but Crooke, who then shared a study with Wilkins, was rude. Grundy dealt with Crooke on the spot. When he had



finished, Crooke had no objection to offer to Grundy's making a third in the apartment. The forcible programme acted in Crooke's case. Grundy gave a dormitory feed on a most liberal scale, and invited Blake & Co. After that Blake gave it as his opinion that the idiot really did not seem to be a bad sort of idiot. And that has been very much the opinion of most of the decent fellows ever since. There may be times when they are fed-up with Grundy—annoyed past the verge of endurance—but when once the trouble is over they are ready to admit that he is not a bad sort of idiot.

He was early a candidate for the cricket eleven. He has been a candidate for that and for the footer team ever since, but an unsuccessful candidate. This is not due to any disposition on the part of Tom Merry to overlook a just claim. Grundy has really no claim at all. For all his strength, he is a hopeless duffer at both games, and will never be anything else.

Grundy's candidature led to a fight between him and Tom. No other way was left. Grundy would have it, and Grundy had it. But Tom had all he knew how to do to lick the burly fellow, and George Alfred was not willing to admit defeat till he was knocked right out. It may be said here that, though there are plenty of other fellows in the Shell and Fourth who do not fear Grundy, and a few who might get the better of him in a boxing bout, there are only three who would have any chance of beating him in a real fight to a finish—Tom Merry, Talbot, and

Noble. Gussy is credited with a victory over him, but that was no more than a fluke.

Crooke was evicted from Grundy's study—of course, it had become Grundy's as soon as he took up his quarters there—for gambling. He could not well complain to the Housemaster, for awkward questions would have been asked. So he changed with Gunn. And ever since Gunn and Wilkins have been Grundy's staunch followers. They know he is an ass—it is possible that they know, it even better than others. But they know that he is also a generous, open-handed, frank, courageous fellow, and it is no mere cupboard love that keeps them faithful. In a different way, the bonds that unite those three are almost as strong as the bonds which unite the Terrible Three, or Blake & Co., or Figgins and Kerr and Wynn.

Grundy has a very sound and strong dislike of anything that savours of blackguardism. Therefore Racke and Crooke, and the rest of the dingy gay dogs, greatly dislike Grundy. His calm assumption of authority is too galling for words in the case of fellows who cannot appeal against it, because an appeal to the Housemaster or the Head is obviously out of the question, and not one of them dares to face an appeal by combat. But it is more than Grundy can do to stop Racke & Co. He can only deal sternly with them when they venture to bet or gamble in his illustrious presence.

The only times when Grundy has any use for the black sheep are such times as find him trying to set up in opposition to Tom Merry in the games line. Grundy firmly believes that he and ten other mediocre cricketers or footballers are more than equal to the St. Jim's junior teams, his prowess making up for any deficiencies on the part of his side generally. And he realises that exercise would do good to the "smoky rotters." Therefore he has more than once enlisted their services. But he has never got any change out of it.

It must be confessed that Grundy's methods at these times do savour of bribery and corruption. But Grundy does not realise that. It would be easier for him to do so if he were less open-handed. He is always ready to give or to lend to a fellow he can trust. Why should he forgo giving because it may be called by other and less pleasant names?

He was terribly spoofed when he raised a cricket eleven. Mr. Railton was then with the colours, and he fixed up a match with the junior team. And Grundy went over to play for the khaki side, and to captain it! He thought that Railton had asked him over the telephone. But it was Monty Lowther who did that.

It should have been a lesson, but it was not. Grundy's team met Tom Merry's. Tom declared his innings closed for 12, made in one over, with no wicket down. Fatty Wynn did the hat-trick twice, and Talbot did it once; and Grundy's side were all out for none! Not much wonder, either. Levison—even in those days—was a few runs in better company; but at any time there would have been nothing surprising in all four failing to score. And there was no reason to expect a single run from Grundy himself, Mellish, Clampe, Piggott, and the rest of the scratch side.

But Grundy has not confined his ambitions to the field of sport. He has figured, to the intense amusement of St. Jim's, as the raiser of a corps of Volunteers, which dug trenches in the pitches on the cricket-field, and played other extraordinary tricks; as hypnotist, practising the art, or trying to practise it, even upon masters; as editor of "Grundy's Weekly," which was to knock Tom Merry's rag right out of time, but somehow failed; as ventriloquist, as detective, and as grand master of a secret society. The last was Gunn's idea; but Grundy adopted it as his own, and was even indignant when Gunn ventured to claim having suggested it.

He has failed in most things he has tried. There is a lesson in his failure for anyone.

who will take it—the lesson that it is not enough to believe in yourself. You must start more humbly than that. Self-confidence is a big asset to the capable; it is but a pitfall to the incapable. Grundy would never shine at cricket or football; but he might not have been so big a duffer as he is if he had only devoted to learning those games half the time he has given to trying to make others believe that he knows all that is knowledge about them.

Grundy is heavy-handed, and always ready for a scrap; but he is no bully. No one is essentially a bully who is not cruel; and there is not an ounce of cruelty in old Grundy. He hurts more than he means to, often; but it is something that his intention is not evil. And in return he often gets hurt. Who has been bumped and ragged oftener than Grundy?

He never bears malice. An injury soon

fades from Grundy's mind. There are fellows whom he does not like, but it is seldom or never on account of anything that they have done to him. Even when he wanted to summon his enemies before his secret society there was no real longing for revenge in it; the longing was for power, for authority. It is Grundy's besetting fault to want to boss the show.

He is no end plucky. He will fight to the last gasp, and fears nothing. His belief in his ability as a swimmer helped him to jump into the flooded river to Tom Merry's rescue. But how many swankers can maintain their swank in the face of such a test of it? When Uncle Grundy seemed to have fallen upon evil days, and George Alfred has to face the prospect of leaving St. Jim's and earning his own living, was he dismayed? Not a bit of it! He was sure that he would soon be able to make up to the old chap for all he had

lost. Swank again. Yes, but something better, too!

He is very straight. When he does anything that seems at all off the rails, it is because he has been betrayed by his ambition; it is never through mean cunning. Do you remember into what a mess he got when Mr. Kailton put him upon his honour not to reveal what he had overheard in the House-master's study? He did not behave in a very brainy way, but yet he came out of a trying ordeal with credit. And do you remember, too, when he was put upon his honour not to fight? That was a hard struggle. "Whoppings" were off, and Grundy was helpless. But he stuck it out somehow.

St. Jim's would be the poorer for the loss of Grundy.

No. 8.—HARRY MANNERS.

## THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA.

FOR NEW READERS.

The twins are Philip Derwent, of Highcliffe, and his sister Philippa, of Cliff House. They have a cockatoo, named Cocky, which has been until recently with Flip (Philip) at Highcliffe, but is now at Cliff House. Flip has made an enemy of Gadsby, who is plotting against him with Vavasour. His best chums, Merton and Tunstall, are away from the school for a time, owing to a serious accident to one of Merton's eyes in a fight with Ponsonby. In their absence Flip gets too friendly with Pon and the rest of the nuts, and, without any real taste for it at the outset, takes to gambling. He is made reckless by failing to hear from his chums, who seem to have thrown him over. As a matter of fact, Gadsby and Vavasour have intercepted and kept back a letter from Tunstall to him. There is also a coolness between Flip and his sister; the Cliff House girls consider that Flip did not back up Merton staunchly. They are gated owing to an anonymous letter, and thus no full explanation is possible between the twins. Flip goes with the nuts to a gambling den at Courtfield, quarrels with Pon, and is knocked senseless just as the warning "Police!" is heard. Flip comes to himself in a cellar, bound hand and foot.

### Chiker Tells the Tale.

"WHAT do you mean?" Flip asked sharply. "I know you, and I warn you that you'll get it hot for this! Of course, I must get back to Highcliffe to-night, you ass!"

"Well, you'll 'ave to buck up an' look slippy, then," Chiker replied, grinning, "or it will be mornin' before you get there, my son!"

The lie came easily. It could not be disproven, for Flip was quite unable to reach his watch.

"That's pretty thick," Flip said.

Chiker thought he was taking it all uncommonly coolly, and rather admired him, for Chiker, though a brute, was no funk.

"It is. Bit rough on you that your pals should 'ave cleared off without you. But they was a good deal flustered about what 'ad 'appened. Of course, it was you what 'it 'im, but there wasn't any tellin' but that they'd come in for some of the trouble for the awful state 'e was in."

"Awful state? What do you mean?" Flip asked, beginning to feel really uneasy now. "I slogged Pon one, I know, and tumbled him over. Did it really damage him much? I don't see how it could."

"Oh, you know all right!" replied Chiker, with a leer.

"I don't know anything about it. There was a cry—oh, I remember now!—a warning that the police were coming. And then I was bowled over. Someone must have caught me a nasty clump on the napper. It couldn't have been Pon, for he was on his back. Who was it?"

"That's more'n I can tell you," said Mr. Chiker. "There was a deal of confusion, you know—bound to be."

Flip's suspicions flew to Gadsby. He tried to remember where that noble youth had been standing at the moment. But he could not.

He told himself that he had no right to suspect Gadsby. It was going too far. But he found that the suspicion could not be got rid of. It was a matter rather of instinct than of reason, and thus the more difficult to combat.

Another aspect of the affair struck him. The police! That was pretty serious. If even one of the Highcliffe fellows had been caught there would be heavy trouble for them all. For, of course, they would have to own up, and stand by their unlucky comrade. Flip had no doubt about that.

"Was it true about the raid?" he asked.

"What do you think? Reckon I'd 'ave brung you along 'ere for nothin'?"

"Well, you didn't tie me up to save me from the police, anyway," replied Flip.

"Ow do you know that? There's a lot of ins and outs to this affair, my lad!"

"There certainly seem to be," Flip said wearily. "Let's have the yarn as straight as you know how to tell it, and then perhaps I shall know where I stand."

Chiker had no particular wish to tell the yarn, for the truth failed to suit his book; and, though he had made one or two successful essays in fiction thus far, he was not sure that he could go on doing it all out of his own head.

"Your pal was outed bad, an' you done it," he said. "Leastways, you started it, an' the others say as 'ow you trampled on the chap in the dark—'r'aps bein' too savage mad to know proper what you was doin'."

"Who says that?" demanded Flip hotly.

"The other two young swells—I don't know their monikers. They 'ad 'im to get away—they couldn't bother about you. An' they didn't seem to want to, neither. I heard one of 'em say that 'e didn't care a dashed scrap what 'appened to you, not after the way you'd treated poor old Pony—no, Pon, it was."

"Oh, you lying cur, Gadsby!" breathed Flip.

Gadsby might have said that. It was likely enough. But if he did he had known well that it wasn't true!

"I dunno. You certainly 'it 'im a oner, an' I s'pose you meant to 'urt 'im."

"I didn't hit him when he was down, and Gadsby knows that. Did they get clear off without the police seeing them?"

"Yes, they done that all right. An' I carried you away—carried you in my arms, like a baby, I did. I 'ope you're grateful for that; but you don't seem to be."

Flip felt half inclined to chuckle, unpleasant as the situation was for him.

"I'd try to be grateful—perhaps—if you cut these ropes," he said. "While I'm tied up the gratitude don't seem to work somehow. I won't say I don't believe your yarn; but I can't see anything in it that explains why you want to keep me trussed up here."

"You're a rum kid!" said Chiker thoughtfully.

"I'm not so rum as you are, I fancy. Are you going to loose me?"

"I—ham—not!" replied Chiker, with great emphasis.

Then he went.

The candle-end soon flickered out, leaving only a nasty smell to show that it had ever been. Flip propped himself up against the damp wall of the cellar, and thought as hard as he had ever thought in his life.

But he could not see through this. If Chiker's story was true, it still left a lot unexplained. If it was not true, there was endless matter for conjecture.

He tried to sort out from the rest what really mattered.

If there had been a police-raid, that scarcely affected his case. The police had not caught him, or he would not have been Chiker's prisoner.

What was Chiker doing it for?

Flip did not believe that the fellow had any strong animus against him. There was certainly no reason why he should have.

But there was something behind this kidnapping. Something—or somebody!

If somebody—who?

Flip could think of no one. He knew Gadsby disliked him; but he had simply no idea of the venomous hatred Gadsby had cherished ever since the day of his licking.

He did not even consider the possibility of Gadsby's having been Chiker's instigator. He was not even aware that the two had ever spoken to one another.

But the thing that mattered most was the reception that awaited him at Highcliffe.

What could he say to Dr. Voysey?

It was impossible to explain, for he could not tell the truth without dragging others into it. Slack as the Head of Highcliffe was, he would be certain to inquire as to how Flip had come to know of the gambling den. To refuse an answer would not help the culprit. To tell the truth being impossible, a refusal to answer seemed to Flip the only alternative, for lying was not in his line.

He seemed booked for the sack in any case. He might have lied his way out of the difficulty—had he been a Gadsby or a Skinner. But even an accomplished liar would not have found this an easy task.

To tell the whole truth would have been best—if it could have been done merely by confessing his own fault. But when you started confessing things about other fellows—well, it was not confession that Flip Derwent would have called that—his name for it would have been sneaking!

They were not his friends. He saw that clearly enough now.

He had never counted Gadsby and Vavasour chums, though he would have stood by them at a pinch.

But he had counted upon Pon. Now he knew better. He remembered all the black stories he had heard about Cecil Ponsonby, and he had no difficulty in believing them now.

It was as though the scales had fallen from Flip's eyes. In that instant when he had struck Pon down, the moment before going down himself, it was as though he had had a glimpse of Pon's black, treacherous heart—a very nest of vipers!

If Chiker's story was true, it was not Pon who had been responsible for deserting him.

It was Gadsby. But it would have been all the same if Pon had been in a condition to make the choice. They would have gone.

No doubt they were safe. They would sneak into the school-unsen. No one would know that he had been with them. He had told the seniors that he had promised to meet Pon at Courtfield; but Pon had only to deny having seen him, and he would be ready enough to do that.

It meant the sack! The crime of being absent without leave, and with no excuse to offer, could not be met with lighter punishment.

Those three were safe. They had led him into it, and now they were safe, and he had come the ghastliest kind of cropper! Flip's mouth set tight as he thought of that.

But the notion of rounding on them never once occurred to him. All through he justified Pon's certainty that he would not split. Rascal as Cecil Ponsonby was, he knew something about human nature.

"Don't seem much good thinking about what I am to do when I get out of this until I know that I'm going to get out," murmured Flip. "On the whole, I think I might as well snooze off, if I can. My word, how my napper aches!"

He lay down on the damp floor of his underground prison, and in less than five minutes was asleep.

Chiker had told the tale to some effect. If Flip had had the least idea that his unconsciousness had lasted so short a time, that his three companions in shady adventure had not yet got back to Highcliffe when his talk with Chiker began, he would certainly not have resigned himself to his fate in that manner.

He would have felt that it was worth while making a struggle for safety. There was still time for him to get back before the fellows who had been with him to Lantham returned. But he did not know that. Chiker had lied to him about the time, and he imagined that it was well on towards morning.

Perhaps it was as well. For he had no chance of struggling, and no cry for help was likely to get any attention from above.

He slept—far more soundly than Gadsby and Vasour did at Highcliffe. Gadsby was worrying as to whether his scheme would succeed or not, and how things would turn out if it did. Vasour dreaded Flip's dragging them into it; and perhaps in his narrow heart there was just a little remorse for his share in the desertion of Flip. He had never liked Flip, but there had been no good reason for his dislike, as he realised now. If Flip did tell, however—if he dragged Adolphus Theodore Vasour into such a shady affair—then Adolphus Theodore would be ready to hate him with all his heart.

As for Cecil Ponsonby, he slept soundly enough, though he dropped off with a headache, and woke up with it aching worse than ever.

#### Miss Gittins Takes a Hand.

IT was past eight o'clock when Flip awoke, though he had no clue to the time, for he was still in darkness, and if he could have got at his watch he could not have seen what hour it showed—which, as it had stopped, made no difference any way.

He was cramped and stiff from his bonds, and his clothes felt damp. It was a nasty shock to wake to a realisation of his position; but he faced it with fortitude. Cheerfulness was scarcely possible; but a stiff upper-lip in the face of misfortune is the next best thing to cheerfulness, and that, at least, he could manage.

There was nothing in his plight that improved upon further consideration. Highcliffe had done with him, that was certain. He began to wonder whether it was worth while going back there at all.

Better to face the music, perhaps. And there was Flap to think of. This would be a heavy blow to her at best. He would have to tell her the truth. And the truth would hit her hard.

He knew what her advice would be. "Go back and face the music!" And he would have done that like a shot but for that wretched alternative of lying or sneaking. To go back and refuse to answer questions would be absurd. No use to him or to anyone, that way!

But it was no good thinking of going back or of running away till he could get free. He felt about for something upon which he might rub the cord which bound his hands, and so rub it through.

He found a jutting brick at length, and set to work at once.

And now he became painfully conscious of a void within. As it was some eighteen hours since he had last eaten anything, this was not surprising. Flip felt as though it might have been eighteen days.

He rubbed away. It was clumsy work at best, and it made his wrists raw before the cord showed any sign of giving.

But it gave at last, and his hands were free. Sharp pains shot through his arms as the imprisoned blood began to move again, but he felt them less than he would have done at another time. They might be more acute than the pangs of emptiness, but they were easier to bear.

"Hang the brute! He might have left me some grub!" he muttered.

It was like Flip Derwent to feel absolutely no fear of Chiker, to have no dread that he was to be the victim of a tragedy.

He could not believe that this was merely a rough practical joke; but it simply never occurred to him that there was any real danger in his present situation. He was in a hurry to get out of it, but that was not in the least because he had any doubt of getting out alive in the long run.

Now he unfastened the cord that bound his legs, and stood upright. A search in all his pockets provided him with a solitary match. Pon would have had his ornate silver matchbox full, in spite of the shortage of matches. But Flip had little use for them.

He hesitated before he struck that one match. Naturally, he wanted to examine the place, to find out what chance there might be of his getting out of it before Chiker returned—which he wanted to do, if only as a sell for Chiker.

But when he did light it he never even looked for the door.

For the flickering light showed him what made him forget all about escape for the present.

On a rough stool in the middle of the cellar stood a plate of food and a mug.

The match went out.

"Silly chump!" growled Flip, as he felt for his prison fare. "How did he think I could get at it while I was tied up like that?"

As a matter of fact, Chiker had considered that problem. He had come to the conclusion that when Flip awoke he would manage in some way or another to get his hands free. Chiker had even thought of freeing them for him. But he had not done that.

There was ham—not a great deal, and inferior in quality. But there was nearly half a loaf of bread; and the best ham Flip had ever eaten had never tasted better than that scrap did, while he had no hesitation about disregarding the Food Controller's injunctions to "eat less bread." The meals he had missed needed making up.

In the mug was coffee—bad coffee, and all but cold. But it went down like nectar.

"The brute ain't wholly a brute, after all," said Flip to himself, as he finished the last crumb of the bread.

He felt so much better that he became almost cheerful.

After all, things might not turn out so badly. He would go to Highcliffe when once he had got out, and hang about until he saw someone who could tell him how matters stood. There might be a chance of escaping the sack; but, on the whole, he was not inclined to put himself in the Head's grip till he was sure that the chance existed.

He felt round the walls till he came to the door.

It was locked, of course. He had quite expected that.

Was it worth while to shout? Somebody must surely hear him if he yelled for all he was worth.

But that was not good enough. Anyone who let him out would be curious, and he might not be able to get away until the police had been called in to investigate the matter. It would never do to go back to Highcliffe in custody.

Most fellows would have shouted, if not at once, then later, when the tedium and discomfort had grown beyond their endurance.

But Flip Derwent, with all his failings, had more resolution and more pluck than the average fellow. He called his pride to his aid, and kept silence.

Sooner or later Chiker was bound to come and release him. Waiting was weary work; but he waited.

It seemed to him that at least twelve

hours must have passed before anything occurred to break the monotony.

Then he heard a key grate in the lock. He moved nearer to the door. His notion was to dash out, taking his gaoler by surprise. Once he was out of that place it would take more than Mr. Bert Chiker to get him back again.

The door swung inwards, and Flip checked himself in the very act of springing.

For it was not Mr. Bert Chiker at all. It was a girl!

She held a candle in her hand, and its light showed the golden hair and blue eyes of Miss Gwendoline Gittins, the post-girl!

"My hat!" said Flip, in utter surprise.

"Oh!" cried the girl, in alarm. "I thought you were my brother!"

"I couldn't be more pleased to see you if I was," replied Flip, with a grin that was almost cheerful, so relieved did he feel at the prospect of escape.

"That's all very well, but what are you doing here?" demanded Miss Gwendoline severely.

"I'm not here for pleasure, I assure you," answered Flip.

The girl's white teeth showed in a smile. "I suppose not," she said. "It ain't exactly a drawing-room, is it? How did you come here?"

"I was put here while I was helpless after being tumbled over. Tied up, too. I hope the chap who did it isn't a friend of yours, because I have a bit of a score against him."

"Well, he ain't a friend of mine—not in the least," said Miss Gittins. "He happens to be my uncle, that's all. Quite a different matter."

"Oh!" said Flip, rather at a loss as to how he should take this.

"You may think a heap of all your relations," Miss Gittins observed. "Some folks do, an' some don't. It depends upon the folks—an' the relations. Mine ain't any great shakes."

"Didn't you mention your brother?" asked Flip.

The girl stood a step or two above him, and he could not have got past her without pushing. But he was in no great hurry to get past. He did not mind much if Chiker came now.

"I did. But I shouldn't mention him as the sort of relation I'd any particular use for. He's a young rotter, Gehazi is. Still, I have to look after him a bit, you know."

The girl smiled down at Flip. She seemed quite a good sort, and she was certainly pretty—not that Flip cared much about that.

"What made you think you would find him down here?" he inquired.

"Well, he's been locked up here before now. Bert Chiker is a rough beggar when he gets in a wax, and Gehazi is about the most annoyin' little beast in Courtfield. I don't wonder his uncle locked him up. But I ain't going to have Mr. Bert Chiker doing just what he likes!"

"Then Chiker's your uncle?"

"Yes. You needn't be in a hurry to go an' tell everybody—it ain't a thing that I brag about much. Gehazi never came home last night—not the first time—so I thought he might be down here. That reminds me—what did Bert Chiker put you here for?"

"I should very much like to know," replied Flip.

"You don't know—honest?"

"I don't, on my word! He has nothing against me, as far as I know. He didn't even talk as if he had."

"H'm!" said the girl thoughtfully.

"There's more in this than meets the eye. You're Highcliffe, ain't you?"

"Yes, I'm Highcliffe."

"Means a row, being out all night, I s'pose?"

"I suppose so, too," said Flip grimly.

"Rough luck, old chap! Well, if you have to tell them all about it, I shall be wanted as a witness, I reckon. So you may as well know my name—it's Gittins—Gwendoline Gittins."

"You wouldn't care much about having to give evidence against your uncle, I take it?"

"I shouldn't be keen, but I should do it if it had got to be done. Look here, I like a lark as well as anyone, and I ain't strait-laced. But I do believe in fair play, an' I don't believe in telling lies and plotting and all that. I'm not going to ask what you were up to last night; but I don't suppose it was sayin' your prayers—else you wouldn't have run against Bert Chiker."

(To be continued next week.)

# A MURDER MYSTERY.

An Adventure of Herlock Sholmes.

By PETER TODD.

## I.

THE sudden and startling death of Mr. Skinfint Skinnem, the great shipowner, had caused a widespread sensation, and it was natural that my amazing friend, Herlock Sholmes, should have been called in to solve the mystery.

I was reading the latest report of the crime at our breakfast-table in our rooms at Shaker Street one morning, when Inspector Pinkeye was announced.

Sholmes smiled with rather a bored expression.

"Our old friend Pinkeye finds the Skinnem case a little above his weight, Jotson," he remarked. "I expected this."

"You will take up the case, Sholmes?" "Undoubtedly," Herlock Sholmes nodded genially to the inspector as he entered, without removing his feet from the table. "Good-morning, inspector! Scotland Yard at its wits' end again—what?"

"It's the Skinnem case, Mr. Sholmes," said Inspector Pinkeye, sinking into a chair. "If you care to help us—"

"Certainly, my dear fellow! Pray give me a few details. You can speak quite freely before my friend, Dr. Jotson."

"An extraordinary case, Mr. Sholmes," said the inspector. "Mr. Skinnem, the managing director of Messrs. Skull & Krossbones, the shipowners, was found dead in his private office. There was no sign of violence about the body, and death had apparently been instantaneous. The medical evidence is that Mr. Skinnem had been the victim of a sudden shock—how administered, it is for the police to discover."

"He was alone in the office?"

"Quite alone, seated at the telephone, with the receiver in his hand. Apparently he had just taken a call."

"When was he last seen alive?"

"His confidential clerk, Samuel Smiff, had been with him ten minutes before, taking his instructions. Mr. Smiff's evidence is that Mr. Skinnem was in perfect health and spirits. He had, in fact, been particularly cheered that morning by good news, freights having risen considerably owing to the destruction of shipping by the German submarines. He remarked jokingly to Smiff that the Hun submarines were an excellent bull point for shipping shares—a Stock Exchange expression, Mr. Sholmes. Smiff left him, and shortly afterwards heard the telephone-bell ring. As it rang again and again, Smiff ventured to enter the private office, and discovered Mr. Skinnem dead at the telephone. That, of course, is Smiff's story, but he has been placed under arrest on suspicion."

Sholmes nodded thoughtfully.

"There is nothing against Smiff, except from the fact that he was the last to see Mr. Skinnem alive. He is a young man, exempted as indispensable, and paid the princely wage of seventeen shillings weekly—doubtless on account of his indispensability. So far as we can ascertain, he was properly grateful and devoted to his employer. Yet—"

"Suicide?" suggested Sholmes. The inspector shook his head.

"There was no motive for suicide, Mr. Sholmes. Mr. Skinnem was enjoying unexampled prosperity. The Skull & Krossbones line had recently paid a dividend of three hundred per cent., and Mr. Skinnem's only worry was the difficulty of disposing of his huge accumulations of wealth. This trouble, however, he was facing with great equanimity. He was done to death. But by whom?" The inspector made a despairing gesture. "He had no enemies, so far as we have discovered. Among certain unthinking persons, of course, he had a degree of unpopularity. A gentleman in Mr. Skinnem's position could not escape slander and misunderstanding."

"And the cause of death—"

"A sudden, terrible shock, Mr. Sholmes—how administered is a mystery, unless by Samuel Smiff. Even if Smiff is guilty, it is not clear what means he used. You must help us, Mr. Sholmes."

Herlock Sholmes smiled.

"Rely upon me, inspector." I gazed inquiringly at my amazing friend. Well I knew the inscrutable smile that played over Sholmes' expressive countenance.

"Sholmes," I ejaculated, "you have a clue?"

"Naturally," yawned Sholmes. "The clue of the telephone-call."

"Really, Mr. Sholmes—" murmured the inspector.

"You do not see it, inspector," smiled Herlock Sholmes. "These clues, indeed, are only discerned in Shaker Street. However, I will enlighten you. The shock that killed Mr. Skinfint Skinnem was administered by means of the telephone."

Inspector Pinkeye started. "Mr. Sholmes! You suggest an electric current, powerful enough to electrocute Mr. Skinner—"

"Not at all."

"There was no sign of electrocution, Mr. Sholmes—"

"I did not say an electric shock, inspector."

"But—what other shock—"

Sholmes shrugged his shoulders. "That is what we shall see, inspector. I shall proceed to work upon the clue of the telephone-call."

Inspector Pinkeye rose to his feet, with an impatient look.

"I came here for assistance," he said stiffly. "I fear that I have wasted my time, Mr. Sholmes."

And Inspector Pinkeye retired. "Twas ever thus, as the poet remarks, Jotson," smiled Herlock Sholmes. "Perhaps I shall surprise our good friend Pinkeye shortly."

"I have no doubt of it, Sholmes. Yet I confess that I do not understand—"

"The things you do not understand, my dear fellow, would fill large volumes," remarked Sholmes.

"True!" I exclaimed. Sholmes removed his feet from the table, and rose.

"To work, Jotson!" he said. "The assassin is still at large. Are you disengaged this morning?"

"Quite!"

"Then remain disengaged, my dear fellow."

And Herlock Sholmes was gone.

## II.

I WAS busy that afternoon, having several operations to perform, and the subsequent death-certificates to sign. I did not see Sholmes again till the evening. When he came into our rooms at Shaker Street I could see by the fact that he was executing a cake-walk that he was in a satisfied mood.

Inspector Pinkeye followed him in. The inspector was looking somewhat glum as he sat down.

"Sholmes—" I exclaimed.

"We are expecting a visitor, my dear Jotson," drawled Sholmes. "The inspector has been kind enough to come to wait for him." "I am here at your request, Sholmes!" said Inspector Pinkeye gruffly. "But I do not see—"

"Naturally!"

"For whom are we waiting?" demanded the inspector, as Sholmes filled both his pipes and lighted them negligently.

"Wait and see!" said Sholmes genially.

We waited.

Half an hour later Mrs. Spudson showed a visitor up.

He started a little at the sight of the inspector.

Sholmes strolled carelessly to the door, and placed his back against it.

"Mr. Whiffles?" he asked politely.

"That is my name. I have called to see Dr. Jotson—"

"To see me?" I exclaimed.

Sholmes laughed.

"Pray excuse me for using your name, Jotson. Mr. Whiffles would scarcely have called here to meet the inspector."

"What does this mean?" exclaimed

Whiffles fiercely. "I was informed that Dr. Jotson had a job for me."

"Exactly! You are Montgomery Whiffles?"

"Yes."

"Lately in the employ of Mr. Skinfint Skinner?"

"That is so."

"Discharged for having had the audacity to ask for a rise in wages from sixteen shillings to sixteen-and-six weekly?"

Whiffles was silent.

"And wanted," continued Sholmes calmly, "on the charge of having caused the death of Mr. Skinnem by means of a shock administered through the telephone."

The man grew deadly pale.

"How do you know?" he gasped. "I—I was alone in the telephone-box! I was not seen—"

Sholmes smiled.

"There is your man, inspector!"

And the iniquitous Whiffles was led away with handcuffs on his wrist.

## III.

"S HOLMES!" I exclaimed breathlessly. Sholmes carelessly tossed off a bumper of cocaine, and smiled.

"I have surprised you, Jotson?"

"You astound me, Sholmes. How—"

"It was simple enough," drawled Sholmes.

"As I mentioned to the inspector, the clue was in the telephone-call. Naturally, an official detective could not see it. However, I followed up the clue. By inquiry at the telephone-exchange I learned whence that telephone-call had come. I traced it to a telephone-box in Grub Street Post Office. The rest was simple. The finger-marks on the receiver were an unerring clue. I suspected revenge on the part of a discharged employee. Whiffles was the man. With finnish cunning, Jotson, he had called up Mr. Skinner in his private office on the telephone that morning, and administered the shock that killed him as if by a bullet from a rifle."

"But in what manner, Sholmes? By means of a powerful current—"

"Not at all!"

"Then by what means, Sholmes, could the assassin have conveyed a fatal shock to Mr. Skinnem along the telephone-wires?"

"By means of a message, Jotson. As that was the only possible method, it was obviously the one used by Whiffles."

"Good heavens, Sholmes! And what message of terrible import could the man have breathed into the telephone to have this instantaneously fatal effect?"

"Ah! There we enter into the realms of theory, Jotson. But unless I am mistaken—"

"Impossible, Sholmes!"

"Quite so! The assassin breathed three words only—three words of dread import to a man in Mr. Skinnem's position."

"And those fatal words, Sholmes?"

"Consider, Jotson. The managing director of the Skull and Krossbones Line was reeking with prosperity, his dividends piled up mountainously around him. If the war should continue for another year, or two years, he had every reason to hope that the total wealth of the Kingdom would be accumulated in the hands of himself and his friends. He had only one thing to fear, Jotson—only one dread possibility clouded his happy horizon—the fearful possibility that the war would come to an end, and peace be declared. But for this haunting dread Mr. Skinnem would have been completely happy. But that dread, Jotson, must always have been in his mind, poisoning his prosperity, sapping away the satisfaction afforded even by dividends of three hundred per cent. With a cunning that approaches the diabolical the assassin breathed over the telephone the three terrible words: 'Peace is declared!'"

"Good heavens, Sholmes!"

"It was too much, Jotson. In that fearful moment the unhappy Mr. Skinnem saw his dividends dwindle away, his prospects of unlimited wealth shattered at a blow, his rosy dreams clouded for ever. And it slew him, Jotson—under that merciless blow he sank down, the victim of a terrible revenge!"

Tears stood in the eyes of Herlock Sholmes, and his voice faltered. It was not till he had finished the cask of cocaine that he was himself again.

Needless to say, the subsequent confession of the heinous assassin fully bore out the masterly deductions of Herlock Sholmes. Once more one of the deepest, darkest mysteries in the annals of crime had been solved by my amazing friend.

THE END.