

DON'T MISS THE AMAZING STORY OF ROOKWOOD SCHOOL—INSIDE!

# The POPULAR

EVERY TUESDAY.

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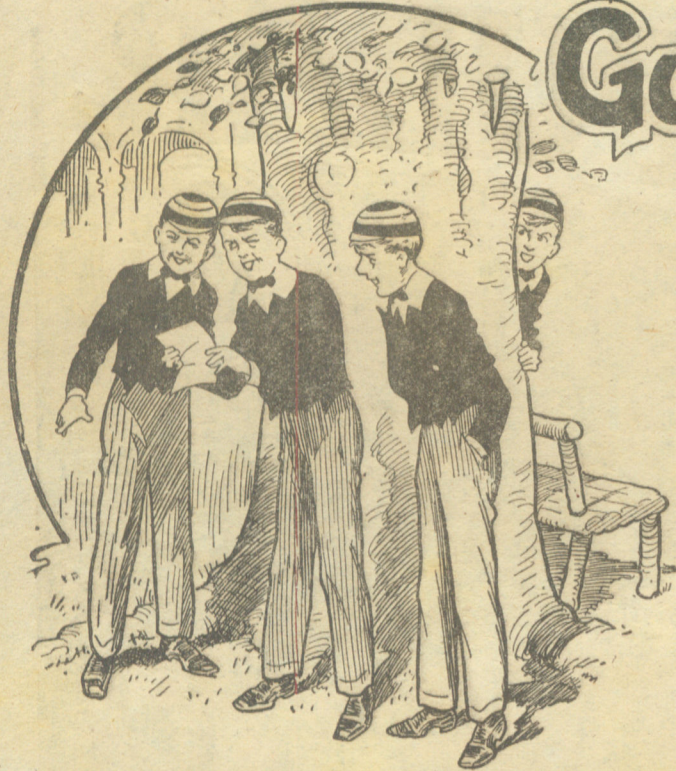


**GUNNER UNEARTHS THE ROOKWOOD "TREASURE!"**

(One of the many surprising incidents from the topping Rookwood Tale in this issue!)

## GUNNER'S LATEST!

The finding of a chart of the Rookwood Treasure sets Peter Cuthbert Gunner on an amazing quest!



# Gunner's Great Find!

Another Rollicking, Long Complete Story of JIMMY SILVER & CO., the chums of Rookwood, featuring Gunner of the Fourth.

By  
**OWEN CONQUEST.**

### THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Startling Secret!

**B**ETTER whisper "  
"We're safe here!"  
"Can't be too careful!" said Tommy Dodd cautiously. "If these Classical bounders should get on to it—"

"Sure they'd think nothing of bagging the treasure and leaving us out in the cold!"  
"Exactly!"

Peter Cuthbert Gunner of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood sat up and took notice, so to speak.

The whispering voices came to his ears, low but clear, round the huge trunk of the beech in a quiet corner of the Rookwood quadrangle.

Gunner was seated on a bench under the big beech, with Virgil on his knees, and a frown upon his brow. Gunner was studying Virgil—not willingly. Mr. Dalton had found serious fault with Gunner's construe that morning—not an unusual experience for Gunner. It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and Gunner had to spend part of it with P. Virgilius Maro, who was about the last companion he would have chosen on a half-holiday if he had had his own way.

Gunner was trying manfully to make head or tail of the celebrated shipwreck scene, when the whispering voices came to his ears.

He grinned.  
He knew the voices—those of Dodd and Cook and Doyle, of the Modern Fourth—the Three Tommies.

Evidently, the Modern chums had retired to that sequestered spot to discuss some matter that was to be kept from the knowledge of their old foes and rivals, the Classicals.

Gunner could not help grinning.

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It struck him as funny that the three Moderns should halt under the very tree where he sat, only the thick trunk separating him from them, and concealing him from their sight. He was out of view, but he was well within hearing.

Gunner of the Fourth had his faults. He was popularly supposed to be the biggest duffer that ever duffed, as Lovell described it. He had a fixed belief that he could do anything and everything, and everybody else had a fixed belief that he could do nothing at all. He had received several lickings since his arrival at Rookwood; yet his belief in his pugilistic powers remained undiminished, and he was ready to "take on" anybody from the Third to the Fifth. But he prided himself chiefly on his brain powers. This was really mysterious to the other Fourth-Formers, who had never discerned in Gunner any sign of brains at all. But although Gunner had his faults—and their name was legion—he was no eavesdropper. In ordinary circumstances he would never have listened to talk not intended for his ears. But in the present case the talkers were Modern juniors, and Gunner regarded himself as learning the plans of the enemy. So he made no sound, and only sat up and took notice.

Besides, he was rather curious. The mention of the treasure interested him, for, of course, Gunner had heard of the Rookwood treasure. Every new boy heard of that as a matter of course—in fact, new boys often went rooting round the old Abbey ruins in the hope of finding it. They never succeeded. If there was any treasure left buried about Rookwood by the ancient monks, they had done their work remarkably well.

"Pieces of eight!" Tommy Dodd's

voice ran on in a whisper, which reached Gunner quite clearly. "That's some sort of old coin, you know—worth a lot of money. That shows it's ancient."

"May be enough to make us all rich for life!" said Tommy Cook eagerly.

"More than that! Those old monks were no end rich, you know, and when Henry VIII. came down like a wolf on the fold, they shoved it all out of sight. Might be a million pounds!"

"Phew!"

"Sure, oughtn't we to take this paper to the Head?" asked Tommy Doyle.  
"Will the treasure belong to us if we find it?"

"I think half goes to the Government and the rest to the finder," said Tommy Dodd thoughtfully. "Something like that. Nothing to do with the Head. He hadn't a hand in finding this old document. We found it. Pieces of eight. It doesn't say how many, but it mentions the oaken chest. Must be a good bit if it needed an oaken chest—what?"

"Yes, rather!" murmured Cook.

"All we've got to do," continued Tommy Dodd, "is to follow the directions in this paper. Then we get hold of the famous Rookwood treasure. It's been searched for for hundreds of years, and nobody's had any luck. Fancy the looks of the Classical duffers when we turn it up! Jimmy Silver will be ready to kick himself!"

"Take care of the paper, Tommy," said Doyle anxiously. "You couldn't remember what's on it if you lost it."

"That's all right. I'm not running any risks with it. It won't be safe to make the search till the dead of night. But I'm not going to carry this precious paper about with me. Might lose it any minute. I'm going to put it in a safe place."

Peter Cuthbert listened with breathless interest now. His heart was thumping with excitement.

The discovery of a document containing a clue to the lost Rookwood treasure was a great event. The Moderns had had that luck, but they were not going to have the treasure, if Gunner could help it. All was fair in war, Gunner considered, and he was already planning to get hold of that valuable document.

He had half-risen, but he sat down again as he heard Tommy Dodd's next words.

"I'm showing it in the hole in this tree. It will be safe there till we want it."

"Good!"

Gunner smiled at the sunny spring sky. He abandoned his half-formed plan of seizing upon the document by force of arms. There was a bare possibility, even in Gunner's mind, that he might have got the worse of the tussle, considering the odds. Tommy Dodd was fairly playing into his hands, and Gunner was content to let it go at that.

He could hear Dodd fumbling on the other side of the big beech. Then there was a sound of retreating footsteps, and of voices dying away in the distance.

Gunner ventured to peer cautiously round the trunk.

The three Tommies were disappearing afar, without even looking back. Gunner indulged in a gentle chuckle.

He stepped round the beech and scanned the old trunk. He was not long in discovering the hole in the bark, and he fumbled in it, and drew out a folded paper.

Gunner did not stop to read it there. He put it hastily into his pocket, and walked away with his prize.

Ten minutes later, for reasons best known to themselves, Tommy Dodd & Co. came sauntering back to the spot. This time they passed the bench on the other side of the beech. On the bench lay a forgotten Virgil, but there was no sign of Gunner. Tommy Dodd, with a grinning face, circumnavigated the beech, and groped in the hole in the bark. It was empty.

"Dear me!" said Tommy Dodd.

And the three Tommies sauntered away again, with amazing equanimity considering the immense value of the document they had lost.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Glorious Prospects!

"SILVER!"

Jimmy Silver waved his hand at Gunner.

It was an emphatic gesture of dismissal; but Gunner did not heed it. "Hook it!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Don't begin on cricket, old man!" implored Raby. "We know you can teach us all about the game. But don't do it!"

"Don't!" urged Newcome. "Leave us in our ignorance. Do!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. were on their way to Little Side for cricket. They really did not want Gunner's conversation. Gunner was the Complete Cricketer—in his own personal estimation. But he always found it difficult to secure listeners, when the spirit moved him to draw upon his stores of knowledge.

"Look here!" hooted Gunner. "It's not cricket! I want to speak to you about something else, Silver!"

"Oh!" said Jimmy, more amiably. "You're not going to ask me for a place in the junior team, nor tell me what

a born idiot Bulkeley is not to play you in the First Eleven!"

"No!" snorted Gunner.

"Then you can run on!" said Jimmy kindly. "I'll give you a minute or two. Back-pedal, you chaps!"

"What do you know about the old treasure of the Abbey?"

"Nothing!" said Jimmy. "The yarn is that the monks buried it when Henry VIII. came looting after their goods, ever so long ago. It's said that an old document exists, giving the clue; but nobody's ever seen the giddy document."

"It's known about the document?" asked Gunner thoughtfully.

"So they say. Hidden about Rookwood somewhere," said Jimmy. "Might turn up any day—perhaps."

"Now, suppose some Modern kids found the document—"

"Suppose anything you like, old bean!"

"Suppose they did, a Classical chap would be justified in bagging it off them, considering that we're up against the Moderns all along the line," argued Gunner.

"I don't know about that," said Jimmy, staring at him. "But as they're not likely to find anything of the sort"—

"You agree with me that I should be justified—"

"Well, not quite," said Jimmy Silver. "It doesn't matter, anyhow, as it will never happen; but if—"

"I might have known I shouldn't get any sense out of you!" said Gunner. "Why the fellows made you captain of the Form beats me!"

"Anything else to say?" inquired Jimmy politely.

"Only that you're a born idiot!"

"Thanks!" said Jimmy.

He went on his way with his chums, and, in passing, took Gunner by the collar, tripped him, and sat him down heavily on the ground. Gunner sat and gasped, hardly knowing how he came to be in a sitting posture. His mighty brain never worked quickly.

By the time he scrambled to his feet Jimmy Silver & Co. were trotting on the cricket-field. Gunner made a stride or two in pursuit; but he stopped.

"No time to trash that cheeky idiot now!" he reflected. "I'll give him a lesson another time. I'm jolly well going to lift that giddy treasure before the Moderns miss this paper!"

Gunner entered the School House and proceeded to his study, No. 7, in the Fourth. There he found his study-mate, Dickinson minor. The latter was labouring through an imposition, with a gloomy countenance. Dickinson minor wanted to be at the cricket, but a cruel destiny chained him to the study and Virgil.

"Not finished yet?" asked Gunner.

"Forty-six out of a hundred!" said Dickinson minor dismally. "Don't interrupt, old chap. I want to get through somehow!"

"Put it away now."

"I've got to take it in to Mr. Dalton before tea!"

"Can't be helped," said Gunner, in his autocratic way. "I want you."

Dickinson minor generally gave Gunner his head, for the sake of a quiet life. But he showed signs of rebellion now.

"Look here, I can't leave my impot!" he said. "Mr. Dalton—"

"Shove it away," said Gunner, unheeding. "I've got something on a bit more important than lines for Dalton. Besides, you can get round Dalton, if you like, by making him a present of a new motor-bike, or a Rolls-Royce car."

Dickinson minor felt as if he would faint.

He backed his chair away from Gunner, looking at him in great alarm. The only explanation of Gunner's remark was that Gunner was not quite right in his head; and Dickinson realised now that there had been many signs of it—Gunner's belief that he could play cricket, for instance.

"What are you blinking at?" demanded Gunner irritably.

"I—I say, you keep off!" gasped Dickinson.

"What?"

"D-d-d-don't you come near me!" gasped Dickinson. "I—I say, you ought to see a doctor at once!"

"See a doctor!" repeated Gunner, in astonishment. "What would a doctor know about the Rookwood treasure?"

"The—the—the what?"

"That's what I was going to tell you," said Gunner. "The Rookwood treasure, you know—pieces of eight—a whole oaken chest full. As you're my pal I'm going to give you a share."

Dickinson jumped up. He realised that it was not insanity; but he was very much astonished.

"You've found the Rookwood treasure?" he yelled.

"Practically."

"Oh, only practically!" said Dickinson, much more soberly.

"It's simply a question of getting hold of it," explained Gunner. "I've found the document giving the clue."

"My hat!"

"I needn't go into details," said Gunner. "The document's in my hands, and that's enough. I understand that half a hidden treasure goes to the Government—trust them to get their fingers on anything they can. But half a million pounds is a lot of money. I shall give you ten thousand, Dickinson."

"W-w-will you?" stammered the astonished Dickinson.

"Yes. Nothing mean about me!" said Gunner. "I shall also let the Head have a whack. I may give him about fifty thousand. Dash it all, he's a deserving case!"

"But where's the document?" gasped Dickinson.

"Bit more interesting than lines for Dalton—what?" smiled Gunner. "Here it is, old chap! I trust you, you see."

And Gunner laid the precious paper on the study table, and Dickinson minor devoured it with his eyes.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Gunner's Luck!

IT was quite an interesting document. It ran:

"Wrytten by ye monk Ambrose by ye order of ye Abbot of Rookwood. Ye Abbot's treasure of golden candlesticks and chalices and pieces of eight, lies buried in ye oaken chest in ye vaults of ye Abbey. Twelve goodly paces from ye lowest step. Search, and ye shall fynde."

"My only hat!" ejaculated Dickinson.

"Easy as falling off a form—what?" smiled Gunner. "I've been in the Abbey vaults already—know the place like a book. We've only got to get a lantern and a spade—"

"But, I say—"

"Well, what?"

"This paper doesn't look so jolly old as—"

"Well preserved, of course!" said

Gunner. "Kept inside a book, I dare say—shut up for hundreds of years, you know—"

"The ink doesn't seem so faded as—"

"Ink keeps its colour if it's shut up away from the light, you know."

"D-d-does it?"

"Oh, yes. You see, the document's quite genuine."

"How do you know?"

Dickinson minor was not a very bright youth, but he was smitten with doubt.

"Well, I do know!" said Gunner loftily. "Leave it to me. You're a bit of a fool, Dickinson. I've often told you so. Don't waste time jawing, but come along."

"But—but my lines—"

"Lines—when I'm going to give you ten thousand pounds for helping me dig up a treasure!" howled Gunner.

"Yes; but—but Mr. Dalton—"

"Are you coming?" roared Gunner.

Gunner was already pushing back his cuffs, and Dickinson minor decided to come. With an extraordinary expression on his face he followed his busy study-mate along the Fourth Form passage and down the stairs.

"Now," said Gunner, "I'll get my bike lamp, and you sneak a spade from the gardener's shed. See?"

"I see."

"Bring it to the Abbey and keep it dark."

"Ye-es."

Five minutes later, Peter Cuthbert Gunner was in the Abbey ruins, at a little distance from the school buildings, with a bicycle lamp in his hand. On the steps that led down to the vaults he halted and lighted the lantern. Then he waited for Dickinson.

He waited a considerable time. This was accounted for by the fact that Dickinson minor, as soon as Gunner's back was turned, had scudded off to the study for his unfinished imposition, and had taken it away to a deserted Form-room, there to finish it in peace.

Gunner waited. He occupied his leisure in saying things about dawdling asses and fat-headed duffers—doubtless alluding to Dickinson minor.

He promised Dickinson half a dozen lickings when he came. But he did not come! Like the Lady of the Moated Grange, Peter Cuthbert Gunner waited for him that came not. And at last, with feelings that could not be expressed in words, Gunner put down his bike lamp on the steps and went in search of a spade himself, inwardly resolving not to hand Dickinson minor a single three-penny-bit out of the vast treasure he was about to unearth.

The treasure-seeker succeeded in annexing a spade from the gardener's shed, but getting it to the Abbey ruins unseen was a different matter.

Two or three fellows asked him on his way whether he was going to bury himself, adding that it was time he did. Quite near the Abbey ruins he fell in with three Modern juniors. Tommy Dodd & Co. were taking a stroll in that direction.

"Hallo! What's on, Gunner?" asked Tommy Dodd affably.

"Mind your own business, you Modern bouncer!" answered Gunner truculently.

"Is it a sayever intirely?" asked Tommy Doyle.

"Find out!"

"Bump him for his cheek!" suggested Tommy Cook.

"Good egg!"

"Here, keep off! Yaroooooop!"

The three Tommies strolled on, smiling.

ing, leaving Gunner sitting on the hard, unsympathetic ground, with his cap stuffed down the back of his neck.

"You cheeky Modern rotters!" spluttered Gunner. "I'll—I'll—Grooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

By the time Gunner recovered his breath, however, he was glad that the three Moderns had strolled away. Vengeance could wait, and he did not want Modern eyes upon him while he was searching for "ye treasure of ye Abbot."

With an angry grunt, Gunner tramped on to the ruins, spade in hand. He descended the steps of the vault to the door at the bottom, which was always kept padlocked to bar enterprising juniors out of the dangerous precincts.

It was rather a serious matter to burst that padlock, but Peter Cuthbert Gunner was not likely to allow such a consideration to stand between him and an oaken chest crammed with golden candlesticks, chalices, and pieces of eight.

A hefty swipe with a spade abolished the padlock, and Gunner threw the door open, picked up his bicycle lantern, and entered the vault.

He did not even notice, before he swiped the padlock to fragments, that it had already been opened and set carefully together to give it an appearance of being locked.

Gunner's powerful intellect did not descend to the observation of trifles.

Dark and gloomy looked the old vaults as Gunner flashed the light of his lamp round him. But darkness and gloom did not deter Gunner. He was not afraid of the ghost of Rookwood, though that special gentleman probably had as much a real existence as the Rookwood treasure.

"Twelve goodly paces from the lowest step!" murmured Gunner consulting his document. "Search and ye shall find. Good!"

Carefully, very carefully, he paced off from the lowest step twelve goodly paces. Gunner's paces could not help being goodly ones—the size of Gunner's feet was not diminutive.

He stopped after the twelfth pace and bent down lantern in hand, eagerly examining the ground. There was a flagstone at his feet—similar to the flags that covered the whole floor of the vault.

But it was dissimilar in one respect. The surface of the stone was chipped, as if with a chisel and hammer.

Gunner's heart beat faster as he discerned it. He knelt down on the flag, and turned the light of the lantern on the stone.

In the light, he felt along the chipping with his finger. There was no doubt about it—it was the letter "T" that was chipped there in the stone.

"T!" murmured Gunner. "If that doesn't stand for 'Treasure,' I'll eat my hat!"

He set the lantern down and took the spade. There was room to insert the edge between that flag and the next, and Gunner inserted it to prize up the heavy stone.

It came up with surprising ease, almost as if it had been raised before in recent times.

There was a terrific crash as it rolled backwards and fell on the adjoining flags.

The noise rolled like thunder through the echoing vaults.

Gunner did not heed it.

He was on his knees at the aperture, lantern in hand. He half expected to see a spiral stair leading downwards. He had read of such things, and a spiral stair certainly would have been in the

picture, so to speak. But there was no spiral stair.

Solid earth met his view. But embedded in the earth was a flat stone, and on that stone the word was cut—or, rather, roughly chipped:

DIG!

Gunner rose to his feet, breathing deep.

He had found it!

There was no doubt about that now. There was the spot, at twelve goodly paces from the stair—there was the direction "Dig." Nothing more than that was required.

Probably any fellow, excepting Gunner, would have set to work with the spade with frantic activity.

But Gunner was not an ordinary fellow.

There was going to be no doubt about the ownership of that treasure when it was unearthed. Gunner was determined on that. It was possible—indeed, probable—that some Modern cads might put in a claim in the circumstances. Gunner burned with indignation at the thought, but he had to admit the possibility.

There had to be official recognition of the fact that Gunner was the finder—that the treasure-trove was Gunner's. On a matter of such tremendous importance nothing short of the Head's authority was adequate. Gunner only needed absolute proof—and now he had it. He blew out the lantern, laid down the spade, and quitted the vault, carefully shutting the door after him.

Then, with a smiling face, and looking like a fellow walking on air, he headed for the School House and Dr. Chisholm's study.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Treasure Trove!

"GUNNER!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth called to Peter Cuthbert as he came into the School House.

Gunner glanced round carelessly.

"Can't stop!" he answered.

"What?"

"In a hurry," explained Gunner.

"I've got to see the Head."

"What do you mean by going about with muddy trousers, and your hands covered with mud?" snapped the prefect.

Gunner glanced down—he had signs of his treasure-hunting all over him. That was a trifle, however. He could not resist the temptation to astonish Bulkeley.

"Oh, that!" he said casually. "Can't grumble at a little mud, Bulkeley, in laying hold of a million pounds!"

"Eh?"

"You see, I've discovered the Rookwood treasure," said Gunner with studied carelessness.

"Wha-a-a?"

Six or seven fellows heard Gunner's amazing statement, and they all stared at him.

Gunner smiled. He enjoyed the limelight.

"You've discovered what?" yelled Hanson of the Fifth.

"The Rookwood treasure," yawned Gunner.

"You young ass!" exclaimed Bulkeley angrily.

"Well, I'm going to report to the Head, anyhow," said Gunner, and he walked on to the Head's study, leaving a buzz behind him.

"Off his rocker, begad!" remarked Smythe of the Shell.

"Fairly off it!" said Peele of the Fourth. "He can't be goin' to spin a yarn like that to the Head! He's gone to the beak's study, though!"

Gunner tapped at the Head's door and entered. Dr. Chisholm glanced at him, looking up from the entrancing pages of Euripides. He did not seem pleased.

"What is it, Gunner?"

"I thought I'd better mention to you, sir—" began Gunner.

"What—what?"

"That I've discovered the Rookwood treasure, sir!"

"What?"

Euripides fell with a crash.

"Golden candlesticks and chalices and pieces of eight, sir!" said Gunner. "I want you to witness that the stuff's mine, sir, if you don't mind. Of course, I'm prepared to hand over the Government's whack. And I should like you, sir, to accept fifty thousand pounds, with my kind regards, sir."

"Is this boy mad?" said Dr. Chisholm, addressing space, in a dazed sort of way.

"Really, sir—"

"If this is a childish jest, Gunner, I—"

"Seeing is believing, sir!" said Gunner calmly. "I shall be much obliged, sir, if you will come to the Abbey vaults and see the treasure."

"Have you been in the Abbey vaults, Gunner?"

"Yes, sir. I had a clue—"

"You have ventured to break the padlock?" thundered the Head.

"In the circumstances, sir, with a million pounds at stake—"

"Nonsense!"

"If you'll come and see it, sir—"

Dr. Chisholm rose to his feet.

"I will certainly come and see any discovery you may have made in the vaults, Gunner. Afterwards I shall punish you for your temerity."

Gunner followed the Head rather sulkily. He felt that this was not the right way to treat a successful treasure-seeker, and he mentally reduced the Head's "whack" to a mere twenty-five thousand pounds. That was more than he deserved, Gunner thought.

There was a murmur as the Head came sweeping out of the School House, with Gunner at his heels. Gunner's amazing statement had spread already. The rumour that the Rookwood treasure was discovered was fairly blazing through the school. Jimmy Silver & Co. heard it as they came in after cricket, and they gasped.

"Who's discovered it?" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Gunner!"

"Oh, Gunner!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Then I'll give twopence for the treasure—not more than that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm jolly well going to see!" declared Tubby Muffin.

The fat Classical was not the only one who wanted to see. Half the school followed on the trail as the Head and Gunner made for the Abbey ruins. Some fellows hurriedly fetched bike-lamps, guessing that the discovery had been made in the vaults. Three Modern juniors, who were strolling near the ruins, looked surprised at the sight of the crowd, and dismayed at the sight of the stately Head.

"What's this game, Silver?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, catching the captain of the Fourth by the arm.

"Gunner's discovered the giddy treasure—so he says!"

"But the Head—"

"He's taking the Head to see it."

"Taking the Head!" babbled Tommy Dodd. "Oh, my hat!"



**THE TREASURE-SEEKER!** A hefty swipe with a spade abolished the padlock, and Gunner threw open the door and entered the vault. His amazing quest after the treasure chest had begun. (See Chapter 3.)

"Who'd have thought that?" gasped Tommy Cook.

"He can't have dug up the giddy chest yet if he's taking the Head to see it!" ejaculated Tommy Doyle.

Jimmy Silver gave the three Moderns a very suspicious look.

"What do you fellows know about it?" he asked.

"Nothing that we're going to tell now that the Head's in it," grinned Tommy Dodd. "But that crass dummy— Oh, my hat!"

Tommy Dodd & Co. joined the crowd streaming into the Abbey ruins.

Gunner opened the door of the vaults, and retrieved his lamp and lighted it, politely lighting the Head's way in. With a grim countenance, Dr. Chisholm strode into the vaults. Half a dozen seniors and a swarm of juniors pressed in behind.

"Well, Gunner," said the Head, in a grinding voice, "where is the treasure you speak of?"

"Here, sir!" Gunner picked up the spade. "You see what it says on the stone, sir? 'Dig.'"

"Is that all?"

"Isn't that enough, sir?" demanded Gunner warmly. "I'll jolly soon turn it out, sir! I want you to be a witness that it is mine."

The Head gave him a glance that a basilisk might have envied.

"You may dig here, Gunner. If the Rookwood treasure really lies below—as I do not for one moment credit—I will excuse you. Otherwise, Gunner, I shall punish you severely. I am waiting."

The Head waited grimly; the Rookwood crowd waited breathlessly.

Gunner, nothing daunted, plied the spade.

Evidently Gunner's announcement of the discovery of the treasure had been a little premature. It was not actually discovered yet—it was only a moral certainty. That moral certainty was good enough for Gunner; but the Head seemed a little difficult to satisfy. His face grew grimmer and grimmer, as Gunner turned out spadeful after spadeful of earth. There was a sudden crash as Gunner's spade struck something hard. A thrill ran through the watching crowd; even the Head started. A chip of wood flew from the end of the spade.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"Touched it, sir!" said Gunner cheerily. "I'll have it out in a minute or two now."

"You may proceed, Gunner," said the Head; and there was much less acerbity in his manner.

It was really striking and extraordinary for the spade to crash upon wood six inches below the surface of the earth, where it had been covered for centuries by the ancient flagstones.

Gunner shovelled away earth at a great rate. The Head signed to the crowd to keep back, but every neck was craned forward. Gunner cleared what was evidently the wooden lid of a box.

"The oaken chest, sir!" he announced. "That wood does not look like oak," said the Head, peering into the excavation. "It appears to me to be common deal, and—and— Bless my soul! There are some letters on it—stencilled on it, apparently—"

"Something in dog-Latin, sir."

(Continued on page 28.)

# Gunner's Great Find!

(Continued from page 5.)

"S—U—G" the Head read out, in surprise. "Clear away that earth, Gunner. Ah, now I see the remainder. A—R! Upon my word! Sugar! It is a box that has contained sugar. If you have played a foolish practical joke upon me, Gunner—"

Gunner gasped.

Even he was astonished to find a cube-sugar box in the place of the expected oaken chest. He crashed the spade on it, smashing off the lid, with the intention of dazzling the Head into full belief by the sight of the golden candlesticks and chalices and pieces of eight. He fairly stuttered at the sight of the contents of the box. There were several half-bricks, and there was a quantity of cinders, and there was an old tomato-tin. On top of the treasure lay a sheet which was daubed, in large capital letters:

"CLASSICAL FATHEAD!  
TRY AGAIN!  
BOW-WOW!"

Dr. Chisholm stared at the paper as if he were mesmerised. Gunner blinked at it, and wondered if he was dreaming. Even Gunner could not suppose that that cheery message had been written by the ancient monks of Rookwood. The crowd craned forward to see it, and the message passed from mouth to mouth; and then the depths of the Abbey vaults echoed and re-echoed with an unaccustomed yell—a terrific yell of laughter.

"Silence!" thundered Dr. Chisholm. "All of you disperse at once—immediately! Gunner, you will come with me!"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Gunner—"I—I had the document—I— Oh, my hat! Those Modern rotters—"

"You have broken into the vaults against my commands. You have wasted my time. You—you," thundered the Head—"have you anything to say for yourself, you incredibly stupid boy?"

"They—they must have known I was behind the tree. They'd got all this up to pull my leg; they—they—I—I—" babbled Gunner incoherently.

"Do not stammer senseless words at me in that ridiculous manner, Gunner! I shall cane you for this severely! The Head swept from the vaults. Peter Cuthbert Gunner followed him, looking like anything but a happy and successful treasure-hunter. The quad swarmed with chortling Rookwooders—only the Head and Gunner looked serious.

In the Head's study Peter Cuthbert Gunner nourished a faint hope that his intended generosity to the Head would have the effect of mitigating his punishment for wasting that gentleman's valuable time. But the hope was in vain.

"Hold out your hand!" said the Head. Judging by what followed, the Head was lacking in common gratitude. He swished just as if Gunner had never intended to give him fifty thousand pounds! Gunner felt that life was hardly worth living—especially to a treasure-hunter—as he crawled away to his study, and he found only a partial solace in punching Dickinson minor's head.

THE END.

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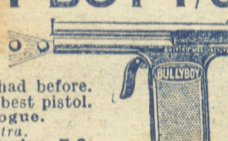
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