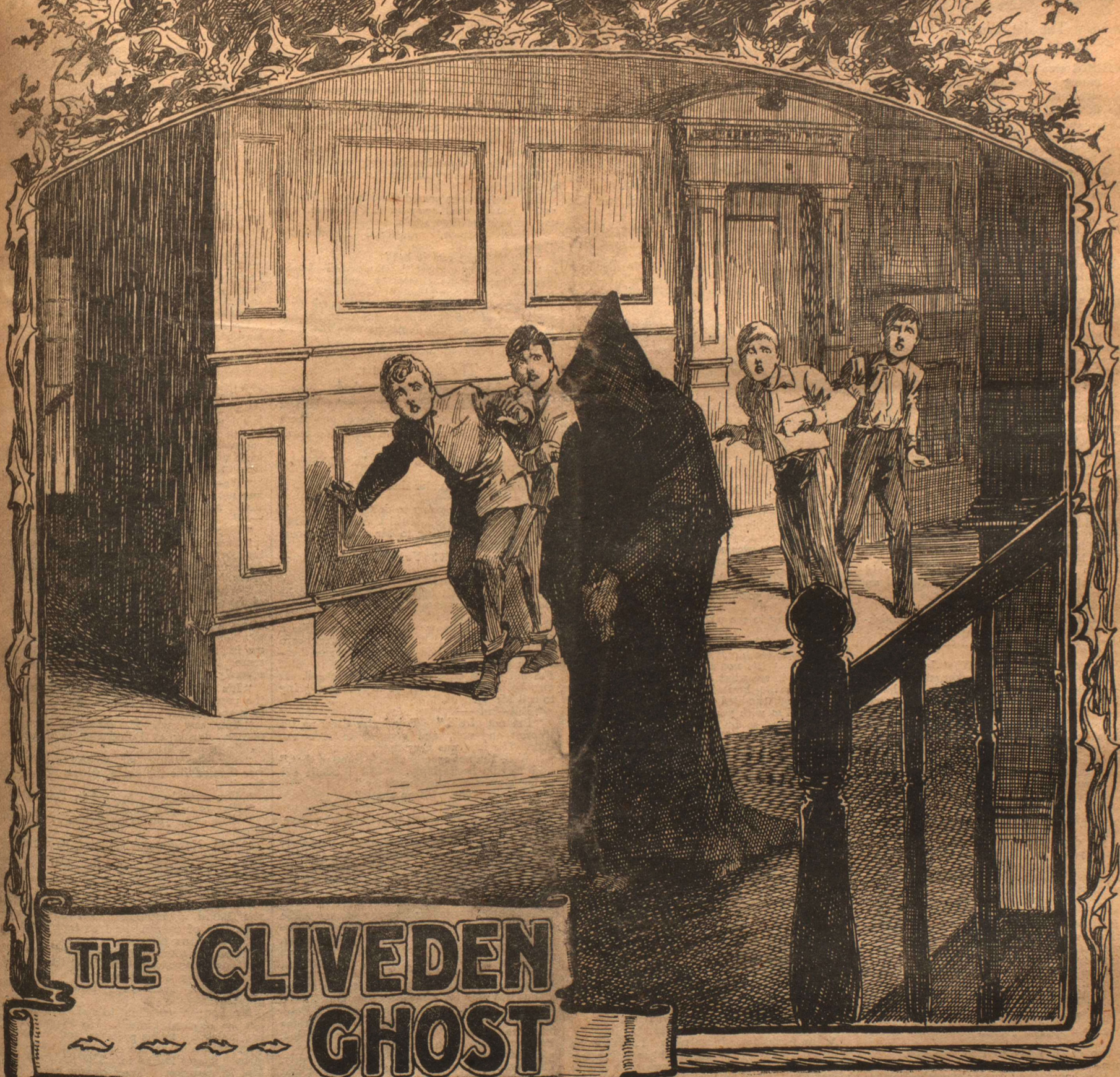


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THE CLIVEDEN
GHOST

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ate, and have not been disturbed. Well, Poindexter, I can only attribute your adventure to a heated imagination, and I should advise you to indulge in no more ghost stories at this hour of the night. I will see you back to your dormitory, and please do not disturb me again for such nonsense." There was no arguing with the Form master. The juniors followed him to the Fourth Form dormitory, and he saw them to bed, and with a parting injunction to go to sleep, he left them. The door closed, and the Form master's footsteps died away down the passage. "Faith, and sure I thought he wouldn't swallow the yarn," remarked Micky Flynn. "All the same, we saw it!" "I guess so. I don't know what it was, but I'll find out some time," said Poindexter. A dozen voices were asking what had happened. Dick Neville explained, and there was a general giggle from the Fourth Form. The juniors who had not seen the spectre abbot were disposed to make fun of the whole affair. "Oh, you dreamed it!" said Gatty. "It's a case of nerves!" remarked Philpot. "Heated imagination, my sons!" said Greene. "What had you been having for supper?" asked King. "If you fellows are looking for an assortment of thick ears," said Poindexter, "you're going just the right way to get them. Shut up!" And he turned over to go to sleep.

The 4th Chapter.

Crane and Cuffy are Convinced.

THE next morning the ghost story was all over Cliveden. It was chatted over among the Fourth at first, but the other Forms soon heard of it, and they inquired for the particulars with great interest. Not that the story found a single believer. It was regarded as a first-class joke, and the Combine and the Old Firm were chipped unmercifully on the subject. There was usually a keen rivalry between the Cliveden Combine—Poindexter, Neville, and Flynn—and Pankhurst and Price, otherwise known as the Old Firm. Their little wars, their alarms and excursions, so to speak, made things lively in the Fourth Form. But on the present occasion their mutual chipping was quite suspended. They had to stand together against the rest of Cliveden. The five juniors had seen the ghost, and no one else had seen it. No one even in the Fourth Form really believed that they had seen anything. They attributed it to a fanciful imagination, heated by the ghost story related in the still hour of midnight. Philpot, indeed, hinted that the chums were departing from the truth. But nobody took any notice of Philpot, who always had something ill-natured to say about somebody. The five were in a rather unfortunate position. In the broad daylight, with the winter sun shining into the corridor where the ghost had walked, they asked themselves whether they had, indeed, dreamed it all. One or two other juniors had thought, overnight, that they had heard footsteps in the corridor. But in the broad daylight they dismissed the idea from their minds. But the Combine and the Old Firm could not persuade themselves that the mysterious footsteps they heard, and the ghostly figure they had seen, were due to the imagination. "I guess it was genuine enough," Poindexter remarked, as the chums strolled out into the Close after morning lessons. "We saw it, kids! But I don't think there was much ghost about it—and we know now that it wasn't any burglar. It must have been some kid playing a joke on us." "But whom?" said Neville. "It certainly wasn't anybody in the Fourth. And you remember the abbot, or whatever he was, was the size of a man. If it was one of the fellows, it must have been a Sixth-Former." "Not much chance of a Sixth-Former playing ghost to frighten us," Poindexter remarked. "Faith, and then who could it have been?" "Blessed if I know; it's a giddy mystery! Hallo, Panky, have you found it out yet?" Pankhurst shook his head. "I can't catch on at all," he said. "Every theory I make on the subject lets water somewhere. The only explanation is that it was a ghost—and that's rot!" "Quite so," said Price. The juniors dug their hands deep into their pockets and looked at one another. They were puzzled and worried. The chipping they were receiving on all sides was not pleasant, but there seemed no chance of solving the mystery. Crane and Cuffy, of the Fifth, came trudging towards them through the snow. In a few days the school was breaking up for the Christmas holidays, and the Christmas weather had come early. The roofs and walls of Cliveden glistened white with snow, and the old Close was carpeted with glimmering white. Poindexter's eyes gleamed as he caught sight of the chums of the Fifth. There was an old feud between the Fourth and the Fifth at Cliveden, and Poindexter knew that Crane and Cuffy were about to make sarcastic remarks on the subject of the ghost. And Poindexter was getting fed up, as he expressed it, with the ghost story. "Hallo!" said Crane affably. "I hear you've been seeing things, Poindexter." "I guess so," said Poindexter. "I can see things now—funniest-looking things I've ever struck." And he stared hard at Crane and

Cuffy, in order to leave no doubt in their minds as to the things he was alluding to. Crane turned pink. "What price the ghost?" he asked. "Mysterious footsteps—ghostly spectre. Tell us the yarn, kid. We've heard it before, but we want information first-hand." "That's it," said Cuffy. "Go ahead, Pointpusher!" "I hear that it was a huge spectre with clanking chains," said Crane. "Philpot said clanking chains, but Greene said the chains didn't clank, and Gatty maintains that you told him the ghost was clad in complete armour, like the ghost of Hamlet's pater. I'd like to know exactly what he looked like." "Yes, rather!" said Cuffy. "I say, Punt-pounder, the next time you see a ghost, could you let me know quick, so that I could come along with my camera?" "I know what the matter really was," said Crane solemnly. "Pointpusher had been eating some of the paternal tinned beef for supper. It's a fact, isn't it, Punt-dodger, that your governor sends you tinned beef direct from Chicago?" "No, it isn't!" said Poindexter, turning red. "Sorry; my mistake! I've often wondered what Chicago tinned beef was made of, and I thought you might be able to tell me," said Crane blandly. "But to come back to the ghost—" "Is it a fact about the clanking armour?" asked Cuffy. "Had you really been eating canned mysteries overnight—ow!" Crane broke off suddenly. Poindexter had suddenly stooped and gathered a handful of snow, and the snowball broke on Crane's nose. He staggered back with a gasp, and a second snowball, from Neville's hand, caught him under the chin. Crane sat down in the snow, with a sudden bump that took his breath away. "Sock into them!" yelled Poindexter.

over, and Crane, stopping to aid him, was bowled over by a volley that smashed all over him. Five active juniors rushed to close quarters in a second, and Crane and Cuffy were pinned down. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pankhurst. "This is where we gloat! Got the rotters!" "Arrah, and it's right ye are!" "Quite so!" "Pin 'em down," said Poindexter grimly. The two heroes of the Fifth were pinned down. They had no chance of wriggling out from under the juniors, and a couple of dozen of the Fourth were standing round in a circle, yelling with laughter, and shutting off the view of the scene from any of the Fifth who might have happened to be out of doors. "Leggo!" panted Crane. "Lemme gerrup, you young rotters!" "Gerroff me chest!" mumbled Cuffy. "I guess we haven't done with you yet. Now, do you believe that ghost story?" "No!" roared Crane. "Good! Roll 'em in the snow, kids, and rub their chivvies well in!" "Leggo!" "Lemme alone!" "Roll 'em over!" "Ha, ha, ha!" The Fifth-Formers were mercilessly rolled over. Snow was clinging to them—it was in their sleeves, in their pockets, in their necks and ears and eyes and noses. They were blinded, choked, and soaked with snow. They struggled frantically, but in vain. The odds were too great. "Now, then," gasped Poindexter; "do you believe that ghost story?" "No!" "Roll 'em over again!" "Hold on—I mean yes!" "You're sure you meant yes, Craney?" "Yes! Oh, yes!"

several youngsters looked uneasily up and down the passage. "What's the matter with you, you kids?" asked the school captain, somewhat puzzled. "What are you peering about in the corners for?" "I wasn't peering," said Greene. "Only just having a look round," said Gatty. "They're looking for the ghost they don't believe in, I guess," Poindexter remarked sarcastically. "Oh, the ghost!" said Trevelyan, laughing. "I've heard about that. I hear that some of you saw the abbot who was tortured by King John was seen taking a walk up the corridor." "I guess so." "Well, I hope you've had a lighter supper to-night," said Trevelyan. "If I were your Form master, and you woke me up with a yarn like that, you'd catch it." "We really saw—" "Ahem! You'd better get to bed." And the Fourth Form turned in. And Trevelyan, cautioning Poindexter not to dream that he had seen any more ghosts, extinguished the light and closed the door. "I don't care," said Neville. "We saw it, and that's flat." "Oh, rats!" said Philpot. "Don't begin to talk about it now, and give us the creeps!" "Arrah, and if ye don't believe in it, why will ye be havin' the creeps intirely?" "Oh, ring off; I want to go to sleep!" "Faith, and I can hear something now!" "It's Trevelyan going down the passage, you ass!" growled Poindexter. "Shut up, and go to sleep!" "Sure, I've a good mind to keep awake and listen, Punt-dodger!" "I guess I won't." And Poindexter was asleep within five minutes. Most of the other fellows followed his example. Half an hour later Mr. Lanyon came up to bed, and he looked in at the Fourth Form dormitory to assure himself that all was right there. Mr. Lanyon was a kind and conscientious master, and he was very popular with his boys, though his scepticism on the subject of the abbot's ghost had not pleased the five juniors who had seen it. The Form master's face was very worn in expression. He had had plenty to do just before the break-up for Christmas, and he was also hard at work upon a book dealing with the history and antiquities of Cliveden—a subject of great interest to him. He generally worked at the book for an hour before going to bed, his time during the day being pretty well taken up by his Form duties. As he was thus burning the candle at both ends, as it were, it was no wonder that he sometimes looked tired and harassed.



Cuffy lost his footing in the snow, and rolled over, and Crane, stopping to aid him, was bowled over by a volley of snowballs that smashed all over him. Five active juniors rushed to close quarters in a second, and Crane and Cuffy were pinned down.

The juniors were not slow to obey. Five pairs of hands grabbed up the soft snow, and the snowballs flew with swift and unerring aim. Cuffy strove to dodge, but there was no dodging the practised aim of the Combine and the Old Firm. He made a rush at the juniors, but a snowball caught him in each eye, and a couple more on the nose and mouth, and he staggered blindly in the snow, and fell. "Arrah!" yelled Micky Flynn, dancing excitedly round the two Fifth-Formers and pelting them frantically. "Go it, darlings! Arrah!" In his excitement Micky hardly saw where his snowballs were flying. One caught Lincoln G. Poindexter in the ear, and another biffed into Dick Neville's eye. "Hold on, you duffer!" roared Poindexter. "Faith, and did it hit ye, Punt-dodger darling? Never mind!" "But I guess I do mind—" "Then guess again, darling!" Crane and Cuffy staggered up. They made a rush at the juniors, and the latter scattered before them, still hurling snowballs. And now some more of the Fourth Form, attracted by the noise, came running up, and fresh snowballs began to fly. A couple of dozen elusivie juniors surrounded Crane and Cuffy, and missiles poured in upon them from all sides. "M-m-my hat!" gasped Crane, as half a dozen balls smashed together in his face, and he sat in the snow once more. "I—I think we'd better cut!" "I th-th-think so, too!" panted Cuffy. And they cut. The juniors, with a yell of triumph, pursued them, hurling snowballs as fast as they could gather them. Crane and Cuffy were out off from the house, and they bolted towards the gym, careless of the ignominy of that flight from fags, so long as they could escape the rain of snowballs. But Cuffy lost his footing in the snow, and rolled

"Do you believe that ghost story, Cuffy?" "Yes, yes, yes!" "Good! We've convinced them, kids!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Faith, and it's a lot of trouble to convince them intirely! Are you quite sure you believe the ghost story, Craney? Sure, we don't mind givin' you another roll!" "Yes, you beasts—yes!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Well, they can't say that we haven't taken trouble enough," Pankhurst remarked, as the juniors walked away. "I rather think Crane and Cuffy will give up chipping for a bit." And Crane and Cuffy, as they dragged themselves out of the snow, feeling utterly wrecked and done up, were of the same opinion.

The 5th Chapter.

Crane and Cuffy's Little Game.

CRANE and Cuffy had been, more or less, convinced, but the chipping of the ghost-seers continued at intervals all through the day. When evening drew on, the chippers did not cease from troubling, nor were the Combine and the Old Firm at rest. Pankhurst and Price came to tea in No. 4, and the quintette discussed the matter once more, but they could come to no satisfactory solution. The mystery baffled them, and as the dark December night drew on, they could not help asking themselves whether the apparition would reappear. And it was noticeable that some of the juniors ceased to joke upon the matter as bedtime drew near. On a dark winter's night it seemed more probable that there was something in the story than in the daytime. Trevelyan, the captain of Cliveden, had to see the Fourth Form to bed, and he noticed that

The Form master held up his lamp and glanced along the row of white beds. The boys were fast asleep, and Mr. Lanyon, with a satisfied look, withdrew and quietly closed the door. He went along to his room, and was soon at work among his beloved manuscripts. The part of the work that he was dealing with, as it happened, referred to the incident of King John and the old abbot, and as he turned over the pages, Mr. Lanyon recalled the affair of the previous night and smiled. The Form master was a patient worker, and his manuscripts kept him going till the clock in the tower chimed out eleven. He little dreamed that the light under his door was watched with impatient eyes by two shadowy individuals, who came cautiously along from the Fifth Form passage. "It's no good," muttered Crane, after watching the light under the door for about ten minutes. "Lanyon's still up. He's working at that rotten book of his, about the antiquities of Cliveden, and he'll never leave it this side of half-past eleven." "Rotten!" agreed Cuffy. "Better get back." "I suppose so," grunted Cuffy. The two Fifth-Formers wrathfully wended their way back to their own quarters. Crane and Cuffy, smarting over their defeat at the hands of the juniors, had planned reprisals, the ghost story giving them the cue. They had intended to enter the Fourth Form dormitory with sheets over their heads, and awaken the chums with sepulchral voices, and give the Combine and the Old Firm the scare of their lives. But the light under Mr. Lanyon's door baffled them. They would have to pass that door on their way back, and it was too risky. If they happened to be caught they could guess how Mr. Lanyon would be likely to deal with them. "It's rotten!" grunted Crane. "But I'm

