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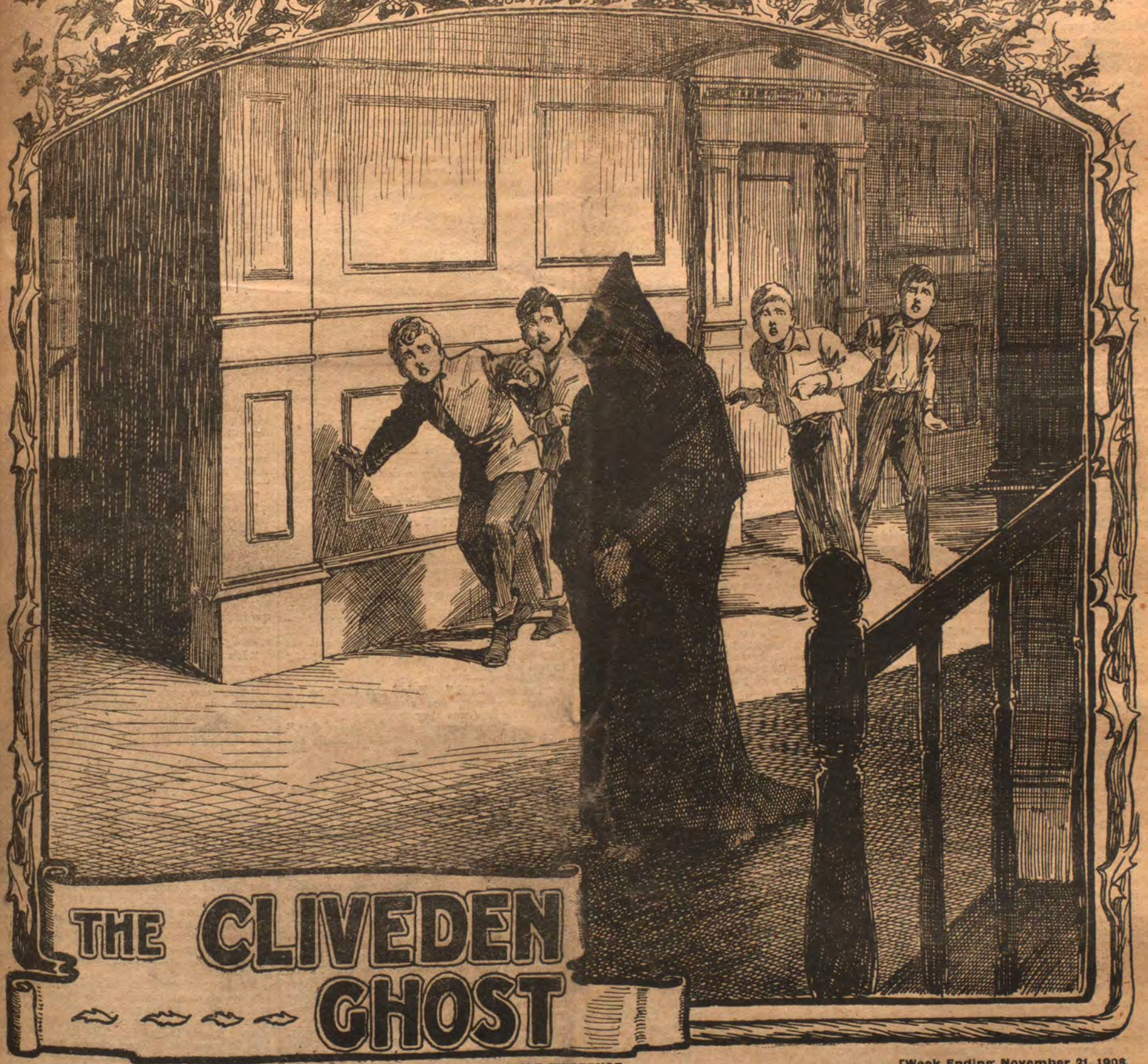

THE CLIVEDEN GHOST

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Four New Serials, Three Long Complete Tales, Twelve Grand Articles, &c.

The Cliveden Ghost

A Grand Complete School Story

By CHARLES HAMILTON.

The 1st Chapter.
In the Dead of Night.

THERE was a blur of frost on the dormitory windows. The moonlight streamed in, and lay in ghostly patches on the floor and the white beds. Outside, in the Close, the snow was steadily falling.

The hour was late, but the Fourth Form were not all asleep. From some of the beds came regular breathing and unmusical snores. But the half-dozen juniors nearest to Dick Neville's bed were awake. Dick was sitting up in bed, his knees drawn up and the bedclothes tucked round him, relating a yarn, to which the other juniors were listening with more or less attention. Dick's voice, though low, sounded very clearly in the silence of the December night.

Dick Neville, who had somewhat of a gift as a story-teller, was frequently called upon for a yarn after lights out in the Fourth Form dormitory at Cliveden, and on the present occasion he had chosen the story of the Abbot of Cliveden—the head of the monastic establishment which had occupied the site of the school in days gone by, and whose troubled spirit was supposed to still haunt the scene of its earthly existence.

It was near the time for breaking up for the Christmas holidays, and a snowy winter night was just the time for such a yarn, and Dick was making the flesh of the Fourth-Formers creep.

The abbot, so the story ran, by the orders of King John had been tortured to force him to reveal the hiding-place of a supposed treasure. He had expired in the hands of his tormentors, and since then his ghost had haunted the ancient precincts of Cliveden. Dick had described the torture with a wealth of gruesome detail, and he went on to relate how King John, sleeping in the abbey the same night, had been awakened by the sound of footsteps that paced round his bed.

"It was a bright moonlight night," said Dick, "just like this, and the king started up from sleep, and heard the footsteps slowly—slowly—slowly coming nearer——"

"My hat," murmured Lincoln G. Poindexter, "I guess you'll give us the creeps soon!"

"Slowly coming nearer, and then——"

"Hark!"

"What's the matter, ass? What do you mean by interrupting the story, Pankhurst?"

"I—I heard something!" gasped Pankhurst.

"Rot! Keep quiet! The footsteps slowly came——"

"There! Didn't you hear it?"

"Rats! I tell you the footsteps slowly—slowly came nearer, and then the king saw, in the moonlight, a white and ghostly figure, in the garb of the murdered abbot, whose finger slowly rose and pointed——"

"Ugh!"

"Slowly rose and pointed towards him. Then, in a hollow voice——"

"Hark!"

"If you don't shut up, Panky——"

"I tell you I can hear footsteps!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"I guess Panky's right!" exclaimed Poindexter excitedly. "Listen!"

Dick Neville unwillingly suspended his narrative and listened. The night was very still, save for the faint wail of the wind in the Close, and the rustle of the leafless elms. The hour was very late; all Cliveden was slumbering.

"My—my word!" muttered Dick.

From the corridor came a faint but unmistakable sound.

It was the sound of footsteps—slow and measured!

"Didn't I tell you so!" muttered Pankhurst, turning pale in the gloom. "W-what can it be?"

No one could reply to that question. No occupant of Cliveden was likely to be out of bed at that hour. And certainly neither master nor boy would proceed along the corridor at that slow and steady pace. The footsteps came slowly nearer, and a sound as of the swishing of a long robe accompanied them.

The juniors listened with thrilling nerves.

Slowly—slowly, nearer and nearer came the footsteps, till they reached the door of the dormitory.

Then there was a sudden catching of breath among the juniors.

But the footsteps passed on—slowly—slowly, with measured stride, till they died away in the distance!

The silence that followed was broken only by the quick, startled breathing of the scared boys.

The 2nd Chapter.
The Ghost of the Abbot.

LINCOLN G. POINDEXTER was the first to break the silence.

"My only hat!" muttered the American junior. "What do you make of that, kids?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Dick Neville, in a shaking voice. "It—it can't be——"

"Faith, and it's the ghost!" said Micky Flynn.

"Oh, rot!"

"Sure, and who would be walkin' the passages at this time of night, thin? Faith, and I've had enought of ghost stories!"

"It must be one of the masters come in late!" muttered Pankhurst.

"Why should he stride along like that, and make such a row about it, too?"

"Faith, and where's he going, too? The master's rooms are not at that end of the corridor!"

"Hark!"

"What is it?"

"I can hear him again!"

"Great Scott!"

The juniors, with throbbing hearts, listened intently.

True enough, the sound of the ghostly footsteps was audible in the flagged passage upon which the dormitory door opened.

The unknown was returning!

There was a slight sound as Lincoln G. Poindexter slipped out of bed. The American junior's face was very determined.

"Where are you going, Poin?" asked Neville quickly.

"I'm going to see what it is."

"But——"

"He'll pass the door in another minute, and I'm going to see him," said the American chum resolutely. "It's not a ghost. That's all rot! I'm going to see what it is!"

Dick Neville hesitated for a moment, and then he, too, tumbled out of bed.

"Then I'm with you, Punty."

"Faith, and so am I!" said Micky Flynn.

And the Cliveden Combine, shivering in their pyjamas, crept cautiously towards the door. The next moment Pankhurst and Price were out of bed. They did not feel much inclined for coming to close quarters with the mysterious night-walker, but they were not to be outdone by their rivals of the Fourth.

The five juniors clustered inside the door, and Poindexter cautiously turned the handle. He opened the door a few inches, and the juniors, craning over one another's shoulders, looked into the passage.

The moonlight streamed in from the high window at the end, and the passage was very light, though the light was wavering, and very eerie.

The footsteps came closer.

The juniors felt their hearts beating like hammers, and they had to fight against a wild desire to bolt back to bed.

But Poindexter was steady, and the others took courage from his example, and they stood their ground, staring fearfully out into the moonlit passage.

Closer and closer came the footsteps!

"Look!" muttered Neville thickly.

A dim form loomed into view. Then it came fully into sight in the moonlight, and the terrified juniors caught a glimpse of a figure arrayed in the full vestments of an abbot of the olden times.

The face was concealed by a cowl, and the ample robes swished along the flagged floor as the terrible form advanced.

Only a glimpse did the juniors catch of it. Then, with one accord, they turned and fled, Poindexter flinging the door shut as he ran.

Half the dormitory was awake now, and eager voices were demanding what was the matter. But no one replied.

The nerves of the juniors were too utterly shaken for speech, for explanation—for anything. They stood in a huddled group, with panting breath and thumping hearts, their eyes glued on the door.

Would it open?

In sickening apprehension they watched the door, dreading every moment to see again that dreadful figure.

But the footsteps passed steadily on. The uncanny sounds died away in the distance, and the juniors breathed again.

"Good heavens," muttered Poindexter—"good heavens!"

"Wh-wh-what can it be?"

"It's the g-g-ghost!" stammered Micky Flynn through his chattering teeth. "It's the g-g-ghost of the abbot!"

In intense anxiety the juniors listened for a repetition of the sound from the corridor, but it did not come. The footsteps were heard no more.

The 3rd Chapter.
Mr. Lanyon is Sceptical.

NEVILLE drew a quick, deep breath. Ten minutes had elapsed, and there had been no sound from the corridor.

"Better get back to bed," he said doubtfully.

Lincoln G. Poindexter shook his head.

"I guess not."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm not going to bed till I've settled what's the matter. I'm going to Mr. Lanyon's room to call him."

"You—you can't! You'll have to follow—it."

Poindexter nodded.

"Look here, you fellows, this has got to be cleared up. It's not a ghost——"

"Then what is it?"

"Blessed if I know. It doesn't seem like a fellow playing a trick. He must have heard us slam the door, and he never hurried himself in the least. I can't catch on to it. But I'm not going back to bed till it's settled. It may be a burglar for all we know. I'm going to call Mr. Lanyon."

"But—but——"

"I'm not afraid." Poindexter drew on his trousers and vest, and stepped towards the door. His face was very determined.

"Well, I'm not exactly afraid, come to that," said Neville hesitatingly. "But I admit I'd rather stay inside the dormitory."

"It's all serene. I'll go alone."

"No, you won't."

"Faith, and it's myself that's comin' wid ye, Pointpusher darling."

The Cliveden Combine looked out cautiously into the corridor. The moonlight lay there in a silver bar, and the corridor was still and silent. There was no trace, no sound of the mysterious visitant.

"I guess I'm going," said Poindexter.

He stepped out boldly into the passage. The master of the Fourth had his bed-room at the end of the passage, near the head of the stairs. It was in this direction that the apparition had disappeared. It required no amount of nerve on the part of the juniors to follow in the direction taken by the mysterious figure. But it was only for a moment that Neville and Flynn hesitated, and then they followed Poindexter. Two red-headed juniors followed them into the passage. Where the Combine led, Pankhurst and Price were not slow to follow.

Poindexter led the way, slowly but steadily. The juniors kept their eyes nervously about them. Plucky as they were, there was not the slightest doubt that panic would have seized them instantly at the sight of the ghostly figure, and that they would have fled pell-mell. But the corridor was deserted save for themselves, and no sound broke the stillness but their own faint footfalls.

They reached the door of Mr. Lanyon's room. Poindexter cast a glance down the great staircase. Through the windows that opened upon it patches of moonlight came in, with a ghostly effect. The American junior would not have been surprised to see the figure of the ghostly abbot start up in the dim light. But there was nothing to be seen, and he knocked at the master's door.

The knock was a quiet one, but in the stillness it seemed to wake a thousand echoes in the corridors. Cliveden was an ancient building, full of rambling passages, shadowy alcoves and recesses, narrow, half-hidden staircases. There was no reply to the knock, and Poindexter repeated it. Still silence!

"I—I say," whispered Neville, "do you think we'd better wake him, after all? You see, he's bound to think we dreamed it all!"

"Faith, and it's right ye are!"

Poindexter shook his head.

"But we know we didn't dream it," he said quietly. "Five of us saw it, and that's enough. I'm going to wake him. What do you think, Panky?"

"Better call him," said Pankhurst.

"Quite so," agreed Price.

For the third time Poindexter knocked. Still the Form master did not wake. The boys were very uneasy. They cast nervous glances up and down the passage.

"He's sleeping awfully sound," muttered Neville. "I—I suppose nothing can have happened to him. The—the thing came in this direction, you know."

The juniors shuddered.

"I'm going in!" said Lincoln G. Poindexter. He opened the door, and stepped into the bed-room. The blind was down, and the room was quite dark. The juniors, peering in after Poindexter, dimly made out the form of the bed in the corner.

"Mr. Lanyon!"

Poindexter spoke in a subdued voice. There was no reply. The juniors began to grow very alarmed. What was the matter with Mr. Lanyon? It seemed strange that the Form master should be sleeping so very soundly.

"Mr. Lanyon!"

Poindexter raised his voice, but the result was the same. The junior shivered. He felt in his pocket for a matchbox, and struck a light. The flickering flame glimmered through the dark room, and it showed the Form master's pillow and his sleeping face. Mr. Lanyon's eyes were closed, and he was sleeping soundly. Poindexter drew a breath of relief. It was only a case of heavy sleeping; the indefinable fear in his heart was not realised.

He lighted the candle that stood by the master's bedside, and then shook Mr. Lanyon lightly by the shoulder.

The Form-master started, and awoke.

"Why—what—who—Poindexter! What are you doing here?"

"If you please, sir——"

"Poindexter!" Mr. Lanyon sat up in bed. His kind, somewhat worried-looking face was turned towards the shivering juniors with an expression of utter amazement. "My boy, what are you doing out of your beds at this time of night?"

"We—we have——" Poindexter paused. It was not easy to put the story into words that would not sound absurd. "If you please, sir——"

"Please explain yourself, Poindexter!"

"There is something—someone—going about the corridors, sir, playing ghost," said Poindexter. "Either that, or it's the ghost of the abbot."

"What can you possibly mean? The ghost of the abbot!"

"Yes, sir. Perhaps you know the story about Abbot Wilfred——"

"Nonsense, Poindexter! Have you awakened me in the middle of the night to tell me nonsense like this!" exclaimed Mr. Lanyon severely.

"It's quite true, sir. We heard footsteps in the passage, and we looked out of the dormitory and saw it."

"You saw what?" demanded the Form master, staring at Poindexter as if he could hardly believe his ears.

"The—the thing, sir, whatever it was. It was dressed like the abbot, with a cowl over its face."

"You must have dreamed it, Poindexter."

"Five of us saw it, sir!"

"How came you to be awake at so late an hour?"

"Well, Neville was spinning us a yarn, sir——"

"Ah, a ghost story, I presume!"

"Yes, sir. He was telling us the story of Abbot Wilfred——"

"And you grew frightened, and imagined you heard something," said Mr. Lanyon. "That is, of course, the true explanation."

"But we saw him, sir."

"You saw some moving shadow in the moonlight. Do you mean to seriously tell me, Poindexter, that you think you saw a ghost?"

"It must have been somebody playing ghost."

Mr. Lanyon was about to make a sharp reply, but he checked himself. He stepped out of bed, shivering in his pyjamas, and crossed to a large wardrobe at the end of his room. He opened it and looked in. The juniors watched him in surprise. They caught a glimpse of some dark-coloured garments hanging in the wardrobe. Mr. Lanyon turned towards them.

"I thought it possible that these things might have been taken by some practical joker," he said. "But they are here, and

safe, 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 alarums 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 jape 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, Puntpounder, 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, Puntdodger, 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.

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, Puntdodger 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 elusive 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 cut 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 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!"

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.

"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 thim intirely! Are you quite sure you belave 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 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, Puntdodger!"

"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 breaking-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.

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

not going to give up the idea. Those young Fourth Form rotters want putting in their places. I suppose Lanyon can't stick it out all night over his rotten book. We'll try again at half-past eleven."

"I'm getting sleepy," murmured Cuffy.

"You can stick here if you like!" growled Crane.

"Oh, I'll come!"

Cuffy was fast asleep, and Crane himself was nodding off when the school clock chimed out the half-hour. Crane started into wakefulness.

"You awake, Cuffy?"

Snore!

"Get up, old chap!"

Snore!

Crane shook his comrade by the shoulder. Cuffy snored again, and then yawned and awoke.

"Wharrer marrer?" he murmured drowsily. "'Tain't rising-bell."

"It's time to get along to the Fourth Form dorm. Half-past's just gone."

"I say, Craney, it would be a good idea to leave it till to-morrow night. Ow! Keep that sponge off my face, you utter ass!"

"Better get up, then."

Cuffy got up. He rubbed his eyes and yawned.

"Come on!" said Crane, taking a sheet from his bed. "Don't forget your sheet. We're going to give those young rotters a regular scare!"

He led the way from the dormitory. Cuffy was keen enough now that he was fairly out of bed. They crept quietly along the passage, and Crane looked at the door of Mr. Lanyon's room. There was no trace of light.

"It's all right; he's turned in," he whispered. "Follow your uncle!"

He stole on quietly towards the Fourth Form door. There was a glimmer of moonlight at the high window, but the thick frost and the driving snow obscured it. The passage was dim. Crane came to a sudden halt.

"What is it?" whispered Cuffy. "What are you stopping for?"

"Cave! I can hear somebody coming!"

"My hat, we shall be spotted, then!" grunted Cuffy. "Who can it be?"

"Blessed if I know! Quiet, and crouch down here; he may pass. It must be one of the masters, though why he should be wandering about——" Crane did not finish, but crouched in the shadow of an alcove in the wall, and Cuffy crouched beside him. In the shadow they were hidden, unless a very searching glance should be thrown in their direction. It was no light matter for boys to be out of their dormitory at that hour of the night, and Crane and Cuffy listened with tense anxiety to the approaching footsteps.

Footsteps—slow and steady!

In the midst of their anxiety Crane and Cuffy could not help wondering whom it could possibly be that paced the corridor with that slow and solemn tread.

The footsteps were approaching them, and the Fifth-Formers strained their eyes through the dimness of the corridor to make out who it was that approached.

A figure loomed up in the gloom—a figure in ample, trailing robe, with a cowl over the face completely concealing it.

A cold shiver ran through the terrified watchers.

They did not need telling who it was.

It was the ghostly abbot of Cliveden!

The 6th Chapter.
A Night Alarm.

FOR a moment the terrified boys stood dumbfounded, incapable of movement or speech. The ghostly figure was advancing steadily, and in a minute more it would pass the alcove, and brushing with its trailing garments the shivering forms of the watchers. Crane suddenly dragged his companion by the arm.

"Run!" he gasped thickly. "For Heaven's sake, run!"

Cuffy was too terrified to move. Crane dragged him away, and Cuffy came to himself somewhat. Fear lent the two Fifth-Formers wings, and they dashed away down the corridor, tearing on blindly in the gloom. Past Mr. Lanyon's door, and on to the staircase, and down the stairs three at a time, they went.

There was a sudden yell on the stairs, and Crane shrieked with terror as he felt himself knock against a solid body in the darkness. But it was not another ghost; the voice of Monsieur Friquet, the French master at Cliveden, quickly reassured him on that point. Monsieur was coming up to bed late, after an evening out, and he was naturally startled at being suddenly biffed into by two flying figures on the stairs.

"Ciel! Ow! Merciful 'eavens! I am keel!"

"Oh!" gasped Crane.

The Frenchman went flying down the stairs, and Crane and Cuffy went flying after him. There was no chance of saving themselves. Mossoo alighted on the mat, with every ounce of breath knocked out of his body, and with Crane and Cuffy sprawling across him.

"Ceil! I am murdair! I am keel! Help! A moi! Help viz me! Murdair! Fire!"

The Frenchman's wild yells rang through the house.

"My hat!" gasped Crane. "He'll wake the place. "It's Mossoo! Cut!"

"The ghost!" mumbled Cuffy.

"Cut, I tell you."

"The g-g-ghost!"

Doors were opening now, and the dark passages gleamed with wavering lights. A dozen voices in different directions asked what was the matter. Trevelyan came hurrying along with a lamp in his hand, and Mr. Quince, the master of the Fifth, dashed out of his room with a poker.

"Wh-what is the matter?" gasped Mr. Quince. "Dear me, Monsieur Friquet—and Crane—and Cuffy! What are you doing here, you boys?"

"The gh-gh-ghost!" mumbled Cuffy.

"What is the foolish boy saying?"

"The g-g-ghost!"

"If you please, sir," gasped Crane, "we've seen a ghost——"

"Crane!"

"Yes, sir, a ghost—the ghost of the abbot——"

"How dare you talk such nonsense, Crane? Monsieur Friquet, I hope you are not hurt? Have you fallen downstairs?"

Mr. Quince gave the unfortunate French gentleman a hand to rise. Monsieur Friquet rubbed his aching bones.

"Ciel! I hardly know what happen viz itself," he said. "I come up ze stairs in ze dark. I am late, and I not make noise so as to vake no vun, and all of ze sudden somevuns spring at me in ze darkness viz zemselves, and I am hurl to ze bottom of ze stairs."

Mr. Quince turned a severe glance upon the Fifth-Formers.

"So this is a trick of yours, Crane?"

"I—I swear that we saw a ghost, sir," stammered Crane. "I know that it sounds a lot of rot, but—but we saw him in the passage up there, and—and——"

"And what were you doing in the passage up there?"

"We—we were going to raid the Fourth Form dormitory," stammered Crane, who would willingly have kept that little bit of information to himself, had it been possible. "It—it was a lark."

"And you became frightened at your own shadows, I suppose?"

"I—I swear we saw it. Didn't we, Cuffy?"

"The gh-g-ghost!" mumbled Cuffy.

"They look as if they had been frightened, sir," said Trevelyan. "Shall I look in the upper passage, sir?"

"Certainly, Trevelyan."

"Don't—don't go!" gasped Crane, as the captain of Cliveden mounted the stairs, holding the lamp up before him. "It's there—the gh-ghost!"

The Cliveden captain smiled, and went on his way. Monsieur Friquet rubbed his bruises and moaned. Crane and Cuffy stood trembling. They were far from recovered from their fright yet. Trevelyan came back in a few minutes.

"Well," said Mr. Quince, "there is nothing to be seen there, I suppose?"

"Nothing, sir," said Trevelyan, smiling.

"I—I swear we saw the ghost——"

"The gh-gh-ghost!"

"Return to your dormitory at once," said Mr. Quince severely. "I shall deal with you over this matter to-morrow. Not a word. Go!"

And Crane and Cuffy went. Trevelyan, looking rather puzzled, went back to bed. The captain of Cliveden believed that Crane and Cuffy had seen something, but what it was he could not guess.

"Ciel! I zink zat I goes to bed," said Monsieur Friquet. "I have ze separate ache in ze each separate bone in ze body. I not like cane ze garcons as ze rule, but I zink zat to-morrow you cane zose two shokers."

"I certainly shall," said the Fifth Form master.

And they went to their rooms. They had not noticed the Fourth Form door open above, and did not know that three juniors were looking down from the upper corridor. Poindexter had been awakened by the noise, and he had immediately got out of bed, and the Combine had come out to investigate. They had watched Trevelyan go downstairs, and heard what followed. They returned to their dormitory now, with excited looks.

"So we're not the only ghost-seers," said Poindexter. "Crane and Cuffy will come in for some of the chipping to-morrow."

"Faith, and what can it mane intirely?"

"I guess that's a mystery."

And the chums of the Fourth went back to bed in a very mystified mood.

The 7th Chapter.
On the Watch.

GREAT was the excitement in Cliveden the next day when the incidents of the night became known. Crane and Cuffy were piled with questions, to all of which they returned the same answers. They had seen the figure of the abbot, exactly as the Combine and the Old Firm had described it. They didn't believe that it was a ghost—now, in the daylight—but what it was they couldn't say. And, in spite of the fun that was poked at them, they stuck to the story.

Even Mr. Quince could not shake their statement, though, of course, he pooh-poohed the whole thing. He caned them both for being out of their dormitory after hours, and characterised the ghost-story as nonsense. His opinion was unanimously shared by the Fifth. Crane and Cuffy told their story only to mockers, and Crane, losing his temper over the matter, began to hit out whenever a remark was addressed to him on the subject, so that he had more fights on his hands that day than he had had during the whole of the preceding term.

Mr. Lanyon looked very thoughtful when he had heard the story. After school that day he sent for Trevelyan, and the captain of Cliveden came up to his room.

"I want to speak to you about this singular ghost affair," said the Fourth Form master abruptly. "What do you think of it, Trevelyan?"

The captain of Cliveden looked decidedly puzzled.

"I haven't the least idea what to think," he said frankly. "I have spoken to the juniors who think they saw the ghost, and they tell the tale clearly enough. They are not the kind of lads to be frightened at a shadow. Now two Fifth-Formers have seen it, too. It looks to me as if there is something in it—not the ghost-story, of course. It looks like somebody playing a little game. Christmas is the time for ghosts, you know, and some mischievous fellow might take the idea into his head."

"But whom would you suspect?"

Trevelyan shook his head.

"I cannot think of anybody."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said the Form master. "I have told Poindexter to come here," he added.

The door opened, and Lincoln G. Poindexter came in.

"You wished me to come, sir?" said the American junior, with a glance at Trevelyan.

"Yes, Poindexter. You still state that you saw the abbot of Cliveden the other night?"

"I guess I did, sir—or somebody got up to look like him."

"You did not see the face?"

"No, sir; it was covered by a cowl."

"But how could the person—whoever he was—see his way about, if his face was covered by a cowl?" exclaimed Trevelyan.

"I guess I can't get on to it. There wasn't any hole in the cowl, as far as I could see; and, besides, the moonlight was full on him, and I should have caught sight of his eyes if they had been uncovered. I am sure they were covered up."

"But you are stating an impossibility, Poindexter. Even granting that someone has been playing ghost, he must have seen his way about."

"I only tell you what I saw, sir," said Poindexter quietly. "I guess I don't understand it the least little bit. It lays over anything I ever struck before."

Mr. Lanyon crossed to the wardrobe, opened it, and pointed to an old, dark abbot's frock that hung there. Poindexter looked at it.

"That is why I asked you to come here, Poindexter," said the Form master. "Was the figure you saw dressed in anything like that?"

"It was exact, sir; it might have been that."

Mr. Lanyon smiled slightly.

"Very good, Poindexter. You may go."

The American junior left the room. Trevelyan looked curiously at Mr. Lanyon.

"Do you think, sir——"

"I think that whoever played ghost borrowed those clothes," said the Fourth Form master quietly. "As you know, Trevelyan, I have been collecting for a long time antiquities belonging to Cliveden, for the purpose of truth of detail in my book on the antiquities of the school. I have had that old abbot's frock by me for some time, and no doubt the circumstance is known to many boys in the school. I think it is certain that the person who has played this foolish trick has borrowed that for the purpose."

"But—but you——"

"I am a very sound sleeper. I did not wake last night, you know, although there was, I am told, a great deal of noise. It would be easy for the practical joker to enter my room and purloin the garments, and return them afterwards, undiscovered."

"By Jove, sir, I believe you're right!" exclaimed Trevelyan.

"I am certain I am," said Mr. Lanyon. "Now, as the trickster has had so much success, I think it is probable that he will play the ghost again. In two days we break up for Christmas, so he will not have many more opportunities. I am going to keep watch to-night Trevelyan. Would you care to keep me company?"

"Certainly, sir. It is a good idea. If the rascal comes here for the things, we cannot fail to nab him."

"Then will you, after going to bed, come up quietly to my room, without acquainting a single soul with the plan? We cannot be too careful."

"Rely upon me, sir."

And the captain of Cliveden left the room, with a satisfied grin on his face. He had little doubt of the correctness of Mr. Lanyon's theory; and the ghost, if he walked again, was doomed. And Trevelyan promised himself the pleasure of bestowing the soundest possible licking upon the unknown individual who had caused so much commotion at Cliveden.

The plan was carried out, and when all the rest of Cliveden was sleeping, Mr. Lanyon and Trevelyan sat up in the master's room, in the dark, and waited.

Eleven boomed out from the clock-tower, and then twelve. As the last stroke of midnight echoed away into the distance, a deeper stillness seemed to settle upon the vast pile of Cliveden. In the silence, the scuttling of a mouse behind the wainscot was distinctly heard, and the faint wail of the wind among the leafless branches in the Close. The snowflakes were falling with a soft pat-pat against the panes.

The watchers were weary, and sleepy. But they kept alert, more alert than ever as midnight passed.

One!

The boom came eerily through the silence of the December night.

"One o'clock," whispered Mr. Lanyon. "It is useless to wait longer, Trevelyan. The rogue must be on his guard, or else he has given up his pranks. You had better go to bed."

"I think you are right, sir. Good-night!"

Trevelyan went quietly to the door. He stepped out, and closed it silently. It was very dark in the passage, and he put his hand out before him as he trod lightly along. He had reached the stairs, when suddenly his hand touched something in the darkness, and Trevelyan started back, every nerve in his body thrilling with horror.

The 8th Chapter.
The Ghost's Last Walk.

"WH-WHAT is that?" gasped Trevelyan. But even as the words left his lips, there was a sudden yell in the darkness.

"Arrah, and I've got him intirely!"

"Flynn!"

"Here he is, boys! Collar him!"

"Flynn——"

"Sure, and it's Trevelyan! Collar him! Fancy the skipper playin' this little game! Collar him! Trevelyan all the time! Collar him! Collar him, ye omadhauns!"

Three pairs of hands had grasped Trevelyan in the darkness, and he was borne back with a rush against the wall. But two of them released him now, and only the Irish junior continued to grasp him with frantic energy.

"You—you young rascals!" panted Trevelyan breathlessly.

"Faith, and we've got him!"

A bicycle lantern gleamed out. The grinning faces of Poindexter and Dick Neville could be seen in the light.

"Sorry, Trevelyan," gasped Poindexter. "We—we didn't know it was you. Let go, Flynn."

"Sure, I've got him intirely."

"You ass! Let him go!"

Flynn unwillingly released the gasping captain of Cliveden. Trevelyan glared at the Combine in almost speechless wrath.

"What are you doing out of your dormitory? How dare you attack me?"

"Sorry. We were keeping watch for the ghost."

"You young rascals! You——"

"We heard you coming, and we took you for him. You see, we've made up our minds that it was a trick, and when you ran into us——"

"Faith, and we've got him."

"I have been keeping watch for the ghost, too," said Trevelyan, laughing in spite of himself, "in Mr. Lanyon's room. You young rascals, you made me jump! I——"

"Then you wasn't playin' ghost after all, Trevelyan darling?"

"You confounded young ass, am I the sort of fellow to play ghost?" exclaimed the captain of Cliveden irascibly. "Get back to bed, before I lick you!"

"Faith, and sure I——"

"Cut!"

Poindexter dragged the Irish junior away, and Dick Neville followed. Trevelyan, still very breathless, went down to his own room. The Combine re-entered the Fourth Form dormitory. Micky Flynn still had his doubts as to Trevelyan's innocence.

"Faith, and I was sure I had him!" he grumbled. "Are ye quite certain it wasn't Trev. after all, Puntpusher darling?"

"I'm quite sure you're a howling ass!" grunted Poindexter. "Get to bed, Micky. I say, kids, our little game is mucked up for to-night; but to-morrow's the last night of term, and we'll give it another chance. Good-night!"

And the Combine were soon sound asleep.

They said nothing of their adventure the next day. They intended to keep watch on the last night of the term, in case the ghost should walk again; but, as Poindexter said, if they announced their intention to the whole Form, they might have a lot of youngsters start keeping watch, too, which would muck up the whole thing. Poindexter preferred to keep the matter under his own fatherly eye.

The juniors waited anxiously for night.

But when the December evening closed in, windy, and snowy, and grim, the task they had set themselves did not seem so attractive. But they were not the fellows to back out. They undressed solemnly, and went to bed, in order to avoid exciting suspicion, and half an hour later they quietly rose and dressed.

"Quiet!" whispered Poindexter. "Not a buzz! Not a whisper! We can't have Pauly and Price monkeying about this business!"

"Can't you?" said a voice from the gloom of the dormitory. "I kinder guess that you're calculating a bit wrong this time, my timed beef friend."

"Quite so!" said another voice.

Poindexter started, and then grinned in the gloom.

"Oh, so you're awake!" he grunted.

"Yes, rather!" said Pankhurst, with a chuckle. "You've been looking so jolly mysterious, that we guessed there was something on."

"Quite so," said Price.

"Well, don't make a row," said Poindexter. "We don't want all the kids in it."

"Don't you make a row!"

"Look here, Panky——"

"Look here, Puntbuster——"

"Faith, and sure ye——"

"Cheese it!" said Dick Neville. "Is this the time to start ragging, you duffers? Shut up, and come on!"

"I guess so. Come on, Panky, and shut your jaw!"

"I'm coming! Don't you cackle!"

SIMPLE TRICKS FOR CHRISTMAS: By G. P. Moon.

An original and very pretty and effective little trick, though one easy enough to perform after a little practice, may be termed

La Belle Volante.

"Here," you say to your audience, "I have a tumbler and a small cloth ball. If I were to declare the absence of any hanky panky about them, you wouldn't believe me, so I must ask you to examine them yourselves to allay any suspicions in that direction."

The spectators, being quite satisfied with their scrutiny, you go on:

"I shall now place the tumbler on this chair over here so that it may be as far from me as possible. Will some gentleman lend me a handkerchief? Thank you. Now, please watch me very carefully while I cover the tumbler with this handkerchief. There! You didn't notice anything suspicious, did you? Ah, I thought not; I was a little too sharp for you."

The ball during this arrangement of the tumbler has been lying on the table. You take it up in both hands and advance toward your audience.

"The next thing to do," you proceed, "is rather difficult: it is no less a feat than to make this ball fly from my hands into the empty tumbler yonder. Here you pretend to hear some remark, or see some significant gesture, which throws doubt upon your assertion of the emptiness of the tumbler. You put on an injured expression, declare yourself hurt at the suggestion of duplicity, and, replacing the ball on the table, remove the handkerchief for all to see that the glass is as empty as it was before.

Having again thrown the handkerchief over it, you bring forward the ball, and say:

"Squeezing the ball in my hands thus, produces a wonderful change in the molecules of which its mass is composed. As you see, it grows smaller and smaller, and is rapidly dissolved away into nothingness, thus."

You open your hands and show them empty.

The handkerchief is then removed from the tumbler, and lo! there is the ball inside, apparently none the worse for it dissolution and aerial journey.

Such is the impression the trick makes upon the audience.

Now for the disillusion of the *modus operandi*.

How did the ball get into the tumbler?

You will not require to be told that two balls are needed. The second ball is slung by means of a loop of black silk to a couple of pins driven into the stuffed back of the chair on which the tumbler is placed, as you see illustrated in Fig. 1.

When the handkerchief is removed the first time, your hands, holding the corners of the fabric, rest on the back of the chair and thus enable you to slip your thumbs through the loops of silk and remove it from the pins. In consequence of this movement, when you raise the handkerchief the ball is also raised; and by an adroit swing forward in the act of recovering the glass, the ball is dropped into the vessel. This sleight must be executed as naturally as possible. It is of no great difficulty.

How does the ball disappear?

In the first place, we must premise that your table has either a little shelf fixed at its back, say six inches below the top, holding a light box, or the cloth is pinned up there to form a pouch to contain a small basket.

The ball is placed a few inches from the back edge of the table. In taking it up the second time in both hands, the little finger of the innermost hand gives it a sharp blow, which drives it backwards into the box or basket prepared to receive it. This must be done instantaneously, and without a pause the hands must be raised, rounded out well as though the ball was between them. The remainder of the trick requires no explanation.

The Erratic Pips.

A gentleman's hat and lady's handkerchief are borrowed; the former is placed, brim uppermost, on the table, and the latter is dropped into it with the remark that it will be quite safe there. But instantly you bethink yourself that it would be more satisfactory to leave the handkerchief in full sight of the spectators; so you remove it from the hat, invert the latter, and deposit the handkerchief on the crown.

A pack of playing cards is next introduced and handed to one of your audience to shuffle thoroughly. When this is returned to you, you observe, "I think no one can imagine after the vigorous shuffle the gentleman has given the cards that it would be possible for me to pick out any particular one. Nor am I going to do so. I simply cut the pack, thus, and take for this experiment whatever card chances to be at the bottom of the upper half. What have we got now? The five of clubs. I pass this five of clubs to the bottom of the pack.

"Now, it's a curious fact in science that if a playing card be struck a sharp blow, after some little mesmeric passes have been made over it,

Fig. 3.—See "Spirit Writing" on another page.

Fig. 1.—See "La Belle Volante" on this page.

the pips will fly from their position and attach themselves to any object you may desire. You don't believe me, I can see very plainly. So I must give you ocular proof. We will command the pips to fly to the lady's handkerchief on the top of the hat yonder."

Here you solemnly pass your hand two or three times in front of the card.

"Now," you go on, holding the bottom of the pack towards your audience so that the five of clubs is in full sight, "I will strike the wall with the pack, thus; and you see my assertion is completely verified."

To the surprise of your audience a blank card now occupies the bottom of the pack. And on spreading out the borrowed handkerchief it is seen to be printed with a representation of the five of clubs.

You then offer the handkerchief to the lender, but she naturally objects to receive it in its present condition; so you declare your intention of restoring it to its original purity.

A plate is procured and the cambric is set on fire; the ashes are wrapped up in a piece of newspaper, and the parcel is again offered to the lady. On her reiterated refusal to accept it, the parcel is torn open and out comes the handkerchief bearing no indications upon it of the ordeal through which it has passed.

The solution of this trick, which, by the way, is a new one excepting the method of restoring the handkerchief, is, of course, substitution. A lady's handkerchief, on which is printed the five of clubs is tucked under your vest before the commencement of the illusion. As you walk towards the table carrying the borrowed hat in one hand and the borrowed handkerchief in the other, you slip the thumb and forefinger of the hand holding the former article beneath your vest and pull out the concealed handkerchief which is allowed to fall into the hat. As will be conjectured, it is this and not the borrowed cambric which is removed from the hat and placed on its crown. The reversal of the topper causes the borrowed handkerchief to fall into the basket slung at the back of the table, as described in the last trick. Thence it is removed and carried behind a folding screen or other arrangement you must have at the back of your "stage" when you fetch the plate or piece of newspaper.

"Yes," you may say here, "that is all very well. But how can we remove the handkerchief without being detected in the act?"

Very simply: stand behind the table, and accidently drop your wand, for, of course, you should possess this necessary adjunct to a conjuror's outfit. And while you are stooping to pick it up, what is easier than to seize the cambric and tuck it up your vest, concealed as the action will be by the draped table?

The newspaper is really a bag—two irregular pieces of paper pasted by three margins, thus leaving an opening through which the borrowed handkerchief is inserted. The transformation of ashes to cambric will not be comprehended. For the outer of the two layers of newspaper only is torn, the other, enclosing the ashes, remaining intact.

And now for the card portion of the trick.

In the first place, the five of clubs is just a shade wider or longer than the remainder of the pack, so that it is an easy matter to make the cut at this particular card.

The change to the blank card is effected in this simple and effective way.

Get a plain card of the shape of the cards you are using, and paste on one side a piece of wall paper identical with that with which the walls of the room are covered.

Attach this to any convenient part of the wall by means of four pieces of beeswax or soap in such a manner that the pattern on the back of the card coincides with the same portion of the pattern on the wall paper. At the distance of a few feet the presence of the card will not be observable.

Now you see how the pips fly?

In striking the wall with the pack you take care to bring it exactly over this invisible card, which is removed with it, and in consequence becomes the bottom of the pack, the five of clubs being then second and concealed.

The Magical Soup Plate.

You commence this illusion by directing the attention of your audience to a soup plate, and a couple of coloured silk handkerchiefs, all of which they freely examine.

"This feat," you observe, "is one of unusual difficulty as you will confess when you see it. It is no less than that of compelling these silk handkerchiefs to fly from one end of the stage to the other—of course invisibly.

"You have assured yourselves of the genuineness of this soup plate, I trust? Then I shall put it on the chair over here."

You do so, placing it bottom upward. But it occurs to you that the chair seat may be viewed with suspicion by the company who may possibly consider the existence of traps and

Fig. 2.—See "The Erratic Pips" on this page.

Fig. 4.—See "The Magical Soup Plate" on this page.

such like in it, a not improbable contingency. Well, if that be the case, you must obviate the suspicion by covering it with something above mistrust.

"Ah," you say, "here's the very thing—a newspaper—the 'Daily Mail.' You all know there's nothing 'tricky' about this."

You unfold the paper to show that it is merely what it appears to be. Then you fold it up again, throw it on the chair, and place the soup plate on the top, bottom upward as before.

"What I'm going to do now is to cause these silk handkerchiefs to leave my hands and appear under the soup plate. Watch me very carefully please, so you may be able afterwards to perform the illusion yourselves.

You take the handkerchiefs between your palms, letting the greater part of them hang down below, and commence an up and down movement with your hands, during which the handkerchiefs gradually become smaller, and eventually disappear, your palms being shown empty.

The soup plate is now lifted up and, lo! beneath it are the handkerchiefs.

The explanation of the appearance of the handkerchiefs under the soup plate is this: On that part of the folded newspaper which will be the bottom, a sort of pouch is made—what tailor's term a "patch-pocket"—constructed of a piece of newspaper, strengthened with a lining of writing-paper or muslin. In this is secreted a couple of handkerchiefs, identical in colour, size and material, with the two shown to the company. During the unfolding of the newspaper it is an easy matter to keep this portion of the sheet out of sight.

As you advance towards the chair, this paper is held in your left hand, your fingers being engaged in extracting the contents of the pocket, ready for the coming sleight. Your other hand carries the soup plate.

In order to have a free hand to move the chair a little nearer the company, you place the plate, bottom facing the audience, on the newspaper, holding it there by the thumb of the left hand.

Then, having altered the position of the chair to your satisfaction, you seize the newspaper with the right hand and throw it upon the chair seat—drawing it from under the plate, so that nothing now intervenes between the latter and the fingers of the left hand which of course still hold the concealed handkerchiefs. The plate is next placed on the newspaper with the handkerchiefs snugly concealed beneath.

So much for the *denouement* of the trick.

And now we come to the disappearance of the handkerchiefs.

There is a little piece of apparatus known as a "vanisher" which may be bought at conjuring shops for a trifle.

It is a light tin box of peculiar shape, flesh coloured, and has a loop of gut attached to the top through which the thumb is passed.

In walking to the table to get the handkerchief, you have plenty of opportunity of taking this "vanisher" from underneath your vest and slipping it upon the thumb of your left hand, so that it hangs behind your palm, where it is, of course, invisible as you stand with your right side to the audience.

Then, under cover of right hand and handkerchiefs, you bring the "vanisher" to the palm; and, little by little, tuck the silk away inside. This done, you swing the apparatus to the back of the hand again, and show your hands empty. And that's how it's done!

THE END.

If you know any good tricks, send them up for "Our Workshop Corner." We pay 2s. 6d. each for them.

THE CLIVEDEN GHOST.

(Continued from the previous page.)

Poindexter refrained from retort. He quietly opened the dormitory door. There was a glimmer of moonlight in the passage again to-night—it was almost as bright as on the first night when the ghostly abbot had been seen. Keeping the door a few inches open, the juniors settled down to watch. It was cold, and as an hour glided by without an alarm, the watch grew terribly tedious.

Boom!

It was the first stroke of midnight.

Eleven strokes followed, and then a heavy stillness fell upon the house—so still, that Poindexter fancied he could hear the brush of the falling snow against the panes of the window.

"Hark!"

Pankhurst muttered the word.

A thrill ran through the juniors.

From the direction of the stairs came a steady tread.

"The—the ghost!"

The ghost was walking once more!

Footsteps—nearer and nearer! The figure of the abbot loomed up in the gloom. The juniors watched it spellbound. It came slowly by—it passed, and the tread died away up the passage as the figure disappeared in the gloom.

There was a quick intake of breath among the juniors.

"Dick," muttered Poindexter, "nip down to Trevelyan's room, and call him—quick! Before the Thing comes back! Quick! I'm going to collar it!"

Dick Neville darted out of the dormitory, and ran silently downstairs to call the captain of Cliveden. He had barely vanished, when the returning tread of the ghostly abbot was heard.

The dormitory door was wide open now. Four juniors stood there, desperate and resolute. The ghostly figure loomed up again—the footsteps echoing eerily through the deserted passage. The figure, with the cowl over the hidden face, slowly passed. Poindexter was about to spring out upon it, but some instinct restrained him. He held back Pankhurst.

"Hold on!" he whispered. "I guess we'll follow it. I—I don't catch on, but—but I can't touch it."

He stepped out into the corridor. The juniors, shivering, followed him. It was evident to all of them that the figure was not a spiritual essence, now—they caught the brushing of the long loose folds on the floor—yet they felt equally assured that it was no practical joker playing ghost. A strange, uncanny feeling was over them, and the terrible thought had come into Poindexter's mind that they had to do with some madman.

Silently, with bated breath, the juniors followed the ghostly figure. Right along the passage it went, with slow and solemn stride, as far as the door of Mr. Lanyon's room.

Poindexter gasped.

"Look! It's—it's going in!"

In the dead silence the juniors heard the handle turn. The figure passed into the room, and the door closed again. There was a glimmer of light on the stairs. Trevelyan came quickly up, a lantern gleaming in his hand, and Dick Neville at his heels.

"Poindexter! You have seen——"

"It's gone into Mr. Lanyon's room!" gasped Poindexter. "For Heaven's sake——"

Trevelyan did not wait for him to finish. He opened the door of Mr. Lanyon's room, and flashed the light inside. The juniors crowded round him, staring into the room.

"Look!"

The ghostly figure was there!

Full in the glare of the lantern it stood. Trevelyan started, and held back the juniors with a gesture.

"Silence!"

Amazement held the boys silent. Poindexter's finger rose slowly to point to the Form-master's bed. It was empty!

But now all eyes were fastened upon the ghostly form. The abbot was disrobing himself of his cumbersome attire. His movements were slow and deliberate. The ample frock came off, and the cowl that concealed the face. And the face revealed in the light of the lantern was the face of Owen Lanyon!

"Mr. Lanyon!"

The Fourth Form master was the Cliveden ghost!

But not consciously so. For Mr. Lanyon's face was quite insensible—his eyes were closed. As soon as the light fell on his face, the boys knew what it all meant. Mr. Lanyon was fast asleep!

The somnambulist finished removing the abbot's attire, and replaced it carefully in the wardrobe. Then he returned to bed, laid his head on the pillow, and pulled the clothes about him. His deep and regular breathing showed that he was slumbering peacefully.

Trevelyan quietly closed the door.

"Go back to bed!" he whispered.

And the boys, amazed and awestruck, obeyed without a word.

* * * * * * *

The mystery of the ghost of Cliveden was solved. Trevelyan explained to Mr. Lanyon the next day, and the Form master, blankly amazed, at first refused to credit the story. He had to believe it at last, however. There was no doubt upon the point. He had never, so far as he knew, been subject to sleep-walking. It was easy enough, however, to find explanations. The heavy work at the end of the term, and his poor state of health for some time past, accounted for the attack of somnambulism. The hard work he had been giving to his book doubtless helped, and the deep impression made upon his mind by his investigation of the antiquities and old legends of Cliveden gave that peculiar form to his somnambulism.

The mystery was solved, and the Combine and the Old Firm, and Crane and Cuffy of the Fifth, were justified. Needless to say, they indulged in a little crowing over the doubting Thomases who had scoffed at the reality of the apparition. As to whom the honour of the discovery was due, there were doubts—both the Combine and the Old Firm claiming it—but they finally agreed that it was a case of honours divided. That day Cliveden broke up for the Christmas holidays, and Poindexter and Neville departed for Ireland to spend a jolly Christmas at Castle O'Flynn; and when, round the Christmas fireside, the time came for relating eerie stories, needless to say they did not forget the story of the Cliveden Ghost.

THE END.

Another grand Cliveden story will appear in a fortnight, but next Wednesday a splendid story of railway life, entitled

"PLUCKY DICK DENVER,"

will appear. Order your copy now.