

BE A CONJUROR! BY JASPER MASKELYNE

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# MODERN BOY

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*Hey! Presto!*



# The GHOST-HUNTERS

When the ghost of old Sir Lucian appeared to LEN LEX, the Schoolboy Detective, and his chums Christmas holidaying at the old Moat House, the boys at once decided to get to the bottom of the mystery. . . . Come on the trail with them!



## A Cry in the Night!

IT was long past midnight, but Len Lex was not sleeping.

The December wind wailed in the leafless old trees round the Moat House, and the old house itself was full of strange sounds. Lying wakeful in the old four-poster, while the leaping and falling flame of the dying log-fire on the hearth filled the room with mysterious shadows, Len was thinking of the spectre that was said to haunt the Moat House—the restless spirit of the old lord of Tudor times, who had been done to death by a greedy heir in his own dark dungeons.

Len was thinking of it with the suspicion in his mind that perhaps history was repeating itself this Christmastide! He had arrived for the Christmas holidays with his pals Harvey, Banks, and Poringe, from Oakshott School, to learn that Sir Lucian Jerningham, master of the house and Harvey's uncle, had vanished—lost as utterly as that old Sir Lucian who had been chained up in a hidden dungeon, to perish in solitude and darkness.

Harvey of the Fifth was, perhaps, sorry that he had brought his friends

From Harvey's room came a cry. To Len Lex it looked as though the eerie figure was about to advance into the room!

to his uncle's house for Christmas in the strange and tragic circumstances. Len Lex was far from sorry. What Banks and Poringe thought about it he did not know, but he was glad he was there—not as Lex of the Oakshott Fifth, but as the nephew of Detective-Inspector Bill Nixon of Scotland Yard—as the schoolboy detective!

To his friends, and to everyone at the Moat House, Len Lex was a schoolboy, like any other Oakshott fellow; but that made his task easier as a detective. He had come to the

Moat House as a schoolboy on holiday—he was going to stay as a detective with grim business in hand.

Poor old Harvey had been absolutely knocked over when Whishaw, the butler, told what had happened to his uncle. He was going to find Len Lex a friend in need—at least, so the schoolboy detective hoped.

The strange, eerie sounds of the old house echoed in Len's ears as he lay wakeful, thinking. But among those many and varied sounds there was none to fix his attention, until there came a metallic clank from the passage outside his room.

Len sat up, his heart beating with a sudden throb, his breath coming faster. That was no natural sound of the ancient building. It was the clank of a chain, rattling as it moved. According to the legend of the Moat House, the spectre of the old lord stalked abroad at midnight's hour, clanking and rattling the rusty chains that had held him a prisoner in the dungeon beneath his own mansion. Even the cool, clear-headed schoolboy detective felt, for a moment, a superstitious thrill.

The next, Len was out of bed, stepping swiftly to the door. Silently,

By  
**CHARLES  
HAMILTON**



he opened the door and peered into the dark, oak-walled passage. The darkness was intense. He could see nothing. But he could hear, faintly but unmistakably, that clanking of an iron chain. Human or ghostly, the spectre of the Moat House was walking within a few yards of him.

The rooms of the four Oakshott fellows were together, two on either side of that old passage. Harvey's was next to Len's. A faint glimmer, from a dying fire within, showed him that Harvey's door was open. Did he detect a moving shadow in that faintly glimmering doorway? It was from that direction that the jingle of iron came.

Len, with set teeth, stepped out into the passage, silent with his bare feet, heedless of the cold. Harvey's door was open—he could not have left it open.

From Harvey's room came a startled cry:

"Who—who—what— Oh, good heavens!"

Light shone from the doorway. Harvey had flashed on his bed-lamp, and in the lighted doorway a strange, weird, startling figure stood. It was the figure of an old, old man, in the ruff and trunk hose of Tudor times, with long hair, white as the driven snow, a long, white beard, and a face of such ghastly whiteness that it was like a mask of death. Round the figure's waist was a chain, old and rusty, with loose ends that clinked and clanked as he moved.

Len Lex clenched his hands, and ran forward. Man or ghost, he was going to know what it was. From Harvey's room came a cry of horror and dread. It seemed from the motions of the spectral figure that it was about to enter the room of Sir Lucian Jerningham's schoolboy nephew—but it stopped and turned, with a sudden clanking of chains, towards Len Lex, no longer silent as he came up the passage with a rush.

Instantly, the figure disappeared from the lighted doorway and flitted up the passage. Len Lex rushed after it in the dark. He shouted as he passed Cedric Harvey's open door:

"Come on, Harvey!"

He was past the doorway in a twinkling, dashing after the fitting spectral figure, unseen now in the darkness of the passage. Ghost or trickster, he had it now, for at the end of that passage there was no exit, only a tall window that looked out over the moat. Man or ghost, it must be cornered there. There were long, heavy hangings over the window. His outstretched hands came in contact with them, and he groped to right and left.

"Harvey! A light!" he yelled. "Porridge! Banks!"

A calling voice answered—that of Banks, from his room. A door opened, light gleamed into the passage and Banks ran out in his pyjamas. Another door opened, and Porridge looked out, rubbing his eyes. Harvey appeared the next moment—his face white, his eyes starting. Bright light illumined the passage from end to end, as Banks found the switch and turned it on.

It shone on four faces—the faces of

the Fifth Formers of Oakshott—on glimmering old oak walls, the floor, the dark hangings at the windows—and on nothing more!

Len Lex stared round him. The spectre of the Moat House was gone. He had almost touched it, as he rushed after it, but in the darkness it had vanished utterly; and the four Oakshott fellows were left staring at one another blankly, in a passage otherwise empty!

### Hands Off!

CAPTAIN JERNINGHAM tramped in at the doorway, kicking snow from his boots. He threw down his hat, to which several white flakes clung, as Whishaw helped him off with his coat. It was a bitter morning; and to judge by the expression on Cecil Jerningham's face, his temper was as bitter as the weather.

His face, naturally rather handsome, was darkly clouded, his brows knitted. His glance shot to an open doorway across the hall, from which came a sound of boyish voices, and his look grew blacker. The plump, apple-cheeked butler of the Moat House coughed.

"The schoolboys, Whishaw!" muttered the captain.

"Yes, sir, they are at breakfast!" murmured Whishaw.

"Is Chard down yet?"

"Mr. Chard is at breakfast in his own room, sir!"

Captain Jerningham strode into the breakfast-room, where his cousin, Cedric Harvey, of the Fifth Form at Oakshott, and his friends were at breakfast. A great log-fire crackled and roared in the grate, booming in the wide old chimney. The diamond-paned windows were rimmed with frost. The four schoolboys looked round as the captain appeared.

Cecil Jerningham stood for a moment or two regarding the four schoolboys in silence. Harvey rather ostentatiously helped himself to rashers and kidneys, no doubt to show his cousin Cecil exactly how much he cared for his black looks. But the captain, when he spoke, was unexpectedly quiet and civil.

"It seems, Cedric, that you never got the letter I wrote you at the school before Oakshott broke up," he said.

"That's so," said Harvey.

"It's unfortunate, but I suppose I can't blame you for having come, as you never knew what had happened. But now you're here, you can see for yourself, Cedric, that this is no place for holiday-making."

"I'm not going!" said Harvey.

Captain Jerningham breathed hard. But he answered quietly:

"Sir Lucian is not here, Cedric. His fate is unknown. He may be dead—indeed, I fear he must be dead, for otherwise, how can his disappearance be accounted for?"

"I'll believe that when I have to," said Harvey. "Not before."

"Alive or dead, he is missing, and this is no place for schoolboys on holiday," said the captain sternly. "I tell you plainly, Cedric, since you

seem to have no idea of the fitness of things, that I can endure nothing of the kind. I will order the car, if you tell me what train you are going by."

Len and Banks and Pie were silent. Harvey did not speak immediately. He gave the captain a long, hard look, then glanced round at his friends.

"We'd better have this clear, you men," he said. "My Uncle Lucian asked us here for Christmas. We were booked for a jolly holiday. That's all washed out now. You can guess I'm not feeling jolly—and I don't suppose that the state of affairs here makes you fellows feel bucked. If you'd rather clear, I shan't take it amiss. In fact, speaking as a pal, I'd advise you to, if you want to enjoy your holidays."

"You're sticking on?" asked Banks.

"Like glue!" answered Harvey grimly. "I'm not going till I know what's happened to my uncle."

"Same here—if you want us."

"Of course I want you, fathead, if you can stick it."

"Done!" said Banks.

"Done!" said Len Lex, like an echo.

"Brace up, old man!" said Porridge. "We're sticking to you! It will be jolly if we find nunky, old bean—no end jolly! And we're going to find him!"

Captain Jerningham started, and fixed his eyes on Pie.

"What do you mean?" he snapped harshly. "Do you imagine that you have the remotest chance of discovering what has become of Sir Lucian Jerningham?"

"Lots!" answered Pie cheerfully. "I know I'm jolly well going to root about till I jolly well put salt on his tail, and chance it!"

"Fool!"

Pie looked warlike.

"I'd jolly well boot you for that at Oakshott!" he said. "Who are you calling a fool, blow you?"

"If you can't speak to my friends civilly, Cecil, you'd better not speak at all!" exclaimed Harvey hotly.

"You're not master of the Moat House and Jerningham Park, Cousin Cecil, so long as my uncle lives—and I'm his nephew as much as you are! You've got no more authority over me than I have over you. You can give orders till you're black in the face—and that's what I care for them!" And Harvey snapped his fingers contemptuously at the angry face across the breakfast-table. "I came here on Uncle Lucian's invitation, and I'm staying until Uncle Lucian washes it out—and I'd no more go at your orders than I'd go at Whishaw's!"

Len Lex sipped hot coffee, his eyes on the captain's face, watching it grow crimson with anger.

"By Jove!" Captain Jerningham almost panted. "You insolent young rascal! Do you want me to drive you out of the house with my riding-crop?"

"Try it on!" roared Harvey. "We'll handle you fast enough, if you do. You're not master of the Moat House yet, Cousin Cecil—though you may think you've got good reasons for fancying you are!"



## The Ghost-Hunters

What do you want to get shut of me for? Are you afraid I shall find out what's become of Uncle Lucian?"

Captain Jerningham started as if an adder had stung him. His face paled, and reddened, and paled again.

"You—you dare to hint—" He choked with rage, strode round the table, and laid his hands on Harvey. "Now, you young scoundrel—now you—"

Len, Banks, and Pie rushed to the rescue. Three pairs of hands grasped Captain Jerningham and he was wrenched away from Harvey. He went staggering across the room, stumbled over backwards, and fell full length with a crash. He lay sprawling dizzily on the floor, spluttering for breath. The Oakshott fellows watched him warily. Whishaw's startled and amazed face looked in at the doorway, his eyes almost popping from his head.

"Hands off, you rotter!" panted Harvey. "Keep your paws to yourself, Cecil Jerningham! Wait till you're master of the Moat House!"

Captain Jerningham staggered to his feet. The Oakshott fellows lined up promptly. He looked for a moment as if he would hurl himself upon them in a burst of fury. But he choked back his rage. Perhaps the horrified gaze of Whishaw, at the doorway, recalled him to self-control. He gave Harvey one long, bitter look, brushed past the butler, and tramped out of the room.

### Pie on the Trail!

THE stocky, red-faced man in uniform came across the bridge over the ancient moat, glanced at the four schoolboys who stood in a group under the mullioned windows of the library, and raised his eyebrows a trifle. Judging by that glance, Inspector Shute, of Holme, shared Captain Jerningham's opinion that the Moat House, with its shadow of mystery and tragedy, was no place for schoolboys on holiday. Pie Porringe looked round at him.

"That's the jolly old inspector, Harvey," he said. "Come on, and get the tip straight from the horse's mouth—what?"

Harvey nodded, and went quickly towards Mr. Shute, his friends following him. The inspector was going towards the great stone porch at the front of the old mansion, but he stopped, and fixed a look of rather grim inquiry on the Oakshott fellows. "Inspector Shute?" asked Harvey.

"You've heard of me, perhaps—Cedric Harvey, Sir Lucian Jerningham's nephew. We came here for Christmas—to hear that my uncle had disappeared a couple of days before. I want you to tell me exactly what happened—so far as you know. You can guess that I'm worried and anxious!"

The rather grim expression on Inspector Shute's face relaxed as he read the lines of anxious trouble in Harvey's face. He could see that the boy was fond of his uncle, and that

what had happened had been a heavy blow to him.

"I quite understand that, Master Harvey," he said. "I'm sorry that there's no news, so far. As for what's known, I can put it in a nutshell."

"Sir Lucian Jerningham disappeared on Monday night. He was in the library with his secretary, Mr. Chard, dealing with matters of business, up to eleven o'clock. At that hour, Mr. Chard bade him good-night and went to bed, leaving Sir Lucian smoking a cigar and looking over the evening paper."

"In the morning, Whishaw found the french window of the library open when he came down. Sir Lucian's valet, Peek, reported that his master was not in his room, and that the bed had not been slept in. Captain Jerningham and Mr. Chard were at once called, and a search was made of the grounds on the supposition that Sir Lucian had gone out and for some unknown reason failed to return."

"This supposition was borne out by the discovery of a half-smoked cigar near the bridge-end, on the outer side of the moat. Nothing, however, was seen of Sir Lucian—and a fresh fall of snow had covered all footprints. As nothing was learned by lunch-time, the police were called in. Search has been going on ever since. That is all."

"Look here! If old Harvey's uncle was snaffled by somebody, ten to one there'd be signs of a struggle!" said Pie, when the inspector had gone.

"Inspector Shute may have thought of that!" murmured Len Lex. "He may have looked, old bean!"

"Oh! Think so?" said Pie.

"Fathead!" said Banks.

"Well, we want to know all the jolly old details if we're going to look for Harvey's uncle and find him," said Pie. "And that's what we're jolly well going to do, if it takes us till the new term at Oakshott. You buck up, Harvey, old man!"

Harvey smiled faintly.

"Yes, that's a good tip, though it comes from Pie," said Len Lex quietly. "Buck up, old man! Your uncle is alive—and while there's life there's hope!"

"Feel sure of that?" asked Harvey. Of Len Lex's connection with Scotland Yard and detective business, he knew nothing, but he had an instinctive faith in his cool, clear-headed judgment.

"I feel so sure of it," said Len, "that I'm going to buck up old Pie all along the line—searching for your uncle till we find him—alive and well!"

"Lex, old man, you're talking sense!" said Pie approvingly. "I've thought sometimes I should make a pretty good detective! Between ourselves"—Pie lowered his voice—"we jolly well know where to look for the man. We jolly well know who comes into the whole bag of tricks if Sir Lucian never turns up, and who's already putting on the airs of a master in the house, as if it was his already—what?"

Harvey breathed hard. That thought was in his own mind; he

could guess that it was in every mind at the Moat House. Pie was the man to jump at the obvious, and fancy that he was making wonderful discoveries.

"Detectives look for the motive first of all," went on Pie. "And there's the motive, sticking up like a goalpost! The old sportsman walks out to finish his cigar on the terrace before going to bed—a certain party follows him out—and has him just where he wants him. That party is pretty hefty, easily able to handle an old man who's walked out of the reach of help!"

"But he's not villain enough to knock his own relation on the head. So long as the old bean disappears and never turns up again, he snaffles the loot all right. What we've got to find is, where's he parked him—what?"

"If you've got it right, old man, the detective business must be a pretty easy job," said Banks. "It hasn't taken you long!"

"Easy to some chaps, not to others, Banker," said Pie. "It wants thinking out. Now, Harvey knows this place like a book. Any place in the grounds, Harvey, where a prisoner could be hidden away—outside the moat?"

"Not that I know of," said Harvey. "Why outside the moat?" asked Len.

Pie gave him a pitying look.

"The old bean's cigar was picked up at the other end of the bridge," he said. "Didn't you hear the bobby say so? That's where the brute got him, and he dropped it, I fancy! Anyhow, we know he went as far as that. May have turned back there after his stroll and was grabbed by the other party. That party, naturally, wanted him as far from the house as possible when he grabbed."

"The police are still searching the park," said Harvey. "A body could be hidden there, but a prisoner—never!"

"What about a car?" said Pie. "The party I'm speaking of got him to a car and ran him off—place all ready to park him in umpteen miles away! Has that cousin of yours got a car of his own, Harvey?"

"Yes—it's in the garage here!"

"I fancy I'll stroll round to the garage," remarked Pie, winking at his friends. "I'd like to know whether that car was out on Monday night."

He walked away. Harvey glanced after him, with a faint grin, then looked at his friends.

"Come into the house," he said. "I want to see Chard, if he's down yet. I've got an idea, and I think Chard may be able to help."

As they went to the porch, Inspector Shute came out again with Captain Jerningham. Taking no notice of the schoolboys, they walked across the bridge, and disappeared into the snowy park beyond. Len Lex noted how lined, almost haggard, the captain's face looked. Whether he had, or had not, a guilty secret on his conscience, it was clear that he was feeling the strain severely. They found Whishaw in the hall.



"Chard down yet, Whishaw?" asked Harvey.

"Not yet, sir. He has breakfasted in his room," answered the butler.

"That's a new thing for Chard, isn't it?" asked Harvey. "He was always an early bird!"

"Mr. Chard has caught a slight cold, sir, helping in the search in the park. He keeps his room somewhat the last few days."

"We'll wait for him in the library," said Harvey. "Come on, Lex!" Harvey and Banks went to the library, but Len lingered a moment to speak to the butler.

"Which end of the bridge did you pick up that cigar-end on Tuesday morning, Whishaw?" he asked.

"The outer end, sir," answered Whishaw. "But it was not I who found it—it was Mr. Chard!"

Len followed his friends into the library.

### What Harvey Suspected!

LEN LEX looked about him with keen interest in the old library of the Moat House. It was a large, lofty apartment, with book-lined walls. Mullioned windows looked out on the moat and the terrace before the house, also a more modern french window. Here and there, among the endless books, were ancient paintings of dead-and-gone Jerninghams.

Harvey stopped before one full-length portrait of a man in Tudor costume and made a gesture towards it.

"Old Sir Lucian," he said. "My uncle's jolly old ancestor, who was mewed up in the dungeons by his nephew and died in chains." He

shivered slightly. "You saw him, Lex, when I did—last night!"

Len nodded, eyeing the ancient, faded portrait curiously. It closely resembled the phantom of the night, except for the deathly paleness of the spectral face. If that strange apparition had been trickery, no doubt the trickster had taken that old portrait as his model. The Tudor costume had been reproduced to the last detail.

"I never saw it, you know." Banks glanced dubiously from one to the other. "Sure you didn't fancy it, Harvey, old man? You were a bit upset, you know—"

"If I fancied it, Lex didn't!" answered Harvey shortly.

"But—" Banks shook his head. "Ghosts are a bit thick—and if it was some sportsman playing ghost, how did he get clear? We had him cornered, unless he glided through a solid wall."

"That's what I want to talk to Chard about," said Harvey. "Let's wait for him here—this is old Chardy's den."

With a swish of rings on a rod, he drew aside long velvet hangings that screened a deep alcove in the wall of the library near the great fireplace. It was like a small room, with a large writing-table, a roll-top desk, two deep leather armchairs, and a shaded electric lamp. A diamond-paned window admitted the wintry sunshine. From floor to ceiling, the walls were of solid oak, black with

Pie stepped quietly and swiftly behind the chair, up-ended the waste-paper-basket, and brought it down on Captain Jerningham's head!

age, in panels carved here and there with curious scroll-work.

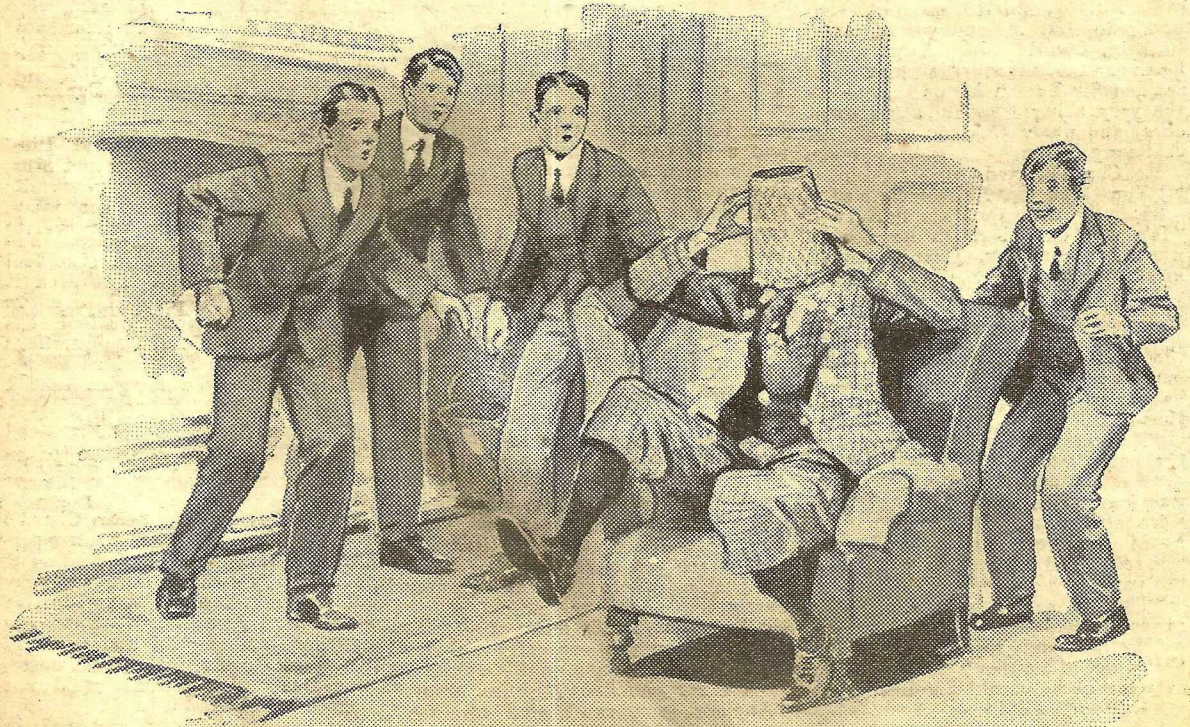
Books and papers lay on the table, many of them, obviously, connected with the business of the estate. But among them was a black-letter manuscript, under a paper-weight, on which Len's eyes lingered. The strange old letters and monkish Latin were not easy to read, but Harvey had told him that this sort of thing was "pie" to Mr. Chard, who was librarian at the Moat House, as well as the old baronet's secretary. A pile of more modern manuscript, in a clear, beautiful caligraphy, indicated that Mr. Chard had lately been at work on his projected volume on the "Antiquities of Jerningham."

"Chard works here," explained Harvey. "We always called it his cosy corner. Jolly little place for a bookworm, what?"

"Chard's a bookworm?" "Lives, moves, breathes, and has his being in stuff that would make an Oakshott beak's head ache!" said Harvey. "But he's a jolly good man of business, all the same. Worth his weight in gold to Uncle Lucian. He does practically all his business for him. He's been with nunky for years. Decent old boy—always civil to a chap—a bit different from my Cousin Cecil."

"Thank you for an unsolicited testimonial, Master Cedric!" said a rather rich, fruity voice, and the three looked round at a plump but sinewy man with a bald forehead, who had entered the library and arrived at the "cosy corner." He carried a green baize bag in his plump hand.

"Oh, here you are, Chardy!" said Harvey, shaking hands with him. "These chaps are my friends from





## The Ghost-Hunters

Oakshott—Lex and Banks. You'll see Porringe presently. He's gone off playing the goat. We're going to hunt for my uncle. I want you to help."

"I don't quite see what can be done, Master Cedric. Almost every foot of the grounds, and the park, has now been searched—"

"That's not what I'm thinking of," said Harvey. "Look here, Chard, I'm going to speak plainly. Once upon a time, a Sir Lucian Jerningham was shut up in a dungeon by a nephew who couldn't wait. I want to know whether that's happened over again."

The secretary's plump face became exceedingly grave.

"That is a terrible suspicion to enter your mind, Master Cedric!"

"Terrible or not, it's there," said Harvey. "Look here, Chard, don't gammon—you must have thought of it, too! Who could want to get rid of my Uncle Lucian, except—?" Harvey broke off. "You see what I mean? I want to spot that old dungeon where Sir Lucian of Tudor times was shut up. You get me?"

"I follow your meaning, certainly," said Mr. Chard gravely. "But you are aware that the old legend is only a legend—nothing is actually known of a secret dungeon beneath the Moat House." He smiled. "You will remember, Master Cedric, that when you have spent previous holidays here, you have explored, hunting for that non-existent dungeon. I remember once that Sir Lucian, in jest, offered you a motor-cycle as a prize if you succeeded in discovering it. It has no real existence."

"Well, I jolly well believe it has," said Harvey, "and I'm jolly well going to find it, and you're going to help, Chard! And I jolly well believe, too, that the man who snaffled Sir Lucian knows that that's the very thing I should think of at once, and wants to clear me off, for that very reason."

Mr. Chard started.

"You think that?" he exclaimed.

"I jolly well do!" said Harvey. "It's not only because he doesn't want my company, Chard, though he's never liked me. He's afraid of what I may spot, taking that line in hunting for my uncle. That's not all. Somebody spotted us coming through the park on our way here last night and played ghost! Captain Jerningham was out of the house at the time!"

"He was in my company, searching the park, most of the time—"

"But not all—he came in first and was here when we arrived, and you were still out!" said Harvey. "I heard him tell Whishaw that you separated and went different ways in the park."

"That is certainly true. But I cannot think—"

"Well, I can!" said Harvey. "And that's not all, either! Last night we saw the ghost of old Sir Lucian!"

"Master Cedric!"

"It gave me a turn, too!" said Harvey, with a shiver. "Lex and I got after it, but it vanished through a solid wall. I'm going over that wall

with a small comb to-day, Chard! It's pretty well known that there are secret passages in this old place. I want you to root through those dashed old parchments—there's a chest full in this library—and see if you can spot anything like a clue to the secret dungeon. It's a chance, at least—and you're the man to find it."

"I will certainly do as you wish, Master Cedric. But you appear to overlook the fact that Sir Lucian was out of doors, at a distance from the house, when he was attacked."

"Was he?" said Harvey. "For all I know, he might have been tackled in this very library!"

"Wha-a-t?" Mr. Chard stared.

"Well, think of it," said Harvey. "Easy enough to open the french window and to chuck the end of poor old nunky's cigar across the moat. Just his game, if he'd got old nunky parked under the Moat House all the time."

"Oh gum!" said Banks, staring at his chum.

"I am afraid, Master Cedric, that you are allowing the ancient Jerningham legend to influence your judgment," said Mr. Chard, with a smile.

"At all events, I will do what you have asked me to do, and—and hope that something may come of it. At the moment, I have some matters of business to which I must attend."

The Oakshott fellows took the hint and left the alcove. Mr. Chard, still with the green baize bag in his hand, stood watching them, a faint smile on his plump face, as they went out of the library. Then, with a swish of rings, he drew the velvet hangings across the alcove, shutting himself off from the apartment.

### A Clue?

PORRINGE grinned as the sound of Captain Jerningham's angry voice reached him. Looking into the library from the hall, he had a view of the back of the captain's sleek, well-brushed dark head over the top of an armchair.

It was near lunch-time, and the captain had come in tired from a weary tramp in the frosty woods. He scowled at the sight of Harvey, Len, and Banks, gathered round the fire, and threw himself into the armchair, his feet stretched out to the logs. The three Oakshott men were also glad of the warmth of the fire, for they had spent most of the morning exploring the ancient vaults under the Moat House—dark and dank and dismal and chilly.

"You young fools!" The captain's voice was deep with angry annoyance. "I hear from Whishaw that you asked him for the key of the vaults. Is that where you have been?"

"That's where!" said Harvey curtly.

"And what, in the name of all that is idiotic, do you expect to discover in the vaults?" snapped the captain.

"I fancy you know," said Harvey. "Anyhow, you can't stop me—any more than the ghost can frighten me away from the Moat House."

Captain Jerningham stared at him. "The ghost? Are you mad? Have

you been fancying that you have seen ghosts?" He laughed harshly, and glanced round at Mr. Chard, in the alcove. The hangings were drawn back now, and the secretary was standing at the table, packing a number of documents into his green-baize bag, apparently to take away to his room. "Do you hear that, Chard? These young fools—"

Mr. Chard coughed. His manner indicated that he did not desire to be drawn into the dispute between Captain Jerningham and his school-boy cousin. And with that non-committal acknowledgment of the captain's remark, he picked up his bag and left the library, passing the grinning Porringe at the door.

Pie strolled in. His three friends glanced at him, but the captain, seated in his armchair with his back to Pie, did not notice his entrance. Pie moved along to the "cosy corner" that Mr. Chard had left. The fatuous grin on Pie's face would have revealed to his chums that Pie was going to play the goat, if they had given him their attention. But Harvey and Banks and Len were giving their attention to the angry man in the armchair. They hardly noticed Pie lounge into Mr. Chard's alcove, stoop by the writing-table there, and reach to the wastepaper-basket that stood under it.

"Play the fool if you like," went on the captain's angry voice. "I cannot at present, as you say, stop you. But there is one thing I will stop—with a horsewhip, if necessary. One of you—the young idiot who is not here now—went to the garage this morning, and asked questions that can have only one possible meaning. No doubt he was surprised to learn that the chauffeur sleeps over the garage, and is therefore able to bear witness that no car was taken out on Monday night."

"That goat Pie!" sighed Banks.

"You hear me, Cedric? I will not tolerate this!" Captain Jerningham's voice was louder, sharper, angrier. "You have already hinted pretty plainly that you suspect me of knowing more than I dare say of Uncle Lucian's disappearance. I've seen the same thought in that fool of an inspector's face. I've seen it in others—" He seemed to choke for a moment. "Now this fool of a boy asks the chauffeur questions which amount to as good as an accusation! Do you imagine that I will tolerate this?"

The three Oakshott fellows stood silent. They were listening to the captain, but they were looking at Pie now.

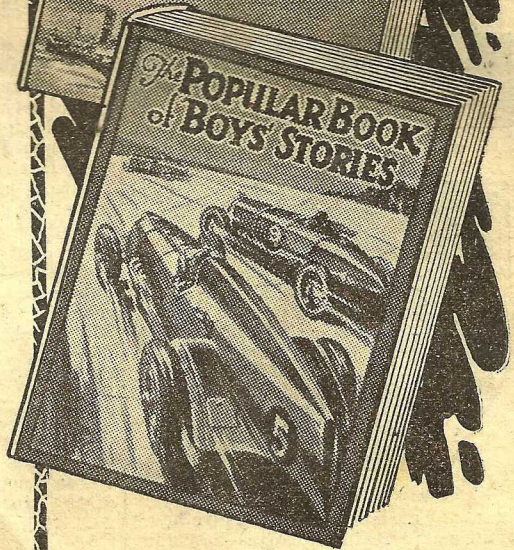
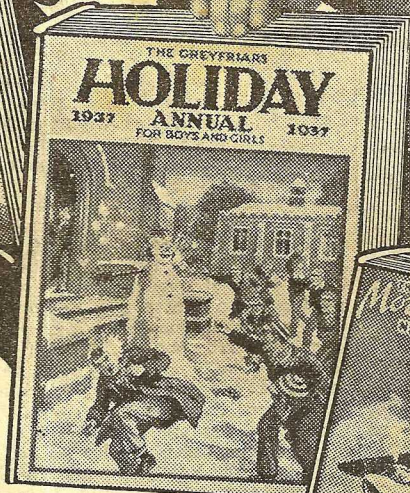
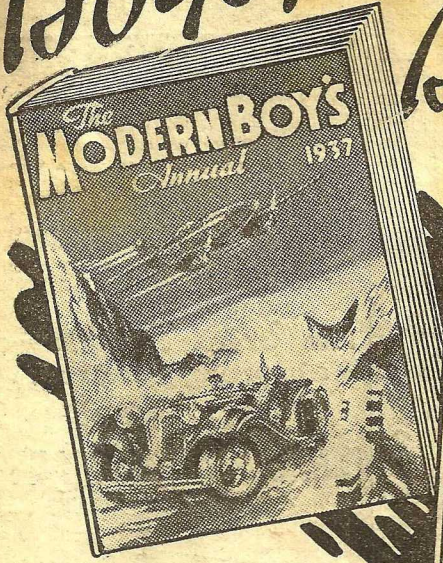
Pie had emerged from Mr. Chard's cosy corner with the wastepaper-basket in his hands. It looked as if the secretary had been rather busy that morning, for it was half-full of crumpled fragments. What Pie fancied he was up to, and what he was going to do with that wastepaper-basket, his friends could not imagine—till he did it!

Pie stepped quietly and swiftly behind the captain's chair. Up went the wastepaper-basket—and came

(Continued on page 30)



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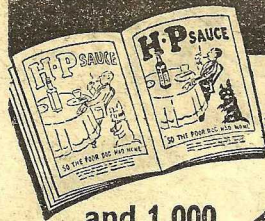
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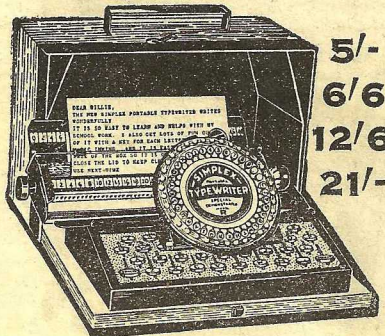
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**The Ghost-Hunters**

(Continued from page 12)

down, up-ended, over Captain Jerningham's head, bonneting him!

"Ha, ha!" roared Pie.

"You goat!" shrieked Harvey.

From the interior of the basket came a suffocated gurgle. Captain Jerningham, utterly astounded, grabbed frantically with both hands at the surprising bonnet on his head.

Off came the basket with a wild wrench, and its contents flew far and wide, scattering like snow round the captain's chair. The wastepaper-basket went to the floor with a crash, and Captain Jerningham bounded to his feet, his face crimson with rage.

"Who——" he spluttered. "What the——"

"Ha, ha!" shrieked Pie, as he faded through the doorway.

"You—you——" Spluttering fury, the captain rushed after Pie.

Pursued and pursuer vanished, both going strong. Harvey and Banks and Len looked at one another.

Captain Jerningham had made himself thoroughly disagreeable, and this was Pie's idea of tit for tat! It was worthy of the goat of the Oakshott Fifth!

"Pick up the jolly old scraps," said Banks.

The three stooped to gather up the scattered contents of the wastepaper-basket and replace them. The school-boy detective paused with a torn sheet in his hand. His eyes, for a second, were glued on that torn sheet. It vanished the next moment—though not into the wastepaper-basket.

The fragments were cleared up, the wastepaper-basket replaced in Mr. Chard's cosy corner, and then the three Oakshott fellows left the library.

"Better go and see what's happened to Pie," said Harvey.

"Let's!" agreed Banks.

But Len Lex did not follow his friends. He was equally interested to know what had happened to the goat of Oakshott, but he was still more keenly interested to take a second look at that fragment of paper he had slipped unseen into his pocket. He turned from the hall into the breakfast-room, now deserted, drew the torn paper from his pocket, and examined it with minute care.

Harvey and Banks, if they could have seen it, would have wondered how it could interest Len Lex or anyone else. But the glint in the schoolboy detective's eyes told that it interested him, deeply and keenly. Yet there was nothing on the paper but a list of apparently meaningless figures:

"34, 9, 8, 15, 32, 26, 0, 22, 8, 17."

That was all. But that was enough to afford Detective-Inspector Bill Nixon's nephew a clue to the mystery of the Moat House!

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