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# MODERN BOY'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

SPECIAL FUN FEATURE!

# The MODERN BOY

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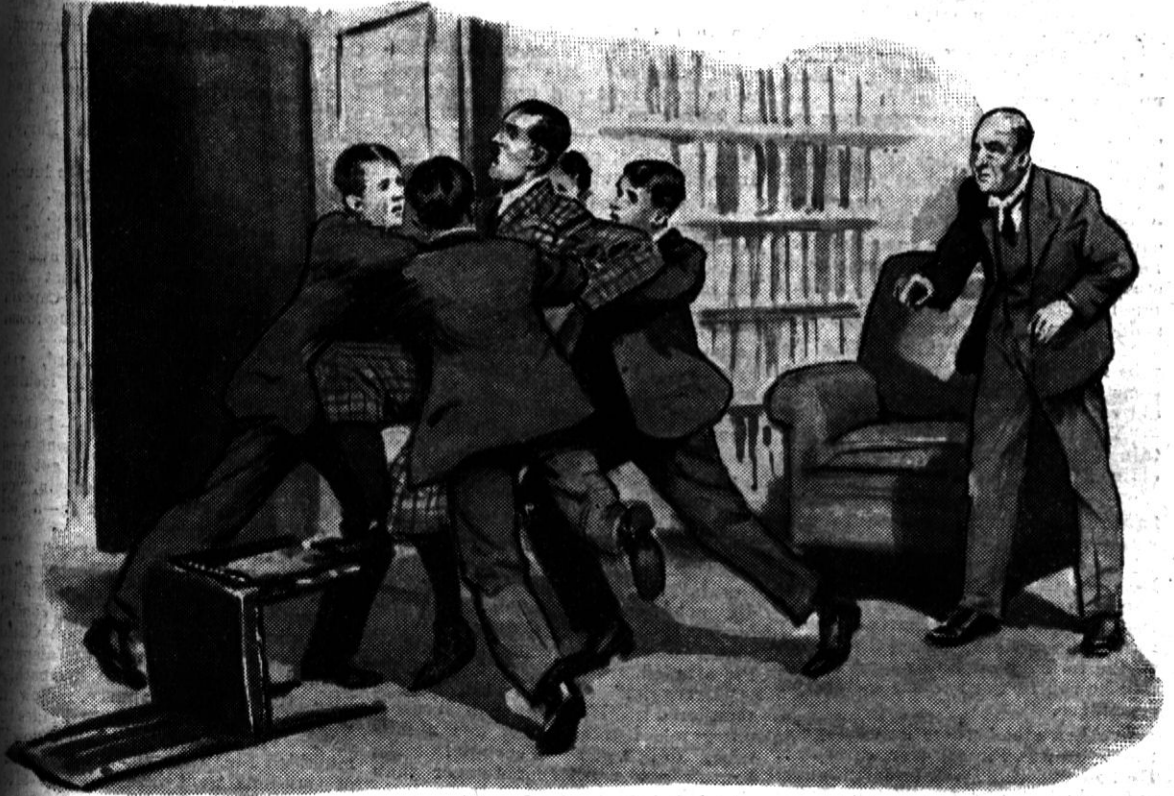


## The Runaways!



# LOST SIR LUCIAN

The SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE provides his chums with an amazing surprise when he clears up the mystery of the old Moat House!



## Too Much Snow!

**P**IE PORRINGE winked, and put his finger to his lips, in sign of silence. His grinning face showed that there was something on.

Len Lex, the schoolboy detective, looking at him, could only wonder what the goat of the Oakshott Fifth was up to this time. Then, as he discerned a snowball of large size gripped in Pie's right hand, he saw that Porringe was in ambush—for whom, he could not see! No one was in sight on the broad terrace in front of the Moat House—the ancient home of Harvey's uncle, Sir Lucian Jerningham, to which Harvey had brought Len, Pic, and Banks to spend Christmas—to find that his uncle had mysteriously vanished!

It was a bitter morning. Roofs and chimneys of the Moat House gleamed with white. Snow powdered the terrace and banked up the old moat, and the leafless trees in the park looked like gaunt spectres through a dim mist.

Len Lex had walked down to the village of Olkham that morning on his own. Harvey and Banks were exploring the old vaults under the Moat House, in hopeful—or hope-

less—search of the secret dungeon in which, according to the legend, the Sir Lucian of Tudor times had been chained up by his unscrupulous heir, and where they thought they might find the present Sir Lucian.

Pie, it seemed, had found something more entertaining. Coming back from the village, Len spotted him on the terrace, close up to the frosty ivy on the wall, a dozen feet from the french window of the library.

"What—" began Len, heedless of Pie's finger to his lips.

Pie winked again and held up the snowball significantly.

By  
**CHARLES  
HAMILTON**

"Wait till he steps out!" he murmured. "Harvey's cousin Cecil—that swab Captain Jerningham! He went in this way—I'm waiting for him to come out!"

Len stood silent, debating in his mind whether he had better grasp Porringe by the neck and roll him over on the terrace. He had no great objection to Captain Jerningham getting a snowball, but he could not feel that it was a judicious proceeding.

Captain Jerningham, the lost baronet's other nephew, and heir, had been as disagreeable as it was possible to be since the Oakshott fellows had arrived. Mr. Chard, the secretary and librarian, seemed to take the view that boyish company brightened the old house that now lay under the shadow of tragedy. But Captain Jerningham took the view that schoolboys were out of place there, and said so, with an utter disregard for the feelings of the Oakshott fellows.

Pie's present intention evidently was to make it plain to the young Army man that he did not care two hoots for him.

"But look here—" murmured Len.

"Will you shut up?" hissed Pie.

## Lost Sir Lucian

"He's gone in to speak to Chard, I suppose—he may come out any minute. He was with Inspector Shute in the park—he's still keeping up that game of hunting for Harvey's uncle, as if he didn't jolly well know where to put his finger on him if he liked." Pie firmly believed the captain was responsible for Sir Lucian's disappearance. "I'm going to get the swab as soon as he sticks his cheery nose out."

"There'll be a row," murmured Len. "Lot I care!" retorted Pie. "Shut up now—I can hear him!"

The french window swung open inwards, and a figure appeared in the doorway. Pie's arm shot up, his hand shot forward, the snowball flew.

Crash! The snowball, large and round, hit a nose and smashed there, squashing all over the face that belonged to the nose. There was a startled howl as the recipient of the missile tottered and sat down with a sudden bump in the doorway.

"Ha, ha!" roared Pie. "Got his nibs right on the boko—what? Take some of the conceit out of the jolly old captain—what? Ha, ha!"

"You priceless ass, that's not Captain Jerningham—it's Chard!" exclaimed Len.

"Urrrgh!" came from the sitting figure in the french window. "Who—what—cooogh! What? Ah—ooogh!"

"Oh crumbs!" said Pie, in dismay. He liked Chard; Sir Lucian Jerningham's secretary had been kindness itself to the Oakshott party—utterly unlike the captain. It was dismaying to Pie to find that he had got Chard, and he ran forward to the secretary's assistance.

Len Lex stood where he was—grinning. It was Pie all over, of course. He had watched Captain Jerningham enter the house by way of the library french windows and expected him to come out again. It had not occurred to the goat that Mr. Chard might step out on the terrace, to take a breath of the keen frosty air, after his work on ancient documents before lunch. But Mr. Chard had done it, greatly to the surprise of both parties.

He scrambled up, clawing snow from his face, as Pie came panting up, and glared and spluttered.

"You—you—you—" he panted. "It was you—"

"Sorry!" gasped Pie. "I—I meant it for that swab, and— Oh, my hat!"

Smack! Smack! Smack! The librarian hurled himself at Pie, smacking his astonished head right and left. Pie backed away, zig-zagging right across the terrace towards the moat. But the angry man followed him up, still smacking with all the force of a muscular arm, his face red, and his eyes gleaming with wrath.

It looked at that moment as if Mr. Chard's customary urbanity was rather a cloak over an exceedingly bad temper that needed to be kept in control. At the moment it was quite out of control, and Pie got the full benefit of it.

"Oh, I say! You keep off! Only a

mistake! Yaroooh! Draggimoff, Lex, you grinning idiot! Here, look out! Do you want to knock me into the moat? Yoo-hoooop!"

Pie staggered on the edge of the old moat, Mr. Chard still smacking. Over the edge went Pie, toppling, to crash headlong into the snow. Buried in snow, he sprawled in the ancient moat, out of reach of further smacks, at all events. Mr. Chard, gasping for breath, stamped back to the library, and Len Lex, gasping with laughter, ran to his chum's assistance.

From Pie's bed of snow came suffocated gurgles. His head emerged, as he got right end uppermost, but he looked as if he had found mud under the snow—quite a lot of it. Len, gurgling, gave him a hand and dragged him out.

Pie staggered on the terrace, squelching snow and mud, and spluttering for breath. In the french window of the library appeared the handsome figure of Captain Jerningham, regarding the hapless Pie with a sarcastic smile. But Pie was no longer thinking of snowballing the heir of lost Sir Lucian; he was thinking of the mud and snow that smothered him, and felt horribly clammy in his ears, his neck, and his hair.

"The swab!" gasped Pie, grubbing mud out of his eyes with his knuckles. "Ow! The swab! Wow!"

Len Lex chuckled. Hitherto, Captain Jerningham had been the "swab," but the schoolboy detective did not need to exercise his professional sagacity to deduce that Mr. Chard was now the swab to whom Pie alluded.

"Urrrgh!" gurgled Pie. "I'm smothered! Ill-tempered beast—urrgh! I told him it was a mistake, didn't I? Yurrgh! The brute's got a rottener temper than the other swab—grooogh! Look at me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Len, as he looked.

"Oh, chortle!" snapped Pie, and tramped away, leaving a muddy trail on the snowy terrace.

### Putting it Plain!

"WHERE is Mr. Chard, Whishaw?" asked Harvey.

The portly butler coughed—his only reply.

The four Oakshott fellows had come in to lunch. Cedric Harvey looked tired and dispirited. He had spent the whole morning in the ancient vaults, searching and searching—with the result as before—nil! Banks had helped him manfully.

Len Lex had been to Olkham to take a telephone call from his uncle in London—his friends being unaware of the fact. They would have seen no reason why Len could not do his telephoning at the Moat House, being unaware that his uncle in London was Detective-Inspector Nixon, of Scotland Yard, and that Len had called on Bill Nixon's aid in dealing with the mystery of Sir Lucian Jerningham's disappearance.

No Oakshott fellow knew that Len Lex was a detective as well as a schoolboy, and it would have astonished Harvey and Banks and Poringe had they known that Len had taken up Sir Lucian's disappearance as a "case"—and astonished them still more had they been able to guess that he had his case fairly complete now, thanks to the information Mr. Nixon had given him on the telephone that morning!

Whishaw, the butler, presided over lunch. Mr. Chard had not appeared. Captain Jerningham never lunched with the schoolboy party—but Sir Lucian's secretary and librarian had always done so hitherto. Pie had rather a guilty look, as Harvey inquired after him.

"Isn't Mr. Chard coming to lunch, Whishaw?" asked Harvey. "I haven't seen him this morning. But he's back from London, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" answered Whishaw. "But—I understand, sir, that Mr. Chard is lunching with Captain Jerningham in the morning-room, sir."

"Anything up with Chard, you fellows?" asked Harvey, looking round.

"Um!" mumbled Pie. "I—I think he might be a bit shirty about a—snowball, old chap! I—I—I got him in—in mistake for your cousin, you see, and—and he seemed a—a bit waxy!"

"Oh, you ass!" said Harvey.

Lunch went on in silence after that. There was a bitter breach between Cedric Harvey and his cousin, Cecil Jerningham; and though Chard had carefully kept out of the dispute, he had seemed rather to sympathize with the Oakshott party. Now it looked as if he had changed sides!

"I say, I'm sorry, you know!" mumbled Pie, when the Fifth Formers of Oakshott went into the hall after lunch. "You see—"

"Oh, you can't help being a goat, old chap!" said Harvey wearily. "But it's awkward. I was relying on Chard for help. He's been librarian here for years, and he's got all the family documents under his charge—and I'm pretty certain that in some of those old papers there's a clue to the secret dungeon. He's promised to go through all the papers and hunt for any mention of it, and—and now, if he's got his back up—"

"That needn't make any difference," said Banks. "Chard's a good old bean. He's as keen on finding your Uncle Lucian as we are!"

"I'll speak to him, anyhow!" said Harvey moodily.

The Oakshott fellows went into the library, where Mr. Chard was generally to be found. Captain Jerningham was there standing before the crackling log-fire, hands in his trousers pockets, a cigarette in his mouth. His face was dark and frowning, and it darkened still more at the sight of the Oakshott fellows.

"I've got something to say to you, Cedric!" he rapped out at once at Harvey.

Harvey gave him a glance of defiance.

"You can save your breath, Cecil!



he answered. "I've come here to speak to Mr. Chard!"

The captain gave a harsh laugh. "I fancy you'll find Mr. Chard as fed up with your presence here as I am!" he sneered.

"No bizney of yours, anyhow!" snapped Harvey. He walked past the fireplace to the oak-panelled alcove, which was called Mr. Chard's "cosy corner," and which the librarian used as a study. His friends followed, Pie giving the captain a rather warlike look as he passed. He was sorry for the little mistake that morning, but he was as keen as ever on making it plain to Captain Jerningham that he had no use for him.

Mr. Chard was seated at the writing-table in the alcove. Through the little diamond-paned window came a glimmer of the December sun, and a gleam of snow. On the table were a number of parchments, some business papers relating to the estate, and an empty green baize bag.

Len Lex's eyes lingered on it for a moment. In that green baize bag, Mr. Chard was accustomed to taking books and papers from the library to his room—no doubt to peruse over his breakfast. It was understood that Mr. Chard had caught a slight cold in helping to search through the frozen park for traces of lost Sir Lucian, since when he had taken his breakfast in his own room. Banks and Porringe were rather amused at the idea of even a librarian taking documents to his room to read over brekker, but Harvey had told them that Chard was engaged on a work on the "Antiquities of Jerningham," which necessitated a lengthy perusal of ancient documents.

When Mr. Chard was at work in his cosy corner, he was generally shut off from the library by heavy velvet hangings, which closed in the alcove. The hangings were open now, however. Mr. Chard was not at work, but had apparently been in conversation with the captain when the schoolboys came in. His manner, as they arrived, was formal and cold. He raised his eyebrows.

"If you've found anything yet, Mr. Chard—" began Harvey.

"Nothing," said Mr. Chard curtly.

"I—I say, I—I hope you're not shirty about what happened this morning, Mr. Chard," stammered the repentant Pie. "I never meant—"

"The less said about it, the better, Master Porringe," said Mr. Chard, in the same curt tone. "It is not for me, employed here by Master Cedric's uncle, to give orders; but if I were in the position of Captain Jerningham, standing in the place of the missing master of the house, I should certainly not permit riotous schoolboys to remain here. As the matter stands, I can only submit."

Evidently, Mr. Chard had changed sides with a vengeance!

Harvey coloured with vexation. Poor Pie was crimson. Banks gave Len a glance and a wink. But Len's eyes were fixed on the librarian. There was a moment of silence, which was interrupted by Captain Jerningham.

"You've heard Chard's views now,

Cedric," he said. "They are the same as mine, which you have heard before. I am asking you whether you are going to have the decency to get out of this house and take your noisy mob away with you. I want an answer."

Harvey turned on him with gleaming eyes. He liked Chard, and was sorry to see him offended. But he did not like Cecil Jerningham.

"I'm sticking here, Cecil Jerningham, and my friends are staying with me to see me through," said Harvey, very distinctly. "If it turns out that my Uncle Lucian is dead, you will be master here, and you can order me out of the house as fast as you like. I believe that my uncle is alive, and I believe—" He broke off.

"Finish!" said the captain, with a bitter sneer. "You believe that Sir Lucian is alive, and that I know where he is." He set his lips. "Do you think I do not know why you have asked Chard to go through the old documents, looking for a clue to the secret dungeon? There is no such place in existence. But you choose to believe that there is, and that your uncle and mine is a prisoner there—that he has been treated as the Sir Lucian of ancient times was treated—locked up in a secret dungeon by a nephew greedy for his estates! Do you dare to deny it?"

"No," said Harvey, between his teeth, "I don't deny it! I believe that the secret dungeon under the Moat House exists, and I believe that Sir Lucian is there, as the old Sir Lucian was in Henry the Seventh's time. And, as you want it plain, I believe that he was put there by his nephew and heir, like old Sir Lucian. And I believe that you want to get me out of this house because you're afraid that I may find him. That's what I believe, Cecil Jerningham, and you can make the best of it!"

### Open War!

THE eyes of the Oakshott fellows were fixed on the young Army man. His face became crimson, and then paled as he listened to Harvey.

"You believe that?" he said, in a choking voice. "You dare to say it to my face?"

"I'm not the only one who thinks so!" exclaimed Harvey. "Think I haven't watched Inspector Shute? Think I haven't seen looks, and heard whispers, among the servants? If my uncle is never found, everything comes to you, Cecil Jerningham! Nobody else believes in the secret dungeon, I dare say; but everybody believes that you know what has become of Sir Lucian! You know it—you know it!"

The captain seemed about to choke. "You want to get shot of us," went on Harvey. "You started that game before we were fairly in the house. The night we came, somebody chanced on us coming through the park and played ghost—a trick to frighten us away. Where were you at the time, Cecil? You went out with Mr. Chard,

but you separated from him in the park; you were in the house when we got here, and Chard hadn't come in! Think it isn't plain?"

"Since then the ghost of old Sir Lucian has turned up, with rattling chains and the whole bag of tricks, in the passage where we've got our rooms. Somebody knows of a secret panel in that passage! Who? But the ghost hasn't walked since our night watch was kept. Now you know we're not to be frightened away, you've chucked that game. You—"

"You young fool!" the captain panted. "You fancy that I—I—" He stammered with rage.

"I don't fancy—I know!" said Harvey. "You've tried every trick you can think of to clear us out. Now you'd like to make an excuse of Porringe playing the goat this morning. Fat lot you care whether Chard got a snowball or not! Well, we're not going! If they find a body in the park, you'll be master here, and you can order us out. But they won't—they won't! My Uncle Lucian is alive, and it will be a jolly long time before his death can be legally presumed, making you master here. Till then, you can give any orders you like, and I'll laugh at them! You're not master here yet, Cecil Jerningham!"

"You mad young fool!" The captain's voice came huskily. "Sir Lucian is dead—he must be dead—his body is hidden somewhere in the snow. If you could make me believe that he was alive, I would forgive you all your insolence, and more—"

"Oh, cut it out!" said Harvey. "I never meant to speak out like this—but you've made me. Make the best of it!"

"This is beyond toleration!" Mr. Chard's quiet voice broke in. "Master Cedric, you must see for yourself that this cannot continue in a house under the shadow of tragedy—and perhaps death! For the sake of appearances—of common propriety—it would be wiser for you to withdraw, or at least let your friends leave."

"I'm sorry you take that view, Mr. Chard—but it makes no difference," said Harvey. "I'm staying here till my uncle's found—and my friends won't desert me."

"No fear!" said Banks.

"I should jolly well think not!" said Pie warmly. "We're standing by you, old man." And Len Lex nodded a silent assent.

"It's no good, Chard. How do I know what might happen to me if I stayed here alone?" said Harvey bitterly. "Somebody's jolly anxious that I shouldn't find the secret dungeon. I might find it—by being chucked into it, along with my uncle, if I were here without my friends!"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Chard. "Such a suspicion of Captain Jerningham is—is scandalous! It is outrageous! It fully justifies Captain Jerningham taking any measures he may think fit—"

"Rely upon me—I shall take them, Chard!" gasped the captain, hoarse with rage. "I have endured all I

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## Modern Boy's Christmas Party

(Continued from previous page)

teaser, and we all failed. The professor, however, did it quite simply by passing the knife over A and B and under C and D, as shown in Fig. 4.

**L**EN CONNOR showed us a very good trick with a box of matches. He displayed a half-open box containing a number of matches, all with their heads in the same direction. He shut the box, opened it again—and one of the matches had changed round, with its head at the other end!

The secret, he told us, was that a match was wedged out of sight between the sliding tray and the top, as shown in Fig. 5. By putting his thumb against the head of this secret match when he shut the box, the match dropped down with the others.

Captain Justice, with a smile, casually knocked a tumbler clean through the table without leaving a hole. This he did by wrapping the tumbler in paper, placing it firmly on the table near the edge, smashing the paper flat with his right hand, and taking the tumbler from under the table with his left.

He chuckled at our amazement, and explained that the paper retained the shape of the tumbler, although he had let the tumbler drop out of it into his left

hand when he placed the paper near the edge of the table. (See Fig. 6.)

Two little tricks from Dr. O'Mally completed my bag. He first put his right hand flat on a table knife, lifted his hand, and the knife was sticking to his palm! He was grasping his wrist with his left hand, and it was the forefinger of this hand, as shown in Fig. 7, which was holding the knife.

**H**E then showed us how he could take his right thumb off when he wanted to. This uncanny business was done by putting his left thumb between his second and third fingers on the left hand, and then placing it against the right hand, with the right thumb out of sight in the palm, as in Fig. 8. When he moved his left hand away, it looked exactly as though his right thumb had gone with it.

Midge then offered to show us how he could make Christmas pudding vanish—and did! Professor Flaznagel frowned at him.

"Making things vanish is simple compared with making things appear," he remarked, uncovering a weird-looking machine. "My thermo-dynamic portable producer is guaranteed to produce anything upon which a certain sensitive photo-cell has previously been fastened. I shall now demonstrate. With the idea of showing the power of the machine, I have chosen the most difficult subject

for production, but you will find the machine infallible."

He turned a valve and a strident humming emerged. We were all breathless with interest.

"Gentlemen," said the professor proudly, "I am now about to produce the greatest sensation of modern zoology—the only available specimen of a live megalosaurus, which, as you know—Why, what—what—what—"

**L**ONG before he had finished speaking Biggles, Algy and Ginger were swarming up their rope-ladder. Porrhage was climbing the chimney. Midge had fallen down the lift-shaft. Justice and O'Mally were rolling downstairs, Len Lex had vanished like a sleuth in the night, and I was back in my office with my feet on the mantelpiece, pretending to be asleep.

"What, again!" yelled a voice, and I saw the Editor in the doorway. "Are you still asleep? That tears it! You're fired!"

"Wait!" I cried. "There's still five minutes to go!"

I dashed to the typewriter and hammered out this account of our great Christmas Party, tricks included. I'm dead-heating with the hour at this moment! So I must stop now and rush this into the Editor's room.

A Merry Christmas, chums, and a very Happy New—Gosh! There's the clock striking! Goo'-bye!

## Lost Sir Lucian

(Continued from page 15)

intend to endure from this insolent boy. He does not believe that I feel my uncle's fate as much as he does; that I would give my right hand to learn that the man who has been as good as a father to me was alive and well! Cedric, you leave this house!"

"Think again!" said Harvey coolly. Captain Jerningham raised his hand and pointed to the door.

"Go!" he said thickly. "You—and your friends! I give you ten minutes to pack. I will order the car to take you to the station. Go—or I will remove you with my own hands!"

Harvey stood like a rock; and his friends drew closer to him. It was evident that the enraged captain meant every word he uttered.

The captain hardly waited for the refusal to be uttered. He made a rapid stride at Harvey and grasped him by the shoulders. The Oakshott fellow, sturdy as he was, spun in the Army man's muscular grasp.

Banks and Pie and Len leaped to his aid. They grasped Captain Jerningham on all sides. Powerful as he was, the Army man staggered in the grasp of the Fifth Formers of Oakshott. Five panting, struggling figures reeled to and fro.

"Gentlemen—gentlemen!" gasped Mr. Chard, rising to his feet.

But Mr. Chard was not heeded. The captain, utterly enraged and exasperated, wrenched and struggled, and the Oakshott fellows handled him without ceremony. In a struggling mass they reeled across the library.

There was a tap at the door. It opened, and Whishaw's horrified face

looked in. Behind him was a stocky man in uniform. Inspector Shute, of Holme, raised his eyebrows.

"Sir!" gasped Whishaw. "Captain Jerningham, sir—Inspector Shute to see you! Goodness gracious!"

The struggle suddenly ceased. Harvey & Co. dropped their grasp from the captain, and Cecil Jerningham staggered back, panting for breath. His face crimsoned under the horrified gaze of the butler and the surprised stare of the police-inspector. The Oakshott fellows stood panting.

Harvey made a sign to his friends, and they left the library, passing the butler and the inspector with flushed faces. They heard Captain Jerningham's voice, hoarse and broken, as they went:

"Please come in, inspector. I am sorry—I—I—"

Whishaw closed the door on the inspector. His shocked look, as he passed the Oakshott fellows in the hall, was eloquent. When he was gone, Harvey looked at his friends, breathing hard, with clenched hands.

"You see what we've come to—open war now? You're standing by me—you're sticking it out?"

"You bet!" said Banks.

A few minutes later, Captain Jerningham came out of the library, leaving the inspector with Mr. Chard. The Oakshott fellows eyed him grimly. But he was calm now—calm and cool and bitter. He passed the group of schoolboys with averted eyes and went up the staircase. But he paused on the stairs and glanced down over the banisters.

"Cedric!" His voice was unexpectedly quiet.

"Well?" snapped Harvey.

"I must think a little of appearances, if you do not!" the captain said. "Listen to me, boy! I wrote to you at your school, not to come here—you came! I thought—and still think—that in the terrible circumstances, this is no place for a crowd of schoolboys. Perhaps I have erred—perhaps my nerves have betrayed me, in this stress of mind—if so, I am sorry!"

"But after what you have said, in the hearing of Chard, it is better for you to stay, so far as I am concerned. I hope that you may repent of your suspicion. But I hardly blame you for it—I have read the same suspicion in many faces since my uncle disappeared—and perhaps I've not given you reason to think well of me. Remain—and keep clear of me! Your belief that Sir Lucian still lives gives me a faint hope that you may be right, and for that I can forgive you the rest."

He went on up the staircase, without waiting for an answer. He left the Oakshott fellows staring—impressed, in spite of themselves, by the quiet dignity with which he had spoken. They stood in silence till the library door opened and Inspector Shute came out. Whishaw came to let him out of the house, and Len Lex, leaving his friends in the hall, followed the inspector out into the December dusk.

### Behind the Settee!

**H**ARVEY, Banks, and Porrhage stood in the open doorway, looking out through the stone porch into the winter sunshine.



Harvey's face was glum. In spite of himself he had been somewhat shaken in his fixed belief by the quiet words Captain Jerningham had spoken after the scene in the library the previous day. But that element of doubt only made the problem more hopeless. For if his Cousin Cecil had no guilty knowledge of the old baronet's disappearance, even the faint shadow of a clue had vanished and all was dark.

"Where's Lex?" asked Pie. "I haven't seen him since brekker."

"Gone out, I think," said Banks. "Here comes Inspector Shute," said Harvey bitterly. "Lot of use his hanging round the place."

Inspector Shute, stocky, impassive, came across the bridge over the moat, and up to the porch. He glanced at the Oakshott fellows, and came in. Captain Jerningham came out of the smoke-room and gave him a nod. He did not glance at the schoolboys.

"Anything new, Shute?" asked the captain wearily.

"As a matter of fact, sir, I have certain reasons for ordering a search in the corner of the park by the Olkham Lane," said the inspector. "If you would care to give my men your assistance—"

"Gladly! Anything is better than doing nothing," said the captain. "Whishaw, my coat, please." The butler helped him on with his coat and handed him his hat. "You are coming, inspector?"

"I wish to speak to Mr. Chard—but I will see you later, sir."

Captain Jerningham tramped into the snow and disappeared across the moat bridge. The inspector glanced at Harvey & Co.

"If you boys would care to help—" he suggested.

"Is there anything we can do?" asked Harvey in surprise.

"The search will be somewhat extensive, and every little helps," said the inspector. "If you are willing—"

"Of course!" said Harvey. "Come on, you men—we can help, and keep clear of my cousin all the same. I dare say we shall see Lex on our way."

Harvey, Banks, and Porryng put on their coats and followed the way the captain had gone.

"Is Mr. Chard down yet?" asked the inspector after they were gone.

"No, he is breakfasting in his room, as usual," answered the butler. "No doubt in half an hour—"

"Then I will wait. Please tell Mr. Chard that I am waiting in the library, when he comes down." The inspector went into the library and Whishaw closed the door after him.

The officer stood before the fire, warming himself. Then he moved along to a great oak settee close by the wall, within a short distance of Mr. Chard's cosy corner. And, though the library of the Moat House was, to all appearance, untenanted by anyone but himself, he said in a low voice:

"Well?"

From behind the settee came an answering voice, in equally low tones. It was the voice of the schoolboy detective.

"You got my uncle on the phone after what I said to you yesterday, Mr. Shute?" he asked.

"Having—after communicating with Mr. Nixon—decided to accept your assistance, Master Lex, I have done exactly as you desired. Captain Jerningham and your friends are now on the other side of the park, and likely to remain there till lunch. I am here, finding you in concealment, as you asked. I am acting on Mr. Nixon's assurance that you have information to give."

"Bill isn't letting you down, Mr. Shute!" came the quiet voice from the unseen schoolboy detective. "Thanks for getting here in good time. We've got a good twenty minutes before Chard blows in—more than enough."

"I presume that your presence here is unknown?"

"It is. I went out for a walk, nipped in by the french window, and here I've been for the last hour."

"What have you to tell me?"

"Sir Lucian is a prisoner in the secret dungeon under the Moat House, like his ancestor in the legend. His kidnapper visits him once a day, generally in the morning, to take him food."

"You accuse Captain Jerningham, as the boy Harvey suspects?" said Inspector Shute.

"No."

"Who, then?"

"Chard! And now look at this!"

A hand from behind the settee passed up a torn sheet of paper. Mr. Shute took it and fixed his eyes on it. In neat figures was a strange list:

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

"That was found in Chard's waste-paper basket," murmured the voice from behind the settee. "Chard's fist! You don't need telling that it is a list of roulette numbers. The learned and respectable librarian of the Moat House sits at the green table, Mr. Shute, taking down the numbers when the ball spins on the wheel. And he sits in his cosy corner, not always at work, but calculating the run of numbers, planning a system, I've no doubt, for beating the jolly old croupier at his game."

"Having given that bit of paper the once-over, Mr. Shute, I had an idea that our friend's weekly visits to London to see his aged parents might bear looking into. Bill looked—at a tip from me! And the night before last, Chard did not visit any aged parents—I doubt if he has any—he spent the night, to a very late hour, at a certain roulette club in Soho, losing money hand over fist, with Bill looking over his shoulder!"

Mr. Shute slipped the paper into his pocket-book as the murmuring voice went on:

"Somebody doesn't want schoolboys here rooting over the place—especially old Harvey, with his belief in a secret dungeon. Somebody spotted us in the park the night we came, and put up a spectral performance. The captain was in the park—but so was Chard! That somebody carried on the game, got up as old Sir Lucian's giddy spectre, startling

Harvey, and the whole household turned up—except Chard!

"Whoever played ghost was behind a secret panel—and Chard was not awakened by a row that awakened everybody else. Since the ghost game failed to scare the schoolboys away, Chard agrees with the captain that any measures ought to be taken to get us on our travels."

"Is that all?"

"Hardly! Chard managed to catch a bit of a cold, which causes him to take brekker in his room—he had to give some explanation of a habit new since Sir Lucian disappeared. John takes up his breakfast, and has confided to me that Mr. Chard's appetite has seemed to improve. Big breakfast—nothing ever left. Chard takes books to his room in a green baize bag—but does not, I think, bring the books down again in it. Very particular about that bag is Mr. Chard. Flies into a temper if a fellow barges it out of his hand and tries to pick it up for him—as I happened to do one morning—"

"Food?"

"Exactly! A prisoner must be fed. Chard settles down in his cosy corner and tells an inquiring schoolboy that he will be busy till lunch; that inquiring schoolboy looks in a quarter of an hour later and he is gone—green baize bag and all. Chard's cosy corner is oak panelled, and that inquiring schoolboy has found opportunities to test the panels—no luck! Better luck this morning, I hope!"

"I understand!"

"Bill watched the good man losing in one night more than his year's salary as librarian and secretary here. He has charge of Sir Lucian's investments. Query: Whose money does he lose on the green table? Does he want a signature to a cheque or to a transfer of stocks and shares, and is Sir Lucian parked in a quiet spot till he decides to sign?"

The murmuring voice ran on softly for a few minutes more. Then Mr. Shute left the settee, resumed his place before the fire, where he stood warming his coat-tails, when Mr. Chard came into the library with a green baize bag in his hand.

He laid the bag on the table in his cosy corner and bowed politely to Inspector Shute. The inspector's eyes lingered for a fleeting second on the bag.

"Whishaw says that you desired to see me, Mr. Shute," said the librarian. "I am quite at your service."

"Thank you, Mr. Chard," said the inspector. "I am carrying on a search in the park close by Olkham Lane. Captain Jerningham and the boys are helping, and if you would care to accompany me—"

"I have every desire to help," said Mr. Chard. "Say, in half an hour's time—"

"Very well, Mr. Chard, I will expect you," said the inspector, and left the library.

Mr. Chard followed him to the door and watched Whishaw let him out of the house. Then he closed the library door, returned to his cosy corner, and drew the hangings across.

The velvet curtains completely shut

## Lost Sir Lucian

in Mr. Chard's cosy corner. They also concealed from Mr. Chard a boyish figure that emerged silently from under a settee, slipped quietly across to the alcove, and applied an eye to a narrow slit in the velvet recently made by a penknife.

Unaware of that eye, Mr. Chard picked up the green baize bag and walked to the back of the alcove. Reaching the wall, he pressed a certain spot in the ancient carved scrollwork, and a panel flew open on silent, well-oiled, hidden hinges.

Len Lex smiled as the secretary disappeared through the wall and the panel shut after him, strolled to the french window, opened it, and waved a hand to a stocky figure hovering on the terrace. Inspector Shute joined him, mutely inquiring.

"Follow on!" murmured Len Lex.

The secret panel flew open again, and Shute, breathing hard, followed the schoolboy detective through. As they trod softly down a seemingly endless spiral stair in the thickness of the ancient wall, there came, faintly from the darkness far below, the clank of a chain.

**W**HISHAW almost fell down when the bell summoned him to the library as, he supposed, to answer the ring of Mr. Chard. The colour wavered in his cheeks, and his eyes bulged at what he saw.

"Sir Lucian!" he gasped.

He gazed at the silver-haired man who, pale, worn, haggard, leaned on the sturdy arm of Len Lex; at Mr. Chard, livid with fury, the handcuffs on his wrists, the grip of Inspector Shute on his arm; at a panel that stood wide open in the oak wall.

"Your master is found, Whishaw," said Len. "Inspector Shute has found him. Help him to his room."

"Help me; my good Whishaw!" said Sir Lucian Jerningham faintly. "Mr. Shute, you will take care of that scoundrel?"

"I have him safe, sir," said Mr. Shute stolidly, and Sir Lucian tottered from the library on the arm of the astounded butler—gazed at in awed amazement by startled servants, one of whom, at a word from the

inspector, hurried away into the park to call Captain Jerningham and the Oakshott fellows to the house.

The master of the Moat House was in bed. Whishaw had telephoned for the doctor, and Len Lex had seen Mr. Shute off in a car with his prisoner, when there was a tramp of hurried feet on the terrace. Smiling, Len opened the door to Captain Jerningham, Harvey, Banks, and Pie. They rushed in, breathless. The captain caught Len by the arm.

"My uncle—" he panted. "Is it true?"

"Quite!" said Len.

Harvey grabbed him by the other arm.

"Len—he's found?"

"Safe and sound, in bed, waiting for the doctor. He's had a hard time, but he's pulling round all right.

"It was Chard," explained Len. "Acting from information received, Inspector Shute got him this morning. There is a secret panel in Chard's cosy corner that gives access to a spiral stair leading down to the secret dungeon, and Chard—"

"Chard!" stuttered Harvey.

"Old Chardy!" agreed Len. "Sir Lucian was tapped on the head from behind that night in the library, and woke up to find himself in the secret dungeon with a chain locked on him. And a man with a mask on his face came once a day with food—"

"But Chard!" gasped Captain Jerningham. "Why?"

"It seems that he wanted Sir Lucian to sign a paper—transfer of bonds, for a few thousand pounds," said Len. "Chard has been losing money. Your uncle never knew who the man was—never suspected Chard—till Mr. Shute followed him down into the dungeons to-day, slipped the handcuffs on him, and pulled the mask off his face."

"Where is the scoundrel?" panted Captain Jerningham.

"Mr. Shute has taken him over to Holme—charge of kidnapping and attempting to extort money," said Len.

Harvey looked at his cousin. His cousin looked at him.

"Sorry, Cecil!" muttered Harvey.

The captain smiled faintly.

"A good deal was my fault," he said. "I was all nerves, with the

anxiety and stress—and knowing what people suspected—"

"I was a fool—"

"So was I! Wash it all out! Come with me, kid—we must see him." The cousins hurried up the stairs together.

"But how," gasped Pie, "did Shute spot the villain? I never dreamed of suspecting old Chard—and I'm a keen chap, as you know. How the thump did Shute do it?"

"From information received, I understand," said Len Lex. "That's what they call it, you know—information received!" For it had been agreed that nothing was to be said about his part in the case. The fact that he was a detective as well as a schoolboy was to remain a secret!

**M**ERRY Christmas!" roared Pie Porrhinge.

Len roared, too, as a snowball caught him in the ear.

Bright and cheery was that Christmas morning. As bright and cheery was every face in the old Moat House. One accustomed face was missing—Mr. Chard was awaiting trial in a cell no less secure than the ancient dungeon in which Sir Lucian had been a prisoner. But nobody at the Moat House wasted a thought on him.

Captain Jerningham, strolling on the terrace, grinned as Len staggered under Pie's snowball, stooped, gathered a handful of snow, and let Pie have it in turn—and Harvey and Banks, chuckling, joined in.

Sir Lucian Jerningham, looking from the library windows, laughed loud and long as the goat of the Fifth slipped in the snow and went head over heels into the moat—for the second time discovering that there was mud under the snow!

"Jolly, after all, you fellows!" said Harvey, when they sat down to Christmas dinner in the old oak hall, Sir Lucian at the head of the table, Captain Jerningham grinning under a paper cap, Whishaw hovering and benign. "Jolly, what?"

**PERCY F. WESTERMAN'S latest thriller starts in MODERN BOY next week! Full particulars on page 32!**

## Robin of the Railway

(Continued from page 12)

afternoon. There's a big rush, you know, and we're understaffed here."

"Oh, my plans must be adjusted to suit yours!" was his uncle's retort.

But Donald Meredith was smiling, and there was a proud light in his keen grey eyes as he gazed at the boy he loved as a son.

**N**EVER had such a day in my life," remarked Peter Potts, as he paced the platform of Southmouth Central Station with the young fellow who had discarded his porter's uniform for a neat grey suit and warm, loose-fitting overcoat, waiting for the arrival of the 8.35 from the harbour on Boxing Day

morning. "Now I've got the pip! What's the good of being happy for one giddy day if you're going to be miserable all the rest?"

"But you're not going to be miserable!" said Robin.

"Yes, I am. I know you've tackled your uncle and he's going to transfer me to London, where I shall have a good chance of getting on, and you say we shall be constantly meeting, but— Oh, it sounds all right now, Robin, but it won't work! Before long I shall be touching my cap and calling you sir."

"If you do, my lad, you'll get the biggest licking you've ever had in your life! We're chums now, and we're jolly well going to remain chums. I had chums at St. Ermin's that I've scarcely missed. I should

miss you terribly, Peter, old chap, and I should miss your mater nearly as much. Now, look here, I shall be at Whitewells till the New Year, then I go to London, and I hope you'll be there by then. In working hours, we shan't be able to carry on just the same as we've done, but once— Oh, here's the train!"

"It's a dog's life!" said Peter gloomily as, by force of habit, he opened the door of a first-class carriage!

**"THE BOY WHO STARTED AT THE TOP!" shows his paces in next week's issue—the first of a sparkling series of humorous adventure stories combining non-stop Laughs and Thrills! See page 32!**