A Collection of Ghost Stories and the Unknown

Edited by
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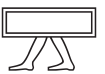

All of the short stories were published by the authors in the past, but now are all part of the public domain. The publication locations are listed below.

The Black Cat - Twenty-Five Ghost Stories 1904
The Parlor-Car Ghost - Twenty-Five Ghost Stories 1904
A Phantom Toe - Twenty-Five Ghost Stories 1904
Mrs. Davenport's Ghost - Twenty-Five Ghost Stories 1904
Grande-Dame's Ghost Story- Twenty-Five Ghost Stories 1904
In Granada - The Little Room and Other Stories 1895
The Dead Woman's Photograph - Twenty-Five Ghost Stories 1904
The Old Mansion - Twenty-Five Ghost Stories 1904
The Veiled Nun of St. Leonards- St. Andrews Ghost Stories 1921
The Boy Who Was Caught - Twenty-Five Ghost Stories 1904

For my Tata.
Thank you for always sharing your weird stories. Your storytelling always left me in awe and I hope that I can continue on your legacy.

Contents

Foreword

A Collection of Ghost Stories and the Unknown is for readers who are interested in a book about the supernatural and the unknown. From chilling short stories by Edgar Allen Poe to S. Mukerji, these stories bring you into the depths of horror. Each story is individual in its experience and writing, but all connect in their ability to haunt their readers. As you read this collection, you will find that each author has a unique story-telling ability. Not one story is the same or even similar. Ranging from black cats, to phantom toes, to parlor-car ghosts, to veiled nuns–this collection contains the most thrilling stories that will keep you up at night. As the pages turn darker and the stories get scarier, you'll only want to keep reading. When I was younger I used to love getting haunted stories books or supernatural stories, but they were rare and far between. I have always been a fan of horror stories because unlike movies you only have the words on the page to accurately depict the horror felt by one physically placed in the situation. There are no jump scares in books like there are in horror movies which makes the writers of horror stories extremely talented in their field. They have the ability to evoke fear and emotion through words and these ten authors do it better than anyone.

The Black Cat

Edgar Allen Poe

For the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not—and very surely do I not dream. But to-morrow I die, and to-day I would unburden my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly and without comment a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified—have tortured—have destroyed me. Yet I will not attempt to expound them. To me they have presented little but horror, to many they will seem less terrible than baroques. Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the commonplace—some intellect more calm, more logical, and far less excitable than my own, which will perceive in the circumstances I detail with awe nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects.

From my infancy I was noted for the docility and

humanity of my disposition. My tenderness of heart was even so conspicuous as to make me the jest of my companions. I was especially fond of animals, and was indulged by my parents with a great variety of pets. With these I spent most of my time, and never was so happy as when feeding and caressing them. This peculiarity of character grew with my growth, and in my manhood I derived from it one of my principal sources of pleasure. To those who have cherished an affection for a faithful and sagacious dog, I need hardly be at the trouble of explaining the nature or the intensity of the gratification thus derivable. There is something in the unselfish and self-sacrificing love of a brute, which goes directly to the heart of him who has had frequent occasion to test the paltry friendship and gossamer fidelity of mere Man.

I married early, and was happy to find in my wife a disposition not uncongenial with my own. Observing my partiality for domestic pets she lost no opportunity of procuring those of the most agreeable kind. We had birds, goldfish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey and a cat.

This latter was a remarkably large and beautiful animal, entirely black, and sagacious to an astonishing degree. In speaking of his intelligence, my wife, who at heart was not a little tinctured with superstition, made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise. Not that she was ever serious upon this point—and I mention the matter at all for no better reason than that it happens, just now,

to be remembered.

Pluto—this was the cat's name—was my favorite pet and playmate. I alone fed him, and he attended me wherever I went about the house. It was even with difficulty that I could prevent him from following me through the streets.

Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years, during which my general temperament and character—through the instrumentality of the fiend Intemperance—had (I blush to confess it) experienced a radical alteration for the worse. I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others. I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At length I even offered her personal violence. My pets, of course, were made to feel the change in my disposition. I not only neglected them, but ill-used them. For Pluto, however, I still retained sufficient regard to restrain me from maltreating him, as I made no scruple of maltreating the rabbits, the monkey or even the dog, when by accident or through affection they came in my way. But my disease grew upon me—for what disease is like alcohol! And at length even Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish—even Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill-temper.

One night, returning home much intoxicated from one of my haunts about town, I fancied that the cat avoided my presence. I seized him, when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand

with his teeth. The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body; and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fiber of my frame. I took from my waistcoat pocket a penknife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket! I blush, I burn, I shudder while I pen the damnable atrocity.

When reason returned with the morning—when I had slept off the fumes of the night's debauch—I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse, for the crime of which I had been guilty; but it was, at best, a feeble and equivocal feeling, and the soul remained untouched. I again plunged into excess, and soon drowned in wine all memory of the deed.

In the meantime the cat slowly recovered.

The socket of the lost eye presented, it is true, a frightful appearance, but he no longer appeared to suffer any pain. He went about the house as usual, but, as might be expected, fled in extreme terror at my approach. I had so much of my old heart left as to be at first grieved by this evident dislike on the part of a creature which had once so loved me. But this feeling soon gave place to irritation. And then came, as if to my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of perverseness. Of this spirit philosophy takes no account. Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart—one of the indivisible

primary faculties or sentiments which give direction to the character of man. Who has not, hundreds of times, found himself committing a vile or silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should not? Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is Law, merely because we understand it to be such? This spirit of perverseness, I say, came to my final overthrow. It was this unfathomable longing of the soul to vex itself—to offer violence to its own nature—to do wrong for the wrong's sake only—that urged me to continue and finally to consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute. One morning, in cold blood, I slipped a noose about its neck, and hung it to the limb of a tree; hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes and the bitterest remorse at my heart; hung it because I knew that it had loved me, and because I felt it had given me no offense; hung it because I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin—a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it, if such a thing were possible—even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the most merciful and most terrible God.

On the night of the day on which this cruel deed was done, I was aroused from sleep by the cry of "fire!" The curtains of my bed were in flames. The whole house was blazing. It was with great difficulty that my wife, a servant and myself made our escape from the conflagration. The destruction was complete. My entire worldly wealth was

swallowed up, and I resigned myself thenceforward to despair.

I am above the weakness of seeking to establish a sequence of cause and effect between the disaster and the atrocity. But I am detailing a chain of facts, and wish not to leave even a possible link imperfect. On the day succeeding the fire I visited the ruins. The walls, with one exception, had fallen in. This exception was found in a compartment wall, not very thick, which stood about the middle of the house, and against which had rested the head of my bed. The plastering had here, in great measure, resisted the action of the fire—a fact which I attributed to its having been recently spread. About this wall a dense crowd were collected, and many persons seemed to be examining a particular portion of it with very minute and eager attention. The words "strange!" "singular!" and other similar expressions excited my curiosity. I approached and saw, as if graven in bas-relief upon the white surface, the figure of a gigantic cat. The impression was given with an accuracy truly marvelous. There was a rope about the animal's neck.

When I first beheld this apparition—for I could scarcely regard it as less—my wonder and my terror were extreme. But at length reflection came to my aid. The cat, I remembered, had been hung in a garden adjacent to the house. Upon the alarm of fire this garden had been immediately filled by the crowd—by some one of whom the animal must have been cut from the tree and

thrown through an open window into my chamber. This had probably been done with the view of arousing me from sleep. The falling of other walls had compressed the victim of my cruelty into the substance of the freshly spread plaster, the lime of which with the flames, and the ammonia from the carcass, had then accomplished the portraiture as I saw it.

Although I thus readily accounted to my reason, if not altogether to my conscience, for the startling fact just detailed, it did not the less fail to make a deep impression upon my fancy. For months I could not rid myself of the phantasm of the cat; and, during this period, there came back into my spirit a half sentiment that seemed, but was not, remorse. I went so far as to regret the loss of the animal, and to look about me, among the vile haunts which I now habitually frequented, for another pet of the same species and of somewhat similar appearance, with which to supply its place.

One night as I sat, half stupefied, in a den of more than infamy, my attention was suddenly drawn to some black object, reposing upon the head of one of the immense hogsheads of gin, or of rum, which constituted the chief furniture of the apartment. I had been looking steadily at the top of this hogshead for some minutes, and what now caused me surprise was the fact that I had not sooner perceived the object thereupon. I approached it and touched it with my hand. It was a black cat—a very large one—fully as large as Pluto, and closely resembling

him in every respect, but only Pluto had not a white hair upon any portion of his body; but this cat had a large, although indefinite, splotch of white, covering nearly the whole region of the breast.

Upon my touching him he immediately arose, purred loudly, rubbed against my hand, and appeared delighted with my notice. This, then, was the very creature of which I was in search. I at once offered to purchase it of the landlord; but this person made no claim to it—knew nothing of it—had never seen it before.

I continued my caresses, and when I prepared to go home the animal evinced a disposition to accompany me. I permitted it to do so, occasionally stooping and patting it as I proceeded. When it reached the house it domesticated itself at once, and became immediately a great favorite with my wife.

For my own part, I soon found a dislike to it arising within me. This was just the reverse of what I had anticipated; but—I know not how or why it was—its evident fondness for myself rather disgusted and annoyed me. By slow degrees these feelings of disgust and annoyance rose into the bitterness of hatred. I avoided the creature; a certain sense of shame, and the remembrance of my former deed of cruelty, preventing me from physically abusing it. I did not, for some weeks, strike, or otherwise violently ill use it; but gradually—very gradually—I came to look upon it with unutterable loathing, and to flee silently from its odious presence, as from the breath of

a pestilence.

What added, no doubt, to my hatred of the beast, was the discovery, on the morning after I brought it home, that, like Pluto, it also had been deprived of one of its eyes. This circumstance however, only endeared it to my wife, who, as I have already said, possessed, in a high degree, that humanity of feeling which had once been my distinguishing trait, and the source of many of my simplest and purest pleasures.

With my aversion to this cat, however, its partiality for myself seemed to increase. It followed my footsteps with a pertinacity which it would be difficult to make the reader comprehend. Whenever I sat it would crouch beneath my chair or spring upon my knees, covering me with its loathsome caresses. If I arose to walk it would get between my feet, and thus nearly throw me down, or, fastening its long and sharp claws in my dress, clamber, in this manner, to my breast. At such times, although I longed to destroy it with a blow, I was yet withheld from so doing, partly by a memory of my former crime, but chiefly—let me confess it at once—by absolute dread of the beast.

This dread was not exactly a dread of physical evil—and yet I should be at a loss how otherwise to define it. I am almost ashamed to own—yes, even in this felon's cell, I am almost ashamed to own—that the terror and horror with which the animal inspired me had been heightened by one of the merest chimeras it would be

possible to conceive. My wife had called my attention more than once, to the character of the mark of white hair, of which I have spoken, and which constituted the sole visible difference between the strange beast and the one I had destroyed. The reader will remember that this mark, although large, had been originally very indefinite; but, by slow degrees—degrees nearly imperceptible, and which for a long time my reason struggled to reject as fanciful—it had, at length, assumed a rigorous distinctness of outline. It was now the representation of an object that I shudder to name—and for this, above all, I loathed and dreaded, and would have rid myself of the monster had I dared—it was now I say the image of a hideous, of a ghastly thing—of the gallows! Oh, mournful and terrible engine of horror and of crime—of agony and of death!

And now was I indeed wretched beyond the wretchedness of mere humanity. And a brute beast, whose fellow I had contemptuously destroyed—a brute beast to work out for me—for me, a man, fashioned in the image of the High God—so much of insufferable woe. Alas! Neither by day nor night knew I the blessing of rest any more. During the former the creature left me no moment alone, and in the latter I started hourly from dreams of unutterable fear, to find the hot breath of the thing upon my face, and its vast weight—an incarnate nightmare that I had no power to shake off—incumbent eternally upon my heart.

Beneath the pressure of torments such as these the

feeble remnants of the good within me succumbed. Evil thoughts became my sole intimates—the darkest and most evil of thoughts. The moodiness of my usual temper increased to hatred of all things and of all mankind; while, from the sudden, frequent and ungovernable outbursts of a fury to which I now blindly abandoned myself, my uncomplaining wife, alas! was the most usual and the most patient of sufferers.

One day she accompanied me upon some household errand into the cellar of the old building, which our poverty compelled us to inhabit. The cat followed me down the steep stairs, and, nearly throwing me headlong, exasperated me to madness. Uplifting an axe, and forgetting, in my wrath, the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded, by the interference, into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp, and buried the ax in her brain. She fell dead upon the spot, without a groan.

This hideous murder accomplished, I set myself forthwith, and with entire deliberation, to the task of concealing the body. I knew that I could not remove it from the house, either by day or by night, without the risk of being observed by the neighbors. Many projects entered my mind. At one period I thought of cutting the corpse into minute fragments and destroying them

by fire. At another I resolved to dig a grave for it in the floor of the cellar. Again, I deliberated about casting it into the well in the yard—about packing it in a box, as if merchandise, with the usual arrangements, and so getting a porter to take it from the house. Finally I hit upon what I considered a far better expedient than either of these. I determined to wall it up in the cellar—as the monks of the middle ages are recorded to have walled up their victims.

For a purpose such as this the cellar was well adapted. Its walls were loosely constructed, and had lately been plastered throughout with a rough plaster, which the dampness of the atmosphere had prevented from hardening. Moreover, in one of the walls was a projection, caused by a false chimney, or fireplace, that had been filled up, and made to resemble the rest of the cellar. I made no doubt that I could readily displace the bricks at this point, insert the corpse, and wall the whole up as before, so that no eye could detect anything suspicious.

And in this calculation I was not deceived. By means of a crowbar I easily dislodged the bricks, and, having carefully deposited the body against the inner wall, I propped it in that position, while, with little trouble, I relaid the whole structure as it originally stood. Having procured mortar, sand and hair with every possible precaution, I prepared a plaster which could not be distinguished from the old, and with this I very carefully went over the new brickwork. When I had finished I felt satisfied

that all was right. The wall did not present the slightest appearance of having been disturbed. The rubbish on the floor was picked up with the minutest care. I looked around triumphantly and said to myself, "Here, at least, then, my labor has not been in vain."

My next step was to look for the beast which had been the cause of so much wretchedness, for I had at length firmly resolved to put it to death. Had I been able to meet with it at the moment there could have been no doubt of its fate; but it appeared that the crafty animal had been alarmed at the violence of my previous anger and forebore to present itself in my present mood. It is impossible to describe or to imagine the deep, the blissful sense of relief which the absence of the detested creature occasioned in my bosom. It did not make its appearance during the night—and thus, for one night at least since its introduction into the house, I soundly and tranquilly slept—aye, slept, even with the burden of murder upon my soul!

The second and the third day passed, and still my tormentor came not. Once again I breathed as a free man. The monster, in terror, had fled the premises forever! I should behold it no more! My happiness was supreme! The guilt of my dark deed disturbed me but little. Some few inquiries had been made, but these had been readily answered. Even a search had been instituted—but, of course, nothing was to be discovered. I looked upon my future felicity as secured.

Upon the fourth day of the assassination a party of the police came very unexpectedly into the house and proceeded again to make a rigorous investigation of the premises. Secure, however, in the inscrutability of my place of concealment, I felt no embarrassment whatever. The officers bade me accompany them in their search. They left no nook or corner unexplored. At length, for the third or fourth time, they descended into the cellar. I quivered not in a muscle. My heart beat as calmly as that of one who slumbers in innocence. I walked the cellar from end to end. I folded my arms upon my bosom and roamed easily to and fro. The police were thoroughly satisfied and prepared to depart. The glee at my heart was too strong to be restrained. I burned to say but one word, by way of triumph, and to render doubly sure their assurance of my guiltlessness.

"Gentlemen," I said at last, as the party ascended the steps, "I delight to have allayed your suspicions. I wish you all health and a little more courtesy. By the by, gentlemen, this—this is a very well constructed house." (In the rabid desire to say something easily I scarcely knew what I uttered at all.) "I may say an excellently well constructed house. These walls—are you going, gentlemen?—these walls are solidly put together;" and here, through the mere frenzy of bravado, I rapped heavily, with a cane which I held in my hand, upon that very portion of the brickwork behind which stood the corpse of the wife of my bosom.

But may God shield and deliver me from the fangs

of the Arch Fiend! No sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence than I was answered by a voice from within the tomb!—by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud and continuous scream, utterly anomalous and inhuman—a howl!—a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell, conjointly from the throats of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation.

Of my own thoughts it is folly to speak. Swooning, I staggered to the opposite wall. For an instant the party upon the stairs remained motionless, through extremity of terror and of awe. In the next a dozen stout arms were toiling at the wall. It fell bodily. The corpse, already getting decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of the spectators. Upon its head, with red, extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had walled the monster up within the tomb!

The Parlor-Car Ghost

Eleanor F. Lewis

All draped with blue denim—the seaside cottage of my friend, Sara Pyne. She asked me to go there with her when she opened it to have it set in order for the summer. She confessed that she felt a trifle nervous at the idea of entering it alone. And I am always ready for an excursion. So much blue denim rather surprised me, because blue is not complimentary to Sara's complexion—she always wears some shade of red, by preference. She perceived my wonder; she is very near-sighted, and therefore sees everything by some sort of sixth sense.

"You do not like my portieres and curtains and table-covers," said she. "Neither do I. But I did it to accommodate. And now he rests well in his grave, I hope."

"Whose grave, for pity's sake?"

"Mr. J. Billington Price's."

"And who is he? He doesn't sound interesting."

"Then I will tell you about him," said Sara, taking a seat directly in front of one of those curtains. "Last autumn I was leaving this place for New York, traveling on the fast

express train known as the Flying Yankee. Of course, I thought of the Flying Dutchman and Wagner's musical setting of the uncanny legend, and how different things are in these days of steam, etc. Then I looked out of the window at the landscape, the horizon that seemed to wheel in a great curve as the train sped on. Every now and then I had an impression at the 'tail of the eye' that a man was sitting in a chair three or four numbers in front of me on the opposite side of the car. Each time that I saw this shape I looked at the chair and ascertained that it was unoccupied. But it was an odd trick of vision. I raised my lorgnette, and the chair showed emptier than before. There was nobody in it, certainly. But the more I knew that it was vacant the more plainly I saw the man. Always with the corner of my eye. It made me nervous. When passengers entered the car I dreaded lest they might take that seat. What would happen if they should? A bag was put in the chair—that made me uncomfortable. The bag was removed at the next station. Then a baby was placed in the seat. It began to laugh as though someone had gently tickled it. There was something odd about that chair—thirteen was its number. When I looked away from it the impression was strong upon me that some person sitting there was watching me.

"Really, it would not do to humor such fancies. So I touched the electric button, asked the porter to bring me a table, and taking from my bag a pack of cards, proceeded to divert myself with a game of patience. I was

puzzling where to put a seven of spades. 'Where can it go?' I murmured to myself. A voice behind me prompted: 'Play the four of diamonds on the five, and you can do it.' I started. The only occupants of the car, besides me, were a bridal couple, a mother with three little children, and a typical preacher of one of the straitest sects. Who had spoken? 'Play up the four, madam,' repeated this voice.

"I looked fearfully over my shoulder. At first I saw a bluish cloud, like cigar smoke, but inodorous. Then the vision cleared, and I saw a young man whom I knew by a subtle intuition to be the occupant, seen and not seen, of chair number thirteen. Evidently he was a traveling salesman—and a ghost. Of course, a drummer's ghost sounds ridiculous—they're so extremely alive! Or else you would expect a dead drummer to be particularly dead and not 'walk.' This was a most commonplace-looking ghost, cordial, pushing, businesslike. At the same time, his face had an expression of utter despair and horror which made him still more preposterous. Of course it is not nice to let a stranger speak to one, even on so impersonal a topic as a four of diamonds. But a ghost—there can't be any rule of etiquette about talking with a ghost! My dear, it was dreadful! That forward creature showed me how to play all the cards, and then begged me to lay them out again, in order that he might give me some clever points. I was too much amazed and disturbed to speak. I could only place the cards at his suggestion. This I did so as not to appear to be listening to the empty air, and be supposed

to be a crazy woman. Presently the ghost spoke again, and told me his story.

"'Madam,' he said, 'I have been riding back and forth on this car ever since February 22, 189—. Seven months and eleven days. All this time I have not exchanged a word with anyone. For a drummer, that is pretty hard, you may believe! You know the story of the Flying Dutchman? Well, that is very nearly my case. A curse is upon me and will not be removed until some kind soul——. But I'm getting ahead of my text. That day there were four of us, traveling for different houses. One of the boys was in wool, one in baking powder, one in boots and shoes, and myself in cotton goods. We met on the road, took seats together and fell into talking shop.

"'Those fellows told big lies about their sales, Washington's Birthday though it was. The baking powder man raised the amount of the bills of goods which he had sold better than a whole can of his stuff could have done. I admitted the straight truth, that I had not yet been able to make a sale. And then I swore—not in a light-minded, chipper style of verbal trimmings, but a great, round, heaven-defying oath—that I would sell a case of blue denims on that trip if it took me forever. We became dry with talk, and when the train stopped at Rivermouth, we went out to have some beer. It is good there, you know—pardon me, I forgot that I was speaking to a lady. Well, we had to run to get aboard. I missed my footing, fell under the wheels, and the next thing that I knew

they were holding an inquest over my remains; while I, disemboweled, was sitting on a corner of the undertaker's table, wondering which of the coroner's jury was likely to want a case of blue denims.

"'Then I remembered my wicked oath, and understood that I was a soul doomed to wander until I could succeed in selling that bill of goods. I spoke once or twice, offering the denims under value, but nobody noticed me. Verdict: accidental death; negligence of deceased; railroad corporation not to blame; deceased got out for beer at his own risk. The other drummers took charge of the remains, and wrote a beautiful letter to my relatives about my social qualities and my impressive conversation. I wish it had been less impressive that time! I might have lied about my sales, or I might have said that I hoped for better luck. But after that oath there was nothing for it. Back and forth, back and forth, on this road, in chair number thirteen, to all eternity. Nobody suspects my presence. They sit on my knees—I'm playing in luck when it is a nice baby as it was this afternoon! They pile wraps, bags, even railway literature on me. They play cards under my nose—and what duffers some of them are! You, madam, are the first person who has perceived me; and therefore I ventured to speak to you, meaning no offense. I can see that you are sorry for me. Now, if you recall the story of the Flying Dutchman, he was saved by the charity of a good woman. In fact, Senta married him. Now I'm not asking anything of that size. I see that you wear a

wedding ring, and no doubt you make some man's happiness. I wasn't a marrying man myself, and, naturally, am not a marrying ghost. And that has nothing to do with the matter anyway. But if you could—I don't suppose you would have any use for them—but if you were disposed to do a turn of good, solid, Christian charity—I should be everlastingly grateful, and you may have that case of denims at $72.50. And that quality is quoted to-day at $80. Does it go, madam?'

"The speech of the poor ghost was not very eloquent, but his eyes had an intense, eager glare, which was terrible. Something—pity, fear, I do not know what—compelled me. I decided to do without that white and gold evening cloak. Instead, I gave $72.50 to the ghost and took from him a receipt for the sum, signed J. Billington Price. Then he smiled contentedly, thanked me with emotion, and returned to chair number thirteen. Several times on the journey, although I did not perceive him again, I felt dazed. When the train arrived at New York, and I, with the other passengers, dismounted, it seemed to me that a strong hand passed under my elbow, steadying me down the steps. As I walked the length of the station my bag—not heavy at any time—appeared to become weightless. I believe that the parlor-car ghost walked beside me, carrying the bag, whose handle still remained in my other hand. Indeed, once or twice I thought I felt the touch of cold fingers against mine. Since then I have no reason to suppose that the poor ghost is not at rest.

I hope he is.

"But I never expected nor wished for the blue denims. The next day, however, a dray belonging to a great wholesale house backed up to our door and delivered a case of denims, with a receipted bill for the same. What was I to do? I could not go about selling blue denims; I could not give them away without exciting comment. So I furnished the cottage with them—and you know the effect on my complexion. Pity me, dear! And credit me, frivolous woman as I am, with having saved a soul at the expense of my own vanity. My story is told. What do you think about it?"

A Phantom Toe

Arnold M Anderson

I am not a superstitious man, far from it, but despite all my efforts to the contrary I could not help thinking, directly I had taken a survey of my chamber, that I should never quit it without going through a strange adventure. There was something in its immense size, heaviness and gloom that seemed to annihilate at one blow all my resolute skepticism as regards supernatural visitations. It appeared to me totally impossible to go into that room and disbelieve in ghosts.

The fact is, I had incautiously partaken at supper of that favorite Dutch dish, sauerkraut, and I suppose it had disagreed with me and put strange fancies into my head. Be this as it may I only know that after parting with my friend for the night I gradually worked myself up into such a state of fidgetiness that at last I wasn't sure whether I hadn't become a ghost myself.

"Supposing," ruminated I, "supposing the landlord himself should be a practical robber and should have taken the lock and bolt from off this door for the purpose

of entering here in the dead of the night, abstracting all my property, and perhaps murdering me! I thought the dog had a very cutthroat air about him." Now, I had never had any such idea until that moment, for my host was a fat (all Dutchmen are fat), stupid-looking fellow, who I don't believe had sense enough to understand what a robbery or murder meant, but somehow or other, whenever we have anything really to annoy us (and it certainly was not pleasant to go to bed in a strange place without being able to fasten one's door), we are sure to aggravate it by myriads of chimeras of our own brain.

So, on the present occasion, in the midst of a thousand disagreeable reveries, some of the most wild absurdity, I jumped very gloomily into bed, having first put out my candle (for total darkness was far preferable to its flickering, ghostly light, which transformed rather than revealed objects), and soon fell asleep, perfectly tired out with my day's riding.

How long I lay asleep I don't know, but I suddenly awoke from a disagreeable dream of cutthroats, ghosts and long, winding passages in a haunted inn. An indescribable feeling, such as I never before experienced, hung upon me. It seemed as if every nerve in my body had a hundred spirits tickling it, and this was accompanied by so great a heat that, inwardly cursing mine host's sauerkraut and wondering how the Dutchmen could endure such poison, I was forced to sit up in bed to cool myself. The whole of the room was profoundly dark, excepting at

one place, where the moonlight, falling through a crevice in the shutters, threw a straight line of about an inch or so thick upon the floor—clear, sharp and intensely brilliant against the darkness. I leave you to conceive my horror when, upon looking at this said line of light, I saw there a naked human toe—nothing more.

For the first instant I thought the vision must be some effect of moonlight, then that I was only half awake and could not see distinctly. So I rubbed my eyes two or three times and looked again. Still there was the accursed thing—plain, distinct, immovable—marblelike in its fixedness and rigidity, but in everything else horribly human.

I am not an easily frightened man. No one who has traveled so much and seen so much and been exposed to so many dangers as I, can be, but there was something so mysterious and unusual in the appearance of this single toe that for a short time I could not think what to be at, so I did nothing but stare at it in a state of utter bewilderment.

At length, however, as the toe did not vanish under my steady gaze, I thought I might as well change my tactics, and remembering that all midnight invaders, be they thieves, ghosts or devils, dislike nothing so much as a good noise I shouted out in a loud voice:

"Who's there?"

The toe immediately disappeared in the darkness.

Almost simultaneously with my words I leaped out of

bed and rushed toward the place where I had beheld the strange appearance. The next instant I ran against something and felt an iron grip round my body. After this I have no distinct recollection of what occurred, excepting that a fearful struggle ensued between me and my unseen opponent; that every now and then we were violently hurled to the floor, from which we always rose again in an instant, locked in a deadly embrace; that we tugged and strained and pulled and pushed, I in the convulsive and frantic energy of a fight for life, he (for by this time I had discovered that the intruder was a human being) actuated by some passion of which I was ignorant; that we whirled round and round, cheek to cheek and arm to arm, in fierce contest, until the room appeared to whiz round with us, and that at least a dozen people (my fellow traveler among them), roused, I suppose, by our repeated falls, came pouring into the room with lights and showed me struggling with a man having nothing on but a shirt, whose long, tangled hair and wild, unsettled eyes told me he was insane. And then, for the first time, I became aware that I had received in the conflict several gashes from a knife, which my opponent still held in his hand.

To conclude my story in a few words (for I daresay all of you by this time are getting very tired), it turned out that my midnight visitor was a madman who was being conveyed to a lunatic asylum at The Hague, and that he and his keeper had been obliged to stop at Delft on their way. The poor fellow had contrived during the night to

escape from his keeper, who had carelessly forgotten to lock the door of his chamber, and with that irresistible desire to shed blood peculiar to many insane people had possessed himself of a pocketknife belonging to the man who had charge of him, entered my room, which was most likely the only one in the house unfastened, and was probably meditating the fatal stroke when I saw his toe in the moonlight, the rest of his body being hidden in the shade.

After this terrible freak of his he was watched with much greater strictness, but I ought to observe, as some excuse for the keeper's negligence, that this was the first act of violence he had ever attempted.

Mrs. Davenport's Ghost

Frederick P Schrader

Dear readers, do you agree with Hamlet? Do you believe that there is more between heaven and earth than we dream of in our philosophy? Does it seem possible to you that Eliphas Levy conjured up the shade of Apollonius of Tyana, the prophet of the Magii, in a London hotel, and that the great sage, William Crookes, drank his tea at breakfast several days a week, for months in succession, in the society of the materialized spirit of a young lady, attired in white linen, with a feather turban on her head?

Do not laugh! Panic would seize you in the presence even of a turbaned spirit, and the grotesque spectacle would but intensify your terror. As for me, I did not laugh last night on reading an account in a New York newspaper of a criminal trial that will probably terminate in the death penalty of the accused.

It is a sad case. I shudder as I transcribe the records of the trial from the testimony of the hotel waiter, who heard the conversation of the two confederates through a

keyhole, and of forty thoroughly credible witnesses, who testified to the same facts. What would be my feelings if I had seen the beautiful victim with the gaping wound in her breast, into which she dipped her finger to mark the brow of her murderer?

I.

About three o'clock on the afternoon of February 3, Professor Davenport and Miss Ida Soutchotte, a very pale and delicate young girl, who had submitted to the tests of Professor Davenport for a number of years, were finishing their dinner in their room in the second story of a New York hotel. Professor Benjamin Davenport was a celebrity, but it was said that he owed his fame to somewhat questionable means. The leading spiritualists did not repose the confidence in him that manifestly marked their regard for William Crookes or Daniel Douglas Home.

"Greedy and unscrupulous mediums," the author of Spiritualism in America thinks, "are to blame for the most bitter attacks to which our cause has been exposed. When the materializations do not take place as quickly as circumstances require, they resort to trickery and fraud to extricate themselves from a dilemma."

Professor Benjamin Davenport belonged to these "versatile" mediums. Aside from this, queer stories were afloat about him. He was secretly accused of highway robbery in South America, cheating at cards in the gambling houses of San Francisco, and the overhasty

use of firearms toward persons who had never offended him. It was said almost openly, that the professor's wife had died from abuse and grief at his infidelity. But in spite of these annoying rumors, Mr. Davenport, by virtue of his skill as a fraud and fakir, continued to exercise a great deal of influence upon certain plain and simple-minded folks, whom it was impossible to convince that they had not touched the materialized spirits of their brothers, mothers, or sisters through the agency of his wonderful power. His professional success received material accession from his swarthy, Mephisto-like countenance, his deep, fiery eyes, his large curved nose, the cynical expression of his mouth, and the lofty, almost prophetic tone of his words.

When the waiter had made his last visit—he did not go far—the following conversation took place in the room:

"There is to be a seance this evening at the residence of Mrs. Harding," began the medium. "Quite a number of influential people will be there, and two or three millionaires. Conceal under your skirt the blonde woman's wig and the white material in which the spirits usually make their appearance."

"Very well," replied Ida Soutchotte, in a resigned tone.

The waiter heard her pace the room. After a pause, she asked:

"Whose spirit are you going to control this evening, Benjamin?"

The waiter heard a loud, brutal laugh and the chair

groaning beneath the weight of the demonstrative professor.

"Guess."

"How should I know?" she asked.

"I am going to conjure up the spirit of my dead wife."

And another burst of laughter issued from the room, full of sinister levity. A cry of terror burst from Ida's lips. A muffled sound indicated to the eavesdropper at the door that she was dragging herself to the feet of the professor.

"Benjamin, Benjamin! don't do it," she sobbed.

"Why not? They say I broke Mrs. Davenport's heart. The story is damaging my reputation, but it will be forgotten if her spirit should address me in terms of endearment from the other shore in the presence of numerous witnesses. For you will speak to me tenderly, will you not, Ida?"

"No, no. You shall not do it; you shall not think of it. Listen to me, for God's sake. During the four years that I have been with you I have obeyed you faithfully and suffered patiently. I have lied and deceived, like you; I learned to imitate the sleep and symptoms of clairvoyants. Tell me, did I ever refuse to serve you, or utter a word of complaint, even when my shoulders bent with the weight of my burden, when you pierced the flesh of my arms with knitting needles? Worse than all this, I imitated distant voices behind curtains, and made mothers and wives believe that their sons and husbands had

come from a better world to communicate with them. How often have I performed the most dangerous feats in parlors with the lamps turned low? Clothed in a shroud or white muslin I essayed to represent supernatural forms, whom tear-dimmed eyes recognized as those of departed dear ones. You do not know what I suffered at this unhallowed work. You scoff at the mysteries of eternity. I suffer the torments of an impending retribution. My God! if some time the dead whom I counterfeit should rise up before me with uplifted arms and dreadful imprecations! This constant terror has injured my heart—it will kill me. I am consumed by fever. Look how emaciated, how worn-out and downcast I am. But I am under your control. Do as you like with me; I am in your power, and I want it to be so. Have I ever complained? But do not force me to do this thing, Benjamin. Have pity on me for what I have done for you in the past, for what I am suffering. Do not attempt this mummery; do not compel me to play the role of your dead wife, who was so tender and beautiful. Oh, what put that thought into your mind? Spare me, Benjamin, I implore you!"

The professor did not laugh again. Amid the confusion of upturned articles of furniture the eavesdropper distinguished the sound of a skull striking the floor. He concluded that Professor Davenport had knocked Miss Ida down with a blow of his fist, or had kicked her as she approached him. But the waiter did not enter the room, as no one rang for him.

II.

That evening forty persons were assembled in Mrs. Joanne Harding's parlor, staring at the curtain where a spirit form was in process of materializing. One dark lantern in a corner of the room contributed the light that emphasized the darkness rather than relieved it. The room was pervaded by profound silence, save the quickened, suppressed breathing of the spectators. The fire in the grate cast mysterious rays of light, resembling fugitive spirits, upon the objects around, almost indistinguishable in the semi-gloom.

Professor Davenport was at his best this evening. The spirit world obeyed him without hesitation, like their lawful master. He was the mighty prince of souls. Hands that had no arms were seen picking flowers from the vases; the touch of an invisible spirit conjured sweet melodies from the keys of the piano; the furniture responded by intelligent rappings to the most unanticipated questions. The professor himself elevated his form in symbolical distortions from the floor to an altitude of three feet, indicated by Mrs. Harding, and remained suspended in the air for a quarter of an hour, holding live coals in his hands.

III.

But the most interesting, as well as the most conclusive, test was to be the materialization of the spirit of Mrs. Arabella Davenport, which the professor had promised at the beginning of the seance.

"The hour has come," exclaimed the medium.

And while the hearts of all throbbed with anxious suspense, and their eyes distended with painful expectancy of the promised materialization, Benjamin Davenport stood before the curtain. In the twilight the tall man with the disheveled hair and demon look, was really terrible and handsome.

"Appear, Arabella!" he exclaimed, in a commanding voice, with gestures of the Nazarene at the sepulcher of Lazarus.

All are waiting——

Suddenly a cry burst from behind the curtain—a piercing, shuddering, horrible shriek, the shriek of an expiring soul.

The spectators trembled. Mrs. Harding almost fainted. The medium himself appeared surprised.

But Benjamin recovered his composure on seeing the curtain move and admit the spirit.

The apparition was that of a young woman with long blonde tresses; she was beautiful and pale, clad in some light, whitish material. Her breast was bare, and on the left side appeared a bleeding wound, in which trembled a knife.

The spectators arose and retreated, pushing their chairs to the wall. Those who chanced to look at the medium noticed that a deathly pallor had overspread his face, and that he was cowering and trembling.

But the young woman, Mrs. Arabella, the real one,

whom he so well remembered, she had come in response to his summons, and advanced in a direct line toward Benjamin, who in terror covered his eyes to shut out the ghastly sight, and with a cry fled behind the furniture. But she dipped the finger of her thin hand into the blood from her wound and traced it across the brow of the unconscious medium, the while repeating, in a slow, monotonous tone that sounded like the echo of a wail, again and again:

"You are my murderer! You are my murderer!"

And while he was rolling and tossing in deadly terror on the floor they turned up the lights.

The spirit had vanished. But in the communicating room, behind the curtain, they found the body of poor Miss Ida Soutchotte with horribly distorted features. A physician who was present pronounced it heart stroke.

And that is the reason that Prof. Benjamin Davenport appeared alone in a New York courtroom to answer to the charge of having murdered his wife four years ago in San Francisco.

Grande-Dame's Ghost Story

C.D.

I don't know whether you ever tell your children ghost stories or not; some mothers don't, but our mother, though of German descent, was strong-minded on the ghost subject, and early taught all of her children to be fearless mentally as well as physically, and, though dearly fond of hearing ghost stories, especially if they were real true ghosts, we were sadly skeptical as to their being anything of the kind that could harm. We were quite learned in ghostly lore, knew all about "doppeigangers," "Will o' the Wisp," "blue lights," etc., and we could not have a greater treat for good behavior than for our mother to draw on her store of supernatural tales for our entertainment. The story I am about to relate she told us one stormy night, when, gathered round her chair in her own cozy sanctum, before a cheerful fire, we ate nuts and apples, and listened while she recited "an o'er true tale," told her by her grandmother, who herself witnessed the vision:

It was a fearful night, the wind sobbed and wailed

round the house like lost spirits mourning their doom; the rain beat upon the casements, and the trees, writhing in the torture of the fierce blast, groaned and swayed until their tops almost swept the earth; bright flashes of lightning pierced even through the closed shutters and heavy curtains, and the thunder had a sullen, threatening roar that made your blood creep. It was a night to make one seek to shut out all sound, draw the curtains close, stir the fire and nestle deep in the arm-chair before it, with feet upon the fender, and have something cheerful to think or talk about. But I was all alone; none in the house with me but the servants, and the servants' wing was detached from the main part of the building, for I do not care to have menials near me, and I had no loved ones near.

It was just such a night that Nancy Black died. "What a fearful night for the soul to leave its earthly home and go out into the vast, unknown future!" I spoke aloud, as, rousing from a train of thought, I drew my heavy mantle closer round me, wheeled my arm-chair nearer the fire, and cuddled down in it, burying my feet in the foot-cushion to warm them, for I felt strangely cold. I was in the library; it was my usual sitting-room, for I seldom used the parlors. What was the use? My books were my friends, and I loved best to be with them. My children dead, or married and away, the cold, grand parlors always seemed gloomy and sad; the ghosts of departed pleasures haunted them, and I cared not to enter them.

It was a long, wide room across the hall from the parlors, running the whole length of the house, and was lined with shelves from floor to ceiling. My husband's father had been a bibliomaniac, and my husband had had a leaning that way also, and the shelves held many an old rare work that was worth its weight in gold. The fire, though burning brightly, did not illume one-half the room of which, sitting in the chimney corner, I commanded a full view, and had been looking at the shadows playing on the furniture and shelves, as the flame shot up, and after flickering a moment, would die out, leaving a gloom which would break away into fantastic shadows as the firelight would again shoot up.

While watching the gleams of light and darkling shades, unconsciously the wailing of the storm outside attracted my attention, there seemed to be odd noises of tapping on the windows, and sobs and sighs, as though someone was entreating entrance from the fierce tumult; and as I sat there, again I thought of Nancy Black, the old schoolgirl friend who had loved me so dearly, and the night when she went forth to meet the doom appointed her; resting my head upon my hand, I sat gazing in the fire, thinking over her strange life, and still stranger death, and wondering what could have become of the money and jewels that I knew she had once possessed.

While sitting thus, a queer sensation crept over me; it was not fear, but a feeling as though if I'd look up I'd see something frightful; a shiver, not like that of cold,

ran from my head to my feet, and a sensation as though someone was breathing icy cold breath upon my forehead, the same feeling you would cause by holding a piece of ice to your cheek; it fluttered over my face and finally settled round my lips, as though the unseen one was caressing me, thrilling me with horror. But I am not fearful, nervous nor imaginative, and resolutely throwing off the dread that fell upon me, I turned round and looked up, and there, so close by my side that my hand, involuntarily thrown out, passed through her seeming form, stood Nancy Black. It was Nancy Black, and yet not Nancy Black; her whole body had a semi-transparent appearance, just as your hand looks when you hold it between yourself and a strong light; her clothing, apparently the same as worn in life, had a wavy, seething, flickering look, like flames have, and yet did not seem to burn.

"In the name of God, Nancy Black, what brought you here, and whence came you?" I exclaimed.

A hollow whisper followed:

"Thank you, my old friend, for speaking to me, and, oh, how deeply I thank you for thinking of me to-night—I shall have rest."

Rest! I heard echoed, and a jeering laugh rang through the room that made her quiver at its sound.

"I have been near you often; but always failed to find you in a condition when you would be en rapport before to-night. What I came for I will tell you; whence I come, you need not know; suffice it to say, that were I happy

I would not be here on such an errand, nor on such a night—it is only when the elements are in a tumult, and the winds wail and moan, that we come forth. When you hear these sounds it is souls of the lost you hear mourning their doom—'tis then they wander up and down, to and fro, their only release from their fearful home of torture and undying pain.

"I have come to tell you that you must go over to the old house, and in the back room I always kept locked, have the carpet taken up from toward the fireplace. You will see a plank with a knot-hole in it. Remove that, and you will find what caused me to lose my soul—have prayers said for me, for 'tis well to pray for the dead. The money and jewels give in charity; bury in holy ground the others you find, and pray for them and me. Ah! Jeannette, you thought your old friend, though strange and odd, pure and innocent. It is a bitter part of my punishment that I must change your thought of me. Farewell! Do not fail me, and I shall trouble you no more. But whenever you hear that wind howl and sweep round the house as it does to-night, know that the lost are near. It is their swift flight through space—fleeing before the scourge of memory and conscience—that causes that sound.

"That to-morrow you may not think you are dreaming, here is a token," and she touched the palm of my hand with her finger-tips, and as you see, my child, to this day, there are three crimson spots in the palm of my hand that nothing will eradicate.

"Do not fail me, and pray for us, Jeannette, pray," and with a longing, wistful gaze, and a deep, sobbing sigh, Nancy Black faded from my sight.

"Am I dreaming?" I exclaimed, as I rose from my chair and rang the bell. When the servant entered, I bade him attend to the fire and light the lamps, and I went through the room to see if any unusual arrangement of the furniture could have caused the appearance, but nothing was apparent, and I bade him send my maid to attend me in my chamber, for I could not help feeling unwilling to remain in the library any longer that evening.

While making my toilet for the night my maid said:

"Have you burned your hand, madam?"

Glancing hastily down, I saw three dark crimson spots upon the palm of my left hand. They had an odd look, seared as though touched by a red-hot iron, yet the flesh was soft, not burned and not painful. Making some excuse for it, I did not allude to it again, and dismissed her speedily, that I might reflect undisturbed over the singular occurrence. There were the marks upon my hand; I could not remove them, and they did not fade. In fact, their deep red made the rest of the palm lose its pinkish hue and look pale from the strong contrast. Could I have been asleep and dreamed it all, and by any means have done this to myself? I thought, but finally concluded that on the morrow I'd go over to Nancy Black's old residence and settle the question; and with that conclusion had to content myself until the morrow came.

Nancy Black was an old friend from my girlhood, who had owned large property in the town, and lived all alone in a spacious stone house directly opposite my home, and who, when dying, had left me the sole legatee of her property.

When morning came I took the keys, and, with my maid, went over to Nancy's house. It had never been disturbed since her death, which was sudden and somewhat singular, and the furniture remained just as she left it when taken to her last resting place. We went to the room Nancy had directed. I bade Sarah take up the carpet, and, sure enough, there was a plank with a knothole in it; so I sent her from the room, and lifted the plank myself, and there, between the two joints, rested a long box, the lid not fastened. Opening it, I was horrified to see two skeletons—those of an infant and of a woman, small in stature and delicate frame. In a moment it flashed before me that I saw all that remained of Nancy Black's young sister, a girl of seventeen, who had left home somewhat mysteriously years ago, and had died while absent—at least, that was the version Nancy had given of her absence, and no one had dreamed of doubting it, her tale was so naturally told.

Left orphans when Lucy was only two years and Nancy eighteen, she had devoted her life to the care of this young girl, and when she found her sister had fallen, she, in her pride of name and position, had destroyed mother and child, that her shame might not be known,

and had lived all those dreary years in that house with her fearful secret.

Round the box, heaped up on every side, were money and jewels, and a parchment scroll among them had written on it: "Lucy's share of our father's estate." I carried out Nancy's wishes to the letter, for I now firmly believed that she had come to me herself that night. To avoid scandal resting on the dead, I took our clergyman into my confidence, and with his assistance had the remains buried quietly in consecrated ground. The money and jewels were given to the poor, and the old building I turned into a home for destitute females; and morning and night, as I kneel in prayer, I pray forgiveness to rest upon Nancy Black and peace to her troubled soul.

In Granada

Madeline Yale Wynne

PEPITA,' said I, 'do tell me a story.'

'Señora Maria Madalena, would you like to hear about Seraphita? She was born in Granada. That was one hundred years ago.

'She was born in a high place; her mother was of a great family, and her father was great too, but he was very wild, and Seraphita was the prettiest thing that ever was born in Granada; everybody said so, and her mother used to think that the sun rose on the east side of her little bed, and set on the west.

'The days ran merrily, and the father felt so happy that he went all the time to the bull-fights, and threw even money, yes, not only cigars but real money, to the torreadors. And all was beautiful till Seraphita was four months old; then she died. She had been very ill, so ill that her father did not go to the bull-fights for one whole week, and he paid for a great ceremony in the church, and everybody said, "Now Seraphita will get well," for he had paid more than one hundred pieces of gold for

prayers. But Seraphita died, and her mother had so much heart-grief that she lost her wits. For one whole day she sat, cold and still, without a tear, and then she cried aloud and began to tear out handfuls of her smooth black hair, and it was a great pity, for her hair was black and long, and glistened like satin—she was called the Satin-haired. But she forgot how beautiful she was, and she would not eat anything, or even sleep.

'Two nights after Seraphita died, and was lying as white and beautiful as an angel, with wax candles at her head and feet and with a white flower in her hand, her mother went quietly into the room, and sent the old nurse, who was watching over Seraphita, away. Then she closed the door and threw herself on her knees, and prayed so hard that her prayers could not get up to Heaven, for they were more like curses than prayers,—and, Señora Maria Madalena, it is not good to pray like that; one must not send up prayers that are not fit to go to Heaven, for then Saint Peter shuts the gates of Heaven, and the prayers go wandering up and down in the great spaces of air, where there is no one to answer them.

'The Devil, who is everywhere but in Heaven, came to her and asked, with a very sweet voice—for he can use any voice he likes—"What is it that Seraphita's mother is praying for?"

"'I want my child back; I want her in my arms that are so empty, and my heart that aches so."

'And then the Devil told her—I do not know exactly

how he told her, but he made her know that he could give Seraphita back to her, just as she had been, with her rosy cheeks, and her black eyes, and her pretty black hair which was going to be like her mother's; he could do this, only he could not give her soul back—she must be always without a soul.

'And Seraphita's mother talked with the Devil, for her wits were gone and she did not know right from wrong; and she promised him anything if he would only give her baby back to her again, even without any soul. And the Devil very politely said he did not want anything to be given to him; he was glad to give the child back, so long as she did not ask for the soul. 'And then, while the mother looked at Seraphita, the pink came into the baby's cheeks and she smiled; and then, because her joy was so great, the mother cried out loud, and her voice could be heard way down in the street. Then everybody came running in to see what was the matter; and the father was so happy he carried Seraphita again to the church and they had another ceremony, and this time he paid even more gold, and there was a great festa in Granada.

'You see, nobody but the mother knew that only Seraphita's body was there, that she hadn't any soul and never could have one; only the mother knew, and she could not be happy.

'She grew very thin, and her smooth satin hair turned white on top, just where the Devil had laid his hand; so she wore a veil, even in the house, and she hid her eyes as

if she was afraid, and she prayed day and night. Nobody knew what she prayed, because she did not dare to tell even her husband.

'Bye and bye she grew so afraid and sad, because Seraphita somehow didn't seem to her any more like her own child; she was like a beautiful wax doll; but she was not wax, and she looked just like herself to everybody else; only to her mother she seemed strange, and she could not get the warm love back into her heart, even though she pressed Seraphita to her bosom night and day.

'The little baby grew in spite of that, and she grew prettier and prettier all the time. Everybody loved her except her mother, and that was just what the Devil wanted.

'The day Seraphita was one year old her mother could not bear it any longer, and she went to her priest and confessed to him all about it; and then very soon she died, because she had kept her secret so long it had just burned her heart out.

'After that—no one knew how it happened—but pretty soon everybody began to whisper and look queerly at Seraphita when the nurse carried her into the street; and her father seemed troubled, and he talked with the priest and wanted to pay some more money to the Church; but they wouldn't have any more ceremonies for Seraphita, and the priests tried to make the people stop talking; what they said was "nonsense." But it was not nonsense, and so they went on talking among themselves; and they would take their own children out of the way

when Seraphita was old enough to play about.

'So she grew up all alone except for her father and her nurse and the priest who went to live in the house—which showed that the Church thought there was something in it, else why should a priest go and live in the house?

'One day, when Seraphita was out walking, she came across some little boys who were stoning a black kitten to kill it—for everybody knows that black cats belong to the Devil. And Seraphita ran right in among the flying stones, and not one of them hit her, for the Devil held his hand between her and the stones, and she caught up the Devil's kitten and hugged it tight, while the stones fell at her feet, and the boys cried out, "Devil's brat! Devil's cat!"'

'Pepita,' said I, 'she seems to me to have been a very nice, soft-hearted little girl.'

'Oh, no! Señora Maria Madalena, you see black cats belong to the Devil, and if she had had any soul she couldn't have taken one in her arms.

'She carried it home, and she used to feed it, and she had to hide it away, because, of course, nobody wanted to have a Devil's cat around, and the cat would run and jump into Seraphita's arms whenever she came near; but it would fly like mad, and its hair would all stand on end, when anyone else came around, which shows—does it not?—that something was wrong. And another thing showed that all was not right with Seraphita: the priest began to teach her, and she learned faster than any child should. There was an evil spirit that whispered the words

into her ear, so that she did not have to study.

'She had power over horses, too, and if she just put her lips to a horse's ear he would turn and rub his nose on her face. You see, horses have no souls, and they knew that Seraphita hadn't any.

'And, besides that, she always looked very old and grave when anybody was near; but when she was alone in the fields or in the woods she would laugh out loud, and they could hear her talk with the birds, for she knew bird-language; and she would lean over the water and talk to herself, or to the fishes. Oh, it was true, she had no soul!'

'Well, what became of her?' I asked, as Pepita paused, to emphasize her statement.

'She grew up so beautiful that strangers would stop in the street and look at her as she passed; but, of course, everybody soon found out all about her, and then they would not look at her—at least they would not look her in the eye, unless they had a charm on.'

'Do you mean that she had the "evil eye"?'

'Oh, yes! why, she could make anyone have bad luck just by looking at them, and she could make flowers grow and blossom, and be more colors than any other flowers. She knew she had the "evil eye," for she never went anywhere, or visited the sick or the poor, though she had plenty of money. She used to send the priest with food or clothes. You see, she knew.'

'And what became of poor little Seraphita?'

'Why, you see, when she was about twenty years old she was very ill again, and she lay in a trance for three days. The doctors wouldn't go near her, and her own old nurse had died, and they couldn't get anyone to take care of her, till finally the priest sent to the convent for one of the Sisters. She was a very good woman, and she went to the house, and, creeping on her hands and knees, so that the Devil could not get hold of her, she went right into the room and prayed all night. Her prayers went straight up to Heaven; and she prayed that Seraphita might die, and that before she died her soul should be given back to her.

'And, Señora Maria Madalena, just as the sky began to grow pink in the east, and the white mist blew across the vega, and the birds began to call, what do you think happened?

'A beautiful white dove flew into the window and alighted on Seraphita's breast, and, laying its bill close to her mouth, it breathed a soul into her, and then the dove just vanished, and Seraphita was dead.

'Then, because God had been good to him, and had given Seraphita a soul again, her father built an orphan asylum and called it after her, "The Seraphita"; and you can see it over there, with the sun shining on it—it looks like gold.'

'It is a pretty story, Pepita; but do you believe she had no soul?'

'The Señora knows I am English on my father's side,

but my mother was Spanish.'

'So you are half Spanish, and half believe it; is that so, Pepita?'

'Yes, Señora.'

The Dead Woman's Photograph

Elia W. Peattie

Virgil Hoyt is a photographer's assistant up at St. Paul, and a man of a good deal of taste. He has been in search of the picturesque all over the West, and hundreds of miles to the north in Canada, and can speak three or four Indian dialects, and put a canoe through the rapids. That is to say, he is a man of an adventurous sort and no dreamer. He can fight well and shoot well and swim well enough to put up a winning race with the Indian boys, and he can sit all day in the saddle and not dream about it at night.

Wherever he goes he uses his camera.

"The world," Hoyt is in the habit of saying to those who sit with him when he smokes his pipe, "was created in six days to be photographed. Man—and especially woman—was made for the same purpose. Clouds are not made to give moisture, nor trees to cast shade. They were created for the photographer."

In short, Virgil Hoyt's view of the world is whimsical, and he doesn't like to be bothered with anything

disagreeable. That is the reason that he loathes and detests going to a house of mourning to photograph a corpse. The horribly bad taste of it offends him partly, and partly he is annoyed at having to shoulder, even for a few moments, a part of someone's burden of sorrow. He doesn't like sorrow, and would willingly canoe 500 miles up the cold Canadian rivers to get rid of it. Nevertheless, as assistant photographer, it is often his duty to do this very kind of thing.

Not long ago he was sent for by a rich Jewish family at St. Paul to photograph the mother, who had just died. He was very much put out, but he went. He was taken to the front parlor, where the dead woman lay in her coffin. It was evident that there was some excitement in the household and that a discussion was going on, but Hoyt wasn't concerned, and so he paid no attention to the matter.

The daughter wanted the coffin turned on end, in order that the corpse might face the camera properly, but Hoyt said he could overcome the recumbent attitude and make it appear that the face was taken in the position it would naturally hold in life, and so they went out and left him alone with the dead.

The face was a strong and positive one, such as may often be seen among Jewish matrons. Hoyt regarded it with some admiration, thinking to himself that she was a woman who had been used to having her own way. There was a strand of hair out of place, and he pushed it

back from her brow. A bud lifted its head too high from among the roses on her breast and spoiled the contour of the chin, so he broke it off. He remembered these things later very distinctly and that his hand touched her bare face two or three times.

Then he took the photographs and left the house.

He was very busy at the time and several days elapsed before he was able to develop the plates. He took them from the bath, in which they had lain with a number of others, and went to work upon them. There were three plates, he having taken that number merely as a precaution against any accident. They came up well, but as they developed he became aware of the existence of something in the photograph which had not been apparent to his eye. The mysterious always came under the head of the disagreeable with him, and was therefore to be banished, so he made only a few prints and put the things away out of sight. He hoped that something would intervene to save him from attempting an explanation.

But it is a part of the general perplexity of life that things do not intervene as they ought and when they ought, so one day his employer asked him what had become of those photographs. He tried to evade him, but it was futile, and he got out the finished photographs and showed them to him. The older man sat staring at them a long time.

"Hoyt," said he, at length, "you're a young man, and I suppose you have never seen anything like this before.

But I have. Not exactly the same thing, but similar phenomena have come my way a number of times since I went into the business, and I want to tell you there are things in heaven and earth not dreamt of——"

"Oh, I know all that tommy-rot," cried Hoyt, angrily, "but when anything happens I want to know the reason why, and how it is done."

"All right," said his employer, "then you might explain why and how the sun rises."

But he humored the younger man sufficiently to examine with him the bath in which the plates were submerged and the plates themselves. All was as it should be. But the mystery was there and could not be done away with.

Hoyt hoped against hope that the friends of the dead woman would somehow forget about the photographs, but of course the wish was unreasonable, and one day the daughter appeared and asked to see the photographs of her mother.

"Well, to tell the truth," stammered Hoyt, "those didn't come out as well as we could wish."

"But let me see them," persisted the lady. "I'd like to look at them, anyway."

He showed her the prints.

"Well, now," said Hoyt, trying to be soothing, as he believed it was always best to be with women—to tell the truth, he was an ignoramus where women were concerned—"I think it would be better if you didn't see them. There are reasons why——" he ambled on like this,

stupid man that he was, and of course the Jewess said she would see those pictures without any further delay.

So poor Hoyt brought them out and placed them in her hand, and then ran for the water pitcher, and had to be at the bother of bathing her forehead to keep her from fainting.

For what the lady saw was this: Over face and flowers and the head of the coffin fell a thick veil, the edges of which touched the floor in some places. It covered the features so well that not a hint of them was visible.

"There was nothing over mother's face," cried the lady at length.

"Not a thing," acquiesced Hoyt. "I know, because I had occasion to touch her face just before I took the picture. I put some of her hair back from her brow."

"What does it mean, then?" asked the lady.

"You know better than I. There is no explanation in science. Perhaps there is some in psychology."

"Well," said the lady, stammering a little and coloring, "mother was a good woman, but she always wanted her own way, and she always had it, too."

"Yes?"

"And she never would have her picture taken. She didn't admire herself. She said no one should ever see a picture of hers."

"So?" said Hoyt, meditatively. "Well, she's kept her word, hasn't she?"

The two stood looking at the pictures for a time. Then

Hoyt pointed to the open blaze in the grate.

"Throw them in," he commanded. "Don't let your father see them—don't keep them yourself. They wouldn't be good things to keep."

"That's true enough," said the lady, slowly. And she threw them in the fire. Then Virgil Hoyt brought out the plates and broke them before her eyes.

And that was the end of it—except that Hoyt sometimes tells the story to those who sit beside him when his pipe is lighted.

The Old Mansion

Q.E.D.

Down on Long Beach, that narrow strip of sand which stretches along the New Jersey coast from Barnegat Inlet on the north to Little Egg Harbor Inlet on the south, the summer sojourner at some one of the numerous resorts, which of late years have sprung up every few miles, may, in wandering over the sand dunes just across the bay from the village of Manahawkin, stumble over some charred timbers or vestiges of crumbling chimneys, showing that once, years back, a human habitation has stood there. If the find rouses the jaded curiosity of the visitor sufficiently to impel him to question the weatherbeaten old bayman who sails him on his fishing trips he will learn that these relics mark the site of one of the first summer hotels erected on the New Jersey coast.

"That's where the Old Mansion stood," he will be informed by Captain Nate or Captain Sam, or whatever particular captain it may chance to be, and if by good fortune it chances to be Captain Jim, he will hear

a story that will pleasantly pass away the long wait for a sheepshead bite.

It was my good luck to have secured Captain Jim for a preceptor in the angler's art during my vacation last summer, and his stories and reminiscences of Long Beach were not the least enjoyable features of the two weeks' sojourn.

Captain Jim was not garrulous. Few of the baymen are. They are a sturdy, self-reliant and self-controlled people, full of strong common sense, but still with that firm belief in the supernatural which seems inherent in dwellers by the sea.

"The Old Mansion," said Captain Jim, "or the Mansion of Health, for that was its full name, was built away back in 1822, so I've heard my father say. There had been a tavern close by years before that was kept by a man named Cranmer, and people used to come from Philadelphia by stage, sixty miles through the pines, to 'Hawkin, and then cross here by boat. Some would stop at Cranmer's and others went on down the beach to Homer's which was clear down at End by the Inlet. Finally some of the wealthy people concluded that they wanted better accommodations than Cranmer gave, so they formed the Great Swamp Long Beach Company, and built the Mansion of Health. I've heard that when it was built it was the biggest hotel on the coast, and was considered a wonder. It was 120 feet long, three stories high, and had a porch running all the way around it, with a balcony

on top.

It was certainly a big thing for those days. I've heard father tell many a time of the stage loads of gay people that used to come rattling into 'Hawkin, each stage drawn by four horses, and sometimes four or five of them a day in the summer. A good many people, too, used to come in their own carriages, and leave them over on the mainland until they were ready to go home. There were gay times at the Old Mansion then, and it made times good for the people along shore, too."

"How long did the Old Mansion flourish, Captain?" I asked.

"Well, for twenty-five or thirty years people came there summer after summer. Then they built a railroad to Cape May, and that, with the ghosts, settled the Mansion of Health."

"What do you mean by the ghosts?" I demanded.

"Well, you see," said Captain Jim, cutting off a mouthful of navy plug, "the story got around that the old house was haunted. Some people said there were queer things seen there, and strange noises were heard that nobody could account for, and pretty soon the place got a bad name and visitors were so few that it didn't pay to keep it open any more."

"But how did it get the name of being haunted, Captain Jim?" I persisted.

"Why, it was this way," continued the mariner.

"Maybe you've heard of the time early in the fifties

when the Powhatan was wrecked on the beach here, and every soul on board was lost. She was an emigrant ship, and there were over 400 people aboard—passengers and crew. She came ashore here during the equinoctial storm in September. There wasn't any life-saving stations in them days, and everyone was drowned. You can see the long graves now over in the 'Hawkin churchyard, where the bodies were buried after they came ashore. They put them in three long trenches that were dug from one end of the burying-ground to the other. The only people on the beach that night was the man who took care of the old mansion. He lived there with his family, and his son-in-law lived with him. He was the wreckmaster for this part of the coast, too. It wasn't till the second day that the people from 'Hawkin could get over to the beach, and by that time the bodies had all come ashore, and the wreckmaster had them all piled up on the sand. I was a youngster, then, and came over with my father, and, I tell you, it was the awfullest sight I ever saw—them long rows of drowned people, all lying there with their white, still faces turned up to the sky. Some were women, with their dead babies clasped tight in their arms, and some were husbands and wives, whose bodies came ashore locked together in a death embrace. I'll never forget that sight as long as I live. Well, when the coroner came and took charge he began to inquire whether any money or valuables had been found, but the wreckmaster declared that not a solitary coin had been washed ashore. People

thought this was rather singular, as the emigrants were, most of them, well-to-do Germans, and were known to have brought a good deal of money with them, but it was concluded that it had gone down with the ship. Well, the poor emigrants were given pauper burial, and the people had begun to forget their suspicions until three or four months later there came another storm, and the sea broke clear over the beach, just below the Old Mansion, and washed away the sand. Next morning early two men from 'Hawkin sailed across the bay and landed on the beach. They walked across on the hard bottom where the sea had washed across, and, when about half way from the bay, one of the men saw something curious close up against the stump of an old cedar tree. He called the other man's attention to it, and they went over to the stump. What they found was a pile of leather money-belts that would have filled a wheelbarrow. Every one was cut open and empty. They had been buried in the sand close by the old stump, and the sea had washed away the covering. The men didn't go any further.

"They carried the belts to their boats and sailed back to 'Hawkin as fast as the wind would take them. Of course, it made a big sensation, and everybody was satisfied that the wreckmaster had robbed the bodies, if he hadn't done anything worse, but there was no way to prove it, and so nothing was done. The wreckmaster didn't stay around here long after that, though. The people made it too hot for him, and he and his family went away South, where

it was said he bought a big plantation and a lot of slaves. Years afterward the story came to 'Hawkin somehow that he was killed in a barroom brawl, and that his son-in-law was drowned by his boat upsettin' while he was out fishin'. I don't furnish any affidavits with that part of the story, though.

"However, after that nobody lived in the Old Mansion for long at a time. People would go there, stay a week or two, and leave—and at last it was given up entirely to beach parties in the day time, and ghosts at night."

"But, Captain, you don't really believe the ghost part, do you?" I asked.

Captain Jim looked down the bay, expectorated gravely over the side of the boat, and answered, slowly:

"Well, I don't know as I would have believed in 'em if I hadn't seen the ghost."

"What!" I exclaimed; "you saw it? Tell me about it. I've always wanted to see a ghost, or next best thing, a man who has seen one."

"It was one August, about 1861," said the captain.

"I was a young feller then, and with a half dozen more was over on the beach cutting salt hay. We didn't go home at nights, but did our own cooking in the Old Mansion kitchen, and at nights slept on piles of hay upstairs. We were a reckless lot of scamps, and reckoned that no ghosts could scare us. There was a big full moon that night, and it was as light as day. The muskeeters was pretty bad, too, and it was easier to stay awake than go to sleep. Along

toward midnight me and two other fellers went out on the old balcony, and began to race around the house. We hollered and yelled, and chased each other for half an hour or so, and then we concluded we had better go to sleep, so we started for the window of the room where the rest were. This window was near one end on the ocean side, and as I came around the corner I stopped as if I had been shot, and my hair raised straight up on top of my head. Right there in front of that window stood a woman looking out over the sea, and in her arms she held a little child. I saw her as plain as I see you now. It seemed to me like an hour she stood there, but I don't suppose it was a second; then she was gone. When I could move I looked around for the other boys, and they were standing there paralyzed. They had seen the woman, too. We didn't say much, and we didn't sleep much that night, and the next night we bunked out on the beach. The rest of the crowd made all manner of fun of us, but we had had all the ghost we wanted, and I never set foot inside the old house after that."

"When did it burn down, Captain?" I asked, as Jim relapsed into silence.

"Somewhere about twenty-five years ago. A beach party had been roasting clams in the old oven, and in some way the fire got to the woodwork. It was as dry as tinder, and I hope the ghosts were all burnt up with it."

The Veilded Nun of St Leonards

William Thomas Linskill

Curiously enough, although I have been in many old haunted castles and churches (at the exactly correct hour, viz., midnight) in Scotland, England, Wales, and the Rhine country, yet I have never been able to either see or hear a ghost of any sort. The only thing of the kind I ever saw was an accidental meeting with the far-famed "Spring-heeled Jack" in a dark lane at Helensburgh. It was many years ago, and as I was then very small and he was of immense proportions, the meeting was distinctly unpleasant for me.

Now, from legends we learn that St Andrews is possessed of a prodigious number of supernatural appearances of different kinds, sizes, and shapes—most of them of an awe-inspiring and blood curdling type. In fact, so numerous are they—80 in number they seem to be—that there is really no room for any modern aspirants who may want a quiet place to appear and turn people's hair white. It might be well to mention a few of them before telling the tale of "The Veiled Nun of St Leonards

Church Avenue."

We will put aside ordinary banshees and things that can only be heard. Well, there is the celebrated Phantom Coach that Willie Carson told us of. It has been heard and seen by many. There is also a white lady that used to haunt the Abbey Road, the ghost of St Rule's Tower, the Haunted Tower ghost, the Blackfriars ghost, the wraith of Hackston of Rathillet, the spectre of the old Castle, the Dancing Skeletons, the smothered Piper Lad, the Phantom Bloodhound, the Priory Ghost, and many, many more. The Nun of St Leonards is as curious and interesting as any of them, though a bit weird and gruesome. In the time of charming Mary Stuart, our white Queen, there lived in the old South Street a very lovely lady belonging to a very old Scottish family, and her beauty and wit brought many admirers to claim her hand, but with little or no success. She waved them all away. At last she became affianced to a fine and brave young fellow who came from the East Lothian country, and for some months all went merrily as a marriage bell, but at last clouds overspread the rosy horizon. She resolved that she would never become an earthly bride, but would take the veil and become a bride of Holy Church—a nun, in point of fact. When her lover heard that she had left home and entered a house of Holy Sisters, he at once announced his intention of hastening to St Andrews, seizing her, and marrying her at once. In this project it would seem the young lady's parents

were in perfect agreement with the devoted youth. He did hasten to St Andrews almost immediately, and there received a terrible shock. On meeting this once lovely and loved maiden, he discovered that she had actually done what she had written and threatened to do. Sooner than be an earthly bride she had mutilated her face by slitting her nostrils; she had cut off her eyelids and both her top and bottom lips, and had branded her fair cheeks with cruel hot irons.

The poor youth, on seeing her famous beauty thus destroyed, fled to Edinburgh, where he committed suicide, and she, after becoming a nun, died from grief and remorse. That all happened nearly 400 years ago; but her spirit with the terribly marred and mutilated face still wanders o' nights in the peaceful little avenue to old St Leonards iron kirk gate down the Pends Road. She is all dressed in black, with a long black veil over the once lovely face, and carries a lantern in her hand. Should any bold visitor to that avenue meet her, she slowly sweeps her face veil aside, raises the lantern to her scarred face, and discloses those awful features to his horrified gaze. Here is a curious thing that I know happened there a few years ago.

I knew a young fellow here who was reading up theology and Church canon law. I also knew a great friend of his, an old Cambridge man. The former I will call Wilson, and the latter Talbot, as I do not want to give the exact names. Well, Wilson had invited Talbot up to

St Andrews for a month of golf, and he arrived here on a Christmas day. He came to my rooms for about ten minutes, and I never saw any one merrier and brighter and full of old days at Cambridge. Then he hurried off to see the Links and the Club. Late that evening Wilson rushed in. "Come along quick and see Talbot; he's awfully ill, and I don't know what's up a bit." I went off and found Talbot in his lodgings with a doctor in attendance, and he certainly looked dangerously ill, and seemed perfectly dazed. Wilson told me that he had to go to see some people on business that evening down by the harbour, and that he took Talbot with him down the Pends Road. It was a fine night, and Talbot said he would walk about the road and enjoy a cigar till his friend's return. In about half-an-hour Wilson returned up the Pends Road, but could see Talbot nowhere in sight. After hunting about for a long time, he found him leaning against the third or fourth tree up the little avenue to St Leonards kirk gate.

He went up to him, when Talbot turned a horrified face towards him, saying, "Oh, my God, have you come to me again?" and fell down in a fit or a swoon. He got some passers-by to help to take poor Talbot to his rooms. Then he came round for me. We sat up with him in wonder and amazement; and, briefly, this is what he told us. After walking up and down the Pends Road, he thought he would take a survey of the little avenue, when at the end he saw a light approaching him, and he turned back to meet it. Thinking it was a policeman, he wished

him "Good evening," but got no reply. On approaching nearer he saw it to be a veiled female with a lantern. Getting quite close, she stopped in front of him, drew aside her long veil, and held up the lantern towards him. "My God," said Talbot, "I can never forget or describe that terrible, fearful face. I felt choked, and I fell like a log at her feet. I remember no more till I found myself in these rooms, and you two fellows sitting beside me. I leave this place to-morrow"—and he did by the first train. His state of panic was terrible to see. Neither Wilson nor Talbot had ever heard the tale of the awful apparition of the St Leonards nun, and I had almost forgotten the existence of the strange story till so curiously reminded of it. I never saw Talbot again, but I had a letter from him a year after written from Rhienfells, telling me that on Christmas day he had had another vision, dream, or whatever it was, of the same awful spectre. About a year later I read in a paper that poor old Talbot had died on Christmas night at Rosario of heart failure. I often wonder if the dear old chap had had another visit from the terrible Veiled Nun of St Leonards Avenue.

The Boy Who Was Caught

S. Mukerji

Nothing is more common in India than seeing a ghost. Every one of us has seen ghost at some period of his existence; and if we have not actually seen one, some other person has, and has given us such a vivid description that we cannot but believe to be true what we hear.

This is, however, my own experience. I am told others have observed the phenomenon before.

When we were boys at school we used, among other things, to discuss ghosts. Most of my fellow students asserted that they did not believe in ghosts, but I was one of those who not only believed in their existence but also in their power to do harm to human beings if they liked. Of course, I was in the minority. As a matter of fact I knew that all those who said that they did not believe in ghosts told a lie. They believed in ghosts as much as I did, only they had not the courage to admit their weakness and differ boldly from the sceptics. Among the lot of unbelievers was one Ram Lal, a student of the Fifth Standard, who swore that he did not believe in ghosts

and further that he would do anything to convince us that they did not exist.

It was, therefore, at my suggestion that he decided to go one moon-light night and hammer down a wooden peg into the soft sandy soil of the Hindoo Burning Ghat, it being well known that the ghosts generally put in a visible appearance at a burning ghat on a moon-light night. (A burning ghat is the place where dead bodies of Hindoos are cremated).

It was the warm month of April and the river had shrunk into the size of a nullah or drain. The real pukka ghat (the bathing place, built of bricks and lime) was about 200 yards from the water of the main stream, with a stretch of sand between.

The ghats are only used in the morning when people come to bathe, and in the evening they are all deserted. After a game of football on the school grounds we sometimes used to come and sit on the pukka ghat for an hour and return home after nightfall.

Now, it was the 23rd of April and a bright moon-light night, every one of us (there were about a dozen) had told the people at home that there was a function at the school and he might

be late. On this night, it was arranged that the ghost test should take place.

The boy who had challenged the ghost, Ram Lal, was to join us at the pukka ghat at 8 P.M.; and then while we waited there he would walk across the sand and drive the

peg into the ground at the place where a dead body had been cremated that very morning. We were to supply the peg and the hammer. (I had to pay the school gardener two annas for the loan of a peg and a hammer).

Well, we procured the peg and the hammer and proceeded to the pukka ghat. If the gardener had known what we required the peg and the hammer for, I am sure he would not have lent these to us.

Though I was a firm believer in ghosts yet I did not expect that Ram Lal would be caught. What I hoped for was that he would not turn up at the trysting place. But to my disappointment Ram Lal did turn up and at the appointed hour too. He came boasting as usual, took the peg and the hammer and started across the sand saying that he would break the head of any ghost who might venture within the reach of the hammerhead. Well, he went along and we waited

for his return at the pukka ghat. It was a glorious night, the whole expanse of sand was shining in the bright moon-light.

On and on went Ram Lal with the peg in his left hand and the hammer in his right. He was dressed in the usual upcountry Indian style, in a long coat or Achkan which reached well below his knees and fluttered in the breeze.

As he went on his pace slackened. When he had gone about half the distance he stopped and looked back. We hoped he would return. He put down the hammer and the peg, sat down on the sand facing us, took off his

shoes. Only some sand had got in. He took up the peg and hammer and walked on.

But then we felt that his courage was oozing away. Another fifty yards and he again stopped, and looked back at us.

Another fifty yards remained. Will he return? No! he again proceeded, but we could clearly see that his steps were less jaunty than when he had started. We knew that he was trembling, we knew that he would have blessed us to call him back. But we would not yield, neither would he. Looking in our direction at every step he proceeded and reached the burning ghat. He reached the identical spot where the pyre had been erected in the morning.

There was very little breeze,—not a mouse stirring. Not a soul was within 200 yards of him and he could not expect much help from us. How poor Ram Lal's heart must have palpitated! When we see Ram Lal now how we feel that we should burst.

Well, Ram Lal knelt down, fixed the peg in the wet sandy soil and began hammering. After each stroke he looked at us and at the river and in all directions. He struck blow after blow and we counted about thirty. That his hands had become nerveless we would understand, for otherwise a dozen strokes should have been enough to make the peg vanish in the soft sandy soil.

The peg went in and only about a couple of inches remained visible above the surface; and then Ram Lal thought of coming back. He was kneeling still. He tried

to stand up, gave out a shrill cry for help and fell down face foremost.

It must have been his cry for help that made us forget our fear of the ghost, and we all ran at top speed towards the ghat. It was rather difficult to run fast on the sand but we managed it as well as we could, and stopped only when we were about half a dozen yards from the unconscious form of Ram Lal.

There he lay senseless as if gone to sleep. Our instinct told us that he was not dead. We thanked God, and each one of us sent up a silent prayer. Then we cried for help and a boatman who lived a quarter of a mile away came up. He took up Ram Lal in his arms and as he was doing it tr—rrrrrrrrrr— went Ram Lal's long coat. The unfortunate lad had hammered the skirt of his long coat along with the peg into the ground.

We took Ram Lal to his house and explained to his mother that he had a bad fall in the football field, and there we left him.

The next morning at school, one student, who was a neighbour of Ram Lal, told us that the whole mischief had become known.

Ram Lal, it appears, got high fever immediately after we had left him and about midnight he became delirious and in that condition he disclosed everything in connection with his adventure at the ghat.

In the evening we went to see him. His parents were very angry with us.

The whole story reached the ears of the school authorities and we got, what I thought I richly deserved (for having allowed any mortal being to defy a ghost) but what I need not say.

Ram Lal is now a grown up young man. He holds a responsible government appointment and I meet him sometimes when he comes to tour in our part of the Province. I always ask him if he has seen a ghost since we met last.

In this connection it will not be out of place to mention two simple stories one from my own experience and another told by a friend.

I shall tell my friend's story first, in his own words.

"I used to go for a bath in the Ganges early every morning. I used to start from home at 4 o'clock in the morning and walked down to the Ganges which was about 3 miles from my house. The bath took about an hour and then I used to come back in my carriage which went for me at about six in the morning.

"On this eventful morning when I awoke it was brilliant moonlight and so I thought it was dawn.

"I started from home without looking at the clock and when I was about a mile and a half from home and about the same distance from the river I realized that I was rather early. The policeman under the railway bridge told me that it was only 2 o'clock. I knew that I should have to cross the small maidan through which the road ran and I remembered that there was a rumour that a

ghost had sometimes been seen in the maidan and on the road. This however did not make me nervous, because I really did not believe in ghosts; but all the same I wished I could have gone back. But then in going back I should have to pass the policeman and he would think that I was afraid; so I decided to go on.

"When I entered the maidan a creepy sensation came over me. My first idea was that I was being followed, but I did not dare look back, all the same I went on with quick steps.

"My next idea was that a gust of wind swept past me, and then I thought that a huge form was passing over the trees which lined the road.

"By this time I was in the middle of the maidan about half a mile from the nearest human being.

"And then, horror of horrors, the huge form came down from the trees and stood in the middle of the road about a hundred yards ahead of me, barring my way.

"I instinctively moved to the side—but did not stop. By the time I reached the spot, I had left the metalled portion of the road and was actually passing under the road-side trees allowing their thick trunks to intervene between me and the huge form standing in the middle of the road. I did not look at it, but I was sure it was extending a gigantic arm towards me. It could not, however, catch me and I walked on with vigorous strides. After I had passed the figure I nearly ran under the trees, my heart beating like a sledge hammer within me.

"After a couple of minutes I saw two glaring eyes in front of me. This I thought was the end. The eyes were advancing towards me at a rapid pace and then I heard a shout like that of a cow in distress. I stopped where I was. I hoped the ghost would pass along the road overlooking me. But when the ghost was within say fifty yards of me it gave another howl and I knew that it had seen me. A cry for help escaped my lips and I fainted.

"When I regained consciousness I found myself on the grassy foot-path by the side of the road, about 4 or 5 human beings hovering about me and a motor car standing near.

"Then the whole mystery became clear as day-light. The eyes that I had seen were the headlights of the 24 H.P. Silent Knight Minerva of Captain ——. He had gone on a pleasure-trip to the next station and was returning home with two friends and his wife in his motor car when in that part of the road he saw something like a man standing in the middle of the road and sounded his horn. As the figure in the middle of the road would not move aside he slowed down and then heard my cry.

"The rest the reader may guess. The figure that had loomed so large with out-stretched arm was only a municipal danger signal erected in the middle of the road. A red lamp had been placed on the top of the erection but it had been blown out."

This was the whole story of my friend. It shows how even our prosaic but overwrought imagination sometimes

gives to airy nothings a local habitation and a name. My own personal experience which I shall describe now will also, I am sure, be interesting.

It was on a brilliant moon-light night in the month of June that we were sleeping in the open court-yard of our house.

Of course, the court-yard had a wall all round with a partition in the middle; on one side of the partition slept three girls of the family and on the other were the younger male members, four in number.

It was our custom to have a long chat after dinner and before retiring to bed.

On this particular night the talk had been about ghosts. Of course, the girls are always ready to believe everything and so when we left them we knew that they would not sleep very comfortably that night. We retired to our part of the court-yard, but we could overhear the conversation of the girls. One was trying to convince the other two that ghosts did not exist and if they did exist they never came into contact with human beings.

Then we fell asleep.

How long we had slept we did not know, but a sudden cry from, one of the girls awoke us and within three seconds we were across the low partition wall, and with her. She was sitting up in bed pointing with her fingers. Following the direction we saw in the clear moonlight the figure of a short woman standing in the corner of the court-yard about 20 yards from us pointing her finger at

something (not towards us).

We looked in that direction bub could see nothing peculiar there.

Our first idea was that it was one of the maid-servants, who had heard our after-dinner conversation, playing the ghost. But this particular ghostly lady was very short, much shorter than any servant in the establishment. After some, hesitation all (four) of us advanced towards the ghost. I remember how my heart throbbed as I advanced with the other three boys.

Then we laughed loud and long.

What do you think it was?

It was only the Lawn Tennis net wrapped round the pole standing against the wall. The handle of the ratchet arrangement looked like an extending finger.

But from a distance in the moon-light it looked exactly like a short woman draped in white.

This story again shows what trick our imagination plays with us at times.

Talking of ghosts reminds me of a very funny story told by a friend of my grand-father—a famous medical man of Calcutta.

This famous doctor was once sent for to treat a gentleman at Agra. This gentleman was a rich Marwari who was suffering from indigestion. When the doctor reached Agra he was lodged in very comfortable quarters and a number of horses and carriages was placed at his disposal.

He was informed that the patient had been treated

by all the local and provincial practitioners but without any result.

The doctor who was as clever a man of the world as of medicine, at once saw that there was really nothing the matter with the patient. He was really suffering from a curious malady which could in a phrase be called—"want of physical exercise."

Agra, the city after which the Province is named, abounds in old magnificent buildings which it takes the tourist a considerable time to see, and the Doctor, of course, was enjoying all the sights in the meantime.

He also prescribed a number of medicines which proved of no avail. The Doctor had anticipated it, and so he had decided what medicine he would prescribe next.

During the sight-seeing excursions into the environs of the city the doctor had discovered a large pukka well not far from a main street and at a distance of 3 miles from his patient's house.

This was a very old disused well and it was generally rumoured that a ghost dwelt in it. So nobody would go near the well at night. Of course, there was a lot of stories as to what the ghost looked like and how he came out at times and stood on the brink and all that,—but the doctor really did not believe any of these. He, however, believed that this ghost, (whether there really was any or not in that well) would cure his patient.

So one morning when he saw his patient he said "Lalla Saheb—I have found out the real cause of your

trouble—it is a ghost whom you have got to propitiate and unless you do that you will never get well—and no medicine will help you and your digestion will never improve."

"A Ghost?" asked the patient.

"A Ghost!" exclaimed the people around.

"A Ghost" said the doctor sagely.

"What shall I have to do?" inquired the patient, anxiously—

"You will have to go every morning to that well (indicating the one mentioned above), and throw a basketful of flowers in" said the doctor.

"I shall do that every day" said the patient.

"Then we shall begin from to-morrow" said the doctor.

The next morning everybody had been ready to start long before the doctor was out of bed. He came at last and all got up to start. Then a big landau and pair drew up to take the doctor and the patient to the abode of the ghost in the well. Just as the patient was thinking of getting in the doctor said "We don't require a carriage Lalla Saheb—we shall all have to walk—and bare-footed too, and between you and me we shall have to carry the basket of flowers also."

The patient was really troubled. Never indeed in his life had he walked a mile—not to say of three—and that, bare-footed and carrying a basket of flowers in his hands. However he had to do it. It was a goodly procession. The big millionaire—the big doctor with a large number of

followers walking bare-footed—caused amazement and amusement to all who saw them.

It took them a full hour and a half to reach the well—and there the doctor pronounced the mantra in Sanskrit and the flowers were thrown in. The mantra (charm) was in Sanskrit, the doctor who knew a little of the language had taken great pains to compose it the night before and even then it was not grammatically quite correct.

At last the party returned, but not on foot. The journey back was performed in the carriages that had followed the patient and his doctor. From that day the practice was followed regularly. The patient's health began to improve and he began to regain his power of digestion fast. In a month he was all right; but he never discontinued the practice of going to the well and throwing in a basketful of flowers with his own hands. He had also learnt the mantra (the mystic charm) by heart; but the doctor had sworn him to secrecy and he told it to nobody. Shoes with felt sole were soon procured from England (it being 40 years before any Indian Rope Sole Shoe Factory came into existence) and thus the inconvenience of walking this distance bare-footed was easily obviated.

After a month's further stay the doctor came away from Agra having earned a fabulous fee, and he always received occasional letters and presents from his patient who never discontinued the practice of visiting the well till his death about 17 years later.

"The three-mile walk is all that he requires" said

the doctor to his friends (among whom evidently my grand-father was one) on his return from Agra, "and since he has got used to it now he won't discontinue even if he comes to know of the deception I have practised on him—and I have cured his indigestion after all."

The patient, of course, never discovered the fraud. He never gave the matter his serious consideration. His friends, who were as ignorant and prejudiced as he himself was, believed in the ghost as much as he did himself. The medical practitioners of Agra who probably were in the Doctor's secret never told him anything—and if they had told him anything they would probably have heard language from Our patient that could not well be described as quite parliamentary, for they had all tried to cure him and failed.

This series of stories will prove how much "imagination" works upon the external organs of a human being. If a person goes about with the idea that there is a ghost somewhere about he will probably see the ghost in everything. But has it ever struck the reader that sometimes horses and dogs do not quite enjoy going to a place which is reputed to be haunted?

In a village in Bengal not far from my home there is a big Jack-fruit tree which is said to be haunted.

I visited this place once—the local zamindar had sent me his elephant. The Gomashta (estate manager) who knew that I had come to see the haunted tree, told me that I should probably see nothing during the day, but

the elephant would not go near the tree.

I passed the tree. It was about 3 miles from the Railway Station. There was nothing extraordinary about it. This was about 11 o'clock in the morning. Then I went to the Shooting Box (usually called the Cutchery or Court

house—where the zamindars and their servants put up when they pay a visit to this part of their possessions) to have my bath and breakfast most hospitably provided by my generous host. I ordered the elephant to be put under this tree, and this was done though the people there told me that the elephant would not remain there long.

At about 2 P.M. I heard an extraordinary noise from the tree.

It was only the elephant. It was wailing and was looking as bad as it possibly could.

We all went there but found nothing. The elephant was not ill.

I ordered it to be taken away from under the tree. As soon as the chain was removed from the animal's foot it rushed away like a race horse and would not stop within 200 yards of the tree. I was vastly amused. I had never seen an elephant running before. But under the tree we found nothing. What made the elephant so afraid has remained a secret.

The servants told me (what I had heard before) that it was only elephants, horses and dogs that did not stay long under that tree. No human eyes have ever seen anything supernatural or fearful there.

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COLOPHON

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