GHOSTLY VISITORS:

A

SERIES OF AUTHENTIC NARRATIVES.

BY

"SPECTRE STRICKEN." PSEUD.

William Stainton Moses

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY M.A. (Oxon.)

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Dedicated

TO

MRS. THOMAS BAILLIE,

IN

REMEMBRANCE OF BONNIE SCOTLAND.

BY

"SPECTRE STRICKEN."

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following series of Ghost Stories was placed in my hands some short time ago by the compiler, with the request that I would pronounce an opinion on the advisability of publishing them. Before I could offer any advice, it was necessary to arrive at some conclusion as to their authenticity. It is very easy to fabricate out of the imagination a series of stories that shall beat facts out of the field. Such Christmas food is amusing, but valueless for any purpose beyond. I set myself, therefore, to inquire whether the stories were fiction or records of fact. I found that they are authentic records of actual fact, and I have in my possesssion the key to the various stories, with the full names of the persons who figure there under initials, or with some disguise.

It is a matter of regret that such narratives cannot be printed with full names, and due attestation. But no one will be surprised that people should shrink from such publicity, if only to avoid the annoyance that would assuredly come upon them from mere impertinent curiosity.

It is obviously impossible to publish the evidence which guarantees the authenticity of these stories. I have thought, therefore, that an assurance that they are what they pretend to be, authentic records of actual facts, given by one who has concerned himself much with such things, might remove possible misconception. For this reason I take on myself to say these few introductory words.

M.A. OXON.

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No, it was of no use attempting it any longer, I, William Coventry, of Brasenose, going in for honours, could not study. Do what I would, my thoughts wandered away to other subjects. Voting Homer a bore, I threw it from me with a yawn, and dashing on my smoking cap, set out for my friend Weston's rooms, hoping to find him as disinclined for work as myself. This proved to be the case. I turned the handle of his door just as he himself took hold of it on the other side. After a few moments twisting and turning the door opened between us, and we confronted each other much to Weston's surprise.

"Ha! ha! old boy," he said, laughing, and with a glance at my cap, "so you have come after me; funny enough, I was coming to have a weed with you. I don't know wherefore, but I can *not* settle to my books."

As I was about to reply, we were joined by another man, Danecourt, of Balliol, who had sought Weston's with intentions similar to mine. The high wind, he thought, must have weakened his nerve power, for he felt not quite up to the mark as regards study.

Weston with that free-hearted hospitality for which he was celebrated, made us heartily welcome. Some rare old port, a present from his "governor," was produced and discussed equally to our own and his satisfaction; then followed cigars, and after some desultory conversation—ghost stories! These were prefaced by the remark from Weston, that it was just the night for tales of the supernatural, the wind having risen to hurricane point, which always served to *raise the spirits*, as his grandmother, God bless her! used to remark.

Danecourt was to have the precedence as narrator, the Danecourts, of Danecourt, Lancashire, having had a family-ghost ever since the first of their name came over with the conquering Norman. Their spectre, however, belonged to the invisible order, modestly contenting itself with ringing bells at impossible hours, twitching caps off the servants' heads, wrenching off door-handles, and with sundry tappings and scratchings, whereby the nervous systems of many of the female Danecourts had been seriously injured.

Thus called to the chair, Danecourt told the following story:—

A MOTHER'S WARNING.

"Mr. B ——, an intimate acquaintance and near neighbour of ours in Lancashire, had the misfortune a few years ago to lose his wife in the most melancholy manner. This sad bereavement rendered the house in which he lived so distasteful to him, that he at once left it, and, with his four children, went to reside in a large, old rambling mansion, situated in another part of the county.

"On their arrival, Mr. B ——'s attention, and that of his servants, was naturally taken up with domestic arrangements, so that the little ones were in a great measure left to themselves. Exulting in their freedom, the merry sprites ran hither and thither, up one stair and down another, along corridors ending in blank walls, through stately apartments—the size and gloom of which filled their young minds with awe—now in quaint odd nooks and corners; anon in a picture gallery; again in chambers cob-webbed and dreary-looking. At length by means of a spiral stair leading up from one of these they reached a room cedar-panelled, and of dark cold aspect. Into this chamber the sun never shone; there was but one window, and that almost entirely closed up. Three or four dismal pictures representing some quaint, old, mythical legends were empanelled in the walls. The hitherto noisy children gazed around with hushed voices and bated breath. A something in its aspect frightened them. They left hastily, and ran down stairs, the eldest, a girl of eight years old, leading the way. In her haste she passed the door by which they

entered on to the stair; onwards in her terror she sped, down —down into darkness.

"Suddenly her flight was stayed, and she retreated backward, the wild startled cry of 'Mamma!' bursting from her lips. The others, terrified, stood for an instant in mute dismay, then turned and fled, she following them, sobbing out, "I have seen mamma, and she waves us back.'

"Thoroughly frightened, they sought their father, and, with pale faces, faltered out their story. Much moved, Mr. B —— provided himself with a candle, and, in company with his children, descended the staircase. To his unspeakable horror the light of the candle revealed to him a wide yawning well within a few paces from where his eldest girl had stood, and into which she would inevitably have fallen but for the spirit mother who stood at its brink, and by her ministering presence saved her child."

Scarcely had Danecourt finished speaking when a series of peculiar taps came to the door. In answer to Weston's "Come in," three Brasenose men, neighbours of mine, entered. They had been to my rooms, and, finding me absent, naturally concluded that I should be found at Weston's. Study had been as impossible with them as with us—high wind had generated a nervous disturbance akin to a meteorological storm. The circle was enlarged, some claret produced to suit the taste of the new-comers, and a fresh supply of cigars thrown upon the table. Informed that ghost-lore was the subject of discourse, Selby expressed his readiness to succeed Danecourt as narrator, and was accordingly placed in the speaker's chair.

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

(Selby loquitur.)—"At a wine-party given some years ago by a Balliol friend of mine, the conversation, as it has chanced to-night, turned upon ghosts, or visitations of spirits, and endless were the arguments brought forward in support of each individual belief. The dispute ran high. One young man in particular was vehement in his assertions that *no* spirit once released from the body could revisit earth. Many forcible

arguments were urged by those who entertained contrary opinions to prove he was wrong—many strange and well-authenticated ghost-stories were narrated, but all to no purpose; he could not be brought to believe in the supernatural. A few evenings after, another friend of mine (whose identity I shall conceal under the initial letter C——) who had rooms in the same quadrangle with F——, the giver of the wine-party, feeling himself indisposed for reading, crossed over to F——'s rooms, as he was frequently in the habit of doing when in these idle moods. To his surprise, on entering, he saw his friend standing with his hand on the back of a chair, and his eyes fixed on M—— (the youth who had so persistently denied the existence of ghosts) who, deadly pale and in evening dress, was seated opposite to, and gazing attentively on him.

"Imagining, from the strange looks of both parties, that high words had passed between them, and thinking it better to appear as if he had not noticed anything peculiar, C—— went up to F——, and addressed to him some trivial remark; but keeping his eyes still fixed on M——, F—— said, in excited tones, and pointing in his direction, 'Go, and speak to *him!*'

"C—— turned round for that purpose, when (did his eyes deceive him?)—the chair was empty!

"In amazement both the men gazed on each other in silence. At length C—— said in a low voice—

"'What can be the meaning of this?'

"'I know not,' said F——. 'Shortly before you came in, I chanced to raise my eyes from my book, and there was M——, sitting pale and silent, just as you saw him—can he be ill?'

"'Or dead,' said C——; 'let us go to his rooms and ascertain.' They did so, and, in answer to their inquiries, they were told that their friend had that evening left the College, in evening dress, but without mentioning where he was going. The end of my story is, that from that day to this he has never been heard of."

"How very strange!" said we all. "How very strange!" was re-echoed in hollow tones from the door-way.

Thoroughly startled—indeed, Selby dropped the glass he was then raising to his lips—we looked round. An Oriel man, named Somerset, finding himself, owing to the terrific wind, quite unable to read, had come to see what was going on at Weston's.

In return for the unmistakeable fright he had given us, our host thrust this last comer into the chair just then vacated by Selby, assuring him that neither wine nor cigar should he touch until he had related a ghost-story for the entertainment of the company. Anxious to have a share of both, Somerset lost no time in complying with the request thus forcibly urged.

THE SPECTRAL CANDLE.

"In these more primitive days, when it was the fashion for the bridegroom and bride to set out in their travels in company with the fair vestals who had acted as bridesmaids, an aunt of mine, then a school-girl in her teens, having officiated in that interesting capacity to a cousin of hers, was, with the others, her companion on her matrimonial trip. An entire day spent in and around a once celebrated old castle, Warwick, I think, so thoroughly exhausted my aunt, who was far from strong, that she declared herself unable to continue her journey. What was to be done! In this dilemma, she suddenly remembered that the grand-mother and sister of her most intimate school friend resided in the immediate neighbourhood. She would find them out, and throw herself on their hospitality for that night. She did so: met with a most cordial welcome, and there she was left by the bridal party.

"It was agreed upon by my aunt and her new acquaintance, that they should share the same room, as it was a large, gloomy-looking apartment, such as is frequently assigned to a highly esteemed guest in old-fashioned country houses, and by no means calculated to promote anything like cheerfulness in the occupant.

"Not long after they had retired to rest, my aunt suddenly enquired of her companion? how she came to have the candle burning?

"'I put it out,' said the other.

"'You cannot have done that,' was the reply, 'for there it is, alight on the toilet table.'

"'So it is; how very stupid of me to leave it so.'

"With these words, her friend sprung out of bed to extinguish the light—but no light was there. Laughing at the trick played them by their imaginations, she betook herself to rest. Scarcely, however, had her head touched the pillow, than again my aunt declared the candle *was* burning. The other, with astonishment, saw she was right; it shone with a clear, steady flame. This time both girls got up. The result was the same—the candle was *not* burning. This proved too much for their nerves. Shrieking as they ran, they flew to the grand-mother, to whom they told their tale, and with whom they passed what remained of the night.

"On her return to school, my aunt told her friend what had taken place.

"'In which bedroom did you sleep?' asked the girl.

"'In the strangers' room.'

"'The very one in which my cousin shot herself.'"

Weldon, of Merton, next turned narrator, and gave us the following, prefaced by the request, that for the time being we should imagine him to be the highly respectable matron who related this most extraordinary incident to his mother.

THE SPECTRAL CARRIAGE.

"My sister was for many years in service in Liverpool. On one occasion the family, with whom she served, went abroad for several months. Before leaving, they laid strict injunctions on her, being the upper housemaid, on no account whatever to admit strangers during their absence, there being much that was valuable in the house in the way of furniture, pictures, etc., etc. One day not long after their departure, a carriage drove up to their door. The footman jumped down from the box, rang the bell, put down the steps, assisted a lady and little boy to alight, then resumed his seat behind the coachman, and the carriage drove off. When my sister went to the door, the lady, who was standing there with the child, begged in

earnest tones that she might be allowed to see the house, saying she had urgent reasons for her request. But this my sister refused to permit, owing to the orders she had received. Again the stranger entreated to be admitted; still my sister remained firm. Upon this the little boy began to cry most piteously. At that moment the under housemaid crossed the hall, and seeing the child in tears, came forward in time to hear the request repeated. Touched at sight of the boy's evident distress, the maid begged my sister to allow them to come in, which at length she did. The lady stepped eagerly in with the child, and, greatly to my sister's surprise, seemed as thoroughly at home in the house as she herself was, for she went from room to room, and tripped up and down stairs without the slightest hesitation, or enquiry, as to where such stairs led. Suddenly, while standing in a dressing-closet attached to one of the principal bedrooms, the stranger lady raised both hands, and exclaiming in tones of heartfelt gratitude, 'God in Heaven bless you for what you have done for me this day!' vanished together with the boy. Beyond measure terrified, my sister flew down stairs, and told the other maid what had taken place. Unable to credit her story, the woman went carefully all over the house, but neither lady nor child were to be seen. In their perplexity they went to the nearest policeman and told him what had happened. Then he, in company with two others, made a visit of inspection, but with the same result, nothing was ever seen or heard of the mysterious visitors."

It will not be thought strange that this story was entirely discredited by all present save the narrator himself. It seemed to us utterly impossible that such a thing could take place. Spectres there might be, indeed we had little doubt that they did exist—but a *spectral carriage* was in our opinion too much of a good thing.

But Weldon would not be persuaded that the servant had either imagined this spiritual visitation, or had fallen asleep in a lobby chair and dreamed it, her mind being full of the orders she had received. "It was well known," he said, "that

in many old Scottish families, previous to the death of one of their members, a coach and four dashed up to the principal entrance of the mansion. Then, again, in the 'Saints of Port Royal,' an equally remarkable incident is told in connection with one of the pious sisters—"

"And," broke in a young Scotchman named Kennedy, "there is that wild legend in which my own ancestor figures. The wicked Sir Archibald Kennedy, of persecuting renown, lies dead in his rock-bound castle of Culzean, and a ship is being tossed in the fearful storm which rages on the Ayrshire coast, when—

"'A boat! a boat!' the steersman cried,
'I see by these flashes bright!'
'*No boat*,' the captain swift replied,
'Could live on this awful night!'

"Soon the heavens burst, and a flood of light
Lit up all with a sickly glare;
And the ship's crew gazed on a fearful sight,
For a funeral train was there.

"Four coal black horses drew each coach,
And they pranced upon the sea:
As each driver caus'd their swift approach,
What an awful look had he!

"Soon as they reach'd the vessel's side,
This ghastly train funereal;
'From whence to where?' the steersman cried,
'From H—ll to Culzean's burial!'"

"Then again, I have heard it said that a coach-and-four nightly leaves St. Andrews, and goes along the Firth, with attendant 'mutes'—spectral of course—to pick up any dead bodies that may chance to be floating on its surface.

"Who can say but a similar ghostly equipage was in waiting on the night of the Tay bridge disaster. I can picture the scene if it were so. Before me lies the broad river lashed into fury by the tempest which careers along fraught with woe and desolation—the chariot of the angel of death! Above me lowers the sullen storm cloud; around me is darkness. Gliding onwards amid the gloom is a funeral coach with coal black

steeds, and sable driver and mutes. On the doomed bridge their eyes are fixed. Onwards they come, eager to snatch from the wind and waves their ghastly prey. A momentary lull takes place in the elementary warfare. A loud, shrill whistle is heard, a red light gleams through the darkness. The train is approaching. The bridge is gained—half crossed, when, with a rush and roar of demon-like fury, the tempest resumes its sway. A shock—the bridge gives way beneath the pressure—down sinks the train amidst the cries of despairing hearts; the driver urges on his prancing steeds, and the expectant mutes descend and disappear amidst the broken girders and the dead."

These verifying statements, together with the also quoted Worcestershire spectre coach, driven by no less important a personage than his Majesty Charles 1st, who, as the headless horses wildly careered past the affrighted beholder, was observed to be carrying his head for greater security under his arm, caused us generally to retract our previous expressions of unbelief; and our thirst for the marvellous being rather increased than diminished by this singular story, Nugent, of St. John's, was called upon to tell us something, which he did as follows:—

"I was for several weeks last autumn a visitor in a large old country house in Denbighshire. There were other guests there besides myself, for the most part intelligent, conversible people. Thus the time passed pleasantly. We blazed away to our heart's content at all manner of game during the day, and chatted and told stories in the evening over a blazing fire. And very comfortable we found it I assure you.

"One night when the equinoxial gales were treating us to a concert in a high pitched key, the conversation chancing to turn upon the supernatural, Mr. S——, one of the visitors, told me this. I give the story as nearly as I can remember, in his own words:—

NUGENT'S STORY.

"Two years ago having a few days at my disposal, I took a run up to Putney, in order to see the Oxford and Cambridge

boat-race, in which as an old Oxford man, I am much interested. After having dined with a friend at Hammersmith, I was walking leisurely back about one o'clock in the morning to my lodgings. When about half way across Barnes Common, I was overtaken by a young man whose acquaintance I had made at the house of the friend I had just left. Our way led us past a churchyard, and he told me with rather a nervous laugh, that he was glad of a companion, as on a former occasion he had got somewhat of a fright while passing the gate of the pretty little cemetery.

"'What from?' I said, smiling.

"'Well, I cannot say more than that I distinctly saw a female figure dressed in a loose black gown, gliding along—for I cannot call it walking—in zig-zag fashion, on the opposite side.'

"'Did you call out to her?'

"'No.'

"'Then what did you do?'

"'I bolted as fast as my legs could carry me.'

"Now, the curious part of the story is this. When in Putney last spring I again met my young friend, and we resumed our former intimacy. While walking with him one day in the Common, the sight of the churchyard recalled his nocturnal adventure to my recollection, and I asked him whether he had encountered any more black robed females in his walks to and from Hammersmith.

"'No,' he said gravely; 'but I have something to tell you in connection with the woman that I saw—for I cannot help thinking that in each case they were one and the same. Some friends of mine live on the outskirts of the Common, and their house is in a straight line with the churchyard (here he pointed it out with his stick). You smile, but mark what follows. My friend's family consisted of himself, his wife, and her unmarried sister. W's. health had been failing for years; and latterly he had become so seriously unwell as to cause his relatives considerable anxiety.

"'So far as I can remember, it must have been about the time of my fright on the Common, that Miss D——, the unmarried sister, went to the door one evening to have a look at

the night before retiring to rest, according to her usual custom, when, to her surprise, she saw standing before her, at the foot of the steps leading out to the little garden, a woman dressed like a Sister of Charity—that is to say, in black, with a white band across her forehead. The stranger's arms were folded on her breast, and her eyes were fixed on Miss D——. Each gazed on the other in silence. Feeling slightly uncomfortable, she could not tell why, Miss D—— called the parlour maid who was then removing the supper things. She came, accompanied by the dog. The latter, instead of rushing out and barking furiously as was its wont, when visitors approached the house, stood looking at the woman, and then retreated, growling, behind its mistress. As for the servant, she stared wildly for a moment, and then seized hold of Miss D——, who obeying what she described as an uncontrollable impulse, slammed to the door, and retreated to her bed-room, the others having long since retired to rest.

"'The next morning Mrs. W—— came down to breakfast, looking pale and worn. Her husband, she said, was too ill to leave his bed. This night had been a wretched one. He could not sleep, he told her, for a woman who stood in a corner of the room, and kept looking at him. Again and again she rose, and tried by altering the arrangement of the furniture to rid him of the delusion, but it was of no use, she was always there.'

"'Well, and what happened?' I said; for the young man had stopped short in his narrative and was looking at me with a puzzled expression.

"'Why, poor W—— died that very day!'

"The same person also told me this," went on Nugent, who seemed wonderfully pleased with his rôle of story-teller:—

SPALDING'S DOG.

"Late one evening I was returning home along a lane lying to the back of my house in Lancashire, when a huge black dog with eyes like coals of fire, bounded over the hedge on my right, directly in front of me, with such a fierce threatening

look in its face, that I felt sure he was about to spring at my throat. Retreating backwards, I kept my stick raised in the air in readiness should the savage looking brute fly at me. But this it did not do. After remaining motionless for about the space of five minutes, it leapt over the hedge on my left and disappeared.

"The day after I met a friend in the lane to whom I mentioned the circumstance of the dog; adding that never having seen it before I wondered to whom it belonged.

"'What,' said my friend, 'have you, who have resided so long in this neighbourhood, never seen or heard of Spalding's dog?'

"'No.'

"'Strange,' he replied. 'I thought every one knew about it.'

"'Why is it called Spalding's dog?' I asked.

"'Because a man of that name was the first to see it. He was a gambler, and one who kept very early hours.

"'Many years ago, when returning home about two o'clock one morning along this lane, the large black dog you describe bounded over the hedge and stood right in his path, glaring on him with its great fiery eyes. It then disappeared as suddenly as it came. This occurrence so frightened Spalding that for the future he abandoned card-playing. Ever since this mastiff has been frequently seen, and is familiarly known as Spalding's dog.'"

Another series of erratic taps at the door, and in walked three Lincoln men, all more or less upset by the high wind, and desirous of congenial fellowship. These were cordially welcomed; and one of them named Gascoigne was asked to furnish a contribution to the ghost lore. Having, as he expressed it, "settled his nerves" with a glass of claret, he cheerfully complied.

GASCOIGNE'S STORY.

"Some years ago when my mother was in Scotland she paid a visit to an old friend of hers who lived at a place called Dundonald, near Troon, in Ayrshire. As she never described the bed-room assigned to her, I cannot tell you what it was like

—whether it was of large or small dimensions—whether the bed was a huge four-poster with hangings, or merely an iron bedstead without these appendages—whether the walls of the room were adorned with fine old engravings, or simply some of those highly coloured chromo-lithographs annually sent out with the Christmas number of the 'Illustrated London News.' On these minor particulars she never entered, but this she did tell me—

"One night she was wakened out of her sleep by a sound of hammering, and on looking out into the room she distinctly saw a lady with dishevelled hair hanging down her back, busily engaged in knocking a nail into one of the walls. What my revered parent's conjectures on the subject were she never informed me; as to the state of her feelings during the remainder of the night she was equally reticent. But next morning she mentioned the circumstance at the breakfast table.

"'Are you in earnest?' asked her hostess in surprise.

"'Perfectly so.'

"'How very singular, for we have often heard that fifty years ago a lady hanged herself in that room.'

"Now, Veriker, it is your turn," said Weston to one of the last comers, who in obedience to this summons began in a flurried manner, "Have any of you fellows heard of that awfully mysterious house in —— Square ——"

"O, come, come; none of that!" we shouted in chorus.

"Don't, for goodness sake, go over that old story," cried Weston; "one hears quite enough in town about the faint ringing of the bell—the pistol shot—man found dead on the floor—pistol discharged and lying on the table."

"But this is a headless woman who is said to haunt No. 50 —— Square," said Veriker.

"Why, bless me!" interrupted Selby, "I have been told that a head without a woman has been seen in Hanover Square!"

"Why, then, the two have dissolved partnership, and the body must have preferred one locality while the head has gone off to another, that is all," said Weston, with a sly look at

Veriker, who, offended by this good-humoured raillery, declined to say anything further on the subject of ghosts; whereupon Walford, a friend of his, said he would take his place and give us a ghostly narrative.

ANNE BOLEYN'S GHOST AT THE TOWER.

"Some of you are doubtless aware there is a chapel attached to the Tower of London." (This implied ignorance on the part of the *others* nearly set us off laughing; but observing that Walford looked grave, we repressed our merriment, being fearful of losing his story, for, like Veriker, he was rather of the touchy order.) "Also," he went on, "that the chapel in question was connected with many of the most striking and melancholy scenes in our history." (We bowed with all the gravity of Chinese Mandarins.) "Well, an old friend of mine, Captain ——, of the —— regiment, was one evening going the rounds with the sentry when he saw a light burning in the chapel. He pointed it out to the other, and asked what it meant.

"'I don't know what it means, sir, but I have often seen that and stranger things here of nights,' was the sentinel's reply.

"Again and again my friend looked at the window, and each time the light gleamed through the darkness. Determined to ascertain the cause, Captain —— procured a ladder, placed it against the chapel wall, mounted it, and gazed in on a scene that thrilled his every nerve. Slowly down the aisle moved a stately procession of knights and ladies, attired in ancient costumes; and in front walked an elegant female, whose face was averted from him, but whose figure greatly resembled the one he had seen in reputed portraits of Anne Boleyn. After having repeatedly paced the chapel, the entire procession, together with the light, disappeared. So deeply was my friend impressed with the seeming reality of the scene, that not till then did he discover he had been gazing in on a phantom crowd."

"I have frequently heard that the ghost of Anne Boleyn haunts the Tower Hill," said Gascoigne.

"Yes," replied Walford, "and Harrison Ainsworth makes a good use of that tradition in that fascinating romance, 'The Tower of London.'"

"Don't leave the chair till you have given us another," said Weston.

"Very good," laughed Walford; "fortunately the following has just occurred to me:—

A PROPHETIC DREAM.

"I had an uncle who, on account of his health, was ordered to sojourn at Torquay for the summer months. He followed the advice given him, and contrived to make the time pass pleasantly; for, being a man of social habits and likely parts, he soon formed a large circle of acquaintances with whom he spent many happy hours. At the house of one of those, he met with a young lady and her brother, natives of Bath, in whom he very shortly became deeply interested. The favourable impression proved to be mutual, and so strong a friendship sprang up between them, that hardly a day passed without some portion of it being spent in each other's society. On one occasion, while taking leave for the night, Mr. M——, told my uncle, that on the following day, should the weather prove favourable, he and his sister were going to the Channel Islands, and asked him to accompany him. My uncle being the reverse of a good sailor was obliged, although reluctantly, to decline the invitation. That same night he was visited by the following remarkable dream. He dreamed he was standing at his bedroom window, looking out on what should have been the Bay of Torquay, but which was changed into the open sea. As he stood thus, two steamers rapidly advancing from opposite directions, suddenly made their appearance, and dashed up against each other with a force that sent both to the bottom. So real did the collision seem that my uncle uttered a cry, and awoke to find himself actually standing at the window, gazing out into the night. Shivering, he found his way back to bed, the horror occasioned by his too powerful dream yet upon him. When at length he fell asleep, he was again visited by the same vision. Once more he awoke with a cry to find himself at the window. Perplexed and frightened by this repetition

of his dream, my uncle at once connected it with his young friends' intended excursion to the Channel Islands, and, apprehensive that some danger menaced them, he resolved to see them at an early hour, and if possible dissuade them from going. Full of this resolve, he again fell asleep, and slept undisturbed till the morning was far advanced. No sooner had the singular events of the night recurred to his memory than he hastily dressed himself and proceeded to his friends' lodgings, and inquired whether they had gone. Yes; they had started an hour before. Vexed with himself for being too late, and yet ashamed to confess the cause of his anxiety, my uncle returned home without mentioning his dream, which was soon verified, and that in the most melancholy manner, for the steamer in which the young lady and her brother sailed came in collision with another, and both sunk with their human freight, just as my uncle had seen them in his vision."

"Talking of dreams," said Weston; "a short time ago, I was told the following curious incident by a sea-captain, who is an intimate friend of mine. His whereabouts when this happened to him I unfortunately forget, but of this I am certain, that his destination was Australia. To quote his own words—'We were to sight land about twelve o'clock the following day, and it was the second watch when I retired to my cabin, having first given the mate instructions to call me at once should anything happen. Soon I was asleep, or thought I was, when I distinctly heard my name called in a loud voice. In an instant I was out of bed, and my foot on the companion ladder. The deck gained, I was surprised to find everything just as it was when I left it, and to learn from the mate that he had not spoken.

"'The night, I observed, had changed for the worse; a heavy brooding mist hung darkly around.

"'Once more in my berth, I speedily fell asleep, but it was not long before I heard the mate's voice sing out, "Captain ——, you are wanted!"

"'Again I sought the deck, and again was solemnly assured by the mate, that he had not called me. Thinking this

repetition of my dream rather singular, I asked, "How goes the night?" "The mist is not nearly so dense," he replied; "I can see the stars through my glass."

"'Satisfied that all was right, I retreated to my cabin, but this time I threw myself dressed on the sofa, and certainly was not asleep when there came this message delivered in peremptory tones, "Captain ——, you will lose your ship if you don't go on deck!"

"'To hear was to obey. But not contented with the mate's report that all was right, I snatched the glass from his hand, and looking through it, my gaze penetrated the fast clearing mist, and to my horror I distinctly saw the white surf breaking on the yet distant shore. Had it not been for this timely warning, in less than a quarter of an hour we should have struck on the rocks.'

"'And you are certain you were not asleep the last time you heard the summons?'

"'Perfectly certain.'

"'And the voice—did it frighten you?'

"'Not at all; it seemed to me a familiar one, and I took it for the mate's.'"

Weston having vacated the chair, Beauchamp of Oriel quietly slipped into it, saying, that, with our permission, he would recite some verses descriptive of a tradition told in connection with an interesting old Yorkshire mansion, now converted into a farm-house, which he was in the habit of wandering about when a resident in that part of the country. The legend, he said, embodied in the verses, was told him by a native of these parts, with the addition, that so frequently were the old lady's tapping heels and rustling silk dress heard in the passage alluded to, that the inmates, convinced that her visits betokened the presence of hidden treasure, had the flag-stones lifted; but if anything were found, a discreet silence was preserved on the subject. We prepared ourselves to listen, and Beauchamp began:—

THE SPECTRE OF HUDDELSTON.

There is a passage in Huddelston Manor—
A passage of stone—
'Long which the night wind sweeps with an eerie rush,
Or low, plaintive moan.

In through its lozenge-shap'd casements the lordly sun
Pours light by day;
And, when night's dark'ning shades prevail, steals gently in
The moon's pale ray,

Piercing the solemn gloom with long rules of light
Which brightly fall
Just there, where sculptor'd rude on the cold grey stone
Of sheltering wall,

Is a shield with a coat of arms engraved thereon—
"*Arg. on a bend,*"
Cotised sable, three Griffins, heads, erased of the first
Motto—"*I defend.*"

Bright through effulgence of a moonlight glory,
This heraldic shield
Stands forth from out the darksome, brooding shadows,
Startlingly relieved.

Perfect as though it thus would stand for ever,
Harsh, grim, and old,
When the heart that dream'd it, and hand that carv'd it
Are still and cold.*

Perfect, as when on proud emblazoned banners
In battle fray
There, where the fight raged fiercest—the blood ran deepest—
It led the way.

Its ancient owners bore themselves right bravely;
No blighting stain
Ere dimmed the lustre of their arms or soil'd
The Dare-all name.

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* See Adelaide Proctor's "*Carver's Lesson.*"

And yet misfortunes gathered quickly o'er them
And their fortunes all,
Dark as the midnight shadows clustering round
Their ancestral hall.

Most foully wronged in these long vanished days—
The good old times—
Some perished broken-hearted, others fled
To foreign climes,

Far from their rightful heritage and native land,
Exiles to roam,
Their hearts' affections ever fondly twining round
Their English home.

Though wrested from them in misfortune's hour
Yet legends say
That one of the grand old race of Dare-alls
Long pass'd away,

Walks in this passage at lone midnight hour
With gentle tread,
And stands and gazes with lack-lustre eyes
Where right o'erhead

Gleams 'mid the darkness the ancestral shield with
"*Arg. on bend,*"
The moon's rays rippling o'er the brave old motto—
"*I defend,*"

Then sadly weeps and paces to and fro.
In their old place
She walks a stranger—other forms are there—
Another race.

Scarcely were Beauchamp's verses finished, when the door flew open, and with a series of savage-like whoops and yells, in rushed about half-a-dozen fellows from Corpus. These right jovial spirits were welcomed with responsive shouts of glee. Seats were provided for them, and claret and cigars supplied them. After these were done ample justice to, ghost stories were eagerly asked for, whereupon one of them, named Morgan,

bestowing a slap on the back of his nearest neighbour, cried, "Here's the fellow for making your hair, if natural, stand upon end with fright; ask Gordon for a story."

GORDON'S STORY.

"When I was a youngster, my father lived for several years in a large, old historical house, some few miles distant from the town of ——. It was a celebrated place, having been one in which many interesting events had taken place. Stately reception-rooms, spacious bed-rooms, winding stairs, long passages, and dungeons dark and drear, that in days gone by had re-echoed the captive's moan, terraced grounds, a moss-grown fountain, and crumbling sun-dial—all these were there, and contributed to give the house a decidedly mysterious, not to say haunted appearance. Startling tales were told of H——. Strange sights had been witnessed in it. A mail-clad figure, kneeling in the attitude of prayer, had been seen by the aged matron then in charge of the mansion. The rustle—

"'Of dainty ladies' dresses,
The waving wind of feathers,
And steps of dancing feet,'

had frequently been heard in the desolated galleries breaking in upon the hush of night; footsteps had indicated the spot where money lay hid; repeated taps on one particular part of a wall led to the discovery of concealed silver-plate; music, soft in its nature as that of the Æolian harp, had floated along the corridors; laughter, sweet and low, betrayed the presence of invisible guests; visitors had been most unaccountably disturbed by nocturnal noises. Hurried and loud steps had paced their rooms; the bed-curtains had on several occasions been drawn back, and they felt as though they were being gazed in upon by invisible eyes. All these and other stories were told to my parents before we went to H——, and we perfectly realised that we were about to occupy a veritable haunted mansion.

"What about your own experience, you will naturally ask. In reply to which imaginary question, I make answer, that we soon had reason to be satisfied that there was something out of

the common about the house. Scarcely a morning passed without some curious facts being related by this or that member of the family at the breakfast-table. Now, steps had been heard on a particular stair leading to unoccupied rooms, or a series of loud raps on some piece of furniture. Again mysterious noises and a violent ringing of bells, which could not well be accounted for. But this that my eldest sister told us was the most curious of all. 'I could not sleep last night,' she said, 'but lay tossing about. While in this feverish state, I heard the door-handle turn. Looking out, I saw a woman enter. She was dressed in a black petticoat, short white tunic, and wearing a cap of most peculiar fashion. Thinking some one of you must be ill, and that a housemaid had come for my candle, I said, "Ellen, is that you?" The woman started, as though surprised at being addressed, and turned on me a dark face, set off by a pair of most Oriental-looking eyes, but made no answer. She walked on with a light tread towards the toilet-table, which was unfortunately hid by the curtain, and then the footsteps ceased. She did not return.'"

"Most strange!" said Danecourt, whose eyes had never once been taken from the speaker's face.

"And what is equally so," Gordon continued, "a housemaid who afterwards entered our service, and who had not heard this story, one morning asked my mother's permission to change her room, giving as her reason for the request, that she had been frightened over-night by seeing a female figure seated on her trunk, gazing fixedly on her. Then followed a description of the cap of peculiar fashion, the dark complexion, and large black eyes of my sister's ghost!"

"Well done, Gordon! well done, old boy!" exclaimed his admiring friend, with another appreciative slap on the back; "now do give us that Fifeshire story you were telling me the other night; I thought it very curious. Fire off at once, there's a good fellow!"

"There's a good fellow!" was the responsive shout. And Gordon good-humouredly complied with our request.

THE FIFESHIRE STORY.

"In the East Neuk of Fife there is an estate called Kinaider,

which formerly belonged to a Miss Callander, and a charming old lady she was, I believe.

"It so happened that one day while walking in her avenue, Miss C—— saw in advance of her, and walking towards her house, the husband of a very dear friend of hers, whom, at the moment, she believed to be confined to his bed and apparently near death. She stared in amazement, for there was no mistaking his familiar figure. Seeing him disappear through the open door, she hastened her steps, and entered the dining-room with outstretched hands expecting to find him there, but no, the room was empty. So were the library and drawing-room. She then summoned the footman. He had not seen Mr. D——, neither had the other servants. Miss Callander, to say the least of it, was extremely surprised, and at a loss to explain what was indeed inexplicable. To add to her mystification, two days after she received a deep, black bordered letter from Mrs. D——, which contained the news of her husband's death. He had died within a few minutes of the time she had seen him in the avenue. When paying a visit of condolence to the widow, Mrs. D——, naturally enough under the circumstances, turned the conversation on the deceased's last moments. In the course of her remarks, she said to Miss Callander, 'Curious to relate, on the day of his death, about 3 o'clock, my husband fell into a deep sleep. On awaking from this he observed to me—"I have had such a delightful dream; I dreamt I was walking in Kinaider avenue, and that I saw Miss Callander there." Shortly afterwards he died.'"

This decidedly creepy story produced a visible effect upon us all, and we smoked and gazed into the fire in meditative silence, which was at length broken by Somerset who remarked, "those curious stories told by Walford and Weston in connection with dreams remind me of one which I had quite forgotten."

THE WRECKED MAJOR.

"Our nearest neighbour in ——shire was a Major S——, a man of good family, and possessed of ample means, yet one

whose society was not courted in the county in which he had recently become a resident. Curious things were said of him, worse were hinted at, so that the surrounding gentry fought rather shy of him with the exception of a few who both visited him and received his visits. For this man my mother entertained the utmost aversion. She detested alike his appearance and manners; the former she considered diabolical, and the latter repulsive, as indeed they were. My father had frequent arguments with her on the subject of the major, and always took his part. But his defence of him in no ways softened my mother's feelings towards him. She persisted in loathing the man, and said she was sure something dreadful would come out about him. Her dislike extended itself to his surroundings; and she would not even pass his house when out walking or driving. My father simply smiled at this feminine absurdity, as he termed it, and continued to think not so badly of the major. It chanced that my mother passed him one day. He was riding; and she told us on her return that the expression of his face, as he looked down at her, was absolutely appalling in its wickedness; indeed, she could think or speak of nothing else. That very same night she awoke from sleep with a cry of terror. On my father asking her what the matter was, she said—'Oh, William! I have had such a fearful dream, and I am sure it has to do with Major S——.'

"'Nonsense, nonsense;' was the sleepy reply.

"'But I tell you I am convinced of it,' and she told him her dream. She described herself as going into a large gloomy looking room, full of quaintly carved furniture, arranged after a peculiar fashion, the ceiling of which was traversed by an oaken beam, and from this there dangled a rope having a noose at the end.

"'What is going on here?' I asked, although I cannot remember being conscious of seeing any one.

"'Hush!' exclaimed an awful voice. 'A dreadful crime is being committed, part of which will be known now, and part at the day of judgment!'

"'Aye, indeed; curious, very; but go to sleep, my dear, and forget all about the major.' With this advice given in a

drowsy tone, my father once more sought oblivion in sleep. But my mother did not allow him to remain in peace. Again she woke him up with an exclamation of horror at the repetition of her dream. No sooner had she fallen asleep than she found herself transported to the sombre room, with its beam traversed ceiling, and ghastly dangling rope. At sight of which, as on the former occasion, she cried, 'What is going on here?' and the same impressive voice responded with 'Hush! a dreadful crime is being committed; part of which will be known now, and part at the day of judgment!' 'I *know* we shall hear something about that horrid man,' she kept repeating in spite of my father's assurances to the contrary. Their feelings, under these circumstances, may well be imagined when the next day the country was ringing with the news that Major S—— had hanged himself during the night. Hastening to the scene of the tragedy, my father, on being shown into the room, at once recognised it as the one my mother had seen in her dream."

"These repeated dreams are fulfilled in the most singular manner," said one of the Corpus men with a melancholy air. "On the night on which my brothers returned from India, my mother dreamed three times successively that two skeletons stood by her bed-side. The repetition of this horrible dream made her so uneasy that she at once went to their room, and to her horror found them both dead in their beds. Owing to its being winter, a fire had been given them; and, in order that they might not take cold, my mother had every draught carefully excluded. The consequence was the poor fellows died of suffocation from the fumes of some charcoal which had got mixed up with the coals."

We all expressed our satisfaction with the story of Major S——, indeed Selby, who had been exchanging whispers with Somerville of St. John's, went so far as to say that he thought it the best we had yet heard; after which he told us that Somerville would give us

A STORY OF SECOND SIGHT.

"Towards the close of a dark cold evening," he said, "the

23rd October, if I remember rightly, I found, much to my annoyance, that I had quitted the high road leading to Portree and was wandering about in the most helpless manner possible amidst innumerable bogs and morasses. What was to be done? To retrace my steps was simply impossible. There was nothing to indicate the proper route. The moon had not yet risen. Darkness enveloped me like a curtain, and I was alone. Once I paused and whistled, but no human voice made answer. The sole response was the beat of the wild sea surf on the distant shore. Stumbling and falling till I was foot-sore and weary, I came at length within sight of the sea. I could distinguish its billows, foam-crested and angry, as they cleft the darkness; and O, joyful sight! I also perceived twinkling lights at some little distance off along the shore. I was then in the neighbourhood of cottages, in one of which I might pass the night. The threshold of the nearest gained, I knocked at its door. After some little delay this was opened by a middle-aged and rather gaunt looking female. My request for shelter was listened to in silence. After a moment's reflection, she went back a few paces, threw a hurried glance over her shoulder into the interior, and then beckoned me to enter. I did so. The room or kitchen into which she ushered me was miserable in the extreme. The plenishing consisted of a wooden table, two straw pallets in one corner, and three chairs, on one of which, cowering over the embers that glowed on the hearth, sat an aged white-haired man. Raising his faded eyes for a moment on my entrance, he again lowered them to the hearth, moaning and muttering the while in the strangest fashion.

"The woman looked on him with an unmistakable expression of awe and fear on her face, then placed for me a chair on the opposite side of the hearth, while she herself took one some little distance off. Her knowledge of English was much too limited for us to indulge in anything like conversation; still she could both understand me when I asked questions and make herself understood when she replied, which was about as much as I expected.

"Her father, she said, pointing to the old man, could talk

English well, for he had been gamekeeper in his youth to a south-country gentleman, and the little she knew she had learned from him.

"A few sentences exchanged, we lapsed into silence, which I was on the point of breaking with some trivial remark when the door opened and there entered a tall, handsome girl enveloped in a chequered plaid. Darting a hasty glance at me, she addressed the woman hurriedly in Gaelic, a language with which I was but slightly acquainted. What she did say, however, seemed in some way to have reference to the old man, for my hostess, while making answer, looked at him and shook her head.

"Much to my surprise, although he must have known he was the subject of their conversation, he never once looked up nor took the slightest notice of his visitor. His dim eyes still remained riveted on the fire, and he moaned and sighed and shivered as if with cold. I could see I also was being made the subject of remark, for once more the maiden's fine dark eyes turned in my direction, as mine hostess replied to some questions of hers. Her curiosity in respect to my presence apparently satisfied, the girl, having previously refused with a smile the chair I offered her, seated herself on the floor beside the woman, and conversed with her in low, anxious tones, while her eyes frequently reverted to the clock with looks of anxiety.

"I was beginning to feel perplexed and curious as to the existing state of matters in this solitary household. Was the old man ill or out of his mind? Was the handsome stranger any relation of the couple, or was she merely a sympathising friend? Why did she look so repeatedly at the clock? Had she any—here an end was put to my mental soliloquy by the girl giving a sudden start, and seizing hold of her companion's wrist, while she raised her forefinger as if enforcing silence. An ashen hue overspread the woman's harsh features as her visitor did this, and she remained rigid and motionless as a statue in the attitude of listening. I, too, listened. Mingling with the dull roar of the billows, I distinctly heard a crashing sound as though some wooden substances were being crushed

together; to this succeeded a noise like the dragging of chains. The women also hearing it, a look of terror swept over their faces, and my hostess uttered, half aloud, the pious ejaculation —'Lord, have mercy on them!' Then both rose to their feet. The younger one, eager and trembling, undid the bar that fastened the casement, opened it, and they gazed out in silence. My curiosity now intensely excited, I also arose, and, noiselessly treading the floor, took my station immediately behind them. The wild scene I then saw I shall never forget. The moon, struggling through a dense mass of storm cloud, threw broad streams of light on the heaving billows as they broke in rude shocks on the shore. Lying at anchor, out of reach of the waves, were several fishing-boats; and, strange to say, although there was a profound calm, these were being dashed up against each other in the most unaccountable manner, while the chains by which they were fastened, creaked and rattled as though they were being dragged about by powerful hands. Then a moaning sound seemed to pervade the air.

"'There—there it's again! O! is'nt it dreadful?' whispered the girl.

"'Did you tell them about this?' said her companion.

"'Yes; but they only laughed at me.'

"'Then, they'll go.'

"'Sure and certain.'

"Poor things! then I doubt they'll never come back. 'O, look there!' Again the boats were dashed to and fro; the chains emitted the same harsh grating sound, but this time I could see several little blue twinkling lights moving along the shore.

"'*The dead lights!*' groaned the elder woman. The young one, shivering, buried her face in her hands.

"'Aye, the dead lights!' was shouted in frenzied tones behind us. I looked round in amaze; so did the women. The old man was standing bolt upright; his hair upon end; his eyes glaring wildly into space; his hands outstretched and quivering.

"'Aye, *the dead lights!* and they're not there for nought. Death! Death! nothing but death! I see it all! There they

are! The boats! dancing merrily over the sea—there—there! Three in all! Away—away! No fear of danger. Stout hearts and strong arms. The bread winners for the wives and children. The wind rises—but what of that? There is no danger! The boats are stout—and the fishers brave, and stalwart, and young! Ha! ha! A sudden squall—Good God! Down goes the foremost—and another—and another—gone, all gone. Neil, Duncan—and—*Farquhar*——!'

"As the old man uttered this name, the girl, with a loud cry, sank senseless on the floor, at the same time that the speaker relapsed into his moaning shivering posture by the hearth.

"When we had succeeded in restoring her to consciousness, I inquired of the woman the meaning of all this.

"'O, sir, *he* has had the "second sight,"' she said, 'he was telling us, as he has done for the last three nights, that our fisher lads will be drowned, and poor Mary's (pointing to the now weeping girl) lover, Farquhar Macdougall, is among them —so he said to-night.'

"'Surely they will not go when they hear of this,' I said.

"'They must, sir, or we should all starve,' was her sad answer; 'that is they *will* go, though we have done our best to prevent their going this week, for should they be drowned, we'll starve all the same.'

"Painfully impressed with what I had seen, and unwilling any longer to intrude my company upon them in their distress, I placed some silver in the woman's resisting hand, and told her the moon being now up, if she would kindly direct me how to get to Portree, I should wish to continue my journey.

"She did so, at the same time saying how sorry she was that her father should have been *taken* in my presence.

"With a few words expressive of hope that he would turn out to be a false prophet, I bade her good evening, and bestowing a farewell glance on the sorrowing maiden, I went my way pondering on what I had seen and heard.

"Not many days afterwards I read in the *Inverness Courier* of the melancholy loss of three boats with their fishers while fishing off Skye.

"Amongst the names of the drowned were those mentioned by the aged seer."

When the impression made by this gruesome tale had somewhat subsided, Darrell, of Oriel, said he would give us a story which had been told him by the actors in it.

THE PHANTOM BUTLER.

"A short time ago," he said, "two acquaintances of mine were applied to by some friends of theirs who were desirous of meeting with a well recommended butler, the one who had been with them for years being about to leave them. Fortunately the Misses O—— did know of one then out of place, whom they considered likely to suit. A correspondence ensued between the parties, the man was interviewed, and, his character being satisfactory, he was there and then engaged. Not long after, the Misses O—— went on a visit to L——, the place at which their friends resided.

"When retiring to rest on the first evening of their stay, the eldest sister remarked to the other with a well pleased air, 'Mary, were you not astonished with *our* butler? For my part I don't know when I have seen such a splendid looking man.'

"'You must be joking,' replied her sister, 'I was quite vexed when I saw him, he looked such a shabby, insignificant looking creature.'

"'Little! insignificant! why the man I mean was fully six feet high.'

"'Then we cannot be speaking of the same person.'

"'I refer to the one who waited upon me.'

"'I saw no such magnificent individual as you describe waiting upon any one.'

"'How very odd! I cannot make out how you missed seeing him—why, in a room full of gentlemen, the man I saw would be remarkable for his noble appearance.'

"'Strange; I thought him quite shabby looking.'

"'Well, to my mind, he made the other three—'

"'Two.'

"'No, three. There were four men waiting on us.'

"'I only saw three.'

"'And I distinctly saw four.'

"Each fancying that the other had made a mistake, they forbore to pursue the subject.

"Once more it is the dinner hour, and again Miss O—— is attentively waited upon by the superb butler.

"Now Fanny will both see and admire him, she thought. But how very odd! As he helped her to vegetables, she looked across at her sister, and by her upward glances endeavoured to make her understand that the man now at her side was the one she referred to. Fanny certainly looked at her in return, but her gaze was one of surprise, as if she could not make out what the other meant. Not once did her eyes seem to rest on the man Miss O—— was so anxious she should see.

"'Did you notice my handsome butler, to-day?' the elder sister asked of the younger, as they left the dining-room.

"'I saw no handsome butler; not one of the three deserves even to be called good-looking.'

"'No, but the fourth.'

"'My dear Mary, there were only three.'

"Once in the drawing-room, Miss O—— enquired of the hostess, if the fine looking man who had waited on her was the butler she and her sister had recommended.

"Mrs. R—— looked at Miss O—— with a startled air, but made no reply. Repeating her enquiry it was received with the same chilling silence.

"'Then you also have seen him!' the governess remarked to Miss O——, as they met in the breakfast-room.

"'Him—who?'

"'*The phantom butler.*'

"Miss O—— looked mystified.

"'The phantom butler?' she repeated.

"'Yes; it is very strange; I don't know the legend respecting this mysterious person, as the family hate to hear him spoken of, but it is a fact that he not unfrequently appears at dinner-time, and exclusively devotes himself to one of the party, moving about noiselessly among the servants, apparently

unnoticed and unobserving, silently performing his waiting duties; you did not see him attend to any other than yourself, yesterday?'

"'No.'

"'So I thought; it is most singular.'

"'Did you see him again to-day?' the same lady enquired of Miss O——, as they were on their way to the drawing-room.

"'No; did you?'

"'Yes; and he waited on me.'

"'What can be the meaning of it?' said Miss O——.

"'I know not; but one thing is certain, the R——'s have a *phantom butler.*'"

"How nice to have such handsome servants requiring neither wages nor liveries!" laughed the sceptical Guy.

"Silence!" cried Weston, with a rebuking frown, "I see Gerrard has got a legend ready for us. Come, out with it, old fellow," he said, addressing the youth in question, "it is sure to be something good, or you would not be at the trouble to tell it."

Gerrard without any hesitation at once possessed himself of the speaker's chair.

THE HAUNTED CONVENT.

"Ours is a Catholic family, has been so since the days of 'bluff King Hal'; we have faithfully preserved our traditions, and each succeeding generation of the Gerrards has furnished a son for the holy priesthood, and a daughter for one of our now numerous English convents.

"Of my four sisters, the second, Eliza, was the one who chose for herself the life of a nun, but unfortunately for her wishes, her health broke down during her noviciate, and sorely against her inclinations, she was obliged to abandon her pious intentions.

"One day during the last Easter recess we were all together in the breakfast-parlour, engaged in various occupations—I in sorting fishing gear, previous to starting on a fishing expedition into North Wales, and my sisters in embroidering altar-cloths

for the adornment of our church. Maggie, the youngest, then at home for the holidays, suddenly stopped in her work, and addressing herself to our eldest sister, said, 'Mary, I am quite sure that —— Convent is haunted—are you not, Sophy?'

"Sophy Blackwood was her favourite friend and fellow-boarder at the convent to which she referred.

"'Indeed!' said Mary, with an amused air, 'what makes you think so?'

"'Why, our shoes, which are placed carefully in rows overnight in the long gallery outside our dormitories, are all found scattered about in the morning, as though some one had been walking there during the night, and kicked them from side to side.'

"'What nonsense,' observed Mary.

"'It is certainly funny,' said Tina, my second youngest sister, 'for the same thing happened when I was there.'

"'Some foolish girl does it to frighten you all,' said Mary.

"'For my part I don't believe in ghosts,' said Eliza, 'still a very curious thing happened to me when I was at —— Convent, which was never accounted for.'

"'Do tell us about it,' said Tina.

"Maggie and her friend re-echoed the request, at the same time that they drew closer to each other, and shivered slightly.

"Thus entreated, Eliza gave us the following:—

"'On one occasion I had to rise at three o'clock to say some extra prayers, and the sister who performed the duty of lighting our candles for us, was asked to come and waken me at an earlier hour than usual. You must know,' she said to a Protestant friend of Mary's who was spending the day with us, 'that no matches are allowed in convents, but at the stated time a sister goes round with a sort of torch and lights your candle, so small is the allowance of which, that on its being lit, you must at once rise, otherwise you would soon be left in darkness.' This explanation made, my sister proceeded thus: 'On the morning alluded to I was wakened from a sound sleep by the opening of my cell door, and looking out, I saw enter a funny-looking, little, old woman, dressed in a quaint garment and huge poke bonnet. I stared in astonishment at this singular

apparition, and wondered where she could have come from, as I had no remembrance of having seen her before; however, as my candle was lighted, and she had left, I sprang up, threw on my habit, and betook myself to my prayers. These were nearly done, when again the door opened, and there stood the ordinary lighting-up sister with the accustomed torch in her hand, ready to perform the duty which had already been done for her. She stared and I stared, but silence being imperative, no explanation took place. Later on we naturally sought each other to discuss this mysterious occurrence. My description of the quaint little stranger who had forestalled her on this occasion, drew forth from Sister Veronica the surprised exclamation, "There is no one like that here!" Then I applied to others in the hope that they might be able to enlighten me on the subject, but no; the answer was invariably the same—they knew of no such sister. The affair soon became the one topic of conversation in the convent, and as several of the nuns and boarders were made rather nervous in consequence, our Superior requested us not to say anything more about it.'

"'How frightened I should have been,' exclaimed Maggie. The others re-echoed her sentiments with the exception of Mary, who quietly remarked, 'I hope the soul of Sister Theodosia is not flying about, for you have exactly described her as she used to dress when she lighted our candles—she wore just such another poke bonnet.'"

"Good!" said Weston, with an approving nod of the head.

"Another!" cried we all.

Gerrard smiled, well pleased, and resumed.

THE GHOST OF THE CARMELITE FRIAR.

"The following was told me by a west-end physician, prefaced by the remark that he neither believed in ghosts nor spiritual manifestations, but that he could vouch for what he was going to tell me, though he could not account for it.

"About three years ago two friends of his were desirous to meet with a nice place somewhere in the country. After the

necessary process of applying to house agents, advertising in the *Times*, etc., had been gone through, and the usual amount of disappointment experienced in consequence, they at length heard of a place in Worcestershire, which, from the description given them by a friend, seemed as though it had been made on purpose for them. Provided with a card of admission, they came, saw, and were conquered. The house was beautiful and commodious; grounds and gardens unexceptionable; the shooting excellent; the surrounding country lovely; and, to crown all, the rent asked for this earthly paradise was a merely nominal one. This latter circumstance aroused Mr. V——'s suspicions, and he whispered to Mrs. V—— that there must be something radically wrong with the drains, but no; on enquiry the drainage arrangements were found to be as perfect as everything else. It is almost needless to tell you that under these circumstances my friends soon became the tenants of —— Hall. I will not weary you with a description of the interior of this 'very desirable mansion,' suffice it to say that the entrance hall, as is not unfrequently the case, was fitted up as a sitting-room in which one could lounge away a few idle hours very pleasantly of an evening. There was a black oaken table in the centre, with high-backed chairs to match; the floor was covered with a Turkey carpet, several portraits of grim-looking old ancestors of the proprietors in buff jerkins and ruffs frowned down from the walls, and suits of armour, together with various warlike weapons, were suspended everywhere. At the further end was a staircase leading up to a gallery, at either end of which were doors conducting to the bed-rooms. One of these was made of green baize.

"So delighted was Mrs. V—— with this antiquated looking hall that she laughingly declared to her husband that she should never sit anywhere else. An arrangement to which he was quite agreeable, as the summer breeze floated in pleasantly through the open door, and the distant Malvern hills formed a charming background. One evening, shortly after they had taken up their residence at —— Hall, Mrs. V—— was working at a piece of tapestry, and Mr. V—— was smoking

a cigar on the steps. Suddenly the former heard the green baize door close with considerable violence.

"She looked round and saw a man in the dress of a Carmelite friar walking slowly along the gallery. His long beard, brown hood, and gown of corresponding hue, were plainly distinguishable in the fading light. As he disappeared through the opposite door, Mrs. V—— screamed loudly, 'Thieves! thieves!' a cry which at once brought her husband in. 'Where are they?' he said, seeing no one but his wife in the hall.

"'Up there—up there!' she cried, in accents of terror; 'I have just seen a man pass along the gallery.'

"Not waiting to hear more, Mr. V—— hastened up the stairs, and followed in the direction pointed out by the terrified lady as that taken by the supposed robber. Not long after he returned, having, as he said, seen no one in any of the bed-rooms.

"'Then there must be a secret passage somewhere,' suggested Mrs. V——; 'for I distinctly saw the man.' And she proceeded to describe his appearance.

"Seating himself by her side, in imitation of her example, Mr. V—— kept his eyes fixed on the gallery and the corresponding doors, but nothing more was seen of the man in brown.

"The following day Mrs. V—— told the head-gardener, who had been for years at ——, of what had taken place.

"Without pausing in his employment—that of fastening up some rose-bushes—the man simply contented himself with an occasional 'indeed!' an ejaculation which, as Mrs. V—— afterwards remarked, was far from calculated to clear up the mystery.

"For several nights, Mr. V—— kept an eager look-out in case of a reappearance of the burglar, but he came not.

"Not long afterwards, Colonel ——, of the Royal Artillery, visited my friends, and, while talking to him one evening in the hall, again the baize-door opened and shut.

"Mrs V—— looked round with a start, and there was the man in brown stalking along the gallery.

"'See, see!' she cried.

"The others saw the man as distinctly as she did.

"'Why, he's a Carmelite monk,' said Colonel ——.

"Mrs. V—— then told him of the former occurrence.

"'The house must be searched,' was the Colonel's remark; 'the fellow may be one of a band of coiners, who has adopted this disguise for the purpose of frightening you away from the place: such things have happened ere now. Come along, V——, let us have a thorough examination of the premises.'

"Their more lengthened search proving equally unsuccessful, the men returned in silence and with puzzled faces. The week after two other military friends joined the small circle. These latter, both young men, were charmed when told of the mysterious monk who occasionally paced the gallery of an evening.

"'O, please, do let us watch for him; do you think he will come to-night?' said one.

"'Only give me a pistol, and let me have a shot at the fellow! I shall soon bring him down!' laughed the other.

"'I shall do no such thing,' replied Mrs. V——; 'you might commit murder. We shall certainly watch for him this evening, but I much fear that, like the police, he won't be seen when wanted.'

"She was agreeably disappointed, however. As the clock struck ten, the baize door slowly opened, and the man in brown appeared, and walked leisurely along—so leisurely, that all present could see his sad, worn features, long beard, and garb of russet hue.

"'What think you of that?' remarked Mrs. V——, to the one nearest her; 'can it be a ghost that we have seen?'

"The youth thus addressed laughed the idea to scorn.

"'Oh, oh—come now; really that is too bad—a ghost in the nineteenth century—more likely a lover of one of the housemaids!'

"'Or of the cook's,' suggested the other.

"'In all probability, it is the head-gardener himself, who hopes to get rid of you before the peach season comes round,' said Colonel ——.

"'I know how to catch the rascal, and make him sing small,' cried the youngest of the 'subs'; and so tickled was he with his own idea, that he lay back in his chair and laughed heartily.

"'May I ask what it is?' said Mrs. V——, anxiously.

"'Let's tie a rope across the gallery, and, my stars! won't we see the fellow come a cropper!'

"'Well, that cannot kill him,' said the hostess, and she smiled at the suggestion.

"So did the others, and they expressed their approval of the proposed stratagem. Without any of the servants being made aware of the experiment that was to be made, the necessary rope was procured and laid aside for future use.

"Great was the merriment indulged in on the following evening at the expense of the make-believe ghost as the young men proceeded to their task of improvising a trap to catch the unwary promenader. This was effected by their securing the rope to the balustrade on the one side and nailing it to the wall on the other. This feat accomplished, the youths rejoined the others, who, seated in the hall, had been observers of their work.

"'I fear his ghostship won't favour us this evening just because we are prepared for him,' said Colonel ——, as the clock struck the hour of ten.

"Mrs. V—— agreed with him, while the others took a more hopeful view of the case.

"Meanwhile they lounged about in the hall, and in the enjoyment of cigars and conversation for the moment forgot all about the nocturnal wanderer. The hand of the clock pointed to eleven when Colonel —— was startled by Mrs. V—— suddenly grasping him by the arm and calling out 'Look!' No one had heard the usual shutting of the baize door, yet there was the monk stalking along towards the other, which he reached and passed through with as much ease as though no such thing as a rope impeded his way.

"'The nails must have fallen out.' As he said this the youngest sub was clearing the stairs. To his unbounded astonishment he found the rope just as he had left it.

"'Is there any story attached to this place?' Mrs. V——

inquired of a voluble neighbour who had driven over to have tea with her on the day following this fresh mystification.

"'Yes,' replied the other; 'I have heard it said that it was a monastery, and when that rapacious tyrant Henry VIII. drove away all the poor monks and nuns from their various abodes, —— was not spared more than the others. By Royal mandate the monks were to be banished, and all obeyed the imperious command save one, who positively refused to leave the home to which he was so deeply attached.'

"'And was he allowed to remain?'

"'No, he was murdered.'

"Mrs. V—— kept her own counsel, but ere a year had elapsed —— Hall was again in the list of those houses for which there was wanted—a tenant!"

"Bravo!" cried Danecourt, "truly an excellent story, but I'll cap it with one told me by my cousin Julia. 'You must for the time imagine that it is she who speaks."

FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIRS.

"We lived in Yorkshire at the time of my mother's death, which happened when I was in my eighteenth year, and my father and I continued to live in the large gloomy old house rendered yet more so by the absence of her we both so deeply mourned. It must have been on the night of my mother's funeral; yes, for I was lying in my bed sobbing bitterly at thoughts of the sad procession which had that day left our house, and of her I should never see again, when my attention was arrested by the sound of a step on the stair. I listened, wondering who it could be that was up at that time of night. Whoever it was, the steps, once the landing was gained, turned to the right and went towards my father's room—that which he and my mother used to occupy during her lifetime, for no entreaties of mine could induce him to leave a chamber which must naturally recall to his mind such sad recollections—there they ceased. In the morning I asked my maid which of the servants it was who had come up the stairs after we were in bed. No one that she knew of,

she said; the others had gone to their rooms before she had left the kitchen. Rendered nervous and wakeful through sorrow, I spent a succession of sleepless nights, and on each of these, as the clock struck twelve, the same gentle footfall was heard on the stair. I confess that for me these measured steps breaking in as they did on the deep silence had an eerie sound, and I felt my heart throb at their perpetual recurrence.

"Again I spoke to my maid on the subject, and insisted that some one of the servants must be given to sleep-walking; for who else could it be that thus roamed about in the night-time? The maid's answer surprised me.

"'Indeed, ma'am, we have all heard the steps as well as you, and we are just as much at a loss to account for them as yourself. The cook says——.' Here Agnes stopped short, and looked at me with a half-frightened air.

"Well, what does the cook say?

"'That she thinks it very strange they should never have been heard before missis was buried.'

"I started; the very same idea had presented itself to my mind. Could it, indeed, be the spirit of my dear mother which was revisiting her earthly home? It certainly was curious that the foosteps always went in the direction of my father's door, and never returned. Much I wondered whether he had noticed them. Should I speak of them to him, or wait until he himself mentioned the subject? Not many days elapsed before he did so.

"'Julia,' he said, one morning at breakfast, 'which of the servants is it who walks about the house at a late hour? I wish you would inquire, and put a stop to it. For weeks past I have been disturbed, and made restless by steps coming up the stairs, then along the passage, and stopping outside my door. It is most annoying, have you not heard it?'

"'We have *all* heard it!"

"'All! but it must be one of the household—a sleep-walker perhaps.'

"'No, papa; the servants are quite as unable to account for it as we are.'

"'That seems odd; who do you think it can be then?'

"I was overcome with emotion, but at length I found courage to say—

"'The steps were first heard by me on the night of dear mama's funeral; and—and I cannot help thinking that in some way or other they are connected with her, for they always go to your door; should you like me to ascertain if they are?'

"My father covered his face with his hands, and sat silent for a few minutes; then he said in low, sad tones—

"'No, Julia; if, as you seem to think, the spirit of your darling mother comes back to visit me, I should not wish her to be disturbed.'

"He never again alluded to the mysterious footsteps, nor did I, although night after night they came up the stairs, and along the gallery as far as *his* door. For myself, I grew painfully accustomed to them, and should have missed them had they ceased to make themselves heard.

"'Miss Julia,' said my maid to me one morning, while brushing my hair, 'You heard the steps last night?'

"'Yes.'

"'And that they went on to the master's door as usual?'

"'Yes.'

"'For cook and I put a chair, overturned, at the top of the stair to see if that would stop them, but it did not, so it must be a spirit that walks about.'

"'What would I not give to see who or what it is! Agnes, have you the courage to sit up one night with me, and whenever we hear the steps we can run out and see if there really is anything there?'

"My young maid was as eager as myself to investigate the mystery in the daytime; but when night came, with its sombre hues and moaning wind, poor Agnes shivered, and declared that her nerves would not stand the shock were she to see what she dreaded to see. To tell the truth, I found my own courage fail me as night approached.

"Two years passed away, and the haunting steps were as constant as ever; and as both of us had grown more courageous with the flight of time, Agnes and I at length resolved, cost what it might, to sit up and watch for the nocturnal

visitor—the very night for our doing so was agreed upon, when, to our surprise and disappointment, the steps suddenly ceased. How was this to be accounted for? Alas! in a manner generally the reverse of pleasing to a grown-up daughter who imagines she is all in all to her father.

"'Julia, my dear, I am about to give you a second mother; see that yours is a loving reception, for she deserves it!'

"My father, as he said these words, stooped down and kissed me tenderly on the forehead.

"'O, Miss!' exclaimed my maid, when I told her of the meditated change in our domestic arrangements, 'then we'll never hear the footsteps again.' And we never did."

"A creepy story, truly," said Weston, looking round upon us, with a grave expression on his usually beaming face; "and I think, of the two I would rather be looking at the monk than lying awake night after night in that gloomy old house listening to these steps echoing on the stairs and along the passages—and they were really never heard again?"

"No; so my cousin told me."

"Well, you and Gerrard have given us two excellent stories; I really don't know which is best."

"And now," said Harcourt, of Christ Church, "I remember a story which may serve to amuse you.

"One evening, last Christmas term, I took a book from off a table by side of which my mother sat knitting a stocking. Observing it to be Owen's 'Footfalls on the Boundaries of another World,' I asked her, with a laugh, if she believed in ghosts.

"'Well, James,' was her answer, 'considering the singular experience I had myself, I cannot say that I do not.'

"My curiosity excited, I begged of her to let me know what that experience was, and she did so as follows:—

THE WALLED-UP DOOR.

"'When your aunt Theresa lived in ——shire, she

asked your father and I to visit her, which we did. It was late when we arrived, and we were at once shown to our room to dress for dinner. The one given us was far from calculated to promote cheerfulness. A decidedly depressing air was perceptible, and this affected us both uncomfortably whenever we entered it. Its aspect was rendered gloomy by heavy, oaken furniture, large four-posted bed with black velvet hangings, and window curtains to match, while its atmosphere can only be described by the word *fusty*.

"'Dinner over and the guests departed, for your aunt had invited several neighbours to meet us, Sir James and I withdrew to our room. Having had a long journey we felt very tired, and glad were we when the good folks had taken themselves off.

"'It certainly looks as if it had a story attached to it, said I, as, candle in hand, I made a survey of the apartment and peered into all the nooks and corners of which there were only too many for my taste. While engaged in making this inspection my eyes fell on a built-up door in the wall at my side of the bed. I pointed this out to your father, who looked at it and on the general surroundings with an unmistakeable air of disgust.

"'I wish with all my heart we were out of this place,' he remarked in tones of irritation, as he covered himself with the clothes; 'I know I shall have another severe attack of rheumatism from the damp.'

"'I fervently hoped not, for Sir James when suffering from these seizures, was the reverse of a Job.

"'After a few common-place observations we disposed ourselves to sleep, but there was no rest for us that night. We did nothing but toss about and shiver in the most miserable manner. My limbs shook and my teeth chattered as though I had the ague; and I could hear your father's going like a pair of castanets. I rose more than once and heaped shawls and greatcoats on the bed, but these, strange to say, procured us no access of warmth—we lay and shivered as before.

"'Never spent such a miserable night in my life,' said Sir

James, as the morning light streamed in through the shutters; 'I am convinced no one has slept in this room for three years at least; your sister deserves a good talking to for putting us into it.'

"'As for me, I felt as if I had never been in bed at all.

"'Unrefreshed, and looking for all the world as though we were in want of a pair of these "combined nerve invigorators" which one sees advertised everywhere, we took our seats at the breakfast table. I noticed that Theresa looked at us curiously, but she made no remark, neither did we.

"'I wonder what kind of night we shall have,' Sir James said as we once more found ourselves in our sleeping apartment.

"'We were not long suffered to remain in doubt upon this point. Again we shivered and tossed; only the cold seemed more intense and our shiverings more acute than on the preceding one. Again I rose to procure some extra wraps, and as I did so I distinctly saw a very cloudy looking substance near to the built-up door.

"'I am off to town—another such night would kill me!' moaned your father, as he tossed and turned feverishly from side to side. Fortunately, the post-bag furnished him with the necessary excuse, and he set out by an early train, leaving me to face the horrors of another night alone. What should I do under these far from pleasant circumstances? Should I make up my mind to encounter perhaps worse experiences than those I had already gone through, or should I tell Theresa, and ask her to let me have another room? I shrank from this latter alternative; she would only laugh at me, and style my fears childish: no, rather than encounter her raillery I preferred passing another night in the same chamber. And now that it was day I felt inclined to pooh-pooh the whole thing. Doubtless, neither of us were very strong just then; Sir James had been thoroughly worn out by his parliamentary duties, and I had recently recovered from a severe attack of neuralgia; added to which, coming as we did from a comfortable, well-aired town house to a de-

cidedly damp country one, was of itself sufficient to account for our chilly feelings.

"'Thus I argued until night came: then my newly-acquired courage deserted me, and it was with a sinking heart that I entered my room, now looking more than ever gloomy, and closed the door, thus separating myself from all human companionship. Most earnestly I wished at that moment that I had gone with your father. Well, there was no help for it, and I put the extinguisher on the candles with pretty much the same feelings as those with which a prisoner retires to rest knowing that he has the water torture before him. How can I ever describe to you that awful night! how make you realise one-tenth of what I suffered! In the first place, as on the previous night, I suddenly became aware of an all pervading sense of cold, and I started up in bed shivering violently. The surrounding atmosphere seemed iced into frigidity, and chilled me to the spine. My heart beat almost audibly, and a cold dew burst out on my brow, as my eyes, impelled as it seemed to look in the direction of the walled-up door, I saw, O horror! close to me—so close that I could trace the outline of a figure in its midst—the grey cloudy pillar. This was too much. With a scream I darted out of bed, threw wide the door, and fled along the gallery then lit up by the moon's rays transmitted through a window emblazoned with the family arms, a star rising from behind a dark cloud, with the motto, "I shine in obscurity." I particularly describe this window, for even now whenever I recall that terrible experience I remember the delight with which I regarded it, feeling as though I had escaped into the regions of light and safety.

"'My sister's room gained, I threw open her door, frightening her out of her sleep.

"'Who is there?' she cried in alarm. 'Theresa,' I gasped, 'is there anything the matter with that room you put us into?'

"'Well, it is called the haunted room,' she said with provoking coolness.

"'And why did you put us there?'

"'Because I did not think you were such fools as to believe in ghosts.'

"'You should not have done so,' I went on; we have had a miserable time of it, and rather than return to that fearful chamber, I shall spend the remainder of the night in a chair.'

"'It seems,' said my mother in conclusion, 'that the built-up door formerly led into a chapel in which a young lady had been murdered, and ours having been her room, her ghost was believed to haunt it.'

"'How could my aunt remain in any such place?'

"'She did not live there long. Shortly after our visit she left, and —— was bought by a neighbouring squire, who pulled down the supposed-to-be haunted part and built an entirely new wing.'

"'And so laid the ghost?'

"'Yes.'"

When Harcourt had finished, Walton of Trinity said he should now tell us a story in connection with a *bona fide* haunted house in London.

"Not in —— Square, I hope," said Weston, with an anxious expression; "officer in the room—friends in one below—bell rung twice—pistol shot—man found de——"

"No, no, no;" said Walton, laughing heartily, as Weston thus glibly went over the very startling details we had all heard mentioned in connection with —— Square; "*my* house is not in a square, but in a street in the neighbourhood of one whose name I leave you to guess.

"The reason why I came to know anything about it, is that two sisters, great friends of my family, live there. The landlady was a former maid of theirs; and on her setting up this establishment some years ago, the Misses M——, their brothers and sisters having married, took apartments in it, and have remained there ever since. My youngest sister is very devoted to these girls, and always puts in an appearance on their 'at home' days. Not many weeks ago I accompanied her on one

of these visits, and while partaking of an excellent cup of tea, I heard the youngest one remark to her with an amused expression, 'Ella! only imagine; we have a ghost here.'

"'A ghost—a real ghost?' cried my sister, '*here*—in *this* house?'

"'Yes; there is something very funny about it; strange noises are heard, but I shall tell it you all from the beginning.'

"'O, do, there's a dear!' And my sister nestled close up to her friend with a face of delighted expectancy.

"Miss M——, then began her tale."

THE BUTLER'S GHOST.

Last summer while at ——, we had Miss Wakefield (the landlady) to stay with us for a few days. She had been very unwell, and we hoped the change would do her good. One evening I took her out for a walk to show her the beauties of the place; and while passing an empty, desolate looking, old house, I remarked that it looked as if it were haunted.

To this our landlady made reply, "Would you be surprised to learn that there is a haunted house in —— Street?"

"Indeed! what number?" was my very natural exclamation.

"No. 17."

"Come, now, you are joking."

"I assure you I am in perfect earnest; and I only mention it to you because the noises have become so dreadful that I think it right you should know about them."

"But we have been with you some years now, and we have heard no mysterious noises."

"Because they take place in the down stairs rooms."

"And when did you first hear them?"

"Only this summer. Owing to the house being very full, I had to give up my room in the top storey and go down to the lower; then my sleep was disturbed in the most unaccountable manner. It seems, however, that the figure was seen many years ago."

"A figure! then, there is a *real* ghost; and who is it supposed to be?"

"A butler, who committed suicide a long time since. This is how I came to know about it. Nine years ago a cousin of mine spent the evening with me. It was summer, and the weather being very warm, we sat with the window open. About ten o'clock, I said to her, 'You won't mind my leaving you for a few minutes, as I must go up stairs and see that all the rooms are right.' 'O, dear, no,' she said, quite pleasantly. I was a good deal astonished then, when on my return she instantly rose, shook hands with me very hurriedly, and merely saying 'It is time I was going,' went away looking much put out. Since that night I have seen nothing of her till last Christmas, when we met at the house of an aunt of mine; and then she appeared quite as glad to see me as I was to meet her. On my asking her why it was that she never came near me, she hesitated for a moment, and then said, 'Well, it is better you should know what happened the last night I was in your house, so I shall tell you. After you left me I saw something so dreadful that nothing will ever induce me to enter it again.'

"'Good, gracious!' said I, 'what was it you saw?'

"'A man dressed in white, with a death-like face, and a long beard, who went three or four times round the room, and then disappeared through the wall near the fireplace, from which there immediately afterwards came out, as it were, waves of white.'

"I stared at her.

"'It was awful to see it—it was awful to see it!' she kept repeating.

"'Why did you not call me?' I said.

"'I could do nothing,' she replied, 'but sit there watching the man in an agony of fear.'

"That must have been the one poor Jane saw," I observed, as if to myself.

"'What did she see?' asked my cousin eagerly.

"Just such another man; only he was lying on the floor with his arms folded on his breas She saw him

distinctly, and told me that he was dressed in white; and his face and eyes were like those of a dead person, though the latter were wide open and staring: also, that he had a long beard. Her seeing him cost her her place, for she was so ill in consequence of the fright she got, that she was obliged to go home. Since then," continued the landlady, "I was one night in my parlour, which, as you know, is next to the room occupied by the maids making up my accounts. The door being open, I could see into the passage. Hearing a noise I looked up and saw its handle being turned rapidly round, and there was no one there. This went on for some time, then all was quiet. You will laugh at me, but so terrified was I, that I sat up all night in my chair, not daring to leave the room in case I should see something in the passage as I went out."

"And the noises?"

"Have been incessant—I am awakened at all hours by them. First I hear a rushing sound; then things are thrown down in the kitchen with great violence. I never closed my eyes till three this morning with the perpetual going to and fro there was in the passage; my great fear is that my servants will find out the house is haunted and leave me. I hope, Miss Emma, that you and your sister won't go away."

I re-assured her, by telling her that in the first place we did not believe in ghosts; secondly, that I was certain these sounds could all be accounted for in a natural manner if we were only to take the trouble to enquire into them; and thirdly, that even were the house haunted, we should not be frightened out of it.

She thanked me, and then the subject dropped.

On our return to town, I asked Miss Wakefield if the noises were still going on.

"I am sorry to say they are," she replied, "and that, too, worse than ever. Only this morning the new parlour maid, who came to me yesterday, asked if I had come down stairs in the night-time, as she had heard steps on the stair, and then some one went into the kitchen, and made a tremendous noise."

"What kind of noise?"

"As if a number of trays had been thrown down."

This appeared to me so very strange (went on Miss M——), that last week I sat up in the room below with my nephew till three in the morning, hoping that I might either see or hear something, but I did neither.

"Could I see it?" my sister asked, with eager looks and clasped hands; 'I should *so* like to be able to say that I had been in a haunted room."

Miss Emma laughed, and proceeded to inquire of the landlady if she might bring her friend downstairs. The answer was in the affirmative; and on my asking permission to accompany them, I was allowed to make one of the party. Together we descended to the basement storey. The worn stone-flagged passage, and the parlour, seated in which Miss Wakefield had been frightened by the revolving door handle, were examined with much curiosity; but our interest was centred in the room in which the ghost of the butler had been seen. I must candidly confess that I don't think I should like to pass a night in it myself, it looked so terribly ghosty. Being underground, the sun's rays never penetrated into it, and its atmosphere was decidedly chilly.

"The smiling landlady fully endorsed Miss M——'s singular story. She showed us where the man had committed suicide, close to the window, where blood-stains were yet to be seen; pointed to the travelling boxes from amongst which the figure came forth that frightened her cousin; attracted our attention to the beam-traversed ceiling which attested the age of that portion of the house; pointed out the chair in which she was seated when she saw the handle of the door turning; and opened the door to the same extent that it was that night, in order to show us that the passage was visible from where she sat—in short, her unvarnished statements and highly pleasing exterior so impressed us, that we left No. 17 thoroughly convinced of her truthfulness, and highly delighted to think we had been in a veritable haunted house."

"And this in the nineteenth century—this age of progress? The thing is impossible!"

And Guy laughed incredulously.

"Don't be so sceptical," replied Giffard, of Lincoln, who had joined our party a little before; "I, also, can give you a somewhat curious nineteenth century experience."

Without further preface he began.

THE MISSION LAUNDRY.

"Some few years ago, when in town, I was staying with a friend who takes a great interest in all things connected with the supernatural.

"One morning, while at breakfast, a ring came to the door bell, and shortly after the butler entered with a tray bearing a card. This he handed to Mrs. N——, who, glancing at it, told the man to show Mr. S—— in.

"Cordial greetings exchanged, Mr. S——— commenced with an apology for his early visit, and ended with asking if he might bring the Rev. Mr. Blank to luncheon that day.

"'Delighted to see any friend of yours,' was the hospitable reply.

"'You will be more delighted when I tell you the reason for my bringing him.

"'Mr. Blank, who is one of the clergymen of ——, has a ghost in his parish. This distresses him very much, and he has done all he could to get rid of it, but in vain. Her ghostship—for the spectre is that of a female—refuses to be driven away "by candle, by book, or by bell;" and her visitations have recently become so frequent, and the noises so alarming, that the inmates are terrified, and the neighbourhood scandalised in consequence.'

"'What fun!' exclaimed Mrs. N——, in great delight; 'and pray who are the inmates?'

"'A pious sister and sundry washerwomen. The house is known as the Mission Laundry, and is maintained in connection with the sisterhood of ——.'

"'But (rising) Mr. Blank can tell you all about it, and will give you his reasons for wishing to speak to you on the subject. His are *very* special ones, I assure you.'

"He laughed as he shook hands; Mrs. N—— laughed; I laughed; then we laughed in concert.

"'Half-past one, remember,' said Mrs. N——; and please don't be late, as I am all curiosity to hear what Mr. Blank has got to say.'

"Punctual to the time named, Mr. S—— and his clerical friend made their appearance. The latter was a little, thin man, with a pale face and anxious expression, which, however, gradually wore off under the combined influences of a good luncheon and cheerful conversation. The mid-day meal discussed, we returned to the library; and after a few preliminary coughs, the reverend gentleman introduced the topic then uppermost in his thoughts.

"'Mr. S—— will have told you no doubt,' he said, addressing himself to Mrs. N——, 'my reasons for intruding myself upon you to-day.'

"'No; I left you to explain that. I merely mentioned that your parish possessed a refractory ghost, and that the house it honoured with its presence is called the Mission Laundry.'

"Waving his hand towards Mr. S——, in token of his gratitude, Mr. Blank resumed.

"'I assure you I have taken every possible means to get rid of the haunting spectre. I have watched the house, slept in it, prayed in it, but without avail. I cannot lay the ghost as other clergymen have done; and informed by my young friend here that you are very intimate with Mr. Home, I asked for an introduction to you, in the hope that you might prevail upon him to get up a *séance* in the laundry, in order that by this means the parish may be rid of this most undesirable intruder. Has not Mr. Home the power to make spirits appear and disappear at pleasure?"

"'Yes.'

"'And you have seen them depart?'

"'Snuffed out like a candle!' laughed Mr. S——.

"Mrs. N—— shook her head at him, and replied to Mr. Blank's question in the affirmative.

"'And he can make them speak?'

"'Yes.'

"'Do you think he will consent to come?"

"'I am sure he will.'

"'And—and—make the spirit tell its history, and why it so torments poor Sister Mary?'

"'Yes.'

"Mr. Blank's face brightened up wonderfully.

"'How grateful we shall be to Mr. Home.'

"'And Mr. S—— informs me that he can take photographs?'

"'I never heard of his doing so; but we can bring a photographer with us who will take the spirit at once.'

"'Mr. Blank's face beamed afresh.'

"'How truly interesting—so grateful—so grateful!' he murmured.

"'And now,' said Mrs. N——, 'will you kindly tell me something about this ghost; I am all anxiety to have full particulars of the hauntings.'

"'It seems,' he said, 'that many years ago, in one of these houses—for there are two connected with the laundry: the one is the washing-house, and the other the dwelling-house—there lived a man of evil reputation, whose wife died in rather a mysterious manner, and who himself committed suicide not long after. This much I found out after poor, dear Sister Mary had spoken to me of the terrible nights she had endured in consequence of the noises which she heard there. The first time she was disturbed in this unpleasant manner was immediately on her arrival at the Mission, when busy over her accounts after the others had retired to rest. The houses are connected by an underground passage, and along this came loud, hurried footsteps, as though a man were stamping about in thick boots. Then the steps increased in number, until at length several persons seemed to be running backwards and forwards. This so annoyed Sister Mary that she rose, took her candle, and went into the matron's room to ask her what she meant by allowing the women to make this dreadful noise. The matron was in bed and fast asleep. She then hastened to the washerwomen's part of the house—they too were in their beds. Opening the

door leading into the passage, she distinctly heard footsteps in front of her, but could see no one; neither did her inquiry, "Who's there?" elicit any reply. Her survey over, she returned to her books, but on account of the noise she felt it impossible to continue her work. She, therefore, left off; noticing, as she passed the clock on her way up-stairs, that the hand pointed to one.

"'The night following the same thing occurred; and this time the matron came to her in great alarm, asking what it meant. Of course Sister Mary was as much puzzled to account for it as herself; and together the poor trembling women sat listening to the continual stamping and banging of doors that was going on underneath. Next morning two of the assistants gave warning; they had never slept all night, and could not stay any longer in a house where such things took place; it was as much as their lives were worth.

"'The next time Sister Mary heard the sounds, they came from the room in which it was said the man had hanged himself; and she described them as being of the most terrifying description—a perfect "hurly-burly," in short. Things were thrown about; there was a constant walking backwards and forwards; doors were slammed with tremendous violence; and at times she distinctly heard men and women's voices in angry altercation. For the space of two years Sister Mary endured this and more in silence; then she felt she must speak or lose her senses; so she told me all.

"'At first I could not believe her story, it seemed so incredible, and I expressed my belief that these noises were got up to frighten her by some of the washerwomen; but she persisted in saying she knew for a certainty that they proceeded from no natural causes. Neither they did: I soon satisfied myself as to that, for I slept a fortnight in the house, and I can only describe them by the epithet —diabolical. Indeed, one night so terrible were they in the room overhead, that next day we had the flooring lifted, thinking there might be something hidden underneath; and I made rather a curious discovery. I came upon a small box lying in straw, and in it there was a

pawn ticket for some uncut jewels, deposited with Attenborough in 1857. Armed with this I went to his shop. He looked at it, and said, that if the jewels were not redeemed they would be sold, and as the manager he had then was no longer with him, he was unable to throw any light on the matter. The result of this discovery was, that the noises in the room that night were ten times worse than ever. It seemed as though several furious men were stamping about and destroying everything that came within reach. Shortly after the ghost made its appearance on the scene. The washerwomen declared they heard a lady in a silk dress, and high-heeled shoes, walking along the passage. One day a laundry-maid had a towel snatched out of her hand by an evil looking old woman; a second received a slap on her face, she could not tell from whom; while a third was found in a faint in the laundry. She had seen, she said, a woman in a black silk dress, who stood and shook her hand at her. Then, again, a figure was seen pacing up and down a circumscribed piece of ground in the garden, as though it were measuring a grave. On another occasion, the greater part of a congregation on their return from evening service in a neighbouring church, saw some one in white at one of the windows, who bowed gravely out to them. All these things are still going on, and I, as I told you before, seem to lack the spiritual power requisite to exorcise them.'

"'And is Sister Mary still there?' Mrs. N—— inquired.

"'Yes; and so broken in health, that her doctor says she must at once go away for rest and quiet, or he will not answer for the consequences.'

"'Then get her away, and once the *séance* has taken place, she will not be subjected to any further annoyance from the ghost.'

"Mr. Blank again expressed his gratitude, and after a few general remarks, he and Mr. S. took their departure.

"Shortly after, I left —— Square.

"In the autumn of the following year I was again staying with Mrs. N——. A Miss F—— was also a guest in the house. It seemed this lady was notorious amongst her friends

for her belief in ghosts and her expeditions in quest of haunted houses.

"'By the bye,' I said one day to Mrs. N——, on hearing her allude to Mr. Home, 'did you succeed in getting up a séance at the Mission Laundry?'

"'No; Mr. Home was leaving England when I wrote to him, and he could not come with us.'

"'Then the ghost is still as active as ever?'

"'I really do not know. I have seen nothing of Mr. S—— for some time, and so cannot say whether it is or not. Miss F——, you should go and see after it.'

"'See after what?' Mrs. N—— told her the story, which interested her very much, she said, and she should certainly find her way to —— some day soon.

"The very same evening this ghost hunter returned for dinner in high spirits, and said she had been to the Mission Laundry.

"'And did you see Sister Mary?' said Mrs. N——.

"'No; she is away owing to bad health, so I was told by Sister Agnes, who has taken her place. It was such fun,' and Miss F—— laughed.

"'Then give us your experiences that we may laugh too.'

"In reply to Mrs. N——, Miss F—— gave us the following account of her adventures.

"'Having inquired as to the whereabouts of the Mission Laundry, I walked in its direction, and soon found myself in front of the reputed haunted houses. I was much disappointed with their exterior. Both were small and common-place looking. Leading up to the door of the principal one was a flight of steps. These I ascended, and rung the visitors' bell. A tall handsome woman, in the dress of a sister of mercy, came forward and saluted me with a sweet smile.

"'Please to walk in, she said, at the same time that she threw open a door to the right of the passage. I entered, and seated myself in the indicated chair, while the sister took possession of one opposite.

"'You are Sister Mary,' I began.

"'No; Sister Agnes: Sister Mary is away at present in bad health. What can I do for you?' another sweet smile.

"'I have called in consequence of the story told of the laundry by Mr. Blank.'

"'*Father* Blank,' emphasised Sister Agnes. I bowed corrected. I had observed on entering the pretty little room that its walls were profusely adorned with those pious emblems so dear to the Anglican heart.

"'*He* says that it is haunted; and that Sister Mary has had a terrible time of it.'

"'O, dear, dear! How very tiresome all this is.' (As she spoke Sister Agnes clasped her hands together.) 'I really wish Father Blank would not go about talking such nonsense; he is getting us into no end of trouble. The owner is *so* angry! She has been told that Mr. Home is coming to lay the ghost; and she says if he does the reputation of her house is gone for ever, and she will never get another tenant. It is really too bad of Father Blank. I am tired to death by people coming to "hear all about the apparition," what it says and what it does; and who go away quite annoyed when I tell them there is no such thing. There, the other day, an open carriage and pair, with four ladies, a gentleman, and a dog, drove up to the door; and Sister Mary was asked for. When I went out to them, they told me they had heard the place was haunted, and they had come to see the ghost. They would insist that it was the case, and were positively quite rude when I said it was not. They did their utmost to force an entrance, and I had the greatest difficulty in getting them away. As they drove off, the names Sister Mary and Father Blank were hurled at me in wrath.'

"'As she finished, the handsome Anglican gave me an upbraiding look, doubtless voting me a "bore," although I had neither carriage nor poodle. But I explained matters to her; telling her that it was no idle curiosity which had procured her a visit from me. That I was deeply interested in houses supposed to be haunted; that I had walked nine miles to see the Laundry, and should not have intruded had Father Blank not said that Sister Mary would be delighted to see any

one who wished to hear about the ghost; and that had I known she still was away, I should have waited till her return. This apology on my part was well received by the justly-vexed Sister. She laughed, and said that my coming under these circumstances was very different: she was only annoyed with people such as those she had mentioned. And in order to convince me that I was not unwelcome, she went to the side-board, from whence she brought me a glass of wine and some biscuits, to refresh me, she said, after my long walk. Thus we became friends; and Sister Agnes spoke very freely on the subject of the ghost.

"'She could not imagine how a sensible man like Father Blank could take up his time with such folly; that Sister Mary was made nervous and fanciful owing to illness, and had imagined a great deal; and as for the laundry maids, their minds were so wrought up to believe anything, that one day when she entered the kitchen with a shawl over her head on account of the toothache, they all screamed out "Here's the ghost—here's the ghost!" and were preparing to run away when she spoke to them and so calmed their fears.

"'I felt dreadfully disappointed when the Sister talked in this fashion, to think there was no haunting shade after all! and I had had my long walk for nothing; but the following remarks afterwards convinced me that there *was* something funny about the Laundry, and that Sister Agnes had a *special reason* for speaking as she did.

"'Do you really think Mr. Home means to have a *séance* here?'

"'No,' I said, 'he cannot have one now, for he has left England.'

"'I am truly thankful for poor Mrs. Owen's sake. She begged me so earnestly to try and prevent his coming; also, *to say a good word for the Laundry to any one who asked me about the ghost, otherwise no one would take it when we left.*'

"'Are you going to leave?'

"'Yes; we remove next month to ——.'

"'*And before your departure you are kindly doing your best to re-establish the character of the house?*'

"'Well, I *am* trying to do so; Mrs. Owen is *so* afraid it will remain empty on her hands.'

"'Thanking Sister Agnes for her kind reception of me, we shook hands cordially, and I took my departure.

"'*When we left,*' these words spoke volumes. Some few months after, I was talking to a friend about the Mission Laundry, when a lady present, said, 'A son of mine lives at ——, and I will get him to go and see it; he takes such interest in haunted houses.' She did so, and was told by him that he had gone at once to the Laundry and found, much to his annoyance, that *both houses had been pulled down.*"

"Talking of London Ghosts," said Walford, "I am told there is a haunted house in Buckingham Palace Road. The haunter seems to be of the 'fetch and carry' order; lights the fire, sweeps the carpets, dusts the furniture, puts on the kettle, and altogether seems a rather good sort of fellow—I assure you it is quite true (Guy's face had assumed a sceptical expression); I had it from one of the family. Then there is the ghost at —— Hospital. A cousin of mine is a medical student there, and he told me he knew when the patient operated upon was going to die, as he always saw a black shade when in the operating ward."

"I should think that shade will make its appearance pretty often," said Gifford.

"How so?"

"Well, thanks to those odious and misleading vivisections of our poor dumb animals—the very idea of which makes me shudder—many honest souls are untimely ferried across the Styx; indeed, I hear that Charon complains loudly of the heavy freights sent him from some of the London Hospitals, and says that he must have a larger boat!"

"Pray, don't let us have any more town ghosts," said Danecourt, when our laughter over Charon's dilemma had subsided, "in my opinion no interest attaches itself to them. They seem completely out of their sphere, and ought not to be treated with the same deferential respect one willingly accords to a family ghost, who is smiled down upon by a long line of ancestral

portraits, whose high heels, hoops, sacques, and Cavalier costumes, correspond with oaken furniture, antique silver plate, and pedigree dating from the Conquest. One naturally associates spectres with an old-fashioned country house, a lordly castle, or moated grange, of which it may be said,—

"'See'st thou yon grey gleaming Hall
Where the deep elm shadows fall?
Voices that have left this earth
Long ago
Still are murmuring round its hearth
Soft and low.'

"Don't you all agree with me?"

"We do—we do!"

Danecourt went on.

"To look majestic, and to preserve the family dignity, ghosts ought to have plenty of space, drawing-rooms of vast dimensions, long galleries, stately staircases"——

"Pardon me for interrupting you," broke in Darrell, "but 'stately staircases' recalls to my recollection the story of a spectre, of which perhaps some of you may have heard; by many it is called the 'Brown Lady of R——'; and by others the 'Ghost of the Housekeeper.'"

One or two said they had heard of it; we all expressed a desire to hear what Darrell had to say about it.

THE BROWN LADY OF R——

"Calling one day last summer on an intimate friend of mine, I found the well-known G—— B—— in earnest conversation with her. Their subject of discourse proved to be dogs; and this devoted lover of animals amused and interested us with several of the anecdotes with which his mind was stored regarding them. One of his favourite books, he told us, was 'Man and Beast, Here and Hereafter'; and that, like its author, the Rev. James Wood, he firmly believed a future was in store for the lower animals. Proofs were not wanting in support of his argument. The 'spirit of the beast' introduced and discussed, then the conversation turned upon that

of the man: this naturally led to ghost stories, of which Mr. G—— B—— seemed to have a choice collection.

"After various supposed-to-be-haunted houses had been touched upon, he asked Mrs. C——, if she had ever heard of R—— Castle, and the ghost which was seen on the principal staircase before any of the family died.

"'Yes;' said the latter, 'and a friend of mine told me this in connection with it. She was staying in a country house with Colonel L——; and when speaking to him about the tradition, she asked if it were true. He said that it was, and that he had seen it. At a late hour, he told me, I was walking up stairs to my room, when I somehow felt impelled to look behind me, and I saw a lady there, the moonbeams shining in full upon her through the window. I stopped short and looked at her, wondering which of the guests it could be, who, like myself, had remained so long down stairs. She came nearer to me—and, O horror!

"'I staggered up the remaining steps as best I could, and once in my room, threw myself on the nearest chair in a half fainting condition.'

"'What is the matter with you?' cried my wife, in alarm.

"'I could only gasp forth, I have seen the Brown Lady!'

"'What was she like?'

"'I will sketch her for you.' Shortly after he handed me a drawing of a figure in a sacque, and with the head of a skeleton.'

"Ha! that is curious!" said G—— B——, "now I will tell you a story about R—— and its ghost. A relation of mine, a Mrs. B——, was the intimate friend of a Mrs. L——, who, strange to say, although a practical matter-of-fact woman, not only believed in but had a longing desire to see the ancestral ghost possessed by the family into which she had married. One day Mrs. L—— came to my relative's house in great delight. 'Congratulate me,' she said, seizing her friend's hand in both hers; 'I am off to R——, and, oh, I do hope I shall see the housekeeper!' Mrs. B—— re-echoed her wish and they parted, Mrs. L—— having first promised that she should write from the haunted mansion. Two months after a letter came. It was full of complaints. I myself saw it, and it

began thus: 'Picture my disgust! here have I been all this time, and I have not yet seen the ghost of the housekeeper!'

"A fortnight passed over, and there came a second; this I also saw. 'Imagine my delight,' it began, 'I *have* just seen the housekeeper.' A few weeks later Mrs. B—— received a third, the envelope of which bore the same postmark, but was addressed in a different hand. She opened it hastily, wondering who it could be from, when these words met her eyes—'Aware of your friendship with the deceased Mrs. L——.' Her friend *had* seen the ghost of the housekeeper and was dead."

"Here is another curious incident in connection with R——," said Sir Charles ——, who had recently joined us.

"Two friends of mine were staying there, and one day, when on their way to the drawing-room previous to the ringing of the dinner-bell, they saw tripping up the stairs before them a very elegant young lady in evening dress.

"'Whoever can she be?' the one remarked to the other; 'she must be a new arrival. What an exquisite figure the girl has!'

"'I wonder what her face is like,' whispered the other; 'I wish she would look round.'

"Shortly after this she did turn round, and attached to that lovely figure was the head of a skeleton."

"Delightful!" cried Dancourt; now that is the kind of ghost story I like. Can any one present cap that?"

Silence ensued; no one seemed willing to accept the challenge. At length Staunton, of Brazenose, who had left the room shortly before, now returned with some papers in his hand.

"What have you got there?" said Weston, looking eagerly at him.

"A manuscript. Seeing you were all in a ghost story mood, I bethought me of this, and went to my rooms for it, thinking it might interest you, as I am not ashamed to say it did me. Before reading it to you, however, I must ask you to accompany me in thought to the Royal Academy, to which exhibition, some few

years ago, I escorted two Scotch cousins. There being a good show of pictures that season, the galleries were most uncomfortably crowded. My temper being ruffled by the crush and the suffocating atmosphere, I was on the point of begging the girls to come away, as there was no possibility of their getting near the 'favourites,' when a lady, darting forth from a corner, seized my youngest cousin by the arm, and said in an audible whisper, 'Only fancy, Isabel, Lord Glen Albyn's portrait is here!'

"'Where, where?' was the excited answer.

"The lady pointed to the next room. 'No. 347; *so* glad I have seen it.'

"'Frances, Frances, do you hear that?'

"'What?' said Frances, whose attention was just then engaged with one of Desanges's beautiful ladies.

"'Lord Glen Albyn's portrait is in the next room.'

"Frances at once made a rush towards the gallery in question, followed closely by Isabel. Intermediate obstacles in the shape of stout gentlemen and portly dowagers were thrust on one side, and the two girls, panting and breathless from their recent exertions, at length found themselves in the neighbourhood of 347, which represented a tall, nice-looking young man in the Highland garb. Judging from the eager crowd there was round it, this portrait was the centre of attraction; glasses of all sizes were levelled at it; lavish praises bestowed upon it; and observations of which the following must be accepted as a specimen were freely indulged in:—

"*(Enthusiastic Young Lady)* 'How *truly* interesting.'

"*(Aesthetic ditto)* 'And how *intense!*'

"*(Scheming Mother)* 'Lord Glen Albyn, *eldest* son and *heir* of Lord Caledonia!'

"*(Novel-reading Miss)* 'Lord Glen Albyn! *what* a *lovely* title!'

"*(Worldly Parent)* 'Castle Caledonia, one of the *finest* seats in Scotland; anciently a royal residence; dates back to the 10th century; magnificent and *extensive* park.'

"*(Daughter, in a whisper)* 'Does *he* know *the* secret?'

"*(Mother, in reply)* 'Yes, my dear; he was told it when he came of age.'

"*(Lady behind, in hurried tones)* '*Most* singular; mystery *cannot* be solved; attempted again and again. Once with handkerchiefs hung out at the different windows in the late Lord Caledonia's absence. Lord Caledonia returned unexpectedly; frowned at sight of the fluttering things—knew quite well what they had been up to. One window it seems *not* accounted for; supposed to be *that* of the secret chamber; existence of said chamber known *only* to present proprietor, agent, and heir when he comes of age.'

"*(Lady to the left)* '*Fact*, I assure you, *quite* changed *ever* since. Left the University to celebrate his twenty-first birthday; *never* been the same person; formerly very gay and full of fun, now quiet and reserved in manner, and almost sad looking.'

"*(Old Gentleman, to friend)* 'There's a something no doubt —evidently desirous to shut off the room from the rest of the house; space between door, supposed to lead to the secret chamber and the opposite apartment made a receptacle for coals; saw the footmen filling their scuttles with them; spoke to Lord Caledonia about the mystery jokingly; coughed and made no reply. Told by one of the family that a violent storm breaks over the Castle in the month of November; no other place in the neighbourhood similarly visited; has a ghost —Earl Beardie! Frightful old woman seen in the avenue!'

"*(Isabel to Frances, with a deep sigh)* 'How *charming* it would be to be married to a young man with a mystery!'

"Now not being the personal embodiment of a mystery, indeed, as you see, the reverse of mysterious looking I felt considerably hurt by this remark of Isabel Sutherland's. To tell the truth, I was captivated by my pretty Scotch cousin, and feared that now my stout figure, yellow curls, and ruddy cheeks would fail to create a favourable impression on the heart of one who seemed so infatuated with the portrait of Lord Glen Albyn. In the reverse of an amiable frame of mind, I made my way out of the crowd, leaving the young ladies to follow at their leisure.

"While looking at the sculpture a Mrs. A—— came running up to me.

"'O, *do* tell me, Mr. Staunton; where *am* I to look for Lord Glen Albyn's portrait—No. 347? I and my girls are *so* anxious to see it.'

"'In the third room from this; but before you go do pray tell me what is all this about Lord Glen Albyn, Castle Caledonia, secret room, and ghost with a beard?'

"'Hah! I see that like me you are deeply interested in this strange family history, so I shall send you by to-morrow's post a short account of the castle, ghost, etc. You may make a copy of it if you like, but be sure and return me my MSS. Poor Jane Lindsay wrote it down for me, and I would not lose it for all the world.'

"Faithful to her promise, Mrs. A—— forwarded me the manuscript. This, the copy of it, I shall now read to you"——

"But first tell us," said Guy, "what has become of the charming Isabel—are you to be married?"

"Alas, no;" and Staunton grew rather red; "the year after she married a city man who certainly looked as if there was no mystery in his family beyond that of the manner in which he had acquired his wealth."

"I beg pardon, old fellow, for the interruption. Now give us the legend."

THE MYSTERY OF CASTLE CALEDONIA.

"Within ten miles of ——, the ancient and picturesque Castle of Caledonia, the seat of the Earl of Caledonia, stands in a finely wooded park.

"Its present dimensions consist of one tall and massive tower of great antiquity, and two wings originally connected, which were built in the year 1140, by Cospatrick, Earl of Caledonia, who repaired and modernised the structure.

"From an old print of Castle Caledonia, it seems to have been anciently far more extensive, consisting of a large quadrangular pile of buildings, having two spacious courts in front, with a tower in each, and gateways and stairs: these were unfortunately removed during the last century, whereby

the Castle lost much of its characteristic and feudal appearance.

"On the northern side was the principal tower, which now constitutes the central portion of the present Castle. This tower is upwards of a hundred feet in height. The walls of the Castle are in some places fifteen feet thick; and such its immense height that there are a hundred and forty-three steps in the stair which leads from the bottom to the top. The principal stairs consist of eighty-six steps; on these five people can walk abreast.

"When the Chevalier de St. George visited Caledonia, he declared he had not seen a finer chateau in Europe. On this occasion nearly a hundred beds were made up within the Castle for the royal visitor and his retainers. Earl Cospatrick's repairs consisted of a tower in one of the angles of the building, and numerous small turrets on its top. He also planted the fine old trees round it in the ancient style of rows and avenues.

"To lovers of fine scenery, the view from the leads of Caledonia Castle will prove in the highest degree enchanting.

"On the North the mighty Grampians tower aloft in imposing grandeur, from whose deep ravines and lonely dells issue forth four rivers, all of which wind like silver threads through the beautiful vale of Caledonia, branching off in different directions to sparkle and foam amidst the fairy scenery beyond. The Sidlaw hills bound the prospect on the South. On the North-east is the gigantic Calterthan, from whose summit, in feudal times, the dread beacon-light warned the terrified beholders to prepare for the coming enemy. On the West the eye can range as far as Stirling, while, towards the North, the mountain peaks of Athole are visible.

"Tradition asserts that one of our early Scottish kings was murdered there in the eleventh century. The room is shown in which he is said to have expired; the floor of which still retains *dark* traces of the horrid deed.

"Like many other old Scottish castles, Caledonia has its 'haunted chamber,' which remains carefully shut up. The secret of its existence, and the nature of the spectral visitant

whose unbidden presence intrudes upon the silence of the night, are alone known to two or three individuals, members of the family, who are solemnly bound not to reveal their secret save to their successors. The knowledge that such a chamber does exist has excited the curiosity of many, and frequent searches have been made with a view to discover it, but in vain. The haunted room still remains concealed.

"Together with this mysterious apartment, there is supposed to be one, also hidden from mortal eye, which, if discovered, would disclose a scene of horrors far surpassing the wildest dreams of fiction.

"Alexander, Earl of Caledonia, who lived in the reign of James the Second, on account of his enormous beard, was familiarly known by the appellation of 'Earl Beardie': on account of his many misdeeds he was also styled the 'wicked laird.'

"The tradition respecting this 'awful room' in Castle Caledonia, is that Earl Beardie was one evening playing at cards with some companions as wicked as himself. Being the loser, he was warned to desist, when bursting forth into ungovernable wrath, he swore that he would play till the day of judgment. Scarce had the impious words escaped his lips, when a terrific peal of thunder crashed overhead, the devil appeared, and amid shrieks and yells of demoniac laughter, the room and its inmates instantly vanished.

"In the dark winter nights, when wild storms rage through the leafless trees, and the northern lights quiver and stream athwart the sky, it is believed by many, that, mingling with the howling blast, may be heard the fierce oaths of the imprisoned gamesters as they pursue the terrible game they are doomed to play till the day of judgment.

"But it is confidently affirmed that Earl Beardie not unfrequently breaks forth from the secret chamber, and stalks through his ancient halls in the dead of night. Silent and solitary he pursues his way,

'Through his earthly home and place,
But amidst another race.'

"'I was on a visit to Castle Caledonia,' writes Mrs. Vernon, together with my husband and son, who was then a boy about nine years of age. The bedroom assigned us was a spacious and beautiful apartment, with a small room adjoining in which Hugh was to sleep. With the exception of the door leading out of our chamber, there was none by which anyone could have entered or left his. In accordance with my usual custom when away from home, I lit a night-light and put it in his room, also one in ours, close to my side of the bed. I had slept, I know not how long, when I was awakened by a sound which struck me as being a very peculiar one. It was the rattling of dice, followed by the heavy blow of a man's hand on a table. Almost at the same instant I became aware that my taper had gone out. With the intention of relighting it, I sat up in bed and put out my hand to take the matches, when there came forth from behind the bed-curtains on the other side, a gigantic looking man. The moonbeams were shining brightly into the room, and I saw him distinctly. At first, in my confusion, I imagined that it was Mr. Vernon, until I realised that he was beside me and fast asleep. Then a strange fear took possession of me; for the man had a long, flowing beard, and his face was that of a dead person—appalling in its ghastliness. I followed his movements with a kind of fascination, and these movements were in the direction of my son's room. Was my boy asleep—would the fearful thing do him any harm—the thought was agony. As the gigantic being disappeared through the doorway, I darted after him; and as I ran, I heard Hugh's voice call out—"Oh, mama! mama! there's a great, big man in my room!" I staggered in, and the next instant my dear boy was trembling in my arms —thank God! alive and unharmed. And the figure was gone! Afterwards I remarked that *both* our night-lights, although not more than half burned, had gone out. The next morning my maid told me that hers had gone out in the same mysterious manner; and at the breakfast-table, several of the guests related similar experiences.'

"Mrs. Gordon said, that while staying at Castle Caledonia, she had a most singular dream. She dreamed that her

room door opened, and there entered a housemaid, who made straight for the fireplace. That on her reaching it, it fell crumbling into ruins; and forth from these there stepped an enormous man, with a long, flowing beard, who shook himself, and said—'Well, it is something to get out of that room after having been shut up in it for so many hundred years!' Mrs. Gordon had forgotten how many, but she mentioned her dream to someone of the family, and the remark was—'That is exactly the number of years that the mysterious room is supposed to have been shut up.'

"The following was communicated to me by Dr. ——:

"Four years ago I visited Castle Caledonia. The day of my arrival was made remarkable by the following extraordinary occurrence. Having dressed for dinner, I was standing at the window looking out on the park, when my door opened after a rather violent fashion. I turned round and saw a man in morning dress beckoning on me.

"'You are wanted; Miss Seymour has been taken very ill.'

"In the parlour to which I followed him, I found a lady lying in an arm chair apparently in a dead faint. I instantly adopted the usual remedies, and she was rapidly recovering her consciousness when the stranger gentleman exclaimed, with a sneer, 'Is that the way in which you doctors treat your patients? I will show you how I cure them;' and before I could prevent him he had stabbed her in the breast with a dagger, then both vanished! My feelings at this moment can be better imagined than described. At first I was transfixed with horror; then I rubbed my eyes to see whether I were awake, or merely the sport of a hideous dream; but no, I was wide awake and *alone*—then what had become of the others? I examined the chair and the floor; no traces of blood were visible; nothing anywhere to indicate that so fearful a tragedy had been committed—nothing to explain the mysterious occurrence of which I had been the sole witness.

"Lost in a maze of conjecture, I descended to the drawing-room, and taking up my position in a window-recess, I eagerly scanned each fresh arrival, wondering if Miss Seymour and her friend would be amongst the guests. While thus occupied,

I was joined by the Hon. Cospatrick Glen Albyn. Simultaneously with his approach the thought struck me, I shall inquire after Miss Seymour, and thus discover whether one of that name is in the castle.

"'I hope Miss Seymour has recovered from her indisposition,' I said.

"'Indisposition! why, she is not ill!'

"'I fear she is.'

"'O, no; I assure you; she is quite well, and will be here presently.' A few minutes after she entered, I took her down to dinner. I perfectly recognised her, but her reception of me was that of an entire stranger. Neither by word nor look did she evince the slightest consciousness of our having met under such peculiar circumstances, or that a trick had been played upon me. Her conversation throughout the evening was perfectly free and unembarassed. What struck me as being very singular, was, that I saw nothing of the stern looking man who had conducted me to her, nor did I during the remainder of my stay.

"Two years afterwards I was at a ball at Gloucester, and, to my great surprise, while making my way through the crowd, I found myself face to face with Miss Seymour. Obeying an incontrollable impulse, I held out my hand and addressed her as such.

"'Mrs. ——,' she said with a smile: 'see, there is my husband!'

"The man she pointed out to me was the one I had seen with her at Castle Caledonia.

"'Then he *was* with you at Castle Caledonia!' I stammered.

"She looked surprised at my visible agitation, and replied in the negative. He never had been there. This extraordinary coincidence made me shiver. What could it portend? A terrible end, I fear, for the poor young wife."

"Letter from Mrs. C——:

"'You are desirous, you tell me, to have an account of my experience at Castle Caledonia. Delighted to oblige you. I and my little girl went thither in the autumn of 18—. We occupied the same room—E. having a cot placed for her at the

side of my bed, which was modern and of small dimensions. The castle was filled with guests, and it was late before I got upstairs. My darling was wide awake: too much excited to sleep, I suppose. Before lying down I chatted a little with her. Suddenly, to my surprise, she sat up in her cot, and stared past me with a startled expression on her sweet baby face.

"'What are you gazing at E.?' I said, wondering at her strange looks.

"'O, mama!' she cried, 'there's a big man standing at the other side of the bed, and he's stooping towards you!'

"'I turned my head as she spoke, and—Oh! horror!—there stood a tall man, in full Highland dress, shadowed in the gloom. As E. said, he was bending his head towards me—the fearful eyes glared into mine; the long beard swept across my face. Happily, then I became unconscious, and remember no more.

"'The next day E. and I bade adieu to Castle Caledonia.'"

"Have you quite finished?" said Guy, as Staunton put aside his MS.

The latter nodded.

"Then I know a story told in connection with Castle Caledonia, which you may think worthy of being added to your paper."

"Indeed; do let me hear it."

"Here it is," said Guy.

"The worthy clergyman of a neighbouring town was desirous to have a new Church for himself. For the carrying out of his scheme, funds of course were requisite; and in order to raise these, the reverend gentleman not only begged of his friends and acquaintances, but furnished them with collecting cards accompanied with earnest entreaties that they would get them filled up, and thus aid him in his pious work. Honoured with an invitation from Lord Caledonia to spend a few days at his princely residence, Mr. ——, when he went did not forget to provide himself with some cards, hoping in the course of his visit to enlist the sympathies of the noble family of Glen Albyn and their guests in his enterprise.

"When told of the haunted room in the Castle, Mr. —— expressed the hope that he might be allowed to sleep in it.

"'Then you are not afraid of seeing the ghost,' said Lord Caledonia.

"'I don't believe in ghosts, my lord.'

"Agreeably with his wish, Mr. —— was given the mysterious chamber. While busy writing at the table, towards the witching hour of midnight, the ghost appeared. In no way daunted by the apparition, Mr. —— bowed with grave politeness, and handed him one of his collecting cards; the spectre looked at it, frowned, and instantly vanished."

"Of course this is intended for a joke," said Staunton, who had been staring at Guy with eyes as large and round as the O of Giotto.

"It points a moral," said the latter, with a humorous twinkle in his handsome ones.

"Indeed!" said the other stiffly.

"Yes; that ghosts don't like being asked for money any more than living people."

Shouts of laughter followed this contribution of Guy's, and Weston said, that when invited to visit at reputed haunted houses, it would be an excellent plan to provide oneself with some collecting cards in order to frighten away the spirits.

"Delicious story that of yours, Staunton," said Danecourt, who had been lying back in his chair with his eyes shut, and looking the picture of enjoyment; "Ah, yes! ghosts such as you and Darrell describe, *do* reflect dignity on an ancient family. Just fancy, a castle nine hundred years old, and a ghost! No modern house ever can or ought to possess one."

"I entirely agree with you, Danecourt," I said, "as to the great interest that attaches itself to old country houses and their ancestral shades; yet, one must admit that stories told in connection with those antiquated spectres who confine themselves to our castles, halls, and moated granges run a far greater risk of being discredited than those which describe hauntings such as have taken place in modern houses."

"What nonsense!" said Danecourt, with a half offended air.

"By no means. Relate a ghost story about some one of our ancient English, Irish, or Scotch castles, and a dozen explana-

tions will be furnished you at its close. Should the hauntings take the form of strange noises—

"'It was the owls!' says one.

"'Jack-daws,' suggests another.

"'Rats and mice,' chimes in a third.

"'The wind in the chimneys or in the passages.'

"'Always noises in old castles.'

"If a figure is seen—

"'You imagined it.'

"'You heard the family tradition, and dreamed it.'

"'It was the reflection of a candle then being carried along the gallery, which cast a shadow on the wall of your room.'

"'A trick played to frighten you by one of the youngsters who came to your chamber by means of a secret passage,'—in short, anything rather than what it was.

"But tell your audience of a ghost seen or heard in a perfectly new house lacking traditions, and all the *et ceteras* commonly associated with ghosts, and they will at once perceive that the usual trite observations don't meet the case; and they will be surprised into saying that such experiences are *very singular*, and *cannot be accounted for*. Now, the story I am going to tell you, and which I can vouch for, referring as it does to a perfectly new, common-place seaside villa, should convince the most sceptical amongst us, that however inexplicable it may appear to them—however opposed to the dictates of reason, or the dogmas of science, 'there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.'"

THE GHOST DRESSED IN BLUE.

"In the summer of 18—, a Mrs. Cavendish, an intimate friend of ours, gave up her town house on account of her health, and went to live at one of our numerous sea-side resorts. The villa she fixed upon was a newly built one—indeed, she bought it before it was finished, and had it completed in accordance with her own taste.

"This last spring, being obliged to go abroad with an invalid relation, Mrs. Cavendish told my mother she should be delighted were she and my sisters to take up their abode at

her marine residence, as she laughingly termed it, during her absence. My mother gratefully accepted this kind offer; my youngest sister had been delicate for some time past, and she thought the sea air would do her good. Shortly after, my relatives set off in high glee for Heathcote Villa. They were charmed with it, they wrote me on their arrival. It was delightfully situated; had an extensive view from its windows, and was deliciously cosy and comfortable in its interior arrangements. I was then in Switzerland, and naturally expected they would remain at Heathcote Villa for a couple of months or so; imagine my surprise, therefore, when, three weeks after, I received a hurried note from my eldest sister, Emily, telling me of their return home. 'You shall know *all* when you come back to us,' formed the postscript. This mysterious sentence so excited my curiosity that one of the first questions I asked on my arrival was, 'Now, what about Heathcote Villa?'

"My mother looked at Emily, and said, 'You had better tell William about it, as you saw the woman.'

"After a momentary hesitation, Emily said:—

You will laugh at me, William, but twice during the first week of our stay, I met a tall woman in a blue dress. She came out of the bedroom on the first floor, and went through a doorway on the stairs. At first I took her for a maid of Mrs. Cavendish's whom she had left behind, and never thought of speaking of her to any of the others. The second time, however, struck with a something peculiar about her, on my return to the parlour I mentioned the circumstance, speaking of her as Mrs. Cavendish's servant.

"Neither of her maids are here," said mama; "one is abroad with her, and the other two went to their homes for a holiday; she told me so herself."

"Then she must be a friend of our servants'. I shall ring and enquire."

When Mary came mama asked her who it was I had seen. The maid looked surprised, and said she did not know who it could be.

"She is a tall woman, and wears a blue dress."

Mary assured us she had never seen any such person in the house, and she was sure Bella had not, but she should ask her. She left the room, and on her return said that the other knew nothing about her.

"Who can she be?" said mama, after Mary had gone; "can any one have got into the house? or is she some person in the neighbourhood who was in the habit of coming here when Mrs. Cavendish was at home, and is not aware of her absence?"

"That is not at all probable," I remarked.

"Not very; but the next time you see the woman you must speak to her."

Mrs. Cavendish having told us that we might invite any friends we chose to Heathcote Villa, mama asked the Nortons to spend a few days with us, which they did. Like ourselves they were delighted with the house, and expressed their satisfaction with their bedroom, the one on the first floor.

When they joined us on the morning after their arrival, we remarked that they both looked pale and thoughtful.

That night none of us got any sleep for the opening and shutting of doors, and footsteps in the hall. We fancied too that we heard voices. The next morning Mr. Norton came to breakfast alone.

Mrs. Norton was not well, he said. Neither of them had had a good night. He hoped we had not been disturbed, as he and Mary, not being able to sleep, had walked about the hall for some time. We expressed our regret at this, and then there followed several leading questions from Mr. Norton—Had any of us slept in the room they occupied? Had any other of our friends slept in it? Who did the house belong to? Did we know anything of its past history? etc., etc.

"From your looks and these enquiries," said mama, "I am sure you have something to tell us about your room, do let us know what it is."

Mr. Norton then gave us an account of their experiences, and certainly they were very dreadful.

"The noises," he said, "began the night before last, and immediately on our putting out the candle. These consisted of loud knockings at different parts of the room, accompanied

with heavy footsteps and whispering voices. We naturally concluded that some one was there, and I got up and lit a night light but could see no one. I was scarcely in bed before the light went out. I rose and lit another, for, strange to say, the wax of the first had melted away. The second shared the same fate, and again the noises and whisperings made themselves heard. This went on all night, and neither myself nor my wife could sleep in consequence. Fearing you would only laugh at us were we to say anything about it, we resolved to wait and see what of peace and rest another night would bring us. Of these we had neither. The noises were simply dreadful. There were loud knockings on the walls, runnings to and fro, and this time the whispering voices seemed to be close to us, though we could not hear what was said: keys were also jingled in our ears, and a pistol was fired off. Night lights were lit one after the other, but went immediately out, and again the wax was found to have disappeared. 'Try a candle,' suggested my wife. I lighted one. The instant after we were in darkness, and subjected to a renewal of these horrid experiences and others of a worse nature. Hands tugged at the bedclothes, and wandered over our faces. At another time my wife was lifted up and then thrown down with considerable violence. We really could endure such horrors no longer, so we left the room and walked about the hall. This morning both my wife and myself feel quite nervous and ill owing to these hauntings."

We expressed our sorrow that he and Mrs. Norton had been made so uncomfortable, and another room was given them. In this they slept undisturbed during the remainder of their stay.

On their departure Rose Vane came to us.

"What bedroom is she to have?" I asked mama.

"The one down stairs; it is much the nicest."

"But what of the ghosts?"

"My dear, there are no such things."

Miss Vane arrived bright with youth and high spirits. At the breakfast table next morning she appeared looking really ghastly.

"Rose!" we all cried in the same breath.

She smiled a haggard smile. "O, Mrs. Oxenford, what a horrible room that is you have given me! I never slept owing to the incessant noises and whisperings that were going on around me. I lit my taper, but, to my consternation, it went out immediately. I tried another and another but with the same results, and the wax of each disappeared as soon as the light went out."

"My dear child! how distressed I am that you should have suffered so; you should at once have come to me."

"I could not move," said poor Rose with a nervous shudder, "I could only lie still and listen."*

Again the woman in blue passed me on the stairs. As formerly, she came out of *that* room.

I ran back into the parlour. "Mama," I said, "there is something dreadful about this house—I have just seen the strange woman—do let us get away from it!"

We at once returned to town. Shortly afterwards Mrs. Cavendish came to see us. Her relative was dead, and she had no longer any inducement to remain away.—Mama told her of the Nortons and Miss Vane's experiences, and asked if there was anything strange about the bedroom on the first floor. She admitted that there was, but would enter into no particulars. All we could ever learn respecting Heathcote Villa was that at the time of its being built, some rather curious people went in and out of the house. Our own impression is that a woman was murdered in that room."

It was universally admitted that experiences such as these could not well be explained away; also, that this story was one of the most singular we had ever heard.

"Can either of you give us one equally strange?" said Weston, looking towards some Oriel men who had hitherto kept silent.

"I can," said Willoughby.

"Bravo!" we shouted.

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* A servant who slept in this room met with a similar experience, and passed the remainder of the night elsewhere.

"You must accompany me to India—in thought only (seeing that we looked surprised)—the incidents I am about to relate having taken place there.

THE AYAH'S GHOST.

One day while General Davenport (real name suppressed, of course) and his lady were out driving in the —— district, the latter's attention was attracted by an Ayah whom she saw before her on the road. Although dressed in female attire, in appearance and walk this figure bore a much greater resemblance to a man. Her movements too excited not only surprise, but alarm lest she should get run over. She walked along with rapid strides, occasionally darting into the middle of the road; then crossing and re-crossing, each time keeping so close to the carriage, that Mrs. Davenport begged of her husband to be careful otherwise he would run over her.

"Run over who?"

"The Ayah."

"The Ayah!—where is she?"

"There; before us."

"I don't see any one."

"Why, bless me! she is just in front of the horses' heads: now, she's on the path—now crossing the road—oh! *do* be careful, Charles—the fool! she must be mad! Good Heavens! she is under the horses' feet!"

General Davenport at once pulled up, threw the reins to his wife, and jumped down to extricate the Ayah from her perilous position, but no Ayah was there. He looked before him, behind him, and on all sides, but no such person was to be seen. He told his wife so; adding, that she must have imagined it.

"Charles, Charles, don't be so foolish," said Mrs. Davenport; "I saw the woman as distinctly as I see you—I declare that I did."

Observing that she was becoming quite hysterical, the General forbore further comment on what appeared to him to be a complete delusion, but remounting the box, he took the reins, and drove on towards their destination.

Dating from that day Mrs. Davenport was haunted by the Ayah. Were she going up stairs the Ayah was coming down; were she descending, the latter was ascending. Did she go into the drawing-room the Ayah was coming out of it. On entering her bedroom the tall Indian came forth from behind the curtains, and glided past her. If she went into the verandah, the same white swathed figure rose from the seat she was about to occupy. So frequent became these dreadful visitations that the poor lady's health gave way under them; and her husband at length resolved to bring her and her daughter, then a girl of sixteen, home to England. Obtaining leave of absence he brought them away from —— in the autumn of 18—. Once on board ship, the Ayah seemed to have ceased her visits until one day when in the Red Sea, she swept past Mrs. Davenport as she was walking on the deck with her husband. With a faint scream, Mrs. Davenport grasped hold of the General's arm.

"What is it you see?" he said, alarmed by her pale face and excited eyes.

"The Ayah!" she gasped, "there! there!" but neither her husband nor her daughter saw anything in the direction in which she pointed. Again the dreaded visitor renewed her persecutions. In her cabin, on the steps, on deck, wherever she was, Mrs. Davenport was hourly confronted by the tall ungainly Ayah in her sweeping robes.

"Am I always to be haunted thus?" moaned the unhappy lady.

One evening however, to her great joy, the Ayah rustled past her, and leaping over the side of the ship, was engulphed in the waves, and she saw her no more throughout the voyage.

When landed in England General Davenport consulted the most eminent of the London medical men about his wife's now shattered health, giving full particulars of her hallucinations, as he supposed them to be.

From the altitude of their sublime elevation the most distinguished of these smiled down in lofty contempt upon poor Mrs. Davenport and her so styled delusions.

"Is Mrs. Davenport a spiritualist?" asked Dr. C——.

"No."

"Ha! you surprise me! Then does she take any prominent part in this forward movement amongst women, and thereby over excited her brain?"

"What do you mean?"

"Does she go in for woman's rights or this most lamentable anti-vivisection crusade?"

"Mrs. Davenport hates cruelty in *every* shape, as I do myself," said the General stiffly.

The doctor threw up his eyes with a deprecating gesture; and having found (so he said) the key to Mrs. Davenport's indisposition, he advised avoidance of *all exciting topics.*

The poor General after having gone the round of the more famous medico-physiologists, returned home with the following prescriptions:

No. 1.—"Stimulants in moderation: chloral at nights if restless."

No. 2.—"Avoid everything in the shape of stimulants and narcotics."

No. 3.—"Gentle exercise on horseback. Must not fatigue yourself."

No. 4.—"Walk six miles a day, and drink a glass of cold water before each meal."

No. 5.—"Eat sparingly of vegetables, and take frequent shower-baths."

No. 6.—"Generous diet; meat twice a day, and a tumbler of champagne after each meal; these hallucinations generally caused by a depressed nervous system."

No. 7.—"Avoid butcher-meat, and drink four glasses daily of some effervescent mixture advertised as being *highly recommended* by the medical faculty."

"What am I to do?" said General Davenport to a sympathising friend, "I am told that these are the only men on whose judgment one can with safety rely—in fact the heads of the profession; and see, each of them gives different advice. What faith can one have in such people?"

"Doctors differ and patients die," laughed his friend, "but

consult Dr. ——, he is a sensible man, and thinks less of the advancement of science than of his patients' welfare. I am sure he will be able to do your poor lady good."

The General at once sent for Dr. ——

Dr. —— did not laugh when Mrs. Davenport explained her case; on the contrary he looked very grave.

"You must instantly set out for the German baths," he said; "take them frequently; and should the figure appear to you again, speak to it, otherwise it may do you an injury. I have had several patients from the same part of India as that in which you resided, who complained of similar persecutions. They followed my advice and were cured; so remember that you speak to it."

Immediately on her arrival in Germany, Mrs. Davenport was again haunted by the Ayah, and so restless and miserable were her nights in consequence that the General took refuge in his daughter's room, while she went to sleep with her mother.

One night, the girl told me she was awakened from sleep by a loud shriek. She turned towards her mother to see what the matter was, and to her horror she saw an Ayah with a most diabolical looking face bending over her. The creature had its hands under her and was raising her up. At this Miss Davenport also screamed loudly.

"In God's name, let me go!" cried Mrs. Davenport. At these words, the Ayah with a hideous grin, threw her on the floor and disappeared.

Hearing their cries General Davenport rushed in and raised his wife who was then in a swoon.

"What has happened?" he said to his daughter. She described what had taken place.

"And oh, Charles, I shall never—never forget what I suffered," said Mrs. Davenport, on recovering from her faint, "when I looked up and saw that awful dark face, with its terrible eyes glaring down upon me, and felt those bony fingers pressing my back! Dr. ——'s advice saved me. Had I not spoken to it the creature would have killed me."

From that day she never saw it again.

Not long afterwards the General was told by a friend who had been formerly a resident at ——, that that district was inhabited by devil worshippers.

AN UNCOMFORTABLE TALE.

"Very singular things happen in India," said Selby, as Willoughby finished his thrilling tale. "At a military station out there Colonel and Mrs. ——— gave a regimental dinner. Amongst the guests were a Major Sullivan and a Lieutenant Montague. These gentlemen sat next each other, and the Major was very much annoyed to see his companion suddenly start and fix his eyes on the hostess, with a look of horrified amazement. Repeatedly Major Sullivan glanced at him and always found him gazing at the lady with the same terrified look. The Major at length whispered to him not to stare so at Mrs. ——; that every one at the table was noticing it. Then the youth for a moment withdrew his eyes, but the instant after they were again riveted on the Colonel's wife.

"When the gentlemen were left alone, Major Sullivan proposed to the Lieutenant that they should join the ladies. The latter assented, and followed the other mechanically as though in a waking dream. Once in the hall, and alone, the Major said in stern tones,—'You are not to enter the drawing-room; you must come home with me. Your conduct has been most disgraceful! I insist upon it, that to-morrow, when in your sober senses, you write a note of apology to Colonel ——, for the more than rude manner in which you stared at Mrs. ——, all throughout dinner. He noticed it, I can tell you, and so did the servants. I was perfectly ashamed of the way in which you behaved—what was the meaning of it?'

"The Lieutenant made answer,—'I assure you, Major, that I could not help it. As I live, I saw the Evil One bending over Mrs. ——'s chair and whispering in her left ear.'

"As they were walking slowly back to their quarters in earnest conversation—Lieutenant Montague persisting in the truth of his statement—a horse's hoofs were heard galloping furiously behind them. They looked round, and saw one of Colonel ——'s men on horseback, spurring the poor creature,

and shouting out—'A doctor! a doctor!' 'What in Heaven's name is the matter?' cried the Major. 'Mrs. ——— has killed herself!' It was too true. The unfortunate lady, on leaving the dinner-table, had gone to her room and committed suicide."

"And could no reason be given for this terrible act?" said Danecourt.

"Well, yes; but the scandal, whatever it was, was hushed up."

"A horrible story," said Weston.

"The reverse of pleasant truly," said Darrell, and he puffed away vigorously at the cigar which he had just lighted.

"Will any one be kind enough to favour us with another, and so divert our thoughts from this most uncomfortable tale," entreated Walford.

"I will," said Winstanley, of Merton.

Meanwhile Guy had his glass in his eye, and was busy inspecting all the left ears in the room.

"What are you at?" said Gerrard, angrily; his own appendages in that way not being of the handsomest.

"Don't be foolish," said Weston; though he laughed, as did we all, at Gerrard's evident confusion.

Guy smiled, and dropped his glass, as Winstanley began his narration, after warning us of its extremely personal character.

THE SUPPOSED BURGLAR.

Last year I was staying with some friends in Shropshire, and there met a girl, with whom I fell desperately in love. She was indeed a most bewitching little creature, being beautiful, fascinating, and accomplished! She knew half-a-dozen languages, could quote from every poem that ever was written, and as for her playing, it was simply exquisite. Like St. Cecilia, she could have drawn an angel down from heaven to listen to her. She was seated at the piano when I first made her acquaintance. I had returned from a successful day's fishing, and was standing entranced on the mat outside the drawing-room door, listening to the divine strains, when Laura Harrington, the eldest

daughter of the house, suddenly threw it open, and found me there. She laughed and pulled me in, sorely against my inclination, for my costume was not what I should have wished it to be under the circumstances. However, there was no help for it, the fair pianist had seen me, so I had to advance and make my best bow in response to Miss Harrington's—

"Mr. Winstanley, Miss Westerton—the 'Ivy' you have heard me speak of." Even at that always awkward moment, I had time to think, what a sweet uncommon name is that of 'Ivy'; and it seemed, too, that she was charmed with mine of Winstanley. It was her favourite one, she afterwards told me; and in the yet unpublished novel written by herself and her cousin, the hero's names were Sydney Godolphin Winstanley. Over head and ears in love as I was, of course I was charmed with this piece of private information, and rewarded her as lovers generally do on such occasions—for we were lovers, and engaged ones, too, ere ever my dear little Ivy became so sweetly communicative. I will not weary you with all the minor details of our love-making—and, indeed, can hardly tell you how the *denouement* came about, only that one day, in the course of a few minutes' stolen conversation in the conservatory, we mutually discovered that our opinions, tastes, and sentiments were identical, and our admiration for each other unbounded; and that, at its close, my arm had stolen round her waist, while her head reposed on my shoulder in the most confiding manner possible. Could anything be more satisfactory? Then we each avowed that with us it had been a case of love at first sight.

Unseen, I was adoring her music.

When seen, I was adoring herself.

She thought me *so* handsome.

I was enraptured with *her* golden hair.

She with *my* dark brown curly ditto.

I thought *her* blue eyes exquisite.

She cared for none but fierce black ones like *mine*.

I was so fascinated with *her* smile, pale, delicate features, and somewhat pensive expression.

She with *my* moustache, and swarthy complexion—*so* brigand-like she said.

She was all the world to me!

I that to her, etc., etc.

Thus, mutually delighted with each other, we wove the sweetest dream that it ever fell to the lot of mortals to revel in.

In a letter of twelve pages, Ivy announced her engagement to her mother, her sole surviving parent.

In one of equal length, I wrote, asking that lady's consent to our marriage. Mrs. Westerton did not say nay to our united petition, and her replies were couched in the kindest terms. Of course I was to pay her a visit immediately on Ivy's return; this I did three days after my betrothed had arrived at the maternal home.

I was already prepared to fall in love with my fair one's surroundings, but the reality far surpassed my expectations. Ivy's home was the sweetest cottage imaginable, embowered in woodbine and wild roses; and Mrs. Westerton, a handsome and charming middle-aged lady. I was made perfectly happy in my new position. Every one seemed so delighted to have me there. Mrs. Westerton beamed upon me. "Buttons" smiled when he opened the door to me; the housemaids, as they entered and left the sitting-room; the cook, when I met her in the passage; the coachman, while I inspected the stables; Ivy's dog, a pretty little Scotch terrier, at once gave me its paw, and with its tongue accorded me a loving welcome; and the very peacocks, as they strutted up and down the gravelled walks, came close to the windows and looked in, as though they had heard of my arrival, and wished to make my acquaintance.

When shown into my bedroom, it proved to be a perfect bower of roses; these my favourite flowers were everywhere placed in fascinating little vases, of every imaginable shape and colour. It needed not the fond mother's, "That was Ivy's doing," to enlighten me as to whose dainty little fingers it was that had been busy throughout the morning, making things look pretty for me. Dear little thing! her happiness, she told me, was now complete; her darling mother had taken *such* a fancy to me, and we three would be *so* happy together. . . .

Was there a burglar in my room? I was awoke out of a charmingly refreshing sleep by the sound of footsteps — a stealthy, cat-like movement, as it seemed to me. I looked out with curious, prying eyes, but could see nothing but the outline of the large cheval mirror shadowed forth in the gloom. I listened attentively, but the footsteps had ceased. It must have been fancy, I thought, as I drowsily turned my head on the pillow. No; my senses had not deceived me; there *was* some one in the chamber, and evidently much nearer to me than when I first heard the steps.

"Who is there?" I called out in a fierce tone.

There was no answer; still I could hear a moving about amongst the furniture. Can it be Ivy's little dog? I called— "Fido! Fido! come to me," and held my hand over the side of the bed, but no canine tongue licked it in response to my friendly invitation. Are there any owls about? was my next reflection; or can one of the pea-fowl have found its way into my bedroom, and been overlooked by the maid? I should soon ascertain if such were the case. I groped about till I found the matches, struck a light, and jumped out of bed, but no living thing was to be seen.

After I had taken a careful survey of the room, I returned to bed, satisfied that I had dreamed it; but no sooner was I underneath the clothes than a hand was laid on my head. It was with difficulty that I repressed a nervous shudder at this close proximity of the supposed burglar. I held my breath, and kept my eyes closed, fearing every instant that light from a dark lantern would be flashed across them, in which case I felt that, strive as I might, I should not be able to prevent a quivering of the lids, and thus betray to the midnight robber my wakeful condition.

Luckily for me I was spared this fiery ordeal. The hand was removed, and again footsteps careered round the room. What should I do? Should I at once grapple with the fellow, or lie perfectly quiet and await the result? I chose this latter alternative. For all I knew to the contrary, there might be several burglars, and being young and in love, life was too sweet to be imperilled by any rash act on my part.

Strange to say, I fell asleep in midst of my resolvings. How long I remained so I cannot tell, but I was suddenly startled out of it by the skirts of a dressing-gown being swept across my face. This was repeated three times, the bed-clothes were violently pulled, and again the pattering feet made themselves heard. Rendered bold by the morning light which now streamed in through the chinks in the shutters, I drew aside the curtains and looked out. The wearer of the dressing-gown was then passing the mirror, in which his image was distinctly reflected. The next instant I was standing by the glass shivering and *alone. There was no one in the room.*

"You look pale, dear," said Ivy, as I entered the breakfast parlour.

I told her what had happened, expressing my belief that there had been a thief in my bedroom.

Ivy heard me in silence, but on Mrs. Westerton's coming in shortly after, she said very quietly, and without looking up at her mother, "Robert says there was a man in his room last night."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Westerton, in an equally subdued tone.

After breakfast Ivy asked me to go with her into the garden. Once there she said in a low faltering voice, "It was not a robber you saw in the dressing-gown."

I looked at her; she was very pale, and her eyes were filled with tears.

"Who was it then?"

"My brother."

"I thought your brother was dead?"

"He is; but listen to what I have to tell you. You never heard of the sad circumstances attending my poor John's death; they were much too painful for me to dwell upon, but now you shall know them, only do not speak of them to mama, as she cannot bear to hear them spoken of.

"On the last occasion of his leaving home, my brother fell over some rocks when jumping out of a boat and seriously injured his spine. He left us a fine, handsome, healthy young man, and he was brought back to N——, where we then resided, a hopeless invalid. Partial paralysis ensued, and he

was unable to leave his room. This sad trial was rendered all the more bitter to us by the doctor saying he never could recover, and that ultimately his brain might become affected. Poor fellow! always devotedly attached to me, he could not now bear me to be out of his sight. It was nothing but Ivy, Ivy from morning till night. It unfortunately happened just then that grandmother, who was ill and confined to bed, had expressed a great desire to have me with her for a few days. I did not wish to leave John, but mama begged of me so earnestly to go to the old lady that I consented; would that I had not done so. The sorrowful beseeching look of the poor fellow's eyes when I bade him good-bye haunts me to this day. He begged of me not to go. 'Ivy, Ivy, don't go; I *implore* you not to go!' he kept repeating as he wrung my hand in his.

"It was Thursday, and I promised to return on the following Wednesday, if not sooner; but this did not satisfy him. I was not to go at all! However, I went, the sad imploring eyes haunting me all the way. On Saturday I got a telegram. (Here Ivy's tears flowed fast.) I was to return instantly. That same evening I arrived at N.——. Mama was in bed, and too ill even to see me; and John was dead—he had committed suicide—the details of which will be spared you. I went into his room. There he lay with his beautiful eyes wide open, and in them was the same melancholy beseeching look they had when I left him. Lovingly I kissed and closed them, and there I remained with my brother till he was taken away to be laid in his grave. Now, he in his turn never leaves me. When I first told mama of his presence she thought grief had turned my head, and brought a doctor to see me. When informed of my delusions, as she styled them, Dr. Ward said that we must at once leave the neighbourhood, otherwise I might have a very serious illness. We came hither, *and so has John.* Mama has seen him several times, and although made nervous and frightened at first, she has now grown accustomed to his visits; as for myself I should miss him sadly were he to leave me, for I feel as though I had not lost him. You look wonderingly at me, but it is a fact, I

assure you. He often comes and sits by me wrapped up in the dressing-gown he wore when he committed the terrible deed; and talks to me in a low murmuring voice, with the same sad beseeching look in his blue eyes. He also flits about our bedrooms, pulls the clothes from off us, and lays his hand on our heads just as you describe him to have done to you."

"And why did your brother come to me?"

"Because you were in my room I suppose—and—and—a great friend of mine, William."

Here Ivy blushed so sweetly.

"Of course you at once gave her up!" said Giffard.

"Gave her up! Why?"

"Because, who in their senses would ever dream of marrying a girl with a ghost!"

"We are to be married next year."

A CONSIDERATE GHOST.

Winstanley having resumed his cigar, Beauchamp said, after a momentary silence,—"That story of yours is very similar to the one I am about to tell you. There is this difference, however, my cousin, Charlie Beauchamp, the elder and married brother, a fine, handsome, dashing young fellow, met with his death in the hunting field. I was in Sutherlandshire at the time, and owing to the letter not being forwarded, two months had elapsed before I received information of the sad event. It was a terrible blow to me, for poor Charlie and I had always been fast friends, and my heart ached at the thought that we should never meet on earth again. Immediately on receipt of the letter I set out for Yorkshire, George in a postscript having begged of me to join him at once. On my arrival at S——, I found my cousin terribly low spirited. Elma, Charlie's widow, who had hitherto borne her dreadful trial with surprising fortitude, had suddenly broken down, and was now confined to bed with a low wasting fever. Her mother and sister, who had only recently left her, had been sent for, but, as they were then in Naples attending on an invalid brother, some little time must elapse before they could be with her.

"When George spoke of his brother a something in his

manner struck me as being peculiar—he looked too nervous and ill; but that might be accounted for by present anxiety.

"Elma has asked repeatedly for you," he said. "Knowing how fond she and Charlie were of you, I thought it might rouse her a little to tell her you were coming; and it has done her good; for a few minutes she seemed like her old self. At present she is asleep, but nurse will let us know when to go to her. In the meantime you must have some dinner—it waits us in the hall."

I accompanied him thither. Our hasty meal ended, George and I drew our chairs close to the blazing hearth. Autumn had set in early, and the wind blew keen and cold over the Yorkshire wolds. I took my cigar case out of my pocket—it had been a gift to me from Charlie.

"Dear old fellow!" I said, half-aloud, "what would I not give to hear once more your joyous laugh and free step."

I then looked across at my cousin. He was very pale, and seemed as if about to speak, then he checked himself, and proceeded to light a cigar.

I was startled by his looks into saying, "George, what is it you have to tell me?"

"You remember that clear ringing laugh of Charlie's, so peculiarly his own that you would know it to be his *under any circumstances?*"

"Yes," I said, wonderingly, for my cousin spoke hurriedly, and with the air of a man who was forcing himself to speak, and so get rid of a weight that was pressing upon his mind.

"And that bounding joyous step of his, and the way he had of striking the table with his hunting whip and pulling the chairs about as he walked up and down the room speaking to Elma?"

"Perfectly."

"Then, Robert, I swear to you that I have frequently heard that laugh and pulling about of the furniture since poor Charlie died."

"Surely you must have fancied it."

"I have not."

"And Elma—has she heard it?"

"Yes, and it is her hearing it that has made her ill."

I stared aghast.

"Are the noises still to be heard?"

"No; the strange thing is this," said George, sinking his voice to a whisper, "that ever since Elma's illness, you would think that the—that Charlie, if it is he who is still with us, knows of her being ill, for the loud laugh and noises have ceased, and now a gentle, cautious footfall approaches her room, and some one seems to be listening outside her door, and then the steps move slowly and noiselessly away."

"Are you sure that it is none of the servants you hear?"

"Perfectly sure, but here comes the nurse."

I followed my cousin to Elma's room like one in a dream. After having exchanged an affectionate though sorrowful greeting with the poor young widow, George and I seated ourselves by the fire, while the nurse remained by the side of the bed. Silence ensued. My cousin, who had been gazing thoughtfully into the smouldering embers, suddenly pulled me by the arm and pointed to the door. I listened. It was no imagination on my part. I distinctly heard a gentle footfall —the steps of one walking, oh, so carefully along the passage, and then pausing outside the door. Some one was undoubtedly there listening—but who? I half rose from my chair with a view to ascertain, but George motioned me to resume my seat.

"It is of no use," he whispered, "you would see nothing—hark! they are moving away."

Here Beauchamp paused.

"Go on," said Weston.

"This is all there is to tell you, poor Elma remains a sufferer, and the anxious listener, whoever he is, still lingers outside her door."

Lowe, of University, who had come in shortly before, now favoured us with a story.

BILLY THE OSTLER.

It certainly is very remarkable how many well authenticated instances there are of curious noises being heard and ghosts seen in houses where suicides have taken place. In our part

of the country there is a posting-house at which we not unfrequently put up when circumstances occasion our having to pass a night on the road. As boys we had a great chum there in the person of Billy the ostler, and it was with sincere sorrow that, when asking for him on one occasion, we were told he had left.

It chanced some little time after Billy's sudden departure that a party from —— Hall, my father's place, were storm-stayed at B—— Inn. My two youngest brothers were amongst the travellers, and were put into the same room, a double-bedded one. In the morning the youngsters came open-mouthed to my father and told him that Billy had come into their room after they were in bed, walked up to the toilet-table, and stood there rubbing his neck, and looking into the glass. Of course they had imagined it, my father thought. But a few weeks afterwards an aunt of mine, who was coming on a visit to us, slept at B——, and had the same room given her; she too saw Billy the ostler. He came in, walked up to the glass, stood looking into it, passing his hand across his throat; after which he threw himself on the nearest bed and then disappeared. In great alarm she told us of this, and my father went to the landlord and asked for an explanation of these visits of Billy. Then the truth came out. Poor Billy had cut his throat at the toilet-table, and then thrown himself on the nearest bed, where he died.

Made very angry by this information, my father threatened to make the affair known in the neighbourhood unless the room was shut up. Fearful of losing his custom, the landlord readily consented to this, and no one was ever again put to sleep in the chamber haunted by Billy the ostler."

"I also think portents very inexplicable," said Lowe. "There is always a great ringing of bells in the house before a death occurs in our family."

"We have three knocks," said Weston.

"And the Selbys, music."

"A black dog sits at our front door and howls dismally," said Darrell.

"Our death-warrant is a smart cut from a whip on the dining-table," said Walford.

"A loud, quick step on the stairs is our warning," said Staunton.

"The Ogilvies have music."

"Lord Airly has his spectre-drummer—that is certain," remarked Weston.

"We Oxenfords have a white dove at the window."

"Our portraits come down from the walls," said Ponsonby.

"Ha! talking of portents reminds me of this," said Harcourt.

THE OLD EIGHT-DAY CLOCK.

A lady friend of mine has an old-fashioned eight-day clock standing in her hall. The sort of thing which reminds one of Longfellow's "Old Clock on the Stairs," only that it no longer "points and beckons with its hands," its works being out of order. One day, I found Mrs. O—— standing opposite to, and regarding this piece of antiquity with a melancholy, distasteful air.

"How I hate this clock!" she said to me as I stood by her and looked at it.

"Because it is neither useful nor ornamental, I suppose?"

"Oh, no; it is not that!"

"What then?"

"You men are so very matter-of-fact in your ideas, that no doubt you will look upon me in the light of a fool when I tell you that I have a superstitious feeling regarding it—so much so, that I have entreated John (her husband) again and again to part with it, and he won't do it."

"Why not?"

"It belonged to his grandfather, and he has a great veneration for it."

"Then why should you wish to be rid of it?"

"Because," looking at it the while with marked aversion, "it has only struck thrice since my marriage, and each time its strokes have been followed by a death."

"But is not this fancy on your part?"

"So you will think, but I know to the contrary. The first

time it struck, John's mother, who had long been an invalid, died. I remarked this to him at the time, but he only laughed at me. Again I heard it. The next day I got a telegram, telling me that my father had dropped down dead at W—— Station. Two years passed over, and one night rendered wakeful and depressed, owing to John's not being very well, I heard this clock send forth a warning chime. I cannot tell you what I felt on this last occasion. Is *he*, too, going to die? I asked myself, fearfully. Thank God! I was spared that trial; but shortly afterwards I heard that my youngest sister had died in Australia of typhoid fever. Have I not reason now to dread the striking of this hateful thing?"

"You have indeed."

I must confess that I too was seized with a loathing for the tall, stiff piece of old lumber. Yes; as a rule, men are matter-of-fact, but had I been John, to please my sweet little wife, I should have despatched that eight-day clock, family relic though it was, to an auction-room, labelled, "Property of a lady deceased."

"Excellent idea," said Lindsay of St. John's," who just then entered; "dead people's goods and chattels always fetch good prices at public sales. I remember my poor, dear mother was excessively anxious to be rid of a table which was of an inconvenient size, but the auctioneer strongly advised delay in her case; 'Worth nothing at present, madam, I assure you; you *must* wait until we have a death in the neighbourhood; *then* you will get something like proper value for your table.'"

"We are not discussing the worth of either tables or chairs," said Danecourt, "we are discussing ghosts."

"Ghosts, ha, indeed! delighted to hear it, for of all things in the world I love a good, creepy, *reliable* ghost story."

"Then you have missed some excellent ones," said Weston.

"A fact much to be regretted," sighed the other. "It seems I have come too late."

"Not so; you being a canny Scot, ought to be able to give us no end of ghostly yarns. 'Caledonia, stern and wild,' has always been considered by us South of the Tweed to be

the nursery of ghosts, brownies, bogies, and fairies; and as for your old castles, why, I have been told on excellent authority, that their inmates never dream of sitting down to meals without a plate, knife, and fork being placed for the family spectre."

"On the contrary," said Lindsay, tapping his snuff-box, "we in the North don't even like to acknowledge the existence of such skeletons in the closet."

"Still they are talked of all the same," said Walford, who was well posted in ghostly lore; "why, there's G—— Castle, the tradition of its 'secret chamber' and 'wicked earl' has been handed down from generation to generation."

"True, but the owners don't like to have these matters spoken of—for the life of me, I cannot tell why. If my family could boast of any such thing as a ghost, I should only be too proud to have it known."

"Haunted houses are essentially public property; so their proprietors must submit to the penalty of having them talked about whether they like it or not." This said Ponsonby.

"Talking of G——," said Lindsay, "I hear that the figure of a horrible old woman has been recently seen in the avenue. When last with my people, they were talking about it."

"And I heard," said Kennedy, "that the mysterious tenant of the secret chamber had recently died in it."

"You don't say so!—who was he?" queried Danecourt.

"The real owner of the property—a creature, half toad, half man, and ninety-eight years of age."

"Good gracious!"

"That is all bosh," said Gordon. "I had it on the best authority that a lady visitor after her departure from G——, dreamed that a creature of this description was the occupant of the mysterious chamber."

"A very different matter," said Danecourt, with a highly indignant air; "I really wish people would not go about circulating such falsehoods as one hears now-a-days."

THE HIDDEN SKELETON.

"By the bye," resumed Kennedy, tapping his head with a well-pleased air, as though grateful for the remembrance, "B———

Castle, in ———shire, is, or rather was, associated with a spectre. The noble owner had repeatedly been spoken to by some of his male guests, who successively occupied the same chamber, about the man who opened the door, ran across the room, and disappeared through the wall at the further end. The statements made on these occasions never varied, still their host preserved the same incredulous aspect, smiled the same incredulous smile.

"At length his brother, after a night passed in the guest chamber, spoke of the man he too had seen run across the room and vanish suddenly. This repetition of the story was, to say the least of it, curious; and Lord L—— resolved that he would pass a night in the now believed to be haunted bedroom. He did so. Strangely enough, a man came in, walked quickly across, and, as his brother said, disappeared throuhg the wall; of that he was positive. There must, then, be a secret door somewhere. Next morning the wall was gone carefully over. A spring was found and touched. A door flew open. Beyond was a well. This, when searched, yielded up some human bones. These received Christian burial, and since then the man has never been seen."

THE HEADLESS SENTRY.

"Then there is the headless sentry of Dumbarton Castle," continued Kennedy. "It is true, I assure you. I had it from one of the daughters of Captain Macdonald, who was for years in command of the staff division stationed at the fort.

"She and her sisters were one moonlight night standing at a window commanding a view of the terrace along which the sentry was accustomed to walk his solitary rounds.

"Suddenly her sister Kate uttered an exclamation of surprise. 'See,' she said, 'the sentinel is walking there, but he has no head!'

"The others looked out, and also saw a tall headless man pacing up and down.

"The day after, on mentioning the circumstance to some friends, they were told that the headless sentry of Dumbarton

Castle had been a known fact in the County for hundreds of years."

"And how had he lost his head?" said Walford.

"That remains a mystery."

THE SPECTRAL CAVALCADE.

"While all of you, no doubt, have heard and read of the 'Martyr King,' I shall indeed be surprised if more than one or two of you—perhaps not even that number—know anything whatever of his celebrated general, D—— of B——, who was for some time at the head of the forces in Scotland."

Livingstone, of Trinity, as he spoke, looked round on us Southerns with a fierce expression, which was slightly disturbing in its effects. I coughed, Weston hemmed loudly, some of the other fellows had violent sneezing fits, while Guy yawned to such an extent that we never expected to see his mouth close again; then we looked at each other and laughed.

"Never heard of the fellow," muttered Darrell.

"For heaven's sake don't let him hear you say that or you'll make an enemy of him for life," whispered Danecourt: "remember he's a Scotchman."

"Here we have him," said Weston, stretching across and taking up a book from the nearest table. From this he read aloud:—

"General T—— D——, born 1615, died at Edinburgh in 1685. Undaunted zeal and blind, devoted fidelity to his sovereign, form almost the sole relieving points in a life redolent of cruelty. His place of sepulchre is unknown. His portrait, well executed, is preserved at B—— House.

"B—— House, an irregular mass of buildings furnished with turrets and embrasures, is beautifully placed on the western slope of B—— Hill. It was built in 1623, and enlarged by the late proprietor. The park around is highly picturesque; the grassy acclivities of the hill being interspersed with trees and evergreens. The summit is crowned with a high round tower, forming a conspicuous landmark."

"Now for your story, Livingstone."

"General D—— was a bloody persecutor—"

"A what?" said Guy.

"A slayer of men, women, and children!

"He was a dreaded foe of the Covenanters; and in company with Claverhouse, Grierson of Lag, and other wild spirits, he performed such acts of cruelty as to earn for himself the title of 'Bloody D——.'"

"What an uncomfortable old fellow!" exclaimed Guy, looking with half closed eyes into the fire.

"So you would have thought and *felt*," retorted Livingstone, "if you had got a bullet through your head, as you were walking quietly along a country road, thinking of your wife and family."

"Nothing more unlikely, my dear boy, seeing I have got neither."

"Guy—Guy! Don't mind him, Livingstone," said Weston.

"Well, then, to return to B——. My mother visited there in 18—; and although charmed with the old place and its owners, she felt rather nervous and uncomfortable, owing to what had been told her by some friends of hers who had rented B—— in the absence of the proprietor. Somehow bad influences made themselves felt; steps were heard on the stairs after the household had retired to rest; doors slammed violently without apparent cause; and animated conversations were carried on without the speakers deeming it necessary to make themselves visible."

"And your mother?" queried Danecourt, who was now all eyes and ears.

"As I told you, she felt very nervous, and, above all things, disliked sitting opposite to the portrait of old D——. His eyes seemed to follow her everywhere; and in their depths she could detect a cunning leer, as though he knew and rejoiced in her fears. His immense beard, too, frightened her terribly; and she declares to this day that on one occasion she saw it positively bristle, and the eyes glare, as some one present expressed pity for the poor Covenanters who had been unfortunate enough to cross his path."

"What a bloodthirsty old ruffian he must have been," remarked Weston.

"Yes, the epitaphs on some of the Covenanters' tombs tell you that;" but to continue.

"My mother was all her life an excellent sleeper; and, in spite of her very natural timidity while an inmate of this believed-to-be haunted house of B—— her rest was not disturbed in consequence, as she never allowed herself to think of D—— or his portrait after her head rested on her pillow. One night, however, she was aroused from her slumber by a most unusual sound in this matter-of-fact age, namely, the clang of armour. Was it so, or did her ears deceive her? She sat up in bed to listen. It was no fancy on her part, the rattling of scabbards and the sound of approaching horses bearing armed men made themselves heard. At that moment the moon broke from behind a cloud, and bathed trees, lawn, and hill, in a flood of light. With a view to discover what force was abroad at this hour of the night, she sprang out of bed, and ran to the window. Just then, the gates of the courtyard flew open, and admitted a cavalcade of men clad in complete armour, one of them bearing a banner. From whence had it come, this pageant of other days, from what tournament or tilting field? Who were they, and who the fierce bold rider who rode at their head; whose that terrible voice and flowing beard? For a brief space the banner streamed in the midnight air, the riders rose in their stirrups, the horses reared, the leader of the band waved aloft his sword, then all vanished, and the courtyard was once more abandoned to silence and the moonlight. My mother's description at the breakfast table of what she had seen overnight was not received in the sceptical spirit she had imagined it would be; and, during the remainder of her visit, she was given a bedroom at the opposite side of the house. I may add, in conclusion, that a subsequent lady visitor at B——, who slept in the chamber my mother occupied during the former part of her stay, also heard the clang of armour and the trampling of horses' feet in the courtyard, but her curiosity was not such as to induce her to leave her comfortable bed to inquire into the cause."

"I like that," said Danecourt, "like it very much indeed, it is a *delicious* story."

Then lying back in his chair, and shutting his eyes, he repeated in a low voice—

"'Twas startling to view them in dusk of night
Or when the pale moon's mystic light
Fell with soft searching ray,
Silver'ng the casques of these warriors bold,
Who look'd like fierce knights of the days of old
Eager for the affray."

"And what about F—— Castle?" said Weston, "a countryman of yours told me, that it has a secret-room in which the plague is shut up; and, were the door ever opened, the pestilence would burst forth and devastate the country."

"Perfectly true," said Lindsay; "Gordon can tell you all about that."

"*We* don't like this subject spoken of," said the youth referred to, drawing himself up stiffly.

"Have *you* anything to do with the family?" queried Lindsay.

"I belong to the same clan."

Lindsay whistled.

"Such affectation!" exclaimed Guy, angrily. "I myself have visited in at least a dozen haunted houses, and have been told in each case *on no account* to mention the supposed ghost when there, as *the family hated above all things to be questioned* about it; and on my arrival, the very first thing the 'family' did was to allude to the traditionary spirit."

"There is some truth in that," said Lindsay; "for, when last in the North, I spent a few days at T—— House, in Peebles-shire, a grand old place, formerly a royal residence, which, it is said, one of our early kings occasionally honours with his presence; and there was no secrecy preserved in connection with the royal spectre; it was spoken openly of at the dinner-table."

"Aye, but then the ghost was that of a *king*," said Guy; "that makes all the difference."

Lindsay laughed, and went on.

"While there I made acquaintance with a learned Professor, who was, fortunately, not too scientific to believe in ghosts. He told me the following in connection with a glen to the back of Neidpath Castle, a picturesque ruin, also in Peebles-shire."

THE HAUNTED GLEN.

"A lady of the name of Hay was foully murdered there some generations back, and her spirit is supposed still to haunt the scene of the crime. One evening, not very many years ago, an old woman was walking along the road near to this spot, when she saw a head adorned with lace lappets, or what was formerly known as 'pearlin,' moving along the top of the wall on her left. This strange mode of progression was continued for some little time, when the head turned round and the eyes looked at her. Then appeared the body, which joined itself to the head, and both came over into the road, and stood opposite to her. So visible was the apparition, that the woman distinctly saw a red line across the throat, at sight of which she fainted. This fearful vision was also seen by a man residing in the neighbourhood, and such was the effect produced upon him, that he was ill for a fortnight."

"And did the Professor himself believe in the genuineness of the spectre?" said Guy.

"Yes; he told me that he had strictly questioned the woman on the subject, and was quite satisfied that it was no mere fancy on her part. Now shall I tell you of

"ANOTHER GHOST WHO NURSED A BABY?"

An eager "yes" was the reply.

Lindsay continued. "Some years ago the Rev. Mr. B—— went to York to take duty for a friend for a couple of years or so. The house he resided in for that period is situated in the —— Gate. At the time I speak of Mr. B—— was a young husband and the happy father of a sweet little baby girl, then in her cradle. No. — is a large old building with rooms and passages innumerable, also a cellar or two, approached by a baize door which swung to with considerable force when any one passed through. For several successive nights the servants, while at their supper in the kitchen, heard the door in question open and shut with a heavy swing. At first this was unnoticed save by the comment, 'who can be going to the cellar at this hour of the night?' Then a woman was seen passing through the doorway. Her back at

this time was turned towards the maids, and they mistook her for Mrs. B——; but afterwards one of them saw her face, and she said it was a strange one. Then a curious circumstance occurred. The nurse, who had several times heard or fancied she heard the cradle being rocked when she was going up stairs to the nursery, on entering one day saw a woman standing by its side. Mary asked if the baby were awake? The woman made no reply, but swept past her and went hastily out at the door. Now, the servants began to talk amongst themselves about these strange occurrences, and the conclusion they unanimously arrived at was that the house was haunted. After this the passages and the baize door were carefully avoided after nightfall. A yet more startling thing happened to confirm them in their belief. A dressmaker, who was shortly after brought into the house to assist the housekeeper with some work, was one night accosted by this same woman with these remarkable words, 'Look below the stone in the cellar that has a cross upon it.' This, of course, was repeated to the household, and, naturally made curious by the hint thus mysteriously given, one or two of the servants, accompanied by the dressmaker and housekeeper, went at once to inspect the cellars. In the outer and larger one no such mark was to be seen on any of the stones, but in the one further off there it was distinctly visible, together, if I remember rightly, with two initial letters. Their fears increased by their discovery, the maids fled forth with loud shrieks, which reached the ears of their master, as he sat in his study. The reverend gentleman ran out to learn what the matter was; and when told of what had taken place he was excessively angry; said there were no ghosts; and that the first servant who spoke of such things and frightened her neighbours should be instantly dismissed his service. As to the stone spoken of, it was not to be touched. This threat had the desired effect; and no mention was ever again made to him of the 'strange woman.'"

"And do you mean to say that Mr. B—— himself never thought of raising the mysteriously-marked stone?" said Weston.

"No; he evidently regarded the whole story as a coinage of the servants' brains, and took no steps whatever in the matter."

"Most extraordinary! And is the house still occupied?"

"Yes; and I can get you all wished-for information on the subject, as I know the eldest daughter—the baby-girl of the story—who is now an elegant woman, and who always declares that the reason for her being so pale is that she was nursed by a ghost!"

In the course of some further observations in regard to Mr. B——'s strange lack of curiosity, Lindsay told us that he knew a house near Edinburgh, one of whose rooms had a secret door, which although occupied by the lady of the house she had never had the curiosity to have it opened. The excuse she made was that the servants would leave her if she did.

"What an Eve she would have made," said Guy, with an ironical smile.

THE OLD CLERGYMAN'S GHOST.

Beauchamp *loquitor.*

"The following curious incident was told me by a curate on his return from Norfolk, whither he had gone to take duty for a brother clergyman:—

"It was in the gloom of a December evening that I arrived at R—— Vicarage. The servant who opened the door showed me into a somewhat cheerless-looking room, while she ran to fetch lights. As I went towards the fire-place I was surprised to find that the arm-chair nearest me was occupied by an elderly man in clerical attire. Placing myself in the other I looked at my opposite neighbour with the intention of addressing him, when he suddenly vanished. Imagining myself to have been the victim of an optical delusion, I stirred the dying embers into a blaze, threw myself back in my seat, and listened to the wind as it tore round the house with a rushing eerie sound. On the servant's returning with candles I remarked on the wildness of the evening.

"'And R—— is not a nice house to be in on such a night.'

"'Why so?'

"'Well, sir, it is said to be haunted—haunted by an old

clergyman who used to live here—Parson White they call him.'

"Could that be Parson White who had so recently sat in the arm-chair? I thought. Well, to say the least of it, it was a singular coincidence."

THE HAUNTED RECTORIES.

"Some of our English rectories have curious stories told in connection with them," observed Selby. "A friend of mine went not long ago into Suffolk (I think it was) to take Sunday duty for a parson; and greatly to his surprise he found the rectory, a large comfortable-looking house, standing empty. Mr. ——, whose guest he was, on his asking for an explanation of this curious state of affairs, said, there was certainly something odd about the place, as every rector who made it his home always left after a short stay, complaining of unaccountable noises and a figure that was seen on the stairs—that of a girl dressed in blue. 'Our present rector and his family left on that account. Not long ago they were having some friends to dinner, and, while seated in the drawing-room, one of them came to Mr. S. and asked, with evident interest, who the lovely girl dressed in blue was whom he had passed on the stairs? Her appearance cannot in any way be accounted for: no tradition is told in connection with her; but that she *is* seen is pretty certain.'

"Then again. Another clerical friend of mine having heard that there was a reputed haunted chamber in —— Rectory, which prevented its being occupied, asked and obtained permission to spend a night in it in company with a friend. One evening soon after the youths repaired to the room in question. Patiently and in silence they sat there till their watches told them it was midnight. Then one of them suddenly became conscious of an unseen presence. A cold shade seemed to pass him, he afterwards said. He made no remarks at the time as to his experience, but he saw from the startled expression of his friend's face that he too had felt it. Both gazed on each other without speaking, until the least brave of the ghost seekers being much too nervous to remain any longer in the

room sprang to his feet and fled, leaving his friend to encounter any fresh horrors alone. And alone the other sat, till again a cold invisible presence made itself felt, as it passed him on its way to the door. Then he too rose and quitted the haunted house. Having related his experience to the friend who had spoken to him on the subject, the latter said, 'Nothing has ever been seen, only one *feels* there is a something in the room.'"

THE HAUNTED CHEST.

"I don't like your country houses," said Guy, with an impatient snort. "Not long ago a friend of mine, a London surgeon, and no fool either, went to stay with a chum of his down somewhere in the Midland counties. His bedroom, he described as being spacious and dreary-looking, and in one corner of it there stood a large oaken chest. Moved by what spirit he knew not, he went up to it and raised the lid. To his horror he saw a man lying in it with his throat cut. Uttering an exclamation, he let the lid fall, but speedily felt himself impelled to open it, when he found the box was empty. Mentioning the circumstance to his friend on the following morning the latter stared at him in astonishment, and said, 'How very odd that you should have imagined that, because a man who used to sleep in that room committed suicide in that very chest, and was found lying there in the condition you describe.'"

THE GHOSTS OF DUTTON HALL.

"I remember another story; would you care to hear it?" said Gerard.

Receiving a nod of encouragement from some of us, he began.

"There is a place in Cumberland called Dutton Hall——"

"I know it," broke in Beauchamp, "and a fearfully haunted house it is."

Gerard proceeded.

"My friend on the left simply states the truth. When advertised to be let, the description of its numerous advantages, both natural and artificial, brought numerous tenants, but a brief occupancy satisfied even the most sceptical of its inmates that there was something mysterious about the place."

"Was anything seen?" queried Weston.

"Yes; an old woman pursued by a shadow."

"Were not both shadows?"

"Both were equally spirits, if that is what you mean: but while the spectre in advance was perfectly discernible, both as regards face and figure, the one in pursuit was not so. These figures, as I describe them, were constantly being seen. Now the old lady was speeding round the various rooms—now she was on the stairs—again careering round the garden—and always with outstretched arms, and the terrible shadow in pursuit. When in the sleeping apartments she seemed as though she were endeavouring to pull out the various drawers within reach.

"My informant went on to say that some years afterwards, when visiting in Cambridgeshire, she was relating her experience in connection with Dutton in a room full of people. One of those present chanced to be a clergyman, who, her narrative finished, came up to her and said, 'Curiously enough, I can supply you with a sequel to your story. When resident in Cumberland I was one day waited on by a parishioner, who told me that a woman, apparently dying, was most anxious to see me. I accompanied him to the cottage in which she lived, and was soon made the recipient of a death-bed confession. The sufferer had formerly lived at Dutton Hall in the capacity of maid to a Miss Millar, the then occupant, and knowing that she was down for a legacy in her mistress's will, she murdered her in order that she might the sooner become possessed of the money. Her conscience, unburdened of its terrible load of guilt, the woman shortly after died: and the most singular part of the story is, that after her death the two figures were seen as formerly, but with this difference, that the one in pursuit had become as plainly visible as the other.'"

THE DEATH SECRET.

"Cumberland is full of ghosts," remarked Dacre of Waddam. "C—— Castle has its 'radiant boy;' W—— Hall, a delicious old Jacobite house, made mention of in 'Waverley,'

a lady spectre; and W—— Hall, the family seat of the C——s, its 'Galloping Harry.'"

"Is the ghost in this instance a man or a horse?" laughed Guy.

"The former. An invalid ancestor of the C——s, was killed by his nurse (a Frenchwoman) for the sake of his personal property, consisting of jewels, &c. In order that his death might be kept secret, she dragged his body, under the cloud of night, to an uninhabited room of which she kept the key, pretending of course to his relations that he was still alive. The robbery effected, she took safety in flight,* when the 'death secret' was discovered. Her spirit is said yearly to return to the scene of its crime, and is heard dragging the body of the dead man along the passages and down the stairs."

THE DEATH SUMMONS—A REMARKABLE INCIDENT.

Dacre having made his bow, Weston turned to a friend of his named Bury, who had recently joined us in company with a gallant colonel, and asked him if he could give us anything equally remarkable.

"I call the following incident remarkable," replied Bury, and as it happened to a cousin of my own I can vouch for the truth of it. Poor Henry H—— was in a deep decline when he and his wife came to stay with us in town. For their greater comfort my mother gave them up her room, as it was the largest and best-aired in the house. Shortly after their arrival, Mrs. H. woke up suddenly in the night time, or as she herself expressed it, she was *made* to awake, and by the light of the gas, which was always kept burning, she saw an open letter lying on the coverlet of her husband's bed, which adjoined hers. Wondering how it could have got there, she sat up and looked at it. The writing was that of Harry's dead mother, and the words she read were, 'I must have my dear son: I cannot any longer be without him.' In the morning the letter was not to be found. The sequel is, my cousin died not long after."

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* Both the woman and her stolen property were lost in the Irish Sea.

Even Guy seemed impressed by this story, for he looked grave, and forbore those sceptical remarks he was so fond of indulging in.

A HAUNTED BILLIARD ROOM.

"Now, Colonel," said Bury, "you must in your turn become story teller, and give us your adventure at Port Royal."

"Willingly," said Colonel A——.

"A little way apart from the Barracks there stands, or stood, a building formerly used as a *Morgue*, and afterwards converted into a billiard room for the accommodation of the officers quartered at Port Royal. One Sunday evening I was sauntering along by myself, when, close to this place, I heard the rolling of balls on the table; more than that, there was a decided canon, followed by the rush and pocketing of a ball. Thinking that some of the soldiers had got into the building, I clambered up and looked in at one of the windows, but nothing was to be seen. I thereupon vacated my position, but no sooner had I reached the ground than I heard an unmistakable click of the balls. I will catch them this time, I thought. Instantly I struck a light and entered by a side door, what I found to be a deserted room—not a living creature was in it, not a ball visible on the table.

"When relating to a comrade what had taken place, he said in reply, 'Well, have you never heard that the spirits of those officers who formerly played in the *Morgue* return to pursue their old amusements?'"

"THE OLD OAK CHEST."

The word *Morgue* made us all feel agueish, and we relapsed into an uncomfortable silence, which was suddenly broken by Deleval, who exclaimed in excited tones—

"You have all of you heard the legend of the Mistletoe Bough?"

"I should think so—rather!" said Weston.

Guy smiled grimly, and muttered—

"The mistletoe hung in the castle hall."

"Well, I do assure you, on my word of honour, that friends

of mine living in Staffordshire possessed the veritable oaken chest."

Guy laughed outright.

"You may laugh if you please, but I tell you it is so. The tragedy took place in Italy, and the descendants of the ill-fated bride, came afterwards to England, bringing the chest with them. Such was the tradition; and a member of the family was at the pains to go to Italy to have it verified, and he found it true in every particular. The disagreeable part of the matter was that the ghost of a young lady in white silk came with the coffer, and kept the family in constant agitation with the frequency of her visits. So long as the celebrated 'old oak chest' remained at C——, so did the ancestral spectre; but one day it suddenly disappeared, stolen no doubt, and with it also vanished 'young Lovel's bride.'"

"Goodness, gracious!" exclaimed Guy, in tones of seeming alarm.

"What is the matter with you?" said Darrell, who sat next to him.

"O dear, dear! I do believe that my mother, who has the family taste for antiquities, has gone and bought that very coffin—for coffin I know it soon will be. In her last letter she tells me of her latest purchase in that way—a large and splendidly carved black oaken chest, date 1603, supposed to have come from Italy—tradition connected with its being brought to England unfortunately not known to the man—seemed anxious to be rid of it—got it for the price of an old song, etc.

"Now the end of it will be," went on Guy, "that I, who am going to Coverdale at Christmas, will see this fair and hapless spirit floating along in the moonlight, and of course will fall desperately in love with her. She will haunt my dreams; with her delicate taper fingers she will beckon me to follow her, and I, who am a noted sleep-walker, will obey her inviting gesture. Along the shadowy gallery she will glide, and I after her, when—bang! and I waken up to find myself lying flat in the chest, whose lid has just closed with 'a sudden spring'—waken up to find myself 'smothered in a living tomb.'"

The suddenness of the "bang" had made us all start from our seats, and when sufficiently recovered from the shock we had sustained, we found that Guy had left the room and was laughing heartily outside the door at our expense.

"Was he serious?" asked Weldon, peering at me over his glasses in the funniest manner possible.

"Not he; never was such a fool," said Danecourt in wrathful tones.

Then said Weston, "That was a weird story of yours, Somerville, about the 'Second Sight.' If you have any more of the same kind, I am sure all present will join with me in the wish that you would let us have them."

We heartily re-echoed Weston's words, and Somerville with great good nature instantly complied.

STORIES OF "SECOND SIGHT" IN THE ISLAND OF SKYE.

Some few summers ago, in company with two friends, I paid a succession of pleasant visits in the Island of Skye, so celebrated on account of its wild and magnificent scenery, as well as for the gift of the "Second Sight" which is said to be specially conferred upon its inhabitants.

The house in which we chiefly resided during our sojourn in the "Island of Mist" is situated directly at the foot of the Coolin Mountains, whose fantastic peaks and spires tower upwards with the dignity of monarchs over the wild and barren solitude surrounding them.

The glimpses we obtained of the Coolins during our sojourn at Rhundunan were few and far between, as the mist which so frequently envelopes mountain scenery often shrouded them from our gaze for an entire week—a thing we by no means approved of, but had quietly to submit to, for a most sufficient reason, namely, that we could not prevent it.

Nothing could be more beautiful than the appearance presented by the Coolins when, on some lovely summer's evening, the mist which had enwrapped their lofty summits during the early part of the day took the form of a light fleecy vapour rose-tinted by the rays of the setting sun, which, as it

gradually wore away, disclosed beneath the dark frowning masses, resplendent with all the colours of the rainbow.

Rhundunan, as before mentioned, is situated at the foot of the Coolins—a situation we afterwards discovered to be more picturesque than safe, as a foaming torrent one day rushing down from the mountains burst in upon us with uncontrollable fury, and nearly swept us all, live and inanimate stock, into the sea. Our nerves were somewhat unstrung by that unexpected incident, and ever afterwards, when the winds and waters were unusually high, we were apprehensive of a renewal of the appalling scene. Never, indeed, shall I forget one wild and stormy night towards the close of September. The rain for several days had been heavy and continuous, so much so as to make us fearful of another visitation from the angry waters. The river which flowed down from the Coolins dashed past the house with terrific rapidity, threatening every instant to overflow its boundaries and sweep away the inmates in its headlong fury. Feeling greatly alarmed, and in dread of serious consequences, I ascended to one of the upper rooms, and, throwing open a window, put out my head in order to ascertain if possible the extent of our danger.

The scene was wild and dreary in the extreme. Rain was falling in torrents, and the roar of the swollen and angry river—whose foam-crested waves, lashed into fury, were alone discernible in the mirky darkness—was absolutely deafening. The spirit of the mist had as usual descended upon the Coolins and enwrapped them in its dusky folds, whilst the subterranean noises which issued from their dark recesses inspired one with feelings of awe. It seemed as if the whole race of the Cyclops were busy over their forges fabricating the thunderbolts of Jupiter, 'mid the solitude of the mountains. Fortunately, upon this occasion our fears proved to be groundless, as the river gradually subsided without having wrought any damage, and our alarm vanished with the ebbing of the waters.

It was an evening adapted for the narration of some of those wild and mysterious stories such as are told in connection with the Island of Skye; so no sooner was there some degree of

order restored, and we were again seated round the comfortable hearth, than we entreated Mrs. M——, the lady in whose house we were staying, and several others of the party, to favour us with some of the incidents of which we knew them to possess—an ample store. Our request was at once complied with, and the following strange tales were narrated, the narration being rendered still more startling by the gloom pervading the apartment, which was relieved only by fitful gleams emitted from the slowly expiring fire, in strange unison, too, with the fierce howling of the wind as it roared along the wild strath in which Rhundunan is situated.

Mrs. M——'s Story.

Mrs. M—— was the first narrator.

"Don't be alarmed," she commenced, "when I tell you that the story I am about to relate is told in connection with the cottages, situated on the banks of the river, flowing past Rhundunan. It is, as you know, generally occupied by shepherds, who return from their work on the mountains too late in the evening for them to reach their own homes. Well, one of these men had slept there two or three nights in succession, and I was a good deal annoyed by hearing from a servant that he had been telling some idle tale in connection with an apparition seen by him whilst sleeping there. I at once sent for him, and expressed my regret that he should have done so; upon which the poor man replied, with a face of consternation, 'Indeed, ma'am, I am very sorry that you should be vexed with me, but, were it to cost me my situation, I cannot sleep any longer in that house after what I have seen!'

"And what have you seen?" I asked, impressed, in spite of myself, by the shepherd's serious manner.

"'You may laugh at me,' he said, for what I am about to tell you, but it is as true as if every word I utter were to be my last. During the past three nights, the figure of a woman dripping wet, has taken her stand by my bedside. She had her handkerchief tied round her head, and her arms folded over her breast. After gazing on me for a little while, she kissed my forehead, and then went across the room and stood

by the fire-place, keeping her eyes fixed upon me with a melancholy look until she vanished.'

"I vainly endeavoured to persuade the man that he had either been dreaming, or that some one had played a trick upon him; he seemed firmly convinced that what he had seen was a supernatural appearance.

"Perceiving him to be the prey of an unreasoning terror, I gave him leave to change his sleeping quarters.

"Shortly after, while with one of my domestics getting linen out of the closet in my room, there was a report as if a pistol had gone off in the press whence we had taken it.

"'Oh, ma'am!' exclaimed the maid, with a face of horror, there will be grave-clothes taken from that chest before this week is over. I laughed at the woman's fears, and proceeded with my occupation.

"The next day, having some business to transact at Portree, I sent this identical servant, who, being a clever, active person, and an excellent walker, I thought best suited for a message of the kind. Portree being distant thirty miles, I allowed her three days for the journey, expecting her back on the evening of the third day from that on which she started. It rained incessantly during the woman's absence, and the river she had to cross, which flows at the foot of the park, was unusually wide and rapid. I felt rather uneasy when the night she had fixed for her return had passed over without our seeing anything of her; but I calmed my fears, hoping she had been detained at Portree on account of the weather, and that the morrow would bring her back in safety. The next day passed in like manner, bringing no tidings of the absent female. Seriously alarmed, we issued forth in a body to search the river, in case she might have arrived at the ford after dark, and not perceiving the increased size of the water, have possibly been drowned in attempting to cross. Our fears, alas! proved to have been too well founded. The corpse of the unfortunate woman was discovered a short way below where the ford was situated. She had, as we conjectured, missed her footing in attempting to cross, and had perished 'mid the darkness and the storm of that dreadful night.

"The strangest part of the tale remains to be told. The arms of the servant when found were crossed upon her breast; she had bound her head round with a handkerchief, in order, as we supposed, to protect herself in some measure from the rain; and the body was carried into the previously mentioned cottage; whilst the bed was removed and placed beside the fire-place, that being a more convenient position.

"In this manner the shepherd's tale met with this singular realisation. It only remains for me to add, he had been a personal friend of the deceased; also, that the grave-clothes in which the unfortunate woman was interred, were taken from the closet in which the report of the pistol was heard, and that within the week, as she herself had predicted."

Mr. M'K——n's Story.

"It was harvest time," said Mr. M'K——n, "and I was standin the field, which lies at the back of my house, looking on while the reapers plied their busy task. Struck by the superior dexterity of a young woman, named Mary Cameron, who was working far ahead of her companions, I pointed her out to the foreman, then standing near to me. This man, who was said to have the gift of the 'second sight,' stedfastly regarded her for a moment or two, and then remarked—

"'She is, indeed, a clever worker. Poor girl! I am sorry to say that this will be her last harvest.'

"'What do you mean?' I asked.

"'Why, that she will be dead in less than three months; her winding-sheet is already high upon her breast. More than that, she will be buried in B—— churchyard; and such and such men'—naming four men—'will lower her coffin into the grave.'

"Not being a believer in 'second sight,' and, at the same time desirous to avoid wounding the man's feelings by treating as a jest what he himself was disposed to regard in a serious light, I allowed his prophecy to pass unquestioned.

"Strange to say, about the time specified by Macdonald, the poor girl took fever and died. Thus the first part of his prediction was unfortunately fulfilled; but, sceptic as I was, I

fully determined within myself that the latter portion should be defeated, by my taking the part of office-bearer on the occasion of her interment. Agreeably with my resolution, I repaired to B—— churchyard on the day of the funeral, and took my stand by the side of the coffin, in company with three of the men named by Macdonald.

"While standing thus, a favourite dog of mine, who had followed me unperceived, suddenly commenced bounding up upon me, striving to lick my face and hands, at the same time that it whined and howled in a very remarkable manner. Unable to make the dog leave off its unreasonable demonstrations, I took it aside, and fastened it to an adjoining tombstone by means of a piece of cord furnished by one of the company. This done, I returned to take my former position by the grave, but found it occupied by the *fourth* man, who had arrived in the churchyard during my temporary absence from my post."

Mr. N——'s Story.

"In the farm-house of T——, where I spent my youth, there lived an old woman named Elspeth M'Kinnon, who was accounted famous for the gift of second sight. Now this old crone was the object of my greatest aversion. Not only was she in the highest degree witchlike in her appearance, being dwarfish in stature, bent almost double, small-eyed, wide-mouthed, and having a sharp chin fringed with a beard, but she was always sitting away in odd nooks and corners peering out at one with eyes glaring and cat-like in their expression, and muttering to herself in a language wholly unintelligible to other ears than her own.

"Had I been permitted to have my own way I am afraid old Elspeth would never have been allowed to pass the remainder of her days at T——, but fortunately for her those in authority did not regard her in the same unpleasing light that I did. They considered her to be a poor helpless creature who had a claim on their kindness owing to her having been for many years a servant in my father's family, and they reverenced her as a seer.

It is, perhaps, needless to tell you that Elspeth prided her-

self on her reputed gift, which it seems she inherited from her mother; and nothing enraged her so much as when any one doubted, or feigned to doubt, her prophetic powers.

"Boy-like, I loved to tease her upon this point, pretending that I was similarly endowed with herself; that whilst wandering amongst the mountains I had seen singular visions, and I would ask her with a mocking laugh what she thought they portended. Elspeth's sole answer when thus pressed would be a torrent of reproaches, coupled with warnings of hideous evils which would assuredly overtake me for my wicked unbelief and ridicule of her powers.

"One autumn morning, as I was standing in a barn looking on while some men were grinding corn, a servant girl came in with the intelligence that Elspeth had just told her to stand on one side of the road, as she saw a 'gathering' with a corpse on a bier passing by.* And that on her saying she did not believe in such things, Elspeth told her the funeral would soon take place, and that her mother and several others (naming them) would follow the bier. She also described the tartan of the plaid which lay over the corpse.

"Running out of the barn I came upon Elspeth cowering under a hedge, moaning and muttering to herself in her usual strange fashion, when, to make use of her own words, 'she was under the power of the sight.' 'Ha! ha! Elspeth,' I shouted in derision, 'and so you have just seen a vision—a bier covered over with a plaid—and what like was the plaid, Elspeth?'

"'It was red,' shrieked the beldame, glaring at me with the look of a tigress; 'red, checkered with green and blue. But grey will be the one put over you, when, in company with another prettier than yourself, you are brought down cold and

* That invisible funerals—that is, invisible to all save those gifted with the "second sight"—always precede real ones, is a favourite belief with the lower class of Highlanders in the islands of Tiree, Mull, and Skye. The writer of this paper was once solemnly assured by an inhabitant of Mull that a friend of hers was repeatedly knocked down one evening while coming along a road then occupied by a train of spiritual mourners.

stiff from the heights of Scuir-na-Gillean!'* 'Thank you, Elspeth; I am glad you have promised me such a comfortable wrap.'

"This mocking rejoinder drew down upon me a fresh torrent of abuse, which I did not tarry to listen to.

"Those among you who believe in 'second sight' will not be surprised when I tell you that Elspeth's prophecy in regard to the 'gathering' that was to be was fulfilled to the very letter, and that within a week after she had given utterance to it. It chanced that a young man residing in a neighbouring cottage was accidentally drowned, and being known to all the residenters in the vicinity of T——, he was followed to the grave by the very people named by Elspeth, and his bier was covered with a plaid checkered as she described.

"Still this strange coincidence by no means cured me of my scepticism. What more likely, I thought, than that when the poor fellow was drowned, his friends, recalling to mind Elspeth's prophecy, should contrive to aid its fulfilment by appointing these persons she named to follow the bier! And every cottage containing one or more plaids it would be easy to procure one similar in pattern to that described by Elspeth.

"Perfectly satisfied in my own mind that such was a correct explanation of the affair, I only laughed at the more than reverential awe with which Elspeth was now regarded by those credulous enough to place faith in her predictions.

"Shortly after this I went south for a few weeks. On my return I was accompanied by a young Englishman named Vernon, who was desirous of learning something of sheep farming under my father's instructions. A stranger to mountain scenery, the weird grandeur of the Coolins so delighted him that he was never weary of gazing on their rugged summits when dimly seen through the driving clouds or rose-coloured mists of evening.

"Of a bold adventurous disposition, young Vernon frequently expressed the wish that together we should ascend their giddy heights ere a snowstorm rendered such a feat

* The hill of the young men.

impracticable. Equally desirous myself of achieving an undertaking accounted rather a hazardous one from the frequent avalanches of gigantic stones which crash in every direction, thereby imperilling life and limb, one fine October morning we started on our expedition, which, as agreed upon between us, was carried out *sub rosa*. We had a mile of hard climbing to encounter ere we reached the mountains; and to us unskilled mountaineers this was by far the most fatiguing part of the undertaking. Our breath came short and thick, and so great was the oppression on our chests that we felt as though we must succumb. Gradually, however, this unpleasant feeling wore off, and by the time we arrived at the foot of the Coolins it had entirely disappeared.

"'Now for the tug of war,' said Vernon at sight of the grim barren-looking mountains towering up from our very feet, their wild and savage appearance rendered still more perceptible at our near approach. Nothing daunted, however, onwards we went, and now it was climbing in good earnest. Our progress might not unfrequently be described as that of one step forward and two backward: the loose shingle yielding beneath our feet occasioned this rather unsatisfactory mode of progression. The higher we ascended the greater the difficulties we had to encounter; and in many instances the peril became extreme when the narrow pathway by which we advanced led us to the brink of some giddy precipice where one false step would have precipitated us down into an unfathomable abyss.

"When near the top of the mountain I observed a solitary peak rising up behind the others, and evidently a good deal higher than those surrounding it. Pointing it out to Vernon, I said, 'Once on that pinnacle we have achieved something to be proud of.' He smiled assent, and we pushed onward, determined to do or die. After two hours and a half's incessant clambering we stood upon the summit, panting and breathless, yet esteeming ourselves amply rewarded for our arduous ascent. The mighty Coolins, naked, lofty, and precipitous, surrounded on all sides this strange-looking peak, which we

found to our great disappointment unscalable. Taglioni herself would have hesitated to execute a *pas seul* on the giddy pinnacle, whose point seemed to us fine as that of a needle. It towered up from the centre of the Coolins, solitary in its height and obelisk-like appearance, whilst its sides were polished as those of marble. The surrounding scenery was sublime. Lochs and mountains in endless variety met our gaze. Wherever we turned there was something to admire or wonder at in the freaks of nature.

"Whilst intensely enjoying the beauties surrounding us, imagine our horror at beholding a dense mass of cloud advancing towards us with rapid strides. There was something terrific in its appearance as it sped over the sea, enveloping the sun in its dusky folds, which, now of a fierce lurid red, seemed like an incensed magician glaring at us in anger for having invaded his dominions. In an instant, as it seemed, everything was hidden from view. Mountains, loch, glens, all had disappeared, and we were thoroughly wet, as though we had been submerged in one of the lochs we were so recently admiring.

"The cold on the top of the mountain had now become so intense that our faces were quite excoriated, and there being no further inducement for us to remain, we prepared to descend. Some large flakes of snow were now in the air. We quickened our steps in alarm, for one of us at least was but too familiar with the horrors of a Highland snow-storm.

"Not far from the summit we met two shepherds who had come up in quest of their fleecy charge, many of which lay dead around. In our eagerness to accomplish the descent in safety, we only tarried to make some inquiries respecting the path by which to descend, and to ask the name of the mountain on which we stood. At mention of Scuir-na-Gillean I could not restrain a cry of surprise. Old Elspeth's prophecy flashed across my mind, and now it seemed about to be accomplished. Was I not on the heights of Scuir-na-Gillean, in company with a friend, and surrounded on all sides with indications of a coming snow-storm, which, unless we were enabled to accomplish the descent in less than half the time it took to ascend, might yet prove our winding-sheet!

"Through the glimmer of the fast-darkening day I seemed to see old Elspeth's skinny hand pointed at me in scorn, and to hear her mocking laugh rise and mingle with the storm now moaning at a distance amongst the wild glens and rocks. As the concluding words of her prediction rose to my recollection, I grasped Vernon by the wrist with a vice-like grasp and plunged madly down the mountain.

. . . . . .

"Some three or four hours afterwards we were discovered by other shepherds lying underneath the shelter of a huge beetling crag, whither we had crept for safety, not dead, but with the life in us frozen. And the shepherds fold us tenderly in their plaids and bear us in safety to our home, for their feet are familiar with the windings of each giddy path, and their dogs, in their wondrous instinct, are guides that err not.

"Ever after that memorable day I permitted old Elspeth to predict as many deaths and marriages as she pleased without further molestation from me—for had not her prophecy in respect to myself been literally fulfilled?

"Grey was the colour of the plaid which covered me when, in company with another prettier than myself, I was brought down cold and stiff from the heights of Scuir-na-Gillean."

Mrs. M'D——'s Story.

"A lovely mid-summer's day had melted into night," said Mrs. M'D——, "and my sister and I lingered on the banks of the loch fronting our house, unable to tear ourselves away from the enjoyment of the sweet scented air and the tranquil beauty of the scene.

"It was indeed an exquisite evening. The unclouded sky was strewn with myriads of stars. A silvery haze floated lazily on the distant mountain summits. The Coolins appeared more than usually rugged and majestic in their outline, standing out in bold relief against the azure sky. Whilst gazing on them in admiration, I observed a splendid star resting as it were on the very point of one of their needle-shaped peaks. The effect was most striking. I attracted my sister's attention to it, and together we regarded it in speechless

ecstasy, as it gradually rose, becoming higher, larger, and more brilliant, until at length the calm, cold rays of fair lady moon —for it was she—stole over the landscape.

"After having sufficiently admired her slow queenly progress amongst the lesser lights, and her reflection in the crystal waters of the loch, we turned to retrace our steps homeward, when we saw the servant girl, whom we had left in the house, come forth from it covered over with a shroud of darkish hue. Stealing forth into the moonlight, she traversed the distance between us and the house, as though wishing to frighten us. After thus pacing up and down for some little time she suddenly disappeared. On our return we asked the girl what she meant by such foolish conduct, whereupon she declared that she had never once crossed the threshhold. Shortly afterwards she was seized with small-pox and died, and her shroud being made of unbleached linen, answered to the description I have given of the garment in which she appeared on the night in question."

Major C——n's Story.

"You have all of you, no doubt, seen Prince Charlie's Well, that lies between Kingsburgh and Mucksdat, of which it is said the Prince drank when on his way to the former place, in company with Flora Macdonald.

"I don't know with what feelings you, my listeners, regard that well, but, for my own part, belonging as I do to the loyal clan C——n, I love it. I never pass that way but I stoop to drink of its crystal waters, and to gather a sprig of heather from off the solitary plant nodding over its brink, humming the while a verse of an old Jacobite song.

"You smile at my enthusiasm—and I think I hear one young lady say, 'Had Major C——n lived in the '45, he would have been *out*.' And she says truly; I should have been 'out,' and, like others of my name, have fought, and died, if need be, for the Prince.

"But to return to the well. It chanced that on the evening of the 15th of April, 1746, my great-grandfather, passing near it, while on his way from Portree to Uig, saw a tall fair

young man, dressed in the Highland garb, kneeling before it, and gazing intently down into its clear depths. On my ancestor's approach, he rose to his feet, and regarding him mournfully, murmured, 'defeated—defeated—defeated!' and then disappeared. At the same instant the beat of drums mingled with the clash of arms caused my great-grandfather to look behind him, and he saw a troop of soldiers defiling up a narrow glen between the mountains. Amazed, he sees them also disappear, as fades the mist before the morning sun.

"On the next day was fought the memorable Battle of Culloden. Soon after which disastrous defeat, that very glen resounded with the tread of King George's troops, despatched in quest of poor Charles Edward; and the Prince himself knelt at the well to quench his thirst whilst a fugitive amongst the wilds of Skye.

"A friend of mine, Captain M——e, said he perfectly remembered his grandfather relate, that towards the close of the year 1744, no fewer than fourteen persons, of whom he was one, saw a large vessel coming in below Kingsburgh, in the dusk of the evening, and cast anchor at the entrance of Loch Snizort—a very singular harbour.

"This vessel was visible until night-fall, but next morning it was no longer to be seen; upon which, all who had beheld it agreed this was a case of 'second sight,' which it proved to be; for Captain Ferguson, when in search of Prince Charles, with the Furnace sloop-of-war, anchored in the dusk of the evening exactly in the very spot above mentioned, half-a-mile below Kingsburgh House."

Miss M'A——r's Story.

"In the autumn of 18—, I was on a visit to my friend Mrs. R——, who, as most of you are aware, lived for many years at M——, on the banks of Loch S——. For the greater convenience of those of her friends who resided on the opposite shore, and who otherwise must have made a wide detour when coming to visit her, Mrs. R—— kept a boat in readiness for despatch whenever a signal-fire on the other side gave notice that some one was waiting to be ferried across the loch.

"Accustomed as I was to the locomotive style of travelling, whereby one is landed at a friend's house without previous warning of any kind, this to me novel mode of transit was in the highest degree interesting; and during the first part of my stay, I frequently stationed myself at one of the drawing-room windows, on the eager look out for the friendly beacon; feeling much disappointed when the sun went down behind the blue mountains of Harris, without my eyes discovering the wished-for signal. Standing thus, one afternoon, I saw a faint wreath of blue smoke curling upward from the opposite shore. Afraid lest the boatman should not have seen it, I was on the point of running to his cottage with the intelligence, when I beheld the boat shoot from under the cliffs, and make off in the direction of the fire.

"I informed Mrs. R—— of the circumstance, and then returned to the window to watch its progress—but no boat was visible. The smoke likewise had disappeared. What could it mean? Was the boat lost, or had I been the victim of optical delusion? Amazed and perplexed, I ran to Mrs. R——, and told her of the mysterious disappearance of the boat. In great alarm, she sent one of her servants to ascertain whether Roderick (the boatman) had returned or not.

"Stranger still, Roderick had never been out at all, but was sitting quietly on the shore smoking his pipe. Mrs. R—— then sent to inquire of him what boat it was that had just gone across the loch, and if he had seen the fire? The answer was, he had neither seen boat nor fire, and he had been looking across the loch for the last hour or more. Upon this Mrs. R—— looked on me, and I on her, in astonishment. 'You must have imagined it,' she said, laughing. I began to think that I had, and felt, as you may imagine, exceedingly foolish and uncomfortable. Observing my vexed looks, Mrs. R—— kindly forbore jesting on the subject.

"Pondering over, and in no small degree bewildered by the spectral illusion, of which I had been the victim, I stationed myself on the day following at one of the drawing-room windows, and again witnessed an illusive appearance similar to the one of yesterday. Responsive to the dim and shadowy wreath

of blue smoke, the boat shot across the loch, and made straight for the opposite shore, which it touched. This time I stirred not from the window, being determined to find out where and in what manner the boat disappeared. I was not long kept in suspense. Slowly, as if moving under a heavy freight, it turned and came back as far as the middle of the loch, when it sank beneath the water.

At the risk of being thought an opium-eater,* I again sought Mrs. R——, and told her what I had seen. This time she regarded me with a graver look and said, 'My dear girl, should you have any more of these visions, I really must have medical advice for you. I have been consulting "M'Nish" on these matters, and he says that spectral illusions are only seen by persons suffering from some functional derangement.'

"Fortunately for me, it happened that I had no return of the spectral illusion. Day after day I seated myself at one or other of the windows overlooking the loch, but there was no repetition of the singular appearance. Real fires there were, and the boat came and went in obedience to the preconcerted signal, but it was always impelled by the strong, sinewy arms of Roderick M'Pherson, and returned in safety with its human freight.

"On my entering the breakfast-room one November morning, Mrs. R—— told me she had just received a letter from a cousin of hers, who lived some thirty miles off in the Macleod Country,† informing her that she and her daughter were coming to pay her a visit, and would be on the opposite shore about three or four o'clock of that or the day following.

"'You must be on the look-out for the signal, Mary,' said Mrs. R——, with a roguish smile, which showed that she had by no means forgotten the episode of the vanished boat.

"That day passed away without the anticipated visitors making their appearance. On the next, towards noon, it

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* Some of the most vivid instances of spectral illusions, it is said, are those induced by opium.

† All that portion of the Island of Skye belonging to Macleod of Macleod, is either styled "The Macleod Country," or "Macleod's Country."

became so dark and stormy that my friend remarked, she hoped they would not come as it would be very rough on the loch.

"'Surely they will never leave home on such a day,' I remarked.

"'Not if it were like this,' replied Mrs. R——, 'but with us the weather changes so suddenly that it might have been quite fine when they started.'

"Looking out on the rising fury of the wild sea, I fervently re-echoed my kind hostess's wish that her visitors would not come. Each succeeding hour the wind was heard to pipe in a louder, shriller key, and the white-crested waves were tossed upward to a greater height ere they broke with a hollow foreboding sound on the rocks lining the shore.

"A gloomy day was descending into a yet gloomier night, and the tempest had rather increased than diminished, when, to my utter consternation, a red light suddenly pierced the darkness, which hung low on the opposite coast.

"At first I felt afraid to mention this to Mrs. R——, in case it should turn out to be another of my spectral illusions, but observing it become larger and deeper in colour, I at length ventured to call her attention to it.

"She looked across the tempest-tossed loch with anxious brows, but made no remark. I was about to ask her if I should send a servant to tell Roderick, when Roderick himself made his appearance.

"I have come," he said, addressing Mrs. R., "to know if I am to go out with the boat?"

"There is no help for it, you must go," she replied, "take Angus with you; it will require you both to row the boat on a night like this."

"Roderick said nothing, but left the room with a look on his face expressive of anything but satisfaction at the task imposed upon him.

"I remained at the window looking out at the fire until it expired in the gloom, when I rejoined Mrs. R——, who was seated by the hearth.

"Two hours passed away, and there was no sign of the

boatman's return. We listened in silence to the moaning wind and the angry beat of the surf upon the shore; neither of us daring to shape into words the fears that agitated our breasts Mrs. R—— at length broke a silence that was becoming insupportable with the remark,—

"'Roderick has perhaps found it too stormy for my cousins to cross in the boat, and so they may have gone round by S——.'

"'How long would it take then to come in that case?' I inquired.

"'We will give them another hour,' was her only reply.

"I said no more, seeing she looked pale and anxious.

"We watched through that and every succeeding hour, until daylight broke in upon our vigil, bringing sunshine and calm, but, alas! not those so anxiously looked for. All four, as we found, had perished while crossing Loch S——, amid the darkness and tempest of the preceding evening. When the sad news was brought us that the bodies had been fished up out of the water, Mrs. R—— whispered to me, in an awestruck voice,—

"'This explains, Mary, what you saw. It was the 'Second Sight!'"

We thanked Somerville again and again for his startling series of stories; and several of us said we should make a tour in Skye during the summer vacation.

Lindsay now volunteered a story related to him by the lady who saw the apparition.

THE SPECTRE MAIDEN.

"The ancient and now ruinous castle belonging to the M'——s, of ——, is situated on a rocky promontory jutting out from the sea coast of one of our Western Islands. Near to this memorial of another and ruder age, stands the modern mansion inhabited by the descendants of this once powerful clan. The M'——s are distinguished for their free-hearted hospitality, and numerous entertainments are given for the amusement of the guests who annually crowd to —— House.

Should the night prove fine these always end in a ramble in the romantic ruins of the adjoining castle. I chanced to be present at one of these balls, and, in accordance with this time-honoured custom, I and my partner in the dance, the second son, a fine young naval officer, led the way to the ancient halls of the M'——s. It was now early dawn, and surrounding objects were distinctly visible in the clear morning light. Imagining myself and partner to have been the first to leave the ball-room, I was surprised and horrified to see a girl whom I took to be the gay and adventurous Maria ——, like myself, a guest at ——, gazing in at me through what appeared to be an inaccessible window. 'Do look at that foolish creature, Maria ——; she will be killed if she does not take care,' and I ran towards her, pulling young M'—— with me. As I came near to her, I saw she was not Maria ——, but a young girl dressed entirely in white, with long fair hair falling over her shoulders, and having on her right arm a broad silver bracelet of peculiar design. She regarded me fixedly for a moment and then disappeared. 'Good gracious!' I cried, 'she has fallen over the rocks.' And I ran to the window and looked out, but no traces of her were visible: indeed no human being could have scaled the steep precipitous crags on that side the castle.

"I looked at my companion in amazement; he was very pale and silent. On our way back to the house we met Maria —— just leaving it. She had never been near the ruins.

"'Who could it have been?' I said to M'——. He made reply—'Don't mention what you have seen to any of my family. I will tell you who I think it was; but first let me ask you, Did you observe the bracelet on the girl's arm?' 'Yes;' I particularly noticed it, and I described it to him. He became yet paler, and said, 'You have seen the evil genius of our house. Her history is this: One of my ancestors, and the heir of the M'——s, fell deeply in love with a beautiful young girl of humble birth. They became engaged, and were about to be married, when the girl suddenly disappeared, and was never again heard of. It was supposed she had been murdered by command of his relations, who were furious

at the connection he was about to form. From time immemorial, there had been preserved in our family two silver bracelets, such as you describe, with which our chiefs betrothed their brides. One of these peculiar bands had shortly before disappeared, and it was believed the infatuated youth had bestowed it on the maid whom he had destined for his wife. Ever since we M'——s have always been warned of approaching death by a fair-haired girl, with this bracelet on her arm.'

"I am very sorry to have to tell you that my poor young partner on that occasion died not long after we had seen the spectre maiden.

A WEIRD STORY.

"Now for a tale of *diablerie* told in connection with dear old Oxford," said Staunton; "the storm is rising in its fury, and my narrative will suit the wildness of the night. Probably none of you ever heard of Frank ——, of —— College. I have frequently, for my father was continually making mention of him as being the president of all the orgies which ever took place in his time in *Alma Mater*. Handsome, witty, and a reprobate, he seems to have plunged head-long into every imaginable excess; an eager imitator of those older in wickedness than himself, and the ruiner, by his pernicious example, of the youthful admirers who crowded round him, attracted by his brilliant exterior and reckless daring. He was at once a man to be shunned and dreaded. As a member of the notorious 'Hell Fire Club,' he shone with a lurid lustre, till at length the name of Frank —— became so fearfully notorious that the heads of his college determined to expel him by way of example to others. But the measure of his iniquity was full! Late one night a fellow student, while walking home to his rooms, observed sauntering leisurely along the street a tall man wearing a steeple-crowned hat, and wrapped in a large Spanish cloak. Remarkable from his height and peculiar bearing, the other watched him from a distance, wondering who he could be, and where he was going to. The stranger continued his careless walk till he came opposite —— College; there he paused below Frank ——'s

windows, and seemed as though he were listening. Looking round at this instant, he disclosed to the affrighted student, who was now within a few paces from him, a malignant scowling visage, with eyes of fire. The instant after he had scaled the wall, thrust his arm through the window, dragged out the profligate ——, and had carried him off. The next day Oxford was ringing with the news that that ill-fated young man had been found dead in his room."

At this moment a terrific gust of wind tore round the college. This was followed by a loud crash in the court below. Weston ran to the window and looked out.

"What's up, old fellow?" shouted Kennedy. "Some of the Rector's chimneys have been blown down by the storm; and, as I live, there's the old boy peering out after them. We all made for the window, and, sure enough, there he was, night-cap on head, and candle in hand, gazing into the darkness. A loud laugh, which we could not restrain, caused him to start and look in our direction. We rushed back, and finding on consulting our watches that it was time to separate, speedily beat a retreat."

Immediately on retiring to rest I fell asleep, and dreamed that his Satanic majesty, in the gay attire of a troubadour, was seated on the Towel Horse, and playing Mozart's Requiem for my entertainment on a one-stringed violin.

Ghostly visitors