

English Haunted Houses.

Apart from any useful purpose they may be made to serve or from any moral they may convey, the local customs, prejudices, and traditions of English rural folk constitute a delightful study, and there is scarcely a parish that does not furnish abundant material. About a couple of miles north of Stratford is "Dead Man's Hole." Some half century since a murder was committed here, the victim being found early in the morning with his head lying in a hole, which has ever since defied all efforts to fill it up. Cover the cavity at night, and the next morning will find it empty and bare—a silent immutable witness of the murderer's guilt. Go to Clopton House, half a mile from Stratford, and there you may behold the blood-stained corridor where, as tradition hath it, a foul deed was perpetrated in the "good old days." The sanguinary streak may be traced on the wainscoting, marking the course along which

THE UNHAPPY VICTIM

was dragged, and like the stain on the hands of Lady Macbeth it continues to defy all the perfumes of Arabia supplemented by the latest patent soap. Of course Clopton is haunted, and natives are not wanting who are willing to entertain the credulous stranger—over a mug of ale—to weird stories of ghosts seen and heard at divers times. The house boasts a couple of portraits, both of goodlooking girls, and to each fair maid a bloodcurdling romance is attached. The end of one was that she drowned herself in a well at the back of the premises in consequence of disappointment in "an affair of the heart;" while the other was buried alive by mistake, and was subsequently found to have turned over in her coffin. A former proprietor of the place was a Roman Catholic, and the room then used as an oratory contains some quaint inscriptions cut in black-letter on the panelling. One inscription comprises the following pious exhortation:—

Whether you rise feylyve or goe to bed late,
Remember Christ Jesus, who died for your sake.

It is this chamber that the murdered victim and the two damsels are said to haunt, as though the memory of its former pious purpose afforded some consolation to their restless spirits. A guest who slept in the same room some years ago declared that the noises he heard throughout the night were of an "infernal description," and he hoped his nocturnal experience might never be repeated. In the days of the wily Guy Fawkes Warwickshire witnessed some stirring scenes, and many

CURIOUS TALES ARE TOLD

of the "racing and chasing" that ensued when the historic plot, and not the powder, was prematurely exploded. The county of Wilts is particularly rich in old associations—some fabulous and fantastic, others historic. Within a radius of ten miles of Salisbury sufficient matter in the shape of tradition and superstition could be collected to fill a respectable book. There is a certain desolate spot where the hard, white dusty road, little better than a cattle track, winds like a serpent across a portion of the famous plain and passes between two disused pits. The sides are not guarded in any way, and to walk over the raised turf on either side of the road means falling a considerable depth. At a certain season of the year—and of course after midnight, when the moon is up—the weary traveller passing this uncanny spot is startled to descry a hare, which rises apparently from the earth on one side of the road, and limps slowly and painfully across to the other side. Even a weary pedestrian, joyfully anticipating a savoury meal, may be tempted to follow puss; but woo betide him in such event. Barely eluding its pursuer's grasp, the little animal climbs laboriously over the slight embankment, followed by the eager stranger, whose mangled remains are found at the bottom of the quarry on the following day. At another place, not many miles distant, the midnight wayfarer has been staggered by the sight of a black, misty ball rolling down a steep hill, threatening to crush him. If an active man, he escapes to the roadside or through the hedge; if not, he passes through it, or rather it envelops him for a moment, like the dust cloud of the desert, and passes on. Hereabouts, too, may be met in the small hours the noiseless coach and pair dashing along the downs at breakneck speed, with not the faintest sound save the sharp crack of the spectral postillion's whip, which is declared to be distinctly audible.

THE GHOSTLY OCCUPANTS

At this vehicle have been on the way to Grafton Green for the last century or so, and

have not arrived yet. It is said that an infuriated kinsman overtook the unfortunate pair about this spot and wedded the bridegroom-elect to King Death, thereby driving the disconsolate young lady to suicide. These are but a few stories taken at random from many which are religiously believed by the dwellers in "outlandish" parts in spite of the advancing tide of education. Nor is it alone in remote localities that such superstitions are fostered. The centres of wealth and culture, of life and activity, are not proof against them. On Coombe Down, near Bath, where many a sanguinary duel was fought in the days of Beau Nash, and where the notorious "Fighting Fitzgerald" is said to have "winged" more than one opponent, spectres of various sorts and sizes have been seen, from the fierce Sir Lucius O'Trigger type downwards, and the vicinity of the "Brass Knocker" has an especially evil reputation. Only a few years ago the village of Bathaston was all agog for weeks concerning a ghost that was nightly observed flitting about the churchyard. It became known as the "Bathaston Ghost," and many blood-curling stories were related of it, till some sceptical fellow brought it down with an old blunderbuss and found it to be a healthy specimen of the harmless though perhaps unnecessary owl, and even then its reputation survived in the shape of sugar representations, which were sold in the Bath sweetmeat shops to wondering youngsters. At Cheltenham the visitor may still behold "Maud's Elm," a gigantic hollow tree on the road to the little village of Swindon. A reasonable picnic party could encamp in the hollow trunk, and many a bonfire have the local youngsters built there. According to local tradition, a girl, a baby, and a donkey are

BURIED BENEATH THIS TREE.

The baby and the young woman were related, but record is silent with respect to the gentle ass. A mile or so away on the Tewkesbury road is the "Cross Hands" public-house. This spot was the scene of a tragedy in days gone by, and so many impenetrable market women were frightened to death by the nightly appearance of the victim's spectre that the journey to Tewkesbury from Cheltenham or vice versa was by many made through the village of Swindon, a much longer route. The spectre was only laid by the united efforts of seven clergymen of the Church of England from seven different parishes, who attended *en masse* one night for that special purpose. Adjoining to the Cheltenham High Street, nearly opposite the Fleecce Hotel, where the authoress of "John Halifax, Gentleman," passed her first night in the town, stands the old parish church of St. Mary, an ancient structure, now eclipsed in point of utility by the new and commodious church of St. Matthew close by. The favorite songster of our grandmothers, Thomas Haynes Bayley, lies in St. Mary's Churchyard, and not many yards from his grave which is distinguishable by the butterfly carved on the stone, there is a door leading into the church. It is a small, rusty looking door, and, according to popular belief, has never been opened. To what part of the edifice it leads no one appears to know, for it defies all efforts to open it. The superstition is that in the "No Popery" days the Catholics of Cheltenham fared very badly, and on one occasion, when the mob were amusing themselves by stoning a priest, the reverend gentleman sought refuge in the churchyard, and, being pursued thither, he rushed to this tiny door, which, though locked and barred, at once yielded to his touch, and he passed through, slamming it after him. A portion of his vestment was caught in the closed door, and there it has remained to this day. The priest himself was never more heard of.—*Manchester Guardian.*

The right arm is always a little larger than the left, but the left foot is almost always larger than the right, presumably because, while nearly every man uses his right arm to lift a weight or strike a blow, he almost invariably kicks with his left foot, while the lounge stands on his left leg and lets his right fall easily, because he has learned by experience that this is the best attitude he can assume to prevent lassitude and fatigue. This constant bearing of the weight on the left foot makes it wider than the right, and it often happens that a man who tries on a shoe on the right foot and gets a close fit has to discard the shoes altogether because he can not endure the pain caused by the tightness of the left. If when riding on a street car you will take the trouble to notice, you will see that in laced shoes the gap is much smaller on the right foot than on the left, while with button shoes the buttons have to be set back ten times on the left shoe to once on the right.

London Police Statistics.

An impressive view of the magnitude of the British metropolis is presented in the annual report of the Commissioner of police, which has just been published, covering the operations of that Department for the year 1890. The authorized strength of the force was as follows: 31 superintendents, 858 inspectors, 1,534 sergeants and 12,841 constables, total 15,264; being an increase of one superintendent, 11 inspectors, 82 sergeants and 445 constables since 1889. Of these 4 superintendents, 54 inspectors, 197 sergeants, and 1,423 constables were employed on special duties for various Government departments, including special protection posts at public offices and buildings, dockyards and military stations, and by public companies and private individuals. The number of police available for service in the metropolis, exclusive of these especially employed and whose services were paid for, was 27 superintendents, 804 inspectors, 1,337 sergeants and 11,432 constables, total 13,600. An average of one-fourteenth of the force, except special duties, sick, etc. (362) is daily on leave in accordance with the regulation granting one day's leave of absence to each man every fortnight. Casualties caused by men sick and on detached sick leave averaged 549 daily. The Metropolitan Police District extends over a radius of fifteen miles from Charing Cross, exclusive of the city of London, and embraces an area of 688.31 square miles, extending from Colney Heath, Hertfordshire, on the north, to Mogadore, Tottenham Heath, in the south, and from Lark Hall, Essex, in the east, to Staines Moor, Middlesex, in the west. The total amount of police rate levied on the parishes for the year ended March 31, 1891, produced \$3,693,015, and the local taxation account contributed \$2,953,405 to the police fund during the year.

The criminal returns for 1890 disclose a most satisfactory record for the year. The felonies relating to property number 17,491 or 2,053 fewer than in 1889 were a marked improvement on those for the preceding year. There were fewer offences of this kind committed in the metropolis during 1890 than in any year since 1875. But in 1875 the felonies of this class were, relatively to the population, in the ratio of 4.182 per thousand, whereas last year the proportion per thousand was only 3.002, or less than half the number considered normal twenty years ago. It thus appears that there was greater security for persons and property in the metropolis during 1890 than in any previous year included in the statistical returns. It should be remembered that in relation to police work, the difficulties of dealing with crime, as each decade adds a million to the population of the metropolis, are augmented in a ratio far greater than that of the arithmetical increase. The facilities for the commission of crime, and the chances of immunity relied on by professional criminals, are very much greater in a population bordering on 6,000,000 than they were in 1875, when the population of London was only about 4,000,000. In ten of the sixteen murder cases recorded in which apprehensions were effected by the Metropolitan Police, convictions were obtained against the perpetrators of the crimes. In seven of these the prisoners were sentenced to death, and in the other three the accused were found to be insane, and were ordered to be confined during Her Majesty's pleasure. Six murder cases remain to be accounted for. In one of these the author of the crime was removed to a lunatic asylum without being brought to trial. In another the murderer committed suicide. In a third the accused was acquitted of the capital charge on the medical evidence adduced as to the cause of death. In the Chiswick case of January 1 it was ultimately established that the death was wholly unconnected with homicidal violence. And in the case of the Italian Pompeo, who was murdered by another Italian on February 13, the accused escaped to Italy, and the evidence of his guilt was remitted to the Italian Government in the usual way. The only capital crime unaccounted for, therefore, is that of the girl Amelia Jeffs, who was murdered at West Ham on January 31, and there the evidence against the author of the crime was deemed insufficient to justify his arrest. In respect to this case it is only right to add popular suspicion did grave injustice to an innocent person.

It is said that nearly 40,000 men desert the German Army every year.

"Was your elopement a success?" "Hardly." "What went wrong?" "Her father telegraphed us not to return and all would be forgotten."

Daniel and Ezekiel.

The following extracts from the letters of Daniel Webster and his brother Ezekiel will indicate how the young men had to struggle with poverty through their college days. The reader will remember that the home farm was mortgaged to pay Daniel's expenses through college, and when it was proposed to give Ezekiel similar advantages the father and mother had a council. "The farm is already mortgaged," said the old gentleman, "and if we send Ezekiel to college it will take all we have, but the boys think they can take care of us."

It did not take the strong-hearted, sagacious woman long to decide the matter. "We can trust the boys," she said.

So the matter was settled. Daniel went back to Hanover, while Ezekiel went, bundle in hand, to Dr. Wood's and began the study of Latin, his expenses being but a dollar a week.

In November, 1882, Daniel was at home in Salisbury, while Ezekiel was struggling with poverty at Hanover. Funds getting low in the Webster homestead, Daniel writes under date of November 4:

"Now, Zeke, you will not read half a sentence—no, not one syllable—before you have thoroughly searched this sheet for scrip, but my word for it, you'll find no scrip here. We held a sabbath-day this morning on the subject of cash. Could not hit upon any way to get you any. Just before we went away to hang ourselves through disappointment it came into our heads that next week might do."

"The truth is, the father had an execution against Hubbard of North Chester for about \$100. The money was collecting and just ready to drop into the hands of the creditors when Hubbard suddenly died. This, you see, stays the execution till the long process of administering is completed."

"I have now by me 2 cents in lawful federal currency. Next week I shall send them, if they be all."

"We are all here just in the old way, always behind and lacking. Boys digging potatoes with frozen fingers and girls washing without wood."

"Ezekiel writes to Daniel at about the same time, the two letters probably crossing each other:

"These cold, frosty mornings very sensibly inform me that I want a warm greatcoat. I wish, Daniel, it might be convenient to send me cloth for one, otherwise I shall be necessitated to purchase one here. I do not care what color it is—anything that will keep the frost out. Some kind of shaggy cloth, I think, would be cheapest. Deacon Pettigill has written offering me \$14 a month to keep school. I believe I shall take it."

"Money, Dan, money! As I was walking down to the office after a letter I happened to have 1 cent, which is the only money I have had since the second day after I came on. It is a fact, Dan, that I was called on for a dollar where I owed it, and borrowed it, and have borrowed it four times since to pay those I borrowed of."

England's Healthiest Village.

There is a village in Bedfordshire, about three miles from Dunstable, called Whipsnade, which can boast of being the healthiest spot in England. In 1868, 1880, 1887, and 1888 there was not a single death. The population of the village at the last census was a little over 200. During the last twenty-four years only three deaths have been registered between the ages of one year and twenty-nine years—one being a case brought down from London. The average age of all the inhabitants of this extremely healthy village over one year old, who have died during the last thirty years is, fifty-six years. Two other very healthy places are Walmer in Kent, with a death-rate of 9.7 per 1,000, and Beeston, a village in Nottinghamshire, with a death-rate of 10.8 per 1,000 inhabitants. One of the healthiest small towns in England is East Grinstead, in Sussex, well-known for the purity of its air, and having an excellent system of drainage. For a considerable time the death-rate averaged about 9 per 1,000, and latterly has been as low as 8.4 per 1,000 of the population.

"Strange," said Mrs. Jones, as she looked up the house, "how old fashions come in again."

"What is it now?" asked Mr. Jones, yawning.

"Why Mr. Simmons passed just now, and I guess he thought it was you he was talking to, for he called out that he was going down street to get a night-cap."

And Mr. Jones didn't enlighten her, but he wished, oh, he wished, he had gone shopping with Simmons.