

THE PARISH MYSTERY.

"Poor young gentleman! I pity him—that I do for all that he's bringing it on himself, so to speak."

Old Goody Jones gave vent to a deep-drawn sigh, as she uttered this ambiguous speech, and turned away from the doorway, from whence she had been watching the new parson, as he strode across the road and turned in at the gate of the as yet uninhabited rectory.

"Do you know, Granny?" anxiously inquired Sally, whose face had hitherto been steadily pressed against the window; for she, too, was anxious to see their new parson, and Granny's portly frame had utterly blotted out all the view from the open doorway.

"Aye, Sally, he do," said the old woman solemnly, as she seated herself in the arm-chair, which groaned heavily under her weight. "He do."

Granny, it should be explained, pronounced this last word as if it were written "dew," and it seemed to add impressiveness to her speech.

"But there! he be that venture-some that the more folks told him, the more determined he were. If it weren't that he be our lawful minister I'd be fain to call it foolhardy. But I don't do it, Sally, mark you! for I follow the catechiz, and I order myself lowly to my pastors and masters—"

Granny stopped for breath, for she was a little asthmatic, and then went on again. "Still he's young, and I'm old, and I have seen a deal of the world" (Granny had never gone farther than the nearest market town), "and I know it don't do to meddle with anything of a Spirit sort—you mind that, Sally!"

"Yes, Granny," promised little Sally readily enough. "But be the new parson going to meddle with 'em?"

Sally's eyes were nearly starting out of her head with terror at the idea of such presumption.

"I can't call it no less," answered Granny in an awe-struck tone. "I heard him say with these very ears" (Sally glanced at the ears, but they were hidden under the mob cap, so she learned nothing from them) "as how ghosties were nothing to him; he'd never seen one, and never should; and to prove his words he would sleep alone—alone, Sally!—in that rectory this very night, and if ghost there were he'd catch it for me."

"Oh, Granny!"—Sally's rosy face was white with terror—"he'll never come out alive! And he's so pleasant-spoken, and when he called here he promised me a book at Christmas—he did!" and Sally sobbed loudly, partly for the certain death of the cheery young minister, and partly for the loss of the promised picture-book.

"There, there! ha' done, Sally!" said Granny, soothingly. "It mayn't be so bad as all that; but, as I said before, it don't do to irritate a ghost; and he'll find it out—poor young gentleman."

The rectory, of which mention has been made, had long borne a bad name in the neighborhood; one and all had pronounced it haunted. The old rector could keep no servant long, the bravest and most undaunted gradually losing nerve, after hearing the strange sounds that night after night echoed through those large rooms, and died away down the long passages,

only to rise again in a few minutes with redoubled force. Not mere scratchings, or rustlings, or the sort of noises, that timid people might conjure up for themselves out of dry leaves, or a bough knocking against a window, but loud, unmistakable footsteps, tramping boldly about the house; aye and not content with tramping, but actually giving tangible proof of their presence, eating up joints and puddings from the well-stocked larder of the rectory kitchen.

At one time it was thought this must be the work of thieves—common flesh and blood thieves—and some enthusiastic young farmers formed themselves into a band, and placed a cordon right round the house, hiding themselves well among the bushes. But all to no good; no thief was caught, and yet the tramping and the depredation had gone on as busily as ever.

After that night the village gave up the Rectory as a bad job—it was haunted beyond a doubt—and the old Rector could get no woman servant to stop in the house after sunset, but he and the equally old gardener were left in solitary possession until daylight appeared, when the maids would come courageously back again from the cottages, where they passed the night with sympathizing neighbors.

Such had been the state of things when the old Rector died. His successor, however, was both young and energetic, and by no means inclined to have the large and commodious Rectory-house rendered practically useless on account of its supposed ghostly visitants.

"I must catch one of these ghosts," said the young Rector to himself, "and make an end of these ridiculous tales. Nothing but actually seeing and feeling them will ever convince my good parishioners of their folly."

The Rector privately held the theory that it was some of the idle scamps of a neighboring parish who were thus preying on the credulity of the country people, and before he settled himself for the night he took care to load a gun with duck-shot.

"A little peppering in the legs will not hurt them," said the young Rector, "and it will make them all the easier to catch; and a ghost of some sort I am determined to find before I am many hours older."

The night passed and the morning dawned, and as soon as ever Goody Jones was downstairs she saw the Rector's tall figure again striding down the pathway. She hobbled to the door as quickly as she was able, and too eager to remember her manners called out anxiously,—

"Did you see them, sir?"

"Aye, that I did; heard them, and saw them, too," answered the Rector in his strong tones.

"Indeed!"

The old woman was so astonished she could say no more for the minute.

"And what's more I caught them," continued the Rector, triumphantly.

"Eh, sir, but that's good news, However did you manage it? See, what comes of knowing Latin, Sally!"

"What are they like, sir?" asked Sally, timidly. "Like? They are black, and of course have tails," replied the Rector.

"And horns, sir?" inquired Goody Jones, nervously.

"No, no horns," laughed the Rector. "See, here's one of the

younger ones;" and both granny and Sally gave a shriek as the Rector held up a young rat.

"These are the ghosts that have troubled the parish so long. There are hundreds and hundreds of them in the Rectory, and they tramp up the stairs like a file of soldiers. No wonder you were all frightened. I can assure you I war a bit taken back, till I found out and caught a ghost or two. Well, I'm going to make arrangements for burying them all in the field." And the next thing that was seen of him was some hours later, when he passed by in company with a score or so of stout young farmers, who bent their steps to the old barns which surrounded the Rectory on three sides.

These barns had been built to receive the tithes, but were now useless.

"Pull them down, my lads," said the cheery voice of the Rector, "and when all my black ghosts are destroyed I promise you a good supper at the Rectory."

As this is a true story I must content myself with only saying that hundreds of huge rats were killed that day when their hiding places were pulled down. Their bodies made quite a heap on the field, and from that day to this there has not been the shadow of a ghost seen in the once haunted Rectory.—*Selected.*

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A LITTLE GIRL WHO BUILT A CHURCH.

There was a church needed in a certain place; so a good man, who loved to work for the Lord, went about among the people asking them to give the money with which to buy the material and pay the workmen. But one man said, "No!" another said, "I cannot!" another said "I am too poor." Somehow or other every one found some excuse for himself, and not one cent was raised. At last he applied to a member of the church who was poor of purse but large of heart; possibly he might help him.

"No," said the church member, "I have my wife and children to support, and this year I can do no more."

"But," urged the good man, "if you put down your name, others may, perhaps, follow your example; if you refuse me, I must give it up, discouraged."

"Father," said a little voice by his side, and the bright eyes of his little daughter looked up into his face. "Father, if you will only put down your name I will earn the money by picking berries and selling them. Honest and true I will; please don't say 'No,' father." The bright eyes were very earnest.

The father could not resist his little girl's pleadings, so he promised to pay a certain sum. The discouraged worker again took heart, and went once more among the people, telling them of the love and zeal of this little girl. Many were touched by the story, and one after another put his name

on the paper till there was an abundance of money. Then the bricklayers came, and the carpenters, and the masons, and after a time a beautiful new church was built and the people always said it was all owing to one little girl.—*Christian Advocate.*

THE EARWIG.

Anselm had the fault of being a listener. His father often warned him, but it did him no good. One evening a person came to his father from the town into the garden, and said he had something to say to him privately. So the father went with him into the summerhouse, and shut the door.

Anselm presently sneaked up, and placed his ear on a little chink which was in the door; but all at once he felt quite a strange sensation in his ear: it seemed as if something was creeping and crawling about in it; and he soon felt such a dreadful smarting that he was forced to cry out, and became almost distracted.

The father came with his visitor in alarm from the summer-house. The doctor was immediately sent for, who syringed Anselm's ear. At last there crawled out of it an earwig, which had concealed itself in the chink, and had crept into his ear.

"Are you now sufficiently punished for your listening, sir?" said his father.

"Let this, then, serve as a warning to you for the future. Know that there are many still worse things than the earwigs which creep into the ears of listeners—yes, and into their heads and hearts, too!—I mean misunderstanding, hatred and malice. You must wean yourself from these failings, if you would ever be an honest fellow."

"Prudence forbids, but shame and honour more,
To stand a sneaking listener at the door."

ON THE VERGE OF STARVATION.—"For three months I could not eat a full meal or do a day's work. I bought a bottle of Burdock Blood Bitters, began using it, and in three days my appetite returned, in a week I felt like a new man. It was wonderful what that one bottle did for me," writes Arthur Allohin, of Huntsville, Muskoka, who suffered from Dyspepsia.

—True liberty consists in the privilege of enjoying our own rights, not in the destruction of the rights of others.—*G. Pinkard.*

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—The liberty of one depends not so much on the removal of all restraint from him, as on the due restraint upon the liberty of others.—*F. Ames.*

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We ought not to look back unless it is to derive useful lessons from past errors and for the purpose of profiting by dear-bought experience. — [George Washington.]