

Some People Like Ghosts

By T. B. ROGERS

Centuries old Danberry Castle was up for sale; and, among other privileges, inspection visitors had the opportunity for a chat with the caretaker, who was by no means averse to having half-a-crown or even sixpence, slipped into his hand.

On one occasion somebody asked about ghosts but the caretaker was cautious in replying. Some people liked ghosts. Others object to them. Finding that opinion was on the whole favourable, he said: "Ever since William the Conqueror slept in the Norman tower—or maybe it was Henry VIII—this place has been full of ghosts. Why, I've often spoken myself with Lady Jane her. Once she showed me where someone had ropped a gold sovereign. A hard working man like me can always do with a bit of extra money.

A voice pointed out that the caretaker was mixing his history and that Lady Jane Grey was not Henry VIII's wife.

"How do you know, sir," said the caretaker. "Were you there when King Henry was alive?"

The critic said it was useless to argue and that history was history.

"Thank you, sir," said the caretaker as if the critic had admitted he was right. "And talking about ghosts reminds me of a very curious thing that happened when Mr. Porson was owner here. It was Christmas time and the castle was full of guests. I was second footman then. Henry—no relation to Henry VIII (this to the critic)—was first footman.

"He was a man I never liked. He is dead now, poor fellow, and I don't want to speak ill of the dead. I will only say that he was the kind of man who would rob a beggar woman and then try to find her son and rob him, too. In all the tips he got, he never gave me a penny.

"Well, it was Major Blaker who started this curious business. He bet Mr. Peebles, another sporting gentleman of the party, that he wouldn't sit up in the Norman tower on Christmas Eve, when a poor man who had had his head cut off in the Wars of the Roses, was supposed to walk."

"Was he fighting on the side of Joan of Arc?" said the critic sarcastically.

The caretaker took no notice. "Mr. Peebles agreed to do so; and the stakes were ten pounds a side, Mr. Peebles to do the sitting from midnight till dawn. A good many gentlemen laughed and said Mr. Peebles would see nothing. But some of them knew nothing about history, only what they thought they knew."

The critic remained silent.

"Well," continued the caretaker, "after dinner the major sent for me in the gunroom. He hummed and hawed and then asked me if I would like to earn five pounds."

"Yes sir," I said.

"Good?" said the major, "then I think I can show you a way. You'd make a fine ghost, William. And as you'd make such a fine ghost I think you had better be one for tonight. It seems a pity for Mr. Peebles to sit in a nasty draughty tower and see nothing."

"You mean me to dress up and frighten him, sir?" I said.

"Not too much William," he said, "Perhaps one groan. That and your truly horrifying appearance will be enough."

"I have always been considered a rather handsome man; and I thought that the major's eyesight was not all that it should be. But I give you my word that when, at a quarter to twelve, the major had finished dressing me up, in the old housekeeper's room that wasn't in use then, I could hardly bear to look at myself in the glass. The major had pillaged the laundry room. I wore somebody's nightdress that reached down to my ankles; and over my head the major pulled a white stocking, so

that I didn't appear to have a face at all.

"You should be carrying your head," said the major. And from a small pillow and some grease paint he made a head that seemed to be all dripping with blood. It gave me the shivers to hold it.

"Can you see through that stocking?" said the major.

"Not very well sir," I replied. "And I think—"

"Fine" said the major. "You won't have to do much seeing. Mr. Peebles will do that. Now give him time to settle down, and up you go."

"Well, gentlemen, I waited till the house was quiet, then I crept along the stone passages and up the stone steps to the Norman tower. I began to think about the real ghost and hoped I wouldn't meet it. I knew which of us would be the most frightened.

"However, I saw nothing. The door of the tower room was half open. A lamp was burning on the table. And by the light of it, I saw Mr. Peebles in an arm chair, huddled in his overcoat with rugs over his knees. His head was bent over a book, but I think he was asleep.

"I let out a groan. He woke, looked round, then jumped from his chair.

"The ghost!" he said.

"I was going to fade gently from his sight. 'Stop,' he cried. 'You look almost human.' He came close and suddenly hit me in the chest. I fell back, but managed to say nothing.

"More and more extraordinary," said Mr. Peebles. "It's a solid ghost. I wonder if I can set it on fire? He felt in his pocket for a box of matches.

"This was too much. 'I'm not a ghost, sir,' I said. 'I'm William the second footman.'

"Take that stocking off your face," said Mr. Peebles. "Now then, when I had obeyed, 'who put up to this, Major Blaker?'"

"Yes sir," I said.

"And how much has he given you?"

"Five pounds, sir," I replied.

"Right," said Mr. Peebles. "I suppose you want to keep it. And if I report you to Strake the butler you certainly won't. So—down you go and haunt Major Blaker. He's sleeping in the tapestry room. And this time be a real ghost. Don't let your shoes show. In fact don't show yourself at all. Just open the major's door and give a weird groan. Try one now."

"Of course I had to do it. The major's five pounds was in my trouser pocket and Strake the butler was a stiff 'un. If I were reported to him he wouldn't think being a ghost was part of the second footman's duties.

"There's one more thing," said Mr. Peebles as I prepared to leave, taking my head with me. "If you see the real ghost give it my compliments."

"Well gentlemen, about five minutes later I stood outside the tapestry room, which was in the east wing. I heard sort of a moaning noise and thinking it was the major talking in his sleep, I opened the door, and put in my head (the real one) and moaned too.

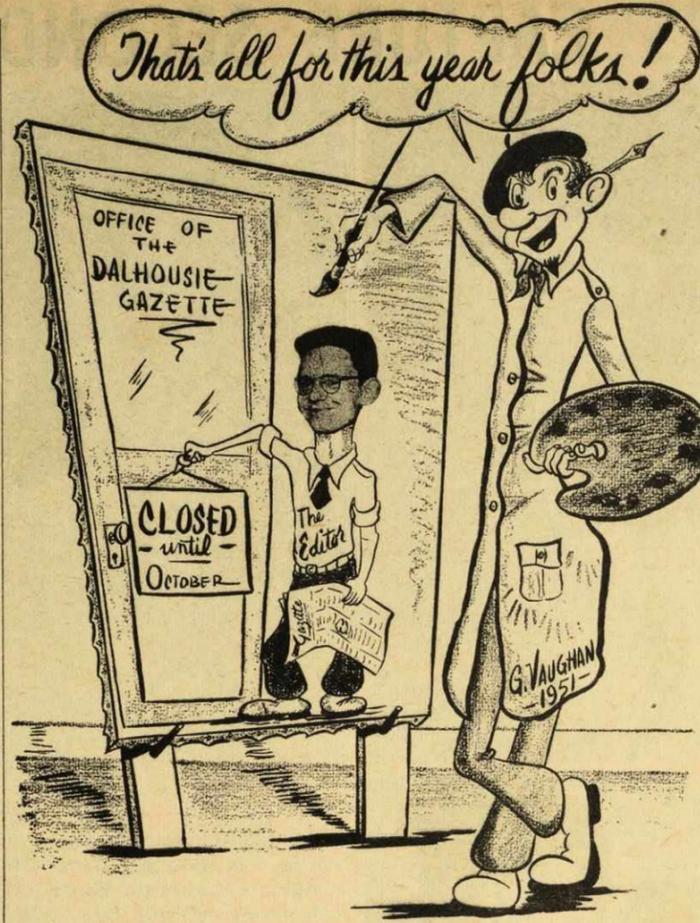
"What's that," said the major.

"It was pitch dark. I moaned twice more, then, thinking I had earned my five pounds, I was going to withdraw when something cold and clammy touched my hand. I yelled and dropped my head.

"Stay, where you are or I'll shoot," said the major. "I've got a loaded revolver here."

"It's William, sir, I said desperately. I was hunting about for my head and couldn't find it.

"I heard the major feeling for the matches. There were only candles in the bedrooms then. 'Stand still William and tell me what you are doing here. I told



you to haunt Mr. Peebles. Have you done it?"

"Yes sir," I said, "but he wasn't very frightened and he is still there."

"Then go to bed," said the major testily. "What do you mean by yelling in my room?"

"Again the cold something touched me and nearly let out another yell. 'There's a real ghost in here sir, I said. 'I can feel its icy hand.'

"Stuff and nonsense said the major. So as I couldn't find my head I left it with him and the real ghost and hoped he liked it.

"Next morning Henry sent for me. There was a nasty gleam in his eye and in his hand was my head. I remember thinking that it was better looking than Henry."

"I want five pounds from you, he said, to return to Major Blaker. He told me the whole story and Strake would be very angry if he knew."

"I was surprised that a gentleman like major should tell on me; but I suppose that Henry had got it out of him. One of his duties was to valet Major Blaker."

"There stood Henry with his hand out. I had to give him the money; as I did so, I noticed what a cold clammy touch he had. He was the ghost number two haunting Major Blaker's room that night; Mr. Peebles had put him up to it!"

Most of the visitors applauded politely the climax of the tale and were quite generous with their

tips, but the critic still lingered.

"I'll give you a lesson in history, he said. "Henry VIII's third wife was Jane Seymour, and Danberry Castle took no part in the fighting of the Wars of the Roses, so really you see your story is quite impossible. However—here is threepence."

"Thank you, sir?" said the caretaker, "but I never said Danberry castle did take part in the fighting. I said a poor man was beheaded then. And do you know

College Papers Make Headlines

University newspapers across Canada hit the headlines this year with stories ranging from counterfeit and hijacked editions to suspension of publication.

The Toronto Varsity started the ball rolling when charges of "pink paper" were leveled at it. The Varsity had previously published what was generally termed 'girlie' pictures, and criticism arose at the CUP conference in December.

The McGill Daily had publication suspended when it allowed stories of an extravaganza featuring drinking, gambling and dancing girls, to appear. University authorities allowed it to resume publication when the editor and other students who were implicated apologized.

A counterfeit edition of the University of Alberta's newspaper aroused considerable furor on that campus. It contained numerous hoax articles including the announcement that classes for the following day when mid-term tests were scheduled were cancelled. Even one professor failed to turn up. Medical students were suspended.

A Prayer for Examinations

A Lord, perched high on Heaven's shoulder
Look down on men, Your little Kid,
And in this last dread awful hour
Help me with your Almighty power.

I've lapsed a little, Lord I know,
Sometimes I hike down to a show,
I've danced a bit and skated, too,
But never more than others do.

Some mornings Lord, I've let things slip,
Of course I didn't have to slip,
But You who know all secrets deep,
Can tell how much I craved that sleep.

Perhaps to you, O Lord, it seems
I waste time in foolish dreams,
But if you knew this little dame,
I'll bet a buck You'd do the same.

So perched up there on Heaven's lid,
Look down on me Your little Kid,
Forgive the times I've been an ass,
And help me now to get a pass.

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Students Graduating in '52

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All students who will be entering their final year in the fall of '51, and who are interested in the scheme are requested to interview Professor Theakston at his office, Room 22, Engineering Building.

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