

SOME STORIES OF SPOOKS.

CHRISTMAS BAKED HOT FROM THE COALS OF CHIMNEY CORNERS.

Notes and News from the Invisible World—Things Seen and Unseen with a Local Habitation but Without a Name—Old and Respectable Family Ghosts.

Two of the most remarkable women I have ever met were Esther Cox and Annie Parker. Both of them have to do with the unexplainable, and both of them furnish arguments for and against the existence of ghosts and spooks.

The story of the Amherst mystery has never been properly written, nor do I intend now to write what I know of it. It is true that several books purporting to give the story have been published, and met with extraordinary sales. Not one that I have seen has been more or less than a mass of trash, aiming only at sensation without any regard for accuracy of details. The Amherst mystery is yet unsolved.

One night, ten years ago, I saw Esther Cox for the first time at her home in Amherst, N. S. The late Dr. T. W. Carrite was with me. I saw and heard that night what I have never yet been able to account for, and what only one man has ever attempted to explain. That man was the late Rev. Dr. Edwin Clay. His explanation I consider vague and unsatisfactory. He attributed the phenomena to electricity or animal magnetism. Perhaps he was right, but he never proved that he was. So far as any known laws of animal magnetism act, that force could not have done the things that were done at the scene of the Amherst mystery.

Esther Cox worked in a shoe factory. She was an ignorant girl and her mind was not a strong one. One day she accompanied a young man for a drive, during the course of which he threatened her life and used the most violent language. Immediately after this, while she was suffering from the effects of the fright she had received, the strange manifestations began.

Knocks were heard in the partitions of the house, much like the knocking of human knuckles. Pieces of plaster flew from the walls and shot across the room with great force. A cradle in the middle of the floor would rock violently without the aid of visible hands. The water in a pail would swirl like a whirlpool when no person was near it. Baskets of vegetables would move across the cellar as if pulled by an invisible cord. Fire would start in all kinds of places. Chairs would rock, and bed clothing would be pulled violently from a person lying in bed. These things would happen at all hours of the day and night.

Other manifestations, more violent in their nature, occurred only at night. Esther went into the cellar one evening, while we sat in the kitchen. A moment later she gave a piercing scream.

"Oh, it's coming! It's coming!" she shouted as she rushed up the stairs with every appearance of extreme terror. In the meantime, blow after blow shook the floor beneath our feet, as though a giant with a ponderous maul were trying to overturn the building.

Another night, when the house had been unusually still, a succession of heavy blows came, apparently, on the outside of the roof. They were so loud that they were heard by people who were a block away. It was a bright moonlight night and every part of the roof was visible from the street. Had there been any mechanical trick it would have been detected. I am satisfied there was not.

Esther was unable to read or write, yet a pencil in her hands would trace sentences, of the meaning of which she was ignorant. Nearly all of these were most obscene and blasphemous. The language was of the kind habitual to the fellow who had given her the fright, and the handwriting was like his, as well.

The knockings in the wall would keep time to music. They also did the much more remarkable feat of accurately following a sentence which I rapped on the table in the Morse telegraphic characters. The "dashes" of course could not be given, but the rapid repetition of the dots and spaces was as if a sounder were connected with a relay. No ordinary trick would have stood this test.

I have heard of many other strange happenings in regard to Esther Cox. The manifestations ceased after a time, but she, ambitious to sustain her reputation, resorted to tricks, which were very easily detected.

And now about Annie Parker. She came to the front not far from the time when the star of Esther Cox rose on the horizon. She was connected with the most mysterious tragedy that ever occurred in New Brunswick. On the night of the 12th of October, 1877, Timothy McCarthy went to the hotel kept by John Osborne, at Shediac, and was never seen alive again.

Annie Parker, a servant at the house, afterwards made a confession that McCarthy had been drugged, robbed and murdered by the Osbornes. The body, she said, had been put in the river. The Osbornes were arrested. In the following spring McCarthy's body was found in the Seadon, and his money, some \$257, was safe on his person.

The Osbornes were tried twice, but it was impossible to convict them. Annie Parker proved utterly unreliable as a witness, and was subsequently indicted for perjury, but she was acquitted.

who killed Tim McCarthy. The whole affair was not only the most mysterious on the criminal annals of this country, but it was the most expensive and by all odds the worst managed.

What has all this ancient history to do with the subject of ghosts?

Not much, except to negative the assumption that there are any such things. I believe that if the foully murdered could revisit the earth to see that justice should be done, Tim McCarthy would have returned. I am reasonably certain that he did not.

Circumstances compelled me to spend one night in an unoccupied building in which were the clothes that were on McCarthy's body when he was fished out of the river. I slept in the room in which the horrible relics lay. If there was any place where the spirit of the murdered man would have been likely to linger it was there. But no uneasy phantom disturbed my rest. That shook my faith in ghosts.

Some of my friends have been more fortunate. A man, in whose word I have the most unbounded confidence, has reluctantly consented that I should tell of a most remarkable experience which he had. It happened years ago, but he has never told the story to more than three persons. It is a subject which impresses him painfully, and he has preferred to keep it to himself rather than have his story laughed at or his word doubted.

In one of the best known cities of the United States, is a mansion, built many years ago. It was a stately house for its time, and would be no mean abode for wealth and fashion today. For years it had been tenanted. No one who attempted to occupy it remained more than a week. Some fled after an experience of one night. It was a veritable haunted house.

Three men in that city did not believe in ghosts. They decided to spend a night in the house. The key was obtained, and as a preliminary step they visited the premises by daylight.

The house sat about fifteen feet back from the line of the street. The intervening space was a lawn. Within the building a wide stairway led from the ground to the first floor landing. At the head of the stairs was a small room, from the door of which a full view of the street door could be had. This room was chosen as the one in which to spend the night. The party then made a close examination of the house from cellar to attic.

The dust lying thick on everything showed that months had passed since a human being had disturbed the solitude of the building. Every place which could possibly conceal machinery for trickery was closely examined, but nothing which could lead to suspicion was found. The doors and windows, front and rear, were securely fastened. It was evident that no one had been there for a long time, nor could any one easily effect an entrance without being heard.

About 8 o'clock that evening the three ghost hunters entered the house, locked the front door after them, took the key with them and went to the chamber at the head of the stairs. They had with them a lantern, their pipes and a pack of cards. They had no liquor with them, nor had any one of them taken a drink that day. They were in the full possession of their senses.

An hour or two passed pleasantly with the aid of the pipes and cards. About 11 o'clock, while they had almost forgotten that they were in a haunted house, they heard a sound which instantly hushed them into silence.

It was the opening of the front door. They had locked it and the key was in one of their pockets, yet somebody or something had opened it and was apparently entering the house.

They distinctly heard the door creak. A moment later steps were heard ascending the stairs.

They were not the steps of a man or a number of men. As near as the sound can be described, it was such as a horse would make, should it attempt the feat. It was the hard metallic tread of some heavy and unwieldy body.

The three men looked down the stairway and saw nothing. The heavy, horrible steps were drawing nearer. The party determined to descend.

The one who carried the lantern went first, while the others followed in close order.

What happened is difficult to describe. "It was," says my friend, "simply a shock as if a blow had instantly deprived me of all sensation." Such was the experience of all three. There was no pain, no realization of being struck in any particular place, but that instant deprivation of consciousness which must accompany a swift and sudden death.

When consciousness returned the three were lying on the lawn in front of the house. The door was still locked and the key was in the pocket where it had been put when they entered the building. Every article which they had carried was with them. The extinguished lantern lay on the grass beside them.

They never returned to the house. I do not attempt to explain the story. I believe every word of it, though I am neither credulous nor a believer in ghosts.

can be put upon the distance over which this subtle telegraphy can be worked?

Years ago a lad belonging to St. John went to sea. He was the only son of his mother and she a widow. Months later, for news travelled slowly in these days, a letter reached the owners of the vessel telling of the lad's death. He had been lost overboard on a stormy night. It was the duty of a near relative of mine to break the news to the widow. He called on her and while making some commonplace remarks before approaching the subject, she exclaimed: "Oh, sir, I know why you have come. My boy is lost. I have felt that it was so for a long time." Finding that her fears were indeed confirmed, she told him on a certain night she had been wakened from her sleep by hearing the cry of "Mother!" repeated twice or thrice in the voice of her son. It was the night that he was drowned.

Many instances of this kind could be given, to show that in the supreme moment of a death struggle, words have been uttered which have passed over land and sea, to be heard by those in sympathy with the dying man. A much more singular case seems to be that of what may be called the double presence of a living person.

A well-known lawyer of this province was sleeping in the house of a relative in a village more than 100 miles from St. John. His sister-in-law, temporarily insane, was an inmate of the lunatic asylum. The house in which the lawyer slept had, years before been the scene of a tragedy. A suicide by hanging had been committed. The lawyer slept in a room adjoining that in which the deed had been done. Shortly after he retired, and while he was about dropping asleep, he heard a strange noise in the suicide's room. It resembled the coiling of a line on the bare floor, and it continued for some time. Presently it ceased, and the lawyer felt a distinct twitch of the coverings of his bed, as though some one was attempting to pull them from him. A few moments later came a second twitch, and this time it was so pronounced that he seized the quilts and pulled them up to his neck, where he held them with a firm grasp. While he so held them there was a third twitch, but, though he lay awake long after that he felt nothing more.

Some weeks after, his sister-in-law was sufficiently restored to reason to return home. She would talk strangely at times, however, of places to which she had been and persons she had seen while out of her mind. "I saw you, too, one night," she said to the lawyer. "You were in bed at ———'s house, and I tried several times to attract your attention, but could not make you notice me." She went so far as to locate the particular night on which this had happened. It was the night that the lawyer had been disturbed in his rest. Up to the time of her story he had mentioned the circumstance to no one.

I place no reliance in the thousand-and-one horrible tales told by midnight seekers for buried money. These stories are either the outcome of a vivid imagination, the result of practical jokes or downright lies. I know one man on the shores of the Bay of Fundy whose whole life was changed by what he saw, or thought he saw, in searching for treasure. The story of Caffrey's chest is, however, not only too long, but belongs rather to the tale of pirates' gold.

Speaking of pirates, there is a singular phenomenon to be seen on the shore of the Baie Chaleur by those who are lucky enough to be there at the right time. On or near the surface of the water, at varying distances, may be seen a light moving here and there, sometimes rapidly and at times almost stationary. I have been told by respectable residents in that locality that the light has looked to them to be as large as a flour barrel, and that they have seen it repeatedly, not only in summer, but when the ice covered that part of the bay in winter. Many attempts have been made to approach it, but no one has ever succeeded in getting within a reasonable distance of it. It is said to have appeared at intervals for the last century or two, and it is believed to be the memorial of a foul wholesale murder by pirates who soon after perished miserably near the scene of their crime.

Eighteen miles from St. John, the Grand Southern railway passes over a bog known as Ghost Lake. I have never been able to learn just why this miserable spot should be haunted, but I have heard some remarkable tales of what has been seen there. A resident of Mace's Bay used to tell how he was driving along the highway one winter night when something, which was neither a man nor a beast, ran nimbly from the bushes and leaped on the rear of his sled. Recognizing that the uninvited passenger was not of flesh and blood, the terrified driver clambered from his seat to the horse's back and galloped furiously for Lepreau. At times he would cast a timid glance behind, to find the fearful object still sitting on the sled, but making no effort to touch him. At last the team reached a bridge, beneath which was running water. Johnny had heard that unclean spirits dared not cross such a place, and as his horse's hoofs struck the bridge he again cast a glance behind. As he looked the ghost "made itself—air, into which it vanished."

Not many miles from this, on the Little Lepreau road, is a rocky elevation, which, to this day, has a most unwelcome reputation. So much has been seen here that a chapter might be written of it alone. Even walking on the road, apparently ordinary human beings. In an instant they have utterly disappeared from view, at a part of the road where there were no bushes to hide the view, and where it was physically impossible for an ordinary man to conceal himself. Objects have rushed past teams travelling the road in the dark hours of the night, shaking the ground with their heavy tread and terrifying horses beyond measure. A man who encountered one of these has assured me that it was not a man or a beast. Beyond that he could give no description. It was "monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens."

The strangest thing I ever knew to happen at this spot was the death of one who may here be called William Bond. One night, in the fall of 1872, Bond started from a tavern on the St. John road to walk to his home at Little Lepreau. He had to pass the haunted rocks; but as he had done so time and again, he gave the matter no thought. He was not under the influence of liquor. Two hours later he returned to the tavern. He had reached the rocks, he said, but beyond that he could not go. As often as he tried to pass, something stepped in front of him and barred his way. What that "something" was he could not tell. It was formless, and had not attempted to injure him. It had simply blocked his path, and after repeated attempts to keep on his way he had returned.

"I have fought in the American war," he said, "and I am not a coward, but I have been frightened in earnest tonight. I believe that if I ever die in these parts, I will meet my death at that place."

New Year's eve was bitterly cold. Bond spent the evening at the tavern, and when he started to go home he took much more liquor than usual. On the following day his frozen body was found at the haunted rocks, where, months before, he had predicted he would meet his fate.

Some attractively horrible houses were swept away by the great fire. There was one, not far from the old grammar school, where visible spooks were a part of the family. In broad daylight a strange woman would be seen sitting on the stairs or passing through the rooms. Locked doors were no bar to her progress. She came and went when she chose. Everybody gave her a clear passage, and no one ever saw her face. A boy from the country, who had heard none of these stories, slept in the house. In the morning he told of waking in the night and seeing a queer looking little old man sitting in his room, reading by the light of a candle. The little old man was one of the spooks. These ghostly visitors made no noise, and save by their appearance at unexpected times, did not at all interfere with the arrangements of the household.

There was another house within the city limits which was burned down years ago by terrified neighbors. The tales told of it were really horrible. There is living today a woman who spent one night within its walls, and never could be persuaded to spend another there. The rustling of silk dresses and the tread of invisible feet were among the least of the things heard. Much worse were the noises which startled even the neighbors at times. Lights would flash, dishes would crash to the floor, and there were times when the horses in the stables kicked and actually screamed in their terror. All this time the house was uninhabited. The owner did not seem to mind the noises which frightened everybody else, and he obstinately stuck to his post. The night he died was a fearful one. To this day the story of it is told with bated breath. No one has ever said just what occurred. The man who knew most about it was a minister who was called to attend the dying man. He admitted that something too dreadful to be told happened at the death bed. No persuasion could induce him to disclose more. It was said that, at the moment of death, something exactly like the departed man in appearance was met rushing through one of the halls.

Though the house was abandoned immediately after this event, there was no cessation of activity on the part of the spooks. The windows of certain rooms glowed at night with supernatural lights. Noises of the most uncanny kind disturbed the quiet of the neighborhood and the locality was avoided by young and old. When the house was burned, there was great and general joy.

It is not long since a house in the centre of the city was suddenly abandoned by its inmates. The story of a woman who died there under circumstances which have never been explained is well known to the public. It is asserted that the tenants in question were visited by the shade of the dead woman, and that locks and bolts availed not to prevent her ingress, egress and regress. The house is still vacant, but it will be occupied soon. The experience of the new tenants will be watched with interest. Personally, I should like to see a ghost. It would fill a long-felt want.

It will pay to Deal With Him. Since Mr. S. H. Spiller opened the boot and shoe store at 167 Union street, his business has steadily increased. Being a practical man in the trade he is able to guarantee the quality of his goods, and always sells at the lowest possible price. Mr. Spiller makes a specialty of best quality fine silks, and has a large stock of the best material in the city.

REFLECTED ON TIN.

The Unfortunate Picture Taken by the Photographer's Assistant.

I had my picture taken, yesterday. The boss was away when it was done, but the boy told me he was the operator when everybody else was out, and I let him practice on me. He needs practice, only he should not charge so much for it. He showed me his collection of pictures which had been taken at two for 40 cents. There were pictures of, apparently, young ladies suffering from rheumatism or tight lacing; and of other girls, taken while in the act of climbing a rustic fence, while they kept their eyes fixed on something miles away. It was a sad collection to present to any prospective victim. The number of children with sad, forsaken looks and the air of an orphan asylum clinging to their clothes, was large. Most all the victims were females and the operator informed me they were very numerous. I hope he will not put my picture in the collection. He will lose all his customers if he does.

I have shown my tinsy-ties to my friends and they all want to know why I took them? Why I didn't make him take some more and see if he couldn't make something like me. But the operator had me sit twice, and the other picture was worse than this one. The face on the first spread all over the tin and was rather open. The operator told me this was because I shook my foot, which, he says, shakes the whole body. The dreamy expression of the eyes was due to gazing too long at a nail hole on the window sash on which I was requested to rest my eyes. They rested and got tired; very tired. Then, the day was dark and to take a good picture, the operator said, I would have to sit longer than usual. My head was placed in position with the chin elevated and my eyes fixed on the nail hole. The operator then took the cap off the machine and went to sleep, leaving me exposed. I couldn't speak or make a noise without spoiling the picture, although I was told I could wink as much as I liked. The picture I now hold clearly shows that they don't care very much whether the eyes are full of winks or not. He awoke at the last turned off the machine. I breathed a long breath and took my eyes off the nail hole. I think I would recognize that hole again anywhere.

The operator disappeared, and returning in about 10 minutes, asked me if he had kept me waiting long. I was asked to look at a picture of a sickly-looking fellow in the last stages of consumption, and state my opinion upon it. I told him I didn't want to see any more samples. Then he said the picture was mine. I took it in my hand to see if there was any resemblance at short range. When I put my hand on the picture it came off, and the operator told me I had spoiled it. I went through that terrible ordeal again, and became further acquainted with the nail hole, while the operator dozed.

At last it was finished, and enclosed in a paper arrangement with a fly leaf, with the photographer's name printed on it with a rubber stamp.

My friends are indignant, and some have desired me to mob the operator. A near and dear one says the picture makes me look like a big calf. The cruel man with dyspepsia says I look like a Sunday school scholar who would take the first prize for good conduct. Only the day before, he said I looked as wicked as a Halifax umpire. The operator has been the only one, so far, who said the picture looked like me. He did his best to make me a healthy-looking creature, after having in his first attempt produced a consumptive. He daubed my cheeks with red, rosy paint, and my hair has the appearance of being stuck on with watered paste. My right ear was increased in size twofold for the occasion, and a sorrowful smile was placed on my mouth that had never been there before nor since.

But enough has been said. I have sent both pictures to publishers of Sunday-school books, and if they are ancient-looking enough they will probably appear in their next publication.

Go From Home to Learn the News. (Letter to New York Clipper.)

The Mexican Wild West is something new to the people of Canada, and has proven a valuable acquisition. The show, when starting out, had but few cars, and today it has fourteen cars in all, owned by Hoge, Griffin & Co. Besides they have added many horses, wagons, etc. The season will close about Oct. 1, and the show will probably winter in Ottawa, Can. The show is visible every Wednesday, and the boys are all happy, especially when they get a Clipper. The show has only had one accident, which occurred at St. John, N. B., and that was a case of "shake down," as a boy who somewhat hurt while loading up the train. He was one of the flat cars, and a wagon ran over his ankle. The boy's father brought out the accident, the matter, but Mr. Griffin compromised the matter by paying \$200, although the boy had no right to the cars; but it was all law and no justice. The trouble at River du Leon, P. Q., where a gang of French and half-breeds endeavored to "do up" the show, was somewhat mistaken, as the yell, "Hey, Rube!" razzled dazled the off colored people in good style, although the Associated Press reported several killed, which was erroneous. Otherwise we have been very successful.

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