

THE ACADIAN

AND KING'S CO. TIMES.

HONEST, INDEPENDENT, FEARLESS--DEVOTED TO LOCAL AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

WOLFVILLE, KING'S CO., N. S. FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1889.

No. 15.

Vol. IX.

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for Infants and Children.

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THE ACADIAN.

Published on FRIDAY at the office WOLFVILLE, KING'S CO., N. S.

TERMS: \$1.00 Per Annum. (IN ADVANCE.)

CLUBS of five in advance, \$4.00

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POETRY.

A Cry.

In the depth of my anguish I longed for the dead, The dead who forever From daylight have fled: I called for my kindred, The born of my blood, Whom I longed for with longing That came like a flood.

"For thy brother?" Ah, never! He breathed but one breath, For the gate of his life

Was the power of death, What heart's blood or kinship Hath dreams of a day, That wake into darkness And vanish away!

"Thy sister?" My sister Lies safe on the hill; No tempest molest her, No winter winds chill, She was worn out and weary With desperate pain, Dost thou think I would call her To suffer again?

"Thy father?" Beside her In silence he sleeps; Above him the low grass Abundantly weeps.

The burden of years The hair had down at last; Shall I lift it again When his troubles are past?

"Thy mother?" Ah, mother! My mother! My own! For thee and no other My heart makes its moan, Thou wouldst come out of heaven With eager delight To comfort and bless me Through all the long night.

The light of thy glory, Thy rapture and rest, Thou wouldst leave for my darkness And count it more blest, No love is like thy love, No heart beats so warm, Tried, tender and patient In sunshine or storm.

If thou wert beside me To smile at my fear, One look of thy dear eyes, Thy voice in mine ear, Were a rest to my sorrow, No other can give; O mother! dear mother! Come help me to live!

No sound out of heaven— No whisper nor voice— She hears not my call, Where the angels rejoice, For my sad eyes to see, But, mother! dear mother! I'm hastening to thee.

—Rose Terry Cooke.

stood there nigh over twenty years, and it's never given way yet. It's surprising how an old bridge like that'll hang out. Mr Grimes said a man was out here seven years ago looking at it and said it wasn't safe to walk your horse over; it might fall down at any minute. But he says that bridge out there is just as good as ever 'twas if people have or might be careful going over it. Says he, "What's their use of puttin' so much money on er bridge away out there? There's not much need of their bridge, anyway. Yer kin drive through ther brook in the summer and in the winter it don't mak much difference if it breaks down or not—you'll light on the ice after you get down fur enough." He's overseer of the road out there, you know.

"Well, the bridge is the first thing you see when you get in sight of the Holler—that is, going out this way. As you approach the bridge, the house suddenly looms up behind the trees. It isn't a bad-looking place in the summer, but in the winter it looks rather grim and grisly. It looks as if it would be a poor kind of a place to spend a night in if you was a tramp. In other words, it has an uninviting aspect, so to speak—a cold, unsovable-like way. That house has stood there a great many years. I asked Tom Harvey one day how old he thought it was, but says he: "Oh," says he, "I dunno," says he. "It's purty old—old as the moral law, I guess."

"Well," says I, "why don't some-body ever buy the place an' live there?"

Says he: "That place has er tale." Continuing, he said: "The place is haunted. Strange sights is seen; strange sounds is seen; strange events is saw. One night a man was going by there on foot, when, to his surprise an' horror, he seen three men ridin' by on horseback with no heads on."

Says I, interrupting him: "Oh, you needn't try ter stuff me. I wouldn't believe that if I told it ter my gran'mother."

Says he: "It's er fact."

Says I: "Who was the men?"

"Wall," says he, "I thought you knowed somethin'! Ef you're a specimen of the boys who live in the place you come from, I pay 'em! Don't yer know anything at all? That's er sure sign that their place is haunted—when yer see anything like that!"

"Is that so?" says I, "I allers considered that was the sign of an early spring."

This, if anything, made him the madder. He said if he hadn't any more brains than I have he'd make an application to the next meeting of the County Council for more, sayin' he hadn't all that the law allowed.

I guess he learned afterward though that I was too many for him.

From this conversation and others which ensued, I gradually ascertained that there was something in it—that the place was haunted. True, I'd never seen any handiness about the place myself, but I wasn't going to keep from believing it on that account. Perhaps I wasn't a judge, anyway.

I never had seen more than half a dozen ghosts in my whole life, and one of them was in a grave-yard, and the feller that was with me said it was nothing but a tomb-stone anyway, although I noticed that he was just as quick to get out of that region as I was, after all!

CHAPTER II. A NIGHTLY VISITOR.

It's getting on towards several years now since dad and I first migrated out here to Handock—to grow up with the place, as it were; but all the time we've been here I never heard about the legend of Handock Holler till one night along about the middle of last winter. We all knew, of course, that the place was haunted, but we never knew the full particulars till then.

I well remember that night. It had been a cold, blusterin' day. One of the biggest storms we'd had all winter was about that time, I think. It was a rough day, I assure you. Henry, our hired man, and I had just got the milkin' finished and the chores all done and had gone into the house to get our supper, feeling mighty glad our work was over with for that night.

Mrs Spriggs, our housekeeper, was bustlin' around the house fryin' pan-

cakes in the sweat of her brow, and getting tea, and dad was laying on the lounge with the paper he'd been reading chucked aside, dozing. Henry drew up a chair alongside of the fire and commenced whittlin', and I, follerin' his example, got out my school-books and commenced studying.

After I'd been studying quite a while and had got well entered into the spirit of my studies, so to speak, all of a sudden we were awakened from our lethargy by a weird, deathly rap at the door. We well knew what it was. We'd heard it too often of late to be mistaken this time. It was somebody to the door. Dad roused himself up, and picking up the paper he'd chucked aside and folding it up and putting it up on the paper rack, said:

"Jack, see who that is to the door."

I immediately rose up and put away my books, and opening the porch door, went out into the darkness to see who it was that was knocking at that unseasonly hour. I pulled up the wood latch to the outside door and opened it, and there in front of me was an old man, an old, grizzled man, clothed in sack-cloth and ashes, as it were.

After I'd stood there and confronted him a while, I said, in a cool, collected way, says I:

"Good evening, mister."

Says he: "Good evening."

Says I: "It's quite cold out."

Says he: "Ya-as, I should think it was!" rubbin' his ears.

"Do you think we'll have a thaw on the end of this?" says I.

"Wall," says he, "I hope so. It's been cold enough to lay to freeze a dog!"

Says I: "Yes, indeed, it's been rather a cold wintry day. But we've had a remarkable open winter so far this year, haven't we?"

Before he had time to answer, the porch door flew open full tickety split and Mrs Spriggs came running out.

"Good land!" says she, "what air yo' standin' out here in the cold for? Come in! Where in the world did you drop down from, anyway?"

"Oh," says he, "I thought I'd take a little jaunt over an' see how you was gettin' on, bein's as how you'd er while since I've been out ter see yo'?" Good'evenin', Mr Hyde," he said, when he'd got into the kitchen, "it's quite a cold night out."

It was old Nathan Miles, I learned afterward, Mrs Spriggs's brother, who had come in in such an unceremonious manner and had taken a chair and sat down before the fire. He'd come to stay two or three days. Mrs Spriggs was delighted to see him, and as for the rest of us, we enjoyed his company. Dad took off his long boots and put them behind the stove, and then putting his feet on the stove hearth, leaned back on his chair and commenced toasting his feet. Then commenced a diversion about one thing and another, dad and Mr Miles being the chief participants, and Henry and I putting in a word here and there to keep up the flow of the conversation. In the meantime Mrs Spriggs continued her frying pan-cakes, and had soon the table all set and supper ready.

"Well," says she, as she took up the last pan-cake and put the whole plateful on the table, preparatory to us sitting down and partaking of our supper, "I don't s'pose this is fit to eat—what I've got here,—but you'll have to make the best of it. Ef I'd known you was comin' out I'd tried to get somethin' good."

"That's a way she has of talking when she's got something a shade above the ordinary—something that kind of lays over anything you've eaten for quite a long while in the shape of victuals. I saw that before she'd been here a month. Whenever she talks that way I alers let on as if 'twas a fact. I generally say: "Well, this is pretty poor, that's a fact—about as poor as anything you've got up fur quite a while; but then," says I, "on the whole, I think you're steadily improving." It pleases her and it don't do any harm.

CHAPTER III. THE LEGEND.

As we got through supper, while Mrs Spriggs was cleaning up the things,

dad moved his chair back before the fire again and resumed the talk. I saw at once that there was no chance for me to study that night. That was out of the question. However, I calculated I could catch up to-morrow morning before school and at recess, so I set my mind to rest on that point.

A lively chat ensued. When Mrs Spriggs had got her work done and had come in and joined in the conversation, dad happened to ask:

"Which way did you come, Mr Miles—round Baxter's Corner way or by the Handock Holler?"

Says he: "I guess you don't ketch me goin' by the Handock Holler in the night time if I know myself, what there's any other way of goin'. I was fool enough ter go by there one time in the night when I knowed no better and that was enough fur me. Ef I hadn't had a mighty fast horse and a lot uv presence uv mind, there's no knowin' what'd become of me!"

"Why," says I, "what did you see?"

"See?" says he; "you'd better go out some night and see for yourself. I wouldn't go through what I did that night for all the money atwixt here and Halifax. It meks me blood fairly curdle when I think uv it."

"It must have been quite ghastly," says I, interested.

"Wall," says he, "you'd er thought so if you'd er been there."

There's a legend about that place, bein't there, Than?" put in Mrs Spriggs. "Seems to me I used to hear father tell about it?"

"Yes, ther air," answered Mr Miles—"ther air. Many's er time I've listened ter it told. You was purty small when he died, but I ventur ter say you remember about him tellin' it."

"I can just remember about it," says she, "but I don't remember much about what it was like. Did you ever hear about it, Mr Hyde?" she said, turning to dad.

"No, I never did," dad answered; "what was it?"

"Yes," says I, "tell it by all means."

"Don't you be in such er hurry, sonny," says he to me; "there was a man in a hurry once and he died."

Mrs Spriggs thought that was the biggest joke she ever heard in her life. She nearly died laughing. I didn't see any particular joke to it, but I thought I wouldn't let on. I didn't want to miss hearing that legend for the sake of a joke, let alone an old one like that. Besides, they say it's better to gain the good-will than the ill-will of a dog. So I just laid back and roared laughing, till it fairly raised the roof off of the house. I tickled him.

Says dad: "I'd enjoy hearing it very much."

"Wall," says he, "I dunno! I never tell that story in the night-time. Yer never know what might happen. It's er gainst my principles ter tell ghost stories in ther night, especially when ther true. Yer can't be too cautious on er pint like that!"

"That's er fact!" says dad. "But I guess it won't make much difference tellin' it once."

"No," says Henry, "we'll risk it fer wunst."

"Wall," says Mr Miles, turning ter dad, "bein's as how you'd i ke ter hear it, Mr Hyde, p'raps ther'd be no great harm done in tellin' it wunst. I wouldn't tell it ter anybody else. P'raps I'll recit it now. It's best ter recite matters erone, especially in ther night-time. Ef yer want ter tell such things tell 'em in ther day-time, says I. I don't make so much difference then."

"Yes," says dad, "on the whole, that's the time to do it. But sometimes it don't make much difference when they're told. Let's hear it."

And he commenced.

"Wall," says he, "one night I remember (it was a night a good'ill like this, only we never hev such weather nowadays as we hed then. 'Twas no uncommon thing then ter snow solid fur weeks togeth er till you couldn't git outside the door and then come round snappin' cold an' freeze up everything round. Why, it wasn't safe ter be out in one uv them air cold snaps. A feller'd freeze his hands an' ears goin' from the house ter the barn.)

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But as I was a-sayin', he continued, "it was one uv them air cold nights we used ter hev yers ago and we was all settin' aforest the fire out to our house. (We used ter live then, yer know, out where Life Curry lives—out beyant Nicklson's. Sold that 'ere place ter him twenty year ago this yere las' Jinnerway). Wall, that 'ere night William Besantson happened ter be out ter our house. Come out that mornin' an' staid all night. He used ter come out quite often in them days. Dead now, you know, long sence."

(To be Continued.)

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