

The Ghost of Heatherleigh Priory.

Do you believe in ghosts? This question has often been put to me. I will not give a direct answer, but if you like I'll tell you my story, and leave you to draw your own conclusions as to whether or not I believe in ghosts.

Many years ago (in fact, more than a quarter of a century has passed away since then) I was an Anglican curate of the athletic type, strong and robust, a fair cricketer, madly fond of shooting and rowing, dearly loving a good cross-country gallop, whenever I got a chance I never thought seriously of my "calling." Like many hundreds of other young men of my day, I had been brought up to know that the "Church" was to be my "profession," and to look forward to the snug family living of my destiny.

My first term of office I accepted cheerfully, and I was proud to be sojourning under the classic roof of "Meggelen," and enjoyed life as only an undergraduate can, working just enough to struggle through the necessary examinations, attending the least possible number of lectures, and getting the most possible amount of fun and amusement.

Those happy days of "Varsity life" ended, and the degree taken, I was compelled to settle down to work, and for three years had plenty of it in all its grim, unvarnished reality, as in a quiet curate of a large district in the East-end, where the small staff of workers seemed utterly powerless—among that teeming population—to stem the ever-increasing tide of poverty, misery, and sin.

My former open-air life, days spent on the river or on the cricket field, to the close streets and exhausted atmosphere of London told even on my robust constitution. The doctor said my health would eventually break down unless I made an immediate change, and I was obliged to seek a country curacy for a while, and found one likely to be suitable, a small village in Surrey, in the parish of Heatherleigh Priory, and the rector being abroad, the correspondence relative to the vacant curacy was carried on by the churchwarden, Colonel Trent. This gentleman suggested an interview, and as I was inclined to see the parish before any final decision should be made, I gladly accepted his kind offer of hospitality, arranging to journey down to Surrey and pass the night at his house—Heatherleigh Priory. One lovely day early in June I found myself in the train rushing through green fields, past densely wooded hills and dales of the prettiest part of Surrey. How delightful was the fresh summer air wafting the sweet smell of clover and hawthorn through the open window, how green the trees, how blue the sky, how putting in a new era of life.

About half-past three the train stopped at the village station for which I was bound. On the platform stood a fine, soldierly man, who introduced himself as Colonel Trent, bidding me follow him into the dog-cart, which was waiting, and taking the reins he drove off, and we were soon bounding along a good road up hill and down dale—past old thatched farmhouses and tiny hamlets nestling under sheltering hills, then across bleak common land bright with yew trees.

The Colonel chatted pleasantly, giving me a short sketch of what my duties would be, describing the rector and principal inhabitants of Heatherleigh, at the same time not forgetting to point out any place of interest we happened to pass—all this in such a easy, friendly way, which made me feel perfectly at home with him, and in return I talked of my East-end work, and of my northern home, becoming quite confidential with this new-found acquaintance. So pleasant was our drive that I was quite sorry when the Colonel pulled up his horse before a quaint old "inch-rate, and asked me to remain in "Here" we are, I jumped out, telling the groom to take the cart home.

I followed my companion into the slady "God's acre," which surrounded the grey old church, a peaceful and lovely spot after the continual noise and turmoil of the great working city from which I had come—there all bustle and unrest, here such quiet and perfect peace.

"Yes, 'tis a pretty place," said Colonel Trent, noting my look of admiration; "you can fully appreciate its rural beauty more than we do who get accustomed to our blessings. Though I've only lived in Heatherleigh two years, I love the old place dearly. Yes, I came here when I left the army, and never heard of its existence till about a month before the bargain was completed; it was quite by accident that I heard the 'Priory' was for sale, and being with easy access from London, I ran down to have a look at it, and quite fell in love with the whole place then and there; but come," he added, "let us for me to show you about, and leave you to find out its charms for yourself, not to take up the time in telling you my experiences."

We went into the church, and my guide pointed out the many ancient objects of interest; meanwhile he told me the chants and hymns in present use, and every conceivable thing I might wish to know.

After looking over the school we passed along the tiny village street with its whitewashed cottages and thatched roofs, from which came like sweet music the ring of the hammer upon the anvil, groups of rosy-faced, white-pinked children played outside their tidy homes, each looking up with a merry smile at my tall companion, the girls dropping their quaint little bob-cursey—a contrast to

the roof starved-looking mites who made mud pies in the gutters or danced dexterously on the longy dog-steps of the London parish.

"Now you see Heatherleigh at its best," said the Colonel. "Of course, the place is very different in winter. Imagine these trees bare and leafless, the roads ankle-deep in chalky mud, and a biting wind sweeping over that bleak common yonder, that's Heatherleigh at its worst."

"As far as the place goes, I think it quite a paradise. I assure you, Colonel Trent, and if the rector and you are satisfied with me I shall not have much difficulty in making up my mind; in fact, it is almost made up already."

"Splendid, my dear fellow," exclaimed the genial Colonel, "I am quite sure you will suit us down to the ground, and now let us go and see if there is not some tea going at home, and you look tight to death from your journey and this slight-seizure."

So, turning down a shady lane, my companion led the way through some massive iron gates along an avenue of magnificent trees. "This is my place," he said, proudly, as a fine grey stone house appeared in view. It was very old and many-gabled, almost covered with ivy, creepers, and roses, while round the deep porch wisteria hung in long garlands, the windows were mullioned with lattice panes of an ecclesiastical appearance; round some of the early roses clustered, while others were almost concealed by ivy, so profuse was its growth.

Following on through the low-ceilinged, oak-paneled hall, I found myself in a pretty drawing-room, and was introduced to Mrs. Trent, a fair, blue-eyed little woman, who greeted me kindly, while she hastened to get me a cup of tea, at the same time nodding her tall hat to a gentle, playful young fellow having kept me out so long.

How delicious that tea and country bread and butter tasted; how charming were the surroundings—the pretty lawn with windows open, the eloping lawn, and the sweet scent of lilac borne in upon the summer breeze! After my dingy London lodging and sour-faced landlady this was truly paradise.

The Colonel talked volubly. Presently a young girl came in through the open window, whom the Colonel introduced as "my girl Dorothy." I rose, and the young lady came toward me and gave me her hand. She was tall and fair, with dark blue eyes and pretty colour in her cheeks. As she stood there in her simple white dress and shady garden hat I thought I had never seen a more beautiful picture, and I think so still, though many years have passed away since that June evening when I first saw the face of Dorothy Trent.

We strolled round the rambling old garden, where flowers and shrubs of all kinds grew and bloomed in profusion. Two fine spreading cedar trees on the lawn afforded pleasant shade, and beyond was a moat, surrounding the house on three sides, where goldfish played hide and seek among the bright green leaves of the water lilies. The Colonel gave some Indian relics, and Dorothy, who spoke occasionally, her soft voice like music to me; the time passed pleasantly and all too quickly. The dressing bell announced seven o'clock.

Then my host conducted me up the broad oak staircase and through a long corridor, with waistcoat carved with many strange devices.

"What a fine old house!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, it is, indeed," he replied, "and very old it is, too. Ah, take care, the step."

He had opened one of the doors and entered a room, and I, not observing the descent, had stumbled into the apartment, nearly upsetting him in my efforts to gain the perpendicular.

"I should have warned you sooner. Old houses are full of unexpected steps, so you sat by the open window, and waited for day; already the first grey streaks of dawn appeared in the eastern horizon. I thought and prayed as I had never prayed before, and ere the sun had risen and nature awoke to the new day I had made a great resolve, which would alter my whole future career.

I was obliged to return to town by the first train, and the bustle occasioned by my early breakfast and departure was a great relief, as I was in no mood for conversation, my nerves being thoroughly shaken. I took a hurried leave of my kind hostess and her pretty daughter. The genial Colonel insisted on driving me to the station. On the way I asked if he knew anything of the former history of his house, in as careless a tone as I could assume. He replied briefly that it had been a Dominican priory originally, but of its history he knew nothing. I bade my kind friend goodbye with much gratitude, smiling at his assurance of soon seeing me, and next day despatched him a letter briefly declining the invitation.

At the first opportunity I visited the Dominican priory in London, and there satisfied myself by the details of the habit, etc., that my midnight visitor was a genuine monk of that order. I also gathered from the priory a few particulars regarding their former settlement at Heatherleigh, but did not mention my reasons for enquiring about it. Being free I went abroad for three months. This period was the most wretched I ever spent. Nothing could amuse or give me rest; day and night that midnight vision seemed ever before me, and those pleading, searching eyes haunted me. The time I had resolved to take in consideration elapsed; I went to the priory and acquainted the Fathers to instruct me. Two

occasional barking of a dog or the lowing of cattle broke the deathlike stillness of the summer night.

I laid my head on the pillow, with my mind fully made up to be cured by Heatherleigh, but the rector would have me, and well planned I was at the prospect. "Man proposes, but God disposes." That night was destined to change the whole course of my life. I was never to be cured of Heatherleigh, or of anywhere else, either.

I could not sleep. From thoughts and conjectures regarding my future, my mind had gone back to old Oxford, to Trinity triumph on the river and in the cricket field, and mixed up with these thoughts of former days Dorothy Trent's sweet face seemed ever before my eyes. I was evidently smitten, and laughed to myself at the idea of such absurd "love at first sight."

The house was very still; a clock in the corridor struck the midnight hour, and seemed to spend at least half an hour in the performance; then another in a distant part of the house followed suit.

I finally made up the pillow and the lattice window which was cast by the moon upon the opposite wall.

Suddenly a chill seemed to seize me, a tremor ran through my whole frame, an awed sense of some strange presence seemed to possess me. I sat bolt upright and gazed in horror right before me, expecting I knew not what. As I gazed, the door in the far corner opened slowly and noiselessly—absolutely noiselessly—and a figure attired in monk's robes entered the room and silently into the room. The door closed behind it.

It was a man of medium height, clad in a long white robe, fastened at the waist by a girde of rope. At his side hung a large string of brown beads and a cross of black ebony, upon which a silver image of Our Redeemer shone in the moonlight with strange brilliancy. His face was sunken and shadowy and the eyes doubtful. That he was a monk I felt no doubt; but how and from whence did he come? What brought him at this hour to my room?

The figure advanced into the clear moonlight; his face was wan and sorrowful and very pale, his tansured head was bare, and beneath his right arm was a book. With trembling fingers he made the sign of the Cross and I had seen Catholics do in times of fear and alarm. Immediately the monk raised his head; his eyes (they were dark and luminous) seemed to search my very soul. I shall never forget that look.

"Father, what am I to do?" I cried, in tones of earnest entreaty, for that pleading look seemed to ask something of me, though the lips were mute.

Slowly, as if in answer, he raised his left hand, at the same time grasping the large crucifix, and no words of mine can ever describe that vision in its real solemnity as I saw it—that ascetic figure in monastic garb, with pale, spiritual face and large, luminous eyes, standing erect and silent in the moonlight room, that midnight hour, holding aloft the crucifix, the silver image of Our Holy Redeemer gleaming against the dark ebony cross. I remained spellbound, until the figure turned and slowly moved toward the door, which again opened noiselessly. Once more he looked at me, again those pleading eyes seemed to stir my inmost soul. With the uplifted crucifix he made a sign as if to beckon me to follow; then the door closed silently, and he was gone.

Without pausing to consider, I made as if to follow him, but the door through which he had seemed to pass was locked, the key turned just as I had observed it early in the evening.

Then a great fear seized me, and I called a visitor from the unseen world. There no remained no doubt in my mind about what had brought him to me. It must mean something; warning of approaching death, perhaps. The more I reflected the more inexplicable became the mystery. To compose myself to sleep was impossible, so I sat by the open window, and waited for day; already the first grey streaks of dawn appeared in the eastern horizon. I thought and prayed as I had never prayed before, and ere the sun had risen and nature awoke to the new day I had made a great resolve, which would alter my whole future career.

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months after, on Holy Saturday, I was overtaken by the true flood. The name of the monastery chapel looked like a dream, the air was sweet with scent of many flowers, the incense floated up in fragrant clouds, it was my first Benediction as a Catholic.

The last beautiful strains of "Tantum Ergo" died away, the prayer said, a holy stillness fell upon the kneeling congregation who waited for His blessing.

As the silver bells gave forth its first sweet peal the incense clouds before the altar, stood the priest in rich vestments holding aloft the Most Holy Sacrament, and by his side there appeared a face, that of a monk, with dark and luminous eyes, which looked at me with gentle, loving approval; the pleading look was gone, and a wondrous smile seemed to illuminate the pale face.

As I raised my head to receive Our Lord's blessing. When I looked again the priest and server stood alone before the altar. From that time a wondrous peace has been within me, no more have I been troubled by that pleading face. I feel sure the monk is satisfied.

Oh, no, I never became a monk, I had no vocation that way. After the first excitement caused by the step I had taken was blown over a bit, my father came round so far as to make me a small allowance, and I obtained some office work.

Colonel Trent found me out, and my happy weeks did I pass under his hospitable roof.

I married Dorothy about a year afterward, and, looking back over more than twenty years, I can say with deep thankfulness that I gained the two greatest blessings of my life at Heatherleigh Priory—my religion and my wife.—B. A. Belcher, in the Catholic Fireside.

DAHING BOY VOYAGERS OF THE ATLANTIC.

A two-thousand-mile journey, unaccompanied by a single friend or relative. That is what a boy only eight years old had to accomplish (says a writer in "Chums"). He was in New York and his mother was in Liverpool, and he had to cross the Atlantic alone the care of the captain and the steward of the Campania, he set off on his long voyage, and quickly made so many friends that he must have enjoyed himself hugely. When he left the steamer—he was then dressed, by the way, in the attire of a Klondike miner—his pockets were overflowing with gifts from fellow-passengers who sympathized with him in his loneliness. As he rejoined his mother, who was waiting for him, he probably wished that he was about to go through a similar experience again. This youthful voyager is by no means the only boy who has been taken charge of by the officials of American liners, as railway guards not infrequently take charge of children. Only a short time previously one or two very young passengers had made their journey across the Western Ocean in the same way. A boy of ten, who had travelled from Canada to Liverpool some years ago absolutely unattended except by some stewards of the vessel which brought him to our shores. And a terrible time of it, in one sense, he had—a time such as happily falls to the lot of comparatively few trans-Atlantic voyagers. For three whole days heavy seas broke over the boat, and consequently he and the other passengers were cooped up below, doing nothing but eat and sleep, and sleeping. And if several boys have come to England from America without a companion, young or old, so have a few travelled in the contrary direction. A young Scandinavian was once missing from a party of emigrants who were sojourning in Liverpool for a few days, waiting for a boat to New York. High and low was he sought; but he could not be found, nor could any tidings of him be gleaned. In the end the nearly heart-broken parents had to sail for the New World without their son. Late on the following day the missing lad turned up. He had been found by the police somewhere beyond Ormskirk, having wandered thither in an inexplicable manner. So he was put in a party of his own countrymen and sent to America, where he once more became tied, let us hope, to his mother's apron strings.

More recently a smart-looking lad of about fifteen years of age, who at an office of one of the leading Transatlantic steamship companies, and wished to book a passage to Boston. For a moment the clerk was decidedly taken aback. "Does your father know you are going to America?" he asked, eventually. "Certainly," replied the boy. In spite of this answer the official felt confident he had to deal with a runaway. The result was that before the lad left Liverpool a telegram was sent to his parents, and, much to the surprise of the police and others, a reply was received, to the effect that they knew of his whereabouts and approved of his intentions. The lad consequently set sail in due course.

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Months, of Domestic Grand of Universal Relief. Mr. Robert Montague, of Dunsville, Ont., writes: "I was troubled with Itching Piles for five years and was so badly afflicted that I was very painful, no matter what I did. I had tried almost every medicine known when I was recommended to use Dr. Chase's Ointment. I purchased a box and from the first application got relief. I have used no boxes and am now completely cured."

A Venetian Island—When the cable first announced that Prince Bismarck was very seriously ill, it was stated, in confirmation of the report, that his diet consisted of the following:—caviare, eggs, beer, and champagne, but that he had forgone his favorite pickled pig's feet.

The Photograph.

A hundred miles from Aden her Majesty's troopship Idema steamed along bound for home.

All day the fierce sun had streamed down with blazing beams, which those on board endured, cursed, or grumbled at according to their various dispositions.

The sensation of the day had been provided for by a Laszar stoker, who, rushing from the inferno of the engine-room, leaped headlong overboard, mad for one delicious plunge into coolness after enduring the torments of heat.

"Man overboard!" rang out. Engines were stopped. Ladies started from lang id reverberation. A smooth-faced subaltern offered a hundred to one against "the nigger being picked up," but no one troubled to listen to him, for the water hereabouts is swarming with sharks. However, just as horror became subdued into resignation a black speck was seen still swimming vigorously. A boat was lowered and the poor wretch was dragged back, collapsing utterly when reached safety.

At this, however, had happened six hours ago. The incident had been discussed, commented on and capped by similar cases, and long before the dinner bell rang the customary state of boredom had again set in.

After dinner, when the sun had finally disappeared and the stars shone out of the wonderful luminosity of a Southern night, someone (probably the major's wife), proposed a dance, and presently the notes of a waltz rose and fell, alluring with its languorous line, melancholy sweetness even those who could not dance. "I didn't want to seek out partners."

Among the many who circled round were the officer in command, Captain Assheton, and his partner, Miss Phyllis Welsh.

The ladies of the Dovecote denied that Miss Welsh had any claims to the attractive adjectives by which the men on board the ship described her charming manners and face. They emphatically agreed among themselves that of being "an outrageous flirt."

Whatever her character might really be, to-night more men than Captain Assheton thought Miss Phyllis Welsh looked "uncommonly fetching." Her eyelids, heavy with dark lashes, drooping as though to hide the exulting brightness of the eyes they shaded, while excitement restored the bloom which a year spent in Indian gayeries had somewhat faded.

As she glided round she breathed a softer than the heat of the evening or the molten of the dance accounted for. She wondered at her own sensations. To experience the delight, fear, rapture, and doubt which it had amused her to make others feel half terrified, half charmed her.

Once raising her eyes she met full a glance from Captain Assheton, and a thrill of certainty swept away the last doubt whether or not her love was returned.

"Let's come and sit it out," said Captain Assheton; then he added, "I want to speak to you—tell you Phyllis."

He stopped abruptly on perceiving an orderly coming up to speak to him.

"Well, what is it?" he asked, peremptorily.

"Please, sir, the doctor says Private Robinson is seriously ill."

Captain Assheton turned apologetically to his partner. "I must leave you for a few minutes. Will you wait for me here? I shall be back in five minutes."

"Yes," assented Miss Welsh, leaning back languidly in a deck chair. "I'll wait for you here if you're not too long."

Captain Assheton and the orderly strode away.

Custom had not steeled Assheton's heart against feeling a pang of sorrow when called to visit the poor fellows whose dying words it was his duty when officer in command to note and report.

When Tommy Atkins dies there is no useless fuss made over the event. No loving hand clasps his to strengthen him during the last struggle. No tears fall to tell him that even he, poor fellow, has some one who will miss him.

No! The doctor merely reports him "seriously ill." The officer on duty comes to stand by his bedside and note down what he has to say. Tommy may choose to send to mother or sweetheart waiting for him at home. Then a few hours later, if on land, "Tommy" is buried in a coffin, the price of which Government steps out of his pay, or if he die on board ship, with some shot tied to his ankles, overboard he is dropped, to sink out of sight and join that weird company of shrouded corpses which stand upright, drifting and awaiting in the current of the sea, half way between the bottom and the surface of the ocean.

On reaching the clifftop deck where the sick, the wounded, and the dying lay, the orderly stopped, beside the berth of Private Robinson.

Usually the officer in command knows nothing of the man whose dying words he has to report, but, as it chanced, Assheton had heard something of Private Robinson's career. He knew that Robinson was "a gentleman ranker," one of those good-looking, reckless, unlicky fellows against whom fortune seems to have a spite.

As Assheton came to the side of his berth the dying man started up with a curious expression of defiant despair. Above him, beside him, all around the deck lay other sufferers listening and watching to hear what "the poor beggar" had to say.

It was hardly the place for confidences, and Assheton felt fully the en-

barrassment of the position. Robinson, however, had reached the time when the world recedes into the background of one's consciousness, and what has to be done must be done at once or left forever unaccomplished.

He feebly strove to take something from under his pillow.

"Can I reach that for you?" asked Assheton, gently.

"I've waited too long," said Robinson. "I intended to send this back myself, but somehow I put it off from day to day. I couldn't bear to part with it." He stopped a minute as he succeeded in lifting up an envelope, that he continued—"I want to send this back to her, and tell her that though she sent me to the devil—I loved her to the end!" He added, as Assheton took the envelope containing the photograph from him. "The address is written at the back of it."

"Is there nothing else I can do for you?" said Assheton, huskily.

"Nothing. Thank you, sir," replied Robinson, and Assheton felt he was dismissed.

He turned away in silence and left the hospital deck.

As he again passed through the dancers the waltz was hastening to its conclusion, and the laughing, talking company were dispersing in search of cool and comfortable seats.

Phyllis Welsh was still sitting where Assheton had left her.

"You weren't there," she said, smiling. "What did 'Tommy' want to tell you? Do tell me all about it."

Something in her words gratified Assheton's feelings. He sat down, and replied slowly: "He asked me to return a photograph to a girl and tell her that, though she played him false, he loved her to the end."

"Oh!" cried Phyllis. "How interesting it sounds. Have you the photograph there?"

"You must not ask me to do that," said Assheton, gravely.

But Phyllis was not accustomed to have her wishes ungratified. She leaned forward and looked up with her wonderful dark eyes glowing. "Will you refuse the first request I've ever made of you?" she urged.

"Of course, if you insist," he protested Assheton.

"I must see it. I must see the girl is like!" Some common vulgar creature, I suppose, that the poor fellow idealized into a piece of perfection."

"Probably," assented Assheton, dryly, taking the envelope from his pocket and producing the photograph.

With eager curiosity Phyllis bent over.

For the space of a second she stared, right with astonishment and dismay; then exclaiming: "Give it to me! Oh, give it to me!" she tried to snatch the photograph from Assheton.

It was too late. Assheton, with blank disgust, had already recognised the beautiful likeness.

"Give it to me!" she stamped.

"Certainly," replied Assheton. "It was what I promised to do."

He dropped the photograph into her hands and strode away.—Temple Bar.

A STORY OF SIR SPENCER WELLS. "M. A." tells the following story of the late Sir Spencer Wells—One day, many years ago, Sir Spencer was called in consultation to a fashionable house in a stylish quarter. The case was that of a lady who was at doctor's door, and yet so far as the doctors could discover she was suffering from no specific ailment. They had called in Sir Spencer as a last hope. Left alone with his patient, Sir Spencer soon made the astounding discovery that she was being done to death by slow poison. It was a case for diplomacy as well as for science. He put on a cheery face, and by kindly questions soon elicited the fact that the lady, who was very wealthy, had no relatives or intimate friends in England, and that for two weeks she had been quiet alone with her husband and the servants. Certain pretexts enabled him to get a glimpse of the latter, who seemed to be honest, respectable domestic of the ordinary type. He cheered his patient by telling her he thought he could cure her case, and walk her up the stairs perplexed and anxious. At the foot of the stairs stood the husband, very proper gentleman, with twitching face, and hands wet with cold perspiration. He appeared unable to speak, but the great doctor simply looked at him and waited. Presently the husband managed to ejaculate, "Will she die?" The doctor played his trump card, and he looked straight in the eyes, and said very quietly, "If she does, you will swing for it!" The man swayed and tottered; the doctor passed him by, and left the house. The lady recovered. Sir Spencer kept the husband's secret, and the intended victim lived in apparent happiness with her so-called partner for many years without suspecting the real cause of the illness which so nearly proved fatal.

There are cases of consumption so far advanced that Birkle's Anti-Consumptive Syrup will not cure, but runs so bad that will not give relief. For coughs, colds and all affections of the throat, lungs and chest, it is a specific which has never been known to fail. It promotes a free and easy expectoration, thereby removing the phlegm, and gives the diseased parts a chance to heal.

Two newboys in the gallery witnessed a performance of "Hamlet." In the last scene, after Hamlet has killed Laertes and the King, and Hamlet the Queen has died of poison, and Hamlet of a poisoned wound, one of the newboys exclaimed: "Sir, what a time that must have been for 'extra specials'!"