

STRANGE STORIES

TOLD AT ELM LODGE.

BY ELLEN VAVASOUR NOEL.

It was a night in Christmas week, and the small party assembled at Elm Lodge—for so my house was called—had gathered around the warm fire which glowed brightly in the grate of our pleasant drawing-room. From a remark made by one of the company, the conversation turned upon ghosts, spirits and goblins, and as I know that most persons, whether they profess or not to believe in such things, like to hear stories concerning the supernatural, I will relate a few that were told that night.

"Many years ago," said my uncle, "I lived in Albany, and my sister kept house for me. We had lately moved into a retired street in the suburbs of the city. The house I had rented was a quaint, ancient-looking mansion, built in the Dutch style, and I believe one of the oldest dwellings in Albany; but as my means were small, and the house seemed comfortable enough, I did not mind its antiquated appearance. We had only been a few days in the house, when, one night, as I was lying awake in my room, where I always kept a light burning, my attention was most unpleasantly attracted by a dark, indistinguishable object moving about above the bed. It was a strange-looking mass, the size of a large bird, but not like one in form, and, with its appearance, a feeling of awe, such as I had never before experienced, crept over me. After moving a while above me near the ceiling, to my infinite horror, it began to descend as if about to rest upon the bed. With an exclamation of terror, I sprang from my couch and stood shuddering, as I watched the horrid object as it came slowly down. It touched the bed, and then, to my surprise and relief, it suddenly vanished. Several times afterwards, the same dreadful apparition appeared in my chamber, and again performed the strange manœuvre I have just described; every time rousing me from my bed to stand shaking with disgust and dread in the middle of the room. I did not say anything about this singular nightly visitor to my sister, for, although I knew her to be a sensible, strong-minded woman, still I thought it best to be silent on the subject, and not disturb her by the recital of—to say the least of it—an unpleasant story, especially as I had noticed that she did not seem as well, or cheerful, as usual. This state of things lasted some weeks, when, one night, not caring to retire to bed, again, perhaps, to behold the frightful supernatural spectacle, whose appearance I looked forward to with perfect horror, I was walking up and down the passage into which my room and, also, my sister's room opened—hers being just at the head of the wide old-fashioned staircase. It was between eleven and twelve o'clock, and through the old gabled window in the hall the moon shone brightly. Suddenly my attention was attracted by hearing footsteps coming down the stairs leading to the attic. My sister, I knew, had retired long before to her apartment, so I thought it must be Sarah, our only domestic, who occupied the upper region. I stood and looked up the stairs, wondering where she could be going at that hour, for the woman I saw and who, as I have said, I supposed was Sarah, had her bonnet on with a white veil over her face. She also wore a white shawl and silk dress which rustled as she approached. 'Why, Sarah,' I asked, in astonishment, 'where are you going at this time of night?' She did not answer; but, as I spoke, the figure threw aside her veil suddenly and looked at me, and then passed into my sister's room, the door of which stood open beside us. The remembrance of that face I shall carry with me to my grave. It was an awful one, white, ghastly, and hideous. I started back in horror: a sickening sense of terror came over me. I felt as if I would faint, indeed. I think that for a few minutes I did lose consciousness. What was that horrible face and unearthly form which I, in the bright moonlight, so plainly saw beside me? Sleep for that night was banished, for I could not shake off the feeling of horror and dread which oppressed me, lest the awful being should again appear to me. I fully determined to leave the frightful old house in the morning, and while at breakfast, told my sister what had occurred the night before, and how several times I had been alarmed by the frightful object which had appeared in my apartment. What was my surprise to learn that she also had been disturbed almost every night by feeling some invisible presence near her, oppressing her heart with a sense of intense dread. Like myself, not believing in the supernatural, she was unwilling to speak of what she could not in any way account for, but what she had suffered in silence caused the change in her health and spirits, of which I have spoken. I did not wonder at it, when I thought of the hideous, unearthly form I had seen going into her chamber, and which, no doubt, was her dread unseen visitor. Before night we left that haunted house, and although I am now an old man, the remembrance of the awful sights I there witnessed has never been effaced from my memory."

The following incidents were related by one of our lady visitors:

"Not very long ago," she began, "my family lived in a large stone mansion, in one of the principal streets of the city of K—. While residing there, I was not disturbed by any supernatural sights or sounds, as some members of

the family were, except on one occasion; but that very strange things happened during the two years we lived there I must allow. The house, as I have stated, was a large one. In the third story my brother occupied a small room at the end of a long, narrow passage. While lying awake late one night, he heard footsteps coming along this passage, and some one, the rustling of whose dress he distinctly perceived, entered his room and stood beside his bed. He was a boy of about fourteen years old, brave, spirited, and one who had no belief in the existence of ghosts, but on that occasion, an unaccountable feeling of dread oppressed him, and he was so terribly frightened that he buried his head beneath the clothes. After a while, when he recovered himself a little, he called out loudly, startling some of the family from their sleep. My father went to him and saw, at once, from his appearance and manner, that he had been dreadfully alarmed, nor would he remain any longer in the room, but moved his bed that night to another apartment. The only time I suffered any alarm was being suddenly awakened one night, by my sister asking me in startled tones, who that was standing at the foot of our bed? I was too much frightened to look who or what it was, for, with the exclamation 'Oh! do hush!' I quickly drew the coverlet over my face. My sister, however, declared that she plainly saw the figure of a woman—a little woman, dressed in black, standing silently in the morning-dawn at the foot of the bed. The apparition, as she called out to me, vanished. Again, one night, long after every one had retired to rest, some one was heard, through the silence which pervaded the house, to run quickly up the long staircase. Another strange circumstance which occurred was this. To the house there was an unfinished attic, but it had no communication with the rest of the dwelling, except by a sort of trap door in the third story. As there were no stairs, or even a ladder, ascending to the attic, no one could possibly get up there. At the side of the house, under the roof, there was in this attic a small window. A gentleman, an intimate friend of ours, in passing down the street one day, happened to glance up at this window. He noticed that there was some one sitting there; the figure of an old man he took it to be. As he thought it rather singular, a day or two afterwards, he mentioned the circumstance to my brother. After leaving the house, we learned that our family was not the only one troubled by unaccountable occurrences in that old dwelling."

Another of the stories told by a gentleman of the party was as follows:

"When a young man, I resided with my mother and sister, in a house situated at the corner of A— and L— streets, in Montreal. The house was pleasantly located, and in quite a thoroughfare, but even at that time, it was not a modern dwelling. One afternoon, my mother—who was by no means of a nervous or fanciful temperament—was sitting at work near one of the windows at the back of the house, overlooking the yard. As she turned her head for a moment and looked out, to her amazement she distinctly saw an open grave in the middle of the yard, and at the same instant, she observed the figure of a little old man, strangely dressed in some ancient costume, going towards it. She called out to my sister, who was in the apartment, to look out; but when she reached the window, both the yawning-grave and old-looking old man had disappeared."

Another time I was out late one night, and on my return home my mother hearing me at the door came down to let me in. While in the act of unlocking the door she heard a step beside her, and instantly afterwards some one struck her on the shoulder. She cried out in alarm. I heard her and drawing my knife—the only weapon which I possessed—from my pocket, hastily opened it, and stood ready to defend her, as she threw back the door. I sprang into the hall, but to my surprise encountered my mother only, instead of some midnight robber whom I, on hearing her scream, had imagined was hid in the house and had attacked her."

On one other occasion an incident occurred for which we also could never account. My sister was in her room one evening about dusk. While crossing the apartment she beheld, in the passage outside, the form of a woman standing at the window, which was at the foot of the stairs leading to the third storey. She was attired in a loose flowing robe, her arms were crossed over her breast, and her face was pressed closely against the window as she apparently peered earnestly into the street below. While my sister in silent terror gazed at her she suddenly turned from the window and vanished up the stairs beside her. As my sister was quite alone in the house and no one could possibly have entered it without her being aware of the fact, her appearance there to this day has remained a mystery to us."

The last story was told by one of the young ladies of the party, who commenced by saying: Last winter I went with my sister to visit some friends who lived in the country. Our apartment was a large one in the front of the house, and being tired out by our journey we soon fell asleep after retiring to our chamber. Suddenly I was awakened and became at once conscious that some one was in the room. It was as I have said a large apartment with three windows in it through which the moon shone brightly. On looking around I perceived walking slowly up and down the room the tall figure of a woman with her head wrapped up and her face covered by her hands. I was greatly

alarmed and lay almost breathless watching this strange form, as in the bright moonlight it paced the room apparently in great trouble. I did not awake my sister, for I was too much frightened either to move or speak. Presently the figure came towards the bed. You may imagine my terror at its approach. Nearer it came until it bent over me, the lips moved and in hollow tones it said, "I'm cold. Let me in."

These words dispelled the terror which had seized me, for I saw that the being beside me was one of flesh and blood, and no spirit as I had fancied. The lady was a relative of the family who arriving late that night after every one had gone to bed, came in by the back door which was unfastened, and proceeded upstairs to the spare room which we occupied. As she was suffering from a severe toothache she had muffled her head and walked the floor until the pain had subsided a little."

This is my story, she added, and although at the time of its occurrence it was quite as frightful to me as some of those I have just listened to, yet it will not, I am sure, be as much appreciated by you as those authenticated ghost stories which have been related this evening."

BLANNERHASSET IN MONTREAL.

Your article on Blennerhasset in the issue of the 3rd inst., asking any particulars connected with this unfortunate family during their residence in Montreal, has induced to send you the following:—

Blennerhasset quite disheartened, and being cramped by endorsements for Colonel Burr, amounting to \$30,000, sold out his plantation in Mississippi and moved to Montreal. One of his intimate friends of former days was the Governor of the Province (Sir George Prevost, I believe), and had invited him to come, with the promise of an appointment to a seat on the Bench for which he was well qualified. But misfortune seemed still to pursue him. He had scarcely reached Montreal ere his friend the Governor was removed from office, and all his hopes were frustrated. His friends urged him to return to England with the assurance of a lucrative post from the Government. He returned but to be again disappointed."

While in this city, when blighted hopes and prospects of poverty were thickening around them, Mrs. Blennerhasset wrote her beautiful poem entitled, "The Deserted Isle."

It was the outgushing of her heart in lamenting over the once happy home on Blennerhasset Island, Ohio.

I here give you a few of the stanzas—

"Like mournful echo from the silent tomb
That pines away upon the midnight air,
While the pale moon breaks out with fitful gloom,
Fond memory turns with sad, but welcome care
To scenes of desolation and despair.
Once bright with all that beauty could bestow,
That peace could shed, or youthful fancy know.

To the fair isle reverts the pleasing dream:
Again thou risest in thy green attire,
Fresh as at first, thy blooming graces seem,
Thy groves, thy fields, thy wonted sweets respire;
Again thou'rt all my heart could e'er desire,
Oh! why, dear isle, art thou not still my own,
Thy charms could then for all my griefs atone.

For many blissful moments there I've known,
Too many hopes have there met their decay,
Too many feelings now forever gone:
To wish that thou wouldst ere again display
The joyful colouring of thy prime array;
Buried with thee, let them remain a blot,
With thee, their sweets, their bitterness forgot.

And Oh! that I could wholly wipe away
The memory of the ill that work'd thy fall,
The memory of that all-eventful day
When I returned, and found my own fair hall
Held by an infuriate populace in thrall,
My own fireside blockaded by a band
That once found food and shelter at my hand.

My children, (Oh! a mother's pangs forbear,
Nor strike again that arrow through my soul.)
Clasp the ruthless in suppliant prayer,
To free their mother from unjust control,
While with false crimes, and imprecations foul
The wretches, vilest refuse of the earth,
Mock jurisdiction held around my hearth.

Sweet isle! methinks I see thy bosom torn
Again behold the ruthless rabble throng,
That wrought destruction, taste not ever mourn;
Alas! I see thee now, shall see thee long,
Yet ne'er bitter feelings urge the wrong,
That to a mob would give the curse due
To those that arm'd the plunder-greedy crew."

JOHN HORN.

Montreal, 6th February, 1877.

MAXIMS OF THE TABLE.

Brillat-Savarin is the author of these sayings:

I. The Universe is nothing except through life, and everything which lives nourishes itself.

II. Animals feed; man eats; a man of wit and breeding alone knows how to eat.

III. The destiny of nations depends on the way in which they nourish themselves.

IV. Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are.

V. The Creator, in obliging man to eat in order that he may live, invites him by appetite, and rewards him by pleasure.

VI. Taste is an act of our judgment, by which we accord the preference to things which are palatable over those which are not.

VII. The pleasures of the table are for all ages, all conditions, all countries, and all days; they can associate themselves with all other pleasures, and remain to console us for their loss.

VIII. The dining-room is the only place where you are never bored during the first hour.

IX. The discovery of a new dish does more for the happiness of the human race than the discovery of a new constellation.

X. Those who get an indigestion, and those who get drunk, know neither how to eat nor how to drink.

XI. The order of edibles is from the more substantial to the lighter.

XII. The order of the drinks is from the lighter to the more heady and more perfumed.

XIII. To assert that there should be no change of wines at dinner is a heresy; the tongue surfeits itself; and, after the third glass, the best wine produces but a dull sensation.

XIV. A dessert without cheese is even as a fair woman who lacketh an eye.

XV. A man may become a cook, but he must be born a roaster.

XVI. The most indispensable quality in a cook is punctuality; the same quality is required of a guest.

XVII. To wait too long for a guest who is late is a want of politeness for all who are present.

XVIII. He who receives his friends, and bestows no thought on the meal to be prepared for them, is unworthy to have friends.

XIX. The mistress of the house ought always to assure herself that the coffee is excellent; the master should see that the wines are of the best brand.

XX. To invite any one to dinner is to make yourself responsible for his happiness during the time he is under your roof.

EPHEMERIDES.

The second meeting of the Sunday School Parliament and Bible Conference, will be held on Wellesley Island, (one of the famous "Thousand Islands" in St. Lawrence River, lying between Gananoque, Canada, and Clayton, N.Y.,) August 20 to 31st, 1877. Rev. W. F. Crafts will be Conductor, as before, assisted by Mrs. W. F. Crafts, in charge of Primary Department Work, and leading Christian workers from Canada and the United States, who will soon be announced. The first five days will be devoted to a "Bible Conference" on methods of Bible Reading, and the use of "Bible Readings," &c., while the second five days will be given to methods of Sunday School Work and Christian Work, including "Parents' Institute," "Temperance day," "Laymen's day," &c. A Normal Class will be organized, which will meet twice a day through the whole session, taking two courses of study of 10 lessons each, with an examination and diploma at the close. The evenings will be given to popular religious addresses by leading preachers and others, and each afternoon there will be a service adapted to interest children as well as older ones. Lodgings can be secured at low prices and of excellent quality in tents, cottages, boarding houses and first-class hotels, while excellent board is furnished at a large Dining Hall on the grounds. Railroads and Steamboats will, many of them, bring persons, as last year, at half fare. Those who wish bulletins and programmes sent them should forward their names on a Postal Card to Rev. J. F. Dayan, Watertown, N. Y., Secretary of the Association of the "Thousand Island Park."

HYGIENIC.

WARM food is more digestible than cold.

BITTER almonds are said to be a prophylactic against intoxication.

Mrs. F. E. FORRESTER cut herself, and trying to stop bleeding, he did not succeed, notwithstanding he tried to do it in several ways; finally the idea struck him to put on some dry plaster of Paris, which happened to be at hand. It stopped the bleeding at once, while it only caused some stinging sensation, lasting a minute or two, but no ill effects were experienced.

It cannot be too often pointed out that, roughly speaking, nobody need suffer from small-pox unless he chooses to do so; for the experience of the last epidemic in London disclosed the startling fact that, whilst vaccination gave considerable protection against the fatal effects of the disease, revaccination conferred almost a positive immunity. Some four out of 1,400 represented the proportion of attacks amongst the revaccinated.

THE St. Louis Sanitarium is a charitable institution for the reformation of drunkards and opium eaters. Patients are treated as inmates, and medicine and advice are also dispensed to outsiders. Non-alcoholic tonics are prescribed for those who habitually resort to stimulants when overworked, and lectures are given in which the nature and consequences of drunkenness are described. The managers now ask that liquor dealers be taxed to support the Sanitarium.

M. SAX gives the following: All the men who make it their profession to try the wind-instruments made at the various factories before sending them off for sale—all, without exception, to my knowledge, are free from pulmonary affections. I have known many such who, on entering on this profession, were very delicate, and who, though their duty obliged them to blow for hours together, enjoyed perfect health after a certain time. The day is not far distant, perhaps, when physicians will have recourse to our art in order to conquer pulmonary disease.

It has been supposed by some that the effects of compressed air on workmen were injurious, but Siebe, an eminent German hydraulic engineer, has established, by a series of experiments during several years, the fact that workmen working in caissons, attain, in a short time, a remarkable degree of comfort; and their chests become strengthened to a remarkable degree. He has also ascertained that pulmonary complaints become cured by thus working under water. In consequence of this, Dr. Carlo Faruani, of Milan, has established an aerotherapeutic establishment, for the treatment of pulmonary complaints.