

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

A friend of mine, who is a man of letters and a philosopher, said to me one day, as if between jest and earnest,—“Fancy! since we last met, I have discovered a haunted house in the midst of London.”

“Really haunted?—and by what?—ghosts?”

“Well, I can't answer these questions; all I know is this—six weeks ago I and my wife were in search of a furnished apartment. Passing a quiet street, we saw on the window of one of the houses a bill, ‘Apartments Furnished.’ The situation suited us; we entered the house—liked the rooms—engaged them by the week—and left them the third day. No power on earth could have reconciled my wife to stay longer; and I don't wonder at it.”

“What did you see?”

“Excuse me—I have no desire to be ridiculed as a superstitious dreamer; nor, on the other hand, could I ask you to accept on my affirmation what you would hold to be incredible without the evidence of your own senses. Let me only say this, it was not so much what we saw or heard (in which you might fairly suppose that we were the dupes of our own excited fancy, or the victims of imposture in others) that drove us away, as it was an undefinable terror which seized both of us whenever we passed by the door of a certain unfurnished room, in which we neither saw nor heard anything. And the strangest marvel of all, was, that for once in my life I agreed with my wife, silly woman though she be—and allowed, after the third night, that it was impossible to stay a fourth in that house. Accordingly, on the fourth morning I summoned the woman who kept the house and attended on us, and told her that the rooms did not quite suit us; and we would not stay the week out. She said, dryly, ‘I know why; you have stayed longer than any other lodger. Few ever stayed a second night; none before you a third. But I take it they have been very kind to you.’

“They—who?” I asked, affecting a smile.

“Why, they who haunt the house, whoever they are. I don't mind them; I remember them many years ago, when I lived in this house, not as a servant; but I know they will be the death of me some day. I don't care—I'm old, and must die soon anyhow; and then I shall be with them, and in this house still.’ The woman spoke with so dreary a calmness, that really it was a sort of awe that prevented my conversing with her further. I paid for my week, and too happy were I and my wife to get off so cheaply.”

“You excite my curiosity,” said I; “nothing I should like better than to sleep in a haunted house. Pray give me the address of the one which you left so ignominiously.”

My friend gave me the address; and when we parted, I walked straight towards the house thus indicated. It is situated on the north side of Oxford street, in a dull but respectable thoroughfare. I found the house shut up—no bill at the window, and no response to my knock. As I was turning away, a beer-boy, collecting pewter pots at the neighboring areas, said to me, “Do you want any one at that house, sir?”

“Yes, I heard it was to be let.”

“Let—why, the woman who kept it is dead—has been dead these three weeks, and no one can be found to stay there, though Mr. J.—offered ever so much. He offered mother, who chaps for him, £1 a week just to open and shut the windows, and she would not.”

“Would not—and why?”

“The house is haunted; and the old woman who kept it was found dead in her bed, with her eyes wide open. They say the devil strangled her.”

“Pooh!—you speak of Mr. J.—is he the owner of the house?”

“Yes.”

“Where does he live?”

“In G—Street, No.—”

“What is he?—in any business?”

“No, sir—nothing particular; a single gentleman.”

I gave the pot-boy the gratuity earned by his liberal information, and proceeded to Mr. J.—in G—street, which was close by the street that boasted the haunted house. I was lucky enough to find Mr. J.—at home—an elderly man, with intelligent countenance and pressing manners.

I communicated my name and my business frankly. I said I heard the house was considered to be haunted—that I had a strong desire to examine a house with so equivocal a reputation—that I should be greatly obliged if he would allow me to hire it, though only for a night. I was willing to pay for that privilege whatever he might be inclined to ask. “Sir,” said Mr. J.—with great courtesy, “the house is at your service, for as short or as long a time as you please. Rent is out of the question—the obligation will be on my side should you be able to discover the cause of the strange phenomena which at present deprive it of all value. I cannot let it, for I cannot even get a servant to keep it in order or answer the door. Unluckily the house is haunted, if I may use that expression, not only by night, but by day; though at night the disturbances are of a more unpleasant and sometimes of a more alarming character. The poor old woman who died in it about three weeks ago was a pauper whom I took out of a workhouse, for in her childhood she had been known to some of my family, and had once been in such good circumstances that she had rented that house of my uncle. She was a woman of superior education and strong mind, and was the only person I could ever induce to remain in the house; indeed, since her death, which was sudden, and the coroner's inquest, which gave it a notoriety in the neighborhood, I have so despaired of finding any person to take charge of it, much more a tenant who would willingly let it rent-

free for a year to any one who would pay its rates and taxes.”

“How long is it since the house acquired this sinister character?”

“That I can scarcely tell you, but very many years since. The old woman I spoke of said it was haunted when she rented it, between thirty and forty years ago. The fact is, that my life has been spent in the East Indies, and in the civil service of the Company. I returned to England last year, on inheriting the fortune of an uncle, amongst whose possessions was the house in question. I found it shut up and uninhabited. I was told that it was haunted, that no one would inhabit it. I smiled at what seemed to me so idle a story. I spent some money in repainting and roofing it—added to its old-fashioned furniture a few modern articles—advertised it, and obtained a lodger for a year. He was a colonel retired on half pay. He came in with his family, a son and a daughter, and four or five servants; they all left the house the next day; and, although they deposed that they had all seen something different, that something was equally terrible to all, I really could not in conscience sue, or even blame the colonel for breach of agreement. Then I put in the old woman I have spoken of, and she was empowered to let the house in apartments. I never had one lodger who stayed more than three days. I do not tell you their stories—to no two lodgers have there been exactly the same phenomena repeated. It is better that you should judge for yourself, than enter the house with an imagination influenced by previous narratives; only be prepared to see and to hear something or other, and take whatever precautions you yourself please.”

“Have you never had a curiosity yourself to pass a night in that house?”

“Yes, I passed not a night, but three hours in broad daylight alone in that house. My curiosity is not satisfied, but it is quenched. I have no desire to renew the experiment. You cannot complain, you see, sir, that I am not sufficiently candid; and unless your interest be exceedingly eager and your nerves unusually strong I honestly add, that I advise you not to pass a night in that house.”

“My interest is exceedingly keen,” said I, “and though only a coward will boast of his nerves in situations wholly unfamiliar to him, yet my nerves have been seasoned in such variety of danger that I have the right to rely on them—even in a haunted house.”

Mr. J.—said very little more; he took the keys of the house out of his bureau, gave them to me, and, thanking him cordially for his frankness, and his urbane concession to my wish, I carried off my prize.

Impatient for the experiment, as soon as I reached home, I summoned my confidential servant—a young man of gay spirits, fearless temper, and as free from superstitious prejudice as any one I could think of.

“F—,” said I, “you remember in Germany how disappointed we were at not finding a ghost in that old castle, which was said to be haunted by a headless apparition? Well, I have heard of a house in London which, I have reason to hope, is decidedly haunted. I mean to sleep there to-night. From what I hear, there is no doubt that something will allow itself to be seen or to be heard—something perhaps, excessively horrible. Do you think, if I take you with me, I may rely on your presence of mind, whatever may happen?”

“Oh, sir! pray trust me,” answered F—, grinning with delight.

“Very well; then here are the keys of the house—this is the address. Go now—select for me any bedroom you please; and since the house has not been inhabited for weeks, make up a good fire—ar the bed well—see, of course, that there are candles as well as fuel. Take with you my revolver and my dagger—so much for my weapons—arm yourself equally well; and if we are not a match for a dozen ghosts, we shall be but a sorry couple of Englishmen.”

I was engaged for the rest of the day on business so urgent that I had not leisure to think much on the nocturnal adventure to which I had plighted my honor. I dined alone, and very late, and while dining, read, as is my habit. The volume I selected was one of Macaulay's Essays. I thought to myself that I would take the book with me; there was so much of healthfulness in the style, and practical life in the subjects, that it would serve as an antidote against the influences of superstitious fancy.

Accordingly, about half-past nine, I put the book into my pocket, and strolled leisurely towards the haunted house, I took with me a favorite dog—an exceedingly sharp, bold, and vigilant bull-terrier—a dog fond of prowling about strange ghostly corners and passages at night in search of rats—a dog of dogs for a ghost.

It was a summer night, but chilly, the sky somewhat gloomy, and overcast. Still there was a moon—faint and sickly, but still a moon—and if the clouds permitted, after midnight it would be brighter.

I reached the house, knocked, and my servant opened with a cheerful smile.

“All right, sir, and very comfortable.”

“Oh!” said I, rather disappointed; “have you not seen nor heard anything remarkable?”

“Well, sir, I must own I have heard something queer.”

“What—what?”

“The sound of feet pattering behind me; and once or twice small noises like whispers close at my ear—nothing more.”

“You are not at all frightened?”

“I'm not a bit of it, sir;” and the man's bold look reassured me on one point—viz., that, happen what might, he would not desert me.

We were in the hall, the street-door closed, and my attention was now drawn to my dog. He had at first run

in eager enough, but had sneaked back to the door, and was scratching and whining to get out. After patting him on the head, and encouraging him gently, the dog seemed to reconcile himself to the situation, and followed me and F— through the house, but hurrying inquisitively in advance, which was his usual and normal habit in all strange places. We first visited the subterranean apartments, the kitchen and other offices, and especially the cellars, in which last there were two or three bottles of wine still left in a bin, covered with cobwebs, and evidently, by their appearance, undisturbed for many years. It was clear that the ghosts were not wine-bibbers. For the rest we discovered nothing of interest. There was a gloomy little backyard, with very high walls. The stones of this yard were very damp, and what with the damp, and what with the dust and smoke-grime on the pavement our feet left a slight impression where we passed. And now appeared the first strange phenomenon witnessed by myself in this strange abode. I saw, just before me, the print of a foot suddenly form itself, as it were. I stopped, caught hold of my servant, and pointed to it. In advance of that foot print as suddenly dropped another. We both saw it. I advanced quickly to the place; the footprint kept advancing before me a small footprint—the foot of a child; the impression was too faint thoroughly to distinguish the shape, but it seemed to us both that it was the print of a naked foot. This phenomenon ceased when we arrived at the opposite wall, nor did it repeat itself on returning. We remounted the stairs, and entered the rooms on the ground floor, a dining parlor, a small back-parlor, and a still smaller third room that had been probably appropriated to a footman—all still as death. We then visited the drawing-rooms, which seemed fresh and new. In the front room I seated myself in an arm-chair. F— placed on the table the candlestick with which he had lighted us. I told him to shut the door. As he turned to do so, a chair opposite to me moved from the wall quickly and noiselessly, and dropped itself about a yard from my own chair, immediately fronting it.

“Why, this is better than the burning-tables,” said I, with a half laugh; and as I laughed, my dog put back his head and howled.

F—, coming back had not observed the movement of the chair. He employed himself now in stilling the dog. I continued to gaze on the chair, and fancied I saw on it a pale blue misty outline of a human figure, but an outline so indistinct that I could only distrust my own vision. The dog now was quiet. “Put back that chair opposite to me,” said I to F—, “put it back to the wall!”

F— obeyed. “Was that you, sir?” said he, turning abruptly.

“I—what?”

“Why, something struck me. I felt it sharply on the shoulder—just here.”

“No,” said I. “But we have jugglers present, and though we may not discover their tricks, we shall catch them before they frighten us.”

We did not stay long in the drawing-rooms, in fact, they felt so damp and so chilly, that I was glad to get to the fire upstairs. We locked the doors of the drawing-rooms—a precaution which, I should observe, we had taken with all the rooms we had searched before. The bedroom my servant had selected for me was the best on the floor—a large one, with two windows fronting the street. The four-poster bed, which took up no inconsiderable space, was opposite to the fire, which burned clear and bright; a door in the wall to the left, between the bed and the window, communicated with the room which my servant appropriated to himself. This last was a small room with a sofa-bed, and had no communication with the landing-place—no other door but that which conducted to the bedroom I was to occupy. On either side of my fireplace was a cupboard, without locks, flushed with the wall, and covered with the same dull-brown paper. We examined these cupboards—only hooks to suspend female dresses—nothing else; we sounded the walls—evidently solid—the outer walls of the building. Having finished the survey of these apartments, warmed myself a few moments, and lighted my cigar, I then, still accompanied by F—, went forth to replete my reconnaissance. In the landing-place there was another door; it was closed firmly. “Sir,” said my servant, in surprise, “I unlocked this door with all the others when I first came; it cannot have got locked from the inside, for it is a—”

(To be Continued.)

HYDRAULIC LIFE-BOATS.

Three of these craft are now in service in England. The propelling agents are jets of water driven out by a powerful steam-pump through nozzles under the water. The nozzles can be made to drive the boat forward or backward, or to turn it, the boat of course, being driven by the reaction in the direction opposite to that of the escaping water. A speed of nine miles an hour was maintained for some two hours in a trial trip. They are not economical; their strong point is the absence of any external paddle-wheels or propellers, which are so liable to become fouled by wreckage. The boat has projecting guards, which protect the nozzles from striking against slips or docks.

LENT IN RUSSIA.

Lent has closed all theatres in Russia since the beginning of Alexander III.'s reign. A recent ukase now permits plays to be performed during the penitential season, with the exception of the first and last weeks. A distinction is made, however, between grand opera and serious dramas on the one hand and comic opera on the other, the latter being strictly forbidden unless given in a foreign language. Local authorities may prohibit any performance if they see fit.

A CAREER IN SOCIETY.

Mrs. James C. Ayer died recently in Paris after a brief illness.

No person would be more missed in the French capital. Mrs. Ayer was the most prominent member of the American colony and one of the best known women in Paris. Her great wealth, her lavish expenditures, her brilliant entertainments and her gowns and jewels were talked about everywhere.

The millions made in patent medicines, and her own determination and energy, gained for Mrs. Ayer the position in society which was the height of her ambition, but it was only after a long fight. She was laughed at, ridiculed, and maligned, but she never faltered. And she was really a good woman, one of the most charitable and generous in the world, and those who said ill of her were those who had benefited from her bounty.

Her many eccentricities and vanities were harmless enough, while her virtues benefited all of those who came in contact with her. She was ever ready to aid the struggling American artists and singers who went to Paris to study. Her purse and her sympathy were never appealed to in vain, and often she sought those whom she believed to be worthy. She was a liberal patron of art, and paid enormous sums for pictures.

The story of her rise in the world is peculiarly interesting and peculiarly American. She was born in Medway, Mass., on December 15, 1826, and she had therefore passed her seventy-first year. Her maiden name was Josephine Mellin Southwick. Her father was a Quaker and a large manufacturer. Her mother was a sister of the founder of the H. B. Claffin Company. Her parents moved to Lowell when she was an infant.

She knew James C. Ayer as a child. He was a clerk in a drug store who had saved a little money, and who started in business for himself. He manufactured a cough mixture and advertised it in the local newspapers. He was the pioneer in the patent medicine business, and it grew rapidly. Before long the Ayer preparations were known the country over. When James C. Ayer died, in 1878, he left a fortune of \$15,000,000.

Mrs. Ayer always had a taste for society. In this country she never secured any recognition. She had a villa at Newport about fifteen years ago, and later took a cottage at Bar Harbor. She was always fond of jewels, and when wealth poured in upon her she began to buy them liberally. She delighted to wear her gems, even going to the extent of wearing a low-necked gown and diamond necklace in the morning.

She made a sensation in this country on one or two occasions by appearing at entertainments in a Directors costume, including the long, flower-decked staff.

Mrs. Ayer first went to Paris about 1880, and except two or three summers spent in this country, she has remained there ever since, making infrequent and very short visits to New York. For years she had a large suite of apartments in the Hotel Continental.

From the beginning she attracted attention by her expenditures. She had a retinue of servants. She employed a dentist who visited her daily. She had a physician to look after the members of the family, while she herself, consulted specialists, to whom she gave enormous fees.

The milliners and shopkeepers from one city to the other regarded her as their best customer. She was fleeced right and left, but she never objected. She would buy \$500 worth of gloves at a time, and there gloves cost not more than a third as much as they do in New York.

She established a kind of salon in the hotel, a sort of Bohemian gathering, and steadily assaulted the houses of those whose positions were established. For a long time, the exclusives would have none of her, but gradually she made her way. Her health and her entertainments battered down barrier after barrier.

Of course there was a deal of talk about Mrs. Ayer getting married again. At one time no fewer than three princes were aspirants for her hand. More than one duel was hinted at. Prince Dalgarouky is a Pole of distinguished appearance, who has an income of \$100 a month, and a reputation as a gamester. Prince Giedroye is a Russian, a brother of the late Emperor of Russia'smorganatic wife. He was fat and reasonably rich. Prince Valori is a Spaniard.

Valori offered to introduce Mrs. Ayer to the Spanish pretender, Don Carlos, and secure her a social position if she would marry him. Mrs. Ayer declined.

Indeed, she was not moved much by the glamour of the title of prince, for in Paris princes are almost as common as Generals in the South.

About six years ago Mrs. Ayer had secured a social position which warranted her in leasing the mansion of the Duc de Mouchy, one of the finest and most expensive to maintain in Paris. It is No. 19 Rue Constantine, near the Invalides, in the Quartier St. Germain.

It was completely refurnished at an enormous expense and Mrs. Ayer installed herself in it with a retinue of servants. She bought magnificent carriages and splendid horses.

Mrs. Ayer entertained lavishly, more expensively, perhaps, than any one else in Paris.

As the years went on she dressed more gorgeously and wore more jewels than ever. Whenever she appeared in public she was pointed out, and the shopkeepers worshipped her. Mrs. Ayer did much to give the Parisians the idea



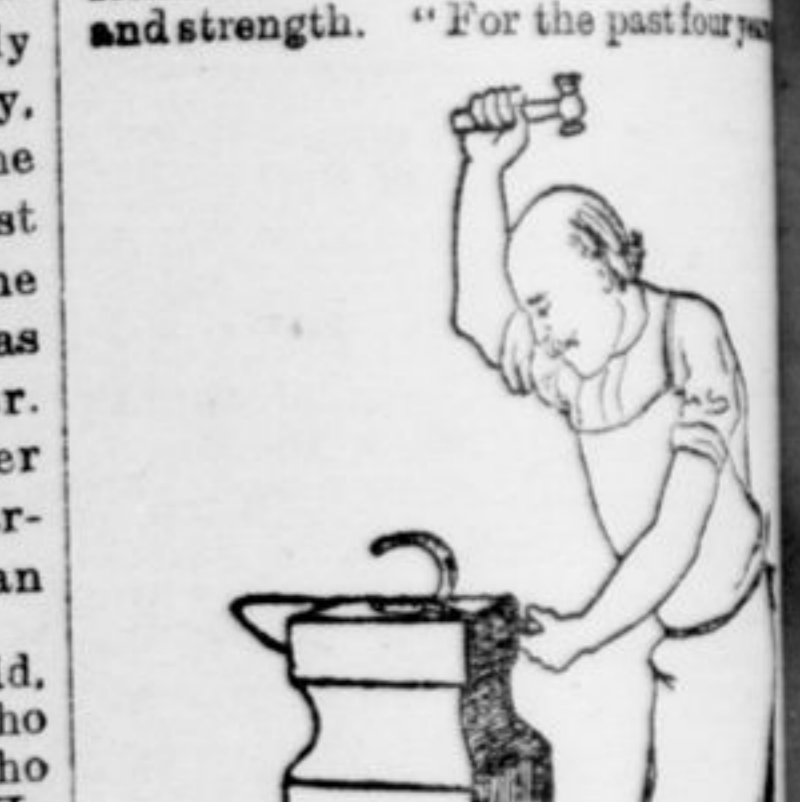
STRONG BACK
You need it to bear the daily burden of life. If your back is weak—Doan's Kidney Pills will strengthen it. If it pains you—Doan's Kidney Pills will cure you. Experiment in taking Doan's Kidney Pills. They cured hundreds of weak, aching backs long before other kidney pills were known of.

Mr. James Row, Belleville, Ont., writes for nine years with terrible pain in his back, rheumatic pains, and pain in bladder. He spent \$300 purchasing pills, but they gave him no relief. Doan's Kidney Pills completely cured him, banished his back pains, and all the other pains and aches.

STRENGTH CAME BACK

The Anvil once more rings with strokes of his hammer.

Mr. Thos. Porteous, the well known blacksmith of Goderich, Ont., who was sick and weak and gave up his business, writes: “For the past four years my nerves have been very weak, my sleep and disturbed by dreams, consequently I arose in the morning unrefreshed, frequently very dizzy and was troubled with a mist that came before my eyes, my memory was often defective and fluttering of the heart, together with sharp pain through it at times. My condition I was easily worried and enervated and exhausted. Two months ago I began taking Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills, since that time I have been in health and strength daily. The pills restored my nerves to a healthy condition, removed all dizziness and heart trouble, now I sleep well and derive comfort from it. That Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills are a good remedy for nervousness, Weakness, Heart Trouble and all complaints goes without saying. Price 50 cts. a box at all druggists or T. J. & Co., Toronto, Ont.



that Americans have inexhaustible supplies of money and that they are going to throw it away. She did everything possible to the effect of time. She passed each day in the hands of the milliner, the hair-dresser, the dentist, the oculian and the great number of physicians whose business it is to repleat and whose most youthful gowns and entertainments became more and more spectacular.

Laxa-Liver Pills cure Dyspepsia

Mrs. Ayer never entertained in her great house. There was a room, for the reason that every room was filled with her old gowns, dresses, and fashions. She threw away a gown that she had but always preserved it as if she purposed wearing it again.

Nobody knows how many of Mrs. Ayer wore each year—more than any woman in Paris, it is said—the immense hotel was taken over by the gowns.

When Mrs. Pearson, Mrs. Ayer's daughter, visited her in Paris, it was necessary to arrange a special place for her in a drawing-room. Mrs. Ayer's crowning social triumph was the dinner she gave in the house of the Duke de Mouchy. Nearly every guest bore a testimonial to her distinguished taste. Her taste wore all her famous jewels, and was outshone by her hostess's sang at this entertainment.

PECULIAR FUNERAL CUSTOMS

Swiss funeral customs are peculiar. At the death of a person, the family inserts a formal announcement in the papers, and sympathy and stating that “the inurn” will be exhibited during certain hours on a special day. In the house where the person dies, there is placed a little black table with a black cloth, on which is placed a black jar. Into this the acquaintances of the family deposit black-margined visiting cards, times with a few words of sympathy on them.

BOGUS PETRIFIED REMAINS

Petrified human remains are to order at Crookston, Maine. Finn, a colored woman of that place, serves as the model from which casts are made for fraudulent exhibits and she has earned a comfortable living in this way for many years. The average price of a petrified body made of plaster of Paris, and so skilfully treated to appear to be genuine, is \$100.

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