A TRUE GHOST STORY

THE OLD WOMAN IN THE QUEER DRESS UNDER AN OAK TREE.

She Always Appeared to Announce an Approaching Death In the Family—She Was Probably a Servant Who Had Been Foully Dealt With In Ancient Days.

"Everybody laughs in these days at the old story of the Irish banshee," said a gentleman of national reputation lately as he chatted with a friend or two in the office of the Continental, "and I am not saying but that it was but a superstition after all, though there is a little thing connected with my family that is a strange coincidence, to call it even that.

"Once, when I was a boy, I woke up during the night weeping bitterly, and when my mother came to my bedside I told her that I had dreamed that a queerly dressed old woman had come to me under a large oak tree and had warned me that my brother Leonard, who was my senior by several years, was going to die very soon. I noticed then that instead of calming my fears my mother listened to me without saying a word, and presently I saw that she, too, was crying as hard as I was. I asked what was the matter, and though she put me off I did not forget the strange effect on her that my dream had produced.

"It could not have been a week after that that my brother came in one afternoon from school and said he was going to join a party of young people in a sleighing excursion to the next town. My mother was very unwilling for him to go and confessed to all sorts of nervous fears, very unlike her usual calm and self reliant self, but my brother insisted and at last went off, followed by my mother's anxious eyes. Within three hours we received a telegram saying that he had been killed by the horses attached to the sleigh becoming frightened, and, running away near a railroad track had thrown my poor brother under the wheels of a train.

"When his mangled body came home, my mother met it, saying to her sister, who was visiting at our house for the day: 'I knew it, Fanny. H. here saw her the other night,' and for a long time I wondered who the 'her' referred to could be. I was nearly grown when I again saw the old woman of my boyhood dream. I was about to graduate at our home university and was studying hard for the final examinations and was sitting up late one night reading over some questions in mental philosophy when I dropped off to sleep in my chair.

"Then I dreamed of standing once more under a large oak tree, which was particularly marked about the bark by a ring about three feet above the ground. Here I was, facing an old woman in a servant's dress of the thirteenth or fourteenth century, I should judge, and this old woman was telling me that I would see my father no more in life. I was a good deal worried over this dream, remembering my former one and its tragic sequence, but had ceased to think of it in the hurry and anxiety of the examinations, when one day old Professor B. called to me as I was passing from one classroom to another and asked, 'H., isn't your father in Switzerland?'

"I replied that he was, for his health had failed so alarmingly for months past that he had been ordered abroad and had been rapidly getting well in the mountains of Switzerland. He had recently joined the English party in an expedition to Mont Blanc and had written in fine spirits regarding the trip. Professor B. said no more, but I came across in a few minutes a newspaper containing an account of an American who had been killed by falling down a crevasse in the Swiss Alps.

"No particulars were known or given by the paper, but I knew—oh, yes, I knew—that the American was my father, and so it proved. I told my widowed mother of the strange coincidence of my second dream, and she replied that the warning would never fail; that it had gone with her through her life, and that her mother had told her that this strange phantom had also given her warning of every disaster she had experienced. The old woman, whoever she was, was always accompanied in her missions of woe by the oak tree marked as I have said. The whole thing is a mystery to us, but it is true, every word of it.

"If the thing is something supernatural, none of us has any idea who the woman could have been or why she came like a bird of ill omen to prophesy evil to a plain American family, sans castle, sans legends, sans romance. And I, for one, am particularly interested in why the oak tree should have come down to us in connection with the ghost. I would somehow hate to think that some doughty ancestor of mine had, after the playful little manner of the good old times, put some faithful servant to death in a way in which an oak tree took a prominent part, but I should not be surprised if he did; indeed I have a sneaking belief that that is the true explanation of the whole thing, though I am sorry that same servant is so unforgiving as to take it out on me by bringing me bad news, which, if she'd only wait long enough, would reach me with proverbial rapidity."—Philadelphia Times.

Entertained.

Aurelia (anxiously)—Have you seen George this evening, papa? He promised to call.

Papa—Yes, he did call, and I entertained him for an hour before you came down stairs.

Aurelia—You entertained him, papa?

Papa—Yes; I gave him a list of all the new dresses you had last year and the cost of each. I never saw a man more interested, yet he left very hurriedly.—London Tit-Bits.

Happily Defined.

Little Johnny (looking up from his book)—Pa, what is the besom of destruction?

Pa (who is adjusting a collar)—A machine they use in laundries, Johnny.—Boston Transcript.

HAIR RAISING FRIGHTS.

Is the "Standing on End" Sensation a Real or an Imaginary One?

As a general rule unscientific opinions on a scientific subject are of but little value to the student and the investigator. Yet to be permitted to ask such questions appears to relieve one to a certain extent, even though the answer be far from satisfactory.

There is a variety of opinions among the authorities concerning the subject of the hair "standing on end" in time of extreme fright, some of which are tenable and altogether probable, others ridiculous in the extreme. The notion, if notion it be, that the hair occasionally raises and lifts the hat is of extreme antiquity. In the oldest book in the Bible (Job iv, 14-15) I find the following: "Fear came upon me and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face. The hair of my flesh stood up."

Do you remember what Virgil says about his hero in the celebrated vox faucibus hoesit passage? I read from Conington's translation:

While thus in agony I pressed
From house to house the endless quest,
The pale, sad specter of my wife
Confronts me larger than in life.
I stood appalled, my hair erect,
And fear my tongue tied utterances checked.

Macbeth relates his experience as follows:

Why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair?

And again in Hamlet we read:

I could a tale unfold whose lightest words
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine.

Similar instances of "hair raising" being mentioned in literature could be multiplied, but the above are sufficient, even without scientific corroboration, to prove that the phenomenon is not a freak of the imagination.

One of the authorities before me gives this opinion: "Plainly stated, the hair raising notion is without a substantial basis. In short, the sensation is only an imaginary one."

Hildreth says, "In such cases the hair actually stands erect, a result of a sudden contraction of the follicles."

Wilson's "Normal Condition of the Hair and Skin" says, "The phenomena of hair standing erect in cases of extreme terror cannot satisfactorily be explained."—St. Louis Republic.

Beardless Physicians.

It is an almost fatal obstacle in the building up of practice for a physician to wear a youthful face. Any doctor will corroborate that. I remember an amusing incident in my own experience after I had graduated from hospital service and put up my shingle and started practice. It was terribly slow work getting patients. I had a friend who was a medical student in my office. He was very dark complexioned, and though only 20 years old had a big black beard. A woman called at the office one day and asked to see the doctor. My student answered the summons and said that he would call me. I walked into the reception room. The patient, who was a stranger to both of us, looked at me impatiently. I had a very adolescent mustache at that time.

"I want to see the doctor," she exclaimed rather sharply. "I don't want to see a medical student. I wish to see the gentleman with the beard." To save myself the loss of that patient I had to apologize and call my student back. I was present, heard all that was said, and I was the author of the prescription given. The woman didn't know that, however, and went away perfectly satisfied. It was simply an amusing illustration of the prejudice, unjust enough, to boyish looking doctors, and incidents of that kind occur every day.—New York Sun.

Southern Planters.

The gentleman, indeed, has taken to agriculture in the south. Before the war the whole southern social system rested on the planter. There has been an insidious and noiseless industrial revolution since, but the planter remains the main support of the taxes. We have no class among northern farmers that quite answers to his. He resembles more the English country gentleman of a past generation when country gentlemen did not go to town.

All the same, it would not do to count the planter out of the scheme. He is the most American farmer of them all, barely excepting the New Englander, who is disappearing every year. He furnishes a conservative, native born influence of immense account. A class that still believes in God and women and honor, that may be led astray by hotheaded prejudices, but can neither be bought nor cowed, is a class to be valued, since it is as true today as in Goldsmith's time that—

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.
—Octave Thanet in Scribner's.

Wasting Our Wealth.

Providence stocked the earth, the waters and the air with a store of all that was necessary for the use or for the benefit of man. Had we been content to live upon what may be called the interest of this store there was amply sufficient to last for all time. But we are the spendthrifts of our race: we are exhausting our capital, exterminating every wild animal, ladling out with our machinery every mineral and raking the very ocean for its wealth. What is to become of us when we have exhausted our sensationalism, exhausted our capital and exhausted even our vitality? They call this fin de siecle. I call it fin du monde.—Truth.

Your Learning.

Wear your learning like your watch in a private pocket, and do not pull it out and strike it merely to show that you have one. If you are asked what o'clock it is, tell it, but do not proclaim it hourly and unasked like a watchman.—Chesterfield.

THE SYBARITE.

A bed of roses where the sunlight falls;
A glimpse of purple grapes on southward walls,
And far, white Thuril through the leaves of trees,
A sense of rest where yet no duty calls.

A single wave that laps the idle beach;
A shining lizard darting out of reach;
A breath of wind through odorous banks of flowers;
A thought of peace, and yet too slow for speech.

A dial where the pointed shadow creeps
From hour to hour of ease; a day that keeps
Its beauty through the night; a night that comes
With dew and stars—a hush—a world that sleeps.

—Detroit Free Press.

Red Men of Guiana.

There are still "red men" in Guiana, according to Mr. Smith Delacour's report—descendants of the inhabitants at the time of its discovery. They are apparently of three or more separate origins.

The oldest inhabitants are believed to be the Warraus, who lead a semiamphibious life, without agriculture and rather as fishers than as hunters. Where these people came from is not known. Of more certain origin are the second set, the Arawacks, who were driven southward from the West Indian islands. After them came a whole series of Carib tribes, who were also forced southward from the West Indies. Just before the advent of the Europeans the last of the Carib tribes made its appearance, and its people were known as the "True Caribs."

In life and surroundings there is no great difference between any of the existing tribes. They live in small family groups, the mutual relations of the members being admirably regulated by a very decided though unwritten code. They pass perfectly simple lives, the happiness of which seems to be enhanced by the inevitable collisions with other tribes. A sufficiency of food is procured by hunting and fishing and a primitive kind of agriculture. Their houses, adds Mr. Smith Delacour, are of the simplest, but exactly what is required, and the furniture is usually a hammock. Clothing is "a question for the future."—London News.

Recipes For Shoe Dressing.

Here are two recipes for making a dressing for shoes: Take 2 drams of spermaceti oil, 3 ounces of good molasses and 4 ounces of finely powdered ivory black and stir them together thoroughly. Then stir in half a pint of good vinegar, and the dressing is ready for use. It gives a bright, clean surface and makes the shoes look almost like new. The second dressing is for rainy weather and is said to make the shoes waterproof. Take an ounce of beeswax, an ounce of turpentine and a quarter of an ounce of burgundy pitch. Put them into half a pint of cottonseed oil and melt together over a slow fire, being careful that the mixture does not take fire.—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

Safe Abuse.

Stubbs—Well, sir, I gave it to that man straight, I can tell you, sir. He is twice as big as I am, too, but I told him exactly what I thought of his rascally conduct right to his face, and I called him all the names in the dictionary.

Spudds—And didn't he try to hit you?

Stubbs—No, sir, he didn't. And when he tried to answer back I just hung up the telephone and walked away.—London Answers.

He Was Sincere.

Friend—What did he say to you when he proposed to you?

Miss Rox—He said life without me meant nothing.

Friend—He was sincere in that. That's just what his possessions amount to.—Boston Commercial.

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