

**PHOTOGRAPHED A GHOST**

**An Actor's Adventure While on a Ranch in Australia.**

**He Took Refuge in a Deserted Church and Met a Strange Creature Whom Everybody Considered an Uncanny Spirit.**

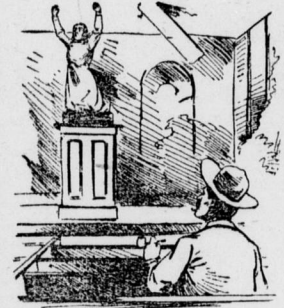
Actors necessarily travel a great deal and see much more of the world than ordinary people. Some of them have strange experiences, too. Herbert Sparling, who is one of the stars of John R. Rogers' comedians and who plays Capt. Courtney and Miss Brown in "The Strange Adventures of Miss Brown," can well claim to be a cosmopolitan.

Some years ago in Australia Mr. Sparling had an adventure which was considered out of the common order of things.

He had purchased a sheep ranch and lived for two or three years on the outskirts of civilization. He is a very expert amateur photographer, and while ranching he made many pictures of ranching life which afterward attracted notable attention in England.

While leading his pastoral life he often heard from his herders weird stories of a ghost which haunted a ruined church in a deserted village some miles "up the country" from his ranch. A number of the herders claimed to have seen the apparition, which was that of a woman, and several of them declared that they had heard her scream in the most unearthly fashion.

Mr. Sparling is a non-believer in spooks. In fact, he is of rather a scientific turn of mind, and is naturally skeptical about the existence of uncanny things. In his frequent rides about the country Mr. Sparling generally carried his "picture box," as his herders called his camera, with him, and he amused himself by "snapping" views of the country and its animals, which he found rare or interesting. While on one of these rides he was overtaken by a heavy thunder-storm. Happening to be only a mile or so from the deserted village spoken of, he dug his spurs in



PERCHED ON THE PULPIT.

his horse's side, and rode with all speed for its shelter. The church seemed to offer the best protection, and not remembering or caring anything about the stories of its being haunted, Mr. Sparling vaulted himself off it. He tilted his horse in the vestibule, and then, feeling somewhat tired, he lay down in one of the pews.

As he did so a wild laugh rang out loud and uncanny. A flash of lightning momentarily illumined the church, and perched on the pulpit was what appeared to be a human figure.

The horse whinnied with terror and Sparling, despite his skepticism, was far from being comfortable in his mind. Through the semi-darkness he could discern the uncouth figure waving its arms.

"Be it what it may," said the actor-ranchman-photographer, "I'll try and snap it."

His box was swinging by its strap upon his back. He had hardly arranged it and aimed it at the top of the pulpit when the lightning flashed long and bright. The figure was as plain as day. Sparling "pressed the button."

Again did the wild thing laugh until the church rafters reechoed its cacophonous.

Then it spoke: "Flash, lightning! His and sputter, and thunder roar. I care naught for you. Once I feared ye. Yes, I cowered when I saw and heard ye. You robbed me of my love. Even when I was on my knees praying for safety, you struck down and murdered my lover, but you can't hurt me. No, I defy you. Strike me if you can. You coward, to rob a poor woman of her love and her all."

As if in response to this awful defiance the lightning again flashed so sudden and so vivid that Sparling was not only blinded, but shocked into insensibility.

How long he remained unconscious he can't tell, but he was revived by the rain falling on him. When able to regain his feet he found that the lightning had struck the church and had nearly destroyed it.

The pulpit was a wreck, but out of its ruins he dragged the body of a half-clothed woman. Her defiance had been answered. She was dead, but on her lips was a scornful smile. Mr. Sparling placed the body on his horse, and as the storm had exhausted itself he was able to reach his home by midnight. His herdsman were much frightened when they found that he was accompanied by a corpse. The body was washed and prepared for burial by one of the herders' wives and then it was placed in a rude coffin.

One of the herders recognized it as that of a lady who had been the wife of a rancher who, with his son, had been killed by lightning in a storm a few years before. The terrible blow had unbalanced the mind of the woman, and she had disappeared no one knew where. It was she who was the wild woman who had so frequently scared the ranchmen and confirmed them in their belief in ghosts.

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