

### Capturing a Ghost.

PAUL CHENEY sat at his desk in the school room of a rural district, where he had been teaching (to use a well-worn adage) the young idea how to shoot. His present task was that of writing a letter to a chum in his city home.

"No doubt (he wrote) you imagine I am dwelling in a sort of rural Arcadia, and just as far as physical nature goes, I am, for there can be nothing more green than the hills, nothing more clear, cool or limpid, or musical than the brooks that everywhere ribbon the valleys. Paradise itself could not produce more life-giving breezes, and yet my life is a burden, because the girls (and they are greatly the majority of my pupils) are such wide-awake, mischief-loving, tormenting beauties as were never before given to one person to manage. They will have their own way, and completely demoralize the school; they tease, coax, and wheedle me out of my most important rules, and when endurance ceases to be a virtue, cast upon me such reproachful glances and put up such pouting, pretty lips, that a fellow is tempted to seize his hat and vamose the ranch, as they say West. But in spite of my complaints, don't imagine me subjugated. I have at last issued positive command for the students not to range off during study hours, as has been the practice.

A sort of Gipsy encampment is located near an isolated nook among the hills. Among the tribe is an old fortune-teller, and of course the pretty heads of my female scholars are completely turned, and I have not only laid down the law against visiting the camp, but fixed a penalty thereto.

Now I know you will raise your hands in holy horror when I tell you that after exhausting every other form of punishment, from the dunce cap to writing lengthy compositions (the bitter abhorrence of every feminine heart!) and all to no purpose, I have in this instance, resorted to the old-fashioned one, the ferrule. And so help me fate, I will carry it out to the bitter end, and make every little hand smart whose owner disobeys, or my name is not Paul Cheney."

The school house where our hero presided was some distance from the village where he boarded, and the walk, though pleasant, was lonely and passing a graveyard. And of late weird tales had been told of ghosts who walk there by moonlight, and in one or two instances, when the school-master had been belated he had observed an object clothed in white flit at a distance before him, and in his very path. Though a trifle startled, he had no doubt that it was a riddle that time would unravel. Therefore, upon the night when he had remained writing to the city friend, as he hurried homeward to be in time for supper, he gave the matter no thought and had reached the boundary of the graveyard when he was confronted by the white robed apparition, approaching him with extended arms.

The suggestions natural to its appearance were the reverse of pleasant, yet he never dreamed the gliding visitant was other than earthly, and quickened his pace to meet it, but to his astonishment it disappeared as quickly and entirely as if swallowed by the earth. Not a little startled and puzzled, he hastened home, but kept his own counsel.

The next morning he proceeded to school more early than usual and spent some time in reconnoitering the walk of the ghost, and evidently to his satisfaction, for the broad smile that illuminated his face as he entered the school room, appeared to assure the pupils that their teacher was in the best humor, and they would accordingly receive many indulgences.

At recess a number of pretty heads were in close consultation, and Sue Salmon, a black-eyed beauty said with a pout:

"Wasn't it mean for Mr. Cheney to threaten to whip any one who went up to the Gipsy encampment? Just as if he dared to do it!"

"I would like to see him ferrule my hand," chimed in May Ellis.

"Or mine, either!" exclaimed Kitty Dalton. "What's the use of being such cowardly ninnyes, girls? Let's go in spite of him."

"I will pay for any girl who will go with me to-day to have her fortune told," laughed Sue Salmon, merrily.

"Will you? Then we will all go, even if we have to submit to the punishment," answered May.

It was decided to run the risk, and accordingly when school closed at noon they marched off boldly to learn the mystery of the future.

"It must be half past one o'clock at least," exclaimed one of the number, as they were hastening back from their visit to the Gipsy camp, half repentant and anxious to know what would be the result of their breaking the law.

"I wish we hadn't gone," sighed Kit-

ty ruefully. "It was all your fault, Sue."

"I know it," returned the young lady with a merry laugh; "and I am ready not only to take my share of punishment, but yours as well."

"It is all very well to talk," said May, "but you are sure you will get off with the lightest penalty, and that you can do anything you please with Paul Cheney."

"Can I? Well, then, I'll shield you for your disobedience. So cheer up and be brave. Here we are, and school has commenced."

They marched in and took their seats, and lifted their guilty eyes to encounter the indignantly flashing ones of their much abused teacher. Of all the scholars, Sue was the prettiest, most lovable and most trying. She laughed his most serious and just reproofs to scorn, and when she found he was really wounded, her great black eyes would flash up to him through tears and appeal to be forgiven. And somehow his voice always tuned itself lower when he addressed her, and in spite of himself she managed to throw upon him the solving of all her most difficult problems. She would come up to him with such a pretty pleading pout, with "My head aches so," and protest she could not do her algebra unassisted; or "Might I not be excused from writing that dreadful composition for just this once, please?" And promised to do anything else he wished; and she looked so winsome, pretty and bright when he yielded that she usually carried the day.

So, when the master, in a hard, cold voice commanded the young ladies who were late to school to leave their seats and take places before his desk, to his surprise Sue said something in a whisper to her companions, and came gracefully and quickly forward alone, and leaning her white arms upon his desk as for support to her trembling limbs, said:

"Mr. Cheney, we have been to see the Gypsies, but I alone am to blame, and am ready to take the punishment you think the rest have merited together with what is my just due."

"Oh! you wish to make yourself a sort of scapegoat for your companions?" he questioned, with a flushed face.

"Yes, sir, if you please," murmured Sue.

"Well, if I don't please? I think you have sins enough of your own to answer for, without shouldering those of others."

"But really and truly," pleaded she, with tears in her glorious eyes, "I am alone to blame. They would not have gone but for me, and you will make me perfectly wretched if you punish them, when the fault was all mine," and she sobbed audibly.

"I should be sorry to do that," he answered. "It is enough that you make every day of my life wretched without my retaliating, and if you will answer for the good behavior of your companions in future it shall be as you desire."

"I will," promised Sue, but she grew deadly pale, to the lips, as he extended his hand to receive hers.

The next moment her little rosy palm lay in his great broad one, above which the ruler was poised for the blow; and though their hands were hidden behind the desk, the blows could be distinctly heard.

"One, two, three, four—one for each truant," said the teacher, looking down into the eyes of Sue with an expression none but she could interpret.

The next instant the face of Sue was buried in her handkerchief, and her cheeks crimsoned as with shame. Then she spoke in a suppressed voice to the teacher, and he had to bend low to hear her.

"Who is the scapegoat now?" she questioned, and the dimples betrayed that her emotion was laughter, and if her eyes were filled with tears they were not sorrowful ones.

"Never mind," was answered by the teacher, as he bit his moustache to hide a smile. "You may take your seat now."

"What a generous soul," murmured Sue, as she laid her head upon the desk, "I knew he wouldn't strike me. His broad hand entirely covered mine and received every blow. How the girls would laugh if they knew it. But I won't tell. That shall be our little secret."

The remainder of the afternoon she studied very diligently and recited cleverly, though there was a very saucy light burning in her brown eyes that argued ill for some one.

When school closed for the day, the girls flocked around her with many expressions of sympathy.

"It was so good and noble in you, Sue, to take all the blame and the punishment," exclaimed May.

"And how ridiculous he looked pounding the little hand of a lady," added Kitty. "I am sure he must think very little of himself, and, as for me, I hate him."

"So do I," said Annie Miller, "and

would sit up all night to find time to despise him."

"Don't be fools!" interrupted Sue, with a flash of anger. "I think he was very kind and generous to let us off as easy as he did, for we were wrong and he right."

"I thought it belonged to a gentleman's code of honor never to strike a woman!" answered May, with a sneer.

"The truth is," replied Sue, "he fixed the penalty so severe and unrelenting that he supposed no one would disobey, and when he was forced to fulfill the law he punished one girl in place of four, and as it was neither of you, I think you ought to be satisfied. Suppose we let the subject drop."

"So be it. But if he remains at the school-house late again to-night; shan't we haunt him?"

"Yes," said Sue, "and it is my turn to be the ghost. There is jolly fun in that."

Meanwhile Paul Cheney was again writing to his city chum, and in conclusion he said:

"I have had a hard day. The girls were unusually provoking, and the knuckles of my left hand are very much swollen, from an injury received while punishing one of them. You need not be surprised to hear that I have given up teaching. The Plainville Academy is proving too much for me, and any day I may drop in upon you."

The letter finished, he started for his boarding place, but as he approached the grave-yard there flitted before him a white-robed ghost, which disappeared, as he neared it, with a mysterious facility. But, nothing daunted, he pressed rapidly onward to an immense hollow tree and forced his way into its depths. There was a smothered cry of alarm, the removing of a sheet, and Sue Salmon stood panting in the arms of Paul Cheney.

"So, I have at last captured the ghost," he said laughingly.

"O, please let me go. See, you have frightened the girls, and they have all run away. So please let me go."

"I do not please just now, Miss Susie. I have a long account to settle with this particular ghost."

"Then settle it quickly, and let me go," she said, impatiently stamping her little foot.

"Well, let me see. How many nights have I been haunted on my way home?"

"This is my first night," asserted Sue. "All the girls took it by turns."

"Ah, did they? And you are generous enough to again be their scapegoat, and take their punishment along with your own?"

"Yes, yes; only please let me go."

"And there were four of you," and stooping down to her flushing face he left four kisses burning there.

"I will never forgive you," she exclaimed, struggling from him, and, standing a little apart, began twisting her long, loosened hair, and coiling it at the back of her pretty head.

"I shall be sorry for that, very sorry, Susie dear. As I told you to-day, you make my life miserable, yet I love you with all my soul."

"And I hate you," she replied passionately.

"Are you going, Susie," questioned he, "and without a single kind word?"

"Yes!" she snapped out, "and give me that sheet. I am sure I don't know what mother will say, because it is so torn."

"One little word," he continued, "before you go. We may not have another opportunity to see each other alone, as I shall leave this place next week."

"Going away?" she asked with a little quiver in her voice, and staying her steps.

"The term will soon be out, and I shall not teach longer—least of all those who hate and refuse to be guided by me."

She drew nearer to his side, with downcast eyes, and giving him her hand said softly:

"Forgive me, Mr. Cheney, I have been very unkind and rebellious. To-day you bruised your own hand to save mine. I saw how red and swollen it was, and that was the most severe punishment you could have inflicted on me."

"A bruised hand is nothing to a bruised heart," he replied.

"I did not know that I was injuring so important an organ."

"When you say you hate me darling—"

"I—I did not mean I hated you. I am very grateful, and—and so sorry you are going away."

"Then if you love me," he whispered, twisting an arm about her, "bid me stay."

"Then—stay—stay, only—"

"Only what, Susie?"

"I am done being scapegoat for any mortal or ghost either."

"That is right, and henceforth receive only rewards."

What she might have said in response he never knew, as her lips were for the moment effectually sealed.

A few months later Paul Cheney's city friend was not surprised at his return, though he was at his bringing back a bride, the chief of his tormentors.

### For THE TIMES. Excursion From Altoona to Atlantic City.

ALTOONA, August 17, 1880.  
Our train started Friday evening, August 13th, at 9:40, from the Altoona depot, and as it was a special train and a little behind time, we were soon thundering on our way from the mountain city to the sea. There were six hundred and twenty-eight passengers on the train, including the band—all Altoona employees of the P. R. R. Company. There were thirteen cars, all full. The first stop we made was in Lewistown Narrows to take in water; next stopping place was Harrisburg, at 9 A. M. Saturday morning. There we changed engines, and train men. The committee then went through the train with the conductor. Our next stopping place was at Lancaster city at about 4 A. M. Here was the finest depot that we passed on the trip, but did not stop long here. Now it soon began to get daylight, affording us a chance to see some of Lancaster county. The country here is generally level, with splendid farms, and nice houses, good corn, clover, tobacco, &c. On nearing Philadelphia the conductor takes one ticket (we had six tickets altogether, and here the conductor tore off the first one.) We arrived in Philadelphia at 6:05, Saturday morning, and now there was a rush for the street cars; some would wait till they could get a chance to get through the gate, but ran and jumped over the board fence, all wanting to get in the cars first in order to obtain seats. I got in and got a seat anyhow. I am unable to tell the number of street cars there was. We went from the P. R. R. depot along Market street to the wharf, and the like for fruit, vegetables, etc., I never saw before. Thousands of bushels of peaches piled up, and the largest ones I ever saw; also apples, tomatoes and cabbage, with beef and mutton piled on both sides of the street for a distance of seven miles.

There is a large court house here, but is not yet finished. The inside is built of brick, the outside marble, and is said to cost when finished, the sum of \$7,000,000.

Here the conductor of the street car takes another ticket. The horses are kept trotting all the way. We arrived at the wharf at 7:15, A. M. and here we got mixed up considerably, as there were three or four excursion parties here, some going to Atlantic City and some to Cape May, but they did not part us here and we all crossed the Delaware together, on the steamer Delaware. The band gave us music while crossing the river. It took but five or ten minutes to cross over, and then we were in the city of Camden, N. J., which is a large city, of nearly all brick houses. And now was the time to get lost, the trains starting for Cape May and Atlantic City, both, some of our crowd did get lost and went to Cape May. We left Camden at 7:30 Saturday morning and were soon thundering over the Jersey sands at a fearful speed. New Jersey is low and level where the West Jersey road crosses. The railroad is built on sand, and the rails fastened down with dykes. There is but a single track, and there is water standing all along the road. We passed some nice orchards in New Jersey, and bearing good crops. Apples and peaches are plenty there, and also pumpkins and watermelons are in abundance. But near the Ocean there is no farming done, on account I suppose of the land overflowing with water. There is a great many pines there and water standing all around them. At 10:40 the Ocean is in sight, and at 10:55 we were standing on "The sands of the boundless sea," looking over the wide Atlantic. As far as the eye would carry, the Ocean looks blue, and appears to rise in the distance.

Myself and a friend were standing on the coast on dry sand talking, and looking in an opposite direction from the Ocean.

"When a wave came up out of the sea, and said to us all, make room for me."

and came out farther than we expected, and wet our feet. There were people in bathing as far as we could see. I suppose there were two or three thousand in the sea at once, and thousands standing on the shore watching.

We saw lots of small sail ships on the ocean, but no large ones, and they were from two to thirty miles out from the coast. There is no landing here. Atlantic City is near one-fourth of a mile from the shore, between which there is nothing but a white sand resembling pewter sand, and while walking through it we would sink in ankle deep. Ladies would sit down on this sand in their good clothes and it would all brush off easily. The first pavement next to the ocean is made of boards and is about six feet from the ground, the others are laid with large flat stones. The streets are as level as a floor, and very solid. They run street cars on the bare streets; they have no track. They have some elegant hotels here, and some fine looking churches. They charge at the hotels from 25 cents to \$1.25 per meal. The performances here, are dancing, flying horses, run by steam, and swings, run by steam. While swinging on them you can see all over the city; charge ten cents per ride.

We were seven hours at the sea. We left Atlantic City at 6:15 Saturday evening. When we came back through New Jersey it rained for about half the way, and was very dark. It was reported that there were two ladies that belonged to our excursion left behind, but I don't know whether it was so or not. We reached Camden about 10 o'clock on Saturday night, and arrived in Altoona at 8 o'clock on Sunday morning. Our tickets for the round trip, which is 688 miles, cost us \$2.50, the cheapest excursion that was ever got up in Altoona.

J. W. HUTCHINSON.

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