

## HAUNTS OF SPIRITS.

PLACES WHERE SPOOKS HOLD CARNIVAL.

HOUSES GIVEN OVER TO TRADITIONAL SPECTRES—CROSS-ROADS GHOSTS.

The historian of Lord Elsin's mission to China observes that in all countries the sports of childhood are essentially the same, though they may differ in name and unimportant details. It is much the same with popular superstition. The Russian boor whispers a prayer and the Bedouin shepherd mutters a curse at sight of a ghost, but the ghosts themselves betray a strong family likeness, and there is something about haunted houses that would enable

AN EXPERT IN SPOOKS

to recognize them at first sight as an experienced farmer would point out a deserted pasture or a neglected orchard.

Even at this late hour of the nineteenth century the surface of the habitable globe is dotted with homesteads that have been abandoned for what a learned British lawyer called 'hyperphysical reasons,' the obtuseness of preternatural visitors who refused to be exercised or explained away. The house often anything but untenable from an architectural point of view, is

RELINGUISHED TO THE SPOOKS AND SPARROWS.

but its desolation does not attract the vandals of the neighbourhood. Doors and windows appear to have been left untouched for years, and the appearance of the surroundings, the rank luxuriance of the lawn and the undisturbed fences distinguish it from a domicile that has become a common loading ground, after having been abandoned for such prosaic reasons as a collapse of mortgage or the owner's removal to a more convenient business place.

Revenants, that is, 'returners,' the French peasant calls haunting spooks. The chief reason for which they are supposed to revisit the glimpses of the moon might be summed up as missed opportunities for the gratification of a ruling passion.

THE PRANKS AND WEIRD NOISES

by which goblins have monopolized the possession of a building have thus often a by purpose of revenge. The last occupant of the Chateau de Blamny, where Voltaire saw 'the biggest spider-webs in Europe,' had been ousted through chicanery and died in exile, but his ghost returned with spectral reinforcements, and soon obliged the usurper to sell the place at a sacrifice, since the reason of his removal had been disclosed by the panic-stricken domestics.

Eight miles west of Bellinzona, near the northern extremity of the Lago Maggiore on the Swiss border of Italy, there is a castle known as the Casa di Locarno which contrived to weather all the war-storms of the middle ages, but about a hundred years ago had to be abandoned in stress of spooks. One afternoon, during the incidental absence of the resident proprietor, an old beggar woman knocked at the door, and being half dead with the fatigue of a long tramp through a pelting sleet storm, was conducted to a vacant guest room and permitted to spread her mantle on a lag full of straw near a comfortable fire. Toward evening the storm increased in fury, and shortly after dark Count Locarno, the owner of the castle, unexpectedly returned with a friend, and at sight of the unwelcome tenant of the guest chamber, lost his temper and peremptorily ordered the old gipsy to pick up her bundle and be gone. The poor creature tried to comply, but was so slow in gathering up her rags that the Count lost his patience altogether and not only hustled her out of the room, but pushed her violently down stairs and ordered his servant to fling her plunder in the barn; but on second thought it occurred to him that it would not do to drive a human being out in a winter storm at that hour of the night. The afterthought of hospitality came too late. The old beggar woman had staggered out into the street, and the next morning was found dead under a hedge where she had crouched for shelter. In a semi-feudal country of the eighteenth century a trifle like that would not have been mentioned, but soon afterward it was whispered that

THE CASTLE OF LOCARNO WAS HAUNTED.

Strange groans and the noise of rustling straw had been heard after dark, and servant after servant was discharged for idiotic superstition, as the master of the castle called it, till he came to the conclusion that the building was too rickety and damp to be decently tenable, and that his family needed a change of air.

Climatic explanations of that sort are, however, not apt to prevail against the verdict of popular opinion, and in the next neighbourhood of a matter-of-fact city like Cincinnati, O., a fine hill top building of sixty-eight rooms (originally used as a Baptist seminary), remained vacant for nearly twenty years after the neighbourhood gossip had once saddled it with the name of

THE 'HAUNTED BARRACKS.'

A syndicate of capitalists purchased it for a trifle, and partly recouped themselves by leasing the adjoining park for a pasture. But their attempts to get renters for the airy rooms remained in vain, though tramps now and then rose above local prejudice and established a dormitory in the attic, and the business manager at last was actually obliged to pay a man for enjoying the comforts of a fine hill park residence in the role of a janitor. The founder of the building had failed during the war and relinquished it with a reluctance which was probably supposed to have influenced his *post mortem* transaction, since his ghost was said to have been seen prowling about the deserted corridors.

In the chaos period of mediæval anarchy and again during the crusades the care of many an old burgh devolved upon the female ancestors of families who still see their spirits wander about the scenes of their solitude. Grillparzer's drama, 'Die Ahn-Frau,' is founded upon the story of an apparition of that sort in the castle of Orlamunde, but the 'White Lady' is one of the ghosts whose name is legion, and she haunts the halls or ruins of at least half a hundred mansions of Christian Europe. The 'Wellin Lady Guelph,' as we might translate her, was seen in the castle of Brunswick the night before the battle of Zena, and it is said that her former apparition had all but determined the representative of her house to resign the command of the Prussian army.

A NAMELESS, BUT NOT VOICELESS, SPECTRE

in white stalks about the royal palace at Stockholm and was once seen by two princes who were engaged in a game of chess with their tutor for referee. A slight noise attracted the attention of one of the players to the door of the adjoining

room, and, noticing his affrighted stare, his brother, too, looked around, and in the flicker of the wax candles saw a white shape standing as if in an attitude of prayer. Then it pointed toward the window with a low moan and vanished like a pale mist. The tutor turned around too late to see the phantom, but had heard the moaning sound, and he took a note of the day and hour. The mails travelled slowly in those days, but about two weeks after a courier from the seat of war arrived with the report that on the evening of the apparition the King of Sweden had expired on the battlefield of Luetzen.

CROSS-ROAD GHOSTS

were supposed to be the spirits of travellers who had perished in defending their property against highwaymen, and who haunted the scene of the tragedy either to warn other wayfarers or to reveal the place where the assassins had secreted their corpses. But evil spirits, too, could now and then be seen at the crossing of two roads. 'Were wolves,' the author of the 'Witches' Hammer' writes, 'trot along the highway till they come to a place where another road crosses, and when there the symbol of salvation obliges them to stand irresolute, till they bethink themselves of turning aside and pursuing their journey by a roundabout path.'

THE SPANISH-AMERICAN GHOSTS,

by the way, are less squeamish on that point, and often remove a wayside cross merely to put the padre to the trouble of fishing it out of a frog pond. A spook who haunts the old military road from Puebla to the sea coast played that trick so often that the orthodox neighbours tried to trap him in the act, but he made his escape by suddenly assuming the form of a coyote and slipping off into the chaparral with a derisive yelp.

MEXICAN SPOOKS

also hang about the hiding places of buried treasure, and attempts to discover their hoards may once in a while lead to practical results in a country where the bosom of mother earth is really the most popular savings bank. An Acapulco sharper went too far in trying to sell a pamphlet with full directions for securing the assistance of a bouanza goblin, and was arrested for complicity in a charge of trespass.

Condorcet, in a note of his description of a journey to the Levant, informs us that the spirits of Tartar horsemen are supposed to career about the walls of Banorah and startle the camping caravans with their midnight shouts. Similar sounds were for centuries believed to have been heard on the battlefield of Marathon. Not the vanquished but the victors indulged in these

MIDNIGHT ORGIES,

probably in a supposed attempt to enjoy a *post-mortem* share of the triumph which their valour had prepared for their surviving countrymen. The wild Odin worship of the pagan Goths, too, reserved the rewards of Walhalla for the victorious fighter, whose spirit the valkyres rescued from the pile of the slain. They alone were conducted to the throne of the war god, and after his resignation in favour of the scriptural deity, accompanied him on his nocturnal excursions, while the best the unheroic dead could hope for was rest and oblivion.

## THE OLD FRIENDS.

The old friends, the old friends  
We loved when we were young,  
With sunshine in their faces,  
And music on their tongue;  
The bees are in the almond-flower,  
The birds renew their strain;  
But the old friends, once lost to us,  
Can never come again.

The old friends, the old friends!  
Their brow is lined with care;  
They've furrows in the faded cheek,  
And silver in the hair;  
But to me they are old friends still  
In youth and bloom the same,  
As when we drove the flying ball,  
Or shouted in the game.

The old men, the old men,  
How slow they creep along!  
How naughtily we scoffed at them  
In days when we were young;  
Their prosing and their dozing,  
Their prate of times gone by,  
Their shiver like an aspen-leaf  
If but a breath went by.

But we, we are the old men now,  
Our blood is faint and chill;  
We cannot leap the mighty brook,  
Or climb the breakneck hill.  
We moulder down the shortest cut,  
We rest on stick or stile,  
And the young men half asbamed to laugh  
Yet pass us with a smile.

But the young men, the young men,  
Their strength is fair to see;  
The straight back, and the springy stride,  
The eye as falcon free;  
The shout above the frolic wind  
As up the hill they go;  
But, though so high above us now,  
They soon shall be as low.

O weary, weary draw the years  
As life draws near the end;  
And sadly, sadly fall the tears  
For loss of love and friend.  
But we'll not doubt there's good about  
In all of humankind;  
So here's a health before we go  
To those we leave behind!

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