

stone, one among a million seemingly; behind this nature's "push button" is a spring, which, upon the utterance of a little fairy-tale magic, or an ordinary push without the magic, will swing open a clay door large enough to comfortably admit a man. From this, a short hallway leads to a spacious room some ten feet in height and ten or twelve in length and width. Here a white pine table with innumerable stains, a broken box or two, a few broken bottles, whose contents contribute their share to the real horror of the place, and were of assistance changing a mortal into a ghost no doubt. While the guests made merry in the room above the wise few apparently visited the barroom for a glass and a chat, but really to slip into the little clay door where they knew great piles of shining twenties awaited, should fickle fortune turn the tide their way. Here the clank of gold was muffled, and an occasional sharp scream or the sharp report of a pistol were alike heard only by those upon whom the clay door had closed. Why the cellar was finally abandoned is the strangest part of all, for it deals with the superstitious side of human nature.

The story is something like this: An unusual crowd had gathered in the cellar that night, great sport was announced, for a stranger, a tourist, foreign, rich, and with love of the game, was to be initiated. The little clock at the end sounded one, two; still the gold clinked, and the piles increased and diminished with the fancy of the coquettish goddess of chance, who was now kind to the hardy miner to the right, now to the pale-faced stranger, whose eyes gleamed and brightened as he stacked up in front of him the piles of gold. Three, four; the little clock was nearing the next hour when the final game was announced. The stake was high—a last swig at the bottle all around—then silence; the game had begun. "Deal two," said the red face, without raising his eyes; three came from another. Then they noticed that the stranger, who had out the deal, required only one to complete his hand. A gleam of suspicion shot across the table. "Raise one hundred," growled one; "five hundred," said the next; "ten"; the last had risked his all, so ten was the limit. "Call." The miner displayed four kings, and prepared to take the coin, but the stranger, without a word, spread four aces on the table face up. The words "Fair play" and "Cheat"—the muttered threats were lost in the general brawl which followed. The gentlemanly foreigner, with satirical smiles, said nothing, but calmly donned coat and gloves, and, without a glance at the crestfallen loser, reached for his bag of coin. Like a flash across the table shout out a brawny hand, grabbed that of the stranger, laid it flat upon the table, and, before the startled, half-drunken on-lookers could interfere, drew his knife and in a moment held up the first and second fingers, saying, with an oath: "Finished his cheating!" The stranger stared at the blood dripping upon the earthen floor, then, with quick decision, he looked his contempt, and, drawing his slight form up in dignity the pale face gleamed more pale, the low narrow eyes glistened, and a curse, blood curdling in its awfulness, fell from the thin lips. "Shall never have peace while you live." He finished, then picked up the knife—the same that had severed his fingers—and in a moment his life blood was staining the clay.

The horror was not that of seeing a man die, but the curse—the curse. With blanched faces the now sober men dragged the body out to the closet stairway, where it was subsequently discovered. That night the clay doors were closed never to be opened again, and rumour will have it that from that day to this the inn has never been on a paying basis. With the finding of the shapely glove with the two fingers missing, the tale ends, only to be revived again and again with the reported appearance of the real or imaginary spectre, who is always seen holding high his right hand with the two fingers gone. After a

fruitless search for this mysterious door or secret spring in the clay bank, everybody started again, this time over a low, rumbling sound. I noticed how every brave put a hand on the pistol pocket. The wind rattled a loose piece of glass from a broken window in the bar-room, the candles flared wickedly, the house trembled, everybody held his breath. Then the owner, with a gleam of mischief in his eye, said: "That is the car coming over the bridge. A mirthless joke or two was responded to by little forced laughs, and we left the basement, where I fancy a million invisible spectre eyes were curiously looking on, and went upstairs again.

Not more than a year ago a tramp was found hanging to a tree back of the tavern. Some one dared some one else to go up to the tree—a few women demurred—at last all decided to go. The little grove surrounding the house on the hill swayed with the wind, sobbed and sighed as he stopped near a little tumble-down fence and flashed our lights over the mounds covered with a thick growth of tangled weeds, mingled with half-stifed roses. A little private burying ground—relatives who were mourned or victims? Because of the roses, presumably the former. To one side we found an old-fashioned well, with the traditional moss-covered bucket, only in this instance the bucket stares up from the bottom, for the rope has long since rotted away.

Six wells in all are scattered about in the grove within a radius of half an acre. Truly a more ideal stalking ground for restless spirits could not be found. It is small wonder that with all the weird surroundings, the place has gained its reputation for ghostly tenants.

After taking a look at the tree which aided the tramp in his flight from this plane to another we made our way back to the entrance. "Sa-a-a-y," in a stage whisper.

Everybody stopped. "I saw something white move." "Where!" (Still in whispers, just as if a ghost could not hear a whisper.)

"Up there," and a black-looking window at one end of the shed-like barn was pointed out. We all laughed nervously and said, "All imagination"; then eyes began to grow round. There was something and it was white. "Look there!" Ah, it had vanished! We stood fascinated; twice, three times it came. Some of the less nervous suspected a trick. The others simply shook and said nothing. Upon investigation this mysterious something was found to be the nose of a white horse stabled in the shed. Upon hearing voices at that time of night his curiosity was aroused, and he made an attempt to look out, but the rope being too short, only his nose appeared.

What will not the imagination form out of a horse's white nose in a dark window of a haunted stable! That being settled, we all entered again through the pantry window and selected the old-time sitting-room for the ghost to do his specialty in. We sat about on boxes, on pieces of barrel, or anything that is part of the furnishing of a vacant house. The lights flared and sent up little wreaths of smoke as the draughts whispered through the holes in the window. Some one held up a candle, and said: "Look, it has wound a death sheet." After that superstition had been explained, another proved curious as to what these particular ghosts were supposed to do for a living, elank chains or howl death wails? At the last word, a long, blood-curdling shriek pierced the air. All came to their feet with a bound, then sat down again looking rather foolish, as the supplementary tooth-toot of the Southern Pacific whistle stamped the first shriek as decidedly from this sphere. A snatch of the banquet scene from Macbeth was rendered by an ambitious student, who I fancy will never have a better inspiration than that occasion furnished.

At last the two hands of the watch pointed to 12, that mystic hour when graveyards yawn. By

common consent silence reigned, but in that peculiar atmosphere silence was far less comforting than the most gruesome babble. My hair seemed ready to assume a perpendicular position at every blast, for many were the curious freakings, rappings, and unaccountable noises caused by a mischievous wind and a rickety old building.

The tall trees on either side of the tavern rustled their branches in fantastic harmony; a drizzle of rain which finally grew into a sharp shower lent its cheerfulness to the occasion. To the evident relief of the assembly, nothing supernatural made its appearance—more's the pity—for it would have had an en-

thusiastic audience, wrought up to a splendid state of nervous appreciation. With more story-telling and conjectures as to the origin of ghost stories, haunted house tales, etc., the retelling of rumour emanating from the residents in the vicinity of the old Jewish Cemetery who have seen vapoury shadows fitting about among the tombstones in the dark hours, the time slowly passed.

Finally the clouds began to lift, the rain and wind were less violent, and we waved our farewell to the spooky tavern. Never have the lights of early dawn appeared more welcome than on this occasion after spending ten hours trying to wrest a secret from another world.

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