

# OUR STORY TELLER



## A TRUE GHOST STORY.

NOT many years ago people used to sneer at ghosts and ghost stories much more than they do now, and one would constantly hear people whisper to one another while some individual was relating his or her experience: "Ah! It is very odd that these ghost stories should always be related at second or third hand. Now, I want to see a person who personally has seen the ghost, and then, I will believe!"

Yes, people are more accustomed to hearing about ghosts now, and yet, even now, should it be a wife, daughter, or sister who ventures to narrate some supernatural experience, she is pook-pooked or laughed at or told to "take a pill."

Now, I have seen a ghost, and am prepared to attest most solemnly to the fact, as well as to the truth of every word here set down. I have, of course, avoided names, but nothing else; so, without further preamble, I will state my case.

Some years ago I became the object of the infatuated adoration of a person of my own age and sex, and I use the word "infatuated" advisedly, because I feel now, as I did at the time, that neither I nor any mortal that ever lived could possibly be worthy of the overwhelming affection which my poor friend lavished upon me. I, on my side, was not ungrateful toward her, for I loved her in return very dearly, but when I explain that I was a wife and the mother of young children, and that she was unmarried, it will easily be understood that our devotion to each other must of necessity be rather one-sided, and this fact caused some dispeace between us at times.

For many years my friend held a post at court, which she resigned soon after she began to know me; and although her royal mistress in her gracious kindness assigned two houses to her, she gave them both up to be free to live near me in B—; indeed, she gave up relatives, old servants and comforts in order that she might come and lie (and die, alas!) in lodgings over a shop near me. But she was not happy. She "gloomed" over the inevitable fact that in consequence of the difference in her circumstances and mine, I could not be with her every day and all day long. I think she was naturally of an unhappy disposition, being deeply, passionately and unjustifiably jealous, and also painfully incapable of taking things and people as they were. All this gave me often much annoyance; but we were, all the same, sometimes very cheerful and happy together, and sometimes the reverse.

Later on, she, poor soul, was taken ill, and during months of fluctuating health I nursed her—sometimes in hope, sometimes without—and at moments during her illness she found strange comfort in foretelling to me, after the most "uncanny" fashion, things which she declared would happen to me after her death. They were mostly trivialities—little episodes concerning people and things over whom we had talked and laughed together, for she was gifted with a keen sense of the ridiculous.

Among other things, she said to me one afternoon: "This bazaar for which we are working (she had been helping me for weeks for a charity bazaar, and I can now see her dainty little hands as she manipulated the delicate muslin and lace. Poor, poor L—!) I shall be dead before it takes place; and I shall see you at your stall, and on one of the days of the bazaar an old lady will come up to you and say: 'Have you any of poor Miss L—'s work?' mentioning me. And you will answer: 'Yes, here is some!' and you will show her this which I am working; and she'll say, 'Yes,' again; and she'll carry it all off and say she buys it for poor Miss L—'s sake.' And I shall know and see it all!"

I remember repeating, wonderingly, "What lady?"

She answered, dreamily, "Oh! I don't know—but some old lady! You'll see!" And I am bound to say that this is exactly what occurred at the bazaar months after her death; an old lady with whom I was not acquainted did buy all her work, having asked for it and carried it away "for her sake!" An old lady, too, whom I had never seen.

One other curious circumstance which attended her death was that, after looking forward with more than usual gloom to my coming birthday, which she said would be a more than commonly happy anniversary—that was the very day she died!

It seems that one of the sharpest re- proofs which I ever experienced in my life consisted in the fact that I was

not with my dearest friend at the moment that she passed away. She had made me promise that I would be with her at that time, and God knows I had the fullest intention of fulfilling her wish, but on that very evening, of all others, I was called away, and she died in my absence. I had been sitting by her bedside all the afternoon, and all that evening I had held her dear hand and had kept whispering comforting words in her ear; but latterly she had made no response and was seemingly unconscious.

Suddenly a message came from my house (not a hundred yards it was away) saying my husband wanted me at once, as one of my children was ill. I looked at the nurse, who assured me there was nothing immediate impending, so, stooping over my poor friend, I whispered,—"at the same time pressing a kiss on her forehead—that half an hour should see me at her side again. But she took no notice, and much against my will I hastily and noiselessly left the room.

Throwing a shawl over my head, I hurried across the square, and as I passed the church the clock struck 12, and I suddenly remembered that to-day was my birthday. I got back in less than half an hour and on my return heard, to my everlasting sorrow, that I had not been gone ten minutes before my dear L— became restless and uneasy, then looked hastily round the room, gave a cry, then there came a rush of blood to her mouth, and after a few painful struggles she sank back, gasped once or twice and never moved again.

Of course I thought then, and do to this day, that she was looking round the room for me and that she died feeling that I had broken my faith with her. A bitter, never-failing regret! I have given this light sketch of the feelings which existed between me and my poor friend before narrating the circumstances of her supernatural visit to me just to emphasize the facts of the alluring fascination, the intense affection, which existed between us during her lifetime, and which, I firmly believe, have lasted beyond her grave.

Quite a year and a half after her death my poor L—, with what motive I know not—unless it may have been, as I sometimes fondly hope, to assure me that she understood and sympathized with my sorrow at having failed her at the moment of her extremity—appeared to me. She came once, but never again. It occurred thus: I had been suffering all day from brow ache and had gone early to bed, but not to sleep. All the evening I had been kept painfully awake by that same church clock which I have mentioned above.

It seemed to me to strike oftener, louder and more slowly than any clock I had ever had the misfortune to come across. Of course my ailment of the moment caused the clock's vagaries to appear peculiarly painful, and I bore the annoyance very restlessly, with my face turned pettishly to the wall, but when the midnight hour began to chime I felt as though I could bear it no longer. Muttering an impatient exclamation, I turned in my bed so as to face the room, and looking across it I saw my poor L— standing close to a screen between me and the door, looking at me.

She was in her usual dress, wearing what was then called a "cross-over," which was tied behind, while her bonnet, which she was always in the habit of taking off as she came upstairs, was, as usual, hanging by the ribbon on her arm. She had a smile on her face, and I distinctly noticed her lovely little white ears, which were always my admiration and which were only half covered by her soft brown hair.

She stood a minute it seemed—looking at me, then she glided toward me, and I, half apprehensive that she was about to throw herself on my bed, exclaimed, jumping up in a sitting posture: "Dearest! What brings you here so late?"

With deep reverence he it spoken; but as soon as these words were out of my mouth I was irresistibly reminded of those spoken, holy writ tells us, by St. Peter at the awful moment of the transfiguration! Awed and dazed at the sight of the spiritual visitants, we are told he uttered words "not knowing what he said." These words of mine also seemed to leap to my lips, with but little meaning in them, if any.

As soon, however, as my voice had ceased the apparition disappeared and I remained some moments motionless. One of the most curious features of

the case is that, although I was very especially restless and awake at the moment of the appearance, I recognized my friend so completely that I forgot also to recognize the fact that she had died, or rather it happened too quickly for me to bring that fact to mind. Indeed, it all took place in such a flash, in such a moment of time—so much quicker than I can tell it—and she looked so exactly like her well-known self that till she had disappeared I really believed I was seeing her in the flesh! Of course as soon as I had time to reflect I remembered and realized what it was I had seen!

I was not frightened, but I felt colder than I had felt in my life, and I have never felt so cold since, but the moisture seemed to pour off my body. I called on one to my assistance. All I realized was that God had permitted me to see her once more, and that perhaps he might send her to me again. But he has not done so, and probably now he never will.

I lay awake all the night afterward, hoping for—and, I think, almost expecting—her again, and after the day dawned I fell asleep.

Before telling my story to anyone and dreading unspcakably all the doubting and sarcastic speeches which such a narration would inevitably call forth, I sent for my doctor, an old and trusted friend, and after making him talk rationally to me for some time, I asked him whether he considered me in an exalted state or whether I had ever betrayed any hysterical tendencies. He reassured me heartily on these points, and then asked my reasons for such questions.

I thereupon opened my heart to him, and he neither ridiculed nor disbelieved, but, on the contrary, told me another case of the same kind which had lately happened to a friend of his, but he strongly advised me to keep my own counsel at present, which I did for some time, and kindly added that he not only did not look upon me as a lunatic, but simply as a woman for whom one corner of the curtain which guarded the unseen had been lifted.

In conclusion, I repeat I am ready to vouch for the truth of every word here set down, and also, should it be required, to give names—in private—to satisfy those who doubt.—Strand Magazine.

### Sugar and Muscle.

The subject of sugar as a food producing muscular power has been discussed by Dr. Vaughan Harely. From a brief summary of his paper we make the following extracts. During a twenty-four hours' fast on one day water alone was drunk; on another five hundred grammes of sugar were taken in an equal quantity of water. It was thus found that the sugar not only prolonged the time before fatigue occurred, but caused an increase of sixty-one to seventy-six per cent in the muscular work done. In the next place the effect of sugar added to the meals was investigated.

The muscle energy producing effect of sugar was found to be so great that 200 grammes added to a small meal increased the total amount of work done from 6 to 39 per cent. Sugar (250 grammes—about eight ounces) was now added to a large mixed meal, when it was found not only to increase the amount of work done from 8 to 16 per cent, but increased the resistance against fatigue. As a concluding experiment, 250 grammes of sugar were added to the meals of a full diet day, causing the work done during the period of eight hours to be increased 22 to 26 per cent.—London Public Opinion.

### Sir Charles' Idea.

Miss Frances Power Cobbe once discussed evolution with Sir Charles Lyell, when some of the party had betrayed the idea that "survival of the fittest" meant of the best. Sir Charles left the room (continues Miss Cobbe, in her recently published memoirs) and went down stairs, but suddenly rushed back into the drawing-room, and said to me all in a breath, standing on the rug: "I'll explain it to you in a minute! Suppose you had been living in Spain three hundred years ago, and had had a sister who was a perfectly commonplace person, and believed everything she was told. Well, your sister would have been happily married and had a numerous progeny, and that would have been the survival of the fittest; but you would have been burnt at an auto-da-fé, and there would have been an end of you. You would have been unsuited to your environment. There! That's evolution! Good-by!" On went his hat, and we heard the hall door close after him before we had done laughing.

### Houses in Canton.

The buildings on each side of the street rarely exceeded twenty feet in height. They were one-storied structures, as a rule. Sometimes there was a distinct upper story, but there the ground floor had a low headway. Frequently balconies ran around inside the open stalls which served as shops, and a half upper floor or loft stretched behind. In fact, when the shops were open, the whole front of the house was taken away. Generally from the eaves of the building light bamboo structures were carried across the streets and hung with grass matting. Sometimes, however, they were more elaborately covered with a substitute for glazing.

His Eye Picked Out by a Crane. Charles Draper, a boy of near Engle-side, Queen Anne's County, Md., was peering into a box in which was confined a crane, when the bird pecked at him, striking him in the eye with its bill. The sight of the eye was entirely destroyed.

A Lawsuit About a Dog. A Connecticut man is about to begin a lawsuit against a young man of his town for selling him a dog that was deaf in both ears.

## AGRICULTURAL NEWS

### THINGS PERTAINING TO THE FARM AND HOME.

Care Should Be Taken in the Selection of Seed Corn—White Clover Fed to Cows Greatly Increases the Yield of Milk and Butter.

#### Gathering Seed Corn.

I am satisfied, from several years' experience, that the best seed corn is that grown upon the farm when proper pains are taken in its selection.

Of all the general crops grown upon the farm, there are few, if any, that show or feel the effects of a change in the conditions of growth more readily than corn. It is often the case that when a new variety is brought on the farm one year's test is not sufficient to determine its value, largely on account that the change in conditions in growth is so great that the effect is felt, and in a majority of cases the longer a variety is grown on the farm, provided good care is taken in the selection of the seed, the better the variety will be adapted to that particular farm. Neglect or carelessness in selecting will soon show in the deterioration of the crop.

But to get the best and have it in the best condition, care must be taken to select in good season. The best plan I have ever seen tried is to go through the field as soon as the grains have begun to harden well. Just before commencing to cut for fodder is a good time, and then select the best ears from the most perfect stalks, leave the husks on and spread out where it can dry thoroughly; then it can be shocked and stored away in a dry place. When this cannot be done conveniently, another way is to select the seed corn when the shucking out is being done. The disadvantage with this is that there is not so good an opportunity for determining what the stalk was. I find that an important item in saving the seed corn is to dry well before storing away, and to keep dry all through the winter. Another item is to select and store away before the corn has been frozen in the field. This is necessary if the vitality is maintained, and good seed is an important item in growing a good crop.—Nebraska Farmer.

#### White Clover for Cows.

One of the most valuable plants for pasture when sown with other kinds is white clover. Its nutritive qualities are considerably better than those of red clover, and it is a hardy, persistent plant. It will grow under the shade of the stronger grass and clover, making a dense bottom that, while it is not available for hay, yet affords a large addition to the feed for pasturing animals. It is beyond reproach for cows and sheep, but for horses has the effect in late summer of salivating them profusely, so much so as to make them quite thin. It has the same effect upon mules, and those animals should, therefore, be kept out of the fields in which it grows to any extent.

It will be a useful occupation for a spare hour or two to scatter a pound of this seed over the pasture, especially where the grass is thin. It will show next season, and once having possession of the ground, it will keep it for several years. It is the best of all honey-producing plants known, and having a long blooming season, the bees make more honey from it than any other source. Its effect upon the yield of milk and butter of the cows is so apparent as to draw from the butter-maker the remark: "The cows are getting the white clover now." And this is always the case when, at this time, the cows are turned into the newly-mown meadows where this plant is abundant.

#### Granular Butter.

It is just at this granular stage of the work of making butter that the important preliminary process, and, therefore, the skill and the judgment of the operator are first tested and shown. First-class butter is not made, and cannot be made, unless the granulation in the churn is of the right standard, and this standard condition cannot be brought out in perfection unless all the preliminary processes have been rightly conducted, and the proper condition secured at every stage of progress. Defects here cannot be corrected in any subsequent process. While, then, it may "require no great skill to make granular butter," regardless of quality, yet a perfect granulation is only secured by the application of the highest knowledge known to the business. So long as this is the case, it seems a proper thing to do to invite butter makers to compare their skill at securing results at this way station of their progress, as well as on the finished product. With a competent maker for a judge, exhibitors will find that securing the highest award will not be a "very easy" thing to do.—Maine Farmer.

#### Tests of Potatoes.

In a large number of experiments at twelve different stations comparisons have been made of methods of cultivating potatoes. Seasons vary so much that the results of different methods are continually contradicting each other. One season potatoes mulched will yield two or three times as much as those grown in the ordinary way, and the next year the results will be almost the opposite.

In trials where direct comparisons were made, results from Alabama, Kansas and Utah favor flat, while Indiana favors ridge cultivation. Maryland, New York and Ohio report practically no difference in yield between flat and ridge culture. Vermont reports that in one season's trial mulching when four inches high gave better results than ridging. Results obtained at the stations in Colorado, Indiana, Michigan and New York are against

mulching. The general tendency seems to be toward thorough preparation of soil and level culture.

Comparisons of deep and shallow cultivation have been made at the Michigan and Utah stations, with very different results. In forty-five trials at the Michigan station the yield of marketable tubers was in forty cases in favor of deep culture, while in Utah shallow culture gave a greater yield than deep. Results are so conflicting that no conclusions can as yet be drawn.

#### The Good and Bad of Inbreeding.

Inbreeding is the only possible way of fixing a strong, prepotent type, capable of reproducing itself every time. If properly done, says the New York World, it will not have a tendency to degenerate any line of blood, but it is essential for the breeder to understand the strong and weak points of his animals and to be particular never to breed weakness to weakness. In fact, weakness should never be bred at all. All such animals should be sent to the butcher, no matter how promising the pedigree. While mediocrity bred to strength will give fair returns, yet the best only are obtained by breeding health and strength to health and strength. These are the first considerations, but next to them I value inbreeding, because of its concentration of the blood, and, if carefully practiced, there will be no decay or degeneracy.

#### A Point in Pruning.

Never prune to a crotch like that tree. Thus pruned, trees are very liable to split down with a heavy load or in a high wind, or under stress of both combined, and the time to shape the tree so as not to leave a crotch is before or when they leave the nursery.

I have, perhaps, fifty trees thus wrongly pruned, because I did not, twenty years ago, so fully understand and feel the necessity of avoiding a crotch from the first, says W. I. Chamberlain in the Ohio Farmer. Trees often come from the nursery that divide into two and sometimes three almost exactly equal branches, about four feet from the ground and at a pretty sharp angle. You dislike to remove either of the limbs. Still, it should be done, or you will have, as I now have, many large trees dividing in a crotch of two or three nearly equal limbs; well-shaped and symmetrical trees, but almost sure to split down unless they are bolted, and the latter injures the trees.

#### Charcoal and Its Value.

Charcoal is most beneficial to potted plants if broken in pieces the size of a small chestnut and added to the soil in the proportion of one part to twenty of earth. M. Sansure has shown by his experiments, according to the Philadelphia Ledger, that the application of carbonic acid to the roots gives luxuriant growth above the soil. Charcoal, if kept moist, combines with oxygen, and emits carbonic acid. The best of drainage for the pots of the window garden is two inches deep of these bits of charcoal.

An excellent liquid food for plants in pots is made of one tablespoonful of soot to one quart of water. Soot holds in its component parts charcoal, salts of ammonia, potash and soda, oxide of iron, silica, alumina, sulphate of lime and carbonate of magnesia.

#### Shipping Celery.

In shipping celery there is no advantage in leaving earth on the roots; shake it off and pack in boxes of moderate size, so that the roots shall not be more than two or three tiers deep, otherwise there is danger of heating in warm weather. Let the cover have open spaces between the boards for ventilation in warm weather, but when there is danger of severe frost it may be covered tightly.

#### Manure for Fruits.

A food mixture approved by fruit growers is 600 pounds kainit, 200 pounds acid phosphate or dissolved bone and 200 pounds nitrate of soda. After being thoroughly mixed, this is broadcasted in the fall for orchards and vineyards. For small fruits it is used, one-third as top dressing late in the fall, one-third very early in the spring, and one-third in the drill before planting.

#### Precautions Against Smut.

The spores of smut will live a long time in the ground, or in manure, and every care should be taken to destroy them. Cut out every diseased stalk before it has time to ripen and resow itself. One preventive is to select the seed before husking time; taken from the crib, it will very likely have come in contact with infected corn.

#### Feeding Purslane.

The best way of getting rid of "pursley" or purslane, is to feed it to the pigs. It is difficult to destroy, and resists heat and dry air for a while, even when the roots are turned up. When used as food for pigs, and some one employed to provide it, the crop of pursley soon begins to run short, like any other desirable food.

Cabbage Unharmed by Freezing. Cabbages are unharmed by freezing if of hardy varieties, but Early Winsted, a tender sort, is nearly spoiled by freezing. While burying cabbage top down may have its advantages, mine are set in a cellar bottom on their roots, and keep well into spring.

#### Pure-Bred Stock.

The nearer you can get to full blood in breeding, no matter what purpose you have in view, the more certain you are of securing good results. If you doubt this, keep an eye on the most successful stock farmers of your acquaintance. You know this is true, and, in finding successful stockmen, always turn to breeders of high-grade and pure-bred stock.

## LITERARY LITTLEBITS

A new edition of Professor de Filippo's "Simplified and Practical Method," for acquiring in the shortest time complete fluency of speech in the French and Spanish languages has just been issued.

In his notes to the "Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," Professor Geo. Edward Woodberry says that much of the "Narrative" was taken from Captain Benjamin Morell's "Narrative of Four Voyages to the South Seas and Pacific."

James Payn and Andrew Lang have both taken to giving lists of books they have "stuck in" and could not get through without an effort. Among them are "Gli Blas," "Don Quixote," "Marcella," "Robert Elsmere," "Dombey and Son," and "The Light That Failed."

Although Jose Echegaray, the Spanish dramatist, has written more than a hundred plays during the past twenty years, nearly all of them successful, he aspires to be famous as a mathematician rather than as a playwright. He writes plays in the intervals of leisure from his scientific studies, and none of them has cost him more than a fortnight's labor. Echegaray is a lively old man of seventy, and he has recently learned to ride the bicycle. He makes the curious boast that up to the age of fifty he had read every novel published in England.

Twenty thousand dollars, the price paid Mrs. Humphry Ward for the serial rights in her new novel, is not the largest ever paid to a popular novelist. According to Mr. R. H. Sherard, Le Petit Journal pays Kleeberg, Mary and Montepin from fifteen to twenty thousand dollars for the serial rights in their novels. Having become rather tired of paying such high prices for its feuilletons, the editor now offers a prize of ten thousand dollars for a serial story. Mme. Marlton, a woman of the working class, reads all the fiction manuscripts submitted to Le Petit Journal, and she is a good judge of the sort of story that appeals to the masses. She likes plenty of sentiment and insists upon decency.

#### A Hard-Headed Farmer.

"Miss Minnie Bertha Learned will now give us some very interesting experiments in chemistry, showing the carboniferous character of many ordinary substances, after which she will entertain us with a short treatise on astronomy, and an illustration of the geological formation of certain substances, and close with a brief essay entitled, 'Philosophy vs. Rationalism.' Thus spoke the president of a young ladies' seminary on the class-show day.

A hard-headed, old-fashioned farmer happened to be among the examining board, and he electrified the faculty, and paralyzed Miss Minnie by asking: "Kin Miss Minnie tell me how much sixteen and three-fourths pounds of beef would come to at fifteen and a half cents a pound?"

"Why, really, I—I—" gasped Miss Minnie.

"Kin you tell me who is the vice president of the United States?"

"Why—I—I—Mr. B—, isn't he? Or is it—"

"Kin you tell me where the Mississippi River rises and sets?"

"I—I—don't just know."

"I reckoned ye didn't. Gimme the good old days when gals and boys went to school to learn sense."

#### Small in Comparison.

When it comes to emoluments, authors rank below lawyers. Rudyard Kipling's seven words for one dollar—said to be the highest price paid any literary man of our times, reads very small in comparison with what was paid Judge Paxon for a literary article. Until McLeod came on the scene the Reading Railroad had used an old sign at the crossings, "Beware of the Engines and Cars," with a mass of further instructions in small print. In some suits for damages it was claimed that the warnings were not clear. McLeod went to Judge Paxon, who composed this admirable notice: "Railroad Crossing—Stop, Look and Listen!" For this little composition he received the modest sum of four thousand seven hundred and ninety-six dollars and sixty-six cents a word.

#### A Question of Doctrine.

A hardshell baptist minister, preaching in a so-called Union church in a Vermont town, at the close of his sermon announced to the congregation that the pulpit would be occupied the following Sunday by a Universalist "They believe," said he, with the solemn air of a man whose convictions as to the hereafter are stronger and sturdier than the oaks of the forest, "that all men will be saved. But, brethren," he continued, intoning the remark with a lugubrious expression, "we hope for better things."

#### Royalty on Vacation.

Kings and queens, like other people, are now enjoying their annual outing. The queen regent of Spain and the little king are at Miramar, near San Sebastian; the king of Portugal is at Cascaes, King Leopold of Belgium is at Ostend, Queen Wilhelmina of Holland and her mother are at the chateau of Sandryth, near Utrecht; the czar and czarina are at Peterhof, Kink Oscar and his family are at the Palace of Tull-garn, the queen of Italy is at Cressan-ey and King Humbert is at his shooting lodge in the Valle d'Oroco, in the Graia Alps.

When children have to "wait" at dinner, they will hate the guests.