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## The Phantom Light.

### A THRILLING GHOST STORY.

It was about eleven o'clock at night.

Nellie and I were sitting by the bow window in our drawing-room, which she had thrown wide open. The day had been most oppressively hot, but now a faint breeze was coming in from the sea, most refreshingly welcome after the sultry, stifling heat of the day.

It was quite dark—that soft, velvety darkness that belongs only to a perfectly moonless, starless night.

Just down below our window lay the yard or two of garden, then the long, straight line of the promenade, with its asphalt walk and drive dimly defined by a shadowy row of white posts connected by ornamental chains. Beyond the embankment lay the wide, desolate waste of sands, stretching away for miles on either hand.

The tide was far out, so far out that only a sort of pale gray gleam on the horizon showed where the sea was just beginning to creep over the shoals and sandbanks off the Southport coast. Seven miles away to the right, across the estuary of the Ribble, the steady light from the Lytham lighthouse kept vigilant watch and ward over the dangerous Horse Bank, that treacherous, dangerous shoal on which many a good ship had gone to its doom of shipwreck and death.

Nellie was leaning out of the window, her elbow on the sill, her eyes fixed on the misty, soft darkness outside. It was as dark inside as outside; we had no thought of lighting the gas that long summer evening.

"How still it is!" she said, dreamily. "What a spell of solemn silence the night lays on everything!"

As if to contradict her words, a faint sound like a far off voice seemed to rise from the sands below, and swept by with a prolonged, mournful cry.

"What is that?" she asked, startled. "Some one calling down on the sands," I said. "The intense stillness carries the sound a great distance at night."

"I heard such a wild legend this morning," she went on, presently, "connected with those great deserts of sand that stretch over toward Lytham. Old Joe, the boatman, says they are haunted by a phantom voice."

"How thrilling!" I remarked, sceptically. "What does it say?"

"Don't scoff, Jean," said Nellie, a little vexedly. "It is a most pathetic, dreadful legend. Years ago, before there was a town here at all, people used to cross the sands between here and Lytham on horseback. One stormy evening a traveler had crossed as usual, and had almost reached the shore, when suddenly a bright light appeared, hovered for a moment over a spot a yard or two away, and then vanished. At the same moment a piteous, unearthly cry echoed all around. The horse became wild with terror, and broke loose, throwing his rider to the ground. When he recovered himself, he found, lying on the ground at his feet, the body of a beautiful young girl. She was quite dead, with a ghastly wound in her side, from which the blood had flowed all over her white dress."

"The traveler staggered away to the nearest house, got assistance, and had the girl's body laid in an upper room. "That night an awful storm arose. A ship was wrecked on the Horse Bank, and only one man, the captain, saved. He was taken to the same house where the traveler had already found shelter, and, by some mistake, was put into the room where the murdered girl was lying. At the sight of her he gave an appalling shriek, and fell down senseless. When he revived, he was questioned, and confessed that the beautiful young girl was his wife, whom in a moment of rage and jealousy he had stabbed to the heart and cast into the sea. And the sea had given up her dead, and the waves had cast him on shore, and the murderer and his victim were face to face. And now they say the voice of the murdered girl haunts the place where she was found. It seems to rise from the sands and goes echoing and wailing along, calling, calling, as if in mortal agony. The old boatman says people have followed it, believing some one was in peril, and have been lured on and on, till the tide has overtaken them, and they were drowned."

"What a horrible tale!" I said, with a shudder. "I wish you had not told it to me."

"And he says," went on Nellie, unheeding my remark, "that whoever hears the voice is in risk of great peril or danger, or some kind of sorrow or trouble is about to happen to him."

Nellie's voice had unconsciously taken a tone of awe. The still, somber darkness, the midnight hour, and the weird melancholy legend had infected us both with an undefined sensation of oppression and fear, a presentiment of dread and evil.

We kept our places by the window, looking out into the deep velvety darkness, with the far-away solitary light from the lighthouse gleaming like a red spark.

Suddenly, while we sat, the sound of a voice rose up again from the lonely sands, a moaning, piteous voice wailing and imploring as if in unutterable distress. It seemed to mingle with the boom of the distant sea, now rising, now falling, a lonely desolate wail, thrilling through the darkness like a soul in mortal agony. It was dying away in the distance, in a low, faint sob, when Nellie suddenly sprang back into the room.

"Oh, Jean, look!" she cried. "Look, the phantom light!"

I leaned out of the window and gazed out along the promenade. Flashing through the somber darkness like a great star was a brilliant beautiful light. It came rapidly toward us from the right, apparently floating in the air, and illuminating the space before it for several yards. It advanced very swiftly, with a steady, forward motion, floating along about a yard from the ground. As it came nearer we perceived, looming dimly behind it, a giant shadow, weird and grotesque, with outspread wings and misty, undefined form, while a sharp rustling, whirring sound accompanied its progress.

As the phantom [approached the desolate moaning rose again from the sands and swept along in low, shuddering cries, dying away sad and piteous as before. With the last faint sound, the light leaped up for one second into intense brilliancy and disappeared.

"Oh!" cried Nellie, fearfully. "What is it, Jean?"

"I don't know," I replied, a feeling of unaccountable dread and horror taking hold of me. The very demon of fear seemed to possess my senses, an icy grasp of terror laid hold of my heart.

The air outside seemed to have become suddenly clammy and cold, a chilly eerie wind crept in at the window. The very darkness seemed filled with shapes, hideous and impalpable, at which I dared not look, lest they should take form before my eyes.

"There it is again!" shuddered Nellie.

And with unutterable dread we saw the brilliant star-like light again floating toward us, this time from the right hand.

It came swiftly, with the impalpable fantastic shadow in the air above it, and when exactly opposite, vanished.

We sat paralyzed with terror, not daring to move, a horrible benumbing terror seizing our hearts.

This phenomenon happened several times, the light alternately appearing from the right and left, and always vanishing when exactly opposite to us, and always accompanied by the moaning voice.

Again the low wailing sounds from the sands, profoundly melancholy, inexpressibly mournful, like nothing akin to humanity. No words were uttered, but the agony of the tones was like a voice from the grave.

"Jean, Jean, here it is again!" cried Nellie, cowering in my arms.

And once more the brilliant phantom light appeared. This time it came on more slowly, glancing to and fro unsteadily, while the shadowy form behind seemed more grotesque and misty than ever.

"Oh, Jean, if it is true! If it comes to foretell some loss, some trouble!" sobbed Nellie, in tears.

"Hush, hush, dear!" I tried to say, reassuringly. "It cannot be. Sorrow may come to us if God wills it, but not through."

"I say, old fellow," shouted a voice down below in the darkness. "You'll frighten somebody into fits with that lantern dodge of yours. You and your confounded bicycle look like some horrible ghostly specter, fitting along in the dark. You gave me a precious start, I can tell you."

Nellie and I jumped to our feet, and gazed incredulously out of the window.

Down below in the road, a yard or two to the right, the phantom light stood stationary at last. In the glare before it a young fellow was standing, while behind loomed the fantastic, mysterious shadow, robbed of all its terrors in a moment.

"Isn't it a stunning dodge?" said the shadow, in most unghostly slang. "You see, Jack, this asphalt's first-rate to practice on; but a fellow has no chance in the daytime for those confounded carriages; so I rigged out this dark lantern and fastened it to my bicycle, and I can spin along in peace now."

"Take care you don't spin away the wits of all the old maids on the promenade," returned the other. "You look most horribly like some goblin from the lower regions, with your dark lantern flashing in front, those noiseless wheels and your long legs and arms spread out like great wings behind."

The other laughed.

"The old maids are all fast asleep long ago, bless their old eyes!" he returned, irreverently. "But I say, Jack, the match for the four oars will have to be put off to-morrow; we are going to have an awful storm. Listen! How the wind sighs and moans among the girders of the pier! It sounds for all the world like some one calling out in distress, and it's a sure sign of rough weather: What a rage Gregory will be in if"—

The two old maids had heard quite enough. Nellie and I looked at each other rather sheepishly, it must be confessed, and then burst into a hearty laugh.

## The Oil Yield.

At this time, says an exchange, the entire yield of crude petroleum suitable for the making of illuminating oil is about 27,000 to 28,000 barrels per diem, of which two-thirds go to the foreign market. That is at least 10,000 per diem less than the yield of eighteen months or two years ago, and producers expect a still further decline during the winter to 22,000 or 23,000 barrels per diem. The production of to-day is actually not equal to the consumption, and the deficit is felt more and more as the excessive old stocks are being worked off, so that there seems no reason to doubt the legitimacy of the advance in price of refined oils from the 10 1/2 @ 11c. of near two years ago to the 26 1/2 @ 27c. of the present.

There are no more of the great flowing wells pouring out hundreds of barrels daily. The borings have been pushed down successfully through the first, second, third and fourth sandstones until they have gone to enormous depths; torpedoes have from time to time broken up the hidden reservoirs in the bowels of the earth and temporarily improved the yield; new wells have been sunk with varying, but generally very moderate success, powerful pumps have been invented and applied, still a diminution of the supply. At the rate of decrease in production which has been maintained of late years—with the exception of the temporary improvement effected a year and a half or two years ago, when the oil wells were generally stimulated to unwonted activity by the exploding of dynamite torpedoes in them—it will take the world only a short time to work a point when oil will be scarce. It is hardly to be expected that the wells will all absolutely dry up and yield nothing in that time—although they may do so.

Vigorous pumping, lucky finds of new wells, and judicious doctoring of old ones, will doubtless afford some oil for almost all time, but it will be scarce, and consequently dear. Up to thirty cents per gallon, kerosene is the cheapest illuminator of equal effectiveness that the world knows. Up to sixty cents it will still be cheaper than candles at eighteen cents per pound. But beyond that figure it must bear a fancy price.

## Necessity of Coolness in Danger.

Panic, of course, one of the things against which it is most easy to preach but which it is most difficult to preach down. Still, if it could be got into the heads of all people in their cooler hours that, in case of an alarm of fire in a theater, the principal danger to the audience comes from themselves and is in their own control, it is probable that, even under the influence of sudden excitement and fear, many who now would show a bad example might then show a good one. Not very long ago a sudden alarm took place in one of the best of the Paris theaters. It was not an alarm of fire, it was only a clattering and crashing among the branches, chains and lamps of the huge glass chandelier which hung from the roof. Those who were under the chandelier thought it was coming down on them, and made wildly for the doors. The theater was well enough constructed, and had many outlets, but in an instant some of the passages were completely jammed and choked by excited people. Luckily a single instant was enough to allow one of the performers on the stage to see and explain the whole cause of the alarm, and to convince the fugitives that there was no danger. The whole stampede was set going by the sudden pattering of hailstones through an open window among the metal and glass of the chandelier. In that instance the alarm was but momentary, and in many parts of the house was unobserved. Yet it was evident to all cool observers that had it lasted only a few seconds longer and been allowed to spread, the passages and doors would have been hopelessly choked by a panic stricken crowd, and some loss of life most infallibly have occurred.

A swindling company in Texas has sold 100,000 lots in a city that has no existence. People in all parts of the United States have been bitten. Any man who expects to get a hundred dollars for one will get disappointed.

## The Parisian Poste-Restante.

Another very curious division of the Parisian post-office is that of the poste-restante. The passion for intrigue that forms so prominent a feature in Parisian social life finds there an ample field for its manifestations. Thither come wives that write to other men than their husbands, husbands that correspond with other ladies than their wives, schoolboys that hazarded a declaration of their feelings to Theo or to Croizette, etc. One strict law of this department is, that no letter shall be placed in the hands of any one save the person to whom it is addressed. Thus, if a jealous spouse comes to find out if there are any letters for his or her suspected wife or husband, the only response obtained will be: "That is none of your business." A story is told how, on one occasion, a gentleman violently excited entered the office, dragging rather than leading with him a young and very pretty woman, who was pale as death and trembling from head to foot. Indicating his terrified companion by a sign, he said to a clerk in attendance: "My wife, Madam V., wishes to know if there are any letters for her?" The impassive official took down the packet of letters marked V., ran them over and answered: "There are none, sir," evidently much to the relief of the lady. An hour later she returned alone, through still pale and agitated. The moment she made her appearance the clerk took from the packet a letter bearing her name and presented it to her. She commenced an eager speech of thanks, which was cut short by the simple announcement: "The person to whom a letter is addressed has alone the right to receive it."

The poste-restante often serves as a trap to catch the smaller class of malefactors, such as runaway wives or defaulting bank clerks. Such gentry usually come to Paris as a secure hiding place. Their names are communicated to the police, and through them are placed upon a list, called the yellow list, of the post-office. If one of these persons ventures to the post-restante to claim a letter, the name given is repeated by the clerk in a loud tone—a very simple and natural proceeding, and one that awakens no suspicions. But its object is to give warning to a detective concealed in a back room, by whom the culprit is immediately followed, and soon after he is in the hands of the law.

## The Rise in Silver.

Dr. Linderman, in the course of an interview, fully reported in the San Francisco Chronicle, attributed the rise of silver to the heavy purchases of coin which the United States government has been making in London and on the Pacific slope, and the enormous demand for silver in China. The future of the silver market would depend, he said, mainly upon the legislation of the United States and Germany. "There is now," he continued, "about \$1,000,000 worth of bullion at the mint waiting to be converted into trade dollars. The government will need hereafter about \$1,500,000 in silver monthly, and it is probable that no more purchases will be made abroad. From \$12,000,000 to \$15,000,000 is likely to suffice for the silver demands of China. If the market continues as good in China as for the last four months there is no doubt that much Mexican bullion will come to San Francisco and be shipped hence to Chinese ports. India is likely to consume \$35,000,000 yearly, or about half the annual silver product of the world. I do not think the double standard would be a good thing for this country. I think we should keep the gold basis, with subsidiary silver for common use, fixing the amount for legal tender at \$10. We have now, as I estimate, in this country \$150,000,000 in gold and less than \$40,000,000 in silver, exclusive of plate. Of this amount, there is from \$25,000,000 to \$30,000,000 in subsidiary coin, and from \$6,000,000 to \$8,000,000 at the mints."

## The Dying Lion.

A French officer who has served many years in Algeria writes an interesting account of a dying lion. Fangless, covered with mange, and blind, is the king of beasts on approaching the close of his reign. When not lying mournfully prostrate and alone in some sheltered nook or behind some friendly mound overgrown with shrubbery, he feebly skulks within a small circuit of his lair in quest of a morsel of prey, which in his decrepitude he rarely succeeds in obtaining. At this stage of his career, if his scent does not utterly fail him, his sole resource for nutrition is an occasional nest of field mice. Inferior animals smell at him fearlessly, and paw him with insolence, for the forest monarch, dethroned by disease, is incapable of resistance. Often the rustic Arab comes upon his majesty in his utter helplessness and ends his troubles with a blow of a club.

## Extraordinary Wheat Culture.

A correspondent of the San Francisco Bulletin says: It has been my good fortune during the past six months to witness the growth and yield of wheat, planted and cultivated in a way new to most people, of which I propose to give you a statement. D. O. Bissell, who resides in Goose Lake valley, Modoc county, California, is a practical as well as a theoretical farmer. He holds that the old mode of wheat raising—that is, of sowing from 100 to 150 pounds of grain per acre—is wrong, contrary to the true principles of agriculture, an unnecessary waste of seed and exhaustive to the soil. In conversation with a party of friends (farmers) he presented that proposition, stating further that he could raise forty bushels of wheat to the acre from one pound of seed. The idea being scouted as impossible he offered to wager \$20 that he could do it. The wager was accepted, whereupon Mr. Bissell, on the eighth day of last April, proceeded to put his proposition to the proof by having one-eighth of an acre carefully measured in the presence of witnesses. It was subdivided into spaces about nineteen by thirty-seven inches apart, and two ounces of seed were planted, the seed having been carefully weighed, the grains counted, and the ground spaced so as to take but one seed in each place. It was then irrigated and cultivated like Indian corn.

Now for the result as harvested in the latter part of September. The number of heads per stool was from sixty to 118 well developed heads. I send you a sample stool, one of many from the plot, which contained 135 heads, 118 of which were fully developed. The number of grains per head in this stool was eighty. Over one-half yielded 100 grains each. Owing to an accident Mr. Bissell failed to get the accurate weight or measurement, but making all due allowance for that, the yield was ten bushels, or at the rate of eighty bushels per acre, forty more than the proposition called for.

Now compare the above result with an average crop sown broadcast. I am assured that the average number of heads per stool in an average field of wheat, sown broadcast, is not over five or forty grains each, which would be less than thirty-three bushels per acre, if all the seed grew. What becomes of the seed? In the field where this plant grew, there was sown broadcast at about the same time 100 acres. It was irrigated, as was the other, and harvested at the same time. It was put in good shape, had the best of care, and at an expense of \$300 for seed alone. The yield was not over twenty bushels per acre, or 2,000 bushels for the crop. Mr. Bissell informs me that he will plant thirty-five or forty acres next spring, using the seed planter and cultivator instead of the broadcast sower. The facts I have given can be well attested, if desired. Should any further information be wished it will be furnished by addressing D. O. Bissell, Willow Ranch, Modoc county, California.

I have written the above facts in the interest of the agriculturists of the country; have been thus particular in details hoping others may be stimulated thereby to profit by the information given. To the Grangers I would say, make this method of grain raising the subject of discussion in your lodges and trial on your farms. A few successful trials, such as witnessed by the writer, would revolutionize the mode of grain growing in this country and remove from the farmer the heavy burden of annually providing 100 to 150 pounds of seed per acre for his crop when one and one-half to two pounds, allowing for wastage in planting, would be all that need be required. With such a system how soon the mortgages would be lifted from the farms—the incubus of debt crushing the farmer into the soil he cultivates; how soon it would be abolished!

## \$2,000,000 Worth of Eggs.

The steamer City of Peking, which arrived at San Francisco, brought an invoice of Japanese silkworm eggs, consisting of 1,872 cases, the value of which approximated \$2,000,000. These eggs, in which a large trade has been carried on between China and Japan and Europe, have heretofore passed through in very meager quantities, and then only as experiments. Dampness is destructive to the eggs, and for that reason their storage in the vessel was made a special care. The cargo in question was packed on the steerage deck amidships, the warmest and driest place on the ship. A bamboo fence surrounded the cases to keep them in position, and superfluous heat was prevented by a current passed through a passage two feet wide among the cases. The precious cargo was shipped on the Central Pacific cars for New York, and will be shipped from that port to Europe by steamer for England, France and Italy.

## The Paris Communists.

Writing from Paris of the Communist in Paris, Lucy Hopper says that it is to be hoped that the present crisis will bring about some cessation of the persecution of the poor wretches who took part in the Commune. Even allowing that the Communists were wholly in the wrong, surely they have been punished enough. The number that were killed by the Versailles troops after their entry into Paris is variously estimated at from thirty to fifty thousand, including many women and little children. The executions that have since taken place amounted to from fifteen to eighteen thousand. When I first arrived here three years ago—that is to say, two years after the suppression of the Commune—I was told that they were still shooting prisoners by squads on the plains of Satory. Recently a fresh victim was condemned to death, not one of the leaders of the rebellion, be it understood, but one of the rank and file. And it must be remembered that many, nay the greater part, of these poor creatures entered the ranks of the Communist forces not to rob or murder, but in good faith, and to earn bread for their wives and little children. It is easy to see how a workingman, a republican by principle, who had starved and suffered all through the siege, and who was offered thirty cents a day to serve in the republican forces, could easily be induced to accept such an offer. And the heroism of some of these unhappy beings was beyond all praise. Not long ago I was told the story of a young Swiss doctor who had charge of one of the Communist hospitals, and who was greatly aided in his labors by a woman of the people, who, young, strong armed and vigorous, assisted him to the best of her ability, and who was at once the most untiring and faithful of nurses to the sick and wounded. After the entry of the Versailles the physician was arrested. As he was being conducted before the tribunal he met his former aid and companion coming forth, escorted by a detachment of soldiers. "Ah, my poor Adele," he said to her, "are you here? We have both fallen on evil days, it seems." She looked him full in the face. "Monsieur, je ne vous connais pas," she said ("I do not know you, sir"), and was hurried away. The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "Evidently I am a doomed man," he said to himself, "since that woman will not recognize me for fear of 'compromising herself.'" He was brought before the tribunal, but by the intervention of a wounded Versaillesist whom he had attended he was released. He learned later the true story of Adele's failure to recognize him. She was being led forth to instant execution when they had met. Even in that terrible hour the brave girl had turned away from the last visage that would ever be bent upon her in sympathy or kindness, the last hand that would ever be proffered to her in friendly greeting, lest such recognition might involve her former comrade in her own doom.

## Analyzing Life.

Dr. Beard states that from an analysis of the lives of a thousand representative men in all the great branches of the human family, he made the discovery that the golden decade was between forty and fifty; the brazen between twenty and thirty; the iron between fifty and sixty. The superiority of youth and middle life over old age in original work appears all the greater when we consider the fact that all the positions of honor and prestige—professorships and public stations—are in the hands of the old. Reputation, like money and position, is mainly confined to the old. Men are not widely known until long after they have done the work that gives them their fame. Portraits of great men are delusions; statues are lies! They are taken when men have become famous, which, on the average, is at least twenty-five years after they did the work which gave them their fame. Original work requires enthusiasm. If all the original work done by men under forty-five were annihilated, they would be reduced to barbarism. Men are at their best at that time when enthusiasm and experience are almost evenly balanced. This period, on the average, is from thirty-eight to forty. After this the law is that experience increases; but enthusiasm decreases.

A MYTHICAL CITY.—The county clerk of Grayson county, Texas, publishes a statement relative to the Ohio, Kentucky and Texas Land Company, which has been flooding the country with circulars and advertisements of their scheme. The company offer lots in Mineral City at \$1 each. The clerk says they own no land in the county, and that Mineral City is a myth—that there is not a house in it or a man living in it. It is believed that the company has disposed of over 100,000 lots in this paper town.