

A Dance of Ghosts

By David McFall

ALTHOUGH not all parts of the Southern States were the scenes of conflict during the civil war, there was not a nook or corner in them that did not feel the direct and immediate effects of it. The entire South was impoverished. A very considerable proportion of its manhood was slain or maimed.

Imposing homes were deserted and abandoned, and extensive plantations quickly reverted to the condition of the wilderness. Educational facilities were so far curtailed that everywhere, except in populous centers, three months schooling in a year was all that any child could expect. The colored race, in many large areas outnumbering the whites, were suddenly removed from discipline and control and were given responsibilities to which they could not rise. And then came the period of reconstruction, a darker aftermath of a dark day.

The time of the following story was at the close of this reconstruction period; the scene was a typical plantation home in western Florida, where cultivated fields on the low gently rolling hills, wide stretches of primeval vines, sluggish streams and dismal bayous were the oft-repeated features of an interesting topography. Everywhere at the water's edge graceful but somber Spanish-moss festooned the trees, as with funeral trappings. The three persons who figured in the story were the widowed owner of the plantation, her daughter (then a child of eleven years, now a charming and cultured woman residing in Western North Carolina), and a young man, a nephew.

To give anything like a comprehension of the extra ordinary manifestations witnessed by these persons it is necessary to describe somewhat in detail the house and its setting. The mansion, a ten-room, two-story structure, with the familiar classic pillars rising from the board verandah to the eaves, was seated on slightly elevated ground at the east of the bayou and about two hundred yards distant. In order to enhance the view from the front of the house the intervening space had been cleared, so that occupants of the verandah looked out upon a sheet of water that resembled an un-sullied lake fringed with serried ranks of feathery cypress. The sides and rear of the house were so closely hemmed in by the surrounding pines that with the lightest stir of air their sighing, a faint response to the beating of the surf on the shores of the Gulf forty miles away, filled every room.

A certain feature in the situation of the house should be noted particularly. When the full moon arose it chequered the front and filled the east rooms with a dim tracery of the cypresses in the bayou—to adapt Wordsworth's line, with "shadowy phantoms interlaced with light," then for an hour or two, after it had risen above the tree tops, it flooded the verandah and front rooms with its unintercepted beams; and finally, when it had surmounted the eaves, it left the front of the house in darkness and cast a slowly encroaching shadow upon the open space. I stress these circumstances, because the dance of ghosts which will be described in a moment occurred only during a full moon, AND ONLY IN THAT BRIEF INTERVAL in which the moon's unobstructed light fell full upon the verandah and the east rooms. The moment the eaves began to cast their shadow the apparitions vanished. This is singular, for notoriously ghosts are lovers of darkness. But there was a yet stranger circumstance. Both tradition and experience have confirmed the fact that ghosts are white or of a misty gray almost invariably; but the ghosts about to be described were black, and not only terrifying but unspeakably repulsive.

It was early in September, nearly ten years after the close of the war, when the widow was informed that she would be permitted to return to her old home if she cared to do so. She grasped the opportunity, determined to spend the rest of her life in trying to restore to the place at least a portion of the former glory with which her recollection and imagination invested it. She was encouraged by the knowledge that although during the last few months of the war the house had been occupied by a company of Union soldiers, whose ethics and deportment may have been those of uninvited guests generally, for several years afterwards, and until military rule was abrogated, it was used as a hospital for convalescents, and therefore must have been kept clean and in good repair. She assumed that for the same reason much of the furniture had been kept intact, and she took with her, as her only baggage apart from change of clothing; two mattresses and a few sheets and quilts. She was right in her conjecture. She congratulated herself that the house and its contents had escaped the ravages suffered by so many southern homes.

She and her slender retinue

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full share of the splendid courage that distinguished the women of the south during the war and its aftermath—arose and with steady hand lit the small lamp that stood near her couch. The shadows had vanished, no living creature and no moving shadow was in the room, and not the faintest sound from within or without could be heard. Her straining ears could easily catch the soft breathing of her sleeping child, and she fancied that she could hear the beating of her own heart, but nothing else with life or breath could she see or hear. She turned down the wick and blew out the diminished flame—and instantly the dark figures appeared and resumed their uncanny, silent dance.

She watched the dumb-show with an interest in which curiosity as yet predominated over fear, and sought to solve the mystery. Her imagination and her reason worked hand in hand. She mentally surveyed in detail every feature of the scene—the bayou, the open space, the surrounding pines, the moon's position in the sky, the arrangement of the furniture, the mirror, even the fireplace, the state of her mind. She could find no clue; and as no mind can bear being held in suspense, she again lit the lamp to find a comfort, if not an answer, in its glow. She examined the room at every inch; she even went to the open doors and, drawing the curtain aside, walked out upon the verandah, peering into the semilight and the shadows with an intentness which nothing unusual could have escaped.

She was completely baffled. Fear was gaining the upper hand; but she decided to extinguish the light once again, in the hope that the figures might at last explain themselves to a mind which was fast losing its normal faculties. Drawing the curtain, she sought her pallet and placed the lamp beside it—but the moment its flame was extinguished the horrible figures, which seemed to have gathered in to themselves every evil that darkness breeds, reappeared and began anew their unearthly dance.

Her self-control gave way suddenly, like an overstrained cord, and a scream was now the only possible expression of her pent-up emotions—and then a quick succession of screams and half articulations—

"Joe! Joe! Come at once—be quick, be quick! Joe! Joe! and then her physical strength failed as suddenly, and she could no more than wring her hands and moan. Awakened from his unquiet sleep by the scream, and instantly responsive, the nephew hastily put on gown and slippers and ran down stairs, with a pistol in his hand. He did not wait to light his candle, which in any event would have exposed him to the intruder, if an intruder were the cause of the unmistakable note of terror in the call for help. When he reached the living room he saw dimly the two figures on the pallet and heard the mother and the child, the latter now awake and crying bitterly, alarmed and distressed at the strange change in her mother. The young man knelt beside the pallet, placing his hand on the woman's shoulder and speaking to her reassuringly, asking what the matter was.

"Oh, look!"—was all she could say, pointing toward the verandah—"what can those horrible figures be? What trouble for us does this mean? Is this a dance of death?"

Her voice had faded to a mere broken whisper, but the hearer could feel in it the wail of a falling mind. He looked over his shoulder in the direction indicated, and for a moment was petrified with astonishment. He knew at once that there was neither hallucination nor illusion there. He SAW, and SAW CLEARLY, the solemn mockery. The sight intensified every mental and physical faculty in him, and he turned to face it, ready to pit his wit and his strength and courage against any phantom from any sphere. As he looked, an emotion with which no fear was mingled took possession of him. The uncouth dance, staged in that house and at that time, was a desecration. It should have been enough that every home in the south suffered from the war; was it needed that this insult should follow suffering?

Steeled by a cold hatred, the young man raised his pistol and fired at the living shadows. For a brief moment there seemed to be a livelier stir amongst them, but they immediately reverted to their grave measures. Again he fired—a head fell forward upon its breast, but immediately restored itself to its accustomed place. Yet again the pistol rang—an arm disappeared, but quickly rejoined its bloodless body.

The young man could stand no more. With uncontrollable rage he arose to his feet and flew at the dancers—and, tearing the filmy curtain from its suspending rings and throwing it in a heap upon the floor, he dashed out upon the verandah, prepared to meet any danger but dreading a continuance of uncertainty and suspense. Nothing could be seen of them, though

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES and COMINGS AND GOINGS

Hallow'en Party for Maxwell Is Big Success

The Hallow'en party at Rogers Hall on Friday night was, truly speaking, a howling success!

No other place in Franklin could have accommodated the crowd that came in families, and in car loads, to the top of the eric hall where the big hall was dimly lighted by Jack O' Lanterns. Creeping white ghosts and black witches in high hats conducted the guests to their destinations.

The palm reading booth, presided over by Rose Rogers in a charming gypsy costume, was crowded throughout the evening.

The "pea-nut vender," Margaret Cozad, kept her corner lively by telling "fortunes" in pea-nut shells.

The "chamber of horrors" from which agonized yells issued continually, was conducted by Mrs. E. L. Siler.

Bess Dowdle in a becoming "dough face" with fierce mustache, was the door keeper for this room and Mrs. Bert Slagle, cashier.

Of course Jess and Mary had the marriage booth! Every time you throw a penny through a wedding ring, just so many years till you married. According to count, it will be 62 years for Jess and 78 for Mary.

Behind a sheet decorated with black cats and hoot-owls, Helen Macon read your horoscope.

Up on the second and third floors, through dark halls where fiery eyes glared and devil heads moaned, in a far corner midst ropes and clanking chains, a red-headed witch named Wyatt, gave pills to cure your ills—that is if you looked cross eyed, stood bow legged, held your left ear with right hand and sneezed three times.

Your future was read in the stars by Agnes Higgins at the star gazing booth.

Sallie Bill Moore and Marie Rogers conducted the air port and the parachutes failed to work every time.

Fresh ead and ginger bread were served by Mrs. Ed Cunningham, Amy Harrison and Mrs. Zachary.

And the best part of all was, the party was given for OUR Maxwell Home, for Maxwell is a part of Macon county. Because it has been supported by the Presbyterians many have the idea that it is a Presbyterian institution only. The records show that they have had fewer boys from Presbyterian homes than any other. Many have been from homes of no church people.

Its doors are wide open to boys who can go no where else—to boys who have parents but no home—to any young fellow, who left adrift, might become a bad citizen, but who, given a chance might make a good one!

What greater work is there any where? What finer way to keep the life going on here of this splendid little fellow who has gone to the Land of Unreturning.

Yes, Maxwell is OURS. This is a work to stop after years of untold good. The idea that it might close has awakened the interest of our town and country people. The manager of the Macon theatre is already planning another benefit show for Maxwell during the Christmas holidays.

The receipts from the party were nearly \$30 and will be given to Mr. Crockett without any strings tied to it.

Not many know that Mr. Crockett left a much better position

he walked out on the lawn and around the house, examining every shadow. Slowly the shadow of the eaves began to creep over the open space, and the living room was in darkness—until a beam of light told him that the woman had lit the lamp.

He returned and saw that she had recovered much of her usual composure, and that already the child was nodding. But on no account would the mother sleep again. The night was spent in talking, and in watching and listening. In the morning she announced her intention of leaving the place, never to see it again. Neither argument nor persuasion could shake her resolve.

Within a year the estate was sold to a lumber company, which wanted it for its timber. The cypresses and pines were cut down and the blackened stumps of "cut-over" lands were all that remained. Subsequently the swamp was drained and the stumps were removed by the energy of a colony of truck-growers. No doubt the produce of their skill and toil has found its way to the table of the reader of this story, though he might not be able to trace its origin in the devious ways of trade.

(The End)

ride this week because of his interest in it. In fact, he is working now without salary and states that at the home closed, it would hurt him more than anyone could know! —M. R. S.

Music Club Entertained By Mrs. Horsley

The 1913 McDowell Music club held its regular meeting at the home of Mrs. H. T. Horsley at 4 o'clock Tuesday afternoon, Oct. 27.

Mrs. Harry Higgins, president of the club, presided and announced that the election of a new secretary was in order. This office was given to Mrs. N. C. Duncan, one of the new members.

The roll was called and 10 members responded. No minutes of the last meeting were read because of the absence of the former secretary.

After a discussion of business matters an interesting program centering on the theme, Edward McDowell, was rendered with Mrs. Dick Hudson giving a sketch of the life of the composer, and selections from his works were presented by Mrs. Higgins, Mrs. C. E. James, Porter, and Miss Edwina Dalrymple.

The hosts served delicious refreshments of ice cream, cake and coffee.

The next meeting will be held at 4:30 p. m., Tuesday, Nov. 10, at the residence of Mrs. D. D. Rice.

U. D. C. To Meet Monday With Mrs. Byrne

The Macon County Chapter of the U. D. C. will meet Monday, Nov. 9, at 3 o'clock with Mrs. John B. Byrne at the Orlando apartments. All members are urged to be present.

Personal Mention

Mr. C. T. Blaine made a business trip to Atlanta this week.

Mrs. Pat Crisp, of Highlands, spent last week here visiting Mr. and Mrs. R. M. Coffey.

Mrs. John Ripston, of Tifton, Ga., is spending sometime here with her daughter, Mrs. R. M. Rimmer.

Mrs. Ben Reece and little son are in Sylva his week visiting Mrs. Reece's parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Miller.

Mrs. J. Frank Ray spent several days last week with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Morgan, in Sylva.

Mr. and Mrs. G. J. Hauser left Tuesday for Atlanta, where they will visit Mrs. Hauser's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Long, for several days.

Judge and Mrs. J. B. Willis and daughter, Miss Mary Willis, left last Saturday for Crystal River, Fla., where they will spend the winter.

Mrs. John Jones and Miss Lily Calloway spent last Saturday in Asheville shopping.

Judge and Mrs. John Swirey are spending this week in Hayesville.

Mr. Jim Hauser left last Sunday for Clearwater, Fla., where he expects to spend this winter.

Miss Arrie Whitson, of Clayton, Miss Hazel Kitchin, of Hayesville, and Miss Mae Warren, of Cornelia, Ga., nurses in Asheville, are here, were to hospital last week to take the State Board examination for nurses.

Miss Harle Service, of Hayesville, was the week-end guest of Miss Edwina Dalrymple.

Mr. F. A. Johnson, of Clarksville, Ga., spent last Sunday here with his sister, Mrs. R. M. Ledford, at her home on 10th street.

Mr. Roy C. Dady spent Friday in Clayton, Ga., with friends.

Mr. W. T. Mozely, of Otto, spent Monday here with his wife, Mrs. S. E. Poland, at the Poland house.

Mrs. J. J. Conley and daughter, Miss Charlotte, left Sunday for Greenville, S. C., where they will visit relatives and friends for several days.

Miss Ethel H. Kirkby, of Asheville, is spending several months in Franklin at the home of Mrs. A. H. Sellers.

The friends of Mrs. Abbey Crawford Milon, of the Chattanooga Times, who has been a patient at the Lyle hospital, will be glad to learn that she has improved sufficiently to leave the hospital, and will remain sometime longer in Franklin, staying at the Scott Griffin hotel.

The Rev. N. C. Duncan and Mr. Cary Edwies returned on Saturday from a trip to Charlotte.

Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Hay announce the arrival of a two and one-half pound boy, James Edwin, on October 31, at their home on Route 4.

Rev. W. J. Pitts, of Highlands, was among the business visitors here this week.

Mrs. W. C. Cunningham, of Clayton, Ga., was visiting friends here Wednesday.

Miss Velma Peck, who is taking a business course in Asheville, spent the week end here with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Peck.

Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Higdon attended the Woodmen of the World district meeting at Murphy last Wednesday.

Mr. and Mrs. Homer Nichols and family, Mr. and Mrs. Charles McBurn, of Kiverside, Miss Charles Moore, of relatives, and Mr. J. E. Gray, of Lyman, Wash., spent a very pleasant day on Wayah Bald last Sunday.

Mr. Homer Bowles has been ill at his home in East Franklin the past week.

Mrs. T. W. Angel, Jr., and little son have returned from an extended visit to her mother at Greensboro.

Mrs. R. M. Rimmer returned Sunday from a month's visit to relatives and friends in Tifton, Ga.

Mr. and Mrs. Homer Nichols and children, after spending a month here with Mrs. Nichols' parents, Mr. and Mrs. Chas. McClure, at 1710, left last Wednesday for their home in Washington, D. C.

Mrs. Boyd Sutton, of Decatur, Ga., spent a week here with her mother, Mrs. Winton Horn on Harrison avenue.

Mr. and Mrs. J. K. Cunningham and Mrs. E. K. Cunningham will spend two weeks in Crystal River, Fla.

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Miss Charlotte Elliott, Miss Hugger, Mrs. J. C. Lamb and Mrs. Albert Hill, of Highlands, accompanied by Mrs. R. B. Eskridge, of New Orleans, were in town Monday.

Friends of Miss Elizabeth Kelly, who was taken ill on Thursday and has been in Angel Brothers' hospital, will be glad to learn that she is well enough to return home, and is convalescing rapidly.

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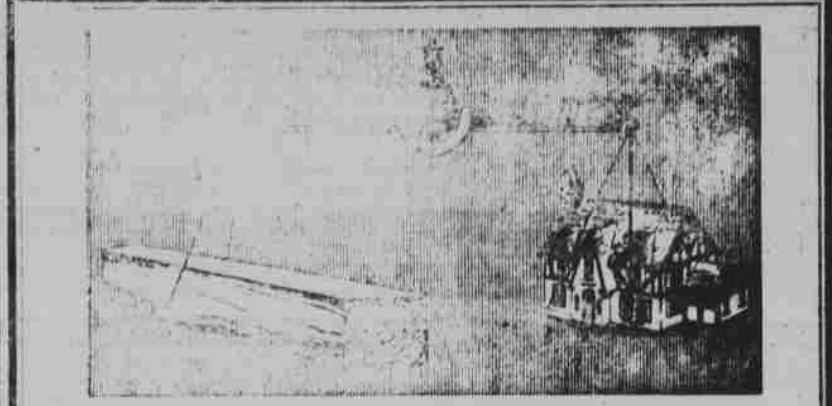
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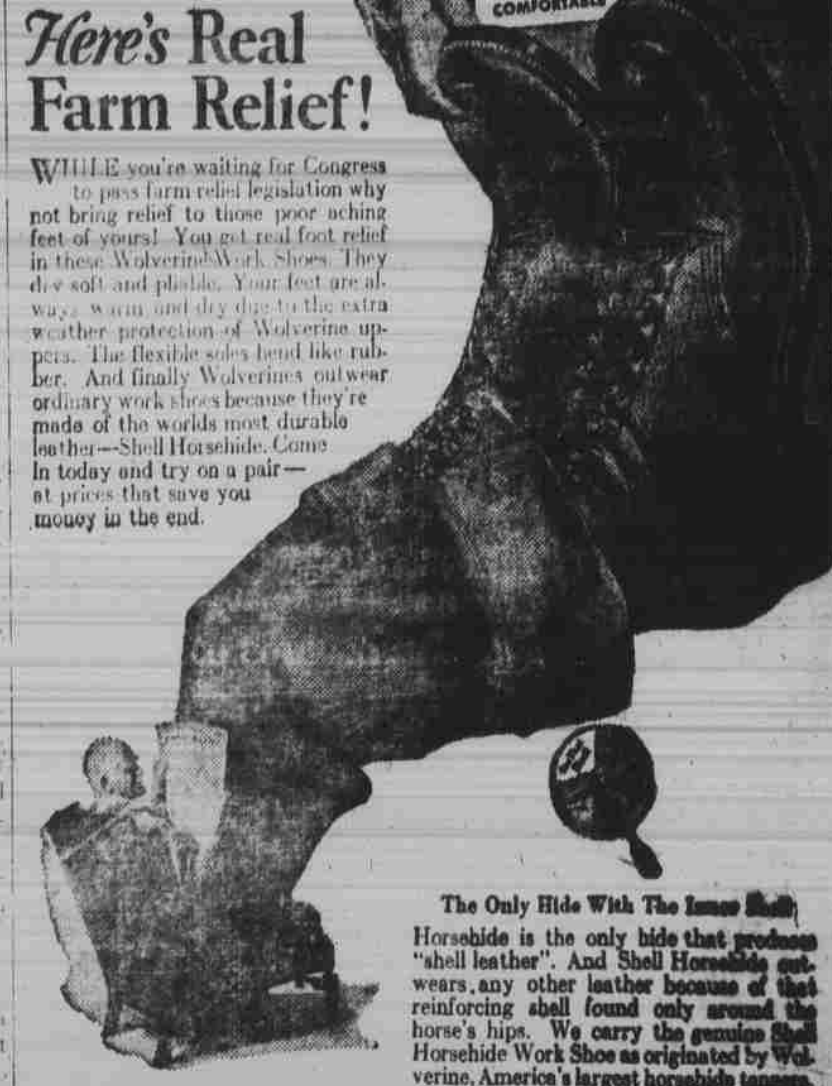
Lumber Quality What It Means to You

There is no question about it but that you can buy cheap lumber and make a momentary saving on the cost of your home. But that saving is only momentary... for time raises havoc with cheap lumber—it warps—it cracks—it bends—it rots.

When you build a home select choice well-seasoned lumber that grows better with age. Be sure that it bears both GRADE MARK and TRADE MARK. Then you can rest assured you are getting the best for the money. You will find this will prove much cheaper in the long run.

Franklin Hardware Co. Building Supplies and Hardware

Wolverine Work Shoes and Work Gloves



Here's Real Farm Relief!

WHILE you're waiting for Congress to pass farm relief legislation why not bring relief to those poor aching feet of yours! You get real foot relief in these Wolverine Work Shoes. They're soft and pliable. Your feet are always warm and dry due to the extra weather protection of Wolverine uppers. The flexible soles bend like rubber. And finally Wolverine's outwear ordinary work shoes because they're made of the world's most durable leather—Shell Horsehide. Come in today and try on a pair—at prices that save you money in the end.

The Only Hide With The Inner Shell Horsehide is the only hide that produces "shell leather". And Shell Horsehide outwears any other leather because of that reinforcing shell found only around the horse's hips. We carry the genuine Shell Horsehide Work Shoe as originated by Wolverine, America's largest horsehide tannery.

WOLVERINE WORK SHOES WORK GLOVES

JOE ASHEAR

We Clothe the Family