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THE GHOST CLUB.

A Remarkable Organization in Crawfordsville, Indiana.

Ghastly Furnishings and Associations of the Lodge Room—Two Stories Recently Told by Members of the Club—"The Ghost of My Client" and "The Haunted Mill."

Crawdfordsville is distinctly a city of clubs, and as such is noted all over Hoosierdom. There is the Gentleman's Literary Club, of which General Lew Wallace, Maurice Thompson, President Tuttle of Wabash College, and Professor John M. Coulter, President-elect of the State University, are charter members; there is the Ladies' Literary Club, "The Athenian," whose membership comprises some of the cleverest lady writers in Indiana; there is the "Ananias and Sapphira Club," the rarest aggregation of lying sportsmen to be found anywhere, over whose farcial deliberations Hon. E. C. Snyder, Judge of the Montgomery Circuit Court, presides with much gravity, deciding the worthiness of the stories told, to be entered in the archives; there are the college fraternities, the social clubs and the sportmen's clubs, and last, but by no means least, is the famous Crawfordsville Ghost Club, or, to use the name with which it is dignified by the members, "The Society for the Advancement of the Belief in Ghosts."

The unique organization has probably no parallel in the country. It is radically different from the spiritualistic bands, which can be found in any city, although it is true that several of its members are confirmed spiritualists. The club was founded upon All Halloween in 1887 by Wm. Ridley, Dr. Henry de Caux and Professor Robert Burton. It now has in the neighborhood of twenty members, although initiations occur but once a year, and that upon the anniversary of the club's founding.

MUST HAVE SEEN A GHOST.

There is one paramount qualification for admittance to membership, and that qualification is a personal experience, on the part of the candidate, with a spook. Mere belief will not suffice; personal experience is necessary. Every application for membership must be accompanied with the asseveration that applicant has, at some time during his life, seen a ghost. Most of the members of the club are men of more than ordinary intelligence, and considerable education and standing. Thus it has come about that their belief in the fundamental principles of their organization is openly questioned by outsiders. But if they are in the club for amusement's sake they wisely keep their own council. Under a suspicion of being only pretended ghost believers several gentlemen have been blackballed, much to their disgust. Still, however, it is the prevailing opinion that just about one-half of the members of this club are enjoying themselves at the expense of the rest, who really do believe in spooks and spirits.

The club's meetings are held fortnightly, and at each one a paper is read by some member which purports to give a truthful account of his own personal adventure with a ghost. The veracity of these stories is never questioned by the brotherhood, although they sometimes have a most unlikely smack. The meetings are rarely ever adjourned before midnight, and after these uncanny recitals the average new member is said to be often too terrified to go abroad, and some have been known to frequently stay in the hall all night rather than run the risk of encountering the disentombed spirits which their imagination pictures as lurking in every alley and dodging about in the shadow of every electric light.

The club-room, or "ghost lodge," as it is called, can certainly lay claim to being the weirdest affair extant. It is a room about twenty by forty feet, in the fourth story of one of the principal business blocks. Its windows on the north overlook Oak Hill Cemetery, while those on the west look directly down into the jailyard, where four red-handed murderers have been swung off into eternity in as many years. In the room itself occurred a murder, many years ago, upon the very night that it was dedicated as a dance hall, and the ghost of the promising young buck then slain is said to frequently revisit the scene of his untimely taking off. From a scaffold on the same building a painter fell some years later and was dashed to death on the cruel flagstones below, while still later an old lady dropped dead from heart disease while searching for an erring son who was playing poker in the hall, which was then a gambling hell.

DECORATIONS OF THE HALL.

These terrible associations had much to do with the selection of the room, and when it was once fitted up its ghastly decorations made its hideousness complete. It is hung entirely in white. White cheese cloth drapes the walls and ceiling. White canvas covers the floor, and even the window glass is painted white. On the other hand every article of furniture is as black as midnight, except such paraphernalia as the skeletons. In each corner of the room stands one of these genial customers, grinning horribly, and each one has a duty to perform, for in every empty cranium there is a small lamp with a red glass chimney, and for the hall these lamps furnish the only light which pours in lurid streams through the empty eye-sockets and grinning mouths of these four repulsive sentinels. The table at which the President and Secretary sit is an old dissecting table, purchased some time ago from the Indiana Medical College. The President to call order rings a large dinner bell, which hangs from the ceiling above. This bell was obtained from the ruins of a farm house in the conflagration of which an infant perished, and in order to ring it the President pulls the identical rope with which Jack Henning was hanged, not 300 yards away, in 1887, for the murder of his sweetheart. The seats in the room were all made from the timbers of the scaffold from which Henning and three others dropped to glory, and which the Sheriff was only too glad to sell when the law requiring all executions to take place in the Penitentiary went into effect. There is a library of some hundred books in the hall, all treating of ghosts and ghost life. There is a museum also, and in it are to be found relics most ghastly and curious. There is the blood-stained club with which Chris Coffey beat old man McMullen and his wife to death; the spade with which the old sexton of the Masonic Cemetery dug over 500 graves, and which he was clutching tightly in his stiffened hand when found cold in death one fine morning; there is the cup in which Rev. Pettit is said to have mixed poison for his wife, the knives and revolvers of murderers and suicides and other implements of a similarly hair-raising character. The club has expended no little money in preparing its quarters, and every month or two some new horror is added to its already startling outfit.

There is no particular secrecy about the organization, and its stories are often related on the outside, the papers even being loaned for perusal to non-members. A fair idea of the character of these papers may be obtained from the appended.

"The Ghost of My Client."

Several years ago Buck Stout was hanged at Rockville, Ind., after taking a change of venue from Montgomery County. His victim was a huckster named Dunbar, whom Buck, having enticed to a lonely place in the woods, killed and robbed. Although arrested at once for the crime, none of the stolen money was found upon the murderer, who died stoutly protesting his innocence. Soon after the execution his old neighbors near Darlington began to complain of the visits of the ghost of this deceased gentleman. In this connection Buck's attorney, Colonel John R. Courtney, read some time since, the following paper before the Crawfordsville Ghost Club:

"It was not long after my handsome client Buck Stout had been hanged that reports began to come to me from Darlington to the effect that his ghost was promenading around that section of country terrifying the women, and even causing the marrow of Darlington's brave men to turn a trifle cool. Knowing that my client had died a guilty man, with a terrible falsehood upon his lips, I was not at all surprised to hear of his spirit's perambulations, but I candidly confess that I was surprised at the visit which that spirit paid me, and at the results of it as well. I was busied with my practice, and paid but little attention to the ghost talk until one night, about three months after the rumor became current, when the matter was brought home to me in a most forcible manner. 'Twas in October, and after a hard day's work I had retired to my rooms, very tired, nervous and about half sick. I retired early, but although much fatigued I was unable to fall asleep. Hearing the old church clock strike the weary hours I tossed and tumbled about on my couch until after 11 o'clock, when I fell into an uneasy slumber. I judge that I could not have slept over a few minutes when suddenly I found myself wide awake and sitting up in bed trembling as with a chill. In accents all too familiar, spoken as from a far-off planet, but terribly distinct, I had heard my name called.

THE MESSAGE.

"Breathlessly I listened for a repetition of that plaintive, wailing cry, and it came. From whence I could not tell—from all around me, from an infinite distance, from nowhere—but it came, and the following words rang through my soul rather than through my ears: 'John! John! For the good Lord's sake, come to the office! Come down at once!'

"There was no mistaking that voice. It was that of my unfortunate client, Stout, but wonderfully sepulchral and subdued. As in a dream, obeying an influence I could not, neither cared to, control, I arose, and having dressed, passed silently out into the night. A death-like stillness hung over the deserted streets and the pavements were weird and startling. I hesitated at the foot of the stairway which led to my office, but, shaking off my fear, I climbed the steps, and, unlocking the door, pushed it wide open. Curiously I gazed into the dark interior. I saw nothing, but gradually became sensitive of another presence than mine. Again on the threshold I hesitated, but taking heart as before, I marched boldly in and closed the door behind me. I had crossed the room and was about raising a window when the old voice, still far off it seemed, exclaimed:

"'John, don't you know me?'

"I quickly wheeled, and standing, not six feet away, I beheld the ghost of my client. There was no doubt about its being only his ghost, for I had seen the sturdy Buck meet a fearful death, and had afterward seen his cold and silent corpse packed safely away under six feet of clay. And then it was a good, old-fashioned, honest ghost I saw before me, pale, shadowy and woe-begone, silently awaiting my response, with its etherial legs sadly mixed up in the waste basket.

"'Buck,' said I (I fear my voice was somewhat shaky), 'how are you?'

"'I'm in torment,' replied the ghost, as it passed its airy hand over its airy brow as though to wipe away immaterial perspiration. 'I died with a secret, and I'm in torment. I come now to you for aid, and I want you to do me a last favor.'

"'Buck,' I returned, 'when I took your case I said that I would stand by you to the end. I thought the end was over months ago, but a lawyer should always be loyal to a client; so name your request and I will grant it.'

A GRATIFIED SPOOK.

"That ghost gave a positive sigh of relief, and its countenance lighted up as you have sometimes seen the moonlight up the fleece-like clouds after emerging from a thunderbank.

"'John,' it whispered, 'your last service is by far your greatest, as you will in future learn. I want you to act in behalf of justice now. I want to make partial restitution to poor Dunbar's widow. When I shot him out there in the woods (here the ghost shuddered like steam vapor blown by the wind) I buried his money on the south side of that oak stump near which they found him. I left $337 there, and I want you to get it for his family. Then may be I can rest. Promise me now to do it, John,' and the whisper died wearily away.

"Of course I prom[illegible]ed, and now being quite at my ease [illegible]th my translated client, or rather with [illegible] the translated spirit of my late client, I undertook some little research into the question of spiritual entity.

"'Buck,' queried I, after a painful pause in which my caller seemed preparing itself for departure, 'how is it where you are? Do they treat you well?'

"The ghost actually squirmed, and fidgeting with an imaginary button on its imaginary vest, asked in evident embarrassment the time. I quickly called the hour, and before my guest could bid me farewell I had again launched into the subject of escatology by inquiring:

"'Now, old fellow, what is the use in your trying to dodge the point at issue? What's the climate of your present abode? Come, say?'

"I was aware of the fact that Buck had been a great admirer of the 'myriad-minded bard' during his imprisonment, but was wholly unprepared to hear his ghost declaim in piping, far-off accents:

"'But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul; freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres;
Thy knotted and combined locks to part
And each particular hair to stand on end
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine;
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood.'

"No sooner was the last word uttered than my visitor, who had been growing more and more shadowy throughout his speech, disappeared, leaving my office in its wanted gloom. So suddenly, however, did a realization of the ghost's departure come upon me that I lost no time in vacating the room, and was conscious of stumbling over the waste-basket and several chairs in making my exit.

THE MONEY FOUND.

"How I got home and to bed I cannot recall, but next remember my awakening the following morning with a splitting headache and a perfect recollection of my late experience with a spook. Although, as I say, my recollection in regard to my midnight visitor was extremely vivid, nevertheless, I was more than half inclined to doubt it, and by the time I had disposed of my breakfast I was almost ready to believe that I had been the victim of a nightmare, grim and horrible. I was to be undeceived, however, for on reaching my office I found the door wide open as I had left it in my flight the night before. Three chairs were upset and the contents of the waste-basket strewn recklessly over the floor. I dropped helplessly into a chair and sat there for half an hour, when I arose and proceeded to a livery stable. In three hours more I had visited the scene of the murder and found buried in a small wooden box at the side of the oak stump, the $337 of blood money. I lost no time in tendering this sum to Dunbar's family, and advised them to keep quiet in regard to the matter. This they certainly did, and my experience ended with the restitution.

"The ghost of my client is the only ghost I ever saw, but for all that I believed in ghosts before I ever heard of Buck or his ghost either, for the uneasy spirit of my own great-grandfather once walked among the ruins of his old manor house in Ireland, armed with the very pistol he grasped when killed in a duel of his own provoking. My great-grandfather had been a hard man, and half the booby Squires in the county took a shot at his ghost with their blunderbusses during his moonlight strolls about his old home. None of them ever seemed to discommode him, but every mother's son of them met with some misfortune soon after encroaching on his solitude, and I have no doubt that their ills were visited upon them by the spirit they had wantonly insulted. It is always best to be deferential to a ghost."

The Haunted Mill.

A few miles from the sleepy village of Yountsville stands a large, rambling old structure, known in the country round about as the "Hibernian Mill." Over a mile from any public road, the only approach to it is along a grass-grown, deserted lane; and, looming up as the mill does—moss-covered and desolate, a frowning bluff in its rear and the forest on every side—it is not strange that the very surroundings should give rise to tales of the weird and supernatural.

Many years ago the creek which furnished the mill with its power changed its bed, and where once a roaring torrent dashed down the ravine a tiny spring-fed brooklet now winds dreamily through the dark shadows to the river. The change in the creek's bed rendered the mill worthless, thus ruining its owner, who suddenly disappeared soon after his misfortune. What became of him was never known until two years ago, and how the mystery of his disappearance was finally solved is told by James R. Hanna in the following paper recently read before the club:

THE MILL AND THE MILLER.

"It was in the summer of 1887 that a party of college friends and myself went into camp at Indian Ford a few miles above Yountsville, in the vicinity of the Hibernian Mill. The hunting and fishing were excellent, and as for the solitude, there was a superabundance of it. The old mill was the only building in a radius of two miles, and that was so covered with Virginia creeper and other tangled vines that it resembled a great bank of fiery blossoms and bright leaves rather than the handiwork of man. Before coming I had heard much of the ghost of the old miller Garineau that walked of nights, and was held in such respect by the county folk that they would not come within half a mile of the mill to gather berries or search for straying cattle. The mill had been built in an outlandishly wild place in order to obtain advantage of a splendid fall and other natural aids to the milling business. When the great freshet of 1868 threw the bed of his creek four miles away Garineau, who was dependent solely upon the mill, was practically reduced to pauperism. A childless widower, he had lived for years reticent and solitary, but after his misfortune he became sullen and morose, never stirring from his windmill. A few farmers called on him occasionally, and found him either sitting on the mounting-block in front with his face buried in his hands, or wandering aimlessly through the great building, which, though worthless now, had cost him a small fortune. His visitors became less numerous and his moroseness greater. He would converse with no one, and finally two speculators who came to purchase his machinery could find him nowhere. His room contained all his effects, but he was gone as from the world. Years passed and the property was sold for taxes. A part of the machinery and the mill-stones were removed, but the old structure was allowed to stand, a melancholy monument to the uncertainty of human aims and expectations.

GARINEAU'S GHOST.

"Yet though the mill stood there so silently, it was rumored about in time that the ghost of old Garineau held high carnival in the lonesome rooms. Sturdy schoolboys, who passed their days playing truant in the woods, came whimpering home at dusk with wild tales of having seen an apparition at the mill. Squirrel hunters saw 'the hant' as they quietly crept up the old creek bed peering about for game, and they usually lost no time in giving it a wide berth. Uncle Jimmy Dawson, the veteran coon hunter, was out with his hounds one night and treed a coon in a small buckeye just behind the mill. Now, Uncle Jimmy wasn't afraid of 'hants,' not he, and was swinging his ax, with a right good will, when suddenly his eager hounds dropped their tails, and, uttering low whines, sulked rapidly off into the brush. Uncle Jimmy, looking up from his work to see what caused all this, saw what made even his stout heart quail, and giving vent to a squall of terrified dismay, he fled precipitately from the spot. Looking from the window of the mill loft was the ghost itself, frowning angrily down upon him, and attired, as Uncle Jimmy ever afterward maintained, in the same red cloak that old Garineau wore many years before when the mill was opened at the time of the grand barbecue given in its honor by the countryside. In view of all these experiences, then, it is not strange that the simple and superstitious people of that section soon learned to shun the wild dell at whose mouth the haunted mill stood like a sentinel guard. With the spirit of romance and bravado, so incident to youth, the members of our camping party delighted to hunt up and down the ghost-ridden glen, declaring that we would shoot the spook on sight. We kicked open the rotten door of the old mill and sacrilegiously joked and declaimed in the gloomy, cobwebbed rooms, which for years had known no earthly visitants. We ascended into the great storeroom above, and in the gloom and confusion one of the boys came near falling through a black hole in the center of the floor. This hole was the opening to sort of a chute into which grain had once been poured to conduct it to the hopper. Over two feet at the opening, it gradually narrowed until at the hopper this funnel was but six inches in diameter. The hole was then filled with dust and cobwebs, and would have been anything but a pleasant place into which to have fallen. We explored the garret or loft, and looked down from the window upon the very buckeye tree at which Jimmy Dawson was hacking away when interrupted by the ghost. We sang and hallooed through the old shell in a most demonstrative manner, and if our spook was anywhere in hearing it must have been mortally offended.

AN EVENTFUL EXPEDITION.

"We had been in camp for probably ten days, when late one afternoon it was discovered that some of our supplies were entirely out. It fell to me, after some parley, to ride six miles to Yountsville and stock up. Hunting our horse in the pasture required some time, and when I passed the old mill, on my way to the village, it was almost nightfall, and when I finally reached the pike, after a hard ride down the desert lane, it was dark. It was after 9 o'clock when I left Yountsville for my return to camp, and in the west the clouds hung black and glowering, obscuring the moon which had lighted me on my way. Long before I reached the lane, over whose rough and broken way I dreaded to ride in total darkness, the heavens were reverberating with the echoes of the thunder which heralded the approach of a beating storm. I cursed my bad luck most heartily, and reaching the lane I lashed my horse along the perilous route at the imminent risk of breaking both our necks. The occasional flashes of lightning kept me keenly alive to a sense of my danger by revealing the stones, washouts and gullies in the path, but, intent on reaching the sheltering mill before the rain poured down, I urged my panting beast forward. We were about a hundred yards from the old building when the first large drops began to patter on the parched, gasping earth, and I had barely time to lead my willing horse through the wide door, which we had kicked open a few days before, when down came the rain. A puff of wind, accompanied by a dash of rain, a momentary, death-like lull, a crash of thunder and the storm was on. The building swayed with the violence of the wind, and through the numerous large cracks the water came dashing in, wetting me to the skin. I recollected that the wareroom was boarded on the inside for protection from the dampness, and lost no time in running up the rickety stairway to this dry retreat, over twenty feet above. It seemed warm and inviting, and, throwing my saddlebags in a corner, I sat down upon them, resolved to wait until the storm had passed over before I started for our camp, which was a mile away, down a rough and brush-grown creek bank. Gradually the fury of the storm spent itself, but as the rain continued to descend in torrents, I determined to spend the night where I was, and, closing my eyes, I soon was fast asleep.

THE GHOST.

"It must have been almost midnight when I was awakened by hearing my horse in the room below give a terrified scream which sounded almost human. Before I was fairly awake I heard him tearing from the mill-room out into the night. The rain had ceased to fall, and the last beams of the declining moon lighted up the large room through its one great window with an unearthly glow. Startled by the commotion made by my horse, I sat up in my corner, and was in the act of raising my hands to rub my eyes when I fell back in a helpless heap, for coming up the stairway from below I saw the ghost!

"An old man with a set and care-worn face, a fierce, hunted light shining in the eyes, which seemed to see nothing, a trembling hand which drew tightly around his slight, bent form a bright scarlet cloak—that was the ghost. Overpowered with conflicting emotions I sat breathlessly watching my strange companion from another sphere. He saw me not, but, murmuring and gibbering to himself, began to pace the room. I could not distinguish all his speech, but 'ruin! ruin! ruin!' was the burden of the self-communion. At first he passed quite close to me as he walked about the musty wareroom, but gradually his circle became smaller and smaller as he neared the center. Finally he paused almost at the edge of the chute and groaned. I was gazing intently at him, when suddenly he took a forward step, and like a flash shot down the chute with a shriek, which still is ringing in my ears. This cry broke the spell which bound me, and leaping to my feet I rushed down the stairs and fled out through the bushes, which were dripping with the water, and which cut and chilled me as I brushed them hurriedly aside. I paused not until I reached our camp, and fell almost fainting among my companions, who had been awakened by the arrival of my horse some time before, and who were just preparing to set out in search of me.

THE INVESTIGATION.

"I was too greatly excited and fatigued to give a coherent account of my adventures that night, but the following morning, after a good breakfast and a drink of brandy, I managed to tell my story. So real was it all to me that the shouts of laughter with which my companions received it filled me with surprise, anger and disgust. Hot words were followed by mutual apologies, and after a good deal of persuasion I was induced to return to the mill with two of my friends, Binford and Fox, in quest of the supplies which I had left there the night before. I was still angry, and it annoyed me not a little to be conscious of the fact that my companions were silently chuckling at my expense. Binford, in his loud, bluff way, insisted upon relating the exceedingly flat story of 'Harry and the Guide Post,' while Fox graciously condescended to repeat a short poem which treated of a ghost which proved to be a frog. Fairly choking with cholor I arrived at the mill and proceeded with my friends up into the wareroom to get the saddle-bags. I had picked them up and was turning away again when I heard Binford exclaim, 'What's this?' and looking quickly to where he stood in the center of the room, I saw him holding up what caused beads of perspiration to stand out upon my forehead and my limbs to shake with terror. He held in his hand a large scarlet cloak, the identical garment, it seemed, the ghost had worn the night before, the same pattern, the same shade. I almost looked to see it vanish into thin air; but no, it was good, stout material. For a moment the terrible thought struck me that perhaps I had been the witness of a real catastrophe, that perhaps a fellow-being had fallen into the chute before my eyes and perished. A glance into the hole, however, undeceived me. Those cobwebs had not been disturbed for years.

"'This is the same cloak your ghost wore, Hanna,' exclaimed Binford with a jarring laugh. 'The old fellow was probably just retiring for the night when you saw him, and as his cloak is here yet, he's probably still in bed. If so we'll roust him out.'

"Stepping to the side of the room he tore off a long weather strip which was fastened over a crack and returning threw it into the funnel with a loud halloo. Instead of shooting through to the hopper, as we expected, it met with some impediment about half way down and stopped there, the end still protruding into the wareroom. Binford seized the pole and began to prod the obstruction vigorously, calling out that he had the ghost cornered now and would finish him forever. A great fear began to take possession of my soul.

"'It's a bag of wheat which has fallen down and stuck there,' Binford finally exclaimed. 'But it feels queer, too,' he added as he gave it another poke. 'Just to satisfy myself I'm going down below and split the old chute open to see what's in it.'

THE MILLER'S FATE.

"Curiously we followed him, and in my heart I felt what the result of that search would be. Climbing upon the hopper Binford thrust an old crowbar between the decaying boards of which the chute was made, and with a mighty wrench tore one of them off. Both my companions gave a cry of horror at the spectacle revealed, but I, expecting such a sight, stood by almost unmoved. There, wedged tightly in the grain chute of his own mill, was the distorted and mummified body of old miller Garineau. The flesh and skin had dried like parchment, but still the ghastly yellow face exhibited traces of the unutterable agony in which the poor wretch had died. No need to explain the manner of his death. I had seen a spiritual repetition of the tragedy the night before, and my companions stared alternately at me, the scarlet cloak and the withered corpse with superstitious horror. We said but little, and since that day my friends have shunned the discussion of our dread discovery. The following day the campers and several neighbors laid the body of old Garineau to rest in a country graveyard several miles away, wrapping him in the same scarlet cloak which had led to the discovery of his remains. Since then the ghost has never once been seen, although the place is still shunned by the country folk, my experience rather increasing the feeling of superstition with which it is regarded. I have never solved the mystery of the scarlet cloak. I know it was not there the day we first explored the mill, and all the old inhabitants stated that it was undoubtedly the garment of the unfortunate miller. I can swear I saw the ghost attired in it, but that is all. It is to me forever a part of the great mystery which unites the natural with the supernatural, the material with the immaterial."—J. A. Greene, Crawfordsville, Ind., correspondent of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

OH, THE HAPPY DAYS OF CHILDHOOD!

Oh, the happy days of childhood,
When bare-legged boys we ran,
Precious pagans, gladly piping,
Though we knew it not, to Pan;
When, within some fairy circle
We oft found ourselves at home,
Whence we fluted from a grass blade
Or made music on a comb!

Oh, the happy days of childhood,
All undimmed by doubts and debts,
When we wooed some little sweetheart
In short frocks and pantalettes!
Oh, the happy days of childhood,
When to joy's own gladsome gales,
All unheeding time and trouble,
We two trimmed our tiny sails!

Oh, the happy days of childhood,
When we played at "keeping house,"
And with bits of broken dishes
Made our mildly mad carouse!
Oh, the happy days of childhood,
When in pairs we made "mud pies,"
And all vaguely from our fancies
Saw a future fair arise!

Oh, the happy days of childhood,
When we quarreled and made up,
When the sweet was as the bitter,
Ten to one in every cup;
When the little girls who lorded
O'er us all our baby lives
Loomed up proudly in prospective
As our winning, willful wives.

Oh, the happy days of childhood,
When the fairies, not the fates,
Seemed to stand for us awaiting
To open wide life's golden gates;
Looking backward through the vista
Of a worldling's worn-out ways.
What to faded eyes is fairer
Than our childhood's happy days?
—M. N. B., in "Farm and Fireside."

We are all free American citizens, enjoying our personal liberty; but most of us are in physical slavery, suffering from scrofula, salt rheum or some other form of impure blood. Hood's Sarsaparilla is the great blood purifier which gives physical liberty.

Add 20 drops of Angostura Bitters to every glass of impure water you drink. The genuine only manufactured by Dr. Siegert & Sons.

As a cure for sore throat and coughs "Brown's Bronchial Troches" have been thoroughly tested, and maintain a good reputation.

THE EAST DRIFT.

After years of varying fortunes in other mining camps, I returned to the Comstock and got work in the Malta. Compared with the old lurid days Virginia City seemed almost deserted. It made me sad to see so many abandoned houses. The very plank walks looked melancholy—their hard, resinous knots protruding above the softer surface. Where were the thousands whose restless feet had worn them? A few old pioneer polygiot liars still loitered around the sunny corners—to lazy to work and too poor or too listless to get away, like disabled birds whose companions have migrated.

My fellow-workman was known as "Dagger Joe." Unlike the other boys, he was never seen with a pistol. His belt always carried a murderous-looking knife, with a double-edged spiral blade, whose buckhorn handle contained nine suggestive notches—about which Joe was persistently silent. One night he told me he took the knife from a greaser who died in the act of robbing Joe's sluice-boxes in California. His cruel mouth grinned in a reminiscent sort of a way, as if he were tasting pleasant memories.

From desultory remarks I inferred that he had followed the pioneer wave of adventurers from camp to camp, and by accident, like myself, had stranded there, with a fortune—to get.

We two were the night shift in the east drift from the main adit, below the Sutro tunnel level, about 300 feet from the shaft, beyond which all the other men worked.

The east drift seemed a hopeless prospect, but against the advice of the Superintendent the directors insisted upon its continuance.

One night Joe told me he overheard the Superintendent talking to the President, who had just secretly driven over from Carson, and had spent several hours in the mine.

A big deal was pending. The stock was at bedrock and was to be boomed out of sight.

We had no money, but early information judiciously used is sometimes a surer bait to catch the wary trout, Fortune, than a whole pot of gold.

I exchanged our early information for options on stock, which we sold out just as the high tide was turning. We made enough to afford to quit work, but the possibilities of more early information decided us to work on as if we had no snug little bank account. We had nearly landed the trout, Fortune, but someone else was fated to eat it. One morning when we came out to the mine we brought a newspaper, as usual, to note the state of the market and see how certain little "flyers" were flying. We were simply paralyzed to learn that the Cashier of our bank, unlike the leopard, had changed his spots, and we were merely day laborers again. Joe's face was a picture. The Cashier had better have been where Dante visited, without even a harpy's claws for defense, than to have stood before Joe at that moment. Joe was so stingy that he never drank except at another's expense. But that day he got wildly, then sottishly drunk. That night, for the first time, I went to the east drift alone.

Were you ever down in a deep mine alone? It is so still there. At night, on the mountain top, you see the stars in the clouds and hear the song of the winds. In the blackest forest you know the trees, at least, are living, for their restless leaves speak to you. But down in an old mine, whose dark avenues stretch out into unknown darkness, the grim silence hurts you, overpowers you, and you want to cry out to hear the sound of a living voice. You grope along, feeling that each step may take you out into black possibilities, beyond the narrow circle of light thrown by your flickering candle. What if your candle should go out! Your hand convulsively grabs for your match box, and if by sad chance you have left it, the tension on your nerves is so terrible that you are almost tempted to blow out your own candle to get relief by facing a reality of horror. Then your heart chokes you as the hollow sound of your step upon the boards over some abandoned winze wakes the dead echoes, which seem to your distorted fancy to be the low growlings of gnomes you have disturbed. You need not blush for shame. Braver men than you have been cowed by Nature in her somber moods. I worked harder for being alone. Joe and I used to "soldier" a little. He would smoke while I spun yarns. He sometimes laughed with his beady black eyes. I never knew his mouth to achieve anything but a sardonic, irregular grin.

After setting off a blast to make room for a square set of timbers in a rock which appeared in the bottom of the drift, I waited for the smoke to partly clear away and then leisurely went through the murky, nitrogenous smell back to my work. The blast had done more than I expected. In the lower right hand corner, furthest from the shaft, was uncovered the apex of a body of rich sulphurets, so dear to the miner's heart and so pregnant with dazzling possibilities. I held a piece in my hand and wished it all were mine. Why not? I found it. I alone knew of it. My own fortune had just been snatched away by the faithless man I trusted. I remembered a text in my boyish copy book, "Self-preservation is the first law of nature." The words seemed branded anew on my memory, and a new meaning dawned upon me. I chuckled to myself because Dagger Joe was drunk. My mind was full of glittering dreams, from which I was startled by a sound. I looked up and into the gleaming eyes of Dagger Joe, drunk enough to be ugly, but too good a miner not to realize the soul-warping situation. In an instant we read each other's greedy thoughts. As he swiftly drew his knife the dim light flashing on its cruel blade made me shudder. I struck him a blow with my pick which would have felled an ox. His right arm dropped useless at his side, and the knife flew against the wall as he sprang upon me and bore me to the ground unhurt. He was much more than a match for me. As it was, I strained every nerve, and almost despaired before I rolled him over and got my knee upon his uninjured arm. Quickly I grabbed the knife, and its screw-like blade sought his heart—again and again. Can I ever forget his face and eyes? Exhausted as I was, I quickly dragged his body to the old winze, tore aside the boards and slid the ghastly thing out of sight. My memory still echoes to heavy, bounding sounds, and the faint splashes as it plunged into the slimy water a hundred feet below. Replacing the plank and dirt, I rolled my wheelbarrow over it many times, then nervously set in the timbers which covered the exposed ore. And my two secrets were safe in the heart of the Malta mine.

It was hard to work out my time that night. It was not easy to recross that old winze after my blood had cooled. I went to my room and actually slept soundly till late in the afternoon—you see I was so exhausted and my judgment told me I was safe.

I went over to Joe's boarding-house and asked what had become of him and why he had not come to work the night before. A man I didn't know replied: "Joe got very drunk. He went down my shaft about midnight—you know I'm the new engineer on the Mexican. He said he was going through into the Malta and go to work. But I suppose he was too drunk to find his way, and he may be in the bottom of some old winze—or in hell, sobering up. Nobody would care much—he's an ugly devil. He threatened to knife me because I would not lend him some money." When he mentioned the old winze it did seem as if my heart would burst. But he was tying his shoe as he said that, and did not see the spasm of pain which paled my face.

Joe was camp talk for a few days, and was then either ignored or forgotten. An unpaid board bill furnished a motive for running away, and it was generally believed that he had done so.

The east drift was soon abandoned. The further it was driven the safer was my secret. Again I was possessed of early information of a different nature, which I coined into gold in a different way.

A partner was easily found who leased that supposed barren end of the Malta, and I was put in charge of the work. I purposely began a new drift near the old winze, into which I dumped the waste till 100 feet of rock and clay made me feel safer. Then a crosscut discovered the ore and my wildest dreams were realized. One morning the night boss met me at the shaft-house, and in a half-apologetic way said that two German miners had stoped up into the old east drift to where the ore ran right up against a set of timbers, and that the men who placed those timbers there without seeing the ore must have been tenderfeet or very drunk. As the two Germans got up into the drift they heard the sound of work on the breast twenty or thirty feet away. They could see no light and no person there. On going closer with their own candles they saw a hand holding a drill in place which was struck by a hammer held in another hand, and no other sign of a human being there. The miners had thrown down their tools and rushed up on top, and swore that nothing could induce them to go there again.

If I had not been smoking I could not have concealed my terrible fear even from the half-embarrassed foreman. But I took a fresh grip on myself and quietly told him about the wild superstitions of the miners in the Hartz Mountains, and added that some German miners were affected by them; besides, these men must have been drinking. The foreman replied: "I saw them when they came up; if they were drunk below, fear had sobered them." I did not go into the mine that day, but went to bed with a raging headache. I told my partner I feared I was catching mountain fever and I wanted to go away. I sold out to him and left that afternoon. After years of wandering around the globe, one day in Paris I chanced to pick up a Virginia City paper in a hotel frequented by Americans. Reading its old familiar type, and the well-known names in its advertisements made my heart warm toward my old friends and I determined to take the next steamer home. My mind was full of pleasant dreams, and I dropped the paper on the edge of the table and it turned over and fell on my knees. Right there under my eyes was something that blurred their sight.

"Was it Dagger Joe? A curious thing occurred last night in what is known as the old east drift of the Malta mine. It may be forgotten that this drift was principally run by Dagger Joe and Mr. A——, who afterward became half owner of a lease on that part of the mine. It is shrewdly suspected, by the way, that Mr. A—— knew what he was leasing. A short time before the mine was leased Dagger Joe mysteriously disappeared. It was said he ran away to avoid a board bill, but why should he when he had a better job than he could probably get elsewhere? Only the Comstock miners get $4 per day. Mr. A—— sold out to his partner and went away with an ample fortune. The partner worked out the ore body and he, too, went away with a million. The mine was again leased to a couple of Swedes, who as mere gleaners, can make money on ore a company could not afford to work. They were carrying in a set of timbers to strengthen the old stope, which broke with the early drift, when they heard the sound of workmen. This surprised them, as they had employed no one to work there. To their horror they discovered two human hands, without any body, working a hammer and drill like an old miner. The Swedes have thrown up the lease. It is said that such an appearance was seen there the night before Mr. A. sold out and went traveling. Can it be that old miserly Dagger Joe found an unsought grave somewhere in that old mine, and his spirit refuses to keep down because he did not fare as well in his life as his fellow workmen in the east drift? Strange things happen on the Comstock."

Then I realized that I was banished for life.—Denver News.

Miscellaneous.

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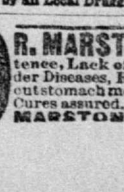

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