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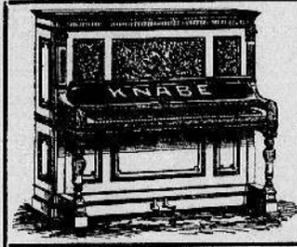
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### WILLIE REILLY'S SHIRT.

Tale of That Garment, It Being White, Told in Very Bad Melody.

Cerements Broken and Ghosts Walk the Earth to Claim Authorship.

Illustrations Dead of Some Other Century Who Take the Opprobrium From the Living.

[Written for THE SUNDAY INDEPENDENT.] Schiedam, a suburb of New York, boasts of being a very lively town, and of possessing a cemetery containing some of the dearest men in these parts, if seniority of decease counts for anything. I have some



ALONE WITH THE SONG.

relatives in Schiedam: two maiden aunts, not quite so old as the cemetery, but very interesting relics for all that. They promised to make a pleasant little party for us if we would come up for an evening.

We, of course, meant Maude and myself. We took a vote on the invitation and decided not to attend the festivities in a body. It was thought more advisable to send a small sub-committee, consisting of myself, to represent our household. As my relatives had intimated that they would have some of the girls at the house, and play games, I did not object to being a sub-committee.

I don't propose to dwell on this party. The "girls" were girls when my aunts were, and they haven't been since, which is a great many years, now. We didn't play Copenhagen or postoffice; we amused ourselves more intellectually. I escorted one of the girls to her home, far, far away on the other side of the graveyard. It was three miles if we went around the long road, and only a mile and a half if we went through it, but my companion was a timid young thing, and insisted on the long road. But after I had seen her to her venerable doorstep, I needed something to cheer me up, so I took the short cut.

I speak of the nature of my entertainment on that evening in order to convince the reader that my experience in the tomb was not the creation of a mind unbalanced by dissipation. Not a man there was calmer than I. As a proof of this, I mention the fact

that I whistled a popular song entitled "Willie Reilly's White Shirt" as I climbed the graveyard fence. I had caught the tune in New York and had long waited an opportunity to whistle it in a solitude that would conceal my degradation. For it was such a bad tune; so shamelessly suggestive of every other bad tune; so offensive to a sensitive ear; in short such a thoroughly typical popular song that I felt guilty when I carried the remembrance of it home with me. And yet I couldn't shake it off. It had clung to me for days; my mouth had been perpetually in a pucker with it; and every night the silent whistle in my brain had lulled me to sleep with "Willie Reilly's White Shirt."

There was nothing coarse in the words; they even had a moral purpose. Willie was represented as residing in the Fourth ward, and the song appealed directly to the young men of that locality. Who could say that it might not be the means of leading many of them to a better life? It was ample and pure white shirts for their own use, thus distinctly advancing in the path of civilization. I said as much to Patrolman Cassidy of that district, and he replied that it was not the first one to think of this possible result, for he had noticed that the washerwomen were hauling in their clotheslines earlier in the evening since the song had become popular.

No, no; the words were pardonable but the tune—ah, there was the crime. It had the property of contagion. It was a musical disease. I felt that if I didn't whistle it all out of my system I should lose my appreciation of every sweet and honest melody. So I piped away lustily among the gravestones, expecting to do myself much good and nobody any harm.

"Young man," said a voice at my elbow, "where did you get that tune?" I turned hastily with a cold feeling in my spine, and saw a tall, thin man leaning over his own gravestone. By the dim moonlight I discerned that it had been erected to the memory of Edgar Smith in 1865.

"I beg your pardon," said I. "If I had any idea it would startle you—"

"Oh, never mind," replied the ghost, "I suppose you intended to be complimentary."

"Complimentary?"

"Yes; in life I was reputed to have written that tune. It was a popular war melody and went by the name of 'Johnny Griffin's Retreat.' I had supposed that it was forgotten."

"You must be mistaken," I replied; "that is 'Willie Reilly's White Shirt,' and was perpetrated by C. A. Jenkins. Perhaps I didn't whistle it correctly."

"Oh, yes you did, near enough," said the ghost. "It went this way," and he finished the air from the point where he had interrupted me.

"That's it," I admitted, "and I consider your claim established. But may I ask—I don't want to be offensive, you know—may I inquire what was done about it when you arrived—that is, did they make it very hot for you on account of this thing?"

"No; my claim to its authorship was not allowed and I escaped. Between you and me, I didn't compose it; I just bashed it up in a hurry out of one or two old things."

"Well, I wish you'd let it rest, that's all," said I, somewhat harshly. "Perhaps, if you had, it might not have arisen in my day."

though I couldn't help thinking that it was more than he deserved.

"No; no; take it away; that's all." I took it away. Even after this fearful morning I couldn't keep it out of my head, and before I had gone twenty paces from the spot I was whistling it again.

"Say, my friend," said a voice on my right, "did that fellow Smith tell you he composed that song?"

"No, he didn't," said I, confronting this second specter boldly, "he confessed that he stole it."

"Probably he knew that you would meet me," continued the ghost; "I'm the man he stole it from. My name is Cyrus J. Perkins, and I was buried before Smith was born. Look at my date, 1819. I composed that song."

He was interrupted by a deep groan, which proceeded from a somewhat older portion of the cemetery. The groan was followed by a voice:

"Perkins, why will you pervert the facts in this shameful manner. You stole that song from a revolutionary ballad composed



REFRAINED FROM BUYING THE SONG.

by me and called 'General Clinton's White Horse.' My young friend, if you want to go into the archeology of that song, just ascribe it to Levi C. Whitcomb, originally of Connecticut."

"When were you buried, Whitcomb," inquired a specter whom I perceived looking down at us from sparsely populated district up near the brow of the hill. The voice had a slightly foreign accent which suggested sunny Italy.

"Seventeen eighty-one," answered Whitcomb, shortly.

"Go back to your cage, old whale-oil," said Whitcomb, sternly; "you are trying to ruin my reputation."

"And furthermore," continued Count Beppo, "there is a lady of my country in the third walk to the left who was a member of an operatic chorus and died in 1729. She remembers that song in her youth—in her youth, mind you!"

I looked at Whitcomb and he melted away into thin mist, taking his pretensions with him.

"I am gratified to have the Count Beppo Spermaceti substantiate my claim."

The words were spoken in Dutch of a somewhat antique pattern, but, on the whole, good enough. Dutel, for a ghost, the speaker stood looking at me over the gravestone of Peter Yollis, who died in 1629. Of course it was not the original gravestone; it was a comparatively new one erected by the later Yollises. But it was the same old Peter; there was no mistaking his antiquity.

"The late Mynheer Yollis," said I, respectfully, "will pardon me for presuming while still living (and on a small salary at that) to address the distinguished dead, but if the lady to whom Count Beppo refers heard the song in her youth which must have been passed in Italy, or considering her profession perhaps I should say Latinum."

"Exactly, my friend," said Yollis, interrupting; "I composed the song while there, before coming to this country. It was republished here, and I dedicated it to Hendrick Hudson. Of course I didn't care

a—, well, we will say a dike, which means much the same thing. Of course I didn't care a dike for Hendrick, but I thought his name would help sell the song, you understand."

"Yes," I admitted, "the same thing is done to-day."

"I was accused, sir; falsely accused of stealing the melody, but it was wholly and entirely original with me."

"Strange," said I, musing, "that is just what Mr. C. A. Jenkins says."

I climbed the graveyard wall in a meditative mood. Something in my experience with the denier had cured me of that song; and when in New York the next morning I heard a man shout in my ear, "All the latest songs of the day; Willie Reilly's White Shirt, etc.," I was able to restrain my desire for a copy.

HOW SHE CAUGHT HIM.

I'd hardly given hint of love. Much less of then proposing. But while she sat, her hands above The ivory keys disposing.

Then softly wrought such tones as spring From throats of thrush or lark. I said: "I like your fingering. There's a dainty brilliance in it."

"My finger ring" she said, as joy Beamed in her glasses so steady. "You don't see dear, ambitious boy? You've ordered it already?"

"How dard you?" Then a bluish intense Count charred to words so clever. "Well, since you go to me to that expense I—I—I'm yours forever." Boston Courier.

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To Los Angeles, going via Ogden and Sacramento and return via San Francisco and Ogden, or vice versa, \$94.

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