

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MAY 14, 1922.

A Famous U.S. Admiral tells Amazing Ghost Story

By Rear Admiral
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SOME will say it was an "astral body"; others will say it was a ghost. Some are thinking, though they have read only thus far, that, of course, it cannot be either, since there can be neither "astral body" nor ghost. I do not argue with the latter, since I do not reveal this story either as "evidence" or as an argument. Neither do I recommend either term for the former. Those who read may call it what they will—"astral body" or "ghost." I wish to say only that the story is true, that those who are mentioned are ladies and gentlemen who rank with the highest and that, because I vouch for my friends, I vouch for their experience. I tell these experiences because they might throw some light upon many recent matters of public controversy.

During a visit of my ship to British waters I was a guest at a typical London social gathering—a dinner—at one of the large, stately London homes. The guests were representative of England's best, soldiers, statesmen, peers.

When the ladies had observed the still prevalent English custom, and had left the dining room that the men might chat together, we drew together at the end of the great dining table to exchange comment upon affairs of especial interest to men.

Gradually the conversation turned to "psychical research"—a subject nowadays much to the fore.

The general sentiment was disapproval of such "hanky-panky," as the majority chose to call "spiritual manifestations," and Hume, Doyle and others who were apostles of spiritualism were denounced and ridiculed. As a stranger, and a foreigner, I thought it more becoming to listen to the discussion than to share in it, although in my own views I sided with the majority.

Among the guests was Sir Francis—I shall not quote his family name without his permission—whom I knew slightly in a professional way as well as socially. He, I could not help observing, merely injected now and then a question designed to bring out more clearly some point under discussion. His own opinion of psychic matters he refrained from expressing.

At last the host, who was a distinguished peer of the realm, turned to him and asked:

"Sir Francis, do you think there's anything in this communicating with departed spirits? You have been so silent I have wondered if you believe—or don't."

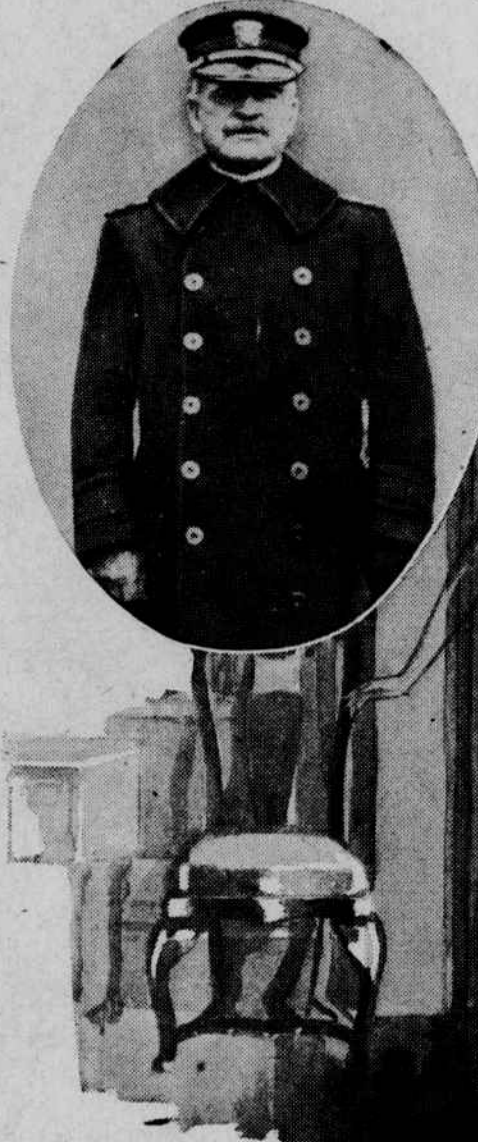
"Really, I can't say," Sir Francis replied. "Some time ago I would have scouted such possibility. Even now I cannot bring myself to credit it. On the other hand, strange things happen. When people we don't know preach at us and give us instances of their experiences we may scout at them, of course. But when something uncanny happens to people we know—our friends, whom we know to be sensible and reliable—then we have to sober down and think."

"You sound mysterious, my dear Sir Francis. Have you a good story to tell us?"

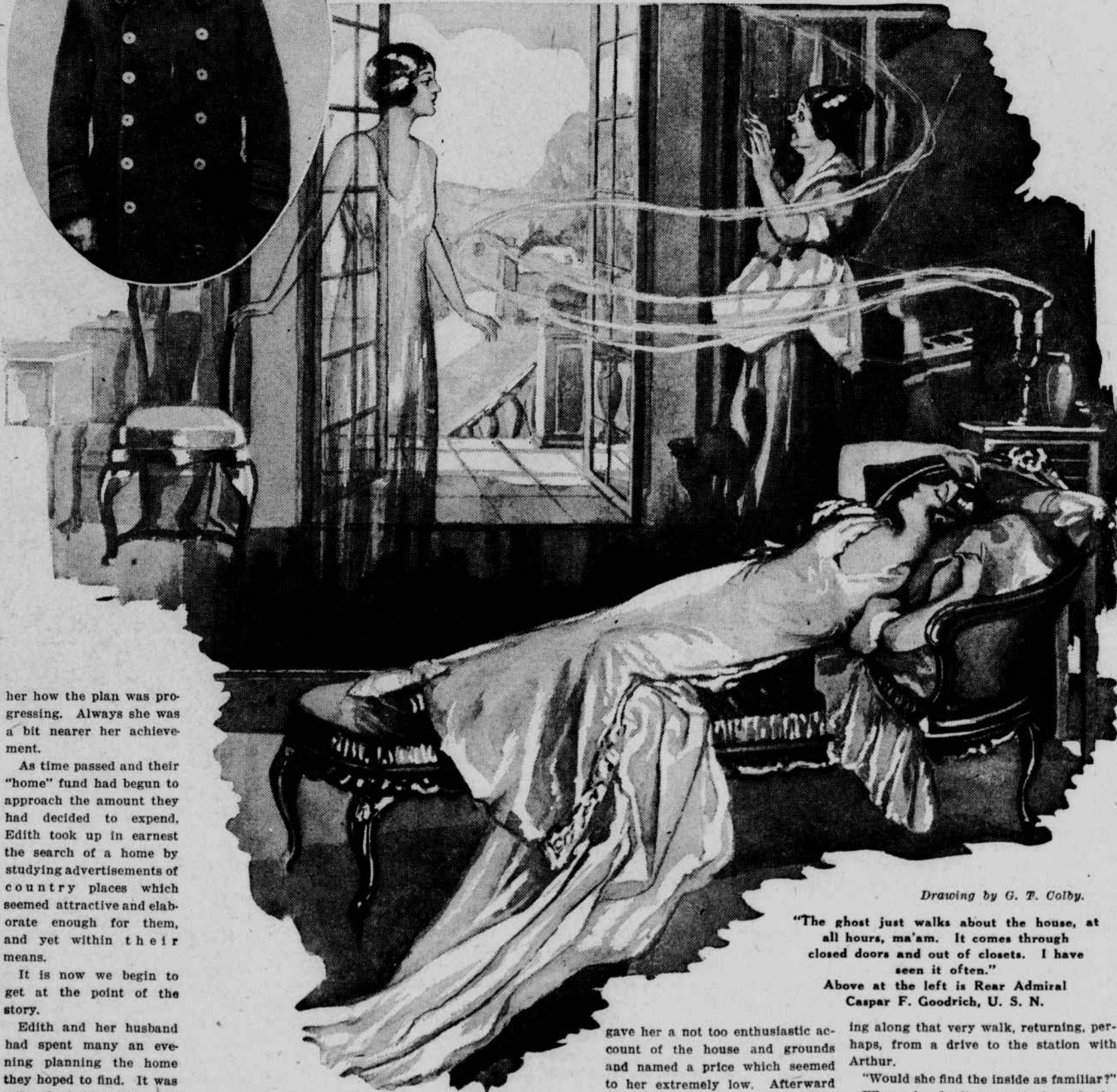
"It's a queer story, but absolutely true. I know intimately the people concerned in it."

Then Sir Francis proceeded with an extraordinary story, which I repeat substantially in his own words as well as I can remember them:

Some time ago I attended the wedding of two young friends, Arthur Browning and Edith Mainwaring, both of whom I had known since childhood. Shortly afterward I had tea with them at their home in London. They were very happy and quite enthusiastic over the plans they had made for the future. Edith had a rather substantial income of her own, on which they proposed living, while every penny for Arthur's practice as a barrister was to be safely invested, accumulating both interest and principal until a sum had been saved sufficiently large to enable them to acquire a comfortable and roomy home in the country, near the city—County Surrey preferred. It was a beautiful plan, described by a charming and clever young bride, and it both amused and interested me, so that from time to time I dropped in to ask



"You May Believe It or Not," Says the Distinguished Officer, "Here Is a True Account of Just What Happened"



Drawing by G. T. Colby.

"The ghost just walks about the house, at all hours, ma'am. It comes through closed doors and out of closets. I have seen it often."

Above at the left is Rear Admiral Caspar F. Goodrich, U. S. N.

her how the plan was progressing. Always she was a bit nearer her achievement.

As time passed and their "home" fund had begun to approach the amount they had decided to expend, Edith took up in earnest the search of a home by studying advertisements of country places which seemed attractive and elaborate enough for them, and yet within their means.

It is now we begin to get at the point of the story.

Edith and her husband had spent many an evening planning the home they hoped to find. It was one of their happy pastimes. When they were guests at the country homes of their friends they would bring away memories of every feature of the park, hedge or garden of the conservatories and even the interior arrangements.

At home again they would compare impressions. Perhaps Arthur liked the outlook from the library. Edith would remember, "Yes, Arthur, but I think the hedge was a bit too high; we will have our library laid out just that way—it was adorable, but we will have a lower hedge and a little further away from the French windows." Arthur would agree, and then to their other plans was added a library with a low hedge a little way from French windows.

Again Edith would return from a week end bubbling over with enthusiasm over a breakfast room she had noticed, a breakfast room looking out, perhaps, upon a garden of morning glories—flowers that unfold only at breakfast time.

"We must have a breakfast room, Arthur dear, and morning glories just outside. It is such a beautiful idea. Now let me see—just where will we fit it in—&c. And so they would "fit in" the breakfast room so it would not interfere with the library.

At last, out of all this planning, planning together and taking days—weeks—over every little detail of the home to be had "some day"—they had built a dream plan. Edith, particularly, had every detail mapped out in her mind.

It was to be a very comfortable, rather old-fashioned house, with ivy and roses climbing over it; a spacious, rolling lawn with a sun dial and handsome trees and shrubs; a kitchen garden, with flower gardens flanking each wing of the house; a tennis court; a small vine covered

garage; the whole estate to be inclosed by a hawthorn hedge that would give May breezes a delightful scent.

As to the house itself, she knew every nook and corner of the one she wanted—every room and every closet; she knew just how she wanted the bedrooms, the offices, the living rooms, dining rooms, drawing rooms, corridors, galleries, &c., laid out.

She spent many idle hours dreaming of herself as the happy mistress of this ideal house. She was alone a great deal—with only her servants about—and she was accustomed to close her eyes and "wander through" the house she hoped to find; she even became familiar with the furniture inside and the very pictures on the walls. These visions, as the time went on, grew more and more vividly real—as well as more frequent.

When she and her husband agreed that their funds were enough to warrant actually looking over, with a view to purchase, properties that might suit, they made many excursions into the country, but invariably returned to the city disappointed. Something essential was lacking in each house offered them. Finally Arthur declared he could go with her no longer. He really could not spare the time. If she found what she liked, then, as a mere matter of form, he would accompany her for a final inspection.

One memorable day she saw an advertisement of what seemed to be exactly the place she coveted. It was in Blankshire, in a lovely neighborhood. The owners were living in town and did not want to carry the expense of a country place. She went to see it, expecting only another of the disappointments to which she had now grown accustomed.

The agent, at Beeshampton, near by,

gave her a not too enthusiastic account of the house and grounds and named a price which seemed to her extremely low. Afterward she recalled that he was somewhat restrained and confined his remarks to barest business outlines. He appeared to consider it his duty to sell the property, but not to be too enthusiastic about it.

Armed with a card of admission from the agent, she drove to "The Grange," as the estate was named. When she had passed through the lodge gate she was dazzled. There were the breakfast kitchen—the hedge, the library French windows—the morning glories! It was the place of her dreams!

For what seemed to be almost an hour Edith sat in her car gazing at the house, its gardens—and there was the sun dial, just as she had planned it.

She was interrupted by an elderly woman, the wife of the lodge keeper, who eventually had noticed the strange car and had come out to greet the visitor. When Edith turned to meet her and stepped down from the car the old woman shrank back as if she had been struck. Her face went white, and with a quick spasmodic motion she threw her hand over her eyes—quickly dropping it, however. When Edith spoke brightly the woman seemed to regain her composure.

Silently, with a queer, frightened look in her eyes, which Edith afterward remembered, she took the admission card, read it, and then, dropping a curtsey as a tribute to Edith's station, led the way into the house.

Edith faltered at the threshold, as the old woman threw open the great, wide oak doors. She was almost afraid to go in. Every step, as she had walked up through the flower bordered walk across the esplanade that flanked the front wing of the house, was familiar to her. Countless times she had imagined herself com-

ing along that very walk, returning, perhaps, from a drive to the station with Arthur.

"Would she find the inside as familiar?" When she finally passed through the door, her heart quickened. There, over the great fireplace she had planned, hung a dark old painting—the very painting she had sketched in her imagination as the proper ornament for the high mantelpiece!

She forgot the caretaker. She fairly ran from room to room. She knew every passageway, every door. She knew every room and almost every important piece of furniture was just as she had planned it, and it stood just where, after days, sometimes of visioning, she had decided it was to stand.

With a brief word of appreciation Edith hurried to her car and drove as fast as she dared, back to Beeshampton, to the office of the agent. She need not wait to have Arthur come. She knew, well, indeed, that he would be astounded as she had been—and so happy.

She told the agent quickly she was ready to purchase at once, on the terms stated, and from her purse she drew a number of five pound notes with which to bind the bargain. She would run no risks of losing the place.

"Before accepting the earnest money," the agent said, "I must in justice to myself and in fairness to you, inform you that, attractive as it is, The Grange has one serious objection. If, knowing it, you still desire to buy it, I shall have the deed drawn up at once."

"And that is?" Edith asked breathlessly.

"Madame, the house is haunted. Several persons have leased it with the option of buying it, if it should prove satisfactory. They never have remained more than a few weeks and they did not buy. They all declared they could not keep servants, for none would live in the same dwelling house with a ghost."

"Haunted?" cried Edith. "How—why

isn't that foolish? What makes them believe it haunted?"

"I only know what they have reported—and what the caretaker reports. A ghost—the ghost of a woman, they say, wanders about the house at night, often in the daytime, too. Whether it is a murdered ancestress, or relative, I cannot say. The caretaker is an old servant of the owners; his wife, the old woman, was the housekeeper. They always have been retained by the tenants. They have both seen the ghost. They might—the old woman, anyway, give you more of the details. I would rather you went to them before you decided to buy, if you still think of buying. You may say I permit them to tell you all they know of the ghost and its habits."

Edith was heartsick. The mystery and the disappointment combined was overwhelming. But she is a determined little woman and she drove back to "The Grange." She did not believe in ghosts. She did not believe the house haunted. She determined to cross-examine the lodge keeper's wife very thoroughly—no doubt, she thought, it was all an idle fancy.

Again, when the old woman came out of the lodge, she stopped and seemed to tremble. Edith was abrupt.

"I have decided to purchase this estate," she said, "but the agent tells me the house is haunted. He advised me to talk with you about it and said I might convey to you his permission to speak frankly."

The old woman—a typical English family servant, trained, respectful and unemotional—could not, nevertheless, conceal an uneasiness.

She replied only, "Yes, madam."

"Well," Edith said impatiently, "is the house haunted, then?"

"Yes, madam."

"Is it true people have come here to live, sensible people and have moved away before their leases expired?"

"Yes, madam."

"What is it that happens?"

"The ghost just walks about the house at night—early in the evenings mostly, but quite often during the day—really at all hours, madam. It does not harm any one—that is, it never has—but it comes through closed doors and out of closets and sits down in the room where people are. The servants all have been badly frightened at times, madam."

"What is the ghost, a legend, an ancestor—or what?"

"It is a strange ghost, madam, that was never connected with the family."

"Is it a man or a woman? Have you yourself actually seen it?"

The old woman showed new signs of nervousness. There was something of awe in her voice as she replied:

"It is a lady, madam. I have seen it often."

"Well, then, tell me at once—what does it—she—look like? There must be some reason for a ghost—something somebody knows—can't you tell more about it? I want to know everything before I decide about buying the house, or giving it up."

"Surely Madame knows—more than I, since madam—here the old woman faltered. Edith was strangely sensitive to a coming shock.

"I know," she exclaimed—"why, what do you mean?"

"Madam surely knows what I mean," the old woman replied—"madam is herself the ghost!"

Edith was thunderstruck. "I—I am the ghost?" "Yes, madam, you are the ghost. You have come sometimes in white, several times just as you are, sometimes in other gowns. You have been coming two years. This is the first time you have ever spoken. I am not afraid—just a little—because I am used to you. But don't know why you should bring the agent's card; you never did before."

Edith understood—and sank back into the running board of her car. The old woman stood silent until Edith laughed, hysterically. She pressed a banknote in the old servant's hands and went away, saying only:

"You need have no fear, my dear; I will never come—as a ghost—again."

She stopped at the agent's and paid over her earnest money. That night she and Arthur, after she had repeated her story over and over to him, called in their friends—me among them—to tell us. They live at the Grange now. I see them often, and have heard from the lodge keeper's wife her side of the story—she likes to tell it at every opportunity. She is hurt when we laugh, now, at the whole thing, for we must laugh when we think of it or else the weirdness of it would break us down. But the old servant sees nothing to laugh at. She still firmly believes that Edith is a ghost come to life, and she is never sure but that her new mistress will come walking through a door or out of a closed closet.

And that, in his own words as well as I can remember it, is Sir Francis's story. I will not comment other than to say that all who know Sir Francis or Arthur and Edith know that what they say happened—happened.