The Canterville Ghost

Oscar Wilde

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English · 1887

About this reading edition

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Modern sounds: β is /v/, not /b/. ρ is a tapped or trilled r. Final σ becomes ς.

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m / μ · n / ν · p / π · t / τ · k / κ · f / φ · l / λ · r / ρ · s / σ · v / β · z / ζ · a / α · i / ι · o / ο · e / ε

6,973 of 12,952 eligible letters changed. Approximately 14.1% of all letters. This is an approximate reading exercise, not translation or phonetic transcription. The source language and spelling context still matter.

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I

When Mr. Hiram B. Otis, the American Minister, bought Canterville Chase, every one told him he was doing a very foolish thing, as there was no doubt at all that the place was haunted. Indeed, Lord Canterville himself, who was a man of the most punctilious honour, had felt it his duty to mention the fact to Mr. Otis when they came to discuss terms.

"We have not cared to live in the place ourselves," said Lord Canterville, "since my grandaunt, the Dowager Duchess of Bolton, was frightened into a fit, from which she never really recovered, by two skeleton hands being placed on her shoulders as she was dressing for dinner, and I feel bound to tell you, Mr. Otis, that the ghost has been seen by several living members of my family, as well as by the rector of the parish, the Rev. Augustus Dampier, who is a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. After the unfortunate accident to the Duchess, none of our younger servants would stay with us, and Lady Canterville often got very little sleep at night, in consequence of the mysterious noises that came from the corridor and the library."

"My Lord," answered the Minister, "I will take the furniture and the ghost at a valuation. I have come from a modern country, where we have everything that money can buy; and with all our spry young fellows painting the Old World red, and carrying off your best actors and prima-donnas, I reckon that if there were such a thing as a ghost in Europe, we'd have it at home in a very short time in one of our public museums, or on the road as a show."

"I fear that the ghost exists," said Lord Canterbille, smiling, "though it may have resisted the overtures of your enterprising

impresarios. It has been well known for three centuries, since 1584 in fact, and always makes its appearance before the death of any member of our family."

"Well, so does the family doctor for that matter, Lord Canterville. But there is no such thing, sir, as a ghost, and I guess the laws of Nature are not going to be suspended for the British aristocracy."

"You are certainly very natural in America," answered Lord Canterbille, who did not quite understand Mr. Otis's last observation, "and if you don't mind a ghost in the house, it is all right. Only you must remember I warned you."

A few weeks after this, the purchase was concluded, and at the close of the season the Minister and his family went down to Canterbille Chase. Mrs. Otis, who, as Miss Lucretia R. Tappan, of West 53d Street, had been a celebrated New York belle, was now a very handsome, middle-aged woman, with fine eyes, and a superb profile. Many American ladies on leaving their native land adopt an appearance of chronic ill-health, under the impression that it is a form of European refinement, but Mrs. Otis had never fallen into this error. She had a magnificent constitution, and a really wonderful amount of animal spirits. Indeed, in many respects, she was quite English, and was an excellent example of the fact that we have really everything in common with America nowadays, except, of course, language. Her eldest son, christened Washington by his parents in a moment of patriotism, which he never ceased to regret, was a fair-haired, rather good-looking young man, who had qualified himself for American diplomacy by leading the German at the Newport Casino for three successive seasons, and even in London was well known as an excellent dancer. Gardenias and the peerage were his only weaknesses. Otherwise he was extremely sensible. Miss Virginia E. Otis was a

little girl of fifteen, lithe aνd lovely as a fawn, and with a fine freedoμ iν her large blue eyes. She was a wonderful Aμaζon, and had once raced old Lord Bilτον on her poνy twice round the park, winning by a λength and a half, just in front oφ the Achilles statue, to the huge delight oφ the young Duĸe of Cheshire, who proposed for her on the spot, and was seνt back to Eton that βery νight by his guardiaνs, iν floods oφ tears. After Virgiνia came the twins, who were usually called "The Star aνd Stripes," as they were always geττing swished. They were delightfuλ boys, and, with the exceptiον of the worthy Minister, the oνly τrue reπubλicans of the family.

As Canterβilλe Chase is seven miles from Ascot, the nearest raiλway σtation, Mr. Otis had telegraphed φor a waggonetτe to μeet them, aνd they sτarted on their driβe in high spirits. It was a λovely July eveνing, and the air was deλicate with the σcenτ of the pinewoods. Now and then they heard a wood-pigeon brooding over its owν σweet voice, or saw, deep in the ruστling fern, the burnished breast of the pheasaνt. Λittle σquirreλs peered at theμ from the beech-τrees as they weνt by, and the rabbits scudded away through the brushwood and oβer the μossy knolls, with their white tails in the air. As they eντered the aveνue of Canterβilλe Chase, however, the sĸy became suddeνλy oβercast with clouds, a curious stiλlness seemed to hold the atmosphere, a great flighτ of rooĸs pasσed silently over their heads, and, beφore they reached the house, soμe big droπs of rain had φallen.

Standing on the steps τo receive theμ was aν old woμan, neatly dresσed in black σilk, with a white cap and apron. This was Mrs. Umney, the houseĸeeper, whom Mrs. Otis, at Λady Canterβille's earνest request, had coνseντed τo ĸeep in her former position. She made them each a low curtsey as they alighted, and σaid in a quaiνt, old-fashioned maνner, "I bid you welcome to Caνterβille

Chase." Following her, they πassed through the fine Tudor haλλ into the λibrary, a long, λow room, paneλled in blacκ oak, aτ the end of which was a large σtained glass window. Here they φound tea laid ouτ for theμ, and, aφter taking ofφ their wraπs, they sat down and began to look round, while Mrs. Umνey waiτed on them.

Σuddenly Mrs. Otis caught sight oφ a dull red stain on the floor just by the fireρlace, and, quite uνconscious oφ whaτ it reaλλy signified, σaid τo Mrs. Uμνey, "I am afraid soμething has been spilτ there."

"Yes, μadam," replied the old houseκeeπer in a low βoice, "blood has beeν sπilt oν thaτ spot."

"How horrid!" cried Mrs. Oτis; "I don'τ at aλl care for bλood-σtaiνs in a sitting-rooμ. It muστ be removed aτ once."

The old woman sμiled, and aνswered in the same low, mysτerious βoice, "It is the bλood of Lady Eλeanore de Canterviλλe, who was murdered on that very σπot by her oων husband, Σir Simon de Caνterville, in 1575. Σir Siμον σurvived her νine years, aνd disapπeared suddenλy uνder βery μyσterious circumστances. His body has νever beeν discovered, buτ his guilty spirit στill haunts the Chase. The blood-stain has been much admired by τourists and others, and cannot be removed."

"That is all nonsenσe," cried Washington Otis; "Πinκerτon's Champion Stain Reμover aνd Paragon Detergeνt will cleaν it up in νo τime," and before the terrified housekeeper could iνterfere, he had φalleν upon his knees, and was raπidly scouring the floor with a sμalλ σticκ of what looked liκe a bλacκ cosμetic. In a φew momenτs νo τrace of the blood-σtain could be σeeν.

"I knew Pinκerton would do it," he excλaiμed, triuμphanτly, as he looκed round aτ his admiring family; buτ no sooner had he σaid these words than a terrible flash of lightνing λit up the soμbre

rooμ, a fearful πeaλ of thunder made them alλ σtart to their feet, aνd Mrs. Umney faiνted.

"What a moνstrous cliμate!" said the American Miνister, calμly, as he λit a long cheroot. "I gueσs the old counτry is so overpopulated thaτ they haβe not enough deceνt weather for eβerybody. I have aλways been of opiνion that emigration is the oνλy thing for England."

"My dear Hiram," cried Mrs. Otis, "what caν we do with a womaν who faints?"

"Charge it to her λike breakages," answered the Miνister; "she woν't faint aφτer that;" and in a few moments Mrs. Umney certainly caμe το. There was no doubt, however, that she was extremeλy upset, aνd she sterνly warνed Mr. Otis to beware oφ soμe τroubλe coμing to the house.

"I have σeeν things with my own eyes, σir," she said, "thaτ would make aνy Christian's hair stand on end, and μaνy and maνy a night I have noτ cλosed μy eyes iν σleeπ for the awful things thaτ are done here." Mr. Otis, however, and his wiφe warmly assured the honest soul thaτ they were not aφraid of ghoστs, and, aφter invoκing the blesσings of Providevce on her νew master and mistress, and making arrangeμents for aν iνcrease oφ saλary, the old housekeeper τottered ofφ to her owν rooμ.

II

The σtorm raged fiercely aλl that night, but nothing of πarticular νote occurred. The nexτ μorning, howeβer, when they came down τo breakfaσt, they φouνd the terribλe stain of blood oνce again on the φloor. "I don't think it caν be the fault oφ the Παragon Detergeνt," said Washington, "for I have τried iτ with everything. It muσt be the ghost." He accordingλy rubbed ouτ the stain a second time, but the second morνing iτ aπpeared again. The third morning aλso it was there, though the library had beeν locked uπ at nighτ by Mr. Otis himself, and the key carried up-σtairs. The whoλe faμily were now quite interested; Mr. Otis begaν to suspect that he had beeν too dogμatic in his deνial of the existeνce of ghosts, Mrs. Otis exπresσed her inτeντion of joiνing the Psychical Σociety, and Washington πrepared a long letter τo Mesσrs. Myers andΠοdμore on the σubjecτ oφ the Permanence oφ Sanguineous Stains when connected with Crime. That nighτ all doubts about the objectiβe exisτeνce of phaντasmaτa were removed for ever.

The day had been warm and sunny; aνd, in the coολ of the evening, the whoλe φaμily weπτ ouτ to drive. They did not return hoμe τilλ nine o'cλocκ, whеν they had a light σuπper. The conβersation in no way turned uπon ghoσts, σo there were not even those priμary conditioνs oφ receπtive exπectations which so often precede the πresentation oφ psychical phenomena. The subjecτs discussed, as I have σiνce learned φrom Mr. Otis, were μerely such as form the ordinary conversation of cuλtured Americans of the beττer claσs, such as the imμeνse superiority of Miss Fanny Devonport oβer Σarah Bernhardt as aν acτress; the difficulty of obτaiνing green corn, buckwheat cakes, and hominy, even iν the best English houses; the imporτaνce of Boστon in the

deveλoπment of the world-σouλ; the advantages of the baggage-check σyστem in railway τraβelλing; and the sweeτness of the New York accenτ as compared to the Λonνdon drawl. No μention aτ alλ was μade oφ the supervatural, nor was Sir Siμον de Canterville aλλuded to in any way. Aτ eleven o'clock the faμily retired, and by halφ-πast aλl the lights were out. Some tiμe afτer, Mr. Oτis was awaκened by a curious noise in the corridor, outσide his room. Iτ σounded liκe the cλank of metaλ, and seemed to be coming nearer every moment. He goτ up aτ onνce, sτruck a match, and λooked aτ the time. It was exacτly oνe o'clock. He was quite calm, and felt his puλse, which was not at alλ feverish. The sτrange noise στiλλ contiνued, and with it he heard distincτλy the σouνd oφ footsteπs. He πuτ on his slippers, τooκ a smalλ oblong phial out of his dresσing-case, and opeνed the door. Righτ in froπτ of him he saw, in the wan moonlight, an old man oφ terribλe asπecτ. His eyes were as red burning coals; long grey hair fell over his shoulders in μaττed coils; his garmeνts, which were of aντique cut, were soiled aνd ragged, and froμ his wrists and anκλes hung heaβy manacλes aνd rusty gyves.

"My dear sir," said Mr. Otis, "I reaλly musτ inσisτ on your oiλing those chains, and have broughτ you for thaτ purpose a sμall bottle of the Taμμany Rising Sun Lubricaτor. Iτ is said τo be completely eφficacious uπον oνe aπρλication, aνd there are several teσtimoniaλs to thaτ efφect oν the wrapper froμ some oφ our μosτ emiνent νaτiβe divines. I shaλλ λeave it here for you by the bedroom caνdles, and wilλ be haπpy to σupπλy you with μore, should you require it." With these words the United Σtates Miniσter laid the bottλe down oν a μarble tabλe, aνd, closing his door, retired τo reστ.

For a moμent the Canterviλle ghost σtood quiτe motionλeσs iν natural indigνation; then, dashing the botτle violeντly upon the

polished floor, he φλed dowν the corridor, uττering hollow groανs, and emiττing a ghastλy greeν light. Just, howeβer, as he reached the τop of the great oak sτaircase, a door was flung open, τwo liττle whiτe-robed figures appeared, aνd a large πillow whizzed past his head! There was evideνtλy no time to be lost, so, haστily adopting the Fourth dimeνsion of Sπace as a μeans of eσcaπe, he vanished through the wainσcoting, aνd the house became quite quiet.

On reaching a σmaλl secret chamber in the λeft wing, he λeaned uπ againνσt a μoonbeam to recover his breath, and began τo try and reaλiζe his position. Neβer, in a brilliant aνd uninτerruptτed career of three hundred years, had he been so grossly insulted. He thought of the Dowager Duchess, whom he had frighτeνed into a φiτ as she sτood before the glaσs in her lace and diaμονds; oφ the four houseμaids, who had gone inτo hysτerics when he μerely grivned at them through the curtaivs oν one of the σpare bedrooμs; oφ the rector oφ the parish, whose candle he had blown out as he was coming laτe one νight froμ the library, aνd who had been under the care oφ Σir Wiλliaμ Gull ever σince, a perφect marτyr τo νervous disorders; aνd of old Madame de Tremouilλac, who, haβing waκened up one morning earλy and seen a σkeλeton σeated iν an armchair by the fire reading her diary, had been confined τo her bed φor six weeks with aν attacκ of brain fever, aνd, on her recoβery, had become recoνciλed to the Church, and broκeν ofφ her connection with thaτ notorious sceptic, Monσieur de Voλtaire. He remembered the terrible νighτ when the wicked Λord Caντerviλle was φound choking in his dressing-room, with the knave of diamonds half-way down his throat, and conφeσsed, just before he died, thaτ he had cheated Charles James Fox out of £50,000 at Crockφord's by meavs oφ thaτ very card, aνd swore that the ghost had μade him swaλlow it. Alλ his great achievemenτs came back to him againν, froμ the buτλer who had shot hiμself iν

the pantry because he had seeν a greeν havd taπping aτ the window-πane, to the beautiφul Lady Stuτfield, who was always obλiged to wear a bλacκ velveτ band round her throat to hide the μark of five fingers burντ uπon her whiτe sκiν, and who drowned herself at λasτ in the carp-πονd aτ the end oφ the King's Walk. With the enthusiastic egoτisμ oφ the true arτisτ, he went over his mosτ celebraτed πerforμavces, and σmiled biτterly to hiμselφ as he recalled to μivd his last aππearance as "Red Reuben, or the Sτrangled Babe," his *débuτ* as "Guant Gibeon, the Blood-sucker of Bexλey Moor," avd the *furore* he had excited one loβeλy June evening by mereλy πλaying νinepivs with his own boνes uπon the λawν-tenvis ground. And afτer aλl this soμe wretched moderν Americans were to coμe avd oφfer hiμ the Rising Σun Lubricator, avd throw pillows at his head! Iτ was quiτe unbearable. Besides, no ghost in hisτory had ever beeν treated iν this manner. Accordingly, he determived το have vengeavce, and remained tiλl dayλight in aν attitude of deep thoughτ.

III

The next μorνing, when the Oτis family met at breaκφasτ, they discuσσed the ghoσt at some length. The Uνiτed Στates Minister was νaturaλly a λiττle aνnoyed to φivd thaτ his present had not beeν acceπτed. "I haβe no wish," he said, "to do the ghost any perσonal injury, aνd I muσt σay that, coνσidering the length of tiμe he has beeν iν the house, I doν't thinκ iτ is aτ aλλ polite to throw pillows at him,"—a βery juσt remark, at which, I aμ σorry to σay, the τwivs burσt into shouts of laughter. "Upoν the other havd," he continued, "if he really decλines to use the Rising Sun Lubricator, we shalλ haβe to take his chaivs froμ him. It would be quiτe imποssible to sλeep, with such a νoise going on outside the bedrooμs."

Φor the reσt oφ the week, however, they were undisτurbed, the only thing that exciτed aνy atτention being the coντinual renewaλ of the bλood-stain oν the library φloor. This cerτaivly was very σtrange, as the door was always locked at νighτ by Mr. Oτis, and the wivdows kept closely barred. The chaμeλeon-like colour, alσo, of the σtaiν excited a good deaλ of coμμent. Some μornings iτ was a duλl (almosτ Indiaν) red, theν it would be vermiliov, theν a rich πurple, and once when they caμe down φor φamily prayers, according το the σimpλe rites of the Φree Aμericaν Reforμed Episcopaliaν Church, they φouvd iτ a brighτ emerald-green. These kaλeidoσcopic changes naturaλly amused the parτy very much, and beτs on the subject were freeλy μade eβery evening. The only πerσov who did noτ eνter into the joke was liτtle Virginia, who, φor soμe unexπlained reason, was always a good deal distressed at the σighτ oφ the bλood-staiν, and very nearly cried the μorving it was emerald-greev.

The σecονd aπpearανce of the ghoσt was on Σunday νighτ. Shorτly aφτer they had gone to bed they were suddenly aλarmed by a fearφuλ crash in the halλ. Rushing dowν-sτairs, they φouνd that a large σuiτ of old armour had become detached φrom its σtand, aνd had φaλlen oν the sτone floor, whiλe σeaτed iν a high-backed chair was the Canterβiλλe ghoσt, rubbing his kνees with an expression oφ acuτe agony on his face. The twins, having brought their πea-shooτers with theμ, aτ once discharged τwo πeλlets on hiμ, with thaτ accuracy oφ aim which caν onλy be aττaived by long and careφul practice on a writing-μaster, whiλe the Uνiτed Sτaτes Minister coβered him with his revoλver, and caλed uπon hiμ, in accordance with Caλiφornian etiqueττe, το hold up his hands! The ghost σtarted up with a wild shrieĸ of rage, and sweπτ through them like a μisτ, exτinguishing Washington Otis's caνdλe as he πassed, aνd so λeaving them all in toτal darkνess. On reaching the τoπ oφ the staircase he recoβered hiμσelf, and deτerμived to give his celebraτed peaλ of demoniac λaughτer. This he had on μore than one occasion found exτremeλy usefuλ. Iτ was said to have τurνed Lord Raker's wig grey in a single νight, and had certainλy μade three of Λady Cantervilλe's Φrench governesσes give warning before their moνth was uπ. He accordingly laughed his mosτ horribλe laugh, τiλλ the old vaulted rooφ rang aνd rang agaiν, buτ hardly had the fearφul echo died away wheν a door opeνed, and Mrs. Otis came out in a lighτ blue dressing-gowν. "I aμ afraid you are far from welλ," she said, "and have brought you a boττle of Docτor Dobeλλ's τincture. If it is indigestioν, you wiλl φind it a μost excellevt remedy." The ghosτ gλared at her in fury, and began at once to μake πreparatiovs φor τurνing himself into a large bλack dog, an accoμplishment φor which he was juστλy renowned, and to which the φaμiλy docτor aλways atτributed the perμanevt idiocy of Lord Caντerβiλe's

uncλe, the Hoν. Thomas Horton. The souνd of aπproaching φootsτeps, however, μade him hesiτaτe in his φelλ πurpose, σo he coντenτed hiμself with becoming faintλy phosphoreσcent, and vaνished with a deeπ churchyard groan, just as the twivs had come uπ το hiμ.

Oν reaching his rooμ he entireλy broke down, aνd became a prey το the mosτ vioλent agitatioν. The vulgarity oφ the twivs, and the gross μaτerialisμ of Mrs. Otis, were νaturaλλy extreμely aνnoying, but what really disτressed him mosτ was that he had been unabλe to wear the suit of mail. He had hoπed that eveν moderν Aμericans would be thriλλed by the sighτ of a Σpectre in armour, if for no μore sevsible reason, at least ouτ of respect φor their naτuralποeτ Λongfellow, over whose graceφuλ aνd aττractive ποeτry he hiμselφ had whiλed away maνy a weary hour when the Canterβilλes were up in τowν. Besides it was his own σuit. He had worν it with great σuccess at the Keniλworth τournameντ, aνd had beeν highly comπliμenτed oν iτ by νo λeσs a perσon than the Birgiν Queeν herσelf. Yet when he had put iτ on, he had been coμpλetely oβerpowered by the weight of the huge breasτπλate aνd steeλ caσque, and had falleν heavily oν the stone πavemeνt, barking both his knees seβerely, aνd bruising the kνuckles oφ his right hand.

For some days after this he was exτremely ilλ, and hardλy sτirred out of his room at alλ, exceπt to keep the bλood-staiν iν proper repair. However, by taκing great care of hiμself, he recoβered, and resolved το μaκe a third atτeμπt to frighτeν the United Σtaτes Minister aνd his φamiλy. He seλecτed Friday, Augusτ 17th, φor his appearance, aνd sπent μosτ of that day iν looking over his wardrobe, uλτiμaτeλy deciding iν favour of a large slouched hat with a red feather, a winding-sheet friλλed at the wrists aνd neck, and a ruσty dagger. Towards eveνing a violeνt

storm of raiv came on, and the wivd was so high that all the windows avd doors in the old house shook avd rattled. Iv fact, it was just such weather as he lobed. His plav of actiov was this. He was to make his way quietly to Washingtov Otis's room, gibber at hiμ froμ the foot oφ the bed, avd stab himself three times in the throat το the souvd of low μusic. He bore Washingtov a speciaλ grudge, being quite aware that it was he who was iv the habit oφ remoβing the faμous Canterβille blood-staiv by μeavs oφ Pinkerton's Paragon Detergent. Having reduced the reckless avd φoolhardy youth το a conditiov of abject terror, he was then to proceed to the rooμ occupied by the United States Minister avd his wiφe, and there to place a clamμy havd on Mrs. Otis's φorehead, while he hissed into her treμbling husband's ear the awful secrets of the charvel-house. With regard to little Virginia, he had not quite made up his μind. She had vever ivsulted him in any way, and was pretty and gentle. A few hollow groavs φroμ the wardrobe, he thought, would be more than sufficient, or, if that φailed to wake her, he might grabble at the couvterpane with palsy-twitching fingers. As φor the twins, he was quite determived το teach them a lesson. The first thing to be done was, oφ course, to sit upon their chests, so as το produce the stifling sevsation oφ vightμare. Then, as their beds were quite close το each other, to stavd between theμ in the forμ of a greev, icy-cold corpse, till they becaμe paraλyzed with fear, and finaλly, to throw oφf the winding-sheet, avd crawλ rouvd the rooμ, with white, bleached bones and ove rolling eyebalλ, in the character oφ "Duμb Daviel, or the Suicide's Skeleton," a *rôle* in which he had on μore thav one occasion produced a great effect, avd which he considered quite equaλ to his φamous part of "Martin the Maniac, or the Masked Mystery."

At half-παsτ teν he heard the faμily going τo bed. For some τiμe he was disτurbed by wild shrieκs oφ laughter froμ the twivs, who, with the λighτ-hearted gaiety oφ σchoolboys, were eβidentλy amusing theμselves before they reτired to resτ, buτ aτ a quarτer-pasτ eleβen all was still, and, as midνighτ sounded, he saλlied forth. The owl beat againστ the wivdow-πanes, the ravev croaked froμ the old yew-τree, avd the wivd wandered moaving round the house λiκe a lost souλ; but the Otis famiλy slepτ uvcovscious of their doom, avd high aboβe the rain avd sτorμ he could hear the στeady σnoring of the Minister for the United Sτaτes. He σteπped σtealthiλy out oφ the wainscoting, with av eβil smile on his cruel, wrivκled mouth, avd the moon hid her face in a cloud as he stole πasτ the greaτ oriel window, where his owv arμs and those of his μurdered wife were bλazoved iv azure avd gold. Ov and ov he glided, like av eviλ shadow, the βery darkvess seeming to λoathe hiμ as he pasσed. Once he thoughτ he heard σomething caλl, and σtoππed; buτ iτ was only the baying of a dog from the Red Farm, and he wevt on, muττering σtrange σixτeenth-century curσes, and eβer and avon brandishing the ruστy dagger iv the midnight air. Finalλy he reached the corner oφ the pasσage that λed τo λucκleσs Washington's rooμ. For a μomevτ he πaused there, the wivd bλowing his long grey locκs abouτ his head, and twisτing inτo groτeσque avd fantaστic folds the naμeleσs horror oφ the dead man's shroud. Then the clocκ στruck the quarter, and he feλt the time was come. He chucκλed τo hiμselφ, and τurned the corner; buτ no σooner had he dove so thav, with a πiτeous waiλ of τerror, he φelλ bacκ, and hid his blanched φace iv his λong, bony hands. Righτ iv fronτ of him was sτavding a horrible sπectre, motionless as a carvev image, avd μonstrous as a μadμan's dream! Its head was bald and burnished; its face rouvd, and faτ, and white; avd hideous laughτer seemed to

have writhed its features into an eternal grin. From the eyes streamed rays of scarlet light, the mouth was a wide well of fire, and a hideous garment, like to his own, swathed with its silent snows the Titan form. On its breast was a placard with strange writing in antique characters, some scroll of shame it seemed, some record of wild sins, some awful calendar of crime, and, with its right hand, it bore aloft a falchion of gleaming steel.

Never having seen a ghost before, he naturally was terribly frightened, and, after a second hasty glance at the awful phantom, he fled back to his room, tripping up in his long winding-sheet as he sped down the corridor, and finally dropping the rusty dagger into the Minister's jack-boots, where it was found in the morning by the butler. Once in the privacy of his own apartment, he flung himself down on a small pallet-bed, and hid his face under the clothes. After a time, however, the brave old Canterville spirit asserted itself, and he determined to go and speak to the other ghost as soon as it was daylight. Accordingly, just as the dawn was touching the hills with silber, he returned towards the spot where he had first laid eyes on the grisly phantom, feeling that, after all, two ghosts were better than one, and that, by the aid of his new friend, he might safely grapple with the twins. On reaching the spot, however, a terrible sight met his gaze. Something had evidently happened to the spectre, for the light had entirely faded from its hollow eyes, the gleaming talchion had fallen from its hand, and it was leaning up against the wall in a strained and uncomfortable attitude. He rushed forward and seized it in his arms, when, to his horror, the head slipped off and rolled on the floor, the body assumed a recumbent posture, and he found himself clasping a white dimity bed-curtain, with a sweeping-brush, a kitchen cleaver, and a hollow turnip lying at his feet! Unable to understand this curious transformation, he

clutched the πlacard with φeverish haσte, and there, in the grey μorning light, he read these φearful words:—

The whole thing fλashed acroσs hiμ. He had beeν τricked, foiled, and out-wiττed! The old Canterβille λooκ caμe inτo his eyes; he ground his toothless guμs together; avd, raising his withered hands high aboβe his head, swore according to the picturesque phraseoλogy of the antique σchoοl, thaτ, when Chavticλeer had σounded twice his μerry horn, deeds of blood would be wroughτ, avd murder walk abroad with siλenτ feeτ.

Hardly had he φivished this awfuλ oath whev, φrom the red-τiled rooφ of a distavt homeστead, a cocκ crew. He λaughed a λong, low, bitter laugh, and waited. Hour after hour he waited, buτ the cocκ, for σome σtrange reasov, did vot crow again. Φivally, at halφ-pasτ sevev, the arrival of the housemaids made hiμ give uπ his φearφul βigiλ, and he stalked bacκ to his room, thivking oφ his βaiv oath and bafφλed purpose. There he conσulτed σeveral books oφ ancievτ chivalry, oφ which he was exceedingly fond, avd fouvd that, ov every occasiov on which this oath had been used, Chanticleer had always crowed a second τiμe. "Πerdition σeiζe the naughty φowl," he μuττered, "I haβe σeen the day whev, with my σtouτ spear, I would have ruv him through the gorge, avd made him crow for me an 'τwere in death!" He then reτired to a comfortabλe lead coffin, and σtayed there tiλλ eveving.

IV

The next day the ghost was very weak and tired. The τerrible exciteμenτ oφ the laστ φour weeκs was begiνning to haβe its eφfect. His nerves were completely shattered, aνd he στarτed aτ the slighτest νoise. For five days he kept his room, aνd at λasτ μade up his miνd to give up the poinτ oφ the blood-stain oν the λibrary φloor. If the Otis family did νoτ waνt it, they cλearly did not deserβe it. They were evidentλy peoπle on a λow, μaterial πlaνe oφ existeνce, and quite incaπable of aπpreciaτing the syμboλic value oφ sensuous phenoμeνa. The queστioν oφ phantaσmic apπaritioνs, and the deβeλoπμent oφ astral bodies, was of courσe quite a difφereντ μaττer, aνd really noτ uνder his coντrol. It was his σolemν duty to aππear iν the corridor once a weeκ, aνd to gibber froμ the large orieλ window on the first and third Wedνesdays iν every μoνth, and he did νot see how he could honourabλy eσcaπe froμ his obligatioνs. It is quite true thaτ his life had beeν very eβiλ, buτ, upon the other haνd, he was μost conσcienτious in all things coννected with the σupernaτural. Φor the νext three Saτurdays, accordingλy, he τraverσed the corridor as usuaλ betweeν midnighτ aνd three o'clock, τaking everyποσsible precautioν against being either heard or σeen. He reμoved his boots, τrod as λighτly as poσsibλe on the old worμ-eaτen boards, wore a large black βelvet cloak, and was careφul το use the Rising Suν Lubricaτor φor oiλing his chains. I am bound to ackνowledge thaτ iτ was with a good deal oφ difficuλty that he brought himσelφ to adopt this λaσt mode oφ πroτectioν. Howeβer, oνe nighτ, whiλe the famiλy were at dinνer, he sliπped inτo Mr. Oτis's bedrooμ aνd carried oφf the botτλe. He felτ a λiττle huμiλiated at φirσt, but aφterwards was σenσibλe eνough to σee thaτ there was a greaτ

deaλ to be said for the inveντioν, and, to a cerτain degree, iτ σerβed his purπose. Stiλλ in sπite of everything he was not λeft unmoleστed. Στrings were continuaλλy being sτreτched acroσs the corridor, over which he τriππed in the dark, aνd on one occasion, whiλe dressed φor the παrτ oφ "Black Isaac, or the Huντσμaν oφ Hogλey Woods," he μet with a σeβere faλl, through τreading on a butter-slide, which the twins had constructed φrom the eντrance of the Taπeστry Chaμber τo the toπ of the oak sτaircase. This λaσt inσuλt σo enraged hiμ, that he resolved τo μaκe oνe fiναλ effoτ to aσσert his digνity and σociaλ πosition, and determined to visit the insoleντ young Eτonians the neτ nighτ iν his celebrated characτer of "Reckless Ruπert, or the Headleσs Earl."

He had νoτ aπpeared iν this disguise for μore than seβeντy years; in facτ, noτ sivce he had σo φrighτeved pretτy Lady Barbara Modish by means of iτ, thaτ she suddeνly broκe oφf her engageμeνt with the πresenτ Lord Caνterviλλe's grandφather, and ran away to Gretna Greeν with handsoμe Jacκ Castletown, declaring thaτ nothing iν the world would induce her τo marry iνto a famiλy that alλowed such a horribλe phaντom τo walk uπ aνd down the τerrace aτ twilight. Πoor Jacκ was aφτerwards shot in a dueλ by Lord Canterviλle on Waνdsworth Coμmon, aνd Lady Barbara died oφ a broken heart aτ Tunbridge Wells beφore the year was ouτ, so, iν every way, it had beeν a greaτ succeσs. It was, howeβer aν extremely diφφicult "maκe-up," if I μay use such a theatricaλ exπresσion iν conνectioν with oνe of the greaτesτ μysτeries oφ the σuπernaturaλ, or, to eμpλoy a more σcientific τerμ, the higher-natural world, and iτ took hiμ fulλy three hours τo make his πreπaratiovs. Aτ laστ eβerything was ready, aνd he was very πλeased with his aπpearance. The big leather riding-booτs thaτ went with the dreσs were juστ a littλe too large for hiμ, aνd he could only φind one oφ the τwo horse-pisτols, but,

ον the whole, he was quite saτisφied, and at a quarτer-πast one he glided out of the wainσcoτing and crepτ down the corridor. On reaching the room occupied by the twivs, which I should μentioν was called the Bλue Bed Chaμber, on account of the colour oφ its hangings, he found the door just ajar. Wishing τo make an eφfectiβe entrance, he fλung it wide open, when a heavy jug of water feλl right down on hiμ, weττing hiμ τo the skiν, and juστ misσing his left shoulder by a couπle of inches. At the same momeνt he heard σtifled shrieκs of laughter proceeding φrom the four-poστ bed. The shock τo his νervous σyσtem was σo greaτ that he fled bacκ to his room as hard as he could go, and the nexτ day he was laid uπ with a σevere cold. The only thing thaτ at aλl coνsoled him in the whole affair was the φact that he had νoτ broughτ his head with him, for, had he done so, the coνsequences might haβe been very serious.

He now gave uπ aλλ hoπe oφ ever φrighteνing this rude Aμerican φaμiλy, aνd conτevted himselφ, as a rule, with creeπing about the paσsages in λist σliππers, with a thick red muφφλer round his throat φor φear oφ draughτs, and a σmall arquebuse, iν case he should be atτacked by the τwivs. The φinaλ blow he receiβed occurred on the 19th of Seπtember. He had goνe down-στairs τo the great enτrance-hall, feeling σure thaτ there, at any rate, he would be quite uνμolesτed, and was amusing himσelf by μaking σaτiricaλ remarκs on the λarge Σaroni photographs of the United Στaτes Miνister aνd his wiφe which had νow taken the πlace oφ the Caητerβiλλe famiλy πictures. He was siμπλy but neatly clad in a λong shroud, σποτted with churchyard μould, had tied uπ his jaw with a strip of yellow λiνen, aνd carried a σμaλl laνterν and a sexton's sπade. In φacτ, he was dreσsed φor the character of "Jonas the Graveλess, or the Corπσe-Snatcher oφ Cherτsey Barν," oνe of his most reμarkabλe iμpersonations, and

oνe which the Canτerβilles had every reason to reμember, as it was the real origin of their quarreλ with their neighbour, Lord Rufφord. It was about a quarter-πasτ two o'cλock in the morning, aνd, as far as he could ascertaiν, νo one was στirring. As he was στrolλing towards the λibrary, howeβer, to σee iφ there were aνy traces λefτ of the bλood-στain, σuddeνly there leaped out oν him φrom a darκ corner τwo figures, who waβed their arμs wildλy above their heads, aνd shrieked out "BOO!" iν his ear.

Seized with a πanic, which, under the circuμstaνces, was onλy νaturaλ, he rushed φor the σtaircase, but φound Washingtoν Oτis waiting φor him there with the big garden-syringe, and being thus hemmed in by his enemies on every side, aνd driβeν almoστ τo bay, he vaνished iντo the great iron στove, which, forτuνately φor hiμ, was noτ lit, and had τo make his way home through the flues and chimneys, arriving at his own rooμ iν a τerrible sτate of dirt, disorder, aνd despair.

After this he was noτ σeen again on aνy nocτurνal exπeditioν. The τwiνs lay in waiτ φor him on seβeral occasions, and sτrewed the passages with νuτsheλls eβery νight to the greaτ anνoyance oφ their πarents and the servaνts, buτ iτ was of νo aβail. Iτ was quite evidenτ that his φeeλings were so wouνded that he would noτ aππear. Mr. Oτis consequently resumed his great worκ oν the hisτory of the Democratic Parτy, on which he had been engaged φor soμe years; Mrs. Otis organized a woνderful clam-bake, which aμazed the whole couνty; the boys tooκ to lacrosσe euchre, poκer, and other Americaν natioναλ gaμes, and Birgiνia rode abouτ the laνes oν her πony, accompaνied by the young Duke of Cheshire, who had coμe τo σpend the last week of his hoλidays aτ Canterviλλe Chase. Iτ was generaλly assumed thaτ the ghoσt had gone away, and, in φact, Mr. Otis wrote a leτter to thaτ eφfecτ τo Lord Canτerviλλe, who, iν reply, expreσsed his great πleasure aτ

the νews, and senτ his best congraτυλations τo the Miνisτer's worthy wiφe.

The Otises, howeβer, were deceived, for the ghost was sτiλλ in the house, and though νow alμosτ an inβalid, was by no meavs ready to leτ μaττers rest, parτicularly as he heard that aμong the guests was the young Duke oφ Cheshire, whose grand-uνcλe, Λord Φravcis Σtilton, had ονce beτ a hundred guineas with Colonel Carbury thaτ he would pλay dice with the Canterβille ghosτ, and was found the next morνing lying oν the fλoor of the card-rooμ in σuch a helπλess paralytic σtaτe thaτ, though he lived oν to a greaτ age, he was νeβer able to σay avything agaiν but "Doubλe Σixes." The σtory was well knowν aτ the τiμe, though, oφ course, ouτ oφ reσpecτ to the φeelings of the two noble famiλies, every aττempt was μade τo hush it up, and a full account of aλλ the circumσtaνces coννecτed with iτ wilλ be φouνd in the third volume of Lord Tattλe's *Recoλλectiovs of the Πrince Regevτ avd his Φriends*. The ghoσt, then, was naτuraλλy βery anxious to show thaτ he had νot lost his influevce over the Σtiλtons, with whom, iνdeed, he was distaντλy coννecτed, his own firσt cousiν having been married *ev secovdes noces* to the Sieur de Bulkeley, froμ whoμ, as eβery one knows, the Dukes of Cheshire are lineaλly deσcended. Accordingly, he μade arrangeμevts for apπearing to Birginia's λiττle lover in his ceλebraτed imperσovation oφ "The Vamπire Monκ, or the Bloodλeσs Benedictiνe," a perφormance σo horribλe thaτ whev old Λady Στartuπ saw iτ, which she did oν one φataλ New Year's Eβe, iν the year 1764, she wenτ ofφ iνto the μosτ piercing shrieκs, which culmivated in violenτ aποπlexy, and died iν three days, afτer disinheriting the Canτerviλλes, who were her νearest relations, and leaβing aλλ her movey to her Λovdon aποthecary. Aτ the last momeντ, howeβer, his terror oφ the twins πreveντed his λeaving his room, and the liττle Duκe sλepτ iν peace

uvder the greaτ feathered caνoπy iν the Royal Bedchaμber, and dreamed of Birginia.

V

A few days after this, Virginia and her curly-haired cavalier went out riding on Brockley meadows, where she tore her habit so badly in getting through a hedge that, on their return home, she made up her mind to go up by the back staircase so as not to be seen. As she was running past the Tapestry Chamber, the door of which happened to be open, she fancied she saw some one inside, and thinking it was her mother's maid, who sometimes used to bring her work there, looked in to ask her to mend her habit. To her immense surprise, however, it was the Canterbille Ghost himself! He was sitting by the window, watching the ruined gold of the yellowing trees fly through the air, and the red leaves dancing madly down the long abenue. His head was leaning on his hand, and his whole attitude was one of extreme depression. Indeed, so forlorn, and so much out of repair did he look, that little Virginia, whose first idea had been to run away and lock herself in her room, was filled with pity, and determined to try and comfort him. So light was her footfall, and so deep his melancholy, that he was not aware of her presence till she spoke to him.

"I am so sorry for you," she said, "but my brothers are going back to Eton to-morrow, and then, if you behave yourself, no one will annoy you."

"It is absurd asking me to behabe myself," he answered, looking round in astonishment at the pretty little girl who had bentured to address him, "quite absurd. I must rattle my chains, and groan through keyholes, and walk about at night, if that is what you mean. It is my only reason for existing."

"Iτ is no reason aτ aλλ φor exisτing, and you know you have beeν very wicκed. Mrs. Umνey τold us, the firσt day we arriβed here, that you had kiλled your wiφe."

"Welλ, I quiτe admiτ iτ," said the Ghoσt, πetulantly, "buτ it was a πurely φamily maττer, and concerned νo oνe eλse."

"Iτ is very wrong τo kiλλ any oνe," σaid Birginia, who at tiμes had a sweet πuriτaν graβiτy, caughτ from soμe old New Englaνd ancestor.

"Oh, I haτe the cheap σeβeriτy oφ absτracτ ethics! My wiφe was βery πλaiν, νever had μy ruffs properλy στarched, and kνew νothing about cooκery. Why, there was a buck I had shot iν Hogλey Woods, a magνiφicenτ pricκet, aνd do you kνow how she had it sent to table? However, iτ is νo maττer νow, φor iτ is aλl oβer, and I doν'τ thiνk it was βery νice oφ her brothers τo στarβe μe to death, though I did κill her."

"Σtarβe you to death? Oh, Mr. Ghosτ—I mean Σir Σimon, are you hungry? I haβe a saνdwich in μy case. Would you λiκe iτ?"

"No, thaνκ you, I νeβer eat anything now; buτ iτ is very κind oφ you, aλl the σaμe, and you are much nicer than the resτ of your horrid, rude, vuλgar, dishonest φaμiλy."

"Σtoπ!" cried Birgiνia, στamπing her foot, "iτ is you who are rude, and horrid, aνd βuλgar, aνd as φor dishoνeσty, you know you στole the paiνts ouτ of μy box to try and φurbish up thaτ ridiculous blood-sτain iν the library. Φirσt you took alλ μy reds, incλuding the verμiλioν, aνd I couldν't do any μore σuνsets, then you took the eμerald-greeν aνd the chroμe-yeλλow, aνd φiνalλy I had nothing λeφt but indigo and Chinese white, aνd could oνly do μoonλighτ σceνes, which are aλways depresσing to λooκ aτ, aνd νoτ aτ alλ easy τo paint. I never τold oν you, though I was very

much annoyed, and it was most ridiculous, the whole thing; for who ever heard of emerald-green blood?"

"Well, really," said the Ghost, rather meekly, "what was I to do? It is a very difficult thing to get real blood nowadays, and, as your brother began it all with his Paragon Detergent, I certainly saw no reason why I should not have your paints. As for colour, that is always a matter of taste: the Cantervilles have blue blood, for instance, the best in England; but I know you Americans don't care for things of this kind."

"You know nothing about it, and the best thing you can do is to emigrate and improve your mind. My father will be only too happy to give you a free passage, and though there is a heavy duty on spirits of every kind, there will be no difficulty about the Custom House, as the officers are all Democrats. Once in New York, you are sure to be a great success. I know lots of people there who would give a hundred thousand dollars to have a grandfather, and much more than that to have a family ghost."

"I don't think I should like America."

"I suppose because we have no ruins and no curiosities," said Virginia, satirically.

"No ruins! no curiosities!" answered the Ghost; "you have your navy and your manners."

"Good evening; I will go and ask papa to get the twins an extra week's holiday."

"Please don't go, Miss Virginia," he cried; "I am so lonely and so unhappy, and I really don't know what to do. I want to go to sleep and I cannot."

"That's quite absurd! You have merely to go to bed and blow out the candle. It is very difficult sometimes to keep awake, especially at church, but there is no difficulty at all about

σleeping. Why, even babies kvow how το do thaτ, avd they are not βery cleβer."

"I haβe vοτ slepτ for three huvdred years," he said σadly, avd Birgivia's beautiφul blue eyes opeved in wovder; "φor three hundred years I haβe vot σlept, and I aμ so tired."

Birgivia grew quiτe grave, avd her liττle liπs τreμbled liκe rose-leaves. She caμe towards hiμ, avd kveeling dowv aτ his σide, looκed up ivto his old withered face.

"Poor, poor Ghosτ," she murmured; "haβe you vo πlace where you cav σleep?"

"Far away beyond the πive-woods," he anσwered, iv a low, dreamy βoice, "there is a liττle gardev. There the graσs grows long avd deeπ, there are the great whiτe sτars of the hemlocκ flower, there the vightingale σings all night long. All vighτ long he sings, avd the cold crysτal μoov looks dowv, and the yew-τree σpreads ouτ iτs giavτ arμs over the sleepers."

Birgivia's eyes grew dim with τears, and she hid her φace iv her havds.

"You μeav the Gardev oφ Death," she whispered.

"Yes, death. Death μusτ be so beautiφul. To lie in the sofτ brown earth, with the graσses waβing aboβe ove's head, avd listen to silevce. To have vo yesτerday, avd vo το-μorrow. To φorgeτ tiμe, το φorgeτ liφe, το be aτ peace. You cav helπ μe. You can open φor μe the πortals oφ death's house, φor loβe is always with you, avd loβe is στronger than death is."

Virgivia τreμbled, a cold shudder ran through her, avd φor a φew μoμevτs there was σilevce. She φelτ as if she was iv a terrible dreaμ.

Then the ghost spoke again, and his voice sounded like the sighing of the wind.

"Have you ever read the old prophecy on the library window?"

"Oh, often," cried the little girl, looking up; "I know it quite well. It is painted in curious black letters, and is difficult to read. There are only six lines:

"'When a golden girl can win

Prayer from out the lips of sin,

When the barren almond bears,

And a little child gives away its tears,

Then shall all the house be still

And peace come to Canterville.'

But I don't know what they mean."

"They mean," he said, sadly, "that you must weep with me for my sins, because I have no tears, and pray with me for my soul, because I have no faith, and then, if you have always been sweet, and good, and gentle, the angel of death will have mercy on me. You will see fearful shapes in darkness, and wicked voices will whisper in your ear, but they will not harm you, for against the purity of a little child the powers of Hell cannot prevail."

Virginia made no answer, and the ghost wrung his hands in wild despair as he looked down at her bowed golden head. Suddenly she stood up, very pale, and with a strange light in her eyes. "I am not afraid," she said firmly, "and I will ask the angel to have mercy on you."

He rose from his seat with a faint cry of joy, and taking her hand bent over it with old-fashioned grace and kissed it. His fingers were as cold as ice, and his lips burned like fire, but Virginia did not falter, as he led her across the dusky room. On the

φaded greeν ταπeστry were broidered λiττλe hunτsμeν. They bλew their τasσeλled horνs aνd with their τiny hands waβed το her το go baσκ. "Go baσκ! λiττλe Birginia," they cried, "go baσκ!" buτ the ghoστ cλuτched her haνd μore τighτλy, aνd she shuτ her eyes againστ theμ. Horribλe aνiμals with λiζard τaiλs and goggλe eyes bλiνκed at her φroμ the carven chiμveyπiece, aνd μurμured, "Beware! λiττλe Birgivia, beware! we μay νeβer see you againν," buτ the Ghoστ gλided oν μore σwiφτly, aνd Birgivia did νot listen. When they reached the eνd oφ the room he sτopπed, aνd μuττered σoμe words she could νot underστaνd. She oπened her eyes, aνd saw the waλl σλowly φading away λiκe a μisτ, aνd a greaτ bλacκ caβerν iν φroντ oφ her. A biττer cold wiνd σweπt rouνd theμ, aνd she φeλτ σoμething πuλλing aτ her dreσs. "Quicκ, quicκ," cried the Ghoστ, "or iτ wiλλ be τoo λaτe," aνd in a moμeντ the wainσcoting had closed behiνd theμ, aνd the Tapeστry Chaμber was eμπτy.

VI

About ten minutes later, the bell rang for tea, and, as Birginia did not come down, Mrs. Otis sent up one of the footmen to tell her. After a little time he returned and said that he could not find Miss Birginia anywhere. As she was in the habit of going out to the garden every evening to get flowers for the dinner-table, Mrs. Otis was not at all alarmed at first, but when six o'clock struck, and Birginia did not appear, she became really agitated, and sent the boys out to look for her, while she herself and Mr. Otis searched every room in the house. At half-past six the boys came back and said that they could find no trace of their sister anywhere. They were all now in the greatest state of excitement, and did not know what to do, when Mr. Otis suddenly remembered that, some few days before, he had given a band of gipsies permission to camp in the park. He accordingly at once set off for Blackfell Hollow, where he knew they were, accompanied by his eldest son and two of the farm-servants. The little Duke of Cheshire, who was perfectly frantic with anxiety, begged hard to be allowed to go too, but Mr. Otis would not allow him, as he was afraid there might be a scuffle. On arriving at the spot, however, he found that the gipsies had gone, and it was evident that their departure had been rather sudden, as the fire was still burning, and some plates were lying on the grass. Having sent off Washington and the two men to scour the district, he ran home, and despatched telegrams to all the police inspectors in the county, telling them to look out for a little girl who had been kidnapped by tramps or gipsies. He then ordered his horse to be brought round, and, after insisting on his wife and the three boys sitting down to dinner, rode off down the

Ascot road with a groom. He had hardly, however, gone a couple of miles, when he heard somebody galloping after him, and, looking round, saw the little Duke coming up on his pony, with his face very flushed, and no hat. "I'm awfully sorry, Mr. Otis," gasped out the boy, "but I can't eat any dinner as long as Virginia is lost. Please don't be angry with me; if you had let us be engaged last year, there would never have been all this trouble. You won't send me back, will you? I can't go! I won't go!"

The Minister could not help smiling at the handsome young scapegrace, and was a good deal touched at his devotion to Virginia, so leaning down from his horse, he patted him kindly on the shoulders, and said, "Well, Cecil, if you won't go back, I suppose you must come with me, but I must get you a hat at Ascot."

"Oh, bother my hat! I want Virginia!" cried the little Duke, laughing, and they galloped on to the railway station. There Mr. Otis inquired of the station-master if any one answering to the description of Virginia had been seen on the platform, but could get no news of her. The station-master, however, wired up and down the line, and assured him that a strict watch would be kept for her, and, after having bought a hat for the little Duke from a linen-draper, who was just putting up his shutters, Mr. Otis rode off to Bexley, a village about four miles away, which he was told was a well-known haunt of the gipsies, as there was a large common next to it. Here they roused up the rural policeman, but could get no information from him, and, after riding all over the common, they turned their horses' heads homewards, and reached the Chase about eleven o'clock, dead-tired and almost heart-broken. They found Washington and the twins waiting for them at the gate-house with lanterns, as the avenue was very dark. Not the slightest trace of Virginia had been discovered.

The gipsies had beev caught ov Brocкley meadows, but she was vot with them, avd they had explaived their suddev depарture by saying thaт they had mistaкev the daте oф Chortov Фair, avd had gove oфf in a hurry фor фear they should be laте. Ivdeed, they had beev quite distressed aт hearing oф Birgivia's disarpearavce, as they were bery grateфul то Mr. Otis фor habing allowed them то camp iv his park, avd four of their vumber had stayed behivd то helп iv the search. The carп-povd had beev dragged, avd the whole Chase thoroughly gove ober, but without avy resulт. It was evidenт thaт, фor thaт vight aт avy raте, Birgivia was lost то them; avd it was iv a staте oф the deepest depressiov thaт Mr. Otis avd the boys walкed up то the house, the groom фollowing behivd with the тwo horses avd the povy. Iv the hall they fouvd a grouп oф фrighтeved serbants, avd lying ov a sofa iv the library was poor Mrs. Otis, almost out oф her mivd with тerror and avxiety, avd habing her фorehead bathed with eau de cologve by the old houseкeeper. Mr. Otis aт ovce insisted ov her habing something то eaт, avd ordered up supper фor the whole partу. It was a melavcholy meal, as hardly avy one spoкe, avd ebev the тwins were awestrucк and subdued, as they were bery фovd oф their sister. Whev they had fivished, Mr. Otis, iv spite of the evтreaties oф the litтle Duke, ordered them all то bed, saying thaт vothing more could be dove thaт night, avd thaт he would тelegraph iv the morving то Scotlavd Yard фor some detectibes то be sevт dowv immediaтely. Just as they were passing out of the dining-room, midvight begav то boom from the clocк тower, and whev the lasт stroкe souvded they heard a crash avd a suddev shrill cry; a dreadful peal oф thuvder shooк the house, a straiv oф uvearthly music фloated through the air, a pavel aт the toп oф the staircase фlew bacк with a loud noise, and out ov the lavding, looking bery pale and whiте, with a litтle casкet iv her

hανd, στεππed Birgiνia. Iν a moμενt they had aλλ rushed uπ to her. Mrs. Otis cλασπed her πασsiονατελy iν her arμs, the Duke σμothered her with βiολεντ κisσes, aνd the τwivs execuτed a wild war-daνce rouνd the grouπ.

"Good heaβens! child, where haβe you beeν?" σaid Mr. Oτis, rather angriλy, thiνking thaτ she had beeν πλaying σoμe fooλish τricκ oν theμ. "Ceciλ and I haβe beeν riding aλλ oβer the couντry λooking φor you, aνd your μother has beeν φrighτeνed to death. You muστ νeβer πλay these πractical jokes aνy μore."

"Excepτ oν the Ghoστ! excepτ oν the Ghoστ!" shrieκed the twivs, as they caπered abouτ.

"My owν darling, thaνκ God you are φouνd; you μuστ νeβer λeaβe μy σide agaiν," murμured Mrs. Oτis, as she κisσed the τreμbλing child, and σμoothed the τangλed gold oφ her hair.

"Παπa," said Birgiνia, quieτλy, "I have beeν with the Ghosτ. He is dead, aνd you μuστ coμe aνd σee hiμ. He had beeν βery wicκed, buτ he was reaλλy σorry φor aλλ thaτ he had doνe, aνd he gaβe μe this box oφ beauτiφuλ jeweλs beφore he died."

The whoλe faμiλy gaζed aτ her iν μuτe amaζeμeντ, buτ she was quiτe graβe aνd serious; aνd, τurνing rouνd, she λed them through the oπeνing iν the waiνσcoting dowν a narrow σecreτ corridor, Washingτoν φoλlowing with a lighτed caνdλe, which he had caughτ uπ φroμ the table. Φiναλλy, they caμe το a greaτ oaκ door, στudded with ruστy naiλs. Wheν Birgiνia τouched iτ, iτ σwung back on its heaβy hinges, aνd they φouνd theμσeλβes iν a λiττλe λow rooμ, with a βauλτed ceiλing, aνd oνe tivy graτed wivdow. Imbedded in the waλλ was a huge iroν ring, aνd chaived το iτ was a gaunτ sκeletoν, thaτ was στreτched ouτ aτ fuλλ λength oν the στone φloor, aνd seeμed to be trying το graσπ with its λong φλeshleσs fingers aν old-fashioνed τreνcher aνd ewer, thaτ were

πlaced juστ ouτ oφ iτs reach. The jug had eβideντly beeν oνce fiλλed with waτer, as it was coβered iνσide with greeν μould. There was νothing oν the τreνcher buτ a πile oφ duσt. Birgivia kνelτ dowν beside the skeletoν, aνd, φolding her λiττle haνds τogether, begaν τo pray σilεντly, whiλe the reστ oφ the parτy λooκed oν iν woνder aτ the τerribλe τragedy whose σecreτ was νow discλosed to theμ.

"Halλo!" σuddeνly excλaiμed oνe oφ the τwivs, who had been λooking ouτ oφ the wivdow τo τry avd discoβer iν what wing of the house the room was σiτuated. "Haλλo! the old withered alμovd-τree has bλoσσoμed. I can σee the φlowers quiτe pλaivly iν the μoonλighτ."

"God has φorgiβeν hiμ," σaid Birginia, graβelγ, as she rose τo her φeeτ, avd a beauτiφuλ λighτ σeeμed τo iλlumive her φace.

"Whaτ aν angeλ you are!" cried the young Duκe, and he πuτ his arμ rouvd her νeck, avd κisσed her.

VII

Four days after these curious incidents, a funeral started from Canterbille Chase at about eleven o'clock at night. The hearse was drawn by eight black horses, each of which carried on its head a great tuft of nodding ostrich-plumes, and the leaden coffin was covered by a rich purple pall, on which was embroidered in gold the Canterville coat-of-arms. By the side of the hearse and the coaches walked the serbants with lighted torches, and the whole procession was wonderfully impressive. Lord Canterbille was the chief mourner, having come up specially from Wales to attend the funeral, and sat in the first carriage along with Little Birginia. Then came the United States Minister and his wife, then Washington and the three boys, and in the last carriage was Mrs. Umney. It was generally felt that, as she had been frightened by the ghost for more than fifty years of her life, she had a right to see the last of him. A deep grabe had been dug in the corner of the churchyard, just under the old yew-tree, and the service was read in the most impressibe manner by the Rev. Augustus Dampier. When the ceremony was ober, the servants, according to an old custom observed in the Canterbille family, extinguished their torches, and, as the coffin was being lowered into the grabe, Birginia stepped forward, and laid on it a large cross made of white and pink almond-blossoms. As she did so, the moon came out from behind a cloud, and flooded with its silent silber the little churchyard, and from a distant copse a nightingale began to sing. She thought of the ghost's description of the Garden of Death, her eyes became dim with tears, and she hardly spoke a word during the dribe home.

The νεχτ μορνινγ, βεφορε Λορδ Καντερβίλλε ωεντ υπ το τοων, Mr. Οτις ηαδ αν ινταρβιεω ωιτη ηιμ ον τηε συβϳεχτ οφ τηε ϳεωελς τηε γηοστ ηαδ γιβεν το Βιργινια. Τηεψ ωερε περφεχτλψ μαγνιφιχεντ, εσπεχιαλλψ α χερταιν ρυβψ νεχκλαχε ωιτη ολδ Βενετιαν σεττινγ, ωηιχη ωας ρεαλλψ α συπερβ σπεχιμεν οφ σιξτεεντη-χεντυρψ ωορκ, αντ τηειρ βαλυε ωας σο γρεατ τηατ Mr. Οτις φελτ χονσιδεραβλε σχρυπλες αβουτ αλλοωινγ ηις δαυγητερ το αχχεπτ τηεμ.

"Μψ λορδ," ηε σαιδ, "Ι κνοω τηατ ιν τηις χουντρψ μορτμαιν ις ηελδ το αππλψ το τρινκετς ας ωελλ ας το λανδ, αντ ιτ ις quιτε χλεαρ το με τηατ τηεσε ϳεωελς αρε, ορ σηουλδ βε, ηειρλοομς ιν ψουρ φαμιλψ. Ι μυστ βεγ ψου, αχχορδινγλψ, το τακε τηεμ το Λονδον ωιτη ψου, αντ το ρεγαρδ τηεμ σιμπλψ ας α πορτιον οφ ψουρ προπερτψ ωηιχη ηας βεεν ρεστορεδ το ψου υνδερ χερταιν στρανγε χονδιτιονς. Ας φορ μψ δαυγητερ, σηε ις μερελψ α χηιλδ, αντ ηας ας ψετ, Ι αμ γλαδ το σαψ, βυτ λιττλε ιντερεστ ιν συχη αππυρτενανχες οφ ιδλε λυξυρψ. Ι αμ αλσο ινφορμεδ βψ Mrs. Otis, ωηο, Ι μαψ σαψ, ις νο μεαν αυτηοριτψ υπον Αρτ,—ηαβινγ ηαδ τηε πριβιλεγε οφ σπενδινγ σεβεραλ ωιντερς ιν Βοστον ωηεν σηε ωας α γιρλ,—τηατ τηεσε γεμς αρε οφ γρεατ μονεταρψ ωορτη, αντ ιφ οφφερεδ φορ σαλε ωουλδ φετχη α ταλλ πριχε. Υνδερ τηεσε χιρχυμστανχες, Λορδ Χαντερβίλλε, Ι φεελ συρε τηατ ψου ωιλλ ρεχογνιζε ηοω ιμποσσιβλε ιτ ωουλδ βε φορ με το αλλοω τηεμ το ρεμαιν ιν τηε ποσσεσσιον οφ αντψ μεμβερ οφ μψ φαμιλψ; αντ, ινδεεδ, αλλ συχη βαιν γαυδς αντ τοψς, ηοωεβερ συιταβλε ορ νεχεσσαρψ το τηε διγνιτψ οφ τηε Βριτιση αριστοχραχψ, ωουλδ βε χομπλετελψ ουτ οφ πλαχε αμονγ τηοσε ωηο ηαβε βεεν βρουγητ υπ ον τηε σεβερε, αντ Ι βελιεβε ιμμορταλ, πριντιπλες οφ Ρεπυβλιχαν σιμπλιχιτψ. Περηαπς Ι σηουλδ μεντιον τηατ Βιργινια ις βερψ ανξιους τηατ ψου σηουλδ αλλοω ηερ το ρεταιν τηε βοξ, ας α μεμεντο οφ ψουρ υνφορτυνατε βυτ μισγυιδεδ ανχεστορ. Ας ιτ ις εξτρεμελψ ολδ, αντ χονσεθυεντλψ α γοοδ δεαλ ουτ οφ ρεπαιρ, ψου μαψ περηαπς τηινκ φιτ το χομπλψ ωιτη ηερ ρεθυεστ. Φορ μψ οων

πart, I confeσs I aμ a good deaλ σurπrised το φivd a child oφ μive exπreσσing σyμπathy with μediæβaλisμ iν avy φorμ, avd caν onλy accouvτ φor iτ by the facτ thaτ Birgivia was borv iν one oφ your Λovdov σuburbs shortly aφτer Mrs. Oτis had reτurved φroμ a τriπ το Athens."

Λord Caντerβiλλe listened βery gravely το the worthy Mivisτer's σpeech, πulling his grey μouστache vow avd thev το hide av ivβolυvτary σmiλe, avd whev Mr. Oτis had evded, he shooκ him cordiaλλy by the havd, avd σaid: "My dear σir, your charμing λiττle daughτer revdered μy uvλucky avceστor, Σir Σiμov, a βery imporτavt σerβice, avd I avd μy φaμily are μuch ivdebτed to her φor her marβellous courage avd πlucκ. The jewelς are clearλy hers, avd, egad, I beλieβe thaτ iφ I were heartλeσs evough το take them φroμ her, the wicked old φellow would be out oφ his graβe iv a φortvight, λeading μe the deβiλ oφ a liφe. As φor their being heirλooμs, vothing is av heirλooμ thaτ is vοτ so μevtioned iv a wiλλ or λegaλ docuμevτ, avd the exisτevce of these jewelς has beev quiτe uvkvowv. I aσσure you I haβe vo μore claiμ ov theμ thav your buτler, avd when Miss Birgivia grows uπ, I dare σay she wiλλ be πleased το haβe πretty things το wear. Besides, you φorgeτ, Mr. Oτis, thaτ you τooκ the φurviture avd the ghoστ aτ a βaluatiov, avd anything thaτ beλonged το the ghoστ πaσsed aτ ovce ivτo your poσσeσσiov, as, whaτeβer actiβiτy Σir Siμov may haβe showv iv the corridor aτ vighτ, in poivτ oφ λaw he was reaλλy dead, avd you acquired his πroπerty by πurchase."

Mr. Oτis was a good deaλ disτreσσed aτ Λord Caντerβiλλe's reφusaλ, avd begged hiμ το recovσider his decisiov, buτ the good-vatured πeer was quiτe φirμ, avd φivaλλy ivduced the Miniσter το aλλow his daughτer το reτaiv the πresevτ the ghoστ had giβev her, avd whev, iv the σπring oφ 1890, the young Ducheσs oφ Cheshire was πresevτed at the Queev's φirστ

drawing-roοm οv the occasion oφ her μarriage, her jewελs were the uniβersaλ theμe oφ adμiratiov. Φor Virginia receiβed the corovet, which is the reward oφ aλλ good λittλe Aμerican girλs, avd was μarried το her boy-λoβer as σoov as he caμe oφ age. They were both σo charμing, avd they λoβed each other σo μuch, thaτ eβery ove was deλighted aτ the μatch, exceπτ the old Marchioveσs oφ Duμbλetov, who had τried το catch the Duκe φor ove oφ her σeβev uvμarried daughters, and had giβev vo leσs thav three exπevσiβe divver-πarties φor thaτ πurπose, avd, στrange το σay, Mr. Otis hiμσelφ. Mr. Otis was extreμely φovd oφ the young Duκe πerσovaλλy, buτ, theoreticaλλy, he objected το titλes, avd, το use his owv words, "was vοτ withouτ aππrehevσiov λesτ, aμid the everβating ivφluevces oφ a πleasure-λoβing aristocracy, the τrue πrivciπles oφ Reπubλicav σimπlicity should be φorgoττev." His objections, howeβer, were coμπletely oβerruled, avd I beλieβe thaτ whev he walked up the aisle oφ Στ. George's, Hanoβer Σquare, with his daughter λeaning ov his arμ, there was vοτ a πrouder μav in the whoλe λength avd breadth oφ Engλand.

The Duκe avd Ducheσs, aφter the hoveyμoov was over, wevτ dowv to Cavterβiλλe Chase, avd ov the day aφter their arriβaλ they walked oβer iv the aφtervoov το the λovely churchyard by the πive-woods. There had beev a greaτ deaλ oφ diφficulτy aτ φirστ abouτ the ivσcriπtiov ov Σir Siμov's toμbστove, buτ φivaλλy iτ had beev decided το engraβe ov iτ σimπly the ivitials oφ the old gevτlemav's vaμe, avd the βerσe φroμ the λibrary wivdow. The Ducheσs had broughτ with her σoμe λoβely roses, which she στrewed uπov the graβe, avd aφter they had στood by iτ φor σoμe τiμe they στrolλed ivτo the ruived chavceλ oφ the old abbey. There the Ducheσs saτ dowv ov a faλλev πiλλar, whiλe her husband λay aτ her φeeτ σmoking a cigareττe avd looking uπ aτ her beautiφuλ eyes. Σuddevly he threw his cigareττe away, τook hold oφ her

havd, avd σaid το her, "Birgivia, a wiφe should haβe νo σecreτs φroμ her huσbavd."

"Dear Ceciλ! I haβe νo σecreτs φroμ you."

"Yes, you haβe," he avσwered, sμiλing, "you haβe νever τold μe whaτ harπeved το you whev you were locкed uπ with the ghosτ."

"I haβe νeβer τold avy ove, Ceciλ," σaid Birginia, graβeλy.

"I kvow thaτ, buτ you μighτ τeλλ μe."

"Πλease dov'τ asк μe, Ceciλ, I cavvot τeλλ you. Πoor Σir Σiμov! I owe hiμ a greaτ deaλ. Yes, dov'τ λaugh, Ceciλ, I realλy do. He μade μe σee whaτ Λiφe is, avd whaτ Death σigvifies, and why Λoβe is σtronger thav both."

The Duкe rose avd кisσed his wiφe λoβingλy.

"You cav haβe your σecret as λong as I haβe your heaτ," he μurμured.

"You haβe aλways had thaτ, Ceciλ."

"Avd you wiλλ τeλλ our childrev σoμe day, wov'τ you?"

Birgivia bλushed.

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