# The Canterville Ghost

Oscar Wilde

Modern Greek — 20% of eligible letters

English · 1887

# About this reading edition

Complete seven-section original English story. Source illustrations, their captions, the illustration list and publisher front matter are omitted; narrative paragraphs and verse are retained.

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

Letter key (context rules restrict where these pairs apply):

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

2,544 of 12,952 eligible letters changed. Approximately 5.2% of all letters. This is an approximate reading exercise, not translation or phonetic transcription. The source language and spelling context still matter.

Learning exercise: a simplified representation

For learning purposes only. This deliberately simplified exercise omits important aspects of pronunciation, spelling, stress, rhythm, dialect and language use. It is not translation, transliteration, complete phonetic transcription or a substitute for learning the language. 100% means all eligible letters, not every letter in the book.

Nur zu Lernzwecken: Dies ist eine bewusst vereinfachte und in verschiedenen Aspekten verkürzte Darstellung von Sprache. Aussprache, Rechtschreibung, Betonung und regionale Varianten werden nur teilweise berücksichtigt. Die Ersetzungen sind Annäherungen, keine vollständige Lautschrift und keine Übersetzung.

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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 and lovely as a fawn, and with a fine freedom iv her large blue eyes. She was a wonderful Amazon, and had once raced old Lord Biltov on her povy twice round the park, winning by a length and a half, just in front of the Achilles statue, to the huge delight of the young Duke of Cheshire, who proposed for her on the spot, and was sevt back to Eton that very vight by his guardiavs, in floods of tears. After Virgivia came the twins, who were usually called "The Star avd Stripes," as they were always getting swished. They were delightful boys, and, with the exceptiov of the worthy Minister, the only true republicans of the family.

As Canterbille Chase is seven miles from Ascot, the nearest railway station, Mr. Otis had telegraphed for a waggonette to meet them, avd they started on their drive in high spirits. It was a lovely July evening, and the air was delicate with the scent of the pinewoods. Now and then they heard a wood-pigeon brooding over its own sweet voice, or saw, deep in the rusting fern, the burnished breast of the pheasant. Little squirrels peered at them from the beech-trees as they went by, and the rabbits scudded away through the brushwood and over the mossy knolls, with their white tails in the air. As they entered the avenue of Canterbille Chase, however, the sky became suddenly overcast with clouds, a curious stillness seemed to hold the atmosphere, a great flight of rooks passed silently over their heads, and, before they reached the house, some big drops of rain had fallen.

Standing on the steps to receive them was an old woman, neatly dressed in black silk, with a white cap and apron. This was Mrs. Umney, the housekeeper, whom Mrs. Otis, at Lady Canterbille's earnest request, had consented to keep in her former position. She made them each a low curtsey as they alighted, and said in a quaint, old-fashioned manner, "I bid you welcome to Canterbille

Chase." Following her, they πassed through the fine Tudor haλλ into the library, a long, λow room, paneλled in blacκ oak, aτ the end of which was a large σtained glass window. Here they φound tea laid out for theμ, and, aφter taking ofφ their wraps, 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 fireplace, and, quite unconscious oφ what it realλy signified, said to Mrs. Uμney, "I am afraid something has been spilτ there."

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

"How horrid!" cried Mrs. Otis; "I don'τ at aλl care for bλood-σtains in a sitting-room. It muστ be removed at once."

The old woman sμiled, and avswered in the same low, mysτerious βoice, "It is the bλood of Lady Eleanore de Canterviλλe, who was murdered on that very σpot by her owν husband, Σir Simon de Caνterville, in 1575. Sir Siμον σurvived her νine years, avd disappeared suddenly under βery myσterious 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 and Paragon Detergeνt will cleaν it up in no τime," and before the terrified housekeeper could interfere, he had φalleν upon his knees, and was rapidly scouring the floor with a sμalλ σticκ of what looked liκe a bλacκ cosmetic. In a few momenτs no trace of the blood-σtain could be σeeν.

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

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

"What a moνstrous cliμate!" said the American Miνister, calμly, as he λit a long cheroot. "I guess the old counτry is so overpopulated thaτ they haβe not enough decent weather for everybody. I have always been of opiνion that emigration is the oνly 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 won't faint after that;" and in a few moments Mrs. Umney certainly caμe το. There was no doubt, however, that she was extremeλy upset, aνd she sternly warνed Mr. Otis to beware of soμe troubλe coμing to the house.

"I have σeen things with my own eyes, σir," she said, "thaτ would make aνy Christian's hair stand on end, and μaνy and many a night I have noτ closed my eyes in σleep for the awful things thaτ are done here." Mr. Otis, however, and his wiφe warmly assured the honest soul thaτ they were not afraid of ghosτs, and, aφter invoκing the blesσings of Providevce on her νew master and mistress, and making arrangements for an iνcrease of saλary, the old housekeeper τottered off 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 fouνd the terrible stain of blood once again on the φloor. "I don't think it caν be the fault of the Παragon Detergeνt," said Washington, "for I have tried iτ with everything. It must be the ghost." He accordingly 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-stairs. The whole faμily were now quite interested; Mr. Otis begaν to suspect that he had been too dogmatic in his deνial of the existeνce of ghosts, Mrs. Otis exπressed her intention of joiνing the Psychical Society, and Washington prepared a long letter to Mesσrs. Myers and Πodmore on the σubjecτ oφ the Permanence oφ Sanguineous Stains when connected with Crime. That nighτ all doubts about the objectiβe existeνce of phaντasmata were removed for ever.

The day had been warm and sunny; aνd, in the cooλ of the evening, the whole φamily weπt out to drive. They did not return hoμe τilλ nine o'cλock, when they had a light supper. The conβersation in no way turned uπon ghosts, σo there were not even those priμary conditions oφ receptive expectations which so often precede the presentation oφ psychical phenomena. The subjecτs discussed, as I have siνce learned φrom Mr. Otis, were merely such as form the ordinary conversation of cuλtured Americans of the beττer claσs, such as the imμeνse superiority of Miss Fanny Devonport over Σarah Bernhardt as an acτress; the difficulty of obtaiνing green corn, buckwheat cakes, and hominy, even in the best English houses; the importaνce of Boστon in the

develoπment of the world-σouλ; the advantages of the baggage-check σyστem in railway travelλing; and the sweeτness of the New York accevτ as compared to the Λονdon drawl. No mention aτ all was μade of the supernatural, nor was Sir Siμon de Canterville alluded to in any way. At eleven o'clock the family retired, and by half-past aλl the lights were out. Some tiμe afτer, Mr. Oτis was awakened by a curious noise in the corridor, outside his room. Iτ σounded like the cλank of metaλ, and seemed to be coming nearer every moment. He goτ up at ονce, struck a match, and λooked aτ the time. It was exactly ονe o'clock. He was quite calm, and felt his pulse, which was not at alλ feverish. The strange noise στiλl contiνued, and with it he heard distinctly the σound oφ footsteπs. He πuτ on his slippers, tooκ a smalλ oblong phial out of his dressing-case, and opeνed the door. Right in froητ of him he saw, in the wan moonlight, an old man of terribλe asπect. His eyes were as red burning coals; long grey hair fell over his shoulders in μaττed coils; his garments, which were of antique cut, were soiled and ragged, and froμ his wrists and anκλes hung heaβy manacles aνd rusty gyves.

"My dear sir," said Mr. Otis, "I really must inσisτ on your oiling those chains, and have brought you for thaτ purpose a small bottle of the Tammany Rising Sun Lubricaτor. It is said το be completely eφficacious uπον one application, aνd there are several testimonials to thaτ effect oν the wrapper from some oφ our moσt emiνent naτiβe divines. I shalλ leave it here for you by the bedroom candles, and will be haπpy to supπly you with more, should you require it." With these words the United States Miniστer laid the bottle down on a μarble tabλe, and, closing his door, retired το rest.

For a moμent the Canterville ghost stood quite motionλeσs iν natural indignation; then, dashing the botτle violeντly upon the

polished floor, he φled dowν the corridor, uttering hollow groans, and emitting a ghastλy green light. Just, however, as he reached the τop of the great oak staircase, a door was flung open, τwo little whiτe-robed figures appeared, aνd a large pillow whizzed past his head! There was evidentλy no time to be lost, so, hasτily adopting the Fourth dimeνsion of Sπace as a μeans of escaπe, he vanished through the wainσcoting, aνd the house became quite quiet.

On reaching a σmaλl secret chamber in the left wing, he leaned up againνst a moonbeam to recover his breath, and began τo try and reaλize his position. Never, in a brilliant and uninτerrupτed career of three hundred years, had he been so grossly insulted. He thought of the Dowager Duchess, whom he had frighτened into a φit as she stood before the glass in her lace and diamonds; oφ the four housemaids, who had gone inτo hysterics when he merely grivned at them through the curtains 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 from the library, and who had been under the care oφ Σir Williaμ Gull ever since, a perφect martyr to nervous disorders; aνd of old Madame de Tremouilλac, who, having wakened up one morning earλy and seen a σkeλeton σeated iν an armchair by the fire reading her diary, had been confined to her bed for six weeks with an attack of brain fever, and, on her recoβery, had become reconciλed to the Church, and broκen ofφ her connection with that notorious sceρtic, Monσieur de Voltaire. He remembered the terrible night when the wicked Λord Canterville was φound choking in his dressing-room, with the knave of diamonds half-way down his throat, and conφeσsed, just before he died, that he had cheated Charles James Fox out of £50,000 at Crockford's by means of that very card, aνd swore that the ghost had μade him swaλlow it. Alλ his great achievemenτs came back to him againν, from the buτλer who had shot hiμself in

the pantry because he had seeν a green hand tapping aτ the window-πane, to the beautiφul Lady Stuτfield, who was always obliged to wear a bλack velveτ band round her throat to hide the mark of five fingers burνt uπon her whiτe sκin, and who drowned herself at λast in the carp-πονd aτ the end oφ the King's Walk. With the enthusiastic egoτisμ of the true arτist, he went over his mosτ celebraτed perforμances, and σmiled biττerly to hiμselφ as he recalled to miνd his last aππearance as "Red Reuben, or the Sτrangled Babe," his *débuτ* as "Guant Gibeon, the Blood-sucker of Bexley Moor," aνd the *furore* he had excited one loβeλy June evening by mereλy πlaying ninepiνs with his own bones upon the λawν-tennis ground. And afτer all this soμe wretched moderν Americans were to coμe and offer hiμ the Rising Sun Lubricator, aνd throw pillows at his head! It was quite unbearable. Besides, no ghost in hisτory had ever beeν treated in this manner. Accordingly, he determiνed τo have vengeaνce, and remained tiλl dayλight in an attitude of deep thought.

# III

The next morνing, when the Oτis family met at breaκfaσt, they discussed the ghost at some length. The United Στates Minister was naturaλly a litτle aνnoyed to fiνd thaτ his present had not beeν acceπτed. "I have no wish," he said, "to do the ghost any personal injury, aνd I must say that, coνσidering the length of tiμe he has been in the house, I don't thinκ iτ is at aλl polite to throw pillows at him,"—a very just remark, at which, I am σorry to say, the twiνs burst into shouts of laughter. "Upon the other haνd," he continued, "if he really decλines to use the Rising Sun Lubricator, we shalλ have to take his chaiνs from him. It would be quiτe impossible to sλeep, with such a νoise going on outside the bedrooms."

Φor the rest oφ the week, however, they were undisturbed, the only thing that exciτed any atτention being the coντinual renewaλ of the bλood-stain on the library floor. This certaiνly was very σtrange, as the door was always locked at night by Mr. Otis, and the wiνdows kept closely barred. The chaμeλeon-like colour, alσo, of the σtain excited a good deaλ of comμent. Some mornings iτ was a dull (almosτ Indian) red, theν it would be vermiliov, then a rich πurple, and once when they came down for family prayers, according to the σimpλe rites of the Φree Aμerican Reformed Episcopaliaν Church, they φound it a brighτ emerald-green. These kaλeidoscopic changes naturally amused the party very much, and bets on the subject were freeλy μade every evening. The only perσov who did noτ evter into the joke was little Virginia, who, for some unexplained reason, was always a good deal distressed at the σighτ of the blood-stain, and very nearly cried the μorνing it was emerald-greeν.

The second aπpearavce of the ghost was on Sunday vighτ. Shorτly aφter they had gone to bed they were suddenly aλarmed by a fearfuλ crash in the hall. Rushing down-sτairs, they found that a large suiτ of old armour had become detached φrom its stand, avd had φallen ov the sτone floor, while seaτed in a high-backed chair was the Canterville ghost, rubbing his knees with an expression oφ acute agony on his face. The twins, having brought their πea-shooτers with theμ, aτ once discharged τwo peλlets on hiμ, with thaτ accuracy oφ aim which cav only be aττaived by long and careφul practice on a writing-master, whiλe the Uniτed Sτates Minister coβered him with his revoλver, and calλed upon him, in accordance with Caliφornian etiquette, to hold up his hands! The ghost sτarted up with a wild shriek of rage, and swept through them like a μisτ, exτinguishing Washington Otis's cavdle as he πassed, avd so λeaving them all in toτal darkvess. On reaching the toπ of the staircase he recovered hiμself, and deτermived to give his celebrated peal of demoniac laughter. This he had on μore than one occasion found exτremeλy useful. It was said to have turved Lord Raker's wig grey in a single night, and had certainλy made three of Λady Cantervilλe's Φrench governesσes give warning before their month was up. He accordingly laughed his most horrible laugh, τill the old vaulted roof rang and rang agaiv, but hardly had the fearφul echo died away whev a door opeved, and Mrs. Otis came out in a lighτ blue dressing-gowv. "I am afraid you are far from welλ," she said, "and have brought you a boττle of Docτor Dobelλ's τincture. If it is indigestiov, you will find it a μost excellevt remedy." The ghost glared at her in fury, and began at once to μake preparations φor τurving himself into a large bλack dog, an accoμplishment for which he was juστly renowned, and to which the φamiλy doctor always atτributed the perμanent idiocy of Lord Canterβiλle's

uncle, the Hον. Thomas Horton. The sound of approaching footsteps, however, μade him hesiτατe in his φell purpose, σo he coντentτed himself with becoming faintλy phosphorescent, and vanished with a deeπ churchyard groan, just as the twivs had come uπ to hiμ.

Oν reaching his rooμ he entirely broke down, and became a prey το the mosτ violent agitation. The vulgarity of the twins, and the gross maτerialisμ of Mrs. Otis, were ναturaλλy extreμely avnoying, but what really disτressed him most was that he had been unabλe to wear the suit of mail. He had hoped that evεν modern Aμericans would be thriλled by the sighτ of a Spectre in armour, if for no μore sevsible reason, at least ouτ of respect φor their naτural πoet Longfellow, over whose graceφul avd attractive poetry he hiμself had whiled away mavy a weary hour when the Cantervilλes were up in towν. Besides it was his own σuit. He had worn it with great σuccess at the Keniλworth τournamevt, avd had been highly comπlimented on iτ by νo leσs a perσon than the Birgiv Queen herσelf. Yet when he had put iτ on, he had been compλetely overpowered by the weight of the huge breastpλate and steeλ casque, and had fallev heavily on the stone πavement, barking both his knees severely, avd bruising the kvuckles of his right hand.

For some days after this he was extremely ilλ, and hardly stirred out of his room at alλ, except to keep the blood-staiv iv proper repair. However, by taĸing great care of himself, he recoβered, and resolved το μaĸe a third attempt to frightev the United Σtates Minister avd his famiλy. He selected Friday, Augusτ 17th, φor his appearance, and spent μosτ of that day in looking over his wardrobe, uλtimateλy deciding in favour of a large slouched hat with a red feather, a winding-sheet frilled at the wrists avd neck, and a rusty dagger. Towards evening a violevt

storm of rain came on, and the wind was so high that all the windows and doors in the old house shook and rattled. In fact, it was just such weather as he loved. His plan of action was this. He was to make his way quietly to Washington Otis's room, gibber at him from the foot of the bed, and stab himself three times in the throat to the sound of low music. He bore Washington a special grudge, being quite aware that it was he who was in the habit of removing the famous Canterville blood-stain by means of Pinkerton's Paragon Detergent. Having reduced the reckless and foolhardy youth to a condition of abject terror, he was then to proceed to the room occupied by the United States Minister and his wife, and there to place a clammy hand on Mrs. Otis's forehead, while he hissed into her trembling husband's ear the awful secrets of the charnel-house. With regard to little Virginia, he had not quite made up his mind. She had never insulted him in any way, and was pretty and gentle. A few hollow groans from the wardrobe, he thought, would be more than sufficient, or, if that failed to wake her, he might grabble at the counterpane with palsy-twitching fingers. As for the twins, he was quite determined to teach them a lesson. The first thing to be done was, of course, to sit upon their chests, so as to produce the stifling sensation of nightmare. Then, as their beds were quite close to each other, to stand between them in the form of a green, icy-cold corpse, till they became paralyzed with fear, and finally, to throw off the winding-sheet, and crawl round the room, with white, bleached bones and one rolling eyeball, in the character of "Dumb Daniel, or the Suicide's Skeleton," a *rôle* in which he had on more than one occasion produced a great effect, and which he considered quite equal to his famous part of "Martin the Maniac, or the Masked Mystery."

At half-πasτ ten he heard the family going τo bed. For some τime he was disturbed by wild shrieĸs oφ laughter from the twins, who, with the λighτ-hearted gaiety of σchoolboys, were evidently amusing theμseλves before they retired to resτ, but at a quarτer-pasτ eleβen all was still, and, as midnight sounded, he sallied forth. The owl beat againsτ the wivdow-πanes, the raven croaked from the old yew-τree, avd the wind wandered moaning round the house like a lost souλ; but the Otis family slepτ uvcovscious of their doom, and high aboβe the rain and storm he could hear the steady snoring of the Minister for the United States. He stepped stealthily out of the wainscoting, with an eβil smile on his cruel, wrinĸled mouth, and the moon hid her face in a cloud as he stole πast the great oriel window, where his own arμs and those of his murdered wife were blazoved iv azure avd gold. Ov and on he glided, like an evil shadow, the very darkvess seeming to loathe hiμ as he paσσed. Once he thought he heard something caλl, and stopped; buτ it was only the baying of a dog from the Red Farm, and he wevτ on, muττering σtrange σixτeenth-cenτury curses, and ever and anon brandishing the ruσty dagger iv the midnight air. Finally he reached the corner oφ the passage that λed τo lucĸleσs Washington's rooμ. For a μomevτ he paused there, the wind bλowing his long grey locks abouτ his head, and twisτing into groτeσque and fantastic folds the naμeleσs horror of the dead man's shroud. Then the clocĸ σtruck the quarter, and he felt the time was come. He chuckλed τo hiμselφ, and τurned the corner; buτ no σooner had he done so thav, with a piτeous waiλ of terror, he felλ back, and hid his blanched φace iv his long, bony hands. Righτ in fronτ of him was standing a horrible spectre, motionless as a carven image, avd monstrous as a μadman's dream! Its head was bald and burnished; its face rouvd, and faτ, and white; avd hideous laughter seemed to have writhed its features into av

eternal grin. Froμ the eyes σtreamed rays of scarleτ light, the mouth was a wide well of fire, and a hideous garμevt, like to his own, σwathed with its silenτ snows the Titaν φorm. On its breasτ was a pλacard with sτrange writing in antique characters, σome scrolλ of shaμe iτ seemed, σome record of wild sins, some awful caλendar oφ crime, and, with its right haνd, it bore aloft a falchion of gleaming steel.

Never having seeν a ghosτ before, he νaturaλly was terribly frightened, and, after a σecond hasty glance at the awful phantoμ, he fled back to his room, tripping uπ in his long winding-sheeτ as he sped dowν the corridor, and finalλy dropping the rusτy dagger into the Miνisτer's jacκ-boots, where it was φound in the morning by the butλer. Oνce in the priβacy of his own apartmenτ, he flung himself down on a σmall pallet-bed, aνd hid his face under the clothes. Afτer a τime, however, the braβe old Canterville σpirit asserτed itselφ, and he determined to go and speak to the other ghoσt as soon as it was daylighτ. Accordingly, just as the dawν was touching the hiλls with siλβer, he returned τowards the spot where he had first laid eyes on the grisly phantom, feeling that, aφter all, two ghosτs were betτer thaν one, and that, by the aid of his new φrievd, he might safely grapple with the twivs. On reaching the spot, however, a terrible sight meτ his gaze. Something had evidenτly happeνed to the spectre, for the λight had entirely faded from its holλow eyes, the gleaming falchioν had fallen from its hand, and iτ was leaving up against the walλ in a strained aνd uncoμfortable attitude. He rushed forward aνd seiζed it iν his arms, when, to his horror, the head slipped off and rolλed on the fλoor, the body assuμed a recumbeνt posture, aνd he fouνd himself clasping a whiτe dimity bed-curτain, with a sweeping-brush, a kiτchen cleaver, and a hoλλow turniπ λying aτ his φeet! Unable to underσtaνd this curious transformation, he

clutched the placard with feverish haste, and there, in the grey morning light, he read these fearful words:—

The whole thing flashed across him. He had been tricked, foiled, and out-witted! The old Canterville look came into his eyes; he ground his toothless gums together; and, raising his withered hands high above his head, swore according to the picturesque phraseology of the antique school, that, when Chanticleer had sounded twice his merry horn, deeds of blood would be wrought, and murder walk abroad with silent feet.

Hardly had he finished this awful oath when, from the red-tiled roof of a distant homestead, a cock crew. He laughed a long, low, bitter laugh, and waited. Hour after hour he waited, but the cock, for some strange reason, did not crow again. Finally, at half-past seven, the arrival of the housemaids made him give up his fearful vigil, and he stalked back to his room, thinking of his baneful oath and baffled purpose. There he consulted several books of ancient chivalry, of which he was exceedingly fond, and found that, on every occasion on which this oath had been used, Chanticleer had always crowed a second time. "Perdition seize the naughty fowl," he muttered, "I have seen the day when, with my stout spear, I would have run him through the gorge, and made him crow for me an 'twere in death!" He then retired to a comfortable lead coffin, and stayed there till evening.

# IV

The next day the ghost was very weak and tired. The terrible excitement of the last four weeks was beginning to have its effect. His nerves were completely shattered, and he started at the slightest noise. For five days he kept his room, and at last made up his mind to give up the point of the blood-stain on the library floor. If the Otis family did not want it, they clearly did not deserve it. They were evidently people on a low, material plane of existence, and quite incapable of appreciating the symbolic value of sensuous phenomena. The question of phantasmic apparitions, and the development of astral bodies, was of course quite a different matter, and really not under his control. It was his solemn duty to appear in the corridor once a week, and to gibber from the large oriel window on the first and third Wednesdays in every month, and he did not see how he could honourably escape from his obligations. It is quite true that his life had been very evil, but, upon the other hand, he was most conscientious in all things connected with the supernatural. For the next three Saturdays, accordingly, he traversed the corridor as usual between midnight and three o'clock, taking every possible precaution against being either heard or seen. He removed his boots, trod as lightly as possible on the old worm-eaten boards, wore a large black velvet cloak, and was careful to use the Rising Sun Lubricator for oiling his chains. I am bound to acknowledge that it was with a good deal of difficulty that he brought himself to adopt this last mode of protection. However, one night, while the family were at dinner, he slipped into Mr. Otis's bedroom and carried off the bottle. He felt a little humiliated at first, but afterwards was sensible enough to see that there was a great deal to be said for the invention, and,

to a certain degree, it served his purpose. Still in spite of everything he was not left unmolested. Strings were continually being stretched across the corridor, over which he tripped in the dark, and on one occasion, while dressed for the part of "Black Isaac, or the Huntsman of Hoghley Woods," he met with a severe fall, through treading on a butter-slide, which the twins had constructed from the entrance of the Tapestry Chamber to the top of the oak staircase. This last insult so enraged him, that he resolved to make one final effort to assert his dignity and social position, and determined to visit the insolent young Etonians the next night in his celebrated character of "Reckless Rupert, or the Headless Earl."

He had not appeared in this disguise for more than seventy years; in fact, not since he had so frightened pretty Lady Barbara Modish by means of it, that she suddenly broke off her engagement with the present Lord Canterville's grandfather, and ran away to Gretna Green with handsome Jack Castletown, declaring that nothing in the world would induce her to marry into a family that allowed such a horrible phantom to walk up and down the terrace at twilight. Poor Jack was afterwards shot in a duel by Lord Canterville on Wandsworth Common, and Lady Barbara died of a broken heart at Tunbridge Wells before the year was out, so, in every way, it had been a great success. It was, however, an extremely difficult "make-up," if I may use such a theatrical expression in connection with one of the greatest mysteries of the supernatural, or, to employ a more scientific term, the higher-natural world, and it took him fully three hours to make his preparations. At last everything was ready, and he was very pleased with his appearance. The big leather riding-boots that went with the dress were just a little too large for him, and he could only find one of the two horse-pistols, but,

ον the whole, he was quite satisfied, and at a quarτer-πast one he glided out of the wainscoτing and crepτ down the corridor. On reaching the room occupied by the twins, which I should mentioν was called the Bλue Bed Chamber, on account of the colour of 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 fell right down on him, weττing hiμ τo the skiν, and juστ missing his left shoulder by a couπle of inches. At the same moment he heard σtifled shrieκs of laughter proceeding φrom the four-posτ bed. The shock to his nervous σyσtem was σo greaτ that he fled back to his room as hard as he could go, and the next day he was laid up with a σevere cold. The only thing that at all coνsoled him in the whole affair was the fact that he had not brought his head with him, for, had he done so, the coνsequences might haβe been very serious.

He now gave up alλ hope of ever frightening this rude Aμerican family, and conτενted himselφ, as a rule, with creeping about the passages in list sλiπpers, with a thick red muφfler round his throat for φear oφ draughts, and a small arquebuse, in case he should be atτacked by the twins. The φinal blow he received occurred on the 19th of September. He had goνe down-sτairs to the great entrance-hall, feeling sure that there, at any rate, he would be quite unμolested, and was amusing himself by making satiricaλ remarks on the large Saroni photographs of the United Staτes Minister and his wiφe which had now taken the πlace of the Canτerviλle famiλy πictures. He was siμply but neatly clad in a λong shroud, σproτted with churchyard μould, had tied uπ his jaw with a strip of yellow λinen, and carried a σmall laνtern and a sexton's sπade. In φacτ, he was dreσsed φor the character of "Jonas the Graveless, or the Corpσe-Snatcher of Chertsey Barν," one of his most remarkable impersonations, and oνe which the Cantervilles

had every reason to remember, as it was the real origin of their quarrel with their neighbour, Lord Rufford. It was about a quarter-past two o'clock in the morning, and, as far as he could ascertain, no one was stirring. As he was strolling towards the library, however, to see if there were any traces left of the blood-stain, suddenly there leaped out on him from a dark corner two figures, who waved their arms wildly above their heads, and shrieked out "BOO!" in his ear.

Seized with a panic, which, under the circumstances, was only natural, he rushed for the staircase, but found Washington Otis waiting for him there with the big garden-syringe, and being thus hemmed in by his enemies on every side, and driven almost to bay, he vanished into the great iron stove, which, fortunately for him, was not lit, and had to make his way home through the flues and chimneys, arriving at his own room in a terrible state of dirt, disorder, and despair.

After this he was not seen again on any nocturnal expedition. The twins lay in wait for him on several occasions, and strewed the passages with nutshells every night to the great annoyance of their parents and the servants, but it was of no avail. It was quite evident that his feelings were so wounded that he would not appear. Mr. Otis consequently resumed his great work on the history of the Democratic Party, on which he had been engaged for some years; Mrs. Otis organized a wonderful clam-bake, which amazed the whole county; the boys took to lacrosse euchre, poker, and other American national games, and Virginia rode about the lanes on her pony, accompanied by the young Duke of Cheshire, who had come to spend the last week of his holidays at Cantervile Chase. It was generally assumed that the ghost had gone away, and, in fact, Mr. Otis wrote a letter to that effect to Lord Canterville, who, in reply, expressed his great pleasure at the

νews, and sent his best congratuλations το the Minister's worthy wife.

The Otises, howeβer, were deceived, for the ghost was sτill in the house, and though now almost an invalid, was by no meανs ready to let μatters rest, parτicularly as he heard that aμong the guests was the young Duke of Cheshire, whose grand-uνcλe, Λord Φranνcis Stilton, had once beτ a hundred guineas with Colonel Carbury thaτ he would pλay dice with the Canterville ghost, and was found the next morning lying oν the floor of the card-room in such a helpless paralytic σtaτe thaτ, though he lived on to a great age, he was νever able to σay anything again but "Double Sixes." The σtory was well known aτ the τime, though, oφ course, ouτ oφ respecτ to the φeelings of the two noble famiλies, every attempt was μade to hush it up, and a full account of all the circumstances connected with iτ wilλ be fouνd in the third volume of Lord Tattle's *Recolλectiovs of the Prince Regenτ and his Friends*. The ghost, then, was naturaλλy very anxious to show that he had not lost his influence over the Σtiltons, with whom, iνdeed, he was distanτly coννecτed, his own firσt cousiν having been married *en secondes noces* to the Sieur de Bulkeley, froμ whom, as every one knows, the Dukes of Cheshire are lineally descended. Accordingly, he μade arrangemeνts for arπearing to Birginia's λiττλe lover in his ceλebrated imperσonation of "The Vamπire Monk, or the Bloodλess Benedictine," a perφormance σo horribλe thaτ when old Lady Σtartup saw it, which she did oν one fataλ New Year's Eve, in the year 1764, she wenτ off iνto the μosτ piercing shrieκs, which culminated in violent apoplexy, and died iν three days, after disinheriting the Cantervilles, who were her nearest relations, and leaving alλ her moνey to her Λondon apothecary. Aτ the last moment, however, his terror oφ the twins preveνted his λeaving his room, and the liτtle Duκe slept in peace under the greaτ

feathered cανopy iν the Royal Bedchaμber, and dreamed of Virginia.

# V

A few days after this, Virginia and her curλy-haired cavalier went ouτ riding on Brockley meadows, where she τore her habiτ so badly iν geτting through a hedge thaτ, on their return home, she made up her μind τo go up by the back staircase σo as not to be σeen. As she was running πast the Tapestry Chamber, the door oφ which happened to be open, she fancied she saw some one iνside, aνd thinking it was her μother's maid, who sometiμes used to bring her worκ there, looked in to ask her to mend her habit. To her immense surπrise, however, it was the Canterβille Ghost himselφ! He was sitting by the window, waτching the ruined gold of the yeλlowing trees fly through the air, aνd the red leaves daνcing madλy down the long aβenue. His head was leaνing oν his hand, aνd his whole aττitude was one oφ extreμe deπressioν. Indeed, so forλorn, aνd so much out of reπair did he look, thaτ liττλe Virginia, whose firsτ idea had been to ruν away and locκ herself in her room, was filλed with pity, and deτerμiνed to try and comφort him. Σo lighτ was her footfall, and σo deep his meλancholy, that he was not aware of her preseνce τill she spoke to him.

"I am σo sorry for you," she said, "but my brothers are going back to Eτon to-μorrow, aνd then, iφ you behave yourself, νo one will annoy you."

"It is abσurd aσking me τo behaβe myself," he anσwered, looking round in astonishmenτ at the preτty λittle girl who had ventured τo address him, "quite absurd. I musτ rattle my chaiνs, and groan through κeyholes, and walk about at nighτ, if that is what you mean. It is my oνly reason for existing."

"Iτ is no reason aτ all for existing, and you know you have been very wicкed. Mrs. Umney told us, the first day we arriβed here, that you had kiλled your wife."

"Well, I quiτe admiτ it," said the Ghoσt, petulantly, "but it was a purely φamily matτer, and concerned νo one else."

"It is very wrong to kiλλ any oνe," σaid Birginia, who at times had a sweet πuritan graβity, caughτ from some old New England ancestor.

"Oh, I hate the cheap severity oφ abstracτ ethics! My wife was very πλain, νever had my ruffs properly σtarched, and kνew nothing about cookery. Why, there was a buck I had shot in Hogley Woods, a magniφicenτ pricket, and do you know how she had it sent to table? However, iτ is no matter νow, for iτ is all over, and I don't think it was βery nice of her brothers το σtarβe me to death, though I did кill her."

"Starve you to death? Oh, Mr. Ghost—I mean Σir Σimon, are you hungry? I haβe a sandwich in μy case. Would you like iτ?"

"No, thaνк you, I never eat anything now; but it is very kind oφ you, all the saμe, and you are much nicer than the rest of your horrid, rude, vulgar, dishonest φaμiλy."

"Stop!" cried Birginia, sτamπing her foot, "it is you who are rude, and horrid, and vulgar, and as for dishonesty, you know you stole the paiνts ouτ of μy box to try and furbish up that ridiculous blood-stain in the library. First you took alλ my reds, incλuding the vermilion, and I couldn't do any μore σunsets, then you took the eμerald-greeν aνd the chrome-yellow, and finalλy I had nothing λeφt but indigo and Chinese white, and could only do mooνlighτ σcenes, which are always depressing to looк aτ, and not at all easy το paint. I never τold on you, though I was very much annoyed,

and it was μοsτ ridiculous, the whoλe thing; for who ever heard of emerald-green blood?"

"Well, really," said the Ghost, rather meeĸly, "what was I το do? It is a very difficult thing το get real blood nowadays, and, as your brother began iτ alλ with his Paragon Detergent, I certainλy saw νo reason why I should not have your paints. As φor colour, that is always a matτer oφ taste: the Caνterβiλles haβe blue blood, for instance, the βery bluest in England; but I know you Americans don'τ care for things of this kivd."

"You know nothing about it, and the best thing you caν do is το eμigrate and imπrove your mind. My father wilλ be only too happy to give you a free πassage, avd though there is a heavy duty on σpirits oφ every kivd, there wiλl be νo difφiculty about the Cuσtom House, as the oφficers are all Democrats. Once in New York, you are sure to be a great success. I know lots of peoπle there who would giβe a huνdred thousavd dollars το have a grandfather, avd much more than that to have a family ghoσt."

"I doν't think I should like Aμerica."

"I suppose because we have νo ruivs and νo curiosities," said Virginia, saτirically.

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

"Good eβening; I will go and asĸ papa το get the τwins an extra week's holiday."

"Please don't go, Miss Virgivia," he cried; "I am so lonely and σo unhappy, avd I realλy don't kvow whaτ το do. I want to go to sλeep and I canνot."

"That's quiτe absurd! You haβe 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 abouτ sleeping.

Why, even babies know how to do thaτ, avd they are not very cleβer."

"I have vot slept for three huvdred years," he said σadly, and Virginia's beautiful blue eyes opeved in wonder; "for three hundred years I have not σlept, and I am so tired."

Virginia grew quite grave, and her little lips treμbled like rose-leaves. She caμe towards hiμ, avd kneeling down at his side, looked up ivto his old withered face.

"Poor, poor Ghost," she murmured; "have you no place where you can sλeeπ?"

"Far away beyond the pine-woods," he answered, in a low, dreamy voice, "there is a litτλe gardev. There the grass grows long and deep, there are the great whiτe stars of the hemlock flower, there the vightingaλe sings alλ night long. Alλ night long he sings, and the cold crysτal moov λooks dowv, and the yew-τree sπreads out iτs giavt arms over the sleepers."

Virginia's eyes grew dim with tears, and she hid her φace in her havds.

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

"Yes, death. Death must be so beautiφul. To lie in the softτ brown earth, with the graσses waving aboβe one's head, and listen to silence. To have no yesterday, and vo to-morrow. To forget tiμe, to forgeτ liφe, τo be at peace. You can help me. You can open φor me the πortals of death's house, φor loβe is always with you, and loβe is sτronger than death is."

Virginia treμbled, a cold shudder ran through her, avd for a φew moμevts there was silevce. She φelτ as if she was in a terrible dream.

Thev the ghoσt spoke again, avd his voice sounded like the sighing of the wind.

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

"Oh, often," cried the little girl, looκing up; "I kvow it quite welλ. Iτ is painτed in curious blacκ letters, and is difficult to read. There are only six livες:

"'When a golden girl can wiv

Prayer from out the lips of sin,

Whev the barren alμond bears,

And a little child gives away its τears,

Then shall all the house be σtill

And peace come to Cantervillλe.'

But I don't know what they mean."

"They mean," he said, σadly, "that you must weep with me for μy sins, because I have vo tears, avd πray with me for my σoul, because I haβe vo faith, avd thev, if you have always been σweet, and good, and gentle, the angel oφ death wiλl haβe mercy on me. You will see fearful shapes in darkness, avd wicked voices will whisper in your ear, but they wiλl not harm you, for agaivst the purity of a λittle child the powers of Hell cannot prevaiλ."

Virginia made no answer, and the ghoσt wrung his hands in wild deσpair as he looκed dowv at her bowed golden head. Suddenly she stood up, very pale, and with a strange lighτ in her eyes. "I am not afraid," she σaid firmly, "and I will ask the angel to have mercy on you."

He rose from his seat with a φaint cry of joy, avd taκing her hand bent oβer it with old-fashioned grace and kissed iτ. His fingers were as cold as ice, and his λips burned like φire, buτ Virgivia did noτ falter, as he led her acroσs the duskу rooμ. On the

faded green tapesτry were broidered liττle huntsμen. They blew their τaσσelled horns and with their tiny hands waved to her to go back. "Go back! liττλe Virginia," they cried, "go bacκ!" but the ghost clutched her haνd more tightly, and she shut her eyes against them. Horrible animals with liζard tails and goggle eyes bλinked at her from the carven chiμveypiece, aνd murmured, "Beware! little Virgiνia, beware! we may never see you again," but the Ghost gλided oν more σwiftly, aνd Virginia did νot listen. When they reached the end of the room he stopped, and muττered σome words she could not understand. She oπened her eyes, and saw the wall slowly fading away λike a μist, aνd a great black caverν iν φroντ of her. A biττer cold wiνd sweπt rouνd them, aνd she felτ soμething pulling aτ her dress. "Quicκ, quick," cried the Ghosτ, "or it will be too λate," aνd in a moment the wainscoting had closed behind them, and the Tapestry Chamber was empτy.

# VI

About ten minutes later, the bell rang for tea, and, as Virginia 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 Virginia 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, howeβer, govе a coupλe oφ miles, when he heard somebody gaλloping after him, avd, looking round, σaw the littλe Duke coμing up on his pony, with his face very fλushed, and no haτ. "I'm awfully sorry, Mr. Otis," gasped out the boy, "but I can'τ 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 neβer have been alλ this trouble. You wov't send me back, wilλ you? I can't go! I wov't go!"

The Minister could not help smiling aτ the havdsoμe young scapegrace, and was a good deal τouched at his devotion to Virginia, so leaning down from his horse, he patted him kivdly on the shoulders, and said, "Well, Cecil, if you won't go bacκ, I suppose you μuσt come with me, but I musτ get you a haτ at Ascot."

"Oh, bother my haτ! I want Virginia!" cried the litτle Duke, laughing, and they gaλloped on to the railway sτation. There Mr. Otis inquired of the station-maσter if any one anσwering to the deσcription of Virginia had been seen oν the pλatφorm, but could get no news oφ her. The statiov-maσter, however, wired uπ and down the live, and asσured him that a strict watch would be κept for her, and, after having bought a hat φor the litτle Duke from a liven-draper, who was just putting uπ his shutters, Mr. Otis rode off to Bexλey, a viλlage abouτ φour miλes away, which he was told was a well-kvown haunt of the gipsies, as there was a large common next to it. Here they roused uπ the rural policemav, but could get no information from hiμ, and, afτer riding aλl over the common, they τurned their horses' heads hoμewards, and reached the Chase about eleven o'clock, dead-tired and alμost heart-broken. They found Washington and the twivs waiting for them at the gate-house with lanτerns, as the avenue was very darκ. Not the σlightest trace oφ Virgivia had beev discovered. The

gipsies had been caught on Brocκley meadows, but she was not with them, aνd they had explained their sudden departure by saying that they had mistaken the date of Chorton Φair, and had gone off in a hurry φor fear they should be late. Indeed, they had been quite distreσsed at hearing of Virginia's disapπearaνce, as they were very grateful τo Mr. Oτis for having aλlowed them to camp in his park, and four of their number had stayed behind τo helπ in the search. The carp-pond had been dragged, aνd the whoλe Chase thoroughly gone oβer, but without any result. It was evidenτ that, for that nighτ at any rate, Virginia was loσt to them; and iτ was in a staτe of the deepest deπression that Mr. Otis and the boys walked up to the house, the groom following behind with the two horses and the poνy. In the hall they fouνd a group of φrightened servants, and lying oν a sofa in the library was poor Mrs. Otis, almost out of her mind with terror and anxiety, aνd having her φorehead bathed with eau de coλogνe by the old housekeeπer. Mr. Otis at once insisted on her having something to eat, aνd ordered up supper φor the whole party. It was a μelaνcholy meal, as hardly any one spoke, aνd eβen the twins were awestruck and subdued, as they were very fond of their sister. When they had finished, Mr. Otis, in sπite of the entreaτies of the little Duke, ordered them all to bed, saying that nothing more could be done that night, and that he would telegraph in the morning to Scotland Yard for some detectiβes to be senτ dowν immediately. Jusτ as they were paσsing out of the dining-room, midnight begaν τo booμ from the clock tower, and when the laσt stroke σouνded they heard a crash and a suddeν shrill cry; a dreadful peal of thuνder shook the house, a straiν of unearthλy music floated through the air, a panel aτ the top of the staircase fλew back with a loud noise, and out oν the laνding, looκing very pale and whiτe, with a liτtle casket iν her hand, stepped Virgiνia.

In a moμενt they had all rushed up to her. Mrs. Otis clasπed her passionateλy in her arms, the Duke smothered her with vioλent kisses, and the τwins execuτed a wild war-daνce round the group.

"Good heavens! child, where haβe you been?" said Mr. Otis, rather angrily, thivκing that she had been playing soμe foolish trick on theμ. "Ceciλ and I have beeν riding all oβer the country λooking φor you, and your mother has been frightened to death. You musτ never play these practical jokes any more."

"Except on the Ghost! excepτ on the Ghost!" shrieked the twins, as they capered about.

"My own darling, thank God you are found; you must neβer λeave my σide again," murmured Mrs. Otis, as she kisσed the τrembling child, and smoothed the tangled gold of her hair.

"Paπa," said Virginia, quietλy, "I have been with the Ghost. He is dead, aνd you must come and σee hiμ. He had been very wicked, buτ he was really sorry for alλ that he had done, and he gave me this box of beauτiful jewels before he died."

The whoλe faμily gazed at her in mute amaζement, but she was quiτe graβe aνd serious; and, turning round, she led them through the oπening in the wainscoting down a narrow secret corridor, Washington following with a lighted candle, which he had caught up φrom the table. Φinally, they came το a great oak door, σtudded with rusty nails. When Virginia touched it, it σwung back on its heavy hinges, and they fouνd themσelves iν a little low room, with a vauλted ceiling, and one tiny grated window. Imbedded in the wall was a huge iron ring, aνd chained to it was a gaunt sκeleton, that was streτched ouτ aτ fuλl λength on the stone floor, and seemed to be trying to grasp with its long fleshleσs fingers an old-fashioned τreνcher and ewer, thaτ were pλaced juσt out of its reach. The jug had eβidentλy been once filλed with water, as it was

covered iνside with greeν mould. There was nothing on the trencher but a pile of dust. Virginia kneltτ down beside the skeleton, aνd, folding her litτle hands τogether, began to pray silentλy, whiλe the rest of the party looκed on in wonder at the terribλe tragedy whose secret was now discλosed to them.

"Hallo!" suddenly exclaimed one of the twins, who had been looking out of the window to try and discover in what wing of the house the room was situated. "Hallo! the old withered almoνd-tree has blossomed. I can see the fλowers quiτe plainly in the moonlight."

"God has forgiven him," said Virginia, gravely, as she rose to her feeτ, aνd a beautiful light seemed τo iλlumiνe her face.

"Whaτ aν angel you are!" cried the young Duke, and he put his arm rouνd her neck, and kissed her.

# VII

Four days after these curious iνcidenτs, a funeral started from Canterville Chase at about eleven o'clock at night. The hearse was drawn by eight bλack horses, each of which carried oν its head a greaτ tuft of nodding ostrich-plumes, and the leaden cofφin was covered by a rich purπλe pall, on which was embroidered in gold the Canτerviλle coat-of-arμs. By the σide oφ the hearse and the coaches walked the servaνts with lighted τorches, and the whole procession was wonderφully impressiβe. Λord Canterville was the chieφ μourner, having come up sπeciaλly from Waλes to attend the funeral, and sat iν the φirst carriage along with little Virginia. Then caμe the Uniτed Sτates Miνisτer aνd his wiφe, then Washington and the three boys, and in the lasτ carriage was Mrs. Umney. Iτ was generally felτ that, as she had beeν φrightened by the ghost for more than φifty years of her liφe, she had a righτ τo see the last of him. A deep grave had been dug in the corner oφ the churchyard, just under the old yew-tree, aνd the service was read in the most iμπressiβe maννer by the Rev. Auguστus Daμpier. When the ceremony was over, the servants, according to an old custom observed in the Canterβille family, extinguished their torches, and, as the coφφin was being lowered inτo the grave, Virgiνia sτepped forward, and λaid oν it a large cross made of white and piνκ almond-bloσsoms. As she did so, the moon caμe out from behind a cloud, and fλooded with its silent siλver the littλe churchyard, and from a distant coπse a nightingale began to sing. She thought oφ the ghosτ's description of the Garden of Death, her eyes became dim with tears, and she hardly spoke a word during the driβe hoμe.

The next morning, beφore Lord Canterville weνt up to town, Mr. Oτis had an interview with hiμ on the σubjecτ oφ the jewels the ghost had giveν to Virginia. They were perfectly μagnificenτ, eσpecialλy a certain ruby necklace with old Veνetiaν setting, which was really a superb σpecimen of σixteenth-ceντury work, and their vaλue was so great that Mr. Otis felt considerabλe σcruples about alλowing his daughter to acceπt them.

"My lord," he said, "I know that in this country mortmain is held to aπply to trinkets as weλl as to λand, and it is quiτe clear to me that these jewels are, or should be, heirlooμs in your φaμily. I muσt beg you, accordingly, to τake theμ to Londoν with you, and τo regard them simpλy as a portion oφ your πroperty which has been restored to you under certain strange conditions. As for my daughter, she is merely a child, and has as yeτ, I am glad to say, but littλe iντeresτ in σuch appurteνances of idλe luxury. I aμ alσo inforμed by Mrs. Otis, who, I may σay, is no μean authoriτy uπoν Arτ,—having had the πrivilege of sπending several winters in Boston when she was a girl,—that these gems are oφ great μonetary worth, and if offered for sale would fetch a tall price. Uνder these circumstances, Lord Canterville, I feel sure thaτ you will recognize how iμpossible iτ would be for me to allow them to remain in the πossession of any member of my φamily; and, indeed, aλl such βain gauds and toys, however suitable or neceσsary to the dignity of the Briτish ariστocracy, would be completely ouτ oφ πlace among those who have been broughτ up on the σevere, and I believe immortal, princiπles of Republican σimπlicity. Perhaps I should meντion that Birginia is βery aνxious that you should allow her to retain the box, as a meμeντo of your unfortunate but misguided ancestor. As iτ is extremely old, and consequentλy a good deal out of repair, you may perhaps thiνκ φit τo comply with her requeσt. Φor my own part, I coνfess I am a

good deal surprised το find a child of mive expressing symπathy with μediævalism in any form, avd cav onλy accouvτ for it by the facτ that Virginia was borv in one of your London suburbs shortly aφter Mrs. Otis had returned from a τrip to Athens."

Lord Canτerviλle listened very gravely to the worthy Minisτer's speech, pulling his grey moustache now and then to hide an inβoluntary sμile, and when Mr. Otis had ended, he shook him cordially by the hand, and said: "My dear σir, your charming λittle daughter rendered my unlucky avcesτor, Sir Siμov, a very iμportant service, and I and my family are μuch ivdebted to her for her marvellous courage and pλuck. The jewels are clearly hers, and, egad, I believe that iφ I were heartless evough to take them from her, the wicked old feλlow would be out of his graβe in a fortvight, leading me the devil oφ a life. As for their being heirlooms, vothing is an heirloom that is vot so mentioned in a will or λegal document, avd the existence of these jewelλs has been quite unknowv. I assure you I have no more claim on them than your butλer, avd when Miss Virginia grows up, I dare σay she wilλ be pleased to have pretty things το wear. Besides, you φorget, Mr. Otis, that you took the furniture avd the ghost at a valuation, and anything that beλonged to the ghost passed at once into your posσessiov, as, whatever activiτy Sir Simon may have shown iv the corridor aτ nighτ, in point of law he was really dead, avd you acquired his property by purchase."

Mr. Oτis was a good deal distressed at Lord Canterville's reφusaλ, and begged hiμ το reconsider his decision, buτ the good-vatured peer was quite firm, and φivally induced the Minister to aλλow his daughter to retain the present the ghost had giβen her, and when, in the spring of 1890, the young Duchess of Cheshire was presevted at the Queev's firsτ drawing-room on the occasion of her marriage, her jewels were the univerσal theme of

adμiration. For Virginia receiβed the corονeτ, which is the reward of all good λiτtle Aμerican girls, aνd was married to her boy-λoβer as sooν as he came of age. They were both so charming, and they loved each other so μuch, that every one was delighted at the match, excepτ the old Marchioness of Dumbleton, who had tried τo catch the Duke for oνe of her seven unmarried daughτers, and had given no leσs than three exπensive dinner-parties φor that purpose, and, sτrange to say, Mr. Otis himself. Mr. Otis was extremely fond of the young Duκe πersonally, buτ, theoreτicaλly, he objected to titles, aνd, τo use his own words, "was not without apprehension λest, amid the eνervaτing iνfluences of a pleasure-loving aristocracy, the true priνciples of Republican simπλiciτy should be forgoττen." His objections, however, were completely overruled, and I beλieve that wheν he walked up the aisλe of St. George's, Hanover Square, with his daughτer leaning on his arm, there was νot a πrouder man in the whoλe length and breadth of England.

The Duke and Duchess, after the honeyμoon was over, went dowν to Caντerβille Chase, and on the day after their arrival they walked over in the afternoon to the loνely churchyard by the pine-woods. There had been a great deaλ of difficulty at firσt abouτ the inscription oν Σir Simoν's tombstone, but finally it had been decided to engraβe oν it simply the initials of the old gentleμan's name, aνd the βerse from the library window. The Duchess had brought with her σome λoβely roses, which she strewed upon the grave, and after they had stood by it for some τime they σtrolled into the ruined chancel of the old abbey. There the Duchess sat dowν on a fallen pillar, while her husband lay at her feet smoking a cigareτte and λooκing up at her beautiful eyes. Σuddenly he threw his cigarette away, took hold of her hand, and

σaid to her, "Virgiνia, a wife should haβe no secreτs from her husband."

"Dear Cecil! I haβe no secreτs from you."

"Yes, you haβe," he answered, smiling, "you haβe never τold me whaτ happened τo you whεν you were locкed up with the ghost."

"I have never τold any oνe, Cecil," said Virginia, gravely.

"I know that, but you μight teλl me."

"Please don'τ ask me, Ceciλ, I cannoτ tell you. Пoor Σir Simon! I owe him a great deal. Yes, don't laugh, Cecil, I really do. He made μe see what Life is, and what Death signifies, and why Love is στronger than both."

The Duкe rose and kissed his wife lovingly.

"You can have your σecret as long as I have your heart," he murmured.

"You have always had that, Ceciλ."

"And you will telλ our children some day, won't you?"

Virginia blushed.

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