The Canterville Ghost

Oscar Wilde

Polish letters — 100% 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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French j to ż, German z to c, consonantal English y to j and selected English w to ł. These are contextual sound matches, not visual substitutions.

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

j / ż · y / j · w / ł · z / c

769 of 769 eligible letters changed. Approximately 1.6% 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 łas doing a very foolish thing, as there łas no doubt at all that the place łas haunted. Indeed, Lord Canterville himself, who łas 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.

"Łe have not cared to live in the place ourselves," said Lord Canterville, "since my grandaunt, the Dowager Duchess of Bolton, łas frightened into a fit, from which she never really recovered, by two skeleton hands being placed on her shoulders as she łas dressing for dinner, and I feel bound to tell jou, Mr. Otis, that the ghost has been seen by several living members of my family, as łell 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 jounger servants łould stay łith 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 łill take the furniture and the ghost at a valuation. I have come from a modern country, where łe have everything that money can buy; and łith all our spry joung fellows painting the Old Łorld red, and carrying off jour best actors and prima-donnas, I reckon that if there łere such a thing as a ghost in Europe, łe'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 Canterville, smiling, "though it may have resisted the overtures of jour enterprising impresarios. It has been łell known for three centuries, since 1584

in fact, and always makes its appearance before the death of any member of our family."

"Łell, 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."

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

A few łeeks after this, the purchase łas concluded, and at the close of the season the Minister and his family łent down to Canterville Chase. Mrs. Otis, who, as Miss Lucretia R. Tappan, of Łest 53d Street, had been a celebrated New Jork belle, łas now a very handsome, middle-aged łoman, łith 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 łonderful amount of animal spirits. Indeed, in many respects, she łas quite English, and łas an excellent example of the fact that łe have really everything in common łith America nowadays, except, of course, language. Her eldest son, christened Łashington by his parents in a moment of patriotism, which he never ceased to regret, łas a fair-haired, rather good-looking joung man, who had qualified himself for American diplomacy by leading the German at the Newport Casino for three successive seasons, and even in London łas łell known as an excellent dancer. Gardenias and the peerage łere his only łeaknesses. Otherwise he łas extremely sensible. Miss Virginia E. Otis łas a little girl of fifteen, lithe and lovely as a fawn, and łith a fine freedom in her large blue eyes. She łas a łonderful Amazon, and had once raced old Lord Bilton on her

pony twice round the park, łinning by a length and a half, just in front of the Achilles statue, to the huge delight of the joung Duke of Cheshire, who proposed for her on the spot, and łas sent back to Eton that very night by his guardians, in floods of tears. After Virginia came the twins, who łere usually called "The Star and Stripes," as they łere always getting swished. They łere delightful boys, and, łith the exception of the łorthy Minister, the only true republicans of the family.

As Canterville Chase is seven miles from Ascot, the nearest railway station, Mr. Otis had telegraphed for a łaggonette to meet them, and they started on their drive in high spirits. It łas a lovely July evening, and the air łas delicate łith the scent of the pinewoods. Now and then they heard a łood-pigeon brooding over its own sweet voice, or saw, deep in the rustling fern, the burnished breast of the pheasant. Little squirrels peered at them from the beech-trees as they łent by, and the rabbits scudded away through the brushwood and over the mossy knolls, łith their white tails in the air. As they entered the avenue of Canterville Chase, however, the sky became suddenly overcast łith 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 łas an old łoman, neatly dressed in black silk, łith a white cap and apron. This łas Mrs. Umney, the housekeeper, whom Mrs. Otis, at Lady Canterville'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 jou łelcome to Canterville Chase." Following her, they passed through the fine Tudor hall into the library, a long, low room, panelled in black oak, at the end of which łas a large stained glass łindow. Here they found tea laid out

for them, and, after taking off their wraps, they sat down and began to look round, while Mrs. Umney łaited on them.

Suddenly Mrs. Otis caught sight of a dull red stain on the floor just by the fireplace, and, quite unconscious of what it really signified, said to Mrs. Umney, "I am afraid something has been spilt there."

"Jes, madam," replied the old housekeeper in a low voice, "blood has been spilt on that spot."

"How horrid!" cried Mrs. Otis; "I don't at all care for blood-stains in a sitting-room. It must be removed at once."

The old łoman smiled, and answered in the same low, mysterious voice, "It is the blood of Lady Eleanore de Canterville, who łas murdered on that very spot by her own husband, Sir Simon de Canterville, in 1575. Sir Simon survived her nine jears, and disappeared suddenly under very mysterious circumstances. His body has never been discovered, but his guilty spirit still haunts the Chase. The blood-stain has been much admired by tourists and others, and cannot be removed."

"That is all nonsense," cried Łashington Otis; "Pinkerton's Champion Stain Remover and Paragon Detergent łill clean it up in no time," and before the terrified housekeeper could interfere, he had fallen upon his knees, and łas rapidly scouring the floor łith a small stick of what looked like a black cosmetic. In a few moments no trace of the blood-stain could be seen.

"I knew Pinkerton łould do it," he exclaimed, triumphantly, as he looked round at his admiring family; but no sooner had he said these łords than a terrible flash of lightning lit up the sombre room, a fearful peal of thunder made them all start to their feet, and Mrs. Umney fainted.

"What a monstrous climate!" said the American Minister, calmly, as he lit a long cheroot. "I guess the old country is so overpopulated that they have not enough decent łeather for everybody. I have always been of opinion that emigration is the only thing for England."

"My dear Hiram," cried Mrs. Otis, "what can łe do łith a łoman who faints?"

"Charge it to her like breakages," answered the Minister; "she łon't faint after that;" and in a few moments Mrs. Umney certainly came to. There łas no doubt, however, that she łas extremely upset, and she sternly łarned Mr. Otis to beware of some trouble coming to the house.

"I have seen things łith my own eyes, sir," she said, "that łould make any Christian's hair stand on end, and many and many a night I have not closed my eyes in sleep for the awful things that are done here." Mr. Otis, however, and his łife łarmly assured the honest soul that they łere not afraid of ghosts, and, after invoking the blessings of Providence on her new master and mistress, and making arrangements for an increase of salary, the old housekeeper tottered off to her own room.

II

The storm raged fiercely all that night, but nothing of particular note occurred. The next morning, however, when they came down to breakfast, they found the terrible stain of blood once again on the floor. "I don't think it can be the fault of the Paragon Detergent," said Łashington, "for I have tried it łith everything. It must be the ghost." He accordingly rubbed out the stain a second time, but the second morning it appeared again. The third morning also it łas there, though the library had been locked up at night by Mr. Otis himself, and the key carried up-stairs. The whole family łere now quite interested; Mr. Otis began to suspect that he had been too dogmatic in his denial of the existence of ghosts, Mrs. Otis expressed her intention of joining the Psychical Society, and Łashington prepared a long letter to Messrs. Myers and Podmore on the subject of the Permanence of Sanguineous Stains when connected łith Crime. That night all doubts about the objective existence of phantasmata łere removed for ever.

The day had been łarm and sunny; and, in the cool of the evening, the whole family łent out to drive. They did not return home till nine o'clock, when they had a light supper. The conversation in no łay turned upon ghosts, so there łere not even those primary conditions of receptive expectations which so often precede the presentation of psychical phenomena. The subjects discussed, as I have since learned from Mr. Otis, łere merely such as form the ordinary conversation of cultured Americans of the better class, such as the immense superiority of Miss Fanny Devonport over Sarah Bernhardt as an actress; the difficulty of obtaining green corn, buckwheat cakes, and hominy, even in the best English houses; the importance of Boston in the development

of the łorld-soul; the advantages of the baggage-check system in railway travelling; and the sweetness of the New Jork accent as compared to the London drawl. No mention at all łas made of the supernatural, nor łas Sir Simon de Canterville alluded to in any łay. At eleven o'clock the family retired, and by half-past all the lights łere out. Some time after, Mr. Otis łas awakened by a curious noise in the corridor, outside his room. It sounded like the clank of metal, and seemed to be coming nearer every moment. He got up at once, struck a match, and looked at the time. It łas exactly one o'clock. He łas quite calm, and felt his pulse, which łas not at all feverish. The strange noise still continued, and łith it he heard distinctly the sound of footsteps. He put on his slippers, took a small oblong phial out of his dressing-case, and opened the door. Right in front of him he saw, in the łan moonlight, an old man of terrible aspect. His eyes łere as red burning coals; long grey hair fell over his shoulders in matted coils; his garments, which łere of antique cut, łere soiled and ragged, and from his wrists and ankles hung heavy manacles and rusty gyves.

"My dear sir," said Mr. Otis, "I really must insist on jour oiling those chains, and have brought jou for that purpose a small bottle of the Tammany Rising Sun Lubricator. It is said to be completely efficacious upon one application, and there are several testimonials to that effect on the wrapper from some of our most eminent native divines. I shall leave it here for jou by the bedroom candles, and łill be happy to supply jou łith more, should jou require it." Łith these łords the United States Minister laid the bottle down on a marble table, and, closing his door, retired to rest.

For a moment the Canterville ghost stood quite motionless in natural indignation; then, dashing the bottle violently upon the polished floor, he fled down the corridor, uttering hollow groans,

and emitting a ghastly green light. Just, however, as he reached the top of the great oak staircase, a door łas flung open, two little white-robed figures appeared, and a large pillow whizzed past his head! There łas evidently no time to be lost, so, hastily adopting the Fourth dimension of Space as a means of escape, he vanished through the łainscoting, and the house became quite quiet.

On reaching a small secret chamber in the left łing, he leaned up against a moonbeam to recover his breath, and began to try and realize his position. Never, in a brilliant and uninterrupted career of three hundred jears, had he been so grossly insulted. He thought of the Dowager Duchess, whom he had frightened into a fit as she stood before the glass in her lace and diamonds; of the four housemaids, who had gone into hysterics when he merely grinned at them through the curtains on one of the spare bedrooms; of the rector of the parish, whose candle he had blown out as he łas coming late one night from the library, and who had been under the care of Sir Łilliam Gull ever since, a perfect martyr to nervous disorders; and of old Madame de Tremouillac, who, having łakened up one morning early and seen a skeleton seated in an armchair by the fire reading her diary, had been confined to her bed for six łeeks łith an attack of brain fever, and, on her recovery, had become reconciled to the Church, and broken off her connection łith that notorious sceptic, Monsieur de Voltaire. He remembered the terrible night when the łicked Lord Canterville łas found choking in his dressing-room, łith the knave of diamonds half-łay down his throat, and confessed, just before he died, that he had cheated Charles James Fox out of £50,000 at Crockford's by means of that very card, and swore that the ghost had made him swallow it. All his great achievements came back to him again, from the butler who had shot himself in the pantry because he had seen a green hand tapping at the łindow-pane, to

the beautiful Lady Stutfield, who łas always obliged to łear a black velvet band round her throat to hide the mark of five fingers burnt upon her white skin, and who drowned herself at last in the carp-pond at the end of the King's Łalk. Łith the enthusiastic egotism of the true artist, he łent over his most celebrated performances, and smiled bitterly to himself as he recalled to mind his last appearance as "Red Reuben, or the Strangled Babe," his *début* as "Guant Gibeon, the Blood-sucker of Bexley Moor," and the *furore* he had excited one lovely June evening by merely playing ninepins łith his own bones upon the lawn-tennis ground. And after all this some wretched modern Americans łere to come and offer him the Rising Sun Lubricator, and throw pillows at his head! It łas quite unbearable. Besides, no ghost in history had ever been treated in this manner. Accordingly, he determined to have vengeance, and remained till daylight in an attitude of deep thought.

III

The next morning, when the Otis family met at breakfast, they discussed the ghost at some length. The United States Minister łas naturally a little annoyed to find that his present had not been accepted. "I have no łish," he said, "to do the ghost any personal injury, and I must say that, considering the length of time he has been in the house, I don't think it is at all polite to throw pillows at him,"—a very just remark, at which, I am sorry to say, the twins burst into shouts of laughter. "Upon the other hand," he continued, "if he really declines to use the Rising Sun Lubricator, łe shall have to take his chains from him. It łould be quite impossible to sleep, łith such a noise going on outside the bedrooms."

For the rest of the łeek, however, they łere undisturbed, the only thing that excited any attention being the continual renewal of the blood-stain on the library floor. This certainly łas very strange, as the door łas always locked at night by Mr. Otis, and the łindows kept closely barred. The chameleon-like colour, also, of the stain excited a good deal of comment. Some mornings it łas a dull (almost Indian) red, then it łould be vermilion, then a rich purple, and once when they came down for family prayers, according to the simple rites of the Free American Reformed Episcopalian Church, they found it a bright emerald-green. These kaleidoscopic changes naturally amused the party very much, and bets on the subject łere freely made every evening. The only person who did not enter into the joke łas little Virginia, who, for some unexplained reason, łas always a good deal distressed at the sight of the blood-stain, and very nearly cried the morning it łas emerald-green.

The second appearance of the ghost łas on Sunday night. Shortly after they had gone to bed they łere suddenly alarmed by a fearful crash in the hall. Rushing down-stairs, they found that a large suit of old armour had become detached from its stand, and had fallen on the stone floor, while seated in a high-backed chair łas the Canterville ghost, rubbing his knees łith an expression of acute agony on his face. The twins, having brought their pea-shooters łith them, at once discharged two pellets on him, łith that accuracy of aim which can only be attained by long and careful practice on a writing-master, while the United States Minister covered him łith his revolver, and called upon him, in accordance łith Californian etiquette, to hold up his hands! The ghost started up łith a łild shriek of rage, and swept through them like a mist, extinguishing Łashington Otis's candle as he passed, and so leaving them all in total darkness. On reaching the top of the staircase he recovered himself, and determined to give his celebrated peal of demoniac laughter. This he had on more than one occasion found extremely useful. It łas said to have turned Lord Raker's łig grey in a single night, and had certainly made three of Lady Canterville's French governesses give łarning before their month łas up. He accordingly laughed his most horrible laugh, till the old vaulted roof rang and rang again, but hardly had the fearful echo died away when a door opened, and Mrs. Otis came out in a light blue dressing-gown. "I am afraid jou are far from łell," she said, "and have brought jou a bottle of Doctor Dobell's tincture. If it is indigestion, jou łill find it a most excellent remedy." The ghost glared at her in fury, and began at once to make preparations for turning himself into a large black dog, an accomplishment for which he łas justly renowned, and to which the family doctor always attributed the permanent idiocy of Lord Canterville's uncle, the Hon. Thomas Horton. The sound of

approaching footsteps, however, made him hesitate in his fell purpose, so he contented himself łith becoming faintly phosphorescent, and vanished łith a deep churchyard groan, just as the twins had come up to him.

On reaching his room he entirely broke down, and became a prey to the most violent agitation. The vulgarity of the twins, and the gross materialism of Mrs. Otis, łere naturally extremely annoying, but what really distressed him most łas that he had been unable to łear the suit of mail. He had hoped that even modern Americans łould be thrilled by the sight of a Spectre in armour, if for no more sensible reason, at least out of respect for their natural poet Longfellow, over whose graceful and attractive poetry he himself had whiled away many a łeary hour when the Cantervilles łere up in town. Besides it łas his own suit. He had łorn it łith great success at the Kenilworth tournament, and had been highly complimented on it by no less a person than the Virgin Queen herself. Jet when he had put it on, he had been completely overpowered by the łeight of the huge breastplate and steel casque, and had fallen heavily on the stone pavement, barking both his knees severely, and bruising the knuckles of his right hand.

For some days after this he łas extremely ill, and hardly stirred out of his room at all, except to keep the blood-stain in proper repair. However, by taking great care of himself, he recovered, and resolved to make a third attempt to frighten the United States Minister and his family. He selected Friday, August 17th, for his appearance, and spent most of that day in looking over his łardrobe, ultimately deciding in favour of a large slouched hat łith a red feather, a łinding-sheet frilled at the wrists and neck, and a rusty dagger. Towards evening a violent storm of rain came on, and the łind łas so high that all the łindows and doors in the old

house shook and rattled. In fact, it łas just such łeather as he loved. His plan of action łas this. He łas to make his łay quietly to Łashington 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 Łashington a special grudge, being quite aware that it łas he who łas in the habit of removing the famous Canterville blood-stain by means of Pinkerton's Paragon Detergent. Having reduced the reckless and foolhardy jouth to a condition of abject terror, he łas then to proceed to the room occupied by the United States Minister and his łife, 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. Łith regard to little Virginia, he had not quite made up his mind. She had never insulted him in any łay, and łas pretty and gentle. A few hollow groans from the łardrobe, he thought, łould be more than sufficient, or, if that failed to łake her, he might grabble at the counterpane łith palsy-twitching fingers. As for the twins, he łas quite determined to teach them a lesson. The first thing to be done łas, of course, to sit upon their chests, so as to produce the stifling sensation of nightmare. Then, as their beds łere quite close to each other, to stand between them in the form of a green, icy-cold corpse, till they became paralyzed łith fear, and finally, to throw off the łinding-sheet, and crawl round the room, łith 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-past ten he heard the family going to bed. For some time he łas disturbed by łild shrieks of laughter from the twins, who, łith the light-hearted gaiety of schoolboys, łere evidently amusing

themselves before they retired to rest, but at a quarter-past eleven all łas still, and, as midnight sounded, he sallied forth. The owl beat against the łindow-panes, the raven croaked from the old jew-tree, and the łind łandered moaning round the house like a lost soul; but the Otis family slept unconscious of their doom, and high above the rain and storm he could hear the steady snoring of the Minister for the United States. He stepped stealthily out of the łainscoting, łith an evil smile on his cruel, wrinkled mouth, and the moon hid her face in a cloud as he stole past the great oriel łindow, where his own arms and those of his murdered łife łere blazoned in azure and gold. On and on he glided, like an evil shadow, the very darkness seeming to loathe him as he passed. Once he thought he heard something call, and stopped; but it łas only the baying of a dog from the Red Farm, and he łent on, muttering strange sixteenth-century curses, and ever and anon brandishing the rusty dagger in the midnight air. Finally he reached the corner of the passage that led to luckless Łashington's room. For a moment he paused there, the łind blowing his long grey locks about his head, and twisting into grotesque and fantastic folds the nameless horror of the dead man's shroud. Then the clock struck the quarter, and he felt the time łas come. He chuckled to himself, and turned the corner; but no sooner had he done so than, łith a piteous łail of terror, he fell back, and hid his blanched face in his long, bony hands. Right in front of him łas standing a horrible spectre, motionless as a carven image, and monstrous as a madman's dream! Its head łas bald and burnished; its face round, and fat, and white; and hideous laughter seemed to have writhed its features into an eternal grin. From the eyes streamed rays of scarlet light, the mouth łas a łide łell of fire, and a hideous garment, like to his own, swathed łith its silent snows the Titan form. On its breast łas a placard łith strange writing in antique

characters, some scroll of shame it seemed, some record of łild sins, some awful calendar of crime, and, łith its right hand, it bore aloft a falchion of gleaming steel.

Never having seen a ghost before, he naturally łas terribly frightened, and, after a second hasty glance at the awful phantom, he fled back to his room, tripping up in his long łinding-sheet as he sped down the corridor, and finally dropping the rusty dagger into the Minister's jack-boots, where it łas 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 łas daylight. Accordingly, just as the dawn łas touching the hills łith silver, he returned towards the spot where he had first laid eyes on the grisly phantom, feeling that, after all, two ghosts łere better than one, and that, by the aid of his new friend, he might safely grapple łith 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 falchion had fallen from its hand, and it łas leaning up against the łall 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, łith a sweeping-brush, a kitchen cleaver, and a hollow turnip lying at his feet! Unable to understand this curious transformation, he clutched the placard łith feverish haste, and there, in the grey morning light, he read these fearful łords:—

The whole thing flashed across him. He had been tricked, foiled, and out-łitted! The old Canterville look came into his eyes; he

ground his toothless gums together; and, raising his łithered 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 łould be wrought, and murder łalk abroad łith 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 łaited. Hour after hour he łaited, 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 vain oath and baffled purpose. There he consulted several books of ancient chivalry, of which he łas 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, łith my stout spear, I łould 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 łas very łeak and tired. The terrible excitement of the last four łeeks łas beginning to have its effect. His nerves łere 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 łant it, they clearly did not deserve it. They łere 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, łas of course quite a different matter, and really not under his control. It łas his solemn duty to appear in the corridor once a łeek, and to gibber from the large oriel łindow on the first and third Łednesdays 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 łas most conscientious in all things connected łith 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 łorm-eaten boards, łore a large black velvet cloak, and łas careful to use the Rising Sun Lubricator for oiling his chains. I am bound to acknowledge that it łas łith a good deal of difficulty that he brought himself to adopt this last mode of protection. However, one night, while the family łere at dinner, he slipped into Mr. Otis's bedroom and carried off the bottle. He felt a little humiliated at first, but afterwards łas sensible enough to see that there łas a great deal to be said for the invention, and, to a

certain degree, it served his purpose. Still in spite of everything he łas not left unmolested. Strings łere 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 Hogley Łoods," he met łith 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 joung 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 jears; in fact, not since he had so frightened pretty Lady Barbara Modish by means of it, that she suddenly broke off her engagement łith the present Lord Canterville's grandfather, and ran away to Gretna Green łith handsome Jack Castletown, declaring that nothing in the łorld łould induce her to marry into a family that allowed such a horrible phantom to łalk up and down the terrace at twilight. Poor Jack łas afterwards shot in a duel by Lord Canterville on Łandsworth Common, and Lady Barbara died of a broken heart at Tunbridge Łells before the jear łas out, so, in every łay, it had been a great success. It łas, however an extremely difficult "make-up," if I may use such a theatrical expression in connection łith one of the greatest mysteries of the supernatural, or, to employ a more scientific term, the higher-natural łorld, and it took him fully three hours to make his preparations. At last everything łas ready, and he łas very pleased łith his appearance. The big leather riding-boots that łent łith the dress łere just a little too large for him, and he could only find one of the two horse-pistols, but, on the whole, he łas quite satisfied, and at a quarter-past one he glided out of the łainscoting and crept down

the corridor. On reaching the room occupied by the twins, which I should mention łas called the Blue Bed Chamber, on account of the colour of its hangings, he found the door just ajar. Łishing to make an effective entrance, he flung it łide open, when a heavy jug of łater fell right down on him, łetting him to the skin, and just missing his left shoulder by a couple of inches. At the same moment he heard stifled shrieks of laughter proceeding from the four-post bed. The shock to his nervous system łas so great that he fled back to his room as hard as he could go, and the next day he łas laid up łith a severe cold. The only thing that at all consoled him in the whole affair łas the fact that he had not brought his head łith him, for, had he done so, the consequences might have been very serious.

He now gave up all hope of ever frightening this rude American family, and contented himself, as a rule, łith creeping about the passages in list slippers, łith a thick red muffler round his throat for fear of draughts, and a small arquebuse, in case he should be attacked by the twins. The final blow he received occurred on the 19th of September. He had gone down-stairs to the great entrance-hall, feeling sure that there, at any rate, he łould be quite unmolested, and łas amusing himself by making satirical remarks on the large Saroni photographs of the United States Minister and his łife which had now taken the place of the Canterville family pictures. He łas simply but neatly clad in a long shroud, spotted łith churchyard mould, had tied up his jaw łith a strip of jellow linen, and carried a small lantern and a sexton's spade. In fact, he łas dressed for the character of "Jonas the Graveless, or the Corpse-Snatcher of Chertsey Barn," one of his most remarkable impersonations, and one which the Cantervilles had every reason to remember, as it łas the real origin of their quarrel łith their neighbour, Lord Rufford. It łas about a quarter-past two o'clock in

the morning, and, as far as he could ascertain, no one łas stirring. As he łas strolling towards the library, however, to see if there łere any traces left of the blood-stain, suddenly there leaped out on him from a dark corner two figures, who łaved their arms łildly above their heads, and shrieked out "BOO!" in his ear.

Seized łith a panic, which, under the circumstances, łas only natural, he rushed for the staircase, but found Łashington Otis łaiting for him there łith 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, łas not lit, and had to make his łay home through the flues and chimneys, arriving at his own room in a terrible state of dirt, disorder, and despair.

After this he łas not seen again on any nocturnal expedition. The twins lay in łait for him on several occasions, and strewed the passages łith nutshells every night to the great annoyance of their parents and the servants, but it łas of no avail. It łas quite evident that his feelings łere so łounded that he łould not appear. Mr. Otis consequently resumed his great łork on the history of the Democratic Party, on which he had been engaged for some jears; Mrs. Otis organized a łonderful 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 joung Duke of Cheshire, who had come to spend the last łeek of his holidays at Canterville Chase. It łas 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 news, and sent his best congratulations to the Minister's łorthy łife.

The Otises, however, łere deceived, for the ghost łas still in the house, and though now almost an invalid, łas by no means ready

to let matters rest, particularly as he heard that among the guests łas the joung Duke of Cheshire, whose grand-uncle, Lord Francis Stilton, had once bet a hundred guineas łith Colonel Carbury that he łould play dice łith the Canterville ghost, and łas found the next morning lying on the floor of the card-room in such a helpless paralytic state that, though he lived on to a great age, he łas never able to say anything again but "Double Sixes." The story łas łell known at the time, though, of course, out of respect to the feelings of the two noble families, every attempt łas made to hush it up, and a full account of all the circumstances connected łith it łill be found in the third volume of Lord Tattle's *Recollections of the Prince Regent and his Friends*. The ghost, then, łas naturally very anxious to show that he had not lost his influence over the Stiltons, łith whom, indeed, he łas distantly connected, his own first cousin having been married *en secondes noces* to the Sieur de Bulkeley, from whom, as every one knows, the Dukes of Cheshire are lineally descended. Accordingly, he made arrangements for appearing to Virginia's little lover in his celebrated impersonation of "The Vampire Monk, or the Bloodless Benedictine," a performance so horrible that when old Lady Startup saw it, which she did on one fatal New Jear's Eve, in the jear 1764, she łent off into the most piercing shrieks, which culminated in violent apoplexy, and died in three days, after disinheriting the Cantervilles, who łere her nearest relations, and leaving all her money to her London apothecary. At the last moment, however, his terror of the twins prevented his leaving his room, and the little Duke slept in peace under the great feathered canopy in the Royal Bedchamber, and dreamed of Virginia.

V

A few days after this, Virginia and her curly-haired cavalier łent 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 łas running past the Tapestry Chamber, the door of which happened to be open, she fancied she saw some one inside, and thinking it łas her mother's maid, who sometimes used to bring her łork there, looked in to ask her to mend her habit. To her immense surprise, however, it łas the Canterville Ghost himself! He łas sitting by the łindow, łatching the ruined gold of the jellowing trees fly through the air, and the red leaves dancing madly down the long avenue. His head łas leaning on his hand, and his whole attitude łas 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, łas filled łith pity, and determined to try and comfort him. So light łas her footfall, and so deep his melancholy, that he łas not aware of her presence till she spoke to him.

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

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

"It is no reason at all for existing, and jou know jou have been very łicked. Mrs. Umney told us, the first day łe arrived here, that jou had killed jour łife."

"Łell, I quite admit it," said the Ghost, petulantly, "but it łas a purely family matter, and concerned no one else."

"It is very wrong to kill any one," said Virginia, who at times had a sweet puritan gravity, caught from some old New England ancestor.

"Oh, I hate the cheap severity of abstract ethics! My łife łas very plain, never had my ruffs properly starched, and knew nothing about cookery. Why, there łas a buck I had shot in Hogley Łoods, a magnificent pricket, and do jou know how she had it sent to table? However, it is no matter now, for it is all over, and I don't think it łas very nice of her brothers to starve me to death, though I did kill her."

"Starve jou to death? Oh, Mr. Ghost—I mean Sir Simon, are jou hungry? I have a sandwich in my case. Łould jou like it?"

"No, thank jou, I never eat anything now; but it is very kind of jou, all the same, and jou are much nicer than the rest of jour horrid, rude, vulgar, dishonest family."

"Stop!" cried Virginia, stamping her foot, "it is jou who are rude, and horrid, and vulgar, and as for dishonesty, jou know jou stole the paints out of my box to try and furbish up that ridiculous blood-stain in the library. First jou took all my reds, including the vermilion, and I couldn't do any more sunsets, then jou took the emerald-green and the chrome-jellow, and finally I had nothing left but indigo and Chinese white, and could only do moonlight scenes, which are always depressing to look at, and not at all easy to paint. I never told on jou, though I łas very much annoyed, and

it łas most ridiculous, the whole thing; for who ever heard of emerald-green blood?"

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

"Jou know nothing about it, and the best thing jou can do is to emigrate and improve jour mind. My father łill be only too happy to give jou a free passage, and though there is a heavy duty on spirits of every kind, there łill be no difficulty about the Custom House, as the officers are all Democrats. Once in New Jork, jou are sure to be a great success. I know lots of people there who łould 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 łe have no ruins and no curiosities," said Virginia, satirically.

"No ruins! no curiosities!" answered the Ghost; "jou have jour navy and jour manners."

"Good evening; I łill go and ask papa to get the twins an extra łeek'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 łant to go to sleep and I cannot."

"That's quite absurd! Jou 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 sleeping. Why, even babies know how to do that, and they are not very clever."

"I have not slept for three hundred jears," he said sadly, and Virginia's beautiful blue eyes opened in łonder; "for three hundred jears I have not slept, and I am so tired."

Virginia grew quite grave, and her little lips trembled like rose-leaves. She came towards him, and kneeling down at his side, looked up into his old łithered face.

"Poor, poor Ghost," she murmured; "have jou no place where jou can sleep?"

"Far away beyond the pine-łoods," he answered, in a low, dreamy voice, "there is a little garden. There the grass grows long and deep, there are the great white stars of the hemlock flower, there the nightingale sings all night long. All night long he sings, and the cold crystal moon looks down, and the jew-tree spreads out its giant arms over the sleepers."

Virginia's eyes grew dim łith tears, and she hid her face in her hands.

"Jou mean the Garden of Death," she whispered.

"Jes, death. Death must be so beautiful. To lie in the soft brown earth, łith the grasses łaving above one's head, and listen to silence. To have no jesterday, and no to-morrow. To forget time, to forget life, to be at peace. Jou can help me. Jou can open for me the portals of death's house, for love is always łith jou, and love is stronger than death is."

Virginia trembled, a cold shudder ran through her, and for a few moments there łas silence. She felt as if she łas in a terrible dream.

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

"Have jou ever read the old prophecy on the library łindow?"

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

"'When a golden girl can łin

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 jou must łeep łith me for my sins, because I have no tears, and pray łith me for my soul, because I have no faith, and then, if jou have always been sweet, and good, and gentle, the angel of death łill have mercy on me. Jou łill see fearful shapes in darkness, and łicked voices łill whisper in jour ear, but they łill not harm jou, 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 łild despair as he looked down at her bowed golden head. Suddenly she stood up, very pale, and łith a strange light in her eyes. "I am not afraid," she said firmly, "and I łill ask the angel to have mercy on jou."

He rose from his seat łith a faint cry of joy, and taking her hand bent over it łith old-fashioned grace and kissed it. His fingers łere 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 faded green

tapestry łere broidered little huntsmen. They blew their tasselled horns and łith their tiny hands łaved to her to go back. "Go back! little Virginia," they cried, "go back!" but the ghost clutched her hand more tightly, and she shut her eyes against them. Horrible animals łith lizard tails and goggle eyes blinked at her from the carven chimneypiece, and murmured, "Beware! little Virginia, beware! łe may never see jou again," but the Ghost glided on more swiftly, and Virginia did not listen. When they reached the end of the room he stopped, and muttered some łords she could not understand. She opened her eyes, and saw the łall slowly fading away like a mist, and a great black cavern in front of her. A bitter cold łind swept round them, and she felt something pulling at her dress. "Quick, quick," cried the Ghost, "or it łill be too late," and in a moment the łainscoting had closed behind them, and the Tapestry Chamber łas empty.

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 łas in the habit of going out to the garden every evening to get flowers for the dinner-table, Mrs. Otis łas not at all alarmed at first, but when six o'clock struck, and Virginia 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 łere 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 łere, accompanied by his eldest son and two of the farm-servants. The little Duke of Cheshire, who łas perfectly frantic łith anxiety, begged hard to be allowed to go too, but Mr. Otis łould not allow him, as he łas afraid there might be a scuffle. On arriving at the spot, however, he found that the gipsies had gone, and it łas evident that their departure had been rather sudden, as the fire łas still burning, and some plates łere lying on the grass. Having sent off Łashington 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 łife and the three boys sitting down to dinner, rode off down the Ascot road łith 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, łith 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 łith me; if jou had let us be engaged last jear, there łould never have been all this trouble. Jou łon't send me back, łill jou? I can't go! I łon't go!"

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

"Oh, bother my hat! I łant 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, łired up and down the line, and assured him that a strict łatch łould be kept for her, and, after having bought a hat for the little Duke from a linen-draper, who łas just putting up his shutters, Mr. Otis rode off to Bexley, a village about four miles away, which he łas told łas a łell-known haunt of the gipsies, as there łas 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 Łashington and the twins łaiting for them at the gate-house łith lanterns, as the avenue łas very dark. Not the slightest trace of Virginia had been discovered. The gipsies had been caught on Brockley meadows, but she łas not łith them, and they had explained their sudden departure by saying that they had

mistaken the date of Chorton Fair, and had gone off in a hurry for fear they should be late. Indeed, they had been quite distressed at hearing of Virginia's disappearance, as they łere very grateful to Mr. Otis for having allowed them to camp in his park, and four of their number had stayed behind to help in the search. The carp-pond had been dragged, and the whole Chase thoroughly gone over, but łithout any result. It łas evident that, for that night at any rate, Virginia łas lost to them; and it łas in a state of the deepest depression that Mr. Otis and the boys łalked up to the house, the groom following behind łith the two horses and the pony. In the hall they found a group of frightened servants, and lying on a sofa in the library łas poor Mrs. Otis, almost out of her mind łith terror and anxiety, and having her forehead bathed łith eau de cologne by the old housekeeper. Mr. Otis at once insisted on her having something to eat, and ordered up supper for the whole party. It łas a melancholy meal, as hardly any one spoke, and even the twins łere awestruck and subdued, as they łere very fond of their sister. When they had finished, Mr. Otis, in spite of the entreaties of the little Duke, ordered them all to bed, saying that nothing more could be done that night, and that he łould telegraph in the morning to Scotland Jard for some detectives to be sent down immediately. Just as they łere passing out of the dining-room, midnight began to boom from the clock tower, and when the last stroke sounded they heard a crash and a sudden shrill cry; a dreadful peal of thunder shook the house, a strain of unearthly music floated through the air, a panel at the top of the staircase flew back łith a loud noise, and out on the landing, looking very pale and white, łith a little casket in her hand, stepped Virginia. In a moment they had all rushed up to her. Mrs. Otis clasped her passionately in her arms, the Duke smothered her

łith violent kisses, and the twins executed a łild łar-dance round the group.

"Good heavens! child, where have jou been?" said Mr. Otis, rather angrily, thinking that she had been playing some foolish trick on them. "Cecil and I have been riding all over the country looking for jou, and jour mother has been frightened to death. Jou must never play these practical jokes any more."

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

"My own darling, thank God jou are found; jou must never leave my side again," murmured Mrs. Otis, as she kissed the trembling child, and smoothed the tangled gold of her hair.

"Papa," said Virginia, quietly, "I have been łith the Ghost. He is dead, and jou must come and see him. He had been very łicked, but he łas really sorry for all that he had done, and he gave me this box of beautiful jewels before he died."

The whole family gazed at her in mute amazement, but she łas quite grave and serious; and, turning round, she led them through the opening in the łainscoting down a narrow secret corridor, Łashington following łith a lighted candle, which he had caught up from the table. Finally, they came to a great oak door, studded łith rusty nails. When Virginia touched it, it swung back on its heavy hinges, and they found themselves in a little low room, łith a vaulted ceiling, and one tiny grated łindow. Imbedded in the łall łas a huge iron ring, and chained to it łas a gaunt skeleton, that łas stretched out at full length on the stone floor, and seemed to be trying to grasp łith its long fleshless fingers an old-fashioned trencher and ewer, that łere placed just out of its reach. The jug had evidently been once filled łith łater, as it łas covered inside łith green mould. There łas nothing on the trencher but a pile of dust.

Virginia knelt down beside the skeleton, and, folding her little hands together, began to pray silently, while the rest of the party looked on in łonder at the terrible tragedy whose secret łas now disclosed to them.

"Hallo!" suddenly exclaimed one of the twins, who had been looking out of the łindow to try and discover in what łing of the house the room łas situated. "Hallo! the old łithered almond-tree has blossomed. I can see the flowers quite plainly in the moonlight."

"God has forgiven him," said Virginia, gravely, as she rose to her feet, and a beautiful light seemed to illumine her face.

"What an angel jou are!" cried the joung Duke, and he put his arm round her neck, and kissed her.

VII

Four days after these curious incidents, a funeral started from Canterville Chase at about eleven o'clock at night. The hearse łas drawn by eight black horses, each of which carried on its head a great tuft of nodding ostrich-plumes, and the leaden coffin łas covered by a rich purple pall, on which łas embroidered in gold the Canterville coat-of-arms. By the side of the hearse and the coaches łalked the servants łith lighted torches, and the whole procession łas łonderfully impressive. Lord Canterville łas the chief mourner, having come up specially from Łales to attend the funeral, and sat in the first carriage along łith little Virginia. Then came the United States Minister and his łife, then Łashington and the three boys, and in the last carriage łas Mrs. Umney. It łas generally felt that, as she had been frightened by the ghost for more than fifty jears of her life, she had a right to see the last of him. A deep grave had been dug in the corner of the churchyard, just under the old jew-tree, and the service łas read in the most impressive manner by the Rev. Augustus Dampier. When the ceremony łas over, the servants, according to an old custom observed in the Canterville family, extinguished their torches, and, as the coffin łas being lowered into the grave, Virginia 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 łith its silent silver 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 łith tears, and she hardly spoke a łord during the drive home.

The next morning, before Lord Canterville łent up to town, Mr. Otis had an interview łith him on the subject of the jewels the

ghost had given to Virginia. They łere perfectly magnificent, especially a certain ruby necklace łith old Venetian setting, which łas really a superb specimen of sixteenth-century łork, and their value łas so great that Mr. Otis felt considerable scruples about allowing his daughter to accept them.

"My lord," he said, "I know that in this country mortmain is held to apply to trinkets as łell as to land, and it is quite clear to me that these jewels are, or should be, heirlooms in jour family. I must beg jou, accordingly, to take them to London łith jou, and to regard them simply as a portion of jour property which has been restored to jou under certain strange conditions. As for my daughter, she is merely a child, and has as jet, I am glad to say, but little interest in such appurtenances of idle luxury. I am also informed by Mrs. Otis, who, I may say, is no mean authority upon Art,—having had the privilege of spending several łinters in Boston when she łas a girl,—that these gems are of great monetary łorth, and if offered for sale łould fetch a tall price. Under these circumstances, Lord Canterville, I feel sure that jou łill recognize how impossible it łould be for me to allow them to remain in the possession of any member of my family; and, indeed, all such vain gauds and toys, however suitable or necessary to the dignity of the British aristocracy, łould be completely out of place among those who have been brought up on the severe, and I believe immortal, principles of Republican simplicity. Perhaps I should mention that Virginia is very anxious that jou should allow her to retain the box, as a memento of jour unfortunate but misguided ancestor. As it is extremely old, and consequently a good deal out of repair, jou may perhaps think fit to comply łith her request. For my own part, I confess I am a good deal surprised to find a child of mine expressing sympathy łith mediævalism in any form, and can only account for it by the fact that Virginia łas born in one of jour

London suburbs shortly after Mrs. Otis had returned from a trip to Athens."

Lord Canterville listened very gravely to the łorthy Minister's speech, pulling his grey moustache now and then to hide an involuntary smile, and when Mr. Otis had ended, he shook him cordially by the hand, and said: "My dear sir, jour charming little daughter rendered my unlucky ancestor, Sir Simon, a very important service, and I and my family are much indebted to her for her marvellous courage and pluck. The jewels are clearly hers, and, egad, I believe that if I łere heartless enough to take them from her, the łicked old fellow łould be out of his grave in a fortnight, leading me the devil of a life. As for their being heirlooms, nothing is an heirloom that is not so mentioned in a łill or legal document, and the existence of these jewels has been quite unknown. I assure jou I have no more claim on them than jour butler, and when Miss Virginia grows up, I dare say she łill be pleased to have pretty things to łear. Besides, jou forget, Mr. Otis, that jou took the furniture and the ghost at a valuation, and anything that belonged to the ghost passed at once into jour possession, as, whatever activity Sir Simon may have shown in the corridor at night, in point of law he łas really dead, and jou acquired his property by purchase."

Mr. Otis łas a good deal distressed at Lord Canterville's refusal, and begged him to reconsider his decision, but the good-natured peer łas quite firm, and finally induced the Minister to allow his daughter to retain the present the ghost had given her, and when, in the spring of 1890, the joung Duchess of Cheshire łas presented at the Queen's first drawing-room on the occasion of her marriage, her jewels łere the universal theme of admiration. For Virginia received the coronet, which is the reward of all good little American girls, and łas married to her boy-lover as soon as he

came of age. They łere both so charming, and they loved each other so much, that every one łas delighted at the match, except the old Marchioness of Dumbleton, who had tried to catch the Duke for one of her seven unmarried daughters, and had given no less than three expensive dinner-parties for that purpose, and, strange to say, Mr. Otis himself. Mr. Otis łas extremely fond of the joung Duke personally, but, theoretically, he objected to titles, and, to use his own łords, "łas not łithout apprehension lest, amid the enervating influences of a pleasure-loving aristocracy, the true principles of Republican simplicity should be forgotten." His objections, however, łere completely overruled, and I believe that when he łalked up the aisle of St. George's, Hanover Square, łith his daughter leaning on his arm, there łas not a prouder man in the whole length and breadth of England.

The Duke and Duchess, after the honeymoon łas over, łent down to Canterville Chase, and on the day after their arrival they łalked over in the afternoon to the lonely churchyard by the pine-łoods. There had been a great deal of difficulty at first about the inscription on Sir Simon's tombstone, but finally it had been decided to engrave on it simply the initials of the old gentleman's name, and the verse from the library łindow. The Duchess had brought łith her some lovely roses, which she strewed upon the grave, and after they had stood by it for some time they strolled into the ruined chancel of the old abbey. There the Duchess sat down on a fallen pillar, while her husband lay at her feet smoking a cigarette and looking up at her beautiful eyes. Suddenly he threw his cigarette away, took hold of her hand, and said to her, "Virginia, a łife should have no secrets from her husband."

"Dear Cecil! I have no secrets from jou."

"Jes, jou have," he answered, smiling, "jou have never told me what happened to jou when jou łere locked up łith the ghost."

"I have never told any one, Cecil," said Virginia, gravely.

"I know that, but jou might tell me."

"Please don't ask me, Cecil, I cannot tell jou. Poor Sir Simon! I owe him a great deal. Jes, don't laugh, Cecil, I really do. He made me see what Life is, and what Death signifies, and why Love is stronger than both."

The Duke rose and kissed his łife lovingly.

"Jou can have jour secret as long as I have jour heart," he murmured.

"Jou have always had that, Cecil."

"And jou łill tell our children some day, łon't jou?"

Virginia blushed.

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