

The Laying of the Ghost.

In riding through the beautiful hills of northern New Jersey you might ^{perhaps} pass a certain pretty winding stream now right at its side and now watching it far below you in the valley and then you might leave it and turn in the direction of a small town. Just before reaching the centre of this town you would come to a fine old place which would not fail to attract your notice for through the trees you would catch a glimpse of the house behind.

It was on this road that about forty years ago a tall slender young man was walking from the station. It was about dusk on a bleak November afternoon.

A sinister gloom pervaded the atmosphere, the sky was cold and glowering, the whole landscape an indefinite blue gray, the dead colored trees bereft of their leaves thrashing themselves upon your notice spreading out their per awny, knotty arms and shaking their stiff fingers and the ever quiet standing stolid and

dark and threatening.

As the traveler walked past the village
 close he scarcely noticed the group of country
 folk gathered about ~~or that there must~~ ^{the American} ~~be some thing~~ ^{causing unusual excitement} ~~causing unusual interest~~
 among them. Several wagons stood in
 front of the low, narrow steps, the farmers
 talking to their neighbors while they waited
 for their wives who were gossiping with
 a group of women. They are noticed Lang-
 don as he went by.

"He's gain' toward the Old Castle" said one,
 "what a fine boy he do look to be."

"And it's all full but that room I hear.
 Like's not they'll put him there."

"He don't know I suppose" said another.

"He looks so young, I've half a notion
 to let him," suggested a motherly looking
 woman, at the same time pulling her
 shawl over her head, "but then what
 good would it do? and it's best not to
 scare them I always say."

And so Langdon went on, observed
 here - not observing, for his mind was
 intent on other things. He was a young

^{house}
 reports did, the large city journal with which he was connected, had sent him there "on an assignment". They were publishing a series of articles about interesting old houses of the country and Langdon felt himself particularly fortunate to be sent to write up the old castle for it was a place of unusual interest.

Inquiring to devise some striking headline for the city daily, Langdon walked rapidly on. He pulled his coat around him and began to whistle to keep himself company. As he passed the lodge at the great gate and entered the woods leading up to the old mansion. The woods were dark and gloomy and the raw air seemed to pierce him through. He noticed the ancient grandeur of the place and tried to recollect what he had heard of its history. It was a large stone house built about 1725 by the second son of an English nobleman. In those days he had kept up a great deal of style, had given many banquets, had

hunted with his friends on his extensive grounds and in short had lived a gay life. Many legends gathered around the old place and the one about a certain haunted chamber was always listened to by the children with open mouths and some of the older folks too perhaps. The door of this room, which was in the back of the house, in the servants' quarters, had a mysterious way of opening and shutting by itself and in early days a dreadful tragedy had occurred there. The room after that had been supposed to be haunted and for a great many years had been closed up. The present occupant ^{of the house} was a descendent of the original owner but the estate was all she possessed and on account of her reduced circumstances and because she had a large family dependent upon her she had been obliged to use it for their support, so that now the place was a kind of family hotel. But even then the haunted chamber had not been opened until very shortly before this

time. But now thoroughly cleaned, wired, and renovated it had been put in nice order and a hard coal stove, a new thing in those days, bought to make it especially attractive. It may seem strange although the simple folk about thought it entirely in keeping, that it had scarcely been used when a stranger who was given that room was found dead in the morning. "Just what you might expect from using a haunted room" said the neighbors. That was the cause, everyone was sure of it, the ghost of its first victim probably, some unclean and unwarthy power certainly and the land lady, not a superstitious woman herself gave up trying to use it.

Langdon received by the maternal land lady ^{himself} was told that the rooms were free as the folks at the store had said ^{but} when he insisted that he must have some place to sleep, that he couldn't get back to the city before morning and that he would be thankful for a cot or

hesitatingly

any thing she could fix up, she said, there was one back room she supposed he might have. He knew of the recent death and suspected from her manner that this was the place where it occurred and was glad of it.

After supper and an hour chat with the family, the young doctor, lawyer, and the ^{minor} cream of intelligence of this little village, sitting before the large old open fire place with the log crackling and brightening the brass and pions he retired to his room. As he went ^{out} one gentleman remarked, "I'm not superstitious at all, but I'd just as big not sleep in a haunted room a blustering night like this; and by the way I need do you realize it was just a week ago that a stranger came ~~into~~ ~~had~~ ~~that~~ ~~room~~ ~~and~~ ~~was~~ ~~taken~~ ~~out~~ ~~dead~~ ~~from~~ ~~that~~ ~~room~~?"

"Yes, so it was, and just such a night as this too. Wonder what he comes here for any way. Looks like a bright young fellow."

"Yes, but we'll see how bright he'll

be after a night in that room."

The room looked neat and comfortable. The new stove was lighted and the fire burning briskly. He sat down with a magazine and book beside him and paper and pen for he wished to put down some interesting facts he had gathered from the landlady. For a while he wrote busily, then fell to thinking. "I don't see any place for a glass to rise in the wall, or for the floor to drop through, or for the ghosts and murders to come through. I wish a couple of ghosts would appear. I'd just like a chat with them now. Ridiculous, this being afraid of ghosts. I want when those boys came on me in the grave yard that time I was practicing that declamation I got the prize for and they looked as much like ghosts in those sheets as any real ones ever did, I'll wager. It's not true for them yet though, it's only about nine." Then he took up a book to read awhile. He read on deeply

interested not noticing when the house
 became perfectly quiet and the wind
 could be heard howling outside and
 the window was shaking and groaning
~~It got to be~~ ten o'clock ^{and} eleven, twelve
 one - Surely it was time for the ghosts
 to appear but Langdon had forgotten
 all about them. He was deep in his
 slong when suddenly he seemed to feel
 some ~~unseen~~ power upon him but
 there were no white shelled figures to
 deal with. A sort of drowsiness came
 over him which he could not shake
 off and yet it was not sleepiness. He
 struggled to free himself, to rouse him-
 self, but some one with out bodily
 form was holding him down, he
 felt it and he thought a hand was
 clutching his throat. At last with
 a start and by main force he rose
 from his chair. A strange force struck
 him down. ~~and~~ ^{with out stretched hands the young man's arms} he fell against the
 window. Heavily. It was ten minutes
 before he recovered consciousness and
 when he did he felt his hand to his

head and get some thing dripping on
 it and by the flickering light he saw
 that he had broken the window pane
 and the fresh air and rain beating upon
 his face had restored him. He looked
 around for the cause of all this and
 his quick brain at once took it in.
 "Strange I didn't see that place was throw-
 ing off gas in that deadly fashion. That's
 what killed my predecessor of a week ago
 and would have killed me but for my
 lucky fall. Well I guess I've got a cut-
~~put for a story besides my article and~~
~~my little pun it has increased by its~~
~~own weight - I hope." But the ghost~~
 of the haunted chamber was for ever laid
 for ghosts can not live in the presence of
 science.

Ellen Swanton Belden.
 March the fourth
 nineteen hundred and one.

"Well I
 guess the
 Editor's
 put his
 article
 all right."