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1826.

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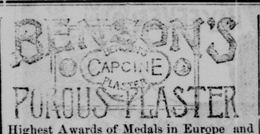

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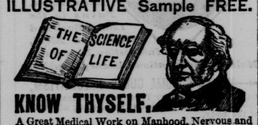

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The Passing Year.

The passing year, all gray with hours,
Ends, dull mirth, with thee;
Chilled his summer, dead his flowers,
Soon will his funeral be;
Frost shall drink up his latest breath,
And tempests rock him into death.

How he shivers! from his age
All his leaves have faded,
And his weary pilgrimage
Ends at last, unaided
By his own sun that drives its ray,
To leave him dark in his decay.

Bring the last December rose,
Frosted o'er with wintry snows;
Let the fading petals fall
O'er the year's funereal pall.

From the wood some oak leaves bring
That were green in early spring;
Scatter them about the bier
Of the now departing year.

Let the bells upon their wheels,
While our fond ideas veer,
Ring the solemn midnight peals,
Ling'ring for the dying year.

Hark! the peal has ceased to roll;
Silence reigns, but now a toll
Breaks upon the startled ear—
Gone forever is the year!

—Sunday American.

A MERCENARY GHOST.

L. R. Meekins in Baltimore American.

Grampton Grange is one of those manorial estates in Maryland whose history runs back, through interesting stages of the old colonial days. It is a beautiful place, located, hermit-like, in the bend of a river, a good distance from any other building, and surrounded by a large grove of veteran oaks, that stand like aged soldiers, guarding from storm and tempest the moss-covered mansion, with its big bay windows and its wide, hospitable porches. Many are the guests that this ancient house has sheltered. Beauty, and wit, and statesmanship reposed time and again under its bountiful roof, and gaiety and fashion held high carnival within its walls; but all these came and went like brilliant birds of passage marking the flight of the seasons, until the house and its occupants grew too old, and then the brilliancy and the glory forsook the place, and left their old friends friendless and their old loves helpless. It was then that the companion of decay and oblivion moved into the mansion and became the sole guest of the silent household.

The place was haunted.

Listen to the story: Centuries ago, Henry Grampton arrived in Maryland. He was one of a vessel-load of emigrants from England. He was a man of sound judgement and active enterprise, with a good eye to the prospective value of real estate. He selected for his settlement several thousand acres of excellent land, and built upon it an humble home. His crops of corn and tobacco were large and profitable, and he prospered. In the course of time he married, and his hut was enlarged into a residence that was considered, in those days of simplicity, luxurious. His children grew up to a healthy maturity, and his old age was serene and happy. When he died his open-hearted hospitality and his successful business methods were continued by his immediate descendants.

So it was through other generations.

There was noticeable, however, a tendency towards family pride that was probably to be expected from the posterity of such honorable ancestry. But as generations came this pride grew more and more pronounced. The Gramptons began to hold their heads above the more recent arrivals and refused to receive the poor emigrants from Europe on an equal social footing. The fact that the original Grampton came over among the first colonists, entitled them to a prestige which they never lost sight of. As their aristocracy grew, so did their hospitality, and they made Grampton Grange the scene of many a great dinner and many a fine ball, attended only by the first families of the country. Constantly greater became their pride, and they were known far and wide for their high-bred dignity and their patrician splendor.

Such pride, of course, was costly.

It not only required money to maintain it, but it developed among the Gramptons an indisposition to undertake manual labor. As a result the haughty descendants of emigrant Grampton took away from instead of adding to the value of the estate. And the pride, in addition to gradually consuming the land, began to affect the family by sapping its hardihood and substituting for it the sickly emaciation which every true aristocrat should possess. As years passed by the family grew smaller and smaller, until finally it dwindled down down to a solitary bachelor, who refused to marry and propagate the name. In the big house he lived alone and undertook the momentous task of maintaining the combined pride of his distinguished ancestors.

In this he spurned assistance.

No companion would he have, because none of the common herd were good enough to deserve his aristocratic favor. So he lived in royal solitude, and when he wanted revenue he summoned his lawyer from the county seat and had a new mortgage drawn.

That the people of the neighborhood talked and gossiped about a man living such a secluded life was to be expected, but what cared he for the vulgar curiosity?

He was a Grampton, and as a Grampton he was above and beyond the gross plebeian affairs of the work-a-day world.

But there was one power which he could not ignore, and that was death. One night he and his pride, that had grown old together, sank into a last sleep, and the Grampton family, that begun so humbly and had risen to such aristocratic eminence, faded from the face of the earth.

He had been dead two days before his body was discovered by the lawyer, who had come down to see about another mortgage. Directions for a simple funeral were found among his papers, and these were strictly carried out. Altogether, it was not such a death and such a burial as would be likely to stop the rural gossip. On the other hand, the gossip was intensified.

Vague rumors, at first only hinted at, became emphatic reports.

Foul play, mystery and crime were whispered about before the corpse had time to feel comfortable in its grave, and, as the lawyer left just after the funeral, the deserted house was looked upon with no favorable eyes.

Strange noises were rumored, and some of the more superstitious declared that they had seen flickering lights among the trees in the grove.

The people were credulous enough to believe anything, for the strange, secluded life had long before given rise to ghostly stories that lost nothing in the telling. And so the rumors gained headway, until they were known throughout the country in a very short time. The negroes refused positively to go near the place after nightfall, and many white people shunned it as they would a curse.

But where there is mystery there is always curiosity.

And it was not many days before the more venturesome of the people began to talk about paying a visit to the ghost and finding out his character and intentions.

Saturday night they congregated at the cross roads with the determination to march to Grampton Grange. There were about twenty of them—strong, well-armed and courageous.

The only thing lacking was a leader.

No one of them evinced a desire to lead an advance against a ghost. The only man in the neighborhood who had a dare-devil spirit that feared nothing and was most happy when it was in most danger was Wat Johnson, and unfortunately he had gone away.

"If Wat was only here!" sighed Farmer Adams.

"But he ain't," said Farmer Jones. "He went to the city two days ago, and he wont be back for two or three weeks."

"I move that we draw straws," suggested Adams.

At first this was received with favor, but when some of the least intrepid began to fear that they might draw the longest straw, they objected. There was another disheartening delay, and matters were becoming tedious, when a shrill small voice said:

"Gentlemen, if no one else will take the place, I'll be your leader."

Astonishment showed itself on every face.

The speaker was Hezekiah Hobson, a man who was looked upon as a natural born coward. He was small and insignificant-looking. His voice was squeaky and his form was weazened and dried up like a gum tree on sterile land. He had never shown any heroism. He did not look like a hero. He was merely a rural dealer, who picked up bargains and made money off other people's financial misfortunes.

Could there be a more improbable type for a leader?

And yet let us remember that circumstances develop great men. Napoleon in the ramparts of Paris and Grant at Vicksburg were considered commonplace until events brought forth their greatness and their genius.

So might it be with Hezekiah Hobson.

And so, indeed, it was; for, in spite of his physical insignificance, his offer was accepted with a readiness and enthusiasm that steeled his determination and raised him immeasurably in the estimation of his neighbors.

At once the advance began. The men proceeded with affected carelessness until they reached the long lane leading through the big trees to the house, and when they entered it their caution began. They advanced with light steps and beating hearts, so as to give his ghostship a surprise. All went well until they got within twenty yards of the house.

Suddenly a light appeared at the window.

And then an unearthly, terrific scream.

Some fell on their knees. Others leveled their revolvers and fired.

A mocking laugh answered the volley.

"Be steady, men!" commanded Hobson.

But they were not steady. They had retreated. Only one man held his ground.

He was Hezekiah Hobson.

With admirable courage he raised his pistol and fired a second shot.

There was another mocking laugh—another unearthly scream—a demoniacal shriek that made the leader's heart rattle in his throat.

His courage oozed out. In wild and uncontrolable dismay he fled.

He found his companious a half-mile distant, trembling at the cross-roads. He joined them, and with ill-concealed coolness said:

"Men, let's try again."

"Not for a thousand dollars," said farmer Adams.

"Not for a million," said the others.

And so the place remained—haunted, abandoned and shunned. No one would go near it. Everybody feared it and spoke of it in mysterious whispers. The strangest stories were told of the goings-on in the house and the grove. Every night the evil spirits held high carnival there.

So, when the lawyer and the auctioneer came down to sell it, in order to pay off the mortgages, nobody showed any willingness to buy. It was distant many miles from railroads, and the steamboats only passed it twice a week in the busiest season. It was only suited to a man who was willing to live down in the country, away from the immediate conveniences of modern civilization. Small wonder, then, that the auctioneer harraugued in vain upon the value and fertility of the estate.

"Gentlemen," said he, "this place is worth fully twelve thousand dollars, and it must be sold. I've got to have a bid. Start it, please. I can't talk all day. Say eight thousand—"

But no one answered. A full half hour did he address the crowd that had assembled to see if any one was brave enough to take a property encumbered by a ghost. At last he grew mad and disgusted.

"Now, for the last time, gentlemen. For the last time. I offer it once more for the last time. Do I hear a bid?"

"If nobody else will take it," said a shrill voice, "I'll give you three thousand."

"Three thousand is offered. It's a regular poor-house bid. But I must take it. Three thousand—at three—at there—do I hear more?—say four—say four—three, then at three it is—This is a shame—yet I've got to take it—at three—at three—at three—say five hundred more. Well, I've done my best—this is the third and last call—going, going, gone to Mr. Hezekiah Hobson for three thousand."

Everobody looked at Hobson and wondered at his rashness.

"Oh, the land's worth that," he said, "even if I have to burn the house down to get the ghost out."

The sale was over. The people separated. Hobson went home. That night a man crept quietly to his back door and rapped. Hobson let him in. The man winked at Hobson and he winked at the man. Then they went into the inner office. Both were laughing.

"How'd you like it?" asked Hobson.

"It was pretty lonesome," said the man.

"Well, it was a success," said Hobson.

"Glad to hear it," said the man.

"Let's see. I offered you two hundred. I did better than I expected. I'll add another fifty. Here it is."

"This ghost business pays," said the man.

And Wat Johnson and Hezekiah Hobson sat down to supper.

Hobson is now lord of Grampton Grange.

Extracts from Swedenborg on Heaven.

Published by request.

Whenever it has been granted me to be in company with angels, the things of heaven have appeared to me exactly like those in the world,—so perceptibly indeed that I was not aware but that I was in the world, and in the palace of a king there. I also conversed with them as man with man.

Since angels are men, and live in society like men on earth, therefore they have garments, habitations, and other things of a like nature, yet with this difference, that all things with them are more perfect, because they are in a more perfect state.

The garments with which the angels are clothed, like all other things, correspond; and because they correspond they really exist. The most intelligent have garments that glitter as from flame, some that shine as from light; the less intelligent have bright and white garments without splendor, and the still less intelligent have garments of different colors. But the angels of the inmost heaven are naked, because they are in innocence, and innocence corresponds to nakedness.

Since there are societies in heaven, and the angels live like men, they also have habitations, and these likewise various according to every one's state of life; magnificent for those in a state of superior dignity, and less magnificent for those in an inferior condition. But it is better to adduce the evidence of experience. Whenever I have conversed with the angels, mouth to mouth, I have been present with them in their habitations, which are exactly like the habitations on earth called houses, but more beautiful. They contain halls, inner-rooms, bed-chambers, in great numbers; courts also, and around them, gardens, shruberries, and fields. When angels live in societies their habitations are contiguous, and arranged in the form of a city, with streets, ways and public squares, exactly like the cities on our earth. I have also been permitted to walk through them and to look around on every side, and occasionally to enter the houses. This occurred in a state of full wakefulness, when my interior sight was opened. I have seen the palaces of heaven, which were magnificent beyond description. Their upper parts shone as refulgent as if of pure gold their lower parts as of precious stones; some more splendid than others, and the spendor without was equalled by the splendor within. The apartments were ornamented with decorations, which neither language nor science can adequately describe.

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