

Four incredible stories

Publication of these stories does not mean that we want more of them. It does not mean that we believe them. It does not mean that we laugh at them or at their authors. We believe that they were submitted in good faith; that their authors believe them; and that psychologists could explain them. We print them because it is justifiable, now and again, to show that A seldom knows what B thinks, or C sees, or D hears.

Uncle Roger Meets A Ghost

WHEN I was a baby my parents went to live in a small three-storied house of my grandmother's that was difficult to keep tenanted. The tenants had made complaints, but as everything in those days was vaguely blamed on "the drains," and as those were quite in order, my parents were quite satisfied and contented with their new home, and in time even their conjectures as to why the tenants had left were forgotten as they settled down to a very happy married life.

At this time I slept in a cot in my parents' room. Later when I was considered old enough to sleep alone I was put in another room on the same floor. But not for long! I began to wake my parents by screaming. It was always the same story. I would scream, one of them would rush in, and I would be sitting up in bed terrified and sobbing about "the nasty lady wif cold hands."

"Too much supper," declared Father.

"Nightmare," said Mother.

But whatever the cause the story was repeated so often that their disturbed nights went beyond a joke and it was obvious that I could not be left to sleep in that room. However, there was a small dressing room leading off it, and so my parents decided to try me in there, and there I slept without any trouble whatever until we left the house several years later.

Before our departure, however, the haunted room (as it came to be called among the family) provided plenty of material for discussion, but it was never

mentioned before friends or acquaintances. It was knowledge kept strictly in the family. At various times overnight guests complained of being woken up and in every case the story was the same—a woman had shaken them awake, and she had icy cold hands. Some complained that my mother was playing questionable jokes on them.

The Fun Began

Then came the time when a friend who was in the mercantile marine pleaded to be allowed to make his home with us during the short period he was ashore in England, as he had no relatives or close friends in Liverpool, his home port. Then the fun really began!

George might spend a whole visit ashore in peace, but at other times peace was *not* what he got, as the ghost "worked overtime." The "presence" seemed to resent his occupation of the room much more than anyone else's. From mere shaking, it progressed to pulling all the clothes off the bed, which in winter in Liverpool was no joke, and when all that failed, an icy cold hand was run down his spine! Mother offered him the use of a room on the top floor but he declined this with the assertion that he would be such and such if he would let any so-and-so ghost get the better of him and put *him* out of his own room. My parents would often hear him cry out, he would give a sudden yell and then he would curse the ghost in the best nautical style and tell it—with variations—to go back to hell where it belonged and warm its blankety blank hands. My mother more than once sat outside his door in the dark, waited until he yelled, and then rushed in with a light, but she never saw anything.

Now here is the queerest part of it all. My mother and father both together and singly often slept in that room without being disturbed.

Means of Revenge

Personally I now regard the ghost and its pranks with something like affection, because they provided me with the means of the sweetest revenge I have ever effected. It began during my grandmother's last illness when her children

were taking it in turns to watch beside her as she lay in a deep coma in one of our downstairs rooms. Mother's brother, Roger, having "stood his watch," went upstairs to take his eight-hour rest period in the ghost's room. Another brother took his turn in the sick room, and mother went to the living room to make supper. Uncle Roger was an abnormally heavy sleeper, and even more so when he was keeping irregular hours. Judge of my mother's surprise when he walked into the living room fully dressed after having been only two hours in bed. In reply to her query why he had got up without being called, he said:

"Well, I like that! You shook me enough, and pulled off the clothes, and for goodness sake warm your hands next time you call me. They were like ice."

After explanations he went back to bed, but in another room. George beamed happily and said he always knew the ghost was intelligent—he did not like Uncle Roger!

The Sequel

After grandmother's death my parents came to New Zealand. Seventeen years later, I visited England, and stayed with Uncle Roger and his family. In spite of his great scholarship, he held what to me were extremely narrow, stupid views. He was more than agnostic; he merely dismissed as untrue anything that he could not perceive with his physical senses. He never missed even half a chance to snub me, and I was thoroughly miserable. During one of the family's discussions at supper table over death being complete oblivion, they were all ridiculing my arguments for survival when my chance came and I retorted:

"Well, anyway, the ghost in our Liverpool house got *you* out of bed in the middle of the night, didn't it, Uncle Roger?"

With eyes cast down, not able to meet the gaze of his family, he sheepishly replied "Yes."

"Oh, Roger!" said his wife in a surprised, shocked voice, "And you always told me it was rats."

My cup of joy ran over.

—M.B. (Whangarei).

Whose Was The Mastiff?

ABOUT 40 years ago I was in Coromandel, fossicking for gold near the head of the Tairua River. I had as a mate a foreign sailor, a very bad, arrogant man about 50, who made two attempts to end my life, so I cleared out while the river was in flood, knowing he could not swim. I got to the store in the evening, but as there was no accommodation for lodgers, I climbed up on top of a stack of rye-straw for the night and made my way to the far end. I settled down and had not been long there when a big dog, a full grown mastiff, came suddenly and lay right up against me, trying to lick my face and doing his own toilet off and on. At last I objected and did all I could to chase him away, but gave it up.

It was a bright moonlight night, and before retiring I and the storekeeper's son, a lad of 16, has been laughing at the antics of a half-drunken Malay. He was full of "bunk" whisky—made up of methylated spirits and kerosene—and he attacked the lad with the shod heel of his boots in one hand when a big Irishman knocked him flat. So I thought it time to make myself scarce.

About 2 a.m. the dog began to growl, and sitting up I saw the Malay climbing up the chaffcutter with a knife in his teeth. The dog made one dash for him and the two rolled out of sight. In the

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