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NELLIE BLY AND THE GHOST.

Armed with Two Pistols, She Passes a Night in That Haunted House at Woodport, N. J.

THE SPOOK NOT AT HOME.

Waiting for the Appearance of the Minton Spectre and That Diaphanous Hand.

ONE MILE FROM ANY HABITATION.

Strange Antics of a Froliesome Door Laid Bare During the Vigil While the Wind Was Howling.

A HUNT IN THE GLOOMY ATTIC.

A Rather Courageous Venture by Miss Bly That Many Men Would Shrink from Undertaking.

Afraid of ghosts? Oh, no! Not I! Why, I was wildly eager to see one, and as for living in a haunted house, I just hankered for a chance.

I pooh-poohed the idea of ghosts. I laughed at those that believed in them and sneered at those that feared them. I did not hide my courageous disrespect for ghosts under a bushel. I couldn't. It was too large for a bushel, and as for what I would do in regard to ghost-searching, if opportunity offered, I had stated it all with a fearless frankness that charmed even myself.

Oh, I was brave, dreadfully brave; but that was before I spent a night alone in the haunted Minton house in New Jersey.

I remember that when the subject of spending a night alone in a ghost-ridden place was first broached to me I smiled. "I have never been afraid of anything," I said. And I thoroughly believed what I said at the time. And as for passing the night there, out in the bleak hills of New Jersey—why, I accepted the proposition joyously.

I would go out there. I would stay there alone from midnight to cock-crow—when ghosts walk—and I would demonstrate what utter nonsense all this talk of haunted houses was, and what sheer stupidity it was for women—yes, and men, too—to be scared out of their senses by a lot of rubbishy gossip over a "spook."

All that happened in a warm, highly lighted room, with a lot of people around.

Later, when I was by myself, I got to thinking very seriously over what I was about to do. I got frightened. But I hadn't the courage to say so. Anyway, it was too late to retreat, for I had made my boast and given my promise.

Now, just consider the proposition.

I was to go to Dover, N. J., and drive from there some sixteen miles, out into a wild, unsettled part of the country to a vacant house that has been much written about as haunted. This house—very old and dilapidated—stands alone, surrounded by hills and wild woods. The nearest habitation is a mile distant across fields that none but a spirit could cross, and heaven knows how far it is off by road.

Now, in this house I was to stay all night alone and watch for the spirit of a young and beautiful girl that, so legend says, was murdered there and buried in the cellar.

People who have lived in the house solemnly swear to having heard all kinds of strange and terrifying noises, and to having seen, in the darkness, a little waxen hand that beckoned them. None of them ever dared to follow.

THE GHOST'S HABITAT.

This hand would apparently open and close the cellar door, for often, when people were sitting in the kitchen with bright lights, the latch would lift and that door would open and shut, and evidently an invisible form would pass through.

This was more than human nerves could stand, and tenant after tenant, who had been attracted by the cheap rent, had to give up and move away.

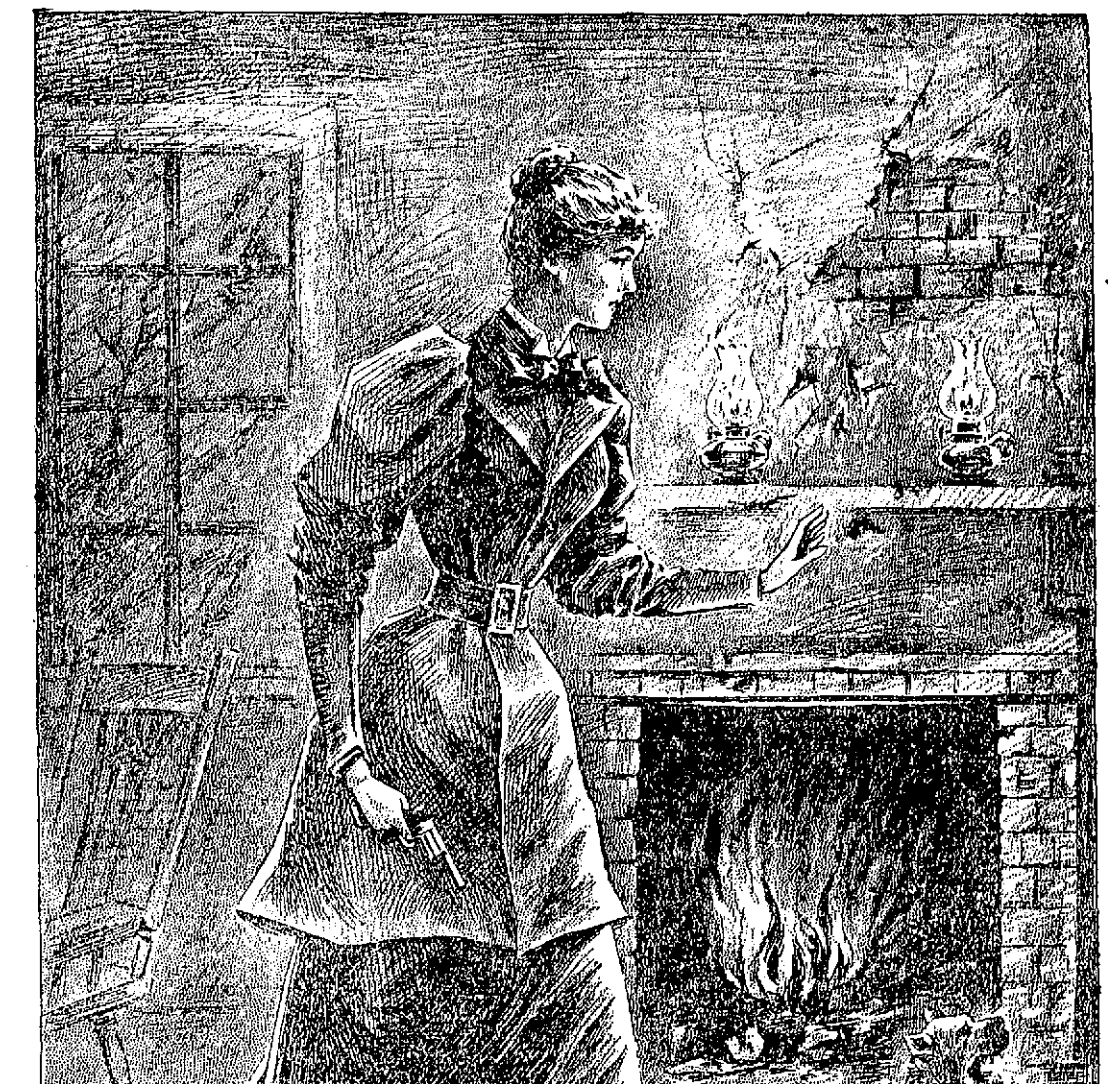
Lately the house has been given up entirely to the ghost. No one would live in it, and the story of the uncanny visitations has spread over the entire county, making the place one of horror to everybody about there.

It would be impossible to convince those who have lived in the house, and still live in the county, that they had not seen and heard the ghost. One family declares that the spirit of the dead girl was seen in the barn milking a spook cow with one horn.

Now, it was to this desolate, wild place that I had promised to go and spend a night alone—to watch for the ghost, to investigate every strange noise I heard, and, if I saw anything, fancied or real, to speak to it.

Had I the courage to do it?

I was sincere at first, when I said I had, but the more I thought about the thing the more I dwelt on my lonely, unprotected position, and the less courage [illegible] I was not afraid of [illegible]



"I ROSE TO MY FEET AND, TAKING A REVOLVER IN MY HAND, WALKED SIDEWAYS AND CAUTIOUSLY TO THE WINDOW."

afraid of meeting tramps, or counterfeiters, or moonshiners.

Not one in a thousand, and I knew it. I pictured the possibilities in all horrible aspects. I could see myself sitting in that empty house, knowing that screams would have to be louder than a fog-horn to reach the nearest neighbor, and then suddenly finding myself surrounded by a half dozen burly men with shaggy beards and rough clothes.

Where would be my courage then? What could I say or do to help myself? Nothing!

Was it worth it—to prove that there were no ghosts?

Then, of course, there was a chance that I would not encounter living beings and would have nothing to do but wait for the ghost.

I was not afraid of ghosts, at least I thought so. I did not believe in them, I say again, but I did fear my imagination, my nerves. I feared myself.

Supposing in the dead of the night I heard cries of some unearthly sort, would they not, in spite of my disbelief, frighten me?

Suppose I should look into the dark hall and see something white and transparent moving towards me?

I could speak to it; I could shoot. But supposing nothing stopped it and it came on and on, nearer and nearer, in spite of my disbelief. Would not my nerves give way and would I not go mad with terror?

My very fancies of what might happen made me tremble like an ague patient. I went back to the office to hedge.

I wasn't very honest about it. I was ashamed to confess my fears, but oh! I did long for sympathy or a change of opinion.

I was told frankly if I feared to do the thing merely to refuse.

But naturally I protested that I wasn't afraid—of ghosts.

I suggested tramps. I asked if it wouldn't be advisable to take a revolver along. I was told that there would be no harm in that if I knew how to use one.

HER COURAGE OOZES.

They were all there who heard my first boast that I wasn't afraid. Each one of them looked as if they wanted to say "Methinks the lady doth protest too much." Once again I said with all the courage I could muster: "I will go." There was nothing else to do.

So I went home and waited for a message from the reporter who had been sent in advance to get the key to the haunted house and have a fire built in it.

The message came. I read it as I would read a death sentence.

"Leave New York at 7.30 to-morrow—Wednesday—evening, by either Christopher or Barclay street ferry. Better bring plenty of wraps and luncheon. Telegraph me to Dover before you start. Will meet you at train."

I sorrowfully packed a bag. I put in it some luncheon I never expected to eat, two revolvers, a knife, dark lantern to show me ghosts, a copy of Lytton's "A Strange Story," to freeze my blood if I didn't scare, and a copy of Life's Monthly Calendar to cheer me up if I did. I took a travelling rug and a flannel robe, and last but not least Paddy.

"Are you cold, my friend?" I asked, "and homeless? Well, then, come in. You can get warm and have something to eat, and when it pleases you to go, you are free."

He sat up and held out his paw to thank me; and so Paddy became No. 5 of my dog family.

When I decided to go ghost-hunting I thought I would take one of my dogs, for it is claimed by ghost experts that dogs can see ghosts when mortals cannot, and that the hair on a dog's back will indicate the presence of a spirit as quickly as a thermometer will indicate a change in the temperature. I decided to take Paddy.

We reached Dover all too soon.

On the front seat was the driver, Ben, who has been eye-witness to the strange things that happen in the haunted house. He was one of the men who formed the party with The World reporter that remained in the house one night a week or so ago, and he will never recover from the horror of that experience.

Mr. M., who sat beside Ben, was also one of that party organized by the reporter, who was now my guide.

UTTER DESOLATION.

The moment I was seated we started off, and the further we went the more [illegible]

As far as I could see there was nothing but trees and snow and the bright stars above. Lonely did not begin to describe the country through which we were passing.

"How is your courage?" the reporter asked me.

"I brought it all with me, but I'm terribly frightened," I confessed, with a nervous laugh.

"You've been through it; tell me all about it," I added.

He told me to ask Ben, for he seemed to fear that I would lose my nerve altogether, and Ben replied, with a decided shake of the head:

"It ain't a fit place for anybody to stay. I wouldn't do it again, no difference how many were with me."

"But you didn't see anything?" I urged, rather eagerly.

"I saw the cellar door shut and I saw it open every time we went back, and I heard things and I saw my coat taken from the door and put way in the end of the hall while we were all down stairs. Things couldn't happen that way themselves."

Oh, dear, how I began to wish I was at home.

"Are you afraid?" the reporter asked.

"I'm afraid of living things," I said. "Counterfeiters, moonshiners and tramps. Do you think there might be such people in the house and that they do all these strange things merely to keep the place free for themselves?"

He was going to reply, but Mr. M. shook his head and gave him a look that I caught and that frightened me more than ever.

"We will soon be on May's Mountain," Mr. M. said, to change the conversation. "It is a very steep, wild place. Once, when Barnum's circus was driving down the road some horses ran away, and the wagon and all tumbled down into the valley below. The horses and drivers were killed and a number of wild animals escaped. Here is the place."

I looked and saw on our left a high, rocky mountain side, and on our right a steep, straight cut clear down into a valley far below us. It was a frightful place, and, seen by starlight, it made me shiver.

"Isn't this a wild country?" asked the reporter. "It is very beautiful in the summer."

"It's simply terrible," I answered, fearfully, "I always oppose immigration until I see such stretches of wild country."

Occasionally—too infrequently for any comfort—we passed a farmhouse. But they all looked dark and desolate. Indeed, many were deserted. Once we drove through a little settlement of a dozen or more houses, and again came to a hotel on the borders of Lake Hopatcong, where we stopped to get warmed up.

Then we started off, this time not to stop until I was left at the haunted house. The country was wilder than before, and the rough road we travelled was straight through heavy woods. Three houses we passed on the way, but they were all abandoned and falling down.

Every dark shadow or bush I saw made my flesh creep, and once, when a man—the only living thing we saw—stepped out of the road to let us drive past, my heart flew up into my throat.

"There is a tramp now," I said, "and heaven only knows how many more I'll see before morning."

"Have you everything fixed at home?" the reporter asked, rather indefinitely.

"I forgot to make my will," I replied. "But I have often said that I want a coffin not made in the regular wide-at-the-shoulders and narrow-at-the-feet plan, but perfectly straight, and that I want to be put in a vault, not buried. And—and—be sure to see that Paddy gets safely home."

There was a moment's silence, broken by a long groan from Paddy.

"If you're going to talk like that," then said the reporter, "I'll turn around and drive you back."

"Even Paddy moans," I try to say lightly, but I do add, with as little seriousness as I can assume:

"You can't tell what may happen, so we might just as well prepare for the unexpected."

Paddy groaned louder than before and sat straight up on the seat shivering.

"I don't think it's right that you should stay all night alone in that house," the reporter said, most emphatically.

"But I've promised," I urged weakly.

"Still, it isn't right, and if you consent we'll stay around somewhere on the outside, so if anything happens you can scream and we'll hear you."

"No; that was not the agreement. I have promised, you know, to stay alone," I say—sadly.

At last we are there. I get out of the sleigh and look around with fear.

There is an old barn and some tumbled-down small buildings further on in the road. Before me is a low flat house with one chimney. Around on every side are hills and heavy, thick woods.

"Supposing I have not the courage to stay all night, which way must I go to find the nearest house?"

"You can't go anywhere," was Ben's consoling reply. "About a mile across the hill is a house, but you'd die in the snowdrifts or brooks or swamps afore you'd get very far. If you're going to stay you've got to stay until we come for you in the morning. You can't get away unless you go out and freeze to death."

"Carry Paddy up to the house," I said, "I don't want him to get wet with the snow."

So Mr. Paddy was carried, and we walked rather close together up around to the front porch. Then we found that the door was unlocked, and it didn't take long to light a match. Paddy was gently sat upon the floor, whereupon he gave an unearthly moan that made it all the more difficult to get the lamp lighted—we tried to do it in such nervous haste.

"If I were to stay here Paddy would frighten me to death," the reporter said.

"I'm afraid I can't tell when he does see a ghost," I said, "for his hair stands up so all the time."

THE DESERTED HOUSE.

Two lamps, a high-backed haircloth sofa, two rugs, a lunch basket and some wood had been brought out to the house that day. The wood was piled in beside the great, wide fireplace, and we soon had a fire going.

Then I unpacked my dark-lantern, two revolvers, knife, books and rug.

I immediately lighted the dark-lantern, and we started on a tour of the house, Mr. M. leading Paddy and I carrying the dark-lantern.

On the floor where I was to remain were three rooms, opening into each other. One was evidently the best-room. The first one adjoining contained a small closet, so I supposed it was a dining-room. The one beside it might have been anything, most probably was a bedroom.

An inclosed stairway led to three unplastered attic rooms.

We found nothing upstairs. Mother Hubbard's cupboard was not in it for bareness. All we found downstairs were some sheets of perforated music-paper, such as is used in music-boxes.

Then we went downstairs to see the kitchen and the cellar-door that won't stay shut.

I was most uncomfortable. I could fancy I saw the waxen hand beckoning me to come into the dark, damp cellar, and I knew if I did go I'd find a distillery or a body of counterfeiters instead of the ghost.

The kitchen was very small, with one window, one door that opened to the outside and the door that opened into the cellar.

I examined the outside door and the window. The window was nailed and the door was latched, but the poor, frail latch of antique workmanship could not withstand the pressure of a dog.

We opened the door into the cellar and looked in very timidly and carefully. I did not see any sign of a grave. But, then, years had gone by since the grave was dug there. I did see one thing, however. Some one had very recently been digging in the cellar.

We went out, and I closed the door very carefully behind me. I took the same precaution with the kitchen door, and then, to drive away my own fears, I suddenly gave a scream and started on a run upstairs.

Ben yelled, and grasped hold of my dress, and Paddy groaned, and I felt shakier than ever, and a little foolish when I had to explain that I was trying to scare Ben.

Paddy at least had enough of ghosts. The hall door happened to be open, and out darted Paddy and down the road like a thing gone mad, until he was swallowed up in the darkness.

Out I started and down the road, shouting "Paddy! Paddy!" at the top of my voice, and whistling when I could no longer shout.

Gone he was. I had made up my mind to that, when I heard something dragging through the snow. Calling again, as pleadingly as I could, Paddy came back to me out of a snow-drift, and lay down humbly, bedraggled, at my feet. He slunk into the house.

"Now you must go," I said to my guides and helpers. "Go back to the hotel and try to sleep. I am very comfortable."

ALONE IN A WILDERNESS.

"I think it is better for us to linger around," the reporter said, kindly. "I feel like a brute to go away and leave you here alone. No one can tell what may happen."

"Well, I'll die hard," I replied, pointing to my revolvers and knife. I was counterfeiting courage. "I'll drive out," he says, with determination. "I couldn't sleep anyway. We'll come out to see if everything is all right, and you can yell to us if you want us to take you away."

"Please do not," I say, earnestly. "I assure you my nerves are all right. Go back and go to bed, and come for me about 6 or 6.30 in the morning."

They go out very sadly and dejectedly. I know that they are suffering more than I am, and I try to be very cheerful. Ben says nothing. He knows I'll be dead or mad in the morning when they come for me, and he is amazed at my foolishness.

They go out of the door. "Good-night!" I say, "Good-by," they answer.

"Have you the door securely locked?" they call to me, and I tell them I have.

I try to look through the window after them, but I can't see, so I go back and sit down on the sofa. Paddy jumps up, and with another mournful whine leans his head on my shoulder.

I am alone in the haunted house.

The sleigh started away. I listen to the bells as long as I can hear them, and then an awful silence falls over everything, and I realize that I am alone, indeed.

It is not a pleasant sensation. My heart begins to flutter in an uncomfortable manner, and if at that instant I could have called the men back to remain somewhere near I fear I would have done so. But I screwed my courage to the sticking point and stood there waiting—for what?

For a moment I wildly hoped that they would be so anxious about me that they would have to turn back; the next moment I assured myself that I was left alone and must make up my mind to endure it calmly.

I looked at my watch. It was on the verge of 12!

I listened. My ears were strained, so fearful was I that something would come upon me without my hearing it.

Paddy's ears were up as straight as two sticks. He sniffed suspiciously. Every sniff sent a chill up my spine. His round, black eyes fastened themselves on the window, as if he saw something beyond.

I felt like Hamlet's mother, and, like her, whispered: "Whereon do you look?" but my Paddy Hamlet answered back with a low growl that I could not interpret. It might have meant "On him, my father's ghost," or "On him, a tramp."

I thought it was the latter, and I felt a creepy sensation steal over me.

If I could only see beyond those small window-panes!

It must be some man or men that had hung around until those who had brought me there had gone again.

If I could only see what Paddy saw! If he could only tell me.

I saw nothing but the flicker of my fire on the glass, now gleaming like two red eyes, now like a white shadow.

Then as I strained my eyes to look I seemed to see the top of a head coming up gradually from below the window-sill, as if some one was trying to peep in without being seen.

My heart fluttered in such a sickly way that I grew weak, but in spite of that I said to myself, as I had said to the rest, I'll die hard.

THE DOOR OPENED!

In an instant my brain was filled with a confusion of thoughts. I didn't want to kill any one unless it was absolutely necessary. Supposing the peeping figure proved to be a tramp, cold and hungry? Wouldn't it be better to say, "You may come in and get warm and have some of my luncheon," than to give him a bit of lead that would make him very cold indeed? I was reasoning curiously.

So long as no harm was offered to me I had no right to shoot, I remember arguing to myself again.

Convinced of this, I rose to my feet and, taking a revolver in my hand, walked sideways and cautiously to the window.

I looked out and there was nothing!

I tried to laugh at my own fears, but I did not succeed so very well. Paddy, however, thought he would follow my example, and when I sat down on the sofa he started on a sniffing tour all around the room.

I did not want to sit with my back to the windows, so I had to turn it partly to the hall door and entirely to the door leading to the inner room.

I would much rather have had my back against a blank wall, so I would have felt sure that no one could approach me from the rear, but as the windows filled the two sides of the room and the other two sides had doors, I could not manage it any better than the position I have just described.

While Paddy was sniffing around I picked up "A Strange Story" and began to read, when, with a force that sent it slamming against the wall, the door at my back opened.

In an instant I was on my feet, but I had jumped so far from the table that I could not reach my revolver.

Breathless, I watched. Nothing came, and as far as I could look into the darkness there was nothing to be seen. Paddy stood also looking, but he made no move to enter.

I waited quite a while, and then, with very forced courage, I took a lamp, and, reaching carefully for my revolver, started into the room.

I held the lamp aloft and looked everywhere. I even forced myself to open the cupboard, which required a great deal of nerve, for I felt positive some one would be found hidden inside. But it was still Mother Hubbard's cupboard—empty!

A little mystified, I returned to the other room. I had clearly not found or seen anything. It was just as clear that the door had opened very violently.

A CRACK LIKE A SHOT.

I closed it again as securely as I could, but it would not latch, and it stuck, being too large at the top.

However, I got it shut by using all my strength, and then sat down and waited for further developments.

I knew I was less courageous than I had been. The unexplained opening of the door, although it was not the ghostly cellar door, rather unsettled me.

The wind howled outside, and rattled down the wide chimney, yet I knew it was not strong enough in the house to open the door as that door opened.

And convinced of this I became so intent on listening that I began to confuse every sound I heard with something uncanny or murderous.

The window panes rattled like castanets, and I felt that somebody was trying to force his way in. Then I heard long, doleful moans that were not Paddy's, for he had come again to snuggle down by my side. Then there was a sound of gentle tapping that made by blood run cold, and then, to complete my misery, I heard something overhead walking on tip-toes across the floor.

In the midst of this, something cracked in the fire like a pistol-shot that made Paddy, with a howl of fear, tumble head over heels down on the floor.

I could not sit still another moment. I was cold from head to foot with terror, and my heart beat with sickly flutters, as if it were on the point of ceasing forever.

There was only one thing to do, I told myself. That was to go through the house and convince myself that I was alone.

I felt I could not do it. I thought that possibly when I was going upstairs something would grab me by the ankle, or if I went up backwards something above would hit me in the head.

To go into the cellar was just as bad; something would grab me from above or below.

And then if I found that wretched cellar door open! [illegible] I would know that the door in my room had been opened by the same cause.

Maybe it was better after all to stay where I was and not to know the truth.

My better senses told me that was madness. Still, unless I saw whether there was something upstairs or down, I would sit there the victim of a thousand fears and fancies that would increase with every moment until they drove me mad.

Then my friends would return in the morning to find a chattering, babbling idiot that knew not them nor fear nor danger.

So I took my lantern and revolver, and, with Paddy close to my heels, started to go upstairs.

I tried to make Paddy go first. I whispered to him that there were rats upstairs, and then I said there were cats, and then I said "Hiss! Go and catch 'em!" but Paddy crouched humbly at my feet and wagged his old tail abjectly.

THE HUNT IN THE ATTIC.

That convinced me that there was something upstairs, so I went up with a rush that brought me to my knees on the top step, and, in recovering myself, I tramped on Paddy's toes, and his feeble protest made me shiver all the more.

But I went through those attic rooms. I convinced myself beyond a doubt that they were empty. Nothing had changed since I went through them with my guides.

This gave me more courage to go downstairs, though I felt a little uncertain. I hated that cellar door, and I wished I didn't know any more about it than I did of the other doors.

Carefully and softly I opened the kitchen door and then, with revolver pointed, breath vanished and heart palpitating, turned the ray of my lantern upon the cellar door.

And found it open? No! No! Closed! Oh! the relief of that moment!

Then I walked upstairs, smiling and very much ashamed of myself, until I recalled that I hadn't explained the opening of the door in my room, or the strange, uncanny sounds.

There are some things hard to account for, I thought, and I saw no way to explain the opening of that door. I tried, with an uneasiness I could not conquer, to forget all about it.

I began to read "A Strange Story," and the noises of moaning and whistling and singing made me throw it down. I picked up "Life's Calendar." I tried to read. What I did do was to listen intently.

Although I hadn't seen anything, I wasn't as fond of the uncanny noises as I might have been, and when I heard the sound of a cautious step on the porch I threw down my paper. I took up a bag of nuts and began to crack them, giving every other one to Paddy. I had to do something to distract me.

I didn't seem to have much appetite. Neither did Paddy. We both thought we could eat under happier circumstances, so I put the nuts away and sat down to stare at my wood fire and listen to the queer tap-tap-tapping outside.

Paddy went sniffing around the room. I called him to me, but he merely wagged his tail and kept on.

Then I turned to look at my fire, when I heard a sound that froze every drop of blood in my entire body.

That door was jerked as if some one was trying to open it!

I picked up my revolver and turned quickly around, so that I would face whatever came.

Paddy stood before the door, smelling. I wondered why he did not growl. Was he too much frightened?

What did the crazy dog mean?

THERE WAS THE GHOST.

As I looked he jumped up with his paws against the door. It withstood him. Again he jumped, and the door was flung back with a jar that rattled the windows.

I sat down and laughed. Probably my laugh sounded a little hysterical at first, but oh! it was such a very grateful laugh.

I had solved that secret.

Paddy was my ghost.

He opened the door the first time, and because I did not see him do it I was frightened. By good luck, I saw it done the second time. By good luck, I say, for if I had not pulled it to so hard it would have given with his first shove, and I would have sworn it was opened by some unseen power. Ah!

Now that I saw how my fears had deceived me I began to inquire into the sounds. I went to the window and convinced myself that the strange tapping was the snow, which was coming down very rapidly.

The other sounds, of creaking and cracking, were such as one would hear in any house if one listened for them. The moaning and sighing, now that my fears had vanished, was the wind, moaning and sighing and sobbing and whistling, as the wind will, around corners, across chimneys and through bare branches.

The creaking noises that sounded above my head were in the old chimney, that had caught fire and had sent forth a brilliant shower of sparks to die in the deep white snow.

How foolish had been my fears! There was still the same danger from tramps, but it got more and more remote as the hours dragged on.

The night was dragging itself along.

I tried to read, but it was 4.30, and I was so sleepy that I had to put down my book.

I became so bored after I convinced myself that nothing could or would happen that I really saw no use of staying awake. I had become very calm.

I was sure that I had given all things supernatural all the chance in the world to make a decent and startling appearance.

I was ready and willing, since I was there to see them, to behold their ghastly forms and to report their tales of woe in all truthfulness, if it was their pleasure to speak.

But they did not appear. They scorned my friendly advances. I even turned down the lamp after I lost my fear and put out my lantern, but the ghosts did not come; neither did tramps, I am glad to say.

I curled myself up on the sofa and, with Paddy lying on my feet, went fast to sleep.

AT LAST IT WAS DAWN.

It was then a quarter to 5. I slept until five minutes after 6, when a noise from Paddy, who evidently had the nightmare, woke me up.

My fire was very low, and it was still dark outside. I put on some wood and lay down again and slept until I heard voices calling.

I jumped up with a start. It was daylight.

Some one was thumping on the door. Mr. M. and The World reporter were there. They looked into my face very curiously and a little frightened.

"Are you all right?" the reporter asked, anxiously.

"Certainly," I laughed. "I've been sleeping."

Then Mr. M. turned and shouted to Ben.

"Come in!" he called; "everything is all right!"

Poor Ben! He did not intend to come in until he was sure he would not gaze upon a gory corpse.

"We did not go to bed," the reporter said to me. "You will never know how I felt about leaving you here. I wouldn't put in another night like last night for any amount of money."

I looked at them. They were all pale and nervous. I realized that the night had been much harder for them to bear than it was for me, and I felt sorry that I had caused them so much apprehension.

We started out. I glanced around the snow-covered hills. So far as I could see there was nothing but utter desolation. No human habitation was in sight. "And in this lonely, God-forsaken region I stayed all night alone?" I gasped.

"You are so nervy that you don't realize what a big thing you have done," the reporter assured me.

"Drive fast, Ben," said I, with a laugh. "The ghosts have left Paddy and me with big appetites."

And that's all I know of haunted houses and ghosts that milk a one-horned cow. NELLIE BLY.

STAGING A GREAT PLAY.

It Seems Simple Enough to the Audience, but Only the Actor and Manager Know Its Hardships.

"SOWING THE WIND" A CASE IN POINT.

What Constitutes the Wonderful Success of Charles Frohman's Stock Company.

A histrion high up in local favor has made himself famous by insisting that "acting is dead easy." Lots of people think so, too, but the fact of the matter is that they don't know. The stage has many illusions, and that acting is easy is one of the most striking of them. Drop into a first-class theatre like the Empire any evening. "Sowing the Wind" is running there, probably as great a dramatic success as New York has ever known. It will stay at the Empire for many months, no doubt.

"THE WHIRLWIND HAS PASSED."—SCENE IN "SOWING THE WIND."

The perfect organization playing the piece goes through it smoothly and with the precision of clockwork. There is such facility of movement and apparent ease of action in all that is done that the audience never for a moment dreams the people on the stage are working; it seems, rather, that they are enjoying themselves, peacocking around in fine raiment and having the jolliest kind of fun, making love to each other and fooling the public. The thought that the members of Charles Frohman's stock company who give this charming performance have anything more to do for a living than they do in these delightful representations of "Sowing the Wind" never enters the minds of the uninitiated onlooker.

Take a walk around the corner and go behind the scenes at the Empire. There you will find out that stock companies are not put together in a day, and the players of a stock company do not earn all their salaries in the glare of the footlights. There are rehearsals and the studying of plays, and talks with the manager and understudying, and so on, that keep the actor and actress busy a great portion of the time that they are off the stage.

Charles Frohman will tell you that he began organizing his present stock company five years ago. He aimed to secure the strongest organization of its kind that it was possible to get together, and he selected his players with a view to presenting them in the best American plays. He arranged with the very best native and foreign authors to prepare plays for the company, and after four years of successive triumphs installed them in their present home, the beautiful Empire Theatre, which cost over a half million dollars.

Some people imagine that with the opening of this theatre the manager's worries and labors should end, or at least be considerably diminished; but they make a mistake. Mr. Frohman does a full twenty hours work out of every twenty-four, and he must do more thinking and planning for his stock company, now that it is a metropolitan fixture, constantly under the eyes of the critics, than he was obliged to do before it had a home. He has twenty-two persons in his stock company, and he must keep himself familiar with their physical health and mental growth. He must know every one of them as he knows himself.

It is necessary that he understand and keep en rapport with them, for he has to select the plays in which they appear. He reads all plays submitted by aspiring dramatists, and keeps step with the progress of an author's work, scene by scene, and act by act, when a native author is building a play for the Empire Theatre Company. The play is read to him piecemeal, and he often makes valuable suggestions which are thankfully received, for every playwright of any importance knows that Charles Frohman has a keener instinct and better judgment about what the public wants dramatically, than any other man in the profession.

It is a fact that Bronson Howard's "Shenandoah," which failed first in Boston, was a phenomenal success when reconstructed on the lines laid down by Mr. Frohman.

When a play is finished the company is called in and it is read to them. Then the male members are consulted one after another. They have long talks with the manager in his office, the latter obtaining from them their conception of the characters, their ideas of make-up, &c. During this period the play is cast by the manager. The physical and psychical adaptation of each person is considered in allotting the parts, the emotional equipment being as carefully judged as the anatomical. After the actors have had their say the actresses are called in and they talk over the play.

When the artist, who determines on the best pictorial effects for the piece and fixes the size of the scenes, selecting one of great breadth and depth for a strong dramatic situation, and quiet front pictures for the tamer passages, so as to bring them close to the audience, has made his report, the ladies of the company select their dresses, the leading lady having her choice of shades and styles, of course, and the other choices coming in the order of importance of the actresses.

The stage architect designs the scenes and submits them, and then the man who attends to the lighting of the stage pictures gives the result of his experiments, and so all the factors necessary to a good dramatic triumph are moulded and combined.

Rehearsals of a new play always begin as soon as a play has been produced. The very week in which Charles Frohman's company first appeared in "Sowing the Wind" the organization began rehearsals of the next Empire Theatre play, "Gudgeons," and although it is known that "Sowing the Wind" will run for many months, these rehearsals are kept up and take place two or three times a week. When the time for producing the play is near rehearsals are had every day; and often at night, after a regular performance is over, the company lingers to "go through a scene" of the new play.

This is only a very vague idea of the preparation of a play for the stage. There is work to be done in the matter of details that cannot be classified. In all of it the stock company player has some part, and so is kept pretty busy. Besides, the actor or actress has to study all the other parts in the play; not only study but rehearse them, so that in case of accident one man could take another's role, and so on.

There are understudies, too, and they rehearse in connection with the regular company. Of the twenty-two members of Charles Frohman's stock company only fourteen appear in "Sowing the Wind." The others stand ready to fill in a vacancy.

The other day Mr. Frohman received a telegram from Philadelphia that Miss Sidney Armstrong was sick, and could not appear in "The Girl I Left Behind Me." In an hour Grace Henderson was on a train going to Philadelphia, ready to take Miss Armstrong's place. One of the men in the Boston "Charley's Aunt" company broke his leg. A few minutes after Mr. Frohman had been notified by telegraph an actor was at the Grand Central Station waiting for the next Boston train.

Besides the regular rehearsals two or three times a week, special rehearsals are often called for scenes or acts in which the players have become apparently slow or indifferent. So you can see, between eight performances a week, studying new plays and rehearsing them, coaching understudies, looking after wardrobes, conferring with the manager, &c., a stock company player's time is pretty well filled in, and there is little chance for anything except work.

In a travelling company like John Drew's, which, though possessing a star, is run and has plays written for it on the stock-company basis, the same routine of study and work applies.

Acting may be "dead easy," but it isn't so "dead easy" as it looks—not for the actors, anyhow.

IT WAS ON THE WRONG BEAT.

A Scheme to Sober Up an Actor That Did Not Quite Work.

Manager Lee Harrison, of "The Wicklow Postman" company, had an exciting experience a few days ago. Preparations were being completed for the resumption of the road tour, and everything looked lovely until it was discovered that one of the principal actors in the company had started in on what promised to be a long-winded spree. Something had to be done at once, and Harrison arranged what he thought would be a coup d'etat.

Harrison has among his many acquaintances a good-natured policeman, whose beat is in West Twenty-fifth street, and, after consulting him, Harrison told W. S. Bland, his fellow-manager, to entice the recalcitrant actor into a certain saloon and get up a row. Then the friendly policeman would come in and arrest the actor, and a day's confinement behind the bars and away from the Tenderloin district would, it was hoped, do the rest.

All would have gone well if it were not that Bland understood the saloon to be in East instead of West Twenty-fifth street. He found, as he thought, the place all right, and had no difficulty in getting his inebriated companion into a row. It was not until a strange policeman made his appearance on the scene that Bland saw there had been some mistake. He tried to explain, but with no success. "You can't fool me," said the copper with a grin, and forthwith yanked Bland and the actor around to the East Twenty-second street station-house. The manager's protestations were in vain until Harrison, who, after vainly waiting in the West Twenty-fifth street saloon, got a horrible suspicion of the cause of the non-appearance of his partner and traced him to the station-house, made his appearance on the scene and with difficulty convinced the sergeant of the real state of affairs. The latter reluctantly allowed the prisoners to go, and Harrison and Bland took the actor over to a Turkish bath, where he was forcibly detained until he had become quite sober.

No Cause for Alarm.

(From the Chicago Inter-Ocean.)

Wife—What effect will these powders have?

Doctor—He will seem rather dull and stupid, but don't feel alarmed.

Wife—Oh, no; he's that way when he's perfectly well, you know.

A Practical Hint.

(From the Chicago Record.)

The Amateur—How is it all your photographs of people show their true expression so well?

The Photographer—I never tell a patron to "look natural."

More Important.

(From the Boston Transcript.)

Deacon Goode—Come, now tell me, [illegible] do you consider yourself an honest man? [illegible]

Wife—Of course I don't [illegible]