

SOME LIVELY SPOOKS.

THE SAD ENDING OF A SPIRITUALISTIC GATHERING.

Howard Fielding Tells How the Spirit of Harvey Blake's Grandmother Used Him as a Toboggan and Then Sued Him for Damages.

My only experience with spooks was as a member of a party who had decided to expose a man who was temporarily named Morse. His wife materialized spirits through the power of a deceased Indian princess, who in life had been called Bright Eyes. Her vision must have been considerably dimmed in the mysterious hereafter or she would have been able to see through such a diaphanous fraud as Mrs. Morse, and would have refrained from having anything to do with her. When Mrs. Morse passed into a trance she was controlled so completely by Bright Eyes that she could speak nothing but pure Choctaw. Thus the ordinary auditor at one of her seances learned little or nothing about the eternal mysteries.

One hunting party heard of this linguistic difficulty, and so we pressed into our



BLAKE SEES HIS GRANDMOTHER.

service an ex-cowboy who conversed fluently in Choctaw. He could also shoot the neck of a two gallon demijohn at fifty paces, and afterwards drink the entire contents, no matter what it happened to be. He was an accomplished gentleman.

He arranged the plan of campaign very carefully. To each was assigned his share of the work. Bill Adams, the cowboy, was so test the quality of Bright-Eyes' Choctaw, after which he was to wait till the signal of attack should be given by Harvey Blake. This young man acted as a sort of guide to our party. He was a believer in spiritualism, who had come to the Morse seances in good faith, until their trickery became too thin to deceive even so partial a witness. The Morses thought that they had a sure grip on him, and so he could easily secure a front seat at the seance—a favor not shown to strangers. In his position of advantage he was well within his reach, and then he was to grab it and yell. At his war-whoop Adams was to overpower Morse; I was to assist in detaining the spooks; and others were to turn up the lights and quell any outbreak on the part of Morse's helpers, of whom there were a half-dozen at every meeting.

I noticed them when I first entered the rooms on the evening selected for the exposure. They were short-haired middle weights who were engaged at fifty cents a head as a body-guard. We were given a brief opportunity of examining the room, one corner of which was curtained off, making the usual cabinet. When we took our seats Blake was in the front row with Adams and me just behind him. I esti-



ADAMS SHOT OFF HIS REVOLVER.

mated that of the thirty people present only about a third had come with a real desire to see and converse with the departed.

When the lights had been turned down, a thin and faded spinster began to play hymn tunes on a consumptive cabinet organ in a manner calculated to disturb the eternal slumbers of their defunct composers, if anything could. That they did not materialize, and remove the organist, hardened my belief as nothing else ever had. But young Blake who was a very nervous fellow, found this waiting for ghosts in the grizzly darkness very trying. He did not know which to fear most, the appearance of a genuine spook, or the rough-and-tumble fight which was certain to follow a palpable fraud. He trembled so that I could feel his chair shake. Adams noticed it too, and tried to quiet the young man's nerves.

"Don't you be alarmed," he whispered. "Just because that man Morse has a gun in his hip pocket, ain't no reason why you should expect to be cut off in the flower of your youth."

Blake's teeth began to chatter audibly. "I felt the gun," continued Adams, "while you fellows were looking over the room, I spent my time looking over Morse. He is my meat and don't you forget it. Cheer up my bloomin' shrub; I have

shooting-iron in my boot leg, and it's twice as long as Morse's."

Blake gave a tremendous groan. By this time Mrs. Morse had gone into a trance and was jabbering in her alleged Choctaw. Adams listened to it a while and then he said: "I'm gambling that that don't come from the happy hunting grounds. If any poor Injun talks that lingo it must be because his sufferin's overpower him. Wait till I try the genuine article."

He spoke a few words in an Indian dialect, and then added in United States, "If the ghost of old Chief Red-Eye isn't here in thirty seconds, the whole thing is a fake."

"Why so?" I inquired. "I just remarked in Red-Eye's native tongue," said Adams, "that I knew where there was a barrel of fire-water on tap. No, no; he'd have been here before this. What evidence do you want? Speak your little piece, Blakey, my boy, and I'll open fire right over your shoulder."

Blake fell upon his knees, and reaching out his hands toward a white robed figure which had just capered out of the cabinet, he called her his dear old grandmother and asked if she had come to protect him. At this several women sobbed, but I was not deeply affected. This same figure had been out before. I recognized it as the bulky form of a fat woman whom I had seen skipping down the basement stairs just before the seance opened. But Blake said she was his grandmother, and an old fellow on the other side of the room recognized her as his daughter who had died at the tender age of eleven. I could not help feeling that this identification was complicated and doubtful; and I longed to make a sure thing of it by digging the spectre to some portion of the house where there was more light. It was evident that Blake was too badly frightened to give the signal; I could hear murmurs from various members of our party; and I was anxious to get away from Adams' revolver before it should go off by accident.

Moved by these considerations, I sprang over Blake's kneeling form, and seized the fat spook around the waist. She offered a very material resistance, which became quite uncontrollable when Adams shot off his revolver into the ceiling and leaped upon Morse. After that I was no more of an incumbrance to the spook than if my arms had been her apron strings. She rushed out into the hall, and I trailed behind like the "bob" of a kite. She fled up the stairs with an agility proportionate to her fright, and marvellous considering her bulk, I accompanied her up the stairs because I was afraid to let her go. On the uppermost step she tripped, staggered a moment, and then, overbalanced by my weight, she fell backward and slid the



AS IF I HAD BEEN A TOBOGGAN.

whole length of the stairs on my unfortunate body, as if it had been a toboggan. I had been told that spirits materialize at the profane touch. This one didn't. She was all there when we landed on the hall floor. I was much nearer dematerialization myself, being pressed out to a thinness which approached transparency. All this I have been told, for I was not in condition to observe it at the time. I did not know when the spirit of Blake's grandmother was lifted off my ruins, nor did I suffer anything at the hospital where I was restored from a strip to my usual cylindrical form. No; these trials were over before I regained command of my faculties; but what did pain me seriously was the notification that Blake's grandmother's ghost would charge me with assault and battery, and sue me for civil damages. Considering that I had fractured five ribs while she was practically uninjured, I could not but regard this as unkind.

Therefore, I publish these facts in order that the new investigating committee may know enough to stand firm under, when spirits that have been too ponderously materialized attempt to impose upon the humble seeker for truth. We should all grieve if any member of the committee should pursue the search for facts about the other world to a point from which he could not return with his report.

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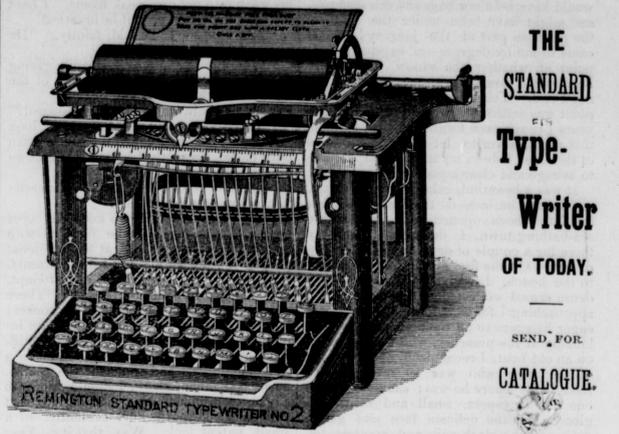
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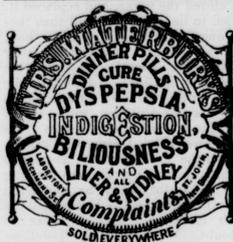
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