

LEWIS CARROLL

PHANTASMAGORIA AND
OTHER POEMS

Lewis Carroll
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Phantasmagoria and Other Poems:

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Lewis Carroll

Phantasmagoria and Other Poems

*Inscribed to a dear Child:
in memory of golden summer hours and whispers of
a summer sea.*

Girt with a boyish garb for boyish task,
Eager she wields her spade: yet loves as well
Rest on the friendly knee, intent to ask
The tale one loves to tell.

Rude scoffer of the seething outer strife,
Unmeet to read her pure and simple spright,
Deem, if thou wilt, such hours a waste of life,
Empty of all delight!

Chat on, sweet Maid, and rescue from annoy
Hearts that by wiser talk are unbeguiled.
Ah, happy he who owns the tenderest joy,
The heart-love of a child!

Away, fond thoughts, and vex my soul no more!
Work claims my wakeful nights, my busy days,
Albeit bright memories of the sunlit shore

Yet haunt my dreaming gaze.

PHANTASMAGORIA

CANTO I The Trystyng

One winter night, at half-past nine,
Cold, tired, and cross, and muddy,
I had come home, too late to dine,
And supper, with cigars and wine,
Was waiting in the study.

There was a strangeness in the room,
And Something white and wavy
Was standing near me in the gloom —
I took it for the carpet-broom
Left by that careless slavey.

But presently the Thing began
To shiver and to sneeze:
On which I said “Come, come, my man!
That’s a most inconsiderate plan.
Less noise there, if you please!”

“I’ve caught a cold,” the Thing replies,

“Out there upon the landing.”
I turned to look in some surprise,
And there, before my very eyes,
A little Ghost was standing!

He trembled when he caught my eye,
And got behind a chair.
“How came you here,” I said, “and why?
I never saw a thing so shy.
Come out! Don’t shiver there!”

He said “I’d gladly tell you how,
And also tell you why;
But” (here he gave a little bow)
“You’re in so bad a temper now,
You’d think it all a lie.

“And as to being in a fright,
Allow me to remark
That Ghosts have just as good a right
In every way, to fear the light,
As Men to fear the dark.”

“No plea,” said I, “can well excuse
Such cowardice in you:
For Ghosts can visit when they choose,
Whereas we Humans ca’n’t refuse
To grant the interview.”

He said "A flutter of alarm
Is not unnatural, is it?
I really feared you meant some harm:
But, now I see that you are calm,
Let me explain my visit.

"Houses are classed, I beg to state,
According to the number
Of Ghosts that they accommodate:
(The Tenant merely counts as *weight*,
With Coals and other lumber).

"This is a 'one-ghost' house, and you
When you arrived last summer,
May have remarked a Spectre who
Was doing all that Ghosts can do
To welcome the new-comer.

"In Villas this is always done —
However cheaply rented:
For, though of course there's less of fun
When there is only room for one,
Ghosts have to be contented.

"That Spectre left you on the Third —
Since then you've not been haunted:
For, as he never sent us word,
'Twas quite by accident we heard
That any one was wanted.

“A Spectre has first choice, by right,
In filling up a vacancy;
Then Phantom, Goblin, Elf, and Sprite —
If all these fail them, they invite
The nicest Ghoul that they can see.

“The Spectres said the place was low,
And that you kept bad wine:
So, as a Phantom had to go,
And I was first, of course, you know,
I couldn't well decline.”

“No doubt,” said I, “they settled who
Was fittest to be sent
Yet still to choose a brat like you,
To haunt a man of forty-two,
Was no great compliment!”

“I'm not so young, Sir,” he replied,
“As you might think. The fact is,
In caverns by the water-side,
And other places that I've tried,
I've had a lot of practice:

“But I have never taken yet
A strict domestic part,
And in my flurry I forget
The Five Good Rules of Etiquette

We have to know by heart.”

My sympathies were warming fast
Towards the little fellow:
He was so utterly aghast
At having found a Man at last,
And looked so scared and yellow.

“At least,” I said, “I’m glad to find
A Ghost is not a *dumb* thing!
But pray sit down: you’ll feel inclined
(If, like myself, you have not dined)
To take a snack of something:

“Though, certainly, you don’t appear
A thing to offer *food* to!
And then I shall be glad to hear —
If you will say them loud and clear —
The Rules that you allude to.”

“Thanks! You shall hear them by and by.
This *is* a piece of luck!”
“What may I offer you?” said I.
“Well, since you *are* so kind, I’ll try
A little bit of duck.

“*One* slice! And may I ask you for
Another drop of gravy?”
I sat and looked at him in awe,

For certainly I never saw
A thing so white and wavy.

And still he seemed to grow more white,
More vapoury, and wavier —
Seen in the dim and flickering light,
As he proceeded to recite
His “Maxims of Behaviour.”

CANTO II

Hys Fyve Rules

“My First – but don’t suppose,” he said,

“I’m setting you a riddle —

Is – if your Victim be in bed,

Don’t touch the curtains at his head,

But take them in the middle,

“And wave them slowly in and out,

While drawing them asunder;

And in a minute’s time, no doubt,

He’ll raise his head and look about

With eyes of wrath and wonder.

“And here you must on no pretence

Make the first observation.

Wait for the Victim to commence:

No Ghost of any common sense

Begins a conversation.

“If he should say ‘*How came you here?*’

(The way that *you* began, Sir,)

In such a case your course is clear —

‘*On the bat’s back, my little dear!*’

Is the appropriate answer.

“If after this he says no more,
You’d best perhaps curtail your
Exertions – go and shake the door,
And then, if he begins to snore,
You’ll know the thing’s a failure.

“By day, if he should be alone —
At home or on a walk —
You merely give a hollow groan,
To indicate the kind of tone
In which you mean to talk.

“But if you find him with his friends,
The thing is rather harder.
In such a case success depends
On picking up some candle-ends,
Or butter, in the larder.

“With this you make a kind of slide
(It answers best with suet),
On which you must contrive to glide,
And swing yourself from side to side —
One soon learns how to do it.

“The Second tells us what is right
In ceremonious calls: —
‘First burn a blue or crimson light’
(A thing I quite forgot to-night),

‘Then scratch the door or walls.’”

I said “You’ll visit *here* no more,
If you attempt the Guy.
I’ll have no bonfires on *my* floor —
And, as for scratching at the door,
I’d like to see you try!”

“The Third was written to protect
The interests of the Victim,
And tells us, as I recollect,
*To treat him with a grave respect,
And not to contradict him.*”

“That’s plain,” said I, “as Tare and Tret,
To any comprehension:
I only wish *some* Ghosts I’ve met
Would not so *constantly* forget
The maxim that you mention!”

“Perhaps,” he said, “*you* first transgressed
The laws of hospitality:
All Ghosts instinctively detest
The Man that fails to treat his guest
With proper cordiality.

“If you address a Ghost as ‘Thing!’
Or strike him with a hatchet,
He is permitted by the King

To drop all *formal* parleying —
And then you're *sure* to catch it!

“The Fourth prohibits trespassing
Where other Ghosts are quartered:
And those convicted of the thing
(Unless when pardoned by the King)
Must instantly be slaughtered.

“That simply means ‘be cut up small’:
Ghosts soon unite anew.
The process scarcely hurts at all —
Not more than when *you* ’re what you call
‘Cut up’ by a Review.

“The Fifth is one you may prefer
That I should quote entire: —
The King must be addressed as ‘Sir.’
This, from a simple courtier,
Is all the Laws require:

“*But, should you wish to do the thing*
With out-and-out politeness,
Accost him as ‘My Goblin King!’
And always use, in answering,
The phrase ‘Your Royal Whiteness!’

“I’m getting rather hoarse, I fear,
After so much reciting:

So, if you don't object, my dear,
We'll try a glass of bitter beer —
I think it looks inviting.”

CANTO III

Scarmoges

“And did you really walk,” said I,
 “On such a wretched night?
I always fancied Ghosts could fly —
If not exactly in the sky,
 Yet at a fairish height.”

“It’s very well,” said he, “for Kings
 To soar above the earth:
But Phantoms often find that wings —
Like many other pleasant things —
 Cost more than they are worth.

“Spectres of course are rich, and so
 Can buy them from the Elves:
But *we* prefer to keep below —
They’re stupid company, you know,
 For any but themselves:

“For, though they claim to be exempt
 From pride, they treat a Phantom
As something quite beneath contempt —
Just as no Turkey ever dreamt
 Of noticing a Bantam.”

“They seem too proud,” said I, “to go
To houses such as mine.
Pray, how did they contrive to know
So quickly that ‘the place was low,’
And that I ‘kept bad wine’?”

“Inspector Kobold came to you – ”
The little Ghost began.
Here I broke in – “Inspector who?
Inspecting Ghosts is something new!
Explain yourself, my man!”

“His name is Kobold,” said my guest:
“One of the Spectre order:
You’ll very often see him dressed
In a yellow gown, a crimson vest,
And a night-cap with a border.

“He tried the Brocken business first,
But caught a sort of chill;
So came to England to be nursed,
And here it took the form of *thirst*,
Which he complains of still.

“Port-wine, he says, when rich and sound,
Warms his old bones like nectar:
And as the inns, where it is found,
Are his especial hunting-ground,

We call him the *Inn-Spectre*.”

I bore it – bore it like a man —
This agonizing witticism!
And nothing could be sweeter than
My temper, till the Ghost began
Some most provoking criticism.

“Cooks need not be indulged in waste;
Yet still you’d better teach them
Dishes should have *some sort* of taste.
Pray, why are all the cruets placed
Where nobody can reach them?

“That man of yours will never earn
His living as a waiter!
Is that queer *thing* supposed to burn?
(It’s far too dismal a concern
To call a Moderator).

“The duck was tender, but the peas
Were very much too old:
And just remember, if you please,
The *next* time you have toasted cheese,
Don’t let them send it cold.

“You’d find the bread improved, I think,
By getting better flour:
And have you anything to drink

That looks a *little* less like ink,
And isn't *quite* so sour?"

Then, peering round with curious eyes,
He muttered "Goodness gracious!"
And so went on to criticise —
"Your room's an inconvenient size:
It's neither snug nor spacious.

"That narrow window, I expect,
Serves but to let the dusk in – "
"But please," said I, "to recollect
'Twas fashioned by an architect
Who pinned his faith on Ruskin!"

"I don't care who he was, Sir, or
On whom he pinned his faith!
Constructed by whatever law,
So poor a job I never saw,
As I'm a living Wraith!

"What a re-markable cigar!
How much are they a dozen?"
I growled "No matter what they are!
You're getting as familiar
As if you were my cousin!

"Now that's a thing *I will not stand,*
And so I tell you flat."

“Aha,” said he, “we’re getting grand!”
(Taking a bottle in his hand)
“I’ll soon arrange for *that*!”

And here he took a careful aim,
And gaily cried “Here goes!”
I tried to dodge it as it came,
But somehow caught it, all the same,
Exactly on my nose.

And I remember nothing more
That I can clearly fix,
Till I was sitting on the floor,
Repeating “Two and five are four,
But *five and two* are six.”

What really passed I never learned,
Nor guessed: I only know
That, when at last my sense returned,
The lamp, neglected, dimly burned —
The fire was getting low —

Through driving mists I seemed to see
A Thing that smirked and smiled:
And found that he was giving me
A lesson in Biography,
As if I were a child.

CANTO IV

Hys Nourytur

“Oh, when I was a little Ghost,
A merry time had we!
Each seated on his favourite post,
We chumped and chawed the buttered toast
They gave us for our tea.”

“That story is in print!” I cried.
“Don’t say it’s not, because
It’s known as well as Bradshaw’s Guide!”
(The Ghost uneasily replied
He hardly thought it was).

“It’s not in Nursery Rhymes? And yet
I almost think it is —
‘Three little Ghosteses’ were set
‘On posteses,’ you know, and ate
Their ‘buttered toasteses.’

“I have the book; so if you doubt it – ”
I turned to search the shelf.
“Don’t stir!” he cried. “We’ll do without it:
I now remember all about it;
I wrote the thing myself.

“It came out in a ‘Monthly,’ or
At least my agent said it did:
Some literary swell, who saw
It, thought it seemed adapted for
The Magazine he edited.

“My father was a Brownie, Sir;
My mother was a Fairy.
The notion had occurred to her,
The children would be happier,
If they were taught to vary.

“The notion soon became a craze;
And, when it once began, she
Brought us all out in different ways —
One was a Pixy, two were Fays,
Another was a Banshee;

“The Fetch and Kelpie went to school
And gave a lot of trouble;
Next came a Poltergeist and Ghoul,
And then two Trolls (which broke the rule),
A Goblin, and a Double —

“(If that’s a snuff-box on the shelf,”
He added with a yawn,
“I’ll take a pinch) – next came an Elf,
And then a Phantom (that’s myself),

And last, a Leprechaun.

“One day, some Spectres chanced to call,
Dressed in the usual white:
I stood and watched them in the hall,
And couldn’t make them out at all,
They seemed so strange a sight.

“I wondered what on earth they were,
That looked all head and sack;
But Mother told me not to stare,
And then she twitched me by the hair,
And punched me in the back.

“Since then I’ve often wished that I
Had been a Spectre born.
But what’s the use?” (He heaved a sigh.)
“*They* are the ghost-nobility,
And look on *us* with scorn.

“My phantom-life was soon begun:
When I was barely six,
I went out with an older one —
And just at first I thought it fun,
And learned a lot of tricks.

“I’ve haunted dungeons, castles, towers —
Wherever I was sent:
I’ve often sat and howled for hours,

Drenched to the skin with driving showers,
Upon a battlement.

“It’s quite old-fashioned now to groan
When you begin to speak:
This is the newest thing in tone – ”
And here (it chilled me to the bone)
He gave an *awful* squeak.

“Perhaps,” he added, “to *your* ear
That sounds an easy thing?
Try it yourself, my little dear!
It took *me* something like a year,
With constant practising.

“And when you’ve learned to squeak, my man,
And caught the double sob,
You’re pretty much where you began:
Just try and gibber if you can!
That’s something *like* a job!

“*I’ve* tried it, and can only say
I’m sure you couldn’t do it, e-
ven if you practised night and day,
Unless you have a turn that way,
And natural ingenuity.

“Shakspeare I think it is who treats
Of Ghosts, in days of old,

Who ‘gibbered in the Roman streets,’
Dressed, if you recollect, in sheets —
They must have found it cold.

“I’ve often spent ten pounds on stuff,
In dressing as a Double;
But, though it answers as a puff,
It never has effect enough
To make it worth the trouble.

“Long bills soon quenched the little thirst
I had for being funny.
The setting-up is always worst:
Such heaps of things you want at first,
One must be made of money!

“For instance, take a Haunted Tower,
With skull, cross-bones, and sheet;
Blue lights to burn (say) two an hour,
Condensing lens of extra power,
And set of chains complete:

“What with the things you have to hire —
The fitting on the robe —
And testing all the coloured fire —
The outfit of itself would tire
The patience of a Job!

“And then they’re so fastidious,

The Haunted-House Committee:
I've often known them make a fuss
Because a Ghost was French, or Russ,
Or even from the City!

“Some dialects are objected to —
For one, the *Irish* brogue is:
And then, for all you have to do,
One pound a week they offer you,
And find yourself in Bogies!”

CANTO V

Byckermant

“Don’t they consult the ‘Victims,’ though?”

I said. “They should, by rights,
Give them a chance – because, you know,
The tastes of people differ so,
Especially in Sprites.”

The Phantom shook his head and smiled.

“Consult them? Not a bit!
’Twould be a job to drive one wild,
To satisfy one single child —
There’d be no end to it!”

“Of course you can’t leave *children* free,”

Said I, “to pick and choose:
But, in the case of men like me,
I think ‘Mine Host’ might fairly be
Allowed to state his views.”

He said “It really wouldn’t pay —
Folk are so full of fancies.
We visit for a single day,
And whether then we go, or stay,
Depends on circumstances.

“And, though we don’t consult ‘Mine Host’
Before the thing’s arranged,
Still, if he often quits his post,
Or is not a well-mannered Ghost,
Then you can have him changed.

“But if the host’s a man like you —
I mean a man of sense;
And if the house is not too new – ”
“Why, what has *that*,” said I, “to do
With Ghost’s convenience?”

“A new house does not suit, you know —
It’s such a job to trim it:
But, after twenty years or so,
The wainscotings begin to go,
So twenty is the limit.”

“To trim” was not a phrase I could
Remember having heard:
“Perhaps,” I said, “you’ll be so good
As tell me what is understood
Exactly by that word?”

“It means the loosening all the doors,”
The Ghost replied, and laughed:
“It means the drilling holes by scores
In all the skirting-boards and floors,

To make a thorough draught.

“You’ll sometimes find that one or two
Are all you really need
To let the wind come whistling through —
But *here* there’ll be a lot to do!”
I faintly gasped “Indeed!”

“If I’d been rather later, I’ll
Be bound,” I added, trying
(Most unsuccessfully) to smile,
“You’d have been busy all this while,
Trimming and beautifying?”

“Why, no,” said he; “perhaps I should
Have stayed another minute —
But still no Ghost, that’s any good,
Without an introduction would
Have ventured to begin it.

“The proper thing, as you were late,
Was certainly to go:
But, with the roads in such a state,
I got the Knight-Mayor’s leave to wait
For half an hour or so.”

“Who’s the Knight-Mayor?” I cried. Instead
Of answering my question,
“Well, if you don’t know *that*,” he said,

“Either you never go to bed,
Or you’ve a grand digestion!

“He goes about and sits on folk

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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