

BANGS JOHN KENDRICK

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OTHERS

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John Kendrick Bangs

The Water Ghost and Others

THE WATER GHOST OF HARROWBY HALL

The trouble with Harrowby Hall was that it was haunted, and, what was worse, the ghost did not content itself with merely appearing at the bedside of the afflicted person who saw it, but persisted in remaining there for one mortal hour before it would disappear.

It never appeared except on Christmas Eve, and then as the clock was striking twelve, in which respect alone was it lacking in that originality which in these days is a *sine qua non* of success in spectral life. The owners of Harrowby Hall had done their utmost to rid themselves of the damp and dewy lady who rose up out of the best bedroom floor at midnight, but without avail. They had tried stopping the clock, so that the ghost would not know when it was midnight; but she made her appearance just the same, with that fearful miasmatic personality of hers, and there she would stand until everything about her was thoroughly saturated.

Then the owners of Harrowby Hall calked up every crack in the floor with the very best quality of hemp, and over this was

placed layers of tar and canvas; the walls were made water-proof, and the doors and windows likewise, the proprietors having conceived the notion that the unexorcised lady would find it difficult to leak into the room after these precautions had been taken; but even this did not suffice. The following Christmas Eve she appeared as promptly as before, and frightened the occupant of the room quite out of his senses by sitting down alongside of him and gazing with her cavernous blue eyes into his; and he noticed, too, that in her long, aqueously bony fingers bits of dripping sea-weed were entwined, the ends hanging down, and these ends she drew across his forehead until he became like one insane. And then he swooned away, and was found unconscious in his bed the next morning by his host, simply saturated with sea-water and fright, from the combined effects of which he never recovered, dying four years later of pneumonia and nervous prostration at the age of seventy-eight.

The next year the master of Harrowby Hall decided not to have the best spare bedroom opened at all, thinking that perhaps the ghost's thirst for making herself disagreeable would be satisfied by haunting the furniture, but the plan was as unavailing as the many that had preceded it.

The ghost appeared as usual in the room—that is, it was supposed she did, for the hangings were dripping wet the next morning, and in the parlor below the haunted room a great damp spot appeared on the ceiling. Finding no one there, she immediately set out to learn the reason why, and she chose

none other to haunt than the owner of the Harrowby himself. She found him in his own cosy room drinking whiskey—whiskey undiluted—and felicitating himself upon having foiled her ghostship, when all of a sudden the curl went out of his hair, his whiskey bottle filled and overflowed, and he was himself in a condition similar to that of a man who has fallen into a water-butt. When he recovered from the shock, which was a painful one, he saw before him the lady of the cavernous eyes and seaweed fingers. The sight was so unexpected and so terrifying that he fainted, but immediately came to, because of the vast amount of water in his hair, which, trickling down over his face, restored his consciousness.

Now it so happened that the master of Harrowby was a brave man, and while he was not particularly fond of interviewing ghosts, especially such quenching ghosts as the one before him, he was not to be daunted by an apparition. He had paid the lady the compliment of fainting from the effects of his first surprise, and now that he had come to he intended to find out a few things he felt he had a right to know. He would have liked to put on a dry suit of clothes first, but the apparition declined to leave him for an instant until her hour was up, and he was forced to deny himself that pleasure. Every time he would move she would follow him, with the result that everything she came in contact with got a ducking. In an effort to warm himself up he approached the fire, an unfortunate move as it turned out, because it brought the ghost directly over the fire, which immediately was extinguished. The

whiskey became utterly valueless as a comforter to his chilled system, because it was by this time diluted to a proportion of ninety per cent of water. The only thing he could do to ward off the evil effects of his encounter he did, and that was to swallow ten two-grain quinine pills, which he managed to put into his mouth before the ghost had time to interfere. Having done this, he turned with some asperity to the ghost, and said:

"Far be it from me to be impolite to a woman, madam, but I'm hanged if it wouldn't please me better if you'd stop these infernal visits of yours to this house. Go sit out on the lake, if you like that sort of thing; soak the water-butt, if you wish; but do not, I implore you, come into a gentleman's house and saturate him and his possessions in this way. It is damned disagreeable."

"Henry Hartwick Oglethorpe," said the ghost, in a gurgling voice, "you don't know what you are talking about."

"Madam," returned the unhappy householder, "I wish that remark were strictly truthful. I was talking about you. It would be shillings and pence—nay, pounds, in my pocket, madam, if I did not know you."

"That is a bit of specious nonsense," returned the ghost, throwing a quart of indignation into the face of the master of Harrowby. "It may rank high as repartee, but as a comment upon my statement that you do not know what you are talking about, it savors of irrelevant impertinence. You do not know that I am compelled to haunt this place year after year by inexorable fate. It is no pleasure to me to enter this house, and ruin and mildew

everything I touch. I never aspired to be a shower-bath, but it is my doom. Do you know who I am?"

"No, I don't," returned the master of Harrowby. "I should say you were the Lady of the Lake, or Little Sallie Waters."

"You are a witty man for your years," said the ghost.

"Well, my humor is drier than yours ever will be," returned the master.

"No doubt. I'm never dry. I am the Water Ghost of Harrowby Hall, and dryness is a quality entirely beyond my wildest hope. I have been the incumbent of this highly unpleasant office for two hundred years to-night."

"How the deuce did you ever come to get elected?" asked the master.

"Through a suicide," replied the spectre. "I am the ghost of that fair maiden whose picture hangs over the mantel-piece in the drawing-room. I should have been your great-great-great-great-great-aunt if I had lived, Henry Hartwick Oglethorpe, for I was the own sister of your great-great-great-great-grandfather."

"But what induced you to get this house into such a predicament?"

"I was not to blame, sir," returned the lady. "It was my father's fault. He it was who built Harrowby Hall, and the haunted chamber was to have been mine. My father had it furnished in pink and yellow, knowing well that blue and gray formed the only combination of color I could tolerate. He did it merely to spite me, and, with what I deem a proper spirit, I declined to live in

the room; whereupon my father said I could live there or on the lawn, he didn't care which. That night I ran from the house and jumped over the cliff into the sea."

"That was rash," said the master of Harrowby.

"So I've heard," returned the ghost. "If I had known what the consequences were to be I should not have jumped; but I really never realized what I was doing until after I was drowned. I had been drowned a week when a sea-nymph came to me and informed me that I was to be one of her followers forever afterwards, adding that it should be my doom to haunt Harrowby Hall for one hour every Christmas Eve throughout the rest of eternity. I was to haunt that room on such Christmas Eves as I found it inhabited; and if it should turn out not to be inhabited, I was and am to spend the allotted hour with the head of the house."

"I'll sell the place."

"That you cannot do, for it is also required of me that I shall appear as the deeds are to be delivered to any purchaser, and divulge to him the awful secret of the house."

"Do you mean to tell me that on every Christmas Eve that I don't happen to have somebody in that guest-chamber, you are going to haunt me wherever I may be, ruining my whiskey, taking all the curl out of my hair, extinguishing my fire, and soaking me through to the skin?" demanded the master.

"You have stated the case, Oglethorpe. And what is more," said the water ghost, "it doesn't make the slightest difference

where you are, if I find that room empty, wherever you may be I shall douse you with my spectral pres—"

Here the clock struck one, and immediately the apparition faded away. It was perhaps more of a trickle than a fade, but as a disappearance it was complete.

"By St. George and his Dragon!" ejaculated the master of Harrowby, wringing his hands. "It is guineas to hot-cross buns that next Christmas there's an occupant of the spare room, or I spend the night in a bath-tub."

But the master of Harrowby would have lost his wager had there been any one there to take him up, for when Christmas Eve came again he was in his grave, never having recovered from the cold contracted that awful night. Harrowby Hall was closed, and the heir to the estate was in London, where to him in his chambers came the same experience that his father had gone through, saving only that, being younger and stronger, he survived the shock. Everything in his rooms was ruined—his clocks were rusted in the works; a fine collection of water-color drawings was entirely obliterated by the onslaught of the water ghost; and what was worse, the apartments below his were drenched with the water soaking through the floors, a damage for which he was compelled to pay, and which resulted in his being requested by his landlady to vacate the premises immediately.

The story of the visitation inflicted upon his family had gone abroad, and no one could be got to invite him out to any function save afternoon teas and receptions. Fathers of daughters

declined to permit him to remain in their houses later than eight o'clock at night, not knowing but that some emergency might arise in the supernatural world which would require the unexpected appearance of the water ghost in this on nights other than Christmas Eve, and before the mystic hour when weary churchyards, ignoring the rules which are supposed to govern polite society, begin to yawn. Nor would the maids themselves have aught to do with him, fearing the destruction by the sudden incursion of aqueous femininity of the costumes which they held most dear.

So the heir of Harrowby Hall resolved, as his ancestors for several generations before him had resolved, that something must be done. His first thought was to make one of his servants occupy the haunted room at the crucial moment; but in this he failed, because the servants themselves knew the history of that room and rebelled. None of his friends would consent to sacrifice their personal comfort to his, nor was there to be found in all England a man so poor as to be willing to occupy the doomed chamber on Christmas Eve for pay.

Then the thought came to the heir to have the fireplace in the room enlarged, so that he might evaporate the ghost at its first appearance, and he was felicitating himself upon the ingenuity of his plan, when he remembered what his father had told him—how that no fire could withstand the lady's extremely contagious dampness. And then he bethought him of steam-pipes. These, he remembered, could lie hundreds of feet deep in water, and

still retain sufficient heat to drive the water away in vapor; and as a result of this thought the haunted room was heated by steam to a withering degree, and the heir for six months attended daily the Turkish baths, so that when Christmas Eve came he could himself withstand the awful temperature of the room.

The scheme was only partially successful. The water ghost appeared at the specified time, and found the heir of Harrowby prepared; but hot as the room was, it shortened her visit by no more than five minutes in the hour, during which time the nervous system of the young master was wellnigh shattered, and the room itself was cracked and warped to an extent which required the outlay of a large sum of money to remedy. And worse than this, as the last drop of the water ghost was slowly sizzling itself out on the floor, she whispered to her would-be conqueror that his scheme would avail him nothing, because there was still water in great plenty where she came from, and that next year would find her rehabilitated and as exasperatingly saturating as ever.

It was then that the natural action of the mind, in going from one extreme to the other, suggested to the ingenious heir of Harrowby the means by which the water ghost was ultimately conquered, and happiness once more came within the grasp of the house of Oglethorpe.

The heir provided himself with a warm suit of fur underclothing. Donning this with the furry side in, he placed over it a rubber garment, tightfitting, which he wore just as a woman

wears a jersey. On top of this he placed another set of under-clothing, this suit made of wool, and over this was a second rubber garment like the first. Upon his head he placed a light and comfortable diving helmet, and so clad, on the following Christmas Eve he awaited the coming of his tormentor.

It was a bitterly cold night that brought to a close this twenty-fourth day of December. The air outside was still, but the temperature was below zero. Within all was quiet, the servants of Harrowby Hall awaiting with beating hearts the outcome of their master's campaign against his supernatural visitor.

The master himself was lying on the bed in the haunted room, clad as has already been indicated, and then—

The clock clanged out the hour of twelve.

There was a sudden banging of doors, a blast of cold air swept through the halls, the door leading into the haunted chamber flew open, a splash was heard, and the water ghost was seen standing at the side of the heir of Harrowby, from whose outer dress there streamed rivulets of water, but whose own person deep down under the various garments he wore was as dry and as warm as he could have wished.

"Ha!" said the young master of Harrowby. "I'm glad to see you."

"You are the most original man I've met, if that is true," returned the ghost. "May I ask where did you get that hat?"

"Certainly, madam," returned the master, courteously. "It is a little portable observatory I had made for just such emergencies

as this. But, tell me, is it true that you are doomed to follow me about for one mortal hour—to stand where I stand, to sit where I sit?"

"That is my delectable fate," returned the lady.

"We'll go out on the lake," said the master, starting up.

"You can't get rid of me that way," returned the ghost. "The water won't swallow me up; in fact, it will just add to my present bulk."

"Nevertheless," said the master, firmly, "we will go out on the lake."

"But, my dear sir," returned the ghost, with a pale reluctance, "it is fearfully cold out there. You will be frozen hard before you've been out ten minutes."

"Oh no, I'll not," replied the master. "I am very warmly dressed. Come!" This last in a tone of command that made the ghost ripple.

And they started.

They had not gone far before the water ghost showed signs of distress.

"You walk too slowly," she said. "I am nearly frozen. My knees are so stiff now I can hardly move. I beseech you to accelerate your step."

"I should like to oblige a lady," returned the master, courteously, "but my clothes are rather heavy, and a hundred yards an hour is about my speed. Indeed, I think we would better sit down here on this snowdrift, and talk matters over."

"Do not! Do not do so, I beg!" cried the ghost. "Let me move on. I feel myself growing rigid as it is. If we stop here, I shall be frozen stiff."

"That, madam," said the master slowly, and seating himself on an ice-cake—"that is why I have brought you here. We have been on this spot just ten minutes, we have fifty more. Take your time about it, madam, but freeze, that is all I ask of you."

"I cannot move my right leg now," cried the ghost, in despair, "and my overskirt is a solid sheet of ice. Oh, good, kind Mr. Oglethorpe, light a fire, and let me go free from these icy fetters."

"Never, madam. It cannot be. I have you at last."

"Alas!" cried the ghost, a tear trickling down her frozen cheek. "Help me, I beg. I congeal!"

"Congeal, madam, congeal!" returned Oglethorpe, coldly. "You have drenched me and mine for two hundred and three years, madam. To-night you have had your last drench."

"Ah, but I shall thaw out again, and then you'll see. Instead of the comfortably tepid, genial ghost I have been in my past, sir, I shall be iced-water," cried the lady, threateningly.

"No, you won't, either," returned Oglethorpe; "for when you are frozen quite stiff, I shall send you to a cold-storage warehouse, and there shall you remain an icy work of art forever more."

"But warehouses burn."

"So they do, but this warehouse cannot burn. It is made of asbestos and surrounding it are fire-proof walls, and within those

walls the temperature is now and shall forever be 416 degrees below the zero point; low enough to make an icicle of any flame in this world—or the next," the master added, with an ill-suppressed chuckle.

"For the last time let me beseech you. I would go on my knees to you, Oglethorpe, were they not already frozen. I beg of you do not doo—"

Here even the words froze on the water ghost's lips and the clock struck one. There was a momentary tremor throughout the ice-bound form, and the moon, coming out from behind a cloud, shone down on the rigid figure of a beautiful woman sculptured in clear, transparent ice. There stood the ghost of Harrowby Hall, conquered by the cold, a prisoner for all time.

The heir of Harrowby had won at last, and to-day in a large storage house in London stands the frigid form of one who will never again flood the house of Oglethorpe with woe and seawater.

As for the heir of Harrowby, his success in coping with a ghost has made him famous, a fame that still lingers about him, although his victory took place some twenty years ago; and so far from being unpopular with the fair sex, as he was when we first knew him, he has not only been married twice, but is to lead a third bride to the altar before the year is out.

THE SPECTRE COOK OF BANGLETOP

I

For the purposes of this bit of history, Bangletop Hall stands upon a grassy knoll on the left bank of the River Dee, about eighteen miles from the quaint old city of Chester. It does not in reality stand there, nor has it ever done so, but consideration for the interests of the living compels me to conceal its exact location, and so to befog the public as to its whereabouts that its identity may never be revealed to its disadvantage. It is a rentable property, and were it known that it has had a mystery connected with it of so deep, dark, and eerie a nature as that about to be related, I fear that its usefulness, save as an accessory to romance, would be seriously impaired, and that as an investment it would become practically worthless.

The hall is a fair specimen of the architecture which prevailed at the time of Edward the Confessor; that is to say, the main portion of the structure, erected in Edward's time by the first Baron Bangletop, has that square, substantial, stony aspect which to the eye versed in architecture identifies it at once as a product of that enlightened era. Later owners, the successive

Barons Bangletop, have added to its original dimensions, putting Queen Anne wings here, Elizabethan ells there, and an Italian-Renaissance facade on the river front. A Wisconsin water tower, connected with the main building by a low Gothic alleyway, stands to the south; while toward the east is a Greek chapel, used by the present occupant as a store-room for his wife's trunks, she having lately returned from Paris with a wardrobe calculated to last through the first half of the coming London season. Altogether Bangletop Hall is an impressive structure, and at first sight gives rise to various emotions in the aesthetic breast; some cavil, others admire. One leading architect of Berlin travelled all the way from his German home to Bangletop Hall to show that famous structure to his son, a student in the profession which his father adorned; to whom he is said to have observed that, architecturally, Bangletop Hall was "cosmopolitan and omniperiodic, and therefore a liberal education to all who should come to study and master its details." In short, Bangletop Hall was an object-lesson to young architects, and showed them at a glance that which they should ever strive to avoid.

Strange to say, for quite two centuries had Bangletop Hall remained without a tenant, and for nearly seventy-five years it had been in the market for rent, the barons, father and son, for many generations having found it impossible to dwell within its walls, and for a very good reason: no cook could ever be induced to live at Bangletop for a longer period than two weeks. Why the queens of the kitchen invariably took what is

commonly known as French leave no occupant could ever learn, because, male or female, the departed domestics never returned to tell, and even had they done so, the pride of the Bangletops would not have permitted them to listen to the explanation. The Bangletop escutcheon was clear of blots, no suspicion even of a conversational blemish appearing thereon, and it was always a matter of extreme satisfaction to the family that no one of its scions since the title was created had ever been known to speak directly to any one of lesser rank than himself, communication with inferiors being always had through the medium of a private secretary, himself a baron, or better, in reduced circumstances.

The first cook to leave Bangletop under circumstances of a Gallic nature—that is, without known cause, wages, or luggage—had been employed by Fitzherbert Alexander, seventeenth Baron of Bangletop, through Charles Mortimor de Herbert, Baron Peddlington, formerly of Peddlington Manor at Dunwoodie-on-the-Hike, his private secretary, a handsome old gentleman of sixty-five, who had been deprived of his estates by the crown in 1629 because he was suspected of having inspired a comic broadside published in those troublous days, and directed against Charles the First, which had set all London in a roar.

This broadside, one of very few which are not preserved in the British Museum—and a greater tribute to its rarity could not be devised—was called, "A Good Suggestion as to ye Proper Use of ye Chinne Whisker," and consisted of a few lines of doggerel printed beneath a caricature of the king, with the crown hanging

from his goatee, reading as follows:

"Ye King doth sporte a gallous grey goatee
Uponne ye chinne, where every one may see.
And since ye Monarch's head's too small to holde
With comfort to himselfe ye crowne of gold,
Why not enwax and hooke ye goatee rare,
And lette ye British crown hang down from there?"

Whether or no the Baron of Peddlington was guilty of this traitorous effusion no one, not even the king, could ever really make up his mind. The charge was never fully proven, nor was De Herbert ever able to refute it successfully, although he made frantic efforts to do so. The king, eminently just in such matters, gave the baron the benefit of the doubt, and inflicted only half the penalty prescribed, confiscating his estates, and letting him keep his head and liberty. De Herbert's family begged the crown to reverse the sentence, permitting them to keep the estates, the king taking their uncle's head in lieu thereof, he being unmarried and having no children who would mourn his loss. But Charles was poor rather than vindictive at this period, and preferring to adopt the other course, turned a deaf ear to the petitioners. This was probably one of the earliest factors in the decadence of literature as a pastime for men of high station.

De Herbert would have starved had it not been for his old friend Baron Bangletop, who offered him the post of private secretary, lately made vacant by the death of the Duke of Algeria,

who had been the incumbent of that office for ten years, and in a short time the Baron of Peddlington was in full charge of the domestic arrangements of his friend. It was far from easy, the work that devolved upon him. He was a proud, haughty man, used to luxury of every sort, to whom contact with those who serve was truly distasteful; to whom the necessity of himself serving was most galling; but he had the manliness to face the hardships Fate had put upon him, particularly when he realized that Baron Bangletop's attitude towards servants was such that he could with impunity impose on the latter seven indignities for every one that was imposed on him. Misery loves company, particularly when she is herself the hostess, and can give generously of her stores to others.

Desiring to retrieve his fallen fortunes, the Baron of Peddlington offered large salaries to those whom he employed to serve in the Bangletop menage, and on payday, through an ingenious system of fines, managed to retain almost seventy-five per cent of the funds for his own use. Of this Baron Bangletop, of course, could know nothing. He was aware that under De Herbert the running expenses of his household were nearly twice what they had been under the dusky Duke of Algeria; but he also observed that repairs to the property, for which the late duke had annually paid out several thousands of pounds sterling, with very little to show for it, now cost him as many hundreds with no fewer tangible results. So he winked his eye—the only unaristocratic habit he had, by-the-way—and said nothing. The revenue was

large enough, he had been known to say, to support himself and all his relatives in state, with enough left over to satisfy even Ali Baba and the forty thieves.

Had he foreseen the results of his complacency in financial matters, I doubt if he would have persisted therein.

For some ten years under De Herbert's management everything went smoothly and expensively for the Bangletop Hall people, and then there came a change. The Baron Bangletop rang for his breakfast one morning, and his breakfast was not. The cook had disappeared. Whither or why she had gone, the private secretary professed to be unable to say. That she could easily be replaced, he was certain. Equally certain was it that Baron Bangletop stormed and raved for two hours, ate a cold breakfast—a thing he never had been known to do before—and then departed for London to dine at the club until Peddlington had secured a successor to the departed cook, which the private secretary succeeded in doing within three days. The baron was informed of his manager's success, and at the end of a week returned to Bangletop Hall, arriving there late on a Saturday night, hungry as a bear, and not too amiable, the king having negotiated a forcible loan with him during his sojourn in the metropolis.

"Welcome to Bangletop, Baron," said De Herbert, uneasily, as his employer alighted from his coach.

"Blast your welcome, and serve the dinner," returned the baron, with a somewhat ill grace.

At this the private secretary seemed much embarrassed. "Ahem!" he said. "I'll be very glad to have the dinner served, my dear Baron; but the fact is I—er—I have been unable to provide anything but canned lobster and apples."

"What, in the name of Chaucer, does this mean?" roared Bangletop, who was a great admirer of the father of English poetry; chiefly because, as he was wont to say, Chaucer showed that a bad speller could be a great man, which was a condition of affairs exactly suited to his mind, since in the science of orthography he was weak, like most of the aristocrats of his day. "I thought you sent me word you had a cook?"

"Yes, Baron, I did; but the fact of the matter is, sir, she left us last night, or, rather, early this morning."

"Another one of your beautiful Parisian exits, I presume?" sneered the baron, tapping the floor angrily with his toe.

"Well, yes, somewhat so; only she got her money first."

"Money!" shrieked the baron. "Money! Why in Liverpool did she get her money? What did we owe her money for? Rent?"

"No, Baron; for services. She cooked three dinners."

"Well, you'll pay the bill out of your perquisites, that's all. She's done no cooking for me, and she gets no pay from me. Why do you think she left?"

"She said—"

"Never mind what she said, sir," cried Bangletop, cutting De Herbert short. "When I am interested in the table-talk of cooks, I'll let you know. What I wish to hear is what do *you* think was

the cause of her leaving?"

"I have no opinion on the subject," replied the private secretary, with becoming dignity. "I only know that at four o'clock this morning she knocked at my door, and demanded her wages for four days, and vowed she'd stay no longer in the house."

"And why, pray, did you not inform me of the fact, instead of having me travel away down here from London?" queried Bangletop.

"You forget, Baron," replied De Herbert, with a deprecatory gesture—"you forget that there is no system of telegraphy by which you could be reached. I may be poor, sir, but I'm just as much of a baron as you are, and I will take the liberty of saying right here, in what would be the shadow of your beard, if you had one, sir, that a man who insists on receiving cable messages when no such things exist is rather rushing business."

"Pardon my haste, Peddlington, old chap," returned the baron, softening. "You are quite right. My desire was unreasonable; but I swear to you, by all my ancestral Bangletops, that I am hungry as a pit full of bears, and if there's one thing I can't eat, it is lobster and apples. Can't you scare up a snack of bread and cheese and a little cold larded fillet? If you'll supply the fillet, I'll provide the cold."

At this sally the Baron of Peddlington laughed and the quarrel was over. But none the less the master of Bangletop went to bed hungry; nor could he do any better in the morning at breakfast-time. The butler had not been trained to cook, and

the coachman's art had once been tried on a boiled egg, which no one had been able to open, much less eat, and as it was the parlor-maid's Sunday off, there was absolutely no one in the house who could prepare a meal. The Baron of Bangletop had a sort of sneaking notion that if there were nobody around he could have managed the spit or gridiron himself; but, of course, in view of his position, he could not make the attempt. And so he once more returned to London, and vowed never to set his foot within the walls of Bangletop Hall again until his ancestral home was provided with a cook "copper-fastened and riveted to her position."

And Bangletop Hall from that time was as a place deserted. The baron never returned, because he could not return without violating his oath; for De Herbert was not able to obtain a cook for the Bangletop cuisine who would stay, nor was any one able to discover why. Cook after cook came, stayed a day, a week, and one or two held on for two weeks, but never longer. Their course was invariably the same—they would leave without notice; nor could any inducement be offered which would persuade them to remain. The Baron of Peddlington became, first round-shouldered, then deaf, and then insane in his search for a permanent cook, landing finally in an asylum, where he died, four years after the demise of his employer in London, of softening of the brain. His last words were, "Why did you leave your last place?"

And so time went on. Barons of Bangletop were born,

educated, and died. Dynasties rose and fell, but Bangletop Hall remained uninhabited, although it was not until 1799 that the family gave up all hopes of being able to use their ancestral home. Tremendous alterations, as I have already hinted, were made. The drainage was carefully inspected, and a special apartment connected with the kitchen, finished in hardwood, handsomely decorated, and hung with rich tapestries, was provided for the cook, in the vain hope that she might be induced permanently to occupy her position. The Queen Anne wing and Elizabethan ell were constructed, the latter to provide bowling-alleys and smoking-rooms for the probable cousins of possible culinary queens, and many there were who accepted the office with alacrity, throwing it up with still greater alacrity before the usual fortnight passed. Then the Bangletops saw clearly that it was impossible for them to live there, and moving away, the house was announced to be "for rent, with all modern improvements, conveniently located, spacious grounds, especially adapted to the use of those who do their own cooking." The last clause of the announcement puzzled a great many people, who went to see the mansion for no other reason than to ascertain just what the announcement meant, and the line, which was inserted in a pure spirit of facetious bravado, was probably the cause of the mansion's quickly renting, as hardly a month had passed before it was leased for one year by a retired London brewer, whose wife's curiosity had been so excited by the strange wording of the advertisement that she travelled out to Bangletop to gratify it,

fell in love with the place, and insisted upon her husband's taking it for a season. The luck of the brewer and his wife was no better than that of the Bangletops. Their cooks—and they had fourteen during their stay there—fled after an average service of four days apiece, and later the tenants themselves were forced to give up and return to London, where they told their friends that the "all was 'aunted," which might have filled the Bangletops with concern had they heard of it. They did not hear of it, however, for they and their friends did not know the brewer and the brewer's friends, and as for complaining to the Bangletop agent in the matter, the worthy beer-maker thought he would better not do that, because he had hopes of being knighted some day, and he did not wish to antagonize so illustrious a family as the Bangletops by running down their famous hall—an antagonism which might materially affect the chances of himself and his good wife when they came to knock at the doors of London society. The lease was allowed to run its course, the rent was paid when due, and at the end of the stipulated term Bangletop Hall was once more on the lists as for rent.

II

For fourscore years and ten did the same hard fortune pursue the owners of Bangletop. Additions to the property were made immediately upon request of possible lessees. The Greek chapel was constructed in 1868 at the mere suggestion of a Hellenic prince, who came to England to write a history of the American rebellion, finding the information in back files of British newspapers exactly suited to the purposes of picturesque narrative, and no more misleading than most home-made history. Bangletop was retired, "far from the gadding crowd," as the prince put it, and therefore just the place in which a historian of the romantic school might produce his *magnum opus* without disturbance; the only objection being that there was no place whither the eminently Christian sojourner could go to worship according to his faith, he being a communicant in the Greek Church. This defect Baron Bangletop immediately remedied by erecting and endowing the chapel; and his youngest son, having been found too delicate morally for the army, was appointed to the living and placed in charge of the chapel, having first embraced with considerable ardor the faith upon which the soul of the princely tenant was wont to feed. All of these improvements—chapel, priest, the latter's change of faith, and all—the Bangletop agent put at the exceedingly low sum of forty-two guineas per annum and board for the priest; an offer which

the prince at once accepted, stipulating, however, that the lease should be terminable at any time he or his landlord should see fit. Against this the agent fought nobly, but without avail. The prince had heard rumors about the cooks of Bangletop, and he was wary. Finally the stipulation was accepted by the baron, with what result the reader need hardly be told. The prince stayed two weeks, listened to one sermon in classic university Greek by the youthful Bangletop, was deserted by his cook, and moved away.

After the departure of the prince the estate was neglected for nearly twenty-two years, the owner having made up his mind that the case was hopeless. At the end of that period there came from the United States a wealthy shoemaker, Hankinson J. Terwilliger by name, chief owner of the Terwilliger Three-dollar Shoe Company (Limited), of Soleton, Massachusetts, and to him was leased Bangletop Hall, with all its rights and appurtenances, for a term of five years. Mr. Terwilliger was the first applicant for the hall as a dwelling to whom the agent, at the instance of the baron, spoke in a spirit of absolute candor. The baron was well on in years, and he did not feel like getting into trouble with a Yankee, so he said, at his time of life. The hall had been a thorn in his flesh all his days, and he didn't care if it was never occupied, and therefore he wished nothing concealed from a prospective tenant. It was the agent's candor more than anything else that induced Mr. Terwilliger to close with him for the term of five years. He suspected that the Bangletops did not want him for a tenant, and from the moment that notion entered his head, he

was resolved that he would be a tenant.

"I'm as good a man as any baron that ever lived," he said; "and if it pleases Hankinson J. Terwilliger to live in a baronial hall, a baronial hall is where Hankinson J. Terwilliger puts up."

"We certainly have none of the feeling which your words seem to attribute to us, my dear sir," the agent had answered. "Baron Bangletop would feel highly honored to have so distinguished a sojourner in England as yourself occupy his estate, but he does not wish you to take it without fully understanding the circumstances. Desirable as Bangletop Hall is, it seems fated to be unoccupied because it is thought to be haunted, or something of that sort, the effect of which is to drive away cooks, and without cooks life is hardly an ideal."

Mr. Terwilliger laughed. "Ghosts and me are not afraid of each other," he said. "'Let 'em haunt,' I say; and as for cooks, Mrs. H.J.T. hasn't had a liberal education for nothing. We could live if all the cooks in creation were to go off in a whiff. We have daughters too, we have. Good smart American girls, who can adorn a palace or grace a hut on demand, not afraid of poverty, and able to take care of good round dollars. They can play the piano all the morning and cook dinner all the afternoon if they're called on to do it; so your difficulties ain't my difficulties. I'll take the hall at your figures; term, five years; and if the baron'll come down and spend a month with us at any time, I don't care when, we'll show him what a big lap Luxury can get up when she tries."

And so it happened the New York papers announced

that Hankinson J. Terwilliger, Mrs. Terwilliger, the Misses Terwilliger, and Master Hankinson J. Terwilliger, Jun., of Soleton, Massachusetts, had plunged into the dizzy whirl of English society, and that the sole of the three-dollar shoe now trod the baronial halls of the Bangletops. Later it was announced that the Misses Terwilliger, of Bangletop Hall, had been presented to the queen; that the Terwilligers had entertained the Prince of Wales at Bangletop; in fact, the Terwilligers became an important factor in the letters of all foreign correspondents of American papers, for the president of the Terwilliger Three-dollar Shoe Company, of Soleton, Massachusetts (Limited), was now in full possession of the historic mansion, and was living up to his surroundings.

For a time everything was plain sailing for the Americans at Bangletop. The dire forebodings of the agent did not seem to be fulfilled, and Mr. Terwilliger was beginning to feel aggrieved. He had hired a house with a ghost, and he wanted the use of it; but when he reflected upon the consequences below stairs, he held his peace. He was not so sure, after he had stayed at Bangletop awhile, and had had his daughters presented to the queen, that he could be so independent of cooks as he had at first supposed. Several times he had hinted rather broadly that some of the old New England homemade flap-jacks would be most pleasing to his palate; but since the prince had spent an afternoon on the lawn of Bangletop, the young ladies seemed deeply pained at the mere mention of their accomplishments in the line of griddles

and batter; nor could Mrs. Terwilliger, after having tasted the joys of aristocratic life, bring herself to don the apron which so became her portly person in the early American days, and prepare for her lord and master one of those delicious platters of poached eggs and breakfast bacon, the mere memory of which made his mouth water. In short, palatial surroundings had too obviously destroyed in his wife and daughters all that capacity for happiness in a hovel of which Mr. Terwilliger had been so proud, and concerning which he had so eloquently spoken to Baron Bangletop's agent, and he now found himself in the position of Damocles. The hall was leased for a term, entertainment had been provided for the county with lavish hand; but success was dependent entirely upon his ability to keep a cook, his family having departed from their republican principles, and the history of the house was dead against a successful issue. So he decided that, after all, it was better that the ghost should be allowed to remain quiescent, and he uttered no word of complaint.

It was just as well, too, that Mr. Terwilliger held his peace, and refrained from addressing a complaining missive to the agent of Bangletop Hall; for before a message of that nature could have reached the person addressed, its contents would have been misleading, for at a quarter after midnight on the morning of the date set for the first of a series of grand banquets to the county folk, there came from the kitchen of Bangletop Hall a quick succession of shrieks that sent the three Misses Terwilliger into hysterics, and caused Hankinson J. Terwilliger's

sole remaining lock to stand erect. Mrs. Terwilliger did not hear the shrieks, owing to a lately acquired habit of hearing nothing that proceeded from below stairs.

The first impulse of Terwilliger *pere* was to dive down under the bedclothes, and endeavor to drown the fearful sound by his own labored breathing, but he never yielded to first impulses. So he awaited the second, which came simultaneously with a second series of shrieks and a cry for help in the unmistakable voice of the cook; a lady, by-the-way, who had followed the Terwilliger fortunes ever since the Terwilligers began to have fortunes, and whose first capacity in the family had been the dual one of mistress of the kitchen and confidante of madame. The second impulse was to arise in his might, put on a stout pair of the Terwilliger three-dollar brogans—the strongest shoe made, having been especially devised for the British Infantry in the Soudan—and garments suitable to the occasion, namely, a mackintosh and pair of broadcloth trousers, and go to the rescue of the distressed domestic. This Hankinson J. Terwilliger at once proceeded to do, arming himself with a pair of horse-pistols, murmuring on the way below a soft prayer, the only one he knew, and which, with singular inappropriateness on this occasion, began with the words, "Now I lay me down to sleep."

"What's the matter, Judson?" queried Mrs. Terwilliger, drowsily, as she opened her eyes and saw her husband preparing for the fray.

She no longer called him Hankinson, not because she did

not think it a good name, nor was it less euphonious to her ear than Judson, but Judson was Mr. Terwilliger's middle name, and middle names were quite the thing, she had observed, in the best circles. It was doubtless due to this discovery that her visiting cards had been engraved to read "Mrs. H. Judson-Terwilliger," the hyphen presumably being a typographical error, for which the engraver was responsible.

"Matter enough," growled Hankinson. "I have reason to believe that that jackass of a ghost is on duty to-night."

At the word ghost a pseudo-aristocratic shriek pervaded the atmosphere, and Mrs. Terwilliger, forgetting her social position for a moment, groaned "Oh, Hank!" and swooned away. And then the president of the Terwilliger Three-dollar Shoe Company of Soleton, Massachusetts (Limited), descended to the kitchen.

Across the sill of the kitchen door lay the culinary treasure whose lobster croquettes the Prince of Wales had likened unto a dream of Lucullus. Within the kitchen were signs of disorder. Chairs were upset; the table was lying flat on its back, with its four legs held rigidly up in the air; the kitchen library, consisting of a copy of *Marie Antoinette's Dream-Book*; a yellow-covered novel bearing the title *Little Lucy; or, The Kitchen-maid who Became a Marchioness*; and *Sixty Soups, by One who Knows*, lay strewn about the room, the *Dream-Book* sadly torn, and *Little Lucy* disfigured forever with batter. Even to the unpractised eye it was evident that something had happened, and Mr. Terwilliger felt a cold chill mounting his spine three sections at a time.

Whether it was the chill or his concern for the prostrate cook that was responsible or not I cannot say, but for some cause or other Mr. Terwilliger immediately got down on his knees, in which position he gazed fearfully about him for a few minutes, and then timidly remarked, "Cook!"

There was no answer.

"Mary, I say. Cook," he whispered, "what the deuce is the meaning of all this?"

A low moan was all that came from the cook, nor would Hankinson have listened to more had there been more to hear, for simultaneously with the moan he became uncomfortably conscious of a presence. In trying to describe it afterwards, Hankinson said that at first he thought a cold draught from a dank cavern filled with a million eels, and a rattlesnake or two thrown in for luck, was blowing over him, and he avowed that it was anything but pleasant; and then it seemed to change into a mist drawn largely from a stagnant pool in a malarial country, floating through which were great quantities of finely chopped sea-weed, wet hair, and an indescribable atmosphere of something the chief quality of which was a sort of stale clamminess that was awful in its intensity.

"I'm glad," Mr. Terwilliger murmured to himself, "that I ain't one of those delicately reared nobles. If I had anything less than a right-down regular republican constitution I'd die of fright."

And then his natural grit came to his rescue, and it was well it did, for the presence had assumed shape, and now sat on the

window-ledge in the form of a hag, glaring at him from out of the depths of her unfathomable eyes, in which, despite their deadly greenness, there lurked a tinge of red caused by small specks of that hue semioccasionally seen floating across her dilated pupils.

"You are the Bangletop ghost, I presume?" said Terwilliger, rising and standing near the fire to thaw out his system.

The spectre made no reply, but pointed to the door.

"Yes," Terwilliger said, as if answering a question. "That's the way out, madame. It's a beautiful exit, too. Just try it."

"H'I knows the wi out," returned the spectre, rising and approaching the tenant of Bangletop, whose solitary lock also rose, being too polite to remain seated while the ghost walked. "H'I also knows the wi in, 'Ankinson Judson Terwilliger."

"That's very evident, madame, and between you and me I wish you didn't," returned Hankinson, somewhat relieved to hear the ghost talk, even if her voice did sound like the roar of a conch-shell with a bad case of grip. "I may say to you that, aside from a certain uncanny satisfaction which I feel at being permitted for the first time in my life to gaze upon the linaments of a real live misty musty spook, I regard your coming here as an invasion of the sacred rights of privacy which is, as you might say, 'hinexcusable.'"

"Hinvasion?" retorted the ghost, snapping her fingers in his face with such effect that his chin dropped until Terwilliger began to fear it might never resume its normal position. "Hinvasion? H'I'd like to know 'oo's the hinvaider. H'I've occupied these 'ere

'alls for hover two 'undred years."

"Then it's time you moved, unless perchance you are the ghost of a mediaeval porker," Hankinson said, his calmness returning now that he had succeeded in plastering his iron-gray lock across the top of his otherwise bald head. "Of course, if you are a spook of that kind you want the earth, and maybe you'll get it."

"H'I'm no porker," returned the spectre. "H'I'm simply the shide of a poor abused cook which is hafter revenge."

"Ah!" ejaculated Terwilliger, raising his eyebrows, "this is getting interesting. You're a spook with a grievance, eh? Against me? I've never wronged a ghost that I know of."

"No, h'I've no 'ard feelinks against you, sir," answered the ghost. "Hin fact h'I don't know nothink about you. My trouble's with them Baingletops, and h'I'm a-pursuin' of 'em. H'I've cut 'em out of two 'undred years of rent 'ere. They might better 'ave pide me me waiges hin full."

"Oho!" cried Terwilliger; "it's a question of wages, is it? The Bangletops were hard up?"

"'Ard up? The Baingletops?" laughed the ghost. "When they gets 'ard up the Baink o' Hengland will be in all the sixty soups mentioned in that there book."

"You seem to be up in the vernacular," returned Terwilliger, with a smile. "I'll bet you are an old fraud of a modern ghost."

Here he discharged all six chambers of his pistol into the body of the spectre.

"No takers," retorted the ghost, as the bullets whistled

through her chest, and struck deep into the wall on the other side of the kitchen. "That's a noisy gun you've got, but you can't lie a ghost with cold lead any more than you can lie a corner-stone with a chicken. H'I'm 'ere to stay until I gets me wages."

"What was the amount of your wages due at the time of your discharge?" asked Hankinson.

"H'I was gettin' ten pounds a month," returned the spectre.

"Geewhittaker!" cried Terwilliger, "you must have been an all-fired fine cook."

"H'I was," assented the ghost, with a proud smile. "H'I cooked a boar's head for 'is Royal 'Ighness King Charles when 'e visited Baingletop 'All as which was the finest 'e hever tasted, so 'e said, and 'e'd 'ave knighted me on the spot if my sex wasn't suited to the title. 'You can't make a knight out of a woman,' says the king, 'but give 'er my compliments, and tell 'er 'er monarch says as 'ow she's a cook as is too good for 'er station.'"

"That was very nice," said Terwilliger. "No one could have desired a higher recommendation than that."

"My words hexactly when the baron's privit secretary told me two days laiter as 'ow the baron's heggs wasn't done proper," said the ghost. "H'I says to 'im, says I: 'The baron's heggs be blowed. My monarch's hopinion is worth two of any ten barons's livin', and Mister Baingletop,' (h'I allus called 'im mister when 'e was ugly,) 'can get 'is heggs cooked helsewhere if 'e don't like the way h'I boils 'em.' Hand what do you suppose the secretary said then?"

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