

# Unknown Ghosts and a Houseful of Girls

THE TERRORS OF ONE SUMMER AS RELATED BY ONE OF THE TERRIFIED. BY F. E. HOWSON

WE made our ghosts' acquaintance in Australia, where Father's business (he is a partner in a bicycle firm) had taken him. Harry and I and little Ike were delighted when Father decided to take us and Mother with him. We expected the six months we were to be away from home to be a picnic, indeed, and we were not disappointed.

I will pass over the trip across the continent from Cincinnati to San Francisco; the long sea voyage, broken by stays at Honolulu and Auckland; the few happy days we spent in Sydney and Melbourne; and commence when we took possession of the furnished house. Father rented for us at Magill, five miles out of Adelaide. He had to locate us somewhere while he traveled round Young business, and chose Adelaide because his college chum, Ralph Inghram, was a member of the Adelaide House of Assembly, having, also, given up his nationality and made his home in Australia, and this house in particular, because it joined the house of Mr. Inghram, and we should have the company of his family, so would not be homeless in Father's absence.

The Inghram family, consisting of father, mother, two sons, one at Cambridge University, England, being made a gentile John Bull; the younger, Harry, was at a boarding school in Melbourne; one daughter, Sara, a girl of my age—devoted to cricket, tennis, cycling, horseback riding and entirely free from nerves.

No sooner had we taken possession of the house than business called Father away from us. He had been gone but a few days when a telegram summoned Mother to join him in Melbourne; he had been asked with an attack of sciatica, and could not get along without her. She departed by the next train, leaving us to the care of the Inghrams and the good-natured Irish woman who had consented to run our domestic machine.

"Shure, mem, ye needn't be feared to leave the chiller with me. I'll take good care of the boy and kape the men folk from runnin' off with the young ladies, bless their pretty eyes," she had said to Mother.

Our troubles were not long in commencing, and Biddy, notwithstanding her promise, proved a poor ally, but of that more later. I will now describe the house.

It stood in the center of a large orchard and was a wide one-story brick building with a veranda on every side. This veranda was raised about two feet from the ground and was carefully boarded round, concealing the foundation of the house. When we took possession of the bed room was broken, and as Father had to leave so hurriedly, and it was difficult to get a man so far out of town, it remained unattended.

The evening Mother left there was a resounding peal from the bell; forgetting that the rope was broken, and thinking that Sara Inghram and one of her toy chums had come over to cheer our loneliness, I ran to open the door. The words of eager welcome died on my lips, for no one was to be seen. Thinking Sara was trying to play a trick on me, I ran round the veranda, expecting to find her hiding in some corner. No one was there. Then I remembered the broken bell rope, and returned to the house, muffled and nervous, and, fearing that Sara Inghram and one of her toy chums had come over to cheer our loneliness, I ran to open the door.

"That night when I went to put 4-year-old Ike to bed, the little fellow said, 'Why is it, Jennie, when you go out the washstand lifts up its leg and knocks?'"

"Nonsense, Ike; a washstand couldn't do that."

"Well, it must have been the bureau, then. There it goes again!" He sprang up in bed, and clung tightly to my neck.

Yes, sure enough, there was a sound of knocking. Again thinking it must be Sara, I opened one of the French windows, only to be disappointed and puzzled once more.

"And something squeals, too," said Ike. "Last night I thought Biddy's sister must have left her baby, and it was crying!" I asked Biddy, and she said: "Shure, an' it was a dirame, child; never a baby did me sister leave at all, an' all."

Scarcely were the words out of the child's mouth than a noise, resembling commenced followed by the most ghastly, horrible muttering I have ever listened to. This lasted for about three minutes, during which Ike clung so closely to my neck that he nearly choked me.

"Don't leave me alone, Jennie," he pleaded; "I'm so scared."

I wrapped him in a blanket and carried him across the veranda to the door, where Harry, who was lying on the sofa reading a book, received our story with derision. She went into the bedroom a few minutes later for a box of candy, and returned with a frightened face, refusing, however, to say what had scared her. While Ike slept we girls sat tremulously expecting for hours. No ghosts appeared during that night, however, but from that time forward they gave us little peace.

They were worst in our bedroom, but could be heard in other parts of the house also. Mystical knocking, rumbling cries, pitiful heart-breaking wailings and sobbing, fiendish gurgles of suppressed laughter, ghoulish mutterings made out an impossibility. Hushed footsteps sounded down the long passages; often have I sat up in bed breathlessly listening while the stealthy footfalls came slowly down the hall and paused at the door. At other times the footsteps appeared to be in our room. They would pause beside the bed and Harry and I would be trembling, hot daring to open our eyes lest some awe-inspiring form should meet our gaze. Then would follow a horrible, fiendish, smothered yell, and we would cover our heads with the bedclothes and lie sweating through the hot summer night praying for morning to dawn.

One night when our tormentors had been unusually quiet and we had fallen into the deep sleep of exhaustion, Harry was awakened by a soft knocking, seemingly on the glass of the French window. Forgetting the ghosts and thinking Father had come home unexpectedly, she sprang out of bed and opened the window. No one was there. Hastily bolting the window, she crept back to bed, and I was awakened by her clinging to me sobbing as smothered peals of ghoulish, mocking laughter sounded through the room. Often the bell would ring without cause. About midnight one Sunday there was a sound of peal which made the whole house ring and brought Biddy from her distant room off the kitchen—her room and the kitchen were additions to the house, and must have been built much later than the original structure. She was angry, and would not believe we were not playing a "trick" on her. When we told her of the ghosts she laughed, and said:

"Shure, it's dramin' ye are. Americans ought to have more sense."

In an unlucky hour, thinking she would be some protection, we invited Biddy to spend a night in our room. The ghosts were even more lively than usual that evening, and not all Biddy's Ave Marias

and Peter Noeters would exorcise them. "Shure, the devil himself is in the house," she said, "and a awful bould the old gintlemen's gettin'" for he laughs in the middle of me prayin'."

One night in our room was enough for Biddy; she even talked of leaving us, but on our beseeching her to remain and reminding her of her promise to Mother, she consented to stay in the house, not asked to go into any part of the house but the dining-room. To this we agreed. We thought of deserting the house in a body, mistaking Biddy's room, and living in that and the kitchen, but came to the conclusion that Biddy's room was too small for four people, so abandoned the idea. Biddy, however, insisted on taking Ike to bed with her.

Numbersless were the discussions we had with the Irish woman as to the cause of the house being haunted.

"Shure and those wicked convicts must have been in their tricks here. Many's the time I've listened to stories of how those men would escape from prison, run wild in the hills, catch the settlers, and after dramin' this, roast 'em in bullock hides."

"But, Biddy," said Harry, who was of a studious and inquiring turn of mind, "South Australia was never convict territory. There were never convicts here."

"Well," answered Biddy, "thin it must have been the natives. Shure the black critters use to kill the white men and roast and eat them before ever a white man was built they've had a feed of man's flesh on the very site of it, and now the spalpeens, being dead, come back to enjoy their wicked deeds, the old gintlemen wid them, had cuss to him."

Here the Irish woman crossed herself and looked fearfully over her shoulder.

"But, Biddy," said Ike, lifting his great inquiring eyes at her face, "how do you know it's the blacks?"

"Shure and it must be the blacks, for though they growl and yell and mutter and howl, they never carried on like we make out. The moanin' and cryin' is from the poor critters waitin' to be cooked. There's a child among them, and one's an Irishman, for didn't I hear him cuss his own name? Don't ye know that God rest his soul, but little he's like to rest knowin' his body's in the stomach of one of those black critters."

It was to break the subject of our nightly visitations to Sara Inghram, but the mere mention of the word "ghosts" brought a pitying and superior smile to the sun-browned face of that athletic maid.

"And do Americans still believe in ghosts?" she asked, with a supercilious lifting of her black eyebrows. "We Australians don't. Ghost stories are old World rubbish. Don't Biddy stuff you with her Irish fairy tales."

I wished I might have tested her incredulity and courage by making her pass a night with us, but I doubted as she would have soared through our nocturnal visitors' orgies, and laughed at us next day.

Mother had now been away ten days, and though Harry and I were getting quite worn out with terror and want of sleep, we did not like to send for her to come back. To telegraph that the house was haunted was so silly, for our one hope was in Harry Inghram, who was expected home for the Christmas holidays. He was a boy, and so would be more sympathetic to us girls than his sister, and of course he would not be scared even by ghosts. On the appointed day he arrived, and in the evening ran in to make our acquaintance. He was as lively, handsome and pleasant as we expected, and I and Harry were soon fast friends. The spirits were quiet for a day or two after he came, so we did not mention them to him. On the fourth night after his arrival he came to the veranda, and mysteriously that we could not sleep a wink, and going out to the henhouse next morning to feed the chickens, we found eight of our best hens lying dead, with blood out a wound on their bodies, or any sign to show by what manner they had come to their death.

"It's as plain as daylight," said Biddy, "that they have been killed by the black critters, 'thin this is the work of the ghosts. The black spalpeens made believe the chickens were white folk. If ye don't believe me, look at the blood; ye poor children, ye'll be lik' to die the night after this. This was not consoling, and we determined to tell our troubles to Harry at the first opportunity. He came over that very evening, and seated himself down when our enemies commenced. At the first sound Harry exclaimed:

"Then seeing our frightened faces, he quickly said a way face as he went out of the door that I thought he must be ill, and followed him into the garden. He disappeared among the trees but I found him rolling over on the grass plot in such convulsions that I felt he had a fit going close, I found he was laughing so that the tears rolled down his cheeks."

"Oh, Jennie, I have so wanted to see a live ghost. You can't tell how merry and glad it makes me feel to think I am to have my wish. If you are a good little girl and go to bed now you shall see one yourself tomorrow," and, jumping up, he ran off to his own home.

Whether it was that the ghosts really did give us a rest on the night of having a protector near eased our nerves, certain it is that Harry and I slept dreamlessly that night, and when we awoke next morning the sun was shining into our room, and the birds carolling gaily without. Just as we finished dressing Harry, who said he had been several times to the door to listen for a sound, knocked Biddy at the French window. As I opened it and stepped out on the veranda, I heard a curious, harsh growling, and Harry, with a theatrical wave of his hand, cried: "Behold the spirits of the black cannibals!"

In a large wire trap placed in front of a hole in the boarding below the veranda were four little, feline, graceful little animals, yellow in color, spotted with white. They were smaller than domestic cats and of a different form.

"They never—! isn't possible that these little animals made those awful noises!" cried Harry and I in one breath.

"But they did—and killed the chickens into the bargain, by just planting their teeth in the poor things' necks and sucking their blood. The teeth marks were so small that you did not notice them until they were a different form."

He led the way round the house. There had made two holes in the boarding; he had made two more. At each of these Harry had placed a trap, and in each trap were some of the little beasts—two in one and three in the others.

"But, I cried, 'the bell ringing, the knocking and the soft footsteps.'" "The wildcats are responsible for those sounds also. The bell wire goes under the door, though it is broken at the door, it is in the under the house. 'See," he said, throwing himself on the ground and mak-

ing me stoop to look into one of the holes. "The foundation is low, the house is raised but a little above the ground. The cats have caught the wire in their paws and rung the bell. The knocking was caused by the bones they were gnawing striking against the floor, and the stealthy footsteps—well, I found a hole the ghosts had made in one of the unoccupied rooms; through this they came into the house, and you heard them patterning down the passages. Biddy did not hear them because her room is an addition to the house, and being raised very slightly from the ground, the cats could find no harbor under it."

"At that moment Biddy joined the group around the cages."

"And is it rats ye call them bastards?" asked she. "It's devils they are; see the evil eyes of them! The big one that switches his tail and bites the little ones when they get in his way is the old gintlemen himself."

Harry laughed. "Shure, can't he take the form of a mouse if it plazes him?" cried Biddy, indignantly.

"Well, Biddy," said Harry, "the 'old gintlemen' and his crew had better prepare themselves, for their souls will be back in Hades tonight. Their skins would make a nice mat for your feet, girls—see, too, as a souvenir of your ghosts."

"Shure, had luck will come to ye if ye kill the critters. The old gintlemen at least ye might lave."

"Well, if you feel so badly about his death, Biddy, I'll let you have Satan for a pet, but the skins of the others I must have."

There is little more to tell. The ghosts being laid—for they troubled us no more—we gave all our attention to having a good time, in which Harry, who left school and entered his father's office, greatly assisted us. Percival came home from England a genuine B. A., and except for a Cambridge accent and a few Anglicisms, which Harry and I set ourselves the task of eradicating, he was worthy of his American descent.

I was back in our home in Cincinnati now—at this moment at my writing table, my feet on the skins of our "ghosts"—but I'm afraid I won't be here for long unless I can make an American of Percival. He writes that he is having the haunted house renovated and newly furnished, and that he is coming for me by the next steamer, leaving Biddy and the "old gintlemen" in charge of our future home.

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ABOUT a year ago there appeared at the door of a house up Pleasant avenue an intelligent black cocker spaniel, whose affectionate manners and excellent deportment gave rise to the suspicion that he was the prodigal canine pet of some one who was at that moment bemoaning his absence. Whatever he had been, Tick became at once the Mol of the three children into whose family he had strayed. Every child in the block and around the corner, as well, soon became devoted to the little black fellow, who could play hide and seek with all the vim of any boy or girl, and whose ability to catch a ball caused him to be frequently pressed into service when a game was on.

The grown-ups, too, save one grumpy old man in the flat at the corner, were well-ash as enthusiastic over his cunning ways. The butcher always had a bit of

meat laid by for him, and the baker would feel that he had neglected some special duty if he had not saved a bun or cake for the little fellow.

Tick felt his importance and was greatly chagrined when the grumpy old man would "shoo" him off with his stick when he went toward him on the street or through the steps of his house.

This conduct on the old man's part was unproductive of good manners on Tick's side. He would bark furiously and give every indication of a desire to bite the old man's legs. Therefore, it was not surprising that the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was informed one day that there was a vicious black dog without a license running at large on Pleasant avenue.

One morning the dogcatcher's wagon appeared on the block where Tick was wandering happily up and down, and when the children came home from school they learned that their pet had been captured. Never had there been such weeping, never such indignation. Not only were Effie, Johnny and Hal bowed down with grief, but every child friend of the little canine captive felt that too deep for utterance had settled upon the community. Such a tragedy called for immediate action on some one told them that Tick could be recovered for \$2. But \$2 was a sum far beyond the resources of Tick's little owners. Papa and mamma needed every penny to buy shoes and clothes for Effie, Jack and Hal, and there was no chance of getting such a tremendous sum as \$2 from the slim pocketbook mamma had so recently opened for the baker, the butcher and the landlord.

A sorrowful group gathered at the lamp-post Saturday morning, and the policeman who was called in to get the most excited manner. Finally, a plan presented itself, upon which a public subscription was at once started, and every one (save the grumpy old man) who knew the little dog was impetuously contributed to the fund for Tick's release. The baker and the butcher each gave 50 cents. A little girl whose father was a policeman dared the parental ire by waking him from his sleep to tell him of the sad case, and secured a quarter, even though he did not seem to be very

pleased at being roused from his first nap after a long all-night bout. The butcher, the leaman, the janitor, the kind-hearted doctor, the cigar-store man—all gave something, while the children thronged together, many of them pennies as they could until the much-needed \$2 limit was reached.

With the pennies, nickels and dimes that had been saved, they started for the Shelter, over on the East River; but, alas, on reaching there, discovered that \$3 instead of \$2 was needed to bring Tick back with them. It was a sad little procession that wended its way up Pleasant avenue, but it was a determined one. The immediate vicinity of Tick's former residence having been thoroughly canvassed, the dogcatcher finally located the more distant quarters, and ringing every doorbell, state their case, and perhaps enough pennies could be begged to make up the other \$1. In every house where there were children the greatest interest in the project was shown. By 3 o'clock, when they had at last secured the \$3, the rescuing party consisted of about 50 little folk of each of whom, having contributed toward the captive's release, felt that Tick was partly his or her personal property.

The men at the shelter laughed as he counted out the money, and then, going into an inner room where there were scores of dogs and cats, opened the door and led Tick out. With a rush he threw himself into the arms of the children in turn, licking Effie's face with canine ecstasy and barking and capering so wildly that all the dogs inside who were no so fortunate as to know him howl until the din was deafening. Then the triumphant homeward-bound procession started. The people at the windows along the avenue gazed in wonder at the crowd, since they had never before seen commotion was all about. The baker and the butcher had to come out into the street to pat the returned wanderer. The policeman who was called in to get the most excited manner. Finally, a plan presented itself, upon which a public subscription was at once started, and every one (save the grumpy old man) who knew the little dog was impetuously contributed to the fund for Tick's release. The baker and the butcher each gave 50 cents. A little girl whose father was a policeman dared the parental ire by waking him from his sleep to tell him of the sad case, and secured a quarter, even though he did not seem to be very

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With the pennies, nickels and dimes that had been saved, they started for the Shelter, over on the East River; but, alas, on reaching there, discovered that \$3 instead of \$2 was needed to bring Tick back with them. It was a sad little procession that wended its way up Pleasant avenue, but it was a determined one. The immediate vicinity of Tick's former residence having been thoroughly canvassed, the dogcatcher finally located the more distant quarters, and ringing every doorbell, state their case, and perhaps enough pennies could be begged to make up the other \$1. In every house where there were children the greatest interest in the project was shown. By 3 o'clock, when they had at last secured the \$3, the rescuing party consisted of about 50 little folk of each of whom, having contributed toward the captive's release, felt that Tick was partly his or her personal property.

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# Tick Went Away and How He Came Back

TRUE STORY OF A COCKER SPANIEL AND THE FIDELITY OF HIS YOUNG FRIENDS