

The Ghost in Regent's Park

By Jessie Adelaide Middleton

The Inner Circle of Regent's Park, now so associated with fancy fairs, midsummer revels and other gay doings, is surrounded by so many of the historical houses of London that when I heard a ghost had been seen there, I wondered if it was the wraith of some picturesque belle of the Regency.

On investigation I found, however, that the ghost was anything but picturesque. It had been seen by a well-known West-End dealer, whom I proceeded to interview in his office, and who told me the following plain and unvarnished tale, for which he is absolutely at a loss to account in any way but a supernatural one. He added that he would gladly have let me publish his name, but for the fear—a most natural one—of a business man, of being “chipped” about seeing a ghost. I will therefore withhold his real name, which is one well known to most Londoners, but will call him by another. Here is the story.

About sixteen years ago Mr. Herst—as I will name him—was training some boar-hounds for no less a person than the German Emperor. When trained, they were to be sent to Berlin, and as they were for so distinguished a client, they were naturally magnificent dogs, both in breed and courage, the pick of a famous kennel.

Mr. Herst had been training the animals for some time, and though they were still rather “a handful,” and would obey no one but him, he had them well under control. Savage and formidable as they were to most people, they answered obediently to his call. It was not a case of even showing the whip. I lay stress on this, because of what happened one evening when they were being taken out by their trainer in Regent's Park.

It was the middle of winter, and the ground was white with snow. It was trodden into slush in the streets, but lay crisp and sparkling on the roofs and trees, and the ground in Regent's Park was covered to a depth of several inches.

Mr. Herst was walking along with his dogs when he heard muffled footsteps behind him, and turning round, distinctly saw a short man following him. He wore an Army mackintosh, with a cape and no sleeves. Though his hat was pulled down low, his face, white and sinister-looking, was plainly visible, and as he still followed and his pace became quicker, Mr. Herst began to wonder what evil design was in his mind. There was something about his whole appearance that suggested no good, and feeling sure that he meant mischief, Mr. Herst set his dogs at him.

To his surprise they refused to obey, and rushed off in the opposite direction like a whirlwind. At the same moment the man suddenly disappeared as if the earth had swallowed him up.

Mr. Herst rushed after the dogs and found them on the other side of the park, with their tails between their legs. He tried to persuade them to return with him to the Inner Circle—coaxed, threatened, cajoled—all to no purpose.

He told me he saw the man disappear when quite close to him, and that before going to collect his dogs he looked down at the ground, where he had last seen him standing, expecting to find his footprints in the snow. But it lay white and untrodden, *with no mark upon it.*

