

Ghostly Music

By Jessie Adelaide Middleton

I have often come across instances of ghostly music, both in fact and fiction. One of the best instances in fiction, I think, is the account given in

“John Herring” of the bundle of walking-sticks in the eerie old Cornish house that used to play the quaint melody, “Since First I Saw Your Face,” whenever any trouble threatened the dwellers in the house.

No doubt the author of the book, the Rev. S. Baring-Gould, being well versed in legend and folklore, had heard of some happening of the kind in Cornwall and wove it into his delightful romance.

But two instances of ghostly music have come to my personal knowledge and are related here for the first time. The first one was told me by a lady who vouches for its accuracy, and whom I know to be the last person in the world to “draw the long bow” or in any way misrepresent facts.

“When I was about twenty,” she said, “my mother and I were together at the old Rectory (her home). It was a most curious house, with two halls, in one of which was an organ. All the rooms were low and narrow, and the second hall opened into the kitchen. My mother was nervous one night, and asked me to sleep with her. We went to bed rather late and were resting quietly, when about twelve o’clock we both heard faint strains of music coming up *from below*.

“ ‘Isn’t that someone playing the organ?’ said my mother. ‘Who *can* it be?’

“Even as she spoke the music became louder and louder, and the full tones of the organ in the hall below swelled out until they filled the whole house. Louder and louder grew the music, while we clung together with fright; then it grew softer, and died away with a sobbing echo.

“We got up and called the governess, who had been awakened by the music, and we all went downstairs and searched the house thoroughly, but all the doors were locked and the maids in bed and everything as quiet as the grave.

“The governess who was deadly frightened, brought wraps and a pillow into our room and slept on a sofa at the foot of the bed. Just as the dawn was breaking we all three heard the music again, and again searched the house but found no one.

“Later on, a letter came to say that a near relative had died during the night, and I took it to be a sign, for we found that she had passed away just at midnight.”

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The other instance concerns a vicarage in Hampshire, and I am fortunate enough to obtain a description of it from a lady who heard the music. I wrote to her husband for details, and she replied as follows:

“I am answering your letter for my husband, as he thinks perhaps I could explain what we know of the haunted room at the vicarage. It is only a few people who have ever seen anything there, and I happened to be lying awake in that room one night, when suddenly I

distinctly heard the door open gently, and it seemed as if a coffin was passing out and a procession of people. They were singing the hymn, 'Hark, my soul, it is the Lord.' I could hear the footsteps, first low and then gradually dying away, and also the voices quite plainly.

"It seems strange that I did not actually *see* anything, but I was so frightened I could not move for a time. When I did I woke my husband and told him. He said he thought I must have been dreaming, but I *know* it was not a dream.

"I also know that a nurse who was nursing my husband's grandmother at the vicarage was sleeping in the room, and she was a stranger and never knew anything about the room being supposed to be haunted; but she asked me if it was, as she had twice seen a coffin, and it looked as if there was someone in a shroud in it."

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Another striking instance of the hearing of ghostly music is recorded on p. 77 in the course of the gruesome story entitled "The House of Horror." Miss Hargrove, again, as a result of her own investigations (*see* pp. 168, 164 and 167), found that mysterious music was an essential part of the manifestations at Knighton Gorges.