

# The Ghost with the Evil Face

By Jessie Middleton

The incident related in this story happened to an officer in the Royal Navy, a personal friend of mine. I have his kind permission to publish the story as he told it to me:

“When I was a boy of eight or nine we were living near Alverstoke, in Hampshire. The house was an old one, on a common, with a wall-garden and small lawn. The windows had little old-fashioned square panes, and on one of them a former occupant or visitor had scratched her name, ‘Mary Carmoys.’ The house had been built on to, and had probably once been, a large cottage. The stable was never used, except as a coal cellar, for the people who lived there before us did not keep horses, nor did we.

“We rented the house furnished, and had been there for several years before what I am going to tell you took place. My father was away at sea, and there were only my mother, we children, and the servants at home at the time.

“One evening I had not been feeling well, and mother suggested that I had better go to bed. I went upstairs with her, and she left me at the top of the landing stairs while she went up three steps to the right and along a passage to the entrance to the bathroom, where a table always stood, on which the bedroom candles were kept.

“‘You wait here,’ she said; ‘I’ll go and get a light.’

“To make clear the exact position where I was left, I will draw you a rough plan. The hall lamp was not lighted, nor the landing lamp, so it was fairly dusk, being close on October, about six in the evening.

“As I say, my mother left me while she went to light a candle. When she was gone and I was waiting for her to come back, I saw facing me a man dressed as a sailor in a blue jersey and stocking cap, who stared at me very intently. His expression frightened me, and his face was peculiarly repulsive. He looked like a particularly villainous specimen of the loafers one sees on the Hard at Portsmouth.

“As I watched him, shaking with fright, I heard my mother returning. As she came down the steps the man vanished quite suddenly. She noticed that I was upset, and asked me what was the matter.

I said: ‘There’s a man standing in the passage.’

“ ‘Oh, nonsense!’ said my mother; but she hunted the whole house and found no one.

“I was so thoroughly frightened at seeing the man that nothing would induce me to sleep in my own room, and so I slept with my mother. I may add that she was very religious and extremely sceptical of anything of the nature of ghosts, but my terror was so evident that she saw I was not humbugging or telling a lie. She had at first believed that I had seen a real man—probably a tramp who had broken into the house, but after she had made a thorough search and had found nothing, she did not know what to make of it.

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“Six years later, when we had gone to live in Devonshire, the conversation turned on servants, and I asked my mother why my former nurse and the cook had left so suddenly.

She told me they had both seen the man within a few days of my seeing him, and had left the house at once. My mother added that she had since heard that the house was haunted by a sailor who was supposed to have been murdered in it over some dispute about a girl.

“The house, which stood close to the creek, had been a well known depot for smugglers. This was borne out by subsequent events. Major Graham (as I will call him), who was the next tenant after our-selves, kept horses. The stable, therefore, was cleared out and used. One day, one of his horses fell into a pit on the way to the stable, the ground having given way, and there was found a regular smugglers’ hiding-place of the old type, such as you read about in stories.

“That ends my story, but I can assure you I shall never forget seeing the ghost as long as I live. I can remember his horrible malignant expression to this very day.”