A Whitehaven Sailor Lad in London & The Mason’s Ghost Story (1880)

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Text type: Prose
Date of composition: 1880
Editions: 1880
Source text:
e-text:
Access and transcription: December 2009
Number of words: 2,214
Dialect represented: Cumberland
Produced by Pilar Sánchez-García

The Mason’s Ghost Story

by

John Christian

New Edition revised by the Author
A WHITEHAVEN SAILOR LAD IN LONDON.

Manhood in the Bud

HAVING business at the West India Docks a few days ago, I was hurrying along one of the narrow streets in that neighbourhood, when my attention was attracted to a sturdy-looking sailor lad. He had a bunch of turnips in one hand, while with the other he grasped a dirty, ragged, cunning-looking, young street Arab by the neck.

“Daar son! a ‘v a gud mind t’ fling tha inta t’ sump thou theevin’ whelp,” roared Jack. Then after shaking the fellow like a bundle of

“Will ta ivver deo it agyan?— hay?”

The sound of the once familiar and still fondly remembered accent of canny Cumberland brought me up all standing. At the same moment a policeman made his appearance.

“Now thin, what's th' maanin' ov this?—What did he do at all?” inquired the man in blue.

“Wey this fella an' sum mare o' his gang es bin scoppen ma we styans an' cabbish runs, an' this en's stown a bunch o' turmets oot o' me basket.”

“Thay did what?”

“Scopp't ma we styans an' stole me turmets,”

roared Jack, as if he thought the policeman was deaf.

The poor "Bobby" looked puzzled; so I explained that the young scamps had pelted the sailor lad with stones and had also attempted to steal his turnips.

“O, crikey! vot a choker!” whined the artful dodger. “Please sir, I ain't a bin an' done nothink. I van jist a lookin' in that 'ere vinder lias hinnisent has a blessed babby, ven a cove comes a runnin' in past an' shoves this 'ere dollop o' wegittibles into my 'and, an' mizzled hup that there alley.”

“Thou's a leer,” said Jack, with a grin, “a seen tha click t' turmets oot o' mo basket, an' a catch't tha be t' neck while thou wus tryin' t' run away, thou snotty yap!”

“No sir, please, sir, 't voren't me, sir, s’help me tater; 't vos another cove as prigg'd the wegittibles, sir.”

“Ef thou ses that agyan a'll giv tha a cloot under 't lug,” bellowed Jack.

“Will ye be aftaer givin' him in chaarge?”

“A wad rayther giv’ em a good weltn', onny a's freeten'd et ef a giv' em ya good dig it wad knock em ta bits. T’ poor divel lucks us ef he wus hunger't Let 'em ga; a’v gitten me turmets back agyan, an’ a want neea mare t' dee we sec a durtty tyad.”

The culprit—who had thrown himself down on the pavement when he saw Jack's threatening "neif"—was admonished by the "Bobby" to "git up, and be off wid ya; git up off the ground, I say, or it's to a
The Salamanca Corpus: *A Whitehaven Sailor Lad in London & The Mason's Ghost Story* (1880)

[5]

bit ov ground wid a staashun-house over it that I'll be after thransplantin' ye to, ye thaavin' young divvel.” Then, turning to Jack, he inquired what countryman he was.

“Kuntryman!” cried Jack, with great indignation, “wey a ‘s Inglish. What d' ye tack ma for?”

“Fait' an' it's quaar English ye spaak anny how.”

Jack's look plainly indicated what *his* opinion of the policeman's English was; and the crowd that had collected, possessing, as London crowds generally do, a keen perception of the ludicrous, burst into a roar of laughter, evidently agreeing with both the policeman and Jack in their opinions respecting each other's English. I took this opportunity to advise Jack to be off to his ship as quickly as he could, fearing that he might get into another row.

“Be jing,” said he, as we walked along, “thay’r a rum lot, and that goff ov a pleesman es as bad as t' rest. Ugh! he pretended et he cudden tell what a sed. But he's Irish. Thay'r a daft lot o'tagidther in this toon, an' can't unthserstand plain Inglish when yan speaks it tull th'm.”

I asked him, to his utter astonishment, what part of Cumberland he came from.

“Hoo d' ya kno' a cum fra Cumberlan’? he inquired.

I replied that I suspected it, owing to a slight peculiarity in his accent.

“Well noo, that caps cut-lugs; a thowt et a spock as plain Inglish as ennyboddy cud dee, an’ f' r o' that thur oathhicks say et thay can't tell what a meen. But you kno' what a say weel enyuf doont ya ?”

“Oh, yes,” I said; “but I have been in Cumberland, and understand the dialect. But you have not told me yet what part you come from; still, I think that I could make a pretty good guess. Is it Whitehaven?”

“Daar son! ye'v varra nar hit it. A belang to Hensegam; it's o' t' syam ya kno'. War ye ivver at Whitehebm ?”

"Yes, I have been there, but its many years ago."

" Hev ye tho'? Its' a nice laal spot. Will ye hev a pint?"

I declined his kindly offer with thanks; and as I was about to leave him, I said, “A's thinken' ef thou duzzent mack yast an' git aboard o' t' ship, it'll be lyat afwore thou gits thee pot yerbs inta t' kyal pot." Jack stared as if he hed seen "t' New Toon Boggle." And as I turned away, after giving him the above hint in his own "plain Inglish," I heard him muttering, "Be gock! that's a Whitehebm chap."
THE MASON’S GHOST STORY.

“When thee Devil was sick,
The Devil a monk would be:
But when the Devil got well,
The devil a monk was he.”

ON a cold, wet, winter day, a good many years ago, eight or ten masons, joiners, slaters, and other workmen were sheltering from a heavy down-pour of rain in a “smiddy” a few miles from Whitehaven. They had been driven by the storm from their work on some neighbouring buildings, and the weather appeared to have a depressing effect on their spirits, for they were talking about ghosts and boggles. Some of them were stoutly denying, and others as stoutly asserting the existence of such beings as ghosts. When the argument had been continued for some time, a dismal-looking man, apparently a mason, who had not previously taken any part in the conversation, said in a dismal, drawling tone—

“Ah! It’s a varra weel t’ say et ye doon’t believe e ghosts, an’ et ye dyu believe e th’m; but did ivver any on yee see yan?”
“No,” was the general reply.

“Well than a hev, an’ nin ov ye kno’ what ye r takin’ aboot.
Thoo so a ghost—whoor did ta see it?
What was’t like?
Wheu did ta see it, Jemmy?
Cum, cum, min tell’s o’ aboot it.
Will sum on ye gimma a pipe o’ bacca than?”—twist—a reccon nowt o’ yer shag, it’s nobbut fit f’r oold wives and bits o’ lads. Thensk t’a, Bob, that's summet like noo; a like neeger heed better ner twist.
“Joe” (to the blacksmith), “dus'ta kno’ what was t' last words t' oold blacksmith, when he was on his deethbed, sed tull es sun?”
“No.”
“Well than, he said, 'Ef ivver thou smucks twist bacca, t' best thing t' leet it we's a rid het nail rod.'
An' a cappital thing it is tyu.” (Puff—puff—pu-u-ff.) “This is nice bacca, Bob; hes 'ta enny mare on’t!”
“Hey, hey, Jemmy, but issent thou gaan’ t’ tell es uboot that ghost?”
“Bodthers! a wish a'd nivver spock on 't.”
“Cum, min, cum, t’ rain ween't hod up yet a bit, an' thou c'n tell es while we bide here oot o’ t’ wet.”
“Well, ef a mun, a mun, but a doon't like t' toke aboot it.” (Puff—puff—puff—puff.)
“Well, a'd been bildin a swine hull f’r Rowley Wilson, at Woodend, an’ a gat dun we me job at Setturday neet; and
a thowt t' ni'est way yam wad be to gang doon be t' Powbeck an oot be t' Fox Hooses." (Puff—puff.) “Well, when a gat ta t' big meeda a bethowt ma et a wad ga up t' Hensegam, t' see a chap et a 'd rowt f'r afwore, an ax 'm f'r a job f'r t' next week. Seea a just hid my tyuls amang t' lang grass at t' boddem o' Snebba Gill, t' syave mesel t' bodther o' tralin' th'm o' t' way up t' Hensegam. A syun fund t' man a wus laatin', an' we went an' hed two or three pints, an' it wus 'rang't et a wus t' ga t' Yacker Woos a Munda', t' dee a bit o' wark. Well noo, yo kno', a diddent like t' leewe me tyuls a Snebba Gill boddem o' t' day a Sunda', seea a just went doon that way t' git th'm. But when a'd gat varra naar t' whoor a'd hid th'm, a so summit queer like reet ower t' spot. It was gaily dark, but a cud see it wassent like a horse, ner like a coo, nor like owt o' a'd iwer seen afwore; it wus mare like a man we'oot a heed, nor owt else. It was swingen' its arms aboot as ef it wanted t' flay ma way, seea a stop't a laal bit, an' than gat up t' dyke inta t' field t' hev a luck at it thrrou t' bushes. Sum boddy in t' Lowther Arms, up at Hensegam hed been tellin' es et t' New Toon Boggle hed been mackin' bonny wark t' neet afwore ut t' New Houses,—an' that com' inta me heed; but a thowt, what hes t' New Toon Boggle t' dee we me! It onny ga's efter t' Boddemers an' sec like, Seea a just crapquietly doon till a wus ebben fyassen t' spot whoor a'd left me wallet. T' thing wus still theer, an' a cud hear it

[10]

stanken', an' cranken', an' blooen', f'r o' t' world like oold Dick Smith. But he wus deed an' berried. Fwok did say et he waddent lig lang in 'es grave, he wus see a wicked oold sinner; thay sed he wus a hin-fiddle er summet worse. A kno' nowt aboot that, but a kno' he cud curse an' sweer hard enyuf t' breck cobble styans. He wassent a bad marrow f'r o' that; me an' him hed rowt menny a hard darrag t' gidther, an' we nivver hed a fratch, seea a needn't be freetned o' Dick ef it wus him. T' mare a luck't at it, t' liker it gat Dick. It was bad in its wind like 'm, an' it wus o' a yaa side like'm, an' at last a cud mack oot his oold bool't heed an' wizzent fyaace, but thay wur whoor his belly shud be. Sumtimes he was bigger an' sumtimes he was quite laal, but he olas kept on puffen' an' blooen' in t' oold way; an' at t' last, a wus as shure; as a'a liggen beer et it was Dick's ghost But what did he want we me? a'd niwer dun owt rang tall'm. A tried t' perswade mesel et a wassent freetned, but it waddent dee; t' skin o' me heed was o' a creep, an' it was seea tite a cudden shut me ies. A mack ye shuro a dadther't like a dog iu a wet seck. A thowt o' sneekin' away, but he seemt't kno' what I wus thinken about, f' r he began to rowk amang t' tyuls we'es feet; an' than o' ov a sudden a mindet et sum o't tyuls in't wallet hed belang'd tall'm; a bowt them fra his dowter efter lie deed, but a heddent paid fr them. A tried t' shut mo ies au' git away, but a cudden, he seem't to hev hod on ma be t'

[11]

breath an' was soookun' ma tall'm like. Lord a marcy! a thowt, he'll rive ma ta bits. A fund mesel' gaan, an' heed fwormest a went reet throw t' bushes doon inta t' gill boddom aside'm. He raised hissel' up, an' a cud see blew lowes cummin' oot o' his mouth. A wus seea freetned et a cud onny just mannish t' co oot, in a dadtherin' sort o' way, 'Dick-Dick, ef thu'll gu away
an' let ma alyan a hev sum brass an' a'll pay't lass f'r tyuls this varra neet.' Efter that a think a mun a swarf't. A doon't kno' hoo lang a wus liggin' theer, but when a com t' mesel ther was nowt t' be seen, seea a just gedther't me things up an' gat away as fast as a cud."

(Puff—puff—puff.)

"But did ta ga an' pay t' lass f'r tyuls Jemmy?"

"Well, a meent t' dee seea when a sed a wad, but when a com t' think matters ower a thowt t' tyuls wassent worth byath t' munney an' freet a'd gotten; an' as a diddent heer Dick say owt, a thowt t' best way wad be t' wait till a so him agyan."