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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Murphy Came Back To Trounce Kelly

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I HAVE no names for this story. The lady who gave it to me is too modest to have me use her name, and she did not want to give me the names of the people involved. But I can assure you the lady is reliable. I found the story interesting, and I hope you will like it too.

I'm using the family name of "Kelly" and "Murphy" for the people involved, just to make the story more easily understood. I hope that's not the real name of either party, if it is, I assure you it's purely a coincidence.

Pat Kelly was a likable young fellow who was a fine specimen of manhood. He came many years ago to a district in West Prince county – it was not far from Tignish – and there he encountered a Murphy family whose four husky sons had an ambition to defeat in physical combat any newcomer to the district.

FIRST CHANCE he got, the older Murphy boy tackled young Kelly. But the likable Irishman wouldn't be pushed around, though he never sought a fight. And he defended himself and defeated his Irish assailant. Every one of the Murphy brothers tried to beat Kelly. But none of them could do the trick.

Finally Murphy senior, father of the pugilistic boys, was having a few drinks one night and in the midst of a tirade against young Kelly, the older Murphy exclaimed with emphasis "I'll beat that blanket-blank Kelly yet, even though I have to come back from Hell to do it."

The scene shifts a few years ahead and Mr. Murphy had died in the meantime. One night Kelly dropped in at the home of the lady who told me the yarn, and literally dropped on to the chair nearest the door. He looked as though he had absorbed a terrible beating. And indeed he had.

Asked for details, young Kelly said "I was walking along the road and when I got to your neighbour's gate, I was set upon by something that proceeded to give me a beating. I couldn't do anything against it, and it gave me a fearful trouncing."

Murphy Did Come Back To Beat Him

YOU WILL note that Kelly never once used the personal pronoun "him" or "her" but used the impersonal or neuter "it" or "that", or he merely referred to it as "that thing". The likable Kelly wouldn't attempt to say anything more by way of description.

Not long afterward Kelly left the district for the United States. When he returned for a visit some years later, the father of the lady who told me the story met him at the station and brought Kelly to their home.

The young Irishman was in great fettle. Between their bits of conversation, he was singing, whistling, jiggling or humming merry, lighthearted tunes. But he stopped and

was silent as they approached the spot on the roadside where he had received his beating some years previously; then he blurted:

“That’s where that old so and so, Murphy gave me the beating some years ago.” That confirmed in the minds of Kelly’s friends what many of them had supposed all along. The bad hearted neighbor had come back to keep the threat he had made not long before he had died.

That story has been told in the community, the lady assured me, and it was of particular interest to her because she and other members of her family had thought so much of the young man who had come to their district from the region of Kelly’s Cross, or ‘65’, though she was not sure of exactly where he did come from. At least she would not tell me.

IT WAS my friend Charles S. MacDonald, Murray Harbor who gave me this ghost story which comes from the Old Land.

The man who had the experience had visited the home of a titled countryman for the purpose of examining a half dozen books in his well stocked library and making extensive notes or extracts.

First, however, there was a dinner and a social hour, then the visit to the library. The fifth book had been disposed of and the gentleman had been working on the sixth for about one-half hour when he explains:

“I saw a large white hand within a foot of my elbow”. Turning his head he saw “a figure of a somewhat large man, with his back to the fire, bending slightly over the table and apparently examining the pile of books on which I had been working.

“HE WAS dressed in what I can only describe as a kind of ecclesiastical habit of thick corded silk or some such material, close up to the throat, and a narrow rim, or edging of about an inch wide, of satin or velvet serving as a stand up collar and fitting close to the chin.”

Continuing he said, “the right hand, which had attracted my attention, was clasping, without any great pressure, the left hand; both hands were in perfect repose, and the large blue veins of the right hand were conspicuous.”

The man who saw the unusual apparition was apparently a clergyman, for he had signed the initials D.D. after his name, and he insists that he had not the least feeling of alarm or even of uneasiness.

Imagine! A Ghost Being Alarmed

THINKING OF a sketch book, which he had left upstairs, he was wondering if he could get it without disturbing the unnatural visitor of the night, when his head dislodged a book which fell to the floor. That alarmed the ghostly visitor, apparently, for the vision disappeared.

“I was simply disappointed and nothing more. I went on with my writing as if nothing had happened” – he was a cool chap. “I had actually come to the last few words of what I had intended to extract from the book, when the figure appeared again, exactly in the same place and attitude as before.

“I saw the hands close to my own; I turned my head again, to examine him more closely, and I was framing a sentence to address to him when I discovered that I dare not speak. I was afraid of the sound of my own voice. There he sat and there sat I.

“I turned my head again to my work, and finished writing the two or three words I still had to write. The paper and my notes are at this moment before me, and exhibit not the slightest tremor or nervousness. I could point out the words I was writing when the phantom came and when he disappeared. Having finished my task, I shut the book and threw it on the table. It made a slight noise as it fell – the figure vanished.”

Man Is Not Completely Consistent

The man who tells the story of the spooky nightly visitor is not completely consistent in his effort to make us believe he was unafraid, as he does at one stage of his yarn, and the impression of being shaken he gives at other stages. But he gives a darn good impression of his curiosity overcoming any lingering fears he may have entertained.

Having finished his writing, he sat back in a rocking chair before the fireplace and wondered “whether my friend would come again, and if he did would he hide the fire from me” – are not ghosts supposed to be transparent, with no earthly substance?

Continuing the story, the man states “There first stole upon me a dread and a suspicion I was beginning to lose my nerve.” But he still strives mightily to give the impression of calm as he adds “I remember yawning;” – that’s scarcely the action of a frightened man – “then I rose, lit my bedroom candle, took my books into the inner library, mounted the chair as before, and replaced five of the volumes, the sixth I brought back and laid upon the table where I had been writing when the phantom did me the honor to appear to me.”

I SHOULD apologize, perhaps, for doubting the man, or for casting aspersions on his truthfulness, for the indications, as I have said, are that he was a clergyman, indeed a Doctor of Divinity. At any rate he concludes his yarn with these sentences which would indicate that he had indeed overcome any trace of nervousness which he may have exhibited, or felt, at some stages of his unusual experience:

“By this time I had lost all sense of uneasiness. I blew out the four candles and marched off to bed, where I slept the sleep of the just, or the guilty – I know not which – but I slept very soundly.”

Then he adds, as if to clinch his argument: “This is a simple and unvarnished narrative of facts. Explanation, theory, or inference I leave to others.”

Sam Sherren Was The Bailiff

THE SHERREN man I spoke of in that old school-boy story several weeks ago, was Sam Sherren who lived on the Sherren Road near Crapaud, my cousin Willie Matheson, Rose Valley told me yesterday afternoon.

WOODROW WHEATLEY, Mount Edward Road told me last week, after my column reference to the Ku Klux Klan appeared, that he and his brother were delivering milk in the City one morning – their father had a milk route – and just about where the St. Pius X church now stands, they saw a huge cross about 25 to 30 feet high, and perhaps 15 feet wide.

The KKK had wrapped it with heavy burlap that was soaked in oil and had burned it the previous night. It had burned fiercely, apparently, but the outlines of the cross were still visible in the morning.

