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# Sir Rupert's Treasure

## A Ghost Story of Bonny Scotland

By JAMES COCKS

THE sun had set. Gradually the darkness of the evening settled like a pall over the hills of bonny Scotland, and the silence that followed was almost painful. Along the darkening way passed a lone horseman urging forward his nag toward a night's shelter.

Suddenly out of the silence came the low roll of distant thunder. There followed a silence more painful than before, then flashes of lightning played across the sky, and the rumble and roar of the storm came on. Nearer and nearer it came, gaining in volume, until with a tremendous crash it broke about the defenseless head of the wayfarer, and he involuntarily ducked to dodge its full force. The lightning flashed about him: Sizz! Crack! Boom!

The belated one, an English traveler, shuddered and bent low over his horse's neck as she stood still trembling, and encouragingly said to her, "Steady, my good Bess." The thunder roared still louder, and the lightning flashes were almost continuous until it seemed as if the crack of doom were upon them. Down came the hail and rain in torrents. The horse shivered and neighed. "Yes, my good Bess, it is a terrible night. I wish that you were in your stall with a good feed of oats and a warm bed of straw, and I by the fireside of a good hostelry with my pipe and a hot glass of grog. Ugh! this is terrible. I would pity a dog out on such a night as this. My good Bess, we must find shelter or we shall perish. Onward, Bess, onward!" Then he mut-

tered to himself, "Fool, fool that I was to take such a trip! No one but a doddering idiot would undertake such a fool piece of business as this. Ugh!" Then, speaking again to his horse, he said, "Cheer up, Bess, old girl, shelter must be somewhere near."

As the rain continued to fall in torrents he soliloquized, "I am a bigger fool than my father, and he was a much bigger fool than his father. Here we have a direct chain of idiocy. Its first link, my grandfather, a fool, and its last link, myself, a *damn* fool. My, what a night! Let me see, how does that legacy read? Ugh! how the hailstones bite! First find the black round stone. In its center is a small drilled hole into which insert a knitting needle. Let the needle stand out three inches, and at the exact hour of noon mark line of shadow to its point A. From point A at an angle of ninety degrees to the east and 1,000 feet away is point B, thence at an angle of ninety degrees south 1,000 feet is point C, thence forty-five degrees West 500 feet is point D. Provide a flat surface here and insert needle at 10:30 a. m. and mark line of shadow 475 feet to point E. Beneath lies Sir Rupert's treasure!—Ugh!—Yes. I've no doubt this is true. But what of it?—Ugh! this is too much!—Damn Sir Rupert's treasure! I have had enough of it. I am through with the whole thing now and forever. I shall—Ah! what is that? A light! Ah! my good Bess, as sure as thunder, I see a light. Onward, Bess, onward! A good feed of oats and a warm bed of straw is waiting."

It was indeed a sorry sight that drew up at the hostelry, a wayside tavern. Mine host said to the be-draggled and half frozen English traveler, "I am sorry, sir, I can not let you have a room. On account of the storm my inn is filled with guests. I will provide well for your mare. She shall have a hot mash, rub-down, and a good bed of straw. But, sir, you are welcome to the shelter of my roof. A splendid fire is burning and the kettle is boiling, and my toddy can't be beaten."

THE traveler was provided with a change of clothing, and after a few toddies by the warm fire, he was himself again. During a lull in the business mine host came and sat by his side and said, "Sir, I have done my best. Your horse is comfortable and enjoying her feed, and I hope you are comfortable too, sir."

He replied, "Mine host, I am indeed grateful for your good cheer. This is a veritable heaven compared with those hills on such a night as this. I spent two hours in that storm, and I don't know what would have become of me if I had not seen your welcome light. I can assure you it was a good sight for weary eyes. But, my dear host, I am terribly sleepy. Could you find some corner where I could snatch a few hours of sleep?"

"My dear sir," replied mine host, "it is impossible. You can see for yourself that I am crowded with guests. Every inch of available space is occupied, but,—ah!"

"But ah what, sir?" asked the Englishman eagerly.

"Well, sir," replied mine host, "it is this way. This tavern, like every old building in these parts, has its legend and its ghost, and we all believe it more or less. My family has lived in this tavern for three generations. My grandfather built this tavern. He occupied one room to the day of his death. Just before he died he vowed

he would occupy the room when dead, as he had when living. He made my father promise to keep the room in order and cozy, and he did so to the day of his death. My father exacted the same promise from me, and I have respected his wishes, sir. I have kept the room well aired and cozy. This room, with the others, is fixed up every morning. It has never been entered after dark since my grandfather's death, and you haven't money enough, sir, to hire anyone around these parts to go into that room at night. It has never been offered to a guest. Now, sir, I am willing to break a rule that three generations have observed. If you are not afraid of my grandfather's ghost, I will let you have the room."

The Englishman sprang to his feet, exclaiming joyously, "Ah, my good host! That is splendid of you, I am sure. So far as the ghost is concerned, it's all humbug, sir, all humbug. Why, I am known among all my friends as a confounded atheist, you know, and a believer in nothing. If you will provide me with a bottle of gin and a kettle of hot water, I can assure you I shall have a pleasant time, and should your grandfather condescend to share the room with me, I shall be only too happy to entertain him, I am sure."

"All right, sir," responded mine host, "I will make up the fire at once, and I hope you will have a pleasant night. Don't hesitate to ring, if you are disturbed and need me."

"Thank you," he replied; "just leave the key on the inside so I can lock out the living, you know."

IN A little while the guest was comfortably seated in an easy chair in front of a cheerful fire with a smoking hot toddy by his side. As he smoked his fragrant cigar, a smile of satisfaction spread over his face, and he thought of his trusty mare crunching her supper and stamping her

hoofs with satisfaction in her stall of clean straw. He prided himself on his infidelity and unbelief in anything supernatural. He claimed to be an atheist, and perhaps he was.

As he sat by the glowing fire and sipped his toddy he began to feel very happy. "Ah!" he sighed; "life is very beautiful and complete after all. What could I wish for more? I am sure of three good meals a day, all the toddy I need, and a pleasant smoke whenever I wish."

A hazy, happy, dreamy feeling was stealing over him. A far-off look came into his eyes and his lips formed into a pleasant smile. He was no longer in a haunted chamber in bonny Scotland. With the swiftness of thought he had crossed the ocean, and was in New York, and about to listen to his favorite speaker, that famous agnostic, Robert G. Ingersoll. He was about to hear again that great lecture, "What must I do to be saved?" As the speaker stood up he clapped his hands with the rest of the audience. Then, while he sat fascinated, breathlessly waiting for him to begin, his right hand moved slowly toward the table and grasped the glass of toddy, bringing it to his lips. Still he kept his eyes centered on the speaker. He heaved an unconscious sigh of pleasure as the toddy reached his reservoir of satisfaction. Yet he missed not a move of the lecturer. His lips resumed their smile as he heard the thrilling voice of the speaker saying, "Ladies and gentlemen. . . ."

With his eyes glued on the speaker, his right hand again reached forth for the glass of toddy. It was on the very edge of the table, and as his hand touched it lightly, it toppled over and fell to the floor with a crash. Instantly the vision vanished. He sprang to his feet with a gasp of fright as he said, "Well I'll be——." Then he smiled, mixed another glass of toddy, resumed his seat before the fire, and blowing clouds of smoke about him

again soliloquized. "Well, 'pon my word, if I didn't forget all about the blamed ghost! For a few minutes I really thought I was in New York. Really, I believe I jumped out of three weeks' growth. Oh, and mine host believes there's a blooming ghost bobbing about this room. Oh, say! This ghost business pains me, you know.

"If you ask me, I'd like to know how the devil can a ghost come back, if he wants to. That's the idea. That's the question. How could he come back if he wanted to?

"When he was alive and kicking, eighty per cent of his body was water. Hold up there, my boy, you are wasting valuable time. Don't forget the toddy. Yes, it's real fine. Every blooming glass tastes better than the one before.

"Let me see. Oh, yes. Eighty per cent of his body is water. That's gases. So, eighty per cent of my dear Mr. Grandfather's ghost is gases—oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen—you know. The other twenty per cent—the residuum—is gone back into earth and made first-class fertilizer, and probably gone into cabbages and turnips long ago. Now, Mr. Ghost, I want to ask you a question. How are you going to show yourself? You haven't any residuum to hold yourself together. I know bally well you can get the gases. That's eighty per cent of you. But you can't get the residuum. That's where you are stuck, my boy. Well, here's to you, Mr. Ghost. 'Pon my word, I wish you could join me. This is excellent toddy.

"Now, friend ghost, if I had some of my laboratory tools here, and you should pay me a visit, I would put you in a vessel and flash a little current through you and bally well turn you into water. Then I would take a drink of this excellent Old Tom gin and drink you for a chaser. Ah, friend ghost, I would blooming well

drink you for a chaser. But you can't come back. You haven't any residuum. You can't do it, you know. Now I am going to make another drink, and then sleep, you know."

He undressed, drank his toddy, crawled into bed, and made himself comfortable for the night. For a few minutes he thought of Sir Rupert's treasure, then mumbled. "Insert a knitting needle in the drilled hole and let it stand out three inches. At 12 o'clock mark the line of the shadow to point A, then at an angle of ninety degrees measure one thousand—one thousand—one thous—." A snore. He was asleep.

WHILE the Englishman was enjoying himself in his room, there was quite some bustle below. They had run out of meat and bread in the kitchen, and a man was busy in the barn dressing a sheep, while the good wife was making a large sponge, for she must bake a good batch of bread the first thing in the morning. When finally her sponge was made and covered with a cloth to keep it warm for the night, the tavern had become quiet, for all were asleep.

The Englishman had not slept long before he felt a slight chill running down his back. He moved uneasily and then awoke with a start. "Suffering Moses," he gasped, as he beheld, standing at the foot of his bed, a ghost, austere, cold, silent. "What a fool imagination I've got!" he mumbled. "Ghost be damned! All poppycock, you know." He then turned over with his face to the wall, and in another moment was soundly sleeping again.

In a little while, however, he again felt chilled, and awoke exclaiming impatiently, "What in the blooming—eh—what's that?" There at the foot of his bed stood the ghost as before, quietly, coldly, surveying him.

"That fool ghost yarn is certainly playing on my imagination," he said,

and then to the ghost he remarked, "But you can't do it, you know. You haven't any residuum. Good night." Then, closing his eyes to the disturbing sight, he was soon snoring in genuine sleep.

But it was not for long that he was permitted to rest. Suddenly startled, he sat up straight in bed, exclaiming, "Hello, hello! What's the blooming row?" Then for a moment his face blanched and his hair bristled. There stood Mr. Ghost. The Englishman's cold-blooded scientific reasoning came to his assistance at once, and he exclaimed in astonishment, "Why, old top, how in the devil did you manage it? Where did you get the residuum, you know? Wait a minute, old top, we've got to think it over a bit." Then he soliloquized, "This is no dream, and the blooming thing was real each time. I can't understand it. I've studied Voltaire, read Tom Paine, and listened to Ingersoll, and come to the conclusion that I was a blooming atheist. Then here comes this old top and knocks the whole shooting match higher than a kite. Well, I'll be blowed."

Then he addressed the ghost and said, "Who are you?" The ghost replied, "I am thy grandaïre, Sir Rupert!"

"The devil you are!" said he. "I thought you were the old chap that built this house. Well, what about it?"

"Follow me," came the reply.

"Yes, but wait a bit, you know—"

"Follow me," came impatiently from the ghost.

"All right, old chap. Don't get your back up!"

He then got out of bed and lit the candle, and followed Sir Rupert's ghost slowly down the stairs, through the hallway and kitchen, and out into the back yard. This back yard was large and covered with many flagstones. Sir Rupert's ghost stood on

the center of one, and said: "*Beneath me lies the treasure!*"

A gust of wind blew out the candle. In the darkness the Englishman said: "Say, Sir Rupert, how in the devil shall I know the spot?"

Sir Rupert's ghost answered, "In yonder kitchen stands a bowl of sponge. Mark well the spot with it."

The Englishman hastened to the kitchen, took up the large bowl of sponge, and turned it upside down on the flagstone on which Sir Rupert stood, remarking: "There you are, Sir Rupert; the sponge will stick to the stone, and the blooming bowl will stick to the sponge."

The ghost replied, "It is well!" and disappeared.

THE tired Englishman went back to his bed, to snatch a little sleep while yet it was night. After some time of peaceful slumber, he dreamed that some soft jellylike monster was enveloping his entire person, sucking the life blood from every pore of his

flesh. He felt its nauseous clammy touch crawling over his legs—they were glued within its grip. It crawled up his legs, and over his abdomen he felt its sickening clasp. Then it enveloped his arms and glued them to his sides, and slowly it encircled his throat. Every nerve of his body was strained to free himself from its sickening grip. Now he was gasping for breath. The thing was about to enclose his mouth and smother him. With a yell of horror, he sprang from his bed. A thousand gluey sticky strings held him to the bed clothes.

"Great jumping Jehoshaphat, what is this!" he exclaimed. He was covered from head to foot with sticky, spongy dough.

"Blimey," he said. "If that cursed ghost business ain't nothing but a dream,—and I've been walking in my sleep again—damn!"

At this moment a voice rang out from below, "*Someone has stolen my batch of dough!*"