

A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

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Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 East Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription rates: One year in the United States and possessions, Cuba, Mexico, South America, Spain, \$2.50; Canada, \$2.75; elsewhere, \$3.00. English office: Otis A. Kline, c/o John Paradise, 86 Strand, W. C. 2, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 840 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

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WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

The Ghosts at Haddon-le-Green

By ALFRED I. TOOKE

A graveyard tale that sounds suspiciously like verse

THE Bishop was poking the library fire. His wife had gone out for a walk, when the Vicar dropped in, and expressed a desire to have a most serious talk. It seemed that a story was floating about, that the churchyard was haunted at night. The Vicar had heard it from Absalom Prout, who'd had a most terrible fright, and swore he had seen, by the light of the moon, some specters cavorting around; while old Mrs. Mortimer-Bryce in a swoon by the gate of the churchyard was found, and later declared she was sure she had seen some ghosts at their midnightly revels; though several people of Haddon-le-Green quite loudly averred they were devils.

The Bishop was shocked as the story he heard, absorbing it *cum grano salis*; then muttered: "Ghosts? Devils? The thing is absurd! Some crank giving vent to his malice, or else some preposterous prank it must be, or somebody's idea of humor. Let's go to the churchyard. Perhaps we shall see what caused this ridiculous rumor!" And so, through the darkness, the two of them strolled, discussing the Curate—a new one; a rather frail chap, who by someone was told he should have a mustache—so he grew one! Thus talking, their way to the churchyard they sought, and opened the gate and went in, and sat on a blanket the Bishop had brought, discussing original sin.

The Bishop, orating, his mission for-

got, and glibly expounded his views. The Vicar picked out a less bumpier spot, and gently fell into a snooze, till the Bishop's long discourse ran suddenly dry. The Vicar awoke, and felt queer. The Bishop leaped up, with a muttered: "Oh, my!" The Vicar responded: "Dear, dear!" For up from behind a new tombstone there loomed a shape that made both of them cower; and just at that instant above them there boomed twelve strokes from the clock in the tower.

Right over the tombstone the visitant hopped, and in the dim light they observed a piece of a shroud that about it still flopped, and both were extremely unnerved. The Bishop was portly; the Bishop was stout, with a wobble in both of his knees. The Vicar was prone to attacks of the gout—yet each ran with remarkable ease. They didn't go round by the gate, but, instead, they climbed o'er the wall, which was quicker. The Vicar fell hard on his nose, and it bled. The Bishop, he fell on the Vicar, and murmured: "Forgive me! The night is so dark!", then was up and away with a bound. The Vicar replied with a scathing remark which by mud was most luckily drowned. Then after the Bishop he hurriedly fled, till the vicarage safely received them. The Vicar's wife gasped; then she put them to bed, and with hot-water bottles relieved them.

The Vicar soon sent her the Curate to

wake. Returning, she said with alarm: "He isn't in yet! No, I made no mistake! I hope he has come to no harm!" But just at that moment the Curate came in. They heard his light step on the stair. The Bishop, he muttered: "Original sin!" The Vicar called out: "Are you there?" The Curate, he entered with guilt on his face at this unexpected detection. A butterfly net he revealed to their gaze, and in a large jar, a collection of moths he had caught. "Pardon me!" he explained, as he gazed at the bottle enraptured. "My hobby, you know! I was somewhat detained by a splendid new species I captured."

The Bishop, he stared at the Vicar aghast. The Vicar collapsed with a moan. "Where were you tonight?" asked the Bishop at last, with a hint of relief in his tone.

"Where the finest of trophies my efforts reward. In the churchyard!" the Curate explained. "I hope you don't think it improper, my lord?"

The Bishop's expression was pained, but he choked back the words that he wanted to use, and murmured: "I'd rather you'd not. Perhaps some more suitable place you could choose, or some—er—less frequented spot?"

The Curate declared he would take the advice, and said he'd be going, and bowed, while behind him there fluttered the butterfly net that looked like a piece of a shroud.

My story is finished. There's no more to write, except that "ghosts" no more are seen cavorting around in the churchyard at night, by the good folk of Haddon-le-Green.
