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31/10/55

Broadcast Talk for All Hallows' Eve

Dorothy Macardle.

THEY SAY IT HAPPENED.

a talk by Dorothy Macardle

cut—  
It is my good fortune that, wherever I go, somebody, sooner or later, tells me some tale of an uncanny happening. Strangers, <sup>as well as</sup> ~~and also~~ people whom I know to be truthful and sensible, relate to me experiences which are outside the laws of nature generally recognised. If I had chanced to meet the Ancient Mariner he would certainly have held me "like a three years' child".

The kind of story which most impresses me has no element in it of the horrific and rarely has a climax such as a dramatist would approve. Most of them bear no relation to folk tale or tradition. They are merely convincing and unexplicable.

This is a time of year when such mysteries come to mind: these evenings when, reluctantly, we realise the remorseless approach of winter; when, from my high promontory, I look out into darkness and hear only those small sighs and whispering noises that <sup>seem to</sup> ~~only~~ deepen the silence of sea and land.



"Is it the wind, or the dead leaves,  
Or the dead men, November eves?"

I sit alone and visit in memory distant ~~places~~ times and places and hear faraway voices again, and the tales they told. I re-enter the smallest inn I have ever seen, in an ancient village in the Maritime Alps; now <sup>a Tall</sup> ~~I am in a room at~~ ~~the top of an~~ <sup>in</sup> old house in St. Stephen's Green; now in a London taxi; now in a dimly lit kitchen in Achill; now at a dinner table, decorated for Christmas, in Southern Italy.

It was number 73 St. Stephen's Green, the home of Maud Gonne ~~Mac~~ McBride, where, in the year 1920, I had two rooms under the roof. After an agitated day, broken, perhaps, by raiding Auxiliaries, <sup>Swinging</sup> revolvers at wrists, searching feverishly for Sean, Madame would come upstairs to rest and drink cocoa beside my fire and would talk of her memories.

She told me that when she was younger and living in France she had possessed the faculty of leaving her body asleep and visiting some person of whom she had thought before she slept. Afterwards, some of those visited, <sup>thoroughly</sup> ~~believed that they had seen her - not as a phantom, but her very self.~~ Others, <sup>would</sup> sceptical, would tell her that she had been dreaming, and feel confounded, if not convinced, when



she described their homes - places she had not seen in her waking life. One sceptical friend was an Italian: ~~a man~~ ~~who~~, like many of her acquaintances, ~~was~~ a man who lived dangerously; a conspirator; one who had unscrupulous enemies. He challenged her to visit him in this way; send her midnight spirit to seek him in one of the obscure lodgings in which he worked from time to time.

One night, a good deal later, she attempted it and succeeded. She woke up, appalled, remembering <sup>too well</sup> what she had seen. In a small, half dark room, she had seen her friend slumped in a chair, inert, his head hanging, a blood-red stain at his throat and streaming down his chest.

With ~~immense~~ relief she learned that the Italian was still alive, yet, the dreadful thought came that this vision might have been a forewarning, and <sup>that</sup> assassination awaited him. She hesitated to tell him about it, when they met, then decided to do so on the chance that precautions might be of avail, and she described the scene.

Never shall I forget how Madame's voice and expression would change while she told one a story - now tragic and ominous; now light and gay. I listened, fascinated, watching the shadows of her changing face.

"I know," her friend had responded, "when that was. It was winter. I had caught a terrible cold so I sat with



my feet in a mustard bath and a red flannel round my neck.  
I probably fell asleep."

*Ridiculous - but strange, never there*

*cut*  
~~I came to that French village on an afternoon of~~  
rain and found the inn-keeper and his wife entertaining  
their only other guest with coffee and very curious tales.  
Two of my hostess's stories ~~were~~ - experiences she said, of  
her Flemish step-mother, concerned witches and priests.  
They went straight into the novel I was working on with  
scarcely an altered word. But these people were strangers  
to me and I can't vouch for their tales, so we'll pass on  
~~to another about which I feel no doubt.~~ This happened in  
Ireland. It happened to a ~~young~~ friend of mine when she  
was a young hospital nurse.

She had gone to an old country house on a private  
case. Her patient was very ill and he needed sleep, so it  
made her angry to hear, incessantly, <sup>still</sup> going on ~~until~~ long after  
midnight, <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ sharp, knocking sound. She thought it was  
the sound of a billiard game and wondered how members of  
the family could be so inconsiderate. At last she went  
downstairs to protest and, in the dark house, opened door  
after door. She could find nobody and saw no light anywhere,  
but the noise went on. Vexed and puzzled, she returned to  
her patient's room.



At breakfast with the family in the morning she spoke out, saying that billiards must not be played so late. An appalled silence fell and everyone present stared at her, aghast; her hostess, pale and half fainting, <sup>moaned</sup> ~~cried~~, "He is going to die."

My friend learned that ever since a fatality had followed a quarrel over a game of billiards, the sound of the game gave warning of the death of a member of the family in that house. Her patient died.

Incontrovertible witnesses, I think, are the writer, Shane Leslie and Mrs. Josephine MacNeill, our Minister to Scandinavia, who told me what had happened to him in Paris at the Gare de Lyons, one evening in March, 1924.

Summoned hastily to the French Riviera, where his wife had been taken ill, Shane Leslie went to the station with an hour to spare before the express should leave for the south at ten past eight. The Rapide was already in the station. He left his bags on the seat in the dining-car and, in order to pass the time of waiting, began to patrol the platform from end to end. He paced up and down, lonely in the crowd. Presently he realised that, at one end of the platform, just where he turned, a lady <sup>and</sup> was standing/looking at him. She did not move. Every



time he came to that place she was there. She was dressed in deep mourning and her dark eyes gazed at him from under a black hood. Her sombre regard made him uneasy and he fell into a strange state of mind in which, without hearing a sound, he received from her an imperative command: Il faut changer de train. Her insistence that he should change to another train had such an overwhelming effect on him that he ran to the compartment where he had left his luggage, snatched it off the train, crossed to a much slower train to the South, which was to leave later than the other, and took a seat there. As though in a dream, he watched the express draw out and steam away. A few miles outside Paris that Rapide was partially wrecked. Many of the English passengers, including an acquaintance of his own, were killed.

Shane Leslie could not connect the figure of the lady who warned him with anyone he had known.

When one has read a book that has enthralled one - especially a first-hand account of a psychic experience, and is about to meet the writer, hopes of eager discussion are born. ~~How excited I felt when I learned that my hostess at St. Hugh's College in Oxford would be one of the two authors of An Adventure - that profoundly interesting and convincing record of an afternoon spent in the far past in~~

*cut-*

*Mar Jordan*



~~Versailles: in the Versailles of Marie Antoinette. Best~~  
~~of all, my place at dinner every night was to be beside~~  
~~Miss Jourdain. What a disappointment when a grave secretary~~  
~~called on each of the guests while we were dressing to say~~  
~~that, please, no one must mention any <sup>psychic</sup> ~~physic~~ question to Miss~~  
~~Jourdain, who was striving to rid herself of her tormenting~~  
~~tendency to find herself in some scene of the past.~~

That was long, long ago. I was luckier last winter, in Amalfi, where I was spending December alone. It was on Christmas Day that the manager of the hotel told me that he was going to introduce me to another writer.

"He dines here to-night. Sir Grimble. A British governor formerly, was he not?"

Sir Arthur Grimble. ~~xxxxxxx~~ A Pattern of Islands. No book had delighted me more for years. Those stories of the charming, Gilbertese people: their fine manners and primitive beliefs; their ghosts and prophetic women and medicine men. I wanted to know whether Sir Arthur still regarded their beliefs and rituals with the sympathy he had felt while living among them? He assured me that he did. He said that he could explain none of it and yet dismiss none of it - even the whistling ghosts.

Some of you will remember the queer old woman in her



hut on one of the remoter islands, who was reputed to be able to describe what was happening elsewhere and what would happen in the future with the aid of ghosts who communicated with her by whistling. He had visited her and had heard that extraordinary tumult of high-pitched sound. She listened and then foretold an event of which it seemed impossible that she should have fore-knowledge by natural means: the arrival of a Japanese ship. Soon afterwards the ship arrived.

Before Christmas evening ended I had heard more strange stories - unwritten, or, at least, unpublished, as yet. I had heard about a haunted house. The house had been planned for himself by a young man called Derbyshire, but before it was half built, before the second storey had been erected, he died. Sir Arthur and his wife rented the house and lived there in great comfort, unperturbed by the frequent visits of poor Derbyshire, whom they saw and clearly recognised, looking exactly as he had looked alive, walking about on the upper floor - the floor he had never seen.

It is with a somewhat uneasy conscience that I recall an excellent lunch in Westminster and some remarkable first-hand stories which I owe to another travelled Englishman; Major Tudor-<sup>Pole</sup>~~Powell~~. He had read a novel of mine about



clairvoyance and, deceived by a foreword which is actually part of the fiction, supposed that the whole thing was based on fact - on some experience curiously like several that had occurred to him.

Cut- Tactfully, when I had confessed, he praised the verisimilitude of my invention, then he entertained me with tale after tale. ~~He told me how he had been lost in a desert without a map, not knowing in which direction to go, when suddenly a tall Arab appeared, sat down and drew a map in the sand, and a line which showed him the nearest way to a town. Then the Arab walked away, still silent. The Major believes that he was not a living man.~~

It was in the taxi which was to drop him at his office before taking me to my hotel that he began to tell me about another visitant - one who was quite certainly disembodied and to whom, <sup>also,</sup> ~~he was certain,~~ that he owed his life.

In 1919, while living with only his native servants in a houseboat on the Nile, Major Tudor-<sup>Pole</sup>~~Powell~~ became very ill. He had been camping by the Dead Sea and thought he must have caught Jordan-Valley fever. The local doctor's treatment proved useless and the sick man <sup>grew</sup> ~~became~~ extremely weak. He lay in bed, unable to eat, wasting away, with very little prospect of recovery, out of reach of help, as he believed.



One evening he heard a knock on his cabin door and, to his astonishment, there entered, unannounced, a stranger, a middle-aged man dressed, most unsuitably for that climate, in a frock-coat, carrying a top-hat, a bag and gloves. The invalid was too weak to ask questions and the doctor - he was obviously an English doctor, stood looking down at him but asked none, nor did he attempt to take his temperature or his pulse. The man had fair hair, turning grey and ~~blue~~, intelligent <sup>blue</sup> eyes. *He laid his things on the dressing-table.*

"You are a doctor?" the patient managed to say and the visitor answered "Yes"; then he told the Major that he was gravely ill and that his life could be saved by only one remedy. He instructed him to send one of his servants to Cairo, to the quarter known as Mousqué, where he was to buy a certain herb. The patient was to drink an infusion of this three times a day. The doctor repeated the name of the herb carefully in Latin and in Arabic and gave instructions about food.

When this point in the story had been reached the taxi stopped outside the Major's office. What was I to do? I could not bear not to know what had happened. Suddenly, however, the rest of the story flashed into my mind. I exclaimed, "You have broadcast this, haven't you?" The reply was, "Yes." I remembered, I had kept a cutting about



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The Major saw, to his amazement, that the mirrors on his table had become visible through the doctor's top-hat and then the doctor's form began to dissolve. But when the sick man asked "Who are you?" he was answered. His visitor said that he was a London specialist who had the power to leave his body and visit people who were in extreme need, and that he did this once every day. Then he took his bag and gloves and hat and was gone. The Major rang for his servant, who swore that no one had come aboard. But the shop in Cairo existed, and there the servant found the herb, and the Major drank the infusion and recovered within two weeks. Though, when in London, he searched earnestly, he never saw the doctor again.

What are the laws that govern such occurrences?

Is it all true? Could hallucination account for <sup>some of these</sup> ~~it~~ appearances? Is it possible to travel in time?

How tantalising it is to talk to an answering microphone. I wish I could transport myself, complete with ears, even if invisible, into your homes this evening and discover what you think of it all! But do not be uneasy, I possess no psychic power. Good-night.



31/10/55

Am-C.

THEY SAY IT HAPPENED.

A Talk by Dorothy McArdle.

Benedin,  
Windgate Road,  
Howth.

Tel. 322159.



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She told me that when she was younger and living in France she had possessed the faculty of leaving her body asleep and visiting some person of whom she had thought before she slept. Afterwards, some of those visited, thoroughly sceptical, would tell her that she had been dreaming, and would feel confounded, if not convinced, when she described their homes - places she had not seen in her waking life. One sceptical friend was an Italian: like many of her acquaintances, a man who lived dangerously; a conspirator; one who had unscrupulous enemies. He challenged her to visit him in this



way; send her midnight spirit to seek him in one of the obscure lodgings in which he worked from time to time.

One night, a good deal later, she attempted it and succeeded. She woke up, appalled, remembering too well what she had seen. In a small, half dark room, she had seen her friend slumped in a chair, inert, his head hanging, a blood-red stain at his throat and streaming down his chest.

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"I know", her friend had responded, "when that was. It was winter. I had caught a terrible cold so I sat with my feet in a mustard bath and a red flannel round my neck. I probably fell asleep." Ridiculous - but strange, nevertheless. This happened in Ireland. It happened to a friend of mine when she was a young hospital nurse.

She had gone to an old country house on a private case. Her patient was very ill and he needed sleep, so it made her angry to hear, incessantly, still going on long after midnight, a sharp knocking sound. She thought it was the sound of a billiard game and wondered how members of the family could be so inconsiderate. At last she went downstairs to protest and, in the dark house, opened door after door. She could find nobody and saw no light anywhere, but the noise



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