

The Ghost of Rosewarne

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"EZEKIEL GROSSE, gent., attorney-at-law," bought the lands of Rosewarne from one of the De Rosewarnes, who had become involved in debt by endeavouring, without sufficient means, to support the dignity of his family. There is reason for believing that Ezekiel was the legal adviser of this unfortunate Rosewarne, and that he was not over-honest in his transactions with his client. However this may be, Ezekiel Grosse had scarcely made Rosewarne his dwelling-place, before he was alarmed by noises, at first of an unearthly character, and subsequently, one very dark night, by the appearance of the ghost himself in the form of a worn and aged man. The first appearance was in the park, but he subsequently repeated his visits in the house, but always after dark. Ezekiel Grosse was not a man to be terrified at trifles, and for some time he paid but slight attention to his nocturnal visitor. Howbeit the repetition of visits, and certain mysterious indications on the part of the ghost, became annoying to Ezekiel. One night, when seated in his office examining some deeds, and being rather irritable, having lost an important suit, his visitor approached him, making some strange indications which the lawyer could not understand. Ezekiel suddenly exclaimed, "In the name of God, what wantest thou?"

"To show thee, Ezekiel Grosse, where the gold for which thou longest lies buried."

No one ever lived upon whom the greed of gold was stronger than on Ezekiel, yet he hesitated now that his spectral friend had spoken so plainly, and trembled in every limb as the ghost slowly delivered himself in sepulchral tones of this telling speech.

The lawyer looked fixedly on the spectre; but he dared not utter a word. He longed to obtain possession of the secret, yet he feared to ask him where he was to find this treasure. The spectre looked as fixedly at the poor trembling lawyer, as if enjoying the sight of his terror. At length, lifting his finger, he beckoned Ezekiel to follow him, turning at the same time to leave the room. Ezekiel was glued to his seat; he could not exert strength enough to move, although he desired to do so.

"Come!" said the ghost, in a hollow voice. The lawyer was powerless to come.

"Gold!" exclaimed the old man, in a whining tone, though in a louder key.

"Where?" gasped Ezekiel.

"Follow me, and I will show thee," said the ghost. Ezekiel endeavoured to rise; but it was in vain.

"I command thee, come!" almost shrieked the ghost. Ezekiel felt that he was compelled to follow his friend; and by some supernatural power rather than his own, he followed the spectre out of the room, and through the hall, into the park.

They passed onward through the night—the ghost gliding before the lawyer, and guiding him by a peculiar phosphorescent light, which appeared to glow from every part of the form, until they arrived at a little dell, and had reached a small cairn formed of granite boulders. By this the spectre rested; and when Ezekiel had approached it, and was standing on the other side of the cairn, still trembling, the aged man, looking fixedly in his face, said, in low tones,

"Ezekiel Grosse, thou longest for gold, as I did. I won the glittering prize, but I could not enjoy it. Heaps of treasure are buried beneath those stones; it is thine, if thou diggest for it. Win the gold, Ezekiel. Glitter with the wicked ones of the world; and when thou art the most joyous, I will look in upon thy happiness." The ghost then disappeared, and as soon as Grosse could recover himself from the extreme trepidation,—the result of mixed feelings,—he looked about him, and finding himself alone, he exclaimed, "Ghost or devil, I will soon prove whether or not thou liest!" Ezekiel is said to have heard a laugh, echoing between the hills, as he said those words.

The lawyer noted well the spot; returned to his house; pondered on all the circumstances of his case; and eventually resolved to seize the earliest opportunity, when he might do so unobserved, of removing the stones, and examining the ground beneath them.

A few nights after this, Ezekiel went to the little cairn, and by the aid of a crowbar, he soon overturned the stones, and laid the ground bare. He then commenced digging, and had not proceeded far when his spade struck against some other metal. He carefully cleared away the earth, and he then felt—for he could not see, having no light with him—that he had uncovered a metallic urn of some kind. He found it quite impossible to lift it, and he

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was therefore compelled to cover it up again, and to replace the stones sufficiently to hide it from the observation of any chance wanderer.

The next night Ezekiel found that this urn, which was of bronze, contained gold coins of a very ancient date. He loaded himself with his treasure, and returned home. From time to time, at night, as Ezekiel found he could do so without exciting the suspicions of his servants, he visited the urn, and thus by degrees removed all the treasure to Rosewarne House. There was nothing in the series of circumstances which had surrounded Ezekiel which he could less understand than the fact, that the ghost of the old man had left off troubling him from the moment when he had disclosed to him the hiding-place of this treasure.

The neighbouring gentry could not but observe the rapid improvements which Ezekiel Grosse made in his mansion, his grounds, in his personal appearance, and indeed in everything by which he was surrounded. In a short time he abandoned the law, and led in every respect the life of a country gentleman. He ostentatiously paraded his power to procure all earthly enjoyments, and, in spite of his notoriously bad character, he succeeded in drawing many of the landed proprietors around him.

Things went well with Ezekiel. The man who could in those days visit London in his own carriage and four was not without a large circle of flatterers. The lawyer who had struggled hard, in the outset of life, to secure wealth, and who did not always employ the most honest means for doing so, now found himself the centre of a circle to whom he could preach honesty, and receive from them expressions of the admiration in which the world holds the possessor of gold. His old tricks were forgotten, and he was put in places of honour. This state of things continued for some time; indeed, Grosse's entertainments became more and more splendid, and his revels more and more seductive to those he admitted to share them with him. The Lord of Rosewarne was the Lord of the West. To him everyone bowed the knee: he walked the earth as the proud possessor of a large share of the planet.

It was Christmas Eve, and a large gathering there was at Rosewarne. In the hall the ladies and gentlemen were in the full enjoyment of the dance, and in the kitchen all the tenantry and the servants were emulating their superiors. Everything went joyously; but when the mirth was in full swing, and Ezekiel felt to the full the influence of wealth, it appeared as if all in a moment the chill of death had fallen over everyone. The dancers paused, and looked one at another, each one struck with the other's paleness; and there, in the middle of the hall, everyone saw a strange old man looking angrily, but in silence, at Ezekiel Grosse, who was fixed in terror, blank as a statue.

No one had seen this old man enter the hall, yet there he was in the midst of them. It was but for a minute, and he was gone. Ezekiel, as if a frozen torrent of water had thawed in an instant, recovered himself, and roared at them.

"What do you think of that for a Christmas play? Ha, ha, ha! How frightened you all look! Butler, hand round the spiced wines! On with the dancing, my friends! It was only a trick, ay, and a clever one, which I have put upon you. On with your dancing, my friends!"

But with all his boisterous attempts to restore the spirit of the evening, Ezekiel could not succeed. There was an influence stronger than any he could command; and one by one, framing sundry excuses, his guests took their departure, every one of them satisfied that all was not right at Rosewarne.

From that Christmas Eve Grosse was a changed man. He tried to be his former self; but it was in vain. Again and again he called his gay companions around him; but at every feast there appeared one more than was desired. An aged man—weird beyond measure—took his place at the table in the middle of the feast; and although he spoke not, he exerted a miraculous power over all. No one dared to move; no one ventured to speak. Occasionally Ezekiel assumed an appearance of courage, which he felt not; rallied his guests, and made sundry excuses for the presence of his aged friend, whom he represented as having a mental infirmity, as being deaf and dumb. On all such occasions the old man rose from the table, and looking at the host, laughed a demoniac laugh of joy, and departed as quietly as he came.

The natural consequence of this was that Ezekiel Grosse's friends fell away from him, and he became a lonely man, amidst his vast possessions—his only companion being his faithful clerk, John Call.

The persecuting presence of the spectre became more and more constant; and wherever the poor lawyer went, there was the aged man at his side. From being one of the finest men in the county, he became a miserably attenuated and bowed old man. Misery was stamped on every feature—terror was indicated in every movement. At length he appears to have besought his ghostly attendant to free him of his presence. It was long before the ghost

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would listen to any terms; but when Ezekiel at length agreed to surrender the whole of his wealth to anyone whom the spectre might indicate, he obtained a promise that upon this being carried out, in a perfectly legal manner, in favour of John Call, that he should no longer be haunted.

This was, after numerous struggles on the part of Ezekiel to retain his property, or at least some portion of it, legally settled, and John Call became possessor of Rosewarne and the adjoining lands. Grosse was then informed that this evil spirit was one of the ancestors of the Rosewarne, from whom by his fraudulent dealings he obtained the place, and that he was allowed to visit the earth again for the purpose of inflicting the most condign punishment on the avaricious lawyer. His avarice had been gratified, his pride had been pampered to the highest; and then he was made a pitiful spectacle, at whom all men pointed, and no one pitied. He lived on in misery, but it was for a short time. He was found dead; and the country people ever said that his death was a violent one; they spoke of marks on his body, and some even asserted that the spectre of De Rosewarne was seen rejoicing amidst a crowd of devils, as they bore the spirit of Ezekiel over Carn Brea.