

BALLADE OF CHRISTMAS GHOSTS.

BETWEEN the moonlight and the fire,
In winter evenings long ago,
What ghosts I raised at your desire,
To make your leaping blood run slow!
How old, how grave, how wise we grow!
What Christmas ghost can make us chill—
Save these that troop in mournful row.
The ghosts we all can raise at will?

The beasts can talk in barn and byre
On Christmas-eve, old legends know.
As one by one the years retire,
We men fall silent then, I trow—
Such sights has memory to show,
Such voices from the distance thrill.
Ah me! they come with Christmas snow,
The ghosts we all can raise at will.

Oh, children of the village choir,
Your carols on the midnight throw!
Oh, bright across the mist and mire,
Ye ruddy hearths of Christmas glow!
Beat back the shades, beat down the woe,
Renew the strength of mortal will;
Be welcome, all, to come or go,
The ghosts we all can raise at will.

Friend, *sursum corda*, soon or slow
We part, like guests who've joyed their fill;
Forget them not, nor mourn them so,
The ghosts we all can raise at will!

CHRISTMAS VIOLETS.

LAST night I found the violets
You sent me once across the sea;
From gardens that the winter frets,
In summer lands they came to me.

Still fragrant of the English earth,
Still humid from the frozen dew,
To me they spoke of Christmas mirth,
They spoke of England, spoke of you.

The flowers are scentless, black, and sere,
The perfume long has passed away;
The sea whose tides are year by year
Is set between us, chill and gray.

But you have reached a windless age,
The haven of a happy clime; '—
You do not dread the winter's rage,
Although we missed the summer-time.

And like the flower's breath over sea,
Across the gulf of time and pain,
To-night returns the memory
Of love that lived not all in vain.

FARMER WORRALL'S CASE.



“WELL, upon my word!” stammered Farmer Worrall, holding out a sheet of closely written foolscap paper at arm’s-length from him, staring at it as if his eyes would pierce the paper—“upon my word!” and he sank into a chair, still holding the paper and still staring at it. Then he

looked up at the man who had brought it, and who stood before him uneasily twirling his hat in his hands, but not speaking.

“Humph! Jim Bates, I reckon you didn’t ever expect to serve no such paper’s this on me,” said Farmer Worrall; and still he stared at the paper, reading and re-reading the lines, as if even yet he distrusted the evidence of his senses.

“Well, no, Mr. Worrall, I must say I never did,” replied Jim Bates, getting very red in the face, and shifting from foot to foot still more uneasily—“I must say I never did, and I didn’t like the job, no how; but you see it’s all regelar, an’ I hed to do it.”

“Oh, that’s all right—it’s all right, Jim. I don’t pick no quarrel with you, you understand. You’ve got your duties to perform, an’ I hain’t ever heern no man say a word but what you performed ’em faithful,” said Farmer Worrall, withdrawing his eyes from the astonishing paper, and resting them with a kindly twinkle on Jim Bates for a moment, then returning to the study of the legal document he held in his hand.

His face darkened as he re-read it. The twinkle died out of his eyes.

“I don’t wonder ye’re mad, Mr. Worrall,” said Bates. “It nigh about took my breath away when I read it. But of course there can’t nothin’ come of it.” He paused suddenly, for at that instant the old man burst into a laugh so loud, so long, so hearty, that Bates gazed at him, half alarmed lest he had gone mad at the shock of what he had read.

Farmer Worrall wore a coarse homespun gray flannel frock, like the English yeoman’s frock. He had never been seen, except on Sundays, in any other garb than

this for sixty odd years. High up on the left-hand side of these frocks was a small breast pocket, in which all those sixty years he had carried a red silk pocket-handkerchief. But he was fumbling vainly for his handkerchief now. His hand trembled. That was not strange. He was seventy-five years old. But his hand did not tremble from the age. He had laughed till the tears were rolling down his cheeks, and still he laughed on. At last he grasped a corner of the red silk handkerchief, and drawing it out fluttering, wiped his cheeks and his eyes.

“Oh, Lord, Jim!” he said, “hev ye got a sense o’ the ridikerlus? Ef ye hev, hold on to’t. It’s the best friend a man’s got in this life. It ’ll kerry ye when money won’t, an’ when friends an’ favors air clean out o’ sight. It ’ll kerry me through this ’ere business. At fust I felt dangerous. I didn’t know jest how ’twas a-goin’ with me. It’s putty hard, Jim, when a man’s own flesh an’ blood turns agen him. But it’s ridikerlus, Jim; it’s ridikerlus, this trick the boys thought they’d play on me. It don’t seem’s ef they could ha’ been in real earnest about it.” The old man stopped short, and eyed his listener keenly. “There ain’t any chance of its bein’ a joke, is there, Jim? Do you think they mean it, now?” and he waited anxiously for the reply.

“They’re in earnest, Mr. Worrall. There isn’t any joke about it. It’s been talked about in town for a month how thet John was a-gettin’ ready to do it, an’ a-collectin’ up all the evidence he could find.”

“Humph! he wuz, wuz he?” and the laugh faded from Farmer Worrall’s face. “Well, I guess there’s some evidence ’ll be took on both sides o’ this case ’fore it’s done with. You can tell ’em I’ll be there—I’ll be there. They needn’t trouble themselves about summonsin’ me any farther. I’ll be there. You better stay round, Jim. There’ll be some laughin’ done. It’s ridikerlus. Ha! ha!” and the old man lay back in his chair again and wiped his eyes, and as the bearer of the unwelcome document walked slowly away, saying, “Good-morning, Mr. Worrall; I have no doubt it will all be settled agreeably to you in the end,” he called after him, “You can lay any bet you want to on that, Jim Bates.” And raising his aged falsetto voice almost to a shriek, as Jim walked briskly down the road, he continued: “Bet anything