



The  
*William Booth*  
Collection

A GHOST STORY

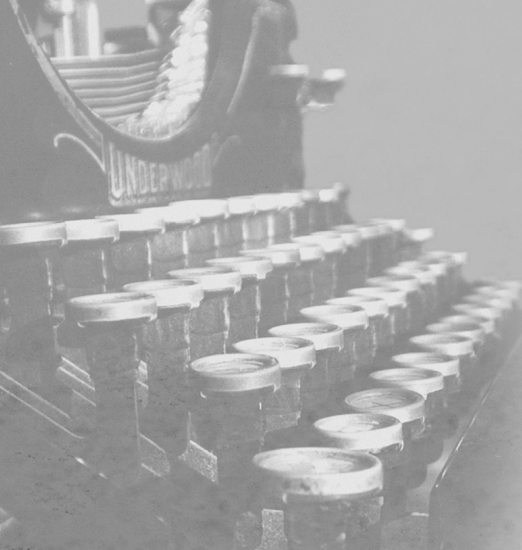
May, 1894.  
By The General

Who can escape some reluctant belief in Ghosts? I am sure I cannot! Still, I must say that if I was a Ghost myself and felt any serious concern for the reputation of my own fraternity, I should pray to be saved from some of my friends – for I think the way in which Spooks, which is only another name for Ghosts, are trotted out and described, and the miserable uses to which they are put in the present day, is anything but calculated to raise the Spirit race in public estimation.

But, on second thoughts, I have come to the conclusion that there is not very much to be said for Ghosts, whether ancient or modern. They all appear, or the great majority of them, from their public performances, to have belonged, so far as we can judge, to a very disreputable class when in the flesh, and in passing into the Spirit World they don't seem to have gone through any regenerative experience, seeing that they make it only too evident that in their Ghostly operations they are mainly prompted by revengeful motives, as they are ever crying out for somebody to be brought, not to repentance, but to the gallows; threatening to go about banging doors, rattling windows, making noises in the chimneys, or otherwise disturbing the peace of a household until the objectionable party comes to some terrible grief, in order that they may be pacified and set at rest.

**MODERN GHOSTS OF QUESTIONABLE CHARACTER.**

If it be contended that this description applies chiefly to the Ghosts of ancient times, it may be replied that many modern Spirits are of very little more worth, seeing that they so palpably lead a most senseless, meaningless life, neither doing nor saying anything that can be of the slightest possible use to the human race, or anything that the human race is not well able to say and do for itself, or communicating anything which is not already well known. At the best they seem to be a sort of community of Submerged Spiritual Casuals, and seeing that I have had so much to do with the sub-merged in the flesh, I suppose it is rather natural that I should



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shrink from having any dealings with them out of it. But perhaps I am a little prejudiced in the matter.

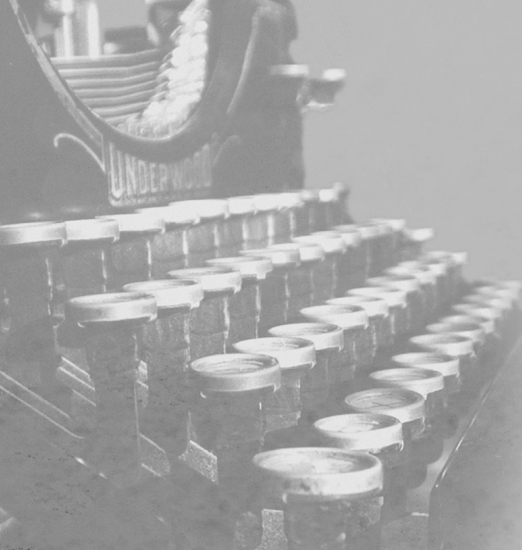
**GENUINE APPARITIONS.**

Still, without question, there have been genuine Ghosts of the most unimpeachable character. Visits have been made to earth by the inhabitants of the Spirit World. No one who believes his Bible can deny the reality of the appearance of Samuel when asked for by Saul in the last hour of his despair. Anyway, I have no disposition to question it. I should be prepared, however, to dispute the theory that the Prophet came from that world of blessedness on which he had just entered, either at the request of the backslidden King, or that he was brought back at the command of the poor old Witch of Endor. She at least was as much surprised at his appearance as any unbeliever in her black art could have been. The truth about it is, I suppose, that God allowed Samuel to appear for the moment in order to destroy the last fragment of hope out of the heart of the apostate Saul, and to set the irrevocable seal to his doom.

**HAVE NEVER SEEN A GHOST.**

Here I might as well confess, before I go further, that I have never seen a Ghost myself, although often desiring to do so. Perchance my faith is not strong enough in the direction of apparitions. However, that may be, I have never been privileged, knowingly, to have any direct personal communication through my bodily senses with the inhabitants of the Spirit World. For which loss, if it is a loss, I have to console myself with the consideration that my faith in the Supernatural rests not upon Visions, Dreams, or Appearances, and that I can therefore more fully claim the application of the words of my dear Lord, spoken to His unbelieving Apostle, "*Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.*"

Neither have I, amongst all the varied dwelling in which I have sojourned during my career, been privileged to abide, so far as my observation has gone, in A Haunted House. Houses having the reputation of being haunted have occasionally been pointed out to me, but I have



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been rather doubtful about the foundation of such reputations. But a rumor has lately reached me that there is at least one House in The Salvation Army that can, after a very important fashion, lay claim to the distinction of being Haunted. My information respecting it is unfortunately rather vague and indefinite, and if any readers of "The Officer" can furnish me with any further particulars – in strictest confidence, of course – I shall be very grateful. The facts of which I have been put in possession are so fragmentary that I have hesitated again and again whether I should give them publicity. Indeed, I have abandoned the task several times since first contemplating it, and it was not until three notably wise comrades with whom I conferred on the subject gave the opinion that the incident was of interest and might prove useful to some of their brethren, that I concluded to entrust the story of it to the pages of "The Officer," where it can be read and taken for what it is worth.

**THE STORY COMMENCES.**

I am sure that it will be very discouraging to my readers for me to begin by confessing that I do not know exactly where the Haunted Dwelling is situated the story of which I am about to relate. I cannot tell whether it is in the Provinces or in the great City. But I do know that it is occupied by a Staff Officer of good rank, considerable ability, and respectable standing in the Army.

Neither would it be agreeable to this Officer, nor serve any wise purpose, for me to give his name, if I knew it, which I really do not. I can, however, impart some particulars respecting him which will enable any member of the Staff to discover whether it is their own quarters or not that are referred to. If, on reading this description, the Officer whose case is described should himself think proper to communicate the fact to me, it would really be a communication of interest.

**THE HAUNTED OFFICER.**

Now, let me try to describe this Officer with a little care. I have already said that he is of good rank and respectable standing, and to this I now proceed to add that he is earnest, energetic, quick in thought and action, and, on account of the rapidity with which he usually arrives at



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conclusions, liable to make now and then very serious mistakes. A man who takes an hour, or half a day to arrive at a decision on matters of ordinary moment, and then changes his mind and requires another half day to revolve the matter over again, and then has to confer with half a dozen other people before he can see his way clear to decide upon the business, ought to make fewer mistakes than the man who hears and sees and promptly decides a question on the spot.

The Officer of whom we are speaking belongs to the latter class, and sometimes acts before he has taken sufficient time to quietly weigh up all the sides of a question, and consequently it will not be surprising to hear that he is occasionally led by his rapid and impulsive nature into errors which lead to serious consequences, anyway which would have been very much better avoided.

**HE MAKES NO MISTAKES.**

But this habit, bad as it is, would not be of so much importance, involving him, as it has done, in some of the most serious mistakes of his life, if he were not also possessed of what you might charitably call a weakness, but which I should be disposed to term a stupidity, of never acknowledging himself to be in the wrong when friends and foes alike can see that he acted unwisely. Those who have known him long and intimately, say that he has never been known to make a straightforward admission of error since the day he was made an Officer – they are not sure that he has ever done so since he was a child! Moreover, they say that if he is compelled to make a self-condemnatory admission at one moment, he is quick to take it back the next, or to clear himself by such excuses or qualifications as say in effect, "It is true I was mistaken, but if the whole circumstances under which I acted were taken into consideration, or if the reasons for my conduct were properly known, it would be seen that if I was wrong I was also right!"



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**PROCEED WITH THE STORY.**

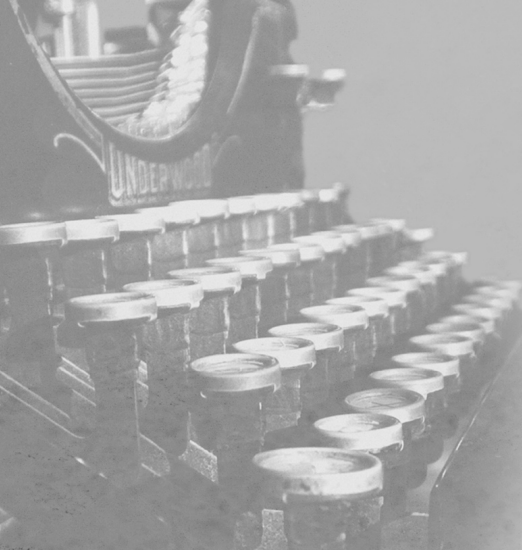
But, "What about the Apparition?" I hear my readers impatiently saying. "Come to the Ghost part of the business, that is what we want to hear about."

I have no doubt you do. Have patience with me and I will tell you all I know. Well, you see, it was in this Staff Officer's Quarters that the Spirit appeared. But, after all, when I come to think it over more carefully, it was not so much the House that was haunted, as the Officer himself, for the Apparition or whatever it might be – for I am not going to guarantee its ghostly qualities, that is a matter which you must judge for yourself – followed him about through all his wanderings, disturbing his peace often after a hard day's work, even in places where he had never been before, although the strange things he saw and heard usually transpired in his own home.

These appearances, occurred ordinarily in the night season, almost invariably after every light was out and all had settled down to rest. Why Ghosts usually choose the night and the darkness for making their revelations I never could very well make out! Surely it is not because Spirits can more readily make themselves visible in the night than in the day, or is it because they can better express the message they have to deliver in the darkness? I should have thought that the daytime and the daylight would have been more suitable for their purpose, and that real, respectable, honest Ghosts would have preferred the day to the mysterious night, and the light to the darkness, thereby keeping clear of much of the suspicion which, unfortunately, more or less attaches itself to almost every ghostly narrative we hear of, come it from whatsoever source it may.

**WHY GHOSTS WALK IN THE NIGHT.**

Several questions arise here: Do ghosts work in the day and are they therefore unable to spare time from their working hours for earthly matters, or can they only obtain permission to harass poor mortals in the night? Or is it the fact that the minds of those to whom they seek to reveal themselves are too crowded with business anxieties of one kind or another in the day to allow



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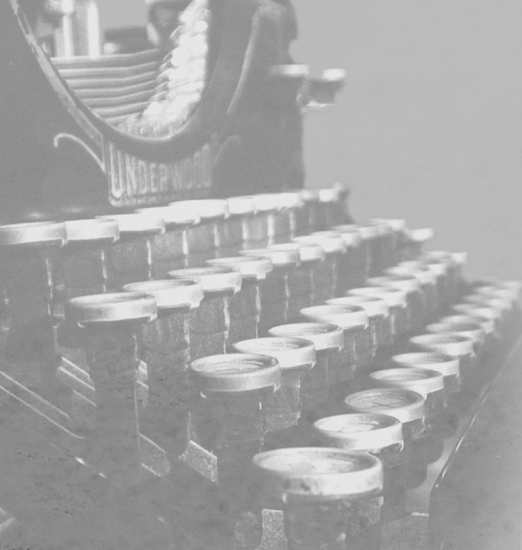
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of the intrusion of ghostly affairs? Or is it because the consciences of men and women are more active, and that memory is busier with the past in the silence and darkness of the night season, which makes it a more favorable time for gaining our attention to their appeals? I don't know. I can only guess. I should think the latter supposition the most probable. Anyway, I am informed that it is usually during the night that the Ghost of which I write walks and talks and troubles the Staff Officer whom I have described.

#### WHO IS THE GHOST?

Although appearing in different costumes and characters, it always seems to be one and the same person that is represented by this Apparition. Sometimes, curious to say, the figure appears as a Field Officer in full Uniform, with bounding step, appearing to be possessed of abundant joy and a heart full of gay dreams of a future Life of Devotion to God, Schemes of Usefulness, Harvests of Souls, and a Glorious Welcome on the Judgment morning. Another time the same individual will appear in civil dress, with downcast eye and saddened heart and other signs which show him to be burdened with some great sorrow all but bordering on despair. Sometimes the Spirit appears on the platform of an Army Barracks pouring out invitations to sinners to come to Christ; suddenly the Vision vanishes, to come again standing on the Penitent-Form, surrounded by group of weeping anxious souls; and then the Figure will change like the picture on the lantern sheet, and come out the same person although differently dressed, standing behind a shop counter buying and selling and making gain. Now the same individual is seen as an Officer standing in the Open-air Ring full of fire and zeal, begging men and women to flee from the wrath to come; and then again the Officer is gone, but the same individual in different dress appears going from door to door, apparently following the business of an Insurance Agent.

These appearances occur at about regular intervals. Just now they are very common. "Reconciliation Week" seems to have started the Spirit into greater activity; for not only has he appeared more frequently than usual to the Staff Officer himself, but he has shewn himself to his wife, while some of his more intimate friends have caught glimpses of the Apparition, heard



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its mutterings, and become quite concerned about it. Indeed, unless something is done, the Quarters appear likely to gain quite a Public reputation for being haunted.

### WAS IT A DOUBLE?

One of the most curious aspects of this Ghost business lies in the fact that the individual whom the Spirit most strongly resembles is not dead. It appears to be a sort of Double – that is, the duplicate of a Spirit still in the flesh.

My knowledge of this class of Apparitions is very limited, and my faith in their possibility is but slight. Still, it has received an accession of strength from a narration which my daughter Lucy (who has just returned from India) gave me the other day. It was on this wise. She had been taken very ill on the eve of a great Field Day at Gujarat, with a sort of choleraic diarrhea. Those were nursing her felt that it was all but impossible for her to endure the fatigue of the day's services, and tried hard to persuade her to abandon it. But knowing that thousands of natives would come to the festival to hear and see her, and being unwilling to disappoint them and anxious to make the most of the opportunity, she insisted on fulfilling her engagement, and so, half dead, they carried her to her tent in the field where the festival was to take place. As one meeting followed another they bore her on a stretcher to the Large Tent in which the great meetings of the clay were held, and it was while lying between these meetings in pain all alone that the appearance took place to which I refer. She said, "The General appeared to me. I saw you most distinctly. I was not asleep. I was wide awake, and particularly noticed the Uniform you wore. You gazed at me with a look of combined affection and anger that went to my heart. I felt that you very strongly disapproved of my conduct. I gave up at once and told my people to take me to Bombay right away."

Now, if that was a Ghost it was a Double. It was the Ghost of a living man, for I am conscious while I write this that I am still in the flesh.

Now, about such Apparitions there is doubtless a good deal of mystery, but not much more than there is about many things daily transpiring around us. But after all, I don't suppose that



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the ghostly appearance which I am endeavoring to describe was of this pattern; it only seems to me to be something on the same lines. Of its particular character the reader must judge. I guarantee nothing. If we can, by telegraph or by telephone, or by making a few marks on a piece of paper; or if we can, as it is asserted to be possible, for us, by an effort of the will, to project – that is, to convey – our thoughts and feelings into the minds and hearts of people thousands of miles away, why should it be impossible for our very "Forms," by some strange process, to be made to appear to the eyes of persons at a distance even while we remain in the flesh?

**WHAT WAS IT ALL ABOUT?**

But what is all this Apparition business about? What is the meaning of it? Did the Ghost explain himself by word or deed? Did he speak, or was he always silent?

I don't think that Ghosts are given to very much talking. True, sometimes we hear of them delivering themselves of certain sounds, and even making definite speeches. Samuel spoke. But ordinarily they content themselves by signs and motions, saying by their faces almost more than could be expressed in words. It was so with this one. Ghosts are proverbially in a hurry; their business, I suppose, requiring haste. But occasionally this one took plenty of time for his business, and on certain occasions made quite a little speech, or seemed to do, which being interpreted was something as follows:

**THE GHOST TELLS HIS OWN STORY.**

"You know me. I was an Officer under your command. When we first met I was full of hope and confidence for a life of sacrifice and usefulness. I was loyal to the Flag, I loved the General, and I gave myself, body and soul, to the Army. My work was my delight. Whatever I had in the present, or might have in the future, of family or fortune, or aught else, were all to belong to the Army. It is true that I changed, and lost some of my devotion and drifted into a careless spirit, and so neglected some of my duties. Still, I was true, and never dreamed of any other thing but living and dying in the ranks. Then there came a time when I differed from you on





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some matters, and said so. You were displeased. You resented it, and marked your displeasure by my appointments, or I thought you did. I thought this was unfair, and it worked on my spirit, and I grew more and more reckless of duty.

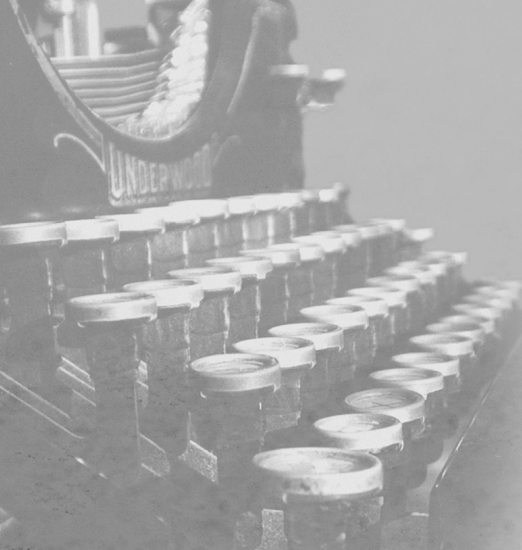
"Then came your discovery of what you thought was a breach of Orders and Regulations, and so it was. I admit it, and I acknowledge that it was a serious departure from discipline. But you charged me with my offence in what I thought was a hard, censorious spirit. I spoke back. I denied what I ought to have admitted with regret, and defended what I ought to have confessed with shame. But I was hurried and carried away with passion, and having taken up a false position, I was too proud to abandon it.

"Then you dealt with me in what I thought was a bad spirit. You did not seem to want to save me but to secure my condemnation, and so made the most of every point against me. You sought every evidence, hunted through my records for shortcomings, and passed over the little of good that I had done, and let me go, as I thought, without a regret – go, as you must have known, to certain misery, if not to backsliding and sin and shame.

"Oh, if you had only honestly tried to save me; if you had let me tell you my case alone; if you had prayed with me and for me and not at me; if you had loved me and let me know that you really cared for me I should have broken down and confessed and been restored. Instead of this, you hunted me out of the Army; you have never followed me with an expression of sympathy, at least I have not heard of one, or made an effort for my restoration. You have murdered my prospects and dragged me down to my present humiliating position. If I am lost —." The Ghost said no more.

**GHOSTS EXAGGERATE.**

Now, beyond doubt, some Ghosts are vindictive. They have that character. Why should they be otherwise? The class of which we are speaking make no profession of salvation, and as we have before said, their chief employment is seeking revenge for the wrongs that they have suffered. We cannot therefore receive all that they say as gospel. No doubt they strive to put



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things in as strong a light as they can and so talk for effect, and this leads them to strange exaggerations.

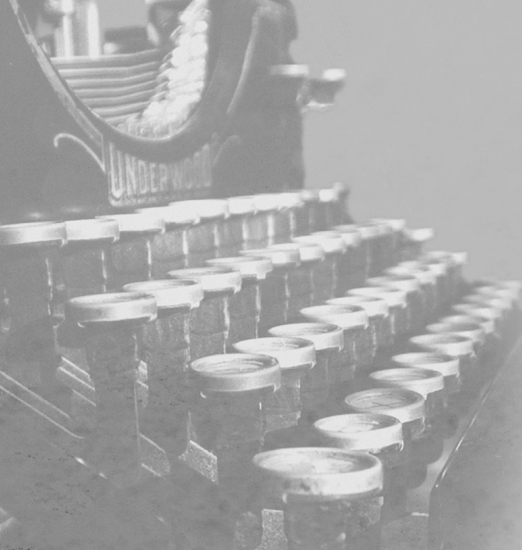
It was probably so with this Ghost. But still, it is whispered that the Officer has confessed to himself and to one or two intimate friends that there is sufficient truth in these ghostly accusations to trouble him. He fears that something serious may come of it; his conscience pricks him. He is trying hard to justify himself. He goes through the circumstances so effectively alluded to by the Ghost again and again, but he cannot make himself appear clear of condemnation even to his own mind. Then the thing, apparently, is getting worse. The Spirit has commenced to appear before him when he is talking in the Barracks. Every time he tries to appeal to backsliders, the awkward question obtrudes itself, *"Who is responsible for Ex-Officer Blank? Who is responsible for Ex-Officer Blank?"*

So something must be done, if only in the interests of the peace and usefulness of the Staff Officer himself. What is there that he can do that will end these unpleasant Appearances and mutterings that disturb his peace by day and his rest by night?

### HOW TO LAY GHOSTS

Now, this is an important question. How can this Spirit be got rid of? "Ghost Laying" used to be, I am in-formed, a very important business – quite a profession, or whatever you may choose to call it. It was, I believe, controlled by a regular set of Rules and Regulations. It might be said to have been almost a science. Varied methods and agencies were employed, consisting of charms and witcheries, together with prayers and religious ceremonies and the like. But no matter what means were used if the appearance was the result of some wrong. The only effective method of getting rid of the Haunting spirit was the confession of the wrong that had been perpetrated, with due reparation on its account, or the punishment of the wrong-doer. This done, all was peace once more.

Surely, that practice was sound in principle? It is exactly what I teach myself when Spirits in the flesh come into similar circumstances, and it cannot therefore be wrong in relation to Spirits



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out of it. Therefore, if the same Staff Officer was to ask my advice as to what he should do to get out of this trouble, I should say, Let him reconsider the whole business; let him carefully and charitably, and as nearly as he can righteously, review the circumstances which led to the separation of Ex-Officer Blank, and if in cooler moments and on a more careful revision he is convinced that he acted in the matter in any way unjustly, or in a high-handed manner, or without sufficient forbearance, or in any way otherwise than he would have done had he the work to do over again, let him, like a Salvation Army Officer who does his duty fearless of consequences, make the only amends possible by acknowledging wrong and asking forgiveness.

There may and will be difficulties about this course. It may be thought to involve an unnecessary humiliation on the part of the Staff Officer which may carry with it some loss of prestige to the whole Staff, and be a blow to discipline and lead to some diminution of authority. But such fears are groundless. If wrong had been done, perseverance in it will not make it right, or help to maintain the vigor of authority and respect for discipline is the generous acknowledgment of a mistake, if one has been made, with such restitution as lies in the power of the individual who is responsible for it.

There is no other course that I have any knowledge of that will be likely to silence the class of Ghosts to which I refer. I am not speaking of the Good Spirits who, according to the Apostle, are sent forth to minister to our heirs of salvation, who hover around us and whisper cheer and courage to our hearts. We would not desire these to cease their loving care for us, but would cry to them to come nearer and nearer to us, until we breathe out our souls into their arms and are borne on their wings to the City of Spirits above.

Nor do I speak of the frivolous, useless, empty, chattering Spirits of which we have heard so much of late. These are not worth notice – in fact, I imagine for them no more serious existence than the vapoury dreams of our night slumbers. I speak of the Spirits who cannot rest whether in the flesh or out of it, and who will not let other Spirits rest by reason of the wrongs that they feel they have suffered, and whose continual cry is



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**JUSTICE! JUSTICE! JUSTICE!**

To quieten these Spirits there can be only one way: Give them justice, and mercy as well, and so shall they cease from troubling and be at rest.

P.S. – Very important! Since the above was written, it has been shown to several Staff Officers, once of whom has stated, I understand, that the Haunted Officer is a Field Officer. It is true, he says, that there may be a Staff Officer in this awkward predicament, but that there is, of his own knowledge, a Field Officer who is so fixed, and that the Spirit that troubles him is either a Local Officer or a Soldier. Perhaps, if all the truth respecting this little controversy were known, it would appear that there are two Officers' Quarters haunted. Indeed, there may be more than two. Perhaps the reader will be able to decide this question.