

Complex Hauntings and Occult Bestialities

By Elliott O'Donnell

What are occult bestialities? Are they the spirits of human beings who, when inhabiting material bodies, led thoroughly criminal lives; are they the phantasms of dead beasts—cats and dogs, etc.; or are they things that were never carnate? I think they may be either one or the other—that any one of these alternatives is admissible. There is a house, for example, in a London square, haunted by the apparition of a nude woman with long, yellow, curly hair and a pig's face. There is no mistaking the resemblance—eyes, snout, mouth, jaw, jowls, all are piggish, and the appearance of the thing is hideously suggestive of all that is bestial. What, then, is it? From the fact that in all probability a very sensuous, animal-minded woman once lived in the house, I am led to suppose that this may be her phantasm—or—one only of her many phantasms. And in this latter supposition lies much food for reflection. The physical brain, as we know, consists of multitudinous cells which we may reasonably take to be the homes of our respective faculties. Now, as each material cell has its representative immaterial inhabitant, so each immaterial inhabitant has its representative phantasm. Thus each representative phantasm, on the dissolution of the material brain, would be either earth-bound or promoted to the higher spiritual plane. Hence, one human being may be represented by a score of phantasms, and it is quite possible for a house to be haunted by many totally different phenomena of the same person. I know, for instance, of a house being subjected to the hauntings of a dog, a sensual-looking priest, the bloated shape of an indescribable something, and a ferocious-visaged sailor. It had had, prior to my investigation, only one tenant, a notorious rake and glutton; no priest or sailor had ever been known to enter the house; and so I concluded the many apparitions were but phantasms of the same person—phantasms of his several, separate, and distinct personalities. He had brutal tendencies, sacerdotal (not spiritual) tendencies, gluttonous, and nautical tendencies, and his whole character being dominated by carnal cravings, on the dissolution of his material body each separate tendency would remain earth-bound, represented by the phantasm most closely resembling it. I believe this theory may explain many dual hauntings, and it holds good with regard to the case I have quoted, the case of the apparition with the pig's head. The ghost need not necessarily have been the spirit of a dead woman *in toto*, but merely the phantasm of one of her grosser personalities; her more spiritual personalities, represented by other phantasms, having migrated to the higher plane. Let me take, as another example, the case which I personally investigated, and which interested me deeply. The house was then haunted (and, as far as I know to the contrary, is still haunted) by a blurred figure, suggestive of something hardly human and extremely nasty, that bounded up the stairs two steps at a time; by a big, malignant eye—only an eye—that appeared in one of the top rooms; and by a phantasm resembling a lady in distinctly modern costume. The house is old, and as, according to tradition, some crime was committed within its walls many years ago, the case may really be an instance of separate hauntings—the bounding figure and the eye (the latter either belonging to the figure or to another phantasm) being the phantasms of the principal, or principals, in the ancient tragedy; the lady, either the phantasm of someone who died there comparatively recently, or of someone still alive, who consciously, or unconsciously, projects her superphysical ego to that spot. On the other hand, the three different phenomena might be three different phantasms of one person, that person being either alive or dead—for one can unquestionably, at times, project phantasms of

one's various personalities before physical dissolution. The question of occult phenomena, one may thus see, is far more complex than it would appear to be at first sight, and naturally so,—the whole of nature being complex from start to finish. Just as minerals are not composed of one atom but of countless atoms, so the human brain is not constituted of one cell but of many; and as with the material cerebrum, so with the immaterial—hence the complexity. With regard to the phenomena of superphysical bestialities such as dogs, bears, etc., it is almost impossible to say whether the phantasm would be that of a dead person, or rather that representing one of some dead person's several personalities—the phantasm of a genuine animal, of a vagrarian, or of some other type of elemental.

One can only surmise the identity of such phantasms, after becoming acquainted with the history of the locality in which such manifestations appear. The case to which I referred in my previous works, *Some Haunted Houses of England and Wales*, and *Ghostly Phenomena*, namely, that of the apparition of a nude man being seen outside an unused burial-ground in Guilsborough, Northamptonshire, furnishes a good example or alternatives. Near to the spot, at least within two or three hundred yards of it, was a barrow, close to which a sacrificial stone had been unearthed; consequently the phantasm may have been a barrowvian; and again, as the locality is much wooded and but thinly populated, it may have been a vagrarian; and again, the burial-ground being in such close proximity, the apparition may well have been the phantasm of one of the various personalities of a human being interred there.

One night, as I was sitting reading alone in an isolated cottage on the Wicklow hills, I was half-startled out of my senses by hearing a loud, menacing cry, half-human and half-animal, and apparently in mid-air, directly over my head. I looked up, and to my horror saw suspended, a few feet above me, the face of a Dalmatian dog—of a long since dead Dalmatian dog, with glassy, expressionless eyes, and yellow, gaping jaws. The phenomenon did not last more than half a minute, and with its abrupt disappearance came a repetition of the cry. What was it? I questioned the owner of the cottage, and she informed me she had always had the sensation something uncanny walked the place at night, but had never seen anything. "One of my children did, though," she added; "Mike—he was drowned at sea twelve months ago. Before he became a sailor he lived with me here, and often used to see a dog—a big, spotted cratur, like what we called a plum-pudding dog. It was a nasty, unwholesome-looking thing, he used to tell me, and would run round and round his room—the room where you sleep—at night. Though a bold enough lad as a rule, the thing always scared him; and he used to come and tell me about it, with a face as white as linen—'Mother!' he would say, 'I saw the spotted cratur again in the night, and I couldn't get as much as a wink of sleep.' He would sometimes throw a boot at it, and always with the same result—the boot would go right through it." She then told me that a former tenant of the house, who had borne an evil reputation in the village—the peasants unanimously declaring she was a witch—had died, so it was said, in my room. "But, of course," she added, "it wasn't her ghost that Mike saw." Here I disagreed with her. However, if she could not come to any conclusion, neither could I; for though, of course, the dog may have been the earth-bound spirit of some particularly carnal-minded occupant of the cottage—or, in other words, a phantasm representing one of that carnal-minded person's several personalities,—it may have been the phantasm of a vagrarian, of a barrowvian, or, of some other kind of elemental, attracted to the spot by its extreme loneliness, and the presence there, unsuspected by man, of some ancient remains, either human or animal. Occult dogs are very often of a luminous, semi-transparent bluish-grey—a bluish-grey that is common to many other kinds of superphysical phenomena, but which I have never seen in the physical world.

I have heard of several houses in Westmoreland and Devon, always in the vicinity of ancient burial-places, being haunted by blue dogs, and sometimes by blue dogs without heads. Indeed, headless apparitions of all sorts are by no means uncommon. A lady, who is well known to me, had a very unpleasant experience in a house in Norfolk, where she was awakened one night by a scratching on her window-pane, which was some distance from the ground, and, on getting out of bed to see what was there, perceived the huge form of a shaggy dog, without a head, pressed against the glass.

Fortunately for my informant, the manifestation was brief. The height of the window from the ground quite precluded the possibility of the apparition being any natural dog, and my friend was subsequently informed that what she had seen was one of the many headless phantasms that haunted the house. Of course, it does not follow that because one does not actually see a head, a head is not objectively there—it may be very much there, only not materialised. A story of one of these seemingly headless apparitions was once told me by a Mrs Forbes du Barry whom I met at Lady D.'s house in Eaton Square. I remember the at-home to which I refer, particularly well, as the entertainment on that occasion was entirely entrusted to Miss Lilian North, who as a reciter and raconteur is, in my opinion, as far superior to any other reciter and raconteur as the stars are superior to the earth. Those who have not heard her stories, have not listened to her eloquent voice—that appeals not merely to the heart, but to the soul—are to be pitied. But there—I am digressing. Let me proceed. It was, I repeat, on the soul-inspiring occasion above mentioned that I was introduced to Mrs Forbes du Barry, who must be held responsible for the following story.

“I was reading one of your books the other day, Mr O'Donnell,” she began, “and some of your experiences remind me of one of my own—one that occurred to me many years ago, when I was living in Worthing, in the old part of the town, not far from where the Public Library now stands. Directly after we had taken the house, my husband was ordered to India. However, he did not expect to be away for long, so, as I was not in very good health just then, I did not go with him, but remained with my little boy, Philip, in Worthing. Besides Philip and myself, my household only consisted of a nursery-governess, cook, housemaid, and kitchen-maid. The hauntings began before we had been in our new quarters many days. We all heard strange noises, scratchings, and whinings, and the servants complained that often, when they were at meals, something they could not see, but which they could swear was a dog, came sniffing round them, jumping up and placing its invisible paws on their lap. Often, too, when they were in bed the same thing entered their room, they said, and jumped on the top of them. They were all very much frightened, and declared that if the hauntings continued they would not be able to stay in the house. Of course, I endeavoured to laugh away their fears, but the latter were far too deeply rooted, and I myself, apart from the noises I had heard, could not help feeling that there was some strangely unpleasant influence in the house. The climax was brought about by Philip. One afternoon, hearing him cry very loudly in the nursery, I ran upstairs to see what was the matter. On the landing outside the nursery I narrowly avoided a collision with the governess, who came tearing out of the room, her eyes half out of her head with terror, and her cheeks white as a sheet. She said nothing—and indeed her silence was far more impressive than words—but, rushing past me, flung herself downstairs, half a dozen steps at a time, and ran into the garden. In an agony of fear—for I dreaded to think what had happened—I burst into the nursery, and found Philip standing on the bed, frantically beating the air with his hands. ‘Take it away—oh, take it away!’ he cried; ‘it is a horrid dog; it has no head!’ Then, seeing me, he sprang down and, racing up to me, leaped into my open arms. As he did so, something darted past and disappeared through the

open doorway. It was a huge greyhound without a head! I left the house the next day—I was fortunately able to sublet it—and went to Bournemouth. But, do you know, Mr O'Donnell, that dog followed us! Wherever we went it went too, nor did it ever leave Philip till his death, which took place in Egypt on his twenty-first birthday. Now, what do you think of that?"

"I think," I replied, "that the phantasm was very probably that of a real dog, and that it became genuinely attached to your son. I do not think it was headless, but that, for some reason unknown for the present, its head never materialised. What was the history of the house?"

"It had no history as far as I could gather," Mrs Forbes du Barry said. "A lady once lived there who was devoted to dogs, but no one thinks she ever had a greyhound."

"Then," I replied thoughtfully, "it is just possible that the headless dog was the phantasm of the lady herself, or, at least, of one of her personalities!"

Mrs Du Barry appeared somewhat shocked, and I adroitly changed the conversation. However, I should not be at all surprised if this were the case.

The improbability of any ancient remains being interred under or near the house, precludes the idea of barrowvians, whilst the thickly populated nature of the neighbourhood and the entire absence of loneliness, renders the possibility of vagrarians equally unlikely. That being so, one only has to consider the possibility of its being a vice elemental attracted to the house by the vicious lives and thoughts of some former occupant, and I am, after all, inclined to favour the theory that the phantasm was the phantasm of the old dog-loving lady herself, attaching itself in true canine fashion to the child Philip.

The most popular animal form amongst spirits—the form assumed by them more often than any other—is undoubtedly the dog. I hear of the occult dog more often than of any other occult beast, and in many places there is yet a firm belief that the souls of the wicked are chained to this earth in the shape of monstrous dogs. According to Mr Dyer, in his *Ghost World*, a man who hanged himself at Broomfield, near Salisbury, manifested himself in the guise of a huge black dog; whilst the Lady Howard of James I.'s reign, for her many misdeeds, not the least of which was getting rid of her husbands, was, on her death, transformed into a hound and compelled to run every night, between midnight and cock-crow, from the gateway of Fitzford, her former residence, to Oakhampton Park, and bring back to the place, from whence she started, a blade of grass in her mouth; and this penance she is doomed to continue till every blade of grass is removed from the park, which feat she will not be able to effect till the end of the world. Mr Dyer also goes on to say that in the hamlet of Dean Combe, Devon, there once lived a weaver of great fame and skill, who the day after his death was seen sitting working away at the loom as usual. A parson was promptly fetched, and the following conversation took place.

"Knowles!" the parson commanded (not without, I shrewdly suspect, some fear), "come down! This is no place for thee!" "I will!" said the weaver, "as soon as I have worked out my quill." "Nay," said the vicar, "thou hast been long enough at thy work; come down at once." The spirit then descended, and, on being pelted with earth and thrown on the ground by the parson, was converted into a black hound, which apparently was its ultimate shape.

Some years ago, Mr Dyer says, there was an accident in a Cornish mine whereby several men lost their lives, and, rather than that their relatives should be shocked at the sight of their mangled remains, some bystander, with all the best intentions in the world, threw the bodies into a fire, with the result that the mine has ever since been haunted by a troop of little black dogs.

According to the *Book of Days*, ii. p. 433, there is a widespread belief in most parts of England in a spectral dog, "large, shaggy, and black," but not confined to any one particular species. This phantasm is believed to haunt localities that have witnessed crimes, and also to foretell

catastrophes. The Lancashire people, according to Haviland and Wilkinson in their *Lancashire Folk-lore*, call it the “stuker” and “trash”: the latter name being given it on account of its heavy, slopping walk; and the former appellation from its curious screech, which is a sure indication of some approaching death or calamity. To the peasantry of Norfolk and Cambridgeshire it is known as “the shuck,” an apparition that haunts churchyards and other lonely places. In the Isle of Man a similar kind of phantasm, called “the Mauthe dog,” was said to walk Peel Castle; whilst many of the Welsh lanes—particularly that leading from Mowsiad to Lisworney Crossways—are, according to Wirt Sikes’ *British Goblins*, haunted by the gwyllgi, a big black dog of the most terrifying aspect.

Cases of hauntings by packs of spectral hounds have from time to time been reported from all parts of the United Kingdom; but mostly from Northumberland, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cumberland, Wales, Devon, and Cornwall. In the northern districts they are designated “Gabriel’s hounds”; in Devon, “the Wisk, Yesk, or Heath hounds”; in Wales, “the Cwn Annwn or Cwn y Wyhr” (see Dyer’s *Ghost World*); and in Cornwall, “the devil and his dandy dogs.” My own experiences fully coincide with the traditional belief that the dog is a very common form of spirit phenomena; but I can only repeat (the same remark applying to other animal manifestations), that it is impossible to decide with any degree of certainty to what category of phantasms, in addition to the general order of occult bestialities, the dog belongs. It seems quite permissible to think that the spirits of ladies, with an absorbing mania for canine pets, should be eventually earth-bound in the form of dogs—a fate which many of the fair sex have assured me would be “absolutely divine” and far preferable to the orthodox heaven.

I cannot see why the shape of a dog should be appropriated by the less desirable denizens of the occult world. But, that it is so, there is no room to doubt, as the following illustration shows. As soon as the trial of the infamous slaughterer X— was over, and the verdict of death generally known, a deep sigh of relief was heaved by the whole of civilisation—saving, of course, those pseudo-humanitarians who always pity murderers and women-beaters, and who, if the law was at all sensible and just, should be hanged with their bestial *protégés*. From all classes of men, I repeat, with the exception of those pernicious cranks, were heard the ejaculations: “Well! he’s settled. What a good thing! I am glad! The world will be well rid of him!”

Then I smiled. The world well rid of him! Would it be rid of him? Not if I knew anything about occult phenomena. Indeed, the career on earth for such an epicure in murder as X— had only just begun; in fact, it could hardly be said to begin till physical dissolution. The last drop—that six feet or so plunge between grim scaffolding—might in the case of some criminals, mere tyros at the trade, terminate for good their connection with this material plane; but not, decidedly not, in the case of this bosom comrade of vice elementals.

From both a psychological and superphysical point of view the case had interested me from the first. I had been anxious to see the man, for I felt sure, even if he did not display any of the ordinary physiognomical danger signals observable in many bestial criminals, there would nevertheless be a something about or around him, that would immediately warn as keen a student of the occult as myself of his close association with the lowest order of phantasms. I was not, however, permitted an interview, and so had to base my deductions upon the descriptions of him given me, first hand, by two experts in psychology, and upon photographs. In the latter I recognised—though not with the readiness I should have done in the photo’s living prototype—the presence of the unknown brain, the grey, silent, stealthy, ever-watchful, ever-lurking occult brain. As I gazed at his picture, as in a crystal, it faded away, and I saw the material man sitting alone in his study before a glowing fire. From out of him there crept a shadow, the shadow of

something big, bloated, and crawling. I could distinguish nothing further. On reaching the door it paused, and I felt it was eyeing him—or rather his material body—anxiously. Perhaps it feared lest some other shadow, equally baleful, equally sly and subtle, would usurp its home. Its hesitation was, however, but momentary, and, passing through the door, it glided across the dimly lighted hall and out into the freedom of the open air. Picture succeeding picture with great rapidity, I followed it as it curled and fawned over the tombstones in more than one churchyard; moved with a peculiar waddling motion through foul alleys, halting wherever the garbage lay thickest, rubbed itself caressingly on the gory floors of slaughter-houses, and finally entered a dark, empty house in a road that, if not the Euston Road, was a road in every way resembling it.

The atmosphere of the place was so suggestive of murder that my soul sickened within me; and so much so, in fact, that when I saw several grisly forms gliding down the gloomy staircases and along the sombre, narrow passages, where X—' immaterial personality was halting, apparently to greet it, I could look no longer, but shut my eyes. For some seconds I kept them closed, and, on re-opening them, found the tableau had changed—the material body before the fire was re-animated, and in the depths of the bleared, protruding eyes I saw the creeping, crawling, waddling, enigmatical shadow vibrating with murder. Again the scene changed, and I saw the physical man standing in the middle of a bedroom, listening—listening with blanched face and slightly open mouth, a steely glimmer of the superphysical, of the malignant, devilish superphysical, in his dilated pupils. What he is anticipating I cannot say, I dare not think—unless—unless the repetition of a scream; and it comes—I cannot hear it, but I can feel it, feel the reverberation through the crime-kissed walls and vicious, tainted atmosphere.

Something is at the door—it presses against it; I can catch a glimpse of its head, its face; my blood freezes—it is horrible. It enters the room, grey and silent—it lays one hand on the man's sleeve and drags him forward. He ascends to the room above, and, with all the brutality of those accustomed to the dead and dying, drags the But I will not go on. The grey unknown, the occult something, sternly issues its directions, and the merely physical obeys them. It is all over; the plot of the vice elementals has triumphed, and as they gleefully step away, one by one, patting their material comrade on the shoulder, the darkness, the hellish darkness of that infamous night lightens, and in through the windows steal the cold grey beams of early morning. I am assured; I have had enough; I pitch the photograph into the grate. The evening comes—the evening after the execution. A feeling of the greatest, the most unenviable curiosity urges me to go, to see if what I surmise, will actually happen. I leave Gipsy Hill by an early afternoon train, I spend a few hours at a literary club, I dine at a quiet—an eminently quiet—restaurant in Oxford Street, and at eleven o'clock I am standing near a spot which I believe—I have no positive proof—I merely believe, was frequented by X—. It is more than twelve hours since he was executed; will anything—will the shape, the personality, I anticipate—come? The night air grows colder; I shrink deeper and deeper into the folds of my overcoat, and wish—devoutly wish—myself back again by my fireside.

The minutes glide by slowly. The streets are very silent now. With the exception of an occasional toot-toot from a taxi and the shrill whistle of a goods train, no other sounds are to be heard. It is the hour when nearly all material London sleeps and the streets are monopolised by shadows, interspersed with something rather more substantial—namely, policemen. A few yards away from me there slips by a man in a blue serge suit; and then, tip-toeing surreptitiously behind him, with one hand in his trousers-pocket and the other carrying a suspicious-looking black bag, comes a white-faced young man, dressed in shabby imitation of a West End swell; an ill-fitting frock-coat, which, even in the uncertain flicker of the gaslamps, pronounces itself to be

ready made, and the typical shopwalker's silk hat worn slightly on one side. Whether this night bird goes through life on tiptoe, as many people do, or whether he only adopts that fashion on this particular occasion, is a conundrum, not without interest to students of character to whom a man's walk denotes much.

For a long time the street is deserted, and then a bedraggled figure in a shawl, with a big paper parcel under her arm, shuffles noiselessly by and disappears down an adjacent turning. Then there is another long interval, interrupted by a pretentious clock sonorously sounding two. A feeling of drowsiness creeps over me; my eyelids droop. I begin to lose cognisance of my surroundings and to imagine myself in some far-away place, when I am recalled sharply to myself by an intensely cold current of air. Intuitively I recognise the superphysical; it is the same species of cold which invariably heralds its approach. I have been right in my surmises after all; this spot is destined to be haunted. My eyes are wide enough open now, and every nerve in my body tingles with the keenest expectation. Something is coming, and, if that something is not the phantasm of him whom I believe is earthbound, whose phantasm is it? There is a slight noise of scratching from somewhere close beside me. It might have been the wind rustling the leaves against the masonry, or it might have been—I look round and see nothing. The sound is repeated and with the same result—NOTHING! A third time I heard it, and then from the dark road on one side of me there waddles—I recognise the waddling at once—a shadow that, gradually becoming a little more distinct, develops into the rather blurry form of a dog—a gaunt, hungry-looking mongrel. In a few seconds it stops short and looks at me with big swollen eyes that glitter with a something that is not actually bestial or savage, something strange yet not altogether strange, something enigmatic yet not entirely enigmatic. I am nonplussed; it was, and yet it was not, what I expected. With restless, ambling steps it slinks past me, disappearing through the closed gate by my side. Then satisfied, yet vaguely puzzled, I come away, wondering, wondering—wondering why on earth dogs should thus be desecrated.

Contrary to what one would imagine to be the case from the close association of cats with witches and magic, phantasms in a feline form are comparatively rare, and their appearance is seldom, if ever, as repulsive as that of the occult dog. I have seen phantasm cats several times, but, though they have been abnormally large and alarming, only once—and I am anxious to forget that time—were they anything like as offensive as many of the ghostly dogs that have manifested themselves to me. In my *Haunted Houses of England and Wales* I have given an instance of dual haunting, in which one of the phenomena was a big black cat with a fiendish expression in its eyes, but otherwise normal; and, a *propos* of cats, there now comes back to me a story I was once told in the Far West—the Golden State of California. I was on my way back to England, after a short but somewhat bitter absence, and I was staying for the night at a small hotel in San Francisco. The man who related the anecdote was an Australian, born and bred, on his way home to his native land after many years' sojourn in Texas. I was sitting on the sofa in the smoke-room reading, when he threw himself down in a chair opposite me and we gradually got into conversation. It was late when we began talking, and the other visitors, one by one, yawned, rose, and withdrew to their bedrooms, until we found ourselves alone—absolutely alone. The night was unusually dark and silent.

Leaning over the little tile-covered table at which we sat, the stranger suddenly said: "Do you see anything by me? Look hard." Much surprised at his request, for I confess that up to then I had taken him for a very ordinary kind of person, I looked, and, to my infinite astonishment and awe, saw, floating in mid-air, about two yards from him, and on a level with his chair, the

shadowy outlines of what looked like an enormous cat—a cat with very little hair and unpleasant eyes—decidedly unpleasant eyes. My flesh crawled!

“Well?” said the stranger—who, by-the-by, had called himself Gallaher,—in very anxious tones, “Well—you don’t seem in a hurry, nor yet particularly pleased—what is it?”

“A cat!” I gasped. “A cat—and a cat in mid-air!”

The stranger swore. “D— it!” he cried, dashing his fist on the table with such force that the match-box flew a dozen or so feet up the room—“Cuss! the infernal thing! I guessed it was near me, I could feel its icy breath!” He glanced sharply round as he spoke, and hurled his tobacco pouch at the shape. It passed right through it and fell with a soft squash on the ground. Gallaher picked it up with an oath. “I will tell you the history of that cat,” he went on, as he resumed his seat, “and a d—d queer history it is.”

Pouring himself out a bumper of whisky and refilling his pipe, he cleared his throat and began: “As a boy I always hated cats—God knows why—but the sight of a cat made me sick. I could not stand their soft, sleek fur; nor their silly, senseless faces; nor their smell—the smell of their skins, which most people don’t seem able to detect. I could, however; I could recognise that d—d scent a mile off, and could always tell, without seeing it, when there was a cat in the house. If any of the boys at school wanted to play me a trick they let loose half a dozen mangy tabbies in our yard, or sent me a hideous ‘Tom’ trussed up like a fowl in a hamper, or made cats’ noises in the dead of night under my window. Everyone in the village, from the baker to the bone-setter, knew of my hatred of cats, and, consequently, I had many enemies—chiefly amongst the old ladies. I must tell you, however, much as I loathed and abominated cats, I never killed one. I threw stones and sticks at them; I emptied jugs, and cans, and many pails of water on them; I pelted them with turnips; I hurled cushions, bolsters, pillows, anything I could first lay my hands on, at them; and”—here he cast a furtive look at the shadow—“I have pinched and trodden on their tails; but I have never killed one. When I grew up, my attitude towards them remained the same, and wherever I went I won the reputation for being the inveterate, the most poignantly inveterate, enemy of cats.

“When I was about twenty-five, I settled in a part of Texas where there were no cats. It was on a ranch in the upper valley of the Colorado. I was cattle ranching, and having had a pretty shrewd knowledge of the business before I left home, I soon made headway, and—between ourselves, mate, for there are mighty ‘tough uns’ in these town hotels—a good pile of dollars. I never had any of the adventures that befall most men out West, never but once, and I am coming to that right away.

“I had been selling some hundred head of cattle and about the same number of hogs, at a town some twenty or so miles from my ranch, and feeling I would like a bit of excitement, after so many months of monotony—the monotony of the desert life—I turned into the theatre—a wooden shanty—where a company of touring players, mostly Yankees, were performing. Sitting next to me was a fellow who speedily got into conversation with me and assured me he was an Australian. I did not believe him, for he had not the cut of an Australian,—Until he mentioned one or two of the streets I knew in Adelaide, and that settled me. We drank to each other’s health straight away, and he invited me to supper at his hotel. I accepted; and as soon as the performance was over, and we had exchanged greetings with some half-dozen of the performers, in whisky, he slipped his arm through mine and we strolled off together. Of course it was very foolish of me, seeing that I had a belt full of money; but then I had not had an outing for a long time, and I thirsted for adventure as I thirsted for whisky, and God alone knows how much of THAT I had already drunk. We arrived at the hotel. It was a poor-looking place in a sinister

neighbourhood, abounding with evil-eyed Dagos and cut-throats of all kinds. Still I was young and strong, and well armed, for I never left home in those days without a six-shooter. My companion escorted me into a low room in the rear of the premises, smelling villainously of foul tobacco and equally foul alcohol. Some half-cooked slices of bacon and suspicious-looking fried eggs were placed before us, which, with huge hunks of bread and a bottle of very much belabelled—too much belabelled—Highland whisky, completed the repast. But it was too unsavoury even for my companion, whose hungry eyes and lantern jaws proclaimed he had a ravenous appetite. However, he ate the bacon and I the bread; the eggs we emptied into a flower-pot. The supper—the supper of which he had led me to think so much—over, we filled our glasses, or at least he poured out for both, for his hands were steadier—even in my condition of semi-intoxication I noticed they were steadier—than mine. Then he brought me a cigar and took me to his bedroom, a bare, grimy apartment overhead. There was no furniture, saving a bed showing unmistakable signs that someone had been lying on it in dirty boots, a small rectangular deal table, and one chair.

“In a stupefied condition I was hesitating which of the alternatives to choose—the chair or the table, for, oddly enough, I never thought of the bed, when my host settled the question by leading me forcibly forward and flinging me down on the mattress. He then took a wooden wedge out of his pocket, and, going to the door, thrust it in the crack, giving the handle a violent tug to see whether the door stood the test. ‘There now, mate,’ he said with a grin—a grin that seemed to suggest something my tipsy brain could not grasp, ‘I have just shut us in snug and secure so that we can chat away without fear of interruption. Let us drink to a comfortable night’s sleep. You will sleep sound enough here, I can tell you!’ He handed me a glass as he spoke. ‘Drink!’ he said with a leer. ‘You are not half an Australian if you cannot hold that! See!’ and pouring himself out a tumbler of spirits and water he was about to gulp it down, when I uttered an ejaculation of horror. The light from the single gas jet over his head, falling on his face as he lifted it up to drink the whisky, revealed in his wide open, protruding pupils, the reflection of a cat—I can swear it was a cat. Instantly my intoxication evaporated and I scented danger. How was it I had not noticed before that the man was a typical ruffian—a regular street-corner loiterer, waiting, hawklike, to pounce upon and fleece the first well-to-do looking stranger he saw. Of course I saw it all now like a flash of lightning: he had seen me about the town during the earlier part of the day, had found out I was there on business, that I was an Australian, and one or two other things—it is surprising how soon one’s affairs get mooted in a small town,—and guessing I had the receipts of my sales on my person, had decided to rob me. Accordingly, with this end in view, he had followed me into the theatre, and, securing the seat next me, had broken the ice by pretending he was an Australian. He had then plied me with drink and brought me, already more than half drunk, to this cut-throat den. And I owed the discovery to a cat! My first thought was to feel for my revolver. I did, and found it was—gone. My hopes sank to zero; for though I might have been more than a match for the wiry framed stranger had we both been unarmed, I had not the slightest chance with him were he armed, as he undoubtedly was, with my revolver as well as his own. Though it takes some time to explain this, it all passed through my mind in a few seconds—before he had finished drinking. ‘Now, mate!’ he said, putting down his glass, the first **WHOLE** glass even of whisky and water he had taken that night, ‘that’s my share, now for yours.

“ ‘Wait a bit!’ I stammered, pretending to hiccough, ‘wait a bit. I don’t feel that I can drink any more just yet! Maybe I will in a few minutes.’ We sat down, and I saw protruding from his hip pocket the butt end of a revolver. If only I could get it! Determined to try, I edged slightly

towards him. He immediately drew away, a curious, furtive, bestial smile lurking in the corner of his lips. I casually repeated the manoeuvre, and he just as casually repeated his. Then I glanced at the window—the door I knew was hopeless,—and it was iron barred. I gazed again at the man, and his eyes grinned evilly as they met mine. Without a doubt he meant to murder me. The ghastliness of my position stunned me. Even if I shrieked for help, who would hear me save desperadoes, in all probability every whit as ready as my companion to kill me.

“A hideous stupor now began to assert itself, and as I strained to keep my lids from closing, I watched with a thrill of terror a fiendish look of expectancy creep into the white, gleaming face of the stranger. I realised, only too acutely, that he was waiting for me to fall asleep so as the more conveniently to rob and murder me. The man was a murderer by instinct—his whole air suggested it—his very breath was impregnated with the sickly desire to kill. Physically, he was the ideal assassin. It was strange that I had not observed it before; but in this light, this yellow, piercing glare, all the criminality of his features was revealed with damning clearness: the high cheek-bones, the light, protruding eyes, the abnormally developed forehead and temporal regions, the small, weak chin, the grossly irregular teeth, the poisonous breath, the club-shaped finger-tips and thick palms. Where could one find a greater combination of typically criminal characteristics? The man was made for destroying his fellow creatures. When would he begin his job and how?

“I am not narrow minded, I can recognise merit even in my enemies; and though I was so soon to be his victim, I could not but admire the thoroughly professional manner, indicative of past mastership, with which he set about his business. So far all his plans, generated with meteor-like quickness, had been successful; he was now showing how devoted he was to his vocation, and how richly he appreciated the situation, by abandoning himself to a short period of greedy, voluptuous anticipation, fully expressed in his staring eyes and thinly lipped mouth, before experiencing the delicious sensation of slitting my windpipe and dismembering me. My drowsiness, which I verily believe was in a great measure due to the peculiar fascination he had for me, steadily increased, and it was only with the most desperate efforts, egged on by the knowledge that my very existence depended on it, that I could keep my eyelids from actually coming together and sticking fast. At last they closed so nearly as to deceive my companion, who, rising stealthily to his feet, showed his teeth in a broad grin of satisfaction, and whipping from his coat pocket a glittering, horn-handled knife, ran his dirty, spatulate thumb over the blade to see if it was sharp. Grinning still more, he now tiptoed to the window, pulled the blind as far down as it would go, and, after placing his ear against the panel of the door to make sure no one was about, gaily spat on his palms, and, with a soft, sardonic chuckle, crept slowly towards me. Had he advanced with a war-whoop it would have made little or no difference—the man and his atmosphere paralysed me—I was held in the chair by iron bonds that swathed themselves round hands, and feet, and tongue. I could neither stir nor utter a sound,—only look, look with all the pent-up agonies of my soul through my burning, quivering eye-lashes. A yard, a foot, an inch, and the perspiring fingers of his left hand dexterously loosened the gaudy coloured scarf that hid my throat. A second later and I felt them smartly transferred to my long, curly hair. They tightened, and my neck was on the very verge of being jerked back, when between my quivering eyelids I saw on the sheeny surface of his bulging eye-balls,—the cat—the damnable, hated cat. The effect was magical. A wave of the most terrific, the most ungovernable fury surged through me. I struck out blindly, and one of my fists alighting on the would-be murderer’s face made him stagger back and drop the knife. In an instant the weapon was mine, and ere he

could draw his six-shooter—for the suddenness of the encounter and my blow had considerably dazed him—I had hurled myself upon him, and brought him to the ground.

“The force with which I had thrown him, together with my blow, had stunned him, and I would have left him in that condition had it not been for the cat—the accursed cat—that, peeping up at me from every particle of his prostrate body, egged me on to kill him. My intense admiration for his genius now manifested itself in the way in which I imitated all his movements, from the visit to the door and window, to the spitting on his palms; and with a grin—the nearest counterpart that I could get, after prodigious efforts, to the one that so fascinated me—I approached his recumbent figure, and, bending over it, removed his neckerchief. I sat and admired the gently throbbing whiteness of his throat for some seconds, and then, with a volley of execrations at the cat, commenced my novel and by no means uninteresting work. I am afraid I bungled it sadly, for I was disturbed when in the midst of it, by the sound of scratching, the violent and frantic scratching, of some animal on the upper panels of the door. The sound flustered me, and, my hand shaking in consequence, I did not make such a neat job of it as I should have liked. However, I did my best, and at all events I killed him; and I enjoyed the supreme satisfaction of knowing that I had killed him—killed the cat. But my joy was of short duration, and I now bitterly regret my rash deed. Wherever I go in the daytime, the shadowy figure of the cat accompanies me, and at night, crouching on my bedclothes, it watches—watches me with the expression in its eyes and mouth of my would-be murderer on that memorable night.”

As he concluded, for an instant, only for an instant, the shadow by his side grew clearer, and I saw the cat, saw it watching him with murder, ghastly murder lurking in its eyes. I struck a match, and, as I had anticipated, the phenomenon vanished.

“It will return,” the Australian said gloomily; “it always does. I shall never get rid of it!” And as I fully concurred with this statement, and had no suggestions to offer, I thanked him for his story, and wished him good night. But I did not leave him alone. He still had his cat. I saw it return to him as I passed through the doorway. Of course, I had no means of verifying his story; it might have been true, or it might not. But there was the cat!—thoroughly objective and as perfect a specimen of a feline, occult bestiality as I have ever seen or wish to see again.

That a spirit should appear in the form of a pig need not seem remarkable when we remember that those who live foul lives, *i.e.* the sensual and greedy, must, after death, assume the shape that is most appropriate to them; indeed, in these circumstances, one might rather be surprised that a phantasm in the shape of a hog is not a more frequent occurrence.

There are numerous instances of hauntings by phenomena of this kind, in some cases the phantasms being wholly animal, and in other cases semi-animal.

What I have said with regard to the phantasms of dogs—namely, the difficulty, practically the impossibility, of deciding whether the manifestation is due to an elemental or to a spirit of the dead—holds good in the case of “pig” as well as every other kind of bestial phenomenon.

The phantasm in the shape of a horse I am inclined to attribute to the once actually material horse and not to elementals.

With regard to phantom birds—and there are innumerable cases of occult bird phenomena—I fancy it is otherwise, and that the majority of bird hauntings are caused either by the spirits of dead people, or by vicious forms of elementals.

Though one hears of few cases of occult bestialities in the shape of tigers, lions, or any other wild animal—saving bears and wolves, phantasms of which appear to be common—I nevertheless believe, from hearsay evidence, that they are to be met with in certain of the jungles

and deserts in the East, and that for the most part they are the phantasms of the dead animals themselves, still hankering to be cruel—still hankering to kill.