

**THE TWO RIVERS.**  
BY HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

Slowly the hand of the clock moves round; So slowly that no human eye hath power To see it move. Slowly the hours roll on, The hours of sleep, the hours of bound, Sails, but seems motionless, as if around; Yet, as the sun goes down, and as the streams Of Yesterday and To-morrow take their way, One to the land of promise and of light, One to the land of darkness and of dreams!

1.  
Slowly, measured, melancholy sounds, Midnight! the outpost of advancing day! The frontier town and citadel of night! The stars are bright, the sky is clear, the streams Of Yesterday and To-morrow take their way, One to the land of promise and of light, One to the land of darkness and of dreams!

2.  
Slowly, with current swift Through channels descending, and soon lost to sight, I do not care to follow in thy flight! The faded leaves that thy bosom drift! O river! river! river! river! Mine eyes, and thine I follow, as the night Wanes into morning, and the dawning light, Wanes into noon, and the noon into the night! I follow, follow, where thy waters run! Through unfrequented, unfamiliar ways, To-morrow, to-morrow, with song; Still follow, follow, sure to meet the sun. And confident, that what the future yields Will be the right, until myself be wrong.

3.  
Not in vain, O river of Yesterday, Through the chasm of darkness to the deep descending, I have the sobbing in the rain, and blending The voices with other voices far, not stay, But turbulent, and with thyself contending, And torrent-like thy force on pebbles spending, That, as the sun goes down, and as the streams Of Yesterday and To-morrow take their way, One to the land of promise and of light, One to the land of darkness and of dreams!

4.  
And thou, O river of Tomorrow, flowing Between thy narrow adamentine walls, Through the chasm of darkness to the deep descending, And wreathes of mist, like hands the pathway showing:

I hear the voices of the morning blowing, I hear thy mighty voice, that calls and calls, And as I saw in Morven's halls, Myself, and all the world, becoming, going! It is the mystery of the unknown!

That fascinates us; we are children still, When the sun goes down, and as the streams Of Yesterday and To-morrow take their way, One to the land of promise and of light, One to the land of darkness and of dreams!

5.  
My UNCLE BEN.

My Uncle Ben believes in ghosts? Of course he did; he used to say: "No modern mansion of stucco and plaster for me; give me a grand old house, all covered with ivy and ivy bushes, and whose walls are hung with tapestry, and whose passages, extending from room to room, make the blood curdle with their gloom and length. Why, sir, there is something even in its decay; the dampness of its walls, and the cracks in the discolored ceilings, which only suggests to the vulgar mindague and rheumatism, are evidences to me of its venerable age and importance."

The very night he wakes up in his old house, the time-worn wainscot, give me a friendly greeting that I never meet in your new-fashioned houses, built for a race of mammon-worshippers who have made their wealth out of shoddy and petroleum.

"People mourn over the various ills that flesh is heir to, over the loss of money, and over the loss of health; but I have no significant things, but I mourn over the decline in the race of our ghosts—that is a real loss; but what can you expect? They are snatched at by foolish skeptics, and insulted by dictionary-concoctors like Walker; what decent people would feel any respect for himself when people call him 'specter'?" It is enough to make him incomptible in his own eyes, and cause him to turn his back to the exhibited at an entertainment, and to instruction, amusement, and horrors, for the small sum of one shilling per head. What honest, gentlemanly ghost, who lives in a quiet, respectable country house, would have any connection with the disreputable roving spirits that can be called up by any charlatan or impostor to play on a cracked accordion, to make stupid jokes, to untie knots, and to rap on a gaudy rotted box from a dirty deal box?

"An old-fashioned, aristocratic phantom would despise the tricks of such nomadic nomadites, as he wanders through the dreary corridors of the haunted house, or remains in his garret or cellar, thinking over the good old times when he appeared with clanking chains to frighten weary wayfarers, and make the awe-stricken folks shudder as they passed by."

"Think of the thrilling interest he excited when he revealed to the true heir the place where the money was concealed, that he had robbed him of before he left this life for the land of shades. Such ghost was well worth knowing; and so was the good old scholarly phantom, who required you to speak him in Latin, who appeared only at the canonical hours of 12, and who could not get rid of with your furniture, but remained one of the fixtures of the ancient mansion."

"To have such a ghost in your family is the only criterion of age and respectability; once a man was known to be a gentleman by the house he inhabited, by his carriage, and his coat-of-arms. Mr. Newell, Solomon Stubbs, the retired chess master, and the house of the ruined Marquis de Saxe, and who purchases a crest at the Heraldic College, he may purchase almost anything, may keep a dozen carriages, but he cannot buy a ghost; it is only the ancient families that can keep that proof of respectability."

I really believe that Uncle Ben valued the ghost that was said to haunt his house far more than all his more tangible property. Nothing could be more angry than for any one to doubt his existence; he was always ready to break a lance with any skeptic on the subject, and to offer him a bed in the haunted room; and, although many of the young members of the family scoffed at the story, very few had the courage to accept it.

One winter night, when the wind was moaning round the chimneys, and through the eaves, singing a dirge among the leafless branches of the grand old spectral trees for the joys of the dead summer, the family was gathered round the fire in the drawing-room.

Uncle Ben, who was standing with his back to the fire, said to his nephew:

"I think, J. W., we had better put on another coat of wood; I don't feel inclined for bed now; and I suppose you youngsters intend to sit up half the night, as usual."

"I don't mean to turn in yet for one, uncle," replied Joe. "Tell me one of your ghost stories; a regular blood-curdler."

"A. J. Joe," said the old man, "I am afraid you are a regular skeptic. I am dubious in all supernatural appearances."

"Certainly," answered Joe, who was Secretary to the Literary Advertising Society in the little town of Madison, and who had written an essay to prove the non-existence of everything, and that we are simply the creations of our own thoughts. "Certainly these impalpable specters are only illusions which the die-ordered condition of our weak physical organism creates us."

"I own you are a clever lad, Joe, but I don't care a button for your arguments. I believe in ghosts because I have seen them."

"Oh, I am open to conviction; if you introduce me to a bona-fide ghost I'll give in. I believe only in the things I understand."

"Joe, you have as little faith as a Jew; and, if you only believe in what you understand, your creed will be shorter than that of any man I know."

"Can you give us any proof? Can you mention one instance in which the specter has appeared to any one you know?"

"A hundred, if you wish it," said the old man.

"One will do; give us one genuine esce and we will believe."

"I will; listen. The story that I am about to relate is an incident that happened to myself some twenty years ago, and for the truth of which I can vouch."

"Well, proceed."

"I would give you the history of the specter attached to this house, but that only appears to be a favored few, and I have not yet seen it, although I have often enough heard the noises it makes."

"We should prefer a ghost that can be seen, if you have ever met with one."

"You must understand that the village in which I lived, has now entirely possessed its original character. About 100 years ago, an ancestor of mine started to London in his traveling carriage, one evening about the latter end of June. He was an exceedingly irascible man, and, as the coachman was not sufficiently quick in preparing the vehicle, he became much enraged, and used exceedingly passionate language. For some time the coachman bore his abuse patiently, but, at last, he lost his temper, and struck the old gentleman in the face with his whip."

"In those days everybody wore a sword; and my ancestor, who was always ready to draw, snatched his weapon from his sheath, and, with one blow, severed the unfortunate man's head from his body."

"Conscience-stricken at the fearful crime, and terrified by the dread of its consequences, he gazed upon the dead body of his victim, and then, doffed his hat with a fit of apoplexy, was carried into the house by his servants, where he died in a few hours."

"Well," said Joe, "although the story is horrible enough, it has nothing of the supernatural in old man may commit a murder and die of it."

"Yes, you are right; if the tale ended there, there would be nothing to doubt; but what I am going to tell you, I am afraid, is true, as told by my skeptical young friends, who, I suppose, believe everything that they do not see or hear."

"That's meant for me," said Joe, with a laugh. "Never mind, uncle; go on with your story."

"Yes, my boy, now I come to the marvelous part. Every year, as the hands of the clock point to the hour of midnight, a traveling carriage, with four horses, driven by a headless coachman, leaves that village, and passes down the London road."

"He must be clever if he can see to drive without his head," interrupted the skeptical Joe.

"That I cannot explain; some ghosts say that it is possible for people in clairvoyant state to read from the pit of their stomach; at all events, a dead man can drive at all, the small matter of a head more or less is of very little importance."

"Just so."

"You know that when a man dies he becomes a spirit."

"No, sir, it's not rum, nor whisky either; and if you cannot listen to my story without endeavoring to turn it into ridicule, I had better leave off," replied Uncle Ben, who was as peppy as his ancestor.

"Oh! pray go on, uncle," exclaimed all the listeners. "We'll try to keep you company."

"Well, as I was saying, this apparition made its appearance once a year, as the clock was striking 12. Many of the villagers had heard the tramp of horses and the rattling of wheels as the ghostly carriage went by. Now and then some favored individual witnessed the headless driver as he whipped his horses toward London. But, in all cases, the coach passed too quickly for any one to see whether the gentleman was really dead or not."

"And if you allow that a dead man can drive at all, the small matter of a head more or less is of very little importance."

"Did you not say what became of him on the other nights of the year, when he was not out for his drive?"

"He said that he had not been much troubled lately by the knight of the round table, who was the best peruke-maker; and was still more surprised when I said that no one wore wigs now, except lawyers and coachmen. He asked me if he could be released from his curse."

"He does, I admit."

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