

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Defoe Abbot Stoker Wilde Carroll Christie Maupassant Byron Molière Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Goethe Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Hall
Baum Cotton Henry Flaubert Turgenev Balzac Willis
Leslie Dumas Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen
Kant London Descartes Cervantes Burton Hesse Harte
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Irving
Bunner Richter Chekhov da Shakespeare Alcott
Doré Dante Swift Shaw Wodehouse
Pushkin Newton



tredition was established in 2006 by Sandra Latusseck and Soenke Schulz. Based in Hamburg, Germany, tredition offers publishing solutions to authors and publishing houses, combined with worldwide distribution of printed and digital book content. tredition is uniquely positioned to enable authors and publishing houses to create books on their own terms and without conventional manufacturing risks.

For more information please visit: www.tredition.com

TREDITION CLASSICS

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series. The creators of this series are united by passion for literature and driven by the intention of making all public domain books available in printed format again - worldwide. Most TREDITION CLASSICS titles have been out of print and off the bookstore shelves for decades. At tredition we believe that a great book never goes out of style and that its value is eternal. Several mostly non-profit literature projects provide content to tredition. To support their good work, tredition donates a portion of the proceeds from each sold copy. As a reader of a TREDITION CLASSICS book, you support our mission to save many of the amazing works of world literature from oblivion. See all available books at www.tredition.com.



The content for this book has been graciously provided by Project Gutenberg. Project Gutenberg is a non-profit organization founded by Michael Hart in 1971 at the University of Illinois. The mission of Project Gutenberg is simple: To encourage the creation and distribution of eBooks. Project Gutenberg is the first and largest collection of public domain eBooks.

Amos Kilbright, His Adscititious Experiences

Frank Richard Stockton

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Frank Richard Stockton

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-7360-7

www.tredition.com

www.tredition.de

Copyright:

The content of this book is sourced from the public domain.

The intention of the TREDITION CLASSICS series is to make world literature in the public domain available in printed format. Literary enthusiasts and organizations, such as Project Gutenberg, worldwide have scanned and digitally edited the original texts. tredition has subsequently formatted and redesigned the content into a modern reading layout. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the exact reproduction of the original format of a particular historic edition. Please also note that no modifications have been made to the spelling, therefore it may differ from the orthography used today.

AMOS KILBRIGHT

HIS ADSCITITIOUS EXPERIENCES

With Other Stories

BY FRANK R. STOCKTON

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1888

CONTENTS.

AMOS KILBRIGHT: HIS ADSCITITIOUS EXPERIENCES

THE REVERSIBLE LANDSCAPE

DUSKY PHILOSOPHY – IN TWO EXPOSITIONS:
FIRST EXPOSITION: A STORY OF SEVEN DEVILS
SECOND EXPOSITION: GRANDISON'S QUANDARY

PLAIN FISHING

AMOS KILBRIGHT: HIS ADSCITTIUS EXPERIENCES.

[This story is told by Mr. Richard Colesworthy, an attorney-at-law, in a large town in one of our Eastern States. The fact that Mr. Colesworthy is a practical man, and but little given, outside of his profession, to speculative theorizing, adds a weight to his statements which they might not otherwise possess.]

In the practice of my profession I am in the habit of meeting with all sorts and conditions of men, women, and even children. But I do not know that I ever encountered anyone who excited in me a greater interest than the man about whom I am going to tell you.

I was busily engaged one morning in my office, which is on the ground floor of my dwelling and opens upon the street, when, after a preliminary knock, a young man entered and asked leave to speak with me. He was tall and well made, plainly but decently dressed, and with a fresh, healthy color on his smoothly shaven face. There was something in his air, a sort of respectful awkwardness, which was not without a suggestion of good breeding, and in his countenance there was an annoyed or troubled expression which did not sit well upon it. I asked him to take a chair, and as he did so the thought came to me that I should like to be of service to him. Of course I desire to aid and benefit all my clients, but there are some persons whose appearance excites in one an instinctive sympathy, and toward whom there arise at first sight sentiments of kindness. The man had said almost nothing; it was simply his manner that had impressed me. I mention these points because generally I do not take an interest in persons until I know a good deal about them.

"What can I do for you?" I asked.

The man did not immediately answer, but began searching for something in one of the pockets of his coat. The little awkwardness which I had first noticed, now became more apparent. He appeared to be looking for his pockets rather than for what might be in one of them. He was conscious of his ungainliness and reddened a little as he fumbled on the inside and outside of his coat.

"I pray you pardon me," he said, "but I will bring before you instantly the matter of my business."

And so saying, he got his hand into a breast pocket and drew out a little packet. There was a certain intonation of his voice which, at first made me think that he was not an American, but in that intonation there was really nothing foreign. He was certainly a stranger, he might be from the backwoods, and both his manner and speech appeared odd to me; but soon I had no doubt about his being my countryman. In fact, there was something in his general appearance which seemed to me to be distinctively American.

"I came to you, sir," he said, "to ask if you would have the goodness to purchase one or more of these tickets?" And he held out to me a card entitling one person to admission to a séance to be given by a party of spiritualists in one of the public buildings of the town.

A feeling of anger arose within me. I was chagrined to think that I had begun to interest myself in a person who merely came to interrupt me in my business by trying to sell me tickets to a spiritualistic exhibition. My instant impulse was to turn from the man and let him see that I was offended by his intrusion, but my reason told me that he had done nothing that called for resentment. If I had expected something more important from him, that was my affair. He had not pretended to have any other business than that which brought him.

And, besides, he offered me something which in fact I wanted. I am a member of a society for psychical research, which, about a year before, had been organized in our town. It is composed almost exclusively of persons who are desirous of honestly investigating the facts, as well as theories, connected with the spiritual phenomena, not only of our own day, but of all ages. We had heard of the spiritualistic exhibitions which were to be given in our town, and I, with a number of my fellow-members, had determined to attend them. If there was anything real or tangible in the performances of these people we wanted to know it. Considering all this, it would be foolish for me to be angry with a man who had brought me the very tickets I intended to buy, and, instead of turning away from him, I took out my pocket-book.

"I will take one ticket for each of the three séances," I said. And I placed the money on the table.

I should have been glad to buy two sets of tickets; one for my wife; but I knew this would be useless. She did not belong to our society, and took no interest in its investigations.

"These things are all tricks and nonsense," she said. "I don't want to know anything about them. And if they were true, I most certainly would not want to know anything about them."

So I contented myself with the tickets for my own use, and as the man slowly selected them from his little package, I asked him if he had sold many of them.

"These you now buy are the first of which I have made disposal," he answered. "For two days I have endeavored to sell them, but to no purpose. There are many people to whom I cannot bring myself to speak upon the matter, and those I have asked care not for these things. I would not have come to you, but having twice passed your open window, I liked your face and took courage."

I smiled. So this man had been studying me before I began to study him; and this discovery revived in me the desire that he had come on some more interesting business than that of selling tickets; a thing he did so badly as to make me wonder why he had undertaken it.

"I imagine," said I, "that this sort of business is out of your line."

He looked at me a moment, and then with earnestness exclaimed: "Entirely! utterly! absolutely! I am altogether unfitted for this calling, and it is an injustice to those who send me out for me to longer continue in it. Some other person might sell their tickets; I cannot. And yet," he said, with a sigh, "what is there that I may do?"

The idea that that strong, well-grown man should have any difficulty in finding something to do surprised me. If he chose to go out and labor with his hands—and surely no man who was willing to wander about selling tickets should object to that—there would be no difficulty in his obtaining a livelihood in our town.

"If you want regular employment," I said, "I think you can easily find it."

"I want it," he answered, his face clouded by a troubled expression, "but I cannot take it."

"Cannot take it!" I exclaimed.

"No," he said, "I am not my own master. I am as much a slave as any negro hereabouts!"

I was rather surprised at this meaningless allusion, but contented myself with asking him what he meant by not being his own master.

He looked on the floor and then he looked at me, with a steady, earnest gaze. "I should like well to tell you my story," he said. "I have been ordered not to tell it, but I have resolved that when I should meet a man to whom I should be moved to speak I would speak."

Now, I felt a very natural emotion of pride. My perception of objects of interest was a quick and a correct one. "Speak on," I said, "I shall be very glad to hear what you have to say."

He looked toward the open door. I arose and closed it. When I had resumed my seat he drew his chair closer to me, leaned toward me, and said:

"In the first place you should know that I am a materialized spirit."

I sat up, hard pressed against the back of my chair.

"Nay, start not," he said, "I am now as truly flesh and blood as you are; but a short three weeks ago I was a spirit in the realms of endless space. I know," he continued, "that my history is a sore thing to inflict upon any man, and there are few to whom I would have broached it, but I will make it brief. Three weeks ago these spiritualists held privately in this town what they call a séance, and at that time I was impelled, by a power I understood not, to appear among them. After I had come it was supposed that a mistake had been made, and that I was not the spirit wanted. In the temporary confusion occasioned by this supposition, and while the attention of the exhibitors was otherwise occupied, I was left exposed to the influence of the materializing agencies for a much longer time than had been intended; so long, indeed, that instead of remaining in the

misty, indistinct form in which spirits are presented by these men to their patrons, I became as thoroughly embodied, as full of physical life and energy, and as complete a mortal man as I was when I disappeared from this earth, one hundred and two years ago."

"One hundred and two years!" I mechanically ejaculated. There was upon me the impulse to get up and go where I could breathe the outer air; to find my wife and talk to her about marketing or some household affair, to get away from this being—human or whatever he was—but this was impossible. That interest which dawned upon me when I first perceived my visitor now held me as if it had been a spell.

"Yes," he said, "I deceased in 1785, being then in my thirtieth year. I was a citizen of Bixbury, on the Massachusetts coast, but I am not unconnected with this place. Old Mr. Scott, of your town, is my grandson."

I am obliged to chronicle the fact that my present part in this conversation consisted entirely of ejaculations. "Old Mr. Scott your grandson!" I said.

"Yes," he replied; "my daughter, who was but two years old when I left her, married Lemuel Scott, of Bixbury, who moved to this town soon after old Mr. Scott was born. It was, indeed, on account of this good old man that I became materialized. He was present at the private séance of which I have spoken, and being asked if he would like to see a person from the other world, he replied that he should be pleased to behold his grandfather. When the necessary influences were set to work I appeared. The spiritualists, who, without much thought, had conceived the idea that the grandfather of old Mr. Scott ought, in the ordinary nature of things, to be a very venerable personage, were disappointed when they saw me, and concluded I was one who, by some mistake, had been wrongfully summoned. They, therefore, set me aside, as it were, and occupied themselves with other matters. Old Mr. Scott went away unsatisfied, and strengthened in his disbelief in the powers of the spiritualists, while I, as I have before said, was left unnoticed under the power of the materializing force, until I was made corporeal as I am now. When the spiritualists discovered what had happened they were much disturbed, and immediately set about to dematerialize

me, for it is not their purpose or desire to cause departed spirits to again become inhabitants of this world. But all their efforts were of no avail. I remained as much a man as anyone of themselves. They found me in full health and vigor, for I had never had a day's sickness in my life, having come to my death by drowning while foolishly swimming too far from land in a strong ebb tide, and my body, being carried out to sea, was never recovered. Being thus put to their wit's end, they determined to keep the matter privy, and to make the best of it, and the first necessity was to provide me with clothing, for on my second entrance into this world I was as totally without apparel as when I first came into it. They gave me these garments of the ordinary fashion of the day, but to which I find myself much unaccustomed, and enjoined upon me to keep silent in regard to what had happened; fearing, as I was made aware by some unguarded words, that their efforts to dematerialize me might bring them into trouble."

My professional instincts now came to the front. "That would be murder," I said, "and nothing less."

"So I myself told them," he continued, "for I had come to the determination that I would choose to finish out the life I had broken off so suddenly. But they paid little heed to my words and continued their experiments. But, as I have told you, their efforts were without avail, and they have ceased to make further trial of dematerialization. As, of course, it would be impossible to keep a full-grown man for any considerable length of time secluded and unseen, they judged it wise to permit me to appear as an ordinary human being; and having no other use to which they could put me, they set me to selling tickets for them, and in this business I have fared so badly that I shall restore to them these that are left, and counsel them to seek another agent, I being of detriment to them rather than profit. What may then happen I do not know, for, as I told you, I am not my own master."

"I do not understand you," I said. "If you have been, in this unparalleled manner, restored to your physical existence, surely you are free to do as you please. What these spiritualists have done for you was done by accident. They intended you no benefit, and they have no claim upon you."

"That is true," he said, with a sigh, "but they have a hold upon me. It was but yesterday that they informed me that, although, so far, they had failed to restore me to what they call my normal spiritual existence, they had every reason to believe that they soon would be able to do so. A psychic scientist of Germany has discovered a process of dematerialization, and they have sent to him for his formula. This, in a short time, they expect to receive, and they assure me that they will not hesitate to put it in force if I should cause them trouble. Now, sir," he continued, and as he spoke there was a moisture about his eyes, "I am very fond of life. I have been restored to that mortality from which I was suddenly snatched by the cruel sea, and I do not wish to lose it again until I have lived out my natural term of years. My family is one of long life, and I feel that I have a right to fifty more years of existence, and this strong desire for the natural remainder of my life is that which gives these men their power over me. I was never a coward, but I cannot but fear those who may at any moment cause this form, these limbs, my physical state and life, to vanish like a candle-flame blown out."

My sympathies were now strongly aroused in behalf of the subject of these most extraordinary conditions. "That which you fear must not be allowed," I said. "No man has the right to take away the life of another, no matter what plan or method he may use. I will see the spiritualists, and make it plain to them that what they threaten they cannot be allowed to do."

The man arose. "Sir," he said, "I feel that I have truly found a friend. Whatever may happen to me, I shall never forget your kindness to a very stranger." He held out his hand, and I stood up by him and took it. It was as much a flesh and blood hand as my own.

"What is your name?" I asked. "You have not yet told me that."

"I am Amos Kilbright, of Bixbury," he answered.

"You have not revisited your native place?" I said.

"No," he replied, "I much desire to do so, but I have no money for a journey, even on foot, and I doubt me much if those men would suffer me to go to Bixbury."

"And have you spoken to your grandson, old Mr. Scott?" I said. "It is but right that you should make yourself known to him."

"So have I thought," he answered, "and I have felt an earnest drawing toward my daughter's child. I have seen him thrice, but have not had the heart to speak to him and declare myself the progenitor of that mother whose memory I know he cherishes."

"You shall make yourself known to him," I said. "I will prepare the way."

He shook me again by the hand and took his leave without a word. He was deeply affected.

I reseated myself by my table, one thought after another rushing through my mind. Had ever man heard a story such as this! What were all the experiences of the members of the Society for Psychical Research, their stories of apparitions, their instances of occult influences, their best authenticated incidents of supernaturalism compared to this experience of mine! Should I hasten and tell it all to my wife? I hesitated. If what I had heard should not be true—and this, my first doubt or suspicion impressed upon me how impossible to me had been doubt or suspicion during the presence of my visitor—it would be wrong to uselessly excite her mind. On the other hand, if I had heard nothing but the truth, what would happen should she sympathize as deeply with Amos Kilbright as I did, and then should that worthy man suddenly become dematerialized, perhaps before her very eyes? No, I would not tell her—at least not yet. But I must see the spiritualists. And that afternoon I went to them.

The leader and principal worker of the men who were about to give a series of spiritual manifestations in our town was Mr. Corbridge, a man of middle-age with a large head and earnest visage. When I spoke to him of Amos Kilbright he was very much annoyed.

"So he has been talking to you," he said, "and after all the warnings I gave him! Well, he does that sort of thing at his own risk!"

"We all do things at our own risk," I said, "and he has as much right to choose his line of conduct as anybody else."

"No, he hasn't," said Mr. Corbridge, "he belongs to us, and it is for us to choose his line of conduct for him."

"That is nonsense," said I. "You have no more right over him than I have."

"Now then," said Mr. Corbridge, his eyes beginning to sparkle, "I may as well talk plainly to you. My associates and myself have considered this matter very carefully. At first we thought that if this fellow should tell his story we would simply pooh-pooh the whole of it, and let people think he was a little touched in his mind, which would be so natural a conclusion that everybody might be expected to come to it. But as we have determined to dematerialize him, his disappearance would bring suspicion upon us, and we might get into trouble if he should be considered a mere commonplace person. So we decided to speak out plainly, say what we had done, and what we were going to do, and thus put ourselves at the head of the spirit operators of the world. But we are not yet ready to do anything or to make our announcements, and if he had held his tongue we might have given him a pretty long string."

"And do you mean," I said, "that you and your associates positively intend to dematerialize Mr. Kilbright?"

"Certainly," he answered.

"Then, I declare such an act would be inhuman; a horrible crime."

"No," said Mr. Corbridge, "it would be neither. In the first place he isn't human. It is by accident that he is what he is. But it was our affair entirely, and it was a most wonderfully fortunate thing for us that it happened. At first it frightened us a little, but we have got used to it now, and we see the great opportunities that this entirely unparalleled case will give us. As he is, he is of no earthly good to anybody. You can't take a man out of the last century and expect him to get on in any sort of business at the present day. He is too old-fashioned. He doesn't know how we do things in the year eighteen eighty-seven. We put this subject to work selling tickets just to keep him occupied; but he can't even do that. But, as a spirit who can be materialized or dematerialized whenever we please, he will be of the greatest value to us. When a spirit has been brought out as strongly as he has been it will be the easiest thing in the world to do it again. Every time you bring one out the less trouble it is to make it appear the next time you want it; and in this case the conditions are so favorable that it will be absolute business suicide in us if we allow ourselves to lose the chance of working it. So you see, sir, that

we have marked out our course, and I assure you that we intend to stick to it."

"And I assure you," said I, rising to go, "that I shall make it my business to interfere with your wicked machinations."

Mr. Corbridge laughed. "You'll find," he said, "that we have turned this thing over pretty carefully, and we are ready for whatever the courts may do. If we are charged with making away with anybody, we can, if we like, make him appear, alive and well, before judge and jury. And then what will there be to say against us? Besides, we are quite sure that no laws can be found against bringing beings from the other world, or sending them back into it, provided it can be proved by the subject's admission, or in any other manner, that he really died once in a natural way. You cannot be tried for causing a man's death a second time."

I was not prepared to make any answer on this point, but I went away with a firm resolution to protect Amos Kilbright in the full enjoyment of his reassumed physical existence, if the power of law, or any other power, could do it.

The next morning Mr. Corbridge called on me at my office. "I shall be very sorry," he said, "if any of my remarks of yesterday should cause unpleasant feelings between us. We are desirous of being on good terms with everybody, especially with members of the Society for Psychical Research. You ought to work with us."

"We do not work with you," I replied, "nor ever shall. Our object is to search earnestly and honestly into the subject of spiritual manifestation, and not to make money out of unfortunate subjects of experiment."

"You misunderstand us," said he, "but I am not going to argue the question. I wish to be on good terms with you and to act fairly and plainly all around. We find that we cannot make use of the dematerialization process as soon as we expected, for the German scientist who controls it has declined to send us his formula, but has consented to come over and work it on this subject himself. His engagements will not allow him to visit this country immediately, but he is very enthusiastic about it, and he is bound to come before long. Now, as you seem to be interested in this ex-Kilbright, we will

make you an offer. We will give him into your charge until we want him. He is of no use to us, as he can't tell us anything about spiritual matters, his present memory beginning just where it broke off when he sank in the ocean in seventeen eighty-five, but he might be very useful to a man who was inclined to study up old-time manners and customs. And so, if it suits you, we will make him over to you, agreeing to give you three days' notice before we take any measures to dematerialize him. We are not afraid of your getting away with him, for our power over him will be all the same, no matter where he is."

"I will have no man made over to me," said I, "and Mr. Kilbright being his own master, can do with himself what he pleases; but, as I said before, I shall protect him, and do everything in my power to thwart your schemes against him. And you must remember he will have other friends besides me. He has relatives in this town."

"None but old Mr. Scott, at least so far as I know," said Corbridge, "and he need not expect any help from him, for that ancient personage is a most arrant disbeliever in spiritualism."

And with this remark he took his leave.

That very afternoon came to me Amos Kilbright, his face shining with pleasure. He greeted me warmly, and thanked me for having so kindly offered to give him employment by which he might live and feel under obligations to no man.

I had promised nothing of the kind, and my mind was filled with abhorrence of such men as Corbridge, who would not only send a person into the other world simply to gratify a scientific curiosity or for purposes of profit, but would rehabilitate a departed spirit with all his lost needs and appetites, and then foist him upon a comparative stranger for care and sustenance. Such conduct was not only mean, but criminal in its nature, and if there was no law against it, one ought to be made.

Kilbright then proceeded to tell me how happy he had been when Corbridge informed him that his dematerialization had been indefinitely postponed, and that I had consented to take him into my service. "It is now plain to me," he said, "that they have no power to

do this thing and cannot obtain it from others. This discardment of me proves that they have abandoned their hopes."

It was evident that Corbridge had said nothing of the expected coming of the German scientist, and I would not be cruel enough to speak of it myself. Besides, I intended to have said scientist arrested and put under bonds as soon as he set foot on our shores.

"I do not feel," continued Kilbright, "that I am beginning a new life, but that I am taking up my old one at the point where I left it off."

"You cannot do that," I said. "Things have changed very much, and you will have to adapt yourself to those changes. In many ways you must begin again."

"I know that," he said, "and with respect to much that I see about me, I am but a child. But as I am truly a man, I shall begin to do a man's work, and what I know not of the things that are about me, that will I learn as quickly as may be. It is my purpose, sir, to labor with you in any manner which you may deem fit, and in which I may be found serviceable until I have gained sufficient money to travel to Bixbury, and there endeavor to establish myself in some worthy employment. I had at that place a small estate, but of that I shall take no heed. Without doubt it has gone, rightly, to my heirs, and even if I could deprive them of it I would not."

"Have you living heirs besides your grandson here?" I asked.

"That I know not," he said; "but if there be such I greatly long to see them."

"And how about old Mr. Scott?" said I. "When shall we go to him and tell him who you are?"

"I greatly desire that that may be done soon," answered Kilbright, "but first I wish to establish myself in some means of livelihood, so that he may not think that I come to him for maintenance."

Of course it was not possible for me to turn this man away and tell him I had nothing for him to do, and therefore I must devise employment for him. I found that he wrote a fair hand, a little stiff and labored, but legible and neat, and as I had a good deal of copying to do I decided to set him to work upon this. I procured board