

Midnight Tales

(Stories from *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*)

by

Bram Stoker

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The following three stories have been reproduced as they appear in the book *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* by Bram Stoker.

The Funeral Party (A Widower's Grief)

The other story was of the funeral in Dublin of a young married woman. The undertaker, after the wont of his craft, was arranging the whole affair according to the completest local rules of mortuary etiquette. He bustled up to the widower saying:

"You, sir, will of course go in the carriage with the mother of the deceased."

"What! Me go in the carriage with me mother-in-law! Not likely!"

"Oh, sir, but I assure you it is necessary. The rule is an inviolable one, established by precedents beyond all cavil!" expostulated the horrified undertaker. But the widower was obdurate.

"I won't go. That's flat!"

"Oh, but my good sir. Remember the gravity of the occasion--the publicity--the--the--possibility--scandal." His voice faded into a gasp. The widower stuck to his resolution and so the undertaker laid the matter before some of his intimate friends who were waiting instructions. These surrounded the chief mourner and began to remonstrate with him:

"You really must, old chap; it is necessary."

"I'll not! Go with me mother-in-law! Rot!"

"But look here, old chap--"

"I'll not I tell ye--I'll go in any other carriage that ye wish; but not in that."

"Oh, of course, if ye won't, ye won't. But remember it beforehand that afterwards when it'll be thrown up against ye, that it'll be construed into an affront on the poor girl that's gone. Ye loved her Jack, we all know, an' ye wouldn't like *that!*"

This argument prevailed. He signed to the undertaker and began to pull on his black gloves. As he began to move towards the carriage he turned to his friends and said in a low voice:

"I'm doin' it because ye say I ought to, and for the poor girl that's gone. But ye'll spoil me day!"

The Shakespeare Mystery (Untitled)

"In a hotel 'out West' a lot of men in the barroom were discussing the Shakespeare and Bacon question. They got greatly excited and presently a lot of them had their guns out. Some one interfered and suggested that the matter should be left to arbitration. The arbitrator selected was an Irishman, who had all the time sat quiet smoking and not saying a word--which circumstance probably suggested his suitability for the office. When he had heard the arguments on both sides formally stated, he gave his decision:

" 'Well, Gintlemin, me decision is this: Thim plays was not wrote be Shakespeare! But they was wrote be a man iv the saame naame!' "

A Deal With The Devil (Untitled)

Another story was of a little boy, one of a large family. This little chap on one occasion asked to be allowed to go to bed at the children's tea time, a circumstance so unique as to puzzle the domestic authorities. The mother refused, but the child whimpered and persevered--and succeeded. The father was presently in his study at the back of the house looking out on the garden when he saw the child in his little night-shirt come secretly down the steps and steal to a corner of the garden behind some shrubs. He had a garden fork in his hand. After a lapse of some minutes he came out again and stole quietly upstairs. The father's curiosity was aroused, and he too went behind the shrubs to see what had happened. He found some freshly turned earth, and began to investigate. Some few inches down was a closed envelope which the child had buried. On opening it he found a lucifer match and a slip of paper on which was written in pencil in a sprawling hand:

"DEAR DEVIL,--Please take away Aunt Julia."