

HURST ECHOES

A new member, Old Hurst Johnian Mr. Peter Luff, has very kindly donated to the Society his copy of Hurst Echoes, published by Alabaster, Passmore, and Sons in 1890, containing articles reprinted from the "Hurst Johnian", the magazine of St. John's College, Hurstpierpoint 1858-1890. A resume of SBG's contributions follows:

The Dead Trumpeter of Hurst Castle (p.1-17)

At Hurst Castle in the Isle of Wight a room is being prepared for Charles I's captivity in December 1648. Treasure is said to be concealed there, guarded by a ghostly trumpeter. Workmen trying to break open a cupboard are confronted by the apparition, but when the King arrives he is given a reverential greeting by the trumpeter. The workmen try again more successfully, but in making their getaway are rude to the King, and rouse the trumpeter's wrath. Charles is reassured by his 'spectral guard' and taken to Windsor still under 'protection'. On the fateful 30th January 1649 there is a final appearance at Hurst, the royal cortege is 'accompanied' from Whitehall back to Windsor, and the last notes of the trumpet are heard from the royal tomb.

Master Sacristan Eberhart (p. 34-44)

Subtitled 'Not Quite a Ghost Story', the tale concerns the elderly watchman living 365 steps up the bell tower of St. Sevaldus Church. He treated one of the gargoyles, a monk's head, as a friend, 'Father Simon'. After the gargoyle had been damaged in a storm, the distraught sacristan summoned a mason to effect repairs. The mason tried to steal the old man's moneybox; he was strangled by 'Father Simon' - and in the morning both were found at the bottom of the tower.

The Fireman (p. 76-90)

A poverty stricken iron worker is visited by a mysterious elderly gentleman whom he tries to rob. The visitor offers wealth in exchange for the recovery of crystals from the furnace. The iron worker was successful at first, until his boy wanted to be part of the affair; the man returned and egged the worker on to obtain a prime specimen, but the son raked it out of reach of his father, who fell into the furnace.

Thieves seem to have a prime place in SBG's hell! After these somewhat macabre offerings, it is a relief to turn to the fourteen stanza poem Easter Eve (p. 95-98), although the pre-Raphaelite imagery and its 'calm thou sleep'st' refrain scarcely matches the robustness of the New Testament.

There is an interesting little footnote on P. 111 referring to a production of Macbeth in which SBG had been the 'daring mortal' squatting 'beneath the brazier to feed the weirdly flame'!