

GERMANTOWNE *CRIER*



Y.W.C.A. COOKING CLASS, 1905

Story on page 72

Christopher Saur's Ghost Stories



ERSCHEINUNGEN DER GEISTER

CHRISTOPHER SAUR, with his son, came to Germantown in 1731 to become a clockmaker, apothecary, and bookseller. In 1738 he opened a printing shop which continued until it was closed by the government of Pennsylvania in 1777. During these thirty-nine years the Saur's, father and son, printed about one hundred and fifty books including three editions of Luther's German Bible (1743, 1763, and 1776), all before any English edition of the Bible was published in America.

The library of The Germantown Historical Society includes a collection of books printed by the Saur's. One, entitled *Erscheinungen der Geister* (Ghostly Apparitions) seemed of more than usual interest and on investigation we found written on the flyleaf:

Of the ghost stories narrated in this book the following relate to Penna.:

p. 24 Stephan Koch in Germantown, in 1732, saw the spirits of Hochman, who died in Schwartzenu, and the widow Bentzin, who died in Germantown. An account of Koch will be found in Seidensticker's *Ephrata*.

p. 33 Elizabeth Joder of Oley, August 15, 1743, saw the ghost of her father, Jost Joder.

p. 120 The daughter of Frederick Reimer of Falkener's Swamp, in 1738, saw and conversed with the ghost of a Hollander buried in the graveyard on neighbor Sieber's land. I have an autograph of this Reimer.

p. 124 Christian Gunti saw the ghosts of two Indians fighting on the road to Chestnut Hill.

(signed) Samuel W. Pennypacker*
January 24, 1885

Here are these stories, Translated from the Language of Colonial Germantown.

*Samuel W. Pennypacker was Governor of Pennsylvania 1903-1907

THE THIRD STORY

AS IT HAPPENED TO STEPHAN KOCH, 1732, IN GERMANTOWN AND AS WRITTEN BY HIM TO HIS FRIEND JOHANN LOBACH MESSERSCHMIDT IN CREVELT AND AS IT APPEARED IN PRINT IN THE YEAR 1736, IN GEISTLICHEN FAMA NO. XX

On Saturday the 9th of December, 1732, as I awakened, just as the day was dawning, my spirits were very depressed for I was considering the uncertainties of this miserable life and how it was surrounded with anxiety and so forth. These thoughts saddened me and made me long for the everlasting rest and happiness. Now, overcome by these reflections and yearning for rest, it seemed to me that I was on a journey to someone who would help me to reach the light and I followed the path uneasily. Now, as I looked about me, there came to me a beautiful masculine being. Never in this world have I seen his like for beauty. As he came to me he asked me how I had come to that place. I said, "I am to visit a sick person and have lost my way." Thereupon he was very friendly and asked if I wished to go with him for he would bring me to a place of beauty the like of which I had never seen. I said, "Yes," that I would go with him. Whereupon I thought, "Oh God! Who is this?" or "Where will he take me?" However, I got hold of myself immediately and indicated my willingness to accompany him. Then he said that I should give him my hand and place my feet on his feet and close my eyes for a while; which I did. Then it seemed to me that he flew with me through the air in a gentle wind and brought me to a very beautiful body of water that was so wide that I could not see the other side very clearly. The surrounding district was wonderfully beautiful and lovely. Indeed it was so wonderful to me that never in my life

have I had such an experience. As I considered this great and beautiful lake with amazement he asked me what lake it was. I replied, "I know it not." He called it a name but the name was so strange to me that I could not retain it. After a time he asked whether I should like to cross over. I replied, "Yes." Then he took me as before and took me quickly over.

Then we came to a region of a beauty and loveliness beyond man's expression. Yes, I was quite astounded by the sights and sounds of that place. Then I heard from afar as it were the voices of an innumerable host of men and all kinds of musical instruments in such a harmony and unison that it came to me like a lovely echo. "He is the Only God. To Him alone is honor due." And after this he brought me to a beautiful city whose streets were of pure gold and there I saw a host of men all dressed in white. I looked at them with wonder and it seemed to me that they all hovered in the air and praised God. Yes, rising and descending and ever praising "Him who lives for ever and forever." And, astounded by the sights and sounds, I thought to myself, "Oh, this is an everlasting rising and falling in the eternal presence of the beloved God. Oh, how restful. Oh how good!" Then he took me up and brought me to a beautiful, high mountain and said, "This is Mount Zion, David's Mountain!" Then I looked around and as far as I could see there was a beautiful level valley with an uncountable number of men who were all dressed in white and floated back and forth praising the Everlasting and Good God in an indescribable manner and with a melody that was marvelously sweet. And I was enraptured by the things that I saw and heard. After I had watched for a while he brought me again to the same city and, looking up, I saw over me a beautifully luminous firmament. Everything was incomparably beautiful, indescribably magnificent, and unspeakably lovely. Now, because I knew none of those I saw, I sighed, "Oh God! If I might only see someone that I knew." Then someone came to me as though hovering and spoke to me in a very friendly manner. "Eh! Where did you come from in your old body and earthly clothes?" I was frightened and answered, "This person brought me here." He asked me if I knew him. I said, "No." He said, "I am Hochman (who died in Schwartzenau). Look now! Here is the magnificent city of God, the Peacable Kingdom of Zion and the blissful company of blessed souls of which you formerly heard me speak while I was yet with you. Here is the kingdom Jesus said belonged to the meek. Here is the opposite of the old world for the souls which Jesus patiently followed through the cross and suffering to the end, come, finally, to this place of happy rest." After these words he seemed to float away from me. However I was left deep in meditation and sighing repeatedly, wishing that I might see someone that had been well-known to me in life. Then again I saw someone who

came to me as though floating and in a very friendly manner said to me, "Stephan! How did you get here in your old clothes and earthly body?" I answered, "This person has brought me here." She asked me if I knew her. I said, "No." She said, "I am Benzin (an aged widow) who formerly lived in your house (and died in Germantown). You see that now I am in this blissful place of rest about which I have often talked with you. At that time I obtained a little peace whenever I put my faith completely in God. However, this would not last long and I would again become distracted and uneasily seek for peace. Since coming to this place of calm and rest I have reached everlasting well-being for change and fear of change no longer exist. To the beloved and praiseworthy God be honor forever!" And then she was taken from me and flew up into the beautiful firmament, so far that I could no longer see her. As long as I could hear her I heard indescribable words of praise to God. After this I moved my eyes to the great number which still, as before, floated back and forth praising God in beautiful harmony and with words such that no mortal tongue can speak. I thought, "That is an unfathomable love of God, an everlasting crescendo and diminuendo in the everlasting peace of God. Oh how good!" Oh how restful it was to me! I cannot describe it or talk of it. The beautiful man, who stood continually beside me, after all this warned me that I must return, which grieved me but I acquiesced and said that I should like to see the part of this blessed place in which lived those who were evil and perverted. He answered, "You shall see it." And then he took me as before and brought me to a large body of water which appeared very muddy and wretched. The entire place seemed pitiful to me. I was quite still and he said nothing to me.

He brought me over this lake also, to a wretched region. Here I heard a howling so pitiful that it was heartrending.

Then he brought me to a city and put me on a tower that was above the gate. There I saw an uncountable number of men of various colors and dress. The whole place was as though in twilight so that one could hardly see. I saw and heard their work which was an unhappy, noisy commotion. Their cries were incomprehensibly crazy and confused. What one of them made another broke and there was incessant quarreling and restlessness among all of them. There were some who wanted to put legal matters right and correct them. But it became more and more unpleasant and the restless work and pitiful cries that I heard and saw tired me greatly. I asked him if he would take me away again as I could no longer look at this restless state of affairs.

Then he took me as before and brought me to the beautiful lake and over it to the land to which he had first brought me. As I came to it everything was again well with me. He asked me whether I knew where I was.

I said, "No." He asked if I had formerly read or heard of people who had been in Old England and were called Rosicrucians. I replied that I had never read anything about them but that I had heard of such people being there and that they could make gold. Whereupon he told me in a very friendly way that he was one of these people and that I should go with him to see his house the interior of which was filled with gold and jewels. It was uncommonly beautiful and I gladly entered it with him. Then he asked me if I wanted to go back to my home. I said, "Yes." And he took me again by the hand as before and brought me to Germantown in a certain lane and there I opened my eyes. It was bright daylight. All our people were already up and I was alone there and fully aware that I was again in my former body and dress. These things made such an impression on me that I am often moved to sigh and wish, "Oh God, may I through Thy grace in Christ Jesus be so prepared that when, in days to come, I leave this vale of tears I may join the blessed souls in the place of rest and forever bless and praise Thee—Amen

THE STORY, WRITTEN AS TOLD BY ELIZABETH JODER'S OWN MOUTH, IN OLEY IN THE YEAR 1743, RUNS AS FOLLOWS:

HER father, who left this visible world two years and several months ago, had on his mind several messages and admonitions for his children and, especially for his above-mentioned daughter whom he dearly loved. She reciprocated with similar love and affection for him. However he was called from this earth unexpectedly before he had told his children that which was on his mind. Following his death the daughter thought of her father often, talked about him, and longed painfully to know how her dear father was getting along and whether he was in a good or bad place. It pleased the one and only Good God to grant her long standing wishes and requests and to send her her father in a visible form to make known to her in what sort of a place he was. Because of this great favor of God the father could be relieved of the admonitions that worried him and deliver them to his children.

On August 14, 1743, the before-mentioned Elizabeth Joder was overcome by great sadness, fear, and anxiety. She said to her mother, "I think father is coming to me." She was so anxious that she continuously looked about her and imagined that her father stood behind her or near her. Because of her anxiety she could neither eat nor sleep.

Now, as she went about her work on the 15th of August, she was again overcome with anxiety and felt such a strong urge to go into the house that it became impossible for her to wait until the work was finished. As she entered the house and went to fetch something from her room, she looked around and saw her father sitting on the bed. He said to her very kindly, "What are you doing my child?" Whereupon she was so frightened

and horrified that she could not answer but dropped everything and, trembling and shaking, ran out of the house and fell down.

Her mother was perplexed by this fearing that there might be unfortunate after effects. She said to her daughter, "You must go live on another farm for a while. It will be a change and do you good." This the daughter did but she continued to be restless and felt a continuous urge to return home.

So, on the 16th of August, under a strong impulse, she returned to her home and went immediately to her room. Her mother and another woman talked to her and told her that if she should again see her father she should not run away again. They would remain outside the door. She again entered and, after she had sat for a while on the chest, everything became quite dark to her eyes as though it were night. When this had passed everything became bright again and her father was standing by the bed. Then, in terror she screamed, "Oh Jesus! He is here." Then her mother and the other woman came in wishing to see him but he had again disappeared. Then the daughter signalled them to leave the room which they did and the father reappeared immediately. He sat with her on the chest talking to her with gentle kindness, "What are you doing my child? Where are your brothers?"

The daughter said, "They are not here."

He said, "I have just taken leave of the world and have said nothing to you. I think this is as good a time as any. So now, obey your mother and do not scorn or mock her. She is on the right path and when she departs she will come to a good place. And the man neither scorns nor mocks. He is on the right path and preaches the truth."

She asked, "What kind of man?"

He said, "The man called Franz." and said, "Tell this to your brothers and sisters and to all good friends.

She answered several times, weeping constantly, "Dear father I will do everything you tell me."

She asked him, "Why do you come now for the first time?"

He said, "There was no time. I could not come sooner."

She asked why he did not appear to others.

He said, "I have a special relation with thee."

She said to him, "Where are you now and how are you?"

He answered, "I am in a good place and I am well."

She asked him, "Where is your dear brother?"

He answered, "He is with me and we are well."

Then he said to her, "Why did you run away from me yesterday? it was not necessary. I am indeed your loving father. You had no need to be afraid. Because you were afraid of me and ran away from me you must undergo a severe illness. The third night will be the worst. Death will approach you three times and you will just escape. But you will recover completely and your life will not be shortened thereby.

Then he said more things that concerned the daughter alone.

When he had said all these things it seemed that he was pulled away from her with these last words, "Now I go forth and come not again." Once again she looked back under the door and could still see the glow of his presence. Then it seemed to her eyes that it became as dark as night and even though it was bright daylight this second time that she saw him.

She said that he had become so beautiful and shone so brightly that the light in the room caused an after-glow.

Moreover he was in the clothes and condition in which he had been laid in his grave.

Furthermore she told how he had sat next to her and how fear of him had made her wish to draw away, but she could not. Then all fear was taken away from her as though someone with one hand had smoothed it from off her face, and she was forced to look straight into his face and could not turn away from him. Her face was not over eighteen inches from his and her left eye, which was closest to him, became so painful that she thought it would fall out and, for a while water ran steadily from it.

Her mother and another woman said that they stood in front of the door, which was open a little, and understood all of Elizabeth's questions and answers. The ghost they neither saw nor heard.

Elizabeth Joder said that after she had talked to her father she felt very well until evening when the sickness her father predicted began and ran the course described. All present thought that she would die. However, thereafter, as might be suspected, the sickness came to an end and her recovery was complete.

A TRUE STORY OF EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE DURING HOLY WEEK HERE IN PENNSYLVANIA AT MR. FRIEDERICH REIMER'S PLACE IN FALKNER'S SWAMP, AS FOLLOWS:

FOUR years previously a day laborer died at that place. He had been a cutter of straw and a maker of thatched roofs. When Friederich Reimer came to this same place his nine-year-old daughter (who, it seems, was able to see such ghosts) saw this dead man several times. Once she saw him sitting on a stump and on another occasion she saw him standing beside the neighbor's maid watching her pull up turnips. Once she saw him sitting on the thatched roof of the stable pulling out bunches of straw and throwing them left and right without making any holes in the roof. These things she told to her family for she did not yet know that it was a ghost. Once, when her father was not at home she induced her older sister, who was seventeen years old, to go with her and question the man. However, the older sister could neither see nor hear the ghost so they went to the man together and the older sister told the child what to say and ask.

First she said, "What are you doing there? What do you want?"

He replied quickly with a muffled voice as though he were down in a hole, "I have waited a long time for you. I hope you will rescue me because you can do it."

She said, "From what am I to rescue you?"

He answered, "Before I came here five years ago I borrowed 30 Guilders from a woman in Holland. I have not repaid her. If someone would pay this for me I could be at rest."

The child asked, "Has this woman a husband?"

He replied, "Yes."

"What is her name?"

"Steinmann."

"Can your wife not rescue you?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because she is my wife."

"Could you not have mentioned this before you died?"

"No, because I died too suddenly."

"Will you be saved after this debt is paid?"

"Yes."

Thereupon the child, at her sister's suggestion, said, "We will pay it."

At this the man appeared to become very happy and began to run across the field.

She asked, "Where do you want to go?"

"To my house."

"Where is your house?"

"Come, I will show it to thee."

Then he ran so fast that the child could see the yellow soles of his feet turning up high behind him.

She said, "Heh! Wait a minute, we want to go with you."

After waiting for a while he began to run again and when he reached the brook he held his arm over the hedges and bushes and the child saw that the hedges bent down as though he had pressed them down with his arm. And when he came to the graveyard on Sieber's land he slipped through and under the fence and there, nearby was his grave with a hole in it. After that she did not see him again.

While she was talking to him the child noticed clearly that there were two red cones hanging out of each side of his mouth which apparently hurt him and made him speak with difficulty. Because at times she did not understand him she asked the same question two and, sometimes, three times until her older sister called to her and said, "He will be angry if you ask him so often about the same thing."

So the child placed her older sister near the man that she might better understand and she was so near him that she seemed to be standing on his grave cloth for at this time he appeared in the condition in which he was buried. The neighbors remembered that, when he was being buried his hat fell off so they just pulled the cloth over his head, and thus he was when she saw him on this occasion. However, before this she saw him several times in his everyday clothing. The child could not have seen the man (before his death) since she had never lived in

any other place but her description of his form and clothing agreed in all respects with what the neighbors said. Furthermore, the child reported that he seemed unable to keep still.

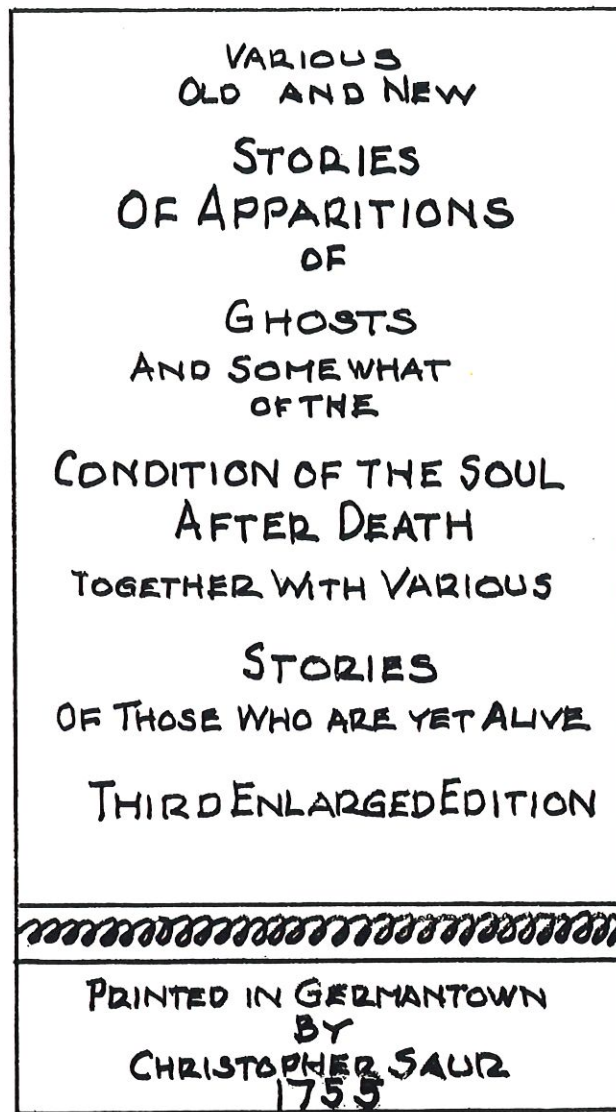
The neighbors said that, four years before, such a man had fallen sick at that very same place. He lost his speech on the second day of his illness and on the fourth day he died. They approached his wife and she denied the debt. However, another woman, who had crossed the ocean with him, said that this man and his wife quarreled with the woman to whom the money belonged and denied receiving the money. Moreover this woman had wished him much evil so that he had had no rest since his death. The neighbors took the trouble to look for this woman but were unable to find her. They were of the opinion that, because the ghost spoke with such a muffled voice through the sheet, the child had gotten the name incorrectly. However, it was said that the ghost did not appear after this.

Several years ago Christian Gunti, who is still living, was riding along the road from Germantown to Chestnut Hill. He saw two Indians approaching but, because the sun had already set, he could not tell whether they were men or women. Then he saw that they were both enraged. One of them took the other by the neck, choked him and brought him down on the ground, knelt on him and continued to choke him. Meanwhile Christian Gunti (who was less afraid of the dead than of the living and who saw that they were ghosts since such things were not new to him) had gotten so close that he knew it would be useless to interfere. However, after he had watched them for a few moments they both disappeared.

Sometime later he had to help repair the road and, as they came to this place, a neighbor said, "Here, once, an Indian beat his wife to death." Christian Gunti answered, "I do not believe he beat her. He strangled her."

From this it seems that wicked men are followed by their evil deeds and that those who die in the Lord are followed by their good works. Only the latter rest from their labors. The former are in unrest and torment especially after the body breaks up when they go from bad to worse. It can be seen by all men that as long as the

elementary part is not completely foul or burned, nothing dies or disappears in timely death but the coarse and carnal portion of mankind.



TITLE PAGE OF CHRISTOPHER SAUR'S
BOOK OF GHOST STORIES (Translation)
(See photo on page 85)

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