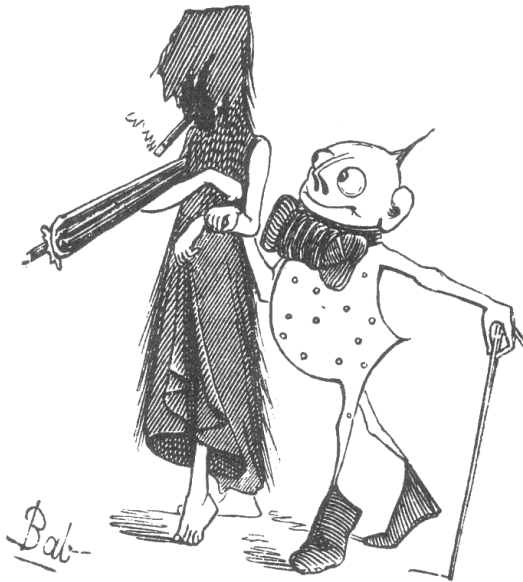


# THE GHOST, THE GALLANT, THE GAEL, AND THE GOBLIN

by W. S. Gilbert



"The Quaint against the Statuesque" –  
By competition lawful--  
The goblin backed the Quaint Grotesque,  
The ghost the Grandly Awful.  
"Now," said the goblin, "here's my plan –  
In attitude commanding,  
I see a stalwart Englishman  
By yonder tailor's standing.

"The very fittest man on earth  
My influence to try on –  
Of gentle, p'raps of noble birth,  
And dauntless as a lion!  
Now wrap yourself within your shroud –  
Remain in easy hearing –  
Observe – you'll hear him scream aloud  
When I begin appearing!"

O'er unreclaimed suburban clays  
Some years ago were hobblin',  
An elderly ghost of easy ways,  
And an influential goblin.  
The ghost was a sombre spectral shape,  
A fine old five-act foggy,  
The goblin imp, a lithe young ape,  
A fine low-comedy boggy.

And as they exercised their joints,  
Promoting quick digestion,  
They talked on several curious points,  
And raised this pregnant question:  
"Which of us two is Number One –  
The ghostie, or the goblin?"  
And o'er the point they raised in fun  
They fairly fell a-squabblin'.

They'd barely speak, and each, in fine,  
Grew more and more reflective,  
Each thought his own particular line  
By far the more effective.  
At length they settled some one should  
By each of them be haunted,  
And so arranged that either could  
Exert his prowess vaunted.



The imp with yell unearthly – wild –  
Threw off his dark enclosure:  
His dauntless victim looked and smiled  
With singular composure.  
For hours he tried to daunt the youth,  
For days, indeed, but vainly –  
The stripling smiled!--to tell the truth,  
The stripling smiled inanely.

For weeks the goblin weird and wild,  
 That noble stripling haunted;  
 For weeks the stripling stood and smiled  
 Unmoved and all undaunted.  
 The sombre ghost exclaimed, "Your plan  
 Has failed you, goblin, plainly:  
 Now watch yon hardy Hieland man,  
 So stalwart and ungainly.

"These are the men who chase the roe,  
 Whose footsteps never falter,  
 Who bring with them where'er they go,  
 A smack of old Sir Walter.  
 Of such as he, the men sublime  
 Who lead their troops victorious,  
 Whose deeds go down to after-time,  
 Enshrined in annals glorious!



"Of such as he the bard has said  
 'Hech thrawfu' raltie rawkie!  
 Wi' thecht ta' croonie clapperhead  
 And fash' wi' unco pawkie!  
 He'll faint away when I appear  
 Upon his native heather;  
 Or p'raps he'll only scream with fear,  
 Or p'raps the two together."

The spectre showed himself, alone,  
 To do his ghostly battling,  
 With curdling groan and dismal moan  
 And lots of chains a-rattling!  
 But no – the chiel's stout Gaelic stuff  
 Withstood all ghostly harrying,  
 His fingers closed upon the snuff  
 Which upwards he was carrying.

For days that ghost declined to stir,  
 A foggy, shapeless giant –  
 For weeks that splendid officer  
 Stared back again defiant!  
 Just as the Englishman returned  
 The goblin's vulgar staring,  
 Just so the Scotchman boldly spurned  
 The ghost's unmannered scaring.

For several years the ghostly twain  
 These Britons bold have haunted,  
 But all their efforts are in vain –  
 Their victims stand undaunted.  
 Unto this day the imp and ghost  
 (Whose powers the imp derided)  
 Stand each at his allotted post –  
 The bet is undecided.

*Fun*, VII, 14 March 1868