

Gothic Whitby

A photographic fantasy by Mr. J. Grabham

It was a dark and stormy night on the West coast of Scotland. Monstrous waves heaved and crashed against the rocks, while rain lashed and the wind howled mournfully in the blackness. Fortunately, I was snug and warm at my home in the western regions of Framwellgate Moor, but it was still with some trepidation that I viewed the electronic mail from Mr. Maughan, inviting me to join him and Messrs. Trout and Griffiths on a visit to a Gothic Festival of some sort to be held in the town of Whitby. Here, he assured me, we would have the opportunity to expose some photographic plates.

So it was that I found myself, at an early hour, accompanying my three companions down the cobbled streets of that old fishing port. The rain was falling steadily and a cold wind ran in from the East as we made our way to an establishment where Mr. Maughan would have us partake of what he called Butties of Bacon – a local delicacy. Thence we were to keep an appointment at the Pavilion with Mr. Bell and his family. The rain had abated, but the streets were still full of a deathly quiet, with only the occasional flap of leathery wings and distant bloodcurdling screams to disturb the silence. Mr. Bell greeted us most

cordially and bade us sit by his wife and his daughter.



Miss Bell proved an agreeable and accomplished young lady and yet...was it something in her demeanour, some slight nuance of expression that disquieted me so? Perhaps it was the undertaker's hat, the long black cloak or the slight protuberance of the canines – I know not. We took our leave and ventured out.

The activity of the day continued apace. Progressively the Goth Folk began to appear from the alleyways, slowly at first but ever-swelling in number, until the streets were filled. They showed no fear of our cameras. Indeed! They smiled and grimaced and smirked and scowled as we bade them. Gradually, inexorably, we were drawn up the steps to the fortress like Church of St Mary. We were too late for the wedding. Only a few guests, dressed in black, had tarried and each would have ten fellows around them to record their likeness. My eye was caught by a throng close by the Church wall; it was a shiver of photographers and a beautiful young woman. The air was thick with whirrs and clicks and the smoke from flash powder. I raised my lens and, with trembling fingers, operated the shutter, but it was only then that the realisation came. That cloak; that hat; those now bared fangs! Miss Bell! I turned and ran and ran.

How long I remained in my state of agitation I have no recollection, but some time later I became aware of an unholy presence at my back. I turned to see two oddly-dressed and

glassy-eyed figures, drooling and gibbering as they shambled towards me – but to my relief it was only Mr. Maughan and Mr. Griffiths. I had survived my day at the Festival!

Later, we made our journey homeward in high spirits. Mr. Maughan was pleased with his day. He had exposed hundreds of plates and he felt sure that some of them might be tolerable. He enquired of me if I might renew my acquaintance with the Goths and I responded that I was unsure.

“Oh, I think you will return” he said. His manner changed slightly.

“I think you must...”