

The Post-Mortem Composer

Have you heard of the violinist Jacques Moreau? Perhaps not, for though he is highly regarded by his peers and is gaining some renown as a talented composer, his name is not yet widely familiar. I, however, have known him as a friend for a number of years and regularly attend his concerts in the south-eastern states. I admire Jacques greatly as a musician but when I think of him now the first recollection is of the peculiar events that he and I witnessed in a house in New Orleans in the month of August in 1856.

I had attended a concert given by Jacques with his quartet in Natchez and the following day, as is our custom when circumstances allow, he and I took luncheon together. He seemed somewhat fatigued on this occasion, and I was wrestling with a difficulty encountered. Despite this, he was cheerful and spoke expansively and enthusiastically about many things. During this rambling discourse he made mention of a relative of his, “some species of cousin”, who sought an explanation and end to what she described in a letter to him as “perplexing and troubling occurrences” at her home. She had written that a recently deceased member of the family had not quite relinquished all earthly attachments and the hours of darkness in the house were now beleaguered by a persisting manifestation of his ghostly presence. Knowing that I held a keen, if perhaps slightly skeptical, interest in all things *other-worldly*, he invited me to accompany him to New Orleans to assist in the matter and, finding myself with some leisure time at that season, I was sufficiently curious to agree to go with him.

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