



Canon Alberic's Scrap-Book

M.R. James

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M. R. James is the master of the English ghost story, whose tales are inhabited not by ethereal spirits, but by terrifying, palpable forces of evil. In these four stories figures appear in paintings, demonic voices are heard, books awaken ancient horrors - and ordinary objects and situations are transformed into inescapable nightmares. This book includes:

- Canon Alberic's Scrap-Book
- The Mezzotint
- The Rose Garden
- The Stalls of Barchester Cathedral

Canon Alberic's Scrap-Book Details

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Author : M.R. James

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From Reader Review Canon Alberic's Scrap-Book for online ebook

Mark J Easton says

Four ghastly stories that touch on old horrors and the darkness that lies beyond the grasp of science and religion. M.R. James' masterful tone and tight tempo keep the reader on edge, serving as welcome reminder that keen readers should always find time for a well told ghost story, except, that is, after dark.

Amirah A Bakar says

I actually had to sit with someone when reading this book at night. The words and style of writing make even the simplest sentences sound creepy. Each of the story is scary in its own way, although only in the last one where the victim actually becomes a casualty.

Eduardo Gameiro says

This is one of the scariest horror stories I've ever read, especially when Dennistoun finds the strange figure he saw in an illustration of Canon Alberic's Scrap Book appear in his hotel bedroom.

I found this story similar to "Oh Whistle And I'll Come To You, my Lad" which tells the story of an academic who finds a strange whistle and ends up finding a ghost or another supernatural thing in his bedroom.

Canon Alberic's Scrap Book is a good way for those who don't know M.R. James well to get acquainted with his work as it is a very short chilly tale which includes all the elements of a classic Jamesian tale and is also quite entertaining.

Mikki says

The man knows his atmosphere. I read some of this book in full daylight and still felt chills running down my spine.

Danielle Lovesey says

satisfyingly creepy great for a Halloween read

Kelsey says

Another short creepy tale from James. There is perhaps just a bit too much build-up for my taste, but it's typical for the time and the actual horror part is quite well-done.

Denise says

An Englishman travelling in France comes to an old church. He studies it, photographs parts of it and spends hours writing in his notebook. The sacristan (caretaker) is a jumpy fellow, constantly at the Englishman's heels, looking over his shoulder.

He notices the Englishman is interested in old books. He has one at home *monsieur* might be interested in...

Please read the full review here.

Kaethe says

How to identify a master of the ghost story: he can really put you out with the simple words "he was more comfortable with a wall at his back." Brilliant.

Alexander Polsky says

M.R. James is the pre eminent writer of Victorian "cozy" ghost stories, but with a sinister edge. Anyone who enjoys the boarding school atmosphere of Harry Potter, but is looking for "the real thing" would do well to read James' work. He was a historian, and headmaster of Eton, and wrote ghost stories for the boys' amusement. I suppose his closest comparison with be Saki (H. H. Munro), but James is more erudite and dusty, and more Victorian.

For a wonderful introduction to his work, try "The Mezzotint", online here:
<http://gaslight.mtroyal.ca/mezztint.htm>

J K says

The first two stories are the best in this tiny collection, but this is a great way to get to know some of M R James' unsettling work. Other short stories riff off his style big time, as it's full of archaic horrors and monstrous revelations, all in a decidedly stiff upper lip manner. These are good and have gone some way to filling in the gap in my horror reading collection. A good sampler, will one day get around to more!

Steven Lawrie says

Haunting ghost stories told in a quaintly antiquated English.

Paige Ziolkowski says

I like very much how this story moves along. It's at a slower pace, but you still enjoy the read. Which is extremely difficult to pull off as a writer. Kudos to him. The ending is a bit strange but also quite unsettling. Like I've said in other reviews, I like classic horror. Something that hasn't been filtered, re-made, or copied in some way. This is definitely one of those books!!

Benjamin Stahl says

James takes typical delight in describing the antiquated image of the demon in the throne room, but otherwise I thought this was pretty average. The payoff was not very satisfying, and though this story commences the anthology of this man's work that I am reading, I know from past experience that he has much better stories.

Phil Mc says

M R James at his best. Disturbing tales of terror with a pervading sense of unease throughout. These are as close to genuinely frightening as short fiction ever gets. The thought of collecting antiquities or even visiting a church is considerably less palatable now. Hardly surprising as James is widely acknowledged as the master of the English ghost story.

Bill Kerwin says

My first reading of "Canon Alberic's Scrapbook" will always hold a special place in my heart, because it was the first time I was conscious of experiencing an "M.R. James' story," the first time I let myself be scared by James in a sophisticated fashion, surrendering myself to the fright but also appreciating the artifice, the skill.

M.R. James's work had already scared me at least twice, when I first read "The Mezzotint" and "Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad." But I was only ten or eleven years old at the time and I didn't really care who had written the scary story—unless it was Poe, of course—provided it scared the hell out of me.

I don't remember how old I was when I first encountered "Canon Alberic," but it was after I had become both a Poe and a Lovecraft fan, and had begun to suspect that every great author of weird tales must have his own distinctive way of generating terror. I remembered "The Mezzotint" and "Whistle" vividly, so when, at the local Salvation Army, I found a used paperback of *Ghost Stories of Antiquary*--the blue-and-purple Dover edition with "Whistle"'s murderous bed clothes on the cover—I purchased it and returned directly home, eager to sample the delights within.

I started with the first story (I always do), and that story was "Canon Alberic's Scrapbook."

I enjoyed the antiquarian atmosphere James' creates in his first two hundred words, as he speaks of "the wonderful church that dominates the little hill of Comminges." but my pleasurable anxiety began to increase with the description of the old sacristan:

It was not in the personal appearance of the little, dry, wizened old man that the interest lay, for he was precisely like dozens of other church-guardians in France, but in a curious furtive, or rather hunted and oppressed, air which he had. He was perpetually half glancing behind him; the muscles of his back and shoulders seemed to be hunched in a continual nervous contraction, as if he were expecting every moment to find himself in the clutch of an enemy.

James supports this anxiety with little touches here and there: the sacristan's odd behavior in the church, his cryptic comments on the walk back. the anxious looks of the old man's daughter when they reach his dwelling. Then, about two-thirds of the way through our story, our hero, the man from Cambridge, opens the "scrap-book" of the title, and examines one of its illustrations:

. . . a Biblical scene. . . . On the right was a King . . . evidently King Solomon. He was bending forward with outstretched sceptre, in attitude of command . . . The left half of the picture was the strangest, however. The interest plainly centred there. On the pavement before the throne were grouped four soldiers, surrounding a crouching figure which must be described in a moment. A fifth soldier lay dead on the pavement, his neck distorted, and his eyeballs starting from his head. The four surrounding guards were looking at the King. In their faces the sentiment of horror was intensified. . . . All this terror was plainly excited by the being that crouched in their midst. I entirely despair of conveying by any words the impression which this figure makes upon anyone who looks at it. . . . At first you saw only a mass of coarse, matted black hair; presently it was seen that this covered a body of fearful thinness, almost a skeleton, but with the muscles standing out like wires. The hands were of a dusky pallor, covered, like the body, with long, coarse hairs, and hideously taloned. The eyes, touched in with a burning yellow, had intensely black pupils, and were fixed upon the throned King with a look of beast-like hate. Imagine one of the awful bird-catching spiders of South America translated into human form, and endowed with intelligence just less than human, and you will have some faint conception of the terror inspired by the appalling effigy. One remark is universally made by those to whom I have shown the picture: 'It was drawn from the life.'

From the moment I read this passage, I was hooked on the work of the master of the antiquarian ghost story, Montague Rhodes James. I have read every one of his stories, and I have never been seriously disappointed.

Oh, and the rest of the story? It is thoroughly worthy of the passage quoted above.

Stephan Peters says

I really enjoyed this one.

Most enjoyable was looking up stuff about the actual cathedral where the book was set.

It was written to be believable, and the real live setting made it even better.

Would be five stars if the ending didn't kind of stop after he saw what might have been a penwiper.

It was a good read.

Carolin says

Actually I expected more of this book. The "ghost stories" were extraordinary but personally, I didn't like the style in which they were written. I really am a fan of slow stories, also of slow creepy stories (Bram Stoker's Dracula is one of my favorites and you can't say Dracula is a very fast adventurous vampire) ;) but somehow these just weren't so much my taste. Maybe reading them on the train is one of the reasons, I don't know.

Lee Howard says

[Re-Read] CANON ALBERIC'S SCRAPBOOK - a remarkably assured debut supernatural horror short story, full of future quintessential traits and details for which the ghost stories of MR James would be rightly praised and cherished. (8/10)

Alexandra says

Fancied a bit of spooky reading this Christmas, and M.R. James is the wordsmith of ghost stories! A very spooky little tale with a lovely build in tension. Perhaps not one of James' best, but it was a bit of fun for a Boxing Day morning read.
