

The Ghost of Dalton Hall

by Sean MacIntosh

With a groan, the two students threw themselves upon their beds; they had again been refused permission to go to town. For a long time they lay there, wondering what they should do; at last, maddened by their humiliation, they decided to do that desperate deed - skip to town.

Fixed with a new zeal they rose from their beds. The prefect wasn't going to pull that stunt over on them this time! They put on their coats quickly, and left the room. Darkness reigned supreme in the corridors of Dalton: all the boys were in bed. Now was their chance.

With boots and overcoats in hand they made their way cautiously down the stair, anxious to avoid the watchful eye of the prefect. No one came, however, and they reached the first corridor in safety. Opening the back door, they slid out into the darkness.

The night was dark and cold, but, by the light of the stars, the two boys could pick their way to the railway track which was about two hundred yards distant.

They reached the track in safety, and scrambled down over the high bank to the level road between the rails. The walking here was perfect, and they strode along happily, exultant at the thought of having deceived the prefect. The high piles of snow on each side of them rivaled even the tallest - Gagnon - in height. The track led right into town: A great escape route blind to the prying eyes of Dalton Hall.

It was not a long walk to town, just over half an hour, but in the boy's excitement and anticipation, it seemed longer. Once in town they both headed for the same place; the pub frequented by students - with or without the prefect's permission. Upon arriving at the pub, they met a few young men from town who, upon recognizing the two as Saint Dunstan's students, invited them to sit down. Over the next few hours, the talk and beverages flowed freely and all too soon the time to return drew nigh.

As the two left the pub, only then did they realize that Mother Nature had not been idle during their festivities. A blizzard had sprung up and the wind was so strong the two needed to bend forward to walk. The snow was coming down in such large amounts that they could barely see one another. They grasped arms and forged onward through



the drifts and made it safely to the tracks.

It was here that they agreed to walk in single file, taking turns to plow forward; the first making a path for the second - Gagnon ahead, Arseneault behind. This arrangement went on for about a quarter of a mile and then Gagnon stumbled. It was then Arseneault's turn to take the lead and Gagnon was to follow. They continued on for several minutes and upon reaching Blake's, Arseneault glanced back to check Gagnon's progress. He wasn't there. Hurrying back along the path, Arseneault called out but there was no reply. Then the decision had to be made - Stay and look or go to get help? He could not do much on his own so he went to Dalton Hall for help.

The frozen body of Gagnon was found the next morning. He had died from exposure. As the cause of death was obvious, the authorities did not see the need for an inquest and released the body to the Rector of the University. Rev. D.P. Crozier accompanied the body to the boy's home in Quebec and the funeral was held a few days later. The incident was over.

A week later in Dalton Hall, things were just beginning to get back to normal. Arseneault had just begun to deal with the grief of his friend's loss, when late one night, while studying the Book of Job for his test in the morning,

there was a knock at his door. Marking his place in the text, he got up to open the door and found no one on the other side.

Looking out into the dim corridor, he saw his friend's snow-covered image near the stair. Not daring to trust his senses, he rushed forward but upon reaching the stair, he found the place empty. A cruel illusion of a tired and grief-stricken mind. Turning to go back to his room, he trod upon the spot where his friend's image had stood. A bone-chilling cold lanced through his body and he grasped the wall for support. Quickly crossing himself, he ran to the prefect's room to arouse him.

Dragging the still sleepy prefect to the top of the stair, Arseneault conveyed a jumbled sequence of events to an increasingly angered cleric. The stern priest attempted to quiet the young man but Arseneault's adamant refusal to back down drew an ever-increasing group of residents. Using his authority, the prefect sent the young men to their rooms with orders to forget the ramblings of a student with an over-active imagination.

This would have been the end of it had not the apparition again appeared one year later - the anniversary of Gagnon's death. The young man occupying the room - Arseneault having graduated - was startled awake by a loud banging on his door. Getting up

to see if it was some prank, he found no one there. Looking for the prankster, he spied a snow-covered man standing near the stair. Thinking nothing of it, he returned to his bed.

Grilling his friends at breakfast the next morning, he soon discovered it was no earthly form he has seen the night before. Word quickly spread of Gagnon's reappearance.

Every year since, Gagnon has returned to his room in Dalton Hall. After the renovations to the building, it was not used as a residence and therefore no reappearance was recorded. This, however, changed when a student working late one night on the third floor of Dalton was surprised by a knock at his classroom door. Upon opening the door he noticed a snow-covered man standing in the hall. He called out to the figure but there was no response. After several seconds and the blink of an eye, the man was no longer there. Walking over to the spot where the man had stood, the student crossed a patch of floor that sent a cold wave through him.

It seems Mr. Gagnon's attachment to Dalton Hall is great indeed.

The above story is an author's reconstruction of the facts. The incidents described did actually occur, although the author has taken liberties and altered certain details for dramatic effect. Blake's as mentioned in the third paragraph, is the present-day location of the R.C.M.P. Barracks on University Avenue. Mr. Gagnon was a student at Saint Dunstan's University between 1923 and 1926.

The author would like to thank Sharon Mullin-Zimmerman and Professor W. MacIntyre for their gracious assistance in researching this story, Gerard Gauthier for his library work and also John Doucette for his expert proof-reading.