

TOLLY GRIMPEN'S TALES OF GROT AND HORROR

The Gruesome Yarn of the Mummy's Nail Clippings

This is a tale covered in grot from beginning to end. Please wash your hands thoroughly after reading it. It concerns a girl by the name of Florence Gallop, a talkative type with a great deal to talk about. For Florence Gallop was an explorer and, although she was only ten years of age, she had seen more of the world than most grown-ups do in a lifetime. A portrait of her hangs in the Rogues Gallery at the Royal Art Gallery in London. Here it is

(insert picture of a smug Victorian ten year old girl in pith helmet)

At the age of seven, Florence Gallop had conquered Mount Tiddliddloppolos, the lowest mountain in Greece. At eight years she had discovered the Lost Tribe of the Dicki-Whoopers (She discovered them behind her outside lavatory which was a little strange). But by far the weirdest tale in which she partook was the one I am about to relate – the Gruesome Yarn of the Mummy's Nail Clippings.

Many articles have been written about this event and over many years I collected them together into my grotty scrapbook. This is the first time they have all appear in print and gruesome reading it makes.

The first piece of evidence I lay before your popping eyes is a speech Florence gave in July 1893 to a congregation at St. Paul's Cathedral. This I found in the dusty archives of the Royal Navigational Society - an august institution, which will figure prominently later in our tale. The file had the following words scribbled across it in nervous hand writing –

“Never to be published. Ever. This is due to the awful incidents which have arisen since the authoress put quill to paper. Hide it on the highest shelf.”

I carefully opened the file. It was a handwritten scrawl by Florence and in the margins were her own notes. This is what is said –

A Speech of Great Scientific Importance to be Heard by Anyone Interested in Important Things by Florence Gallop (aged ten, with her own quill).

This is a very important speech about nail clippings so jolly well listen closely and I'll tell you how it all happened.

(That got them all interested)

As you all probably know I am a very important and famous explorer. I am ten years old and very clever. I speak Latin (Just enough to order a cup of tea) and Greek (Just enough to send it back) and I have explored lots of the world. I am four feet two inches tall and four feet three inches tall in my hiking boots. I have a large pith helmet and lots of fly-swats. I also have an atlas of the world called Atlas of the World, which I use when I go exploring. Being famous and important means I get invited to important places. Like this place –

(I forgot what the place was called and had to look inside the Bishops hat. It said "Property of St.Paul's Cathedral." I think I annoyed him.)

- St.Paul's Cathedral.

(Some people clapped here and I think I heard someone say, "Is this the bingo?")

Once, not long ago I was asked to explore a lesser part of Egypt called the Valley of the Baby Camels. The place is full of little pyramids and I climbed up the first one easily.

(The Bishop interrupted me and, holding onto his hat, said, "Could you get to the point?" and I hissed, "Yes, it wasn't a very high pyramid." Seems he meant could I get to the point of the story. The audience were getting restless and had only come for the bingo)

And so from this wooden chest I present the Nail Clippings of Kaki-Tartar. These Clippings I personally found in the Kaki Tomb where they had laid amongst other Egyptian artefacts for thousands of years.

(that got an Ooooo from the audience)

The Nail Clippings OF kaki-Tartar, ladies and gentlemen – the eighth wonder of the world. But the Royal Navigational Society who are “very important”

(I made quotation marks in the air to show I was being SARCASTIC)

said there can only be SEVEN wonders of the world. In this pouch are the last clippings from the last toes of Kaki-Tartar.

(and that was the bit where I supposed to pull out the nail clippings and pass them around, but the pouch was EMPTY. I didn't know where they had gone or what had happened to them. It was SOOOOO embarrassing. The rest of my speech was supposed to be all about the history of Kaki-tart but without the nail-clippings I was stumped. I quickly said, “It's bingo time!”, winked at the Bishop and legged it down the aisle.)

And this is where Florence's short speech ends, but it is where the real story begins. The Nail Clippings of Kaki-Tartar carried a dark and foul curse. Only a stupid person would ignore it. Florence, it seems, was very stupid. But did she actually discover them in the first place? Indeed she did. I have the documents to prove it. But at the very moment she wanted to reveal them to the British Public they vanished into thin air. A strange occurrence and one that was to get stranger. What became of the Nail Clippings? Perhaps this cutting from the London Times of 21st July 1893 may shed a little light –

Nigel Tattle's Diary of Social Affairs and Events

It seems everyone is talking about Rupert Creamingly, the finest beautician in London. Everyone knows he is the personal make-up artist to Prime Minister Gladstone, but here is something only a very few people know. It seems dear Rupert was at work in his beauty parlour the other day and had just put the finishing touches to Lady Fop's Hair Net. I am told the good Lady shrieked in delight at the result of Rupert's work. She was convinced she was to be the talk of Ascot, but, between you and me, it was the huge spot on the end of her nose would draw attention. Once more Lady Fop shrieked and dear Rupert ran over, clutching the bill onto which he had just scribbled a few extra noughts, to find out what was troubling her ladyship.

"My beauty spot!" She shrieked again in a voice that could grate cheese. Rupert tried to placate her, "Yes, her ladyship has the finest beauty spot in England!"

"Not anymore." She responded, removing the mirror from her face, "Someone has squeezed it!"

Of course, this all could be mere gossip, but I am told Lady Fop now attends social functions with a small set of curtains in front of her nose.

This is the first recording of the Nail Clippings wreaking havoc. More was to come. Strange reports could be found on almost every page of every newspaper – tales of blackboards being scraped in empty classrooms, bottoms being pinched at the opera, peas being flicked across the dining room at the Ritz Hotel. I also uncovered this entry in the Ward Diary of Battersea Childrens Hospital. Nurse Crickle wrote,

"Upon taking Master Tompkinson's temperature I momentarily left to allow him to sleep. On my return he sat up straight and smiled at me and said, "Thank you for scratching my foot, nurse." I couldn't bring myself to tell him I hadn't even been in the room."

So it was plain to all and sundry the naughty nail clippings were running amok around London. Who was to know what vile villainy they were to cause? It was a devilish tale bordering on the slightly eerie not far from outlandishly weird.

Our next piece of evidence in this tale takes the form of a letter - a letter written by the hand Edwina Scoop and read by the eyes of Florence Gallop. Edwina was a columnist and reporter on the London Times and had written many times to Florence without receiving a single reply. This letter, it seems, was her last attempt.

Dearest Misstress Gallopp,

I is writtin an artickle for the noospaper and wanted to ask you sum things. My name is Edwina Scoop and these is my quiztions –

- a) Cud you comment on the dizzyperance of the Nale Clippings, please?
- b) Did you no everyone in London finks you is pullin off a scam and you rely no where they are?
- c) If you produce the Nales this Noospaper will gif you £100,000 in money.

Yours fafffully, Miss Edwina Scoop.

Now what was Florence thinking as she read this ill-spelled and slightly scruffy letter? £100,000 could have come in very useful for an explorer with many parts of the world still to see. £100,000 could be spent on much needed new equipment and travel plans. So what was Florence thinking? This is her reply –

Dearest Miss Scoop,

How delightful to receive such an intelligent and well thought out letter. These are my answers to your questions.

- a) The rumours of the disappearance of the Nail Clippings are greatly exaggerated (see answer c)
- b) It is not a scam, but I can now reveal the Nail Clippings are safely hidden away.
- c) I am a serious explorer and do not do it for profit. I can show you the Nail Clippings, but want the money first. I need to buy some new Wellingtons for a forthcoming expedition. And some gloves. Yours sincerely,

Florence Gallop (miss)

Dearest Misstress Gallopp,

I has ad a word wiff my bozz and ee saise that we can giff you the money but you as to giff us the Nales. If you as em. We will haff a meetin at the Roil Naffigaichunal Sositty on Fryday at noon o'clock.

Bring the Nales and you shall haff the money.

Fafffully Edwina Scoop.

What an invitation! What an opportunity! What appalling spelling! How could Florence refuse? But did Florence really know the whereabouts of the Nail Clippings or was she really pulling off a scam to earn £100,000? Perhaps the next item may reveal more. It is the transcript of a police interview with Florence Gallop recorded on to the new wax gramophone on 31st August 1893 about tea-time –

Clapham Police Station Official Police Recording of Interview between Miss Florence Gallop and Constable Stubble.

Constable Stubble : Could you tell us a little about your doings on the night in question.

Florence Gallop : I did a naughty thing.

(Here there is a long, long pause and we hear only the crackle of the record and embarrassed shuffling of the officer.)

Constable Stubble : Could you tell us a little more?

Florence Gallop : Certainly. On the night in question I was sitting on the edge of my bath thinking about my fate.

Constable Stubble : Why were you thinking about your feet?

Florence Gallop : Not feet, fate. If I failed to produce the Nail Clippings I would become a laughing stock of the Royal Navigational Society.

Constable Stubble : And you would lose the £100,000 promised you by the London Times.

Florence Gallop : I do wish you would stop interrupting. I have a lot to say and this is a very short record. I was sitting on the edge of the bath when suddenly I saw my feet.

Constable Stubble : Your fate?

Florence Gallop : No, my feet. And I saw the nails on the end of my toes. I swiftly grasped a pair of nail clippers and set to work.

Constable Stubble: Where did you get the nail clippers, miss?

Florence Gallop : I bought them that very morning from the chemist.

Constable Stubble : And do you have the receipt?

Florence Gallop : No, whatever has that to do with my story?

Constable Stubble : Just checking.

Florence Gallop : Well stop it. I clipped every nail off every toe and by the end I had a small pile of slightly whiffy toe nail clippings. Only an experienced eye could prove they did not belong to an Egyptian Mummy. The next day I breakfasted on quails eggs and cheese. I

dressed in my Khaki jacket, puttees and pith helmet. I took my fly net from the cupboard and set to work on the second part of my plan.

(At this point a distinct snoring can be heard)

Florence Gallop : Are you listening, little man?

(It seems Florence bangs the table here and the needle hops from the record. The interview is replaced by the sound of the Clapham Police Choir singing a selection of music hall songs which Stubble clearly thought he was recording over)

Sadly, there is no further recording of the police interview, however further evidence was to prove Florence Gallop's undoing. Two days after the events she related to Officer Stubble this appeared in the London Times –

IDIOT SPOTTED CLIMBING BIG BEN

Special Report by Colin Scratch

St.Martins Lane, the busy hub of London's market trading. Not far from where I stand a turnip seller hawks his wares, a mobile barber goes about his business followed by small boy with a dust pan and brush. Behind me signs swing in the breeze declaring their owner's trades –

“Ears Pierced While You Wait!”

“Cast Iron Sinks!”

All was well and proper in this bustling lane yesterday, until a STRANGE OCCURRENCE OCCURRED.

The sight of a small girl was not an unusual one on these streets, but the sight of a small girl dressed in a pith helmet and hiking boots carrying a fly swat was. The girl climbed onto a

small soap box she was carrying and tried to attract the crowd's attention. Not something easy to do in the cacophonous surroundings. She then produced a small car horn, honked it loudly and waited for silence.

"My name is Florence Gallop," an eye-witness said she said, "And I am going to re-capture the run away Nail Clippings!" This drew a loud cheer from the crowd and a fish monger enthusiastically slapped a fish on his counter.

"Many people think", the eye-witness continued she continued, "I have stolen the Nail Clippings. Well, it's simply not true. Look." Here she rolled-up both her trouser legs and sleeves. This shocking act caused a gasp of embarrassment and the fish-monger stopped slapping his fish. It was quickly agreed the girl did not have the nail clippings and could she cover up her arms and legs?

The girl's plan was clearly well prepared. She grabbed her soap-box and her car-horn and cried, "To Big Ben!" and she set off pursued by the curious street traders and their customers.

THE CLIMB

Big Ben, the most famous of all London's landmarks, has donged and dinged the hours for many years, but yesterday it was the location of a STRANGE EVENT.

Florence Gallop, appeared at the base of the noble tower and announced to all her new followers she believed the Nail Clippings were hidden somewhere on the tower. How she came across this information is a mystery. And she refused to answer questions. She placed her fly-swat, soap-box and car-horn on the ground, cracked her knuckles and then did an odd thing. An eye-witness claimed she patted her pockets as if looking for something. She patted them again, a little more frantically and then finally peered up her sleeve and sighed. What was she hiding?

Then her climb began. Up and up she went, higher and higher. The perilous clamber was keenly watched by the gathered throng. A raven swooped passed the girl as she neared her half-way point. And then the girl stopped. This is where some confusion arose – many folk say she reached into a small crevice on the tower, but others say she reached up her sleeve. Whichever it was a small bag appeared and she waved it triumphantly.

“I have found the Nail Clippings of Kaki-Tartar,” an eye-witness said she yelled. Unfortunately, to wave the bag entailed her removing a hand from the Tower and that is when she lost her grip and slipped.

She whooped and cursed as she curled and tumbled through the air, but the story ends happily. It also ends grottilly. Florence Gallop was saved from death by landing in something soft and sticky and

brown. Unfortunately, the London Times will not allow me to write anymore about the sticky substance into which she fell so I shall have to leave it to your imagination.

And if you have no imagination here is something that may help. It is the transcript of a speech given by Mr. Ernest Runns, who was the Star Guest at the Annual Manure Shifters Ball in 1893. He was the Star Guest because of his involvement in the above occurrence. I managed to find a copy of the speech, wiped it down and place it before you. You may have to hold your nose.

So there I am happily trotting down the street with Flusher pulling me cart and Mrs.Runns jabbering in me ear. I got two hundred weight of top-quality poop to get to Peckham before night fall. Now me and the wife have been married longer than either of us has fingers and toes to count so I'd given up listening to her long since. But what I did hear was this. It was a sort of squelchy, sploshy ploppy sound and was coming for me cart. So I gives the reins to

the wife and turns around and there before my very eyes is a happarition covered head to toe in poop. I stares at it and it stares back. Then it says, "I am Florence Gallop take me to the Royal Navigational Society." Well, I'm not happy about this. Not happy at all and I says, "What you doing in my muck? You're getting it dirty!" and it says, "I am Florence Gallop take me to the Royal Navigational Society." So I snatched back the reins from the wife who was still jabbering away and I gees up Flusher. It just so happens we was just around the corner from the place what she wants and I drops her off. Seemed a nice girl. I wish she hadn't shook my hand though.

So the question on your spotty tongue is what happened next? For that information we must consult the Official Archivist of the Royal Navigational Society, Mr. Edward Quilt, whom I interviewed for my records. The moment Florence burst into the Grand Hall of the Royal Navigational Society with the bag of toenails in her hand and her clothes splattered with manure was clearly one he would remember for a very long time.

Grimpen : Could you tell the readers a little

Quilt : Friday, about twelve noon it was and the clock had just stopped it's donging. Into the Grand Hall of the Royal Navigational Society squelched a short thing and it was ponging like a stable. It had a mean look in its eye and the fellows of the society parted like a herd of startled buffalo. I checked my side arm for protection and my whiskey for ice and watched the spectacle unfold.

"I am Florence Gallop! And I have the Nail Clippings of Kaki-Tartar!" She bellowed. We had already been alerted this may occur and members of the press had gathered in expectation. A gaggle of reporters, clutching their pens and papers, crowded around the

stinking child and began questioning her in an abrupt manner. I ordered another whiskey from a passing waiter and tried to eaves-drop.

“The nail clippings currently running amok in London are not the Nail Clippings of Kaki-Tartar! For they are here!”

And with that she drew a pouch from her jacket and from it produced ten toe-nails. She shifted the remains of a fulsome lunch and laid them out on the Grand Banqueting Table. There was a gasp of admiration. Sir Albert Toot, our esteemed chairman, cleared his throat and was about to make a speech of gratitude when another voice piped up from the back.

“Stop!” It said. Its owner was amongst the crowd of reporters, “I am Edwina Scoop of the London Times and those are not the Nail Clippings of Kaki-Tartar.”

“Yes, they are! And I claim my £100,000.”

“No, they’re not!”

Two ladies head to head in a set-to like this can be a horrible and sickening sight so I found a nearby chair and made myself comfy.

“And I can prove it!”

Now all the members of the society muttered and looked about. Sir Albert Toot, gestured for the Edwina Scoop to step forward. And she did.

“In my hand I have a receipt!” She pulled a tattered slip of paper from her pocket and held it aloft. She continued, “A receipt for a set of nail clippers!”

Another gasp ran through the room followed by a confused snort and then an awkward pause. The pause was Edwina’s and she was using it for dramatic effect. She glanced at the reporters and you could hear a pen drop in the silence. Edwina Scoop, stomped up to the stench-riddled Gallop and held the receipt before her muddled face.

“Read what it says!” she ordered.

Gallop flicked something from her eye and gazed at the receipt. She muttered something.

“Speak up!” Scoop ordered again.

“It says, “Receipt for One Set of Nail Clippers Purchased by Florence Gallop!””

Suddenly hundreds of pencils began scribbling on hundreds of note pads and someone far at the back began wittering into one of those new telephone gadgets.

“Now you may be wondering how I came by this receipt?”

The fellows of the society nodded as loudly as they could over the sound of the scribbling pencils.

“I had been corresponding with Florence Gallop in the hope of gaining an interview for my paper. I had adopted the writing style of a simpleton in the hope she may take sympathy on me. She did, but the reply contained more than just answers to my question. Florence Gallop had accidentally folded this receipt into her letter!”

From the corner of my eye I noticed Constable Stubble of Scotland Yard come into view. He strode stealthily over to the hub-hub and began to observe the goings-on.

“Constable arrest this woman!”

Constable Stubble looked about a little nervously and said, “I can’t do that, Miss Scoop.”

Edwina was clearly not a woman to be tangled with and Stubble was about to get tangled.

“Why not?”

The constable lowered his voice and said, “We ain’t got no evidence!”

Scoop gestured towards the whiffy nail clippings spread out on the table.

“This is the evidence!”

Stubble adjusted his tie, polished his whistle and finally wiped his helmet.

“But we don’t know they are hers!” He said nodding towards Florence Gallop.

“Ha!” Yelped Florence pointing a manure covered finger at Edwina.

“Remove her shoes and socks!” replied Scoop, softly.

Within seconds Florence was laying on her back on the Grand Banqueting Table in the Grand Hall of the Royal Navigational Society with her socks being tugged from her little feet by eager journalists, a reluctant policeman and a giggling bishop.

Ten tiny toes wiggled by the soup bowl. At the other end of her body Florence Gallop's face was frozen in an expression of impending doom. Scoop took the first toe nail and held it in the air for all to see. She inspected it closely, nodded sagely then tried it against Gallop's left big toe. Every pair of eyes in the room stared intently as she did so. It fitted perfectly. One by one each and every toe nail on the table was tried against a toe and one by one every toe nail fitted every toe.

As Constable Stubble stepped forward with his hand-cuffs a camera flash went off and the case was proven beyond doubt.

Now most readers would think that was the end of this particularly grotty tale. But there is just a little more. I have in my collection a photographic plate. It is the photograph of a wall - the wall of the cell in which Florence Gallop was imprisoned. And upon this wall is scrawled some words in the hand writing of Florence Gallop. I have studied the photograph under a magnifying glass and this is what I believe is written –

The moon gazes through the cell window and all I hear is tap-tap, tap-tap, tap-tap on the cell door, night after night. Then tonight through the barred windows tip-tapped I,I,I,I,I,I,I,I,I brown and aged toe nails. They are tapping at my water-bowl as a write this. They tap-tap-tap closer and closer and closer. Tap-tap-tap....