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The weavers society walked in procession on the 27th June, to display a new flag which had been presented to them by Captain George Darby, of the guards, a native of Tiverton, and who had himself been bred a weaver.

On Sunday the 1st July, a terrific storm accompanied by thunder and lightning occurred, which commenced during the afternoon service; and the vivid and unusual appearance of the lightning, in Saint George's chapel, followed, as it was by the most violent and alarming claps of thunder, in quick succession, had the effect of so frightening some of the congregation, imagining the Church was coming about their ears, that they quitted their seats and returned home in the storm.*

During this year the curiosity of the public was much excited by some very extraordinary occurrences which took place in the village of Sampford Peverell, five miles from Tiverton; this is well known by the title of the Sampford Ghost; and although there can be no doubt of its having been occasioned by some designing persons, yet, the utmost vigilance was unequal to discover the actors in this infamous plot, "for if it be," says Mr. Colton, "the result of human machinations,

* The lightning is represented as having the appearance of hot bars of iron, preceded by flames of fire, which passed about three feet above the peoples heads, the whole length of the north gallery.

A. D. 1810. there must be more than sixty persons concerned in it."*

As supernatural objects will ever find attraction, and create interest in the public mind, the name of a haunted house was quite sufficient to make this habitation a source of both curiosity and alarm for a length of time.

The house appears to have consisted of a shop and kitchen below, with one staircase forming the only communication with the upstair rooms, comprising a small antiroom or landing, a middle or passage room, and an inner apartment, and the scenes which follow were acted in the two latter rooms.

At first this goblin sprite was a daily as well as nocturnal visitor, giving evidence of its presence by violent knockings, generally drawn forth by stamping with the foot. "These phenomena, observes Mr. Colton, by day, continued almost incessantly for about five weeks, when they gradually gave place to others still more curious and alarming." "Whatever females slept in either of these apartments,† experienced, some of them all, and all of

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* See "Hypocrisy," by the Rev. C. Colton. Appendix, page 295.

† An exception must here be made, when two respectable and strong minded female persons from Tiverton, slept there; but as

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them some, of the following sensations. They were most dreadfully beaten, as bye-standers may hear and witness; and I am quite certain I have heard myself, more than two hundred blows given in the course of a night." "The blows differed in violence; at times, they can be compared to nothing but a very strong man striking with the greatest force he is master of, with a closed fist on the bed. They leave a great soreness, and visible marks; I saw a swelling at least as big as a turkey's egg on the cheek of Anne Mills, a servant of Mr. Chave's." "When these blows and noises have been most violent, I have generally placed myself close to the bed, and when they were at their height, without changing my position, have desired one or other of the party to rush in with a candle kept ready lighted on the outside of the door for that purpose, but we could discover no cause. Every plan we could think of has been practiced to frustrate or foil artifice or design." "I have seen a sword, when placed in the hands of a woman, repeatedly and violently wrested out of them, and thrown with a loud noise sometimes into the middle of the room, and sometimes still more violently against the wall. This sword I have heard *it* take up, and with it beat the bed;

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they would not allow the bedclothes to cover their heads, or remain without a light in the room, the night passed without molestation. I should have observed that men were not exposed to these nocturnal assaults.

A. D. 1810. by *its* shaking the handle in a particular manner, I have been aware of *its* taking it up. I have placed a large folio greek testament, weighing about eight or nine pounds, on the bed, it has been repeatedly thrown into the centre of the room. It is a curious circumstance that this same testament has been thrown with great violence and a loud noise, from the foot to the head of the same bed, *inclining in its direction a little to the right.*" "I have often heard the curtains of the bed most violently agitated, accompanied with a loud and almost indescribable motion of the rings. These curtains, to prevent their motion, were often tied up, each one of them in a large single knot, and in this state every curtain in that bed was agitated and the knots thrown and whirled about with such rapidity, all at the same time, that it would have been by no means pleasant to have been in their vortex, or within the sphere of their action. I have heard, in the presence of several witnesses, footsteps repeatedly walking by me, and round me, when sitting at times by the light of one or two candles, and could see nothing. I have been in the act of opening a door, which was already half open, with a candle in one hand, when a violent and sudden rapping was produced on the opposite side of the same door. I paused a moment, but while the rapping continued, I drew the door which was before half open, suddenly open; not a second could have elapsed, yet I can swear I could then see nothing! although I had a lighted candle in

my hand, nor can I at this moment conjecture the cause of that violent knocking. I have been in one or other of the two apartments that are so much disturbed more than once, but particularly in the one which has a large modern window, "when from the noises, knockings, blows on the bed, and rattling of the curtains, I did really begin to think the whole chamber was falling in. Mr. Taylor, sitting on a chair in the same room, while I was standing close by him, observed, "I thought it was sufficiently terrible last night, but this is more than I ever heard it." A. D. 1810.

"One night the two servants were so much agitated that they refused to sleep any longer in their apartment; Mr. Chave permitted them, in the dead of night, to bring their bed and bedclothes into the room where he slept with Mrs. Chave; after they had been quiet about half an hour, and the light was put out, a *large iron candlestick began to move most rapidly over the whole room*, producing by its motion a noise exactly resembling the grinding of a malt mill. Mr. Chave was in the act of ringing the bell, to call up the 'prentice boy, when the candlestick was violently thrown at his head, which it narrowly missed; but after striking the head of the bed, fell upon the pillow."

"Mr. Searle, late keeper of the County gaol, informed me of his intention of going to Sampford, to find out what he termed the grand trick that was there exhibiting. He informed me, after his

A. D. 1810. visit, however, that the blows were extremely loud and violent on a bed in which a single female slept, *(Anne Mills,)* even while he was sitting on one side of the bed, and his friend on the other. The sword before mentioned, was placed, he positively assured me, on the bed when a large folio testament was placed over it, thus by its weight pressing down the sword; they then resumed their position on each side of the bed, so as to be able to ascertain the slightest motion of the person who occupied it. The sword was in a very short space of time hurled with the greatest violence from the bed against the opposite wall, a distance of about seven feet. He was quite certain the female in the bed neither moved hand or foot. It seems that in Mr. Searle's absence from this room, a few minutes, his friend struck at something and blood was evident on the knife, but as this circumstance took place without any witness, I do not consider it worthy of much attention."

"As the following fact has been sworn to in the presence of Captain Jones, myself and others, I may venture to relate it. Mr. Taylor deposes that on going into the room in consequence of the shrieks of the women, the sword that before was lying on the floor, he saw clearly suspended in the centre of the room, with its point towards him; he drew back and contemplated this wonderful object with amazement and terror, when, after the expiration of about a minute it fell to the ground, with a loud noise. He also deposed

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to his perfect ignorance of the cause of this phenomenon."

"Last Thursday night, September 13th, the family, with one exception, were not much disturbed, nor were they some nights previous to that; but Anne Mills deposed on oath, on Friday morning, before Mr. Sully, "(an Exciseman residing at Sampford)" and myself, that she was beaten so violently on that night, that she hesitated whether she should run out of bed or strike a light; in the act of doing the latter, she received a very severe blow on the back, the effects of which she deposed were very visible, and the tinder box was forcibly wrenched out of her hand, and thrown into the centre of the room, *by the same agent that gave the blows.*"

The following concluding occurrence is perhaps among the most extraordinary. It was voluntarily deposed to, in the presence of a Mr. Sumpter, by the two domestics belonging to the house, Mary Dennis and Sally Case. "That on Sunday morning at half-past seven o'clock, they were violently beaten while in bed; that the bed in which they slept was opposite to the large modern window, before described; that while nothing interfered between them and the light but a thin sheet, they distinctly saw a large arm, suspended over the bed, *without any body attached to it.* The possibility of seeing such a phenomenon, *if it was there to be seen,* I have convinced myself of."

A. D. 1810. The facts here adduced form the leading particulars of this singular affair, as detailed by the Rev. C. Colton; but Mr. Marriott, the editor of the "Taunton Courier," has given another version of this mysterious tale, with a hope, I conclude of being able,

"To drag this hideous Monster into Day."

from whence I shall give a few extracts.

He says, that Taylor, whom he considers, a principal actor in this goblin story, had studied necromancy under the celebrated Moon, and doubtless some of the performances might be attributed to this deceptive art. He, however, made oath before J. Govett, esquire, Mayor of Tiverton, to the following effect; viz.—

"That he never saw Mr. Moon exhibit but three times in his life; that he never was in his company but twice in his life; that he never was under Mr. Moon's tuition one hour. Sworn before me, 27th of September, 1810.

J. GOVETT, Mayor of Tiverton."

It appears also that this house was formerly occupied by a Mr. Bellamy, during whose life it has been supposed these premises were used for the purpose of secreting smuggled goods, for, says Mr. Colton, "in the corner of the second room, where strangers usually sit during the night, there is a large hole about two feet square, and six feet deep." Mr. Marriott, in remarking on this circumstance, says that instead of their being but

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one communication with the upper rooms, as stated by Mr. Colton, there are three, a fact which "Mr. Chave studiously concealed from the numberless visitors who have been drawn by curiosity from all parts of the country to attend the ghostly lectures."* In this statement he gives at length the result of Mr. Talley's nocturnal residence at this house, and observes, that on his, (Mr. T's.) going into the inner room, "he was much surprised to observe a man named Dodge, a cooper, sitting on the bedside, *half concealed by the curtain.*" Mr. Colton, in his remark on this passage, says, "Mr. Talley himself now admits he recollects he did not see any man half concealed behind a curtain, for the plainest of all possible reasons, *there were no curtains to that bed* on which he saw Mr. Dodge sitting." Mr. Marriott, in proceeding with his account, states, "that Mr. Talley then took the precaution *to lock all the doors;* and, taking the keys with him, went into the bed prepared for him in the servants room;" and continues, "on the following morning Mr. T. went into the chamber where Dodge was, who could not quit his room till he had let him out of it, *he having taken the key!*" "This, "says Mr. Colton, is rather miraculous, as I shall now make it fully appear that the door of this identical chamber where Mr. Dodge slept, on that memorable night, with the apprentice boy, hath never had since its for-

* See his journal for 20th September, 1810.

A. D. 1810. mation, either key-hole, lock, bolt, bar, or any thing to secure it, but a very common thumb latch, even the catch of which was gone."

Amid these conflicting statements, it does not become our province to attempt a solution; and in the words of the talented author of the pamphlet, from which I have so largely quoted, simply say,

"Hear blust'ring Marplot, like Glendower bawl,
"At Sampford's vasty Pond for goblins call,
"Be not deceived my Friends, 'tis all a Hum,
"Roar as he may, and rant, *No Ghost will come.*"

The Cock-lane ghost, in 1762, was discovered, and the authors consigned to the punishment such iniquitous proceedings so justly merited; but of the Sampford ghost, it can only be further observed, it was "going on more than three years; in defiance of a reward of two hundred and fifty pounds, to be given to any one who can produce such information as may lead to a discovery. Nearly two years have elapsed, and no claimant has appeared."*

The editor of the Taunton Courier† quite releases Mr. Colton from at all "acquiescing in the object of its original contrivance."

Of Mr. Colton it may be remarked, that during his ministry at Tiverton, (which continued for some years as Curate of Priors portion,)

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* Hypocrisy, appendix, p. 294.

† See Taunton journal, 25th October, 1810.

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he exhibited considerable talent, whenever he liked to exercise it. His general habits but little accorded with the offices of a Clergyman, and the negligence with which he, occasionally, performed his duties in the Church, testified how little he felt the sacred calling with which he was entrusted, and the effect could only be prejudicial to others. In his habits he had the character of being social, — an agreeable companion,— not given to intemperance, and liberal to his neighbours and friends, but was addicted to the fearful vice of gambling, which, at last, is reported to have brought his life to an awful close. Soon after his leaving Tiverton, which he did on procuring a College living in the neighbourhood of London, he was concerned in the business of a wine merchant; but his ruling vices having led to a suspension from the duties of his profession, he retired to Paris where he resided several years, but at last, sunk in the depths of wretchedness, he closed his career by suicide. The following is extracted from "the American in Paris," Vol. I. p. 119. "I have just fallen accidentally upon the story, which every one knows, of the unhappy Colton. He wrote books in recommendation of virtue, and critiques in reprobation of vice, with admirable talent. He was a Clergyman by profession, and yet became a victim to this detestable passion (gambling.) He subsisted by play several years amongst these dens of the Palais Royal, and at length falling into irretrievable misery,

A. D. 1810. ended his life here by suicide. One feels a sadness of heart in looking upon the scene of so horrible an occurrence; one owes a tear to the errors of genius, to the weakness of our common humanity."