SAMPFORD GHOST.

A PLAIN AND

AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE

OF THOSE EXTRAORDINARY OCCURRENCES,

HITHERTO UNACCOUNTED FOR,

WHICH HAVE LATELY TAKEN PLACE

AT THE

HOUSE OF MR. CHAVE,

IN THE VILLAGE OF SAMPFORD PEVERELL,

IN THE COUNTY OF DEVON.

By the Rev. C. COLTON, M. A. Reg. Col. Soc.

Who was himself witness to many of the Facts,

TIVERTON:

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PREFACE.

THE curiosity of the Public having been much excited by some very extraordinary occurrences which have lately taken place in the Village of Sampford Peverell, in the County of Devon, being about five miles from Tiverton, my place of residence; I have thought it expedient to lay before the Public a plain, simple, and authentic narrative of such facts only as can be substantiated on the oath of credible and disinterested witnesses.

The circumstances therefore here submitted to the attention of my readers are authentic, and their truth, I presume, will not be disputed, except by those who expect stronger evidence than human testimony can afford.

It is by no means my intention to attempt to prove in these pages, or disprove the existence of Ghosts, neither have I any opinion on this subject, to which I am in the slightest degree ambitious to make one Proselyte; neither am I about to propose any theory, to account for any of the Phenomena hereafter stated. All I mean to vouch for is, the truth of the particulars here humbly offered to the perusal of the Public, in order that they may form their own conclusions, and also that those who on every other subject are much better informed than I am, being now put in full possession of the facts, may have an opportunity of exerting their abilities, in discovering the cause of them. It was my wish to have avoided the imposing appearance of a Pamphlet on this subject, but I was given to understand, no Newspaper could find room for so bulky an article, and I did not think it adviseable to divide it.

I must also request my various Correspondents, with and without names, to consider these Pages as a general answer to their enquiries.

AN

Authentic Narrative, &c.

In consequence of various Rumours in circulation concerning the late occurrences at Sampford, the following Letter was addressed by me to Mr. Marriott, Editor of the Taunton Courier.

Mr. Editor,

It is not the object of this letter to make converts to a belief in Ghosts; yet, were the existence of such supernatural Beings established, I am apt to suspect the effects produced by such a persuasion, (if any) would be rather favourable to virtue, than otherwise. On this subject, the Gospel preserves a dignified silence, although the only two passages that I conceive can be fairly brought to bear upon the question, by no means militate against such a belief, but rather confirm it. I should not have presumed (and particularly at a time when other engagements demand the whole of my attention,) to have troubled the public with any observations of mine upon this subject, had not many stories already got into circulation, so very contrary, that the credibility of facts which certainly have taken place, is utterly destroyed by the palpable absurdity of other stories so ridiculous, that they carry their own confutation with them. In addition to this, there exists in every country town, but chiefly where a stagnation of trade throws a great deal of time at once upon the hands of the inhabitants, while it also deprives them of their usual methods of employing it, a strong tendency to misrepresent facts, and to misjudge motives: thus a whole morning shall be spent in spreading a false report, and this very naturally finds employment for a whole evening in

contradicting it. "*Perditur hæc inter miseris lux.*" Perhaps there was some sense in this enigmatical advice attributed to Pythagoras, "when the winds are up, worship the echo;" by which, I presume he meant, that when there are a variety of rumours in circulation, it is right to suspend our judgment, and wait patiently for the second report.

[I now proceed to a short detail of circumstances, to the truth of which, I have voluntarily sworn with a safe and clear conscience; I am well aware that all who know me, would not require the sanction of an oath, but as I am now addressing the public, I must consider myself before a tribunal, of which my acquaintance constitutes a very small part. And first, I depose solemnly, that after an attendance of six nights, (not successive) at Mr. Chave's house, in the village of Sampford, and with a mind perfectly unprejudiced, after the most minute investigation, and closest inspection of all the premises, I am utterly unable to account for any of the phenomena I have there seen and heard, and labour at this moment under no small perplexity arising from a determination not lightly to admit of supernatural interference, and an impossibility of hitherto tracing these effects to any human cause. I farther depose, that in my visits to Mr. Chave's house, at Sampford, I never had any other motive, direct or indirect, avowed or concealed, but an earnest, and I presume not a culpable wish to trace these phenomena to their true and legitimate cause. Also that I have in every instance, found the people of the house most willing and ready to contribute every thing in their power and to co-operate with me in the detection of the cause of these unaccountable sights, and violent blows and sounds. Also, that I am so deeply convinced of the difficulty of proving these effects to be human, that I stand engaged to forfeit a very considerable sum to the poor of my parish, whenever this business now going on at Sampford shall be made appear to have been produced by any human art or ingenuity, collectively,

or individually exerted. Also, that I have in the presence of many gentlemen, repeatedly sworn the domestics to this effect, namely,—that they were not only utterly ignorant of the cause of those circumstances which then astonished us, but also of the causes of many other things equally unaccountable, which we ourselves did not hear, nor see, but to the truth of which they also swore, no less than to their perfect ignorance of the means by which they were produced. Also, that I have affixed a seal with a crest to every door, cavity, &c. in the house, through which any communication could be carried on;—that this seal was applied to each end of sundry pieces of paper in such a manner that the slightest attempt to open such doors, or to pass such cavities, must have broken these papers, in which case my crest must have prevented their being replaced without discovery;—that none of these papers were deranged or broken; and also, that the phenomena that night were as unaccountable as ever. Also, that I have examined several women, quite unconnected with the family of Mr. Chave; but who, some from curiosity, and some from compassion, have slept in this house—that many of them related the facts on oath—that all of them wished to be so examined, if required, and lastly, that they all agreed without one exception in this particular:—that their night's rest was invariably destroyed by violent blows from some invisible hand—by an unaccountable and rapid drawing and with-drawing of the curtains—by a suffocating and almost inexpressible weight, and by a repetition of sounds, so loud, as at times to shake the whole room. Also, that there are more than twenty people of credibility, quite unconnected with the owner, or the present tenants of this house in question, who have related to me the most astonishing circumstances they have seen and heard on these premises; all of which they are ready to substantiate if called upon, on oath. Also, that it appears that this plot, if it be a plot, hath been carried on for many months, that it must be in the hands of more than fifty people, all of whom are ready to perjure themselves, though not one

of them could possibly gain any thing by it;—that the present owner is losing the value of his house, the tenant the customers of his shop, whom fear now prevents from visiting it after sun-set, and that the domestics are losing their rest; and all these evils are with most exemplary patience submitted to, without any object but the keeping of a ridiculous secret, which although so many are privy to it, and many more interested in discovering, hath not yet been divulged, although such a disclosure would be attended with circumstances highly advantageous and gratifying to any person who could be induced to discover it]

To the truth of the above cited particulars *enclosed between the two crotchets*, I voluntarily make oath, in the presence of B. Wood, Master in Chancery, Tiverton. *B. WOOD, M. C.*

With respect to the facts that have led me to the above conclusions, to detail them would be to engross the whole of your paper; but here I must once for all observe, that I by no means wish your readers to conceive that these mysterious circumstances never can, or will be discovered, because I have not been able to effect it; it is true I have given the subject all the attention I thought it deserved, but others may be more fortunate in their methods of investigation. But that I may not appear singular in such conclusions as the experience of my senses has forced upon me, I shall here subscribe the names of a few, selected from a cloud of witnesses, on whose minds a sensible experience of similar facts hath produced similar convictions, facts which they are willing to substantiate on oath they are utterly unable to trace to any human agency. The names are as follows:

Mr. JOHN GOVETT, Surgeon, Tiverton.
Mr. BETTY, Surgeon, Tiverton.
Mr. PULLIN, Merchant, Tiverton.
Mr. QUICK, Landlord of the White Horse, Tiverton.
Mr. MERSON, Surgeon, Sampford.
JOHN COWLING, Esq. Sampford.
Mr. CHAVE, Mere, near Huntsham.

All these gentlemen are ready if called on, to depose to their having witnessed circumstances in this house at Sampford, to them perfectly inexplicable, and for which they are utterly incapable to account.

Requesting you will give this tedious letter a place, with the subscribed names, have the honour to remain,

Sir, your's truly,

August 18*th*, 1810. *C. COLTON.*

TO THE PUBLIC.

In my Letter to the Editor of the Taunton Courier, I was accused of dealing only in generals, but in that letter I also gave a very satisfactory reason, (as I conceive) for so doing; *an enumeration of the Particulars must have occupied the whole of that Paper.*

But as an high degree of curiosity has been very naturally excited on this occasion, I shall in the following pages attempt in as short, plain, and simple a manner as possible, to put my readers in full possession of all the facts which have taken place of late relative to this mysterious affair, at the house of Mr. Chave, in the Village of Sampford, in the County of Devon, and shall strive to give them as clear an idea of these proceedings, as *they* might have gained by being present on the spot. I would also request the public to observe that no transactions will be here related, except such as are well known in *this* neighbourhood to have taken place, and which can, if required, be substantiated on the oaths of credible and respectable witnesses. Having discharged this part of what I *now* consider my duty, I shall stop. To explain these effects, or even to propose a conjecture on their cause, will be no part of my undertaking; it is quite out of my power to perform this, and therefore I do not promise it, lest it

might be asked, "Quid dignum tanto, &c. In such a case, I might reasonably expect to be compared to that celebrated character who undertook to astonish the world by getting into a quart bottle, when the moment arrived, a vast assemblage of the credulous were informed by him that some little untoward accident prevented him from fulfilling his promise on that day, but if they would favour him with the honour of their company precisely at the same hour on the day following, he would surprise them still more by getting into a *pint bottle*. But, alas! I have no pretensions to anticipate so enviable a comparison, since all the public prints have already announced to the world, that *I am no conjuror*

But first, I must beg leave to trespass on the patience of my readers a few moments, to do away some impressions caused by remarks of the different newspapers on my former letter. Freedom of speech, and a right of private opinion, are such invaluable blessings, that I should be very sorry to see them impaired or diminished on my account; and I am so great a friend to cheerfulness, that I had rather all the kingdom were merry than sad, even though it were at my expense. Neither can I lightly suspect any Gentleman of wilful misrepresentation, but would rather attribute their misconceptions of my meaning to my having expressed myself in a manner not sufficiently intelligible.

It was easy to foresee that a letter on such a subject, must occasion much ridicule; but surely the "ridiculum acri fortius" then only exercises its legitimate functions, when it becomes not (what Lord Shaftesbury would have it,) *the test of truth*, but *the just punishment of falshood*; when it goes hand in hand with, or follows closely after the detection of a fallacy. Unfortunately in the present instance the whole of the ridicule *precedes* the detection, and leaves it so far behind that those who clearly perceive the former, have not as yet been able even *dimly to descry* the latter. Now this *promised de-*

tection is the very thing we are in want of; "Hoc est tibi quod promitti sæpius audis," Produce this, and I shall then readily join in the laugh. Till then, I cannot put myself in the ludicrous situation of those who after having been extremely merry on this subject, are under the necessity of gravely inquiring of each other what it is they have been laughing at? *The discovery of the Trick?* no trick have yet been proved; The gross credulity of the Dupes? Surely this is begging the question, since the *discovery of the plot* is still wanting, to prove the *existence of the dupes*. Is their mirth excited because a clergyman of the nineteenth century has seen and heard things he cannot account for? If this indeed be matter of amazement, it is paying a great compliment to the profession at the expense of one of its members; but I can assure the Public that even the wisest of my Brethren see things every day and feel things every hour they can neither account for nor explain. But is is far more easy and pleasant to laugh and to write, than to reason and investigate.

I might indeed amuse the public by promising them a full discovery, the moment my budget of information from some distant parts came to hand; like the man who deferred the payment of his debts, until *his Box arrived from India*; or I might sagely hint that I was in possession of the secret, but was not at liberty immediately to disclose it; like that Irishman whose estates in Tipperary *were so well secured he could not get at them himself*. After all, it is most probable, that time, which has made so many real Ghosts, and proved the non-existence of so many false ones, may effect that for us, which it hath done for others,

"Quod optanti Divom promittere nemo
Auderet, volventibus *Dies* en attulit *ultro*.

At present, any reader of the daily Papers, in consequence of their remarks on my former Letter, must set me down for a firm believer in Ghosts, and must be

also satisfied that I attribute the Phenomena in that Letter alluded to, to supernatural agency. Surely the authors of those remarks never could have read the following sentence in my letter; *I am utterly unable to account for any of the Phenomena I have there seen and heard, and labour at this moment under no small perplexity arising from a determination NOT lightly to admit of supernatural interference, and an impossibility of hitherto tracing these effects to any human cause.* In other Papers the public are informed that it is clear from my Letter that I have pinned my faith on the reports of others, but have myself heard and seen nothing; the sentence above quoted must contradict this affirmation. Other Papers go on to represent me as a credulous person, and one easily imposed upon; all this may be very true, but surely Men of this stamp and character, are the very last whom the *Editors of Newspapers* ought to attack, seeing that such are their best friends. Neither doth the imputation of credulity come with a very good grace from those who can gravely persuade themselves that they can develope a mystery in another Man's house, by sitting quietly in their own. Neither can I conceive that those who would insinuate that I was a dupe to very clumsy artifices, have read that part of my letter wherein I enumerate some of the precautions (tho' indeed by no means all) which I took to prevent deception and frustrate any previously concerted plan.

Some Editors of Newspapers are convinced from that same Letter that I am a blind and superstitious Bigot; but in that very letter this sentence occurs, *(Here I must once for all observe, I by no means wish your readers to conceive that these mysterious circumstances never can or will be discovered, because I have not been able to effect it; it is true I have given the subject all the attention I thought it deserved, but others may be more fortunate in their methods of investigation.)* This, I presume, is not the language of superstition, nor of Bigotry.

Fell Bigotry, in meek Religion's breast
Nourish'd awhile an Infant, and caress'd,
To Manhood grown, this Monster, carnage fed,
Thrusts his poor mother out, to seek her bread;
See him her hand-maid charity expel,
Invite the furies in her house to dwell,
Retain the Serpent, but dismiss the Dove,
And bind in chains of torment not of love,
Plant Persecution guard where Mercy stood,
Spurn at his Mother's milk, and thirst for blood.

These lines were written by me long before this affair at Sampford was heard or thought of, as is well known to many of my friends here. Of their merit there will of course be various opinions, but whether the writer of them is prejudiced in favour of Bigotry I presume there can be but one opinion, and on that account alone are they here introduced.

The illiberality of the Remarks of those Gentlemen who style themselves Examiners is their concern not mine; perhaps it might become those who lay claim to such a title, to be less hasty in their decisions. It would appear that these Gentlemen are very indignant that a Clergyman should believe the existence of any thing he cannot comprehend. With all due deference to such great authorities, I cannot but suspect the creed of these sapient gentlemen would be confined to the two first words of all creeds, if they were determined to believe only what they have fully examined into, could clearly define, and satisfactorily account for. If they thought such a creed too short for an examiner I would recommend this addition, We believe——in our own ignorance and impertinence. But I will not in charity exasperate these Gentlemen, as I understand their libel fund is low.

By garbling a letter, and producing just such parts of it as suit our own purposes, it were easy to prove or disprove any thing; and those who from such extracts would attempt to give their readers a full view of the

whole, act about as wisely and as fairly, as that Man, who when he wished to sell his house, took a brick in his pocket as a specimen.

There are others who positively will admit of no evidence as sufficiently strong to establish any unaccountable facts and occurrences, and who entertain so light an opinion of an oath, that most sacred of human appeals, as to affirm that fifty men may be produced at any time, to swear any thing. Perhaps it would be no easy task to procure fifty men to swear that those who avowed such an opinion were persons possessed of sense or discretion.

I shall now proceed to lay before my Readers the facts I have promised them, in as clear a manner as I am able.

In the first place, the Room which has of late been the principal scene of action (for I have heard similar noises at times in another apartment) is as ill adapted for carrying on a trick as it is possible to imagine. In this Room there is but one door, not a single cupboard, and one very small chimney, which has been regularly examined. The walls are of stone, it appears, the flooring of new deal, extremely close, and not covered by a Carpet. There is one very large, rather modern window in the Room, and this apartment is one story high. It must not be omitted that there is no visible access to this Room but through another, in which those who wish to satisfy their curiosity constantly sit. Of course, therefore, there are three dead walls in this aforesaid Room, and one partition.* This partition is very thin, there is also a window in it, and this partition serves to divide that Room from the Room in which any visi-

* This partition has been often examined by me, is a very few Inches thick, and the slightest aperture on the opposite side, must be instantly visible on a smooth lath and plaister white-washed wall.

tors sit. These circumstances concerning the Room it will be necessary to keep in mind. In the Room where strangers sit, there is also one door only; and there is a kind of landing Room at the top of the stairs opposite to this door.

In one corner of that Room where Strangers usually sit during the night, there is a large hole about two feet square and six feet deep; the floor covers this hole, but the boards have been loosened for the purpose of examining it. It is generally supposed that Mr. Bellamy, the former proprietor of this house, made use of this hole for the purposes of smuggling. This Cavity I have always most narrowly watched; at times securing the boards that cover it in the manner described in my former letter, at other times by placing sticks and poles in a slanting position, in such a manner that the slightest upward motion of the boards must cause the fall of such poles or sticks, and thus give notice of the ingress or egress of any object whatever. I can most positively affirm that nothing coporeal or material ever passed thro' this hole while I was in the Room, nor do I see how any such use on the present occasion could be made of it, as persons who watch are constantly within one yard or less of this cavity. Requesting the public to keep these circumstances in mind, I now proceed to detail some of the principal facts, to enumerate the whole of them would exhaust the writer's and the reader's patience.

Rather more than four months since, this house became extremely troublesome, altho' long before that time, some very unaccountable things had occasionally taken place in it. An apprentice boy had expressed himself often dreadfully alarmed by the apparition of a woman, and had heard some extraordinary sounds at night. Little or no attention was paid to this. But to return, rather more than four months from the present time, the inhabitants of the house were alarmed in the following manner; noises and blows by day were heard extremely loud, in every apartment of the house. On going up stairs and stamping on any of the boards of the floor, in any Room, say five or six times, or more, corresponding blows, but generally louder, and more in number, would be instantly returned: the vibration of these boards caused by the violence of these blows, would be sensibly felt thro' a shoe or boot, on the sole of the foot. Observe, the floors underneath which these noises were heard, are all of

them immediately over Rooms that are cieled, and various attempts have been made to imitate the same noises by striking with different instruments, every part of such cielings as were under the Rooms, whose floors were thus disturbed: but neither the vibratory motion of the boards, the sensation excited in the sole of the foot by that vibration, nor any thing at all like the same sounds, could in that way be produced. Add to this another effect, not to be produced by any blows on the corresponding under cielings, the dust was thrown up from such boards as were beaten with such velocity as to affect the eyes of the spectators. These extraordinary circumstances naturally drew together a great concourse of persons, both strangers and neighbours.

At mid-day the cause of these effects would announce its approach, by amazingly loud knockings in some apartment or other of the house, above stairs or below, as might happen. The moment they were heard, any person or persons (for at times more than a dozen witnesses have been present at once) on ascending the stairs, and stamping loudly with their feet, would be answered somewhat louder; and then, what is extremely curious, these noises would very often and in repeated instances, absolutely follow the persons through any of the upper apartments, and faithfully answer the stamping of their feet, wherever they went in them. The joists and beams of the flooring certainly opposed not the slightest obstacle to its progress, as it often followed the person who challenged it to answer him by stamping, returning such stamps of his foot much louder, immediately under him, wherever he moved. Walls it would penetrate with equal facility, as was manifest, in some degree, by its following any person into different apartments, and more clearly still, from the wonderful rapidity with which it changed its scene of action from one room to the other. But still more remarkable—Suppose five or six persons were in the room attending to these noises, as for instance, A, B, C, &c. Should B observe, on hearing it under the feet of A, "it is now under A's feet," before such words were well out of his mouth, B would have these very noises under his feet, and so on. But after having returned the stamps of the stoutest man, stamping with his utmost violence, and even returning such stamps in a still louder manner than those produced by the person, should that very person knock with his knuckles ever so

lightly on any part of the wall of such apartment, no matter which, in which the stamps were answered, the slight and small noises produced by his knuckles on the wall, would in many instances be instantly and faithfully returned in the very place in the wall where the blows from the knuckles were struck, and with a similar sound.

These Phenomena by day continued almost incessantly for about five weeks, when they gradually gave place to others still more curious, and alarming. That I have related the above facts without the slightest exageration, that they are literally and strictly true, can be at this moment proved from the affidavits of numerous disinterested witnesses; they are as well known in Sampford to have happened as that the sun shines at noon day. Let the incredulous but give themselves the trouble to enquire personally of any who were present on these occasions, some of whom I shall presently name; they will be satisfied, nay, I will forfeit all claim to future credit, if they find I have been guilty of the slightest exageration. Three or four clergymen have heard these noises, and are as much at a loss to account for them as I am. Mr. Samuel Chave, no relation to the tenant of the house, but of the same name, and also his wife, and Mr. Sully, Excisemen at Sampford, and his wife, expressed this very morning, (viz. September 14) their readiness, if called on, to swear (to use their own expressions before an hundred magistrates) to their knowledge of those facts having happened—and to their utter inability to assign their cause. J. Cowling, Esq. Mr. Merson, Surgeon, Mr Webber, Turner, and many others, have often made use of similar expressions before me. These are all neighbours of Mr. Chave, and comprise the most respectable persons in the Village. James Dodds, Cooper, voluntarily made oath this very morning before me, in the presence of Mr. Sully, Excise-man, that having been for a length of time employed in making butter casks in an out-house attached to Mr. Chave's house, he had constant opportunities by day, of hearing these noises; he also deposed that it was his firm belief they were not the effect of any trick, that he is convinced they were not produced by the inhabitants of the house, and that these sounds were often much louder than the noise caused by him, while working at his trade. Mrs. Dennis, a near neighbour, voluntarily made oath also before me, in the pre-

-ence of Mr. Sully, this morning, to her having heard all these noises as I have described them, to her firm belief that the people of the house are not concerned in them, and to her entire ignorance of their cause. Mr. Tully, himself, the Landlord of the house, cannot deny that he has heard these noises, when extremely violent. If he should have forgotten this, I must request him to apply to Mr. Baker of Halberton, to Mr. Cowling, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Escott, and Mrs. Dennis, all of whom can refresh his memory, being present at the time. The noises were then so loud that two men working a winnowing machine in a neighbouring barn, were alarmed by them.

Mr. Cowling was present with many others, when a certain board in the floor of one of the upper rooms, was most violently beaten and so agitated by the vibrations of the strokes, that the dust was thrown up in a very peculiar manner.—Mr. Chave was requested, if possible, instantly to take up that board. He ran down below for an hammer and chisel, and in the act of drawing up that board, the very board adjoining was at that instant beaten more violently than the one he was removing. This very extraordinary circumstance much increased the curiosity of the spectators, but on looking under this board, nothing was visible, and it was also quite evident that the joists were throughout that apartment so close to the floor that not even a mouse could find a passage between them. These Phenomena, as I before observed, after continuing about five weeks, were succeeded by the following nightly occurrences. There are two apartments in this house, which I have described at large; whatever females sleep in either of these apartments, (with the exception of one single instance, to be hereafter stated) experienced some of them all, and all of them some, of the following sensations. They are most dreadfully beaten as bystanders may hear and witness. Placing myself, at times, close to the bed, at other times in other parts of the Room, I am quite certain I have heard, myself, more than two hundred blows given in the course of a night. Mr. Pullin, Merchant, of Tiverton, Mr. Betty and Mr. Govett, Surgeons, and Mr. Quick, Landlord of the White Horse, in this town, I refer to for the truth of one or other of the following particulars; one or the other of them having been present with me when they took place.

The blows given differ 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; she voluntarily made oath that she was alone in the bed when she received the blow that caused that protuberance, from some invisible hand. Mrs. Dennis, and Mary Woodbury, have both sworn voluntarily before me, one in the presence of Mr. Sully, Exciseman, the other in the presence of Mr. Govett, that they were so much beaten by some invisible hand, as to experience a peculiar kind of numbness, and were sore many days after. When these things happened to Mrs. Dennis, I was present in the room. The same women also solemnly deposed, that they are positively certain that a little apprentice girl, called Sally Case, not quite 16 years old, who slept in the same bed with these women, could not possibly have produced either the blows they felt, or any of the noises to be hereafter mentioned. Had she stirred hand or foot, they must have perceived it.

Observe that 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. Others have then watched the bed, while I took post at the door, and the noise still went on. Every plan we could think of has been practised to frustrate or foil artifice or design. The position of the bedsteads has been altered, the rooms have been changed, the bedside carpet removed, the beds examined, both top and bottom; the chimney by means of a lighted candle fully inspected, and the walls which are quite smooth, minutely investigated, and the deal flooring proved to be solid, and close all through. Having premised this, I have now to add that the following phenomena took place in my presence; that all of them were witnessed by one or the other of the gentlemen just mentioned, and that the underwritten females swore to their entire ignorance of the causes of them; also that Mr. Taylor, a young Man not quite twenty years of age, whom some, without any shadow of a reason, as yet produced, have thought proper to suspect, has on these oc-

casions sat wherever we thought proper to place him, without moving from the spot. The names of the females alluded to, are as follows, Mary Dennis, senior, Mary Dennis, junior, Martha Woodbury, Anne Mills, Mrs. Pitts, Sally Case. These are all strangers, except Sally Case, and Anne Mills. I have seen a sword, when placed in the hands of some of these women, repeatedly and violently wrested out of them, after the space of a few minutes, and thrown with a very loud noise sometimes into the middle of the room, sometimes still more violently against the wall. This sword I have heard it take up, and with it beat the bed; 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 8 or 9 pounds, on the bed, it has been repeatedly thrown into the centre of the room. Mr. Pullin and Mr. Betty were then requested to bring in the candle, and the testament was placed on the end of the bedstead in such a manner, that no part of it could touch the bed. The women from fear, were enveloped entirely in the bed-clothes; these gentlemen were then requested to take particular notice of the position of every fold and wrinkle in the bed; the candle was then removed, Mr. Pullin and myself placed ourselves so close to the bed, that had an hand or arm been moved, by any one, we must have heard it, as was afterwards experimentally proved. It is a very curious circumstance that this same testament was then 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. A candle was instantly produced; the situation of the bed-clothes was not in the slightest degree deranged, and the females in the bed were in the most solemn manner, in the presence of Mr. Pullin and Mr. Betty, swore as usual, to their entire ignorance of the cause of that event. I have often heard the curtains of the bed most violently agitated, accompanied with a loud and almost undescribable motion of the rings; on one occasion there was from the moon, a sufficient degree of light to see this motion, and at the same time clearly to ascertain that the cause, whatever it might be, was something invisible. These curtains, to prevent their motion, were often tied up, each one of them in one large single knot; making of course four knots. There is a very large modern window in this room,

when the moon is at full, it is almost light enough in the room to read a large print. Mr. Chave, of Mere, no relation at all to Mr. Chave who rents this house, can swear to the following fact. Sitting up as he has often done, to hear and see these Phenomena, he was alarmed by one or two very loud shrieks; on rushing into the room his course at the threshold of the door of that apartment was arrested by the following Phenomenon.– 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; Mr. Taylor then stood on the same threshold, close by his side, and they could both distinctly perceive by the clear light of a full moon, that the cause of these effects was invisible. This scene, accompanied with such a violent noise of the rings as (to use Mr. Chave's own expression) could not have been exceeded by four persons stationed one at each curtain, for the purpose, continued for about two minutes, when it concluded with a noise resembling the tearing of a person's shirt from top to bottom. Candles were then instantly produced, and many rents, one very large one *across* the grain of strong new cotton curtains, were discovered. I have heard, in the presence of other 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. Mr. Quick and myself, sitting in the lower room, distinctly heard it come down the stairs, with a noise like the treading of a man's foot in a slipper, it then passed through a wall, into another apartment, as appeared by the sounds; but we had two candles burning, and could see nothing. I have been in the act of opening a door, which was already half open, I had a candle in one hand; the instant my other hand was stretched out for the purpose of fully opening the door, 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! altho' 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 worse than I ever heard it." Mr. Govett, Surgeon, of Tiverton, was present with me on this occasion; for I have made it a rule, from which I have not once departed, never to sit up at Sampford without some respectable person as a witness. Mr. Govett can testify that the shrieks which he heard that night were such as could not be counterfeited. Observe, they came from the women who slept there, and were strangers to Mr. Chave, and all his family; and the symptoms of real fear could not be mistaken; a most violent perspiration evinced by large drops standing on their foreheads, the aspect of their countenances, and the sounds of terror they uttered, were such as surpassed the powers of a Garrick or a Siddons to imitate in their most unrivalled moments.

One thing is worthy of remark in these noises; they would very often answer by night, as was the case formerly by day, any noises or knockings made by other persons; on one particular night the cause of them was most minutely exact and faithful, in its mode of returning any noises made. These answers by knocks were generally louder than those made by bye-standers, as hath been before observed of those by day. But the rapidity equalled only by lightning, with which it changes its position, is in my opinion, one of the most extraordinary features in this mysterious business. As quick as thought, it flies from one part of the room to another; when it has been in the act of beating the females in one bed most violently, and when from the sound of the blows, I have had notice of its being at the foot of the bed, I have rushed to the spot, it has instantly been heard at the head of the bed, equally violent, and almost at the same moment, would begin its blows on the opposite bed. Mr. Chave, the occupier of the house deposed before me to the following effect; That 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. (thus Mr. Chave expresses it.) He could hear no footstep, and perceived by calling to the maids, that they were quietly in the corner of the room, in their bed. He was in the act of ringing a 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. This Mrs. Chave and the two servants also know to be fact. A light was afterwards produced and nothing could be seen.

About a fortnight since, Mr. Searle, late keeper of the County goal, informed me of his visit, and intention of going to Sampford, to find out what he termed the grand trick that was there exhibiting. Mr. Searle has given numerous proofs of personal courage, and decision of character. He brought a friend with him, and I left them, after having assisted them in thoroughly examining the apartment, in full possession of the scene of action. It was impossible any man could be more confident he should discover this *plot*, than Mr. Searle was on the evening of that night; or more convinced of the difficulty attending it, than he was on the following morning. I then saw him, and discoursed with him. "Quantum mutatus ab illo!" His account was most marvellous, as also appeared from the paragraph he inserted in the Exeter Paper on the following day.

Observe, I left Mr. Searle and his friend, at half past eleven on that night, to go back to Tiverton, and three other gentleman returned with me, as it was my wish that Mr. Searle and his friend should prosecute their own method of examination, undisturbed. But I appeal to those three gentleman whether some phenomena had not even then taken place, which strongly shook their scepticism, and caused them to leave that house with very different impressions from those with which they entered it?

Mr. Searle informed me 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 nor 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.

Numberless extraordinary things have been seen and heard by individuals in this house, but I have uniformly rejected all of them, from this narrative, and admitted only such facts as have taken place in the presence of two or three witnesses. One fact of this nature, as it has been sworn to, in the presence of Capt. Jones, myself, and others, I may venture to relate. 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 to his perfect ignorance of the cause of this phenomenon.

There is a peculiar hollow sound generally in the knockings, which we have attempted in vain to imitate. On one occasion I stood quite close to the head of the bed, which was at that time shook and agitated violently; I requested Mr. Govett to rush in as suddenly as possible with a candle; I kept myself earnestly fixed at the head of the bed, and heard two or three violent blows, after the candle was introduced. Had the agent been visible, I must then have perceived it. 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 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.

To prevent the great influx of strangers, the inhabitants of the house have been recommended to keep this affair for a season as quiet as they can, as their night's rest has been broken almost as much by them, as by this invisible and unwelcome visitor; and above all things, not to blazon or exagerate any thing that may take place.

The usual solutions of haunted houses have been already advanced and refuted; such for instance as hollow walls, subterraneous passages, perforated beams, wires, and every other method of pantomimic deception. But the offspring of error is very vivacious, and truth may be outstripped in the race by falshood *for a time*, but always overtakes it in the *end*.

As truth is our object, I shall enumerate what appeared to me to be suspicious circumstances in this, as yet, unexplained affair. This agent has never yet attacked men—Its operations always are weakened, and generally made to cease altogether by the approach of light—It is very capricious, and by no means constant in its effects.—Two or three nights may elapse undisturbed. I took two women with me both much advanced in years, but one of them certainly possessed of a very stong mind, improved by an excellent education; * two gentlemen from Tiverton also attended; on that night nothing was heard. I communicated my suspicion on this subject to the Editor of the Taunton Courier, but as these suspicions were done away, in my mind, by another circumstance, our correspondence ceased. Some gentlemen have been there by night, and have returned disappointed; but I suspect very few have sat up in that house *a whole night* without witnessing much for which they could not acccount.—— It must be further observed, that many women can depose, that they have seen and felt its effects very violently when a candle was in the room, as Mary Woodbury, and others. Neither are its active efforts the less true or marvellous, because at times they cease; for instance, it would be hardly fair to assert that it was impossible that A could have been robbed on Hounslow heath or monday night, because B passed over it unmolested on tuesday, yet this mode of reasoning

* Mrs. Burgess.

has been resorted to. The circumstance that prevented my further correspondence with Mr. Marriott was this; a widow lady from Honiton, of a very superior mind, and strongly inclined to scepticism on the subject of ghosts, passed a week in this house very shortly after the affair above mentioned. Her convictions *now*, are as strong as her former scepticism. This lady does not wish to have her name made public, but the account she gave me of the Phenomena that produced these convictions, in the presence and hearing of R. Sumpter, esq. of Histon near Cambridge, is as curious as any thing here related.

One particular I can safely affirm, that those who have paid this affair the most attention, are the most convinced of what I have been thoroughly satisfied of long since THE GREAT DIFFICULTY OF DETECTING IT.—I have met, many different times, some individual of the family, I have examined him or her on the occcurrences of the last night, I have then rode on to the house, and on putting the same questions, have received similar answers; I have invariably found them in one story, and never could perceive the slightest tendency to exageration.

I have thus faithfully enumerated most of the leading facts on this extraordinary business; to detail the whole of them, would be to write a volume not a pamphlet. This affair has been going on for many months, and still continues. No conjecture has yet been formed to account for it, that has the humble merit of being probable, much less plausible. We are at this moment no less at a loss for the object than the cause. The stale explanation of all haunted houses, viz. a wish on the part of the tenants to purchase cheap—an idle and exploded story about a painting bill, set at rest long ago by the oaths of two credible witnesses, before Mr. Govett, Mayor of Tiverton——a conversation between Mr. Chave and Mr. Tally, sworn before me in the presence of Mr. Sully, never to have taken place; and a few other such vague allegations, have been adduced by one who deals much in assertions, but little in facts.

☞ An APPENDIX to this Narrative is now in the Press, wherein the Falshood of Mr. Marriott's assertions in the Taunton Courier will be satisfactorily proved by undeniable evidence.

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