

*LINE FIELDS*

**THE APPARITION OF SIR GEORGE VILLIERS,  
FATHER OF THE THEN DUKE OF  
BUCKINGHAM, TO ONE MR. PARKER  
(1834)**

TRANSCRIPTION BY  
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NEWS  
FROM  
THE INVISIBLE WORLD:  
A COLLECTION OF  
REMARKABLE NARRATIVES  
ON THE CERTAINTY OF  
SUPERNATURAL VISITATIONS  
FROM  
THE DEAD TO THE LIVING  
IMPARTIALLY COMPILED FROM  
THE WORKS OF BAXTER, WESLEY, SIMPSON,  
AND OTHER WRITERS OF INDISPUTABLE VERACITY,  
BY T. OTTWAY.

“There is no people, rude or learned, among whom apparitions  
of the dead are not related or believed.”—DR JOHNSON

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*The Apparition of Sir George Villiers, father of the then Duke of Buckingham, to one Mr. Parker, to warn the Duke against something, which if not prevented, would end in his death; which so fell out, he not regarding the advice; and soon after he was stabbed by one John Felton, an officer.*

THERE were many stories scattered abroad at that time of several prophecies and predictions of the [47] duke's untimely and violent death; amongst the rest, there was one that was upon a better foundation of credit. There was an officer in the king's wardrobe<sup>1</sup> in Windsor Castle, of good reputation for honesty and discretion, and then about the age of fifty or more. This man had in his youth been bred in a school in the parish where Sir George Villiers, the father of the duke, lived, and had been much cherished and much obliged in that season of his age by the said Sir George, whom afterwards he never saw. About six months before the miserable end of the Duke of Buckingham, at midnight, this man being in his bed at Windsor, where his office was, and in very good health, there appeared to him, at the side of his bed, a man of a very venerable aspect, who undrew the curtains of his bed, fixed his eyes upon him, and asked him if he knew him.

The poor man, half dead with fear and apprehension, being asked the second time whether he remembered him, and having in that time called to his memory the presence of Sir George Villiers, and the very clothes he used to wear, in which, at that time, he seemed to be habited, he answered him, that he thought him to be that person; he replied, he was in the right, that he was the same, and that he expected a service from him, which was that he should go from him to his son, the Duke of Buckingham, and tell him, if he did not do something to ingratiate himself with the people, or at least to abate the extreme malice which they had against him, he would be suffered to live but a short time.

After this discourse he disappeared, and the poor man (if he had been at all waking) slept very well till morning, when he believed this to be a dream, and considered it no otherwise.

The next night, or shortly after, the same person appeared to him again, in the same place, and about the same time of the night, with an aspect a little more severe than before, and asked him whether he [48] had done as he had required of him; and perceiving he had not, gave him some severe reprehensions, told him he expected more compliance from him, and that if he did not perform his commands, he should enjoy no peace of mind, but should always be pursued by him; upon which he promised to obey him. But the next morning, waking out of a good sleep, though he

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<sup>1</sup> The King's Wardrobe was a department of the Royal Household which contained valuables and clothes and travelled with the King wherever he went.

was exceedingly perplexed with the lively representations of all particulars to his memory, he was still willing to persuade himself he had only dreamed; and considered that he was a person at such a distance from the duke, that he knew not how to find out any admission to his presence, much less to be believed in what he should say: so with great trouble and unquietness he spent some time in thinking what he should do, and in the end resolved to do nothing in the matter.

The same person appeared to him a third time with a terrible countenance, and bitterly reproached him for not performing what he had promised to do. The poor man had, by this time, recovered the courage to tell him, in truth he had deferred the execution of his commands upon consideration how difficult a thing it would be for him to get any access to the duke, having acquaintance with no person about him; and if he should obtain admission to him, he never would be able to persuade him that he was sent in such a manner, that he should at least be thought to be mad, or to be set on, and employed by his own, or the malice of other men, to abuse the duke, and he should be sure to be undone.

The spectre replied as he had done before, that he should never find rest till he had performed what he required, and therefore he had better to dispatch it; that the access to his son was known to be very easy, and that few men waited long for him; and for the gaining him credit, he would tell him two or three particulars, which he charged him never to mention to any person but to the duke himself; and he should [49] no sooner hear them than he should believe all the rest he should say; and so repeating his threats he left him.

In the morning the poor man, more confirmed by the last appearance, made his journey to London, where the court then was; he was very well known by Sir Ralph Freeman, one of the masters of requests, who had married a lady that was nearly allied to the duke, and was himself well received by him. To him this man went, and though he did not acquaint him with all the particulars, he said enough to let him know there was something extraordinary in it; and the knowledge he had of the sobriety and discretion of the man made the more impression on him: he desired that by his means he might be brought to the duke in such place and in such a manner as should be thought fit, affirming that he had much to say to him, and of such a nature as would require much privacy, and some time and patience in hearing.

Sir Ralph promised that he would speak first to the duke of him, and then he should understand his pleasure; and accordingly the first opportunity, he did inform him of the reputation and honesty of the man, and then what he desired, and what he knew of the matter.

The duke, according to his usual openness and condescension, told him, that he was the next day early to hunt with the king; that his horses should attend him at Lambeth Bridge, where he should land by five of the clock in the morning; and if the man attended him there, at that hour, he would walk and speak with him as long as should be necessary.

Sir Ralph carried the man with him the next morning, and presented him to the duke at his landing, who received him courteously, and walked aside in conference near an hour; none but his servants being at that hour in the place, and they and Sir Ralph at such a distance, that they could not hear a word, though the duke sometimes spoke loud, and with great [50] emotion, which Sir Ralph the more easily observed and perceived, because he kept his eye always fixed upon the duke: having procured the conference, somewhat, he knew, was up very extraordinary.

The man told him, in his return over the water, that when he mentioned those particulars that would gain him credit, (the substance whereof he said he durst not impart unto him), the duke's colour changed, and he swore that he could come at that knowledge only by the devil; for that those particulars were only known to himself and to one person more, who, he was sure, would never speak of it.

How strongly does this confirm the opinion, that the soul, when departed, has a knowledge of the actions of the living, and willing to do any office for their good, if permitted.

The duke pursued his purpose of hunting, but was observed to ride all the morning with great pensiveness, in deep thought, without any delight in the exercise he was upon; and before the morning was spent, left the field, and alighted at his mother's lodgings in White-hall, with whom he was shut up for the space of two or three hours! the noise of their discourse frequently reaching the ears of those who attended in the next rooms. And when the duke left her, his countenance appeared full of trouble, with a mixture of anger; a countenance that was never before observed in him in any conversation with her, towards whom he had a profound reverence; and the countess herself (for though she was married to a private gentleman, sir Thomas Compton, she had been created Countess of Buckingham shortly after her son had first assumed that title) was, at the duke's leaving her, found overwhelmed in tears, and in the highest agony imaginable.

Whatever there was of all this, it is a notorious truth, that when the news of the duke's murder (which happened a few months after) was brought to his mother, she seemed not in the least degree surprised, but received it, as if she had foreseen it; nor did she afterwards express that degree of sorrow as was expected from such a mother, for the loss of such a son.

This story is related with a little circumstantial difference by several considerable authors, who all seem to agree in the most material parts of it. —*Vide Baker's Chronicle.*

Fame, though with some privacy, says, that the secret token was an incestuous breach of modesty between the duke and a certain lady too nearly related to him, which it surprised the duke to hear of; and that, as he thought he had good reasons to be sure the lady would not tell of it herself, so he thought none but the devil could tell it beside her; and this astonished him, so that he was very far from receiving the man slightly, or laughing at his message.

A considerable time before this happened, Sir Clement Throckmorton dreamed that an assassin would kill his grace, therefore he took the first opportunity to advise him to wear a privy coat; the duke thanked him for his counsel very kindly, and gave him this answer, that he thought a coat of mail would signify little in a popular commotion, and from any single person he apprehended no danger. —*Relique Wotton*, p. 144.

This relation is recorded by three different authors; viz., Mr Lilly, the Astrologer, in a work of his; Lord Clarendon's History of England; and Mr. Baker's Chronicle. It is also mentioned by Mr. Flavel in his Treatise of the Soul.