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**APPARITIONS
(1783)**

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 and believed.”— DR. JOHNSON.

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The volume publication year was 1843, but the source of the first narrative is to be found in a publication from 1783.

(pp. 1-6)

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**NEWS
FROM
THE INVISIBLE WORLD**

APPARITIONS.

[1] Various opinions have been held respecting the reality of the existence of apparitions. The sentiments of almost every person on this subject are influenced by the society with which they are connected, and the number of credible accounts they hear which have a tendency either to substantiate the reality of these visitors from the other world, or to inspire a total incredulity as to their existence. Of the two extremes, we have no hesitation in saying, that this incredulity is most calculated to promote the happiness of every one, though in general, early impressions forbid it.

We shall lay before our readers two authentic narratives, which seem to favour these opposite opinions; and though the circumstances narrated occurred at different times and places, and were in every respect totally unconnected with each other, yet they may be said in some measure to elucidate the subject; and while the former may stagger the infidelity of some, the latter will certainly have a tendency to moderate the extreme credulity of others.

[2] The following account was lately found among the papers of the Rev. Mr. Moore, late of Layton, in Essex, formerly of Queen's College, Oxford, a gentleman of unquestionable veracity, and highly respected for his learning and abilities, who died in the year 1778:—

“ Mr. John Bonnell was a Commoner of Queen's College, Oxford;¹ he was remarkable in his person and gait, and had a particular manner of holding up his gown behind, so that to any one who had but once seen him, he might be known by his back as easily as by his face.

“ On Sunday, November 18, 1750, at noon, Mr. Ballard, who was then of Magdalene College, and myself, were talking together at Parker's door. I was then waiting for the sound of the trumpet for dinner, and suddenly Mr. Ballard cried out, Dear me, oh! Who is that coming out of your College? I looked, and saw, as I supposed, Mr. Bonnell, and replied, he is a gentleman of our house, and his name is Bonnell; he

¹ The space between quotation marks and the next word has been kept, as that is how it appears throughout the original text.

comes from Stanton Harcourt. Why, bless me! Said Mr. Ballard, I never saw such a face in all my life!² I answered slightly, his face is much the same as it always is; I think it is a little more inflamed and swelled than it is sometimes, perhaps he has buckled his band too tight; but I should not have observed it if you had not spoken. Well, said Mr. Ballard again, I never shall forget him as long as I live; and seemed to be much disconcerted and frightened.

“ This figure I saw without any emotion or suspicion: it came down the quadrangle, came out at the gate, and walked up the High-street; we followed it with our eyes till it came to Catharine-street, where it was lost.

“ The trumpet the sounded, and Mr. Ballard and I parted, and I went into the hall, and thought no more of Mr. Bonnell.

“ In the evening the prayers of the chapel were desired for one who was in a very sick and dangerous condition. When I came out of the chapel, I enquired [3] of one of the scholars, Jame Harrion, in the hearing of several others, who were standing before the kitchen fire, who it was that was prayed for? And was answered, Mr. Bonnell, senior. Bonnell, senior! Said I, with astonishment; what is the matter with him? he was very well to-day, for I saw him go out to dinner. You are very much mistaken, answered the scholar, for he has not been out of his bed for some days. I then asserted more positively that I had seen him, and that a gentleman was with me who saw him too.

“ This came presently to the ears of Dr. Fothergill, who had been my tutor. After supper he took me aside, and questioned me about it, and said he was very sorry I had mentioned the matter so publicly, for Mr. Bonnell was dangerously ill. I replied, I was very sorry too, but I had done it innocently; and the next day Mr. Bonnell died.

“ Enquiry was made of Mr. Ballard afterwards, who related the part he was witness to, in the same manner as I have now related it; adding that I told him the gentleman was one Mr. Bonnell, and that he came from Stanton Harcourt.”

From such statements as the foregoing, of which there are many to be found equally well authenticated, persons are led to decide with absolute certainty as to the existence of apparitions.

But as there are many of these extraordinary appearances which have been afterwards most completely accounted for, there is reason to believe that almost all the rest might, however improbable they appeared at the time, be reduced to some natural combination of circumstances. The following story, which we have somewhere met with, is exactly in point; the names and places of abode of the parties are forgotten, but no doubt can exist as to the facts:

Mr.—, a respectable tradesman in a small market-town in— shire, was a member of a club, or brotherly society, which met every month to smoke and talk

² In the original text there is a direct speech that has not been introduced with quotation marks, which is something that is going to be noticed often in the text.

politics, at a public house in the street where [4] he lived. He was much respected by his brethren, and unanimously chosen as president of their little society; but short are the honours as well as the pleasures of this mortal life! Poor Mr.— was taken exceedingly ill, and confined to his room, a short time before the monthly meeting of his club. He was visited in his affliction by most of its members, who lamented his indisposition, and hoped he would recover sufficiently to take his seat amongst them at the next meeting: but their sympathy was unavailing; and as the time drew on he got so much worse, that no hopes were entertained of his life. At the appointed time the members took their seats without him, with sorrowful hearts at the absence of one who had been the life and soul of their society; and they resolved unanimously, that the president's chair should not be filled at all that night, as a mark of respect to the absent member.

The evening passed away without its accustomed hilarity, and they were just about to retire before the usual time, when their attention was arrested by the entrance of a figure, which every one knew to be an exact resemblance of their absent president. His face was pale and emaciated; he was dressed in a flannel gown and nightcap, and walking deliberately towards the head of the table, took his seat in the vacant chair. He looked benevolently around on his companions for a few moments, then rose up without speaking, and immediately disappeared.

As soon as the consternation occasioned by this appearance had in a measure subsided, they all retired to rest, with perturbed hearts and countenances too. The next morning they heard that Mr.— expired about the time they had witnessed that extraordinary appearance; and the affair making a great noise in the town, at the request of some persons an account of the fact was drawn up, which was attested before a magistrate, and signed by every member of the club.

[5] Some years after, while these circumstances were fresh in the recollection of every one, an old woman, who had for many years been employed as a nurse, and who bore an excellent character, being at the point of death, sent for the clergyman of the parish, and gave him the following relation: — “I cannot,” said she, “die contentedly without informing you of some particulars respecting the death of Mr. —, which may throw some light on the story. I have hitherto concealed them, because my own negligence was the cause of his extraordinary appearance. I was left with him the night on which he died; and finding him very faint, I stepped out to a neighbouring shop to get something for him, leaving him alone. When I returned, having been detained longer than I expected, I found him gone, and was for some time considerably alarmed. Presently I heard the street door open, and Mr.— came up stairs in a very exhausted state, threw him on the bed, and in a short time after expired. I have no doubt but that it was Mr. —himself who took the vacant seat at the club, and not his apparition, as was generally supposed; but I feared to give this account before, as I should have been considered the cause of his death, and should have lost all my employment in the town.”

Thus was this most extraordinary affair at once brought to light. Mr. — knew it was the club night, and in the delirium occasioned by his fever, set off, regardless of his situation, to fill a post which he had so often filled with satisfaction to himself and his companions; and it was supposed that the night air through which he passed caused his immediate death. We leave our readers to make their own reflections on the possibility of Mr. Bonnell's doing the same. At least it proves that many circumstances, which daily pass around us, and which have an appearance equally out of the course of nature, for aught we know, might be explained in the same way; and should lead us not to form a hasty judgment of events like these; [6] and while we are ever open to the honest conviction of our minds, should prevent us from being the slaves of a blind credulity.

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