

GOTHIC BOURNES

**The Disturbed Ghost
(1674)**

TRANSCRIPTION BY
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EDITING GOTHIC TEXTS
NINTH SERIES, 2022
Nº 11

THE PACK OF AUTOLYCUS

OR

Strange and Terrible News

Of Ghosts, Apparitions, Monstrous Births, Showers of Wheat,
Judgments of God, and other Prodigious and Fearful
Happenings as told in Broadside Ballads of the Years

1624 — 1693

EDITED BY

HYDER EDWARD ROLLINS

CHRISTO

ET ECCLESIAE

VERITAS

Cambridge

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1927

Source text:

<https://archive.org/details/packofautolycus00roll/page/n6/mode/1up?view=theater>

(Pages 172-178)

The disturbed ghost

[172] Douce, I, 56^v, black letter, two woodcuts, four columns, slightly torn.¹ I have followed a manuscript copy furnished by the kindness of Bodley's librarian.

I have not seen the original pamphlet called *A Faithful Narrative of the Strange Appearance of E. Aven to T. G., his Son-in-Law*, 1674 (W. C. Hazlitt's *Hand-book*, 1867, p. 677), on which this ballad is perhaps based; but it is reproduced in *Satan's Invisible World discovered*, 1685 (1780 ed., pp. 69-73), by George Sinclair, "Late Professor of Philosophy in Glasgow"; in William Turner's *Compleat^{ll} History of the Most Remarkable Providences*, 1697 (pt. I, ch. 4, pp. 36-37); in *The History of Witches, Ghosts, and Highland Seers* (Berwick, n. d. [ca. 1780?], pp. 137-142); and in several other places. Sinclair's reprint runs thus: —

Thomas Goddard of Marleborough,^{lll} in the county of Wilts, weaver, on the ninth of November 1674, going to Ogburn, at a stile^{lv} on the high way, about nine in the morning, met the apparition of his father-in-law, one Edward Avon of this town, glover, who died in May last, having on, to appearance, the same clothes, hat, stockings, and shoes, he did usually wear when he was living, standing by, and leaning over that stile; which when he came near, the apparition spake^v to him, with an audible voice, these words, "Are you afraid?" To which he answered "I am, thinking on one who is dead and buried, whom you are like." To which the apparition replied with the like voice, "I am he you were thinking on; I am Edward Avon your father-in-law: come near to me, I will do you no harm." To which Goddard answered, "I trust in him that bought my soul with his precious blood, you shall do me no harm." Then the apparition said, "How stands cases at home?" Goddard asked, "What cases?" Then it asked him, "How do William and Mary?" Meaning, as he conceived, his son William Avon, a shoemaker here, and Mary his daughter, the said Goddard's wife. Then it said, "What? Taylor is dead;" meaning, as he thought, one Taylor of London, who married his daughter Sarah, which Taylor died at Michaelmas last. Then the apparition held out his hand, and in it, as Goddard conceived, 20 or 30 shillings in silver, and then spake with a loud voice, "Take this money, and send it to Sarah; for I shut up my bowels of compassion toward her in my lifetime, and now there is somewhat for her." And then said, "Mary (meaning the said Goddard's wife, as he conceived) is troubled for me; but tell her, God hath shewed mercy contrary to my deserts" But the said Goddard answered, "In the name of Jesus, I refuse all such money." Then the apparition said, "I perceive you are afraid, I will meet you some other time." And immediately it went up the lane to his appearance. So he went over the same stile, but saw it no more that day.

He saith, The next night, about seven of the clock it came and opened his shop windows, and stood in the like clothes, looking him in the face, but said nothing to him. And the next night after, as Goddard went forth into his back-side, with a [173] candle in his hand, it appeared to him again in the same shape; but he being in fear ran into his house, and saw it no more then.

But he saith, That on Thursday the 12th instant, as he came from Chilton, riding down the hill, between the manor-house and Axford farm-field, he saw somewhat like a hare crossing his way, at which his horse frighted, threw him into the dirt, and as soon as he could recover on his feet, the same apparition met him there again, in the same habit; and there standing about eight feet before him in the way, spake again to him, with a loud voice, "Source (a word he common[-

¹ Description of the manuscript in which the story was found.

^{ll} Archaic spelling of "complete."

^{lll} Town in the English county of Wiltshire. Different spellings of Marlborough are to be found in the text.

^{lv} Meaning "an arrangement to allow persons to pass but not sheep and cattle."

^v Archaic past form of "speak."

ly]^{vi} used when living) you have staid long;” and said to him, “Thomas, bid William Avon take the sword that he had of me, which is now in his house, and carry it into the wood, as we go to Alton, to the upper end of the wood, by the wayside; for with that sword I did wrong thirty years ago, and he never prospered since he had that sword; and bid William Avon give his sister Sarah twenty shillings of the money which he had of me. And do you talk with Edward Laurence; for I borrowed twenty shillings of him several years ago, and did say, I had paid him, but I did not pay it him; and I would desire you to pay him twenty shillings, out of the money which you had from James Elliot at two payments.” Which money, the said Goddard now saith, was five pounds, which James Elliot, a baker here, owed the said Avon on bond; and which he, the said Goddard, had received from the said Elliot, since Michaelmas, at two payments, viz^{vii}, thirty-five shillings at one, and three pounds five shillings at another payment. And it further said to him, “Tell Margaret (meaning his own wife, as he conceived) that I would desire her to deliver up the little money which I gave to little Sarah Taylor the child, or any one she will trust for it; but if she will not, speak to Edward Laurence to persuade her; but if she will not then, tell her, that I will see her very suddenly: and see that this be done within a twelve-month and a day after my decease, and peace be with you.” And so it went away over the rails into the wood there, in the like manner as any man would go over a stile, to his apprehension: and so he saw it no more at that time. And he saith, that he paid the twenty shillings to Edward Laurence of this town, who, being present now, doth remember he lent the said Avon twenty shillings about twenty years ago, which none knew but himself and his wife, and Avon and his wife; and was never paid it again, before now by this Goddard.

And this Goddard further says, that this very day, by Mr Major’s order, he, with his brother-in-law, William Avon, went with this sword; and about nine o’clock this morning, they laid down the sword in the copse^{viii}, near the place the apparition had appointed Goddard to carry it: and then coming away thence, Goddard looking back, saw the same apparition again, in the like habit as before; whereupon he called to his brother-in-law, and said, “Here is the apparition of our father,” who said, “I see nothing:” then Goddard fell on his knees, and said, “Lord, open his eyes that he may see it, if it be thy blessed will.” And the apparition, to Goddard’s appearance, beck’ned with his hand to come to it, and then Goddard said, “In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, what would you have me to do?” Then the apparition said to him, “Thomas, take up the sword, and follow me.” To which he said, should both of us come, or but one of us? To which it answered, Thomas, do you take up the sword; and so he took up the sword, and followed the apparition, about ten poles in length, further into the copse; and then turning back he stood still, about a pole and a half from it, his brother-in-law staying behind, at the place where they first laid down the sword; then Goddard, laying down the sword upon the ground, saw something stand by the apparition, like a mastiff dog of a brown colour. Then the apparition coming towards Goddard, he stept back about two steps; and the apparition said to him, “I have a permission to you, and a commission not to touch you;” and then it took up the sword, and went back to the place, at which before it stood, with a mastiff dog by it, as before; and pointed the top of the sword into the ground, and said, “In this place, lies buried, the body of him whom I murdered in the year 1635, which is now rotten, and turned to dust.” Whereupon Goddard said, “I do adjure you, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, When did you commit this murder?” And it said, “I took money from the man, and he contended with me, and so I murdered him.” Then Goddard asked him, Who was confederate with him in the said murder? And he said, “None but myself was accessary^{ix} thereto.” Then Goddard said,

^{vi} The original manuscript contains unintelligible words and word fragments that were inferred by the editor and written between brackets. They have been reproduced in the present transcription.

^{vii} Abbreviation of videlicet which, in this context, means “namely.”

^{viii} Contraction of the word coppice which means “small wood grown for purposes of periodic cutting.”

^{ix} Early 15th century use of the term accessory. In this context it seems to mean “aiding in a felony.”

“What would you have me to do in this thing?” And the apparition said, “This is, that the world may know that I murdered a man, and buried him in this place, in the year 1635.”

Then the apparition laid down the sword, on the bare ground there, whereon grew nothing, but seemed to Goddard, to be as a grave sunk in; and then, the apparition, running further into the copse, vanished, and he saw it no more; whereupon Goddard, and his brother-in-law, Avon, went away together, leaving the sword there. Avon told Goddard he heard his voice, and understood what he said, and heard other words distinct from his, but could not understand a word of it, nor saw any apparition at all; which he now, being present, affirmeth; and all which the said Goddard then attested under his hand, and affirmed, he will depone the same, when he shall be thereto required.

From this pamphlet the ballad itself differs in a number of important details. Perhaps it was written up from hearsay. The average reader will view “the said Goddard” and his incredible tale with grave suspicion.

The tunes are given in Chappell’s *Popular Music*^x, I, 162-164.

The Disturbed Ghost: Or,
The Wonderful Appearance of the Ghost, or Spirit of *Edward Avon*, late of *Marlborough* in *Wiltshir[e]*^{xii} to his Son-in-Law *T. G*². and his own Son *W. A.* the 23, 25, and 26. of *November* last. With the co[n]fession of money he in his life time borrowed of *E. L.* Which he denyed, and forswore, when [it]¹ was demanded. Also how³ he committed a Robbery and murder 39. years ago in *Boru[m]*ⁱ Wood and other Remarkable passages.

Tune *Aim not two High, or Kings Tryal*.^{xii}

THE DISTURBED GHOST

- 1 [175] Good Christian people all pray lend an ear,
And hearken to the words I shall declare;
A stranger wonder late hath not been known,
As in this Song shall presently be shown.
- 2 The truth of which is known both far and wide
And hath by many men been justified,
Though folks so unbeleaving [sic] now are grown
That what there^{xiii} eys [sic] do see theyl hardly own.

^x Alternative title: *Popular Music of the Olden Time; A collection of Ancient Songs, Ballads, and Dance Tunes, illustrative of the National Music of England. With short introductions to the different reigns and notices of the airs from writers of the 16th and 17th centuries. Also a short account of the Minstrels. By W. Chappell, F.S.A. The Whole of the Airs harmonized by G.A. MacFarren.*

¹ Torn.

² Text F. G.

³ Text how how.

^{xii} Indicates the different melodies that could be used to sing this ballad.

^{xiii} Their.

- 3 The subject which I me [sic] going to declare,
Is of a truth and many men there are;
Have justified the same as it is known,
Before the Magistrates of *Malborough*^{xiv} town.
- 4 There *Edward Avon* as it came to pass,
An Officer or under *Bayly*^{xv} was:
An honest man who was by Law his son,
He married *Avons* daughter as tis known.
- 5 This *Avon* was about some business sent,
And nine or ten miles out of town he went:
In May last he to *Collingbourn* did goe,
Not dreaming what should follow to his woe.
- 6 He went full well and seem'd his health to hav[e.]¹
When he came their [sic] *Tobacco* he did crave:
Because that he was hot with going fast,
Not thinking that same pipe should be his la[st.]¹
- 7 For suddainly^{xvi} the pipe in's mouth tis said,
He being in his chair did fall down dead:
To the amazement of his dearest friend,
Who little thought of his so suddain end.
- 8 Thus he in deasent^{xvii} manner was convayd,
[A]nd¹ in the earth in Burial he was laid:
None thinking of disturbance as they say,
Nor thought to see him eare the judgment day.
- 9 [176] But he who *Avons* daughter had to Wife,
[A]¹ person well approv'd of honest life:
Walking towards *Ogburn* there a town hard by
Met one of his acquaintance by the way.
- 10 To whom he said have you your Father seen,
[I]¹ met him as I came by yonder green:
My Father said the sun alas [sic] hees^{xviii} dead,
And hath these seaven [sic] months been buried.

^{xiv} Most proper names are italicised in the original ballad, which seems to be a way of highlighting certain words. Furthermore, it seems like some common nouns have been capitalised in order to stress their importance in the story.

^{xv} Bailiff. Occupational name for a steward or official, deriving from "baiulivus" in Late Latin.

^{xvi} "Suddain" is an archaic spelling of the term "sudden." Therefore, "suddainly" is the obsolete spelling of "suddenly."

^{xvii} Decent.

^{xviii} Contraction of "he is."

- 11 To which the man reply'd I durst have sworn,
The cloaths^{xix} that you have on by him was worn;
And so they parted on there [sic] way each one,
But mark what follows after shall be shone.
- 12 This son had not gon fields ore passing two,
But met his Father whom so well he knew:
That taking courage thus his mind exprest,
What ist [sic] saith he desturbs [sic] thy quiet rest.
- 13 Speak in the name of God what ist thoudst have
Or what disturbs thy quiet in the Grave:
Let me but know thy mind and Ile fullfill [sic],
Unto my utmost power all thy will.
- 14 Speak for I fear no ill thou wandring [sic] guest,
What makes thy spirit thus to be opprest:
To which the ghost it presently reply'd,
Some mony^{xx} I did owe before I died.
- 15 In *Marlburrough* town I borrowed of one,
Just twenty shillings which I did disown:
And when for that same som [sic] he to me came,
I did deny it, and forswore the same.
- 16 And stretching, forth his hand unto him then,
Said he her's mony goe and pay the man:
To which the sun reply'd Ile see it payd,
But will not take your mony or your aid.
- 17 [177] Accordingly as to the ghost he said,
He went next day and there the mony paid:
That so his Fathers ghost might be appeas'd,
And his disturbed spirit should be eas'd.
- 18 A little after rideing on the way
The likeness of a hare did make him stay:
Which starting up before his horses head,
The horse did start and down his burden laid.
- 19 But geting [sic] up found standing by his side,
The old mans ghost as formerly he spy'd:
Said he my sun [sic] in law be not a frayd,
I will not hurt thee be not thou dismayd.

^{xix} Archaic spelling of "clothes."

^{xx} Archaic spelling of "money."

- 20 But to my story lend attentive heed,
The grief of which would makes ones hart [sic] to bleed,
Said he my own son *William* hath at home,
A *Sword* which I could wish he nere^{xxi} had known.
- 21 Which if he keep it will much mischief breed,
Heel^{xxii} never thrive till from it he be freed:
To morrow bring it if that you think good,
And meet me both of you at *Borum* wood.
- 22 Next day the Brothers both together went,
And took the *Sword* to give the ghost content:
When both unto the wood side they repaired,
Where presently the ghost to them apeard.
- 23 He bid them lay the *Sword* upon the land,
Which presantly [sic] he took into his hand:
And wished them to follow him full fast,
And mark the place where he should lay it last.
- 24 Into the wood they came close by an oak
And further yet the ghost unto them spoak,
Theres nine and thirty years by past and gone,
Since in this place I rob'd and kill'd a man.
- 25 [178] Close by this oak I did his corps convay
And from him this same *Sword* was tane^{xxiii} away
And that's the reason I am so oprest,
Till I declared it, (I could take no rest.)
- 26 This it declared to do all men right,
And then it vanished out of there^{xxiv} sight:
The truth of which is known both far and wide
In *Malburrough* and in all Wiltshire beside.

London, Printed for Phillip Brooksby at the Ball
in West Smith-Field.

^{xxi} Never.

^{xxii} Contraction of "he will."

^{xxiii} Taken.

^{xxiv} Their.

EDITOR'S NOTES

This text is part of *The Pack of Autolyclus* (1927), a compilation of forty ballads edited by Hyder Edward Rollins. The ballads were selected from Anthony Wood's, Samuel Pepys', Francis Douce's, Richard Rawlinson's and William Euing's collections and from the unnamed collection at the Manchester Free Reference Library.

The editor of the original text included his own footnotes in it. These have been respected in this transcription and can be recognised as they are marked by the Arabic numerals 1,2 and 3. These give details about the state and contents of the original manuscript. The footnotes specific to the present transcription are those in Roman numbers.

In the editing of this text the spelling of all words that were contained within it has been maintained at all times. The difficulty in editing it lay in the fact that the spelling rules in Middle and Early Modern English were much more flexible than they are now.

In the text there were many examples of the different spellings of regular verbal past forms (those that today end in "-ed"). These have not been marked in the transcription in order not to collapse it with footnotes. Several appear contracted: e.g., "beck'ned," "appeas'd" or "spy'd." There are also those written with a "-t" like "oprest" or with a "-d" instead of an "-ed" as in "repaired."

The text also contains several examples of the archaic third person singular, which ended in "-th" as represented in the words "saith" and "affirmeth."

Several instances of what seem to be printer's mistakes can be found in the ballad. The semicolon in stanza 3, the first comma in stanza 16, and the "-s" in "makes" in stanza 20 are a few examples of this.

The Saxon genitive is used several times in the text, but the apostrophe is omitted most of them.

In the ballad, there are several instances of pronoun-verb contractions spelled in an archaic manner like "theyl" in stanza 2, "hees" in stanza 10 and "lle" in stanza 13.