

***GOTHIC BOURNES***

**A WONDER OF WONDERS, BEING A TRUE  
RELATION OF THE STRANGE BEATING OF A  
DRUM AT THE HOUSE OF JOHN MOMPESSEON,  
ESQUIRE, AT TIDWORTH  
(1661)**

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# THE PACK OF AUTOLYCUS

OR

## Strange and Terrible News

OF GHOSTS, APPARITIONS, MONSTRUOUS BIRTHS, SHOWERS OF  
WHEAT, JUDGEMENTS OF GOD, AND OTHER PRODIGIOUS AND  
FEARFUL HAPPENINGS AS TOLD IN BROADSIDE BALLADS OF  
THE YEARS 1624-1693

EDITED BY

HYDER EDWARD ROLLINS

Cambridge

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<https://archive.org/details/packofautolycuso00roll/page/n17/mode/2up?view=theater>, pp. 114-121.

**Prefatory Note:**

1. This text is included in *The Pack of Autolyucus* (1927), a compilation of forty ballads edited by Hyder Edward Rollins (1889-1958), a recognized American scholar in the broadside ballad. As Rollins notes in the preface of the above-mentioned edition, some of these compositions are selected from Anthony Wood's, Samuel Pepys', Francis Douce's, Richard Rawlinson's and William Euing's compilations and from the unnamed collection at the Manchester Free Reference Library. However, it is necessary to underline the fact that twenty-two of the ballads reprinted in Rollins' edition were part of Anthony Wood's ballad collection. Wood (1632-1695) was a famous English antiquarian celebrated for having assembled 279 broadside ballads that dealt with marvels that were supposed to have occurred before 1640. Rollins highlights Wood's importance in this regard, for he considers his collection one of the most valuable and important of all. Indeed, Mr. Andrew Clark, Wood's biographer, proved that some of the most significant collections, such as that of Rawlinson's in the Bodleian Library, were stolen from the antiquarian. The connection with these acts of theft is in fact reflected in the title of the volume, *The Pack of Autolyucus*, since according to Greek mythology, Autolyucus, Hermes' son, was known as the King of Thieves. The direct source of Rollins' title is, of course, Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*.
2. The many references to philosopher Joseph Glanvill (1636-1680) in Rollins' introduction to the ballad stems from the presence of the Tedworth case in a famous work on demonology by him, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism. In Some Philosophical Considerations about Witchcraft*, published in 1668. His work helped to spread the notoriety of the case.

## *A wonder of wonders*

[114]

Wood 401 (193), black letter, four columns. The single woodcut is the well-known picture of Richard Tarlton, the famous Elizabethan comedian, with his drum and tabor. It has been reproduced in J. P. Collier's *Book of Roxburghe Ballads*, p. 54, and in Halliwell-Phillipps's edition of *Tarlton's Jests*, Shakespeare Society, 1844, frontispiece (cf. also pp. xliii f.). Wood dated the ballad "mense februar: 1662" (*i.e.*, 1662/3).

Joseph Glanvill, chaplain of Charles II and Fellow of the Royal Society, published several accounts, each more circumstantial than its predecessor, of the "Daemon of Tedworth." See, for example, his *Blow at Modern Sadducism in some Philosophical Considerations about Witchcraft. And the Relation of the Famed Disturbance at the House of M. Mompesson. With Reflections on Drollery, and Atheisme. The Fourth Edition* (1668).<sup>1</sup> Glanvill's accounts support the ballad (which is perhaps the earliest treatment of the story extant) in every detail. The curious disturbances at John Mompesson's, in Tidworth, Wiltshire, lasted from March, 1661/2, to about the middle of 1663, Glanvill testifies in his *Sadducismus Triumphatus*. Included in that work (1681, pt. II, preface) is a letter from Mompesson himself, dated August 8, 1674, which declares: "When the *Drummer*<sup>2</sup> was escaped from his Exile, which he was Sentenced to at *Gloucester* for a Felony, I took him up, and procured his Commitment to *Salisbury Gaol*,<sup>3</sup> where I Indicted him as a Felon, for this supposed Witchcraft about my House. ...<sup>4</sup> The Assizes came on, where I Indicted him on the Statute *Primo Jacobi* cap. 12. where you may find, that to feed, imploy, or reward any evil spirit is Felony. And the Indictment against him was, that he did *quendam malum Spiritum negotiare*, the Grand Jury found the Bill upon the Evidence, but the Petty Jury acquitted him, but not without some difficulty"; the drummer, it was proved, had said that the disturbances arose "because he [*i.e.*, Mompesson] took my Drum from me; if he had not taken away my Drum, that trouble had never

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<sup>1</sup> The first section of this account of the "Tedworth Demon" is reprinted in John Ashton's *The Devil in Britain and America*, 1896, pp. 47-59. See also George Sinclair's *Satan's Invisible World discovered*, 1685 (1780 ed., pp.37-51); John Beaumont's *Historical, Physiological, and Theological Treatise of Spirits*, 1705, pp. 309 ff.; *The History of Witches, Ghosts, and Highland Seers*, Berwick, n.d., pp. 12-31; and, for a mere allusion to the story, the prefatory epistle to Scott's *Fortunes of Nigel*. [Hyder Edward Rollins' note]

<sup>2</sup> Capitalization of nouns started to become more frequent during this period. These conventions may have been borrowed from German. It was used frequently in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For more information on the subject, see Crystal, David, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> The word 'Gaol', old-fashioned for 'jail', appears sometimes throughout the text. "Gaol." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gaol..>

<sup>4</sup> The number of dots can result in four if a complete sentence precedes an omission, hence a period is used before the three-dot ellipsis mark. <https://www.grammarbook.com/blog/ellipses/ellipses-four-dot-method/>

befallen him, and he shall never have his quiet again, till I have my Drum, or satisfaction from him.” [115] According to *Mercurius Publicus*, April 16-23, 1663, the drummer was one William (but sometimes he is called John) Drury, of Uscut, Wiltshire.

Samuel Pepys records that at a dinner party on June 15, 1663, Lord Sandwich, discussing spirits, said “the greatest warrants that ever he had to believe any, is the present appearing of the Devil in Wiltshire, much of late talked of, who beats a drum up and down. There are books of it, and, they say, very true; but my Lord observes, that though he do answer to any tune that will play to him upon another drum, yet one tune he tried to play and could not; which makes him suspect the whole; and,” says Pepys, “I think it is a good argument.” Later Pepys found the book “worth reading indeed,” though he considered *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* “not very convincing.” Samuel Butler laughed at the “Tedworth Demon” in *Hudibras* (II, i, 131 f.), while in *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* (1677) John Webster treated Glanvill with slight respect. “I am sure,” he wrote (p. 11), “his story of the Drummer, and his other of Witchcraft are as odd and silly, as any can be told or read, and are as futile, incredible, ludicrous, and ridiculous as any can be.” Such, too, were Addison’s sentiments, although the story is the chief source of his comedy, *The Drummer* (1716).

Increase Mather accepted the story *in toto*, retelling it in his *Remarkable Providences* (ed. George Offor, pp. 111 f.), and adding a parallel to it that was supposed to have occurred in 1679 at the house of William Morse, of Newbury, Massachusetts (pp. 101 ff.). Many of the illustrations Mather gives seem like actual borrowings from Glanvill. For instance: “On December 8, in the morning, there were five great stones and bricks by an invisible hand thrown in at the west end of the house while the mans<sup>5</sup> wife was making the bed; the bedstead was lifted up from the floor, and the bedstaff flung out of the window, and a cat was hurled at her; a long staff danced up and down in the chimney,” and so forth.

To hear invisible drums beating in the air was no unusual thing — if one is to believe all one reads! There is, to illustrate, a pamphlet called *A true Relation of a very strange and wonderful thing that was heard in the air, 12 Oct. [1658], by many hundreds of people; namely three canons shot off, a peal of musquets<sup>6</sup> followed, and drums beating all the while* (Thomason Tracts, E. 955 [4]); and wonderful drums are heard a few times in *Mirabilis Annus* (1661). But seldom has so strange a story as that of the “Tedworth Demon” been so elaborately “authenticated”. On its truth Joseph Glanvill staked his reputation. Later John Wesley<sup>7</sup> came to be regarded as its chief defender, so that Hogarth, in his print of “Credulity, Superstition and

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<sup>5</sup> In modern English, the use of an apostrophe was frequent in the seventeenth, but only became established around 1700. In the genitive plural the apostrophe was not used in this period. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “Grammar in early modern English”, <https://public.oed.com/blog/grammar-in-early-modern-english/>

<sup>6</sup> Musket: A musket was an early type of gun with a long barrel, which was used before rifles were invented. *Collins Dictionary*, “musket”, s.v. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/musket>

<sup>7</sup> Cf. especially his *Journal* for May, 1778 (ed. Curnock, V, 266 f.) [Rollins’ note]

Fanaticism,” made his emotional thermometer, capped with a figure of the “Tedworth” drummer, rest upon volumes written by Glanvill and Wesley. Beside Glanvill’s tale, the spirits and ghosts that operated at Woodstock in 1649—cf. satirical pamphlets like *The Woodstock Scuffle* and [116] *The Just Devil of Woodstock* (Thomason Tracts, E. 587 [5], E. 1055 [10]) and Scott’s novel<sup>8</sup>—seem tame indeed.

For a recent discussion of the “Tedworth” affair see Wallace Notestein’s *History of Witchcraft in England*, 1911, pp. 273-276.

As for the ballad, it is far superior to any other extant work from the pen of Abraham Miles (cf. No. 17). Its subject gives it real importance. On the very popular, but still unrecorded, tune see the notes in my *Pepysian Garland*, p. 283.

### A WONDER of WONDERS; BEING

A true Relation of the strange and invisible Beating of a Drum, at the house of *John Mompesson*, Esquire, at *Tidcomb*<sup>9</sup> in the County of Wilt-shire, being about Eight of the Clock at night, and continuing till four in the morning, several dayes one after another, to the great admiration of many persons of Honour, Gentlemen of quality, and many hundreds who have gone from several parts to hear this miraculous Wonder, since the first time it began to beat Roundheads and Cuckolds, come dig, come dig. Also the burning of a Drum that was taken from a Drummer: Likewise the manner how the Stools and Chairs danced about the Rooms. The Drummer is sent to *Glocester* Gaol: Likewise a great<sup>10</sup> Conflict betwixt the evil Spirit and *Anthony* a lusty Country fellow.

To the tune of, *Bragandary*.

[117]

- 1 All you that fear the God on high  
amend your lives and repent,  
These latter dayes shew Dooms-days nigh  
such wonders strange are sent.  
Of a strange Wonder shall you hear  
at *Tidcomb* within fair *Wilt-shire*,  
*O news, notable news,*  
*ye never the like did hear.*
  
- 2 Of a Drummer<sup>11</sup> his use was so  
at great Houses for to beat,

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<sup>8</sup> Published in 1826, *Woodstock, or The Cavalier. A Tale of the Year Sixteen Hundred and Fifty-one* is one of Walter Scott’s *Waverley Novels*.

<sup>9</sup> *Tidworth* [Wood’s note]

<sup>10</sup> *Text grea.* [Rollins’ note]

<sup>11</sup> “He had been a Soldier under *Cromwel*, and used to talk much of gallant Books he had of an old Fellow, who was counted a Wizzard” (*Sadducismus Triumphatus*, 1726, p. 281). [Rollins’ note]

- He to one certain house did go  
and entered in at Gate:
- [118] At the house of Master *Mompesson*  
he began aloud to beat his Drum.  
*O news, notable news,*  
*ye never the like did hear.*
- 3 Alarum, March, and Troop likewise  
he thundered at the Gate,  
The Children frighted at the noise  
forwarned he was to beat:  
But he refused, and his Drum did rattle  
as if he had bin in some battle.  
*O news, notable news,*  
*ye never the like did hear.*
- 4 HE said he would not be forbid,  
neither by his beck nor brall,  
And had power for what he did,  
they did him Rascal call:  
No Sir I am no such quoth<sup>12</sup> he  
two Iustices<sup>13</sup> hands in my Passe be,  
*O news, notable news,*  
*ye never the like did hear.*
- 5 'Twas counterfeit he did understand,  
and then without delay,  
He gave his Servants then command  
to set this fellow away,  
And likewise took away his Drum,  
this you'l repent the time will come.  
*O news, notable news,*  
*ye never the like did hear.*
- 6 About eight a clock that present night  
a Drum beat in every Room  
Which put them in amaze or fright,  
not knowing how it did come:
- [119] The first it beat was this old lig,

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<sup>12</sup> "Quoth" is an old-fashioned form that stands for "said". *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "quoth", <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/quoth>.

<sup>13</sup> In 17<sup>th</sup> century spelling, 'i' and 'j' were interchangeable. 'I' can be found instead of 'j', both initially and medially, either vowel or consonant. See, Hill, Ronald. A, *Interpreting the Symbols and Abbreviations in Seventeenth Century English and American Documents*.

*Roundheads & Cuckolds* come dig, come dig.<sup>14</sup>  
*O Wonders, notable wonders,*  
*ye never the like did hear.*

7 From eight till four in the morn  
with a rattling thundering noyse<sup>15</sup>  
The eccho as loud as a Horn,  
and frights them many ways,  
To appease the noyse I understand  
they burned the Drum out of hand.  
*O wonders, notable wonders,*  
*ye never the like did hear.*

8 But still about the same time  
this noyse continued,  
Yet little hurt they did sustain  
but Children thrown from bed,  
And then by the hair of the head  
they were plucked quite out of bed.  
*O wonders, notable wonders,*  
*ye never the like did hear.*

9 From one Room to another were they  
tost by a hellish Fiend,  
As if he would them quite destroy  
or make of them an end,  
And then some ease after their pain  
they'd be placed in their beds again.  
*O wonders, notable wonders,*  
*ye never the like did hear.*

10 The Gentleman did give command  
to have the Children away  
Unto a friends house out of hand  
them safely to convey:

[120] What ever they did it made them wonder  
a ratling Drum was heard like thunder.  
*O wonders, notable wonders,*  
*ye never the like did hear.*

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<sup>14</sup> "For an Hour together it would Beat, *Round-heads* and *Cuckolds*, the *Tat-too*, and several other *Points of War*, as well as any Drummer" (*Sadducismus Triumphatus*, 1726, p. 272) [Rollins' note]

<sup>15</sup> In Early Modern English 'i' and 'y' are used interchangeably to represent the same phonetic sound.  
<https://coggle.it/diagram/WpmH9B0nGXbnPpwa/t/orthography-early-modern-english>

11 A Minister being devout at prayer  
unto the God on high,  
A bed-staff was thrown at him there  
with bitter vehemency,<sup>16</sup>  
He said the Son of God appear  
to destroy the works of Satan here.  
*O wonders, notable wonders,  
ye never the like did hear.*

12 There's one they call him *Anthony*  
that carried a Sword to bed,  
And the Spirit at him will fly,  
hard to be resisted,  
If his hand out of the bed he cast,  
the Spirit will unto it fast.  
*O wonders, notable wonders,  
ye never the like did hear.*

13 Both Rooms, Stables, and Orchard ground  
a Drum was heard to beat,  
And sometimes in the Chymney sound  
by night make Cattle sweat,  
Both Chears and Stools about would gig  
and often times would dance a lig.  
*O wonders, notable wonders,  
ye never the like did hear.*

14 So powerful were these motions all  
by Satan sure appointed,  
The Chamber floor would rise and fall  
and never a board disjoynted:  
[121] Then they heard a show<sup>17</sup> from high  
three times a witch a witch did cry.  
*O wonders, notable wonders,  
ye never the like did hear.*

**Finis.**

*By Abraham Miles*

Printed for William Gilbertson.

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<sup>16</sup> "A Bedstaff was thrown at the Minister, which hit him on the Leg, but so favourably, that a lock of Wool could not fall more softly" (*Sadducismus Triumphatus*, 1726, pp. 272f.). [Rollins' note]

<sup>17</sup> *Read* shout. [Rollins' note]