

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

Incredible as it may seem that, in this enlightened age, persons can be found weak enough to believe in the existence of supernatural agency on earth, and in the occasional visitations of the inhabitants of another world to this, yet, at this very moment, no trifling alarm exists from an impression in the breasts of certain individuals, of a highly respectable family, occupying for a time a comfortable mansion-house at South Lancing, within two miles of Worthing, on the coast of Sussex. It appears that the house in question, previous to the tenancy of the present family, had remained useless for a considerable time—a circumstance which, upon what foundation it would be difficult to discover, gave rise to a report that it was haunted. To this report all the old women of the village gave full credit, and, as usual on such occasions, were provided with sundry amusing tales, illustrative of the fact. Lights had been seen at the dead hour of the night, when none but aerial spirits could be supposed to walk the earth. Noises too of an inexplicable nature had been heard on various occasions, and, we believe, some even went so far as to embody the effusions of their fancy into the actual figure of a young lady supposed to have been murdered many years before in a house, the space occupied by the foundation of which is alone visible. In defiance of all these mysterious warnings, the gentleman now in possession, seeing that the premises were in every respect eligible for the accommodation of his family, moved them thither about six weeks back, and still maintains his post. Truth, however, forces us to confess that this possession has not been altogether without disturbance, and that a few mysterious knockings, the cause of which has not been clearly ascertained, although the house stands detached, have produced considerable agitation in the minds of the weaker part of his domestic circle, although he himself treats them with perfect indifference. These sounds have been heard in different parts of the dwelling, sometimes in one room, sometimes in another; sometimes up stairs, and sometimes down. On one of these awful occasions, Mr. M. was sitting with his family in the parlour, and heard three distinct taps, as if some person was desirous of admission—although the sound came from a part of the room at which there was no door. He called out to know who knocked, but received no answer; he opened the door—all was quiet. He searched the house over, but his search was fruitless: he went round the outside of the house with as little success. The butcher of the village was accidentally passing, and was called in; a second search was made, but with as little profit as before. The butcher “had heard something of the knockings, in the village, but he was’nt such a fool as to believe in ghosts—he feared no ghost as ever wore a head—it must be all imagination.” The honest fellow was politely asked to take a glass of grog, which he, nothing loth, accepted; and to comply with his natural taste still further, he was supplied with a pipe. While enjoying these, his favourite companions, he inveighed with great warmth against the foolish stories that had been in circulation about the house, not one of which he believed. The pot valour of our hero, however, was suddenly cut short by the repetition of three loud knocks against the wall, close to his ear. The sentence he was uttering remained unfinished—the pipe dropped from his trembling hand—and with a countenance most woefully changed, and in an under voice, he exclaimed, “That must be something supernatural!”—a sentiment in which the servants, whatever might be the opinion of their master, did not fail to concur. The butcher shortly afterwards took his departure, confessedly not so much a sceptic on the subject of *ghostesses* as he had previously been. Similar alarms have since been repeatedly excited; and many curious scenes arising from momentary terror have followed; but the cause of these singular sounds remains a mystery. Like the Cock-Lane ghost of old, however, the ghost in question is perfectly harmless; and like that it will, no doubt, soon be traced in some obvious motive.