

The Haunted Schoolhouse

AT

NEWBURYPORT,



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MASS.

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BOSTON.

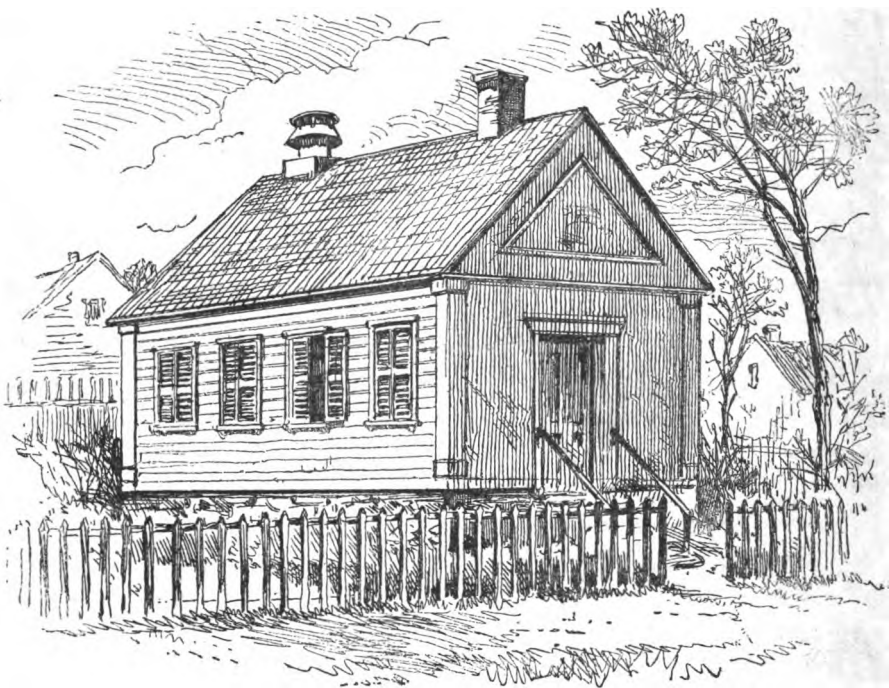
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HAUNTED SCHOOL-HOUSE



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COR. WASHINGTON AND BROMFIELD STREETS,
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PA 1472
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THE HAUNTED SCHOOL-HOUSE.

THERE have occurred, in the last decade, few things that have created more surprise and curiosity than the strange phenomena now in existence in Newburyport, Mass.

We propose to detail them, giving the sifted and investigated testimony of those most concerned, without heightening or lowering the colors of the stories. There are few matters relating to supernatural appearances of which one can write temperately or fairly, so strongly does the love of the marvellous or the hatred of sham enter into the composition of the mind. It is hard to preserve an equable tone, and to keep a pen in the proper course; but the present writer feels that extraordinary care is necessary in this case, for the matter has become so widely known, that to depart into the regions of romance would ensure instant detection, while to write reservedly would be doing a clear injustice to the astonishing facts.

It would seem, then, that at last we have a veritable ghost, — a pure and unquestionable visitor of semi-spiritual material. It has appeared, at various times, in a small school-house in Charles Street, in Newburyport, and the evidence regarding it is too lucid and consistent to be passed by.

Perhaps the history of these manifestations would be more intelligible, if we began at the beginning and detailed the first of the troubles, and carefully described the premises where they occurred.

THE LOCALITY.

The school-house in question is situated on Charles Street in this fine old city, and is an ordinary one-story building raised upon a three-foot underpinning. It has a pitch roof, four windows upon each side, and its entrance door looks upon the street. It stands nearly east and west. It is drab in color, with green blinds, and it is not in the very best condition outwardly. The door-posts are soiled, the weather-boards are covered with all sorts of scratches and cuts, similar to those that every other school-house is marked with, and about the bare yard and the broken fences, and the homely building itself, there is a sombre dreariness that oppresses the beholder, and makes him more willing to listen to the strange tales that are told of the place.

The cut that is herewith given of the school-house is accurate, though no artist's hand could represent the weird and uncanny appearance of the structure that the eye perceives after the ear has been fed with the half-scared stories of the teacher and her pupils of the things they have seen and heard.

The neighborhood is a neat and quiet one. The surrounding houses are well built, generally white and mostly of good style. A little further down the street is the James Cotton Mill, the perpetual whirl of whose thirty thousand spindles keeps up an eternal monotone that penetrates even

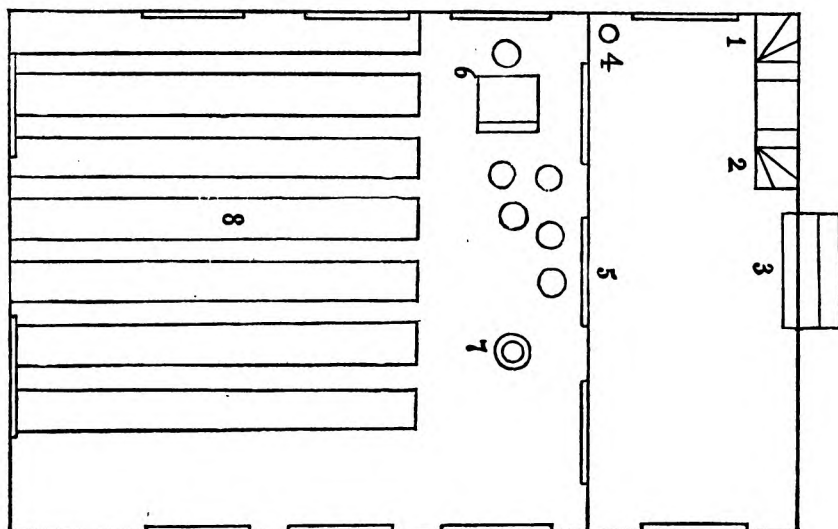
to the school-room, and perhaps is a pleasant companionship for the distressed young pupils within it.

As one goes up the half-a-dozen stone steps and enters the battered and sun-cracked door, he comes upon an entry marked "3" in the plan. It is close and stuffy, and has that old familiar scent of Southern pine that haunts the nostrils of those who have ever attended a public school.

Directly opposite the door is a partition window which looks in upon the school-room ("5" in the plan). Its panes are

where the coal is stored, and the other to the garret above. They are both encased with sheathing, and both have doors fastened with latches, and the cellar-door has, in addition, a strong bolt, which may be thrown three-quarters of an inch.

At either end of the entry is another window similar to the one described, and at either end of the partition is a door of light deal, painted brown, and which leads into the school-room. Around the entry are two rows of stout iron hooks, used by the pupils to hang their outer garments upon.



10 × 12 inches in size, and twenty in number. The sash is stationary, the mouldings are light, the glass is of medium thickness, and there is nothing peculiar whatever about this very important feature in the building. It is at this bare, commonplace, and uninteresting window that some of the most startling appearances have taken place.

To the right hand are two pairs of stairs; one leading to the cellar below,

We now look into the school-room. It is sixty feet long, forty feet wide, and perhaps twenty feet high. It is one of the most dispiriting and unhappy apartments that children ever got into. Its furniture is old-fashioned, uncomfortable, and in bad condition; the walls are old, dusty and cracked; the windows are grimmy, and the floor is chipped and ingrained with dust.

Everything, the chairs, desks, wainscotings and all, have become so permeated

with the bad air that arises in an overcrowded school, that even when the pupils have been dismissed and the room is open to the outer atmosphere the half-stifling scent troubles the breath.

The apartment is lighted by three windows on either side, and by two at the rear end. Upon the walls are three or four Colton's maps, torn at the edges, soiled with dust, and with a general decrepitude in all of their parts. There are seats for about sixty scholars, and absurd and ridiculous seats they are. From the front of one boy's desk there projects a narrow ledge, which forms the seat for the lad in front of him, and so on. These seats are arranged as is usual, — in longitudinal rows, — and they face the window in the partition. The teacher sits beside a door leading to the entry, and her desk and a few chairs, for visitors, are designated by the number "6." There is nothing at all peculiar about the room. There are no niches to give echoes; there are no mirrors to refract the light; there are no closets where one could be secreted, and there are no objects near enough to the windows outside to cast shadows within. All is plain even to meanness, and bare to a fault. It is nearly the last place in the world that one would point out as being a spot where a ghost would walk, or where spirits would take up their abode.

It has no particular history. It was built for a school-house originally, and it was moved to the present spot from another place; but the site had always been bare. There has never been a mansion here that has had legends and old horrors connected with it. No tragedy has ever been perpetrated (as far as known) in

this vicinity. Affairs have gone peacefully on, and all attempts to connect the "haunting" with some old-time event have been unsuccessful. To be sure several rumors of a violent death have gone the rounds of the excited community; but there is hardly any ground for belief that those circumstances have anything in common with these. Many people tell the story that a poor boy of thirteen years was flogged so savagely by a brutal school-master in this very building fifteen years ago, that his death ensued in several days after the beating. This is not well authenticated, though one is tempted to believe it, even on the imperfect evidence, when the true ghost is described. Here is the boy, the picture of death in his face, the evident preparation for burial, and the motive for his reappearance. Who would not try to think that there might be some connection between those old, terrible facts and these present terrible ones?

THE SCHOOL.

The school is a primary one for boys. Those who attend it are the children of people of the humbler sort, they being sons of mill-operators, or of fishermen, or of tradesmen. The smallest of them is very small, being so brief in stature that his white head does not rise far above the level of his lilliputian desk, while the largest is a strong, intelligent and wide-awake boy of thirteen or fourteen years of age. Under different circumstances, there could be nothing more amusing than the appearance of these boys at study. Their dresses are made up of all sorts of colors and patterns, and are eked out with patches and strings. The children's features are rather homely,

though a certain ruggedness of health is apparent in them. When they study, they study furiously, rubbing their fat hands up and down their knees, bending their bodies backwards and forwards, and nodding their dishevelled heads up and down. When they recite, they tramp noisily out and stand in an uneven row, and cry out their answers with a fierceness and shrillness that enable one to hear them at the further end of the street. The assemblage of anxious and furtive faces that has now replaced the assemblage of childlike and happy ones impresses the observer very painfully. There is a certain air of watchfulness, a certain habit of starting and turning quickly, a disposition to shrink and to cry out, that touches the heart of those who are permitted to go into the school-room. It is curious to see them try to fix their attention on their stained and dog-eared books after some of the disturbances have taken place and have been calmed for a while. They bend down their heads, and put up their hands to their temples, and seem to try to shut out the sights and sounds, and to hide away from the scene.

Some of the larger boys have been questioned by the writer, and he found an almost perfect consistency in their stories, and this is quite remarkable in a case where imagination may be made to play so important a part. It has been argued that such children cannot be competent witnesses, because of their youth and immaturity, but it is reasonable to insist that they are more reliable from this very fact, in cases like the present one. A child who sees something strange receives a quick and vivid impression on his fresh mind which cannot be easily disturbed, and he only shows his

childishness in attempting to account for it. He will stray out of all sense and probability in describing the why and wherefore, but he will detail the evidence of his eyes and ears with an exactness that is astonishing.

It is in this place then, and among these children, that there has occurred the remarkable and to a certain extent frightful manifestations that are now described. The writer attempts no explanation, simply for the reason that he has none to give. The matter is not explainable. It takes its place on the long list of proved but mysterious phenomena, and it demands a respect and consideration second to none. A recital of the facts arouses a strange sense of fear that pursues the hearer at all hours and in all places until constant attrition with the hard features of the world gradually wears away his dread. There is implanted in every human being an instinctive attraction towards the supernatural and the unknown, and if there is in these troubles anything that may renew a general interest in matters of this kind, and awaken fresh inquiry, then it will not be regretted that this uncanny tale has been told.

EARLY TROUBLES.

As long ago as 1870, it is now remembered, a few people became cognizant of disturbances in the Charles-Street school. It was reported in a narrow circle that various unaccountable sounds and acts had taken place from time to time within the building, but the matter attained no prominence in the community, partly on account of the rather common character of the troubles, and partly because the teachers

and the school committee were interested, for plain reasons, in keeping the affairs secret or in making light of them. It is now known that the two teachers who were there previous to the present incumbent were forced to throw up their charge for the real reason that their lives were made miserable by the constant intrusion and "doings" of a power that they could not see nor feel, but of which they had a nervous dread. It was not something that they could "mark," or scold, or whip; it did not come at stated times; it could not be expected; it could not be met, or hunted down, or destroyed; it was something in the air, something malignant, yet intangible. It rushed in at prayers; it was present at recitations; it came while the school was busy and while it was silent; and it beset it with so many plagues and annoyances that the teachers one after the other retired from the unwholesome place, and finally a braver and a more enduring woman stepped into the breach, and there she yet remains in spite of all.

And this "all" is a great deal.

There is hardly a phase of spiritual manifestations that has not been exhibited in this luckless spot, and some of them have been startlingly novel in their character. There are two or three that arouse as great a sense of fear and awe in the mind as the ghost itself, and so wild are they that one asks in reading of them, what awful meaning lies behind all this?

Let us begin with some of the simplest troubles and trace them up gradually to their highest forms.

They are not startling. They consist of the ordinary knocking and pounding that every one is familiar with, but which, alas

for human ignorance! are yet perfectly mysterious. Their cause is unknown. No one can tell why in response to a question a resounding blow is delivered close to one's person, or why, in response to another question, two blows are delivered. This is the A B C of such things, it is said. Well, that is true. But are you not wholly powerless to account for these trifles, these coarse incidents? You must say, "Yes."

For a very long time this school-house has been alive with a strange power that made these knocks. Now in the silence of the morning hour, when the faithful teacher and her little brood of children are uttering their morning prayers, and there is nothing to be heard save the low murmur of their voices, there comes upon the floor a thundering blow, that causes every anxious head to fly up, and every ear to listen for another and yet another. Now it comes upon the wall, now it comes upon the teacher's desk, now it beats upon the wainscoting, now upon the windows, and now upon the ceiling. Sometimes the blows are sharp and quick, and sometimes they are dull and slow. They do not wait upon time. They come at all hours; at all minutes. They cannot be evaded. They attack the place at any point, or at all points at once.

On one occasion these sounds were so rapid and powerful that the teacher could not hear her boys recite their lessons. One lad was spelling the word "cannot." He pronounced the letters c-a-n-, but the noise which had been going on for a long while suddenly increased, and his voice was completely drowned. The teacher saw his lips move, but she heard nothing. His thin tones were overcome by this uproar. He was out-shouted by this incompre-

hensible influence. These raps come upon the stairs that lead to the garret and upon the walls of the entry. Sometimes they are soft as if made with the palm of a light hand, and again they are so heavy as to resemble the blows of a sledge-hammer.

These are the simplest and most common of these famous troubles, and yet who can say where the cause lies.

The present teacher, to calm her children and to quiet their fears, cried "rats," "frost," "wind," at first; but she has long since quitted that expedient, and is obliged to acknowledge herself at fault.

A little while ago a series of raps was administered in the middle of the afternoon upon the outer door. The teacher, deceived by their naturalness, went to admit the expected visitor. There was no one there. She closed the door and locked it. The raps were instantly repeated. She made haste and looked out again. But she found no one. She again closed the door and pretended to throw the bolt by rattling the key. Again the knocks came, imperative and commanding, close to her ear. She pulled the door open instantly for the third time. No one there. She looked out. She saw a boy at a pump forty yards off. She demanded angrily:—

"Why have you been knocking at the door?"

He denied having done so, but he said that he had heard the blows three times, and he had stopped to listen. He was innocent of any hand in them, and the teacher retired, perplexed and nervous.

Another fruitful cause of annoyance is the inability to keep the pupils' garments on the hooks in the entry. A mischievous hand throws them down upon the floor.

The corridor is often paved with the caps and mufflers and the little patched coats of the children. They are hung carefully up again, but again they are dashed down with spiteful energy, and they are permitted to lie there.

In the stairway leading to the garret it is customary to hang the dustpans and brushes. But it is also customary for this influence to unhang them. They are thrown down against the door with a noisy clatter. This happens over and over again. Not ten days ago a visitor to the school-house made a special test of this trifling matter. He replaced the brushes and pans securely upon their hooks, but they were instantly dashed down about his feet, and all subsequent attempts to keep things in order were as fruitless as the first.

In the school-room, in the open space in front of the pupils' desks, is a tubular stove of small size, which has a cover which may be raised by a wire handle. This handle is at times seized, as if by invisible fingers, and raised upright, and the cover is lifted, bodily, several inches above the burning coals; and after keeping its mid-air position for some minutes, it is lowered again and restored to its place. The janitor of the building—a man ordinarily courageous—has lately declined going into the school-house unaccompanied, to build his fires in the morning. He says that the noises and disturbances are too much for him, and he waits until some one comes along who will keep him company. He often finds the stove moved from its position, the utensils scattered in various places, and the fuel disarranged.

In the school-house, the long funnel

which overhangs the desks of the pupils often shakes to and fro, as if it were about to fall. It grates and creaks upon its wire hooks, and so violently has it swayed at times, that the teacher has caused the children to leave their seats, for fear that it would fall upon their heads.

Upon the teacher's desk there are two bells; one smaller than the other. Frequently the lighter is seized by the unseen power, raised from the ledge where it usually rests, and violently rung before the astonished eyes of the scholars. One day last October, this bell played a part in which a certain amount of humor was displayed. Early in the morning, that is, at a quarter to nine, the boys who were playing soldier with sticks, in the yard, heard this bell ring. They ran to the door of the building, but they found it locked. There was no one within. The janitor had built his fire and had long since gone away. Still the bell rang sharply and loudly. They looked up the street, and they beheld the teacher coming down. She had just arrived. They entered the school-room in a breathless and timid body; nothing was disturbed; everything was in its place; the fire was burning brightly, and both of the bells were on the desk. Presently the city clocks struck nine, and then the school formally assembled. It is said that this imitation of the familiar jangle of the bell aroused the pupils' fears more than any of the more noisy manifestations, and an appearance of being cowed haunted them for a long time after.

The school-room is ventilated by means of a circular hole in the ceiling, which is closed with a wooden valve, which may be raised or lowered at will by means of a

cord which descends from the garret. It is a trick of the rogue to shut this valve when it is required to be open, and to open it when it is shut. It is found that it takes a weight of six pounds to lift the cover. When the room is too close and the air too impure, the teacher seizes the cord and pulls it down. By this means the ventilator is opened. Now there comes this contrary spirit, and endeavors to press it back again. It pulls and jerks the cord until it seems on the point of breaking. On several occasions the string has become loosened, and the valve has closed with great violence. At other times it flies up and down with great persistency, creating much annoyance. One day the teacher knotted the cord to prevent it from slipping, and the efforts made to free it by the "influence" were vigorous; the cord snapped and strained, but it was too strong to give, and the attempts presently ceased.

Another phase of these troubles is the mysterious opening and closing of doors. Any door in the building is likely to swing noiselessly open with more or less rapidity, and, in some cases, to resist all available power to close it again. Many times has the teacher summoned some of the largest of her pupils to help her shut a door that has just opened silently of its own accord, and many times has the power proved too strong for them. They would push and pull with all their might against a door apparently swinging on its hinges, but without the slightest effect. When the door got ready to shut, it would do it of its own accord, and not in consequence of force. It will be seen, on looking at the plan, that five doors open upon the corri-

dor. One day in November, the teacher heard the door leading to the garret swing back; she passed out into the entry to close it. No sooner had she done so than two more doors opened. She closed the first and the second, when all of them opened. She shut one after the other, but her efforts were fruitless; her work was undone before she had hardly performed it. She hastened with all possible speed from one to the other, but in vain. The mysterious power trickily followed behind her and mocked her. She struggled for ten minutes. It will be remembered that the door leading to the cellar has a bolt upon it. On shutting this door, finally, the plucky teacher, tired and out of breath, pushed the bolt into its socket and turned it around, so that its handle fell into the slot. Now mark — this handle was seized, the bolt righted and pulled back with a visible effort, and the door was thrown angrily against a hat-hook behind it, and a deep indentation was made in the soft pine. To quote a remark made on this incident in a recent publication, "this act seems very clearly to involve an intelligence *plus* the force;" and it is deemed that here is a plain combination of something analogous to a human brain with something analogous to human power.

HIGHER ORDERS OF TROUBLES.

All the incidents that have been described, are not, perhaps, uncommon. They are of a low grade in the classes of spiritual manifestations, and perhaps in themselves would attract little more than local attention; but we have yet to chronicle the real disturbances, and to describe a series of manifestations that are not infe-

rior to the highest that have ever been known.

EFFECT UPON THE PUPILS.

It is natural to ask how it is that the school has been held together through so much that is frightful. The best reply is, because the teacher has, by remaining at her hard post, — which must be a very pillory, — set an example that her pupils can but follow. She invented excuses to calm them, until their wits persuaded them that "rats" and "frost" and "wind" had but little to do with all their scares; and then when they began to recognize that they were encompassed by a mysterious and aggressive power, they looked to her for a pattern of fortitude and courage; and they found it. She stood by the school, and so did they.

THE TEACHER.

Now that we are compelled to bring the teacher prominently upon the stage, it is necessary that she should be described. Her name is Lucy A. Perkins. She is twenty-three years of age, strongly framed, and full of vigor and strength. She is of medium height, and has pleasant features. Her hair is black, her skin brown, her mouth small and somewhat sensitive, and her eyes dark and liquid. She impresses one as being a decided materialist, and not a person to be impressed with conceits and imaginings. Her evidence in all these matters is singularly lucid and consistent. She declares that she is not a spiritualist, and that she is not a medium. She professes an entire ignorance of the methods and literature of this class of believers. She properly considers herself an historian,

and not a cause or an expositor of the scenes which she witnesses. Perhaps a close observer might detect a certain weariness and lassitude in her manner; but her "staying" power must really be strong to enable her to encounter day after day the distressing peculiarities of her position. She has taught in this building for two years, and it is hard to fancy how a woman could pass through such an ordeal and still preserve so much of her elasticity and strength. Miss Perkins has not yielded to the conviction that she was surrounded by mysterious powers without a hard struggle. She has tried all means to convince herself as well as her pupils that some ingenious human trickery underlies all this agitation; but it is hardly necessary to say that she signally failed.

Upon reading what is written hereafter one cannot wonder that she did fail, for more weird, singular, and alarming manifestations never haunted the most favored of German castles than have shown themselves in this simple and homely American school-house.

We now detail one or two of the higher order of appearances.

THE LIGHT.

At times the whole school-room has been illuminated, while the school has been in session, by a strong, yellow glow, which on dark days has proceeded from the entry and entered through the partition window.

In the midst of storms, when the sky is heavily overcast and the school is almost lost in gloom and obscurity, a soft and equal radiance has stolen over the scene and lighted up the furthest corner of the

apartment. This is nothing that can be ignored and treated with brave indifference. Over the faces of the pupils who have put aside their books on account of the darkness, there suddenly begins to creep this terrible light. It has no central point. There is no flame anywhere. There is no brilliant burning focus. It is an illuminated exhalation, arising from no one knows what, and shedding its rays into the petrified and astonished visages of the children. Outside all is tempestuous, black and howling. Within all is calm, vivid, and silent.

An examination of the entry reveals nothing. The light springs from nowhere in particular, but from everywhere. One can see the most distant corners. All is revealed and brought out plainly. After half an hour, perhaps, this light begins to fade away. It withdraws gradually and slowly. It is extinguished with the same tardiness that marked its coming, and the honest daylight, or rather the honest gloom, resumes its sway.

What does this mean? Where is the natural cause; or the unnatural cause? What does it portend; or what does it hinge upon? Is it a sequence of anything? Or is it forerunner of something?

That strange thing that comes with a roar and a clatter one may endure with comparative courage. The tumult distracts him from the real contemplation of the miracle; but it is when a mystery dawns slowly and silently upon the senses that fear has time to develop and to possess. The tremendous awfulness of silence helps the infliction, and the heart flutters, and the flesh trembles, and the hair rises before its time.

But there is still another "manifestation" (for want of a better word), that is equal with this one in its boldness.

THE WIND.

The school-house is often attacked by powerful currents of air, that arise suddenly at times, even when the atmosphere is entirely at rest.

This phenomenon is in this respect a complete contrast to the one just described. In that, calmness and light are placed in distinct opposition to the state of nature, while in this, tempest and agitation take place, while the outside is calm and pleasant.

On various occasions the pupils have declared themselves unable to study, because something was going round and round over their heads. An examination has revealed the fact, that a current of air was circling about the room with great rapidity, while there was no apparent motive for the agitation. These circles of air seemed to gather slowly in towards the open ventilator and then to be swallowed up in it as in a vortex; an act which was no sooner accomplished than the vortex belched the air out again, when it recommenced its rotary motions, though with a reverse tendency; that is, the circles grew larger and larger until they encompassed the entire ceiling. This motion is accompanied with a loud whirling noise, which resembles that of a flight of birds. There is often seen in the ventilator, or just below it, a black ball, ten or twelve inches in diameter, which is tossed up and down and whirled about like a boy's top.

A more dramatic feature of the wind-

trouble is this. At times there seems to arise a great storm. Outside vast billows of air appear to rush upon the building and to sweep about it with all the vigor of a tempest. The blinds creak, the joists rack, the eaves moan, the chimney becomes an organ-pipe, and there are all the sounds of a hurricane. Cold fans of wind shoot in at all the crevices, and there is an undertone of rustling beneath the coarser sounds.

At such hours as these, there is nothing to be done. Study cannot go forward; classes cannot be heard; wonder begets wonder, and the threescore of children pause and gaze at each other in helpless astonishment.

Sometimes Miss Perkins bids them sing to drive away their disturbing fancies, and they break out with their high-pitched, unmusical voices, into

"Here we stand, hand in hand;"

or, "The Farmer's Boy;" and shrink into the air with a scared vigor that contains not a little that is pathetic. What could be more striking than the picture of this school of infants surrounded and terrified by something they cannot understand, trying to drive away their dread by shouting their childish rhymes at the tops of their voices! They throw back their heads, open their lips wide, and look hastily from one side to the other, meanwhile emitting a shrill, discordant treble, that contains but the faintest semblance of a tune. And what a use to put a tune to! Cromwell's songs, or the piping at Lucknow, or the Pilgrim's hymn, provokes in us, when we hear of them, much the same sensations that we feel when we hear of this extraordinary music. It is theatrical

and sad at the same moment, and yet it is not without a small touch of humor. Amid one's surprise and distress at the spectacle, there lurks a sense of amusement; but it is quickly banished never to be revived. This song is a song to the point. It has a right to be. But it awakes in one a sense of anger that it need ever be sung; that the urchins are permitted to enter a place where they are driven to such expedients to preserve their courage.

Now one half of the incidents of the less important sorts that have taken place in this singular arena have not been hinted at. They comprise nearly the whole list, as it has once been said; but they so closely resemble manifestations that are very familiar to every one, it is not thought necessary to take time and space to enumerate them. The present writer has selected a few of the simpler and a few of the rarer phases, and detailed them for the purpose of leading up properly to what now follows. The remainder of the paper will be almost entirely devoted to a description of the apparitions that have presented themselves to the school-house. Up to the first of November of the present year, the disturbances had steadily increased in number and significance until they had attained such magnitude that the public began to be aroused to the consideration of the case.

The school at this time was nearly full, it having an average attendance of fifty-five pupils, though two or three of the children had been withdrawn temporarily on account of the troubles.

THE "HAND."

About three weeks before this date the

first intimation of ghostly appearances was had. On one afternoon, at about three o'clock, a boy named Lydston, a lad of thirteen years of age, suddenly saw pressed flat against a pane of the second row, in the partition window, a child's hand.

It was yellowish-white in color, entirely bloodless, and its fingers were spread wide apart. Below the hand was to be seen a portion of the wrist receding into the background as though its possessor had leaned forward.

Before Lydston had time to make an outcry, two or three of his companions had seen it, and all together they called to Miss Perkins. She at once hastened into the entry, an act that consumed but two or three seconds, and found no one there. The doors were all closed, and the outer one was locked securely. No one had been in the entry, and no one had gone out of it.

This simple appearance created but little stir in the school, for it was so entirely fresh a manifestation that all were quite willing to believe that it might possibly have resulted from natural causes, or been in some indefinite way a deception.

Let it be remarked here that it is the easiest thing in the world to exclaim, "it was something or other;" that "you *thought* you saw it;" or "it was some boy playing a trick upon you;" but it is far more reasonable to believe in ghosts at once, than to attempt to quench testimony by such means. It would be more miraculous for a person to produce these appearances and to escape undetected, than it would be for the most evanescent spirit to lend its presence upon the earth.

After the first appearance others of the

same ilk followed rapidly. The hand re-appeared, and it was again seen. It took the same position nearly always. It became familiar to the pupils' eyes, but it by no means became familiar to their hearts. They always shrank when they saw it. They scream to-day, "There's the hand! there's the hand!" with as much terror and emphasis as they did on its first appearance.

There was now a ghost. The eye now realized something, and this sense is the chief vehicle of dread. When there was something to be seen, then there was something to be afraid of. The evidence of the ear was a great deal, but the evidence of the eye was proof.

A week previous to the 1st of November matters took another step. On that day one of the children exclaimed, with up-raised hand:—

"There's a boy looking in at the window!"

The teacher came. There was no mistake. The children all saw it. The face was pale, and it was that of a young boy. It was pressed sideways against the sash, and its eyes were turned inwards, towards the school-room. Its right hand was raised to its temples as if to shut out the refracted light. Its position was natural and easy. It was plain, distinct and unequivocal.

The teacher ran at her utmost speed into the entry. There were the same bare walls, the same damp, musty air, but nothing more. There was no shadow, no figure, no presence of any kind. As before, the doors were closed tightly and all was silent and quiet.

Miss Perkins was naturally led from the

character of the apparition to make an extraordinary search for some interloper. She took especial care to leave no places unexamined. She ascended for the twentieth time into the garret. She hunted for the twentieth time in the cellar. Nothing that could throw the least light upon the matter was found. The school turned out *en masse*, and penetrated every nook and cranny, and then reassembled, empty-handed, but filled with consternation.

It is to be supposed that each child carried at once to his home accounts more or less exaggerated of this appearance, but, even partially aroused as the community was, this fresh contribution to the stock of wonders created but little new excitement. There was a disposition to doubt, to wait a while, to look further, and so the school went on, when it should have been closed at once.

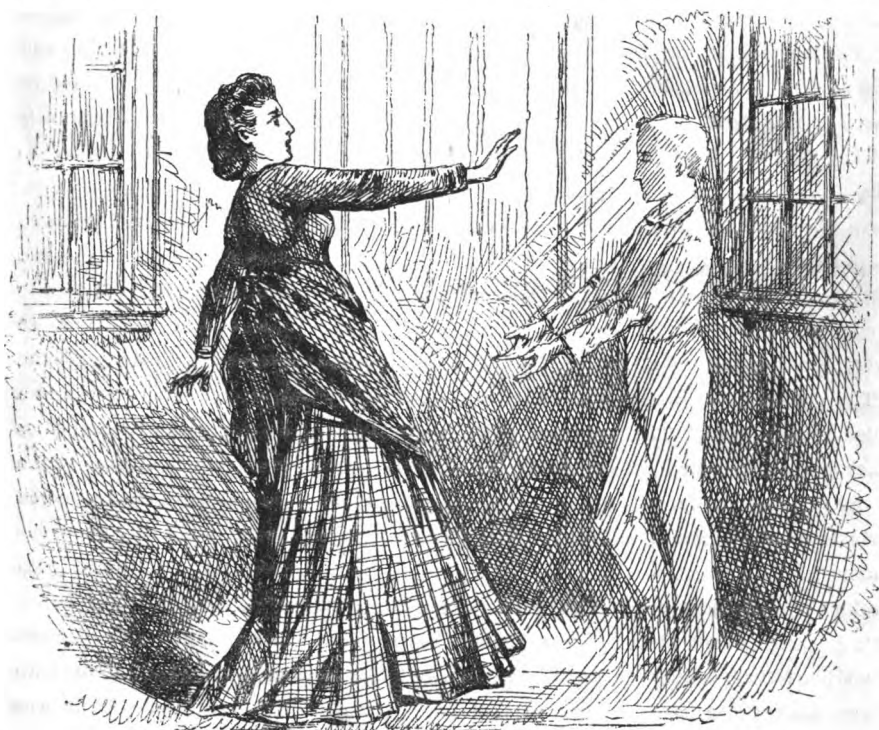
On nearly every day between this date and the beginning of the next month the hand or the face appeared at the window. At times a portion of the arm would also be visible. It was thin, shrunken, and of the same death-like hue that characterized the face. The noises continued meanwhile. There was hardly any cessation to the knocks upon the walls, or of the disturbance of the furniture. The old troubles continued with the new, and there seemed to be a slow accumulation going on.

The school, the pupils and the teacher were now in a perturbed condition. They were keenly alive to all that passed, though they did their utmost to continue their tasks. All were alert and sensitive.

Such was the condition of matters on that day when the disturbance came to a

climax, or, if not to a climax, at least to a point far above any yet attained. A few of the younger pupils had been withdrawn by their parents, but the older and larger ones yet remained. Miss Perkins was in her usual health, and also as fully possessed of courage as ever. The weather on the first of November was unpleasant. The atmosphere was full of moisture, the clouds were lowering and the temperature was low, the thermometer sinking to 30° Fahrenheit.

that afternoon a class in Geography was called upon the floor to give its recitation. It took its place on the southern side of the room in such a way that it stood at a right angle to the partition-window. The teacher's desk was opposite it. It was composed of eight or ten lads of various ages, comprising some of the oldest in the school. The recitation began, and it had proceeded five minutes when the boy who was at the head of the class, and who was standing beside the southern door which



What took place on that day will now be described with the utmost care and accuracy, and with as much minuteness as possible.

THE GHOST.

At a few minutes before three o'clock on

led into the entry, and which was open, suddenly cried out, with a startled voice:—

“There’s a boy out there!”

Miss Perkins left her place instantly, hurried across the room to the open door, passed through it, and emerged upon the

corridor. At the further end of it she indeed beheld an intruder.

She addressed some hasty and impatient expression to it, and hastened towards it with the intent of ejecting it from the building. She received no reply. It retreated to the corner opposite the foot of the garret stairs, and there it stood quietly. Miss Perkins approached. It stood facing her, with its arms loosely held together and the left hand partially extended.

Miss Perkins approached within four feet of the apparition, when a realization of its true character rushed upon her. She stopped, overwhelmed with fear, and gazed into its face.

The figure was that of a boy of thirteen. The visage was remarkably pale, the eyes were blue, the mouth sad, and the whole effect was that of extreme melancholy. The general picture was that of a child prepared for burial, and prepared, moreover, in a poor and make-shift way.

The clothing was brown and somewhat faded and rubbed. The trowsers were black, and they seemed to have belonged to a taller person, for they were much wrinkled and creased, and they rested about the feet in such a way that Miss Perkins was almost unable to see the extremities. About his neck was a wide stock-like band, such as is used to keep the lower jaw of deceased persons in their places. His hair was of a yellowish tint, and it was thrown back in some disorder over the head, and was clipped behind in such a way that the neck was left bare. The figure was very slight, and it was easily and even beautifully posed. There was no excitement or perturbation visible in

its behavior. It seemed entirely calm and tranquil.

Miss Perkins was able to look through this figure and to perceive the wainscoting and the sash on the other side. It was transparent, yet it was entirely visible. Its outline was perfect, its surfaces retained all their integrity, yet the film was so scant that it seemed that a breath could disperse it.

Miss Perkins, transfixed with horror and about to faint, grasped at the wall to support herself. At this instant the figure moved. It passed before the teacher and with its eyes still fixed upon her glided to the garret door, which opened apparently of its own accord. It then began to ascend the stairs.

The teacher aroused herself and followed it. It preceded her half-a-dozen steps and it looked back over its shoulder, apparently watching her. Its countenance began to grow even more sad than ever, and the color of its clothing began to give way to a whitish tinge. Midway up the ascent Miss Perkins stumbled over some brushes which lay upon the stairs, and when she recovered her footing the apparition had gained the top of the flight and was pausing and looking down at her.

It required a pretty high order of courage in the teacher to pursue this figure into the gloomy and solitary garret. She was now sure that it was not a thing of substance, and there could be few more terrifying trials than to enter into personal contact with the unknown. Yet she might be mistaken; she thought she might have been so influenced in some subtle way by the previous appearances that she had mis-

judged this one. She went on. The figure waited for her with its immovable eyes. She saw it even more plainly against the shadowy background, and its true character became proved. Yet she did not pause; with a resolution and bravery that can hardly be surpassed she advanced with outstretched arms. She

In a moment it had vanished entirely. There was nothing of it left but its picture in the girl's mind. She returned, half fainting, to her expectant charge.

The evidence upon this vital point in the long list of supernatural troubles is distinct and satisfactory. Each and all of the children agree with the teacher. Upon



closed upon it. She endeavored to grasp it. Her fingers encountered nothing; her hands involved themselves in the very centre of its chest; but they seized air, and air alone. The figure then began to disappear. It sank down. It did not retire further or fade out, but it melted and fell away. The face descended, with its eyes fixed perpetually upon the trembling teacher, with an indescribable pathos.

technicalities their testimony is strictly uniform. For instance, the appearance of death in the figure's face; its white stock, the color of its clothing; its semi-transparency; the noiselessness of its movements, the expression of its countenance, and its attitude, are each and all described identically. There is no fault, no discrepancy, no hesitation. So far as human testimony may be valuable, this is; to converse with

the lookers-on at this singular spectacle is to be convinced.

It cannot be a part of this paper to reopen the vast field of discussion of spiritual matters; it is designed merely to exhibit in the plainest and most honest light a series of new facts, without comment or judgment. It is enough to indicate that another "strange thing has swept upon the stage;" the lessons of this thing are yet to be taught and learned.

On the Friday succeeding this most eventful one, the apparition made another appearance. It was precisely the same as before. There was the sad look, the mournful appeal, the silent motion, the wavering dissolution. This time it vanished when midway up the stairs, whither the teacher had followed it.

In the interval of this week there had arisen a new feature. The garret overhead had apparently been peopled with three persons, each with a distinct voice and a distinct step. The pupils heard tones resembling those of a human being proceeding from above them. Only now and then were they distinct. One was harsh and deep, another thin and shrill, and the third small and querulous. Besides the voices there were numerous sounds. Some of them were loud and some soft. Some resembled the rolling of cannon balls, some the tread of heavy feet, some the loud and repeated blows of a hammer. One day the sounds represented to the people below, this sequence. A box was set heavily upon the floor. Two persons hovered over it, talking together in low voices. A cover was seized and fitted on. Then a voice said:—

"D——n it, where's my hammer?"

It was apparently found, for the adjustment of the cover was proceeded with; nail after nail was driven in with great vigor, and presently the hammer was put down. Then the box was seized by the two persons, one before and the other behind, and it was partially lifted and partially pushed across the floor. The person in front took decided steps; the person behind shuffled as if his motions were impeded.

All who heard these sounds recognized the acts they represented. Nothing could surpass their fidelity. On one occasion more recently a voice addressed by name a child in the school-room below, and asked him if he had got his lesson. The sound was distinct and unequivocal.

On the third Friday after the first appearance of the spectre the school was disturbed by a sound that aroused afresh all the blasé emotions of the inmates. This time it was a long, low and disagreeable laugh, that seemed to come from beside the teacher's desk. It echoed against the opposite wall, and then re-echoed. There was that in it that petrified all who heard it. Every motion was suspended; the busy hum was stopped, every ear was touched, and the school seemed to have been stricken with a spell.

After the noise had ceased, the teacher, even more afraid of this than the apparition, called out to ask who would volunteer to search the garret and the cellar once more. The boy Lydston promised to go, provided she, the teacher, would accompany him. She assented at once, and each took a stout stick, and for the hundredth time an expedition was undertaken against the ghosts. There was nothing strange in the cellar.

There were the coal-heap, the piles of dusty refuse and the damp and mouldy walls, but nothing more. They ascended into the garret. Here they walked cautiously, for they felt that they were in the

ghostly boy contrasted with the dark background of the wall. He was standing in his old position, with one hand extended, as if asking for something, and with the same half-erect position of the head. This



stronghold of the disturbers. No sooner had they gained the floor than they were saluted with a laugh similar to the one they had heard a few minutes before. It had the same qualities, the same significant import, and the same resonance. It appalled them. Now it came from the right hand, now from the left hand, now from behind, and now from before. They turned here and there, confused and astounded.

Lydston began to waver. Suddenly the teacher perceived the tranquil figure of the

sight in connection with those sounds surpassed all other effects. It aroused all that was sensitive in the spirits of the two beholders. The teacher, frenzied with terror, struck repeatedly at the spectre, but it remained intact; the cudgel met the brick wall and rebounded harmless. At each like attempt the laugh arose with renewed force, and the sound re-echoed from one wall to another until the attic was alive with the awful sounds.

It was not in nature that human beings

could face this. Lydston fled; the teacher followed, and as they disappeared the laughing was renewed and increased as if in jubilation at a victory.

It is in this last scene that we find combined most that is earthly and most that is unearthly. There were two senses that were fully satisfied. Two others, smelling and tasting, are rarely required for proofs; therefore only one, the sense of touch, remained unrewarded by testimony. Is it possible that we must reject the evidence of two because of the default of one?

Subsequent to the date of the manifestation last described, the school-house has been the scene of almost continual agitation. It exists this very day as emphatically as it did three months ago. A screen of newspapers, which has been tacked against the partition-window, to hide from the pupils the apparition of the face and hands, has been repeatedly rolled down without fracture, and there has beaten against the sash a strong hand that seems to threaten destruction to the glass. Voices arise mysteriously every day. Twenty-four hours do not go by without a tumult of some sort or other. Now the entry seems to be in flames. The teacher runs out only to find that all is safe and whole. There has been a stout trap-door placed at the head of the garret-stairs, and the key is kept by the teacher; yet something descends them nearly every day, emerges upon the corridor, crosses it, goes out at the front door, then, after a short absence, it returns, reascends the stairs, and re-enters the attic, and then becomes quiet.

It is the vainest of all vain things to say that there is trickery here. It is absolutely

impossible for it to exist. Hundreds of watches have been set, hundreds of skeptics have interposed their contrary spirits; but there is no discovery made, no exposure consummated.

No one has undergone a more thorough and rigid cross-examination than Miss Perkins; and no children have been subjected to more bribes and promises and threats, than the urchins of this luckless school. It is said that Mr. Oliver Wendell Holmes has tried his hand at teasing a confession of trickery from a boy named Currier, with the aid of a dollar-bill; but he failed. Mrs. Southworth and Mr. William T. Adams have been "speering round," and so has the venerable Robert Dale Owen.

The phenomena have excited the widest and most curious comment. Miss Perkins has received letters of inquiry from the remotest parts of the country; and to admit that one is from Newburyport is to invite an endless series of questions relating to the "ghost."

The direct effect of the agitation upon the school in question has, of course, been bad; many pupils have now been withdrawn, and many others threaten to leave. Such has been the character of the disturbances, that the school committee have been reluctant to give color to the case by taking notice of it; but it is clear that they have delayed too long. When it was evident, six months ago, that the little community was being disturbed by an uncontrollable influence, the building should have at once been closed, and a strict investigation ordered. The investigators would have discovered the true state of the case, and a remedy could have been easily applied; that is, the school would have been removed.

We shall be much surprised if this extraordinary case does not at once bring to light the half-observed spiritual theories that have lain dormant so long. The matter is distinct and isolated, and it is entirely free from special influences; that is, there is no deluding romance about it that would make spiritual manifestations seem proper and congenial; no one connected with it has mediumistic qualities, and it does not seem reasonable that the disciples of any of the dark arts should want to proselyte in a dusty ward school-room.

In closing this brief and faulty paper, we feel that we have completed one of the strangest stories that has ever been written. It is easy to see what opportunities there have been for dramatic descriptions

and startling elucidations, and we compliment ourselves that we have repressed the natural tendency to make effect. It is not often that one is permitted to adopt a subject so full of chances to write "hard and fine;" but we are conscious one has scant right to do so where clear and unvarnished evidence is so plainly demanded.

There are many people to be aroused by the reports of incidents like these, and each time such an arousal is made, just so much further on the road towards truth have we travelled. The scientists, the materialists, the theologues, the spiritualists and the common people, all have an interest here, and it is hoped that this printer's echo may not be ineffectual to stimulate an inquiry.