

The Edgefield Ghost Fifty Years Ago.

Messrs. Editors: There being an old copy of the "Edgefield Ghost," found in some waste papers, it has brought fresh to memory the strange circumstance. I am now the oldest living witness that I know of. I am the oldest child and son of the family, and it was at the time in my eighteenth year.

Strange as it was, it is no less strange than true. There never has been any explanation of the mysterious circumstance upon a rational principle.

It could be heard at intervals for twelve months, but during two weeks in May 1829, it could be heard whenever called for. There has never been anything of the kind heard about the place by any person, that I am aware of, since October, 1829.

I send you an account of it republished from the Carolinian some years ago, and if you think proper to publish again, you can do so.

Yours respectfully,
S. C. Burnett,
Abbeville County,
Phoenix Post Office.

April 24th, 1879.
(The above communication was addressed to the Edgefield Advertiser.)

(From the Carolinian, Saturday, July 11, 1820.)

The Edgefield Ghost.

The following statement of facts in relation to a matter which has produced much inquiry and speculation in this district, may be depended upon by the public, as having been carefully compiled by a gentleman of piety and of strong and well cultivated mind. We are not disposed to believe that a breach has been made in the laws of nature, without any useful purpose, but we have not yet heard any satisfactory explanation of the circumstances upon rational principles.—Editors Carolinian.

Messrs. Editors: As public curiosity has been greatly excited and many tales more or less true, have gone out concerning the mysterious and invisible being, that has been heard at Mr. Isaac Burnett's in this district for some time, it seems proper that the public should be in possession of the facts relative to this extraordinary circumstance. The voice was first heard in October last, imitating various noises, such as that of the spinning wheel, reel, ducks, hen, etc. It was first heard by Mr. Burnett about twenty yards from the house which led him to suppose it was one of his neighbor's children hiding in the weeds and trying to frighten his children. It was afterward heard in the loft of the house and Mr. B. supposing it to be a bird, sent a boy up to drive it out, but nothing could be seen. It thus continued to perplex the minds of the family for some time, until, at length, one of the children said he believed that thing could talk and commenced asking questions, which it answered by whistling very much like a parrot. This circumstance getting out, many persons came to hear it. Mr. John Shepherd, a pious and worthy citizen, who lives in the neighborhood, conversed with it in the presence of a number of witnesses. To ascertain the extent of its knowledge, he asked various questions about most persons in the neighborhood, and their circumstances, which it answered correctly. It told his name and the number of children he had; also, the names of most of the persons present. He asked what it came there for. It replied, "Because it had no other place to go to." It was asked if it came to do the family any harm, it said no—it loved the family. It was asked finally if it loved Jesus Christ, to which it made no reply, nor answered any question which Mr. Shepherd asked. The evening after, it answered others, but would not answer him. For the first three months it was heard only once a month, but afterwards much oftener. It had been heard at various times, both in the day and night, but more frequently in the day. Search has been repeatedly made by the family and others, but nothing found from which the voice could proceed. There is no place of concealment about the house. It is a small house with but one room, a loft of boards laid across the joists, and a piazza on one side. The house is not underpinned, so that you can see from one end to the other, underneath. For some time the voice appeared generally to proceed from the farther end of the house, opposite the fire-place and the upper part of the loft. If any one, except the children, while it was talking, or if any one would steal around the house ever so softly to that end on the outside of the house when it was dark, and whilst others were talking to it, it would instantly stop; and when they returned, it would commence

again. This experiment was tried one evening when a number of persons were there, so that both the house and piazza were full. Some one from the piazza, without the knowledge of those in the house, who were talking to it, went around on the outside to see if they could discover any one, when it instantly stopped. It has been known to whistle most any tune, either sacred or profane, which any one would tell it.

Mr. and Mrs. Burnett appear to be simple-hearted, upright and amiable persons, serious in their dispositions, and as far from encouraging any trick about them to make sport as any one. No one in the neighborhood, who knows them, believes that they know anything about the matter. They have evidently been much disturbed and alarmed on account of it, but having so far experienced no harm from it, they have resolutely maintained their ground. It manifests a great partiality for a little daughter of the family, who is about eleven years of age. This so alarms her that she generally gets sick whenever she talks to it, and she has been known to quit the house precipitately, when she heard it alone in the house. Not long since, however, she quoted to it a passage of Scripture, which a pious friend pointed out and advised her to memorize for the purpose, 1 Tim. 1:15, and it bade her hold her jaw, but she persisted in quoting the passage until it hushed, and has not spoken to her since.

Since so many persons went to hear it, it has become very shy and is seldom heard when many persons are about, or when any person is in the house except the smaller children. They have never been able to ascertain who, or what it is, or the object of its visit. It has told its name repeatedly, but cannot be understood. It will not answer any serious religious questions. When asked whether it was a man or a woman, it said it was the foolishest question it ever heard, and appeared to laugh.

The Rev. Mr. Hodges visited the family several times, at their request, without hearing anything. However, on the 25th of May Mr. H. being in the neighborhood and calling at the house of Mr. N.; Mrs. N. informed Mr. Hodges, she had just been to Mr. Burnett's and heard the voice—Mr. H. immediately rode over in company with Mr. John Shepherd. Mr. S. went up to the house first, to get the children in the house to talk to it, and after it commenced, upon a signal given, Mr. H. went up to the house and seated himself on the piazza. A little boy eight or nine years of age stood just inside of the door to ask questions which were suggested to him by the company. It imitated various noises in a whistle, such as the crowing of a cock, the clucking of a hen, noise of a partridge, etc., and answered a variety of simple questions. There were but few answers that Mr. H. could understand, but were interpreted to him by the family, who were accustomed to hear it, he could then trace out some resemblance. Some words, however, were pronounced very plain, such as kitten, yes, no, goose-quill, etc. The family say, that it generally spoke much more distinctly and could be much better understood than on this occasion. Mr. Shepherd says the same. It was understood, however, to say it knew Mr. H., pronounced his name tolerably distinct, said it got acquainted with him there, and that it did not like him. When Mr. H. spoke and said, "I have not come to drive you away," it was understood to reply "Do if you dare." During the conversation with it, which lasted about an hour, no person was present except Mr. Burnett's wife, Mr. Shepherd and Mr. Hodges, with the small children. The oldest was the little girl above mentioned, who was in the yard with the little children. No one was inside of the house except the little boy who asked the questions. The reason why he was put there to ask questions was, because for some time it had ceased to speak to any but the children. There were also in the kitchen a negro woman, and an idiot girl, spinning and weaving, who could not have heard what passed in the house. The two older sons were absent at work in the farm. Mr. S. and Mr. H. after the conversation ended, examined the house and found nothing. During the time of conversation it was asked to sing a song—it said it did not know any. Mr. H. whistled a sacred tune, but it said that wouldn't do. It then whistled Yankee Doodle very distinctly.

When Mr. H. first heard of the circumstance he very naturally was led to suspect that it proceeded from some one in the neighborhood, or family who possessed the art of ventriloquism. But against that opinion lie the following objections, viz: 1st. It is certain that it is no one, not of the family, as no such person has been thereabouts at times when it

was heard, and no person could be there always, without being seen especially in the day time. 2nd. Mr. Burnett and wife, whose word will be taken by all who know them, state that no individual of the family, who could possibly be suspected of such a thing, is always present at such times. They state positively, it has been heard when the negro (the servant about the house) was in the field at work. It has been heard when the two older sons, who were nearly grown, were absent, as was the fact when Mr. H. heard it. It has been heard when all the other children were at school, except the two youngest, one of which is about three years old, the other an infant. The idiot girl has not the intelligence which this invisible being manifests, according to the testimony of all who have heard it.

Furthermore, even supposing any of the children possessed this faculty and had the disposition to carry on the deception, for so long a time to the evident disquietude and distress of the family, is it a rational supposition, that this could be done without being suspected by the parents? Or would not the individual be disposed to try its pranks at school, or among other children to frighten them, as well as at home? There is another circumstance which contradicts this supposition. About two months ago Mr. Burnett, at the suggestion of some one, put a testament in the place whence the voice appeared to proceed. It instantly left the place, came down into the house, and said it was going away. It replied it was obliged to go, it could stay there no longer, and bade them farewell. It was then absent about two weeks, during which time it was heard at Mr. Rogers', Mr. Dicks' and Mr. Nickoll's, in the same neighborhood, as they believe. They had heard it at Burnett's and believed it to be the same, but did not converse with it. When it returned it was asked and said it had been to those places. None of Mr. Burnett's family were at those places when it was heard. Since its return it has occupied no particular part of the house, but is heard in various parts. It is now seldom heard, as Mr. B. does not allow the children to talk to it—they do not pay much attention to it.

These are the most material circumstances connected with this strange affair, for the confirmation of which, and for further information, the public is referred to Mr. J. Shepherd, Dr. E. Andrews, and Mr. G. Slappy, who live in the neighborhood, and who have all heard it. Mr. Burnett lives about twelve miles below Cambridge, and about three miles west of the road leading to Hamburg, near Mr. Wiley Berry's.

Seek Protection From Night Riders.

Chattanooga, Tenn., Feb. 27.—Renewed activities of night riders around Bridgeport and other Alabama towns resulted in an appeal today to federal authorities for protection by residents who have been attacked in their homes. The jail at Scottsboro is under special guard of state law enforcement officers as a precaution against mob violence as an aftermath of night riding in that section the past week.

According to reliable information reaching here today the farmers in the Bridgeport and Stevenson sections are keyed up to a high pitch of excitement over developments of the past few days. Jodie Beavers and John Brown, two farmers arrived Saturday by state law enforcement officers sent to Jackson county by Governor Kilby, are confined in the jail at Scottsboro. Brown is suffering from a wound alleged by the officers to have been sustained in the course of a raid on the home of Harry McGowan Thursday night by a band of 15 or 20 night riders. Both Beavers and Brown, it is said, have been identified by McGowan as members of the gang of alleged night riders who attacked his home. Both men deny having participated in the raid.

Information reaching Chattanooga today stated that night riders in Jackson county, Alabama, have dragged men from their homes and whipped them unmercifully and others have been warned to join the tenant's union or take the consequences. Members of the union, while denying any part in the outrages, are charged with either taking part or inspiring these attacks. It is alleged that the night riders are attempting to enforce the principles of the tenants' union, the raids being on homes or tenants who have refused to join.

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