

Wild Animals and the Unknown

By Elliott O'Donnell

Apes

The following case of animal hauntings was recorded in automatic writing:—

“I sank wearily into my easy chair before the fire, which burned with a fitful and sullen glow in the tiny grate of my one room—bare and desolate as only the room of an unsuccessful author can be.

“My condition was pitiable. For the past twelve months I had not earned a cent, and of my small capital there now remained but two pounds to ward the hound of starvation from my door. In the moonlight I could perceive all the bareness of the apartment. Would to God Fancy would ride to me on this moonbeam and give me inspiration! ’Twas indeed weird—this silver ethereal path connecting the moon with the earth, and the more I gazed along it, the more I wished to leave my body and escape to the star-lighted vaults. Certainly, from a conversation I had once had with a member of the New Occult Society, I believed it possible by concentrating all the mental activities in one channel, so to overcome the barriers which prevent the soul visiting scenes of the ethereal world, as to pass materialized to the spot upon which the ideas are fixed. But although I had essayed—how many times I do not like to confess—to gain that amount of concentration necessary for the separation of the soul from the body, up to the present all my attempts had been fruitless. Doubtless there had been a something—too minute even for definition—that had interrupted my self-abstraction—a something that had wrecked my venture, just when I felt it to be on the verge of completion. And was it likely that now, when my ideas were misty and vague, I should be more successful? I wanted to quit the cruel bonds of nature and be free—free to roam and ramble. But where?

“At length, as I gazed into the moonlight, I lost all cognizance of the objects around me, and my eyes became fixed on the mountains of the moon, which I discovered, with a start, were no longer specks. I found, to my amazement, I had left my body and was careering swiftly through space—infinite space. The range opened up in front of me, spreading out far and wide, winding, black and awful—their solemn grandeur lost in that terrible desolation which makes the moon appear like a hideous nightmare. I could see with amazing clearness the sides of the mountains; there were enormous black fissures, some of them hundreds of feet in width—and the more I gazed the more impressed I grew with the silence. There was no life. There were no seas, no lakes, no trees, no grass, no sighing nor moaning of the wind, nothing to remind me of the earth I now found to my terror I had actually quitted. Everything around me was black—the sky, the mountains, the vast pits, the dried-up mouths of which gaped dismally.

“With the movements of a man in a fit, I essayed to hinder the finis of my mad plunge. I waved my limbs violently, kicking out and shrieking in the agonies of fear. I cursed and prayed, wept and laughed alternately, did everything, yet nothing, that could save me from contact with the lone desert so horribly close. Nearer and nearer I approached, until at last my feet rested on the hard caked soil. For the first few minutes after my arrival I was too overwhelmed with fear to do other than remain stationary. The ground beneath my feet swarmed with myriads of foul and long-legged insects, things with unwieldy pincers and protruding eyes; things covered with scaly armour; hybrids of beetles and scorpions. I have a distinct recollection of one huge-jointed

centipede making a vicious grab at my leg; he failed to make his teeth meet in anything tangible, and emitting a venomous hiss disappeared in a circular pit.

“Whilst I was the victim of this insect’s ferocity the horizon had become darkened by the shadowy outline of an enormous apish form. I wanted to run away, but could not, and was compelled, sorely against my will, to witness its approach. Never shall I forget the agonies of doubt I endured during its advance. No man in a tiger’s den, nor deer tied to a tree awaiting its destroyer, could have suffered more than I did then, and my terror increased tenfold when I recognized in the monster—Neppon—a young gorilla that had been under my charge and had given me no end of trouble when I was head keeper in the Zoological Gardens at Berne.

“I never hated anything so much as I had hated that baboon. At my hands it had undergone a thousand subtle torments. I had pinched it, poked it, pulled its hair, frightened it by putting on masks and making all sorts of queer noises, and finally I had secretly poisoned it. And now we stood face to face without any bars between us. Never shall I forget the look of intense satisfaction in its hideous eyes, as its gaze encountered mine.

“In that strange forlorn world we faced each other; I, the tyrant once, now the quarry. In the wildness of its glee it capered about like a mad thing, executing the most exaggerated antics that augmented my terror. Every second I anticipated an assault, and the knowledge of my fears lent additional fierceness to its gambols. A sudden change in my attitude at length made it cease. The use had returned to my limbs; my muscles were quivering, and before it could stop me I had fled! The wildest of chases then ensued. I ran with a speed that would have shamed a record-beater on earth. With extra-ordinary nimbleness I vaulted over titanic boulders of rocks; jumped across dykes of infinite depth, scurried like lightning over tracts of rough, lacerating ground, and never for one instant felt like flagging.

“Suddenly, to my horror, I came to an abrupt standstill, and the cry of some hunted animal burst from my lips. Unwittingly I had run against a huge wall of granite, and escape was now impossible. Again and again I clawed the hard rock, until the skin hung in shreds from my fingers, and the blood pattered on the dark soil, that in all probability had never tasted moisture before. All this amused my pursuer vastly; it watched with the leisure of one who knows its fish will be landed in safety, and there suddenly came to me, through my olfactory nerves, a knowledge that it was speaking to me in the language of scents—the language I never understood till now was the language of all animals.

“ ‘Reach a little higher,’ it said; ‘there are niches up there, and you must stretch your limbs. Ha! ha! Do you remember how you used to make me stretch mine? You do! Well, you needn’t shiver. Explain to me how it is I find you here.’

“ ‘I cannot comprehend,’ I gasped with a gesticulation that was grotesque.

“The great beast laughed in my face. ‘How so?’ it queried. ‘You used to quibble me upon my dull wits; must I now return the compliment? Ha! There’s blood on your hands. Blood! I will lick it up.’ And with a mocking grin it advanced.

“ ‘Keep off! Keep off!’ I shouted. ‘My God, will this dream never cease?’

“ ‘The dream, as you call it,’ the gorilla jeered, ‘has only just begun; the climax of your horrors has yet to come. If you cannot tell me the purport of your visit I will tell you mine. Can your lordship spare the time to listen?’

“I gave no answer. I clutched the wall and uttered incoherent cries like some frightened madman.

“The gorilla felt the muscles in its hairy fingers, and showed its huge teeth. I looked eagerly at my enemy.

“ ‘Come, you haven’t yet guessed my riddle; you are dull to-night,’ it said lightly. ‘That old wine of yours made you sleep too soundly. Don’t let me disturb you. I will explain. This moon is now my home—I share it with the spirits of all the animals and insects that were once on your earth. And now that we are free from such as you—free to wander anywhere we like without fear of being shot, or caught and caged—we are happy. And what makes us still happier is the knowledge that the majority of men and women will never have a joyous after-state like ours. They will be earth-bound in that miserable world of theirs, and compelled to keep to their old haunts, scaring to death with their ugly faces all who have the misfortune to see them. There is another fate in store for you, however. Do you know what it is?’

“It paused. No sound other than that occasioned by his bumping on the soil broke the impressive hush.

“ ‘Do you know?’ it said again. ‘Well, I will tell you. I’m going to kill you right away, so that your spirit—it’s all nonsense to talk about souls, such as you have no soul—will be earth-bound here—here for ever—and will be a perpetual source of amusement to all of us animal ghosts.’

“It then began to jabber ferociously, and, crouching down, prepared to spring.

“ ‘For Heaven’s sake,’ I shrieked, ‘for Heaven’s sake.’

“But I might as well have appealed to the wind. It had no sense of mercy.

“ ‘He, he!’ it screamed. ‘What a joke—what a splendid joke. Your wit never seems to degenerate, Hugesson! I’m wondering if you will be as funny when you’re a ghost. Get ready. I’m coming, coming,’ and as the sky deepened to an awe-inspiring black, and the stars grew larger, brighter, fiercer; and the great lone deserts appealed to me with a force unequalled before, it sprang through the air.

“A singing in my ears and a great bloody mist rose before my eyes. The wailing and screeching of a million souls was borne in loud protracted echoings through the drum of my ears. Men and women with evil faces rose up from crag and boulder to spit and tear at me. I saw creatures of such damning ugliness that my soul screamed aloud with terror. And then from the mountain tops the bolt of heaven was let loose. Every spirit was swept away like chaff before the burst of wind that, hurling and shrieking, bore down upon me. I gave myself up for lost. I felt all the agonies of suffocation, my lungs were torn from my palpitating body; my legs wrenched round in their sockets; my feet whirled upwards in that gust of devilish air. All—excruciating, damning pain—and *pro tempore*—I knew no more.”

* * *

N.B.—It was subsequently ascertained, by my friend the late Mr. Supton, that a man named Hluggesson, who had been for a short time head keeper at the Zoological Gardens, had been found dead, in bed, by his landlady, with a look on his face so awful that she had fled shrieking from the room. The death was, of course, attributed to syncope, but my friend—who, by the way, had never heard of Hugesson before he received the foregoing account through the medium of planchette—told me, and I agreed with him, that from similar cases that had come within his experience, it was most probable that Hugesson had in reality projected himself, and had perished in the manner described.

No more improbable than the above story is that sent me by my old school friend Martin Tristram, who died last year.

I style it “The Case of Martin Tristram.” It is reproduced from a magazine published some three years ago.

After Martin Tristram once took up spiritualism his visits to me became most erratic, and I not only never knew when to expect him, but I was not always sure, when he did come, that it was he.

This sounds extraordinary—to see a man is assuredly to recognize him! Not always—by no means always!

There are circumstances in which a man loses his identity, when his “ego” is supplanted by another ego, when he ceases to be himself, and assumes an individuality which is entirely different from himself.

This is undoubtedly the case in madness, imbecility, epilepsy, so-called total loss of memory through cerebral injury, hypnotism, sometimes in projection when the astral body gets detained, and also not infrequently in investigating peculiar instances of psychic phenomena.

But if the astral body has been evicted from its carnal home, whither has it gone? and what is the nature of the thing that has taken its place

Ah! These are indeed puzzles—puzzles I am devoting a lifetime to solve.

There have been moments when unseen hands have gradually begun to pull aside the obscuring veil, when the identity of the usurping spirit has seemed on the verge of being disclosed to me, and I have been about to be initiated into the greatest and most zealously guarded of all secrets.

There have been times, I say, when my occult researches have actually brought me to this climax; but up to the present I have invariably been disappointed—the curtain has suddenly fallen, the esoteric ego has shrunk into its shell, and the mystery surrounding it has remained impenetrable.

This is but one, albeit perhaps the most striking, of the many methods through which the superphysical endeavours to get in immediate contact with the physical.

I was unpleasantly reminded of it when Martin Tristram’s carnal body came to visit me one night several years ago. I was aware that it was not Tristram. His mannerisms were the same, his voice had not altered; but there was an expression in his eyes that told of a very different spirit from Martin’s dwelling within that body.

The night being cold, he closed the door carefully, and crossing the room to where I sat by the fire, threw himself in an easy chair, and gazed meditatively at me.

My rooms in Bloomsbury were not lonely. They had more than their share of “brawling brats” on either side; there were no gloomy recesses or ghost-suggestive cupboards, and I never once experienced in them the slightest apprehension of sudden superphysical manifestations, yet I cannot help saying that as I met that glance from the pseudo-Tristram’s eyes I felt my flesh begin to creep.

He sat for so long in silence that I began to wonder if he ever meant to speak.

“The secret of success in seeing certain classes of apparitions,” he said at length, “to a very great extent lies in sympathy. Sympathy! And now for my story. I will tell it to you in the third person.”

I looked at Tristram’s face in dismay. “The third person!”

“Yes, the third person,” he gravely rejoined, and under the circumstances the only person. You see it is now close on midnight.”

I looked at the clock. Great heavens! What he said was correct. A whole evening had slipped by without my knowledge. He would, of course, have to stay the night. I suggested it to him.

“My dear fellow,” he replied, with an odd smile, “don’t worry about me. I am not dependent on any trains. I shall be home by two o’clock.”

I shivered—a draught of cold air had in all probability stolen through the cracks of the ill-fitting window-frames.

“You have on one of your queer moods, Martin,” I expostulated. “To be home by two o’clock you must fly! But proceed—at all costs, the story.”

Tristram raised an eyebrow, a true sign that something of special interest would follow.

“You know Bruges?” he began.

I nodded.

“Very well, then,” he went on. “Exactly a week ago Martin Tristram arrived there from Antwerp. The hour was late, the weather boisterous, Tristram was tired, and any lodging was better than none.

“Hailing a four-wheeler, he asked the Jehu to drive him to some decent hostel where the sheets were clean and the tariff moderate; and the fellow, gathering up the reins, took him at a snail’s pace to a mediæal-looking tavern in La Rue Croissante. You remember that street? Perhaps not! It is quite a back street, extremely narrow, very tortuous, and miserably lighted with a few gas-lamps of the usual antique Belgian order.

“Tristram was too tired, however, to be fastidious; he felt he could lie down and go to sleep anywhere, and what scruples he might have had were entirely dissipated by the appearance of the charming girl who answered the door.

“It is not expedient to dwell upon her—she plays a very minor part, if, indeed, any, in the story. Martin Tristram merely thought her pretty, and that, as I have said, fully reconciled him to taking up his quarters in the house.

“He has, as you are doubtless aware, a weakness for vivid colouring, and her bright yellow hair, carmine lips, and scarlet stockings struck him impressively as she led the way to his bed—chamber, where she somewhat reluctantly parted from him with a subtly attractive smile.

Left to himself, Martin sleepily examined his surroundings. The room, oak-panelled throughout, was long, low, and gloomy; an enormous, old-fashioned, empty fireplace occupied the centre of one of the walls; on the one side of it was an oak settee, on the other an equally ponderous black oak chest.

“Heavy oaken beams traversed the ceiling, and the sombre, funereal character of the room was further increased by a colossal and antique four-poster which, placed in the exact middle of the chamber, faced a gigantic mirror attached to grotesquely carved and excessively lofty sable supports.

“Viewed in the feeble, fluctuating candlelight, the latter seemed endowed with some peculiar and emphatically weird life—their glistening, polished surfaces threw a dozen and one fantastic but oddly human shadows on the boards, as at the same time they appeared in bewildering alternation to increase and diminish in stature.

“Tristram hastily undressed, and stretching himself between the blankets, prepared to go to sleep. Like yourself, and for a similar reason, he never sleeps on his left side. Accordingly he occupied the right portion only of the enormous bed.

“Why he did not fall asleep at once he could not explain; he fancied that it might be because he was overtired. This undoubtedly had something to do with it, as also had the remarkable noises—footfalls, creaks, and sighs—that came from every corner of the apartment the moment the light was out.

“He listened to these inexplicable sounds with increasing alarm until the sonorous clock from somewhere outside boomed ‘one,’ when, quite unaccountably, he fell asleep, awaking on the stroke of two from a dreadful nightmare.

“To his intense astonishment and consternation he was no longer alone in the bed—someone, or something, was lying by his side on the left-hand side of the bed.

“At first his thoughts reverted to the young lady with the scarlet stockings; then, a sensation of icy coldness, whilst speedily reassuring him with regard to her, struck him with the utmost terror. Who or what could it be?

“For some seconds he lay in breathless silence, too frightened even to stir, and panic-stricken lest the violent beating of his heart should arouse the mysterious visitor. But at length, impelled by an irresistible impulse, he sat up in bed and opened his eyes. The room was aglow with a phosphorescent light, and in the depths of the glittering mirror he saw a startling reproduction of the phantasmagoric four-poster.

“He instinctively felt that there was some extraordinary change in the supports, and that the suspicions he had at first entertained as to their semi-human properties had become verified; but, mercifully for his sanity, he found it impossible to look. His attention was immediately riveted on the object by his side, which he recognized with a thrill of surprise was a bronzed and bearded man of rather more than middle age, who appeared to be buried in the most profound sleep.

“The picture was so vividly portrayed in the glass that Tristram could see the gentle heaving of the bedclothes each time the sleeper breathed.

“Fascinated beyond measure at such an un-looked-for spectacle, and desirous of a closer inspection, Tristram, with a supreme effort, managed to tear away his eyes from the mirror and to glance at the bed, where, to his unmitigated astonishment, he saw no one.

“Quite unable to know what to make of the phenomenon, he again directed his gaze to the glass, and there right enough lay the sleeper.

“A cold shudder now ran through Tristram—he could no longer disguise from himself what he had in reality thought all along, that the room was haunted!

“The usual symptoms accompanying occult manifestations rapidly made themselves known. Tristram was constrained to stare at the luminous glitter before him in helpless expectation; to save his soul he could neither have stirred nor uttered the faintest ejaculation. He saw in the mirror the door of the bedroom slowly open, and a hideous, apish face peep stealthily in, not at him, but at the sleeper.

“Next he watched a figure, brown, hairy and lurid—the figure of some huge monkey—come crawling into the room on all-fours, and followed each of its tell-tale movements as, sidling up to its sleeping victim, it suddenly hurled itself at him, choking him to death with its long fingers.

“This was the climax—Tristram saw no more. The phosphorescent light died out, the mirror darkened, and on sinking back on his pillow, he realized with the wildest delight he was once again alone—his bedfellow had gone!

“Tristram was so unnerved by all that had happened that he made up his mind to leave the house at daybreak, a decision which, however, was altered on the appearance of the sun and the charming little girl in the red stockings.

“After breakfasting, Tristram strolled about the town, chancing to meet an old school-fellow, named Heriot, in the Rue de Mermadotte.

“Heriot had only recently come to Binges; he was dissatisfied with his lodgings, and readily fell in with Tristram’s suggestion that they should ‘dig’ together.

“The maid with the yellow hair was more pleasing than ever, Heriot fell desperately in love with her, and it was close on midnight before he could be persuaded to bid her good night and accompany Tristram to the bed-chamber.

“ ‘I wonder why she told me not to sleep on the left side of the bed?’ he said to Martin, as they began to undress.

Tristram glanced guiltily at the mirror. For reasons of his own he hadn't as much as hinted to Heriot what he had seen there the previous night, and he was not at all sure now that it might not have been a nightmare or an hallucination; anyhow, he would like to put it to the test before mentioning it to anyone, and Heriot, whom he knew to be a sceptic with regard to ghosts, was so strong and hale a man physically that, happen what might, he had no apprehensions whatever concerning him.

“Regretting that he was obliged to disobey the wishes of a lady, Heriot declared his preference for the left side of the bed, adding that if the maiden was so highly enamoured of him, she must put herself to the inconvenience of a few extra yards. ‘Infatuation like hers,’ he maintained, ‘should surely overcome all obstacles.’

“Nothing loth, Tristram gave in to him, and before many minutes had elapsed both men had fallen into a deep sleep.

“On the stroke of two Tristram awoke, perspiring horribly. The room was once again aglow with a phosphorescent light, and he felt the presence next to him of something cold and clammy.

“Unable to look elsewhere, he was again compelled to gaze in the mirror, where he saw, to his consternation and horror, no Heriot, but in his place the man with the bronzed face and bushy beard.

“He had hardly recovered from the shock occasioned by this discovery when the door surreptitiously opened, and the figure of the ape glided noiselessly in.

“Again he was temporarily paralysed, his limbs losing all their power of action and his tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth.

“The movements of the phantasm were entirely repetitious of the previous night. Approaching the bed on ‘all-fours,’ it leapt on its victim, the tragedy being accompanied this time by the most realistic chokings and gurgles, to all of which Tristram was obliged to listen in an agony of doubt and terror. The drama ended, Tristram was overcome by a sudden fit of drowsiness, and sinking back on to his pillow, slept till broad daylight.

“Anxious to question Heriot as to whether he, too, had been a witness of the ghostly transaction he touched him lightly on the shoulder. There was no reply. He touched him again, and still no answer. He touched him yet a third time, and as there was still no response, he leaned over his shoulder and peered into his face.

“Heriot was dead!”

* * *

“ ‘This is the fourth death in that bed within the last twelve months that I can swear to,’ the English doctor remarked to Tristram, as they walked down the street together, ‘and always from the same cause, failure of the heart due to a sudden shock. If you take my advice, you’ll clear out of the place at once.’

“Tristram thought so too, but before he went he had a talk with the girl in the red stockings.

“ ‘I can’t tell you all I know,’ she said to him, as he kissed her; ‘but I wouldn’t sleep a night in that room for a fortune, though I believe it’s quite safe if you keep on the right side of the bed. I wish your friend had done so, he was so handsome,’ and Tristram, not a little hurt, let go her hand, and made arrangements for the funeral.”

* * *

“And is that all?” I asked, as Tristram’s material body paused.

“It may be,” was the reply, “but that is why I’ve come to you. Don’t be gulled by Tristram into any investigations in that house. Enthusiasm for his research work makes him unconsciously callous, and if he once got you there he might, even against your better judgment, persuade you to sleep on the left side! Good night!”

I shook hands with him and he departed.

The following evening I heard it all again from himself—the real Tristram.

Needless to say, his concluding remarks differed essentially. With unbounded cordiality he urged me to accompany him back again to Bruges, and I—declined!

* * *

He wrote to me afterwards to say that he had discovered the history of the house—a man, a music-hall artist, answering to the description of the figure in the bed—had once lived there with a performing ape, an orang-outang, and happening to annoy the animal one day, the latter had killed him. The brute was eventually shot!

“This experience of mine,” Tristram added, is of the greatest value, for it has thoroughly convinced me of one thing at least—and that—that apes have spirits! And if that be so, so must all other kinds of animals. Of course they must.”

Phantasms of Cat and Baboon

A sister of a well-known author tells me there used to be a house called “The Swallows,” standing in two acres of land, close to a village near Basingstoke.

In 1840 a Mr. Bishop of Tring bought the house, which had long stood empty, and went to live there in 1841. After being there a fortnight two servants gave notice to leave, stating that the place was haunted by a large cat and a big baboon, which they constantly saw stealing down the staircases and passages. They also testified to hearing sounds as of somebody being strangled, proceeding from an empty attic near where they slept, and of the screams and groans of a number of people being horribly tortured in the cellars just underneath the dairy. On going to see what was the cause of the disturbances, nothing was ever visible. By and by other members of the household began to be harassed by similar manifestations. The news spread through the village, and crowds of people came to the house with lights and sticks, to see if they could witness anything.

One night, at about twelve o’clock, when several of the watchers were stationed on guard in the empty courtyard, they all saw the forms of a huge cat and a baboon rise from the closed grating of the large cellar under the old dairy, rush past them, and disappear in a dark angle of the walls. The same figures were repeatedly seen afterwards by many other persons. Early in December, 1841, Mr. Bishop, hearing fearful screams, accompanied by deep and hoarse jabberings, apparently coming from the top of the house, rushed upstairs, whereupon all was instantly silent, and he could discover nothing. After that, Mr. Bishop set to work to get rid of the house, and was fortunate enough to find as a purchaser a retired colonel, who was soon, however, scared out of it. This was in 1842; it was soon after pulled down. The ground was used for the erection of cottages; but the hauntings being transferred to them, they were speedily

vacated, and no one ever daring to inhabit them, they were eventually demolished, the site on which they stood being converted into allotments.

There were many theories as to the history of "The Swallows"; one being that a highwayman, known as Steeplechase Jock, the son of a Scottish chieftain, had once plied his trade there and murdered many people, whose bodies were supposed to be buried somewhere on or near the premises. He was said to have had a terrible though decidedly unorthodox ending—falling into a vat of boiling tar, a raving madman. But what were the phantasms of the ape and cat? Were they the earth-bound spirits of the highwayman and his horse, or simply the spirits of two animals? Though either theory is possible, I am inclined to favour the former.

Psychic Bears

Edmund Lenthal Swifte, appointed in 1814 Keeper of the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London, refers in an article in *Notes and Queries*, 1860, to various unaccountable phenomena happening in the Tower during his residence there. He says that one night in the Jewel Office, one of the sentries was alarmed by a figure like a huge bear issuing from underneath the Jewel Room door. He thrust at it with his bayonet, which, going right through it, stuck in the doorway, whereupon he dropped in a fit, and was carried senseless to the guard-room. When on the morrow Mr. Swifte saw the soldier in the guard-room, his fellow-sentinel was also there, and the latter testified to having seen his comrade, before the alarm, quiet and active, and in full possession of his faculties. He was now, so Mr. Swifte added, changed almost beyond recognition, and died the following day.

Mr. George Offer, in referring to this incident, alludes to queer noises having been heard at the time the figure appeared. Presuming that the sentinel was not the victim of an hallucination, the question arises as to the kind of spirit that he saw. The bear, judging by cases that have been told me, is by no means an uncommon occult phenomenon. The difficulty is how to classify it, since, upon no question appertaining to the psychic, can one dogmatize. To quote from a clever poem that appeared in the January number of the *Occult Review*, to pretend one knows anything definite about the immaterial world is all "swank" At the most we—Parsons, Priests, Theosophists, Christian Scientists, Psychical Research Professors,—at the most can only speculate. Nothing—nothing whatsoever, beyond the bare fact that there are phenomena, unaccountable by physical laws, has as yet been discovered. All the time and energy and space that have been devoted by scientists to the investigation of spiritualism and to making tests in automatic writing are, in my opinion—and, I believe, I speak for the man in the street—hopelessly futile. No one, who has ever really experienced spontaneous ghostly manifestations, could for one moment believe in the genuineness of the phenomena produced at seances. They have never deceived me, and I am of the opinion spirits cannot be convoked to order, either through a so-called medium falling into a so-called trance, through table-turning, automatic writing, or anything else. If a spirit comes, it will come either voluntarily, or in obedience to some Unknown Power—and certainly neither to satisfy the curiosity of a crowd of sensation-loving men and women, nor to be analysed by some cold, calculating, presumptuous Professor of Physics whose proper sphere is the laboratory.

But to proceed. The phenomenon of the big bear, provided again it was really objective, may have been the phantasm of some prehistoric creature whose bones lie interred beneath the Tower; for we know the Valley of the Thames was infested with giant reptiles and quadrupeds of all kinds (I incline to this theory); or it may have been a Vice-Elemental, or—the phantasm of? a

human being who lived a purely animal life, and whose spirit would naturally take the form most closely resembling it.

Judging by the number of experiences related to me, hauntings by phantom hares and rabbits would appear to be far from uncommon. There is this difference, however, between the hauntings by the two species of animal—phantom hares usually portend death or some grave catastrophe, either to the witness himself, or to someone immediately associated with him; whereas phantom rabbits are seldom prophetic, and may generally be looked upon merely as the earthbound spirits of some poor rabbits that have met with untimely ends.

Hauntings by a White Rabbit

Mr. W. T. Stead, in his *Real Ghost Stories*, gives an account of the hauntings by a phantom rabbit in a house in Road. He does not, however, mention any locality. After describing several of the phenomena which disturbed various occupants of the place, he goes on to say, in the language of Mrs. A., who narrates the incident:—

“A dog which lay on the rug also heard the sounds, for he pricked up his ears and barked. Without a moment’s delay she flew to the door, calling the dog to follow her, intending as she did so to open the hall door and call for assistance, but the dog, though an excellent house dog, crouched at her feet and whined, but would not follow her up the stairs, so she carried him up in her arms, and reaching the door, called for assistance; when, however, the dining-room doors were opened, the rooms were in perfect quiet and destitute of any signs of life.”

The behaviour of the dog here accords exactly with the behaviour of dogs I have had in haunted houses, and substantiates my theory that dogs are excellent psychic barometers.

“After the family had been in the house a few weeks, a white rabbit made its appearance. This uncanny animal would suddenly appear in a room in which members of the family were seated, and after gliding round and slipping under chairs and tables, would disappear through a brick wall as easily as through an open door.

This is the invariable trick of ghosts; they seldom, however, open doors. Mrs. A. adds:—

Some years have now elapsed since the incident I have now related took place, and again, in response to orders given by the enterprising landlord of the property, long-closed doors and windows have been thrown open, and painters and paperhangers have brought their skill to bear upon gruesome rooms and halls; the house is once more inhabited, this time by a widow lady and some grown-up sons. These tenants come from a distance, and are entirely strangers both to the neighbourhood and the former history of the house, but, to use her own words, the mistress ‘cannot understand what ails the house,’ her sons insist on sleeping together in one room, and the quiet of the house is constantly being broken by the erratic appearances of a large white rabbit, which the inmates are frequently engaged chasing, but are never able to find.”

Mr. Stead offers no explanation. I can see no other conclusion, however, than that his ghost was the actual phantasm of some rabbit that had been done to death in the house, probably by the boy whose apparition was among the other manifestations seen there.

John Wesley’s Ghost

In his article “More Glimpses of the Unseen” (*Occult Review*, October, 1906), Mr. Reginald B. Span writes:—

“During the extraordinary manifestations which occurred in the house of John Wesley at Epworth, the phantom forms of two animals appeared, one being a large white rabbit, and the other an animal like a badger, which used to appear in the bedrooms and run about and then disappear, whilst the various bangings and rappings were at their loudest.”

This is the only case I have ever come across of the ghost of a badger. I think it must be unique. Mr. Span adds: “Many strange and inexplicable things occurred in that house which were not due to any natural cause or reason. I remember that loud rappings used to sound round my room at nights, even when I had a light burning. I was often awakened by rappings on the floor of my bedroom, which would then sound on the walls and furniture, and were heard by others occupying rooms some distance off.” This, again, is most interesting, as ghosts seldom visit lighted rooms. Mr. Span continues:—

“It was in the afternoon in broad daylight when my brother saw this mysterious animal.

“He was in the drawing-room alone, and as he was standing at one side of the room looking at a picture on the walls, he heard a noise behind him, and found, on looking round, that a sofa which generally lay against one of the walls had been lifted by some unknown power into the middle of the room, at the same time he saw an animal like a rabbit run from under the sofa across the room and disappear into the wall. He searched everywhere for the animal, which could not have escaped from the room, as the doors and window were closed, but was unable to find any sign of one or any hole whereby one might have passed out.”

The Psychic Faculty in Hares and Rabbits

Hares and rabbits are very susceptible to the superphysical, the presence of which they scent in the same manner as do horses and dogs.

I have known them to evince the greatest symptoms of terror when brought into a haunted house.