

The account given by the latter differed, in some material particulars, from that of Mirabel. He had enjoyed, indeed, some casual acquaintance with that gentleman. They had dined together, once, at his (Auguier's) house. He had accepted the hospitality of Mons. Mirabel, as often at a tavern. He had advanced that gentleman a crown. Mirabel had spoken of a ghost and money, and had talked of placing the latter in his charge. At present, he had however, limited his confidence to the deposit of two empty bags and a red ribbon. All the other allegations he indignantly denied.

Deeply impressed with the marvellous history, the Lieutenant-Criminal decided that the matter should be sifted to the bottom. The process continued.

Magdalene Paret deposed that Mirabel had called on her one day, looking pale and agitated, and declared that he had been holding converse with an apparition, which had revealed to him the situation of some buried treasure. She was present when the parcel, apparently containing money, was found; and she remembered Mirabel stating, subsequently, that he had placed it for safety in the hands of Auguier.

Gaspard Deleuil repeated the narrative told by Mirabel of the ghost and the gold adding, that he had met him, on the seventh of Stember, near the Porte des Fainéants (Idlers'-gate), carrying two bags; that he saw him hand them over to a man who appeared to be waiting for him, and saw him receive in return a piece of paper; and that, on rejoining him, Mirabel stated that he had entrusted to Auguier some newly-found treasure, taking his acknowledgment for the same.

François Fournière, the third witness, confirmed the relation of the spectre and the money by Mirabel, who appeared deeply stricken by the extraordinary favour shown him in this supernatural visitation. On his pressing for a sight of the treasure Mirabel took the witness to his chamber, and, removing some bricks from the chimney, displayed a large bag filled with gold coin. Having afterwards heard of Auguier's alleged dishonesty, the witness reproached him with it: when he became deadly pale, and entreated that the subject might be dropped.

Other witnesses deposed to the sudden intimacy, more noticeable on account of their difference of station, that had sprung up between Mirabel and Auguier, dating from the period of the discovery of the gold. Sundry experts bore testimony to the resemblance of the writing of the receipt, signed "Louis Auguier," to the autograph of the latter.

The ghost and Mirabel carried the day. In fact, it was a mere walk over the course. The Lieutenant-Criminal, entirely with them, decreed that Auguier should be arrested, and submitted to the "question."

Appal, however, was made to the parliament of Aix, and the matter began to excite considerable notice. Persons were found to censure the ready credence given by the Lieutenant-Criminal to the story of the ghost, and, the case coming to hearing, an able advocate of the day buckled on his armour to do battle with the shade.

Is it creditable (he asked) that a spirit should quit the repose of another world expressly to inform Mons. de Mirabel, a gentleman with whose existence it seems to have had no previous acquaintance, of the hiding-place of this treasure? How officious must be the nature of that ghost which should select, in a caprice, a man it did not personally know, to enrich him with a treasure, for the due enjoyment of which his social position made him unfit? How slight must be the prescience of a spirit that could not foresee that Mirabel would be deprived of his treasure by the first knave he had the misfortune to trust! There could be no such spirit, be assured.

If there were no spectre, there was, according to all human probability, no gold; and, if no gold, no ground for the accusation of Auguier.

Descending to earthly reasoning, was it likely that Mirabel should entrust to Auguier a treasure of whose actual value he knew nothing, or that he should take in return a receipt he had not seen the giver write? How was it, pray,

that the woman Paret and Gaspard Deleuil demanded no share in the treasure so discovered? Were these excellent persons superior to the common weakness of humanity—curiosity, and the lust of gain? The witness Paret certainly saw the discovery of a parcel; but the rest of her evidence was hearsay. The witness Deleuil saw the exchange of bags and paper; but all the rest—spectre included—was heresy. And when the witness Fournière declared that Auguier being taxed with robbery, turned deadly pale, Auguier frankly—nay proudly—confessed it, stricken as that honourable burgher was with horror at a charge so foul and unexpected! The climax of injustice was surely reached when this respected, estimable, substantial merchant of France's proudest seaport, was, on the uncorroborated word of a ghost (for to this it must be traced), submitted to the torture. In criminal, even more than in civil, cases, that which seems repugnant to probability is reputed false. Let a hundred witnesses testify to that which contrary to nature and the light of reason, their evidence is worthless and vain. Take, as example, the famous tradition which gives an additional interest to the noble house of Lusignan, and say that certain persons swore that the fairy Melusina, who had the tail of a serpent, and bathed every Saturday in a marble cellar, had revealed a treasure to some weak idiot, who was immediately robbed of it by another. What would be thought of a judge who should, on such testimony, condemn the accused? Is it on such a fairy fable that Auguier, the just, the respected family-father, the loyal patriot, must be adjudged guilty? Never! Such justice might be found at Cathay, might prevail among the yet undiscovered islands of the Eastern Archipelago, but in France—no. There remained, in short, but one manifest duty to the court, namely, to acquit, with all honour, this much-abused man, and to render him such noble compensation as the injuries he had suffered deserved.

It was now, however, the phantom's innings. Turning on the court the right side of nature, the spectre's advocate pointed out that the gist of Auguier's defence consisted of a narrow and senseless satire upon supernatural visitations, involving a most unauthorized assumption that such things did never occur. Was it intended to contradict Holy Writ? To deny a truth attested by Scripture, by the Fathers of the Church, by very wide experience and testimony; finally, by the Faculty of Theology of Paris? The speaker here adduced the appearance of the Prophet Samuel at Endor (of which Le Burn remarked that it was, past question a work commenced by the power of evil, but taken from his hand and completed by a stronger than he); that of the bodies of buried saints after our Lord's resurrection; and that of Saint Felix, who, according to Saint Augustine, appeared to the besieged inhabitants of Nola. But, say that any doubts could rationally exist, were they not completely set at rest by a recent decision of the Faculty of Theology? "Desiring," says this enlightened decree, "to satisfy pious scruples, we have, after a very careful consideration of the subject, resolved that the spirits of the departed may and do, by supernatural power and divine license, reappear unto the living." And this opinion was in conformity with that pronounced at Sorbonne two centuries before.

However, it was not dogmatically affirmed that the spirit which had evinced this interest in Mirabel was the ghost of any departed person. It might have been a spirit, whether good or evil, of another kind. That such a spirit can assume the human form few will deny, when they recall that the Apostles held that belief, mistaking their Lord, walking on the waves of Galilee, for such an one. The weight of probability, nevertheless, inclines to the side of this singular apparition being, as was first suggested, the spirit of one deceased—perhaps, a remote ancestor of Mirabel—perhaps, one who, in this life, sympathised with honest endeavour, and sought to endow the struggling toiling peasant with the means of rest and ease. And, with regard to its reappearance, a striking modern instance seemed pertinent to the question at issue. The

Marquis de Rambouillet and the Sieur de Prècy, aged respectively twenty-five and thirty, were intimate friends. Speaking one day of the prospect of a future state of being, their conversation ended with a mutual compact that the first who died should reveal himself to the survivor. Three months afterwards the marquis went to the war in Flanders, while De Prècy, sick with fever, remained in Paris. One night, the latter, while in bed, heard the curtains move, and turning, recognised his friend, in buff-coat and riding-boots, standing by the bed. Starting up, he attempted to embrace the visitor, but the latter evading him, drew apart, and, in a solemn tone, informed him that such greetings were no longer fitting, that he had been slain the previous night in a skirmish, that he had come to redeem his promise, and to announce to his friend that all that had been spoken of a world to come was most certainly true, and that it behoved him (De Prècy) to amend his life without delay, as he would himself be slain within a very brief period. Finding his hearer still incredulous, the marquis exhibited a deadly wound below the breast, and immediately disappeared. The arrival of a post from Flanders confirmed the vision. The marquis had been slain in the manner mentioned. De Prècy himself fell in the civil war, then impending.

(The speaker here cited a number of kindred examples belonging to this period, such as, in later days, have found parallels in the well-known stories of Lord Tyrone and Lady Betty Cobb, Lord Lyttelton and M. P. Andrews, Prince Dolgorouki and Apraxin, the ex-queen of Etruria and Chipanti, with a long list of similar cases, and then addressed himself to the terrestrial facts.)

It was proved by Magdalene Paret that the treasure was actually found. By the witness, Deleuil, it was traced into the possession of Auguier. By other witnesses, it was shown that Auguier had made use of many articles to obtain the custody of the gold, cultivating a romantic attachment for this humble labourer, and seeking to inspire him with fears for his personal safety, so long as he retained possession of so large a sum. Upon the whole, unless it had been practicable to secure the attendance and oral testimony of the very phantom itself, the claim of Mirabel could hardly address itself more forcibly to the favourable judgment of the court.

It may be that this little deficiency in the chain of evidence weighed more than was expected with the parliament of Aix. At all events, they demanded further proof; and the peasant, Benard, was brought forward, and underwent a very rigid examination.

He stated that, on a certain day in May, Mirabel informed him that a ghost had revealed to him the existence of some secreted treasure. That, on the following morning, they proceeded together to the spot indicated by the apparition, but found no money. That he laughed at Mirabel, snapped his fingers at the story, and went away. That he nevertheless agreed to a further search—the witness, Magdalene Paret being present—but again found nothing. That, subsequently, Mirabel declared he had discovered eighteen pieces of gold, then twelve, finally, thirty-five, but displayed none of them. That Mirabel had, however, sent by him twenty sols to a priest, to say masses for the soul of the departed, to whom he owed so much; and that he had spoken of handing over the treasure to Auguier, and taking the latter's receipt, which certainly seemed to be the same now produced, signed "Louis Auguier."

The matter was obscure and puzzling. There was, by this time, no question that this large sum of money had, somehow, come into the possession of Mirabel. He could not, by skill or labour, have realised the hundredth part of it. No one had been robbed, for the notoriety of the case would at once have produced the loser. If Mirabel had found it (and there were the witnesses who proved the discovery many feet below the surface, in an undisturbed corner of the terrace), who revealed the precious deposit to this poor simple clown? The scale was in-