

# Stans (Switzerland) Poltergeist

This is a translation of the full text of a pamphlet published by Melchior Joller (1818–65) under the title *Darstellung selbsterlebter mystischer Erscheinungen* (Narrative of personally experienced strange phenomena), describing events that took place in his household in the town of Stans, a small town near Lake Lucerne in Switzerland, over a period of two years from 1860. The pamphlet is reprinted in Fanny Moser, *Spuk: Irrglaube oder Wahrglaube?* (Baden-bei-Zurich, 1950).

## Melchior Joller (1818–65)

Joller was a distinguished citizen, a lawyer, journalist and member of the National Council (the lower house of parliament). He lived in a substantial house, inherited from his parents, with his wife, four sons and three daughters, and one or more maids. Beginning in 1860, Joller heard of incidents involving ghostly shapes and rapping noises reported by members of the household, but paid little attention to them. The phenomena began in earnest in August 1882, and although Joller at first refused to believe what he was hearing, he eventually started to experience the rapping noises for himself. Thorough investigation failed to reveal the cause. The phenomena escalated in frequency, variety and strength over the next few weeks. Windows and doors slammed repeatedly; furniture was hurled about; stones were thrown; there were ghostly noises and footsteps; apparitional forms were sometimes seen. The repeated disturbances attracted the attention of newspaper reporters and the the house and its occupants became the centre of public gossip, scandal and ridicule. In October, the family fled to Zurich, never to return. Joller himself died three years later, his career and reputation ruined.

The narrative begins with a description of the house, paraphrased below. The rest of the text is given in full.

## The Joller House

The ground floor was not a living space but used as a sort of all-purpose out-house, for laundry, dairy, wine-press and suchlike. It was enclosed by thick brick or stone walls with few windows. The rest of the house was of wood, and rested on these foundations. Outside steps led up to the front door on the first floor, where there was a porch, a hallway leading to the main living room, the kitchen and a pantry, a bedroom and a small corridor leading to a bathroom. The second floor contained Joller's study and four bedrooms linked by a corridor. The attic space included an upstairs living room, a drying room, two small bedrooms - one occupied by a maidservant - and some storage space.]

## Autumn 1860

It was first noticed - as far as we could recall, not knowing what it was at the time - by our housemaid around the beginning of autumn 1860. She slept in a third floor attic room above the bedchambers, and one morning she told us she had heard and

felt a distinct knocking on her bedhead during the night. She was sure it meant someone in the house was about to die. I rebuked her for this superstition and told her firmly to keep such things to herself, putting the knocking down to a hallucination, although she stuck absolutely to her conviction. The matter was soon forgotten, the more so as everyone remained perfectly well.

Returning from a business trip a few weeks later, my wife told me that she and our second daughter Melanie had experienced something extraordinary that night. Shortly after going to bed they were woken by a rapid knocking on the table next to the bed, and wondered what on earth it could be. As they were talking the knocking began again, some 10 to 15 quick blows that started strong and gradually faded. Astonishment now changed to fear: they demanded it knock if it had something to communicate, at which it replied in the same way. They were terrified and waited in dread for the morning. They too they were inclined to see it as a 'warning' of something to come, and were strengthened in this idea by the death of a female friend some days later. Personally I was sure the cause would be found in the complicated construction of the table, perhaps in the loosening of a joint, as I could not begin to imagine how an inanimate object could make knocks.

## 1861

A striking incident occurred at the beginning of June 1861 involving my second youngest son Oscar, then nine years old, tough and fearless. One evening he went into a little kitchen room on the third floor, which at that time was used to store logs. As he didn't turn up for supper, we went to look for him and eventually found him lying on the pile of logs in a deep swoon; it was some considerable time before we could bring him round. When he was able to speak he told us that shortly after entering the room there had been three knocks on the door. He paid them little attention, but then suddenly the door opened and a white formless shape came in - at which he passed out. I took this to be an effect of the imagination, following from the frightening knocks which themselves could have a quite natural origin, and once the boy had recovered we gave no more thought to it.

Around this time the boys who slept in the bedroom above the first floor living room complained they often heard a noise at night, as if something was in the upstairs living room or hallway above them, knocking on the floor. I recalled later that they had called me into their bedroom one day to hear this odd knocking, and I really did hear something that sounded like a dog scratching with its foot on the floor. So I went upstairs, but found the door closed, and could not discover the cause, either in the room or anywhere else. I told the boys it was doubtless something to do with cats, rats or a bird in the roof; after this, the disturbance was often heard but no longer heeded. Again, I was firmly of the view that such noises could be traced to a quite natural cause, and as the noises tailed off I remembered having frequently heard something similar in my study during the day, perhaps for the past two years even.

In the late summer the housemaid complained that in the evenings when she was in the kitchen, cleaning shoes on the stairs, as she often did, she was frightened at seeing grey forms downstairs in the dark, on the ground floor. One of them once

even came up to where she was sitting and then vanished. Then one morning she claimed that during the night someone had gone up the stairs, past her room on the third floor, and onto the stairs leading to the upstairs living room. From there her name was called distinctly several times. Then it went up and down the stairs three times and finally entered the living room, where she heard a deep sobbing that went on for the longest time. My wife told her not to talk about such imaginary things to the children, and personally I considered her to be a most superstitious person.

Shortly afterwards - this was still in August - my youngest daughter Henriette, then around eleven years old, found herself alone one sunny afternoon in her bedroom, which was situated above the main living room. She was preparing for exams and was leaning by an open window with her face buried in a schoolbook. Looking up, she saw a cheerful-looking child coming towards her, half-clothed. At first she took him for her little brother, but then the form changed aspect and suddenly disappeared right in front of her. This terrified her and she ran from the room. I learned about the incident only some days later, when I was trying to get Henriette to tell me why she wouldn't go into the living room on her own. However I managed eventually to reassure her by persuading her that it was just her imagination.

In October we decided that we would manage the housework on our own in future, and accordingly the housemaid was dismissed, and her place taken by a 13-year-old girl for basic duties.

## **1862**

From now until the summer of the following year we don't remember noticing anything unusual. However at this time the two boys who slept in the room overlooking the garden told me they often heard a strong scratching on the wall. Also upstairs at night a distinct coming and going could be heard that sounded like a big dog, as well as knocking here and there on the floor and walls. My insistence that all this had a natural cause managed to keep fear from the children until

### **Assumption Day, 15 August**

I had business to attend to in Lucerne, and set out at around seven in the morning with my wife and eldest son Robert, returning home very late. On the following morning my children wanted to tell me about some unusual incidents that had shocked and frightened them through the whole day. Without really listening to them I rebuked them for their superstitious fear and hinted that I would take a rod to their backsides if I heard any more silliness. Reluctantly they withdrew, muttering that father would not believe anything. From now on nothing of the kind was said in front of me, and it was only later when I myself had become convinced that something was going on that I found out what had happened. Here it is, as accurately as I can make it:

During the course of the morning 14-year-old Melanie was alone with the housemaid when she mentioned that her younger sister Henriette often heard a peculiar knocking on the wall of the bathroom, so the two of them went there to look. Henriette came by at that moment and confirmed what she had said. But

Melanie couldn't hear anything and wouldn't believe it, calling out loudly 'in God's name, if something is there, then come out and knock!' And immediately there was a knocking, like someone rapping with his knuckles. Then Oscar turned up, and hearing what had happened made the same demand, and again it immediately answered with the same knocking. When their older brother Edward heard what was going on he too rushed up and made the same request and for the third time it gave the same answer.

Terrified they flew headlong out of the house and sat on the bottom of the front steps. At this point an oval stone, roughly the size of a fist, flew between Melanie and the youngest boy Alfred, who was standing quite near to her, however without hurting either of them. After a while they plucked up enough courage to go back in and get their lunch, finding all the cupboard doors in the downstairs living room and chamber, big and small, wide open. They closed them and went into the kitchen, from where they saw that the door of my study was also standing open. They closed it and took out the key, but soon it was standing wide open again. Thinking it might be because of an air current, they closed the windows and shut the doors firmly, and then stood by the front door, to see whether it would open again. Nothing happened, but the moment they turned to go the door stood wide open. Again they closed it. Now they clearly heard the muffled steps of someone coming down the stairs. Then the bedroom door opened again; they closed it and bolted it but the moment their backs were turned it opened again. As things were getting ever more peculiar, they again left the house.

It was time for lunch so the maid went back into the kitchen. Looking towards the corridor, she thought she saw someone hanging a sheet from one corner down the stairs from the upstairs banister. Observing more closely, it seemed to be rounded off at the top and with two long black marks at the bottom, like the tips of two feet. Shocked, she called out, "who's there?" With a sound like "Wuh", the form suddenly vanished, at which the girl went white and stumbled outside screaming.

My oldest daughter Emaline now came home, and the maid had recovered sufficiently to fetch the meal from the kitchen quickly and bring it outside. The children ate in the garden under the hazelnut tree, something which rarely happened. Just as the maid was taking the dishes back into the kitchen, and as she was going through the porch, she saw and heard the doors and windows in my room, the terrace and garden rooms and the door leading to the veranda, as well as the corridor - all suddenly spring open together. The opening of the windows was seen also by the children from under the tree. After quickly washing up the girl ran outside again.

Now the children hung around the barn, where my workers were busy with the hay harvest, creeping every so often towards the house to see what was going on. They almost always heard noises, even from the barn some forty or fifty steps away. Once the maid and Edward ventured up the steps, from where they could see through the window into the living room, which, like the two windows underneath, again stood open, despite having been bolted from inside. As they looked they saw a chair slide of its own accord from its place and then in a flash turn upside down with its legs in the air. Everyone standing below heard the commotion and sprang away in terror.

Another time, standing in front of the house, they clearly heard through the open bedroom window a deep, groaning voice say, in tones of unbearable melancholy, 'Even when no one at all is around!' - with heavy emphasis on the word all. From the barn the children kept seeing formless shapes moving around my room.

Later, when Melanie was standing at the western corner of the house and Edward was by the well, halfway between the house and the barn, they heard a peculiar music appearing to come from the upstairs living room. A melancholy voice, accompanied by a single-tone string, was whimpering a slow movement with the tune of Camille's prayer in Zampa [a comic opera by Ferdinand Hérold].

Eventually my tenant's wife - they lived with their three small children in an outside annex - came by, so they asked her to go inside with them to help find out what was going on. There, on the floor in front of the grindstone they discovered a little snow-white picture, so like a death's head in the smallest detail that an engraver could not have bettered it. It was no bigger than a small coin, and looked as if it had been poured on. They scrutinized it at length: the eye holes were deeply set and from one side it was shaded blue, appearing to grin at them; the nose bone and apertures were sharply represented, as were two teeth in the jaw. They could not see what the picture was made of, however; shortly it grew darker and lost its shape. Now they heard a big commotion in the rooms and went outside again.

As they were gathered together under a tree, an old crone hobbled up to ask if this was the house where Veronica Gut had lived after the accident. The children said it was, and offered her some fruit. She told them that she had known their great grandmother well, and had tolled the bell in St Joder's chapel after their grandfather's four sisters drowned in the Aawasser [a nearby river]. It seemed only yesterday that she and her brother Sigrist suspected the worst. As night came on a man dressed in white and carrying a lamp came to the chapel, a sign that the bell was about to toll for someone. But when her brother went over he couldn't see anyone, either nearby or far off, and he this really disturbed him. In the morning they heard the tragic news, and the death bell tolled for some time. Thanking them and giving them all best wishes the old woman then went on her way.

Between four and five o'clock they lit a fire in the ground floor area to heat a kettle, and at about seven o'clock the maid lit the kitchen range to prepare supper. Suddenly it became light in the chimney, and, looking upwards she saw coming down it an object shaped like a sugar-loaf giving off lots of little blue flames. This object disintegrated inside the chimney, and as it did so it doused the fire with a great deal of water; however a piece also fell into the adjoining chimney to the ground floor, just where Edward at that moment was scraping soot off the kettle. Both he and the maid simultaneously cried out, 'The chimney is on fire!' Edward found the kettle, and the maid her jacket, covered with the thousand sharp little flames that a moment ago had seemed to dissolve into water. At all this they lost their heads completely, and when Frau Joller returned about 8.30 pm she found them in the annex outside, weeping with terror.

Later I heard from relation in Germany that on the very same day he and his whole family had experienced a similar inexplicable incident. A strong knocking had started up in a nearby room, repeating several times and so loudly that the landlord

came by to find out what was causing such a racket. However most careful search produced not a trace of a cause. Similar incidents were said also to have occurred in other houses.

The reprimand that I delivered the following morning, as I mentioned earlier, at least meant that nothing more was said about it in my presence

## **Tuesday 19 August**

Just as I was arriving home on the following Tuesday my wife called down from the corridor for me to come and listen to a peculiar knocking on the wall. I went somewhat reluctantly, and heard from the pantry back wall a repeated rapping of ten to twelve peculiar blows that speeded up towards the end, as if someone was tapping nervously on a door with his finger, demanding instant admission. The rappings were repeated many times after short pauses. Putting my ear to the wall I found the precise location of the sounds, but then realised they frequently moved. I assumed it must be a living creature such as a rat, and hit the wall to frighten it away. Instead it replied, more than once, with the same tapping sound, ending with one or two more powerful blows as if with a fist.

I had a candle brought, went into the little room and searched it with the greatest care to try to find some trace of the disturbing agency. While I was doing so the rappings continued as before, and my investigation remained without result. Listening longer and more carefully, I now perceived the raps coming from other places in the corridor. Stubbornly insisting that the cause could be found, I reassured my family with a promise to carry out a thorough investigation of the entire house the following morning.

After supper I got out Zschokkes' Family Prayerbook from my bookshelf and read out the chapter on 'The Power of Superstition'. Straight away there began a knocking on the living room floor, in the same manner as before, and it frequently interrupted my reading, although I tried, firmly but in vain, to continue. Now and again there was a strong blow - did I think this too was a rat, my children could not resist asking. Then there was a knock on the living room door - the first time this had happened - as if someone was outside demanding admittance.

Convinced that someone was play-acting a ghost, I took a candle and a sharp knife and proceeded to the ground floor, where I made a careful search. I knew all the rooms like the back of my hand, especially the cellar beneath the living room and all the containers stored there. While I was investigating the knocking went on above me, but without my being able to discover the cause. I repeated the search first with light and then without it, creeping around quietly, but could not find anything amiss in the slightest apart from the noise of the knocking.

As it was now becoming somewhat quieter, I told my children to say their prayers and go to bed. The two oldest boys Robert and Edward went to their bedroom above the living room, while the other children, still very much afraid, all went together into the big chamber, where the maid would watch over them. My wife and I went to bed, but hardly had we arrived when a frightened cry came from the chamber; it was the children complaining of a loud noise coming from their bed. Apart from the

two oldest boys, who had gone to sleep, the entire family was now gathered in the big chamber.

After a moment I sat on the edge of the bed. The tapping began again in the west corner of the room, came nearer and nearer, then thumped with strong and heavy blows on the footboard of the bedstead, and then on the chair standing right next to me. I quickly struck a light, searched everywhere in vain, and found all the doors and windows closed. A longer pause followed. I put the candle out and sat down on the footboard of the bedstead. After a while the tapping on the wall began again, also the blows on the footboard which I held with my left hand - they were so strong that it shook violently, as did the whole bedstead, yet I felt nothing more than a light touch on the index finger of my left hand. The sounds repeated while the candle was alight without my being able to see anything at all. At last, getting on for midnight, things grew quieter, and by and by I fell asleep.

### **Wednesday 20 August**

The din began again at six o'clock in the morning and spread all over the house. It started underneath the living room door, two or three quick blows as if made by a heavy wooden mallet; this was followed by a heavy knocking on the doors - the one to the living room, the one leading from the kitchen to the chamber, and the one from the kitchen to the little room - and in various places upstairs, with short pauses between. The knocking on the doors sometimes ended with strong blows.

Desperate for an explanation I searched through the whole house. I had been born there in 1818, and apart from my years at university lived there permanently. With a child's natural curiosity had paid close attention to all the maintenance work and was familiar with literally every knook and cranny. For all that, my careful search was in vain and revealed nothing suspicious. All the time the racket was going on all over the house - now here, now there; now upstairs, now downstairs - with increasing strength.

At this point I narrowed my investigation down to the phenomenon itself, which seemed to occur at short intervals mainly on the doors and floors of the living room and lower bedroom. I placed my hand on the door, variously on the inside and outside, and on the upper half around which the blows were perceptible, yet without feeling anything on my hand, not even a draught or disturbance of air. I also held the door half-open, so as to observe it from both sides; the rapping occurred again without my perceiving any cause.

I went and stood outside while my family observed from inside - for a long time in vain. Eventually there were such mighty thumps on the door between the bedroom and the kitchen that each time, being made of soft pinewood, it visibly bent. At around ten o'clock I went and stood by the bedroom door and gently pulled back the bolt so that the door was only just held on the latch. My wife stood with a boy some twenty-two paces behind me, in such a position that when the door opened she could see the kitchen window in the background, whilst I could only see the dark kitchen wall. After a little while the door was so powerfully struck that it flew open and hit the wall. In that moment I saw - I was certain of it - something dark, although I couldn't make out its shape precisely against the dim background. It

shot like lightning from the door to the side of the chimney. Rushing after it, and before I could say a word, my wife and son called out that they had just clearly seen a dark-brown half arm bone dart back from the door, and their assertions were so quick and simultaneous there could be no doubt this apparition had passed in front of them. I had always held to the Biblical saying that 'spirit lacks flesh and blood', but this crippled it. I made a stringent search of the chimney, but found it empty, with no mark on the fallen soot, nor any other clue.

Finally I called on my oldest sister to find out if perhaps earlier, unknown to me, something similar had occurred in the house. She was shocked by the phenomena and declared she had never heard of anything of the kind before. Meanwhile the housemaid, engaged with her chores in the kitchen, was constantly flying into the living room: one time she claimed she had just at that moment clearly heard someone coming down the stairs and three times she heard a deep voice groaning, 'have pity on me', but when she looked she saw no one. Soon she was back again, claiming to have seen a transparent little grey cloud that floated in through the partly-open kitchen window, crossed the room and pounded on the door to the bedroom. Meanwhile our tenant's wife also came by. As I was carrying on my search, with the blows pounding ever more strongly on the floors and doors, everyone was becoming increasingly frightened and asked me, as the episcopal commissioner Niedgerberger was away just then, to let the local priest be told of it. I assented readily, as I knew the old man to be as richly endowed with scientific understanding as with experience, and no less as a mystical visionary.

The priest was kind enough to accept the invitation in the afternoon. I told him the whole story; he said nothing like that had happened to him in his whole life. He observed the phenomenon closely and at length, but ended up likewise unable to shed any light on the problem. He was no expert, he pointed out; he thought the best thing would be for knowledgeable men to carry out a thorough investigation. But it should be done only with extreme care, he advised, and the family should be as discreet as possible, so that the noises should not become public. He then gave the house the customary blessing and left. As evening came on the racket started up violently and only subsided at around 10 pm.

It then occurred to me to see what I could find on the subject in my library, and I got down a dusty college text on experimental physics by Professor Sieber in Munich, but without finding a key to the riddle. All the time I kept hoping for a quiet end to these goings-on.

### **Thursday 21 August**

The disturbances began in the early morning at a high level of intensity and went on throughout the morning at short intervals. The situation was becoming ever more distressing. I was no longer able to calm people down, and with my whole family trembling in abject terror at every new violent blow, I feared the worst consequences of staying there any longer. I also noticed people gathering on the road outside and taking account of the noises. When a man came to invite me to a local meeting the following day I saw how his dog cowered behind him at every knock, taking it for a game by mischievous boys.



This was court day and I had to leave for work as I had a lot of business to attend to. Before I had finished at court one of my children came rushing to call me home, as the noise had become so terrible that everyone had fled. I finished up quickly and hurried home. (I had planned to notify Herr Kaiser, the head of the local canton authority, but at the time he was on his way to England.) At home I found my entire family outside in the open air. I wasn't afraid - fear has seldom troubled me in my life - and went inside, finding the disturbances repeating at intervals of between three and five minutes. The blows on the floor were so violent it was as though a wooden mallet was being swung with all the strength of a powerful arm, causing the living room table to spring in the air and displacing the objects sitting on it. The blow was quite local, however; the house itself did not seem to shake. The massive nutwood door of the living room burst open and slammed shut again with the greatest force. There was a blow from the kitchen on the bedroom door, equally violent, and I feared that at any moment it would burst into the room in fragments. The walls of the living room meanwhile remained undisturbed.

The tumult was attracting more and more attention in the neighbourhood. I investigated the matter again with as much coolness as possible, tested the pressure by laying my hands on both sides of the doors and felt not even the slightest air movement, whilst the force of the blows, like that of the most powerful fist, jerked the closed door two or three inches from the hinge. Once when I came into the kitchen, I noticed the bottles, glasses and vessels on the table being struck as if with a metal instrument. The blows in the different parts of the house followed each other so quickly that if the ghost was a hoax it would have had to involve at least four or five people.

Seized by the apprehension that the whole unexplained business could soon damage the house, if not utterly destroy it, I sent for councillor H. Zimmerman, an old family friend, who soon appeared and was astonished by the din. We agreed to call in Dr K. von Deschwanden, a scientifically educated man; he came, together with the court president Odermatt and judge Schallberger, as well as the master builder Alois Amstad and the art teacher Odermatt - all of them convinced themselves of the extraordinary racket that was going on, although as dusk fell it fell off somewhat. Attempts were made to arrive at a physical cause, and a great number of hypotheses were put forward - vulcanism, galvanism, electricity, and so on. Among other things it was thought that the asphalt terrace floor might be conducting an electrical current, but on closer reflection nothing provided the slightest clue as to the origins and character of the phenomenon. At around 12 o'clock the company broke up, perplexed. Meanwhile calm was returning, and the rest of the night passed without disturbance.

### **Friday 22 August**

The din began again in the early morning. I had to go out on business at seven o'clock and expected to be back soon afterwards. During my absence the court president Odermatt and others of yesterday's visitors positioned themselves to witness the day's incidents; the blows followed quickly, and with even more violence than the previous day, if that were possible. A client 'K.S'. who had called by and insisted on waiting for my return, was sitting in the living room near the

door when there was a sudden blow on the floor and door, so violent that he leaped up in panic. He had once had occasion to see an electrostatic generator in action, and his first idea was that there must be such a thing in the house. Robert, who was present at that moment, and who like everyone else had been told to keep the affair as secret as possible, did nothing to disabuse him of this idea, and he took his leave. However a bit later a second neighbour 'A.J.' came by to see what was going on, and from him the affair could not be hushed up. Both he and my tenant's wife witnessed a thumping on the door between the kitchen and the bed chamber, so strong that the metal hooks again sprang from the posts and were flung into the opposite wall. As this happened Melanie, who was in the living room, saw by the door a snow-white, oval shaped form, extending to the height of the door, an apparition that Frau L. who, moments earlier had opened the door, also witnessed amid a violent racket.

By now more and more people were calling in, among them the head of the provincial government Franz Zelger, who lived in the neighbourhood. The racket was again observed and investigated, how the doors wrenched open and slammed shut. I could hear the blows quite clearly from high up on the mountains where I had gone to mark the boundaries of my woodland. Hurrying back, I met some of these people, and I now promptly proceeded to notify the police about it; the local police inspector Jann came in person and with all judiciousness confirmed what was going on. After a while Dr Christen arrived too and soon had an opportunity to witness the racket. At this time Edward, coming through the front door, saw in the kitchen a white form like a little hand waving, at which he passed out, but sprang up after a while and stumbled into the living room to tell what he had just seen.

In the afternoon the episcopal commissioner Niederberger saw and heard the phenomena, as also did the priest for a second time. Niederberger installed himself in the lowest chambers of the house and investigated with great attention until around seven o'clock. For the purposes of comparison a knocking was made on the cellar ceiling to see what the effect would be in the hall upstairs - this caused the house to shake and the windows to clang, which did not happen in the places where the disturbances occurred; the tone and the manner of the blows was different too. By the afternoon the force had diminished somewhat and there were long intervals between the noises. Herr Niederberger, a man whose sharp perception and scientific understanding cannot be denied, left in the evening with the firm conviction that this remarkable business was neither mere hallucination, nor someone playing at ghosts. Indeed he doubted that even the most thorough physical investigation would lead to a satisfying result.

Meanwhile rumours were spreading, and in the evening I watched with growing anxiety as crowds streamed up to the house, feeling just as a home-owner does when he sees river floodwaters breaking the dams and threatening to engulf his property. With the living room and the porch full of curiosity seekers, there occurred among other things a heavy blow on the living room door, as if someone had thrown himself against it with full strength. One heard less frequent but still quite violent knocks on the door between the kitchen and the living room. Towards 8.30 pm it got quieter, and the police inspector posted two of his men to guard the house.

My fears were not misplaced. In this country, as everywhere else, there are people who believe far too much, some who believe too little, and a few who believe nothing at all. One person hears the noise and flees in terror; another commands the devil to come out; a third has electrostatic generators on the brain (this notion, which my son allowed the visiting client to go away with, came in handy). Alas, some people found it hard to distinguish the concept of electrostatic machines from conjuring, and seized on this hybrid as an explanation of last resort. In this they were strongly encouraged by the performances that Schneider theatre company was giving in Stans at the time. Actors were still regarded by a large part of the public as jacks-of-all-trades, gypsies or magicians, and they soon got mixed up with the affair in some people's minds. To make matters worse, my son had been seen in the company of one of them, a man by the name of Stöbe from Baden: it was soon being said that the boy had 'learned sorcery from the gypsy' and was using it to terrify people for his amusement. I mention this particular simple-minded rumour only because it found its way into a local scandal-sheet, and from there spread like wildfire in newspapers throughout the land, served up with every kind of margin illustration as the true explanation of the ghost.

### **Saturday 23 August**

On Saturday the violence of the banging diminished significantly. Various apparatus were applied in the search for electrical, magnetic or vulcan causes - all to no effect. Her Odermatt kindly travelled to Lucerne to consult with Professor Ineichen, who was away however. Other similar requests were refused. The throng of visitors became ever bigger and more burdensome. The somewhat sparse phenomena of these days were as follows:

At nine o'clock in the morning the living room door, which was resting on its latch, wrenched open and juddered shut; this was followed by strong blows from within on the kitchen-living room door, throwing the catches far into the kitchen. A few minutes later there was a heavy blow on the living room door, then at 3.03 pm two blows on the living room door, the second of them weaker; the same at 6.10. At 8.45 in the presence of a large company the living room door, which was closed, opened and slammed shut with the greatest vehemence; violent blows followed on the kitchen door. From then on it became calmer.

Towards midnight I went to my bedroom, leaving three police guards in the living room to keep watch. I lay down on the side of the bed and waking after some time, I propped my head on my right hand and looked over to the window opposite; this was closed, covered on the inside by a curtain; the outside shutters were open. I could clearly see the grey-white clouds in the sky. All was quiet, apart from the snoring of the guards in the living room, which I could distinctly hear. I was alert but not at all excited. Suddenly I felt a soft rustling of the hairs on my left temple, as if caused by a playing finger. Thinking that someone wanted to wake me, I grasped at it with my left hand and felt a soft warm little hand - I felt quite distinctly the thumb and finger. As I did so it softly withdrew in the direction of the window, where I saw, in sharp relief against the shutters, a dark shape moving slowly backwards and forwards.

Thinking it must be a member of my family, I called out to the maid who was lying on the sofa. At this my wife anxiously asked if I too had felt something touching my head, but I replied evasively so as not to worry her. The girl, who could only be woken after repeated calls, went to turn on the light to see the time. She found the three guards in the living room in deep slumber and woke them; it was 2.45 am and everything was still quiet. She went back to our bedroom, turned out the light and lay down on the sofa, only to start up wailing that just at that moment something had stroked her on the brow, then moved the curtain and fluttered lightly against the wall. She fled into the living room, turned on the light and spent the rest of the night there. My wife now told me that earlier, after having been touched gently on the head, she felt the gentle hand of a child, which quickly withdrew from her hand; however she noticed at once that it was not the hand of the child sleeping at her side. In the morning I told her what had happened to me.

### **Sunday 24 August**

Today it was quiet until about eleven o'clock, when in the presence of several neighbours there were some very heavy blows on the floor and doors. This happened again at one o'clock, after which everything was silent until the evening at 5.05, when there were another two knocks on the living room floor, and then it remained quiet.

The few incidents of these days were witnessed by a great many people. In the evening the crowds pressed in, in the belief that these sorts of incidents would be most likely occur during the night. In vain, however: people who waited for hours for something to happen left shaking their heads and opining that the whole thing was a false alarm, as they hadn't heard anything. Some strong spirits plucked up enough courage to come right up to the house in the middle of the night to carry out an exorcism. In such circumstances any semblance of normal order in the household was completely lost - most of my children had already had to leave. Only a strengthened police guard was able to hold back the press of the crowds.

### **Monday 25 August**

On Monday the phenomena started only towards midday, but this time with much of its former violence. At 11.30 am we noticed a rustling on the wall of the little kitchen room, as it first appeared, then three or four strong muffled blows on the open living room door, which then slammed shut. At 1.05 pm there were three blows from underneath the living room floor. Some forty minutes later the kitchen-corridor door, which was almost always left open and until now had been left in peace, pulled itself shut rapidly, despite its weight. This happened again some minutes later. At 3.30 pm there were two quite strong blows from under the floor of the living room and after some minutes four or five hard thumps on the living room door, followed by the violent slamming of the kitchen door. A young doctor from Lucerne who witnessed all this complained of a strong prickling on his skin, although I put it down to fright. About 5.45 there were another two blows on the living room door and, after a short pause the kitchen door started to slam repeatedly, bringing the events of the day to an end at about 8.30.

I made my notes in the presence of the police guards, who themselves had made careful observations. The police subsequently brought the matter to the attention of the weekly council meeting with the declaration that 'due attention has been made and investigations instituted on the part of the police, but steps will need to be taken by the high government to determine whether or not the knockings can be ascribed to a natural cause'. The authorities then appointed a commission charged 'with all dispatch, legal authority and proper qualifications to institute an investigation with all the necessary resources, as long as the knocking should continue'. The appointed members were W. Zelger, L. Wursch and inspector Jann. After all this, one might have expected the investigation to start promptly, all the more so as the decision had been made early on when phenomena were continuing to be reported. However the day went by without any arrangements being made.

### **Tuesday 26 August**

The racket began early at 7.20 am with two knocks - in the hall and, after an interval of nine minutes, on the door of the living room. The tone was somewhat harder than before and it was no longer observed upstairs, but entirely on the doors downstairs. After twelve minutes the kitchen door flew violently shut. From then on there was a pause until 10.07, when there were more powerful blows on the floor of the living room; at 11.25 there was a knocking four or five times, in rapid succession and stronger than for some time, on the slightly-ajar living room door which was violently torn open and just as quickly slammed onto the latch. This immediately also happened with the kitchen door, all the work of two to three seconds.

At 12.13 pm there were three knocks on the living room door. Then it was quiet until the evening at around eight o'clock, when there were another two hard blows on the same doors, and the same on the floor of the kitchen. The slamming of the kitchen door that followed some twenty minutes later was the last disturbance noticed in the house today.

Herr Zelger, president of the investigatory commission, took no steps today either to get things started, despite our having informed him immediately of the day's events, and this did nothing to strengthen my confidence in the commission having any real interest in carrying out an investigation in the interests of science. The only exception was police inspector Jann, who had personally seen what was going on several times, and had warmly agreed to take part, unfortunately in vain. As for myself, stuck in the midst of this calamity, I was greatly perturbed by the crowds of curiosity-seekers that continued to press, and overburdened with professional business that could not be put off.

### **Wednesday 27 August**

Today the racketing began around 9.30 am similar to yesterday, namely: 9.20, two knocks on the floor of the living room; 9.27, on the doors; 9.28, slamming of the kitchen door; and at 9.35 the living room door, also this time in the presence of many people. At 11.35 there were four knocks on the living room door, which was standing slightly ajar but which after the fourth blow slammed violently. At 12.30 pm we heard a weak tapping on the hallway outside my study; five minutes later

the kitchen door slammed shut, after which it became quiet until 2.50. There followed a double hard banging on the living room door, then a light tapping on the kitchen door, at which it slammed so violently we feared it would spring off the hinges. From then on things were quiet.

Still the state commission had raised no kind of investigation; it was only late in the evening, when the disturbances had stopped, that it showed signs of making a start. After a short interview I was tasked with providing a written report about the goings on, which I undertook to do at once, and then - this would have been around eight o'clock - I was told to leave the house immediately with those members of my family who still remained. I obeyed without demur, despite having four trials to prepare for the following day, and the inconvenience of being separated from my office and my books. Yet at the same time, I was convinced that what I had failed so completely to get to the bottom of would similarly elude these gentleman. The police guard was replaced by another, which I had no doubt would minutely examine every corner of the house, but without uncovering anything suspicious that might lead to the cause of this extraordinary phenomenon.

## **Bitter Complaints**

By now the affair had now got to the stage where it was not just the daily talk of the locality but had become a national scandal. If you have never experienced the rumours and antagonisms that a natural disaster can stir up, you can still less imagine the confusion that follows a supernatural occurrence like this. The public wants explanations for every detail and finds it all too readily; superstition, scepticism, exaggeration and speculation all jostle with each other. Woe betide anyone unlucky enough to get mixed up in such a thing. He will be shown no mercy, thrown as prey to the raging monster, and neither his good family name nor spotless reputation will save him from the maws of the ravening beasts. It was just like the heated passions in my years of political campaigning, when enemies would stick their heads up like vermin after a warm spring rain. It might sound exaggerated, but I was made to feel like a criminal, as much among my immediate circle as in the country as a whole.

I would certainly have expected better from the liberal Swiss press. Alas, the papers didn't bother to look for true information; instead they repeated the silliest rumours that were being made about me, all the most bitter barbs and dirtiest suspicions. I, who for the past twenty years had laboured in the field of liberal politics, often at great personal sacrifice and in the toughest conditions, found myself being subjected to a public stoning. I appealed to the liberal citizens of Stans to help me, but apart from my loyal political allies these people treated me grievously, even to the point of besmirching my personal honour, something which not even my most implacable opponents in political campaigns ever did. And all because of some petty rumours. Why? Because an inexplicable incident in my house made so much noise that eventually I could no longer keep it secret and it was seen and heard by hundreds of people. That was my crime.

At the same time it would be wrong not to mention the warm support that I received from worthy men in the various political parties. It's in one's hour of need

that one truly learns to know people. Many of those who had regularly stood against me as political opponents now held out the hand of friendship and vouched for my honesty even against their colleagues. But by the same token some of those who spread incense for me in happier days now gave me a cold shoulder. How childish! Even a strong character, it seems, will rush to disown something that frightens him but which he knows is real, simply because he fears being mocked for credulity.

## **September**

### **Monday 1 September: Proceedings of the Commission**

Meanwhile it appeared that the racket was no longer to be heard. On Monday, on the recommendation of the investigating committee, the local authority decreed the investigation closed, although the committee was to remain in being and the house kept under police guard. It was returned to me that afternoon, and the government considered it appropriate to reimburse me for the costs of my eviction.

My fear that the investigation would not go very deep was fully born out, as will be seen from what follows. From the wording of the report it appeared the disturbances had tailed off, not just from the moment when the commission's guard was mounted, but already from Wednesday afternoon at 2.50 pm. Had there been a sincere will to get to the bottom of the business, or at least to discover the facts and manner of the disturbances, one might have supposed the commission would interrogate those who had been personally convinced of what had happened and whose position and intelligence qualified them as credible witnesses. Expert views would have been presented, or an investigation carried on while the family was again living in the house, the more so as the same incidents subsequently occurred again. But nothing of kind happened. In my report I offered to put myself at the commission's disposal, so that the house could be investigated by the scientific authorities. In vain. It seemed things had got to the point that the majority of the commission just did whatever would save them trouble.

In possession of the house once more, my ruined family gathered in the hope that the terrible disturbances had run their course. We came up to the house at nightfall, but in the event only three of my children dared to spend the night with me. Even I felt scared for the first time, and slept little, although as it turned out the night passed peacefully.

### **Tuesday 2 September**

On the following day two of my children heard the tapping on the stairs to the second floor; I tried to calm them down, which I was able to do the more easily as the following day passed peacefully.

### **Thursday 4 September**

Business called me to Beckenried, and when I got back in the afternoon my family told me that around one o'clock, with my wife and daughter sitting at the table by the window, there had been a blow on the floor so powerful that it could be heard

far from the house and made the little table spring high into the air - at which they ran outside shaking with fear. Towards evening, the maid and one of my children heard heavy muffled steps coming through the entrance corridor towards the front door, where the heavy iron bolts jolted up and the door slowly opened. They could see no one and were so overcome with fear they tumbled out of the window, a height of twelve to thirteen feet, suffering light sprains to their ankles.

### **Saturday 6 September**

Nothing was remarked on the following day. However on Saturday in the morning there were two violent knocks outside the living room, and the whole day long we heard a light quick knocking on the doors and walls, now here, now there, ending in the evening with three violent blows in the southwest corner of the living room, which until then had remained quiet. All these incidents were reported to the commission, but a majority of its members seemed disinclined to bother with it.

### **Sunday 7 and Monday 8 September**

The rustling on the corridors and walls continued during these two days at short intervals. It was heard in particular in the little corridor as well as in my study, where there was a knocking on the floors, from below and above, on the walls, and quite distinctly on the cupboard doors of my library - in the presence of dozens of observers who had fanned out into the various rooms. Among them was a militant sceptic from the neighbouring canton Obwalden, who in the press had been eagerly explaining it all away as hallucinations, but was now himself completely convinced - a knocking which I ruefully recalled I myself had heard some time ago without paying any special attention to it.

### **Tuesday 9 September**

Midday 12 pm, a banging three times on the living room floor, followed by a strong banging on the half-open door.

### **Wednesday 10 September**

A court appearance called me today to Beckenried: I left in the morning at 7.30 am and returned in the evening at about 7.30 pm. As I was arriving, neighbours told me they had heard a racket going on in my house from some distance. When I got to the house I discovered that shortly after my departure in the morning there had been three quick and very violent blows from under the living room floor. My wife, who was in the bedroom, went with Emaline and stood by the door; in this moment both saw a stool in the living room move slowly from its place and then in a flash turn over with its legs in the air, hitting the floor so violently that the dust from the grooves in the floorboards blew up. Then the living room doors slammed so violently that the noise could be heard far over the neighbourhood.

At around 12 pm Emaline was in the garden in full sunshine when she suddenly heard a noise on the trellis wall of the house; she looked up to see a pale figure in the area of the little corridor, leaning out of the window and reaching onto the trellis. Thinking for sure it was the housemaid picking grapes, she observed the



figure dispassionately, and it then struck her that the figure's straight hair, hairnet and dark neckerchief were rather unusual, and that the head was sunk forward with an air of melancholy. She called out for the maid, who however emerged from the cellar, while the figure ducked under the leaves and disappeared. An immediate investigation discovered nothing more. Later a knocking was heard in this little corridor; as dusk fell there was a racket from outside the house and soon afterwards a violent knocking on the living room door. Around nine o'clock, as I sat at the table and looked through the open door towards the kitchen, I heard the sweeping noise which my children had repeatedly told me of, especially in the little corridor. Listening closely it sounded like someone in floppy shoes sweeping the corridor with a beech broom in the direction of the living room door, and taking long steps. It was so realistic that I had to positively convince myself that no sweeping was really going on at all.

### **Thursday 11 September**

Even during the night there was a loud racket throughout the house. Then in the morning the banging continued all over the floors and walls. It was a bright sunny day. At around 9 am the living room was empty. In the middle stood the massive walnut table, placed lengthways as usual, with the chairs and the sofa against it. Everything being thus in order I left the room with my wife and two children (all the others were away), taking them upstairs, as they were very frightened. The servant girl was busy in the kitchen. Going up the stairs we heard a quick rapping on the corridor wall above us, in a sort-of dancing rhythm.

Then our attention was caught by a stirring in the living room and we rushed back to the door, which I had never taken my eyes off, and listening outside for a moment heard a noise that sounded like a lot of people dancing around in socks. We opened the door quickly: it was quiet, but the heavy table lay upside-down by the door, while further into the room to the left, two chairs next to the stool by the sofa had also been overturned. We could hardly believe our eyes - barely a minute had passed since we left the room.

Sitting on the bedroom sofa, which was placed by the back wall, I saw through the open window opposite something that looked like a big horsefly flying rapidly down towards me and crash into the sofa. Looking closely I found two newly-torn twigs, roughly two inches in length and covered with leaves. Moments later a girl walked under the window and a similar twig fell on her from above. There was hardly any breeze. Opening a cupboard we found shoes that in the morning had been in good order all jumbled up. Rapid knocks broke out all over the house on the walls and floors. As things quietened down round about three in the afternoon, one of my boys saw the living room door slam shut in its usual way, but then also something quite new: an upholstered chair standing near him began to move of its own accord; it travelled some one and a half yards from its place and then suddenly, and without the slightest noise, tipped over. When he came to tell us about it we all went into the living room and found that the same thing had happened to a second chair.

From then on things were quiet until around 6.30 pm. We were sitting down to supper just as the light was starting to fade, the door standing ajar, when we saw something floating in that looked like a little three-cornered grey shawl, that

extended from the floor to the height of the lock in the door. It hovered by the open cupboard door of the corner sideboard, swinging lightly, and vanished. The same phenomenon appeared half-an-hour later in the kitchen, where the maid was standing by the sink. She felt something stroking her on the foot, and thinking it was a cat paid no attention, but then it suddenly pulled roughly on her skirt and she saw the same form going away from her to the ground floor staircase - she nearly fainted from fright. As it happened someone else was with her at that moment and could also see the phenomenon.

### **Friday 12 September**

Everything remained completely calm until 2.45 pm. While the family were sitting down to coffee, the maid, sweeping by the open living room door, drew our attention to a noise upstairs. We hurried up, together with three students who had dropped in out of curiosity. In the upstairs living room a strange sight of disorder met our eyes. On the left wall a big tableau (of Amazons fighting) had been taken down and was lying upside down on the floor, as were both mirrors from the further wall. A glass sugar bowl, which normally stood on the right on the high chiffonier, lay likewise tipped over on the floor in front of it, the cover at its side. A fruit basket that had been standing on the chest-of-drawers at the back wall lay in the same condition, and the oil lamp at the far wall had moved. Next to an ornamental lamp a little sun-blind that had previously stood in a corner of the room now hung from its handle, stretched wide open. Under it a red cloth that normally hung by the window had been laid on the floor and nearby an upholstered chair lay upside down. Many of these items were fragile, yet none were broken. The photograph hanging over the chest-of-drawers remained undisturbed, as did a painting above the chiffonier. Meanwhile a neighbour who had just come into the house was gazing in astonishment at the weird arrangement in the living room, where all the chairs lay upside down around the table. It can be readily understood that I had been able to keep an objective eye on everything going on as long as I was in the house, and knew the situation and circumstances better than anyone, and was completely convinced that this 'ghost' was not made by human hand.

### **Saturday 13 September**

In the morning we found even greater disorder in the rooms, even though they had been locked. In the upstairs living-room the tableau, the armchair and both mirrors again lay on the floor in the same state as yesterday, together with the fruit basket from the chest-of-drawers. The red cloth was now hanging on the screw that had previously held one of the mirrors, while the curtain on the highest window had been wound round the curtain pole several times. In the garden room a little tableau had been taken off its screw, which had been bent back almost to the wall, and now rested upside down on the floor next to a tipped-over clothes chest.

Called by business to Lucerne, I had among other things to pay someone a large sum of money. On my return my family told me they had experienced something quite new: when they were together in the living room they suddenly heard in the adjoining chamber a loud clinking of coins. So distinct was the sound of coins being laid one on top of another, and then the rolls of coins being laid on their side, that

they were all convinced there was someone in the room the process of paying money. However when they went to look they found no one. When I asked when this happened it appeared to have coincided exactly with the time I was performing my business in Lucerne.

Later the three older boys, Robert, Edward and Oscar, were standing outside the front of the house when a shower of stones fell around them. One of them felt a stone as big as a fist strike him on the shoulder, but without hurting him. Looking up, they saw a large stone coming out of the chimney and, without hitting the roof, fall on the path near them. When we all sat down at the table in the evening, one person and then another remarked that their chairs were moving slightly.

### **Sunday 14 September**

I had ordered everything in the rooms to be left undisturbed, just as we had found them yesterday morning, so that we could see what else happened to them. When we made the rounds the next morning we found the objects all undisturbed, although in the upstairs living room another footstool had been turned over. The sunshade that on Friday we had returned to its place in the corner was again fully extended and hanging by its handle from the screw that had held the tableau. The wooden clasp of the lamp had wound round the screw that had held one of the mirrors and the little red cloth was hanging from underneath by the hem.

In the garden room it seemed as if a satyr had moved in. A pillow hung from a wall screw next to the window, and where the tableau had been now hung a blanket by the torn end. Both these objects were more or less covered by the window curtain, of which a corner had been lightly turned round the further screw. In the little closet next door the mirror and a plaster cast of St Anna lay face down on the floor, and on the bedcover, partly concealed by the foot cushion, lay a slate from my mineral collection that had been covered with a fairly accurate drawing in blue chalk of a human skull. The coffee grinder, a jar, a pewter pot and a bowl had appeared from the kitchen - all likewise spread out on the floor. And in the cellar, spread out over a barrel of fermenting wine, we found an apron which the servant girl had been unable to find that morning, although she swore she had put it in her chest.

At midday I entrusted the house to a reliable guard and took my family, those that were still with me, to Kehrseiten to make a little distraction and get away from the crowds. Just as we were coming home, and as dusk was falling, we saw something like a light grey little cloud blowing out towards us. In the living room we found as many as twenty people who had come by from the neighbourhood. At least there was protection in numbers - no one could be frightened with so many people around. As night came on and I sent for lamps to be lit, one of my girls gave a cry of terror and complained of ice-cold finger tips ruffling her neck and face. When the lights arrived this stopped, but going out into the dark corridor she felt the same disturbance. The servant girl complained of it as well, and later insisted that in this spot she had been plagued the whole distance by something like cold spiky dogs claws.

The crowd departed only towards midnight; I led the last one at around 12 am to the front door, which I then closed. I looked around carefully and shut the living room door, pushing the heavy iron bolts in place with extreme care, and satisfying myself afterwards that I had done so. I went back into the bedchamber where my family had all gone to bed - none of them dared be alone anymore in a room even in daylight, let alone sleep at night on their own - and here too I pushed the bolt into place. The candle had not yet been put out, and a weak nightlight burned in the stove pipe opposite. Just at that moment I saw something move like a bolt of lightning across the faltering flame in the stove pipe, and there was a clanging that made everyone start up in shock. When I looked here, I saw to my great surprise fragments of glass, broken tiles, rags, cores of fresh pears and an old hatchet that normally lived in the pantry. The bedroom door was ajar, and as I went to the living room with the candle I saw that the living room door was also half open.

One of my neighbours, whose character vouches for the truth of his words, later told me that on the same evening, just as he was passing by the house, he saw a flame as bright as day some feet above the ground; as he got closer it suddenly seemed to vanish in the far distance.

### **Monday 15 September**

As we were sitting at the table after lunch, two of my children saw a transparent fuzzy silhouette tripping towards them from the front door, and through the corridor to the open living room door, where there were several loud knocks; the door then slammed shut in the usual way. Around one o'clock in the afternoon the sweeping was again to be heard in the dark corridor, and it carried on in front of the opened door; there, heavy muffled steps were heard, as if someone was walking away. Soon afterwards I heard a sound in my study as if someone in the little closet next door was working a spinning wheel, with the thread being turned in long pulls. The whirring of the spindle was so clear and lifelike that I was sure it was just what it sounded like. Yet I found no trace of such a thing, and it seemed that wherever I went it was always in the next room - nor did my investigations seem to disturb it. The maid claimed she had already heard this spinning several times of late; it sometimes sounded to her like the grinding of cogs, like an old Black Forest clock being wound up.

In the rooms upstairs there had been no more disorder, however downstairs the satyr had been up to its tricks again. At around two o'clock my wife was getting ready to go out when her hat, which she had put on the sofa in the living room, suddenly disappeared. Puzzled as to what could have happened, as no one could have touched it, she eventually found it hanging above an oil painting in the chamber, while the portrait of myself hanging nearby had been turned round. I put the pictures to rights, and kept an eye on them for a moment, but hardly had I turned my back than both of them were face to the wall. After this had gone on for a while they were finally left in peace. At the time the servant girl was busy cleaning the living room floor, and two people, one of them from the neighbourhood, were playing cards at the table; both assured me they had not noticed anything, which ruled out any manipulation by human hands.

In the evening, three acquaintances arrived to keep watch, as a way to provide us with some relief, as by then we had not been left alone for a single evening for several weeks, and very seldom during the day either. As we sat at the table and on the sofa and chatted about the awful disturbances the day before, it occurred to us to extinguish the candles. My wife and children immediately complained of ice-cold fingers tickling them on the face and neck: my wife said it was a light stroking on her forehead, as if by a cold dead hand, and fainted in my arms. I was sitting opposite the window, on the right of my family and the three guests and could clearly see the silhouette of innumerable hands wriggling and jerking in front of the windows; however I felt no disturbance and neither did the guests. The spectacle stopped as soon as the lights came on again.

At midnight these watchers left us. As we were going to bed we put the night light in its usual place and discovered in the inside of the stove pipe, next to a stripped maize kernel, the same axe that we had found yesterday, and which I had returned to its rightful place; there was also a sickle and an iron ring three or four inches wide, which I didn't remember seeing before. As the maid was removing these weird objects she complained suddenly of a pricking in her hair, and pulled a broken knitting needle and a pear out of her hair net. I told her to take away the objects and as she came back to the living room I saw her being pelted with pears, which again got stuck in her hair net.

As soon as the candle in the bedroom had been put out, one of my children complained again about the ice-cold fingers grasping at the throat and face, and we were obliged leave a candle burning the whole night through in addition to the usual nightlight. One person, then another, would feel as if something heavy was lying at the foot the bed and then from time to time tug on the blanket. My youngest child was also disturbed, stretching his little hand over his face repeatedly and making parrying movements. The following morning one child complained of cold feelings several times, even after it had got light.

## **Tuesday 16 September**

Again I found myself forced to send away part of my family. The thought of all of us having eventually to leave the house, which had been so homelike - at least until a year or so earlier - perhaps never to return, was heavy, but had to be faced up to. However before going to those lengths I wanted to make one last attempt to verify some of these occurrences by means of an official investigation. Of course anything that depended on the resolution of the local authority would never get off the ground, never mind the government commission, which had been persistently dragging its feet. Nevertheless I planned the next day, in the evening if possible, to collect a circle of willing friends for this purpose.

Meanwhile the phenomena continued. At around 8 am I witnessed the strange hopping of an apple. It was thrown from the upper part of the house, down the lower stairs to the front door, and hopped past me with several jumps, through the corridor and into the kitchen. The servant girl, who was at the hearth, took the apple, which was by now somewhat battered, and placed it on the kitchen table. From there, after a short rest, it again hastened with two or three jumps towards the corridor. The girl seized it and threw it out of the kitchen window, but it flew in

again in a flash and lay on the kitchen table. From there, after a short rest, it bounced through the kitchen and the corridor and into the living room; after another short rest it jumped back into the corner by the bedroom door and lay quietly on the floor.

As I was going into the kitchen shortly afterwards, a pear struck quite near at my side, apparently having come down from the ceiling, with such strength and speed that it was completely squashed. Everyone was still in the bedroom apart from the maid, who was standing at the hearth.

At 12 pm one of the boys said that as he was going out of the door he heard the sound of someone pacing in muffled steps near his chair. During the course of the afternoon we checked the stove pipe, in view of the recent terrible discoveries, and this time found it stuffed with an old horse harness and a chain, pressed so compactly into this narrow space that it was only with the greatest trouble that I could get it out. The harness normally hung in the pantry, while the chain belonged in the locked cupboard. I hadn't the first clue as to how such a thing could have been done by human hand.

After supper I shared with my family my thoughts about starting a new investigation, to which they reacted with various hopes and objections. I then read aloud from a newspaper. We were still sitting around the table, the door to the kitchen standing wide open, as otherwise the maid, who was busy there washing up, would be very afraid. All at once I was motioned to be quiet; outside someone could be heard speaking to the maid, which I now also clearly heard. As I strained to hear more closely, the girl screamed and stumbled in white as a corpse. When she had got over the shock she told us of the deep voice which she had often heard before speaking slowly from the hall: "I shall come no more!" At hearing these words she was hardly able to breathe for fear. A bit earlier my wife felt an ice cold breeze on her hand and complained of a slight stiffening of her wrist; a phenomenon which was felt not only by members of the family but also by other people present, as much during the light of day as by night. It was the sensation of being blown on by a bellows.

On the following day

### **Wednesday 17 September**

things did not remain quiet. A knitting needle that had been very much messed around with in the last three days got up to more tricks, appearing now in this room, now in that. But it happened with such lightning speed that all one ever saw was a sudden movement as it fell to the floor. Once it was thrown out of the window into the grass, but after a short while it was back where it had been moments earlier. At midday a light knocking was heard on the outside wall by the garden. When one of my boys passed by the door of the upstairs living room at around one o'clock he claimed to have heard something similar going on there, also in the evening a strong banging on the floor outside the bathroom.

### **Thursday 18 and Friday 19 September**

On the two following days it remained calm, which meant the investigation was again thwarted. However, so fearful was the whole family that the phenomena would return, I resolved on Saturday to arrange our departure and find a refuge from these unexplained persecutions somewhere else in Switzerland.

### **Sunday 21 September**

Today I returned from my journey in the evening, only shortly after my wife - who I had asked to keep out the foolish mob that was pouring out of Lucerne in droves - had shut the door against them; however they were nevertheless so completely lacking in inhibitions that they made a human ladder and presently thieves broke through the window (although it should be added that at least some of them, apparently a better class of persons, had reservations and hung back making objections).

I was naturally upset about my house being broken into, but it at least helped me understand why much of the Lucerne press had been so censorious about the affair, and to accept its behaviour with more equanimity. Incidentally it would be unjust not to mention the many honest individuals from this neighbourhood, at least some of whom had become convinced of the phenomena, who took great exception to such debauchery and zealous superstition, for the idle curiosity seekers themselves had themselves by then become a topic of conversation in the local cafés.

After bringing me up-to-date with the incidents that had occurred in the meantime, a guard mentioned that he had heard a noise in the kitchen that sounded like the water tap running out on the kitchen floor; he and someone else who happened to be present, and who confirmed it, watched closely but without being able to discover any trace of what might be causing the noise, even though it was quite loud and right next to them. On the other hand several occurrences were noticed on

### **Monday 22 September**

At 12 pm one of my daughters was at the well when she was suddenly pelted with stones; they fell all around but without hitting her. Two people standing by the kitchen window saw a stone falling from the roof; then a jagged building stone of around two pounds weight fell down the chimney onto the lid of the clay pot and bounced onto the floor, without damaging anything and without leaving any soot marks.

In the presence of the custodian, at around 5 o'clock, the whole household left the house and it was closed up. Three people standing outside saw the curtain of the lower bedroom window move, as if an invisible hand had pulled it together in the middle and swung it vigorously up and down. Three people at the front side of the house saw this movement of the curtain; and one of my children thought he saw through the window the movement of a grey, shapeless form. One of the boys entered the house with a worker who had come by, and heard from the corner of the chamber such a loud whirring or rolling noise that the floor shook, but he could not see anything else. Later the grey figure showed itself again at the open bedroom

window, waving, as if with a white handkerchief. From the kitchen one of my daughters heard a melancholy sobbing that seemed to come from the second-floor bedchamber and lasted some time.

### **Tuesday 23 September**

On this day we observed nothing until seven o'clock in the evening, when gravel stones were again thrown down the chimney. They were about the size of hens eggs and were covered with dew.

### **Wednesday 24 September**

In the morning a stone suddenly fell between my two oldest girls, who were standing in front of the house, but without disturbing them. In the evening, while my daughter was with a neighbour outside, she saw through the closed kitchen window a grey cloth being waved rapidly up and down and back and forth, by what seemed like a brown arm bone. The neighbour also saw this, and plucked up the courage to spring into the kitchen; however the apparition vanished in a flash and she found nothing there. Now several more small and large gravel stones were thrown into the kitchen.

### **Thursday 25 September**

In the morning I had to go to a nearby spot to discuss a timber contract in my woodlands. When I came back home at midday my wife told me that one of the children had heard a faint knocking on the floor in the kitchen, and that for a long time she herself had heard quite clearly the sound of someone chopping wood coming from the ground floor area, although she found no one there. The sounds of an axe being struck and logs splitting apart were easily recognizable; she called the children who heard it as well.

In the afternoon one of my daughters heard the persistent rolling sound that resembled the winding up of an old grandfather clock, and later there was a light knocking in my study. As the children went back by themselves to the rented accommodation, they were pelted with stones that followed them inside, although hitherto nothing ghostly had been observed in this newly constructed building. Later, when everyone was assembled in the living room again, the children loudly invited it - whatever it might be - to reveal itself, and steps were heard coming from the ground floor area up to the living room door. At this, the would-be-exorcists lost their nerve and were overcome with terror (this would have been between seven and eight o'clock). After that there was a slight movement on the door, which was standing ajar, and a murmuring which gradually diminished. As this was court day I was in Stans until 9 pm.

### **Saturday 27 September**

In the afternoon, when I was upstairs in the living room with a furniture man, a carpenter's angle gauge was thrown down from the ceiling and landed near us in the corridor; we went to investigate immediately but were not able to discover the cause. In the evening one of my boys was overcome with horror when he saw a



whitish apparition under the hall window. This took the form of two arms with broad, snow-white hands pointing ahead; it fluttered into him and disappeared.

### **Sunday 28 September**

The stone-throwing was seen several times, in the morning from the chimney into the garden, and in the evening inside in the kitchen and down the stairs. In the course of the afternoon there were two muffled blows on the living-room floor. In the evening my attention was drawn to the sound of gnawing under the floor of the bathroom, like a dog at a bone, which ended with a number of knocks.

### **Monday 29 September**

In the morning gravel was thrown in the garden. Then it remained quiet until the evening, when one of my daughters, standing with a relative outside the house, heard a loud knocking coming from my study, first on the floor and then on the window. I went straight in to look but found no one in the house.

### **Thursday 30 September**

It was quiet until the evening towards dusk, when a stone the size of a fist was thrown down the stairs to the living room door and another into the kitchen amid a loud knocking; both were moist with dew. From then on nothing more was noticed.

## **October**

### **Friday 3 to Saturday 4 October**

In this night there was a disturbance in the upstairs rooms, and several times we thought we heard muffled steps in the summerhouse above the bedchamber. I proceeded today to Lucerne. On Monday Emaline and Melanie were standing outside the house next to the milk cellar when they heard a clanking on the iron bars of the downstairs windows, and then saw a heavy stone fall in the basin. Soon after this Edward noticed a small, triangular white figure coming from inside to one of these windows and then quickly pull back. Everyone then left the house and it was shut up. When they returned at around two o'clock they found three armchairs in the living room tipped over and metal screws lying around which no one had put there, also an iron ring which no one had seen before.

I got home at dusk, and as I planned to the local fruit press after supper, and no one wanted to stay in the house, we locked up the remains of the meal - a pewter plate with two and a half sausages and some bread - in the cupboard of the living room sideboard and took out the key. The rooms and outside doors were likewise closed. The boys and the housemaid came with me, while my wife went with the girls to the hired accommodation in the new building. It was around 10 o'clock when I and the boys got back to the rented house and then we all went back into the house together. In the living room we found the cupboard door that we had locked before leaving standing open, the pewter plate tipped up on the floor, the bread and sausages strewn around the armchairs. No one had left the annex in the meantime.

Throughout the night we thought we heard repeatedly something moving around in the upstairs rooms.

### **Sunday 5 October**

In the afternoon several freshly torn twigs with the leaves on were thrown down the chimney into the kitchen, to which I was witness along with several of my household.

### **Monday 6 October**

I went with my wife to Lucerne to attend mass. At nine o'clock my children saw the outside door in the little corridor swinging open and shut - as had happened frequently before. Soon after this there was a knocking from the corridor on the living room wall. Once they heard in the corridor, seemingly coming from the floor, the same deep voice that they had often heard before, calling the name of first one girl then the other, then asking about the whereabouts of their mother. Then they heard noises upstairs, at which they went outside again. They spent the afternoon in the barn where the tenant's wife told them that, just as she was returning from the common, where she had been busy with her husband, and was approaching the garden, she saw in the house a girl sitting at the table, quite like the maid, but much better dressed and looking fixedly in front of her at the floor. As it turned out, our maid was away from the neighbourhood at the time. At the window there was nothing more to be seen.

After a while Melanie went to attend to the laundry in the garden and she too saw the figure at the window; she calmly observed it at length. This girl wore a green jacket and a net over her straight hair, her head bent in front of her in a melancholy fashion. Wondering whether it might be the servant girl, she loudly called her name, at which the form crouched down lower in an odd way. She asked where the maid was and then saw her returning from a neighbour's house some way off, where she had been busy fetching fruit. Hearing about this, one of the older boys rushed into the garden so that he too could see the apparition. There was nothing more to see at this window, but he did see the same figure through the open window of the garden room - although to him the jacket seemed to be brown - walk from the corridor into the room, boldly swing her feet onto the window ledge, as if she was going to jump out, and then suddenly vanish. In the evening when we had come home Melanie and the maid saw the same figure that Melanie had seen by the lower window, exactly in the earlier position. Here too an immediate investigation led to no result.

### **Wednesday 8 October**

My wife and one of my children were getting ready in the morning for a small mountain journey to Rickenbach (I had left early for Zurich), when there was one mighty knock on the chamber floor. That was one of the last of the most striking phenomena. From then until our final departure it was merely a matter of stone throwing and footsteps in the empty chambers, beginning some two or three days later.

## **Wednesday 22 October**

With the contents of the house all packed up, the children were pelted with chunks of soot from the chimney (on September 20 this had been scoured with a chimney brush but without pushing up against anything suspicious). Finally they were driven from the upper chambers with bits of wood, stones and nuts.

As I went round the house closing up all the cosy rooms for the last time, I was engulfed with memories of the happy family life I had enjoyed for the past twenty years, and also of my boyhood there under the protection of my loving parents. Standing outside my beloved house I felt the full force of the poet's words, that as much as half a person's being is bound up in his home life. It was as though the best pages had been torn out of the record of my life, and I had been left ruined.

I tell everything down here in this little text and vouch for the truth of what I relate, the result of my best scientific endeavour carried out with absolute conscientiousness. For the sake of convenience I have omitted long lists of witnesses of the events, but am always ready to provide them for the benefit of any serious researchers. It turns out that ours was not the only experience of the kind, but has been often uncovered by researchers, and is spoken of in a great number of letters that people have sent me describing similar events that they too have experienced. They include a distinguished friend, highly regarded in liberal Switzerland, who experienced similarly inexplicable phenomena, if somewhat less tumultuous and confined to a narrow circle of confidants.

The house was closed after our departure, and was only now, in this Spring of 1863, let out again, so far however without any of the phenomena appearing to have returned. Since our departure I and my family have been spared any of this kind of persecution.