

reign, which were only terminated by the royal interposition, are not yet forgotten. Scarcely fifteen years, I believe, are elapsed, since London had its "Chevalier de Saxe," in the memorable Cock-Lane ghost.

The man who here exhibited so extraordinary a proof of his art; for such it must, in every case, be esteemed; was a person of the name of Schrepfer, who originally resided at Leipzig, of which city he was a native, and where he kept a coffee-house. But, his business not producing him either as much profit, or as much distinction as he aspired to possess, he pretended to study magic, and to have acquired many secrets connected with that imaginary science. He boldly asserted that he had intercourse with, and a control over spirits, whom he could summon, command, and cause to disappear, if not altogether at his pleasure, yet by the force of his invocations. These agents he had the ingenuity and effrontery to divide into three classes, the friendly, the evil, and the neutral; all of whom he

knew how to distinguish at their approach, or on their appearance, by the noises which preceded and attended them. Whenever he affected to exert his magical powers, he always began by calling to his assistance the benevolent spirits; in order, as he said, to defend him against the attacks of the malignant ones. Pretensions so extraordinary, sustained by some exhibitions which impressed the spectators with astonishment, soon procured him no little reputation.

Schrepfer, about this time, while he still resided at Leipzig, had given offence to Prince Charles of Saxony, by expressions relative to him, of an unbecoming or insolent nature. The Prince irritated at such conduct, ordered an officer belonging to his household to repair to Leipzig, and there to inflict on Schrepfer, in his name, personal chastisement. His orders were exactly executed: but Schrepfer, though he made no other resistance, running into a corner of the room, threw himself on his knees, and loudly invoked his invisible allies to come to his assistance. Their visible appearance

pearance or interposition were however unnecessary, in order to rescue him from violence: the officer, it is asserted, having been so much alarmed at the invocation and its possible consequences, as to quit the chamber with precipitation.

A circumstance of such notoriety, as well as so degrading in itself to Schrepfer, induced him to leave Leipzig. After an absence of some time, he appeared at Dresden, where he assumed a fictitious name, and announced that he was a colonel in the service of France. In that quality he even made an attempt to be presented to the Elector; but Monsieur de Marbois, who acted as Chargé d'Affaires in the absence of the French envoy, refused to carry him to Court. His real name soon became known; and his pretences to skill in magic attracting many followers, his reputation speedily reached Prince Charles. It was accompanied with such extraordinary accounts of Schrepfer's powers, as to induce that Prince to make every exertion for obliterating the recollection of the indignity lately offered him.

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As a step towards it, he did not hesitate to go in person to the "Hotel de Pologne," an inn where Schrepfer lodged; and in presence of various witnesses, to ask his pardon for the blows given him, as well as to offer every amends that the nature of the affront admitted. Schrepfer, flattered by such a condescension, having accepted the apologies, the Prince then requested to see some proofs of his supernatural art. It is pretended that he exhibited many; all of which only tended to augment the Prince's admiration, and to stimulate his curiosity for further specimens.

But, the most difficult operation of magic in all ages, has been to raise departed spirits from the tomb; a prodigy which Schrepfer made no secret of his ability to perform. Prince Charles having earnestly, as well as repeatedly besought it; after many refusals, real or affected, obtained at length a reluctant promise to present before his eyes an apparition; for Schrepfer artfully professed the greatest repugnance and disinclination to the act, as being perilous to himself, and
attended

attended with various circumstances of horror. It only remained therefore, to fix on the spirit to be summoned. After long consideration the Chevalier de Saxe was named, and Schrepfer undertook to produce his ghost before a select company. The place chosen for the experiment, was Prince Charles's Palace in Dresden. But, as it was well known that the Elector having the misfortune to be neither credulous, nor inclined to permit such exhibitions in his capital, might disapprove and prohibit it, the strictest secrecy was observed previous to the affair.

The Chevalier de Saxe, third in order of birth, among the natural sons of Augustus the Second, King of Poland, was only half brother to the famous Marshal Saxe, as they were by different mothers. In right of his, who was a Princess Lubomirska, of a very illustrious Polish family, the Chevalier inherited considerable property in that country, as well as in Saxony. He resided principally in Dresden, and died only
a few

a few years ago, at his palace in this city; which his nephew Prince Charles, who was his principal heir, occupied after his decease. In addition to his maternal estates, the Chevalier possessed a vast income from his military and other appointments in the Electoral service; and as he left no issue, he was supposed to have amassed great sums. Reports had been circulated, that money was concealed in the palace; but no one pretended to ascertain the precise place where it was deposited. If his spirit could be compelled to appear, that interesting secret might be extorted from him. Thus curiosity combining with avarice, or at least with the hope of discovering a considerable treasure, prompted Prince Charles to name his uncle, as the object of the experiment.

On the appointed night; for Schrepfer naturally preferred darkness, as not only more private in itself, but better calculated for the effect of incantations; the company assembled. They were nineteen in number, of whom I personally know several,

several, who are persons of consideration, character, and respectability. When they were met in the great gallery of the palace, the first object of all present was to secure the windows and doors, in order equally to prevent intrusion or deception. As far as precaution could effect it, they did so, and were satisfied that nothing except violence could procure access or entrance. Schrepfer then acquainted them, that the act which he was about to perform, would demand all their firmness; and advised them to fortify their nerves by partaking of a bowl of punch, which was placed upon the table. Several of them, (indeed, as I believe, all except one or two,) thinking the exhortation judicious, very readily followed it; but, the gentleman from whom I received these particulars, declined to profit by the advice. "I am come here," said he to Schrepfer, "to be present at raising an apparition. "Either I will see all, or nothing. My "resolution is taken, and no inducement can "make me put any thing within my lips."

Another

Another of the company, who preserved his presence of mind, placed himself close to the principal door, in order to watch if any one attempted to open or force it. These preparatory steps being taken, the great work began with the utmost solemnity.

Schrepfer commenced it, by retiring into a corner of the gallery, where kneeling down, with many mysterious ceremonies he invoked the spirits to appear, or rather to come to his aid; for it is allowed that none were ever visible. A very considerable time elapsed before they obeyed; during which interval, he laboured apparently under great agitation of body and mind, being covered with a violent sweat, and almost in convulsions, like the Pythoness of antiquity. At length, a loud clatter was heard at all the windows on the outside; which was soon followed by another noise, resembling more the effect produced by a number of wet fingers drawn over the edge of glasses, than any thing else to which it

could well be compared. This found announced, as he said, the arrival of his good or protecting spirits, and seemed to encourage him to proceed. A short time afterwards a yelling was heard, of a frightful and unusual nature, which came, he declared, from the malignant spirits, whose presence, as it seems, was necessary and indispensable to the completion of the catastrophe.

The company were now, at least the greater part, electrified with amazement, or petrified with horror; and of course fully prepared for every object which could be presented to them. Schrepfer continuing his invocations, the door suddenly opened with violence, and something that resembled a black ball or globe, rolled into the room. It was invested with smoke or cloud, in the midst of which appeared to be a human face, like the countenance of the Chevalier de Saxe; much in the same way, it would seem, that Corregio or Hannibal Carrache have represented Jupiter appearing to Semelé. From this form issued a
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loud and angry voice, which exclaimed in German, "Carl, was wolte du mit mich?"

"Charles, what wouldst thou with me?"

"Why dost thou disturb me?"

Language, as may be supposed, can ill describe the consternation produced among the spectators at such a sight. Either firmly persuaded that the appearance which they beheld, was spiritual and intangible; or deprived of resolution to approach and attempt to seize it; they appear to have made no effort to satisfy themselves of its incorporeal nature. The Prince, whose impious curiosity had summoned his uncle's ghost, and to whom, as the person principally responsible, the spectre addressed itself; far from manifesting coolness, or attempting reply, betrayed the strongest marks of horror and contrition. Throwing himself on his knees, he called on God for mercy; while others of the terrified party earnestly besought the magician to give the only remaining proof of his art for which they now were anxious, by dismissing the apparition.

rition. But Schrepfer, though apparently willing, found, or pretended to find, this effort beyond his power. However incredible, absurd, or ridiculous it may be thought, the persons who witnessed the scene, protest that near an hour elapsed, before, by the force of his invocations, the spectre could be compelled to disappear. Nay, when at length Schrepfer had succeeded in dismissing it; at the moment that the company began to resume a degree of serenity, the door, which had been closed, burst open again, and the same hideous form presented itself anew to their eyes. The most resolute and collected among them, were not proof to its second appearance, and a scene of universal dismay ensued. Schrepfer, however, by reiterated exorcisms or exertions, finally dismissed the apparition. The terrified spectators soon dispersed, overcome with amazement, and fully satisfied, as they well might be, of Schrepfer's supernatural powers.

Having thus related as seriously and circumstantially as I am able, the principal

facts relative to the affair in question, it is natural to ask my own opinion of the story; and to demand whether I can explain or account for it in any rational manner. To such inquiries I must frankly reply, that I can neither give any satisfactory solution of it, nor have I heard any attempted, except the obvious one of human credulity and terror, operated upon by imposture and deception. But, the manner in which so wonderful an illusion was produced, I am, in common with every person here, at a loss to understand. I believe, no one has yet clearly explained how the liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood is performed; though, out of Naples, I imagine few persons attribute it to miraculous or supernatural interposition. We know from experience, how prodigious are the deceptions practised in and upon optics. Nineteen men, met together for the avowed purpose of seeing an apparition, and believing that it is in human power to render a departed spirit visible, are already half subdued to any thing, however gross. Night, darkness, and

and the imposing solemnity of magic invocations, bereave the strongest minds of their self-possession. A bold and artful impostor might then trample on their reason, and present to their eyes some hideous figure properly accoutred for the occasion. It must, however, always excite some astonishment and more regret, that among near twenty persons, not one should have endeavoured to lay hands on the spectre. Its second appearance is likewise a circumstance very difficult to account for, as it was unnecessary in order to produce conviction, which had been fully effected. That it was a deception, no man of sound understanding will doubt; but how it was managed or produced, the persons who were duped, have not yet discovered. They are all, or nearly all, still alive in this country, and they by no means boast of their adventure, or derive from it any sort of vanity. On the contrary, independent of the ridicule, they all feel and express the utmost repugnance to relating, or even recollecting

a scene, which has impressed on their imagination so much horror. Their friends dread and deprecate a renewal of the images then presented to those who were present; and a lady earnestly besought of me, not to press her husband on a subject, of which he could never think or converse without passing a sleepless night. We must be content therefore to resolve it into German credulity or superstition, and congratulate ourselves on our superiority to such puerile terrors.

The story no sooner spread through Dresden, than the Elector expressed his disapprobation of such scenes, and his peremptory injunctions not to repeat them. Schrepfer soon retired to his native city, Leipzig; where his fame accompanied him, and drew after him, a crowd of disciples or votaries. To them he continued to give, as is confidently asserted here, numerous and astonishing proofs of his supernatural power, some of which I have heard related; but after the specimen that I have detailed,

detailed, all others would be at once tedious and superfluous. Schrepfer did not long enjoy his celebrity, and his death is not the least extraordinary part of his history. Three gentlemen, whom he had in some measure initiated into his mysteries; for he professed to instruct in the science of magic; were promised by him an exhibition more wonderful than any at which they had yet assisted. For this purpose they attended him into the wood of Rosendaal, which is at a small distance without the gates of Leipzig. It was in summer, before the sun rose, between three and four o'clock in the morning. When they came to a certain part of the grove, he desired them to stay a little, while he went on one side, to make the requisite invocations. After waiting a few minutes, they heard the report of a pistol. Running to the spot, they found that he had shot himself, and was already without sense. He soon afterwards expired. All those who believe him to have had intercourse with evil spirits, affirm that he was tor-

mented by them perpetually, which rendering his life miserable, induced him to have recourse to a pistol. I imagine however, you will think with Horace, that it is not necessary to call in supernatural interference, in order to account for the violent end of such a man. He has left behind him many profelytes; but, I believe, no one who pretends to equal knowledge of his secrets.

It is probable that my next letter will be from Prague, or from Vienna.