

## GHOSTS IN GLOUCESTER.

### The Mysterious Noises in Gould's Court.

#### An Acadian French Theory of Their Cause —Men Less Brave Than Women.

#### Frequent Gratuitous Rappings Unex- plained.

[Special Despatch to The Boston Globe.]

GLOUCESTER, March 2.—“I hope we shall not hear that noise tonight,” said the wife of Stephen McKinney as she sat in an upper room of 12 Gould court a week ago. A female companion expressed the same hope, and Mrs. McKinney continued: “We may not hear it for a fortnight; we have not heard it for the last three weeks, and—”

She did not finish the sentence. At that moment, in the hall below, was heard a rap! rap! rap! as of knuckles on a door. There was a pause; then, one after another, heavy blows, as of a maul on the partition wall, came in rapid succession. Every tin in the cupboards rattled as if shaken by an earthquake, every one in the house became silent and listened for what they knew would come again. The clock then pointed to 10.30. In a few minutes more raps were heard and more blows, with a force as from a giant arm; again and again at irregular intervals was this repeated. During one of the intervals Stephen McKinney and James Strahan went to the cellar to investigate. They remained there about five minutes, but all was silent; when they returned up stairs the noise was renewed. Shortly before midnight two blows, as if from an axe, were heard on the roof by those who were in the attic. When the clock struck 12 all was silent, and no further noises were heard that night.

At 9.30 o'clock Wednesday night the same kind of noises commenced again, and again continued until midnight, when they ceased. Thursday night brought a similar experience, but on Friday and Saturday nights all was quiet, and the owner of the house and his sons, who watched on the first-named night, could hear nothing to justify

#### The Story of the Tenants.

It is certain, however, from the mass of evidence on the subject, that the mysterious noises were heard on the other nights named. It seems equally certain that they were the result of no fraud or jest, and that, in point of fact, they were neither the conception of the human mind nor the work of mortal hands.

The mysterious noises in Gould court were not heard then for the first time, nor is it probable that they have been heard for the last time. The strange story dates back to the autumn of 1881, when the noises were first heard. They have come at intervals during every fall and winter since then. The house known as No. 12 is a wooden tenement owned by Michael O'Maley, who lives near at hand. It consists of two stories with basement and attic, and contains seven or eight rooms. The basement is one large apartment, having its floor on a level with the ground, and is used for the storage of fuel, etc. Rough board partitions divide it into compartments for the use of the different tenants. It is well lighted and contains no place of concealment for an intruder. The first floor is about six feet above the ground level and the main entrance door is reached by a common flight of steps. There is no porch in which one could hide. The first floor contains on each side of the hall a room about twelve by sixteen feet and a small bedroom. The width of the hallway is between these at the rear. This floor is occupied by Henry Hatch, a fisherman, his wife and three children, the eldest of whom is 9 years of age. Hatch is away nearly all the time, and his family remain alone in his absence. The second floor is occupied by Stephen McKinney, fisherman, on one side, and by Mrs. Gillis on the other. They occupy their respective attics as bedrooms. McKinney, who is

#### Away Nearly All the Time,

has a wife and three children, the youngest a babe. During the greater portion of the time, therefore, the occupants of the house are women and small children. The Hatch family has been in the house ten years, the McKinney fifteen months, and Mrs. Gillis only eight months.

On entering the front hall the door of Hatch's kitchen is immediately to the left, and directly in front is a door opening into the cellarway under the stairs. It is from this cellarway, and in or upon the five inch partition separating it from the kitchen that the noises chiefly come. The first heard of them was in September, 1881, when a quick impatient rapping, followed at once by heavy thumping, alarmed all the inmates of the house. The hour was 10 at night. Mme. Labelle, an Acadian laundress, was then an up-stairs tenant.

“I ran to ze window over ze door,” she says, “and cry out, ‘who dare?’ I tink it be some girl or fisherman who get zeare cloze wash by me. No one spoke; I see no one; I go away. Zen, dey pound, oh! great noise! grand hammering, same as if you take hatchet and hit board. I cry out again, ‘Who dare? qui est la?’ and see no one. Zen I say I tink it ze devil, and wish I had pitcher to throw water on him. Zen I ran down; I open ze door; no one dare. Zen I say, ‘it must be ze devil, sure.’”

All the other tenants heard the noises which puzzled madame, but they were more alarmed when the rapping and pounding was continued at intervals for a week or ten days. Then it ceased and was not heard for three or four months, when it recommenced, and was continued with more or less regularity for a week or ten days more. It

#### Was Not Heard During the Summer,

but in the following fall it came again and was heard at intervals during the winter. Last summer no noises were heard, but when October came the noises came with it. Sometimes two or three weeks would pass without any disturbance, and then the racket would begin and continue for two or three nights. The attack came as stated Saturday a week ago. Then nothing was heard until Wednesday night, when at 9.30 the unwelcome visitor was heard again, and the visit was renewed at the same hour Thursday night. Henry Hatch, being absent so much, has heard it but once, and that was two years ago. His wife has heard it very many times, but, being a woman of much courage, has ceased to be alarmed. She, however, is careful to have her younger children asleep before the usual hour at which the noise is due, and the door leading into the hall is kept locked after 9 o'clock, lest the cause of the knocking might become materialized and walk in without leave. Mrs. McKinney does not accept the matter so calmly.

“I am that nervous my shadow frightens me,” she said, “but men are more afraid than we women are.”

Mrs. Gillis takes the matter quietly, but seems indisposed to converse about it.

The source of the noise, so far as can be judged by the ear, is on the wall in the cellar-way, but it has been known to shift suddenly to the opposite wall of Hatch's kitchen, twelve feet or more away. The demonstrations can be heard distinctly in every part of the building, and have even been heard in the neighboring houses. Besides the regular knocking, the blows on the roof are heard on rare occasions, and some of the former tenants aver that they have heard other strange noises apparently in the air. The door of the cellar way is made of plain boards, fastened with a common thumb latch. During the progress of the knocking

#### This Door Has Been Seen to Shake

violently, and the latch has rattled as if some impatient hands were on the other side. Opening the door suddenly has disclosed “darkness there, and nothing more.” One peculiar feature is that the rapping has never been heard before 7 o'clock in the evening, nor later than midnight. Usually the hour is between 9 and 11, and the favorite hour is 9.30. The tenants have begun to regard the phenomenon as a harmless one. They are not sure whether it is of this world or the other, but they believe that if it had any power to hurt them it would have excited it long ago. None have moved out through fear of it, and none of the present occupants propose to do so.

A stranger, said to represent an eastern dialectical association, visited the house today and made an inquiry into the facts. It is understood that he has some theory which rejects the idea both of deception and of supernatural agencies, and ascribes the phenomenon to the feeble understood laws of magnetic forces. Whatever the solution may be the stories of all, heard separately, agree in every respect, and there is no likelihood of collusion. No known motive for fraud exists; none concerned are of a class to be skilled in tricks of legendary, and any ordinary trick would have been found out amid the investigations of the past.

years. Even if trickery were possible it could profit no one.

The mystery awaits solution, and Gould court has become more famous than was dreamed of in the philosophy of the oldest of the old-time citizens.