

Gaspar, The Friendly Ghost

The Survival Files — Case 28 — ESS = 210.8

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This testimony is submitted by Mr. S. Carter Hall, editor of several leading British periodicals in the early 19th Century.¹ His source is a woman he met in Worcester who, although insisting on anonymity, was vouched for by a trusted banker, who had known her for some 30 years. The lady's words, uttered reluctantly but with conviction to Mr. Hall at the urging of the banker, were recalled by him a few weeks later as follows:²

“About the year 1820, we were residing at the seaport town of [name withheld], in France, having removed thither from our residence in Suffolk. Our family consisted of my father, mother, sister, a young brother about the age of twelve, and myself; together with an English servant. Our house was in a lonely spot, on the outskirts of the town, with a broad, open beach around it, and with no other dwelling, nor any outbuildings, in its vicinity.

“One evening my father saw, seated on a fragment of rock only a few yards from his own door, a figure enveloped in a large cloak. Approaching him, my father bid him ‘good-evening’; but, receiving no reply, he turned to enter the house. Before doing so, however, he looked back, and, to his very great surprise, could see no one. His astonishment reached its height when, on returning to the rock where the figure had seemed seated, and searching all round it, he could discover no trace whatever of the appearance, although there was not the slightest shelter near where any one could have sought concealment.

“On entering the sitting-room, he said, ‘Children, I have seen a ghost!’— at which, as may be supposed, we all heartily laughed.

“That night, however, and for several succeeding nights, we heard strange noises in various parts of the house — sometimes resembling moans underneath our window, sometimes sounding like scratches against the window-frames, while at other times it seemed as if a number of persons were scrambling over the roof. We opened our window again and again, calling out to know if any one were there, but received no answer.

“After some days, the noises made their way into our bedroom, where my sister and myself (she twenty and I eighteen years of age) slept together. We alarmed the house, but received only reproaches, our parents believing that we were affected by silly fancies. The noises in our room were usually knocks — sometimes repeated twenty or thirty times in a minute, sometimes with the space perhaps of a minute between each.

“At length our parents also heard both the knockings in our room and the noises outside, and were fain to admit that it was no imagination. Then the incident of the ghost was revived. But none of us were seriously alarmed. We became accustomed to the disturbances.

“One night, during the usual knockings, it occurred to me to say, aloud, ‘If you are a spirit, knock six times. Immediately I heard six knocks, very distinctly given, and no more.

¹ He is best known, perhaps, for being the husband of Mrs. S.C. Hall (Anna Maria Fielding) who was a well-known author of stories and novels set in Ireland. Thus, he was a public figure with a reputation to uphold.

² As quoted by Owen.

“As time passed on, the noises became so familiar as to lose all terrifying, even all disagreeable, effect; and so matters passed for several weeks.

“But the most remarkable part of my story remains to be told. I should hesitate to repeat it to you, were not all the members of my family witnesses of its truth. My brother — then, it is true, a boy only, now a man in years, and high in his profession — will confirm every particular.

“Besides the knockings in our bedroom, we began to hear — usually in the parlor — what seemed a human voice. The first time this startling phenomenon occurred, the voice was heard to join in one of the domestic songs of the family while my sister was at the piano. You may imagine our astonishment. But we were not long left in doubt as to whether, in this instance, our imaginations had deceived us. After a time, the voice began to speak to us clearly and intelligibly, joining from time to time in the conversation. The tones were low, slow, and solemn, but quite distinct: the language was uniformly French.

“The spirit — for such we called it — gave his name as “Gaspar,” but remained silent whenever we made inquiry touching his history and condition in life. Nor did he ever assign any motive for his communications with us. We received the impression that he was a Spaniard; but I cannot recall any certain reason, even, for such belief.³ He always called the family by their Christian names. Occasionally he would repeat to us lines of poetry. He never spoke on subjects of a religious nature or tendency, but constantly inculcated Christian morality, seeming desirous to impress upon us the wisdom of virtue and the beauty of harmony at home. Once, when my sister and myself had some slight dispute, we heard the voice saying, ‘Mary is wrong; Susan⁴ is right.’ From the time he first declared himself he was continually giving us advice, *and always for good.** [*Footnote in Owen’s text: * The italics are in the original manuscript.*]

“On one occasion my father was extremely desirous to recover some valuable papers which he feared might have been lost. Gaspar told him exactly where they were, in our old house in Suffolk; and there, sure enough, in the very place he designated, they were found.

“The matter went on in this manner *for more than three years*. Every member of the family, including the servants, had heard the voice. The presence of the spirit — for we could not help regarding him as present — was always a pleasure to us all. We came to regard him as our companion and protector. One day he said, ‘I shall not be with you again for some months.’ And, accordingly, for several months his visits intermitted. When, one evening at the end of that time, we again heard the well-known voice, ‘I am with you again!’ we hailed his return with joy.

“At the times the voice was heard, we never saw any appearance; but one evening my brother said, ‘Gaspar, I should like to see you’; to which the voice replied, ‘You shall see me. I will meet you if you go to the farthest side of the square.’ He went, and returned presently, saying, ‘I have seen Gaspar. He was in a large cloak, with a broad-brimmed hat. I looked under the hat, and he smiled upon me.’ ‘Yes,’ said the voice, joining in, ‘that was I.’

“But the manner of his final departure was more touching, even, than his kindness while he stayed. We returned to Suffolk; and there, as in France, for several weeks after our arrival, Gaspar continued to converse with us, as usual. One day, however, he said, ‘I am about to leave

³ Supposedly there was a Spanish pirate named José Gaspar who plundered ships off the coast of Florida in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but stories of him were not in print until 80 years after the events recounted here.

⁴ Names are pseudonyms.

you altogether. Harm would come to you if I were to be with you here in this country, where your communications with me would be misunderstood and misinterpreted.’

“From that time to this, we never heard the voice of Gaspar again!”

So ends the woman’s testimony. Mr Hall adds: “These are the facts as I had them They made me think; and they may make your readers think. Explanation or opinion I pretend not to add, further than this: that of the perfect good faith of the narrator I entertain no doubt whatever. In attestation of the story as she related it, I affix my name. — S.C. Hall, London, June 25, 1859.”

After this case was published in Owen’s book, it was copied by the *Worcester Herald* newspaper along with commentary suggesting that the whole thing was a hoax perpetrated by Mr. Hall. A few days later, however, the paper issued an apology, saying that the banker “assures us that Mr. Hall has given the story most faithfully and exactly as she told it,” and that he reiterated the woman’s “truthful manner and apparent earnestness of conviction.”⁵

Opposition

One advantage of older cases is that skeptics, critics, and debunkers have had plenty of time to put forward any opposing argument or testimony. Several hours tediously searching the Internet for any such contention regarding this case have proven fruitless. [As of 3 January 2007.]

ESS Score

The direct voice phenomenon is quite rare in seances and virtually unheard of in the public and ongoing manner described herein. Likewise exceptional is the “on-demand” appearance of the spirit to the son. Both of these occurring in the same case is not just rare, it is otherwise unknown to psychic research. The scoring system is not, and cannot be, designed to rate such a case, thus, there must be some subjectivity and creativity involved here.

The spirit manifested visibly to two people (the father and the son) on two separate occasions in two separate venues when each was otherwise alone. It was heard to speak by at least seven different people (five family members plus servants) on numerous occasions in two different locales throughout a three-year span. It made itself known to the two daughters in their private bed-chamber. It is inconceivable that any magician, ventriloquist, or poltergeist could have caused all these events. Also, there were at least two pieces of verified information imparted — the location of the father’s missing papers and the appearance of the spirit at a particular place and time. The latter bit is of particular importance, as neither mental telepathy nor the Akashic Records can be used to explain knowledge of a future event. In addition, several communications contained advice or admonishments which cannot be thought to spring from a cosmic data bank. (This last type of information, however, is not verifiable.) All of which, taken together, argues for taking Gaspar at his word that he is a discarnate spirit. A CS rating of 161 seems appropriate.

The Witness Reliability rating is “b” (46 pts) with a bonus (3 pts) for the prominence of the repoter (Hall) and the endorsement by the banker. WR = 49.

⁵ Owen, *Addenda*, p. 511.

The Character/Complexity of Information rating is “p” with a bonus point for quantity and duration. IC = 0.8.

Total ESS Score: $161 + 49 + .8 = 210.8$

For Further Information See: [*Footfalls On The Boundary Of Another World*](#) by Robert Dale Owen, first published in 1859 by J.B. Lippincott & Co., reprinted by Kessinger Publishing, pages 461-466.

END CASE 28
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