WITCHCRAFT IN ENGLAND, 1558–1618

EDITED BY

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restraining of trivial pamphlets, as well to exercise the readers in matter necessary as to cut off the writing of things needless.

Among other, your Worship's care as well for the furthering of the truth of this arraignment (being judge at the trial of the malefactors) as also the crossing of whatsoever pamphlets should have been preferred respecting either the matter partly or confusedly—emboldens me to prefer the patronage hereof to your Worship; not doubting but as you have been careful as well for the trial and judgment of such heinous offenders, and withal taken extraordinary pains in perfecting this work to others' example, you will likewise vouchsafe to pardon our boldness.[2]

To the Reader

At length, though long first, gentle reader, this notable arraignment and examinations of Samuel, his wife and daughter for their sundry witchcrafts in Huntingdonshire are come to view. It hath for special cause been so long deferred, as well that nothing might escape untouched which they had done, as that everything might be throughly sifted, lest it should pass any way corruptly.

These cares having perfected the work, it is now passed the press to your presence, wherein I presume ye shall find matter as admirable as ever this age afforded.

A true and particular observation of a notable piece of witchcraft practised by John Samuel the father, Alice Samuel the mother, and Agnes Samuel their daughter, of Warboys in the county of Huntingdon upon five daughters of Robert Throckmorton of the same town and county, esquire, and certain other maidservants[3] *to the number of twelve in the whole, all of them being in one house: November, 1589.*

[2] Variations of style within the book appear to suggest that it is a patchwork —that notes taken at the time of certain events were written up, then linked together by the 'author' without comprehensive re-writing. We know that Gilbert Pickering and Robert Throckmorton both took notes; a section after the arrests is ascribed to Doctor Dorington, and someone at the trial recorded procedure there. It is possible that Edward Fenner's 'extraordinary pains in perfecting this work' indicate that he wrote or checked the account of the trial; he might even have seen the book through the press, as he was influential enough to 'cross' or prevent publication of other accounts of the case.

[3] We hear nothing of these servants, and nothing of Robert, the youngest child and only son in the family. Taken for granted by the adults to the point of being invisible, these 'blank' characters in the drama could well have provided by their gossip much of the information which the girls acquired 'supernaturally' from the spirits. At the beginning of their affliction the children were aged as follows: Joan, 15 or just under; Elizabeth 13; Mary 12; Jane, just under 10 or 11; Grace, 9 or just under; Robert, 6. Nobody was very interested in the precise ages of the children and there are contradictions.

About the tenth of November which was in the year 1589, Mistress Jane, one of the daughters of the said Master Throckmorton, being near the age of ten years, fell upon the sudden into a strange kind of sickness and distemperature of body, the manner whereof was as followeth:

Sometimes she would sneeze[4] very loud and thick for the space of half an hour together, and presently as one in a great trance and swoon lay quietly as long; soon after she would begin to swell and heave up her belly so as none was able to bend her or keep her down; sometime she would shake one leg and no other part of her as if the palsy had been in it; sometimes the other; presently she would shake one of her arms and then the other, and soon after her head, as if she had been infected with the running palsy.

Continuing in this case two or three days, amongst other neighbours in the town there came into the house of Master Throckmorton the foresaid Alice Samuel to visit this sick child, who dwelt in the next house on the north side of the said Master Throckmorton. The child when the old woman came into the parlour was held in another woman's arms by the fire-side, so she went into the chimney corner and sat down hard by the child; the grandmother of the child and the mother being also present, she had not been there long but the child grew something worse than she was at her coming, and on the sudden cried, saying, 'Grandmother, look where the old witch sitteth'—pointing to the said Mother Samuel. 'Did you ever see' said the child, 'one more like a witch than she is? Take off her black thrummed* cap, for I cannot abide to look on her.'

The mother of the child, little then suspecting any such matter as afterwards fell out, was very angry with her child, and rebuked her for saying so; and thinking that it might proceed of some lightness in the child's brain, by reason of her great sneezing and want of sleep, took her and laid her down upon a bed, and hanged curtains against the windows, thereby hoping to bring her into a sleep; but much ado they

[4] Here and throughout the obsolete 'neese' or 'neeze' is used.

had to pacify and quiet the child. The old woman, hearing this, sat still and gave never a word, yet looked very ruefully, as afterwards was remembered by them that saw her.

The child still continuing her manner of sickness, rather worse than better, within two days after her parents sent the child's urine to Cambridge to Doctor Barrow, a man well known to be excellent skilful in physic, who returned this answer: namely, that he did perceive no kind of distemperature, save only that he thought she might be troubled with worms, and therefore sent his medicine accordingly; but the child was no whit the better.

So within two days after they sent again to the same man, declaring unto him the manner of her fits more at large; he said that the urine which they then again brought to him showed no such kind of disquietness to be in her body, and as for the falling sickness,* which the parents did suspect to be in the child, he would warrant her clear from that disease. Then he sent other prescripts as he thought good to purge her body, which took no place nor prevailed anything in the child as he looked for.

Then the parents sent to him the third time, as his desire was to understand how his physic wrought, declaring that it wrought nothing at all as he looked for, neither that the child was any way amended. Then Master Doctor, looking again in the urine, and perceiving the child's body to be in good temper, as he then said, for anything that he saw, demanded whether there was no sorcery or witchcraft suspected in the child; answer was made 'no'.

Then said he, 'All surely cannot be well'; for it is not possible that the child's body should be distempered by any natural cause as was then declared to him, and no sign thereof at all to appear in the urine; notwithstanding, for their better assurance, if the messenger would go to any other skilful man in the town to take further advice, he said he would be very well contented.

Whereupon the messenger went to Master Butler who, considering of the urine and hearing the manner of the child's trouble, said that he thought it might be the worms, which yet he did not perceive to be by the urine, and if it were the worms, than then it was a very strange kind of grief to be caused by them in that sort; and appointed the same medicine and physic for the remedy which before Doctor Barrow had prescribed.

Which being known, was not applied to the child because Master Doctor Barrow had said that if Master Throckmorton (to whom he

wished very well, as he then said, by reason of ancient acquaintance with him) would follow his advice, he should not strive any more therewith by physic, nor spend any more money about it; for he himself said that he had some experience of the malice of some witches, and he verily thought that there was some kind of sorcery and witchcraft wrought towards his child.

After which answer from Master Doctor Barrow, Master Throckmorton resolved himself to rest upon God's pleasure, not striving any further by physic to help his daughter; yet both himself and his wife were free from any such conceit of witchcraft which Master Doctor Barrow did suspect until, within one just month after (the very day and hour almost observed) two more of his daughters, elder than the other by two or three years fell into the same like extremeties as the other sister before them was in, and cried out upon Mother Samuel, saying, 'Take her away, look where she standeth here before us in a black thrummed cap' (which kind of cap indeed she did usually wear, but she was not then present); 'It is she' said they, 'that hath bewitched us and she will kill us if you do not take her away'.[5]

This thing did something move the parents, and strike into their mind a suspicion of witchcraft, yet devising with themselves for what cause it should be wrought upon them or their children, they could not imagine; for they were but newly come to the town to inhabit, which was but at Michaelmas before, neither had they given any occasion (to their knowledge) either to her or any other to practise any such malice against them.

Within less than a month after that, another sister younger than any of the rest, about the age of nine years, fell into the like case, and cried out of Mother Samuel as the other did. Soon after, Mistress Joan, the eldest sister of them all, about the age of fifteen years, was in the same case and worse handled indeed than any of the other sisters were; for she having more strength than they, and striving more with the spirit than the rest, not being able to overcome it was the more grievously tormented. For it forced her to sneeze, screech and groan very fearfully; sometime it would heave up her belly, and bounce up her body

[5] Thomas Darling (*The most wonderfull and true storie, of a certaine Witch named Alse Gooderige* . . . (London, 1597), A4^{v}, first suspected that he was bewitched because he heard his aunt and a neighbour discussing the possibility; doubtless such discussion kept alive Jane's original whim in the others. Most parents unconsciously assume that children hear only what is said directly to them.

with such violence that, had she not been kept upon her bed, it could not but have greatly bruised her body. And many times sitting in a chair, having her fit, she would with her often starting and heaving almost break the chair she sat in.

Yet was there no striving with them in this case, for the more they laboured to help them and to keep them down, the more violently they were handled; being deprived of all use of their senses during their fits, for they could neither see, hear, nor feel anybody, only crying out of Mother Samuel, desiring to have her taken away from them, who never more came after she perceived herself to be suspected.

These kind of fits would hold them, sometimes longer, sometimes shorter, either an hour or two, sometimes half the day, yea, the whole day; and many times they had six or seven fits in an hour. Yet when it pleased God to deliver them of their fits, they neither knew what they had said, neither yet in what sort they had been dealt withal, as hereafter shall be declared in particular.

After that Mistress Joan had been thus handled a while, the spirit as it should seem would sound in her ears something which she would declare in her fit; and amongst the rest, it showed unto her one time that there should be twelve of them which should be bewitched in that house, in one sort or other, and named them all unto her, being all womenkind and servants in the house, herself and her sisters being five of the number. All which proved afterwards very true, for they had all their several griefs and most of them afflicted in the same sort and manner as these five sisters were; of whom and the manner of their faith, if it should be written in particular how they were dealt withal, there would be no end of this book.

And this may suffice to be known concerning the servants, that when they first fell into their fits, they all cried out of Mother Samuel as the children did, saying 'Take her away, Mistress, for God's sake take her away and burn her, for she will kill us all if you let her alone!'—having the same miseries and extremities that the children had; and when they were out of their fits they knew no more than the children did, what either they had done or said.

And presently upon their departure from Mistress Throckmorton's house they were all very well, as at any time before, and so have continued ever since, without suspicion of any such kind of vexations; and those servants that came in their places, for the most part of them they were afflicted in the like sort as the other, for the space of two years together.

Upon Friday, being Saint Valentine's Even the thirteenth of February, in the two-and-thirtieth year of Her Majesty's reign, Gilbert Pickering of Titchmarsh Grove in the county of Northampton, esquire, being uncle to the said child, and hearing how strangely they were vexed and troubled, went to Warboys as well to visit and see them and also to comfort their parents. Coming to the house where they were, [he] found them all at that present very well as any children could be; and about one half hour after, the said Master Pickering was informed that one Mistress Andley, and Master Whittle of St. Ives,[6] and others, were gone to the house of Mother Samuel to persuade her to come to see and to visit the said children.

And because they tarried long, it seemed to the said Master Pickering that they could not bring her, although that the said Mother Samuel had often said she would come to the said children whensoever it pleased their parents to send for her, and she would venture her life in water up to the chin, and lose some part of her best blood to do them any good; but now as it seemed, her mind was clean altered.

The cause was, as it was suspected, for that all the said children (as it is said before) in their fits cried out of her, saying that she had bewitched them, and that she also feared the common practice of scratching would be used on her; which nothing less at that present was intended, for both the parents and the said Master Pickering had taken advice of good divines of the unlawfulness thereof. Wherefore the said Master Pickering went to Mother Samuel's house as well to see her as also to persuade her that if she were any cause of the children's trouble, that it might be amended; who coming to the said house found there the foresaid Master Whittle, Mistress Andley, and others persuading her to visit the said children, but she with loud speeches utterly refused the same. Whereupon the said Master Pickering told Mother Samuel that he had authority to bring her, and if she would not go with him willingly and of her own accord, he would force and compel her whether she would or no; which he then did, together with her daughter Agnes Samuel and one Cicely Burder, who were all suspected to be witches, or at the least in the confederacy with Mother Samuel.

And as they were going to the said Master Throckmorton's house, Master Whittle, Mistress Andley, and others going before Mother Samuel, Agnes Samuel and the said Cicely Burder in the middle part, and the said Master Pickering behind them—the said Master Pickering

[6] St. Ives in Huntingdonshire.

perceived[7] that old Mother Samuel would have willingly talked with her daughter Agnes, but the said Master Pickering followed so near behind them that they could not confer; and when they came at the door of Master Throckmorton's house, Mother Samuel used courtesy to the said Master Pickering, offering him to go into the house before her, which he refused, and in the entry of that same house (for either then or not at all) she thought that she should have had time to speak to her daughter: the said Mother Samuel did thrust her head as near as she could to her daughter's head and said these words 'I charge thee, do not confess anything!' Which the said Master Pickering being behind them perceiving, thrust his head as near as he could between their heads whilst the words were spoken, and, hearing them, presently replied to old Mother Samuel, 'Thou naughty woman, dost thou charge thy daughter not to confess anything?' 'Nay', saith she, 'I said not so, but I charged her to hasten herself home to get her father his dinner.'

In the meantime, whilst these words were in speaking, Master Whittle, Mistress Andley, and others went into the house, and three of the children [were] then standing in the hall by the fire perfect well. But no sooner had Mother Samuel entered the hall but at one moment the said three children fell down upon the ground strangely tormented, so that if they had been let lie still on the ground they would have leaped and sprung like a quick pickerel* newly taken out of the water, their bellies heaving up, their head and their heels still touching the ground as though they had been tumblers; and would have drawn their heads and their heels together backwards, throwing out their arms with great groans most strangely to be heard, to the great grief of the beholders.

But not long after they were thus fallen to the ground, the said Master Whittle took up one of the said children, which was Jane Throckmorton, and carried her into an inward chamber, laying her upon a bed; and being a man of as great strength as most be this day in England, and the child not above nine years old, yet he could not hold her down to the bed, but that she would heave up her belly far bigger and in higher measure for her proportion than any woman with child ready to be delivered, her belly being as hard as though there had been for the present time a great loaf in the same; and in such manner it would rise and fall an hundred times in the space of an hour, her eyes being closed as though she had been blind and her arms spread abroad

[7] Original has 'perceiving'.

so stiff and strong that the strength of a man was not able to bring them to her body.

Then the said Master Pickering went into the parlour where the said child was and, standing on the farther side of the bed from the child, viewing the order of her, presently the said child stretched forth her right arm to that side of the bed next to the said Master Pickering, and there scratching the covering of the bed, said these words very often, 'Oh, that I had her! oh, that I had her!' whereupon the said Master Pickering was in great admiration what the meaning of the said words should tend unto, and the rather for that the said Master Gilbert Pickering was of that opinion that scratching was merely unlawful.

Yet the said Master Pickering put his own hand to the child's hand whilst she was speaking the words, but the child feeling his hand would not scratch it, but forsook his hand and scratched still on the bed, her face being turned on the contrary side from the said Master Pickering, her eyes being closed, and Master Whittle lying in a manner with his whole body and weight over her to hold down her belly, fearing that she would have burst her back.

Notwithstanding, the occasion being thus offered by the child, or rather by the spirit in the child, to disclose some secret whereby the witches might be by some means or token made manifest and known, the said Master Pickering went into the hall and took Mother Samuel by the hand (who went as willingly as a bear to the stake) and brought her to the further side of the bed from the child, who lay scraping with her nails on the bed covering, saying 'Oh, that I had her!'

Then the said Master Pickering in very soft speeches, so that the child could not hear, said to Mother Samuel, 'Put your hand to the child's hand', but she would not. Then the said Master Pickering for example's sake put his hand to the child's hand, so did also Mistress Andley and others at the same instant, but the child would scarce touch, much less scratch, any of their hands. Then the said Master Pickering, without either malice to the woman, confidence or opinion in scratching (only to taste by this experiment whereto the child's words would tend) took Mother Samuel's hand and thrust it to the child's hand; who no sooner felt the same, but presently the child scratched her with such vehemency that her nails brake into spills with the force and earnest desire that she had to revenge.

Whilst the child was thus scratching, the said Master Pickering did cover Mother Samuel's hand with his own hand, to try what the child

would do in this extraordinary passion; but the child would not scratch his hand, but felt to and fro upon the bed for that which she missed, and if by any means she could come with her hand or but with one of her fingers to touch Mother Samuel's hand, she would scratch that hand only and no other. Yea, sometimes whiles the said Master Pickering with his hand did cover Mother Samuel's hand the said child would put one of her fingers between the fingers of the said Master Pickering and scratch Mother Samuel's hand that lay nethermost with that one finger, all her other fingers lying on the hand of the said Master Pickering without moving.

And in this passion, if at any time Mother Samuel's hand had been hidden or withdrawn from the child, she would have mourned and showed apparent tokens of dislike, as though there had been some great discourtesy offered. And this is to be noted for a most certain truth, for so it was by the said Master Pickering at the Assizes in Huntingdon given in evidence, that the child's eyes were closed so that she could not see any person, for so was the order of their fits; and though she at that present could have seen, yet the child's head and neck were so turned backward into Master Whittle's bosom, who covered (as before is said) both her head, face and body with his body, in such sort and so close, that it was unpossible for the child to see the company which stood on the further side of the bed.

This being done, the said Master Pickering departed out of that place into another parlour where there was a woman holding one of the other children, which child, as the said Master Pickering passed by, scraped the woman's apron that held her, saying, 'Oh, that I had her! oh, that I had her!' Then the said Master Pickering went into the hall and did bring Cicely Burder to the said child, and (for brevity sake) as the said Master Pickering did with Mother Samuel to the first child, so did he to Cicely Burder, and as the first child did to Mother Samuel, so this second child did to Cicely Burder in all respects.

There was a third child also at that present in the hall, which spake the same words, but the father of the children and Master Doctor Dorington, parson of the same parish, came then into the house, not allowing that which was done, by reason whereof the third was not put in proof.

The same night after supper, the children being all very well and out of their fits, Master Doctor Dorington made motion to have some prayers before the company departed; the company then kneeling down, Doctor Dorington began to pray. But no sooner had he uttered

the first word, but even at one instant of time all the children fell into their fits, with such terrible screeches and strange sneezings, so wonderfully tormented as though they should have been torn in pieces; which caused Doctor Dorington to stay in the midst of his prayers, and said these words, or the like in effect 'Were we best to go any further?'

But he had no sooner made stay, and his breath stayed from praying, but the children were quiet (but still in their fits); then he began to pray again, and then the children, or rather the wicked spirit in the children forced them as before. This was proved often in the time of prayer, for when he had made an end of any one prayer the children ceased and were quiet; when he began to pray, they began to shriek; when he ended, they ended.

The next day, being St. Valentine's Day, the said Master Pickering brought home to his house at Titchmarsh Grove aforesaid one of the said children called Elizabeth Throckmorton, being in her fit; who no sooner was[8] on horseback and out of Warboys town but she was well, and so continued till she came into the said Master Pickering's house.

But no sooner had she entered into the house but that the fit took her suddenly; gasping, being not able to speak, only thus 'It cometh!' she pitched herself backwards, all the joints of her backbone being as it were drawn together, thrusting out her belly so strongly that none could bend her back again, being very strong and heavy, shaking her limbs and oftentimes her head (when it riseth so high), but specially her arms, like to those which struggle and plunge betwixt life and death; being both dumb, deaf and blind, her eyes closed up. Now this held her not a quarter of an hour, but with a gasp she came again to herself, stroking her eyes as though she had been but asleep.

Sometimes, being taken in her fit she is but deaf only, when she can speak, or rather (as we think) the spirit in her, but very vainly; and she can see also but with a small glimmering, when if you look upon her, ye would deem her to have no sight at all. Sometimes also she can hear only, and not everybody, but someone whom she liketh and chooseth out from the rest; sometimes she seeth only, and as plainly as any other, but neither heareth nor speaketh anything, her teeth being set in her head; sometimes both hearing and seeing very well, and yet not able to speak.

Above all things she delighteth in play; she will pick out some one body to play with her at cards, and but one only, not hearing, seeing or speaking to any other; but being awake she remembereth nothing

[8] Original has 'being'.

that she did, heard, or spake, affirming that she was not sick, but only slept.

She continued well until night, and before supper in time of thanksgiving it vexed her very strangely, taking her at the very name of grace, and holding her no longer than grace was in saying. She sat very well at the table, but no sooner had she put up her knife but it pitched her backwards; then being taken from the table she was well until thanksgiving, all which time she was most grievously vexed and no longer.

Afterwards she was very quiet and well until motion was made of prayers, all which time it seemed as though it would have rent her in pieces, with such screeching and outcries and vehement sneezing as that it terrified the whole company; but prayers being ended she was quieted, but still in her fit.

Then Master Pickering and others that were acquainted with the manner of it said that if any should read the Bible or any other godly book before her, it would rage as before so long as they read; but because it was a thing very strange and therefore hardly believed, one did take a Bible and read the first chapter of Saint John,[9] the first verse. At the hearing whereof she was as one besides her mind; when he that read held his peace she was quiet. When he read again it tormented her; when he ceased, it ceased; this divers did prove many times.[10]

Nay, at the motion of any good word (as if any that stood by chanced to name God, or prayed God to bless her, or named any word that

[9] The conviction that it was wrong to do anything that the Devil wanted led the parents and friends of possessed children not to *avoid* but to *stress* the actions which brought on fits. A favourite reading to vex the Devil was the first chapter of St. John—a passage which had been worn in amulets or repeated as a charm since the earliest days of the Catholic Church, and was still powerful as such. After tormenting the child to the utmost, the Devil would depart in a final paroxysm, and the child would be able to engage in holy exercises unhindered. (Oddly, a modern psychiatric treatment for obsessive fears consists of confronting the patient with the feared object till he cracks and is then receptive to new suggestions.)

[10] Naturally, a good deal of mere curiosity was mixed up in this, and the exorcist Darrell warned against the idle wish to produce a fit (*Alse Gooderige* . . . D^{v}). Nonetheless, the parents of an afflicted child had much to do '. . . attending on such as came to see him, whereof many were of very good account' (*Alse Gooderige* . . . A4^{v}). The Elizabethans regarded personal fortune or misfortune as 'exempla' to benefit all; neither unhappiness, illness nor childbirth carried any right of privacy, and to turn away even curious strangers would apparently have been regarded as an unthinkable breach of hospitality.

tended to God or godliness) it raged all one as if any had read or prayed by her, and thus she was carried to bed still continuing in her fit.

In the morning, being the Sabbath day, she came down into the hall towards prayer time, and being asked whether she would tarry the time of prayers or not, she answered that she would do as they would have her. Then was she asked whether she could read; she said that she could once, but she had almost forgotten now. Then being asked further whether she had prayed that day, she made answer 'it would not suffer her'; then whether she used to pray at home, she answered that it would not give her so much time.

Then one said to her 'Since it will not suffer you to pray, nor any other (seeming to have ears), pray to yourself secretly in your heart and spirit'; and beginning to tell her that God understood the inward sighs and groans of the heart as well as the loudest cries of the mouth, she suddenly fell into her fit, being more strongly and strangely tormented that ever she was before.[11] And being carried away, her fit continued and increased all prayer time, albeit she was out of the hearing, with such vehement cries, screeching, and continual sneezing that many times prayers were constrained to be ceased for the time, so much it amazed the whole company. Prayers being ended, she came to herself with a gasp, wiping her eyes, being presently as well as anybody as though it had never been she.

She came down to dinner, and during the time of grace, it held her again, which was usual; yet will it suffer better another to say grace than herself, but nobody well. At dinner time it played with her, (for sometimes she hath merry fits) putting her hand besides her meat, and her meat besides her mouth, mocking her and making her miss her mouth, whereat she would sometimes smile and sometimes laugh exceedingly; and amongst many other things this is worthy to be noted, that being in her fit, she looked far more sweetly and cheerfully than when she is awake, and although being tormented most pitifully, that

[11] The children's fits seemed to be based on two contradictory desires—the desire to *get* attention and the desire to avoid *paying* attention. The silent fits allowed them to ignore anything they did not wish to hear (mainly adult instruction and edification); the violent fits allowed them to express blasphemous feelings through unbecoming actions and to produce, not disapproval, but awe and sympathy. Thus parents were compelled to devote all their thought and care to the frightening plight of their offspring, but were unable to rule or discipline children so frequently 'deaf' to them. (This is not to say that the fits were fully deliberate or controllable—only that they had distinct psychic advantages.)

it would have grieved any to see it, yet being once awake and out of her fit, she is as well as anybody.

At length Master Gilbert Pickering called to mind an experiment which was made at Warboys which was, that if one took any of those children in their fits and carried them into the churchyard which is adjoining to the house, they presently awaked, but bring them in again—they were as before; carry them forth and they came to themselves: go into the house and immediately their fit took them, and this was as often found true as proved. Hereupon we proved the like with this child, and carried her out of the house, and she presently recovered; but within the house it took her again.

But the certainty of this failed us soon (as Satan is most uncertain); yet for three days' space, if she were carried abroad in her fit, it would leave her and not take her again until she was brought into the house.

[The account of this child's seizures and obsessions continues for many pages.[12] The adults, in their strange scientific desire to 'test' the spirit and find rules for its behaviour are put through an extraordinary series of performances, carrying the girl indoors and out, feeding her in the fields a mile from the house, checking up on her statements about the activities of sisters in other places; Elizabeth is always one jump ahead, changing the rules as fast as they discover them.

Mother Samuel is not forgotten, however; she appears to the child in a white sheet with a black child on her shoulders, and on another occasion forces a mouse (i.e. spirit) into the girl's mouth. These visions seem to cause very genuine terror. Finally Elizabeth is taken home.]

Now that you have heard the particular manner of the fits of this child Mistress Elizabeth, you may imagine and aim at the manner of handling of the rest of her sisters (during this time remaining in other places) who were no less strangely dealt withal than she was; of whom it should particularly be observed, as is done in her—as strange wonders (if anything hitherto seem strange) befell every one of them severally as are these which you have already heard. And by some of them were showed matters of far greater admiration; but this may suffice, lest in entering into the rest no end could be found, so infinite is the matter.

It pleased the providence of God that, not long after Master Gilbert Pickering had carried away this child to his house (about a month or such a thing) the Lady Cromwell, wife of Sir Henry Cromwell, knight, who then lay in Ramsey, a town two miles distant from Warboys, came to Master Throckmorton's house together with her

[12] Sigs. $B4^v$–$D3^v$ are here omitted.

daughter-in-law Mistress Cromwell, to visit these children and to comfort their parents, with whom she was well acquainted.

She had not long stayed in the house but the children which were there fell all into their fits, and were so grievously tormented for the time that it pitied the good lady's heart to see them, insomuch that she could not abstain from tears. Whereupon she caused the old woman Mother Samuel to be sent for, who durst not deny to come, because her husband was tenant to Sir Henry Cromwell; who after she was come, the children grew to be worse than they were before, which caused the greater sorrow.

Then the Lady Cromwell took Mother Samuel aside, and charged her deeply with this witchcraft, using also some hard speeches to her; but she stiffly denied them all, saying that Master Throckmorton and his wife did her great wrong so to blame her without cause. The Lady answered her that neither Master Throckmorton nor his wife accused her, but the children themselves in their fits did it, or rather the spirit by them.

One of them, Mistress Joan by name, being then in her fit, hearing the old woman thus clearing herself (for she heard not the Lady, nor any other) said that it was she that caused all this, 'and something there is', saith she 'that doth now tell me so'; asking if nobody heard it but she, affirming that it squealed very loud in her ears, and marvelled that nobody could hear it, wishing the old woman to listen to it.

But Mother Samuel still continued her denial. Then the Lady Cromwell would have taken her up into a chamber to have examined her more narrowly, Master Doctor Hall, a doctor of divinity, being present, but she by no means would go with them but rather fained many excuses to go home.

In the end, when the lady perceived that by no good speeches neither she nor any other could prevail with her, and that fain she would have been gone, she suddenly pulled off her kercher* and taking a pair of shears, clipped off a lock of her hair, and gave it privily* to Mistress Throckmorton, mother of the children, together with her hair-lace, willing her to burn them.[13]

[13] A later witch-pamphlet suggests that the hair of a witch cannot be cut but will turn the edge of a pair of scissors (*The Trial of Master Dorell* (London, 1599), G2–G4). Here the cutting of the hair seems connected with the idea of scratching—any breach in the witch's physical invulnerability not only signifies but *causes* loss of power, because the devil whose dwelling she is will be offended and depart.

Mother Samuel, perceiving herself thus dealt withal, spake to the lady thus: 'Madam, why do you use me thus? I never did you any harm as yet.' These words were afterwards remembered, and were not at that present time taken hold of by any. Towards night, the Lady departing left the children much what as she found them.

The same night, after the Lady Cromwell departed from Warboys, she suffered many thing in her dream concerning Mother Samuel, and was very strangely tormented in her sleep by a cat (as she imagined) which Mother Samuel had sent unto her, which cat offered to pluck off all the skin and flesh from her arms and body; but such was the struggling and striving of the Lady that night in her bed, and mournful noise which she made speaking to the cat and to Mother Samuel, that she wakened her bedfellow,[14] who was Mistress Cromwell before named, wife to the worshipful Master Oliver Cromwell, son and heir to Sir Henry Cromwell, who that night was from home.

Mistress Cromwell being awakened, and perceiving the Lady thus disquieted, awakened her also, who greatly thanked her for it; declaring how she had been troubled in her dream with Mother Samuel and her cat, with many other circumstances which she did very well remember, neither could she take any quiet rest or sleep all that night after for fear thereof. Not long after, the Lady fell very strangely sick and so continued unto her dying day, which was some year and quarter after her being at Warboys.

The manner of her fits was much like to the children's, save only that she had always her perfect senses; for sometime her pain would be in one arm, sometime in the other, now in the one leg, by and by in the other, many times in her head. Yea, sometimes it would take her but in one several finger or toe, and always shake the grieved part as if it had been the palsy. And that saying of Mother Samuel which she used to her at Warboys, which was, 'Madam, I never hurt you *as yet*' would never out of her mind. And thus leaving this good Lady in Heaven with God, we will return to these children.

About Christmas after, Anno 1590 (for there was nothing noted all that time although there befell 100 wonders), Master Henry Pickering,

[14] People of the Middle Ages and Renaissance seem to have suffered severely and frequently from nightmare. By this they meant, not just a frightening dream, but that specific variety in which there is a sense of suffocation and weight on the chest, accompanied by extreme terror and often by erotic feelings as well. Theologically, nightmare was attributed to an incubus or succubus (male and female demons of unchastity); medically, it was associated with melancholy.

uncle to these children, being then a scholar of Cambridge, went to Master Throckmorton's house and continued there some three or four days. [He] was desirous to speak with Mother Samuel and taking a convenient time, he requested two other scholars of his acquaintance (then being in the town) to go with him; to whom they granted, and presently went without the knowledge of any in Master Throckmorton's house.

As they were going, she came out of her own house and crossed the street before them; when they saw her they determined rather to follow her whither she went than stay her return, because her husband was a froward* man and would not suffer her to talk with any if he might know it. She went to a neighbour's house for some barm,* and carried a little wooden tankard in her hand, and a little barley in her lap to exchange for the barm.

When she came to the house whither she purposed to go, the scholars followed her immediately and heard her tell her errand to the wife of the house, who had not that for which she came. Being ready to depart, the scholars desired to speak with her but she seemed loth to stay; yet they entering into questions with her stayed her a little.

But she was very loud in her answers and impatient, not suffering any to speak but herself. One of them desired her to keep the woman's virtue and be more silent; she answered that she was 'born in a mill, begot in a kill,* she must have her will', she could speak no softlier.

The greatest part of her speech was railing words against Master Throckmorton and his children, saying that he did misuse her in suffering his children so to play the wantons in accusing of her and bringing her name into question; often repeating that the children's fits was nothing but wantonness in them and, if they were her children, she would not suffer them so to escape without punishment one after the other.

The scholars enquired about her service of God and profession of her faith, but all that they could get of her was that 'her God would deliver her, her God would defend her and revenge her of her enemy' —alway using the phrase of 'my God will do this and that for me'. Which being noted by one of them, he asked her if she had a God alone, or if she did not serve the same God that others did? She answered 'Yes, she did'; yet much ado they had to bring her from the phrase of 'my God' to say 'the God of heaven and earth'.

In the end she would needs be gone, saying that her husband would beat her for her long tarrying. Then the uncle of those children, being

somewhat more moved than the rest, at the parting said that if she were the woman that had wrought this wickedness upon these children, the vengeance of God would surely wait upon her unto death and, howsoever she might deceive herself and the world for a time, yet there was no way to prevent the judgements of God but by her confession and repentance; which if she did not in time, he hoped one day to see her burned at a stake, and he himself would bring fire and wood, and the children should blow the coals. Her answer to him was this (for they were then in the street hard by a pond) 'I had rather' said she 'see you doused over head and ears in this pond!' and so they parted.

Now to come to the point; the eldest of Master Throckmorton's daughters was then in her fit, sitting at home in a parlour, her father and grandmother with some other of her sisters in their fits being present with her. On the sudden said she, 'Now is my uncle (naming him) and the two other (whom she also named) going to Mother Samuel: we shall hear some news by and by.'

Presently she said 'Look where Mother Samuel goeth trotting in the streets before them, with a wooden tankard in her hand and her apron is tucked up before her—I believe' saith she, 'there is somewhat in it. She is gone into such a man's house that keepeth an alehouse.' The man's name she could not hit of, but described him by his red head.

'Hark!' said she to her sisters, 'Mother Samuel is very loud, and my uncle bids her speak softly, but she saith she cannot'—repeating to her father and the rest the same words (*viz.* that she was born in a mill, etc.) after the same manner that Mother Samuel spake them to her uncle and the other scholars.

To be short, she declared particularly every word that passed between Mother Samuel and those scholars at that time. And at the parting she said 'There, Mother Samuel, my uncle did touch you, I think;' repeating again the very same words that her uncle had done, wishing that that day were once come, 'for I myself' said she 'would blow the coals. But he had been as good he had said nothing to her,' said she, 'for she wished him over head and ears in the pond for it.'

Master Throckmorton standing by and hearing all this, after that the child had said that now Mother Samuel and the scholars were parted, enquired for his brother the child's uncle, asking if any knew whither he was gone. Answer was made that he came not home from the church

since evening prayer (for it was on a Saturday) but where he was, nobody knew.

'It may be' said Master Throckmorton, 'that he is with Mother Samuel', and went immediately out of his own house to see if he could perceive where they were. As he went, he met them in the church-yard coming from Mother Samuel's. 'Where have you been?' said he. They told him. 'I could have told you so much myself,' said he, and repeated to them the whole matter as his daughter before had showed.

When they were come into the parlour where she was, there was also another of her sisters in her fit sitting by; and this her other sister could hear her said uncle speak unto her and nobody else, and so by her mouth (for they could for the most part hear one another in their fits) he enquired of her sister all those matters over again which she did in his own hearing repeat—'but' said she, 'the wind was so great that I had much ado to hear them'—whereas indeed there was then no wind stirring.

After this the spirit (or 'the thing' as the children called it) would many times appear unto them in their fits in some kind of shape or other, but most commonly in the likeness of a dun chicken, and would talk familiarly with them, saying that they came from Mother Samuel (whom they called their dame) and were sent by her to the children to torment and vex them in that sort.

It would declare to the children many things concerning Mother Samuel, insomuch that she could do nothing almost at home for a great time but the spirit would disclose it, if it were required by the children in their fits: viz. as to know what she was then in doing at home or in what place of her house or elsewhere she was, the spirit would tell; which by a messenger presently sent of purpose, was proved true.

Now did the spirits manifestly begin to accuse Mother Samuel to the children in their fits, saying it was she that had bewitched them and all those servants which were bewitched in the house; and told them that whensoever they were in their fits and were either carried to Mother Samuel's house, or she caused to come to them, they should be presently well.

This many times was proved true, and never failed once, so that if the children at any time being in their fits had been carried to Mother Samuel's house (for it was a very hard thing to get Mother Samuel to Master Throckmorton's house) although they were in such a case as that a strong man could scarcely hold them, they would so struggle, start and sprawl in his arms, yet if they came but once to the threshold

of Mother Samuel's door, they would wipe their eyes and say 'I am well—why do you carry me? set me down!' as though some shame had been offered them in that they were carried in the streets, not knowing anything in what case they had been.

While they continued in the house they were very well, but determining once to come away, and offering to come out of the door, they fell presently down on the ground and were brought from thence in the same case that they were carried thither. Contrariwise, whensoever Mother Samuel came to Master Throckmorton's house, in what kind of extremity soever these children were in (as it was most wonderful strange to see them many times), so soon as ever she had set foot into the parlour or hall where they were, they would all presently start up upon their feet and be as well as any in the house, and so continue while she was present.

But when she offered to depart, they would all sink down as a stone upon the ground; if she turned but her face again and came towards them, they would be well as before, which was tried twenty times in one hour. And when she departed from the house, she left them in the same estate wherein she found them, so long as their fit continued upon them.

After this Master Throckmorton thought good to disperse his children, and sent them abroad, some to one friend's house, some to another for a time, to see how they should be dealt withal, yet always keeping some one of them at home with him. If it should be declared how these were all severally handled for the time they were abroad, it would ask a long discourse, and longer indeed than is thought meet at this time, although very strange things, and such as may seem worth the noting befell every one of them, as this for one:—

They could tell being in their fits in what case or estate their other sisters were at that instant, being separated some of them eight, ten, or twelve miles asunder, and have said, 'Now is my sister (naming her and the place where she was in her fit) very sore handled', as she herself was at that instant. It was proved to be most true by the just computation of times, with many such like things.

But this may suffice concerning them being abroad—that they were never altogether clear and free from their fit, although it be true that some of them, whether at home or abroad, had not their fits above once in a month, sometimes once in half a year; and one of them was clear a whole year together. And this also is verified and true in some other of these five sisters, that they were never clear nor free from some kind

of fit or other three weeks together—I think scarcely three days since the first day it took them, except now since these last Assizes in Kent whereat these witches were executed.

To pass over all that which might be spoken of them for a year and almost an half, we will come nearer unto these latter times wherein the spirits, whether moved by their own malice (as it passeth the reach of man to sound the depth of the Devil's malice to mankind) or moved by the malice of the senders and setters-on, or both, it is not known; or whether for the conclusion and consummation of their parents' patience in this point it pleased the wisdom of God, who in His providence had determined their end, to grant them therefore more liberty for the time to exercise their malice against these children, we leave it to God; but truth it is that they were more strangely vexed and more grievously tormented in their body now of late, and take them generally altogether, than at any time almost from the beginning.

And to begin this time at Michaelmas[15] last past, or thereabouts, four of these children were all together at Warboys in their father's house, and the fifth, which was the eldest of them, was at her uncle's house, Gilbert Pickering, esquire, dwelling at Titchmarsh Grove.

About this time, which was Michaelmas 1592, one of these four children, the youngest save one, near upon the age of fourteen[16] years, was in a very strange kind of fit, the manner whereof was as followeth: every day for the space of three weeks or more she had a senseless fit, some one time of the day or other, and sometimes many fits in one day. In which fit she could neither hear, see, nor speak to anybody, besides her inward griefs, that she would heave, and start, and swell up her body, which was very troublesome to her for the time.

When she was out of these fits, she would go up and down the house very well, she would eat and drink and sometimes be very pleasant in outward gesture with her sisters; she would do anything which by any sign she did understand should be done, she would make a reverence as she passed by unto those where she saw it was due, insomuch that any man ignorant of her estate could perceive nothing to be amiss in her, yet would she never speak to any in particular, neither could she hear any that spake to her during that time; except sometimes she would prattle a little to an infant which was newly born in the house, wherein she took great delight.

[15] Michaelmas: Sept. 29, one of four quarter days in England.

[16] If this was Jane, she was said to be nearly 10 in November 1589, which would make her nearly 13 now.

It pleased God, about the beginning of these kind of fits in her, an aunt of hers being then in the house was delivered of a child, upon which occasion many of her uncles and aunts and other kindred and friends resorted to the house, and some of them stayed a week or ten days altogether, all which time the child was in these kind of fits; and, as it happened, Mother Samuel amongst the rest came to the house and was brought up into the gentlewoman's chamber, where commonly the greatest company was.

So soon as she came in, this child in question being there, espied her and presently spake to her, bidding her welcome and, saying that she was a great stranger there, she fetched her up both meat and drink, and would do anything readily that she willed her to do. In the end, she asked Mother Samuel whose that little child was which she herself had in her arms; the old woman told her, and likewise the name of it, which thing she also demanded.

The child marvelled, saying, 'Is my aunt brought to bed? I am very glad of it. Why then,' saith she, 'such and such of mine uncles and aunts promised to be here'—who were then indeed in the house, and some of them in that company. Then Mother Samuel told her that such and such whom she asked for were in presence. The child said that she saw nobody but her and that little child which she had in her arms, although she looked full in their faces. Many such like strange things then fell out, which is too long to speak of. When the old woman departed, the child lost the use of all her senses, and continued in the same case wherein she was when the old woman came into the house.

When she had continued thus three weeks or more, she came one day out of her aunt's chamber into the hall, and she had not long stayed there but she fell into a most troublesome fit for the time, but it continued not long. Presently she spake and said, 'I am glad, and very glad', repeating it often; on the sudden she wiped her eyes and came out of her fit. Her mother being in the hall, she asked her blessing, and enquired of many things, and amongst others asked how her aunt did, from whom a little before she came, and knew of nothing that was done, neither that any company had been there for the space of three weeks before.

It followeth to speak of the rest of her sisters together with herself, who all of them, as the year grew towards an end, so their grief and extremity of troubles increased, insomuch that every day brought with it increase of pain and strangeness in their manner of fits.

Towards All Hallowstide[17] the spirits grew very familiar with the children, and commonly towards the end of their fits (when the greatest trouble was over) would talk with them half an hour together, and sometimes longer. The greatest matter of their talk was about their manner of fits which they should have, and concerning Mother Samuel, whose pleasure it was that they should be so used; but the spirits said many times that they would bring her to shame for it in the end. If in this time (being in their fits) they had enquired of their spirit when they should come out of that fit wherein then they were, and when they should have another, it would have told them and not missed any whit at all.

If they had asked how many fits they should have the next day following, and the third day, or any day that week, and how many fits they should have in one day, and what manner of fits they should be, whether more grievous or less, how long every fit should continue, and in what part of the day they should begin and when they should end, it hath told them and not failed in one point, for it hath been presently set down in writing as the children have spoken it (for it was not possible to remember the times for them all) and proved wholly true.

The times and signs which the spirits did appoint unto them for the beginning or ending of their fits were usually these: in the morning so soon as they did offer to arise out of their beds; so soon as they were up or ready; so soon as they asked their father b[l]essing, or their mother, or their grandmother; so soon as they took a book in hand to pray, or when they had ended their prayers; so soon as they went to breakfast, so soon as dinner was set upon the board, or so soon as they did offer to say grace either before or after dinner; so soon as they themselves were set down to dinner, or at the first bit of meat they put in their mouths; or so soon as dinner was ended or they had put up their knife after dinner, the same circumstances at supper also observed.

Or if it had been upon the Sabbath day, or any day wherein the bells ought to be rung, so soon as the first, second or third peal ringeth, or have done ringing, with many such like signs which would be too long to speak of, appointed by the spirit for the children to fall in or out of their fits, which they duly observed and failed not a minute, as may be thought.

After they had continued in this case about a month together or such a thing, whether the spirits were weary (as they oftentimes said unto

[17] Original has 'All Hollantide', i.e. Feast of Allhallows, or All Saints' Day: October 31.

the children in their fits, that they now waxed weary of their dame Mother Samuel), or whether that through the power of God's goodness and special protection of the children the spirits perceived that their own malice and the malice of their dame to the children was restrained and kept under in such sort that they could not kill the children, as they desired—for we may not think that it agreeth with the nature of the evil spirit to sport and play with man as these spirits oftentimes did with these little children: they said to them that now ere long they would bring their dame either to her confession or confusion.

And this was the greatest stay of comfort and prop of patience which the parents of these children, and friends, always had; namely, that when these children were in their greatest torment and miseries as might be devised, in such sort as that it made the heart of the beholders many times to melt in their bodies, being without all hope ever in this world to see them alive again—yet, whensoever it pleased God to deliver them out of their fits, they would wipe their eyes and be presently well, as if it had never been they, not knowing anything that had befallen them; so that now it would seem that God Himself would take the matter into His own hands and, having in His council determined an end thereof, so He would also appoint the means to bring it to pass, which was even by the spirits themselves, the instruments of this wickedness.

For now they began to accuse Mother Samuel openly to her face, and say that 'they shall not be well in any place except they continue in her house, or she be brought to continue with them; and besides that, they shall have more troublesome fits than ever they had, except one of these two be brought to pass'.

Master Throckmorton, still thinking that the spirits might lie, was contented to try the uttermost for three weeks together, all which time his children had very many most grievous and troublesome fits; insomuch that when night came, there was never a one of them able to go to their beds alone, their legs were so full of pain and sores, besides many other griefs they had in their bodies, being out of their fits, which was not usual with them. And one of them also for all that time of three weeks never had use of her legs, except it were an hour or two in one day while Mother Samuel was in the house; and then she was able to go and was very well, as the rest also were; otherwise her legs were thrust up to her body as if they had been tied with strings, and where you set her down, there you should find her, except she crept away.

Master Throckmorton, perceiving that by no means he could get

leave of old John Samuel for the old woman to come to his house, although he offered very largely for it; which was to allow him (if it came to ten pounds in the year) for the board and wages of the best servant in Huntingdonshire to do his business, if he would, in her stead, besides his promise and bond, if he would require it, for the well using of his wife while she was with him: he could find no other remedy for the health of his children but to carry them thither, which he did, who as soon as they came into the house were all presently well.

Which he perceiving, said that his children should dwell there, and out of the house they should not go—he would provide for their necessities. The man seeing this, that there was no striving with the company, quenched out the fire (and it was a cold season) saying that he would starve* them, besides very many evil words which came from him and his daughter at that time.

All that day they continued there very well, and did both eat and drink and read in their book, and were very merry. At night when the man John Samuel perceived that they should lodge there, he thought that they would be very troublesome to him, and therefore gave his faithful promise that his wife should come to Master Throckmorton's house the next morning and continue with him; whereupon Master Throckmorton took home his children, and they were in their fits so soon as they came out of his doors, and so continued all that night.

The next morning Master Throckmorton went for the old woman, but she was gone nobody knew whither, so he sent again for his children who, so soon as they came into the house, were well. Towards night, came in the old woman, who said that she had been 2 or 3 miles out of the town, and her husband knew of her going because she should not come to Master Throckmorton's; which when he understood that she had spoken (for she spake it privately, desiring them to whom she spake it not to tell her husband), he utterly forswore the matter, and presently fell upon his wife and beat her very sore with a cudgel—many being present—before she could be rescued by them.

In the end, when the man perceived Master Throckmorton still to continue in the same mind aforesaid, he was contented to let his wife go home with them that night, who went all to Master Throckmorton's house very well together, and so continued the space of nine or ten days following, without any manner of soreness, lameness, or any manner grudging* of fits, and in better case than they had been (as it was well known), all of them together, for the space of three whole years before.

This made the parents right glad, and to use the woman as a welcome guest. At the ten days' end, the old woman entreated Mistress Throckmorton—for her husband was gone forth that morning—that she might go home, making her excuse to fetch something that she wanted. Mistress Throckmorton was very loath to grant it, promising that she herself would rather fetch what she would have than that she should go out of her house; yet the old woman saying that nobody could come by that thing that she would have but herself (which haply was true) and promising her present return, she yielded to her request.

Soon after she was gone, some of the children fell into their fits again as before times, and the spirit then talking with them said that now Mother Samuel was feeding of her spirits and making a new league and composition with them; which was, that although now she came again to the house, they shall be no whit the better, but rather the worse for her being there, because she would not remain any longer there.

Which thing seemed to be true that the child spake, for so soon as she came again (which was not before she was sent for, four or five hours after she went) the children which were in their fits at their coming so continued, and they that were not, after her coming fell into their fits, all of them crying out that now Mother Samuel had made a new composition with her spirits, and now they should be no whit better for her presence but rather the worse.

Master Throckmorton, when he came home, and perceiving the case otherwise with his children than he left it, and the cause why, could not be but heartily sorry; yet referred all to the good pleasure of God, and would not suffer the old woman to depart his house, for this cause chiefly—because his children, being in their fits, could neither hear, see, nor speak to anybody but to her, and some of the children could take nothing but that which she either gave them or touched with her hands.

Mother Samuel remaining thus with the children, she could not be in any place of the house alone, neither doing anything about the house, but the children in their fits would reveal it; specially when she was feeding of her spirits, for then the children would say, 'Now is Mother Samuel in such a place of the house feeding of her spirits.' When they went and looked, there they should find her, but whether doing any such thing or not, God and her conscience are the best witnesses.

Many times also as she sat talking with these children, being in their

fits by the fire-side, they would say unto her, 'Look you here, Mother Samuel, do you not see this thing that sitteth here by us?' She would answer 'No, not she.' 'Why,' they would say again, 'I marvel that you do not see it—look how it leapeth, skippeth, and playeth up and down!' pointing at it with their fingers here and there as it leaped. Sometimes also they would say, 'Hark, Mother Samuel, do you not hear it? hark how loud it is! I marvel you do not hear it—nay, you cannot but hear it!' She would deny it, and bid them ask their father, or some other whom she saw to stand by whether they heard it or not. The children would answer that they saw nobody, although they stood hard by them. Then would they tell Mother Samuel that it telleth them that she both heareth it, seeth it, and sent it.

The father of these children, Master Throckmorton, to make a kind of experience of this matter, one night willed Mother Samuel (as he might have done to any other then being present) to name how many fits those three children that were then in their fits should have the next day following, and what kind of fits they should have, when they should begin and how long they should continue.

Mother Samuel was very loath to be brought unto it; yet in the end, their father saying that she should do it, she said, 'One of them shall have three fits (naming the child) such and such for the manner (namely, easy fits, appointing the time for their beginnings and endings); the other shall have two in like sort (the time appointed by her); and the third shall have none but be well all the day.' All which fits proved very justly in every one of them the next day as she had spoken.

At another time not long after, Mother Samuel sitting by these children being in their fits as before, Master Throckmorton their father, and some other also being with him, demanded of Mother Samuel, saying that he had heard that those that were acquainted with these spirits (as the children say that she is) and had retained them in their service to do for them as they commanded, that they did feed them and reward them with something from them, but most usually with their blood, and that every day; 'now therefore,' said he, 'make open confession and shame the Devil in telling the truth, whether you do any such thing or not.'

She most vehemently denied it with many bitter words and curses upon herself, desiring the Lord to show some present token from Heaven upon her that all the world might know that she was such a kind of woman as they suspected her for, if she used any such thing,

or rewarded them any such way, or had any spirits, or knew what they were.

Presently* after, Master Throckmorton and Master Henry Pickering, uncle to the said children, who was then with him, hearing her use such protestations [and] being half terrified in their hearts (because they alway vehemently suspected her guiltiness) that she should thus violently with her own hands, as it were, pull down the judgments of God upon her head—went out of the doors; and before they were gone ten paces from the house, another young gentleman, Master John Lawrence (cousin to the said children) that stayed behind in the parlour, came to Master Throckmorton and Master Henry Pickering and said that Mother Samuel's chin did bleed.

Whereupon they returned into the parlour again where she was, and saw the napkin wherewith she had wiped away the blood from her chin to be bloody to the quantity of eight or ten drops. Then Master Throckmorton, with the rest, looked upon her chin and there was no more to be seen than upon the back of a clean hand, only there appeared some few little red spots, as if they had been flea-bitings. Then Master Throckmorton demanded of her whether her chin used to bleed so or not? She said that it did, very often. He asked her who could witness it but herself? She said 'nobody', for it did always bleed when she was alone, and she never told anybody of it.

This her bleeding at the chin, she did confess to the said Master Henry Pickering after she was condemned, that the spirits were then sucking at her chin when she made that protestation to Master Throckmorton and him; and that when she wiped them off with her hand, her chin bled, which sometimes it had done before after their sucking, but not often, and never so much as then—nay, scarcely the quantity of one drop at any time before.

And this by the way, as a general note throughout the book: where there is one of these strange things set down (if they be so accounted as strange) there are ten omitted which may as well be put in and, in the judgment of them that hear of them, are no less strange than these. And for that which this book doth contain, it is set down upon the sudden[18] and as it cometh to present memory, at the request of divers right worshipful, and especially for the motion sake of the right worshipful Master Justice Fenner, one of the patrons hereof.

[18] This is the conventional disclaimer of a well-born author, and appears to be contradicted by the careful dating and the several references to notes taken at the time of certain incidents (see note 2).

And for the truth of the most of these things herein contained: they were given in evidence, and ready to be given against the parties accused if either need should have required or time served, upon the oath of divers gentlemen on the Assizes day at Huntingdon, before the said parties. And for the rest which were not then alleged, if any shall make doubt thereof, there are divers gentlemen of honest report ready to confirm the same upon their oaths, if need should so require, that were present, some at one time, and some at another, at all these several tragedies (as they may be termed).

At another time soon after, the spirits told the children (then being in their fits, the old woman also standing by them) that if their father, Master Throckmorton would then presently go to John Samuel's house, his daughter Agnes Samuel, who then dwelt at home with her father and is not yet brought into question about any of these matters, would hide herself and not be seen of him. Master Throckmorton, hearing them, said that he would go presently and make trial thereof. When he came to the house Agnes Samuel, whether perceiving Master Throckmorton or any of his company, or whatsoever else it was it is not known—but she went up into the chamber (there being but one in the house) the stairs whereof stood in the same parlour below where her father was, and the door thereof was a trap-door, whereupon she set sacks of corn and tubs with some such like things to keep it down.

Master Throckmorton hearing a noise in the house thought there was some such matter in hand, and continued still knocking at the door. Presently John Samuel asked who was there and what he would, with some such like questions, and in the end, knowing what he was, said he should not come in.

Then Master Throckmorton went on the other side of the house and, finding the back door open, went in; and when he came into the parlour where the man was in his bed, being about eight of the clock or something before, he asked for Agnes Samuel his daughter, and where she was. John Samuel had not his oath to seek, but presently swore as God judge his soul (which was his common oath, and used also divers times before the Bench at his arraignment, yea, and until the very time of his execution) that he knew not where she was.

Master Throckmorton asked when he saw her. He answered 'that since the evening she was in the house, but where now she is, he could not tell'. He asked if she was not in the chamber over them; he swore he could not tell, which thing he could not indeed but know, for it was a very low chamber, and she could not stir her foot in it but he must

needs hear her; besides her going up into it, for the stairs stood hard at his bed's feet, and the noise also she made in the hearing of Master Throckmorton and the rest coming into the house.

Master Throckmorton verily suspecting that she was there, called to her three or four times, and willed her to answer if she were there, for it was all that he desired, to know where she was; but she would not answer. Then Master Throckmorton took the candle and said he would go up and see, but when he came to the top of the stairs the trap door was so fast that he could not stir it; which he perceiving, said that surely he would break open the door or break up the plancher* of the chamber, for he would go into it before he went out of the house, and willed one of the company to fetch him a bar of iron or some such like thing, for he would do it indeed.

The maid hearing Master Throckmorton thus resolute, answered that she was there; then Master Throckmorton willed her to come down, which she did, removing those things that before she had set upon the door. So he departed home to his house, challenging the man for his naughty lie, which yet he stiffly stood in.

But to let an hundred of these things pass with their fellows, and to come nearer the old woman's confession and the manner of it: you shall understand that Mother Samuel grew now to be marvellous weary of Master Throckmorton's house, both because she could do nothing in the house but the children in their fits would reveal it, and especially because the children in their fits likewise had told her twenty times to her face that she should confess this matter before the Tuesday after Twelfth day,[19] and that the spirits had told them that they would enforce her to confess it in despite of her, and she had often experienced that whatsoever the spirits foretold proved most true.

Now this Tuesday which the children so often named was not then thought upon of any that heard it to be the Sessions[20] day at Huntingdon, as it is generally in most places of England—no, not within a week or more after the children had spoken of it. Yet were they often whispering with themselves (always in their fits, as you must understand it) about that Tuesday, wishing oftentimes that it were once come, for that was some happy day, they would say, belike for them, for after that day the spirits had told them they should never have more fits. So that all their joy in their fits was for that day, yet they would say to themselves that the spirits doth tell them that it may

[19] Twelfth Day: Epiphany or January 6.

[20] Quarter Sessions, presided over by local Justices of the Peace.

happily be before that Tuesday, but on the Tuesday at the farthest she must confess it and they must be well; but if she would confess it before, they should be well presently whensoever she did confess it.

For this cause the children in their fits continually would exhort her to confess it that they might be well, which yet she always would deny to do, saying that she would not confess that which she never did know of, nor consented unto. The children would answer that they would not wish her to accuse herself for anything, and therefore willed her to look to that in any respect; yet they said that they enforced no more upon her than what the spirits had told them.

Yet to speak the truth of these children and no more, if anything herein written of them be strange, this for strangeness goeth beyond all other, and for truth equal to the rest: such were the heavenly and divine speeches of these children in their fits to this old woman, some at one time, some at another, concerning her confession of this fact, as that if a man had heard it he would not have thought himself better edified at ten sermons.

The matter of their speech was this: concerning chiefly the joys of heaven which she should lose and the torments of hell which she should endure if she being guilty would not yet confess, and the eschewing of the one and enjoying of the other if she would confess and be sorry for that she had done. They rehearsed likewise unto her her naughty manner of living, her usual cursing and banning of all that displeased her, and especially of their parents and of them (which she could not deny), her negligent coming to church and slackness in God's service; all which she confessed to them 'but she would now begin to amend', she said.

Her lewd bringing up of her daughter, in suffering her to be her dame, both in controlling of her and beating of her, which before had been proved to her face, and she herself had also confessed. They remembered also unto her that which they had heard some speak of when they were out of their fits—namely, that she had said that their fits were but wantonness in them; they asked her now whether she was still of that mind or not? She answered 'No'—with many such like speeches, and in the end concluded with their hearty prayer to God for her, saying that they would forgive her from the bottom of their heart if she would confess it that they might be well—besides that, that they would entreat their parents and their friends, so much as in them lay, clearly to forgive and forget all that was past.

Their manner of behaviour in this their exhortation to her was that,

as for the most part they began with tears, so they continued, and always ended with tears; insomuch that there was not any that heard them could abstain from weeping; only the old woman was little or nothing moved.

This kind of behaviour in the children passed on until nearer Christmas, yet without any touch or stirring of the old woman. In the mean season every day almost this old woman had a fit of bleeding at the nose, and bled very much at a time, which is not usual in old age; so that now she waxed faint and looked very pale, insomuch that Master Throckmorton and his wife were very careful for her, fearing some harm should come unto her in his house, and comforted her by all the means they could, not suffering her to want anything that she desired if possibly they could come by it. So that she did confess to all that came to her that she was marvellous well used of Master Throckmorton, and thought herself greatly bound to him—as truly she had no other cause.

For as for her business, she did nothing but her own work, and for her diet she sat at his own board, or with his children if they were in their fits and could not sit down; and for her lodging she lay continually in his own chamber, and for the most part with one of his children.

And to tell you one thing more of her before her confession, one of these children, Mistress Elizabeth Throckmorton, was one day not well at ease and could not eat any meat; yet when night came and supper was ready she thought to make herself amends. But when she was ready to sit at the table, she fell presently into her fit, and yet that was not all the punishment she had, but her mouth was locked up that she could neither eat, drink, nor speak (as it was an usual thing with them all to have their mouths shut up, especially at mealtimes, and other whiles shut and open half a dozen times in a dinner, so would the spirits sport with them).

But she went so to bed, very sorrowful and weeping—what her grief was, none can tell because she was not able to utter it. When the next day came, she was sick and ill as the day before, yet out of her fit and ate very little or nothing at all; when night came, she said she felt herself well amended and very hungry, not knowing for her part but that she had eaten her supper the night before.

Then was she counselled by them that feared the worst to eat something, but she said she would not, purposing to eat her part at supper. When the time came and meat was set upon the board, she fell into the same case as she had been in the night before; which Throckmorton perceiving, he said to the old woman that stood by her, 'I think, Mother Samuel, you are disposed to pine* that wench.' She made him answer 'no, she was rather sorry to see it.' 'Well,' said he, 'surely you shall neither eat nor drink until she can do both, and therefore', said Master Throckmorton, 'whilst she fasteth, you shall fast, and when she can eat, you shall eat—but not before, use the matter as you will.' And thus they continued both fasting until supper was almost ended, and the company ready to arise; the one fasting upon necessity, because she could not eat, and the other for Master Throckmorton's pleasure, because she might not.

The old woman perceiving that Master Throckmorton was in good earnest with her, and that the meat was carried out of the parlour—on the sudden, upon what motion God He knoweth, the child fetched a great sigh (for she had been weeping all supper-time) and spake, saying, 'If I had some meat now I could eat it.'

Mistress Throckmorton, the child's mother, hearing her speak (as did also all the rest that were in the parlour) commanded presently that meat should be given to them both, the company not giving notice to Mother Samuel of the matter; so they both fell to their meat very heartily, but especially the old woman who, as it should seem, was then very hungry, as she had always a good stomach.

And from that time forwards, during the old woman's continuing in the house, neither that child nor any of her sisters had their mouths shut up at any time when they should eat their meat or, if they were, they did not long continue so; although it was a common custom with them before time to have gone supperless to bed upon that very occasion many a time.

After all these matters were passed over, and as it waxed nearer and nearer to the time appointed, Mother Samuel every day complained of a new grief to befall her. Sometimes she would cry out of her back, that it was so full of pain that she was not able to stir herself in her bed all the day long, nor take any rest at night, sometimes she would in like sort cry out of her head, otherwhiles of her stomach; yet she would eat her meat, saying that she had a gnawing at her heart, and the next day after it would be in her knee or lower, so that she would go halting up and down the house.

And to speak the truth of her, it should seem that something there was that troubled her, whatsoever it was, for she would so grieve and moan herself in the night-time, one while complaining of this part of her body, another while of that, that indeed she rested but little in the

night-time herself, and greatly disquieted those also that lay in the chamber by her.

And one night amongst all the rest, she cried out very pitifully of her belly, insomuch that she disturbed and awakened both Master Throckmorton and his wife that lay by her. Saith Master Throckmorton, 'In God's name, Mother Samuel, what aileth you and why do you groan so?' Said she, 'I have a marvellous great pain in my belly on the sudden, and I know not how it should be caused.' 'Why,' said he, 'what is the matter in your belly?' She answered that there was something in it which, as she thought, stirred, and it was as big as a penny loaf, and put her to marvellous pain.

Whereupon Mistress Throckmorton arose out of her bed, and went and felt upon her belly, and there was indeed a marvellous swelling to the quantity before likened, but she felt it not stir, not staying long with her, the weather was so cold. And (be it spoken without offence to women) it may be that she bred then that child wherewithal she said she was when she was asked what she could say by my Lord the Judge, why sentence of death should not be given against her, as hereafter you shall hear.

But whatsoever it was, she cried out to Master Throckmorton of her belly and said she was full of pain; and further she said that she had often told him that she thought there was some evil spirits haunted his house which did thus torment his children, which thing he told her that he did easily believe was true—'and now,' saith she, 'I verily believe that one of them is gotten into my belly.' Master Throckmorton said that all this might very well be true.

So she said that it was an evil house, and haunted with spirits, and wished that she had never come into it; he told her that if there were any evil spirits haunted the house, they were of her sending, and so he would grant all that she said. In the end she passed away that night with groaning and moaning, and the next morning she was very ill at ease, she said, but her swelling in her belly was gone; and where her greatest pain was she could not tell, it was in so many places, but her stomach was the best of any part. And after this she continually complained of one part of her body or other so long as she stayed in the house.

Within a very short time after, one of the children fell into a most terrible fit, Mother Samuel standing by, and it was so grievous upon her for the time as that neither she nor any of her sisters had the like for the space of a year or two before, and especially her sneezing fit

was so terrible and strong upon her as if it would have caused her eyes to start out of her head. This fit did greatly quail* Mother Samuel, for she herself did then think that she should have seen the child dead at that present, and this wrung out of Mother [Samuel] prayers, so that she desired the Lord then to help her and to preserve her in that danger and she hoped never to see her in the like again.

But the more earnest Mother Samuel was in her prayers, the greater was the child's trouble and torment, and the oftener she named GOD or Jesus Christ, the stronger the child's fit was upon her. And at that very instant (as hereafter you shall hear of the rest) when she had thus continued some two hours or more, the spirit spake unto the child and said that there was a worse fit than this to come yet, wherein she must be worse handled than thus. The child answered that she cared neither for him nor his dame, but willed them to do their worst they could to her for, she said, she hoped God would deliver her; and soon after she came out of her fit and was very well. But the sight of this fit was so terrible to Mother Samuel as she would many times pray that she might never see the like again in any of them.

The children continued still all of them calling upon Mother Samuel to make confession of this matter, saying that she must do it before it be long, and as good at first as at last, but if she would now do it, that they might be well before Christmas, they would then think themselves beholding to her. They told her further that now Christmas was at hand, and if she would now confess it, they should be presently well and keep (by the grace of God) a merry Christmas.

She answered that she would do for them all the good she could but, for confession of this matter, she would not, for it was a thing she never knew of nor consented unto. Their father Master Throckmorton, hearing his children and the old woman thus talk together, stepped in and said, 'Mother Samuel, you hear what these children say, which is that if you would confess this fact, they should be presently well; and they say that you must confess it before it be long, and you know that they have not used to tell lies in their fits. Now therefore, in the name of God, if there be any such matter, confess it; it is never too late to repent and to ask for mercy.' But she made to him the like answer that she had done to the children before.

Then said he, 'But what say you to that grievous fit which the spirit of late threatened to my daughter Jane? I would fain know when that should be.' 'Oh,' saith she (remembering the terror of it), 'I trust in God I shall never see her in such a case again, nor any of them all.'

'Yes,' saith Master Throckmorton, 'I verily think she shall have it, and that shortly, for the spirit, you know, useth not to fail them in anything he promiseth.' 'Oh,' saith she, 'I trust in God she shall never have it'—speaking marvellous confidently. 'Why,' saith Master Throckmorton, 'charge the spirit in the name of God that she may escape this fit which is threatened.'

She presently said, 'I charge thee, spirit, in the name of God, that Mistress Jane never have this fit.' The child sitting by said, 'Truly, "the thing" saith (I thank God) that I shall never have this fit that he hath foretold me of.' Saith Master Throckmorton, 'Why, that is well, thanks be to God; go on, Mother Samuel, and charge the spirit in the name of God, and speak from your heart, that neither she nor any of them all have their fits any more.'

So she said as Master Throckmorton willed her, speaking marvellous heartily. The same child again said, 'Truly, "the thing" saith (I thank God) that I shall never have it more after the Tuesday after Twelfth day.' Saith Master Throckmorton, 'It is well, thanks be to God; charge the spirit again in the name of God—and speak from your heart and be not afraid—that he depart from them all now at this present and that he never return to them again'; which words she uttered very loud and very boldly.

So soon as she had ended, then those three children that were then in their fits, and had so continued for the space of three weeks, wiped their eyes, and at that instant thrust back the stools whereon they sat, and stood upon their legs, being as well as ever they were in their lives.

Master Throckmorton had his face now towards the children and his back to the old woman, and seeing them so to start up suddenly said, 'Thanks be to God!' While he was thus speaking (little knowing or thinking indeed of any such matter) the old woman fell down behind him on her knees and said, 'Good master, forgive me!' He turned him about and, seeing her down said, 'Why Mother Samuel, what is the matter?'

'Oh sir,' said she, 'I have been the cause of all this trouble to your children.' 'Have you, Mother Samuel?' said he, 'and why so? What cause did I ever give you thus to use me and my children?' 'None at all,' said she. Then said Master Throckmorton, 'You have done me the more wrong.' 'Good master,' said she, 'forgive me.' 'God forgive you,' said he, 'and I do. But tell me, how came you to be such a kind of woman?' 'Master,' said she, 'I have forsaken my maker and given my soul to the Devil' (these were her very words).

And old Mistress Throckmorton their grandmother and Mistress Throckmorton their mother being now in the hall (for this was done in the parlour), hearing them very loud, not understanding the matter perfectly, came into the parlour; of whom, when Mother Samuel saw her, she asked likewise forgiveness. Mistress Throckmorton their mother presently without any questions forgave her with all her heart, yet she could not well tell what the matter was. Mother Samuel asked those three children that were there forgiveness, and afterwards the rest, kissing all of them; the children easily forgave her, for they knew not that she had offended any of them in their own persons, except what they saw in their sisters, when they themselves were out of their fits.

Master Throckmorton and his wife, perceiving the old woman thus penitent and so greatly cast down (for she did nothing but weep and lament all this time) comforted her by all the good means they could, and said that they would freely forgive her from their hearts, so be it their children might never be more troubled. She answered that she trusted in God they should never have their fits again, yet would she not be comforted for anything that they could say.

Then Master Throckmorton did send for Master Doctor Dorington, the minister of that town, and told him all the matter with the circumstances, desiring him to comfort her, which they all joining together did so well as they could at that present; yet could she not forbear weeping, and so continued all the night. The next day, which was the Sabbath day and Christmas Even, Master Doctor Dorington chose his text of repentance out of the Psalmist[21] on set purpose to comfort her, and there declared in the open assembly all the matter of Mother Samuel's late confession, applying his speech directly to the comforting of a penitent heart, and so by consequence of her.

All this sermon time, Mother Samuel did nothing but weep and lament, and many times was so very loud with sundry passions that she caused all the church to look on her. And thus much farther you shall know for this point: Master Throckmorton, the same day after prayers were ended, very wisely remembering himself and the old woman's unconstancy heretofore, called to mind that there was none present at her confession but himself and Master Doctor, with his own household, who might be all thought partial in this matter [and] willed therefore Mother Samuel to come into the body of the church and there demanded of her before his neighbours whether that confession

[21] Original has 'Psal.' which could be 'Psalms' or 'Psalmist'.

which she over night had made to him and Master Doctor was wrested and wrung out of her, or whether it proceeded frankly and freely of and from herself. She answered before them all that it came of herself, and desired all her neighbours to pray to God for her and to forgive her.

Towards night, Master Doctor Dorington understanding the old woman still to continue in this heavy case, came to Master Throckmorton's house (who is his brother-in-law by marriage) and entreated him upon simplicity of good will, tendering the old woman's comfort, to give her leave to go home to her husband, and he would be a means that her husband should receive her, and to reconcile them together; wherein the old woman was marvellous dutiful. To this motion Master Throckmorton did easily grant at the first, being as willing to comfort the old woman as any, and indeed used the means himself also that her husband might receive her, little suspecting that anything should fall out thereby otherwise than well. The man, when he understood of it, spake bluntly as his manner was, saying that she might come home if she would.

Now that you have heard this old woman's confession, it may haply seem strange in some points to some, but for the truth of it, it is as certainly true as is any part of this book, both the matter and the manner and the words also observed in all points, so near as possibly could be remembered. Mother Samuel is now upon Christmas Even at night gone home to her husband and her daughter, where we doubt she hath a cold welcome for her entertainment, and the rather because she hath confessed this matter; for it should seem that they both set upon her (as she herself after confessed) and so far forth prevailed with her as that the next morning, which was Christmas Day, she denied all that she had said before, and it was no such matter with her.

Before night it came to Master Throckmorton's hearing that this new convert had revolted again, and had denied all that she had spoken to him; the best comfort he had therein was the open confession she made in the church, and thereupon did hardly believe that which was reported of her.

The same day in the evening, Master Doctor Dorington and Master Throckmorton went to her house to know the truth; and when they came at the door, it pleased God that John Samuel, his wife and his daughter were talking of this matter (for it should seem that it was all their talk), which they understanding, stayed awhile and heard the daughter say these words, 'Believe them not, believe them not for all

their fair speeches.' Hereupon they went both presently into the house and charged the daughter with these words, which she utterly denied, as did also the father and the mother.

Then did Master Throckmorton demand of her concerning the matter which before she had confessed in his house and in the church, telling her that he had heard that she had denied it again. She answered that she would deny that she was a witch, or any cause of the troubling of his children. 'Why,' said he, 'did not you confess so much unto me?' 'I said so,' saith she, 'indeed, but it is nothing so.' 'Why then,' said he, 'I must not show you that favour which I promised; I will surely have you before the Justices; but,' said he, 'why did you confess it to be so to me if it be not so?' She answered, 'For joy.'

'For joy,' said he (smiling to himself, marvelling what she could make of it), 'and why for joy?' 'Because,' said she, 'I did see your children so presently well after your good prayers and mine.' Then said Master Throckmorton unto her, 'I pray God so continue them; notwithstanding, howsoever it be I will not let pass this matter thus; for seeing it is published, either you or I will bear the shame of it in the end'. And so they departed for that night.

The next morning betimes, Master Throckmorton went to Master Doctor Dorington's house and told him that he would not suffer this matter thus to die in his hand, lest the worser sort of the people should imagine that this was but some device of theirs to bring the old woman into further danger. So they agreed to approve her once again in this matter, and sending for her to the church, they found her farther off from confessing anything that she had said or done than ever she was before.

Then Master Throckmorton took her by the hand and said that both she and her daughter should that day (by God's grace) go with him to my Lord the Bishop of Lincoln's. So he presently sent for the constables and charged them with the mother and daughter, and willed them to provide for the journey.

When the old woman perceived preparation for the journey, and the constables in readiness, Master Throckmorton also putting on of his boots, she came to him and said, 'Master, if you will go with me into the parlour, I will confess all to you alone.' Said he, 'I will go.' So they went together, and there she confessed the whole matter again unto him which before she had done. 'Why then,' said he, 'tell me why have you denied it all this time?' 'Oh,' said she, 'I would never have denied it but for my husband and my daughter, who said that I was a fool in

confessing of it, and that it had been better for me to have died in the same estate I was in than to confess myself a witch; for now everybody will call me "old witch' whilst I live.'[22]

Master Throckmorton told her, if she would persist in confessing the truth, he would show her all the favour he could. In this meanwhile cometh in unto them Master Doctor Dorington, and he fell into questioning with her, but she seemed something coldly to confess that unto him which before she had done; so he drew her aside, and Master Throckmorton went from them. Then did Master Doctor Dorington call for pen, ink and paper, and wrote down that confession which she made.

In the meantime Master Throckmorton sent to the church which is adjoining to his house and, there being divers of his neighbours, for it was about prayers time, he desired them to come to him and, telling them the matter, placed them hard underneath the parlour window where Master Doctor and this old woman were talking together. Whereof, when notice was given to Master Doctor, he spake very loud, and willed the old woman to lift up her voice also, faining something, so that the neighbours which were without might easily hear all the words that passed between them.

When they had done, Master Throckmorton went unto them into the parlour, and desired them to come forth into the hall; when they came, there stood all the neighbours that had heard this matter. Then began Master Doctor to read in their presence that which the woman had confessed, but she would fain have denied all again. 'Nay,' said the neighbours to her, 'it is too late to deny anything now, for we heard all this with our ears'—telling to her the place where they were.

When she perceived herself thus catched in a trap, she would have made the best of it, but it would not prevail. As they were thus in the

[22] The fate of a convicted but unexecuted witch could be very hard indeed in a small town, tenacious of memory and unforgiving. Sir George Mackenzie speaks of one who stands for many:

'I went when I was a Justice-depute to examine some Women, who had confest judicially, and one of them, who was a silly creature, told me under secresie that she had not confest because she was guilty, but being a poor creature, who wrought for her meat, and being defam'd for a Witch, she knew she would starve, for no person thereafter would either give her meat or lodging, and that all men would beat her, and hound Dogs at her, therefore she desired to be out of the World; whereupon she wept bitterly, and upon her knees call'd God to witness what she said.' (*Laws and customes of Scotland in matters criminal* (Edinburgh, 1678), p. 87.)

house together, came in John Samuel the old woman's husband, who had understood that there was something to do in the house concerning his wife. When he was come, Master Throckmorton told him that which his wife had again confessed, and with the rest he said that his wife would never have denied that which she did but for him and his daughter.

'Hast thou said so?' said he to his wife, giving her a foul term—and with that would have stricken her, had not others stood betwixt them. The old woman perceiving her husband thus fiercely coming towards her, fell down presently in a counterfeit swoon before them all. Mistress Throckmorton standing by, was on the sudden marvellously amazed thereat, and called for *aqua vitae** for her. When they took her up, they perceived her countenance nothing altered, but that she looked cheerful enough.

One of her neighbours standing by, peradventure better acquainted with her fashions than the rest, said, if they would let her alone, he would be their warrant that she would do well enough; so presently after, she came to herself again and all was well.

These circumstances about her confession are therefore the more expressly set down, although they be not so pertinent to the matter, neither indeed should have been declared at all, had it not been reported by some in the country (and those that thought themselves wise) that this Mother Samuel now in question was an old simple woman, and that one might make her by fair words confess what they would. But to leave that to the judgment of them that knew her well enough, Master Throckmorton continued on his journey, purposing to discharge himself of the matter, and caused the old woman with her daughter to be carried the same day to my Lord the Bishop of Lincoln; and there he examined her and her daughter.

The Examination of Alice Samuel of Warboys, in the county of Huntingdon, taken at Buckden before the right reverend Father in God, William, by God's permission Bishop of Lincoln, the 26 of December 1592.

Being asked whether a dun chicken did ever suck on her chin, and how often, the said examinate saith that it sucked twice and no more since Christmas Evens even last. Being asked whether it was a natural chicken, she saith it was not; she knoweth it was no natural chicken because when it came to her chin she did scarce feel it, but when she wiped it off with her hand, her chin did bleed. She saith further, that the said dun chicken did first come unto her and suck on her chin

before it came to Master Throckmorton's house, and that the ill and the trouble that hath come to Master Throckmorton's children hath come by means of the said dun chicken; the which chicken she knoweth is now both gone from them and from her. And further she saith, that Master Throckmorton and Master Doctor Dorington shall bring further information of such things as yet she hath not declared.

The Examination of Alice Samuel of Warboys in the County of Huntingdon, taken at Buckden the 29 day of December 1592, before the reverend Father in God, William, by God's permission Bishop of Lincoln, Francis Cromwell, and Richard Tryce, esquires, Justices of Her Majesty's peace within the county aforesaid.

She saith, she never did hurt to any, saving to the children in question. Being demanded how she knoweth the said dun chicken is gone from the said children, she saith, because the said dun chicken with the rest are now come into her, and are now in the bottom of her belly, and make her so full that she is like to burst. And this morning they caused her to be so full that she could scant lace her coat; and that on the way as she came, they weighed so heavy that the horse she rid on did fall down and was not able to carry her.

And further she saith, that the upright man* of whom she hath confessed to Master Throckmorton told her that Master Throckmorton was a hard man and would trouble her much, wherefore he would give her six spirits that should vex and torment his children, and so he did. Which spirits had reward of her by sucking of her blood oftentimes when they were without her body, and that the said spirits did suck of her blood before she sent them forth any whither.

She saith further, that whatsoever the children of Master Throckmorton did speak in their fits proved true, and was true; as for example, whensoever the said children said they did see the said spirits, then were the spirits there, and she did also see them. And she saith that oftentimes she did give a privy beck or nod with her finger or head, and then the spirits did presently stop the children's mouth that they could not speak until they came out again; and then would the children wipe their eyes and be well again.

Further she saith that it was taught her of a man that did come unto her house (but where he did dwell, or what his name was, she cannot tell) who told her that if she would call the said six[23] spirits they would

[23] Joan mentioned 9; Mother Samuel in her final confession could remember only 3.

come, and she called them and they appeared in the likeness of dun chickens; their names were as followeth: first, Pluck; second, Catch; the third White, and the other three she called with her mouth with three smacks. And two of them she (this examinate) sent to Master Robert Throckmorton of Warboys and his wife, and they returned again and told her that God would not suffer them to prevail.

Whereupon she (this examinate) sent the said spirits to the children of the said Master Throckmorton, by means whereof they have been so strangely tormented as to the neighbours and country hath been seen. She said further, that what they children did speak in their fits in her hearing, that it was true, and so it fell out.

Being asked further what the upright man's name was that gave her the devils, she said she could not tell; whereupon she was moved to go into another chamber and demand of her spirits what his name was, which she presently did; and there with a loud voice said these words as followeth: 'Oh thou devil, I charge thee in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost that thou tell me the name of the upright man which gave me the devils'; which thing she did three times and then returned saying that her spirits had told her that his name was Langland. And being demanded where the said Langland dwelled, she said she could not tell.

Then was she moved to go into the said chamber again and demand of her spirits where the said Langland dwelt; which also she presently did, and there with a loud voice three times said: 'O devil, I charge thee in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, tell me where the said Langland dwelleth.' Then she returned and said that he had no dwelling. Then was she further moved to go again and demand where the said Langland was at that present, which also she did, and demanded as before, and returned with this answer 'That her spirits told her that he went the last voyage beyond the seas.' After these confessions thus made, Mother Samuel and her daughter were committed to the gaol of Huntingdon.

Now that we have brought Mother Samuel to the gaol, we will let her there rest in God's peace and the Queen's until the next general assizes day holden at Huntingdon; and although many things fell out unhappily concerning her during her continuance in the gaol, whereof she was greatly suspected, as the death of one of the gaoler's servants whom she threatened, the extreme sickness of one of his children, with his present amending after the scratching of her, and divers other things which are shrewd pieces of evidence against her, if there had

been nothing else laid to her charge—yet, because they do not concern the trouble of these children, neither is a matter so perfectly known to the authors of this book, it is therefore but touched by the way.

And to come unto the daughter Agnes Samuel, who now cometh upon the stage with her part in this tragedy, you shall understand that she was left with her mother in the gaol until the sessions day held at Huntingdon the ninth of January following, which day was the Tuesday that the children so often had spoken of to the old woman.

At dinner time Master Throckmorton made his request to the high Sheriff and the Justices to bail this maid, and to have her home to his house to see if it might please God whether any such evidences of guiltiness would appear against her as had before appeared in the children against the mother. This suit was not easily granted, for it was a demur amongst the Justices whether the maid was bailable by law in this case or no. In the end Master Throckmorton continuing his suit, they being resolved of the doubt granted it, but it was almost three of the clock in the afternoon before, as everybody can witness that were then present; which time is therefore here mentioned because it hath relation to the next point that hereafter followeth, as you shall hear.

The report of Master Doctor Dorington of that which happened at Warboys on Tuesday, which was the Sessions day at Huntingdon, the ninth of January. [*1593*]

About twelve of the clock, a little before dinner, Mary, Joan, and Grace, the daughters of Robert Throckmorton of Warboys aforesaid, esquire, fell into their accustomed fits of lameness, blindness, deafness and want of feeling; only their youngest brother Robert, of the age of nine years, might speak unto Jane with her understanding, and she only might speak in the like manner to Mary and Grace. . . .

Mary and Jane, whispering secretly one in the other's ear, spake thus much in our hearing oftentimes: 'I marvel how she should know that thing; I am sure none of this house told her, and therefore it cannot be but that the spirits told her'. . . .

[The children foretell the coming of Agnes Samuel and forecast their behaviour in their fits when she arrives.]

. . . After Agnes Samuel was brought to Master Throckmorton's house the children continued for three or four days without any fits at all, so that their parents were put in great comfort that their children

should then have been clean delivered from their torments; but it should seem that the matter was not yet brought to an end, for the children fell all of them afresh into their fits again, and were as grievously afflicted as ever they were in the old woman's time. And then the spirits did begin as plainly to accuse the daughter as ever they did the mother and do tell the children that the old woman hath set* over her spirits to her daughter, and that she hath bewitched them all over again, and that she will deal worse with them than ever her mother did . . .[24]

[Joan, the eldest child, comes home from Titchmarsh Grove where she had been staying, and immediately makes herself the centre of attention. She talks 'very familiarly' with the spirit, which announces that she will have worse fits than any of her sisters, and soon invents an amazing low-comedy team of spirits who quarrel and beat each other like Mr. Punch and his friends.]

. . . The next day which was Saturday the tenth of February . . . she fell suddenly into bleeding at the nose and bled very much, whereat she marvelled (for she did perceive it) saying, 'I pray God send me good news after this, for it is strange with me to bleed—I bled not so much this seven years before.' When she had much bloodied her handkerchief she said that it was a good deed to throw the handkerchief into the fire and burn the witch, for she knew, she said, that this bleeding came of no good cause.

After she had talked thus to herself a little, it should seem the spirit came to her, for she said thus, smiling to herself and casting her eyes about her, 'What is this in God's name that cometh thus tumbling to me? It tumbleth like a football; I think it be some puppet-player, it is much like his dame's old thrummed cap. What is your name, I pray you?' said she. 'The thing' answered, as it should seem, that his name was Blue; for presently upon the question demanded of his name, she made answer again herself, saying, 'Master Blue, you are welcome; I never saw you before—I thought' said she, 'that my nose bled not for nothing. What news have you brought?'

It told her as before. 'What, dost thou say' saith she, 'that I shall be worse handled than ever I was? Ha,' saith she, 'what doest thou say?' (for she would ever repeat the spirit's words after him, as they all would do when they were talking with them, bending their heads to the ground)—'that I shall now have my fits when I shall both hear, see and know everybody? That is a new trick indeed! I think never any of my sisters were so used! But I care not for you,' said she, 'do your

[24] $H3^{v}$.

worst; and when you have done you will make an end.' These were her very words.[25]

. . . when night came and supper was ended, she first fell into her sensible fit and after that was ended, she fell into her senseless fit. Anon, fetching a great sigh, she said, 'Who sent for you, Master Smack?' He made answer that he was come according to his promise which he made unto her on Sunday at night. 'Belike' said she, 'you will keep promise, but I had rather you would keep you away and come when I send for you; but what news have you brought?' 'I told you' said he, 'that I had been a-fighting the last Sunday night, but I have had many battles since.' 'Yea, so it seemeth,' saith she, 'for here was both Pluck, Catch and Blue, and they all came maimed unto me.' 'Yea,' said he, 'I have met with them all.' 'But I marvel' said she, 'that you could beat them; they are very great and you are but a little one.' Said he, 'I am good enough for two of the best of them together.'

'But' said she, 'I can tell you news.' 'What is that?' said he. 'They will all at one time fall upon you and beat you.' He said he cared not for that, he would beat two of the best of them. 'And who shall beat the other two?' said she, 'for there is one that hath been many times spoken of, and he carrieth the name of Hardname; for his name standeth upon eight letters, and every letter standeth for a word, but what his name is we know not; only Hardname.'

The spirit answered that his cousin Smacks would help him to beat the other two. (There are also two other Smacks as you may read in the old woman's confession.) 'What!' said she, 'Shall your cousins Smacks help you? What, is there kindred amongst devils? I never heard of that thing before, that the devils were cousins—God keep me from that kindred!' Such like foolish talk they had together at that time . . . [26]

[One of the children evolved a formula (told by the spirit, of course) which would bring them out of their fits. This was used to convince company; Joan's spirit once advanced the time of a promised fit because 'strangers were come, and now she must have her fit to prove Agnes Samuel a witch!'[27]]

. . . So the child's father called for Agnes Samuel and willed her to say to the child [Elizabeth] these words, 'I charge thee, devil, in the name of the God of heaven and earth, as I hate thee and am no witch, nor guilty of this matter, that thou depart from this child and suffer her to come forth of her fit.' This said by the maid, the child moved

[25] $H4^v$. [26] $I–3^v$. [27] K.

not. Then the child's father willed her to say thus, 'I charge thee, thou devil, as I love thee and have authority over thee, and am a witch and guilty of this matter, that thou suffer this child to be well at this present.' These words were no sooner ended but the child wiped her eyes and was as well as any in the parlour. . . .[28] [This formula was later amended by Joan to 'As I am a witch and consenting to the death of the Lady Cromwell, so I charge thee to depart and to let her come forth of her fit,'[29] with the same success; later she added the bewitching of Mistress Pickering of Ellington 'most grievously tormented with pain and breaking out in her legs,'[30] of her sisters, and of herself 'to death' and lameness.[31]

Joan suffered a good deal of physical pain, particularly in the legs and head; her 'fits' were often convulsive, but she had also a trance-like variety when it seemed that she had ceased to breathe, and it was noticed that this held her 'always the longer when any of her friends or other company stood by and comforted her'.[32] Despite this, the girls were apparently even more convincing than they had been earlier, even to Agnes Samuel. 'And being asked of the matter, what she thought of it and whether it was wantonness or not, as she had oftentimes said before she came to the house, as well as her mother had done; but now she could not deny but that it was some supernatural work in the patient.'[33]

On February 23, Joan's spirit announced that she should be free of fits for a week (except when there were visitors) if she got up early the next morning; but he also told her that she should shortly have a very 'sick week'. Towards the end of the 'free week' Mary, apparently the most lightly afflicted, fell into a fit of shuddering, and then an insensible fit, at the end of which she said to the spirit, 'Is it true? do you say this is the day wherein I must scratch the young witch?' Her uncles Edward and Henry Pickering decided to bring Agnes to the child 'to see what would be the issue of it, knowing very well that the maid was able to keep herself from scratching if three such as the child was should set upon her at once'.][34]

. . . So soon as the maid came into the chamber where the child was, the child said, 'Art thou come, thou young witch, who hast done all this mischief?' The maid seemed to stand amazed at those words, for she was not accustomed to hear any such hard speeches from the child.

[28] I–2. [29] $I–4^v$. [30] L4.
[31] $L4^v–M^v$. [32] L3. [33] $I–2^v$.
[34] K2.

So one in the company willed the maid to take up the child and carry her down (for her legs were taken from her).

Mistress Mary suffered herself very quietly to be taken up in her arms and clasped her hands about her neck; but even as the maid began to lift her up she fell on scratching of her so eagerly and so fiercely as that it was a wonder to all that saw it, saying, 'I will scratch you, you young witch, and pay you home for this punishing of me and my sisters! "The thing" telleth me that I had been well and never should have had my fits any more but for you!'

The maid stood still holding down her head (for the child kneeled upon her knees) and cried very pitifully, yet either would not or could not once pluck away her head. 'Nay,' said the child, 'I know you cry, but the spirit said that I should not hear you, because I should not pity you, and he it is that holdeth you now that you cannot get away from me.' So the child scratched her face until the skin came off the breadth of a shilling, but there came no blood at all, but water. In the end the maid brought her down into the parlour, where the child sitting awhile in her stool seemed to be wonderful sorry for that she had done and said, 'I would not have scratched Nan Samuel, but "the thing" told me that I should do it, and forced me thereunto, stretching forth mine arms and straining my fingers whether I would or not, and made me to scratch her.' And truly they that saw the manner of it and knew the mild disposition of the child might easily see that she was overruled in the action; for she was carried with such vehemency and cruelty for the time against the maid as that it appeared to be altogether besides her nature.[35]

[Next day, March 2, Mary was told by the spirit that she would have no more fits because she had scratched Agnes, and so it proved; she was the only child to be so cured, though all the others scratched Agnes.[36] Joan, even more jealous of her sisters than they of her, promptly took up the challenge, and on the same day (the text erroneously says February 2) she foretold her 'sick week' to begin on Monday March 5.

[35] K2–K2v.

[36] On March 21 even Grace the youngest, who had suffered only from silent fits 'groaning and weeping most lamentable to see' fell on Agnes 'but such was the child's short nails and want of strength that she could not once ripple the skin of the back of her hands' (L4v).

These scratching incidents are curious because they do not cure anyone but Mary, yet they seem to cause both genuine excitement and genuine distress to the children. It is almost as though they were punishing themselves in this other disobedient and uncontrollable daughter.

This was duly carried out, and she had violent pains in head, stomach and legs, as well as two kinds of fits—a screeching and twitching that went on for hours, and a breath-holding trance. The most violent manifestations occurred on Saturday March 10.

Predictably, Elizabeth was also very ill all week, and on Saturday March 10 surpassed herself with a horrible episode in which she flew at Agnes] . . . and scratched one of her hands most fiercely to see with both her hands, and saying that it was she that had bewitched her and all her sisters, and she had been well long since but for her—'Oh thou young witch, oh thou young witch, fie upon thee, fie upon thee—whoever heard of a young witch before?' And thus she cried with such vehemency of speech and eagerness of scratching as that both her breath and strength failed her . . . then she rubbed her hand upon the maid's hand that bled a little and wiped the blood upon her own hands, and this the child did oftentimes while she talked with her. Presently upon the scratching ended the child began to weep. . . .

When this weeping fit was something assuaged, she began to exhort her, lifting up her voice with such vehemency and desire for her amendment as that we may verily think the like was never heard to come forth of a child's mouth.[37]

[As she preached, she demanded the presence of John Samuel so that she might scratch him too; he arrived at that moment, but her courage failed before his grim looks and she contented herself with lecturing him for an hour and a half.]

. . . The man was so rude in his behaviour and so loud in his speeches that the child could not be heard for him. His answers to the child were, that she lied and so did all the company in saying he was a witch; and he said she had been taught her lessons well enough, and that she was above seven years old[38] (though indeed she was not twice seven),[39] with many such like speeches, and would not be silent nor suffer the child to speak for anything until he was almost forced unto it by the child's father. Although he might perceive very well, as also did all the company that the child could not hear him nor answer to any of his speeches, neither yet stayed her words at his talking in anything she intended to speak to him, although he greatly interrupted the same (if she could have heard him); but she neither heard him nor any other in the company, yet she saw him and his daughter and not any other.[40]

[37] K4–L.

[38] The age of reason, or understanding.

[39] The age at which a child could legally be a witness, or a criminal.

[40] L2.

[He was tested with the command to the spirit devised by Joan, and of course Elizabeth came out of her fit; he was allowed to go home for the time being.

Jane, who had started the whole business when she first called Mother Samuel a witch in her first strange illness, now took up the cue and on March 15 declared John Samuel a witch: ' "I did think . . he was as bad as the worst, he looked so ill favouredly!" '[41] She said that her fit would last till he charged the spirit to depart, but he refused to come to the house, and her fit lasted till the day of the Assizes, when he pronounced the formula in court (under threat of being held guilty if he did not) and she was cured.

Jane's fits had from the beginning taken the attention-getting form of attempted suicide; she would fling away her knife in horror, or attempt to thrust her head into the fire.] . . . Yet this hath been observed continually in all these temptations, that she was never tempted to any of these dangers (that ever was known) being alone, but always when there were some company and assistance by to help her; which thing thus considered, whether it hath proceeded of the gracious providence and goodness of GOD, which cannot be denied but that it hath showed itself most strange and most wonderful both in the preservation of her, as also in the rest of her sisters in these their troublesome extremities—or whether it hath been some secret illusion and mockery of the Devil to deceive the standersby, it resteth doubtful and cannot be determined amongst men. But whether one or the other, or whatsoever, God deserveth the glory.[42]

[On the same fifteenth of March Jane scratched Agnes, clawing her hand till she was 'weary and windless'.[43] Doctor Dorington, who seems to have overcome his objections to this exercise, was present, and improved the occasion with a sermon to the weeping Agnes.]

. . . Then Doctor Dorington began to instruct the maid and to exhort her with many good speeches, saying that God would surely not suffer her to be thus cried out upon by these wicked spirits, and afflicted in this sort by these innocent children contrary to their wills, if she were not consenting, or at the least concealing, and of some knowledge of these wicked practices which her mother had confessed. The maid very stiffly denied all that could be said, and desired God to show some present token upon her that they all might know that she was guilty of these matters.

Presently after these words her nose began to bleed and she bled

[41] $N2^{v}$. [42] $M4^{v}$–N. [43] N2.

very much; which thing, whether it were a sign of God's sending at that time in token of her guiltiness or not, that He knoweth only, and man, I think, may without offence greatly suspect. Yet this she could say, being charged withal, that she had bled four times that day before, which thing was very true; bleeding very much every time, always saying that she had not bled so much to her remembrance in seven years before, wishing that this often bleeding would foreshow no evil towards her.[44]

[But it was indeed an ill omen for her. Assizes day was April 4; on Sunday March 25 Joan staged a marathon conversation with the spirit Smack, laying down all kinds of new conditions for her fits and charges for ending them.]

. . . Then Master Throckmorton, with others that were then in company, perceiving the spirit to be willing to declare so many things of the maid, willed her to charge the spirit in the name of God to answer her to certain questions which she should ask it, and not to lie; the maid gave that charge to the spirit [and] the spirit said to Mistress Joan, 'The young witch (for so he in all this talk and speech hath called her) chargeth me to tell the truth in certain questions which she shall ask me . . .'[45]

['The spirit' also implicated the whole Samuel family in the death of Lady Cromwell, foretold the end of Joan's fits on Assizes day, listed Mother Samuel's nine spirits, and told of two neighbours who had been bewitched by John Samuel.

For at least six weeks Joan had been gloating over the prospect of scratching Agnes; this time Agnes was forced by the family to ask 'the spirit' where Joan should scratch her, and 'the spirit' relayed both question and answer to Joan, who spoke them aloud to the company she 'could not' hear!

On April 2, as predicted on March 19, Joan acted out this big moment]. . . . Mistress Joan fell into her fit a little before supper, and so continued all supper time, not being able to stand on her legs. So soon as thanksgiving after supper was beginning to be said, she start up upon her feet and came to the table side, and stood with her sisters that were saying of grace; and presently when grace was ended she fell upon the maid Nan Samuel and took her head under her arms and first scratched the right side of her cheek and, when she had done that 'Now,' said she, 'I must scratch the left side for mine Aunt Pickering', and scratched that also until blood came forth of both sides very abundantly. The

[44] N2. [45] M.

maid stood stone still and never once moved to go from her, yet cried very pitifully, desiring the Lord to be merciful unto her.

When she had done scratching, Mistress Joan set herself upon a stool and fared as though she had been out of breath, for she took her wind marvellous thick (yet the maid never struggled with her) and was able to hold never a joint of her but trembled as it had been a leaf; and [she] called for a pair of shears to pare her nails, but when she had them she was not able to hold them in her hands, so she desired somebody to do it for her.

Then Master Doctor Dorington's wife (who was her aunt) standing by her took the shears and pared her nails, but Mistress Joan herself saved the nails as her fingers were pared, and when she had done threw them into the fire and called for some water to wash her hands; which, after she had done, she threw the water also into the fire.

When this was done, this Mistress Joan fell upon her knees and willed the maid to come and kneel down by her and to pray with her. They said the Lord's prayer together and likewise the Creed, but it should seem that Mistress Joan could not hear the maid, for she would say amiss many times, and then the company would help her out; but Mistress Joan did not stay for her, so that she had ended her prayers before the maid had half done hers.

After this Master Doctor Dorington took a prayer book and read certain prayers which he thought good; and when he had done, then Mistress Joan fell to exhorting of the maid, and gave her many good exhortations. And as she was thus in speaking to her she fell into a marvellous weeping and sobbed so greatly that she could not well utter her words, saying that she would not have scratched her, but that she was forced unto it by the spirit.[46]

[Elizabeth then came up and repeated the whole series of actions.

On Wednesday April 4, the day of the Assizes, Joan was taken to Huntingdon and lodged at the Crown Inn with Agnes. During the day 'five hundred men' at least visited to stare at her fits and to try experiments in bringing them on or alleviating them. In the evening Master Justice Fenner the Judge came 'with a great assembly of Justices and gentlemen' and proved to the satisfaction of all that the fits could only be ended by a charge from Agnes Samuel—a charge which was a confession: ' "As I am a witch and a worse witch than my mother, and did consent to the death of the Lady Cromwell, so I charge the devil to let Mistress Joan Throckmorton come out of her fit at this present." '[47]

[46] $M3^{v}$–M4. [47] N4.

After other confessions of this nature 'presently the said Mistress Joan was well as ever she was in her life, and so hath continued without any grief or fits till this day.'[48]

Sister Jane had been cured even more spectacularly in court the same day, when John Samuel was finally forced on pain of immediate sentence of death to utter the charge she had demanded on March 16:

' "As I am a witch and did consent to the death of the Lady Cromwell, so I charge the devil to suffer Mistress Jane to come out of her fit at this present." Which words being no sooner spoken by the old witch but the said Mistress Jane, as her accustomed order was, wiped her eyes and came out of her fit, and then, seeing her father, kneeled down and asked him blessing; and made reverence to her uncles that stood near her (which before she took no show of knowledge) and wondering said, "O Lord, father, where am I?" '[49]]

. . . The next day, being Thursday in the morning, there were three several inditements made and delivered to the great inquest, whereof the one was against old Father Samuel, old Mother Samuel and Agnes their daughter for bewitching unto death the Lady Cromwell, late wife of Sir Henry Cromwell of Hinchingbrook in the county of Huntingdon, knight, contrary to God's laws and the statute made in the 15 year of the Queen's Majesty's reign that now is, etc.

The other two inditements were framed upon the said statute for bewitching Mistress Joan Throckmorton, Mistress Jane Throckmorton and others, contrary to the said statute.

The inditements being delivered to the grand jury, the evidence was given them privately by Master Dorington, doctor of divinity and parson of the town of Warboys aforesaid, by Gilbert Pickering of Titchmarsh in the county of Northampton, esquire, by Robert Throckmorton, esquire, father of the said children, by Robert Throckmorton of Brampton in the said county of Huntingdon, esquire, by John Pickering and Henry Pickering, gentlemen, and by Thomas Nut, master of art and vicar of Ellington. The grand jury made no great delay but found them all guilty.

And about eight of the clock, the evidence of the forenamed gentlemen was openly at large delivered in the court to the jury of life and death, and with great patience of the Judge, it was continued till one of the clock in the afternoon. So many of these proofs, presumptions, circumstances and reasons contained in this book was at large delivered as that time would afford, which was 5 hours without intermission or

[48] $N4^{v}$. [49] O^{v}.

interruption, until both the Judge, Justices and jury said openly that the cause was most apparent; their consciences were well satisfied that the said witches were guilty and had deserved death. And therewithal the gentlemen ceased to give any further evidence . . .[50]

Then the confession of old Mother Samuel before specified, made the 26 day of December 1592 last past at Buckden before the reverend father in God William, Bishop of Lincoln, was openly read. So also was read the confession of the said Mother Samuel made at Buckden aforesaid the 29 day of December 1592, before the said reverend father in God William, Bishop of Lincoln, Frances Cromwell and Richard Tryce, esquires, Justices of her Majesty's peace within the county of Huntingdon, which also is before specified.

After these confessions read and delivered to the jury, it pleased God for the further proof and overthrow of these wicked persons to rear up more witnesses (at that time unexpected) who spake some things of their own knowledge and some of report. The first was Robert Poulter, vicar and curate of Brampton aforesaid, who said openly that one of his parishioners called John Langley, at that instant being very sick in his bed, had told him that one day he, being at Huntingdon at the sign of the Crown, did in the hearing of old Mother Samuel forbid Master Knowles of Brampton aforesaid to give her any meat, for that she was an old witch.

And thereupon in the afternoon as he went from Huntingdon to Brampton, having a good horse under him, he presently died in the field; and within two days after, by the providence of God he did escape death twice or thrice very dangerously. And though it pleased God not to suffer the Devil to have the mastery of his body at that time, yet presently after he lost as many good and sound cattle (to all men's judgments) as were worth twenty marks,* himself not long after in body extraordinarily handled. And the same night of the day of Assizes, as after it proved true, the same John Langley died.

Also the forenamed Master Robert Throckmorton of Brampton which before had given some evidence against the said witches in the children's behalf, now[51] spake for himself: that he likewise at Huntingdon and in other places having dealt very roughly in speeches with the said Mother Samuel, on Friday the tenth day following had one of his two-year-old beasts died; and on Sunday next after, another beast

[50] Nearly 2 pages (O–O^{v}) concerning Jane's cure in court on Wednesday April 4 are here inserted in the original, confusing the apparent sequence of events.

[51] Original has 'now he'.

of the same company and like age died also. The next week after on Friday he had a yearling calf died, and the next Sunday following he had another calf of the same company and like age died also. The next week after on Friday, he had an hog died, and the next Sunday after he had a sow having ten pigs sucking on her died also.

Whereupon advice was given him that whatsoever thing next died, to make a hole in the ground and burn the same. Likewise the fourth week on Friday he had a very fair cow worth four marks died, and his servants made a hole in the ground and buried the same cow in it, and threw faggots and fire on her and burnt her, and after that all his cattle did well. Of this last matter Mother Samuel being examined the night before her execution, she confessed the bewitching of the said cattle in manner and form as is declared.[52]

[Another piece of evidence from neighbours had been recounted by Joan in her fit on March 25, and probably figured in the evidence read by Robert Throckmorton.]

. . . The spirit told Mistress Joan that it was Chappel and his wife, which two parties were the old man's next neighbours and were at some variance and contention with him, and did greatly suspect themselves of such a matter; for they were both of them a little before that time marvellously troubled with bleach,* the woman not able to stir herself and the man was for a fit or two in the same case that these children were in. Yet said 'the thing', 'If Chappel will beat the old witch well he may peradventure never be more troubled with him.' 'The old witch,' said the spirit, 'would once have broken his neck by giving him a fall upon the causeway in the street as he met him, for he caused on the sudden both his pattens* to be broken, and if he had fallen on the stones as he fell in the mire, he had been maimed!'

This last point of Chappel's fall was not known to any in the house at that time, and Mistress Joan being asked of the same when she came forth of her fit said that she never heard of any such thing. But when it was inquired of Chappel, he confessed that he had once such a fall as he met with old Samuel in the streets, and both his pattens were broken at one instant; and because he would not fall upon the causeway on the stones he cast himself in the falling besides the causeway (for it was but narrow) into the mire, wherein he was marvellously soiled, and if another neighbour had not been with him he had been in greater danger.[53]

[52] O^{v}–O2^{v}. [53] M2^{v}.

. . . Then[54] the jailer of Huntingdon gave this evidence: that a man of his, finding Mother Samuel very unruly whilst she was prisoner, at a time chained her to a bedpost; wherefore not long after his man fell sick and in all respects was handled as the forenamed children were, with heaving up and down of his body, shaking his arms, legs and head, having more strength in him in his fits than any two men had, crying out of Mother Samuel, saying that she did bewitch him. And thus remaining in this extraordinary course of sickness, about five or six days after died.

The said jailer said also that not long after the death of his servant, he had one of his sons fell sick and was for the most part handled as his servant beforenamed was, so that it was most apparent that he was bewitched. Therefore the said jailer went into the prison and brought Mother Samuel to his son's bedside and there held her until his son had scratched her, and so presently his son amended.

And to draw to some end, the jury of life and death in the afternoon found all the inditements *Billa vera*; which when old Father Samuel heard, he said to his wife in the hearing of many, 'A plague of God light upon thee, for thou art she that hath brought us all to this, and we may thank thee for it'.

Then the Judge grew to sentence and asked old Father Samuel what he had to say for himself why judgment of death should not be pronounced on him; whereat he answered that he had nothing to say but 'the Lord have mercy on him'.

Then the Judge asked old Mother Samuel what she had to say for herself to stay judgment; whereat she answered that she was with child, which set all the company on a great laughing and she herself more than any other because (as she thought) there should for that cause no judgment have been given.[55] Her age was near fourscore, therefore the Judge moved her to leave that answer, but in no case she would be driven from it till at length a jury of women were empanelled and sworn to search her, who gave up their verdict that she was not with child unless (as some said) it was with the Devil. And no marvel; for after she was found guilty there went the forenamed Master

[54] Continuing from point reached at note 52; reprint now continues without a break till end of book.

[55] A plea of 'pregnant' meant delay of sentence, usually for a year, if the jury of women empanelled to search the prisoner declared her to be pregnant in truth. Since early pregnancy is not always easy to diagnose, the plea itself (in women of child-bearing age) sometimes seems to have won a measure of delay.

Henry Pickering unto her where she stood amongst the prisoners to persuade her to confess the truth, and amongst other things she confessed that the forenamed William Langland[56] who gave unto her the spirits had carnal knowledge of her body when she received them. Some are of opinion that it was the Devil in man's likeness.

After all this the Judge asked Agnes Samuel the daughter what she had to say why judgment of death should not be given her; at which time there was one (being a prisoner) standing by her that willed her to say that she was also with child. 'Nay,' said she, 'that will I not do; it shall never be said that I was both a witch and a whore.'

And so the Judge, after very sound and divine council given severally to them all, proceeded to judgment, which was unto death. The next day certain godly men went to the prison to persuade the condemned parties to repentance, and to confess their sins to the world and crave pardon at God's merciful hands; at which time Mother Samuel, being asked by Master John Dorington, esquire, one of her Majesty's Justices of the county of Huntingdon, whether she did not bewitch the Lady Cromwell, she said 'No, forsooth, I did not.' Then her husband, old Father Samuel standing behind and hearing her deny the same, said 'Deny it not but confess the truth; for thou didst it one way or other.'

The confession of the old woman Alice Samuel unto certain questions that were demanded of her by Master Doctor Chamberlain at the time and place of her execution; being upon the ladder.

First, being demanded what the names of those spirits wherewith she bewitched were called, she said they were called Pluck, Catch and White, the which names she often repeated. Being asked whether she had bewitched the Lady Cromwell to death or not, she answered that she had. Being asked with which of her spirits she did bewitch the said Lady to death, she said, 'With Catch'; and being demanded for what cause she did it, she answered, for that the said Lady had caused some of her hair and her hair-lace to be burned; and that, she said, Catch willed her to be revenged of the said Lady; and that thereupon the said Mother Samuel bid him go and do what he would. And being asked what Catch said to her when he came back again, she confessed that he said that he had been revenged of her. Moreover she confessed,

[56] Original has 'Langley' here, perhaps by confusion with the bewitched John Langley.

and upon her death did say for truth that she was guilty of the death of the Lady Cromwell.

Being demanded whether she had bewitched Master Throckmorton's children, she confessed that she had done it. Being asked with which of her spirits, she said that it was Pluck. Being asked what she said to him when she sent him about that matter, she confessed that she willed him go torment them but not hurt them. Being asked how long they should be in that case, she said, she could not tell, and that she did not see Pluck since Christmas last.

Being asked what she did with White, she said that she never did hurt with him, and that she had sent him to the sea, and that he had sucked upon her chin, but the other two had not any reward. And likewise she confessed that she had those spirits of one whose name, she said was Langland;[57] where he dwelleth she knew not. And for that her husband would not confess anything of the witchcraft at the time of his death, nor of the privity of himself or his daughter as accessories to the same, it was demanded of her whether her husband was privy to the death of the Lady Cromwell or not; she answered, 'He was'.

Being demanded whether her husband was a witch, or had any skill in witchcraft, she said, he had, and could both bewitch and unwitch; but touching her daughter she would in no sort confess anything, but sought by all means to clear her. And for her daughter herself, she confessed nothing at all touching the witchcraft, but, being willed by Master Doctor Chamberlain to say the Lord's prayer and the Creed when as she stood upon the ladder ready to be executed, she said the Lord's prayer until she came to say 'But deliver us from evil,' the which by no means she could pronounce,[58] and in the Creed she missed very much, and could not say that she believed the Catholic Church.

After the execution was ended and that these three persons were thoroughly dead, the jailer (whose office it is to see them buried) stripped off their clothes and, being naked, he found upon the body of the old woman Alice Samuel a little lump of flesh, in manner sticking out as if it had been a teat to the length of half an inch; which both he and his wife perceiving, at the first sight thereof meant not to disclose because it was adjoining to so secret a place which was not decent to be seen. Yet in the end, not willing to conceal so strange a matter, and decently

[57] See note 56.

[58] Agnes had a very poor memory, as the Throckmortons found when they tried to teach her a simple grace (K2). See also K^{v} and M4.

covering that privy place a little above which it grew, they made open show thereof unto divers that stood by.

After this the jailer's wife took the same teat in her hand and, seeming to strain it, there issued out at the first as if it had been 'beesenings' (to use the jailer's word) which is a mixture of yellow milk and water; at the second turn there came out in similitude as clear milk, and in the end very blood itself. For the truth of this matter, it is not to be doubted of any, for it is not only the jailer's report unto all that require of him, but there are forty others also in Huntingdonshire of honest conversation that are ready to confirm the same upon their own sight.

And thus ye have the story of these three witches of Warboys, so plainly and briefly as may be delivered unto you. If any be desirous to know the present estate of these children, how they are and have been since the death of these parties, you shall understand that since their day of execution not any one of them have had any fit at all, neither yet grudging or complaining of any such thing, but have all of them been in as good estate and as perfect health as ever from their birth. God's blessed name be evermore praised for the same. Amen.[59]

Finis

[59] Sir Henry Cromwell, husband of the dead Lady Cromwell, as lord of the manor received in forfeit the goods and chattels of the executed family. He used the money to found an annual sermon at Huntingdon, to be delivered by a fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge, who was to preach against the detestable sin of witchcraft. This sermon (though finally used to denounce belief in witchcraft) was given annually till 1812.

Sir Henry's two sons, Oliver and Henry, who had direct experience of the Warboys case besides the death of their mother, sat in the House of Commons when it helped to pass James' Witchcraft law of 1604.