



SOME UNSWORN M.P.'s.

By NORMAN WENTWORTH.

ONE does not as a rule associate any belief in what are disrespectfully termed "spooks" with the shrewd, practical M.P. He is much too sensible, you would say, for any foolish ideas of that kind. Yet most historic buildings and assemblies have their own private and peculiar ghosts, and would it not be a pity if the House of Commons were ineligible for a place among the number?

People whose minds have a leaning towards the superstitious would at any rate fancy so, no doubt. And, as a matter of fact, the Houses of Parliament have a highly respectable set, and there are plenty of hon. members who can tell you all about them, and give you chapter and date and evidence, too, of their appearances, their peculiarities, their habits and customs, such as would make the flesh of any young and superstitious M.P. creep uncomfortably.

The queerest part of it is that there are two good cases on record of the ghosts of living people having appeared in the House of Commons, and one of them was that of a sitting member, a no less well-known gentleman than Mr. T. P. O'Connor.

There is any amount of evidence to substantiate the appearance of "T.P.'s" ghost in the Spring of 1897. Why it should choose to appear whilst the hon. member still endures the earthly coil must be a matter for conjecture for all but the ghost itself, though those learned in the habits of the spook do say that when the persons they represent are suffering mental uneasiness their phantoms are sometimes

seen. On this ground there was ample excuse for the intrusion of the "T.P." wraith in the House, for it actually entered the hallowed precincts and *sat itself down on the third Bench on the Opposition side below the gangway, where Mr. O'Connor usually sits.* A telegram had previously called the gentleman himself to Ireland to the bedside of his dying father. A friend of his, Mr. J. G. Swift McNeill, M.P., was not aware of this fact, and was as positive as he could be that that evening he saw him sitting in his usual place! Others who knew "T.P." well were equally certain.



MR. T. P. O'CONNOR WAS SEEN IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS WHEN HE WAS IN IRELAND!

The other ghost of a living person is that of the wife of one of the officials of the House of Commons, and this particular wraith made its

others, too, had seen the lady where she certainly was not. There was the mystery, and there the ghost.

Some people fancy that this was not a new wraith at all, but was a revival of the "White Lady" ghost which haunted the House of Commons for a period thirty or forty years ago. This was the figure of a lady clad in robes of white, and it trailed along the corridors in different parts of the House night after night, and was seen by scores of people.

Another female Parliamentary ghost was the "Terrace Ghost," which has not been seen for twenty years or more, but which used to be a fairly constant visitor to the terrace on nasty, foggy nights. It had a distinct preference for bad weather, and such was its reality that one night in 1878 an attendant, named Ralph, was almost frightened out of his life on seeing it.

Its attire was always wet and dripping, as if it had arisen from the river, and it was its habit to walk slowly along the whole

length of the terrace, and then at the end to gaze up with a look of anguish at the big building. Then it gave vent to a terrifying scream and forthwith cast itself into the river and was lost to view. This is a ghost story which suggests a romance. What past or present M.P. is implicated?

There is another Parliamentary "ghost" which apparently resides in the river, and that is the Big Ben ghost, which is a spectral gentleman of very bad omen. Almost a score of people are ready to swear they have seen it, and that not very long ago.

Where the omen comes in is that when it appears a member of the Royal Family has invariably died on the following day.

The Big Ben ghost made its last unwelcome visits to Westminster on December 13th, 1861, December 13th, 1878, and January



EARL GREY DECLARED THAT HE THREE TIMES SAW A DEATH'S HEAD WHEN INTRODUCING THE REFORM BILL.

appearance even more recently. Many of her friends and acquaintances declare most positively that they saw it. The lady resides within the precincts of the House, and one night the handle of her bedroom door was quietly turned

and the door was thrown ajar.

That in itself seemed nothing, and the lady simply closed the door again, but a few minutes later it was opened in the same way. There was no one about, and, a little puzzled, she rang the bell for the butler. When this latter individual saw her he had a fright, for he declared emphatically that he had passed the lady herself in the corridor just before answering the summons! He had no doubt about it, and

13th, 1892—please note the days of the month—and on the following days respectively the country mourned the deaths of the Prince Consort, Princess Alice and the Duke of Clarence. This ghost is an oarsman, for it comes as a bent old man in a rotten old skiff, which glides along from the Surrey side of the river a little below Westminster Bridge, shoots the third arch and then dashes into the terrace wall of the House at the instant that Big Ben clangs the first of his midnight strokes. Nothing more is seen of it.

The last time it accomplished this performance a river police boat saw it, challenged it, and, getting no response, gave chase; but the ghost's vanishing trick was too much for the officers, who nearly upset their boat through going headlong into the Terrace themselves. What is one to think when it is gravely stated that a constable who was on duty on the Terrace at the time saw the whole thing and reported it to Scotland Yard? But Scotland Yard was helpless.

There is also a "Radiant Boy" ghost in the House of Commons, who is a very unhappy sort of creature, wandering about from room to room in a most melancholy manner and moaning pitifully all the time. Its eyes are of remarkable brightness, but it never looks up nor before it, keeping its gaze rivetted upon the floor. Its face is a deathly white, and a silver flame shines like a halo round its head as it pursues its mournful course, with the palms of its hands extended and parallel with the ground. So at all events say they who claim to have seen the spectre.

Even a Prime Minister—the second Earl Grey—declared that he saw a ghost in Parliament, and he was, without doubt, terribly upset at the apparition. The Earl was by no means a superstitious man; but he declared that while he was delivering his great speech on the introduction of the Reform Bill he three times saw a death's head appear right in front of him. It came for a few seconds clearly and distinctly, and then faded away into nothingness.

What renders this story still more remarkable is the certain fact that the Earl's daughter, Lady Georgina, herself declared that she saw much the same thing, and she told her story to her father before she was aware of his own.

Another authenticated story is of a ghost

which was so well acquainted with Parliamentary procedure as to be able to vote in the Division Lobby. An important measure was before the House, and five-line



THE BIG BEN GHOST IS AN OARSMAN. A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL FAMILY DIES WHEN HE IS SEEN.

whips were sent out imploring Members to be in their places, and to take part in the critical division which would take place. One M.P., who was abroad and

very unwell at the time, replied by telegram that he would certainly be present.

A little after midnight the division was duly taken, and the Tellers at the door of the Lobby declared emphatically that they

by the Tellers, and this one was that of this particular M.P. And there was the solemn fact that when the division was taken he was lying dead.

Of course, this was probably a mistake on the part of the Tellers—at least, that is the sensible, matter-of-fact way of explaining the circumstance—but the Tellers didn't think so, and it was an extraordinary thing.

The ghost of Mr. Spencer Perceval, who was assassinated in the House by the madman Bellingham, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, is said occasionally to haunt the House, and in the story of Mr. Perceval's life, written by his grandson, there is a most circumstantial account of a dream dreamt by a Mr. John Williams, of Scorier House, in Cornwall, a few nights before the tragedy, wherein he three times, with waking intervals, saw the murder take place just as it eventually did.

Mr. Williams was so much alarmed and impressed that it was with difficulty that he was persuaded not to go up to London and tell Mr. Perceval the story, as he wished to do. About the authenticity of this remarkably prophetic dream there is absolutely no doubt whatever.

Surely, if any ghost has a right to a place in Parliament it is that of good old Guy Fawkes, and he has duly attended

saw the gentleman in question, and they, therefore, counted his vote. It was discovered, however, the next day, that the number of votes recorded by the Division Clerks was one fewer than those recorded

there, though latterly he appears to have become sick of the proceeding, for it was on November 4th, 1852, that he last turned up. That was when the Commons first took possession of their new House.



THE "WHITE LADY" HAS HAUNTED THE HOUSE OF COMMONS FOR MANY YEARS, AND HAS BEEN SEEN BY THE WIFE OF ONE OF THE OFFICIALS OF THE HOUSE.