

NON-FICTION

Daniel Defoe

**A True Relation
of the
Apparition of
one Mrs. Veal**

 eBookTakeAway

NON-FICTION

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

A TRUE RELATION
OF THE
APPARITION OF ONE MRS. VEAL,
THE NEXT DAY AFTER HER DEATH,
TO ONE
MRS. BARGRAVE, AT CANTERBURY,
THE 8TH OF SEPTEMBER, 1705;

Which Apparition recommends the perusal of Drelincourt's
Book of Consolations against the Fears of Death.

THE PREFACE.

THIS relation is matter of fact, and attended with such circumstances, as may induce any reasonable man to believe it. It was sent by a gentleman, a justice of peace, at Maidstone, in Kent, and a very intelligent person, to his friend in London, as it is here worded; which discourse is attested by a very sober and understanding gentlewoman, a kinswoman of the said gentleman's, who lives in Canterbury, within a few doors of the house in which the within-named Mrs. Bargrave lives; who believes his kinswoman to be of so discerning a spirit, as not to be put upon by any fallacy; and who positively assured him that the whole matter, as it is related and laid down, is really true; and what she herself had in the same words, as near as may be, from Mrs. Bargrave's own mouth, who, she knows, had no reason to invent and publish such a story, or any design to forge and tell a lie, being a woman of much honesty and virtue, and her whole life a course, as it were, of piety. The use which we ought to make of it, is to consider, that there is a life to come after this, and a just God, who will retribute to every one according to the deeds done in the body; and therefore to reflect upon our past course of life we have led in the world; that our time is short and uncertain; and that if we would escape the punishment of the ungodly, and receive the reward of the righteous, which is the laying hold of eternal life, we ought, for the time to come, to return to God by a speedy repentance, ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well: to seek after God early, if happily he may be found of us, and lead such lives for the future, as may be well pleasing in his sight.

A RELATION
OF THE
APPARITION OF MRS. VEAL.

THIS thing is so rare in all its circumstances, and on so good authority, that my reading and conversation has not given me anything like it: it is fit to gratify the most ingenious and serious inquirer. Mrs. Bargrave is the person to whom Mrs. Veal appeared after her death; she is my intimate friend, and I can avouch for her reputation, for these last fifteen or sixteen years, on my own knowledge; and I can confirm the good character she had from her youth, to the time of my acquaintance. Though, since this relation, she is calumniated by some people, that are friends to the brother of this Mrs. Veal, who appeared; who think the relation of this appearance to be a reflection, and endeavour what they can to blast Mrs. Bargrave's reputation, and to laugh the story out of countenance. But by the circumstances thereof, and the

cheerful disposition of Mrs. Bargrave, notwithstanding the ill-usage of a very wicked husband, there is not yet the least sign of dejection in her face; nor did I ever hear her let fall a desponding or murmuring expression; nay, not when actually under her husband's barbarity; which I have been witness to, and several other persons of undoubted reputation.

Now you must know, Mrs. Véal was a maiden gentlewoman of about thirty years of age, and for some years last past had been troubled with fits; which were perceived coming on her, by her going off from her discourse very abruptly to some impertinence. She was maintained by an only brother, and kept his house in Dover. She was a very pious woman, and her brother a very sober man to all appearance; but now he does all he can to null or quash the story. Mrs. Véal was intimately acquainted with Mrs. Bargrave from her childhood. Mrs. Véal's circumstances were then mean; her father did not take care of his children as he ought, so that they were exposed to hardships; and Mrs. Bargrave, in those days, had as unkind a father, though she wanted neither for food nor clothing, whilst Mrs. Véal wanted for both; insomuch that she would often say, Mrs. Bargrave, you are not only the best, but the only friend I have in the world, and no circumstance of life shall ever dissolve my friendship. They would often condole each other's adverse fortunes, and read together Drelincourt upon Death, and other good books; and so, like two Christian friends, they comforted each other under their sorrow.

Some time after, Mr. Véal's friends got him a place in the custom-house at Dover, which occasioned Mrs. Véal, by little and little, to fall off from her intimacy with Mrs. Bargrave, though there was never any such thing as a quarrel; but an indifferency came on by degrees, till at last Mrs. Bargrave had not seen her in two years and a half; though above a twelvemonth of the time Mrs. Bargrave hath been absent from Dover, and this last half year has been in Canterbury about two months of the time, dwelling in a house of her own.

In this house, on the 8th of September, 1705, she was sitting alone in the forenoon, thinking over her unfortunate life, and arguing herself into a due resignation to providence, though her condition seemed hard. And, said she, I have been provided for hitherto, and doubt not but I shall be still; and am well satisfied that my afflictions shall end when it is most fit for me: and then took up her sewing-work, which she had no sooner done, but she hears a knocking at the door. She went to see who was there, and this proved to be Mrs. Véal, her old friend, who was in a riding-habit. At that moment of time the clock struck twelve at noon.

Madam, says Mrs. Bargrave, I am surprised to see you, you have been so long a stranger; but told her, she was glad to see her, and offered to salute her; which Mrs. Véal complied with, till their lips almost touched; and then Mrs. Véal drew her hand across her own eyes, and said, I am not very well; and so waived it. She told Mrs. Bargrave, she was going a journey, and had a great mind to see her first. But, says Mrs. Bargrave, how came you to take a journey alone? I am amazed at it, because I know you have a fond brother. Oh! says Mrs. Véal, I gave my brother the slip, and came away because I had so great a desire to see you before I took my journey. So Mrs. Bargrave went in with her, into another room within the first, and Mrs. Véal sat her down in an elbow-chair, in which Mrs. Bargrave was sitting when she heard Mrs. Véal knock. Then says Mrs. Véal, My dear friend, I am come to renew our old friendship again, and beg your pardon for my breach of it; and if you can forgive me, you are the best of women. O, says Mrs. Bargrave, do not mention such a thing; I have not had an uneasy thought about it; I can easily forgive it. What did you think of me? said Mrs. Véal. Says Mrs. Bargrave, I thought you were like the rest of the world, and that prosperity had made you forget yourself and me. Then Mrs. Véal reminded Mrs. Bargrave of the many friendly offices she did her in former days, and much of the conversation they had with each other in the times of their adversity; what books they read, and what comfort, in particular, they received from Drelincourt's Book of Death, which was the best, she said, on that subject ever written. She also mentioned Dr. Sherlock, the two Dutch books which were translated, written upon death, and several others. But Drelincourt, she said, had the clearest notions of death, and of the future state, of any who had handled that subject. Then she asked Mrs. Bargrave, whether she had Drelincourt. She said, Yes. Says Mrs. Véal, Fetch it. And so Mrs. Bargrave goes up stairs and brings it down. Says Mrs. Véal, Dear Mrs. Bargrave, if the eyes of our faith were as open as the eyes of our body, we should see numbers of angels about us for our guard. The notions we have of heaven now, are nothing like what it is, as Drelincourt says; therefore be comforted under your afflictions, and believe that the Almighty has a particular regard to you; and that your afflictions are marks of God's favour; and when they have done the business they are sent for, they shall be removed from you. And, believe me, my dear friend, believe what I say to you, one minute of future happiness will infinitely reward you for all your sufferings. For, I can never believe, (and claps her hand upon her knee with great earnestness, which indeed ran through most of her discourse,) that ever God will suffer you to spend all your days in this afflicted state; but be assured, that your afflictions shall leave you, or you them, in a short time. She spake in that pathetic and heavenly manner, that Mrs. Bargrave wept several times, she was so deeply affected with it.

Then Mrs. Véal mentioned Dr. Kenrick's Ascetick, at the end of which he gives an account of the lives of the primitive Christians. Their pattern she recommended to our imitation, and said, their conversation was not like this of our age: For now, says she, there is nothing but frothy, vain discourse, which is far different from theirs. Theirs was to

edification, and to build one another up in faith; so that they were not as we are, nor are we as they were: but, says she, we ought to do as they did. There was an hearty friendship among them; but where is it now to be found? Says Mrs. Bargrave, It is hard indeed to find a true friend in these days. Says Mrs. Veal, Mr. Norris has a fine copy of verses, called Friendship in Perfection, which I wonderfully admire. Have you seen the book? says Mrs. Veal. No, says Mrs. Bargrave, but I have the verses of my own writing out. Have you? says Mrs. Veal, then fetch them. Which she did from above stairs, and offered them to Mrs. Veal to read, who refused, and waived the thing, saying, holding down her head would make it ache; and then desired Mrs. Bargrave to read them to her, which she did. As they were admiring friendship, Mrs. Veal said, Dear Mrs. Bargrave, I shall love you for ever. In these verses there is twice used the word Elysian, Ah! says Mrs. Veal, these poets have such names for heaven. She would often draw her hand across her own eyes, and say, Mrs. Bargrave, do not you think I am mightily impaired by my fits? No, says Mrs. Bargrave, I think you look as well as ever I knew you. After all this discourse, which the apparition put in much finer words than Mrs. Bargrave said she could pretend to, and as much more than she can remember, (for it cannot be thought, that an hour and three quarters' conversation could all be retained, though the main of it she thinks she does,) she said to Mrs. Bargrave, she would have her write a letter to her brother, and tell him, she would have him give rings to such and such; and that there was a purse of gold in her cabinet, and that she would have two broad pieces given to her cousin Watson.

Talking at this rate, Mrs. Bargrave thought that a fit was coming upon her, and so placed herself in a chair just before her knees, to keep her from falling to the ground, if her fits should occasion it: for the elbow-chair, she thought, would keep her from falling on either side. And to divert Mrs. Veal, as she thought, took hold of her gown-sleeve several times, and commended it. Mrs. Veal told her, it was a scowered silk, and newly made up. But for all this, Mrs. Veal persisted in her request, and told Mrs. Bargrave, she must not deny her: and she would have her tell her brother all their conversation, when she had opportunity. Dear Mrs. Veal, says Mrs. Bargrave, this seems so impertinent, that I cannot tell how to comply with it; and what a mortifying story will our conversation be to a young gentleman? Why, says Mrs. Bargrave, it is much better, methinks to do it yourself. No, says Mrs. Veal, though it seems impertinent to you now, you will see more reason for it hereafter. Mrs. Bargrave then, to satisfy her importunity, was going to fetch a pen and ink; but Mrs. Veal said, Let it alone now, but do it when I am gone; but you must be sure to do it: which was one of the last things she enjoined her at parting; and so she promised her.

Then Mrs. Veal asked for Mrs. Bargrave's daughter; she said, she was not at home: But if you have a mind to see her, says Mrs. Bargrave, I'll send for her. Do, says Mrs. Veal. On which she left her, and went to a neighbour's to see for her; and by the time Mrs. Bargrave was returning, Mrs. Veal was got without the door in the street, in the face of the beast-market, on a Saturday, which is market-day, and stood ready to part, as soon as Mrs. Bargrave came to her. She asked her, why she was in such haste. She said she must be going, though perhaps she might not go her journey till Monday; and told Mrs. Bargrave, she hoped she should see her again at her cousin Watson's, before she went whither she was going. Then she said, she would take her leave of her, and walked from Mrs. Bargrave in her view, till a turning interrupted the sight of her, which was three quarters after one in the afternoon.

Mrs. Veal died the 7th of September, at twelve o'clock at noon, of her fits, and had not above four hours' senses before her death, in which time she received the sacrament. The next day after Mrs. Veal's appearing, being Sunday, Mrs. Bargrave was mightily indisposed with a cold, and a sore throat, that she could not go out that day; but on Monday morning she sent a person to captain Watson's, to know if Mrs. Veal was there. They wondered at Mrs. Bargrave's inquiry; and sent her word, that she was not there, nor was expected. At this answer Mrs. Bargrave told the maid she had certainly mistook the name, or made some blunder. And though she was ill, she put on her hood, and went herself to captain Watson's though she knew none of the family, to see if Mrs. Veal was there or not. They said, they wondered at her asking, for that she had not been in town; they were sure, if she had, she would have been there. Says Mrs. Bargrave, I am sure she was with me on Saturday almost two hours. They said, it was impossible; for they must have seen her if she had. In comes Capt. Watson, while they were in dispute, and said, that Mrs. Veal was certainly dead, and her escutcheons were making. This strangely surprised Mrs. Bargrave, when she sent to the person immediately who had the care of them, and found it true. Then she related the whole story to captain Watson's family, and what gown she had on, and how striped; and that Mrs. Veal told her, it was scowered. Then Mrs. Watson cried out, You have seen her indeed, for none knew, but Mrs. Veal and myself, that the gown was scowered. And Mrs. Watson owned, that she described the gown exactly: For, said she, I helped her to make it up. This Mrs. Watson blazed all about the town, and avouched the demonstration of the truth of Mrs. Bargrave's seeing Mrs. Veal's apparition. And captain Watson carried two gentlemen immediately to Mrs. Bargrave's house, to hear the relation of her own mouth. And when it spread so fast, that gentlemen and persons of quality, the judicious and sceptical part of the world, flocked in upon her, it at last became such a task, that she was forced to go out of the way. For they were, in general, extremely satisfied of the truth of the thing, and plainly saw that Mrs. Bargrave was no hypocondriac; for she always appears with such a cheerful air, and pleasing mien, that she has gained the favour and esteem of all the gentry; and it is thought a great favour, if they can but get the relation from her own mouth. I should have told you before, that Mrs. Veal told Mrs. Bargrave, that her

sister and brother-in-law were just come down from London to see her. Says Mrs. Bargrave, How came you to order matters so strangely? It could not be helped, says Mrs. Véal. And her brother and sister did come to see her, and entered the town of Dover just as Mrs. Véal was expiring. Mrs. Bargrave, asked her, whether she would drink some tea. Says Mrs. Véal, I do not care if I do; but I'll warrant you, this mad fellow, (meaning Mrs. Bargrave's husband,) has broke all your trinkets. But, says Mrs. Bargrave, I'll get something to drink in for all that; but Mrs. Véal waived it, and said, It is no matter, let it alone; and so it passed.

All the time I sat with Mrs. Bargrave, which was some hours, she recollected fresh sayings of Mrs. Véal. And one material thing more she told Mrs. Bargrave, that old Mr. Breton allowed Mrs. Véal ten pounds a year; which was a secret, and unknown to Mrs. Bargrave, till Mrs. Véal told it her.

Mrs. Bargrave never varies in her story; which puzzles those who doubt of the truth, or are unwilling to believe it. A servant in the neighbour's yard, adjoining to Mrs. Bargrave's house, heard her talking to somebody an hour of the time Mrs. Véal was with her. Mrs. Bargrave went out to her next neighbour's the very moment she parted with Mrs. Véal, and told her what ravishing conversation she had with an old friend, and told the whole of it. Dreincourt's Book of Death is, since this happened, bought up strangely. And it is to be observed, that notwithstanding all the trouble and fatigue Mrs. Bargrave has undergone upon this account, she never took the value of a farthing, nor suffered her daughter to take anything of anybody, and therefore can have no interest in telling the story.

But Mr. Véal does what he can to stifle the matter, and said, he would see Mrs. Bargrave; but yet it is certain matter of fact that he has been at captain Watson's since the death of his sister, and yet never went near Mrs. Bargrave; and some of his friends report her to be a liar, and that she knew of Mr. Breton's ten pounds a year. But the person who pretends to say so, has the reputation of a notorious liar, among persons whom I know to be of undoubted credit. Now Mr. Véal is more of a gentleman than to say she lies; but says, a bad husband has crazed her. But she needs only present herself, and it will effectually confute that pretence. Mr. Véal says, he asked his sister on her death-bed, whether she had a mind to dispose of anything? And she said, No. Now, the things which Mrs. Véal's apparition would have disposed of, were so trifling, and nothing of justice aimed at in their disposal, that the design of it appears to me to be only in order to make Mrs. Bargrave so to demonstrate the truth of her appearance, as to satisfy the world of the reality thereof, as to what she had seen and heard; and to secure her reputation among the reasonable and understanding part of mankind. And then again, Mr. Véal owns, that there was a purse of gold; but it was not found in her cabinet, but in a comb-box. This looks improbable; for that Mrs. Watson owned, that Mrs. Véal was so very careful of the key of the cabinet, that she would trust nobody with it. And if so, no doubt she would not trust her gold out of it. And Mrs. Véal's often drawing her hand over her eyes, and asking Mrs. Bargrave whether her fits had not impaired her, looks to me as if she did it on purpose to remind Mrs. Bargrave of her fits, to prepare her not to think it strange that she should put her upon writing to her brother to dispose of rings and gold, which looked so much like a dying person's request; and it took accordingly with Mrs. Bargrave, as the effects of her fits coming upon her; and was one of the many instances of her wonderful love to her, and care of her, that she should not be affrighted; which indeed appears in her whole management, particularly in her coming to her in the day-time, waiving the salutation, and when she was alone; and then the manner of her parting, to prevent a second attempt to salute her.

Now, why Mr. Véal should think this relation a reflection, as it is plain he does, by his endeavouring to stifle it, I cannot imagine; because the generality believe her to be a good spirit, her discourse was so heavenly. Her two great errands were to comfort Mrs. Bargrave in her affliction, and to ask her forgiveness for the breach of friendship, and with a pious discourse to encourage her. So that, after all, to suppose that Mrs. Bargrave could hatch such an invention as this from Friday noon till Saturday noon, supposing that she knew of Mrs. Véal's death the very first moment, without jumbling circumstances, and without any interest too; she must be more witty, fortunate, and wicked too, than any indifferent person, I dare say, will allow. I asked Mrs. Bargrave several times, if she was sure she felt the gown? She answered modestly, If my senses be to be relied on, I am sure of it. I asked her, if she heard a sound when she clapped her hand upon her knee? She said, she did not remember she did; but said she appeared to be as much a substance as I did, who talked with her. And I may, said she, be as soon persuaded, that your apparition is talking to me now, as that I did not really see her: for I was under no manner of fear, and received her as a friend, and parted with her as such. I would not, says she, give one farthing to make any one believe it: I have no interest in it; nothing but trouble is entailed upon me for a long time, for aught I know; and had it not come to light by accident, it would never have been made public. But now, she says, she will make her own private use of it, and keep herself out of the way as much as she can; and so she has done since. She says, She had a gentleman who came thirty miles to her to hear the relation; and that she had told it to a room full of people at a time. Several particular gentlemen have had the story from Mrs. Bargrave's own mouth.

This thing has very much affected me, and I am as well satisfied, as I am of the best-grounded matter of fact. And why we should dispute matter of fact, because we cannot solve things of which we can have no certain or demonstrative notions, seems strange to me. Mrs. Bargrave's authority and sincerity alone, would have been undoubted in any other case.

TO THE READER.

THE origin of the foregoing curious story seems to have been as follows:--

An adventurous bookseller had ventured to print a considerable edition of a work by the Reverend Charles Drelincourt, minister of the Calvinist church in Paris, and translated by M. D'Assigny, under the title of "The Christian's Defence against the Fear of Death, with several directions how to prepare ourselves to die well." But however certain the prospect of death, it is not so agreeable (unfortunately) as to invite the eager contemplation of the public; and Drelincourt's book, being neglected, lay a dead stock on the hands of the publisher. In this emergency, he applied to De Foe to assist him, (by dint of such means as were then, as well as now, pretty well understood in the literary world,) in rescuing the unfortunate book from the literary death to which general neglect seemed about to consign it.

De Foe's genius and audacity devised a plan which, for assurance and ingenuity, defied even the powers of Mr. Puff in the *Critic*: for who but himself would have thought of summoning up a ghost from the grave to bear witness in favour of a halting body of divinity? There is a matter-of-fact, business-like style in the whole account of the transaction, which bespeaks ineffable powers of self-possession. The narrative is drawn up "by a gentleman, a *Justice of Peace* at Maidstone, in Kent, a very intelligent person." And, moreover, "the discourse is attested by a very sober gentlewoman, who lives in Canterbury, within a few doors of the house in which Mrs. Bargrave lives." The Justice believes his kinswoman to be of so discerning a spirit, as not to be put upon by any fallacy--and the kinswoman positively assures the Justice, "that the whole matter, as it is related and laid down, is really true, and what she herself heard, as near as may be, from Mrs. Bargrave's own mouth, who, she knows, had no reason to invent or publish such a story, or any design to forge and tell a lie, being a woman of so much honesty and virtue, and her whole life a course, as it were, of piety." Scepticism itself could not resist this triple court of evidence so artfully combined, the Justice attesting for the discerning spirit of the sober and understanding gentlewoman his kinswoman, and his kinswoman becoming bail for the veracity of Mrs. Bargrave. And here, gentle reader, admire the simplicity of those days. Had Mrs. Veal's visit to her friend happened in our time, the conductors of the daily press would have given the word, and seven gentlemen unto the said press belonging, would, with an obedient start, have made off for Kingston, for Canterbury, for Dover,--for Kamtschatka if necessary,--to pose the Justice, cross-examine Mrs. Bargrave, confront the sober and understanding kinswoman, and dig Mrs. Veal up from her grave, rather than not get to the bottom of the story. But in our time we doubt and scrutinize; our ancestors wondered and believed.

Before the story is commenced, the understanding gentlewoman, (not the Justice of Peace,) who is the reporter, takes some pains to repel the objections made against the story by some of the friends of Mrs. Veal's brother, who consider the marvel as an aspersion on their family, and do what they can to laugh it out of countenance. Indeed, it is allowed, with admirable impartiality, that Mr. Veal is too much of a gentleman to suppose Mrs. Bargrave invented the story--scandal itself could scarce have supposed that--although one notorious liar, who is chastised towards the conclusion of the story, ventures to throw out such an insinuation. No reasonable or respectable person, however, could be found to countenance the suspicion, and Mr. Veal himself opined that Mrs. Bargrave had been driven crazy by a cruel husband, and dreamed the whole story of the apparition. Now all this is sufficiently artful. To have vouched the fact as universally known, and believed by every one, *nem. con.*, would not have been half so satisfactory to a sceptic as to allow fairly that the narrative had been impugned, and hint at the character of one of those sceptics, and the motives of another, as sufficient to account for their want of belief. Now to the fact itself.

Mrs. Bargrave and Mrs. Veal had been friends in youth, and had protested their attachment should last as long as they lived; but when Mrs. Veal's brother obtained an office in the customs at Dover, some cessation of their intimacy ensued, "though without any positive quarrel." Mrs. Bargrave had removed to Canterbury, and was residing in a house of her own, when she was suddenly interrupted by a visit from Mrs. Veal, as she was sitting in deep contemplation of certain distresses of her own. The visitor was in a riding-habit, and announced herself as prepared for a distant journey, (which seems to intimate that spirits have a considerable distance to go before they arrive at their appointed station, and that the females at least put on a *habit* for the occasion.) The spirit, for such was the seeming Mrs. Veal, continued to waive the ceremony of salutation, both in going and coming, which will remind the reader of a ghostly lover's reply to his mistress in the fine old Scottish ballad:--

Why should I come within thy bower?
I am no earthly man;
And should I kiss thy rosy lips,

Thy days would not be lang.

They then began to talk in the homely style of middle-aged ladies, and Mrs. Veal prozes concerning the conversations they had formerly held, and the books they had read together. Her very recent experience probably led Mrs. Veal to talk of death, and the books written on the subject, and she pronounced, *ex cathedra*, as a dead person was best entitled to do, that "Drelincourt's book on Death was the best book on the subject ever written." She also mentioned Dr. Sherlock, two Dutch books which had been translated, and several others; but Drelincourt, she said, had the clearest notions of death and the future state of any who had handled that subject. She then asked for the work [we marvel the edition and impress had not been mentioned,] and lectured on it with great eloquence and affection. Dr. Kenrick's *Ascetick* was also mentioned with approbation by this critical spectre, [the Doctor's work was no doubt a tenant of the shelf in some favourite publisher's shop]; and Mr. Norris's *Poem on Friendship*, a work, which I doubt, though honoured with a ghost's approbation, we may now seek for as vainly as Correlli tormented his memory to recover the sonata which the devil played to him in a dream. Presently after, from former habits we may suppose, the guest desires a cup of tea; but, bethinking herself of her new character, escapes from her own proposal by recollecting that Mr. Bargrave was in the habit of breaking his wife's china. It would have been indeed strangely out of character if the spirit had lunched, or breakfasted upon tea and toast. Such a consummation would have sounded as ridiculous as if the statue of the commander in *Don Juan* had not only accepted of the invitation of the libertine to supper, but had also committed a beef-steak to his flinty jaws and stomach of adamant. A little more conversation ensued of a less serious nature, and tending to show that even the passage from life to death leaves the female anxiety about person and dress somewhat alive. The ghost asked Mrs. Bargrave whether she did not think her very much altered, and Mrs. Bargrave of course complimented her on her good looks. Mrs. Bargrave also admired the gown which Mrs. Veal wore, and as a mark of her perfectly restored confidence, the spirit let her into the important secret, that it was a *scoured silk*, and lately made up. She informed her also of another secret, namely, that one Mr. Bretton had allowed her ten pounds a year; and, lastly, she requested that Mrs. Bargrave would write to her brother, and tell him how to distribute her mourning rings, and mentioned there was a purse of gold in her cabinet. She expressed some wish to see Mrs. Bargrave's daughter; but when that good lady went to the next door to seek her, she found on her return the guest leaving the house. She had got without the door, in the street, in the face of the beast market, on a Saturday, which is market day, and stood ready to part. She said she must be going, as she had to call upon her cousin Watson, (this appears to be a *gratis dictum* on the part of the ghost,) and, maintaining the character of mortality to the last, she quietly turned the corner, and walked out of sight.

Then came the news of Mrs. Veal's having died the day before at noon. Says Mrs. Bargrave, "I am sure she was with me on Saturday almost two hours." And in comes captain Watson, and says Mrs. Veal was certainly dead. And then come all the pieces of evidence, and especially the striped silk gown. Then Mrs. Watson cried out, "You have seen her indeed, for none knew but Mrs. Veal and I that that gown was scoured;" and she cried that the gown was described exactly, for, said she, "I helped her to make it up." And next we have the silly attempts made to discredit the history. Even Mr. Veal, her brother, was obliged to allow that the gold was found, but with a difference, and pretended it was not found in a cabinet, but elsewhere; and, in short, we have all the gossip of *says I*, and *thinks I*, and *says she*, and *thinks she*, which disputed matters usually excite in a country town.

When we have thus turned the tale, the seam without, it may be thought too ridiculous to have attracted notice. But whoever will read it as told by De Foe himself, will agree that, could the thing have happened in reality, so it would have been told. The sobering the whole supernatural visit into the language of middle or low life, gives it an air of probability even in its absurdity. The ghost of an exciseman's housekeeper, and a seamstress, were not to converse like Brutus with his Evil Genius. And the circumstances of scoured silks, broken tea-china, and such like, while they are the natural topics of such persons' conversation, would, one might have thought, be the last which an inventor would have introduced into a pretended narrative betwixt the dead and living. In short, the whole is so distinctly circumstantial, that, were it not for the impossibility, or extreme improbability at least, of such an occurrence, the evidence could not but support the story.

The effect was most wonderful. *Drelincourt upon Death*, attested by one who could speak from experience, took an unequalled run. The copies had hung on the bookseller's hands as heavy as a pile of lead bullets. They now traversed the town in every direction, like the same balls discharged from a field-piece. In short, the object of Mrs. Veal's apparition was perfectly attained.--See The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. vol. iv. p. 305. ed. 1827.