

NOTES ON A PAMPHLET OF THE RESTORATION  
PERIOD.

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THIS Pamphlet, or rather series of Pamphlets, was produced in consequence of the ecclesiastical changes at the Restoration, as appears by the preface to the first: "The things that are here presented to the Reader are various and remarkable, more having happened within the compass of a year, than a whole age hath produced in times past, the Lord therein showing great mercy and compassion to the people of these Nations, that though He hath suffered this year so many hundreds, if not thousands, of our able, godly, preaching Ministers to be removed into corners, yet the defect of their ministry hath been eminently supplied by His immediately preaching to us from Heaven in the great and wonderful works of His Providence."

The first part was published in 1661, entitled "*Επιειρος Τεραστιος*, *Mirabilis Annus*, or the year of Prodigies and Wonders, being a faithful and impartial Collection of several Signs that have been seen in the Heavens, in the Earth and in the Waters; together with many remarkable Accidents and Judgements befalling divers persons, according as they have been testified by very credible hands; all of which have happened within the space of one year last past, and are now made publick for a seasonable warning to the People of these Three Kingdoms speedily to repent and turn to the Lord, Whose Hand is lifted up amongst us." This "seasonable warning" is followed by quotations from Isaiah, The Psalms, The Revelation of S. John, Tertullian ad Scapulam, and Zanchius de Oper. Dei.

This Pamphlet has a Frontispiece containing illustrations of twelve of the most astonishing marvels, but the Draughtsmen have utterly failed in their efforts to creditably depict the incidents, being in this respect quite unlike most Showmen. It was published in 1661, and contained accounts of 114 prodigies seen in the heavens, on the earth, and in the waters, besides terrible accidents and judgements befalling notorious sinners, being at the rate of more than two a week as the Editors themselves observe.

In 1662 there appeared *MIRABILIS ANNUS SECUNDUS* in two parts containing further instalments of wonders. The preface to the first part contains the apologia of the Editors who take great credit to themselves for the care with which they had sifted the evidence for each prodigy, and assert that whereas at the

publishing of the first part it was openly excepted that they were all false, the book now stands *rectus in curia* in the judgement of all indifferent and unbiassed men.

As to the localities of the marvels, the West of England was certainly the most highly favoured and then London and the neighbourhood. Leicestershire was very little disturbed, there being recorded only a great storm at Langton, which upset a windmill and killed three men in it, 18th February, 1661-2; a whirlwind at Worthington and Tonge on the 3rd September, 1660, caused the Chappel to be sore shaken and the Chauncel in danger of falling; as this wind upset by the roots twenty loads of wood, it seems hardly worth while noticing that a hive of bees was likewise carried away and not heard of again. On 27th January, 1660-1, occurred a great earthquake in most parts of Leicestershire so that in some places men could hardly stand except they held something, and this continued for the space of a quarter-of-an-hour. But what were these compared to the visions beheld in the heavens by divers over all England: such as that in Yorkshire where six sober discreet persons being very early on the road, saw a fiery apparition in the air, wherein they discerned two or three steeples and several Cathedrals, some burning, others rent and torn irreparably, others subverted with the pinnacles downward, and by one of the pinnacles stood an angel with a flaming sword. Or the astrological vision seen shortly after day-break at Stoke Lane in Dorset, where the sun was seen first black in the middle and red at the edges: then that which was black turned bright, and the edges which before looked bright turned black, and so successively two or three times together. Afterwards it turned into several strange shapes, which they that beheld them could not express, and the parts seemed to strive with each other; at length there appeared seven suns together, which continued for a little while, and then they all joined in one again, in the midst of which appeared a dark cloud in the form of a black glove; the edges were exceedingly bright, from them seemed to fall to the earth very great streams of blood.

These terrific visions were occasionally accompanied by sounds prophetic of wars and rumours of wars. As four labourers at Stoke sub Hamdon in Somerset, in the month of September, 1661 were in a field cutting beans at two o'clock in the morning, they heard the noise of the beating of a drum, and one of the company being a drummer, could distinguish the several beatings, and affirms that there was first a call beaten, and then a battail, which continued a good space of time, and in the midst of it a great skreeking and harsh confused noise like the the clattering of armour, and the groanings of dying men.

The prodigies in the waters were mainly confined to double tides, swarms of frogs, and streams turned into blood.

A more mysterious occurrence is reported from Oundle, where in August, 1661, for eight or ten days together was heard the beating of a drum in a well; whereat the inhabitants were much alarmed in regard that the same thing hath happened many times before, upon some imminent and fatal changes.

In the first pamphlet parallels drawn from sacred and profane history were fully appended to the accounts of the prodigies, but were afterwards dropped, because as the Editors ingeniously confess, "Great exception was made that some of the parallels in the ears of many trumpet out nothing but sedition and rebellion, therefore we have purposely avoided that rock and given only a plain and naked account of the several remarkable passages themselves."

These parallels had sometimes a comic element. At the foot of an account of prodigious swarms of field-mice in Norfolk, a parallel is noted in *Stowe's Chronicle*, of a similar plague of mice in Danby Hundred in Essex, during the reign of Elizabeth, and that the year following, the Queen was much disturbed with Jesuits, of whom several were executed.

The strange and unusual accidents and remarkable judgements, nearly all turn on the question of Conformity and the use of the Book of Common Prayer and the Surplice in Church. The mere intention to conform was sufficient to bring punishment; a Minister coming home from Exeter on a Saturday with a newly purchased Prayer Book and Surplice was found drowned in a shallow brook and "the Surplice well washed against its next being used."

At Magdalene College, Oxford, a spectrum in pontificalibus, attired like a Bishop in his lawn sleeves appeared to a Scholar in bed, and terrified him to such a degree that six others volunteered to sit up with him: these were frightened in their turn by a great noise as of children crying out. (As this occurred before the era of married fellows, it was certainly uncanny). This prodigy is headed "The Devil in the likeness of a Bishop appears to a scholar in Magdalen," a parallel being found in the apparition of the devil in the form of a white friar which appeared in Danebury Church, frightening the congregation and damaging the chancel and steeple: the next year this body fell into great disgrace. *Temp. Hen. IV. from Stowe's Chronicle.*

Near Dorchester as a prelatical minister was reading the Common Prayer for the first time, the floor suddenly gave way, and he sank in up to his middle. This is much talked of, and smiled at by many, because it was his wife's grave which he kneeled somewhat too heavily upon.

If these stories told in all good faith make us smile, we must remember that the Puritans of that day were far too much in earnest to notice the comical side of their prodigies, and that in

the bitterness of spirit produced by the downfall of all their schemes at the Restoration, one may well overlook the occasional outburst of feeling against the victorious Episcopalians with their services and ceremonies, which found expression in such tales as the following:—

“On the High Altar of Trinity Coll. Cambridge, the first erected since the late revolution, candles were burnt; when evensong was over, the Chappel Clerk put the ends in a box, and not being careful enough in extinguishing them, and placing the box too near the Sanctum Sanctorum, it took fire and was all destroyed. This circumstance has caused some to judge it convenient, that our learned Convocation do enter into a speedy and grave debate, whether it be not necessary that this, or a like form of deprecation be forthwith added to the Litany lately established by Act of Parliament:

From snuffs in the Quire  
 From unhallowed Fire  
 From candle-ends  
 And from seeming friends  
 Libera nos:”