

The Text

The above-mentioned Gottliebin Dittus is single, without means, and twenty-eight years old. She has lived together with two sisters and one brother who is half blind. All are older than she. They have lived together for four years in a modest first floor apartment in Möttlingen. Due to her good disposition and her faithful education by Christian parents, she has a good basic education, even though her school training was not the best. The instruction she received through my predecessor, Pastor Dr. Barth, now living in Calw, brought a good Christian foundation into her heart. She remembers him with gratitude at every opportunity. After finishing school, she had a desire for the world at first, but her reputation was always unsullied. She worked as a servant in several places and is remembered to this day with high esteem in the houses she served, because of her proved faithfulness; especially in Weil der Stadt, where she was for eight years.

Due to a peculiar disease of the kidneys which she suffered from during the years 1836-1838, her Christian disposition became more decided and more serious. During this illness many and highly respected doctors attempted to treat her at the recommendation of Pastor Dr. Barth and Vicar Stotz. This happened just before I was installed here, that is, in July of 1838. Since then she has remained here in Möttlingen and has led a retiring and quiet life with her brother and sisters. She was loved and respected for her Christian understanding. Gottliebin retained a number of physical weaknesses from her disease, one being that she could never pass water without a special instrument given her by her doctor. The disease also left her with a shorter foot, a high side, stomach trouble, etc.

As soon as she first entered into the above-mentioned apartment, into which she moved in February of 1840, Gottliebin believed, as she told me later, to have felt a peculiar influence on her. This

struck her the more since she thought she saw and heard many weird and sinister things. Even her brother and sisters took note of this. Right from the first day, when she prayed at the table, "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest . . ." she had fits in which she fell to the floor, unconscious. What was heard was a frequently recurring trampling and scuffing in the bedroom, the living room, and the kitchen. At times these noises lasted all night and often scared the poor brother and sisters very much. They also disquieted the people living upstairs, even though all of them shied away from letting anything about these things become known. Gottlieb experienced special things in her body. For example, at night her hands were folded by force; she saw figures and small lights, etc.

It appears from her accounts that the later possessions* had their beginning in her even at this time. From this time on she had something repulsive and inexplicable in her behavior and a repugnant way about her, which was disliked in many places. But everyone let it go because no one asked much about this poor orphan family. Also Gottlieb was highly reticent about her strange experiences. It was not until the fall of 1841 that Gottlieb came to me at the parsonage because her nightly temptations had reached an ever higher degree. However, she spoke only in general terms about her temptations so that I could not get anything worthwhile out of her. Nor could I give her very satisfactory advice. On the other hand, she confessed freely something about her former life because she hoped to get free from the aforementioned temptations through this confession.

In December of that year and until February of 1842 she suffered from erysipelas in her face and lay dangerously ill. Through the entire time of her illness I did not care much to visit her because her behavior repulsed me. She would look at me out of the corner of her eyes, would not respond to my greetings or unfold her hands which she had folded before, when I prayed; and would not pay any attention to my words. She would even seem nearly unconscious, which she was not before or after my visits. I thought of her then as a self-willed, self-righteous and spiritually proud person, even as others began to think of her. Therefore, I stayed away rather than to expose myself to a lot of embarrassments. Meanwhile, she received faithful medical treatment, and at the end she recuperated.

*See Note.

Finally, in April of 1842, I learned for the first time something about the ghost in the house. Two of Gottlieb's relatives had come to ask my advice because it could not be kept secret any longer as the whole neighborhood had noticed the trampling at night. At that time, Gottlieb saw with special frequency the figure of a woman of this town (who had died two years earlier), holding a dead child in her arms. Gottlieb carefully kept her name secret and did not tell it to me until later. This woman, she said, would always stand at the same place in front of her bed and at times would move toward her and then would often repeat these words, "I want to be left alone," or, "Give me a paper, and I won't come back," etc. Now I was asked whether anything more specific could be inquired of this woman figure. My advice was that Gottlieb was not to start a conversation with the figure under any circumstances, the more since no one could know how much self-deception was part of it. One thing was sure, anyone who became involved with the spirit world could get into terrible error and foolishness. Also Gottlieb was to pray seriously and faithfully and the whole thing would stop by itself after a while.

Upon my request a friend of hers dared to sleep in her house. (One of Gottlieb's sisters was serving in a household outside the city at that time and her brother was only rarely at home and her other sister was not enough.) She also heard the trampling and finally, guided by the shimmer of a light, they discovered half a piece of paper under a bed, at the threshold of the bedroom door. It was covered with soot and all written upon. But the writing could not be read because of the soot smeared on it. Next to it, they found three crown thalers and a number of smaller coins, each one wrapped in paper by itself and smeared with soot. That writing seemed to be a prescription, possibly of magic. From that point on there was quiet in the house for about a fortnight. However, the trampling started again. A light flickering on the floor behind the stove revealed a whole number of things which had been buried there. (Immediately underneath the living room floor is the ground.) There was found a box of little maces, chalk, salt, bones, etc. Furthermore, small square pieces of paper with little powders were found together with other pieces of paper in which were wrapped three or four small coins each, all disfigured by soot in a most ugly way. The things which could be analyzed, like the powders, were

later analyzed chemically by the chief medical examiner and an apothecary in Calw. However, neither one discovered anything special and, therefore, I burned the whole discovery except for the money. I thought the strange affair would thus be ended, which, however, was not at all the case.

In the meantime, the trampling assumed such proportions that everyone was excited by it. One could hear it during the day as well as at night, often when no one was in the living room. Passers-by were scared, especially when Gottliebin was inside because the noise occurred in front of her and behind her; even on the table, shaking it violently. Often this happened in the presence of others. The physician, Dr. Späth of Merklingen, who had always treated her with compassion and to whom alone she had confided many things, stayed in the living room for a night on two occasions, together with other curious persons.

The Investigation Begins

What he experienced was more than what he had expected. The whole thing not only became the talk of the town, but spread about in the whole region so that tourists began arriving out of curiosity. Finally, fearing such a great tumult, I decided to make nightly investigations in the house. I made a secret agreement with the mayor of the town, carpet manufacturer Kraushaar, a sensible, sober, and God-fearing man; and several men of the town council, altogether some six to eight men. We divided ourselves into parties of two in and around the house and arrived, unexpected, around ten o'clock in the evening. Mose Stanger, a young, married man, also a relative of Gottliebin's, a man distinguished by Christian discernment and having the best of reputation in other respects, later my most faithful helper, had gone there before us. As soon as I entered the living room, two immense bangs met me from the bedroom. In a short time, others followed. Noises, bangs, and knockings of the most varied kind were heard, mostly in the bedroom, where Gottliebin lay on her bed, fully dressed.

The other guards outside and upstairs heard everything and met downstairs after some time because they had become convinced that everything they heard originated there. The tumult seemed

to increase, especially after I had asked that a hymn be sung and had prayed a short prayer. In the space of three hours, twenty-five bangs were heard toward a certain spot in the bedroom. They were so loud that the chair leaped, the windows rattled and sand fell from the ceiling. Villagers at a far distance were reminded of the shooting on New Year's Eve. Beside these bangs, weaker and stronger noises were heard, some like the tapping of fingers, or a more or less regular drumming. One could follow the sound which seemed to begin mainly under the dresser, and reach under with one's hand without noticing the least thing. We tried with and without light but it did not change anything. However, the strongest bangs occurred only when all of us were in the living room. One could clearly make out the place under the door upon which these bangs fell. Everything was checked in greatest detail but no explanation could be found in any wise. Finally, toward one o'clock in the morning, when all of us were in the living room, Gottlieb called me to her bedside and asked if she could say who the figure was if it appeared, as she could already hear some scuffing. I denied her that entirely. I had already had my fill of the investigation and I did not want to risk the possibility that these many people were going to *see* something inexplicable. Therefore, I asked her to get up. I finished the investigation and made provision that Gottlieb could immediately find room and board in another house. Thus we left the house. The half blind brother was supposed to have heard and seen many things after we left. Strange to say, the noise was strongest during the night we visited there.

The following day was a Friday and Gottlieb was present at the service of that day. Half an hour later an incredible crowd had gathered in front of her house and a messenger told me that she was in a deep faint and near death. I rushed there and found her lying on her bed, quite stiff. The skin of her head and arms was glowing and trembling but the rest of her appearance indicated suffocation. The living room was crowded full and a doctor who happened to be there from another village had rushed in, trying this and that to bring her back to life. But soon he left, shaking his head. After about half an hour she awakened and told me quietly that she had seen the figure of the woman with the dead child in the living room when she returned from church. But soon after she had fainted.