

Defoe Daniel

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



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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. Veal 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. Veal was intimately acquainted with Mrs. Bargrave from her childhood. Mrs. Veal'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. Veal 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. Veal's friends got him a place in the custom-house at Dover, which occasioned Mrs. Veal, 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. Veal, 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. Veal complied with, till their lips almost touched; and then Mrs. Veal 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. Veal, 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. Veal sat her down in an elbow-chair, in which Mrs. Bargrave was sitting when she heard Mrs. Veal knock. Then says Mrs. Veal, 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. Veal. 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. Veal 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. Veal, Fetch it. And so Mrs. Bargrave goes up stairs and brings it down. Says Mrs. Veal, 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.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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