
Review note by Margaret Burger Kohn.

An interesting work to be dusted off and reissued in the wake of the recent preoccupation with events psychic and supernatural is entitled Apparitions and Haunted Houses--a Survey of Evidence. Sir Ernest Bennett originally published the book in 1939 through Faber & Faber of London and it has been republished in the United States recently. As the name implies, Sir Bennett is attempting to prove a point by employing "evidence" he has gathered. The purpose of his work is "to awaken scientific curiosity" and to "make some impression on two different classes of distinguished men--the scientists and the leaders of religion."

Bennett, through a close affiliation with the Society for Psychic Research, has amassed one hundred and four cases of supernatural apparitions that were reported to that society between the 1880's and the 1950's. He has attempted to present a convincing argument for the validity of his testimonies and the necessity of further research in the area of extraordinary phenomena.

Of course, the author's purpose was far from offering a tome to be employed by folklore enthusiasts. In fact, he diligently presents his material as scientific "proof" for his hypothesis; i.e. that supernatural visions are the result of telepathic action between the unearthly visitor and the visitee. Despite this fact, the author has introduced a number of ghost tales valuable in that they are presented verbatim from his informants. Throughout the testimony certain themes and details are carried over into new cases. Whether this is a result of oral tradition or further proof of the predictable nature of ghostly visions is anyone's guess.

The author has relied upon the records of the Society for Psychic Research and unpublished correspondance for his evidence and therefore has presented a wealth of information heretofore unknown. Folk motifs and ghostly superstitions are scattered liberally throughout the informants' tales, making this work a valuable comparative tool for field collectors of ghost lore.