

III. *Account of the violent Storm of Lightning at East-bourn, in Suffex, Sept. 17, 1780; communicated by Owen Salusbury Brereton, Esq. F. R. and A. S.*

Read December 14, 1780.

S I R,

I AM desired by my friend and neighbour JAMES ADAIR, Esq. of Soho Square, to communicate to you an account of the dreadful accident which happened to him and his family at East-bourn, in the county of Suffex, at nine o'clock in the morning, on Sunday the seventeenth of September last. He rented a house which stood by itself, built of various sorts of stone, three stories high, and facing the sea, which was nearly South-east of it. The morning was very stormy, with rain, thunder, and lightning; and just at nine o'clock a horrid black cloud appeared, out of which Mr. ADAIR saw several balls of fire drop into the sea successively, as he was approaching the window in a one-pair of stairs room; and very soon after, as he was standing at it with his hands clasped, and extended open against the middle of the frame, a most violent flash of fire forced his hands asunder, and threw him several yards upon the floor on his back, with both his legs upright in the air, which remained long so fixed. He was very sensible of his situation all the time, but could not open his eyes or speak; nor had he the least power of motion of any of his limbs for a long time. On
help

help coming in, and examining his cloaths, which were blue cloth, his right sleeve, both of coat and waistcoat, and also shirt, were all torn on the inside of the arm entirely open, as if by a dog, from the shoulder to the wrist; the right-side of the breeches was torn in the same manner, and part of each of the brass buttons melted.

He had in his fob a gold watch with a steel chain; the button which opens it and three other places of the case were melted. The pendant to which the chain is fixed was almost melted through, and much of the steel chain is incorporated with it, as is reciprocally some gold on that part of the steel which was within the fob. The going of the watch had stopped instantaneously, occasioned, as at first appeared by the small pendulum spiral steel spring having been lengthened; not that it was absolutely so, but relatively, respecting the escapement of the watch, the several inner turns being brought closer together.

His right-arm, right-side, and thigh, were miserably scorched, and the flesh torn: the foot of the stocking of his right leg and his shoe were torn in several places between the buckle and the toe-end of the shoe, and one of his toes split almost to the bone; but the buckle, which was a broad silver one, was not the least hurt or even marked, and remained buckled as before. His sleeve-button of gold, in which was platted hair covered with crystal, was broken from its link, and neither hair or crystal have been found since. A key and a pen-knife in his right-side breeches pocket have several marks of fusion upon them.

The frame of the window on which Mr. ADAIR was leaning was little damaged; but every pane of glass so completely smashed, you could scarce perceive it had ever had glass in it. The room was stuccoed and papered, and between the windows hung a large pier glass, which, with much of the stucco, was shivered to pieces, and strewed over the floor. A door opposite the window

was shattered to pieces, and the posts of a bed in a room behind it, and all the bell-wires were destroyed.

Under the dining-room Mr. ADAIR was in, on the parlour floor, were his coachman, butler, and footman. The coachman was going to open a glass-door to go towards the sea, and was struck dead. His body was totally black. His cloaths, and the caul of his wig, and cravat, were much torn; but no particular flesh wound was found. The enamelled face of his silver watch was broken to pieces, and the links of his steel chain fastened together.

The footman was dressing his hair near a window, when he was thrown dead on the ground. He appeared much scorched, bruised, and black. He had a very large wound in his side which penetrated near his heart; but very little, if any, blood came from it. His buck-skin breeches were much torn, and the steel of a metal knee-buckle driven through them. The window sash was driven into the room, and a stone, about eight inches square, forced out of the wall into the middle of the room, not far from the body. The butler was a yard or two behind the coachman, and going out with a telescope in his hand, which was forced in pieces from him, his hat and wig were thrown to some distance, and he perceived a violent pressure on his skull and on his back, but was no otherwise hurt. He had a silver watch with a silver chain, which received no damage.

In the room over Mr. ADAIR's, a young lady was dressing, and her maid attending. They were both driven to a distant part of the room, and rendered insensible for some time, but not hurt. The posts of the bed she had just left were all shivered to pieces, and the bell wires destroyed, and the chimney thrown down on the roof.

It is to be remarked, that though the bodies of the two servants lay unburied from the Sunday till Tuesday, all their limbs were as entirely flexible as those of a living person.

Multitudes on the shore before the house saw the meteor dart in a right line over their heads, and break against the front of the house in different directions, and all agreed the form and flame was exactly like that of an immense sky-rocket.

