

Once I served the pudding (apple pie) she said—all very grand—'I shall take coffee in the Drawing Room Nancy.' The Drawing Room faces the sea & gets all the weather thrown at it. Those tall windows are full of gaps & drafts. I hadn't lit the fire in there—only laid it—not knowing she would want to be in there too. So I quickly put a match to the fire (quite a few matches in fact as the sea air makes everything DAMP) & lit the lamps & drew the curtains. It still felt far from Cosy.

When I came back with the coffee—I can make that—Miss Dearing was huddled up close to the fire with a box of chocolates open on a footstool. 'Do have one,' she said—much more like the old Miss Dearing. So I did. Lady Pouncey would not approve. In that book of hers she is VERY FIRM on the subject of Relations between Master & Servant.

Back in the kitchen I sat warming my feet on the oven door. I was just dozing off—on account of never sleeping well at night—when the Drawing Room bell rang.

Miss Dearing looked surprised. I said 'You rang for me Miss' and she said 'No I didn't.' I said 'You did Miss,' and she said 'Indeed I did not' and this went on a bit until she said I must be HEARING THINGS.

Oh this is a great house for hearing things! Except it is only me that does.

I hurried back to examine the bells—which are in the passageway just outside the kitchen—and what should I trip over in the hallway?

A HEAD!! A chopped-off head!

It went flying off my shoe & bounced on the bottom stair. The hallway's quite dingy so I didn't know it was a head at first. I had to bend down (with shaking hands & pounding heart) & see what on earth I'd kicked:—

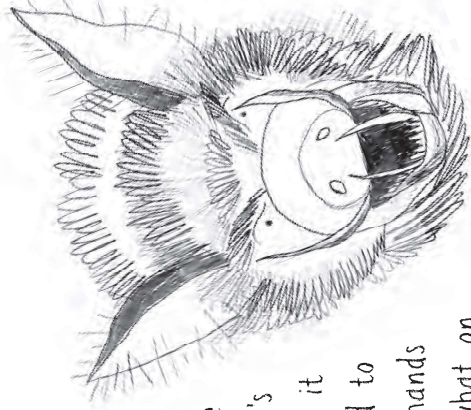
Some kind of pig—but not any pig's head you'd see in the butchers. It must have fallen off the wall. When I looked up I could see the gap.

Then the Drawing Room bell rang again! I went back this time wondering if it would be another NO I DIDN'T! YES YOU DID! talk—but Miss Dearing was there all saucer-eyed saying 'Did I hear a scream Nancy?'

'You may have Miss' I replied. 'There is a head on the hall floor.'

'A HEAD?!' she said looking even more like poor little Goldilocks scared stiff by the Bears coming home.

'A wild pig—but very dead. Fallen off the wall. One of



Mr Duggan's soo-veneers.'

Miss Dearing fanned herself with a newspaper & said 'I wondered if you were going to say a mouse's head—something a cat might bring in.'

'We haven't got a cat' I reminded her. She agreed. Then she said it was very likely the pig fell off of the wall cos the plaster was rotten—the nail was broken—the head had shrunk—or we had **DISTURBED** it with all our Comings & Goings.

None of those reasons convinced me. I don't think they convinced Miss Dearing neither. She looked quite shaken. I wish Miss D. did hold with strong drink as we might have had a nip of Brandy like my Gran ~~recks~~ reckermonds for A **BAD SHOCK**. Instead I left her to her coffee—cold by now.

I still had to check the bells. I put my hand to the wire of the Drawing Room bell & it tinkled. I did it again. There was nothing to show whether or not the bell had truly rung before or **WHO**—or **WHAT**—had rung it.

So I crept back to my warm place by the Excelsior & got out this Journal. I cannot say my writing is very steady.

ODD OCCURRENCES AT OXCOOMBE GRANGE (CONTINUED)

Latest events:—

9. Mysterious ringing of Drawing Room bell!
10. Pig's head fell off wall of its own accord!!

There is definitely something scary going on.

