

LII. *An Account of the Effects of Lightning at Southmolton in Devonshire, by Joseph Palmer, Esquire.*

Read Jan. 9,  
1752.

ON Thursday the 6th day of June 1751, about 3 o' clock in the afternoon, (that day, and some others before, having been extremely hot and sultry, and the wind pretty strong in the south-east) a flash of lightning attended with an uncommon thunder-clap, which immediately followed or rather accompanied it, fell upon the windows and walls of the church and steeple of South-Moulton in Devon, greatly damaging them.

The lightning seemed to divide itself into three parts, one of which struck on the east angle of the south-east buttress of the chancel near the ground, and made a large opening in the same: it likewise very much rent and shatter'd a large stone just above the aforesaid opening, as if done by the force of gun-powder; it split another large stone adjoining, and shiver'd the wall near the foundation, in a very odd manner.

Another part of the lightning took off a slice, about 3 inches thick, of a very large angular stone on the west side of the same buttress, forced inwards a large free-stone window of the church, and greatly shatter'd it (tho' it broke very little of the glass) inso-much that it is thought it must be taken down and rebuilt: it then pass'd cross the church, and damaged the north side, enter'd a passage before the vicar's house, which was in a direct line of its course, and beat a stone of the floor to pieces.

A person standing by the south window within the church, at the time when the lightning happen'd, felt a blow cross his foot, as if it had been taken off with an ax; and others near him had strokes in different parts of their bodies, the fire-ball, as they call'd it, passing between them.

Beside this ball of fire, they observed likewise another ball, to appearance, which (after damaging 3 or 4 more large stone window-frames, and making breaches in divers places of those stone frames and south wall) roll'd towards the west end of the church, where it enter'd the belfry: it there broke a very large stone of the floor near the west door into several pieces, and threw a great part of the stone from its place, and stopp'd the church clock, which was near it: from thence ascending the steeple, it divided the great iron rod or spindle of about 50 feet long (composed of several joints fixed into square sockets, and convey'd from the clock for turning the hand of a dial, plac'd in the south front of the steeple) out of their respective sockets, which were much forced and rent: broke and twisted the iron wire of the chimes and clock from the belfry to the bell-chamber (being about eighty feet high) in a most extraordinary manner; some of the wire being much burnt, and in sundry places, melted into little grains. It then enter'd the bell-chamber, threw a large bell off the brass it hung upon; forced the said brass out of the beam, broke off part of the gudgeon, and shatter'd the said beam and frame of the bell: made several breaches in the east and west, but mostly south walls and quoins, split the arch of the south window, which was over the said bell, and drove

out some large stones near it. It then passed out of the steeple about that place, and struck off part of the arch on the outside, together with a large piece of the stone window-frame adjoining; then ascended about four feet higher (which was near the top of the steeple) and beat off a large piece of an old carved Gothic stone head, without injuring the leaden pipe, which came out of its mouth.

Though many people happen'd to be in different parts of the church, yet providentially no one received any hurt.

The belfry was so full of smoke, attended with a strong sulphureous smell, that they, who went thither immediately after the accident, were almost suffocated; and they apprehended, that some part of the church or steeple was on fire, and a watch was kept all night in the church for fear of what might happen.

N. B. The lime and stone were in many places so far affected with the lightning, as to be easily reduced into a powder, by the bare pressure of the finger.

About the same time of the day, two horned cattle in a wood, near two miles south-west of the town of Moulton, were struck dead under a large oak, and the tree itself appeared much scorched.

And in another parish, about the same distance to the south-east of Moulton, and likewise at the same time, three sheep which were lying together in a field were likewise kill'd; the ground under them having two holes made about 2 feet deep each, one of them almost perpendicular, and the other at about a foot distance, more oblique.

About

About 5 or 6 paces farther from the place where the sheep were lying, towards the north-west the ground was much torn up as if plough'd, and an oblique hole made of about three feet deep.

The breadths of the different holes were from six to three inches.

LIII. *A Letter from Mr. James Dodson to Mr. John Robertson, F. R. S. concerning an Improvement of the Bills of Mortality.*

S I R,

January 13, 1752.

Read Jan. 16, 1752. **A**S there has lately been a scheme proposed for amending the form of the bills of mortality of London, in a pamphlet called *Observations on the past growth and present state of London*, by Mr. Corbyn Morris, the ingenious author of which has enumerated many excellent purposes, to which it may be applied, but has omitted to mention that of giving a greater degree of certainty to the calculations of the values of annuities on lives; a benefit too considerable to be pass'd by silently: And as your knowlege of that subject will enable you to judge of what is fit to be done, in order to obtain so desirable an advantage; I beg leave to trouble you with my thoughts concerning a farther regulation of those bills, which, I presume, may be conducive thereto.

The present possessors of intailed estates are, in common law, justly called tenants for life. Marriage-