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THE DUMB BELL, KNOLE.

ON A DUMB BELL AT KNOLE.

By R. S. FERGUSON, F.S.A., Chancellor of Carlisle.

Mr. C. Essenhigh Corke, of Sevenoaks, to whom I have been so much indebted for information about the "Picture Board Dummies" at Knole, has kindly sent me a photograph of a contrivance or machine at Knole, called the "Dumb Bell," which stands in an attic called the "Dumb Bell Gallery" or "Attic."

Some years ago Mr. Corke's curiosity was excited by the name "Dumb Bell Gallery," and he inquired of the housekeeper what it meant. She could give him no information but referred him to the attics, or, as they are called at Knole, the "Wardrobes," a term which applies to all the rooms on the top floor at Knole.¹ In the long attic gallery over the east front rooms at Knole, *i.e.*, over the "Spangled Bedroom" and the "Leicester Gallery," Mr. Corke found the "Dumb Bell," whose photograph is reproduced with this account. It resembles the windlass used for hauling up the bucket out of a drawwell, but has no handle: each end of the roller round which the rope winds and unwinds has four iron arms, each with a leaden poise or ball at the end, like the end of an ordinary hand dumb bell. The rope leads through a hole in the floor into the Leicester Gallery (now the billiard room) below; the hole still remains in the ceiling. A person pulling the rope in the Leicester Gallery would get the same exercise as he would by pulling a bell rope in a church tower, and his efforts would cause no noise, to annoy his neighbours. Sir H. Dryden, to whom I have

¹ These attics appear too large to have been used as "wardrobes," and it is suggested that the term may be a corruption of "ward-rooms," where were lodged the lads of good family, who

would be sent to Knole to finish their education and learn manners. Sir Thomas More was sent as a "ward" for that purpose to the house of Cardinal Moreton, *i.e.*, Knole.

shown the photograph, writes that he has never heard of such a contrivance, and attributes it to the 17th century,

When bell ringing was part of a gentleman's education and practice. It was probably to train and keep in practice the arms for the bell ringing, not merely for exercise.

Mr. Corke thinks that as the room the "Dumb Bell" stands in was restored by Thomas (1st Earl) about 1603 to 1608, it cannot be older than that date. The "Dumb Bell" is now quite rotten, but Lord Sackville recollects that when a boy he used to fasten a stick to the end of the rope and swing up and down upon it.

One would much like to know if any other instance of such a contrivance exists or is known to have existed: the machine is cumbrous, and even dangerous, and takes up much room: it would probably in most cases be taken down, and destroyed, if not used. But I think we have here the hitherto missing link in the derivation of the name "dumb bell," as applied now-a-days to short bars of iron weighted at each end with lead. They were probably developed from the windlass dumb bell, by some athlete, who cared nothing about practising bell ringing, but who wished to develop his arms.