

*THE DEAD*  
*DO NOT TALK*

*Julien F. Proskauer*



*HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS*

*NEW YORK AND LONDON*

*THE DEAD*  
*DO NOT TALK*

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THE DEAD DO NOT TALK

PUZZLES FOR EVERYONE

HOW'D JA DO THAT?

WHAT'LL YOU HAVE?

SUCKERS ALL

• SPOOK CROOKS

RADIO REVELRY

ROAD TO BETTER PICTURES

FUN AT COCKTAIL TIME

MORE FUN AT COCKTAIL TIME

**THE DEAD DO NOT TALK**

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*Dedicated to my grandchildren*  
*Susan Patricia and Thomas Arthur Garson*  
*in the hope that when they grow up*  
*Spiritism will be a thing of the past*



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## THANK YOU!



Grateful thanks are herewith extended to the vast army of professional and amateur magicians throughout the world who have sent the author newspaper clips and stories relating to charlatans, fortunetellers and spook crooks, and who in many cases revealed to him methods used by these frauds.

Harry Blackstone, America's No. 1 magician, has been of invaluable service in supplying information. Walter B. Gibson, editor of *Conjurors' Magazine*, the professional magicians' monthly, is hereby thanked for his editorial services and access to his vast library of literature on "spirits."

To Judge Jonah J. Goldstein, New York State General Sessions Court, who has called in the author for expert testimony when cases of spirit mediums and fortunetellers were before him, public acknowledgment is made for his impartial, judicial and just rulings through which the vicious motives behind many spook frauds were laid bare, and the guilty sent to prison.

Special credit is also given to *Popular Science* magazine for its fearless exposés of the methods used by spook crooks in its November, 1944, issue which brought acclaim from authorities everywhere. Credit is also given Miss Rose Mackenberg, former confidential investigator

## THANK YOU!

for the late Harry Houdini, who willingly co-operated in supplying information to *Popular Science* and this writer relative to the *modus operandi* of many charlatans. Credit, too, to Mrs. Mary Sullivan, in charge of New York City policewomen, who has never failed to aid the credulous and superstitious and to prosecute the spook crooks who would mulct them.

To Reverend Father Francis Xavier Flanagan, S.J., to others of the Catholic clergy, the Protestant ministers of all faiths and to rabbis everywhere, all of whom have preached "neither let there be any found among you who consulteth soothsayers . . . nor let there be anyone that consulteth pythonic spirits, or fortune tellers, or that seeketh the truth from the dead. . . ." (Deut. 18:10-12 [Douay]), my heartfelt thanks for their earnest co-operation and sincere efforts to convince their parishioners "The Dead Do Not Talk!"

## INTRODUCTION



This book, while it is a definite expression of my dismay at the public's widespread indulgence of fraud in the field of the supernatural, is meant as a warning to those who hope to communicate with discarnate beings through the aid of a professional go-between.

The men and women whom you will meet in this book are spiritists, some of a fascinating and almost hypnotic attraction. Many burglars, however, who are now behind bars, are upright citizens when compared with the "spook crooks" described in this volume.

Spook crooks is the name I have given fake spirit mediums, fortunetellers, and self-styled seers, who, through the practice of some material method, defraud the credulous and the superstitious. Claiming the special gifts of supersensitivity to the unseen, and the annihilation of both space and time, they offer the bereaved contact with the spirit world.

Please do not think that this book is the protest of a closed mind on the subject. Nothing could be further from the fact. Scientific research into psychic phenomena, which is motivated by a genuine and disinterested desire to add to man's knowledge of himself and his destiny, has my respect.

My first contact with "spiritism," I discovered, was

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with the profitable and bogus side of it. This was in 1915, when I appeared as a magician at Germania Hall, New Rochelle, New York. During the performance, I did a slate stunt wherein the name of a chosen card appeared on slates held by someone in the audience, and which had been previously shown to be blank.

Immediately after the show, a rather heavy-set individual approached me and asked if I had had any experience with spirit-mediums. Of course I had not, but I bluffed in order to learn what was on the man's mind. He led the talk to a discussion of psychic powers. Although he obviously knew that the slate effect was nothing but a normal bit of magician's skill, or misdirection, he ended by offering me twenty-five dollars to teach him how to use the slates. I had paid two dollars for the slates (and instructions with the secret), at Clyde Powers Magic Shop, which was then next to Hammerstein's Victoria Theatre on Forty-second Street, near Seventh Avenue. To a high school boy, a profit of twenty-three dollars from a "fellow magician" was something worth while, so we made the deal. It was not until later, when I discussed the episode with friends who were professional magicians, that I realized the use to which those slates would be put. The late Theo Hardeen, brother of Houdini, told me exactly why I had made such a profit, for he, as well as Houdini, knew the tricks of the fake spirit mediums.

From that time on, my interest in the methods of the fakers was intense, but my career as a researcher into their racket was interrupted by the Mexican fracas and World War I. After the war, I returned to the news-

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paper profession and did some magic on the side. It was while I was city editor of the Canton, Ohio, *Daily News* (1920) that I again met Honest John Kelly, the famous gambler, an old friend of mine. He reawakened my interest in spiritism by telling me of some of the new rackets that had sprung up because of the deaths in the armed forces (1916-1918), and the boys who were "Missing in Action."

Harry Houdini played Cleveland at this time, and I went to see him. I told him of the few experiences with mediums that I had managed to have when I first entered the newspaper field, before the wars had stopped me, and he told me of some of his observations of their methods. Houdini, at that time, was well on his way to becoming the greatest "ghost breaker" of all time. I determined to follow in his footsteps.

From then until 1931, I kept a complete diary and record of all mediums with whom I came in contact, carefully listing their various systems and practices.

- When the Parent Assembly of the Society of American Magicians, an organization of legitimate entertainers, decided to start a campaign against fake spirit mediums, fortunetellers, and others claiming supernatural powers, I was appointed chairman of its committee. This committee delved into all records kept on false seers on which it could lay its hands. Particular attention was paid to material in the secret diaries of Houdini, the late national president of the Society of American Magicians. These diaries were lent to me by the late Bernard M. L. Ernst, then president of the Parent Assembly. The case histories unearthed were published

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in a book called *Spook Crooks* (A. L. Burt Co., 1932). This present volume takes up where that book left off.

The reader may wonder why I, although past national president of the Society of American Magicians, and successor in that office to Houdini, Thurston, Hardeen, and other great names in magic, have taken upon myself, without scientific training, the hunting down of these vicious fakers.

The answer is simple. Who is in a better position to know the tricks used by these charlatans than a man who has followed magic for more than forty years, and who is definitely able to devote a great deal of his time to the study of the methods used by the spook crook? The reader can understand that the magician is bound to be the natural foe of the spirit fakers who adapt for their nefarious uses, apparatus built for legitimate entertainment purposes.

I am a firm believer in freedom of speech, and freedom of religion—fortunately guaranteed to all of us by our Constitution. Therefore, there is every reason why I am among those who insist that people who have made the core of their own religious faith a strong belief in the intercommunication of the living and the dead, should declare it.

If they, through some personal experience, are convinced that they have received direct evidence of spirit phenomena, they should, naturally, also state that. But, on the other hand, although I feel I have not closed my mind to the possibility of such phenomena, I, personally, have no evidence which could prove that the dead can communicate with the living in any manner whatsoever,

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through raps, through spirit mediums, or through signs—nor have I ever seen or heard a true believer in spiritism give advice in what stocks to buy, how to invest money, how to cure an ill, prescribe medicine, or in any single way do anything that a priest, minister, or rabbi would not do. It follows, then, does it not, that the activities I just mentioned must be confined only to the bogus “believers”?

I must, as a result of my own studies, unqualifiedly state that the futures of individuals are not predictable by any means whatsoever. Furthermore, I state that all predictions of the future made by spirit mediums, astrologers, fortunetellers, numerologists, mind readers, or what-have-you, have been, and are, conscious chicanery, and that the predictions are for the vilest of purposes—that of obtaining money from the credulous.

It is no disgrace to be credulous, but it can be unfortunate when parasites are abroad in the land. Faith is a natural thing for us Americans . . . that is why Europeans call us the greatest sucker nation. We are still unsophisticated enough as a people to tell the truth—therefore, we believe almost anything we are told. That is why a man a thousand miles from a race track can sell a tip on a horse for a hundred dollars to some unsuspecting person. The spook crooks know this.

These parasites are dangerous. Shrewd, hard, and unscrupulous, these people possess minds capable of keen observation, and often collect their information through sharp analysis of the ways of their anxious clients. They have constructed a pattern of typical human frailties, with their attendant emotional reactions to stock

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"treatments," and almost hypnotic suggestions. These fakers know the percentage of successful "guesses" possible for group units of five, ten, twenty, or even more, clients. There is a so-called spirit church one flight up in mid-town New York where the "reverend" hits six out of ten people with the right answer.

If credulity were limited to certain uninformed groups of us, and we could count on our men of science to be immune, their reports on their scientific research into spirit phenomena would carry more weight. Their motives, as I have said, I respect. I also admire their industry. Many scholars of integrity and serious and careful mind have given their full time to psychical research, I do not want to quarrel with their findings. But I cannot wholly and unquestioningly accept them, for I know that for all their erudition, they know nothing of sleight of hand, palming, misdirection, or audience psychology.

Even while testing persons purporting to produce psychic phenomena in their science laboratories under controlled conditions, many of them do not know what to look for, or how to control conditions to guard against subtle, and often practiced, trickery. Fortunately, among my friends are many noted scientists, some in physics, and others in sciences closely allied, whom I am rapidly educating to recognize chicanery when they see it. Incidentally, the data on ectoplasm in this book will amaze some of my scientific friends.

Unlike both our "laymen" and our scientists, the spook crooks are a hundred per cent skeptic. While their clients are considering them genuine, and while



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their investigators withhold doubts concerning their alleged "powers" until they have proved them frauds, this predatory group picks up the secrets of magic, on the one hand, and imitates the effects recorded by the scientists as nearly as possible on the other, so that their "craft" is not even their own. Their only claim to authenticity is that they are genuine criminals.

As you read these case histories, I am sure you will agree with me that communication with those of the other world is not yet established, and that, perhaps, we do wrong to try to disturb the sleep of those who are at rest forever. This book contains much material which will make you think many times before you go to another fortuneteller or spirit medium. Better give your money to charity.

All of these words lead me to the title of this book, and I repeat it here:

THE DEAD DO NOT TALK

JULIEN J. PROSKAUER

New York City



*THE DEAD*  
*DO NOT TALK*



## SPIRITS LIKE JEWELS

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**H**OW far and how boldly a spirit medium can carry his calling until it leads to deeper and more serious crime is illustrated by the case of the self-styled "Dr." Emerson Gilbert, whose contempt for the law seems to have been stimulated by its laxity in dealing with him.

Just a short while ago Gilbert was operating one of the most outrageous yet lucrative swindles in the so-called psychic business. He had a tenth floor apartment in New York's fifties where he posed, not as a mere medium but as a spirit healer. Since that brought him into competition with regular physicians, Gilbert put up the proper front by equipping his place like a doctor's office, with assistants serving as nurses.

Most of Gilbert's patients were gullible ladies who were ushered into an inner office where they reclined upon an examining table, with Dr. Gilbert in attend-

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ance. Here, for a sizable fee, they were first treated to that rarity among modern psychic phenomena, a materialization.

It was a bizarre setting, a doctor's office transformed into a seance room. A neat psychological twist concocted by the subtle mind of a man who was to mark himself a clever schemer, craftily seeking every twist and turn. Having gained his client's confidence by disguising his claptrap under a medical mask, Gilbert continued with the process of warped logic, presented in convincing style.

Lowered shades produced a sense of calm, the semi-darkness therewith set the scene for the materialization which was to follow, with a curtained corner of the room serving as a cabinet. And "Dr." Gilbert, aping the manner of a reliable medical practitioner, spoke in terms of a "consultant" who rendered a specialist's service in every case.

What marked Dr. Gilbert as unique was the fact that he was not limited to the choice of contemporary specialists. Having contact with the spirit world, Gilbert could summon his consultants from there, giving his patients an advantage that no other physician could offer. Gilbert's choice was always a certain "Dr." Walker, who was far superior to any mundane medical man, because he could not only apply the methods he had used in mortal life, but now was equipped with healing methods that he had learned in the higher spirit plane.

Thus the first step was to materialize Dr. Walker, so it was Gilbert's wont to retire behind the curtain and begin his trance. Soon the breathless patient was re-

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warded when a luminous figure stepped from the curtain and promptly began to lay on healing hands in the true Dr. Walker style. Afterward, the shining form stepped back to the curtained cabinet, and, after Walker dematerialized, Gilbert reappeared to collect fees both for himself and his spirit specialist.

One day a new patient arranged an appointment with the Gilbert-Walker combine and arrived with a friend who stayed in the reception room. The lady accepted the advice of Dr. Gilbert, but when Dr. Walker materialized, it was he who received the treatment, not the patient. The customer applied the proper medicine for showing up a fake materialization. She grabbed the ghost.

The commotion brought the other woman from the reception room and, between them, they not only brushed off Gilbert's assistants, but kept their clutch on the materialized form of Dr. Walker, and finally got him out of his luminous regalia. What they found underneath was none other than Dr. Gilbert. To make it more sorrowful for that gentleman, his captors turned out to be two New York policewomen especially assigned to this case.

So Dr. Emerson Gilbert found himself in court, and that was where I found him when I went there to aid as a technical witness in the case.

Gilbert based his title of "Doctor" on an alleged theological degree which gave him the right, so he claimed, to practice what he called religious tenets of the Society of Ethical Science Church, which he had chartered through the Independent Spiritualist Associa-

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tion of the U. S. A. He also insisted that his powers of materialization were genuine, despite the fact that the luminous robe worn by his spirit friend, Walker, was produced in court and found to consist of mere mundane cheesecloth.

A chance was given Gilbert to prove this claim, and he undertook a seance in his apartment under test conditions. He soon found that the conditions were to be too stringent, so the seance was never completed. Gilbert was fined fifty dollars and given a suspended sentence of four months.

That should have ended the career of Dr. Emerson Gilbert and his Society of Ethical Science Church. In fact, it did put him out of business for a time, despite the protests of the patients who had been paying fifteen dollars for each phony treatment and keeping both doctors busy. Indeed, Gilbert must have found it preferable to leave New York, for his next run-in with the law occurred in Pennsylvania.

There, in 1940, Emerson Gilbert was sentenced to six months in jail for practicing "drugless therapy," which was another way of saying that he was back at his old business. So Dr. Gilbert made another move.

Where this time?

Right back to New York, where the law had been more lenient in his case. No doctor's office in the fifties for this present venture. Dr. Gilbert had larger and more extravagant notions. He took himself a ten-room apartment on Riverside Drive, where he set up a fantastic meeting room for his Ethical Science cult, which came along with him. He also had the effrontery to list



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himself in the telephone book, since he expected many out-of-town customers to be looking him up.

Dr. Walker was missing from this setup, though he may have materialized for a few special healings in between the regular meetings of the cult, which were held twice a week for a dozen or more devotees who paid ten dollars at each meeting. With a "take" of better than two hundred and fifty dollars a week, Dr. Gilbert was having little trouble paying his rent of one hundred and seventy-five a month, and covering his other expenses. But the thousand a month was only his basic income.

In the shimmery light of the meeting room, Gilbert worked his crude old dodge of stepping out and in again as a materialized spirit, but now he went in for more famous personages from the other plane, including Michelangelo. Such spirits informed the believers that they were helping Gilbert grant immortality to his followers, and all who wore the mystic rings that Gilbert distributed—at a price—would be eligible to remain on earth indefinitely.

There was something of the Svengali in Gilbert. There had to be or he wouldn't have been able to ply his peculiar trade, retaining the same customers year by year. Though he was operating in New York, the reports received concerning him trickled in from other cities, from people who mentioned that friends in those towns came to New York often, just to consult with a remarkable Dr. Gilbert whose psychic powers were most amazing.

This was making Gilbert's thievery hard to detect.

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Apparently his New York clients were scattered and difficult to discover. He wasn't taking new ones locally, unless sure they weren't the sort who would register a complaint with the police.

It was early in 1944 when some began to gather details of the new racket that Gilbert had been operating for some time, and to crash the gate of that ten-room sanctum offered something of a problem. Actually, the police were also already on their way, but they were taking nearly a year to reach Gilbert, and they were doing it by way of Oklahoma.

Like all fakers who are getting away with fraud too easily, Gilbert was aiming for greater and more dangerous ambitions, turning his lavish surroundings into a front for something else.

Among the dupes who listened to strange voices that spoke from the depths of a carved altar in a room weirdly lighted was a young man named Jack Tedro Flory. Through another believer, Gilbert managed to place Flory as a messenger with a large Manhattan jewelry store. It wasn't long before the voice of Michelangelo was aiding Emerson Gilbert in persuading Flory to obtain certain jewels necessary for the rings which the cult members would need.

Later, Flory claimed he had been hypnotized by Gilbert. Certain it was that the "Doctor" with the Svengali manner had Flory under his full control. Using Flory as a tool, Gilbert caused more than twenty thousand dollars worth of gems to vanish at timely intervals. He covered his speculations so well that it took investigators almost a year to unravel the case and then only

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through a series of roundabout trails that finally uncovered Flory in Oklahoma, where he had gone in the meanwhile.

Instead of merely peddling the stolen gems to his dupes, Gilbert had obtained enough to fence them elsewhere, and, apparently, fooled the jewelers to whom he sold them. This wouldn't have been too difficult if Gilbert ran true to the form of most mediums, who mulct a steady and exclusive clientele. They are always talking wealthy weaklings into giving them valuable family jewels—to please their relatives who are in the "Summerland," and who like to "see" their favorite mediums wear expensive earthly baubles. Sometimes the spirits of the beloved say so at seances, and they have been known to materialize and actually pluck jewelry from their mundane relatives and give it to the medium!

Mediums have a habit of disposing of such gifts through jewelers at good prices, since the transaction is legitimate enough. So a medium of Gilbert's status would not have excited suspicion, working through usual channels.

However, he went too far, and is now living further up the Hudson River than New York, and is paying no rent on a two to four year lease of a Sing Sing apartment which is not quite as commodious as his ten-room establishment.

How long a character like Gilbert will remain immobilized is an unanswered question. The fact stands that he was twice convicted of perpetrating scandalous swindles which were accomplished as a fraud medium—

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regardless of what the charges were technically termed—yet he still managed to operate the same crooked game in one of the cities where he had been arrested. This had continued, with but brief interruptions, over a period of ten years, and Gilbert was still using the title of a sham religious organization to justify his activities—something which should be branded as criminal in itself.

This faker probably grossed twenty-five thousand dollars during the year which the police spent in finally unearthing him, when he should have been in jail during that entire period as a heartless trader on defenseless dupes. Instead, he was finally convicted only on a charge of possessing stolen property, a crime much less injurious to the public weal.

The career of Emerson Gilbert is an indictment against the laxity of legislation covering those who profit through the credulity of the weak, and which is as much an act of thievery as the more direct measures which some eventually take. If thorough investigation were made of all doubtful characters who call themselves "spirit mediums," no doubt authorities would find many who use their "calling" as a steppingstone to more prosaic crime. Laws are needed to eliminate that breeding place of chicanery, the private seance room!

## PSYCHIC REVELATIONS—AND WHERE THEY COME FROM

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**S**EVERAL years ago I received a letter from a businessman in a small city in one of our southern states, telling me of a most convincing session he had had with a "spiritual scientist" in his town, and asking me for an explanation of the uncanny way in which she was able to tell him facts of his past life. I think his letter and my reply deserve a place in this book:

Dear Mr. Proskauer:

Last week I had a most uncanny experience with a spirit medium or seer and I am at a loss to explain it, although I have never believed in that kind of thing, always figuring that it was just a sucker trap. Let me tell you exactly what happened to me and maybe you can shed some light on how this woman came to know things about me that even I had forgotten.

For several weeks I had been worried about my judgment in a business matter involving another person, and it had

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begun to prey on my mind so that I couldn't sleep, and I had lost weight and was feeling generally "whupped down."

I didn't mention this to my wife because I didn't want to worry her, but I did mention it to a family friend, a lady who goes to our church. I did so without mentioning any details, just told her that I was worried. I felt that I had to confide in someone or lose my mind. Well, this lady recommended a certain Mrs. Fletcher who, she said, had helped her in the past. Mrs. Fletcher did not advertise herself as a "medium," exactly. In fact, she didn't advertise at all, as far as I could learn. She has a clientele made up of some of the most socially prominent people in the county—or so I was told.

Anyhow, I called on this Mrs. Fletcher. She lives in one of the old southern style mansions which have gone to seed, and when I drove up to the portico, I couldn't see that the present occupant had done much to restore the house. It was just about falling apart.

When I went to the door, a colored maid let me in, never asked my name or anything, but showed me into an ante room off the reception hall where there was a little desk. She gave me a printed form to fill out. It stated that I was to write my question, fold up the paper, and keep it in my pocket at all times. This I did. After waiting quite a while in another and larger waiting room, I was told that Mrs. Fletcher would see me in the garden. The colored girl took me out there.

Mrs. Fletcher surprised me. She turned out to be a very pretty woman of around thirty or thirty-five, with dark hair drawn down smoothly over her ears and coiled in a knot on her neck, very much like the old style I have seen in tintypes of my grandmother. Her dress was some kind of a flowered material, also old style. She was very quiet and might have stepped right out of the 1860's.

## PSYCHIC REVELATIONS

Now, mind you, I had not given my name, and yet she called me by name the first words she spoke. We were sitting in an old-fashioned summerhouse shaded by wisteria vines, and she began to talk to me. I could swear that I never said a word.

That woman told me the date of my birth and gave me an astrological character analysis which fit me to a T. Then she made some reference to the question which had brought me to her and said that she would see it clearer by and by, but first she wanted to get my "vibrations."

Now our city is pretty good-sized and I could swear that I had never laid eyes on Mrs. Fletcher before. Also, I am confident that the lady who sent me to her is honest and would not be the kind to be "pumped" by the medium or anyone working for her. But Mrs. Fletcher pulled these things right out of the air.

She told me not only my name but my wife's name and the names of our two youngsters, and gave me their ages within three years. She told me what kind of a house I lived in, and, not only that, but she described where I had lived as a boy, thirty years ago. It was one of the spookiest things I've ever run across in all my born days. She told me how my business had gone during the past ten years, up and down. And, in the end, she answered my question, even stating the first name of the man involved, and prophesied that I would profit in a certain way by the transaction, but that the deal would involve certain disappointments, and this has certainly come true for I profited by the experience, even though I did lose some money.

Now, then, Mr. Proskauer, can you tell me how she did it? I've thought over every way until I've just about come to the end of my rope. I thought at first that someone must have told her. Yet I questioned the lady who referred me

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closely and she is not what you would call a credulous type of "believer." She is a school teacher and has a keen, active mind and it was just as much a mystery to her as it is to me, for she declares that she has never so much as mentioned my name to a soul in this connection. There was no "leak." How did Mrs. Fletcher do it? Is it mind-reading?

ARTHUR M. L——

This was my reply.

Dear Mr. L——:

Your letter is similar to hundreds I have received in my years as an exposé of fraudulent mediums and their shams and rackets. However, I must say that your observation is acute and your statement of the case is fairly accurate . . . as accurate as it could be, since you are not trained in detecting this type of fraud.

I do not claim that I know how your Mrs. Fletcher did it. However, if she will come to New York and submit to a series of tests before a committee of my choosing, I will personally pay her fare both ways, her expenses while in New York, and give her ten thousand dollars besides—if the neutral committee I select decides that her psychic powers are genuine.

All I can tell you is what she *might* have done to produce the effect you described. Let us assume, for the time being, that this is what she really did, for everything which you described could have been learned without recourse to telepathy or other unusual powers.

In your letter you state that you *drove* up to Mrs. Fletcher's residence. Many psychics have an assistant posted at a window to take note of the license numbers of clients' cars. These are quickly looked up in a directory of license numbers which gives the name of the original registrant of the car (to whom the plates were issued).



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I take it that your car is fairly new and that you present an appearance of prosperity. The deduction, therefore, is that you bought the car new and that its license number is registered in your name.

When you wrote your question on the printed form, you probably sat at a small desk, the top of which was covered with a harmless-looking blotting pad. You probably wrote with a hard pencil given you by the colored maid. My inference here is that beneath the blotter was a piece of carbon paper which recorded your question, and also your date of birth. You did not state that the form had a space at the bottom for the date of birth of the client, but this is usual in such cases.

When Mrs. Fletcher called you by name, your astonishment showed her that the name gained from the auto directory was correct, and while seated in the garden she may have signaled an assistant in the house to proceed with the routine.

Let me state here that your description of the way in which the lady wore her hair leads me to suppose that she is using an electric telephone unit concealed in her coiffeur. The wire of such a device runs down through her dress, and while seating herself in the wisteria-covered summer-house, the lady might very well have plugged in the connection so that all the data on you which the assistant in the main building discovered could be conveyed to the lady by the concealed telephone wire and earphone under her hair.

Psychics who work for big money make a collection of reference works. These include current city directories and telephone books, as well as old directories going back ten or twenty years, and old maps of the city. In a directory is listed your name, profession, age, and address. Naturally,

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your children, having the same last name, appear in it near your own name. The addresses check.

On following a name back through twenty years of directories, much can be learned of a person's life. You can trace him into marriage, can learn of the coming of children, get the wife's name, make a guess at the grandparents' names, look them up, find out where they lived twenty years ago, check with the old maps and describe the street, the landmarks, and so on.

As I said before, this may not be the way the lady in question "read your mind," but it is one way of doing it, which, for the psychic fakers, has "stood the test of time."

In this hidden research room, where the assistant is busy finding data and telephoning it to the medium, are a number of credit-rating books going back several years. I mention these only because you state that the lady told you the state of your business and its ups and downs.

The medium in this case gave you an equivocal answer which could have been interpreted either way. If you had made money but lost a friend, you would still have "profited in one way, but suffered a disappointment also." This is one of the cleverly worded formulae of the occult "seer" which the "customer" interprets to suit himself.

Mrs. Fletcher, according to your account, advised you to call again a few days later. If you went back you probably learned even more amazing things about your life which the lady "could not possibly have known." Mrs. Fletcher, if she is fraudulent, is undoubtedly a very high-class worker and employs at least one "leg-man" (who may be a motherly looking old woman) to "case layouts" (look over a client's residence, "pump" children playing in the street, and even, perhaps, enter the house on some pretext or other and talk with the client's family).

No matter how the lady operates, the chances are that by

## PSYCHIC REVELATIONS

this time a card bearing all the data she has uncovered about your life, as well as facts which she drew from you, yourself, without your knowledge, is on file in the office of a shyster lawyer in your city.

This index of "clients" of spirit mediums and psychic advisors is one of the most ingenious "gimmicks" of the profession. Its ostensible purpose is to assure the mediums that they are dealing with "reliable and sincere" persons. Actually, it serves as a source of information for other mediums.

The institution of the data file is not maintained by the lawyer out of the goodness of his heart. He is more likely to be the "boss" of the local spook racket which has become organized in recent years like many other rackets. Your Mrs. Fletcher may be working for the local boss on a salary.

The penalty for quitting or rebelling or holding out on the profits is trouble with the police, initiated from the lawyer's office by means of a complaint filed by a confederate against the medium. When she is arrested, the lawyer does not have to be notified. He is automatically on the job to represent her.

And usually one "treatment" of this kind is enough. The psychics, victimized in their turn, continue operating on a salary, while the "master mind" of the racket takes his "cut." His only service, other than providing legal talent in the event of a "pinch," is in maintaining this reference file of data on persons who have consulted mediums. And a person who has been once tends to go again.

I sincerely trust that with the information contained in this letter, you will be able to make an honest evaluation of Mrs. Fletcher's psychic powers and view the value of her advice and predictions accordingly.

Yours very truly,

Julien J. Proskauer

## THE DEAD DO NOT TALK

### Note:

The setup described by our southern businessman is an elaborate one. As a rule, the psychic's assistant operates in an adjoining room. A concealed trap door in the wainscoting enables him to push the information, written on a card which is attached to a slender pole, out where the medium can read it while seated behind a wide desk.

In addition to the main index of data, many mediums keep their own "obit file." This is compiled in the following way: Every morning the medium or his assistant clips the obituary notices from the local paper and pastes each one on a separate file card. Such notices usually state ". . . He is survived by a daughter, Mrs. John Smith, and a son, Mr. William Robinson. . . ." These names are cross-indexed on separate cards.

The medium, if working without an assistant, secures the name of the client either by the auto license list, as described in the letter, or through the carbon device, or one of its variations. The client may be left to cool his heels in the waiting room while the spiritual advisor does a rapid research job in the inner office and gets enough data for a preliminary "convincer" reading.

In further sessions, of course, more details have been gathered. This system works only for those who have recently lost some loved one through death, but, after all, such persons form one of the chief sources for the spirit medium's clientele.

In discussing the sources of information employed by psychics, it would not be fair to the reader to omit one of the most valuable—the client himself.

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To the practitioners of the spook racket there is a technique known as the "cold reading." This signifies the ability to start "cold"—without any mechanical aids or research—and tell a "sitter" events of his past and present, with speculations on his future.

In Chapter VII of my book, *Spook Crooks!* (1932), entitled "How to Become a Spirit Medium," I mentioned the twelve divisions which, according to the author of *Guide Book to Spirit Mediumship* for psychic fakers, cover all the events in the average person's life.

For those who did not read *Spook Crooks!* here are the twelve divisions mentioned and other data from the *Guide Book*.

The twelve divisions cover everything in the life of the average individual: time, personal magnetism, investments, partnerships, best friends, obstacles, sickness to look out for, enemies, marriages, money conditions, change in affairs (trips), surprises and warnings are included in the things the fake medium must cover in his "spiel."

Taking these twelve points as a framework, the convincing talker can fill out the details with deductions drawn from the sitter's appearance, and check the correctness of his guesses by the client's response.

The details change according to the age and sex of the dupe. If the medium has a chance before the meeting opens to search the pockets of overcoats, etc., left in an outside room, he may do so, thus getting information that he later states the spirits told him. Not all mediums do this, but some do, and have.

Trickery based on deception gives the nervy medium a chance to use "stock spiels" to impress the credulous.

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No matter how uneducated a faker may be, if he (or she) has a good memory he can learn by rote the proper things to say.

Out of a lot of ramblings about "organisms and psychic impressions of spirit conditions" any medium may make some statement that, while applied generally, hits most of us many times. "Lucky statements," so impress some dupes that they believe the faker really has some supernatural power.

The mediums grow wonderfully sensitive to such "hits" or "misses," and even though the customer tries to maintain a "dead pan" expression, the experienced reader can detect, by subtle signs, when he is "hitting," or when he is off the track.

I am convinced that many of the miraculous stories which come to me of persons who "never said a word or wrote a line" and who were, nevertheless, told "amazing" things about their private lives by "consulting psychologists" and the like, have been victims of this crafty, but devilishly subtle art.

Just as the stage "mind reader" can find a pin hidden in the audience by having a spectator touch his wrist lightly, "sensing the subconscious directions imparted through the spectator's hand," just so the "spiritual scientists" detect right and wrong guesses in time to remedy them, talk their way out of tight spots, reverse themselves entirely at times, and, in the end, convince even hardheaded businessmen and well-informed women that there is "something to it."

There is no question but that many mediums are sincere and believe themselves gifted with genuine

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psychic powers. The writer, as an associate member of the American Society for Psychical Research, read carefully the journal of that society, *Psychic Research*, for years but still found nothing to change his conviction *The Dead Do Not Talk*.

In this publication one finds cases that are reported to be "genuine phenomena," yet these are in such minority as compared with the millions of "spirit messages" given in "churches" and seance rooms regularly that before you accept as "genuine" any statements of any medium it is wise to check the medium's standing with approved psychic research investigators.

## WAR DEAD PHOTO FRAUD

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**A**LREADY a new spook racket, cunningly conceived during the grimmest days of World War II, has begun to reap the postwar dividends foreseen by its originators. By a "new" fraud, I mean an adaptation of an old one, which is common in all psychic fakery, a game in which tested devices are always preferred. But, in this instance, something new was needed and it has been added—or we might say, subtracted.

During the past war, a group of believers in the psychic instituted something which, for them, was quite novel—a series of seances conducted under test conditions with a sprinkling of skeptics in the audience. If there is anything that mediums ordinarily shy from, it is a "test" seance; indeed, all their writers and lecturers insist that under such conditions spirits themselves refuse to function, rather than have their authenticity doubted.



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In this instance, however, not only mediums but their controls agreed to shatter precedent and the seances were conducted as advertised, with definite phenomena resulting. There were psychical phenomena, too, but anyone who expected to see materializations, or something reasonably spectacular, was headed for disappointment.

The tests were confined to the production of spirit photographs, and though the conditions were somewhat stringent, they were specified by the mediums or their representatives. Spirit photography has always been the safest and surest form of fraudulent spook work, because it allows so many loopholes, and, at worst, can be allowed to fizzle on the ground of improper conditions.

What developed at these seances was something quite apart from the usual brand of spirit photographs. In the course of things, sheets of sensitized paper were handed to members of the audience, and, later, on those sheets were found curious symbols described as being supernormally produced, which were immediately given another name to enrich the already overburdened vocabulary of spiritistic double-talk.

These symbols were called "skotographs."

Now the remarkable thing about skotographs was that they were produced without the aid of a camera, something almost unknown in the annals of spirit photography, though believers long preferred to have it listed as entirely unknown, on account of Mr. Mumler in Boston.

Mr. Mumler was the first medium ever to produce spirit photographs, which he did immediately after the

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Civil War. Later, when Mr. Mumler found himself detected in fraud, he confessed that spirit photography was the outgrowth of his finding dim images on old plates that had not been properly cleaned. So Mr. Mumler only needed a camera to produce a picture of a corporeal person with the spirit form hovering in the background, the form having been on the plate all the while.

But that was seventy-five years ago, and nobody at the present-day test seances connected sensitized paper with Mr. Mumler, particularly since they had heard nothing but good about Mr. Mumler, and the good things never included a reference to his nasty old confession.

Apparently, the skotographs were "thought-forms," and if they could be induced upon slips of sensitized paper, why couldn't pictures be similarly projected upon a camera film or plate? It was necessary to test this to discover whether the spirits were really responsible for what had happened, so, instead of putting the photographic plates into the camera, they were held up so the audience could concentrate on loved ones gone to the Beyond.

Those plates were developed and the pictures were found on them. Little tiny pictures, like the skotographs. No pictures of anyone in the audience, although the plates had been brandished in front of their faces—just a lot of skotographs. But it proved just this. With due concentration on the features of some loved one, the picture of that person could be imprinted by the

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spirits upon a simple sheet of sensitized paper, just as well as a camera plate.

Always tiny, though, these personalized skotographs. The smaller the slip of paper, the better. I wondered about this until a year later. Then I wondered why I had wondered at all. I know photography. I should as I was a demonstrator for the Eastman Kodak Company of Rochester, New York, and had traveled for almost two years setting up camera clubs, teaching photography, and selling the apparatus.

To me, spirit photography had never held the slightest mystery in any form. If the man who pressed the first electric light switch had told people that the spirits turned on the light to make them believe him, he wouldn't have been getting away with anything more than did Mr. Mumler.

If spirit faces peer out of photographs, why don't spirit voices start speaking out of phonograph records? Maybe they will, if some smart medium reads this suggestion, but, so far, they haven't. It just happened that spirit photography got started at a time when photography itself was young and regarded somewhat superstitiously by an unsophisticated public. Now the weight of years of "evidence" in the form of accumulated frauds and hoaxes has enabled spirit photography to claim a public status. That is all.

So the skotograph twist meant nothing to me, except maybe that the medium had been afraid to let skeptics test his camera and had staged a trick before they expected one to be due.

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Until suddenly the whole purpose struck like a devastating cloudburst.

It happened in a small city in the Midwest where I had stopped off during a business trip to investigate a sudden boom in the spirit medium profession which I had heard had struck the town. I asked a local amateur magician—we will call him Mr. Bates—if he knew anything about what was going on with the mediums. Very grimly, Bates nodded, saying he would show me something that evening.

After dinner, Bates arrived at my hotel, bringing a locket which he said belonged to his wife. It was a cheap locket, but quite ornate with what appeared to be an ancient talisman engraved upon it. Opening the locket, Bates showed me a tiny photograph of a soldier.

"Our son," he told me. "My wife usually wears this locket, but I hurried her off to the movies tonight so she would forget to take it."

I noticed that the photograph was slightly blurred, and commented on the fact.

"The original couldn't have been very clear," I said, "or it wouldn't have made such a poor reduction."

"That isn't a photograph," informed Bates. "It's called a spookograph, or something like it."

"You mean a spirit photograph?"

"No, a spookograph. I think that's what Madame Tosca told my wife it was."

"Mediums don't like the word spook," I argued. "It must have been something else." Suddenly the word shot home to me. "You don't mean a skotograph?"

"That's it!" exclaimed Bates. "The medium says that

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these impressions represent a great advance in psychic science. They are skotographs, developed through the efforts of specially trained mediums in New York.

"Only you can't risk enlarging them, and, what's more, they are apt to fade unless kept in one of these talisman locketts that have been specially treated to preserve them." Bates was becoming grim, almost indignant, as he recounted this rigmarole. "The more I think of it, the more it sounds like a racket. Who is this Madame Tosca? Why did she come to our town to disturb everybody? If I didn't know that you know lots about these things, I wouldn't know to whom to talk!"

I just let Bates talk, and he told me more and more. Madame Tosca had sold dozens of these skotographs at five dollars each, and another five for the talismanic locket. A lot of families had bought several copies of each skotograph, and all were the pictures of war heroes who had fallen in action.

When Bates had finished, I asked him a question: "Have the people here received many photographs from the boys overseas?"

"Why, yes," replied Bates. "Mostly a lot of snapshots. Generally pictures of themselves that some other G.I. has taken. They swap them around, you know."

"Do any of the snaps tally with these skotographs?"

"I don't believe so, but I wouldn't be sure."

I asked Bates to find out all he could, and the next day I consulted a local photographer to learn what he knew about Madame Tosca and other visiting mediums. He hadn't met any of them, but a few persons—all strangers—had stopped in to ask him if their skoto-

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graphs could be enlarged. He'd said they could, and the strangers had asked to see samples of his enlargements of regular snapshots, but he hadn't received any orders.

By now I was beginning to get somewhere, and when Bates came back that afternoon, I had an idea. Bates had some G.I. snapshots with him, and we went over them. In one we found a photograph of a sergeant whom Bates knew quite well.

"That's Bill Tierney," said Bates. "He was shot down over Holland and listed as dead, only the underground got him out and he's safe in England. I just heard about him from his uncle in Chicago."

"Chicago?" I queried. "Isn't this Bill's home town?"

"It was until after his parents died," Bates explained. "Then he went to live with his uncle in Chicago. Some of the boys from here ran into him in England. He had his picture taken with them."

That night I went to see Madame Tosca in the hotel suite she used as a seance parlor. I told her I was Bill Tierney's uncle, just arrived in town. I'd been reading a book called *Many Mansions* that had come from England, telling of wonderful messages received from departed aviators. I wondered if Tosca could bring one through from Bill.

For five dollars I was given a trumpet seance in a pitch-black room, and heard Bill's voice describe the bomber crash that had resulted in his death. For another five, Tosca produced a skotograph definitely resembling the snapshot I had seen of Tierney, and, of course, I bought a locket for another five.

In putting away the trumpet, Madame Tosca had

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gone into another room where the telephone was. I asked if I could make a phone call, so she bowed me into that other room, where I closed the door. I saw the trumpet over in a corner, but what interested me more was a writing desk that a close look told me wasn't part of the hotel furniture.

The desk drawer was locked, as I expected, and the lock was a very solid one. The desk, however, was something different. Its legs folded under in a jiffy, and the whole desk fitted right into a canvas carrying case that I found on the shelf of the closet. Once inside the canvas, the desk resembled a suitcase for the canvas had a handle attached.

I came from the room and was halfway to the outside door before Madame Tosca saw that I was carrying the suitcase, and began a wild protest.

"I couldn't get the police on the phone," I told her, "so I'm taking this suitcase down to headquarters. Don't worry—I'll pay for a new lock if they have to break the one on the drawer. All we want to do is try developing a few skotographs ourselves."

Madame Tosca wilted. The fact that I'd recognized the desk for the portable kind that mediums carry for a quick getaway, was enough to make her talk. She'd tell me the whole story—if I'd let her clear town, and I could keep the desk.

I kept the desk. It makes a good typewriter table to carry on trips. In fact, I'm using it right now, but there's only typewriter paper in the drawer, instead of the sensitized sheets and a bottle of hypo solution used in developing skotographs.

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After all, Madame Tosca wasn't too much to blame. She had simply been planted in this town as a worker for a syndicate that was flooding the country with skotographs. It was too big a job to work alone. In fact, the medium didn't even begin operations until the spot was fixed.

The syndicate was gobbling up G.I. snapshots from every possible source, checking the pictures of the individual soldiers both from the source and in the towns where the boys came from. When Madame Tosca opened shop in this little burg, she had all the photographs and data cards with her, which was why she preferred to carry her own desk.

It took about a week to build up business, and from then on the length of a stay depended on the size of the town. The medium's hotel bills were deductible from the total profit, and she could keep twenty-five per cent from then on. Tosca said she'd expected a gross take of a hundred dollars a day, but she hadn't done that well. She was counting on doing better in bigger towns.

"It looked better than futurescopes, though," was Tosca's comment. "They're usually only good for peanuts, except for the locals who cleaned up with them once. But I'd rather have a peck of peanuts than the peck of trouble these skotographs got me in."

I'd forgotten all about futurescopes. They seemed too trivial. Yet they'd been on the market for years, and they were undoubtedly what skotographs derived from. I remembered a supply house peddling them at three or four dollars a thousand—little stock photographs that



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developed on squares of sensitized paper when given a drop of hypo.

Carnival fortunetellers sold them for a dime—or maybe a quarter. Madame Tosca had been working them as a “pitch” with a palm-reading concession, or “mitt camp” (as she termed it) with a carnival that summer. It seemed that the syndicate had been looking for just such workers as the right people to sell the improved futuresscope, or skotograph, on a dollar, instead of a penny, basis.

Of course the futuresscopes were just a gag—like the Buddah Mystery that develops written fortunes. The stock photos on the futuresscopes were supposed to represent the client’s future husband or wife—whereas skotographs not only carried made-to-order pictures, but worked through an improved developing process that was almost undetectable.

Tracing the head men of the racket through Madame Tosca was almost impossible since she’d only dealt with agents and collectors. Other towns were notified to watch for such persons, but they must have been ready for such an emergency because the only persons rounded up were other “mediums” like Madame Tosca, all equally ignorant, and unimportant in the general scheme of things.

There have been, and are, a few spasmodic revivals of the racket in other parts of the country, but they appear to be no more than a salvage effort on the part of the ring, to defray some of the cost that must have been invested in records and salaries to field workers.

How widespread this game might have become is

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still a question, but it marks only a preliminary in the history of skotographs.

When I checked with dealers who had been supplying futurescopes in previous years, I found that they knew nothing of the skotograph trade. Their business was quantity production of cheap items which they termed "novelties," and, to a degree, the simple futurescopes came under that general head.

It had never occurred to them that such a trivial item as a self-developing minicam photo could be built up to a full-fledged spook racket. But it struck me that whatever had been started on a nationwide basis must be something already in the hands of individual mediums, so I began to check on such.

I found several instances where mediums, instead of taking regular spirit photos, or recommending customers to a spirit photographer, were utilizing the wonderful new process whereby a group of faces from the Beyond were produced by the spirits on a photographic sheet that never went into a camera.

But why should this supplant the old style of spirit photographs which the gullible still accepted and which were certainly highly convincing, since the spirit images were often quite as large as the sitter's own picture with which they appeared.

The answer was easy, once the clue had been discovered. The taboo on enlargements was the clue.

In spirit photographs, the medium simply superimposes a picture of the person from the "other side," and, to do this, an original of such person must be obtained. This is comparatively easy to accomplish with the aid

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of a few good scouts and visits to the right places, particularly small-town photographers.

Little snaps, however, are unsatisfactory because they blur when enlarged. This was why the business of spirit photography bogged down after the last war. Too many spooky pictures showed obvious traces of being reproductions of snapshots taken in the trenches of France, or somewhere behind the lines.

When mediums were called upon to produce new and original photographs from spirit land, they couldn't fill the requirement, and many promising cases of alleged spirit communication fell by the wayside. With the outbreak and continuance of World War II, the same promise was threatened by the same eventual disappointment. Spirit photographs of war dead were the strongest evidence to bring bereaved relatives into a belief in spiritism, and, therefore, an interest in other forms of psychic communication, but something had to be done to bolster the lack of satisfactory pictures.

Skotographs were the answer. If mediums supplied them instead of larger pictures, the flaws would not be recognized. So the neglected futurescopes were adapted to that purpose, but on a made-to-order basis. Giving skotographs a quasi-scientific status through seances under pretended test conditions not only produced nationwide publicity, but justified the use of skotographic processes in the postwar period to come.

Even the end of the war has not stopped their use entirely, but I am sure that the wide publicity boomeranged in that the sponsors of skotographs were in no way directly responsible for the racket that cropped up

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involving such small-fry mediums as Madame Tosca. Too many important and wealthy people are slated for a trimming to risk future results by playing the small towns wholesale.

The spook business has always had its own black market, and some smart operators simply grabbed this new idea as soon as they heard about it. Breaking up the wholesale racket was a proper measure in itself, but it has preserved the situation needed for the more lucrative retail trade.

Psychic journals have been publishing skotographs obtained at the so-called test seances, requesting readers to identify any faces that they recognize, and send in names along with "earth pictures"—which is what they call a photograph taken of an actual person, as if there could be any other sort of photograph!

Just why should such names be wanted?

The fact is, those names aren't, but the names of the senders are. Anybody who is foolish enough to believe in spirit photography, even in its minicam version of skotography, is A-1 timber for a three-ply sucker list.

And speaking of timber reminds me of something that even the psychic journals haven't yet unearthed. They are always publishing pictures of "spirit-guides," many of whom are Indians, answering to such names as Silver Birch, Black Cloud, Red Feather, and the like. These are sent in by amateur circles and are accepted on sight.

One of the favorites of these publications happens to be inhabiting the mundane plane, not in the flesh, but in solid hardwood. He stands over on Third Avenue in

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New York, one of the few survivors from the era of cigar-store Indians. Somebody snapped a double exposure of this wooden Indian, and sent his picture for publication. He's been appearing ever since as regular filler for a psychic journal that boasts a circulation of thirty thousand subscribers.

What are skotographs in small doses to anyone who will swallow a wooden Indian whole?

## THE MAIL-ORDER MYSTICS

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**T**HERE is a man in the Midwest who says he has talked with God—and he can teach you how to talk with God, too, for a consideration. There is a man in the Far West who will tell you—for nothing—why God permits war, and will teach you, at a price, the strange secrets of Tibet, which can keep you from ever growing old. In Texas, a mail-order house sells the hidden lore of the ancient Mayan civilization, while in California there is a “fraternal order” which will initiate you by mail into the mysteries of time and space, the attainment of cosmic consciousness, and the secrets of “arcane cosmogony”—one of which is that the world is round, but that we live on the inside of it!

In eras of war and the chaotic years which follow it, psychic frauds spring up like mushrooms, trading on the tension, the hopes and the spiritual needs of people who have lost loved ones, whose relatives have vanished

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in war-torn countries, or who simply find the future too terrifying to face without aid or guidance.

Admittedly, there are not enough well-equipped advisors in this country—or any other country—to take care of the multitudinous problems growing out of the war. However, there are vocational counselors, psychiatrists, social agencies and genuine religious organizations which exist to render real service to the heartsick, the confused, and the mentally disturbed.

But before they ever get in touch with reputable sources of advice, thousands upon thousands of American men and women fall into the hands of the charlatans, many of whom operate by mail, exclusively. The mail-order mystics do an annual business which makes the “take” of the spirit mediums look like chicken feed. The high-power salesmanship of occult piffle has become an annual multimillion dollar industry.

We must turn for a moment to the history of occultism in the Western world to better understand the background of these cults.

The United States gave the nineteenth century the fad of spiritualism through the toe-joint cracking “spirit raps” of the Fox sisters in the 1840’s. These girls, self-confessed frauds in later life, were followed by Daniel Dunglass Home, a Scotch-American adventurer, who took the fashionable society of the fifties by storm with his “spirit phenomena,” some of which he performed “in the full light”—that is to say, the candlelight which illumined the salons of his day. Home, by ingenuity, charm, and limitless brass, established himself at the imperial court of Russia, married a Russian girl of

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good family, and for years was the center of a storm of controversy over whether his miracles were genuine spirit manifestations, or the tricks of a charlatan.

Riding the wave of interest in matters ghostly, there came from Russia to western Europe, and later to the United States, an amazing woman of titanic energy, persuasive words, and some unquestioned familiarity with oriental mysticism—Helena Petrovna Blavatsky.

Born in Ekaterinoslav in 1831, she was married at seventeen to a government official from whom she soon separated. She spent the next ten years or so wandering the world and dabbling in mysticism. There is minor evidence to show that she actually did penetrate Tibet, but this writer spent so much time on research of her later life, that he feels we need not go too deeply into her earlier life.

Anyhow, in 1858 she showed up in her native Russia and gained a sudden fame as a spirit medium. She then transferred her activities to the United States, around 1870. In New York in 1875, she helped to found the Theosophical Society, dedicated to "forming a universal brotherhood of man, studying ancient religions, and developing the divine powers latent in man."

Madame Blavatsky's teachings were a confusion of what we called "American spiritualism"—Buddhism, Brahmanism, cabalistic doctrine, and much pure Blavatsky. She talked in terms of "astral bodies," "precipitated messages," and "mahatmas." And, prophetically enough, one of her major mysteries involved a use of the mails.

On meeting a likely prospect, she would give him



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advice, or make a prediction concerning his life, which would be reinforced a few days later by a letter addressed to the man by name, and, undoubtedly, mailed weeks previous to his meeting with the madame, by someone in India. Sceptics hinted that the madame might very well get information about the prospective follower and send a letter to a stooge in India, who would copy it and sent it back, the madame arranging meanwhile to meet the "victim" and make her prophecy a few days before the mail from India was due to arrive.

Similarly, one of the favorite manifestations of the great Blavatsky was the "astral bell"—a clear, silvery, musical note which sounded mysteriously at certain times during her discourses, and without any apparent physical cause. An investigator, however, once saw a little silver doodad fall from the folds of the madame's garments, and caught her trying to recover it unseen. There were no trained investigators in those days, so this reported episode indicates crudeness on the part of the medium.

So much for the upsurge of interest in occult science which hit the Occident in the middle of the last century and is steaming along too gaily today in the aftermath of the war.

One of the most successful operators in the game of selling mysticism by correspondence is a gentleman whom we can call, for convenience, Dr. Brown. Today this individual owns a newspaper and a chain of stores in the small town in which he lives, and from which he sells his wares. He boasts, in his sales literature, that he

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owns a beautiful home—complete with pipe organ—and that he carries a large load of life insurance. Yet his business, to which he gives a fancy name, is incorporated as a nonprofit religious organization, and, consequently, is tax free. It is administered by the doctor, his family, and a few old friends.

Let us look into his background. Starting out in his youth as a boy-of-all-work, he soon discovered an “amazing power” within him. This statement is true enough, but I feel the “power” was the power of high-pressure salesmanship. At this, I am convinced, he is certainly an “adept.” From clerking in a retail store, he proceeded to sell a prominent churchman on sending him through Bible school, and he subsequently became an ordained minister, but quit the recognized church to found one supporting his own brand of religion.

His advertisements have appeared in eighty-six magazines and seven hundred newspapers throughout this country, according to his statements. A reader who would like to know how he, too, can receive health, wealth, happiness, and the good things of life by bringing out the Power of God Within Him, is invited to send for the doctor’s free literature. This “free” offer is bona fide, because the seeker after the good things will receive plenty of literature—sixty-seven separate pieces over twenty-two weeks—before the good doctor gives him up as a bad prospect. At least, I received that number!

This “religion” consists of twenty lessons on how to develop the Power of God, costing twenty-eight dollars, with an eight dollar discount for cash. The lessons con-

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tain some surprising statements on what the founder can do with his own Power. In one of his books, the doctor tells of being able to *command his pet goldfish to come sailing through the air at his command. He was able to talk with his dead mother, and cause his dog to walk through two locked doors.*

As for the methods by which you, too, can talk with God—they consist of autosuggestion, backed up by the doctor's personality in the form of phonograph records, on one side of which are inspirational talks by the founder, and on the other side, recordings of him playing his pipe organ.

The doctor has not always had the Power of God, or he might have used it when he was dishonorably discharged from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police after a serious conflict with Demon Rum, in which the doctor was the loser.

Let us turn now to a gentleman in the West, whom we shall call Mr. Angel (because he is anything but that), president of the "Foundation of Psycho-Science." He, too, is a man who has overcome many misfortunes, only to emerge triumphant by means of his strange faculties. By his own admission, he has learned from the "adepts and masters of the high Himalayas, a strange method of mind and body control that leads toward immense powers," including levitation and the ability to "tread on red-hot irons without danger."

However, Mr. Angel was not able to tread without danger on the corns of the Federal Trade Commission, which has had him on the carpet twice in the last seven years, charging him with false and misleading represen-

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tations. The FTC was unwilling to believe that this "adept" was a world teacher, having a perfect mind and a perfect body, as he claims, and that he learned from the *rishis* in the Far East, knowledge theretofore known but to them. The commission objected most strongly to his claim that his "secret breath control" would enable one to enjoy unfading youth of body and mind.

Mr. Angel sells his secrets of the mysterious East for five dollars down and two dollars a month. If the subscriber shows no enthusiasm after the first barrage of sales letters, free booklets, pamphlets, leaflets, application blanks, special letters containing "great news" and other high-pressured devices, Angel comes down to a two dollar down payment, with a thirty-day money-back guarantee. The student is to send two dollars a month thereafter for as long as he cares to sit with his back straight, breathing in through one nostril and out through the other, while repeating "affirmations" such as:

"Now I imagine that great light at the back of my neck. I am looking down over my beautiful spine. It seems that I am looking at a great waterfall with the sunshine playing on it. I see countless numbers of tiny specks of iridescent light . . . *light* . . . LIGHT . . . and I know my whole body to be full of light."

Stripped down, this man's "secrets of the East," revealed to him by the *rishis* of Tibet, could be learned by anyone with a day to spare who will go to the public library and look up the subject of yoga. As for the effect of genuine yogic practices, it is interesting to note

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that Dr. Kovoov T. Behanan of the Yale Institute of Human Relations came to the conclusion, after a year of careful research with an accredited yogi in Bombay, that yogic exercise and breathing made him "feel better."\* Leaving aside the autohypnotic and mystical aspect of yoga, it is apparently no more beneficial, when practiced without a lifetime of devotion to it, than any other regimen of moderate exercise and sensible diet.

As for Mahatma Angel's background, there is no denying that he spent a number of years in the Far East as a newspaperman, and in other capacities. But the New York City Department of Health's report on him, (under his right name), made at the request of the American Medical Association several years ago when Angel was operating a School of Wisdom in New York, described him as a "professional health itinerant and religious vagabond."

The AMA investigated him on complaints of former students of the "wisdom" school who complained that the master's breathing exercises had thrown a number of people's vertebrae out of kilter. The master moved West, where he has continued to operate his foundation.

One of the more recent mysticism-by-mail outfits is located in Texas. It is run by an ex-vaudeville "mind reader." Of interest here is the fact that the brother of the ex-master-mind operates a business elsewhere, which is listed officially as a medium's supply house. But from it one can buy a "luminous ghost which travels about

\* Behanan, Kovoov T., *Yoga: A Scientific Evaluation*, the Macmillan Company, New York, 1938.

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the seance room, and can raise either hand as a gesture of the dead. A one-man feature, complete—\$22.50."

This same concern also sells a little fountain pen flashlight gimmick which throws ghostly pictures on the wall of a seance room, and "will play havoc with the nonbeliever, and deeply stir the emotions of the true spiritualist."

The "mind-reading" brother used to operate over the radio from Mexico, giving advice, but has now set up shop in Texas. He is reputed to have five thousand members paying four dollars a month each for the "amazing wisdom that has been hidden from the multitude," supposedly originating in the lost Mayan civilization of southern Mexico and Central America. This means a gross of twenty thousand dollars a month. And the overhead of mysticism-by-mail is not large.

One of the oldest vendors of the "hidden knowledge" is a self-styled "Imperator" of a mystic fraternal order which has its headquarters in California. In 1916 this gentleman was in New York trying to round up a group of people whom he would instruct in the lore of Atlantis, the sunken continent. However, his project also sank, and he repaired to Tampa, Florida, but did not prosper. At last the Gold Coast claimed him, and he has been going strong ever since.

In the free literature of his "order" there is a tract designed to warn prospective customers from rival organizations which are "not what they seem." It draws a parallel between outfits which merely "look good" and the structures on a movie set which seem to be palaces from the front, but from the rear are a crude

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shell of lathes and plaster. Inspiration for this homily could have been drawn from his elaborate buildings, which show up most impressively in the photographs used in the literature, but which, on close inspection on the spot, prove themselves to be typical "movie set" constructions.

The Emperor's literature is the most modest of all the mail-order cults, and is probably the best written. It is convincingly vague, but seems to promise such specific benefits as "attainment" and "awakening."

The awakening comes, perhaps, after the customer has joined the order with a five dollar initiation fee and three dollars a month dues, and receives his lessons. These are printed sheets, full of "symbols" and text. One of them tells the neophyte that we live on the inside of a great sphere, and gives a cross-section map (in spite of infrared photographs, taken from aircraft, which show the curvature of the earth and prove to the naked eye that we live on the outside. But such elements of genuine science are blithely ignored by the purveyors of the "inner wisdom").

The student is told that he will be instructed in a mastery of cosmic vibrations. The way to do this, apparently, is to sit in a darkened room and look at a candle. For these instructions in candle watching, the "student" pays three dollars a month—forever, apparently, if he does not get disgusted and quit.

The foregoing descriptions of four of the largest mail-order cults in the country are not complimentary, but are fact. Please keep in mind, also, that I believe it is the constitutional right of these men to select,

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create, or preach any religion or philosophy they choose. But it is also my opinion that their advertising is misleading and fraudulent, their "lessons" without a shred of scientific basis, their operators of proven shady backgrounds in many cases, and their appeal a callous one in these days of social upset and anxiety. And that my conclusions and opinions are correct, is found in various Federal, state, and city reports about all four!

Their advertisements flourish in the columns of popular magazines where one is also promised a myriad of other systems and products which will make life healthy and prosperous: "End the tobacco habit," "relieve rupture," "banish superfluous hair," "raise giant frogs in your back yard"—and all to be done, "this quick, easy way." Their advertisements do not appear in the best and biggest magazines and newspapers.

The road to religious fulfillment is a hard one, if we are to believe the testimony of the thousands of genuine mystics who have followed it. "Enlightenment" has come to them after agony and bloody sweat. Whether they are right or wrong, whether they have been absorbed in the all-pervading soul of the universe, or have merely hypnotized themselves, is not for us to say. But of this I am convinced: They did not find the light as a result of clipping a coupon and parting with several dollars of their hard-earned cash per month for a series of "lessons" which are nothing but a rehash of any of a dozen popular books on occultism.

The genuine student of yoga spends years—twenty hours a day, sometimes—in systemic discipline and mental gymnastics. And as for the hidden lore of lost



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continents and vanished civilizations, the best minds of modern anthropology will admit that we know little about these phases of man's early life.

You can't find happiness by mail order. In the stormy times around us—and ahead of us—a man must fight for mental calm, for courage, for clear thinking. There is no “quick, easy way. . . .”

## UNFINISHED HOUSES—AND SPOOKS!

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**L**ET us leave the mail-order cults and mystics and return to the C.O.D. spooks via the house in California that stands as a monument to the deceptions practiced by fraudulent mediums, a classic of extravagance and wanton waste of wealth; one that shames even the most notorious of political grafts.

At least somebody profits heavily through ordinary graft, but the things that spook crooks start through their small greed often go beyond their limitations and leave them helpless where the pay-off is concerned.

The house to which reference is made was built by the widow of an arms manufacturer on the advice of some smart medium who wanted to keep her in the fold. He insisted that the ghost of persons killed by that particular brand of firearms would arrive to occupy and haunt the house as soon as its building was completed.

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So the lady of the house decided never to complete it. Day and night, as months blended into years, carpenters, masons, construction men, were always at work, with architects drawing up plans to keep them constantly busy. Containing scores of rooms, the house sprawled itself over several acres, and today remains a memorial to gullibility that was thirty-eight years in duration.

This California house is not unique. There was a railroad built in Texas that changed its terminal city before completion, running up huge costs for altered plans, because the chief engineer listened to the call of the spirits. In Vermont, a huge marble mausoleum with a life-sized statue of its deceased occupant remains as sad evidence of some misguided notion that such a structure would have some bearing on the hereafter of its builder.

There was a house in New Jersey that went to wrack and ruin in an unfinished state, but which at least proved that mediums sometimes could control a situation. The spirits "ordained" the construction of the house through a medium who learned later that the builder was running out of funds, whereupon the spirits ordered the work to stop and won their point, saving the medium her meal ticket.

These are just large examples of the countless smaller frauds that have been perpetrated for the best part of a century by the manipulators of that greatest of all con games, the spook racket.

Most people would laugh at the thought of Wall Street being haunted, but it is, and not by the shades

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of bulls and bears, but by the spirits of loved ones who dwell in the private lives of grim financiers, men whose soft spots of regret or remorse have been touched by crafty spook fakers, whose sucker lists are based on wealth, beginning from the top of the ladder down.

Only a few years ago, the death of a famous astrologist revealed that her clients had numbered some of the most successful financiers. Many people, instead of being impressed by the fact that such news proved gullibility to be universal, took the stand that this only proved there must be something in astrology.

And to those who take their astrology seriously, we can only say, don't press it too hard or you'll find it nothing more than the springboard that will plunge you right into the deepest of all leech ponds, where the spook crooks spawn.

In the year 1929, a certain astrologer published his usual set of twelve forecasts based upon the birth signs of the purchasers. To bring the same customers back, year after year, his annual forecasts included month by month information on matters of business and finance. Due to a conjunction of planets due in September of that year, the forecast set the time as the worst for any new investments.

It happened that the astrologer predicted the Big Crash practically on the nose. A handful of investors who already felt that the stock market was uncertain, happened also to have read the forecast. Those of them who weren't caught, actually through their own foresight, at least were kind enough to give the astrologer some credit.

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So the astrologer publicized the testimonial letters he received, and for the next several years sold his annual forecasts on the basis that they told when the market would come back. Only the market didn't come back in any of those years, yet with each new forecast the astrologer harped back to his great success of 1929 as proof that he was infallible.

It has been estimated that this astrologer sold a minimum of fifty thousand horoscopes annually, on a dollar basis, with better than ninety cents profit, which gave him a fine income. But there is no way to estimate how many persons followed his advice and played the market for those annual rises that never came. The price of the horoscope was small—the losses sustained following it are, of course, unknown.

This illustrates the story of the California house, but on a mass basis. In brief, the faker, after "earning" a quick dollar, doesn't care how many thousands he causes people to toss away, nor how many hundreds of persons may suffer directly or indirectly. He gets his—and gets out.

Why don't the spook crooks work their racket like that, taking the whole profit quickly, and move somewhere else?

Because the "business" is too good to ruin. It is the greatest repeat profit maker known. Those who have worked too boldly have met with too much inconvenience, along with a drop in total receipts over an extended period.

A crystal gazer, whom we will style Swami Zero, proved an excellent case in point. Playing a circuit of

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smaller theaters, Swami Zero always carried along a horde of "stooges." They helped the act by working as "plants," getting immediate and startling answers to their questions and saving the situation if something short-circuited the wiring to the earphones hidden in the swami's turban.

They did other things, such as smashing the windows of local jewelry stores so the swami could predict attempted burglaries. They stole cars from parking lots and left them in lonely quarries so the swami could locate them through spirit aid.

The regular customers often wanted psychic advice on how to invest, so one night when a lady asked what to do about fifty thousand dollars that she was afraid to entrust to stock promoters who had been hounding her, Swami Zero saw clearly in the crystal what Mrs. R—— should do!

He "saw" that Mrs. R—— would meet two honest stock salesmen—one dark, the other light. They would come to her hotel at three o'clock, probably in the afternoon, and the stock would have something to do with copper. Swami Zero had been buying up a lot of defunct copper stock to paper his rumpus room when he closed the show for the summer, only he didn't specify that fact.

The two stooges visited Mrs. R—— the next afternoon at three, and exchanged some worthless copper shares for the fifty thousand dollars. The same day, a man, missing from town for several years, came home, fulfilling a prediction that Swami Zero had made to the man's sister, stating that "she would hear from her

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brother in the next fortnight." As a result, the theater manager extended the swami's engagement for another week.

Before the week was up, the stock swindle was uncovered and the law clamped down on Swami Zero before he could leave the state. He was summarily tried and sentenced to a term in the state penitentiary, which was a formidable place where no prisoner could hope to work his way out with a file, hence the warden offered no objections when one of the swami's grieving clients sent him a big birthday cake that might have had a few puny tools hidden inside it.

What the cake contained was a stick of dynamite, with the necessary fixings. Swami Zero found his chance and blew out a goodly portion of the prison wall while he and his fellow prisoners were exercising in the yard. Half the convicts were out through the gap before the stunned guards could stop them, and Swami Zero led the rush by such a distance that he reached a waiting car and was away while the rest of the prisoners were just beginning to dot the countryside.

They found out who did it after Swami Zero was safe in Tegucigalpa. Business being poor for crystal gazers in Honduras, Zero didn't want to stay there, so he wrote to his lawyers in America. Back in a certain western state, the authorities hated to pay for a new penitentiary wall with taxpayers' funds. Through his attorneys, Swami Zero not only denied that he had blown the wall, but so resented the implication that he offered to foot the repair bill, provided the entire matter—includ-

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ing the new wall—would not be called to his future attention.

So the bill was paid by the swami's lawyers, and talk of extradition dropped, even interstate extradition. Returning to the United States, Swami Zero resumed his tour, but ever thereafter avoided one particular state where the architecture of the penitentiary displeased him.

In definite contrast to Swami Zero, another crystal seer, whose selected name was something like Prince Mystic, found it much more advisable to handle securities that were legitimate, although admittedly speculative. He carried a complete office equipment along with his theatrical props, and sold stock on a commission basis, but only when the "spirits advised it."

What was more, Prince Mystic tried to handle stocks that had a future, because he was counting on his clients to invest some of the profits in other enterprises that registered in the depths of Mystic's crystal ball. But at that, his status was no better than that of a bucket shop or wildcat promoter, which made him just as great a menace to the local financial scene.

Knowing how closely spook crooks are geared to the financial scene, my advice to all investors tempted by speculative offerings, is to investigate not only the financial status of the men behind it, but their leanings toward the occult.

Right now, I know of a clairvoyant who is working on a regular salary, trying to tap spirit messages that will produce a clue to a lost gold mine. I also knew a man from Texas who toured the country looking for



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successful dowsers so that he could hire them to test their divining rods in a search for oil wells.

Somebody has to pay the costs in such cases, and the deluded believers who initiate a project of this sort invariably concoct some other story to tell to skeptics rather than be ridiculed. The worst cheats are often the unconscious cheats, which sometimes goes for clairvoyants themselves, as well as the persons they convince.

## SPIRIT MOTORS

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**M**EDIUMS have used direct and outright measures in proposing get-rich-quick schemes that would have astounded the famous Mr. Wallingford. One of these, perhaps the boldest, and certainly the most recent, was the case of spirit motors.

The way I heard about Spirit Motors was through a halfway believer who happened to be a good friend of mine. Such people have a habit of meeting with halfway skeptics, something which mediums encourage, because the trend of such meetings is to bring more believers into the fold. Because when halfway skeptics meet the full-fledged kind, the latter generally ridicule all things psychic and become impatient with a man who wavers.

My policy has always been the opposite. Through halfway skeptics, I meet halfway believers and always listen to their attempts to give a scientific status to mediumistic phenomena.

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One of the most current of such theories is that of "psychic force" or "od" as Bulwer Lytton once termed it in a novel. It would account for peculiar physical phenomena not otherwise explainable, and I have never derided the "od" theory because it safeguards the gullible person who might otherwise accept the spirit hypothesis for everything that occurs in a seance room.

So my friend, whom we will call Mr. Hathaway, came to see me with a story that was truly serious because of its utter absurdity.

"Would you like to see psychic force that we discussed, in use?" asked Hathaway. "You didn't deny that there might be such a thing. You said you'd have to see it demonstrated in order to believe it."

"That's right," I assured Hathaway, "I would like to see it."

"Did it ever occur to you what such a demonstration could mean?" Hathaway demanded. "Provided, of course, that it did exist? There would be money in it, wouldn't there?"

I made a mental addition and nodded.

"About twenty-five thousand dollars," I assured Hathaway. "That's the appropriate total of the various awards now being offered for a scientific proof of anything truly psychic. Of course a smart medium could get believers to promise to match those awards, provided they were won. Believers would do it, just to prove they are as generous as skeptics—"

Hathaway was interrupting all this with a steady head shake. Something even bigger was in his mind and I wanted to hear it.

"The thing would be as great as cosmic energy," he

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declared. "In fact, I'm beginning to believe that it's the very thing we've tapped."

"Who has tapped?" I asked.

"Professor Ironsides," Hathaway replied. "He is a friend of Kalgore, the medium. Don't get me wrong—" Hathaway added that very quickly—"I don't mean that Ironsides is a believer himself. In fact, he's rather annoyed because he can't explain the whole thing from a strictly physical standpoint."

I realized I'd begun to show the skeptic's look when I heard about the link between Ironsides and Kalgore, so I used what I feel was a straight poker face when I said:

"Ironsides isn't a believer, but he knows Kalgore, the medium. That's very interesting, exactly like anything else that doesn't make sense."

"But Ironsides didn't know Kalgore," explained Hathaway, triumphantly. "The man who introduced them was Albert Croydon. It took weeks for Ironsides to get into Croydon's office and even then it was only luck that Croydon listened."

If at this point I could give the true name of Albert Croydon, my readers would be as amazed as I was. I can only say that if you eliminate all but five names from those that would occur to you as the leaders in the financial field today, Croydon's real name would be one of them. I have tried this on about fifty people and *not one left out the real Croydon.*

Don't think, however, that I am giving you a clue by stating that our Mr. Croydon was overboard on matters psychic. He is a gentleman who has been overboard

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quite often, without letting anybody know it. I'd heard rumors on the psychic angle at the time, but, frankly, I hadn't believed them. And today those rumors would be false, because Albert Croydon threw the psychic question overboard himself, after the episode that I am now relating.

Right then, I introduced a question that seemed minor to Hathaway, the type of question that believers overlook. I should have been agog over the Croydon matter, accepting everything on the strength of his importance. But the one odd note struck me, as it always does with persons who have become experienced at uncovering psychic frauds.

"This luck that Ironsides had," I commented. "Just what do you mean by luck?"

"It was just something about geometric symbols," replied Hathaway, somewhat annoyed by the unimportance of it. "Ironsides laid a lot of plans on Croydon's desk, and if they had been lettered or numbered, Croydon would have thrown them back at him. But everything was labeled with geometric symbols: squares, circles, triangles—"

"And wavy lines?" I interrupted. "Or crosses?"

Hathaway stared, dumfounded.

"Why, yes!" he exclaimed. "How did you know—or are you psychic, too?"

"Maybe," I conceded. "But those happen to be the symbols that Dr. Rhine uses at Duke University when he tries his tests in E.S.P., and it occurred to me that Croydon might have been familiar with them."

"He probably was," admitted Hathaway with a nod.

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"He's talked about using the profits from the Spirit Motor to set up parapsychological laboratories in certain institutions which he has already helped endow."

"Would Kalgore know whether or not such symbols would register immediately with Croydon?"

"Kalgore certainly would. He happens to be Croydon's consulting medium. A good man, Kalgore. He lets you tell him your theories, while he simply helps weed them out. He has a great mind."

I conceded mentally that Kalgore must have a great mind, but I didn't say so. Only somebody who knew Croydon well—as a psychic consultant like Kalgore would—could have steered Ironsides into the office at the right time, when his battery of secretaries were out, or occupied. The fact that Ironsides had embellished his drawings with E.S.P. symbols also savored of a tip-off.

"Croydon introduced Ironsides to Kalgore," continued Hathaway, "because Ironsides himself admitted that his motor was uncanny. In trying to tap one source of energy, he had found another that defied physical laws."

"You've seen this motor?" I asked.

"Of course," acknowledged Hathaway. "Croydon offered a few of us a minority share in the motor, and there is still an opportunity if you are interested."

Obviously, Croydon wanted partners so he could blame them if the invention proved to be a hoax, but I was interested just the same. I suggested, though, that this was a case for a committee of investigators on psychic matters, and Hathaway assured me that such

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had been arranged. He had picked me as a possible investor because I could serve on the committee too, limiting the number of persons who would gain a preview of a device which might revolutionize modern science.

Matters were soon arranged and I met both the investors and the investigators at the laboratory where Ironsides kept the invention. The machine had not only been in operation for a month or more—during the past week it had been watched day and night by a crew of private detectives hired by Croydon. These operatives reported that neither Ironsides nor Kalgore, who was around quite often, could have adjusted or rigged the mechanism in any possible way.

The machine itself was an odd-looking contrivance. It consisted of a conglomeration of wheels, cogs and sprockets, with peculiar spiral shafts and globes that created optical illusions during their constant revolutions. Ironsides explained that he had constructed it on a theoretical fourth-dimensional pattern, and showed us diagrams from which he had worked.

Ironsides was an eccentric character with shocky hair that seemed to add to his general excitement, but he was coherent. He said that he had studied Zollner's *Transcendental Physics*, one of the earliest books devoted to a survey of the fourth dimension, and that he believed it basically sound, but lacking in certain theory which had been supplied by later researchers.

What Zollner had done in contrast to his successors, was try to demonstrate the fourth dimension, and Ironsides had resolved to do the same with further

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knowledge at his command. He claimed that there were realms beyond science as we knew it—that energy must exist in such realms and that he had tried to attract it to our sphere.

There Kalgore took over. He was a darkish man of oriental ancestry as difficult to trace as his accent. He spoke slowly, decisively, when he declared that these theories fitted perfectly with those of the spirit plane, and that Ironsides through his machine had obtained a constant flow of the telekinetic energy so often demonstrated in the seance room when objects moved or were apported from unexpected places.

All this while, the spirit motor was proving its own case by its steady operation. Its parts, though numerous, were incapable of hiding a secret power unit, and we were free to check every detail with the plans that Ironsides had drawn and shown to Croydon. The machine was mounted on a sheet of glass, which, in turn, stood upon four glass pillars that came from a platform on the floor. There was a glass case that went over it, completely isolating the contrivance, and we were told that we could use short-wave detectors, or anything else that might curb our doubts.

Croydon was present, and in one of the impatient moods for which he was famous. He had decided that the spirit motor was bona fide and worth the price that Ironsides wanted for it. He felt bound, however, to await the decision of the other investors and the finding of the committee, but he wanted them to make up their minds at once.

A few of the investors were doubtful, but when I



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retired with the committee I found they were skeptics to the last man. They couldn't account for the machine's continuous operation under absolute test conditions, but they were convinced that whatever power ran it must come from some physical source. Finding that source seemed a complicated matter, until it suddenly struck us that the simpler it was, the better it would be from the standpoint of Ironsides and Kalgore, since the whole fraud—if it were such—lay in some ingenious concealment of the source itself.

From that moment, we came to a quick decision that satisfied Croydon, and yet was properly calculated to mislead Ironsides and Kalgore into what was to prove a false security. The committee decided that it would need twenty-four hours in which to study the subject. If at the end of that time it could not disprove the theories regarding the machine, the verdict would be in favor of the spirit motor.

All that the committee did in that twenty-four hours was make a single phone call to the right party. Then we adjourned until the next day.

We came to the laboratory the next afternoon to find Croydon there with Hathaway and the other investors, all ready to sign the necessary agreements with Ironsides. Croydon had brought along a certified check for one hundred thousand dollars to clinch a bargain on what he regarded as a million dollar invention. The others were writing out their personal checks for pro rata shares, since they were afraid that Croydon, now completely sold on the spirit motor, intended to monopolize it if he could.

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Kalgore was present, and I learned from Hathaway that the medium had staged a seance the night before, to which I was not invited, having allied myself with the committee. Ironsides had gone to the seance and Kalgore's spirit messages were answers to the inventor's questions regarding improvements on his motor.

The great minds of the higher plane had long been seeking a mortal genius capable of understanding cosmic geometry and mechanics. Ironsides was the answer to that want. From now on he would commune directly with the masters and benefit through the wisdom of the ages.

Hathaway was telling me this aside, and in all seriousness, while the spokesman for our investigation committee was reading a lengthy, but vague, report that brought Croydon's impatience to the breaking point. It was plain that the report was getting nowhere, and the secret partners in the motor hoax, Kalgore and Ironsides, were exchanging triumphant glances, not knowing what the committee could gain by hesitating.

Something else was stalling—the spirit motor. Its fanciful, corrugated globes that, presumably, picked up the power of the universe, were slackening their twirl. Big wheels, little cogs, spiral shafts, were all slowing uniformly.

Nobody was noticing the motor, except a few members of the committee, and when they nudged the spokesman, he skipped to the end of the report and read the final paragraph.

"While unwilling to accept or endorse the hypothesis of spirit power," the spokesman stated, "the committee

## SPRIT MOTORS

nevertheless concedes that the motor invented by Ironsides is a self-demonstrable device and *that should it be functioning when this report is finally submitted*, the committee will automatically recommend its purchase."

Croydon accepted the signed report and turned as if to order the shipment of his prize to his lavish office in the skyscraper he owned. But the spirit motor was a prize no longer! Its smooth, silent-moving parts were coming to their final stop. Lazily, it halted, while Kalgore and Ironsides stared as frozen as the machine itself.

The chairman of the investigation committee handed Croydon a letter from Consolidated Edison stating that, as verbally agreed by telephone, the electric power in this area would be temporarily turned off. The time set was the exact hour of this meeting. We had seen to it that Ironsides hadn't received a notification.

Having cracked the riddle of the motor's source of power, the question was how Ironsides had managed to pipe in the juice to his isolated machine. Rather than be brought to court on a swindle charge, the "inventor" revealed his ingenious trick.

No wiring was necessary to the spirit motor itself. It was simply geared to another motor, a smooth-running electric device, concealed in the platform beneath the stand that stood on the round glass posts.

One of those glass cylinders was hollow. Up through it ran a solid glass rod, which served as a vertical drive shaft, the lower end operated by the hidden electric motor, the upper end being topped by a flat cogwheel

## THE DEAD DO NOT TALK

of sufficient diameter to cover the hole in the glass plate through which the transparent shaft emerged.

This cog, in turn, was geared to the rest of the contrivance, which formed an intricate circuit of movable parts, the twirling wheels, four in all, that extended above the motor simply being side pockets, so to speak. They didn't power the motor. It powered them.

Not only is glass invisible when seen through glass; its motion cannot be detected when so observed. The one hollow post with its solid core looked exactly like the completely solid posts, even when the invisible drive shaft was in operation.

Psychic frauds of this type are akin to the old perpetual motion schemes of years ago. They have gained impetus because a man named Keeley, who flourished at the turn of the century, invented some perpetual motion contraptions that were outlawed, but never fully exposed. Later, Keeley was attributed with psychic powers by persons anxious to vindicate him, and spiritists readily took to the notion that Keeley had been a medium because it gave them a parallel case to that of Home, the medium who believers claim was never exposed.

So Ironsides was simply following an existing trend when he teamed with Kalgore to exploit the psychic motor. As for the random hint that gave the committee its clue to the actual source of power, it was this:

One member of the committee (a member of the Magicians' Guild) had once been asked to explain the riddle of a ghostly apartment, where every day the electric clock lost ten minutes when no one was at home,

## *SPIRIT MOTORS*

yet otherwise kept perfect time. Nothing else in the apartment was ever disturbed and the phenomenon was uncanny.

The investigator concealed himself and watched the clock, keeping constant tally with his watch. The only person who came into the place was a trusted maid who swore she had never touched that clock. The maid spent ten minutes using a vacuum cleaner, and the most convenient socket happened to be the one to which the clock's extension cord was plugged.

So the maid unplugged the clock, plugged in the vacuum cleaner, and later reversed the process. She just wasn't familiar with electric clocks, which were only coming into vogue at the time, hence she never realized that she was creating a mystery which the family mentioned in hushed tones rather than lose the services of a maid who might become skittish if she suspected an apartment was haunted.

Such trifling and sometimes ludicrous incidents in the career of a psychic investigator often become the clues to something far larger and highly important, as was proved in the case of the spirit motor.

## SPOOKS AND SPIRITS (LIQUID)

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**I**F YOU attend a spirit seance and take it seriously —as some people do—the best cure is to take a couple of drinks afterward. You'll need them.

The best proof is the case of Geoffrey Holland. He needed the drinks and didn't take them. Geoffrey is still around, but it's mostly luck that he and Jacqueline North didn't follow the same route that dozens of people have taken after leaving the seance room, twenty stories straight down.

New York is a bad place to attend a spook meeting. It's a city with too many tall buildings, and not enough rubber sidewalks.

It happened that Geoffrey Holland had broken off with his wife Marie. One reason was that Marie took spiritism too seriously. There were times when she even thought she was a medium and began seeing things that Geoffrey couldn't. So they separated.

## *SPOOKS AND SPIRITS (LIQUID)*

Now Geoffrey had a good job in a busy plant. He was earning a high salary as a consequence. He and Marie would have been really happy if she hadn't been won over to the spook craze. So Geoffrey thought, until he found himself all alone. Then he began to wonder whether Marie was right.

There was a way for Geoffrey to find out, and, at the same time, a way to win back his estranged wife. He'd go to a seance on his own, and treat the results fairly and seriously. Maybe Geoffrey could come around to Marie's way of thinking, and they would both be happy.

So Geoffrey went to a seance.

Now there were nice people at the seance, provided you didn't think they were nuts. They welcomed Geoffrey. He told them he worked all day, earned a good income, but that he had problems. They sympathized with Geoffrey and told him they were sure the medium would give him a helpful message.

The medium's name was Madame Casaba, and she could always be helpful if she had enough information with which to work. Finding that Geoffrey was worried and worked in a one-time war plant, she put the two together very nicely.

Madame Casaba had the spirits tell her what bothered Geoffrey. He was somewhat psychic or he wouldn't have come to the seance. The gift of prophecy was his, in a slight way, but sufficient to tell his inner self that within the next two days something was going to happen to somebody in his plant.

Since it was the sort of plant where something did happen to somebody every other day, Madame Ca-

## THE DEAD DO NOT TALK

saba wasn't taking much of a chance with her haphazard guess. However, she added, Geoffrey would be taking a terrible chance if he went to work during the next two days. He wouldn't want to be there when a tragedy occurred. Perhaps the person that the spirits meant was Geoffrey Holland himself! They could tell him, if he asked, but unfortunately, the spirits had used up their yardage of explanations for tonight, and wouldn't be back for a week. So the best plan was for Geoffrey to play safe and not go to the plant for two days.

When the seance ended, Geoffrey's new friends and fellow dupes expected him to be quite happy, but he wasn't. He didn't say why, but the reason was that he really wanted to go to work, make more money, and make up with Marie. But if he threw over the advice of an authenticated medium, what would Marie think? Geoffrey didn't know.

Everybody else knew what to do about Geoffrey. They were going to have a party, so they invited him along. They went to a suite in the Hotel Armistead, up about the twentieth floor, and invited Geoffrey to have a drink.

But Geoffrey Holland didn't want a drink.

Neither did Jacqueline North, another member of the party.

They began comparing notes, Geoffrey and Jacqueline, because Jacqueline had been to see Madame Casaba often. If it hadn't been for Geoffrey's taking up so much of Madame Casaba's time tonight, Jacqueline would have received a message, maybe—possibly from her dead sister, Louise.



## *SPOOKS AND SPIRITS (LIQUID)*

For a long while, Jacqueline insisted, Louise had been haunting her, because Madame Casaba said so. But Louise was earthbound, or fogbound, or whatever it was that kept people on this plane, and simply couldn't "come through." Meanwhile, she'd been haunting Jacqueline so heavily that about the only thing Jacqueline could do was go over to the other side—but she hated to go alone.

That gave Geoffrey an idea. Since somebody at the plant was scheduled for a trip to the "better world," maybe Geoffrey ought to be big-hearted and head there himself. He'd be good company for Jacqueline, and when he reached the spirit world, he could start haunting his wife Marie, just the way that Louise was haunting her sister, Jacqueline.

Being the only sober members of the party, Jeff and Jackie, as everybody now was calling them, decided to take the window route together. They were halfway out on the twentieth story ledge with all the drunks encouraging the idea as something that would please the spirits, when Jackie shrieked: "Louise, here I come!"

That made Geoffrey pause. At least he should add: "Marie, here I go." But Marie wasn't in the spirit world, so Jeff told Jackie to wait while he phoned Marie and gave her the news that he was going somewhere that she could join him whenever she wanted.

That phone call home to Marie was as genuine sounding as a doctor's pronouncement of death. Marie quickly told Jeff to wait and to hold Jackie back, too, because she wanted to rush over and join both in the suicide leap. But Marie didn't actually mean it, and the wild ride in a cab to the Hotel Armistead was

## THE DEAD DO NOT TALK

enough to curb her early hysteria. When she reached the hotel suite and found Jeff and Jackie waiting on the ledge, Marie had plenty of arguments in favor of their prolonging their lives upon this plane.

It took one hour and a half for Marie to win her point against the urgings of the half-drunk crowd who wanted to see the predictions of Madame Casaba fulfilled. At last, Jeff and Jackie didn't jump.

If this story had come from a local newspaper, spiritists would roundly and loudly deny it. But it didn't come from a newspaper! It came here straight from the pages of a little trade sheet that spiritists publish for circulation among themselves! The names have been fictionized, and the situation dramatized, but otherwise the facts are as stated. And now I suppose my name will be dropped from the circulation lists!

Why did such a spiritist paper publish the story at all?

Because Madame Casaba had to be vindicated as a medium. She'd been wrong about the plant, but right about her prophecy of death, because two days later, Madame Casaba was in the subway and saw a man fall off the platform and get killed by an arriving train.

As for Marie's hour and a half of persuasive argument, that went to prove that she was a medium in her own right, since she must have been under spirit control to convince Jeff and Jackie that they shouldn't jump.

It would have been just the same if Jeff and Jackie *had* jumped!

## WORKING A HOSTILE TOWN

THIS is a good place to break away from concrete "big city" case histories, and give the reader an insight into a "spook-crook" away from his or her home base. While writing this book, I felt there was one field which I had not covered well, and while getting a complete picture of it presented some difficulties, I decided to get a former medium to "open up," in her own slang or argot, about "working hostile towns."

This is a difficult thing to do, for mediums will stubbornly insist that their phenomena are genuine in the face of the most convincing evidence to the contrary. One dowdy old woman, when "grabbed" in a dark seance, and held until the lights were turned on, was found to be wrapped in gauze which had been impregnated by luminous paint. She affirmed that the gauze was an "apport"\* brought into the seance room by a

\* See Chapter XI.

## *THE DEAD DO NOT TALK*

mischievous spirit from a theatrical costumer's shop across the street!

The humor of this incident is somewhat tempered by the fact that sincere believers who were present immediately rose to the medium's defense and accepted the ridiculous alibi in good faith.

There was one former medium, however, whom I had never met, but with whom I corresponded. She had told me a number of interesting things about mediumship, a subject to which she never referred as anything else than "the racket." I wrote her, giving her a list of questions I felt the average reader would like answered. Here is the answer I received:

You want to know how a spook worker operates in a hostile town. Well, I'm the one who can tell you because I made a specialty of towns that other workers figured were too tough to invade. And I did it for years and never stepped on the flypaper once. I claim there was no such thing as a closed town—that is, closed to me.

It took me about eleven or twelve years to learn all the angles of the racket. I started when I was sixteen, as assistant to an old buzzard who could hardly read and write, but who was one of the "strongest" workers I ever saw. I'll tell you about him later. I almost married him, too—but that's another story.

To begin with, if you look up the law on fortune telling, you'll find that what the police object to is not mystical stuff, but "pretending to foretell the future." You can start any kind of spook church you want, and if you don't let them catch you foretelling the future, or knocking off the customers with stock sale dodges and such, there's nothing they can do to you.

## WORKING A HOSTILE TOWN

Cops operate on complaints, and unless somebody puts in a complaint to the effect that some medium or reader has taken him, the shamuses are not likely to close your place unless maybe one comes in with his hand out for a little donation on his own hook. And I've even been able to fluff them out, believe it or not.

One can work as a "scientific life reader," "character analyst," "handwriting analyst," "consulting psychologist," "Orientalist," or any other kind of an *-ist* as long as she keeps away from the words "psychic," "crystal," "seer," and so on.

I know one high-class worker, a girl young enough to be my daughter, who has an apartment in the same building with a police chief. He figures she's a doc of some kind. Her shingle says "consultant and psychologist." Well, that girl is just as much a fortune teller as any mitt reader in a carnival on Coney Island. Only she has built up a money-bags business with plenty of front.

Let's say I want to start business in Jonesville, and it is a closed town where the palm readers and mediums have been run out recently. And let's make it real tough—let's suppose that I'm broke and working solo. I can't talk or write good English, so I can't go to a Y.W.C.A.—or can I?

First thing I do is, I look around for a rooming house where the one who keeps it is a believer or just a chump. You may have to spend a couple of days visiting rooming houses, but you can find one if you keep plugging. All right, you work yourself into being trusted for the first week's rent, and you can even be fed in the bargain, depending on how strong you play it and how you go over.

Next you find a hole-in-the-wall job printer and get yourself a batch of cards made something like this:

## THE DEAD DO NOT TALK

REV. ANN LEVETI

Consultant

Advisor

Vocational Counsellor

MEMBER, SPIRIT CHURCH

She has helped thousands find their way from darkness into light. She can help you. Telephone\_\_\_\_\_

Next, you canvass the beauty parlors, particularly the ones in the proper sections of town, where you'll get a better reception. If the boss is a man and looks grouchy, you ask him the time and keep going. If it's a woman, you take her to one side and start to talk. You turn on the mystery, and you may get her as your first customer. It depends on how good you are at the quick size-up of the "mark" and how convincing a talker you are. Anyhow, you leave her a stack of cards to give to her customers.

Now, mind you, I'm still assuming that you're broke. With a little dough, you have blotters printed with a much longer message, and you don't have much trouble spotting these around in the beauty parlors.

The phone number is the rooming house. You go home and wait and I'll guarantee you won't wait more than a day before just a few hundred cards will bring you a few customers. Satisfy them and you get more and more.

And I'm not talking out of my hat, either. I did it just this way once, starting with a five dollar bill, just to see if I could do it. That town that was labelled "hostile," proved so good that I stayed there three years. And in all that time, I never used any advertising except word-of-mouth and a few circular letters.

The way you work the circular letters is this: You don't want to send them through the mail if you can help it, be-

## WORKING A HOSTILE TOWN

cause in the event of a complaint, this may bring in the Federal men. And you don't want to stuff them in mail boxes. What you do is slide them under doors early in the morning.

Pick the obituary column of the local paper, make a list of all the people who have kicked off, and then write to those addresses. Mind you, you don't simply leave one letter. They can get you on that, but if you cover the whole apartment house, or whole block, if it's a private residence, it looks like a general circularization. It doesn't look like you're hearse chasing. Naturally, when you work this dodge, your sales letter bears down on the spirit angle without actually coming out and saying so. You concentrate on "troubles," "heartaches," and so forth.

If the town is not a hundred per cent hostile, you use the classified ad columns in the paper. They're in the section where people look when they're hunting a job, looking for a lost relative, etc. Or you can take small one-column display ads on the society pages. Never more than an inch-and-a-half, and never too strong, unless it's an "open" town, and towns like that are full of competition.

Another good spot for advertising in a closed town is the local theater program. You can get away with stronger copy there than any place else and the rates are pretty low.

So far, I've only gone into where you get your customers from. Once you've landed one, you protect yourself by means of the receipt. I don't know if you've ever seen a medium's receipt, but I guess you have. It's a blank which looks like an ordinary receipt only at the top in fine print it says something like this:

I hereby make application to Rev.\_\_\_\_\_ for a psychological character reading with the full understanding that she makes no claim whatever to psychic or

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supernormal powers and does not pretend to tell the future by any system or method, and is not a fortune teller. I further agree to accept my reading as psychological truth, and my payment of the consultation fee is to constitute evidence of its value.

Signed.....

Not one in twenty sees anything phony about the fact that while they are paying the money, you keep the receipt. You are talking to them while they sign it, and that's that.

Naturally, you never let in more than one person at a time to your inner sanctum sanctorum, and if the customer turns out to be a woman cop, it's her word in court against yours, even-Stephen. If you do get arrested, just ask for a jury trial. You then don't take the risk of coming up before a judge who is dead against the racket.

When your case comes up, you take the stand yourself, and sit there and talk to the jury, when the time comes, looking at it when your lawyer asks the right questions.

You stand a good chance of beating the rap, doing this, depending, of course, on your choice of a mouthpiece, and what he has done to soften them up for you before you get on the stand.

In any (except the very toughest towns) you can feed customers into your office in lots of ways. You can lecture on spiritualism, psychology, or any other -ology—you hire a hall or talk some believer into lending you her house, if it's big enough, and from a public lecture and demonstration of occult powers you can get enough people into your business office to cover the cost of the hall a hundred times over, if you don't over-reach yourself and rent a ball park.

There's another angle I forgot to mention. Once you've



## WORKING A HOSTILE TOWN

got them coming, you give each customer half a dozen "come back" cards. These carry a stronger message and offer a reading to the bearer at a cut rate. They'll come back to you, too, if you've sold the first client solid.

Let's suppose that you've graduated from working the racket in your rooming house, and have set up a regular office. The best place is on the second floor over a store in a business neighborhood, neither too high-toned, nor too run-down. You have your name—or the name you are using in this town—lettered on the street door in small type, and under it you just say, "consultant."

Upstairs you should have two rooms. The larger has maybe a dozen straight-backed hard-seat chairs for the customers to wait on. If the chairs are uncomfortable, so much the better—the more nervous the mark is, the easier she is to take. I keep saying "she" all the time, because the majority of your business in the racket is women. But the men are just as big chumps when they get as far as the waiting room.

In the center of the room is a wicker table loaded with magazines of astrology, popular psychology, self-help digests, and that kind of thing.

In the inner, or reading room, you have a small wicker table and two chairs with wicker arms and upholstered seats. When they get into your room and you start analyzing their troubles, you want them to feel a little more comfortable. They attribute it to your soothing powers. Actually, a lot of it is just the change from a hard seat to a soft one. The wicker furniture has two angles—if you have to leave town quickly, it is cheap and not much of a loss.

Also, it doesn't give a writing surface—you can go ahead with the old carbon paper under the magazine cover to get the chump's questions or use any other impression dodge—

## THE DEAD DO NOT TALK

they've got to use it because the wicker furniture can't be used as a surface. As you can see, the people in this racket have doped out all the angles a long time ago.

I could write a book on this subject, myself. Another place where you can advertise safely is in the spook papers—the ones devoted to spiritualism. They go all over the country and the rates are pretty fair. There you can run a good-sized ad with your picture, if that wouldn't be a handicap to you when the cops finally catch up. The return from the spook papers is slow, but it's steady if you stay put in one town for a year or so.

Once you get set with an office, you have a lot of customers, all ready to believe that they're psychic themselves. They all want to become mediums or healers or psychics of some sort. You can get a lot of cash out of development classes, or even sell mimeographed "lessons" (at several dollars a copy) on how to crystal gaze, how to read minds, how to analyze their friends' character by the shape of their features, and so on and so on.

You buy these "courses" by the gross, all printed up from any one of a half dozen supply houses which advertise in trade papers. In the back of each "lesson" are ads for books on psychic subjects, spirit incense, candles and all kinds of hokum. This gives you repeat business.

I've sold small "crystal" balls—made of glass—for ten dollars apiece. They cost me \$1.75 wholesale, but that was without the blarney that went with the sale.

When you really start getting in the chips, you can branch out in a number of ways. In a strange town you sooner or later get around and mix with the folks who are interested in "extra-sensory-perception" and "psychic research." You get hold of one person with a loose tongue and you pump him, or her, for data on the others, and sell it back to them as "tests."

If one has a husband, wife, girl friend, brother, or any-

## WORKING A HOSTILE TOWN

body else to be trusted, you can really go to town. They act as spotters for you, steer "marks" ("easy marks" to you) into your office and do a lot of the running around for you. But you've got to have somebody you can trust.

There's mighty few spook workers that will trust each other. By and large, they're as ratty a bunch of hustlers as you will find; will rat on each other whenever one seems to be getting more business than another.

(Here I have omitted several paragraphs of rather heated remarks by the writer of the letter).

Sorry to fly off the handle, but to get back to various angles of the racket, here's one dodge they used to use as an opener. It's as old as the hills, but it's still being used by the cheaper workers who have an uneducated clientele. The mark comes in and by the look on his face, you know he's worried. You start talking about an "evil influence" surrounding him which occasions delays, disappointments and anxieties.

"My dear friend, let me make a scientific test. It will not cost you a red cent, I just want to be sure. Will you kindly pull a hair from your head? You know that evil forces can be detected, even in so minute an object as a person's hair. Thank you. I'll wrap it up in this slip of paper and now we set it on fire. Ah! Look—evil, great, curling masses of it! How it twists and writhes as the cleansing flame consumes it!" And so on and so on.

In the paper you slip a "serpent's egg" and when the fire touches it, it uncoils in a wriggling, snake-like ash. It's old, but it still works—in some spots, and with some chumps. You can buy a "serpent's egg" at any novelty supply store most anywhere.

I got that one from the old "doc" who first broke me into the racket. He was a big, white-haired old fraud, with a

## *THE DEAD DO NOT TALK*

rumbling voice, and a very impressive manner, even if he did murder the English language. Here's another gag he used to work. They call it the lost husband dodge:

A woman comes to you and wants you to find her husband who has decamped, usually with another woman. If the client is well fixed and broken up enough to be a push-over for this line you really can make money! You keep her coming back and back, handing her a line and taking her money until you sense that she's ready to quit and then you have the spirits pull out of the air an address in a far distant city. You tell her to write to her husband there, and, in the meantime, you will use your powers to work a change in him, even at this distance, and make him see the error of his ways.

Well, she writes and she gets her letter back with a nice little note from some lady who keeps a rooming house, saying that the guy has just moved. The note lets slip a couple of things which identify the husband without a shadow of a doubt. Back comes the client to your "Oriental Science Parlor" for another shot of advice. You stall her some more—as much as the traffic will bear—until she shows signs of quitting again, and then you fish up another address and the letter she writes comes back marked "moved."

You keep this up until you have her really hooked and then you assure her that the third time will do the trick. Already you've proved that you can locate the guy. Only what she doesn't know is that these addresses are friends of yours who have been wised up by you ahead of time. They are the ones who send the letters back. The third time you really "take" the customer for everything she has. That's the time for you to move to a new town because the letter never comes back at all. She comes to you and you point out that the husband must have received it and doesn't want to answer and all your powers can't persuade

## WORKING A HOSTILE TOWN

him. Most cases she will think this over for a while and write again—only the third address is also a friend of yours who sends you back the letters so you know what she wrote the husband.

You go on from there. But at this point it is a good thing to change your town. Sometimes the woman runs for the law or tells the whole thing to a family friend, minister, priest or so forth. That's when the wicker furniture gets left for the landlord to dispose of as he chooses.

The buried treasure gag is another one. You buy an old run-down, played-out farm near town, and on it you bury an old teapot containing some junky old jewelry and a few coins. You get a chump who is all set up to find a buried treasure and you "locate" it for him by your wonderful powers. In the dead of night you take him out there and "find" the teapot and dig it up. This is just the convincer.

For while you are getting away, out comes the "farmer" (really a pal of yours who is in on the dodge) and lets go with his shotgun. Well, the long and short of it is that you build up the chump to buy the farm to get the "main treasure." You simply sell him the place at twice what it's worth and scam, taking the "irate farmer" with you and leaving the victim with the property.

I know a bunch of spook workers who sold the same farm to five different people at the same time and then ran away, only one of them got sore on the split, and turned copper so the whole crowd were sent over.

There's one thing you've got to remember about the racket: there's a lot of psychic investigation business and people making experiments and writing papers on "phenomena." But the boys and girls who really dish it out don't take it seriously. To them it is just a racket. I ought to know. I was in it long enough.

I don't care now about everybody knowing what it took

### *THE DEAD DO NOT TALK*

me so many years to find out. I'm through with the racket for good. I hope your new book goes over big and helps to wise up a few people. I got sick of the racket towards the end, and sick of all the other hustlers in it. I'd like to see them all sent over.

I would have answered your letter before, only I got into a little fracas a while back and the warden suspended privileges on me for two months, including letters. And this was too big a wad to kite out.

In publishing this letter, I do so with the full permission of its author. I think it speaks for itself, particularly its eloquent last paragraph.

## THE SPIRIT POST OFFICE

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**W**E'VE seen from the last chapter that there are dozens of ways to get started in the spook business, even in a "hostile town," but here is the first explanation in print of one of the most thriving spook rackets that the war years introduced, the spirit post offices. This scheme led all other in volume business—while it lasted. Unfortunately for the medium who used this lucrative system to tell people their futures, he was too busy to consult the spirits regarding his own.

The ethereal postal service somehow crossed routes with the corporeal United States Post Office and Spookland's postmaster general was advised to close up shop. Since he is still answering messages, but only those written by visitors to his seance room, we shall refer to him only as Dr. Query, rather than encourage curious readers to attend his meetings, which have now become very drab indeed.

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For Dr. Query has eliminated all the picturesque from his endeavors rather than be identified with the hocus-pocus that he used to stimulate the heavy delivery of mail. Furthermore the complaints in the past have made him suspicious of skeptics and whenever they invade his circle, the readings they receive are sparse.

Don't think that Dr. Query originated the spirit post office. All he did was simplify it and speed its operation through a very ingenious system. The racket proper—or improper—had its inception as early as the Gay Nineties and was a logical service instituted by the traveling mediums of that period.

Believers always sighed when their favorite medium left town, so what was more natural than for them to write him, enclosing a fee for him to consult the spirits and forward the replies to the believers? That was the way it started, but the mail-order mediums began to be annoyed when believers wanted them to answer questions for skeptical friends.

The skeptics always insisted upon sealing their envelopes very tightly, often with sealing-wax stamped with a signet, and in some cases they actually sewed the questions inside the envelope. The spirits having "see-all know-all" powers, were forced to answer these questions along with the loose ones, otherwise the medium's reputation would suffer.

This caused the medium hours of trouble steaming open envelopes, making bread-crumbs impressions of seals, and carefully rethreading envelopes through the needle holes from which he cut the original threads. At a few dollars each, the messages weren't worth the



## *THE SPIRIT POST OFFICE*

bother, so the business faded and was practically forgotten until Dr. Query came along.

Here was the great idea, which must have been Query's own, because if the spirits had devised it, they would have told it to other mediums long before:

Why not treat the messages that came by mail in exactly the same fashion as those brought to the seance room, proving the authenticity of the answers by having the spirits produce them in the presence of human witnesses.

There are two phases to the "question and answer" business: one, the learning of the questions; the other, the giving of the answers. Occasionally, both of these are done in mystical fashion, but one phase is sufficient to prove that spirits are involved.

For instance, a medium who calls himself a "psychometrizer" will hold envelopes to his forehead and then give an answer verbally, the mystery to his "client" being how he discovered the contents of the envelope, hence, reading the message (or knowing the answer) meant a spirit relationship.

Conversely, a slate medium may let people state questions verbally and then have the spirits produce it in writing on a slate, the manifestation being the mystery.

The latter type of phenomenon appealed to Dr. Query, but with an eye to wholesale business, he preferred to have the spirits forego the old style slate writing and use another form of pneumatography, styled "independent writing."

In introducing this to his clients, Dr. Query had them ask questions, then he wrote their initials on the backs

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of blank cards and laid these upon a slate. Another slate was placed on top, to produce total darkness between the pair, "like a miniature spirit cabinet," he told the victims.

When the slates were taken apart, the cards were given back to his various clients, and on the underside of each card was found an answer to the question, unquestionably written in pencil by a "spirit hand!"

Of course, with his regular clients, Query stepped up the procedure by letting them write the questions and fold the paper; but he was able to learn what was written by means of one of the usual switches the fakers use.

The answers he gave were the result of a switch, too. All Dr. Query needed was a pair of "spirit slates" of the old-fashioned flap variety. One of these slates has a loose flap, matching the slate. When the two slates are put together, the flap is allowed to fall to the other slate. As usually used, the surface originally hidden has a chalk message written on it, which is revealed after the flap drops to the second slate.

But Query's adaptation consisted of hiding several cards under the flap, all with initials and messages. The blank cards—that is, those marked with initials only, were placed on the flap slate. When the other slate was added, both were turned over and the flap, in falling, concealed the unwritten cards, those with the writing being found in their place.

At two dollars a customer, Dr. Query was doing a nice quick business. Five messages answered at one sitting meant a ten-dollar turnover, with each turnover of the slates!

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Query varied the system occasionally by switching a blank card for a written one before placing it between the slates and he used this as a special demonstration in which he put the card between two sheets of glass which could be turned over while the card was still between them, showing that the spirits had produced a message under the very eyes of the spectators.

This was done in the light, so, of course, it took the spirits longer to operate, spirits being shy creatures, and it meant only one message at a time. What it did was convince the sitters that the slates must be as innocent as the sheets of glass, so it bolstered the slate trick immensely.

And it did more.

Terming his glass method a "test," Query applied for an award offered by a scientific journal to anyone who could produce a spirit manifestation that could not be explained or duplicated by physical means.

Of course, Query failed to win the award, but, unfortunately, he wasn't exposed. The committee simply brushed off the claim by having a competent professional magician duplicate the stunt. Out of this, Dr. Query gained national publicity of the sort that satisfied believers and impressed halfway skeptics.

Having made his name known, Dr. Query immediately began advertising that he would answer questions that came to him by mail. All the customer had to do was write a letter containing the question and enclose two dollars with it. No sealed messages were necessary because the spirits would divulge the answers during the course of a regular seance, so the letters would have

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to be opened in order that witnesses could check them with the answers.

Those same witnesses, Query's own clients, would then authenticate the fact that the answers had been written on blank cards by the spirits, supplying affidavits to that effect, if required. Moreover, any mail-order customer who came to New York could attend one of the seances and satisfy himself that all letters were answered in the same scrupulous style as the questions that the sitters asked.

Now, of course, Dr. Query had to open the letters beforehand, just to make sure that each contained its two dollars, because the spirits disregarded money and might answer some letters free, which wouldn't be fair to the reliable customers who enclosed the proper fee.

There were plenty of reliable customers!

At every seance, Dr. Query had slates working in relays, piling up answer cards for the believers in the hinterlands, while the breathless sitters tallied and certified them, working in relays of their own, so that the medium would get to their questions before the meeting ended.

Such was the spirit post office and the idea took hold like chain letters. Dr. Query was swamped with increasing business during a few lush months and the very fact that his profits were still on the rise may be why he is still at large. Dr. Query hadn't found time to get around to working his sucker list for something bigger when complaints began to reach the post office inspectors.

These complaints, Query's adherents claimed, were the work of jealous mediums, probably small-town spook

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makers who resented seeing cash leave their community and protested because of misguided civic pride. The clamps closed suddenly on Dr. Query, but not too hard, because he was setting something of a precedent in violation of the postal laws, and hadn't yet run afoul of the more stringent regulations.

So Dr. Query closed the spirit post office, and today he just gives the usual brand of seances for cash customers who appear in person. His clients telephone him when they want appointments, because letters sometimes take a singularly long while to reach him. It may be that when Dr. Query receives too much mail, he sends it to the post office with apologies, asking them to open it and please return any money to anyone who sent it . . . or possibly a "fraud order" is about to be issued, so Dr. Query's mail is held up.

Whatever it is, the "doctor" no longer is postmaster of the spirit post office! 'Cause there isn't any such thing!

## ECTOPLASM IS BUNK!

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**W**HENEVER gullible scientists who attend a seance witness something that they can't explain, they invent a name for it, along with a theory regarding the thing itself. In so doing, they create new targets at which mediums can aim and score a bull's-eye.

For there is nothing that a smart medium likes better than a challenge, provided he is allowed full leeway. And a challenge based on a delusion is the best of all. The medium discovers what it was that the scientist misinterpreted and cooks up an improved method of repeating the effect. The result is always more than satisfactory.

Ectoplasm was one of those scientific "finds" that really boomed the psychic business. In simple terms, ectoplasm is "ghost stuff" and it came into existence immediately after a scientific investigator reported that he saw a parcel of it emanating from a medium.

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Now the curious fact is this: If spirits chose to herald themselves in ectoplasmic style, why didn't they furnish a few samples back in the Fox cottage where the first modern manifestations began? Why didn't they float a few clouds of ectoplasm out through the windows of the cabinet in which the Davenport boys were stalling their tests because somebody had tied them with the wrong kind of knot? Why couldn't the Davenport brothers, up in the town of Chittenden, produce their Indian controls under cover of some ectoplasmic smoke, instead of waiting for evenings when the scene was tempered by an abundance of standard Vermont mist?

The best answer is to consult Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism* which still rates as one of the finest samples of debunking ever written. It appeared more than fifty years after the spook business came into vogue and covers everything with a remarkable clarity and a thorough index. Yet in that index the word "ectoplasm" does not appear.

Think of it! The masters of the other plane required a half century which included such mediums as the famous Home, before they thought of releasing the great wherewithal which no Grade-A medium of today could do without.

Perhaps the prudery of the Victorian era had something to do with it. Mediums of that era wore a lot of clothes, in contrast to a modern lady, who frequently does a complete strip before producing ectoplasm in the center of a mixed circle.

Still, there was the time when the spirit of Katie King shed all her shining trappings in the presence

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of Captain Marryat's daughter, just to prove that the materialization was real; yet Katie King didn't spice the situation with a display of ectoplasm.

Of course, today, spiritists will claim that all through the years, there were certain luminous phenomena that are now known to have been "ectoplasmic manifestations." Those increased in quality as flashlights gradually superseded phosphorous matches and improved in exact ratio with the development of better brands of luminous paints. Canceling those against each other, we come to the simple fact that the term "ectoplasm" was coined by Professor Charles Richet, who identified it more or less with the phenomenon of materialization, but it was not until after the term had become well popularized that the production of ectoplasm as a manifestation in itself became a popular sport with mediums.

Technically, ectoplasm, or teleplasm, as it is sometimes called, is a mysterious protoplasmic substance that streams out of the bodies of mediums. This is manipulated by the spirits in order that they may materialize; hence, in a sense, they use it to shape themselves into a corporeal form. Thus a medium who would score five points for a materialization is credited with about three if he gets as far as the ectoplasmic stage, because, from then on, it's mostly up to the spirit.

This is a great boon to mediums because materializations are dangerous, particularly if there are skeptics around to grab the ghost, which used to be a very popular sport with my old friends, Harry Houdini, and his brother, Theo Hardeen. Ectoplasm is easier to produce, easier to dispose of, and, even if some of the stuff is left



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around, it can be of a brand that will puzzle the people who find it.

Here are some instances of ectoplasm.

A certain medium put on a seance for Harry Price, the famous British psychic researcher in London. A frothy substance emanated from the medium's mouth and drooled down over his chin. After the seance, Price defined the ectoplasm as the foam from a certain brand of tooth paste.

A committee of which I was a member, tested the same medium while he was living in New York. One of our investigators took a look into the medium's medicine cabinet before and after the seance. That brand of tooth paste wasn't there, but a bottle of peroxide had evaporated to the extent of a quarter inch when marked before the seance, and checked afterward.

When Margery, the Boston medium, was giving a seance for a group of college professors, she produced a long stretch of ribbony substance which was defined as ectoplasm. The professors were allowed to handle the substance very lightly, because the slightest strain on it might prove fatal to the medium.

One of the professors tied the ectoplasm into knots while Margery wasn't looking. When he announced the fact, the medium screamed, the ectoplasm vanished, and then the medium fainted. She wasn't able to give another seance for three days, just to prove that tying knots in ectoplasm could be very tough on mediums.

A clever young Italian medium announced that he would produce ectoplasm that could be photographed by flashlight. He did this successfully, and the stuff

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looked very uncanny, being vapory and almost transparent.

In one picture, however, the medium's hand showed through the curtains of the cabinet, holding the end of the ectoplasm. The "stuff" was identified as the medium's handkerchief which he had blurred by waving it rapidly just when he called for the flashlight shot.

An English medium named Jack Webber allowed infrared pictures to be taken during his seances, but always at stipulated moments. One of his manifestations was a floating trumpet, and a photograph taken at a bad angle revealed the trumpet floating at the end of a twisty extension.

This was defined as an ectoplasmic rod, which made the picture all the more remarkable. Close examination of the photograph indicated that this was simply Webber's premeditated excuse in case the extension device did show up in the picture. The ectoplasm bore a striking resemblance to the usual telescopic reaching rod used by fraudulent mediums, except that in this instance the reacher had been wound spirally with crepe paper to disguise its real construction.

Mediums can buy ectoplasm by the yard from their favorite supply houses. Of course, it comes in various qualities, and the higher priced types are worth it, particularly since they are due for tremendous improvements.

The value lies in the fact that the special brands are composed of all sorts of peculiar substances. Experimental types of synthetic rubber, or discarded plastics, are gobbled up by the supply houses. The more worth-

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less the stuff in commerce, the better it is for mediums. Such scientific failures are either unknown or forgotten, hence the substances are almost impossible to identify or trace.

There was a medium in Chicago who staged the slickest ectoplasmic trick that I have ever witnessed. He was a specialist in what is called the Excelsior Rope Tie, in which a medium's arms are crossed, each with a rope around its wrist, and the other ends of the ropes are brought behind the chair in which he is seated, where they are firmly tied.

Yet, given a few moments in a cabinet with the curtains closed, the medium can produce remarkable manifestations. The moment the curtains are whisked open, he is sitting there bound as securely as before. In fact, the ropes have to be cut from his wrists to release them.

The medium doesn't have to slip those ropes. All he does is slide down in his chair, bring his crossed arms over his head, turn around, and there he is, with a whole length of rope as slack for each arm. He can then ring bells, write on slates, rattle tambourines, blow a trumpet, and skid back around, under and into the ropes, while the objects are flying over the top of the cabinet, from a toss that the medium gives them.

This medium, who called himself Dr. Heart, had ectoplasm streaming from his mouth when the curtains were yanked. The ectoplasm was a coil of ribbon that was hidden in the seat of his chair. His stooges would close the curtains and he would pack away the ectoplasm while supposedly coming out of his trance. After that he was cut loose from the ropes.

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In company with two Chicago magicians and their wives, I attended one of Dr. Heart's seances. On the way, one of the magicians decided he knew how to fix the medium. We all knew the Excelsior Rope Tie had one definite weakness. Acting on that, we caught the medium off guard.

One man slipped a rope under the medium's arm, the other pulled this over the opposite arm so neatly that it wasn't until his arms went tight that Dr. Heart realized they were folded, instead of merely crossed. Nobody can slip that tie with folded arms, and, as a result, there were no manifestations until the stooges finally opened the curtains.

Then, to the amazement of the magicians, they saw that Doctor Heart had managed to produce the ectoplasm. His chin was lowered to his chest, and the ribbony stuff was flowing gradually from his mouth, across his vest and coat. This time the ectoplasm didn't disappear. He gasped for people to release him, and while they did, he let the ectoplasm fall to the floor.

One of the magicians managed to get the scissors used for cutting the rope and he snipped a chunk of ectoplasm before the doctor collected it. When we arrived back at our hotel, we tried to figure what the ectoplasm really was, and the stuff really baffled us until one man suddenly gained the same inspiration that had helped the medium in his pinch.

It was the padding from the doctor's necktie!

Many silk ties have a cotton padding to give them bulk. We remembered that the medium's tie had looked very bedraggled after the seance, but we attributed it

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to his struggle with the rope. Now, we realized, despite the ropes, he'd hunched the necktie up to his teeth, worked it to the bottom, and had literally bitten out the whole length of padding. Somewhat chewed and gradually released, the cotton stuff had made an excellent emergency ectoplasm. Ingenuity worthy of a better cause, we agreed.

Cracked down, these incidents give ectoplasm a humorous aspect, but such is far from the usual case. Ectoplasm has been used as the basis for some of the most unpardonable frauds perpetrated by the phoniest of mediums. Take, for instance, the medium whose real name wasn't Rajah Rhomboid, though it will do because it's as good as any other.

When he gave what he termed lectures to gatherings of believers, the "rajah" would hush the audience by calling for the spirit veil. An assistant would bring him a length of broad, whitish substance that, in the low light, had the filmy appearance of ectoplasm.

The rajah claimed that it *was* ectoplasm, but in a fully materialized state, being the veil of a spirit named Star Bright, who had dropped it in his cabinet just before she dematerialized back into the higher realm. He then offered his audience pieces of the veil as souvenirs of the occasion, and counted the raised hands before he began cutting the trophy into pieces of proper proportions. The price of each souvenir was one dollar, and one night I saw the rajah cut them very small, because he sold exactly one hundred and sixty-eight.

Which was one hundred sixty-seven dollars and ninety-two cents profit for Rajah Rhomboid, because,

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at that time, the price of white cheesecloth was twelve cents a yard, and the rajah only used a two foot remnant for the thing that he called a spirit veil.

It was pitiful, the way those people accepted the advice that went with each dollar purchase. They were told that as long as they kept their token of the spirit world, they would be happy, but they could expect ill luck the moment they lost it.

Lose it they would, unless they used it as an aid to their own psychic development. By clutching it and staring into space, they would eventually see the spirit of dear old Star Bright themselves. If they failed, they must try more often; otherwise the bit of ectoplasm would dematerialize as proof that they were unworthy.

Too much belief in ectoplasm is not conducive to a healthy state of mind, or pocket book, the way the rajah sells the stuff, except for the spook crook!

## APPORTS MAKE MONEY!

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**O**NE of the most productive phases of the spook racket is the apport business. Apports were mentioned in a previous chapter, but you should know more about them.

The term "productive" is quite suitable, because it also defines apports. They are physical objects which appear mysteriously in a seance room and stay there, in contrast to ghosts, spirit hands and other uncanny things that materialize and then evaporate.

A whole book could be written on apports alone. In fact, some books have. Many famous mediums, including Daniel Home, had a habit of introducing apports on occasion, but, in those days, the phenomenon was considered of a somewhat inferior sort.

Today, apports are popular among mediums because of the huge decline in the materialization field, which has come to be a very unsafe form of fakery. An apport

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is tangible, easy to produce, carries the element of surprise, and is difficult to expose.

Nevertheless, apports can be written off completely, because invariably they can be duplicated by natural means, and in many instances skeptics themselves have shown up the game by outshining mediums in the apport field.

Stanch believers in the psychic will cite as supernatural the amazing cases where mediums have caused live birds to arrive mysteriously in the darkness of the seance room. They will ask if that can be duplicated naturally. It can be matched, and more.

I advise such believers to go and watch Blackstone, the greatest magician of today, when he performs his vanishing bird cage. Not only the canary, but the cage itself disappears from Blackstone's fingertips in a twinkling. He duplicates this phenomenon, as the mediums would term it, by vanishing another cage, and its canary, while members of the audience are helping him hold the cage.

This is far more amazing than the mere production of objects, apport style. And where productions are concerned, Blackstone far exceeds the apport medium. He produces huge bowls of goldfish on a lighted stage, whereas the most I've ever seen an apport medium do along that line, was cause a few live goldfish to arrive squirming on a table in the center of a very dim room.

The thing that amazed the sitters when the medium produced his few pitiful squirming goldfish, was how the fish could be alive unless they had been apported



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directly from a goldfish bowl which happened to be in the next room. They argued that the seance had been going on for nearly half an hour before the apport occurred. The trick was simple: the medium filched the goldfish from the globe beforehand. He parked them in a small cardboard box, packed with damp cotton. In such surroundings, goldfish can live almost as conveniently as in their normal habitat.

Back in the early days of apports, two boys from Syracuse decided to show a group of believers just what could be accomplished in that line. They went out for a drive, found an odd looking chunk of stone so heavy that it took the two of them to lift it. Arriving at the medium's house, these skeptics placed their trophy in the broken cane seat of an old porch chair and laid a broad cushion over it. When the seance was about to start, and it was found that more chairs were needed, the skeptics obligingly brought in the porch chair, and one of them sat in it. Just when the medium was about to deliver a few trivial apports that he had hidden in his pockets, these chaps got to work.

In the darkness, they lifted their chunk of rock from its hiding place, and hoisted it above the table. One man thumbed the cork from a small bottle of phosphorus compound. There was a great flash of blinding light, and, with it, the perpetrators released their stone. Landing on the table, the stone not only smashed a slate that was lying there, but wrecked the table, also. When lights were put on and no hole was found in the ceiling, it was immediately claimed that the medium had apported a portion of a living meteor. Geologists were

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called upon to prove the origin of the stone, and the medium, recovered from his panic, was the proudest man in Syracuse until the perpetrators of the hoax explained exactly how they had produced it.

Today, apports have gone strictly modern and are fast becoming one of the most lucrative phases of the spook racket. There is a certain medium who plays the penthouse circuit and causes apports to appear right in the very hands of his astonished customers. The items that appear are precious gems and good luck stones supplied by the spirits. They are given to the clients as souvenirs of the occasion. He is very clever, this medium, as clever as he was when he performed as a third-rate magician thumbing drinks around speakeasies by doing bar tricks. His repertoire was too limited for him to become a table worker in the cafés and night clubs of today, so he grew a beard and became a medium instead.

His only trick is the old stunt of getting a person to close his hand tightly. To illustrate what he means by tight, he helps close the other's fist. That is when the medium's own hand drops in the object which is later to appear as an apport. The person's fist, having been clenched a few times, is unable to distinguish the presence of the object when it is placed there. Thus, upon opening his hand, the victim undergoes a complete surprise when he sees the gift from Spookland.

The so-called gems are merely synthetic products or colored quartz that the medium identifies under fancy names. His wonderful lucky stones are the cross shaped "Fairy Stones" or "Storalites" which run about a dollar

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a dozen. Occasionally, this medium apport a rare gem into the hands of some sitter. This is always the big event of the evening. It always happens under strictly test conditions, with a person who is sitting clear across the table from the medium. Of course, the recipient is a stooge who is constantly crossing the medium's circle. The stooge has it in his hand all the time and simply opens his fist after several other persons have received apports. The medium gets his rare stone back after the seance and everybody is happy. Simple though it sounds, this is one of the most convincing demonstrations that I have ever seen. The tendency is for everyone to forget the medium helped them close their hands. If they have any dim recollection of such, they are watching for it to happen again, but by that time the stooges are coming into the picture with a completely baffling effect. This performance furnishes what is known in the trade as a "fill" and I have known people to be tipped off to the process beforehand, yet still be baffled when they witness it.

The most modern thing in apports that I have seen was the demonstration of apports given by a certain Madame Ziska, who operated from a swank apartment in Greenwich Village. I had difficulty tracing Madame Ziska because she changed her address even more often than her name. Still, she had no trouble finding apartments during the shortage.

Madame Ziska had a perfect system. Her spirit controls suggested trips to Florida and other places for certain of her clients, and she obligingly offered to look out for people's apartments while they were away, rent

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free, of course. But since Madame Ziska had a way of finding lost objects, it was good to have her around.

The Village apartment belonged to a lady whom the controls had sent to Florida without predicting when she would return, and, probably by arrangement with Madame Ziska, they picked the very time when a transportation shortage threatened to materialize, since this was during the war period.

The shortage did materialize, though Ziska's controls didn't. They weren't that kind of spirits; they specialized in apports. Very oddly, these apports often belonged to people in whose apartments Ziska had stayed recently, because while there she psychometrized the place, discovered what was missing, and later had the spirits bring such things from wherever they might have been loaned, or stolen. Thus Ziska's clientele followed her along to each new place she went.

When I heard that Madame Ziska was producing apports under strictly test conditions, I didn't take it seriously, because mediums have their own idea of what test conditions are. But when I attended the Village seance, I was surprised both by the setup and the things that happened.

For a cabinet, Madame Ziska used a large Chinese screen. The screen was of the three-fold type, and it was set with the opening toward a corner of the room. Ziska allowed herself to be tied in a chair, then the screen was closed, with the apex of the triangle behind her.

In front of the broad center of the screen was a small table, and upon it stood a glass fruit vase, which resembled an old-fashioned flower basket, with a curved

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handle above it. Over this was placed a fairly large napkin that draped down in front of the vase.

The front of the screen was in sight beyond the draped vase, though the latter was quite close to the screen. However, the proportions of the vase were small in comparison to the screen's broad panel.

We sat and waited for manifestations to occur within the screen, and they did—the clapping of hands, the ringing of a bell that Ziska had taken with her. But all these simply prefaced the apports. Suddenly, there came a muffled clank from within the covered vase that fronted the screen.

Immediately, the vase was uncovered and, lying in it was a silver fountain pen, which was identified as the property of one of the persons present.

This happened in a lighted room, and though the illumination was not bright, the surface of the screen could be seen at all times throughout the convincing demonstration, proving that there could be no trick panel. Where the apport really came from was a riddle, though the thing savored of hocus-pocus more than the weird.

At the second seance I attended, an ornamental paper knife was apported into the draped vase. It, too, was identified as a missing object. It was reasonable to suppose that Ziska had filched these items from apartments where she had stayed, and was simply using this method to restore property that people thought was lost.

But how did she get the things through that screen?

By veering away from that question, I found its answer unexpectedly. Considering the missing objects,

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themselves, I began thinking of missing people—namely, persons who ought to be at Ziska's seances, but weren't. I learned of a certain Mrs. Borden who had let Ziska have her apartment, but was no longer one of the medium's clients.

It just struck me that Madame Ziska might have been caught thieving something from the Borden household, so I called on Mr. Borden at his office, and found that I had hit the reason why his wife no longer was friends with Ziska. Something had disappeared from the place, and when Mrs. Borden had inquired if Madame Ziska had taken it, the medium denounced her roundly and forbade her ever to come to another seance.

Only it wasn't a household object that was missing, but a small roll of a new plastic cloth belonging to Mr. Borden, who was connected with a company dealing in such experimental research. When Borden described the peculiar merits of this yet unmarketed material, I had the answer that I wanted. Ziska had never met Borden, so I took him to the next seance.

There Borden found his missing plastic cloth. It was now the covering of Ziska's fancy screen. The merit of the fabric was that its weave spread instead of ripping when anything was punched through it, then that same weave contracted back to shape.

Long, thin objects were the only kind that Ziska apported. She had them behind the screen, pushed them through the covering, and let them drop into the vase, which was draped over the front, but had an open space at the back, below the handle. Mr. Borden demonstrated this to our satisfaction, then ripped the screen apart and

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broke up Ziska's racket. She decamped, but soon found another apartment, and, I understand, she is continuing her seances, but that her controls no longer specialize in apports.

The apport business received an impetus just prior to World War II through the activities of a British medium, Jack Webber, who spiced his rope tie seances by delivering apports. Webber was ingenious in many ways. His seances took place in the dark, and before producing the apports, he levitated a table. Always the table was weighed beforehand to prove that it was too heavy for one person to hoist and toss around. Webber was also searched to prove he had no future apports on him.

That table was loaded with bronze statuettes and other heavy items, all neatly concealed. As soon as the lights were out, Webber removed the objects from the table and stowed them on his person. He was able to manipulate the lightened table and, for the pay-off, he produced the missing weights in the form of apports that further mystified the sitters.

Webber died very suddenly in 1940, and immediately mediums in America began bringing his spirit into their circles. This enabled them to revive all the old rope tying tricks, and when they couldn't slip back into their bonds, they would claim that Webber's spirit had obligingly released them.

I attended several of these Webber circles and found that apports were common in most of them. At once I recognized a fine, leather-bound edition of a book on occult India, which had a lock on it. The medium was

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accustomed to reading from this volume before the seance began.

However, I knew that the medium probably had two copies of that book, because I had just received a special price list from a supply house dealing in spook appliances. Two books were sold to customers, one ordinary, the other tricked so that it opened at the binding. The tricked book was hollow and served as an "apport carrier" for the medium.

The medium had read from the book in the parlor and then had taken it into the seance room, inviting us to enter a few moments later. I noticed a closed writing desk in the corner and decided that the medium might have stowed the original volume there. As soon as the lights were out, I slid over to the desk, found it unlocked, and discovered the book inside. There was still time to switch it for the fake job lying on the table beside the medium, and I managed the maneuver.

There were no apports that seance, and when the lights came on, the medium looked puzzled. For all I know, he may still be wondering how he happened to forget to switch the solid book for the apport carrier.

A certain medium, who runs an antique business as a front for his phonier trade of spook making, is regarded highly by other mediums because he can supply them with all sorts of curios that make unusual apports. He gets high prices for these, but sometimes he sells other antiques cheaply.

Why? Because they go to customers who also invite him to give seances at their homes. His bargain antiques are always cabinets and chests that have secret compart-



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ments which he has uncovered. He packs these with necessary items for a seance, gauze veils, reaching rods, rapping devices, and fails to tell the buyer about the secret drawer.

This medium accomplishes wonders when he goes to the homes of his antique customers. He seldom produces apports himself; too many would be connected with his antique business. Instead, he produces raps and winds up with materializations, much to the amazement of his clientele. What is more, he allows himself to be searched before and after his demonstration.

Lately, he has been buying back antiques, claiming that the market is rising and that the business is so good he has no time to give seances. The real answer is that other mediums caught on to his stunt and have been offering him high prices for those special antiques, hoping to plant some with their own customers. He is smart enough to know that such a game is through when it gets into too many hands, because one slip-up will be disastrous for all. So he is moving out of it, at a profit.

There was a South American medium named Señor Bardo who made a brief visit to New York. He was famous for apports and some of the proceedings of psychic research societies contain marvelous accounts of his sittings before a committee in Buenos Aires.

The señor brought with him some rare tropical birds that he claimed to have produced or materialized during his test seances. When I saw him give a seance in his hotel room, the place was hung with cages containing the living evidence of his reputed powers. Several apports, mostly in the form of unusual tropical flowers,

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arrived during Bardo's seance, but only while the room was completely dark.

This was the only seance that I attended, because Señor Bardo left very soon for South America, but after his departure I learned that he had sold the birds to a bird fancier at a high price. I went to see the purchaser and found that he had not yet junked the old cages. I looked them over and discovered that they were double-bottomed, with the lower portion neatly rigged to drop open, deliver its contents, and spring silently back into place.

That explained the apports. All Bardo had to do was release one hand while a committee thought it was controlling him, and reach for the bottom of the bird cage. It may also explain how a large crop of smuggled jewels, later traced to South America, appeared on the market soon after Bardo's visit. Having met Bardo, I doubt that he could have been the sort to bring in those cages with the double bottoms empty, provided he felt reasonably sure of outwitting the customs officers.

The reason for the present popularity of apports, outside of the fact that they are safe because they leave no direct evidence of fraud, is the fact that they are geared so closely to the postwar spook business. Already, odd items are landing in seance rooms that are in some way identified with war dead whose relatives happen to be present.

This was the same heartless fraud that was perpetrated after World War I. Searching back through the annals of that period, we find that many notable persons—among them, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—were converted

## *APPORTS MAKE MONEY!*

to the cause of spiritualism through so-called evidence denoting the survival of their sons who died in battle.

Handwriting purporting to be last messages on earth, photographs of returned spirits, messages referring to personal matters—such were the common products of the seance room but apports were coming into favor, too, when the emphasis on the war heroes faded.

There was a simple reason why. Spiritualism in many of its phases, is a selfish creed. Some few believers are interested in their loved ones, but most of them are more concerned about themselves. As the craze leveled off after World War I, messages from the war dead became few and far between, but the canny mediums didn't forget that such was the stimulating factor.

The present boom in the spirit business is not just a repetition of the previous postwar experience. This one is beginning where the other left off. During the blitz days in London, messages were coming through from R.A.F. flyers as soon as they were reported shot down over the English Channel. Now the follow-up is under way and apports are being personalized. Spirits are bringing mementos from many obscure places where war heroes perished.

Some of these spirit gifts are being faked, others are actual war souvenirs diverted to a gross misuse. People who cherish the few effects left by a hero missing in action are naturally prone to accept any new memento which they are assured belonged to the lost one.

The fraudulent mediums are gathering all such things that they can find, making roundabout inquiries to learn facts from servicemen who were friends of those

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who died, and, if possible, to falsely acquire something that actually belonged to a lost fighter. Watch the psychic journals and in the months to come, you will read of remarkable apports of this nature.

Why not now?

Because this heinous business is still on the build. Trance messages, rappings, and the like, are sufficient to convince certain people that they are in contact with the spirit world. The spook makers are waiting for war bonds to be cashed, holding off until they have found which of their clients are both steady and wealthy customers before they begin to produce the more tangible evidence, which they are still working to accumulate.

The more that can be done to debunk the apport racket, the better, for the fakers are counting upon it heavily to aid the swindles of tomorrow.

## HOW TO TRAP MEDIUMS

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**T**HE greatest hue and cry raised by the champions of psychic phenomena is against the "medium baiter," as they term any skeptic who actively endeavors to prove his claim that the manifestations of the seance room are fraudulent.

Anyone from a heckler at a spiritistic lecture, to a ghost grabber who invades a dark seance room, comes under the head of a medium baiter, which allows a great deal of leeway. Since I have operated frequently between those two extremes, I suppose that I am a medium baiter, too.

So, for those who wish it, I shall herewith give advice from one medium baiter to another, citing various cases that illustrate the art, including some of my own experiences. But first, I shall submit the logic of the thing, in brief.

To anyone who has made an exhaustive study of the

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science of deception, as I have, the production of so-called psychic manifestations of a physical sort, such as slate messages, table rappings, materializations, and even such quasi-mental demonstrations as the reading of sealed messages, simply constitute a degraded or misused form of parlor magic or sleight of hand.

Fraud and deceit through skill are practiced by the expert professional gambler or the chronic pickpocket, as well as by lesser varieties of crooks or con men. If members of a respectable club gang up on a card cheat and strip him of a sleeve hold-out or a dice-switching belt, nobody ever accuses them of an ungentlemanly action. Indeed, in the better circles, it is considered quite the gentlemanly thing to do.

Similarly, any trap that snags a pickpocket red-handed is praised as a boon to society at large. Such rascals deserve such treatment. But imagine, if you can, such characters as crooked gamblers and pickpockets claiming that they were serving humanity and bringing hope and happiness to the very persons they sought to rob!

The gambler might plead that he was cheating for self-protection, the pickpocket that he was a victim of kleptomania. From exposed mediums we hear similar alibis. Some admit that they resorted to brief trickery, rather than disappoint the sitters at a time when psychic influences were low. Others concede that they may have dealt in unconscious fraud. To say that no sane listener would swallow such hogwash would seem a rudimentary deduction. But I cannot go that far, because I would be saying that no full-fledged believer in psychic phenomena is sane. Yet many such persons are quite sane.

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Nevertheless, practically all full-fledged believers accept the premise that a thoroughly discredited medium still may be genuine.

But why?

Simply because they are susceptible to the autohypnotic influence of the seance room, a thing to which the practiced medium is immune. They can't believe that the same darkness which holds them breathless and fearful, is serving as a cloak for a cool, calculating deceptionist working under conditions so much in his favor that the most surprising thing about the "miracles" of the seance room is that they are so often limited to mere raps, table jouncings, or the brush of passing hands.

As a so-called medium baiter, Houdini rated tops because he, of all people, recognized the great psychological gulf between the mind that stayed calm under stress, and the mass mentality which deludes itself through the stimulus of its own imagination. No one ever profited more thoroughly—yet honestly—from the creation of audience suspense than did Houdini.

He made the wonders of the seance room seem tame, did Houdini, when he allowed himself to be lowered, head downward, hanging from locked stocks that encased his ankles, into a glass-fronted, steel-barred cell filled with water. From the moment that a cabinet was lowered over the cell, the audience lived through a thousand deaths with the imprisoned Houdini, and when, three minutes later, he whipped open the front of the cabinet to arrive in sight, dripping wet, with the locked cell bulking behind him, people felt that the absolutely incredible had been accomplished.

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As proof of the fact that stout believers in psychic manifestations are susceptible to that very suspense factor, I quote from a book styled *Spirit Intercourse* by J. Hewat McKenzie, who describes his impression of Houdini's escape from the water torture cell as follows:

The last occasion on which the author, under strict test conditions, saw Houdini demonstrate his powers of dematerialization, was before thousands, upon the public stage of the Grand Theatre, Islington, London. . . .

While the author stood adjacent to the tank, during the dematerialization process, a great loss of physical energy was felt by him, such as is usually experienced by sitters in materializing seances, who have a good stock of vital energy, as in such phenomena a large amount of energy is required. . . .

Dematerialization is performed by methods similar in operation to those in which the psycho-plastic essence is drawn from the medium. . . . While in this state, Houdini was transferred from the stage to the retiring room behind, and there almost instantaneously materialized. . . .

Not only was Houdini's body dematerialized, but it was carried through the locked iron tank, thus demonstrating the passage of matter through matter. This startling manifestation of one of nature's profoundest miracles was probably regarded by most of the audience as a very clever trick.

That is *exactly* what it was, a very clever trick. I know, because I am familiar with the working method of the actual apparatus, which was destroyed after Houdini's death in accord with provisions in his will. Except for the inconvenience of being lowered head foremost, the Water Torture Escape was no more difficult to perform



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than Houdini's earlier escape from a padlocked milk can filled with water.

The Milk Can Escape was already the mutual property of Houdini and his brother, Hardeen, who continued to perform it publicly until a few weeks before his death at the age of sixty-nine. Only one other man ever demonstrated this escape from the authentic Houdini-Hardeen milk can. That man was myself.

My purpose in performing the Milk Can Escape, which I did on several occasions, was to discover my own reactions and analyze those of the audience. From my experience in aviation in the days when airplanes were literally flying crates, I more than fancied myself a cool head, which, indeed, I must have been to counteract the overwhelming sensation of engulfment that came when the locks were clamped outside the milk can.

I might not have made it, that first attempt, but for the knowledge that Jim Collins, Houdini's old assistant, was standing outside the cabinet, ready to invade the premises and chop a hole in the milk can with an ax to let the water out, if I didn't show within three minutes. That was the thing that sustained my nerve.

On subsequent occasions, when I performed the escape, I was able to study the audience reaction. On many faces I could see the evidence of the self-induced strain that the suspense had wrought. It wasn't just the amazement that grips the witness after viewing a rapid stage illusion, but a certain stupefaction that left the mind wide for any strange belief. I could feel that in the case of a showman like Houdini, people would have

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given him up for lost and would have accepted his reappearance almost as a return from the dead.

Nevertheless, there was no dematerialization in either Houdini's case, or my own, and I hold to this sentiment: If believers in the supernatural, like Mr. McKenzie, feel free to credit a stage magician with a power that he disclaims, instead of taking his word for the trickery he admits, certainly there should be no objection to the qualified magician visiting the seance room and denouncing the power which the medium pretends to possess, by seeking to expose the trickery which the magician knows, through his own experience, must be there.

At any rate, Houdini took that attitude, and I have regarded that as sufficient justification for others to do the same. Whatever frauds I uncover in the seance room, I shall make public, despite the objections of certain amateur magicians who, nowadays, seek to protect certain of their secrets, even after mediums have appropriated those methods for purposes of fraud.

It was Houdini's policy to expose every fake device of mediums, no matter what its origin, and he recognized full well that such mediums purposely filched the inventions of magicians as false passports to protection. Yet the very clique of magicians which today is covering for the mediums, goes through the sham of honoring Houdini's memory with annual magic shows.

If Houdini could return, I doubt that he would attend one of these performances. He would be too busy going around town finding and exposing the

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mediums who were privately working the same tricks that some of the magicians were doing publicly.

It is singular that this indifference to the public weal should have so corrupted the amateur members of the magicraft, considering that a generation ago, such a group staged the most startling exposé of the period when they unmasked the famous Italian medium, Eusapia Palladino.

Arrived in America after a remarkable success in Europe, Palladino was confounding skeptics and savants alike with her famous table levitation, when a secret committee of magicians resolved to find out just what made the table float. Attiring themselves in black, they crawled into the seance room unobserved and wriggled right beneath the table. There, they found out how the table lifted.

Palladino's footwork was responsible. She worked a toe beneath a table leg, then hoisted it upward. She had one hand planted flat on the table top, directly above that leg. Her hand and foot formed what could be styled a powerful clamp. To elevate the table further, she tilted her foot upward on her heel, thus getting the table several inches from the floor.

All this happened when Palladino's arms and knees were fully controlled by investigators, making it seemingly impossible for the levitation to occur by physical means until the magicians snaked to their goal and cracked the case of Spookdom's most notorious faker.

This discovery needed something else—a proof of that psychological factor which I have mentioned as what might be termed the “exaggeration prone.”

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Once proved, Palladino's fraud was checked against the reports of eyewitnesses who had believed her manifestations real. Not only had they overestimated the height of the table lift, but some maintained that Palladino had finished by causing the table to float independently, then fly across the room.

It was discovered that what she did was give the table a kick as she drew away her hand, and sank back with a convulsive spasm that allowed her foot to operate. People gained two impressions—one of a rise, the other of a lurch, both on the part of the table. In many instances these registered as separate items which the memory promptly disassociated, causing persons to suppose that the table had elevated, paused, then flown of its own accord.

Of course believers pointed to such testimony—all given before Palladino's exposure, and by persons who were completely duped—as proof that she did possess powers which had not been adequately explained by the visiting magicians. But the facts are that Palladino's methods, once discovered, were practiced by capable conjurors and tried on persons unfamiliar with those tricks. The testimony resulting from such reconstructions of Palladino's seances, brought the same exaggerated reports of a table suspended high in mid-air that leaped later of its own accord.

This is all akin to the self-delusion of the ouija board and the cavortings of tables in impromptu home circles. Table tilting, one of the earliest amusements wherein people duped themselves, is actually of the simplest origin. Varying pressure of the hands around the table,

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plus unconscious relaxation, causes a subconscious leverage that jounces the table one direction, until, after several ups and downs, its rebound causes it to start jumping the other direction.

Once under way, the table will behave quite madly, even chasing people from the circle, because, as others rise to stay with it, they unconsciously keep pushing it further on its way. They also make it spell out messages by subconsciously clamping down on it, a thing which can be proven by testing it purposely. Most people are able to rationalize these facts, once they are called to attention, but there is one phenomenon that has long puzzled such people.

In certain home circles, people have sworn that the jouncing table has, at times, actually lifted itself beneath those pressing hands, and has remained entirely clear of the floor, under conditions which precluded trickery because it was a known fact that there were no tricksters present.

This is attributable to that same hiatus or time lapse that accompanied Palladino's table kick, plus the thing that nullifies all home circle evidence, namely, the reliance on the testimony of incompetent witnesses. What happens is this: In the course of continuous tilting, certain tables have a tendency to gain a rotary motion in which they swing from one leg to the next, instead of in the usual teeter fashion.

The effect is surprising, even to the trained observer. He feels the table literally move upward beneath his hands, and gain the effect of a suspension. This goes all around the circle, and if one impressionable person

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either is late in exclaiming that the table is floating, or overestimates the duration of the phenomenon, his experience infringes, or overlaps into that of the others. Since they can bear witness to the same fact, they accept the false statement as reliable, and the result is an attested report of a table levitation.

It is better for a would-be investigator to rely solely upon his own impressions or those of some equally reliable person who is working in co-operation with him, and this brings me to the more important phase of psychic investigation, that of actually cracking down the processes of the seance room, dark or light.

Mere heckling or open dispute is a poor form of procedure because it simply discourages the very thing the investigator seeks, a display of manifestations. Houdini interrupted spook meetings on occasion, but only when there was no other course, as when he challenged the famous message reader, John Slater, to read the contents of Houdini's own envelope, with a certified check for ten thousand dollars waiting as an award for success. The medium's ignoring of this offer was at least a tacit confirmation of Houdini's claim that the thing could not be done.

As for ghost grabbing, Houdini practiced it, too, but only when he had the local authorities on hand to take charge of the evidence. It is the right procedure for putting an individual medium out of business or cracking the spook racket at a given time or place, but, unless it is followed through, it merely discourages future investigations, and makes it difficult for the ghost grabber to get into other seance rooms.

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I prefer a midway course that Houdini initiated, that of subtly tricking the medium so his fraud is self-exposed, in part or whole, and, best of all, when he can be left totally in the dark as to the identity of the sitter who snared him. This is even better than demanding seances under test conditions which the medium will either figure how to nullify, or will dodge by being out of form on that occasion.

Houdini's famous stunt of trapping a medium unaware was during trumpet seances. As soon as the lights were out, Houdini would go for the trumpet, which was standing in front of the medium, and smear it with some lampblack that he had handy in his pocket. He would then let the medium do all he wanted with that trumpet, floating it in the darkness, speaking from it in ghostly voices, and anything else. When the lights came on, the medium would become the laughing stock of the group, for his hands and face would be smudged with the blacking from the trumpet.

Of course, mediums have answers for such an outright exposure. They either attribute the face blacking to malignant spirits that accompanied skeptics to the seance, or they claim that the trumpet was floating and voiced by ectoplasmic rods emanating from the medium—that such rods, on retiring, brought back traces of the lampblack with them, and left it on the medium's person.

One clever English medium actually used trickery to prove this theory when a gullible investigator was foolish enough to accept it. The medium's body was openly smudged with a red powder at places where

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ectoplasm might emanate from the pores. During the seance, raps were heard upon the wall. When the lights were turned on, the spot on the wall was smudged with the red stuff.

The inference was that ectoplasm had extended through the medium's clothes and furnished the raps and this was recorded as a scientific fact. Actually, the medium had another supply of a red powder on a glove hidden beneath a chair cushion. The raps were furnished by the medium's hand, after it was slipped into the glove. When the glove was put away, only the traces of the red powder remained on the wall. The medium scored double by producing a new phenomenon and by preparing an alibi for any future exposure of the lamp-black type.

On the other side of the ledger, there are ways of using one medium's methods to discountenance another member of the fold. My best achievement in this direction was when I showed Prince Rajah a trick used by Professor Psycho, but in a proxy fashion, with a boomerang result.

Professor Psycho, as I prefer to call him, instead of using one of his numerous aliases, was a very clever message reader who used a billet switch. He would take a folded slip of paper, bearing a written question, deftly exchange it for a blank, and toss the latter into a small fish bowl.

Now the professor's problem was to hold attention on the phony slip, while he secretly opened the question paper beneath the table, and read what was on it. He held attention perfectly, because, while both his hands



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were still in sight, there was a puff of dazzling flame from the fish bowl, and while the startled customer was still rubbing his eyes, the professor had ample time to read the purloined question.

What Psycho had was a tiny bit of potassium inside the folded blank. As soon as the water soaked through the paper, which was almost immediately, the chemical reaction took place. The potassium brought hydrogen from the water so rapidly that the gas ignited, giving the professor his opportunity.

I remembered Psycho's trick and, in fact, rather admired it. The stunt occurred to me when I took some friends to see Prince Rajah, who was a message reader, too. Only the prince didn't use a switch. He would take a written slip that was folded twice, tear it into four pieces, and drop those fragments into an incense burner, watching them reduce to ashes.

In making the tear, Prince Rajah retained one portion of the torn slip, the quarter which happened to be the very center. This was the part that bore the message, because the prince always drew a circle on the paper and told a person to write his question within it.

When the prince leaned toward the burner, his hand stayed just behind it and his trained fingers opened that all-important message center. There was a light shining from a crystal ball, fitted with a bulb, and the prince gained all the benefit of it, during this neat operation. I say neat, because the opening of the quarter-slip with fingers and thumb must be handled loosely, yet without letting the slip get away from the grasp.

Now Prince Rajah did not use a bowl of water, and

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I am not in the habit of carrying potassium in my pockets, but we both had the equivalents. Using a slip of paper from a pocket pad, I wrote: "You are a fraud," and signed my initials, J. J. P. I showed this to my companions so they could identify it later.

When Prince Rajah came to my question, he tore the paper, swiped the center with his right fingers, and leaned forward, right hand behind the burner, while his left fluttered the other fragments into the incense burner. He was already opening the slip when he let those pieces flutter.

What the prince received was an unexpected answer to that question before he even knew its wording. A puff of flame burst from the incense burner, practically singeing the prince's whiskers, and, as he lurched away with a howl, another piece of paper fluttered from his half flung right hand. I picked it up and showed it to him, my initialed question, which my friends identified. As we said good-by to the prince, I dropped it in the incense burner, too, and there was a smaller flare of flame, like an echo of the former one.

That pad I carried consisted of sheets of flash paper, a specially treated type that photographers used before the days of flash bulbs, and which magicians have adopted for use in certain tricks, such as vanishing a coin from a folded piece of paper, the flash coming when the paper is touched with a cigarette, or even a burned match which has just been extinguished.

I did such tricks occasionally, and when Prince Rajah suggested that customers use their own pads or notebooks, if they had such, I took him at his word. The

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heat from the smoldering incense set off the flash paper as effectively as Psycho's potassium worked with water. There are two types of flash paper, slow and quick. Mine was the quick kind and it was little wonder that Prince Rajah lost his torn center in his excitement.

Many mediums use the "one ahead" system when doing sealed envelope readings. Old as the phony psychic game itself, this stunt is still good with a company of believers.

The medium collects envelopes containing messages. He takes one and holds it to his head, reading off a phony question which a stooge promptly identifies. Opening that envelope, the medium takes out the question which he has just answered, and checks it, laying it aside.

What he is doing is reading a bona fide question written by some stranger. He picks up the next envelope and answers the question just read. He continues thus right through the lot, ending with a marked envelope containing the dummy question which he first answered for the stooge.

My system to disconcert such fakers was to insert a blank sheet of vivid red paper in my envelope, instead of the white paper that the medium provided. It was fun waiting for the pay-off. After answering someone else's question, the medium would blandly open an envelope to take out the question and tally it. His face would go redder than the paper he found inside, when he realized that his game was stopped cold.

Some mediums would bluff it out, others would promptly call off proceedings. The question of challeng-

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ing the medium at that moment depended on the type and size of the audience. There was no use in trying to convince a sizable gathering of firm believers that they had been duped, but it was a good procedure with a smaller group.

However, I thought my surprise was tops among the ways and means to deal with message readers, until one night some other skeptic's gag broke up the message seance before mine had a chance. The medium had finished reading a message for a very earnest lady, and was opening the envelope to check her question for her, when the thing went off with a whirr, hit the medium in the nose, and came sailing out over the audience.

The skeptic had included an April Fool device in his envelope, one of those whizzers that wind up with rubber bands and zoom away the moment the enclosing paper is unfolded. Of course, it happened with the wrong message, giving away the "one ahead" stunt right in the middle of the medium's act.

There are many legitimate ways of gumming up a fake seance, all adaptable to the particular occasion. Mobility is the medium's chief requirement in many cases where he is bound in a cabinet, or has persons hold his hands. One good device is to attach a hook to the end of a spring tape measure and secretly fasten that hook to the medium. After the seance, you can measure off just how far the medium traveled away from where he was supposed to stay.

I attended a seance once where a ghost appeared and worked a much better stunt than trying to grab the spook. If I'd made a grab, I'd have been grabbed, be-

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cause the medium had a pair of husky stooges flanking me. Instead, I simply stepped on the edge of the ghost's trailing robe as it started to move away.

Next thing, the whole seance room was in confusion. Instead of vanishing into the cabinet, the ghost dropped away and flattened on the floor. Somebody turned on the lights, and we saw one of the sitters trying to stuff a lot of luminous cheesecloth underneath his coat. He'd simply been parading, ghost fashion, draped in the regalia that he had brought along. Of course, the medium disclaimed this confederate as a meddler who had purposely tried to frame him, and the stooge accepted the indictment.

One case of stepping on a trailing robe brought dividends in an instance which came to my attention. The ghost never did get away, and the whole reason was exposed when the lights came on. The ghost was the covering of a collapsible frame that hooked to a fish-line running down through an old-fashioned hot air register in the floor, which would have swallowed the whole contrivance, if an investigator hadn't broken the line by stepping on the hem of the ghostly costume.

Whenever I attend a slate writing seance, I always bring my own. Of course the medium won't use them, so there is no use telling him about them. I always keep them under my coat and let the medium use his slates. In many instances, the medium places his slates under a table and asks you to hold them there; or he may turn out the lights and place a slate in your hands. Other times, he asks that a slate or slates be examined, then placed in the cabinet.

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Any such opportunity enables me to exchange my slate or slates for the medium's, according to how many slates he uses. My slates already bear messages not too complimentary to the medium. Sometimes that message shows up as is, if the medium has made his switch before I make mine. Other times, two messages arrive, mine and the medium's. In those cases, he is using the method of writing with his toes on a slate laid beneath the table, or has released a hand from the bonds that hold him, and scrawls his message in the dark. Single or double, my unexpected message always brings a sudden end to the proceedings.

The best spook party that I ever helped break up was a materialization seance given by a Jersey clairvoyant who had only recently developed the psychic energy necessary for materializations. The catch was that only the medium saw the spirits, since they were visible to persons with clairvoyant faculties, no others.

Since this was a development class, there were others who claimed to see the spirits, too, and the medium, a lady of generous proportions named Madame Olga, was quite confident that in time those who took the entire course of lessons would be able to see the spirits also.

That time came sooner than Madame Olga anticipated. Hardly had she called upon the spirits to manifest themselves than they appeared in full-fledged form, three of them, almost surrounding her. Those spooks didn't have time to dematerialize, because Madame Olga beat them to it with a wild dive through a door in back of her.

We wanted to see ghosts, three of us who had come

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for our second lesson in development, so we'd brought our own. They were the kind called Instantaneous Ghosts, listed in a catalogue of a mail-order house at eight dollars and fifty cents each.

The catalog described them as treated with the best Ghost-Glo paint, easy to conceal and operate. It added that they were of unbreakable construction, and would start a riot at any ghost gathering.

They came up to all specifications, and the unbreakable feature proved its worth by saving us the cost of our investment. The ghosts were about the only things that weren't broken, when Madame Olga's steady pupils supported her flight with a general stampede.

A bull in a china shop is nothing to a ghost in a seance room when the spook arrives without the medium's invitation!

## HELEN VICTORIA DUNCAN

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**I**F THE death blow to fraudulent mediumship is ever to be struck, it is most likely to come now through a woman like Mrs. Helen Victoria Duncan. The believer in spiritualism is fantastically credulous, so taken in by the crudest phenomena that fraud may never be given its quietus.

You don't believe me? Perhaps you have never before heard of the operations of such people as cheating mediums. Listen to this account of Mrs. Duncan's progress and see what you think then.

A native of Scotland, Mrs. Duncan held seances in Dundee before 1929, when Dr. Montagu Rust, also of Dundee, brought her to London to give seances for the spiritualistic groups there. The doctor, among other followers of this woman, was much impressed by her manifestations. Her specialities were materializing ghosts, producing "teleplasm" and moving objects placed far beyond her normal reach.



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With this equipment of miracles, she stirred London. Even the public in general clamored for sittings with her at large fees—for the newspapers had given her a great deal of space and praise. Perhaps if you had been a citizen of London at this time and had been one of her group, you, too, might have been impressed, for in full light her materialized ghosts walked and talked with her clients, which might have meant you! They danced. They sang. Adult phantoms and ghosts of children—they were all mobile and all vociferous. At least this was the claim.

Mrs. Duncan, being a woman of tremendous bulk, found it easy to persuade her clients, without words, that she herself could never imitate such nimbleness as her spooks displayed. As for "Peggy," her little girl ghost, how could a large female like the medium act the part of that little image?

While producing teleplasm, Mrs. Duncan permitted pieces of the substance to be cut off by her customers. A soft white material, much like the boiled white of egg, it seemed to be spontaneously produced, since it exuded from nose or mouth or some other part of the body in great quantity. Sheets of the stuff covered her at times in a thin film through which one could see the outlines of her body.

So much on the rise was her fame as a person with genuine psychic gifts that in 1931, when she was tested both by the London Spiritualistic Alliance and Harry Price and his committee, and was, by both groups, pronounced a fraud—her believers put up a battle for her reputation, which was epic. In spite of the committee reports on evidence obtained, namely, that Mrs.

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Duncan's teleplasm was a mixture of paper, white of egg, and a few chemical substances messed up together, and her ghosts made of butter cheesecloth, held together with safety pins upon which were pasted paper doll cut-out countenances—her friends insisted that she was genuine. From the deluded believers one expected this. But, and this is why I say it is hopeless to expect an addict of spiritualistic phenomena to use reason—the chairman of the very group of spiritualists who found Mrs. Duncan guilty of trickery, published a statement which I give you here:

My personal opinion is that Mrs. Duncan probably has what we are accustomed to regard as genuine mediumistic faculties. . . . Her ego personality was apparently unaware of the performance of her secondary personality, and all that appeared as transparent fraud was due to the mischievous entity set free by the disintegration of her total personality under the dominant (perhaps hypnotic) influence of her husband."

This statement, I think, is an almost too magnificent piece of rationalization.

No use to carry you painstakingly through the various tests and dialogues between her examiners and Mrs. Duncan. One elementary, if slightly unusual fact, emerged from the mass of details. Mrs. Duncan could claim one talent—although a crude one. She was a "master" regurgitator. Whatever she swallowed, she could also "bring up." Her talent in this direction was no mean one, for the ghosts, complete with safety pins, were once in the depths of a most capacious stomach, simultaneously with odds and ends of ectoplasm, and

## HELEN VICTORIA DUNCAN

an occasional apport. How do I know? Simple, my dear Watson. Harry Price X-rayed Helen.

According to her husband, who finally decided to play "Truth or Consequences" with Harry Price, Helen had the habit of retiring about three hours before every major seance. During that time, he said she was accustomed to "losing her will." He, no doubt, meant to convey that during a lengthy and ethereal trance she absently-mindedly swallowed cheesecloth, gathered in strategic places by safety pins. But one could imagine that at this time, fully conscious and fully willful, the corporeal Helen arranged for more capacity in her stomach—and the garnishing thereof.

Following Mr. Duncan's statement, Miss Mary Ginlay—Helen's housemaid—signed one of her own. She said she had been suspicious for some time that the quantities of cheesecloth it was her unfortunate duty to wash, must have been close to Mrs. Duncan's stomach from the evidence of her senses alone. She also threw light upon what happened during the famous seance, also attended by Mr. Duncan, in which Mr. Price first proposed X-raying Mrs. Duncan. After the medium had dashed wildly from the seance room and had clung to the railings outside screaming hysterically against such goings on, Miss Ginlay said she met Mr. Duncan near his house, after the "show" was over. He then brought forth from the pocket of his coat some limp bundles of the familiar butter muslin and had passed them to Miss Ginlay for laundering, saying that during Mrs. Duncan's performance on the iron railings she had given them to him. Here, perhaps, we should

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give Helen a hand for seeing into the future. However, not too far—for, later, Mr. Price did manage the X-ray process.

But tests, evidence, confessions and adverse publicity in the spiritists' own magazine, *Light*, were in vain. Mrs. Duncan's ghost ship sailed on. Her friends increased, her defenders became savage in her behalf, committees of the Spiritualist Groups, meeting in solemn conclave, endorsed her genuineness. Everybody apparently liked the cheesecloth phantoms and domestic brand ectoplasm.

It was not until World War II, when the English spiritists really gathered momentum in their drive to break down the mental barriers set up by the British mind between Here and Hereafter that the Home Government got the wind up over the incredible number of persons attending spiritualistic seances.

At any rate, for many reasons—the financial protection of the British people, their mental health, the prevention of possible leakage of military secrets in the dim seance rooms where all types of people of many nationalities met freely and often received very cryptic messages from the "spirits"—the government moved against all go-betweens of the spirit world who appeared at all suspicious. And to the police looking over the field, Helen Duncan's ever-increasing fame must have been quite noticeable, as, no doubt, was her former indictment for fraud by the Edinburgh Sheriff's Court in 1932. Mrs. Duncan was denounced by a Miss Maule at that time for impersonating "Peggy." The court, as a result of the evidence of witnesses, found Helen guilty

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and gave her a choice of paying ten pounds, or taking a month's imprisonment.

Mediums could be, and were being, "picked up" by the police, charged under the Vagrancy Act, Sec. 4—"every person pretending or professing to tell fortunes. . . ." And, in January, 1944, it was under the Vagrancy Act that Mrs. Duncan was brought in by police, while giving an unadvertised seance in Portsmouth, England. But the wording of her offense was different. The police had found another formula during the war, i.e., "pretending to hold communications with the spirits of deceased persons."

In a report of the proceedings against her, we learn that she was refused bail

For the entire year of 1944, Helen Duncan's case was fought. She hung firmly on the horns of a large dilemma, indeed. For, by the time her case was heard at Old Bailey, she was no longer held merely on a charge of fraud, but also as a witch! According to the Witchcraft Act of 1735, her sentence, in addition to imprisonment, would require her presence every quarter year in the stocks of the market place in some town in England chosen at the time. Found guilty by the court, her sentence was modernized to fit 1944. They omitted the pillory, but gave her nine months' imprisonment. Her final appeal, which was granted, that the House of Lords "sit" on her case, meant that this noble court must consider evidence at the first witchcraft trial in England for many years.

The spiritualists, naturally enough, were seething at the turn this matter was taking. If Helen was guilty of

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"conjunction," then all of them were—for all took part in ceremonies aimed at inducing the materializing of spirits—both good and evil, presumably, since the spirit's "audience" had never had any choice in the matter, really.

American spiritualist papers barely mentioned Mrs. Duncan's trial, but the English press, both lay and "religious," gave practically a blow by blow account of her arrest, life in prison, personal reactions, and the fabulous scenes at her trial. Here her accusers and her defending counsel battled first over the meaning of certain phrases, then over single words pertaining to her "crime." Legal terms that belonged to a more ancient and primitive time than ours flew around the court: sorcery, enchantment, necromancy, witchcraft. Definitions and descriptions whirled around Helen's head as she sat and wept in her chair, a bewildered woman who found herself reviled, not as a simple cheat but as a kind of monster. One thing this trial will do—force Helen, unless she wants to be forever branded as a witch, to confess to the butter muslin, and desist from further claims that she can conjure up spirits—or she may find herself in more difficulties than she is in now, and instead of providing matter for the present academic dogfight among the lawyers over the niceties of the word "conjunction," Helen may find herself really looking around hopefully for a broomstick to get her out of there!

## HAUNTED HOUSES

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**P**ERSONS who think of haunted houses in terms of "spoof" rather than spooks, may be surprised when I define the belief in ghostly haunts as the real fundamental in the spirit racket. Indeed, just such a house, the home of the Fox Sisters near Rochester, New York, was the cradle of modern spiritism.

That house still exists. It was transported from Hydeville, where it belonged, to Lily Dale, the summer colony where mediums and believers flock. For twenty-five cents, a resident medium will give you a sample of the very phenomena which made the house famous—the raps that ushered in our present age of credulity.

The old Fox homestead is a rather inconsistent example of what a haunted house should be. The rappings left it and traveled with the sisters when they began their first tour. Now the raps are back again, helping maintain the upkeep. Otherwise, the Fox house is a

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disappointment, since it lacks more peculiar phenomena.

The investigation of haunted houses is, in a sense, the most important form of psychic research, for a self-evident reason. Even before the Fox Sisters sprang to fame, other flurries of spook mania had begun, invariably because of odd manifestations reported in old houses. In years since, there have been dozens of such incidents, striking enough to have originated a ghost cult, had one not already existed under the name of spiritism. In addition, there have been literally hundreds of other houses definitely listed as haunted.

To rate as strictly Grade-A, haunted homes should furnish manifestations independent of their physical inmates. If uncanny things happen only when certain persons are around, the question arises which to investigate: the persons or the house. If we concentrate solely on the house, we are dealing with something basic—so basic, in fact, that the whole theory of spiritism is ready to stand or fall with these crumbly edifices that are as shaky as itself.

Even a gifted medium is useless without a handy spirit. The finest radio receiving set would pick up nothing if there were no broadcasting stations. When haunted houses are reported as offering weird surprises for all comers, a medium is superfluous, and, therefore, an honest investigation is a surety. Every time independent manifestations are tracked down and proved to be something physical, a solid blow is struck against fraud, for champions of the pseudo-supernatural regard haunted houses as the Exhibit A of their absurd claims.



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Having personally investigated a sizable quota of haunted houses, and having compared notes with others who have done the same, I can personally vouch for two things: first, that there is not one instance of a genuinely haunted house in these United States; second, that the number of alleged haunts is legion, far beyond any total that the average person would concede.

The greatest curbers of haunted house rumors are real estate agents. Owners may flee their homes in terror, or find some aversion to residing there, but put a smart realtor on the job and the ghosts will sooner or later evaporate. It used to be that every hamlet had its "ha'nted house"—always the most ramshackle, dis-used, or isolated home in the town. But no longer.

Now such buildings are either torn down or remodeled. Service stations have frequently sprung up on the sites of haunted houses, and I am still waiting to hear of a ghost around a service station. But I have visited plenty of old houses that still harbored spooks, according to reliable testimony. The net result was that the testimony proved other than reliable.

There was a house in Charleston, South Carolina, that proved as baffling a case as any I have investigated. It was an old mansion that nearly maddened its inmates because of the weird sounds that were heard there. The noises were creepy and indefinable, yet always reported similarly by successive tenants and invariably those sounds occurred at night.

The sounds were best defined as a ghostly approach that never arrived, and, therefore, kept increasing the suspense of every listener. People claimed that they had

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boldly searched the house through an entire night. Sometimes the sounds were close—then they would become distant. But always, they ceased at dawn, according to the few individuals who had remained that long.

Those nights that I spent in that Charleston mansion came closer to convincing me that ghosts were real than anything I have ever witnessed in a seance room. When the ordeal finally ended with the solution of the riddle, I was a veteran skeptic, and have been ever since. If there were such things as ghosts, I'd rather meet them than go through all that again.

The first rule in investigating a haunted house is to locate the reported source—or sources—of the trouble, and operate from there. Often, such a source is in the cellar, attic, or some particular room. With the Charleston house, the manifestations were of a peripatetic sort, always on the move, reported here and there by various residents. Always that ghostly creeping that shifted from one place to another.

This demanded another type of inspection. All old houses have individual peculiarities: thinner walls in one part than another, chimneys where wind can whistle down, spots where the foundations have settled, producing a proportionate strain on joists and beams. Sometimes the equivalent of air shafts form between double walls—while rat holes, squirrel nests, and other minor items can cause complicated results.

So the thing here was to search the house for old crannies, to be remembered later, then establish a central headquarters and operate from there, which we

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did. Our headquarters was an upstairs parlor where we played bridge so that the fourth man who held the "dummy" hand would be free to make a brief round through the house and then return to the game.

It was toward dawn when one of the group returned, as pale as he was eager, to tell us that he'd heard the approaching ghost. He hadn't waited for the footsteps to reach him, but had hurried to inform us. So we all set out on the quest, and soon discovered why our fourth man had been in such a hurry to rejoin us.

No words could define that creeping sound. It would approach, then recede, but not as though it wanted to avoid you. On the contrary, it seemed to be circling for some new vantage point. The only thing to do was circle away from it—then the sound would recur, almost at one's elbow. Here, then there—faint, then strong—those creeps would sound near cobwebbed windows, and along old creaky passages, where they seemed to keep pace with anyone who trod the groaning floor boards.

Through the safety of numbers, we outlasted the ordeal, and when dawn arrived, the creeping sounds ceased. That was the uncanny feature of the noises—daylight dispelled them. We tried to blame the wind for it, but the afternoon proved windier than the previous night, yet there was no repetition of the sound.

The next night the thing occurred again. There was some wind, but it was comparatively light. Nevertheless, the ghostly sounds occurred at intervals, and always in unexpected places. Our only theory was that prowlers had come around to hoax us—a feeble theory,

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but sufficient to gratify our general wish that we leave the house and stay outside a while.

It was moonlight and the haunted house loomed like a great monster, with surrounding trees swaying mildly, like a host of lesser demons. We stayed outside until dawn arrived, then we went indoors, but the ghosts were no longer prevalent. Right then, if we had been less experienced in such investigations, we would have certified the house as haunted, by a unanimous vote.

However, we resolved to spend another night in the place, and all that day we studied the house, inside and out. Toward dusk the wind was gusty, and it was then that I noticed a contrast with the moonlight scene. I gained the notion that I could explain the riddle if it occurred again.

The sounds came again the next night. Nobody hesitated when I suggested that we all go outside. Again, we were there in the moonlight, and I pointed out the cause of the phenomenon. The house was flanked by weeping willows, and their droopy boughs were pressing against the side roofs. With every breeze, those willows dragged and were responsible for the creeping sounds that filtered through the decrepit walls.

Thus translated, the creeps were no longer fearful. We checked them, tracked them to their source, until they ceased soon after dawn. As daylight broadened, we went outdoors and I pointed out why the ghosts did not work the day shift. With the rising sun, the willow boughs had lifted and no longer grazed the roof. The fact that there were no creeps by day was purely a natural phenomenon. It was only at night that the

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willows drooped and began their weird work—at night when the imaginative mind would attribute the creeping sounds to ghosts and be positive of it when daytime produced no traces of those manifestations.

One of the most typical of modern ghost hunters was the late Edward Saint, who made a special study of Houdini's records and used their data to help him in his craft. Once he debunked a haunted house in something like thirty seconds flat. The house in question was supposed to be inhabited by the ghost of an old lady who carried a light from the back of the house to the front, showing it at windows along the way. Every time a car arrived at the house, the ghost made its favorite trip, but never could be traced further.

When Saint saw this happen, he asked if the ghost ever went from the front of the house to the back. Receiving a negative reply, he said he would arrange to back the car from the yard. The mysterious light went to the back of the house from window to window. The explanation was that the window panes were composed of old-fashioned glass that was slightly wavy. They caught the reflection of the headlights and threw them back in a most uncanny style, running from window to window in progression. Simple though this was, it had baffled many people because the lights from the windows did not look like reflections and the old glass gave them a bluish tint. Also, the windows were spaced just far enough to produce the peculiar running effect, no lights being seen at the same time at different windows.

Every old house has creaking floor boards, groaning joists, and other peculiarities that are mistaken for

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ghostly manifestations, providing something approaching the tangible accompanies them. It was in such a house that I first saw the famous "pool of blood" that marked the spot where a murder had been committed, and always reappeared on the anniversary of the crime. Creaks were invariably heard in the house for a few days before the pool of blood appeared. Then, one fine morning, people would discover the blood pool near the corner of the haunted room.

One family was bold enough to test the blood, and found that it was not blood at all, though they were not certain what it was. This, however, did not dispel the mystery, because there was no reason why ghost blood should be the same as the human variety. I must admit that the sight rather startled me the time I saw it, but I had already heard of such a phenomenon and set about to test it. The whole case cracked down to this:

Careful checking proved that the blood pool did not always appear on the exact anniversary of the murder. In fact, no one remembered the exact date of the crime, except that it had taken place in the spring during the rainy season. The mysterious pool was the result of rain water that had come down between the walls, later found its way out beneath the baseboards, and had reached a slight depression in the floor. These facts were ascertained by studying the baseboards, and the use of a carpenter's level. The creeping sound heard in the house occurred during the rainstorm, which is often common in old houses. But sounds frequently frighten people because they hear them so seldom. The mystery lay in the fact that the pool did not appear until a

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few days after the rains were over. That was because the walls were filled with dried leaves that had come down through a crack in the roof. The leaves absorbed the rain and held it, but later, it trickled down, underneath the baseboards, and to its favorite spot in the floor. It was from the leaves that the rain water gained a peculiar color which made it appear to be blood.

A much less common, and little reported phenomenon, is that of the "whistling ghost." People are accustomed to whistling sounds in old houses, whenever there is a wind outdoors, because common sense tells them that wind will find its way through various cracks. But when the whistling is confined to a single room, and always when the weather is very calm, the effect becomes uncanny. Such was the case with a house in Massachusetts which I visited especially to find the ghost that whistled. The haunted room was on the second floor and soon after dark the whistling began. It was a strange kind of persistent hissing that came up to ghostly specifications. It stopped as soon as we closed the door, so that we were imprisoned in the haunted room. That fact made the manifestation all the more formidable, and was why people did not like it. Hearing the whistling with the door open was bad enough, but to close it and have the sound stop, made it seem as if the ghost had taken on a vengeful mood. This was a real puzzler, and I stayed at the house a few days, studying it indoors and out in order to learn the cause of the weird noise.

Again, the season had something to do with it, but in this case it was temperature, not the rainfall. This

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was late fall, and I learned that it was about the only time the ghost whistled. The answer was that the whistling was of an outward, not an inward, variety. Difference in temperature between the house and the outside air was not very great during the daytime, but at night when the outside air turned frosty, the warmer air within the heated house had the tendency to escape rapidly through tiny chinks in the wall of the haunted room. This was what produced the perpetual whistling, except when the door was shut. Then the room failed to receive a continued share of warm air coming up from the floor below. As a result, the whistling ceased.

There are cases on record where houses have been purposely haunted, though I was never in one at the time it happened. By "haunted" I do not mean that the house had an actual ghost. I am referring to cases where human beings played the ghost for one purpose or another. In the old days, one great reason why many houses were reputed to be haunted, was because vagrants or criminals purposely furthered the legend.

As a result, the local inhabitants stayed away from the haunted house, which, therefore, made it an excellent headquarters for the crew that occupied it. Anything in the way of mysterious lights, weird sounds around the premises, would scare late passers-by and further the rumor. If local ghost hunters came to go through, the outlaw residents would naturally clank chains, fake footsteps by thumping upward beneath the floor, and employ any other artifices that would properly scare away the amateur investigators.

There is no doubt but that small-fry crooks preferred



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houses that had a haunted reputation, and, in such cases, garnered local stories regarding manifestations that occurred there, so as to duplicate them when occasion demanded.

This brings us to the class of hauntings known as "poltergeist disturbances." These are supposed to be the work of a malicious entity or supernormal force which does not have the ability or inclination to materialize or otherwise affirm itself as an individual being. Poltergeist phenomena can, of course, include about any extraordinary happenings, but certain of these have been fairly well defined.

The crashing of dishes, the throwing of missiles, the starting of fires, are generally branded as poltergeist disturbances. These are easily—and often—faked by persons who have reason to scare people from a house. To vagrants and criminals can be attributed many of the mysterious fires, either through carelessness, or need to dispose of certain evidence of crime. Talk of such manifestations is also a temptation for firebugs to try their hand.

According to authorities who speak from the psychic side of the fence, poltergeist phenomena are often induced by the presence of some sensitive person, who becomes a target for naughty entity that disturbs the house. It is a curious coincidence that these "sensitives" often turn out to be young girls who are very much bored with their surroundings, or who may be much more eccentric than sensitive.

When these cases are thoroughly investigated, they generally dwindle down to hoaxes, like the one per-

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petrated by the Fox Sisters, a hundred years ago. There was the case of Lulu Hurst, later called the "Georgia Magnet," whose reputed powers began when strange noises and clatters of pebbles occurred in her presence. Fortunately, Miss Hurst outgrew those symptoms, and later published a complete account of how she fooled everyone.

Today, investigation of prankish phenomena is conducted in hardheaded and efficient style, whether by the authorities or psychic debunkers. This happened when the Wild Plum Schoolhouse in North Dakota suddenly became "hexed" in a most violent fashion, two years ago. Lumps of coal were tossed about, fires started of their own accord, and a mysterious hooded creature began peering into the schoolroom. The children were in terror, and the teacher nearly so, until due pressure came to bear.

Then some of the children admitted enough to direct strong questioning upon the others. They, themselves, had played the "ghost" that scared them. They'd tossed the coal when the teacher wasn't looking, had struck matches unobserved, and had even brought chemicals to the school to help the fireworks. The hooded man was simply of their own concoction.

This case is highly deserving of permanent record, because it ties in so conclusively with the intelligent analysis of old-time cases that credulous persons would still have us accept as supernormal. In the Wild Plum hoax, we see the accumulating efforts of youthful ingenuity, as spurred by imitation. Also, the result of

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hysteria on the part of the sponsors when their game gets ahead of them, and, therefore, out of hand.

It happened exactly that way with the Fox Sisters, but they were sent away from the house when they became too hysterical, and by that time local imagination was stirred to a hunt for a nonexistent ghost which had left with its originators. In the case of the Fox Sisters, there were only two children, equally implicated, both too afraid of the consequences to admit the imposture, whereas the Wild Plum incident brought in lesser participants who weakened under cross-examination, and thus broke down the whole case.

If the Wild Plum schoolhouse had gone wild a hundred years ago, it would probably now be perpetuated as a shrine representing the dawn of a new something-or-other that would be described in far more stately terms than the one it deserves: bunk. Yet at that, it rates as a far more wonderful edifice than the famous Fox Cottage, which has actually been preserved as a memorial by the deluded, because, item for item, the Wild Plum goings-on were far more exciting than the mere thumps and raps that the Fox girls faked in their home at Hydeville, New York.

About every other year, psychic investigators head for Nova Scotia during the poltergeist season, which seems to be a frequent feature of that area. Always, they find some young girl living in the midst of the phenomena that frightens her and mystifies the other residents of the ghost-ridden house. Cold climates seem to attract poltergeists, probably because the winters are long and rather tiresome.

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There was a poltergeist, though, in California, who raised plenty of hob around a machine shop, tossing loose nuts and bolts at anyone who wasn't looking. My friend, Edward Saint, looked into that case and found a rather erratic old lady on the premises, who seemed as worried as everyone else.

Saint didn't watch the old lady. He just strolled around with his arms folded, and let the missiles come plopping past him. But, in one hand, he had palmed a small mirror, which he tipped in the crook of his elbow and focused in the direction from which the flying objects came. He spotted the old lady chucking the assorted hardware, probably just for the fun of it.

There was a badly haunted house in the West where the ghost turned out to be an old recluse who was living in a little secret room and making raids on the pantry. There was another down South where rats came down the stairs with slow hops that made each landing sound like a thumping footstep. There was a house in England that had once been an old inn, and a forgotten tavern sign had been stowed in a blocked-off portion of the attic, where it creaked and groaned like a ghost every time the wind rippled through.

I have watched windows rise in weird fashion, only to discover that they were jarred by the ground tremors of a passing freight train. But the best haunting on record was that of the war worker who used to hear his footsteps go downstairs after he came up, and listen to himself open and close the front door.

This man, whom I shall call John Doe, because he has requested it, actually called me up to tell me he was

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haunted. I went over to New Jersey and met him outside his house at midnight, which was the time he regularly came off his shift. The house was one of an old row, and he unlocked the door and invited me to come up to his room and listen.

The room was right at the head of the stairs, which creaked noticeably as we ascended. He had the door on the right, and he stopped there to unlock it. As he did, he said, "Now listen and you'll hear me go downstairs."

I listened and heard the very sounds he described. The effect was surprising, for each step creaked in turn, all the way down. Mr. Doe was gripping me excitedly, excitedly exclaiming in a hoarse whisper: "That's the way it happens, night after night—every night! And now you'll hear the front door—"

I didn't wait to hear the front door, which was hidden by the ceiling above the stairs. I wanted to see it, so I started down after those footsteps. I heard the front door open and close, but I was in time to observe that it didn't move at all, so I hurried out in time to catch the ghost.

He was a pretty husky ghost, a brawny war worker who lived in the house next door to Mr. Doe. He had a few minutes to spare, so he came up with me to assure Mr. Doe that he wasn't haunted. The situation was this: the man who lived next door, in a room at the head of the stairs in the adjacent residence of the row, went to work right after Mr. Doe came home.

The next-door neighbor didn't have an alarm clock, and it used to disturb his reading to keep looking at his

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watch to note the time. Through the thin wall of the old house, which had been hastily reconstructed to accommodate war workers, he'd heard Mr. Doe come up the stairs and go into his room just at the time he was supposed to leave.

So, our friend next door had gauged his own departure to Mr. Doe's arrival. His were the footsteps that went down the stairs, and the door that opened and closed was that of the house next door.

A ridiculous case, indeed, but it is of such stuff that ghosts are made!

## THE "INSIDE" OF SPIRITISM

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**D**URING the war, the pages of the psychic journals frequently discussed "evidential" phenomena which had taken place in seance rooms and which were evidence, indeed, but evidence of things going on in this mundane sphere. If these had anything to do with the spirit land, the connection was a very grim one.

I refer to cases particularly of trance or message mediums who used the old "pumping" practice to bring out facts that were most on everyone's mind, namely matters that had to do with the war.

In England, such doings could be defined only by the term "atrocious," for it was a common practice for mediums to bring through messages from soldiers or sailors who had died in the various theaters of war. Descriptions of air battles were given in graphic detail, as were sinkings of destroyers and cruisers.

It became a custom for many persons to go to seance

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rooms in hope of gaining information regarding relatives reported as missing. Often they received facts that were proved later, and, therefore, added to the medium's reputation. To skeptics like myself, who have solid reasons for doubting the "spirit origin" of trance utterances, this brought up the very important question:

Where did the mediums actually get their information?

Reports of these seances eventually must have reached the higher authorities and due investigation must also have resulted therefrom. Since there have been no outward reverberations, it would not be surprising to learn at length that one of the "hushed" phases of subversive activity was the part played by certain mediums who, whether wittingly or unwittingly, gave aid and comfort to the enemy.

Nearly all believers in spiritism feel that they have the right to treat a medium somewhat in the light of a confessor. This right, in some instances, is argued on religious grounds. As such, the status of that right is jeopardized by the fact that mediums, in their turn, claim the right to broadcast anything the spirits tell them, in order to prove that those very spirits exist. Thus, the whole arrangement becomes a vicious circle that works two ways.

Let us take some instances that appeared on the American scene during those hectic wartime years.

There is a certain medium who has a control whose name, for purposes of identification, we can call Jasper. In case the reader is not familiar with the term "control," and such personalities as "Jasper," the setup is



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about like this: The medium goes into a trance state—so called—and begins to speak in a strange voice known as the "control." Usually, this is done in the dark, so that no one will observe that the medium's lips are moving, because mediums are not good ventriloquists, or they would be in that business instead.

Whereupon the "control," who, in this case, is "Jasper," begins to single out persons in the group and call them by name. Jasper says, "Is Willard here?" and Willard answers—the medium having previously ascertained that someone named Willard is present.

Also, the medium has checked to some extent regarding every person present. If a skeptic checks afterward, he will find that everything Jasper tells a person will be in direct ratio to what the medium has learned about the same person.

Now, on the occasion that I mention, Jasper picked several sitters, gave them messages, and finally concentrated on one person, stating that he was a seafaring man, and calling upon said person to admit it, which he did. Next, Jasper declared that the sitter was waiting to take command of a new Liberty ship, which was likewise admitted. After which came other statements, some corroborated, some not.

The next upshot was that quite a few other people in that same darkness learned a great deal about where the ship captain had been, where he was likely to go, and how soon. When they left the hall where this seance was given, under the guise of a lecture, they were too busy talking about how wonderful Jasper had been to

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notice a big government poster that read: **BUTTON YOUR LIP AND SAVE A SHIP.**

There is another sprite spirit who answers to the name of Pansy, and becomes loquacious—and sometimes, insulting—when he speaks through the borrowed vocal chords of his favorite medium.

On one occasion, Pansy became concerned about a new visitor, and stated he had throat trouble—which the visitor denied. So Pansy told the visitor to go and see his doctor. The visitor said he already had, whereupon Pansy insisted that he'd better see another doctor because his own was unreliable.

To prove that he was right, Pansy began to cough and said that he had "heard" the visitor making sounds like that. It's really amazing the way these spirits get around. They can service a dozen people all at once, just the way Santa Claus used to fill all the stockings in a neighborhood in an estimated time of three seconds.

In Pansy's case, the new customer admitted he'd been making coughing sounds, but they didn't worry him. Pansy said they would, if he kept making them too long, so the visitor argued that he didn't expect to go on coughing very long. Pansy said that a month would be too long, and the customer replied that he'd be through his coughing trouble before the month was over.

All this dialogue covered the simple fact that the newcomer to the seance room was a war worker who had come to the seance with a friend who was a regular patron. The newcomer had just been transferred to a department that was working out a new chemical proc-

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ess, on the verge of its final tests. Without realizing it, the researcher was giving away the information that the new process was scheduled for completion within the month.

There is a message reader who works in full light, as though the spirits preferred it in his case, but the real reason is that he needs the lights to read the messages that people trustingly place upon his rostrum. He psychometrizes each message, answers it, and sticks it on a file hook beside him.

Of course, he uses the "one ahead" system, explained elsewhere, and while he is "answering" one question, he is really reading another. He is very practical about it, for he boldly places each opened message right where he can conveniently read it while faking with another. Except that "bold" is hardly the term, because anyone familiar with the "one ahead" system will spot it on sight, no matter how clever the medium is; but the sucker trade, not suspecting any trickery, will accept anything.

And this medium, like all the smart ones in the business, plays for the sucker trade exclusively.

During the war, this reader was helpful with persons who had relatives in the service. He could "see" that they were troubled, because some person who was away had gone still further from them. The spirits mentioned a "danger" that was past, but that another and graver danger lay just ahead.

If the customer was not too certain of the coming danger, the medium would speak of a "change of plans," and would mention that the customer "understood."

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If this brought a nod, the medium would then emphasize what the danger might be, while watching for corroboration, or otherwise.

What the medium was working on, was this: He knew that the customer was worried about a son in the Army, and that the son had expected to go overseas. The "past danger" referred to the transport trip, the medium working on the assumption that the son had reached his objective and had written home. The "new danger" was an effort on the medium's part to learn if the soldier had been assigned to a combat zone. If not, the medium simply intimated that he would be, which was always a logical play.

Of course, in such a case, the medium threw in identifying remarks, part-way descriptions of the absent person, and anything that could build the case. By the time he was through, he had put on quite a convincing show.

Summing the three cases above given, we learn this: During the war, mediums gathered information and delivered it in detail on such subjects as shipping, war work, and troop movements. With this, they either included or hazarded dozens of identifying points that put just that many teeth into the subject that they broached.

What were the potential consequences?

Here is something to think over:

During that same war period, a well-known mentalist burst into fame as a radio luminary with a program wherein he answered questions that were on persons' minds. This was presented as legitimate entertainment and created a well-deserved sensation. During nearly every program, certain questions arose which this legiti-

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mate performer stated he could not answer further, because they referred to persons engaged in military or wartime operations.

Yet while this ruling was scrupulously invoked during a radio program that likewise disclaimed any connection with the supernatural, mediums all over the country were ignoring such censorship while giving seances which they openly misrepresented as being inspired by the guiding forces of another world.

Such information, freely released, could sink a ship or ruin military plans just as effectively whether it came from sources inhabiting this world or the next.

While I am fairly convinced that certain misfortunes of the war could be traced back to facts blabbed by mediums, I doubt that they wreaked any greater damage than that caused by persons who were simply too careless at the wrong times. I say this, not to the credit of the mediums, but simply as a matter of general analysis. In a sense, it is to their discredit, at least to that of their general claims. For, in substance, it means that mediums were so generally unreliable that enemy agents felt they would be wasting time to depend upon the drivel these people peddled.

Mediums prefer not to be too specific with a client. A few points driven home are sufficient as pegs for a lot of vague statements that are left hanging in the air after the pegs are gone. That brings back the customer and mediums like nothing better than a steady clientele. Often they hold out choice plums for the person's next visit, and if that person does not return, the information is simply written off.

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Of course, somebody might get to the medium and buy up his information wholesale, but mediums are chary about accepting such offers. The bidder might turn out to be a psychic investigator beginning a crusade against ethereal hokum; or, even worse, a rival medium ready to open a shop across the way.

How this rivalry works is illustrated by the story of the house on Fifty-ninth Street.

A wealthy believer, named Mr. Ernest, owned a nice house on Fifty-ninth Street. He attended lectures and readings given by a medium called Professor Marvel, and, occasionally, went to dark-room seances, maneuvered by a gentleman whom we shall style, Dr. Craft.

One evening, Mr. Ernest told Professor Marvel about the house. It appeared that Mr. Ernest didn't know exactly what to do with the house, and felt that the spirits ought to furnish some solution. Since Mr. Ernest owned another house—in fact, owned lots of houses—this one seemed superfluous.

Professor Marvel felt that the spirits should be considered as something more than mere advisers. All over the country were poor, but honest, mediums who might want to come to New York, but were afraid that hotel rooms would be injurious to their powers. They needed a friendly atmosphere, and the house on Fifty-ninth Street could provide it.

Helpfully, Professor Marvel offered to accept the title deed as custodian of the house. Then he would be able to invite the out-of-town mediums to visit him, charging whatever the spirits considered nominal. Thus Mr.

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Ernest would be famous as a man who had provided a living monument to the cause.

It sounded so great that Mr. Ernest couldn't wait to get it started. On the way to see his lawyer, he stopped off to visit Dr. Craft and tell him all about it, since the doctor was the sort of medium who dealt in physical phenomena. Dr. Craft approved the idea, but saw one objection.

What the house needed was a resident medium. Being a lecturer, Professor Marvel would be holding meetings in halls seven nights a week. Who would take charge of the proceedings at the house? What would happen if visiting mediums were tired from their trips, and could not find their powers? To be a true memorial, the house would need someone who could deliver manifestations on call, any night, every night.

Thinking this over, Mr. Ernest liked it, and immediately the thought struck him that Dr. Craft would be the very man to serve as resident medium. After much persuasion, Dr. Craft agreed, and when Mr. Ernest reached his lawyer's office, he said that he wanted the deed switched to Dr. Craft, instead of Professor Marvel.

The lawyer found that this would take some time, and, in the interim, he communicated with some of Mr. Ernest's friends and relatives. They, in turn, began to look into the comparative merits of Professor Marvel and Dr. Craft, and found it difficult to decide which one was worse. They talked Mr. Ernest out of the whole proposition, and now, Professor Marvel and Dr. Craft are not on speaking terms, not even through each other's spirit controls.

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The term "believer" is an apt one where the dupes of mediums are concerned, because such people believe almost anything. This was proved not long ago when a group invited a trance medium named Yogi Yama to give a series of seances featuring his pet control, Archimedes. The only question was the price, and Yogi Yama finally agreed to accept a reduced honorarium for his first series of appearances.

Archimedes showed up along with the yogi, and to help pay expenses, skeptics were invited to attend the seances. At that, the "take" was not too good, and when the series neared its end, the group asked Yogi Yama to continue at the same rate. The yogi insisted that he needed an increase, and would have to terminate his services. He was sorry, of course, on account of Archimedes, who liked the group immensely.

So the group announced that the next series of seances would be handled by a cut-rate operator named Mahatma Pundit, who grabbed the job by a very smart suggestion. Since the group wanted Archimedes and Archimedes wanted to visit the group, what was the matter with Mahatma Pundit bringing Archimedes through?

Ordinarily, it wouldn't be right, since Archimedes was Yama's regular control, but the group had a share in Archimedes, too, and Pundit was sure their favorite spirit would be on hand.

And Archimedes was—with this difference.

Yogi Yama had a voice that could go surprisingly deep, which it always did when he invoked Archimedes. In contrast, Mahatma Pundit was used to spirits that



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spoke in a falsetto not too far from his high tenor. When the skeptics heard that Pundit was going to do an Archimedes, they turned out in full force to pick up the pieces of his broken vocal chords.

However, Mahatma Pundit had no voice trouble. He simply let Archimedes pipe away in a tenor tone. The skeptics were happy. Here was fraud so palpable that even the believers would recognize it. After the seance, one skeptic put the question: "Well, what do you think of our new medium?"

"He was excellent," replied a believer, quite seriously. "His work was really inspiring. But do you know, I was disappointed in Archimedes. His voice didn't seem to be the same as usual."

If that had been the opinion of an ignoramus, it would have been laughable. Unfortunately, it was the sincere conviction of a gentleman who rates very high in a very important profession. It definitely proves the existence of a certain psychological factor which causes certain people to interpret what happens in a seance according to their wishes, and not their senses.

Mediums pick such patrons and pluck them. The frauds and deceptions that they impose upon such victims are childish, which is preferable from the medium's standpoint. It saves him the trouble of planning clever tricks and enables him to concentrate on the more effective work of tapping the victim's exchequer.

Shaping a friendship between the control and the dupe is the best process, as it reduces the medium to a role of innocent bystander. A medium will go into a trance and let his shortcomings be discussed between

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the control and the dupe. When he awakes, the medium pretends he didn't know what happened:

Perhaps the medium becomes short-tempered, reluctant about giving seances at all. The dupe discusses this with the control, who decides through his superior knowledge that the medium needs a vacation. So the medium is sent to some resort, with an unlimited expense account, and when the dupe visits him there, the medium is very happy to throw a seance, at which the control comes through and triumphantly announces: "See? I was right!"

People have often asked me: Why are mediums such fools as to try for some of the awards offered by scientific societies for genuine phenomena, when the tricks they use are so pitiful? The answer is that the mediums are not the fools—their sponsors are.

Urged to meet a test that will prove spirit communication, a medium has but one choice—he must attempt it. Of course, he will find one excuse after another, but when all are exhausted, he turns his ingenuity toward some device that will trouble the test committee, or produce an impasse. In such a contest, anything resembling a draw, or even a default, is a win for the medium.

In fact, these offers of awards, whether made by individuals or scientific groups, have done more to publicize and further the spook racket than to curb or suppress it. Without being too critical of all instances, I am forced to the conclusion that much of this so-called scientific investigation has a dash of sham itself.

The sincere, but deluded, believer in things psychic

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can be matched only by the trusting but ignorant man who offers an award of a few thousand dollars on the supposition that any high-grade medium would bother about such small change, to the jeopardy of a much more profitable repeat business.

It was a believer, Henry Seybert, who provided the funds for the first American investigation of spirit mediums, which took place in the eighties. The investigators were appointed by the University of Pennsylvania to function as the Seybert Commission, and, in their report, they state that they found themselves "embarrassed" by requests for fees, ranging up to five hundred dollars, on the part of mediums.

Just why the commission should have expected mediums to neglect their clients and work for nothing, is a mystery. Perhaps they supposed that professional mediums would welcome a chance to prove themselves genuine, thereby increasing their trade. However, mediums do not think in such terms.

The happiest medium imaginable would be one who could convince his paying customers that all other mediums are fraudulent. Why? Because, if all practitioners of the spooky art received a clean bill of health, what would happen to a high-grade medium's gilt-edged clientele?

They would go to the handiest parlor medium, just as they sometimes patronize a neighborhood movie. The cut-rate market would begin full blast. Newcomers would work gratis in order to accumulate worth-while suckers for the trim.

The famous Daniel Home realized this, and one of

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his sidelines was the exposure of other mediums. As for the Seybert Commission, it drew in one of the Fox Sisters, who was anxious then to expose spirit fakery, and it also held several seances with Dr. Slade, who, at that time, was somewhat in disrepute and needed to stage a comeback.

Of the rest, the canniest simply gave preliminary seances, leaving the cautious commission expressing doubt, but unwilling to declare outright fraud, though it might be intimated. The mediums went their way among the gullible, proclaiming the findings of the commission as the equivalent of a certificate of merit, negatively expressed.

During the sixty years since, there have been other investigations, sweetened by offers of awards ranging from one thousand dollars on the nose, to thirty thousand dependent on various conditions and provisos that, according to mediums, render the offers largely invalid.

These offers have been thorns among the roses of the Summerland, but they have not halted the progress of the spook racket. As for cash, within the past few years, several psychic groups have been financed by believers, involving cash considerably greater than the skeptical committees have ever offered. When mediums need money, they get it from their friends, not their enemies.

What worries mediums is when those friends privately offer to match, or better, the award if the medium is willing to try for it. Sometimes believers will pay a medium a high price just to appear before skeptics, gratis, submitting to their conditions in order to prove that spirits are real.

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One medium so impressed a group of believers that they began to attribute him with powers equaling those of the famous Home. Unwisely, the medium let his controls certify this. The controls had been helping levitate the medium in the dark, and they were now willing to try it in the light, under absolute test conditions.

Of course, by that the medium meant his own idea of light—a few red bulbs on the floor. As for test conditions, those were to be of his own choice, as had been the regular practice with this group. When the believers talked about when and where the levitation should be held, the medium was confident they would want an ordinary seance, and, therefore, let them write their own ticket.

Unfortunately, they looked into the history of Mr. Home and were much impressed by the story of how he floated out one window, and into another, on the third floor of a building. The only regrettable phase of Home's test was the fact it had not been advertised or prearranged. So here was the chance for these believers to prove levitation on a master scale.

They invited their medium to float from one window to another across the front courtyard of a New York apartment house at a tenth story level so that a multitude in the street could be convinced of his great powers.

Those great powers faded before the test was ever attempted. The medium suffered one of his lapses—they all have them when occasion demands—and the controls advised a trip to the country. Since then, the medium has never felt quite at home in the tumult of

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the city. Noises disturb him, his powers are always limited when he gives seances in town. He is wonderful, though, and powerful, when he visits the various spiritualistic colonies where people live in cottages and bungalows. Along with open air, he has a preference for low altitudes.

The camps and colonies where believers assemble are always fine for mediums. People come there largely by invitation, or previous arrangement. Skeptics are restrained, as all skeptics should be. Mediums work on a semi-mutual basis, and visitors are happy because the messages from Spookland get better, clearer, with every subsequent seance, no matter if the client changes mediums.

Prices are scaled at various levels and special seances often bring special fees. Recordings are made of seances wherein such champions of spiritism as Oliver Lodge and Conan Doyle speak through from the spirit world. These records are sold to believers at fancy prices, and will be shipped anywhere, during the in-between seasons.

Summer after summer, winter after winter, the same reliable mediums appear at these places. This was something not foreseen by the famous Seybert Commission when it submitted its report. In the year 1885, the commission felt that it had thoroughly exploded one form of psychic manifestations, namely, spirit slate writing, which was cracked down from every possible angle.

The commission specifically discussed a certain medium named Keeler, who specialized in producing

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manifestations on a curtained table while his hands were held under cover by two members of the committee. After a single seance, the commission decided that Keeler was simply working a hand switch that enabled him to produce those hidden manifestations. Slate writing was Keeler's other specialty, but he never got around to it with the Seybert Commission.

Satisfied that spiritism was on its way out, the commission closed up shop, probably expecting that Keeler's business would dwindle rapidly. If it dwindled at all, it wasn't as fast as the commission anticipated. Looking through a copy of a psychic journal dated in 1943, nearly sixty years after Keeler's visit to the Seybert Commission, I find the announcement that "Keeler's Nationwide Development Class is continuing in successful operation," along with the statement that Keeler has been in the slate-writing field for sixty-three years.

Checking through other records, I find that during many of those years, Keeler's table manifestations, curtain and all, were a regular feature at the summer colony, which practically became his headquarters. At least three generations of investigators have reported on the same old act, always as if describing something new.

The spook business has its old reliable customs, just as the shell game and the gold brick story constantly remain tops in their respective fields. While investigators go searching after new and remarkable phenomena, the standard items continue to bring results from the regular trade.

If you want to know why, ask your favorite medium

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to get the answer from the spirits in writing on a pair of slates. If the spirits won't tell, it will mean that they regard the question as too flippant, so your next step is to join a development class to assure them of your sincerity.

There must be a lot of fun in these things for someone, or the business wouldn't have kept going on for more than sixty uninterrupted years.



## CASE HISTORIES

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**H**OW psychic fakers fleece their victims can best be told by relating some case histories from the various files—police or otherwise—that I have kept or examined in my survey of the subject.

While some of these represent isolated instances, others come into the category of con games that are generally prevalent, and all are illustrative of methods and devices commonly used by spook fakers.

In fact, the special appliances described and detailed in these accounts are all on regular sale and are peddled in large quantities by supply houses that cater to customers claiming occult powers. Fortunately, the ratio of such sales to actual fleecings is comparatively low, because most mediums merely use such apparatus as adjuncts to seances at which the charge ranges from fifty cents to ten dollars a head.

Nevertheless, the potential is always present and it

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can hardly be termed good protection to the public when the question of a small or large trimming is left entirely to the perpetrator. Perhaps some fakers are deterred by a dislike for running afoul of the law, but, in the majority of cases, they find that volume business at a low price is more profitable than single shots at a huge return, hence they curb their operations accordingly.

In each case recounted here, the actual names of persons and places have been changed, and the descriptions are limited to essential details of the fraud, but, in every instance, it can be proved that the mechanical device involved has been catalogued and sold, often at remarkably low prices, to practically any and all customers.

At best, gold mining is a speculative business, and, at worst, it can prove disastrous to the operator. Nevertheless, the magic word "gold" attracts a great many solid businessmen who are chary only of their inability to double-check the claims of glib promoters who insist that "them thar hills" are full of gold.

Willoughby Renn was just such a businessman, and he followed an example set by many. He fell for a game that was a small edition of the old gold-brick swindle. This was the "treasure finder" which consisted of a mechanical gadget that would buzz when gold was around, and Mr. Renn sank a chunk of cash in one before he realized that it was just as apt to buzz up an iron horseshoe as a gold nugget.

By then, Mr. Renn had heard of "diving rods" and true to the adage of "once a sucker, always a sucker,"

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he decided to look into this old-style edition of a treasure finder. That was how he wandered into the parlor of one Professor Savant, whose advertisement in the local newspaper spoke of the finding of hidden things.

Hearing Renn's story, Savant assured him that the divining rod had much in its favor, and cited instances where water had been found by persons who knew how to handle the pointing hazel branch. Renn, himself, had heard that diviners were often successful, but doubted their claims of finding precious minerals as easily as running water.

On this, Savant agreed. The whole process was dependent upon magnetism, the type called animal magnetism. Some persons had it, others didn't. Therefore, the right thing was to develop it for oneself. To help Renn accomplish this, Savant furnished him with a talismanic ring which he was to wear whenever he began a hunt for gold.

The chary Mr. Renn thereupon talked with various promoters and was soon convinced that he had met a man who had a good buy. The promoter wouldn't lead Renn to the mine until he put up a sizable deposit and he was frank to admit that although the gold was there, finding the vein would be a task in itself. Otherwise, Mr. Renn wouldn't be getting a bargain.

What prompted Renn to go through with it was the fact that his development lessons were already panning out. Every time he visited Savant, Renn tried the test of passing his hands over a nugget of gold that Savant laid on the table, and on several occasions the object had actually stirred under Renn's magnetic influence.

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And now, with the cash ready for delivery, Renn tried a final test. To his delight, the nugget not only stirred but turned itself around when Renn's hand passed over it. So Savant received his final fee, the promoter his cash, and Renn the gold mine. At last reports, Renn was still groping about in the darkness of an old shaft, wearing his talismanic ring and wondering why his hazel rod never dipped at the same place twice. Surely, since Renn had the proper magnetism, the gold should declare itself!

The trouble was that Renn had no magnetism at all. Professor Savant had duped him with a stepped-up version of a dollar spook trick, plus a special ring worth about the same price. The talismanic ring wasn't solid gold, but simply iron, gold-plated, and the iron itself was imbued with magnetism, but of a normal kind. The ring was a disguised magnet.

As for the nugget, the term should have been plural, for there were three of them. One was gold, the other two weren't. They were iron, gold-washed. One was heavy enough so that it barely responded to the pass of the hand that wore the magnet ring. The other was light enough to turn about when the magnet came close to it—hence, this “nugget” was reserved for the final test.

Not connecting gold with ordinary magnetism, Renn thought that he had acquired the supernormal kind. Needless to say, Professor Savant was teamed with the promoter who unloaded a chunk of rocky land on Willoughby Renn, claiming it to be the site of a gold mine. Five thousand dollars was the price of the gold mine option, and Renn paid another two hundred and

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fifty dollars for his lessons in developing magnetic powers. All of which proved that Professor Savant was smart in selling a trick that mediums usually employ simply to prove that they have telekinetic powers, or the ability to make objects move without touching them, the object most generally used being a walnut containing a chunk of iron over which the medium passes his own hand, while personally wearing the talismanic ring.

It was easy to tell that Mrs. Tudor-Windsor lived on Park Avenue, considering the type of dog that towed her about that vicinity. Mrs. Tudor-Windsor was proud of Fifi as a blue-ribbon winner, but she couldn't forget Toto, Estelle, Chichi, and several other pets whom she had outlived.

One day Mrs. Tudor-Windsor and Fifi saw a book in a bookstore. It had a dog's picture on it, which was why they noticed it, and Mrs. T-W was much intrigued when she bought the book, read it, and learned that there was a spirit land for dogs, just like people—though the exact location of the bowwow plane was as yet uncharted.

If people could get messages from others who had gone to the human Summerland, why couldn't dogs communicate, too? Apparently all they needed was a medium's aid, so Mrs. T-W took Fifi to see Madame Francine, who proved sympathetic. Madame Francine liked dogs, particularly Fifi, and why not, considering that Fifi was paying five dollars a visit?

Speaking in spirit voices, Madame Francine came through with some occasional woofs that put Fifi on the

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alert, but results were barren until the medium's own control, Silver Belle, came through and talked to Mrs. Tudor-Windsor. By that time, Madame Francine had learned a lot about Fifi from Mrs. Tudor-Windsor, but, of course, Silver Belle couldn't have known it.

What Silver Belle said pleased Mrs. T-W much. It was all to the effect that Fifi was ailing, despite the arguments of veterinarians, who all said she wasn't. There was only one thing for Silver Belle to do, and that was recommend another vet. She saw someone named Dr. Claudius, and made out the name of a hotel and the number of a room.

When Mrs. Tudor-Windsor phoned, she found that Dr. Claudius was there. He was in New York conducting special research on matters canine in order to start a wonderful hospital, all for dogs, in the Midwest. He met Fifi, and not only discovered that the dog had the very ailment Mrs. Tudor-Windsor fancied, but privately agreed with the theory that doggies had a heaven all their own.

This, of course, was something that Mrs. T-W should never mention, since it would hurt Claudius with his profession. Already such opposition had arisen regarding his dog hospital, and several persons supposed to contribute to the endowment fund had failed to do so. Dr. Claudius showed letters from them, along with his replies, and wound up by spreading out the plans that the architect had drawn for the dog hospital.

Dr. Claudius left New York twenty-five thousand dollars richer because that was the amount that Mrs. Tudor-Windsor contributed to a hospital that never

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was planned, nor would be, since Dr. Claudius wasn't a veterinarian to begin with. Madame Francine left at the same time, because Dr. Claudius was her husband, and she rather liked him—particularly after he acquired so much money.

Mrs. Tudor-Windsor began to wonder about the hospital when she failed to receive any more letters, but, so far, she hasn't even located the town where it was supposed to be built. There isn't any place by that name on the map!

People weighed down by tragedy are always in a susceptible state, and particularly those who feel themselves responsible for the occurrence. One such was Miss Lorena Tibbit, a former schoolteacher who had taken a class of children on a boat excursion that ended in a catastrophe.

The little steamer had run aground and capsized, with the result that five of Miss Tibbit's charges had drowned. One person regarded her culpable. That person was Miss Tibbit, herself. Brooding over the tragedy, she eventually went to see a medium named Madame Thora, who was just the right person to establish contact with child spirits because her own control was the spirit of a little girl named Bonnet Blue.

Wonderful things happened at Thora's seances, increasing in their scope as the medium learned more about Miss Tibbit's great sorrow. With other sitters present, Bonnet Blue vocalized through Madame Thora, leading the group in singing "There Are Angels All

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Around," which Bonnet Blue childishly worded, "They Is Angels All Around."

It should have occurred to Miss Tibbit and others that Bonnet Blue wasn't just being coy, but was subject to Madame Thora's own grammatical limitations, found in her regular conversation, but this escaped attention because of the phenomena that occurred. There *were* angels all around—Madame Thora fairly crowded the room with their lovely faces, which vanished and reappeared spasmodically in the dark.

Then voices began to speak through Thora's trumpet when it floated as mysteriously as the spirit faces, marking its position by a brilliant luminous band attached to it. But the thing that thoroughly convinced Miss Tibbit was when the spirits of the drowned children re-enacted the tragedy. They began speaking through the trumpet with gurgling, choking voices that Madame Thora couldn't have faked in any possible way.

Indeed, Madame Thora was aided and abetted by a skeptic named Laurence Herkimer, who was a friend of Lorena Tibbit. He came to the seance as a doubter, hoping to rid Lorena of her fixation. Those drowning gurgles convinced Herkimer that the medium was real, and he pleaded with Madame Thora to help rid Miss Tibbit of her obsession.

It worked out beautifully. Having a private fortune, Miss Tibbit was to "adopt" the child spirits, and they, in turn, would instruct Madame Thora to give financial aid to unfortunate children still on the mortal plane. This was to be done entirely in the names of the spirit children, who would be happy at seeing their little



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earthly friends gain the good things that they had missed.

Of course, Miss Tibbit supplied the funds, and Madame Thora took charge of their delivery, because she wouldn't go hysterical when she heard the child spirits gurgle. Perhaps after Thora gained their confidence, they would talk normally through the trumpet.

This suited Herkimer, because he wanted to marry Lorena, and one obstacle had been her independence. Being wealthy in his own right, Herkimer felt that his wife wouldn't need an income, too. He believed in the spook stuff himself, and Madame Thora gained the happy idea that perhaps he, too, would donate something to the Tibbit Fund.

Madame Thora sprang that one after about four thousand dollars of Lorena's money had gone into the kitty. Herkimer asked some hardheaded friends about it, and they told him he was a dōpe. They figured that between them, Herkimer and his future wife would be trimmed of twenty-five thousand dollars if this thing continued.

Still partly a skeptic, Herkimer listened. He finally asked for Lorena to give a seance which would include some other promising contributors as sitters. They wanted the whole show, faces, voices, even gurgles. At the climax, one of the new clients turned on the lights, having gone unseen to the wall switch.

They found that Madame Thora was getting by with about sixteen dollars worth of equipment. She was using a spirit trumpet—cost five dollars—and a luminous band—one dollar extra. These, of course, were known

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as appliances. In addition, she had a five-dollar reaching rod, collapsible like a fish pole, and five luminous faces printed on flat cardboard, costing only one dollar each, because they were the small size, to represent children.

She would hitch one of these flats to the end of the reacher and swing it out above the sitters. Twirling the rod made the face disappear because the back of the card was black. She was able to handle two with the rod, by setting them at angles. The others were operated on the ends of slotted sticks that Madame Thora had painted black and improvised as short reachers. Those spooks always flickered around Thora's head and shoulders.

The reaching rod was also used to make the trumpet float, but it was attached to the luminous band alone, so that people thought the trumpet was in the air, when it wasn't. Madame Thora simply kept the trumpet and talked through it, directing it toward the spot where the band showed high in the dark.

But the real convincer was Thora's own specialty, those drowning sounds. She was caught right in the middle of her gurgles, and the whole fraud was exposed. On the floor, Thora had what looked like a solid, cushioned seat, shaped like a cylinder. There were several of these in the room, genuinely solid, except for the special one. It was a large wastebasket, inverted and painted to look like a seat, and cushioned on its inverted bottom.

Inside this simple contrivance was a pail of water. When Thora wanted gurgly voices, she lifted away the inverted cylinder, put the big end of the trumpet in

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the water, and wheezed through as she talked. It was really like something out of this world, that sound supposed to represent drowning gasps!

When Horace Holliday attended seances given by Professor Bramaputra, he went as a skeptic and came away the same. Nevertheless, Holliday was fair-minded and gave the professor a chance to prove the things he claimed.

Professor Bramaputra insisted that people write serious questions, fold them, and keep them in their own possession. They were to concentrate solely on the questions, and Bramaputra would supply the answers. So that the customers could write the questions, Bramaputra handed them a small writing board with a piece of paper attached by a spring clip at the top. They wrote what they wanted, took off the paper, and kept it.

Other people received answers to their questions, but Holliday felt the answers didn't mean much. The professor always talked cryptically, and Holliday took it that he was just guessing. Of course, some people fell for that and agreed that the answers fulfilled their questions. But Holliday, being a keen stockbroker, put questions that were specific.

He would write: "I am going to buy one hundred shares of Astabula Plastic. Why?" He would also use the names of customers and write down facts concerning them. He would keep a steady face, give no answers when Professor Bramaputra tried to pump him. So the spirits never talked to Mr. Holliday.

Oddly, Holliday began missing out on some important

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deals. He had trouble with his clients, and, in short, his business became so wobbly that he began to hope that the spirits would really give him some advice, hence the stuff that he wrote on those slips was more vital than ever.

By fortunate chance, Holliday came across a magazine article (*Popular Science*, November, 1944) covering the spook racket, and saw my name mentioned as an authority on the subject. Also, in the article, was reference to a certain device used by spook crooks. Holliday came to my office and told me about Professor Bramaputra. We went to see the medium, but one of his friends recognized me and the professor never appeared from his sanctum.

Instead, Bramaputra left, and in such a hurry that he wasn't able to take along his clip-board, which we found in the seance room, lying under his turban. It was the thing that cost Bramaputra a dollar and a half, but had cost Holliday some of his best customers, along with an indeterminable amount of cash that ran into thousands of dollars.

The clip-board is simply a writing board with a paper surface—the paper being printed to resemble wood. Under the false woodwork is a sheet of carbon paper with a plain piece beneath. Whatever is written on an ordinary paper, set upon the board, is transcribed by the carbon. The medium pulls out the duplicate sheet and learns all.

Some clip-boards cost five dollars, but Bramaputra was using the "junior model," which is considerably cheaper, but equally effective. He either took his clients

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one by one, as on the evening we visited him, or used several small clip-boards, one for each customer.

Of course, the professor could give wonderful answers when he wished. In Holliday's case, he didn't want to pass out answers, not when he saw the sort of confidential information that Holliday was handing him in duplicate. Instead of amazing Holliday, the professor faked failure. Each time Holliday left, the professor phoned the right people and tipped them off to what he'd learned, for a price.

How much Bramaputra got from the chisellers who were ruining Holliday's business by calling his turns, we never learned. But we did find out why mediums refer to their wooden writing pad as a "clip-board." It isn't because of the clip at the top of it. It's on account of what the medium does to his customers.

"Delightful Visions in the Crystal" were the experiences promised by Dr. Clear, who, by his own testimony, had studied the one and only Hindu system for enabling clients to gain the power themselves.

It cost a mere two dollars for a visit, but to develop one's own power, the price was raised to five. This, however, was just the beginning of the "come-on" as Mrs. Wivern was to learn.

She was a wealthy lady, Mrs. Wivern, and when Dr. Clear delivered his two-buck visions, he solved one of her problems. Mrs. Wivern had been unable to find a suitable companion, so Dr. Clear sought one in the crystal. He saw a face, but it was vague, so he suggested

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that Mrs. Wivern try the five-dollar method and see for herself.

It wasn't long before Mrs. Wivern saw a face there. She liked the looks of the woman, but wondered how she could find her. Dr. Clear said she wouldn't have to hunt, that the crystal revealed things in a person's own experience, either past or future.

Sure enough, the woman with the face turned up as one of the applicants when Mrs. Wivern advertised for a companion. The woman's name was Miss Hildebrock, and Mrs. Wivern called her Hildy for short. Hildy went everywhere with Mrs. Wivern, except to see Dr. Clear, because Hildy didn't believe in such things as crystal gazing, which was about her only point of dispute with Mrs. Wivern.

Despite Hildy's skepticism, Mrs. Wivern's development increased. In the crystal she saw things that Dr. Clear didn't even know about—little flashes of places where she'd gone with Hildy. So Mrs. Wivern paid fifty dollars for one of Clear's fine, genuine (glass) crystals that cost him one dollar and seventy-five cents each, in dozen lots. She took it home, but it didn't work.

There were two reasons for that, Dr. Clear explained. First, his influence was helpful—second, Hildy's skepticism was harmful. So Mrs. Wivern kept going to see Dr. Clear, despite Hildy's objections.

In the crystal, Mrs. Wivern saw more and more surprising things from the recent past. So, when the crystal revealed an overturned automobile, she canceled a trip that she had planned to Miami Beach. Unfortunately,

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she couldn't dispose of the apartment she had rented for the season, so she sublet it to some stranger, against Hildy's advice.

Mrs. Wivern never collected the rent. Similarly, she lost badly on some real estate deals, and other transactions by trusting persons whose faces she saw in the crystal. Yet Mrs. Wivern felt it was her fault, not that of the crystal, because so many real things in her own experience kept bobbing up. She talked to Dr. Clear about it, and he decided that the crystal visions must be warnings, only.

That was when Perry's face suddenly appeared. Perry was Mrs. Wivern's chauffeur and he'd proved unreliable lately. In fact, Mrs. Wivern was prepared to give him his notice. Along with Perry's face, Mrs. Wivern had a vision of an empty jewel box that she recognized as her own. She hurried home, found the jewels gone, and discovered one of Perry's gloves under the bureau. Hildy remembered that Perry had been in the house a few times, without properly explaining why.

So the arm of the law descended on poor Perry as the perpetrator of a fifty thousand dollar jewel robbery. Hildy advised Mrs. Wivern not to talk about the crystal visions, because people wouldn't believe her. Dr. Clear gave the same advice, because he felt the spirits would prefer to keep their warning confidential.

It was Perry who did the talking, more than anyone expected. He'd listened to a lot of Mrs. Wivern's chit-chat about the wonderful Dr. Clear. He'd driven her to that vicinity a few times and had talked with patrons of the neighborhood gin-mill which was Clear's part-

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time hangout. Perry claimed that he'd been framed, and the police believed he might be right.

A couple of detectives watched Clear's place and saw a veiled lady go in there. They thought they recognized the customer—and they were right. Entering, they nabbed her in conference with Clear over a matter of splitting the take on some stolen jewels. The veiled lady was Hildy, and the jewels belonged to Mrs. Wivern.

The detectives also appropriated the very nice outfit for which Dr. Clear had paid fifty dollars. It consisted of a crystal ball, a stand with a cut-out space just beneath the crystal, and a little roller device that handled a roll of small-sized film. On Hildy they found the tiny camera that used such film.

Hildy was the accomplice that Clear had planted with Mrs. Wivern. Wherever they went, Hildy snapped shots with the watch-sized camera. She turned the negatives over to Dr. Clear, who saw to it that these flashes of Mrs. Wivern's recent past appeared in the crystal. The glass ball magnified any picture that came into the cut-out, and the stand had an automatic gadget that fed them through, one by one. Hildy's picture, those of other people, some accomplices of Clear's were inserted whenever needed.

Of course, Hildy had taken the shot of Perry, and also the empty jewel box—after she'd robbed it—and had planted a glove that Perry had mislaid. The Florida apartment was checked and it turned out that the rent had been paid to a confederate of Clear's. The same applied to several other deals in which Mrs. Wivern had dropped much cash.



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These crystal gazing outfits are still on the market, cameras and all. There are even some good used sets available, like Clear's, because he and Hildy are now doing time and won't be using the device that nearly sent the wrong man to the place where they are now!

Predicting the future was a regular habit with a mental master who called himself Mentalo. He would invite people to his apartment, write things on calling cards, then turn on the radio. When he recognized something that came across the air, he would find the right calling card, brandish it triumphantly in his hand, then turn it over. On it, people would find the very thing that had been broadcasted.

Always, Mentalo used cards supplied him by visitors, and wrote on the blank, or reverse sides of those cards. Of course, he never showed a prediction until after it was fulfilled. That would have shattered his mental confidence. But the predictions couldn't be anything but genuine, because Mentalo only picked up the card with one hand, hence couldn't possible change what he had written.

Another thing Mentalo did. He would predict headlines that were to appear in next Sunday's newspaper. Mentalo would write these on slips of paper, seal them in envelopes, and let persons keep them. The headlines always proved to be correct, though Mentalo let the people open the envelopes themselves.

However, Mentalo would never use the power for worldly gain. He would specify what some of his predictions represented, but, generally, they were unim-

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portant matters. Sometimes, though, he would let clients give a name and Mentalo would visualize some future happening connected with that name, which always proved to be true. The only money that Mentalo ever received was a lecture fee, for he always gave a talk in connection with these demonstrations.

What Mentalo hoped to do was start classes in prophecy, but some of his friends had a better idea. Two of them, Lester Rondo and Roger Freed, were ardent horse players. They had heard of an ex-jockey who gave some terrific tips, but wouldn't listen to anything less than bets of several thousand dollars, so he could cash in heavily on his own commission.

So Rondo and Freed got hold of Jockey Klingley, the tipster concerned, and he agreed to come with them to meet Mentalo. Each thought of a different horse, in separate races, as named by Klingley, and they asked Mentalo to concentrate on the names they had in mind.

Mentalo named each horse correctly and gained a curious association regarding all three. He not only sensed that they were horses, but saw their individual names at the top of a big board. When he realized that he'd picked the winners for some coming races, Mentalo became furious, ordering his false friends from the place.

This made Lester Rondo so remorseful that he refused to place any money on those horses. He said he wanted to square himself with Mentalo. That left the whole opportunity wide open for Roger Freed, who took his friend's share of the bets and handed the cash to Klingley.

It turned out that Klingley was a great picker—of

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losers. Not one of the three horses won its race. In fact, Klingley had purposely picked longshots, and so, wisely—in a negative way—that he didn't bother to even bet on them, though he didn't tell that to Freed. If any had come through, Klingley would have jumped town anyway.

As it happened, Klingley kept one-third of the cash. The rest was split between Rondo and Mentalo. Klingley wasn't a former jockey, Mentalo wasn't a prophet, and Rondo wasn't wealthy. He was just a middle-man, working Freed for a sucker.

All of Mentalo's card-writing "predictions" were done with a device that mediums call a "nail-writer." They used to use it with chalk, for getting messages on slates, but they simplified it to a bit of a pencil on the head of a large thimble, worn on the thumb.

Mentalo wrote nothing on the calling cards at first. After he heard what came across the radio, he picked up the required card, and, in brandishing it, used his hidden thumb, equipped with the nail-writer, to scrawl what he'd just heard. That was the way with all similar predictions.

The Sunday newspaper gag was simple. The headlines always came from the "pre-date" section which is made up a week or more in advance, and is shipped to newsdealers throughout the country. Sold in other cities ahead of the actual date, these sections can be acquired and "predictions" made to fit with the final editions of the New York newspapers. That was the system Mentalo used.

Roger Freed lost about fifteen thousand dollars on

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his one day's betting, and he couldn't blame Mentalo. It turned out that Mentalo had visioned those horses as future winners, which they were—a long time in the future. Besides, Freed had tried to use Mentalo's psychic powers for gain, so he deserved the misfortune that he met.

That is the opinion of Mentalo's honest friends, including Lester Rondo, who has been forgiven and is now back in the fold, waiting for another sucker like Roger Freed to come along.

## CONCLUSION



Though this book is ended, the story is not complete. Thousands upon thousands of pages could be filled with cases, heartbreaking tales in which theft is but a minor part of the damage done. Seduction, rape, theft are only words found in the dictionary . . . behind all these lie death, and destruction of all many hold dear.

You have met spook crooks in this book and probably you have found them colorful, clever and convincing. You have noticed that their chief stock in trade is superstition and preying on the hope that at last here is someone who can lift the veil of the unknown and reveal the future.

In every age the strong as well as the weak have been easy victims of the spook crooks of every period. Yet, in all the history of mankind there has never been such a wave of belief in the supernatural as that which exists today. I thought this was true in 1931 when there were so many who were victims of these charlatans.

World War II made the 1931 estimated "take" of spook crooks of one hundred and twenty-five million dollars pale into insignificance. Based on today's police records, I feel that a two hundred and fifty million dollar 1946 income for charlatans is a modest figure.

The bearded cone-hatted diviners of the Middle Ages

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were bungling amateurs compared to the modern seers whom you have met in this book, so it is my sincere wish that by now you realize—

1. Communication between the living and the dead is not yet established.

2. There has been some inexplicable phenomena in seance rooms. Believers in spiritism state that the "spirits" of the departed came back and demonstrated their return by this phenomena. Scientists say there is a natural or material reason for whatever transpired. I do not judge, but I do say that out of millions of "messages" given by spirit mediums yearly, all that I have ever read, or seen given to dupes, have been based on sleight of hand of one kind or another or on use of some magician's apparatus originally built with the intent to entertain, not to trick an unsuspecting victim into parting with cash.

3. The Smithsonian Institution definitely states "We have no evidence to indicate that the futures of individuals may be predicted in any manner whatsoever." Beyond that, I say that if the future could be predicted, why should the "gifted" fortuneteller waste time predicting a stranger's future when all he would need to do would be to take an office in the Stock Exchange Building at 11 Wall Street, in New York City, and successfully predict which stocks would go up and down. Were he able to do that, it would not be necessary to waste time giving \$2.00 readings.

4. No one possesses supernatural powers of any kind whatsoever. The messages which appear mysteriously on slates are put there by material means, not mystic

## CONCLUSION

powers, and at any store which sells magic apparatus, you may buy (for a dollar up) complete information on "How To Read Sealed Messages," which is the basis of most of the hokum.

5. The application of sleight of hand, chemical process or unseen manipulation, is behind every "miracle" that I have ever seen in any seance room. Miracles are obviously "phony" when a person is operating in a dimly lighted loft which he terms "church."

6. No sincere spiritual church minister has ever, to my knowledge, recommended purchase of oil stocks, gold mines, selling of jewelry and transfer of assets because some "spirit" so directs. The spiritualists who believe in spiritualism as a religion are entirely different from the "spiritists" who are for the most part only spook crooks.

7. Astrology, numerology, palmistry, tea leaf reading, fortunetelling by cards, or by use of any of the so-called pseudo-sciences, are examples of false doctrines invented to impress the credulous and superstitious.

All of which adds up to:—THE DEAD DO NOT TALK!





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