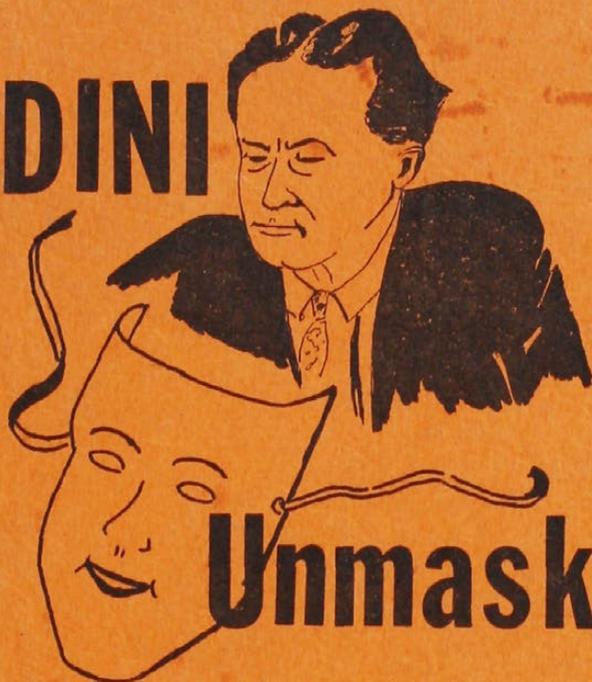


HOUDINI



Unmasked

CODE MESSAGE RECEIVED

By BEATRICE HOUDINI



RECORDS OF TWO DECADES ON THE
HOUDINI-FORD CONTROVERSY

By LYDIA EMERY

COMPILED BY R. G. PRESSING

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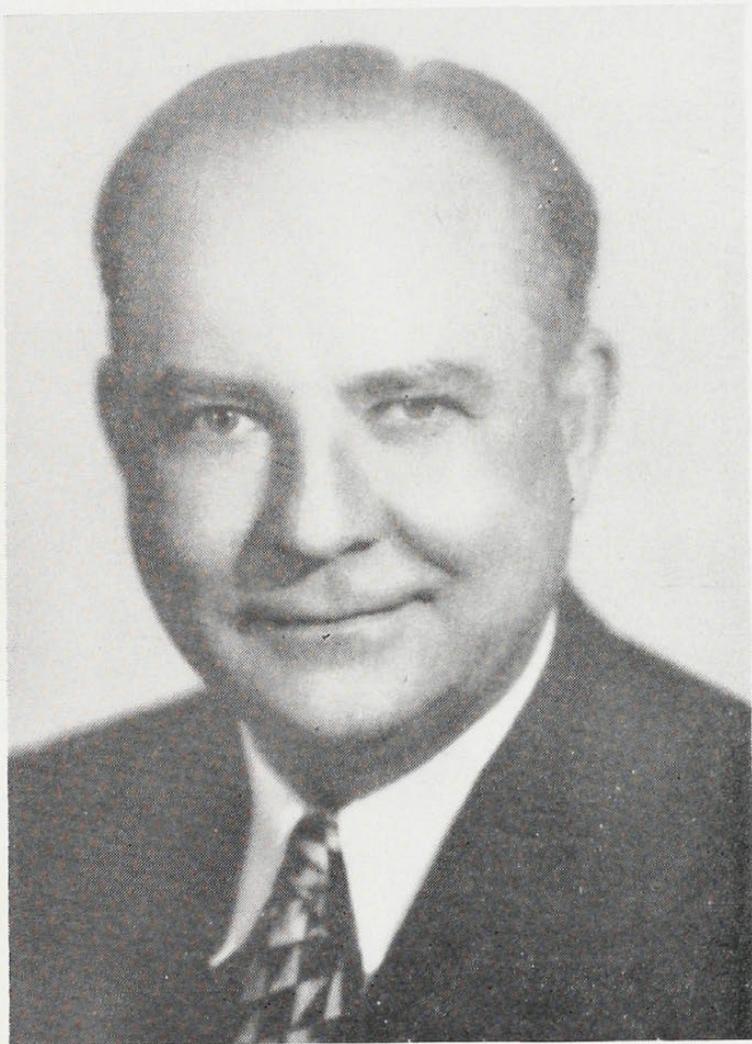
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Arthur Ford

Trance and Clairvoyant Medium;
Internationally-known Lecturer.

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EXPLANATION OF PICTURES ON PAGES 6, 7, and 34

In the picture Page 6, taken by Alex Martin (See Page 36), spirit photographer, Houdini is seated; his assistant stands behind him. Houdini never did explain away the four spirit faces, nor has he ever duplicated this picture. All the so-called claims to the effect that genuine spirit pictures can be duplicated is a lot of nonsense. Of course, there is such a thing as trick photography, double exposure and all that BUT the spirits pictured by mechanical means are usually grotesque and so horrible that even a school boy can tell the difference.

The spirit picture, Page 7, classified as one of the most conclusive proofs that Houdini has manifested, shows a Denver woman standing with her right hand on the chair to the left. Houdini's face can be seen plainly, extreme upper left, second from the bottom. Mr. Martin's integrity and honesty as a medium is on record. He is also recommended by one of Spiritualism's oldest and most reliable members, Rev. Dollie E. Seybold, 422 North Market St., Wichita, Kansas. Rev. Seybold is minister of a church in Wichita, lecturer, writer and medium. She is a member of The National Spiritualist Association and one of their accredited teachers.

N. Y. MENTAL MEDIUM FRUSTRATES HOUDINI

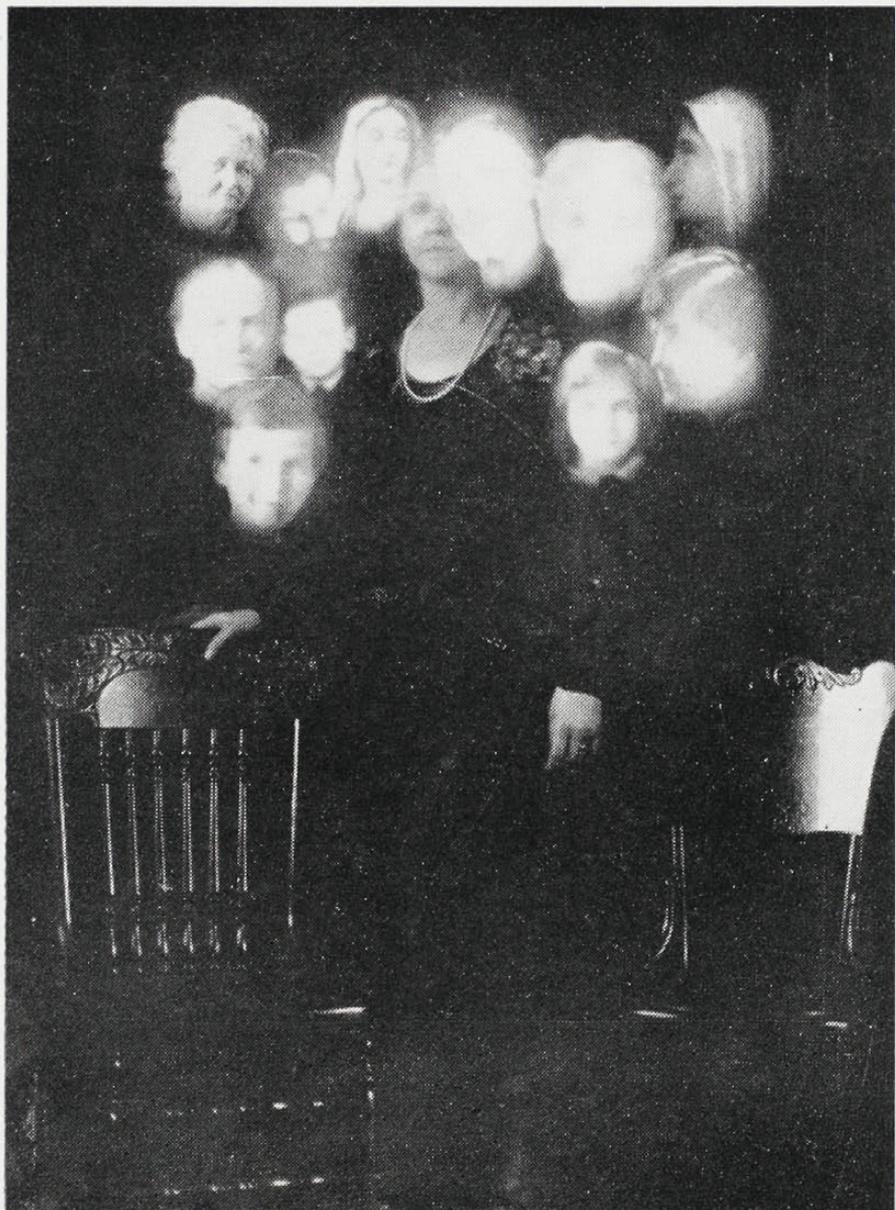
It is interesting to note that, during the time Houdini was trying to expose mediums in New York City, he called at the home of CAROLINE RANDOLPH CHAPMAN. Thinking he would not be recognized, Mr. Houdini asked for a reading. HE GOT IT and was flabbergasted not only because he was told things he could not deny but because Mrs. Chapman would take no money from him. Before his departure, he tried to incriminate the medium by putting a \$5 bill in a vase. Houdini was, however, laughed to scorn by the medium and made to take his "stage" money with him.

HOUDINI SITS FOR SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY



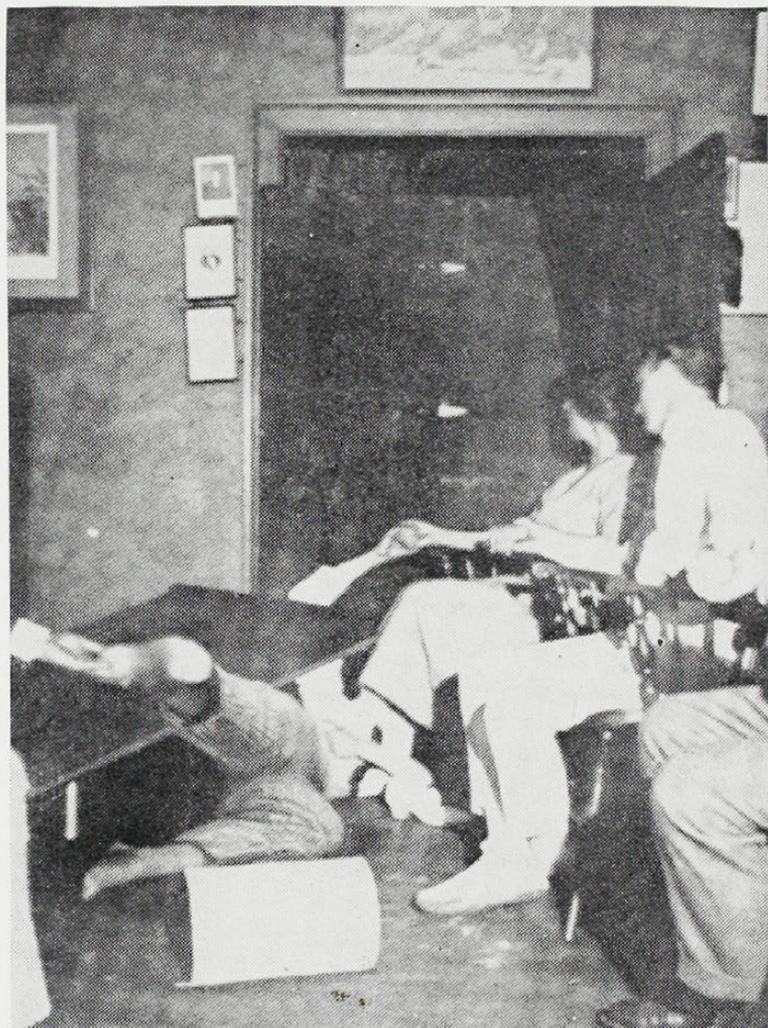
(See explanation Page 5)

HOUDINI'S SPIRIT PICTURE



(See explanation Page 5)

PSYCHIC RESEARCHERS OF YESTER-YEAR



The picture (above), taken from a prominent journal, was headed "The Climax of a Wild Night." It vividly portrays the inane curiosity of some "intellectual" psychic scientists. One of the sitters had an impelling desire to see under the curtain (rear) and during the seance, held in the dark, this flash-light picture was taken. Note psychic researcher, his shoes off, tackling one of the sitters. No wonder mediums have become disgusted with this sort of investigation.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this booklet is to present facts and authenticated data, collected over a period of twenty-five years, that will settle once and for all time the GREAT CONTROVERSY . . . 'Did Mrs. Houdini receive the code message from her husband?' and "If so, why did she deny it?"

The pictures, with detailed information and the story, written by *Lydia Emery*, will answer the first question. The answer to the last question . . . only Mrs. Houdini could know. The



Lydia Emery

facts in the case are: Fourteen years before her passing, Mrs. Houdini began to publicly state that she did not "believe"; Every *Hallowe'en*, at midnight, she gathered a group of newspaper men on the top floor of a Hollywood Hotel and, without a medium, tried to call Houdini "back"; for ten years, not missing a year, the newspapers printed the sordid details of this great *Hallowe'en* hoax. The continual "barping" on the subject moulded the minds of the reading public to the extent that no matter what was printed to the contrary, the wide adverse publicity given to Mrs. Houdini's tale, could not be overcome.

The *true* story was repeatedly submitted to all the large Press Associations and newspapers but they would not print it. And so, with this booklet "*Houdini Unmasked*," it is hoped that the greatest hoax ever foisted on man, stands EXPOSED.

The end of this fiasco came with the passing of Beatrice (Mrs. Harry) Houdini, February 18th, 1943. The wife of one of the greatest magicians and tricksters could not evade the "grim reaper." She must have actually known down in her heart that there IS AN AFTERLIFE. Why else would she make such a hullabaloo about it and keep denying something if it never existed? Was she trying to be a good trouper . . . till the end?

She was evidently carrying out her husband's wishes, but

the law of compensation works in devious ways. Even before the end, Mrs. Houdini was a broken woman. In her effort to reach New York City, where she intended to create another stir with her blatant denials of the fact that she had ever received the code message from Harry Weiss (Houdini's real name), she broke down; was rushed to an oxygen tent, but too late. She passed away.

Aside from the signed message on page 37, the real truth of the whys and wherefores of the shananagans carried on by The Houdini's in their effort to discredit Spiritualism, may never be known. Suffice to say, Mrs. Houdini *did* sign the statement. SHE NEVER DENIED IT.

She did deny that she ever *heard* Houdini's spirit voice and that she ever *saw* his spirit form. She was *not* a medium so how could she? However, she did receive a conclusive, incontestible message. Her denial was only a trick, so worded that 99% of the public and 100% of the news reporters believed her. She was trying to follow her husband's methods.



R. G. Pressing

The irony of it all was the fact that Houdini was able to have his name before the public every year . . . for 14 long years after his death. SOME MAGICIAN. No wonder all the *second rate conjurers* who have tried to follow Houdini's footsteps have been laughed to scorn. Why they hardly had time to bury Mr. Houdini when another magician came out with that thread-bare \$10,000 award . . . claiming that any medium's psychic phenomena could be duplicated.

The strange part of it all is that, even today, millions of outsiders and thousands of Spiritualists still think that all the fanfare about the \$10,000 award was on the level. At no time, since that mythical award was offered, has there even been a clause in the challenge,—stipulating "UNDER THE SAME CONDITIONS." In other words, all the magician had to do was to duplicate spirit phenomena by mechanical means, using

a "bag of tricks" and half dozen accomplices. When these performances are presented on the stage, those that want to believe, howl and applaud; those that KNOW THE TRUTH OF PSYCHIC PHENOMENA are simply nauseated.



The reading matter in this booklet may be used, provided proper credit is given (i.e.) "Taken from 'Houdini Unmasked—or Records of two decades on the Harry Houdini, Arthur Ford, Beatrice Houdini Controversy'—published by Dale News, Inc., Lily Dale, N. Y., U. S. A."

The pictures cannot be used without special permission.

R. G. Pressing



SON OF A RABBI

Houdini was born in 1874, son of a Hungarian rabbi who settled in Appleton, Wisconsin. In his teens he gave up his real name, Erich Weiss, and adopted a more euphonious one in honor of his boyhood inspiration and idol, the famous French conjurer, Robert Houdin. Houdini's "Memoirs" were fascinating reading for the magic-minded youngster who saw his first magician in the sideshows of a traveling circus.

Short, stocky in build, with powerful muscles and a fine physique, the gray-eyed illusionist did not, as most people supposed, depend on his physical prowess alone to effect his releases. Nor could he, as many believed, press his thumb so tightly against his fingers that the diameter of his hand would reduce itself to less than that of his wrist.

The real secret behind his marvelous escape work was his vast knowledge of knots, locks and all forms of ancient and modern confinements.

A "DEAD" MAN TESTS THE TESTERS

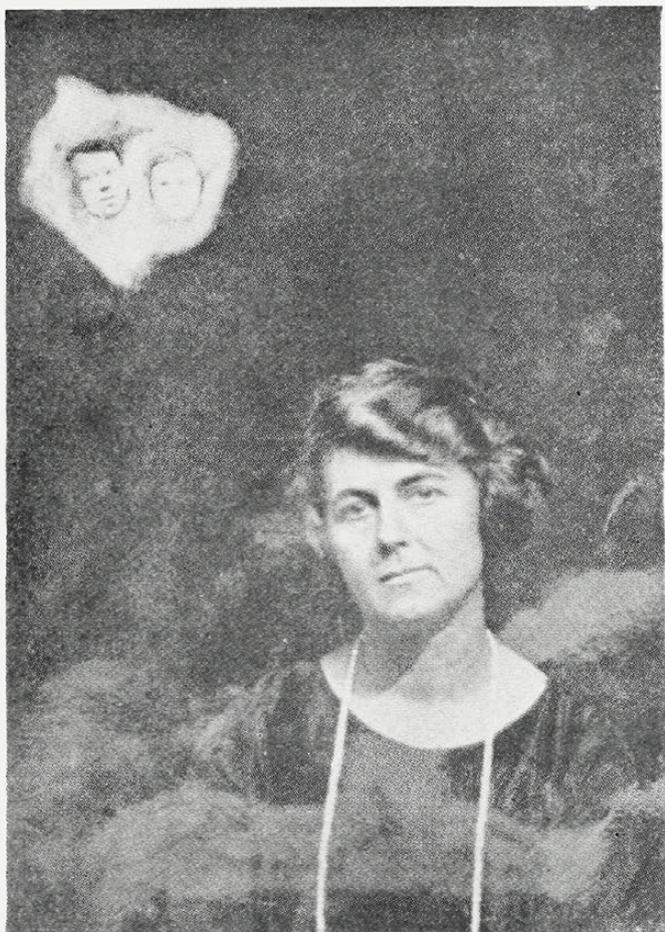


WALTER STINSON, "Dead" Brother of MARGERY CRANDON, famous Boston medium. For years, psychic researchers have been testing the Spirit World, Spirit Guides and Mediums, BUT "WALTER" was one spirit who kept the pseudo Psychic Researchers "in line."

WALTER was not long in "catching up" with the trickery Houdini tried to play on his sister, Margery, when he (Houdini) brought rulers and gadgets into the seance room and attempted to shift the blame for their use upon the medium. Many magicians and so-called researchers have been "gently" ordered out of the seance room by this alert spirit.

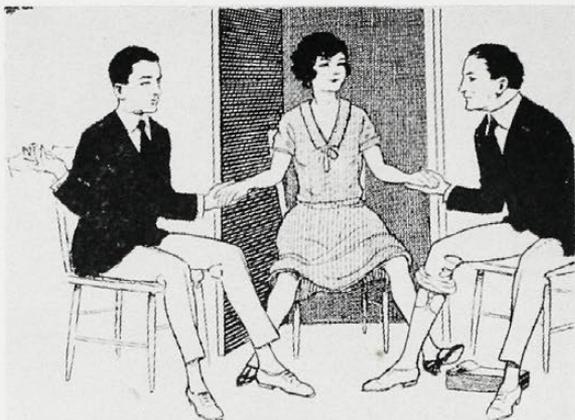
Nothing is more despicable than to try to trick a spirit entity. Tests and research, yes, BUT it's about time some conjurers and "researchers" undergo a little investigation themselves.

SPIRIT OF WALTER PHOTOGRAPHED



The psychic picture (above) taken by Mrs. Deane, an English medium, shows Margery, the sitter. The half-tone process has robbed the extras (upper left) of much of the clarity which is theirs on the original prints. The one nearer Margery is recognized as Walter; See the out-of-print book "Margery" (Page 140) by J. Malcolm Bird.

HOUDINI TRICKS MARGERY



The Deadly Parallel

Below: Foot Control as the camera showed it. Above: the drawing Houdini employed to illustrate his claims of fraud. Observe the discrepancy in the height and position of the bell-box, and position of feet and legs. For full description of pictures above, see J. Malcolm Bird's rare book "Margery," pages 418 and 419.

Houdini

UNMASKED

RECORDS OF TWO DECADES

On The

HARRY HOUDINI, ARTHUR FORD

BEATRICE HOUDINI CONTROVERSY

By

LYDIA EMERY

Compiled by

R. G. PRESSING



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1947

15

SHE AFFIRMED — THEN DENIED



Beatrice Houdini

She admitted receiving the code message through the mediumship of Arthur Ford—then denied—but her signed statement (see page 37) and her letter to Walter Winchell (see page 40) stand as mute evidence. Her denials during the latter years of her life were published only by journals antagonistic to the truths of the religion of Spiritualism.

Facts About the Trickster

HARRY HOUDINI

The following data appeared on page 213, *The Encyclopedia of Psychic Science* by Nandor Fodor: Houdini was a very clever magician, but according to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, his narrowmindedness was sufficiently indicated by the fact that he died disbelieving that the phenomena of hypnotism was genuine. In *Houdini and Conan Doyle*, by B. M. L. Ernst and Hereward Carrington, many interesting letters are published on Houdini's strange adventures in psychic realms.

After his death, there was a long controversy about the code words which he left behind to prove his identity if messages be claimed to originate from him. Will Goldstone, noted English magician, in *Sensational Tales of Mystery Men*, quotes a letter from Mrs. Houdini with this admission: "I have gotten the message I have been waiting for from my beloved husband, how, if not by spiritual aid, I do not know." The medium was Arthur Ford.



One of the last photographs of Houdini, who attacked Spiritualism because they professed to believe that the "dead" could communicate with the living.

Some of Houdini's American colleagues made sweeping concessions. David P. Abbott, of the American S.P.R., and E. A. Parsons, investigated in 1906 the direct-voice phenomena of Mrs. E. Blake. They both became convinced of its genuine nature. Abbott published his experiences in *Omaha World Herald*. Howard Thurston, upon whom the mantle of Keller fell, is a convinced Spiritualist.

HOUDINI FEARED HIM



SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE called Houdini's bluff many times, both publicly and privately.

Houdini Unmasked

By LYDIA EMERY

Records of two decades on the Harry Houdini-Arthur
Ford-Beatrice Houdini Controversy

*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth
shall set you free.—John VIII. 32.*

Erich Weiss, known to the world as *Harry Houdini*, American magician and writer, famed for his spectacular escapes from handcuffs, locks, straitjackets and chained chests under water, is *dead*. He, who had attempted to expose what he termed fraudulent Spiritualistic mediums and their phenomena, left to the Library of Congress his collection of magic, the most complete and valuable in the world.

Among his writings were, "A Magician Among the Spirits," "Miracle Mongers," and "The Unmasking of Robert Houdin"; based on the life of *Jean Eugene Robert Houdin*, (1805-71) French conjurer and magician, celebrated for his optical illusions and mechanical devices, and for the fact that he attributed his magic to natural rather than to so-called "supernatural" powers. The first to employ

electro-magnetism for his effects, he authored an "*Autography* in 1857 and "*Secrets of Prestidigitation and Magic*" in 1868.

It was for *Houdini* that *Erich Weiss* selected the name *Harry Houdini*; a name which was destined to become linked with one of the greatest controversies in history; the *Truth of Survival*.

Born in 1874, *Houdini's* childhood dreams were centered around becoming a magician. As a result, he and his brother, *Theodore Hardeen*, became professional tricksters at an early age, traveling from town to town with a small group of assistants. It became a common sight to see *Harry Houdini* tightly bound with ropes, locked in a heavy chest around which chains were securely drawn, and thrown overboard into a local river. Making an escape, he was rewarded with whatever small change one cared to donate. This led to roadshows with small companies and later to vaudeville, which he head-lined with his wife, *Beatrice*.

It was not until the early 1920's however, that *Houdini* received national attention, and this was accomplished through his connection with the widely-publicized mediumship of the renowned "*Margery*," who in private life was known as *Mina Stinson Crandon*, wife of the well-known Boston surgeon, *Dr. L. R. G. Crandon*.



"MARGERY"
July 24, 1924

It was through the interest of this great physician in psychic research that his wife became one of the most noted American Spiritualist mediums. Books on the subject were followed by visits to clairvoyants, and it was during a rare visit to a medium that Mrs. Crandon's deceased brother, *Walter*, contacted her for the first time, relating trivial occurrences as tests pertaining to the authen-



Dr. L. R. G.
CRANDON

ticity of his appearance to the medium, and informing his sister that she herself possessed great psychic ability.

When told of *Walter's* visitation, a youth who had been killed in an accident a number of years prior to this seance, *Dr. Crandon* encouraged his wife's spiritual development by deciding to experiment privately. Not being familiar with the technique involved in the act of development, *Mina Crandon* lapsed into several trances from which she had difficulty returning to consciousness.

Almost from the beginning of *Mrs. Crandon's* seances, her brother was in control; first, simple table liftings, then raps and levitations. Flying ash-trays and vases, often filled with flowers, whistling and music, cold breezes and materialized hands that wrote messages in several languages, including *Chinese*, were evident after only a few months. Other than occasional demonstrations of automatic writing, the manifestations were mostly physical. Ectoplasmic features became a common occurrence.

🔥 The entire records of *Mina Stinson Crandon* and the

A HIGHLY PUBLICIZED SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPH



A rare photograph of J. Malcolm Bird, psychic researcher and author of the book "Margery." This picture, taken through the mediumship of William Hope, famous spirit photographer, shows one definite spirit extra and numerous other extraneous marks.

seances which took place at her home at No. 10 Lime St., Boston, Massachusetts, can be found in the book, "Margery," written by *J. Malcolm Bird*, who attended many sittings with the famous medium. It was Mr. Bird who first called Mrs. Crandon "Margery," in order to shield her and Dr. Crandon from the eyes of the world during the *Scientific American Psychic Investigation*, in which she played the major role.



Professor
McDOUGALL
M.D., F.R.S.

When word of "Margery's" remarkable demonstrations of spirit contact was made known, noted surgeons, philosophers, psychologists and physicists, including *Austin C. Lescarboursa* of the *American Scientific Press*, sought admittance to No. 10 Lime Street.

In *London* and *Paris*, where "Margery" was taken by her husband, the renowned medium captured the interest of leading *British* and *European* students of psychic research, as well as the interest of the late *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, who had read of her feats in the "World Psychic Press."

In 1924 the magazine, "*Scientific American*," conducted an investigation in a search for genuine psychic phenomena which could pass the most rigorous scientific tests. For these tests, a committee of five men were to be chosen, men whose integrity was above reproach.

The Investigating Committee of "*Scientific American*" was composed of the following: Dr. *William McDougall*,

Professor of Psychology at Harvard University; Dr. Daniel Frost *Comstock*, Physicist on the Faculty of Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Dr. Hereward *Carrington*, American delegates to the International Psychical Congress; Dr.



Walter Franklin Prince

Walter Franklin *Prince*, Principal Research Officer of the American Society for Psychical Research; and Harry *Houdini*, stage magician and escape-artist. There was one non-voting member of the five investigators, Mr. Bird, who acted as secretary for the taking of shorthand notes.

The investigation revolved around a group of seances to be conducted by "*Margery*." Although *Houdini* had accepted the post as an investigator, he did not attend many of the sittings, due, he alibied, to his vaudeville engagements. However, when newspaper accounts informed him of the meetings, he anxiously wired, asking that no definite votes be taken until his arrival.

It was one of these seances attended by *Houdini* which apparently decided the judges in favor of the authenticity of "*Margery's*" mediumship.

As always, *Walter*, Mrs. Crandon's brother, acted as

HOUDINI TRIES TO TRICK MARGERY



(By courtesy of the British College of Psychic Science.)

The picture (above) shows Margery in boxed cage devised by Houdini. It was used during a "Scientific American" investigation. Margery's right hand is held by Dr. Prince; her left by Houdini. At the first sitting, Walter caught Houdini putting rubber eraser under flapper of bell-box to prevent ringing. At the second sitting, Walter discovered a folding rule "planted" in the control box with the evident purpose of discrediting the medium.

the medium's collaborator during trance. On this particular occasion, the magician had brought a massive box in which the medium was placed, with only her head and hands free. Locks were snapped into place and her hands were gripped on either side by members of the committee. Houdini was chosen to sit at Mrs. Crandon's right and to hold her hand throughout the seance. (See picture opposite page.) At this time a bell (*) was placed a few feet in front of the cabinet.

A few minutes later, "Margery" had gone into trance and Walter came through with greetings to the committee members. When he reached the trickster, however, instead of extending greetings, he asked how much money the magician was receiving for stopping the phenomena. Whereupon *Dr. Comstock* interrupted by asking what the entity meant by such a remark.

Houdini's "Pink Pamphlet"

According to the recorded scientific report, *Walter* replied, "*Comstock, you take that bell-box out into white light, examine it, and report back. You'll see fast enough what I mean.*"

Following *Walter's* instructions, the physicist found a rubber eraser, from the end of a pencil, tucked between the contact boards at an angle. Although this did not make the bell wholly inoperative, it did require approximately four times the usual pressure to ring it.

Shortly after the committee's findings, *Harry Houdini* published his notorious "*Pink Pamphlet*" independently of the investigating scientists, and without their knowl-

(*) On display at the Psychic Observer Office, Lily Dale, N. Y.

edge, bombasting psychic research. Two years later, 1926, Houdini passed away.

The *Houdini* messages were confused by numerous persons for many years. The mother of *Harry Houdini* had promised before her death, to return to her son with a pre-arranged message, if survival were true. This message, however, was never received by the magician, who disbelieved in Spiritualism. "*The Houdini Messages*," an outstanding booklet on the subject, was written by Francis R. Fast, 150 Broadway, New York City. This booklet is now out of print.

After *Houdini's* death, the world waited—for what they did not know. Perhaps only a word which would mean survival. But none was forthcoming. The pre-arranged message between the magician and his wife, that had received so much publicity remained unspoken.

Ford Accused

Then, in 1928, *Rev. Arthur Ford*, Pastor of the First Spiritualist Church, Carnegie Hall, New York City, announced he had a message from Houdini's mother, and that the key-word was "*Forgive.*"

Immediately after this announcement, news reporters from the "*Brooklyn Eagle*" came forth in print with an account, branding the minister a fraud. According to one reporter, *Beatrice Houdini* had spoken of this message in an interview with the *Brooklyn Eagle* in March of 1927. Other papers soon took up the cry, denouncing the youthful medium, who was then only in his middle twenties.

Born and reared in Florida, *Arthur Ford*, as a boy, was simply called *Art*, and his greatest ambition was to go barefoot. The son of *Albert Ford* and *Henrietta Brown Ford*, he was one of four children.

Immediately after being graduated from high school, while still in his teens, he married and had one son. This marriage, however, was of very short duration, and it was while in college that he came to the attention of *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*. The interest of the celebrated Englishman



FLETCHER
(An enlarged Spirit Picture)

led to study in *India* and to recognition of the Florida youth's gift of mediumship throughout *Europe* and *England*. Receiving a summons from *Her Majesty, Queen Alexandria*, Ford was given a jeweled emblem of the British Coat of Arms as a token of her esteem.

As the joint-protege of *Doyle* and *Sir Oliver Lodge*, *Arthur Ford* returned to America as minister of the First Spiritualist Church in Carnegie Hall.

At the time of the first *Houdini* message, the noted medium and lecturer had recently lost his son, who died from exposure after falling through the ice while skating. Deeply immersed in his own sorrow, he refused to comment on the debate at hand.

Instead, in November of 1928, he again sat in trance. The second message was delivered by the medium's spirit collaborator. "*Fletcher*," a French-Canadian, during eight

separate seances; four with individuals and four with small groups, among them a New York physician and *Hamilton Emmonse of England*, who was visiting America at that time, and who was present at three sittings.

The message, in its entirety, took over ten weeks to assemble, since only one word at a time was possible at the beginning of the experiment, which took place in *Ford's* hotel room, some miles from the *Houdini* residence at No. 67 Payson Avenue.

"*The first word,*" Fletcher said, after coming through in a well-lighted room, "*is the one that is going to unlock the rest.*" The first word relayed to *Fletcher* by the spirit, *Harry Houdini*, was "*Rosabelle.*"

It was not until two weeks later that a second word, "*Now,*" was added. In December, the third word was given, which was "*Look,*" and described as actually being the sixth word in the code.

During the holidays, however, *Fletcher* asked that the word "*Now*" be withdrawn as possibly incorrect. Two other words, "*Right*" and "*Now,*" were also brought through and eliminated. At the end of the year, four new words were added. They were, "*Rosabelle,*" "*Answer,*" "*Pray,*" and "*Tell.*"

Several days following the *New Year*, the seventh seance was conducted and the guide beheld but two errors in the message, which were to consist of transposing the third and fourth words, and the last words, of the ten complete words in the sequence.

Speaking for *Houdini*, *Fletcher* continued, "*He tells me that he has put the next five words, explaining these, in French.*" The control had not deciphered them and therefore gave the other words in advance.

On January 5th, 1929, the eighth and final seance took place, at which time the last word of the second *Houdini* message was given. It was "Tell." The time was then asked by the Spirit control and recorded as being 9:23 P. M. This was followed by a dictated message which was to be written in longhand and delivered to *Beatrice Houdini* from her husband.

"*Harry Houdini whose real name was Erich Weiss, is here,*" Fletcher said, "*and wishes to send to his wife, Beatrice Houdini, the ten word code which he would do if it were possible to communicate. Houdini says you are to take this message to her, and upon acceptance of it, he wishes her to follow the plan they agreed upon prior to his passing.*"

Whereupon, the code message, in its entirety, was repeated. It was as follows:

"ROSABELLE—ANSWER—TELL—PRAY—ANSWER
LOOK—TELL—ANSWER—ANSWER—TELL!"

Upon completion of the note and message, the letter was signed by those present, who were, Francis R. *Fast*, a New York broker and importer, Helen E. *Morris*, Dorothy *Stafford*, and John W. *Stafford*, Associate Editor of the *Scientific American*.

Fletcher's next speech was stenographically recorded by Mr. *Fast* and Mr. *Stafford*, and is as follows:

"That last is the message which is to go to his (*Houdini's*) wife. He wants it signed in ink by each one present. He says the code is known only to him and to his wife, and that no one on earth but those two know it. He says there is no danger on that score, and that she must make it public. It must come from her; you are nothing more than agents.

"He says that when this comes through there will be a veritable storm, that many will seek to destroy her and she will be accused of everything that is not good, but she is honest enough to keep the pact which they repeated over and over before his death. The last words he spoke were those used in going over this together, so that they would understand it clearly. 'I know,' he says, 'that she will be happy, because neither of us believed that it would be possible'."

"Her husband says that on receipt of this message she must set a time, as soon as possible, when she will sit with this instrument *Arthur Ford*, while I, Fletcher, speak to her, and after he has repeated this message to her, she is to return a code to him which will be understood by her and by him alone. The code that will be returned will be a supplement to this code, and the two together will spell a word which sums it all up, and that word will be the message that he wants to send back. He refuses to give that word until he gives it to her."

The Final Seance

The next day after the final seance, which was Sunday, Mr. Fast and Mr. Stafford, both strangers to Mrs. Houdini, called at the *Houdini* home where *Beatrice Houdini* lived with her mother, *Mrs. Balbonoa Rabner*, her sister, *Mrs. Marie Hinson*, *Mrs. Minnie Chester* and *Miss Julia Karchere*, her life-long companion, to deliver the letter and code message. The magician's wife had been slightly injured in a fall on New Year's, but she nevertheless received the two men.

At the conclusion of their testimonies, and with the code before her as mute proof of their statements, she

agreed readily to a seance which was to be conducted at her home two days later.

On January 8th, 1929, *Arthur Ford*, accompanied by three members of his group and *Harry R. Zander*, a representative of the *United Press*, called at No. 67 Payson Avenue, where they met *Betatrice Houdini* and two of her friends. The *Roman Catholic* wife of the world's greatest trickster lay on a couch as she motioned the visitors to be seated.

How Could She Deny?

Relaxing in a chair that had belonged to *Harry Houdini*, the medium, *Arthur Ford*, again went as if into deep slumber and the voice of *Fletcher*, with its French-Canadian accent, filled the room.

"Hello, *Bess*, *sweetheart*," the entity smiled, speaking for *Harry Houdini*, and repeating the ten words of the code. "*This code*," he said, "*is one you used in one of your secret mind-reading acts. Now, Harry wants you to tell him whether or not they are right.*"

"Yes," Mrs. Houdini nodded, "*they are.*"

Fletcher hesitated, then continued. "He smiles and says, '*Thank you*'."

Pausing a moment, the entity went on, "He now tells you to remove your wedding ring and to tell them what *Rosabelle* means."

With deliberate movements, Mrs. Houdini slipped the band from her left hand and sang:

"Rosabelle, sweet Rosabelle,
I love you more than I can tell;
O'er me you cast a spell,
I love you! My Rosabelle!"

As the song died on her lips, the guide spoke again. "He says, 'I thank you, darling. The first time I heard you sing that was years ago in our first show together.'"

A few minutes later the control informed the former vaudeville star that her husband was showing him a picture, "And draws the curtains so, in this manner." Whereupon, she responded in French, "*Je tire le rideau comme ca.*" The nine words succeeding "*Rosabelle*" were to spell one word in the Houdini mind-reading code.

Quoting *Houdini*, Fletcher explained the second word, which was "*Answer*," as representing the letter "B," which is the second letter of the alphabet. The next word in the code was "*Tell*," and the fifth letter of the alphabet "E." "L" being the twelfth letter, the first and second words of the code were used to make up the twelve separate letters, as below:

THE ORIGINAL CODE

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 1. Pray | A |
| 2. Answer | B |
| 3. Say | C |
| 4. Nok | D |
| 5. Tell | E |
| 6. Please | F |
| 7. Speak | G |
| 8. Quickly | H |
| 9. Look | I |
| 10. Be quick | J |

The first ten letters of the alphabet were represented by ten words, the eleventh letter of the code beginning

with one-one, followed by two-two for the twelfth, etc., until the alphabet was complete.

In order to receive the correct message, it was necessary that the correct sequence be followed, otherwise, the letters would have been jumbled and another word sup-
planted.

At the conclusion of the seance, the medium's Spirit guide gave forth the one key-word that was made possible through the ten separate words, several of them having been used in repetition. It was the same word employed in the message given *Arthur Ford* by *Houdini's* mother the year before.

"BELIEVE!"

Listed below is the deciphered code word sequence and its meaning:

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Answer | B |
| Tell | E |
| Prayer, answer (1 and 2) | L |
| Look | I |
| Tell | E |
| Answer, answer (2 and 2) | V |
| Tell | E |

That same evening, as well as the following morning, "*The World*," "*The New York Sun*," and "*Times*" newspapers carried the report of the message deliverance. John W. Stafford, Associate Editor of *Scientific American*, said he was "*convinced, after attending several of the seances, that Harry Houdini, dead world famous magician, talked through a medium with Mrs. Beatrice Houdini, his widow.*" Stafford concluded, "*In this case, accepting the good faith*

of all parties concerned, which I do, there can be no doubt that communication has been established between a living person and one dead."

Mrs. L. R. G. Crandon, the Boston medium known as "Margery," whom *Houdini* had attempted to expose, said, in a statement to the United Press, that she was "sure the message was genuine."

Mrs. *Laura Pruden*, Cincinnati medium who had been acclaimed by *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, said that some would alibi that telepathy might explain it. Whereupon, it was brought to attention via news accounts that the message had not been received in the presence of Mrs. *Houdini*; and while certain phases of telepathy were possible between persons some distance apart, these occurrences were either arranged, whereas the two persons were in mental accord, or mere flash impressions would manifest upon rare occasions. Such a difficult feat of *mind-reading* was eliminated by leading *scientists on telepathy* as being utterly impossible.

Vault Held the Code

While newspapers were hailing this phenomena, Mrs. *Houdini*, accompanied by those who had attended the seance at her home, rode to the 5th Avenue Branch of the *Manufacturers' Trust Co.*, and withdrew a sealed envelope that had been locked in the *Houdini* vault.

Before the witnesses, she broke the seal and laid the papers on a desk before them. *The words were identical with those given by Fletcher while Arthur Ford* was in trance! Even the request that Mrs. *Houdini* remove her ring and sing "*Rosabelle*" had been set down as a part of the test.

Following this disclosure, *Beatrice Houdini* worded a dated statement on her own stationery, declaring the mes-

sage given her by *Arthur Ford* to be correct in every detail. Her signature was witnessed by *Harry R. Zander*, the United Press Representative, her good friend, *Mrs. Minnie Chester*, and *John W. Stafford*, of the Scientific America.

(For statement see page 37.)



HOUDINI'S MASTER



In the picture above, taken in 1925, Houdini is consulting with his close friend, Alex Martin, noted Denver psychic photographer. During their acquaintance, Mr. Houdini sat with Martin many times (see picture Page 6). At no time, by word or pen, did Mr. Houdini ever condemn Martin's mediumship.



**Hereward
CARRINGTON**

For over 50 years a distinguished American psychical investigator and author of many important and popular books on the subject of psychic science. When 19, he joined the Society for Psychical Research. Resides in Hollywood, California.

THE STATEMENT



NEW YORK CITY.

JAN. 9TH, 1929

REGARDLESS OF ANY STATEMENTS MADE TO THE CONTRARY, I WISH TO DECLARE THAT THE MESSAGE, IN ITS ENTIRETY, AND IN THE AGREED UPON SEQUENCE, GIVEN TO ME BY ARTHUR FORD, IS THE CORRECT MESSAGE PRE-ARRANGED BETWEEN MR. HOUDINI AND MYSELF.

Beatrice Houdini

WITNESSED;

Harry R. Zander.

Minnie Chester

John W. Stafford -

When interviewed by reporters, who asked if she thought her mind could have been read, the magician's wife replied, "*Impossible, I never saw Mr. Ford or any of the persons with him until that day. Of course, I knew the code, but I had no idea what combination of words Harry would use; and when he sent 'Believe,' it was a surprise.*"

Thus the last shred of doubt concerning the *mind-reading* angle had been removed. *Mrs. Houdini herself had not known the sequence of words which had been sealed in an envelope and locked within a vault in the 5th Avenue Branch of the Manufacturers' Trust Company!*

"Pro and Con" Battle

It was also revealed that *Charles Williams*, Mrs. Houdini's press agent, had asked her for the code, as well as other *Houdini* secrets, to include in some of the many articles and books written by him for the former vaudeville head-liner. She had, however, refused to divulge the code-word to any third person, and the sequence itself would have been impossible to have divulged, since she was unaware of the manner in which her husband would present the word, if and when Spirit communication were possible.

Williams, who wrote a series of articles for the "*Evening Graphic*," detailing Mrs. Houdini's memory of Houdini's exposes of the physical, distinguished, in *Williams'* own words, from the psychical, and who had also been in on the arrangements for the coup, admitted that he, too, was convinced of the authenticity of the message.

The *pro and con* battle was on. The attempts of a widely publicized professional magician and prestidigitator, to duplicate the phenomena, wherein he said that he could have produced the "*spirit message*" from Houdini, which

Mrs. Houdini proclaimed to be genuine, caused the controversy to wax more violently than ever between the believing and the skeptical.

Meanwhile, *Joseph Lewis*, President of the *Freethinkers' Society* of New York, offered \$25,000 for the reproduction of a conversation between *Houdini* and himself held in the dressing-room of the Hippodrome Theatre in New York in 1926.

Again this highly publicized magician, in conjunction with the magazine, "*Science and Invention*," offered \$21,000 for similar feats. When these offers were made public, it was pointed out that Mrs. Houdini herself had previously offered a \$10,000 reward to anyone giving her the correct message, but that this offer had been withdrawn at the request of prominent Spiritualists when it became known that *Arthur Ford* was ready to deliver the secret code which had been received at the eight separate seances.

This rejection of the \$10,000 reward before the message was given, temporarily brought the debate to a halt, and thousands of interested parties to the defense of psychic research, whose members were interested *not in profit* but in securing recognition of personal conscious survival after death.

Leading columnists joined in the battle, acclaiming psychic phenomena. The controversy was topped by *Walter Winchell*, who devoted his entire column, "YOUR BROADWAY AND MINE," on Saturday, January 19th, 1929, to a letter written him by Mrs. Beatrice Houdini, a copy of which appears:

(See Page 40)

Your Broadway and Mine

By Walter Winchell

MRS. HOUDINI EXPLAINS

Dear Mr. Walter Winchell:—

This letter is not for publicity. I do not need publicity. I want to let Houdini's old friends know that I did not betray his trust.

I am writing you this letter personally because I wish to tell you emphatically that I was no party to any fraud.

Now regarding the seance: For two years I have been praying to receive the message from my husband. Every day, for two years, I have received messages from all parts of the world. Had I wanted a publicity stunt I no doubt could have chosen any of these sensational messages. When I repudiated these messages no one said a word, excepting the writers who said I did not have the nerve to admit the truth.

When the real message, *THE* message that Houdini and I agreed upon, came to me, and I accepted it as the truth I was greeted with jeers. Why? Those who denounced the entire thing as a fraud claim that I had given Mr. A. Ford the message. If Mr. Ford said this I brand him a liar. Mr. Ford has since stoutly denied this ugly thing, and knowing him as well as I do, I prefer to believe Mr. Ford. Others say the message has been common property and known to them for some time. Why do they tell me this now, when they knew my heart was hungry for the true words from my husband?



WINCHELL

The many stories told about me I have no way to tell to the world the truth or the untruth, for I have no paper at my beck and call,

every one has a different opinion of how the message was obtained. With all these different tales I would not even argue. However, when any one accuses me of GIVING the words that my beloved husband and I labored so long to convince ourselves of the truth of communication, then I will fight and fight until the breath leaves my body.

If any one claims I gave the code, I can only repeat they lie. Why should I want to cheat myself? I do not need publicity. I have no intention of going on the stage, or as some paper said, on a lecture tour. My husband made it possible for me to live in greatest comfort. I don't need to earn money. I have gotten the message I have been waiting for from my beloved, how, if not by spiritual aid, I do not know.

And now, after I told the world that I had received the true message, every one seems to have known of the code, yet never told me. They left it for Mr. Ford to tell me, and I am accused of giving the words. It's all so confusing. In conclusion may I say that God and Houdini and I know that I did not betray my trust. For the rest of the world I really ought not to care a hang, but somehow I do, therefore this letter. Forgive its length.

Sincerely yours,

Beatrice Houdini

At this point in the controversy, the same highly publicized magician immediately issued a statement, claiming that in a safety deposit box in New York was a heavily sealed envelope, containing secret messages entrusted to him by *Edison*, *Houdini*, and *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, and that each vowed, if return from the grave were possible, to transmit the key-words that only he (the highly publicized conjurer) knew.

This statement was printed in "*Life*," the American Pictorial weekly. At a seance described by that journal,

the same highly publicized conjurer stated that he also possessed a similar code message deposited with him by *Sir Oliver Lodge*.

Sir Oliver had made no mention of this alleged message in his will, in books he had written, or orally to any one he had ever met. His will stated only that he would try to *prove his survival after death* by transmitting a series of messages he had written and deposited in sealed envelopes with the *Society of Psychological Research* in London, England.



Denis Conan
DOYLE

Conjurer Caught

When questioned regarding this statement which concerned the Englishman, the highly publicized conjurer was unable to prove that he had ever even met *Lodge*.

Soon after, *Denis P. S. Conan Doyle*, *Sir Arthur's* son, wrote to "*Time*," the American news magazine, "*There is not one word of truth in a certain magazine's claim to possess this code message from my father. I know as a positive fact that my father never left a code message with a conjurer or anyone else, not even with his own family. SUCH A MESSAGE NEVER EXISTED.*"

In reply to the first part of the highly publicized conjurer's statement, it was made known that *Thomas A. Edison*, the famous inventor, had already talked to *Dr. Miller Reese Hutchinson*, who for ten years was his chief

engineer and collaborator, in a direct-voice seance. Immediately after the seance, *Hutchinson* played a record of *Edison's*. The two voices were identical. Since that time, recordings of direct-voice seances have frequently been made, thus eliminating the question of mass hypnotism in connection with the hearing of Spirit voices. These voices can now, thanks to the progress of science, be preserved even on home-recording machines.

Frank Decker, the noted American test medium, who, at the time, resided at No. 30 West 72nd Street, New York City, answered the highly publicized conjurer's challenge in regards to psychic demonstrations. The magician had made a new offer of \$10,000 to any medium who could produce psychic phenomena which he could not duplicate by trickery. *Decker* accepted



Frank
DECKER



Miller Reese
HUTCHINSON

the challenge, on these terms:

The highly publicized conjurer was to deposit with any bank a check for \$10,000, which would be sent to the *United Hospital Campaign Committee* if the conjurer failed to duplicate the seance results obtained by the medium.

Decker was to be searched by doctors before a committee of any chosen physicians, scientists, and men of unquestionable reputation. He was then to be controlled

in any way the highly publicized conjurer or the committee might suggest. Psychic phenomena produced were to be recorded, after which the magician would be similarly searched and controlled.

On the highly publicized conjurer's failure to duplicate the phenomena, *under the same conditions* under which the medium had worked, the committee would instruct

the bank to forward the conjurer *REFUSED* to designated charity.



Harry P.
VAN WALT

The highly publicized coinjurer *REFUSED* to accept *Decker's* challenge.

On March 1st, 1942, at the Hotel Wellington, 7th Avenue and 56th St., in New York City, *Cal Harris*, formerly Harry Houdini's



FRED BUNIEL

press agent and manager, chose to sit in a seance with *Decker*. Mr. Harris, who resided at No. 30 East 76th St., New York City, sat with *Decker* *under strict test conditions*—to which the medium agreed.

Those present at the seance were: Dr. and Mrs. Harry P. *Van Walt*—Mr. Van Walt is a noted psychic researcher and served as interpreter at the International Spiritualist Congress at The Hague, Holland, before World War II; Mr. and Mrs. *Fred Buniel*, Santiago, Chile; Mr. and Mrs. J. Frank *Hogue*—Mr. Hogue is a prominent New York business man whose integrity is beyond reproach; Dr. M. Spencer *Robde*, a New York physician; *Juliette Ewing*

Pressing and Ralph G. Pressing, Editor-owners of Dale News, Inc., which publishes *Psychic Observer*, Spiritualism's Pictorial Journal.

During the seance, *Harry Houdini* related two instances that no one but *Harris* knew about. The messages, being of a personal nature, proved conclusively that, aside from the voice of *Houdini*, there were additional irrefutable evidence of personal identity.

This is Cal Harris' statement:

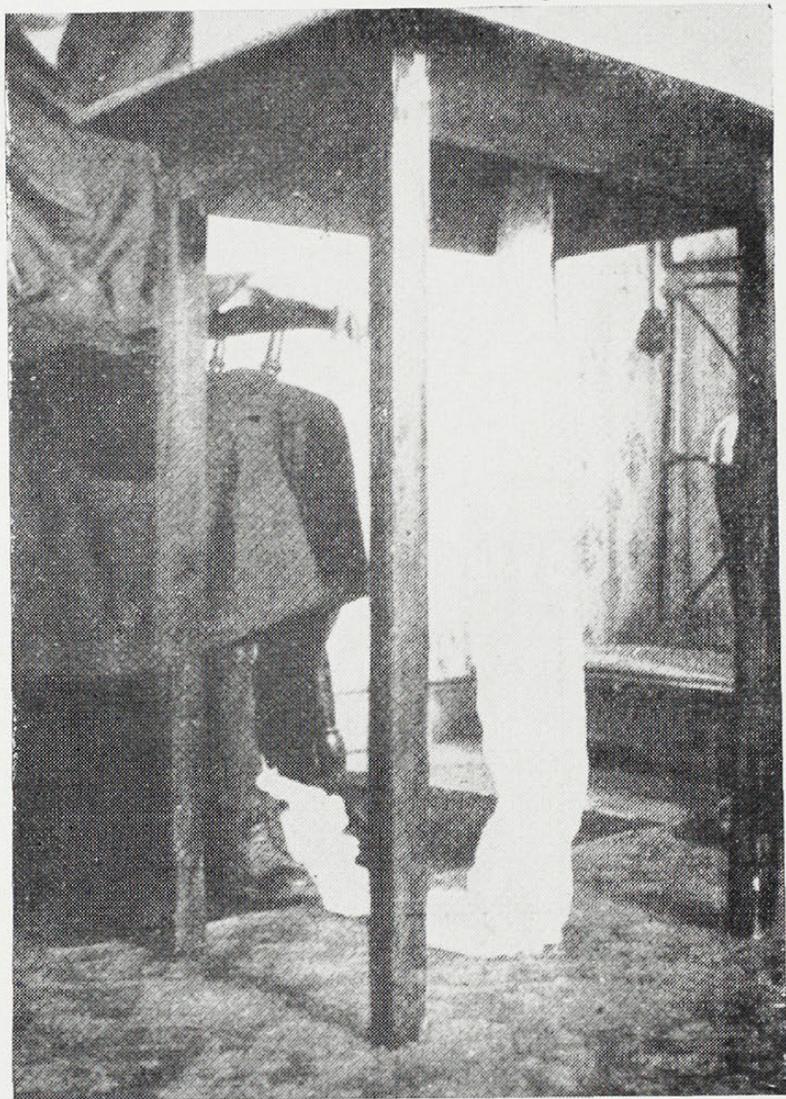
"I sat in a seance with Frank Decker during the evening of March 1st, 1942, at Hotel Wellington, 7th Avenue and 56th St., New York City. During the above stated seance, I sat behind the medium, Frank Decker, and held both his hands. I heard a Voice that I recognized as that of Harry Houdini and am satisfied that the medium was not speaking or trying to imitate Harry Houdini's voice at the time because I had one hand over the medium's mouth."

Signed

CAL HARRIS.

NOTE: Cal Harris' signature is attested to by Dr. Harry P. Van Walt and Dr. M. Speer Rohde.

Upon interview, the press agent and manager declared, "I swear that it was Houdini's voice."



Ectoplasmic force causing table levitation photographed during Crawford experiment.

The same highly publicized conjurer's new efforts to discredit Spiritualism were a turn-back to the Fall of 1938, when Mrs. Houdini, with the promise of making a million dollars, had starred in a motion picture entitled "*Religious Racketeers.*"

Miss *Fanchon Royer*, the producer of the film, had contacted Police Commissioner *Glenn H. McClellan* of Buffalo, New York, and secured a signed statement from him that appeared commendable as a boost to her movie. The official's statement had been enlarged and plastered on billboards in the foyer of Shea's Buffalo Theatre, where the film was scheduled to make its debut.

A Bluff Is Called

Within the picture, *Beatrice Houdini* declared flatly that she had never received a Spirit communication with her husband. That she had never seen him, nor heard his voice. At the conclusion of her starring vehicle, she said, "*We must be on the lookout for the 'LEECHES' who claim to be able to bring messages from the dead.*"

After reviewing this film, *Ralph G. Pressing*, Editor of *Psychic Observer*, called on Miss Royer in her erstwhile palatial Delaware Ave. apartment to present the statement signed by Mrs. Houdini in 1929. Mr. Pressing, however, was greeted with disdain, and Miss Royer snapped, "*All Spiritualists or Spiritualist mediums or anyone who believes that communication with the so-called dead is a fact, are frauds and fakes.*"

But Miss Royer was reckoning without reason or good judgment. Without delay, the newspaper publisher contacted *Vincent McFaul*, General Manager of Shea's Buffalo Theatres, and showed him the signed statement, witnessed by reputable personages.

A wire was immediately sent to Mrs. Houdini's manager, *Dr. Edward Saint*, asking for a denial. No denial came. Twenty-four hours later the picture was banned from Western New York area. The \$200,000 spent on "*Religious Racketeers*" was a costly error on the parts of *Miss Royer* and *Mrs. Houdini* who acted without realizing that A SIGNED AND WITNESSED DOCUMENT WILL STAND IN ANY COURT.

Naturally this blunt denial created a new controversy and psychic research was again head-lined as the famous *Houdini* case was revived in print.

Energy Never Dies!

Mrs. Houdini was correct in her assertion that she had neither seen her husband, nor heard his Spirit voice. *Arthur Ford has never been a direct-voice medium.* The code message was delivered through the tones of his guide, *Fletcher*, while he himself was in trance. On the other hand, Mrs. Houdini was *not* a medium, and therefore it was impossible for her to either *see* or *hear* her husband. *Beatrice Houdini's* physical body was not responsive to the vibrations of radiating energy of which man's soul is a part. Physics and chemistry recognize this fact, that ENERGY NEVER DIES!

While one producer, Miss Fanchon Royer, was attempting to strike deadly blows at psychic phenomena, another producer was busily engaged in writing books on the subject; *Mary Pickford*, one of the owners of United Artists Studios in Hollywood, Calif., and at one time, "*America's Sweetheart.*"

Miss Pickford has long been openly interested in psychic research and one of its greatest champions. Her three

books, "*Why Not Try God*," "*My Rendezvous With Life*," and "*Why Not Look Beyond*," are intelligently written and have been excellent sellers for a number of years.

Another equally interested person is *Margaret Mayo*, the noted playwright, whose article, "*Houdini—the Trickster*," was based on the Spirit manifestations of Harry Houdini to her friend, "*Little Sophie Irene Loeb*," who will be remembered for putting through thirteen "*Child Labor Bills*" while on earth. The famous author related amusing and convincing evidence of the return of *Harry Houdini*, who played several tricks in order to reveal his presence and identity.

Mrs. Houdini Passes Away

On February 18th, 1943, *Beatrice Houdini* died, bringing to a close one of the greatest debates in history.

In *Arthur Ford's* first and only address following the code deliverance, he said, "*If asked to say on oath whether I know beyond the shadow of a doubt that I actually got the Houdini message, I could not do so except on the basis of Mrs. Houdini's statement, and I cannot do more.*"

Yet many persons have continued the *Houdini* controversy for almost two decades. Perhaps they have never known the facts which are presented herein, taken from actual records; or perhaps they have been like *Willard D. Vandiver*, who, in his famous speech of 1899, said:

"I come from a State that raises corn and cotton and cockleburs and Democrats, and frothy eloquence neither convinces nor satisfies me. I am from Missouri. *You have got to show me.*"

FINIS

One Rap - NO!

Two Raps - DOUBTFUL!

Three Raps - YES!

RAPPINGS

THAT
Startled the World

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