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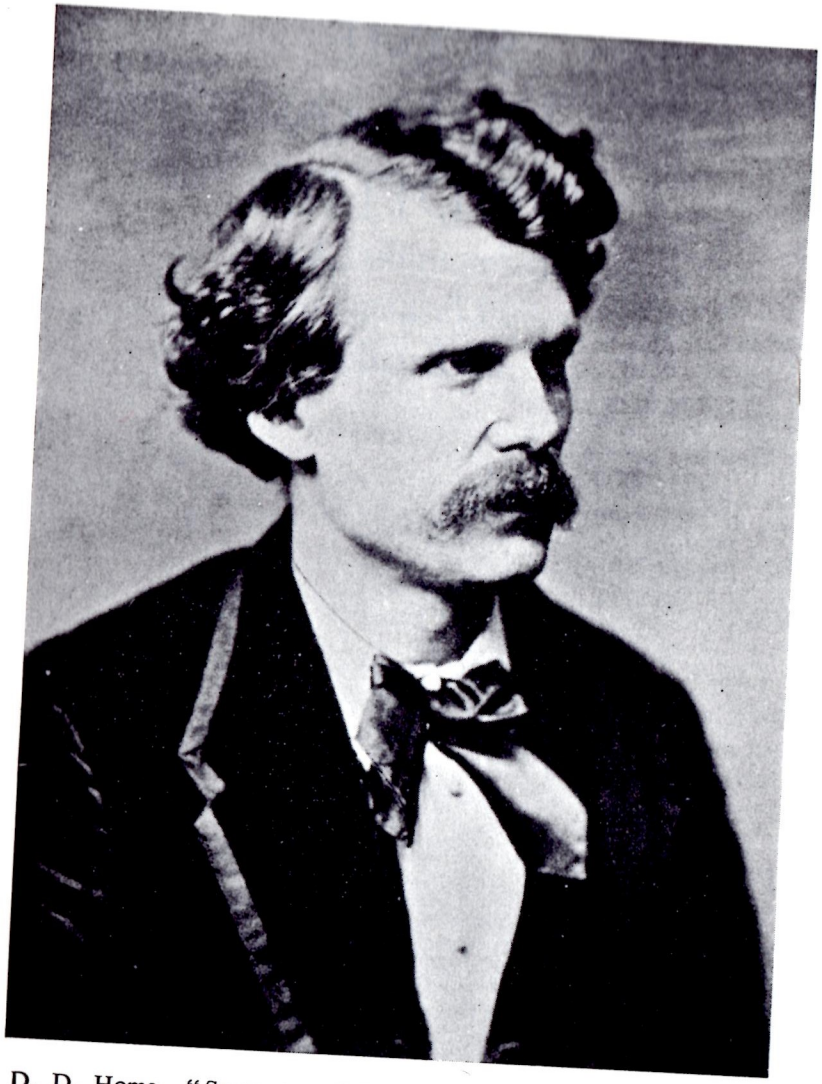
Studies in the Queer, the Uncanny and the Fanatical



D. D. Home. "Some regarded him with favour and others with aversion." (See p. 95)
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SOME HUMAN ODDITIES

Studies in the Queer, the Uncanny and the Fanatical

WITH TWELVE PLATES

BY *Eric John Dingwall*, M.A., D.SC., PH.D.

UNIVERSITY BOOKS *New Hyde Park, New York*

Thanks are due to the American Psychical Research Society and Columbia University Library for providing copies of the original edition of this book for reproduction purposes

Library of Congress Card Catalog Number 62-14948

Manufactured in the United States of America

INTRODUCTION

By John C. Wilson

DR. DINGWALL belongs to a very rare profession. He is one of perhaps a dozen full-time psychical researchers in the world today (if there are a dozen). There are very few of them, because there is almost no way for psychical researchers to make even a modest living at their chosen profession. There are less than a handful of academic chairs in this borderline science and the distinguished but small psychical research societies in England and the United States offer employment to very few indeed. Something more is being done today by a newer organization, the Parapsychology Foundation, but necessarily only in the form of temporary grants. Only heroes and martyrs and extraordinarily courageous pioneers are likely to be found in such an unattractive profession.

Eric Dingwall belongs among the very first of these. By common consent among those qualified to judge, I think he would be considered the world's greatest authority on physical mediumship. Of the six chapters of his book, only one, that on D. D. Home, deals with a physical medium, probably the most famous and extraordinary that ever lived. What, then, is the connection, if any, between the various subjects of these chapters? The first is about a saint who performed miracles. The second is about a transvestite. The third is about a man ridden by demons. The fourth is about *convulsionnaires* among the Jansenists. The sixth (following upon D. D. Home) is about a fraudulent occultist.

The connection between these farflung subjects is to be found in Dr. Dingwall's profession. What are we really grappling with when we try to decide what is true and what is false in the story of D. D. Home? Dr. Dingwall's most significant sentences on this and, indeed, on his whole work, is to be found quite buried in an appendix of this book: "The problem underlying the life and work of D.D. Home can be briefly summed up by saying that it is the problem of miracles in its most acute form." Most miracles reported over the ages can be dismissed as incredible and ridiculous. But not because miracles are impossible. They are impossible only if one so defines them. It is true that many of the occurrences reported are due to mal-observation, fraud and similar sources of error. "The question remains, however, whether

or not a residuum exists which is not open to any normal explanation known to us, and is therefore for the time being, inexplicable. . . . Here was a man who was not immured in some religious house, surrounded by an atmosphere of sanctity and by companions wholly unversed in modern ways of thought. The phenomena said to occur in his presence were of a type familiar to all students of the subject, and many of them bore a startling resemblance to some of those reported with the Saints of the West and the Holy Men of the East. Yet all attempts to solve the mystery failed then, as they failed in the past. Yet, were a satisfactory solution to be arrived at, what a flood of light would be let into some of the darker fields of human activity."

When Dr. Dingwall speaks of the darker fields of human activity, he means, if I understand him, not only those dark because hidden or unknown but also such phenomena as the transvestite, the man ridden by spirits, the quite extraordinarily endowed woman, known as Angel Anna, who wasted her life as a fraudulent occultist. Dr. Dingwall senses, even when he is not quite able to define for us the connection between occultism and sexuality. But it is there. More accurately, he may not be able to define it in general, but he is quite well able to show us many specific connections in the history of religion, as in the case of the flagellants (to which he devotes an extraordinary essay in another book, VERY PECULIAR PEOPLE). As the sub-title of this book shows, by implication, he finds profound connections between the queer, the uncanny and the fanatical.

The reader may happily be told that Dr. Dingwall wears his learning and scholarship very lightly. For the reader who wishes to go on, however, it is there. The back of the book is devoted to appendices which provide a decade of reading for anyone who wishes to pursue these fascinating subjects.

PREFACE

BOOKS about queer people are usually of two main types. There are those in which a vivid presentation of each character is made, unencumbered with any references to the documentary and other sources consulted. Then there are the more technical accounts which are mainly medical and psychological monographs, and which make no pretence to being anything else than case histories of the people concerned.

The present work aims at being a combination of the two. The author is convinced that there are many people who remain dissatisfied with popularly written accounts of odd people, and who feel the need of a more detailed treatment in which the points of interest to the scientific man are briefly discussed and original sources indicated.

In the present work I have, therefore, added at the end of the book a supplementary note to each chapter in which further details and references will be found, but to which it is not necessary to refer if the reader is satisfied with the portrait printed in the main text. Thus the book can be used equally well both by the general reader and by the specialist in the various borderland medical and psychological phenomena which the characters have been chosen to illustrate.

In conclusion, it remains my pleasant task to thank all those who have helped me in the preparation of the book and from whose advice and criticism I have profited. I am also indebted to the publishers, John Murray, for permission to quote some extracts from the letters of Mrs. Browning, the proprietors of the *News of the World* for their kindness in allowing me to reproduce the drawing of Angel Anna, the proprietors of *Punch* for permission to reproduce the cartoon featured on Plate X and the verses on D. D. Home, and the Council of the Society for Psychical Research for permitting me to reproduce the two photographs of D. D. Home.

E. J. DINGWALL,
Cambridge.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

ST. JOSEPH OF COPERTINO: THE FRIAR WHO FLEW

IN Apulia, the district in the extreme south-east, or heel of Italy, lies the province of Lecce, and some nine miles south-east of the city of the same name is to be found the little town of Copertino. Founded in medieval times it has had a long and chequered history; and if one visits it to-day, and asks the way to the Via Vittoria, one will soon arrive at the Church of S. Guiseppe da Copertino, built during the years 1754-8 in honour of one Guiseppe (or Joseph in English) Desa, who was born here in 1603, and who was destined to be one of the most remarkable men ever canonized by the Roman Catholic Church.

His father, Felix Desa, was a carpenter, but, owing to financial difficulties and the importunities of creditors, he and his wife, Frances Panara, had to seek refuge away from home, and report has it that Joseph was born in a stable to which his mother had resorted when her time came.

The child was brought up under a system of pious but rigid maternal discipline; and he soon showed decided leanings towards the religious life, going so far as to make up a small altar in a corner of the house (as did St. Mary Frances of the Five Wounds a century later), which he used both by day and by night for prayers and for recitations of the rosary and litany. At the age of eight it was reported that he had his first ecstasy; and his behaviour at school, where occasionally he used to sit agape and motionless and with his eyes raised to heaven, earned him the nickname of "Open Mouth." His unhealthy way of living, poor food, and self-inflicted miseries were soon to have their effect, for he was afflicted by an internal abscess or sore of some kind which began to spread, and which compelled him to remain in bed as he could no longer

walk. His mother became very worried about his condition, and sought out a hermit who had the reputation of a healer in cases such as those of Joseph, and who succeeded in effecting a miraculous cure.

From the records of the time we know how Joseph ate and what were the torments he inflicted upon himself. His fasting not only deprived him of meat, but he was accustomed to cover the few vegetables and herbs he ate with a bitter powder, and he often went without food altogether for two or three days at a time. Next to his skin he wore a rough hair-shirt, and the chroniclers seem to agree that this garment was of an exceptionally prickly nature.

At the age of seventeen he became determined to devote his life to religion ; and thus he offered himself to the Friars Minor of the Conventuals, in which Order two of his uncles, Fr. Franceschino, his father's brother, and Fr. Giovanni Donato, his mother's brother, were religious. His two relations, however, resisted his application, as they thought that his ignorance and lack of education would hardly fit him for a priestly vocation.

Nothing daunted, however, and perhaps recognizing the justice behind the rebuff he had received, Joseph decided on a new idea, and forthwith presented himself to Fr. Antonio Francavilla of the Capuchins, hoping to be taken on as a lay-brother. To his great joy he was accepted, and taking the name of Stephen he was admitted to the Capuchin Order in August 1620. At first he was destined to work in the refectory, but the result of his frequent fits of absence of mind and ecstatic states on the crockery was disastrous, and Joseph added to the irritation caused by his breakages by wearing the pieces round his neck. From the refectory he was put to work in the kitchen, carrying firewood and doing odd jobs for the staff working there. But his mental condition made his employment impossible, and after eight months had elapsed he was deprived of his habit and was dismissed.

On leaving the monastery Joseph went on to Vetrara to see another of his uncles who worked in the locality. On his journey he met numerous perils such as attacks by fierce dogs and an

encounter with a devil. Having arrived at his destination he sought out his uncle who received him ill-humouredly, but with patience, telling him that he was a useless vagabond, and after a short time taking him back to Copertino, where his mother received him to the tune of what one of his biographers calls the most pungent invective.

After a time, however, it was arranged, partly through the good offices of Fr. Donato, that Joseph should be received as a tertiary into the Order of Conventuals at Grottella (Grottaglie), a mile or so to the east of Copertino, where he was put to work in the stable looking after the mule. Evidently remembering what had happened to him before, Joseph did not fail this time in his work, although he still went barefoot wearing his hair-shirt, and in addition, a narrow iron chain tightly fastened about his loins. Moreover, he still carried out his prolonged fasting, and slept upon three boards upon which had been thrown a bear-skin and a rough sack stuffed with straw to serve as a pillow.

Finally, his superiors thought that the time had come for a change ; and to Joseph's great joy he was received into the Order of St. Francis as a cleric on 19th June 1625, at a Provincial Chapter at Altamura. He was clothed in the religious habit, took the name of Fr. Joseph Maria, and began his novitiate at the monastery at Grotella two years later (30th January 1627). He received minor orders without previous examination, passing on to a subdeaconship on 27th February, and a deaconship on 20th March. There still remained the priesthood to attain ; and the examination of this was entrusted to Battista Deti, Bishop of Castro, a stern examiner when it was a question of admitting deacons to the priesthood. The first few students who were questioned did so well that the good Bishop thought that all were equally good, so did not continue the examination, admitting the rest without questioning, among whom was our Joseph, who thus became a priest on 28th March 1628.

On Joseph's return to Grottella he at once began the life of an extreme ascetic. He continued his fasting and consumption of

herbs which, again like St. Mary Frances, he covered with his special powder, thus making them so unpalatable and unpleasant that one of the monks, who put a portion on the end of his tongue, felt so ill that for three days he could not touch food without nausea. Joseph called himself "The Ass"; and when he was ordered by the Superior to have his beard attended to, he said: "We are going to wash and clean up this Ass." Day by day he continued his scourgings, inflicted both by himself and others; and indeed the whip was now more painful than ever, being furnished with pins and star-shaped metal pieces which caused the blood to spurt out and stain the walls of his cell. In addition to his hair-shirt and iron chain he now wore a large iron plate which bit into his flesh. Indeed, as we shall note later, his Superior had to prohibit the use of some of these contraptions; and moreover, Joseph's ecstasies disturbed the services to such an extent that he was not allowed to join with the others in the choir or even to eat with them in the refectory.

News of these regulations was not likely to be kept secret, and stories of miracles and legends began to cluster around Joseph's name, and at length the attention of the authorities was attracted and action was taken. He was ordered to leave Copertino and to proceed to Naples to be examined by the Holy Office. Whilst there he stayed at the monastery of S. Laurentio, and was thrice brought before the Inquisition; but the charges against him were dismissed and he was allowed to say Mass in their own church of St. Gregory of Armenia. Here a remarkable incident was said to have occurred. After having said Mass in the secret chapel, he went into a corner of the church to pray. Suddenly he rose up into the air, and with a cry flew in the upright position to the altar with his hands outstretched as on a cross, and alighted upon it in the middle of the flowers and candles which were burning in profusion. The nuns of St. Ligorio, who were observing each one of his acts and movements, and saw him first in the air and later among the burning candles, cried out loudly: "He will catch fire! He will catch fire!" But Fr. Lodovico, his companion, who

was present and who made a statement in the Process, and who was accustomed to such sights, told the nuns not to lack faith as he would not burn himself. Then, with another cry, Joseph flew back into the church in a kneeling position and, alighting upon his knees, began to whirl round upon them, dancing and singing, being filled as he was with joy and exultation and exclaiming: "Oh! most Blessed Virgin, most Blessed Virgin!"

Had Joseph's power of levitation not been supported by evidence from high places it might have done Joseph more harm than good. But when he was in Rome another notable event occurred. The Father-General of his Order arranged for him to kiss the feet of the Pope, Urban VIII. On finding himself in the presence of the Supreme Pontiff, Joseph was seized by ecstatic rapture and rose into the air, remaining suspended until recalled to his senses by the Father-General. The Pope was so much impressed by this surprising event that he is said to have declared that, should Joseph die during his pontificate, then he himself would testify to the truth of what he had seen.

From Rome Joseph was sent to Assisi where he arrived in April 1639. Trouble awaited him there. The Custos, Fr. Antonio di S. Mauro, evidently had his suspicions regarding the genuineness of Joseph's ecstasies and raptures, for he regarded him at first with haughtiness, then with contempt, and finally with threats as if he were an untrained novitiate. Nevertheless, Joseph remained humble and obedient; and the more he found himself humiliated the more did he show his respect, attributing the offensive behaviour of his Superior to his own insufficiency, and converting to his own spiritual uses that bitterness which was his lot. Indeed, to be called a hypocrite and to be subject to penances, not only alone but sometimes in the presence of others, could not have been at all pleasant to Joseph, who began seriously to doubt his own worthiness. Moreover, he began to be assailed by every kind of hideous and unchaste dream, and he saw visions which were clearly hallucinatory in character. In this way, says one of his biographers, poor Joseph was reduced "from the high level of his own

meditations to the low level of persecution, melancholy, sterility and temptation."

This deplorable state into which Joseph had fallen lasted for about two years and, according to the relevant documents, the Superior-General of the Order heard what was going on and sent for Joseph to join him in Rome, whence, after a short stay, the ascetic returned to Assisi and was enthusiastically received by the inhabitants. When he entered the basilica of the monastery and saw the crowds and notables who were gathered together, he raised his eyes to Heaven and saw the picture of the Virgin Mary painted on the ceiling surmounting the carved wooden group on the altar depicting the Immaculate Conception. Uttering a cry, Joseph rose into the air and flew eighteen paces (*diciotto passi*=about 15 yards) in order to embrace it, crying out: "Oh! My Mother! Thou hast followed me!" This phenomenon excited great interest and fear, for apparently the story had already been circulated that, when Joseph had been told that he had been formally received into the Family of the Conventuals of the Sacred Convent, thus becoming a compatriot of St. Francis, he passed into the ecstatic condition, and having taken leave of his senses floated up as far as the ceiling of his cell.

During the years he spent in Copertino and in the monastery at Assisi the number of his flights and other miraculous doings are too numerous to describe. Indeed, there was almost a constant succession of raptures during which surprising cases of levitation were observed. For example, when at Copertino, he often used to become insensible for considerable periods of time when he listened to music being played in the church. On one occasion some shepherds, who used to tend their sheep near Grottella, were approached by Joseph with the proposal that on Christmas Eve they should play joyfully upon their pipes. They accepted, and all went into the church, which soon resounded with the music from pipe and reed. Fr. Joseph was so full of joy that he began to dance in the middle of the nave to the sound of the pipes, and then, giving a deep sigh and loud cry, he flew like an angel through

the air from the middle of the church where he had been dancing on to the High Altar on which was the tabernacle which he embraced, and which was about twenty yards [1] distant from the spot from which he rose.

The shepherd who tells the story thought that what was especially wonderful was that the altar had many burning candles upon it, and that Joseph alighting thereon did not knock anything over, but remained kneeling for about a quarter of an hour, and then got down and blessed the shepherds, who thought that they had been present at a miracle. Indeed, one of Joseph's biographers says they were astounded beyond measure as, on another occasion, were some other monks and inhabitants of Copertino, when the Blessed Joseph had to assist at a procession which was held in the Church of St. Francis and in honour of that Saint. As the procession was just beginning, Joseph sank into a state of meditation and, forgetting the holy vestment which he was wearing and the sacred function at which he was officiating, and moreover, having already come out of the sacristy, he was overtaken by a brief ecstasy, followed quickly by rapture, during which he flew up to the pulpit, on which he knelt, and which was nearly four feet from the ground.[2]

Following this account another incident is recorded which was said to have taken place on the night following a Thursday in Holy Week. He was in church along with other religious, and they were all praying in front of the altar on which the sepulchre or Altar of Repose had been placed and which had been decorated with ornamental clouds and lamps making a majestic and unified picture. Suddenly Joseph flew up on the altar to embrace the tabernacle without paying any attention to the clouds, lamps, ornaments and other obstacles, which he passed through as if he were making his way through a narrow lane or between stakes.

[1] D. Bernino, *Vita del P. Fra Giuseppe da Copertino* (Venezia, 1753, p. 25), says *più de cinque canne*. Pastrovicchius (A.S., Sept., V, 1021A) says *plus quam quinque perticis*. Bernino (or Bernini) was the eldest son of the famous Italian artist, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who died in 1680.

[2] Bernino, *op. cit.*, p. 151, has *quindici palmi*. Pastrovicchius has *quindecim palmis* (A.S., 1021B).

There he remained upon his knees until the Superior recalled him to his place, to which he obediently returned without having done any damage to himself or to the altar with its decorations. In thus describing this incident Bernino (*op. cit.*, p. 154) goes so far as to say that in the Mass, which he then celebrated, he was suspended in the air longer than with his feet on the ground, although very often he stood on the points of his big toes in a most unnatural position. On another occasion when entering the church from the sacristy he heard the congregation repeating the words "Holy Mary, pray for us," and suddenly, uttering a cry, he sprang up and flew right over the heads of the congregation to alight upon the altar.

This story of Joseph's flight, and the fact that he was able to alight on an altar crowded with objects without disturbing any of them, is paralleled by another report of a flight where the same phenomenon was observed. It appears that one day Joseph went to see a sick man in whose room there was a sacred picture which attracted his attention. Under the picture was a small table on which had been placed a number of bottles containing various medicines, among which was also a phial containing some kind of balsam. At the sight of the picture Joseph immediately flew up in the air and landed on the table in the kneeling position, remained a few moments, and then flew back to the place from which he had risen without overturning or breaking anything.

The flights and levitations of Joseph did not always occur inside buildings, but sometimes out of doors. For instance, it is recorded that one day a priest, Antonio Chiarello, who was walking with him in the kitchen-garden, remarked how beautiful was the heaven which God had made. Thereupon Joseph, as if these words were an invitation to him from above, uttered a shriek, sprang from the ground and flew into the air, only coming to rest on the top of an olive tree where he remained in a kneeling position for half an hour. It was noticed with wonder at the time that the branch on which he rested only shook slightly as if a bird had been sitting upon it. It appears that in this case Joseph came to his senses whilst still

"St. Joseph of Copertino rose like a bird into the air." (See p. 17)

Plate I

on the tree, as the Rev. Antonio had to go to fetch a ladder to get him down. This seems all the more remarkable as the fact that his weight did not bend down the branch on which he rested whilst in trance might have been ascribed to the force responsible for his levitation, which presumably would no longer be active after Joseph had recovered his senses. Why, then, did not the branch break, or did the holy man crawl to a safer one before being rescued? The Process does not tell us, neither do his biographers, as far as I have been able to consult them.

On another occasion it is said that Joseph wanted three crosses erected on a little hill lying between Copertino and the Convent of Grottella. One of the crosses was of walnut, tall and very heavy, and ten workmen were engaged in dealing with it. All of them struggled vainly to place it in its proposed position, and Joseph became impatient at the delay. "Here I am," said he, and having taken off his cloak and rushing forward he rose like a bird into the air, flew a distance of fifteen paces [1] (about 12 yards) and with both hands seized the cross and, as if it were made of straw, carried it off and put it in the hole which had been prepared for it. (See Plate I.)

On more than one occasion the mystery of Joseph's levitations was deepened by the fact that he was reported to lift others with him on his aerial flights. For example, in the Church of Santa Chiara in Copertino a festival was once in progress in honour of the clothing of some novitiates. Joseph was present, and was on his knees in a corner of the church, when the words *Veni Sponsa Cristi* (Come, Bride of Christ) were being intoned. Giving his accustomed cry, he ran towards the convent's father confessor, a priest from Seclì, a village not far off, and who was attending the service and, seizing him, grasped him by the hand and (to quote Bernino) "in a joyous rapture began to whirl round and round just as David did before the Ark of the Lord.[2] Finally both rose into the air in an ecstasy, the one borne aloft by Joseph and the

[1] Pastrovicchius says "about eighty paces."
[2] See II Samuel vi. 14.

other by God Himself, both being sons of St. Francis, the one being beside himself with fear but the other with sanctity. Thus it is noted in the Processes how a Custos of the Sacro Convento of Assisi, a lunatic and a priest of the Order of the Reformati were all at different times and in different places seized and carried aloft by this Angel of God, like Habbakuk by the hair,[1] or like the prophet Elijah in his aerial journey. Happy travellers," Joseph's biographer concludes, " to whom God conceded so rare a gift as to travel towards Heaven without regard to their own merit but in the company of others ! "

The story of Joseph and the lunatic is, perhaps, worth recording here. It appears that one day a certain nobleman named Baldassare Rossi was brought to Joseph so that he might cure him of a mental trouble which had transformed him, according to Bernino, into a most furious madman (*furiosissimo Matto*). He was brought by his relations with considerable difficulty, as he had to be tied into his chair ; and further trouble was encountered when he was untied and forced to kneel before Joseph who, on seeing him, drew him up from his chair, made him stand up, and then put his hand upon his head saying : " Sir Baldassare, do not be in doubt but commend yourself to God and to His most holy Mother." Whilst saying these words he seized his hair with the hand which he had placed upon the madman's head and, uttering his usual cry, he rose into the air in a rapture, taking with him the lunatic, the pair remaining in the air for about a quarter of an hour before they returned to earth. Then Joseph told Baldassare to be joyous, and the knight, having in the meantime become sane, went home, praising God and the servant of God for so marvellous an event.[2]

From the records of the life of Joseph it would seem that the stories of his raptures and aerial journeys were not confined to the immediate surroundings of the monastery where he lived, but were bruited abroad and attracted the attention of lay persons who were anxious to make themselves personally acquainted with them.

[1] *Bel and the Dragon*, 36.

[2] The seventeenth-century form of modern shock therapy.

We may therefore collect a few of these incidents before passing on to review the remaining years of Joseph's life.

One of the most interesting events of this kind was that connected with Johann Friedrich, Duke of Brunswick, who died in 1679, and who was the patron and employer of the great German philosopher, G. W. Leibnitz (1646-1716), who for many years had charge of the Brunswick family library in Hanover. He visited Assisi in February 1651, and expressed a wish to see Joseph in the Sacro Convento. For this purpose the Duke, on his arrival and accompanied by two of his noble retinue, Johann Friedrich Blume and Georg Sittig, of whom Sittig was a Catholic and the other not, was conducted to a room in the Convent which was called the Pope's Room. The next morning, which happened to be Sunday, he with his two companions were secretly taken by a private staircase to the door of the chapel situated in the Noviziato Vecchio, where Joseph was accustomed to say Mass, but on this occasion had no idea that he was being observed. There they heard him give a loud cry and saw him rise in the air in a kneeling position, passing backwards five paces and then returning in front of the altar remaining in ecstasy for some time.

The Duke was naturally eager to see this unexpected phenomenon a second time, and it was arranged that the next day he should again see Joseph when he was saying Mass, as it seemed possible that the Duke, hitherto a Lutheran, might be converted to the Roman Catholic faith. On Monday morning, therefore, the Duke was again present at the service ; and this time he saw Joseph raised a palm high from the altar step and remain floating for about a quarter of an hour. The Duke was so overcome by the sight that his doubts were resolved and he became a Catholic. Not so Heinrich Blume, who was of the Lutheran persuasion, although already tending towards Catholicism. He was frankly annoyed and exclaimed : " May I be cursed for coming to this country ! I arrive with a quiet mind, but here I am always in a state of agitation and anger and, further, I have difficulties with my conscience."

Unfortunately, Leibnitz does not seem to have written much about the marvellous events which hastened the steps of his noble patron into the Catholic fold. It is true that he bluntly says that the Duke went to Assisi and was there converted to the Roman Catholic faith by the wonder-working Father Joseph,[1] but he appears to think that it was wiser not to comment upon the nature or explanation of these wonders. It ought, perhaps, to be recorded here that the recalcitrant chamberlain who accompanied the Duke to Assisi is reported to have become a Catholic also in 1653.

Another of Joseph's visitors was Frédéric Maurice de la Tour d'Auvergne, Duc de Bouillon (1605-52). He was in Italy in 1644 and was said to have come to Assisi on purpose to see the friar; but in the account of his journey, which was published in 1656, I cannot find any mention of it. Similarly, Isabella of Austria, the daughter of the Archduke Leopold of Innsbruck and wife of Charles Gonzaga the Second, Duke of Mantua, visited Joseph, but again in her short biography, published in 1696, I can find no account of the incident. Another noble lady who was much attracted to Joseph was the Infanta Maria, daughter of Carlo Emanuele (Charles Emmanuel) the Great, Duke of Savoy († 1630), and who was much drawn to the religious life, and who in her piety had visited many Italian shrines. She came to see the holy friar and remained about a month [2] in Perugia, whence she used to visit Assisi, and was much impressed by reason of the phenomenal events of which she herself was a witness and in which she participated. On one occasion, when at Mass, she saw Joseph, whilst elevating the Sacred Host, rise three palms above the ground. Very different was the experience of the Marchioness Artemisia, the sister of the Duke of Corgna, who with some ladies from Perugia came to Assisi to be present at the raptures of Joseph, and to see with their own eyes the inscrutable phenomena which accompanied them. The plan, however, failed, owing apparently

[1] See G. W. Leibnitz, *Gesammelte Werke* . . . Hrsg. von G. H. Pertz, (Hannoverae, 1843, etc.), IV, 1e Folge, p. 9.

[2] Bernino (*op. cit.*, p. 89) says "some months."

to the sagacity of the holy man who, approaching the Marchioness with a look of disdain upon his face, asked her why she had thus come out of pure curiosity, and did she not know that God could work miracles on a piece of wood? The lady was so taken aback that, as the record puts it, she felt "like a wet hen," since she realized only too clearly that the secret thoughts of the heart were not hidden from Joseph.

Another of the famous visitors who came to see the flying friar in 1645 was Juan Alfonso Henriquez de Cabrera, Duke of Medina de Rio-Seco and an Admiral of Castile, together with his wife and family, who were making their way to Rome, since the Admiral had been appointed Spanish Ambassador to the Apostolic See. Born in 1597 the Admiral had had an active political and military life, and it was not until about 1645 that he was sent to Rome to present his papers to the new Pope, Innocent X. His stay in Italy, however, was far from untroubled, due apparently to various intrigues and ecclesiastical difficulties; and on his return to Spain after only a brief period in Rome, Naples and Genoa, he died in January 1647 from a fever which he had been unable to shake off.

On his way to Rome, "attracted by the fame of so great a Servant of God," as Bernino puts it (*op. cit.*, p. 83), he arranged to interview Joseph in his cell; and later told his wife, who was awaiting him in the church, that he had seen and spoken to another St. Francis. This so intrigued the good lady that she expressed the wish to talk to Joseph herself, a proposal which the Custos knew would be repugnant to Joseph, who avoided women. Evidently wishing to please the Admiral and his wife, the Custos, by virtue of his authority, told Joseph to go to the church and speak to the lady and the female retinue which accompanied her. Joseph smiled and said that he would obey, but did not know if he would be able to speak. Well did he foresee his own powerlessness in this matter which, as the chronicler observes, was derived from a higher source. Acting on the orders of his Superior, Joseph left his cell and entered the church by a little door facing the altar

where there was a statue of the Immaculate Conception. On seeing the figure Joseph uttered a cry, rose into the air and flew a distance of twelve paces over the heads of the Admiral and his companions, only to alight at the foot of the image of the Queen of Heaven, where he remained immobile for a short time in dumb adoration. Then, again uttering his shriek, he flew back on his return journey through the air to the place whence he started, bowed to the Mother of God, kissed the ground, and with head inclined and cowl lowered, hastened off to his cell leaving many of the ladies fainting with amazement at so surprising a phenomenon. The wife of the Admiral was indeed so overcome by this sudden and unexpected miracle that she was only revived with some difficulty by water sprinkled on her face and strong smelling-salts (*suffumigi*) applied to her nose.

The Admiral, being a man of stout heart, merely raised his eyebrows and threw out his arms in a state of stupefaction. It was true that he did not faint : all he did was to lose the power of feeling, as if he was half-way between life and death. As to Joseph himself, he later interpreted his rapture and flight as due to the intervention of the Blessed Virgin, who had thus solved the difficulty in which he found himself when ordered by a superior authority to overcome his repugnance to speak with the ladies awaiting him in the church.

Among other notables who visited Joseph at Assisi were Prince Leopold of Tuscany, son of Cosimo II and Maria Maddalena of Austria, and who, in 1667, was to become a cardinal under Pope Clement IX. This was the Leopold who founded the great Accademia del Cimento in Florence in 1657, which was formed mainly for experimental work as opposed to the medieval course of studies. Then there was John Casimir V of Poland (1609-72), the second son of Sigismund III, and who was made a cardinal in 1646 by Pope Innocent X, and who had long hankered for the religious life. He used to discuss his feelings with Joseph, but his political and religious aspirations clashed, and it was much later that, having lost his wife, he became disgusted with public

life, abdicated and retired to the abbey of St. Germain-des-Près, finally dying at Nevers in 1672.

Apart from his frequent levitations Joseph exhibited other phenomena. He was credited with reading the thoughts of persons for whom he acted as confessor, giving examples both of clairvoyance and prevision. For instance, during his last illness Joseph asked the doctor attending him whether he had made his confession. " Yes," replied the doctor, to which Joseph countered, " Go and think a little more." After a moment's reflection the doctor said that he could not remember anything more, to which Joseph replied by saying : " Think of what you were doing on such and such a day and at such and such an hour," at which, recollection came back to the good man, who went forthwith to confess his fault.

Apart from his other miracles Joseph is reported as healing the sick, miraculously multiplying food, finding lost articles, and was even credited with the power of bilocation.[1] Nevertheless it can hardly be doubted that his battles with the devil (who once appeared complete with horns some two feet long) partook of the nature of particularly vivid hallucinations. For example, one day, when he was praying at night in the church, he heard the door impetuously pushed open and a man appeared who sounded as if he were wearing iron clogs. Joseph followed him with his eyes and he noticed that, as he approached, the lamps round the altar of St. Francis became dimmed, and then went out one by one until a single lamp was left burning. Commending himself to St. Francis, Joseph prepared for the assault which soon followed, the devil pouncing upon him and seizing him by the throat. Invoking St. Francis, Joseph saw the Seraphic Father emerge from his tomb, which was near the foot of the altar, and with the help of a small candle relight the lamps which the devil had extinguished, and thus ended the terrible experience. Such stories as these are not uncommon in the lives of the Saints, and whether we believe or disbelieve them no real understanding of the psychology of sanctity

[1] See J. Görres, *La Mystique divine* (Paris, 1854), II, p. 339.

can be achieved without taking them into account in our appraisal of the facts.

On 23rd July 1653 the Inquisition ordered Joseph to leave the monastery in Assisi and proceed to Pietra Rubea in the Duchy of Urbino, where he was instructed to take up his abode in a Capuchin monastery. It was on his way to Pietra Rubea that Hyacinth Libelli († 1684), Archbishop of Avignon, met him at Città di Castello and observed one of his ecstasies. They had been discussing spiritual matters, and Joseph was remarking upon the lack of human gratitude when the sufferings of the Saviour were considered, and then he began to enumerate these sufferings one after the other. As the Archbishop looked at him he suddenly fell off the box on which he was sitting, with such violence that Libelli thought he had injured himself. He did not do so, however, but knelt down before the prelate, his eyes open but with pupils rolled up, and his arms extended in the shape of a cross and in the position in which St. Francis is often depicted when receiving the stigmata. After a short time Libelli tried to move one of his arms but could only do so with difficulty, and then it moved from the shoulder like a pendulum so that he was able to make it swing or oscillate like a plumb-line suspended in the air. After about fifteen minutes Joseph came to himself and, addressing Libelli in the Neapolitan dialect, asked to be excused, since, he added, whilst taking his seat on the box, "sleep overtook me." [1]

Great excitement seems to have occurred during the three months he lived at Pietra Rubea. The story of his raptures and flights had been spread abroad, and crowds of sight-seers arrived to see what might happen, even going so far as to try to remove the tiles from the roof of the church so as to be able to observe what Joseph might do when saying Mass. He was therefore soon transferred to another Capuchin house in Fossombrone ; and in the course of the journey it was observed that during a heavy shower Joseph's clothes remained dry. On his arrival his raptures were continued, and on

[1] For further descriptions of the trance state see Bernino, *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 155.

one occasion when in the dormitory he was found stretched out on the floor as if dead, his eyes and mouth covered with flies, and apparently in some kind of cataleptic fit. Again, one Sunday he was in the kitchen-garden with some other brothers when he saw a lamb belonging to the monastery and, wishing to have a look at it, one of the young friars took it up and put it into Joseph's arms. He clasped it to his breast and then took it by the legs and flung it across his shoulders. Becoming gradually more and more agitated Joseph began to run through the garden, followed by his companions, anxious to see what was going to happen. Having thrown the lamb into the air, Joseph flew after it high up above the trees in the garden, and remained kneeling in space, as it were, for more than two hours (*per più di due ore*) speaking with the Good Shepherd and adoring that Lamb the counterpart of which he had thrown into the air.

From Fossombrone, where he stayed for three years, Joseph was moved to Montevecchio ; and on the accession of Alexander VII to the Papacy, a request was made to restore Joseph to the Conventuals. He was thereupon sent to Osimo, an ancient city in the Marches, not far from the famous sanctuary of Loreto, which stands on a hill overlooking the Adriatic and not far from Ancona. The journey provided material for more stories of miracles which occurred as they went on their way. For instance, Joseph's horse was led through the night by his companion, Paolino ; and the latter, to avoid stumbling, carried in his hand a candle which neither went out, although a strong wind was blowing, nor diminished in size although burning for many hours. This miraculous candle Paolino kept as a relic, "a splendid testimonial," as the record adds, "to the sanctity of Fra Joseph."

Having almost arrived at Osimo, Joseph tarried a short time to gaze at the cupola of Loreto, a sight which brought on the state of rapture. Uttering his usual cry, Joseph declared that he saw the angels ascending and descending, and promptly rose into the air, and with his eyes fixed on the Holy House flew a distance of

some twenty-five to thirty yards [1] and at a height of about twelve palms to the foot of an almond tree. Whilst Joseph was at Osimo the Bishop (and later [1657] Cardinal) Antonio Bichi saw him in a state of ecstatic rapture. Suddenly Joseph rose from where he was sitting, and knelt down on the ground with arms outspread and eyes wide open. Anæsthesia was so complete, according to the report, that a fly crawled over the pupil of one of his eyes for an appreciable time without Joseph batting an eyelid. These minor observations of Joseph's condition during his ecstasies are interesting from whatever point of view one chooses to regard them. For instance, one of his biographers, Roberto Nuti, records the fact that on one occasion during the singing of the canticles it was noticed that Joseph was apparently kneeling in space, although part of his habit still touched the ground. Wishing to be certain of his complete levitation, one of those present passed his hands beneath him, thus assuring himself that Joseph was completely raised from the ground.

The most remarkable of all these investigations was doubtless that made by the surgeon Francesco Pierpaoli, who attended Joseph during his last illness in the summer of 1663. It appears that this doctor gave an account of the incident which was included in the Processes and which Bernino (p. 124) includes in his biography of the Saint, and which I shall summarize for the benefit of the reader. During his last illness, the doctor writes, when cauterizing his right leg by order of Dr. Giancino Carosi, he noticed that he was rapt and deprived of his senses. Joseph was sitting down at the time with his right leg lying across Pierpaoli's knees : cauterization had already begun and his arms were opened wide, his eyes likewise open and face raised to Heaven, whilst his mouth was also half-open without showing the least sign of respiration. Pierpaoli also observed that he was raised almost a palm above his chair, but in the same position as he was before he became rapt.

[1] Bernino, *op. cit.*, p. 113, says *sei canne* : the *Acta Sanctorum* says *spatio sex perticarum*. The *canna* varied in different localities, but may, perhaps, be taken as about $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 yards.

The doctor tried to lower his leg but found it impossible, for it remained in the same position. Moreover, he noticed that a fly had settled on the pupil of one of Joseph's eyes, and the more he drove it away the more obstinately did it return to the same position, where at last he let it remain. In order better to observe the position of Father Joseph, he went down on his knees together with the other doctor who was present, and they both saw clearly that not only was he in a state of rapture, and completely deprived of his senses, but that he was also raised from the ground in the air in the way and in the manner described above. As long as a quarter of an hour passed in this way when Fr. Silvestro Evangelista of the Osimo Monastery joined them. Having seen what was occurring, he spoke to Joseph and, using his superior authority, called him by name. Suddenly Joseph smiled and returned to his senses and again sat upon his chair saying : " My doctor, put on the cautery," to which Pierpaoli replied : " Father Joseph, I have already done so," to which he answered saying that they were laughing at him, so Pierpaoli let him see his bandaged leg and again told him, to which he replied that he had felt nothing.

This was not the only time that Dr. Pierpaoli had the opportunity of observing Joseph during his ecstatic states. On another occasion, when the physician was attending to his tongue, the Saint passed into a condition of rapture, which continued whilst the operation was in progress ; and on still a third occasion the doctor observed him at Mass when kneeling in his little chapel. He gave a great cry, which alarmed the physician, and then he saw him extended on the ground completely devoid of his senses.

The observations which were made when Joseph was levitated are sometimes of particular interest since they record associated facts which help us to get a clearer idea of what happened during these strange occurrences. Thus in the present case it was, as his biographer Bernino puts it, always noticed how little were his clothes and vestments disarranged during his aerial flights. It was almost as though an invisible hand were controlling his garments : his legs and feet were always covered by his robe, as was his neck

by his cowl. On another occasion when one day he was praying in a small vestry off the church, he was seen by all the people in the church emerging from the windows of the vestry, and then remain turned towards the tabernacle and suspended in the air with his knees still together. During this rapture his sandals fell from his feet inside the chapel, whilst his face shone like that of a seraph. The Superior ran into the vestry, and from the windows signed and called upon Joseph to come back, which he did by the same route, " for to him every window was a door when he was borne aloft to his God in his raptures." A friar brought his sandals back to him, because in this spiritual state it seemed that he despised them as trappings which were always tending to remain on the ground.

On another occasion before rising in the air he impetuously threw his biretta far from him, perhaps, as Bernino says, to enjoy God better with his mind without any impediment and without the slightest covering. This story is very instructive since it implies that Joseph may have been aware of a coming rapture and flight before it occurred, a fact which is suggested by other stories included in the Process.

In August 1663 Joseph was seized by a fever and grew steadily worse. On 17th September, or the day before he died, he received the Viaticum and said that he heard the sound of a bell which was summoning him to God. Passing into the ecstatic state, he rose from his death-bed and flew from his cell as far as the steps of his little chapel. " The Ass is beginning to ascend the mountain," he said, and, having received Extreme Unction, he called out in a loud, clear voice, which hardly corresponded with his extreme weakness : " Oh ! what chants, what sounds of Paradise ! What perfumes, fragrance, sweets and tastes of Paradise." Fr. Silvestro Evangelista, who, with his physician, had seen him floating in the air, was with him till the end, which came on Tuesday, 18th September 1663. This time the spirit had flown leaving the body behind.

In a letter, written on 2nd October 1663, Cardinal Facchinetti

of Spoleto tells of his friendship with Joseph, and of his life when on earth. Declaring that the ecstasies to which he was subject were known to all, he added that, speaking for himself, he had actually seen him levitated and that many of his household had shared the experience. Similar testimony was given by Cardinal Giulo Spinola († 1691) and Cardinal Francesco Augusto Rapaccioli († 1657) as recorded by Bernino (*op. cit.*, p. 81).

The story of Joseph of Copertino does not close with his death. Within three years of his funeral, inquiries were set on foot by the authorities with the view of obtaining the deposition of actual witnesses of the miraculous events which were said to have been observed during his life. Nuti's biography includes the testimony of many persons who had known Joseph ; and this book must have been prepared within a few years of his death, although it was not actually published till 1678. Bernino's book, first published in 1722, provides abundant references to the details as recorded in the Process, the printed record of which is so rare as to be known only in a few copies. The Process itself was concluded in 1735, when Pope Clement XII first made public the decree asserting the virtues of Joseph ; and the Congregations for the discussion of the miracles were held from 1751 to 1752, Pope Benedict XIV publishing a decree in the latter year approving of two of the miracles which occurred after Joseph's death. Further inquiries were then set on foot before the decree by which Joseph was canonized was finally promulgated. These having proved satisfactory, the decree was formally announced by Pope Clement XIII on 16th July 1767. The flying friar had joined the Saints at last.

In connection with the investigations which were made during the proceedings for canonization, it must be remembered that this is no mere act by the Pope, which he authorizes or withholds at his own pleasure. The whole suit is argued before the Congregation of Rites, which acts as a tribunal before whom the matter is brought. Evidence is adduced by the official in charge who is called the *Postulator*, and the facts are examined with a view to rebuttal by another official called the *Promotor Fidei* who tries to pull the case

to pieces and point out its weaknesses and lack of evidential standards. The whole procedure is very complicated, and there seems little doubt that great care is exercised as to the kind of evidence submitted and the amount of verification demanded for its acceptance. One of the chief authorities for both beatification and canonization was Prosper Lambertini, afterwards Pope Benedict XIV, who published his treatise on the subject in the eighteenth century. It so happens that this notable authority was the *Promotor Fidei* in the case of Joseph of Copertino, and thus he had before him the reports of Joseph's levitations, the evidence for which it was his duty to examine, and in which to discover flaws if such existed. His testimony, therefore, is of some importance, and I shall quote it. " Whilst I was discharging the office of *Promotor Fidei*," he writes, " the cause of the venerable servant of God, Joseph of Copertino, was discussed by the Congregation of Sacred Rites, and eye-witnesses of unexceptionable integrity reported on the celebrated levitations and remarkable flights of this servant of God when in a condition of ecstatic rapture." [1]

These are weighty words and there seems no reasonable doubt that Lambertini believed fully in the testimony of the witnesses whom he examined, and consequently in the reality of Joseph's levitations, and even possibly also of his aerial flights. Moreover, if we make all possible allowance for exaggeration, it is not easy to dismiss the testimony of the two medical men or other lay witnesses, although it is doubtless regrettable that independent accounts do not appear to have been recorded. But for those of my readers who are inclined to believe in the reality of these strange occurrences, a wealth of testimony exists from every part of the world. Men and women have been reported as floating in the air without visible support for many hundreds of years. The Saints of the Roman Catholic Church are not the only ones who are credited with these powers. Holy men and ascetics in India

[1] See *Opus de Servorum Dei Beatificatione et Beatarum Canonizatione*, Lib. III, cap. 49, 9 : *Opera Omnia* (Prati, 1840), III, p. 566). It ought, perhaps, to be said that Lambertini seems to have believed in the levitations of Pythagoras and Simon Magus.

and the Far East have many times been described as being levitated, and the idea is not unknown among so-called savage tribes. Saints and demoniacs, magicians and mediums, queer men and women of all ages and all times are reported as being raised from the ground and transported bodily through the air. It was never very common even among those saints with whose names it is especially connected. And as the years go by it seems to be getting rarer. If a genuine photograph exists showing a levitated person, apart from one where the appearance is due to trickery, I have yet to see one. Perhaps we shall know more about these so-called physical phenomena of mediumship now that we can both see and take photographs in darkness. Perhaps they will disappear altogether, and dark séances become a thing of the past. If so, my more sceptical readers will hardly fail to draw their own conclusions. And I do not blame them for it.

It is, I think, to be regretted that the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church appear to be so unwilling to offer any co-operation when it is a question of investigating physical manifestations connected with persons professing the Catholic faith.[1] It is true that the difficulties which confront the authorities are not easy to resolve. In any particular case the question has to be answered as to whether the phenomena are diabolic or divine : whether in fact they come from Heaven or from Hell. This was always the pitfall into which the unwary were accustomed to be trapped. Mysticism, and the phenomena which often accompanied it, were not manifestations of religious sanctity of which the Church was inclined to approve. Much of it seemed to be too independent, and possibly heresy was to be scented therein. How was it possible to determine whether any particular mystic, with his accompanying ecstacies and raptures, was deriving these gifts from God as a result of his divine communion, or was in reality drawing his powers from a diabolic source, perhaps as a result of a pact made

[1] Mgr. Ronald Knox has stated that Roman Catholics do not " resent scientific investigation into our stories of miracles," but rather, " we welcome it " (*Miracles*, London, 1927, p. 24). Perhaps, however, the phenomena themselves are not included under " the stories."

with the Evil One in days gone by? That most Christian doctor, the great Jean Gerson (1363-1429), had tried to draw up a list of rules on the matter before the close of the fifteenth century. Others have followed, but the problem shows little sign of being fully solved. To the convinced Catholic the phenomenon of levitation is a miracle, divine or diabolic; and its origin must be sought in the details of the ethical pattern of each individual life in which it is reported. In the case of mediums, the fact that they demonstrate their powers, instead of trying to hide them from the outside world, is a circumstance which condemns them unreservedly in the eyes of the believing Catholic. To him, as to the mystics of the Orient, these miraculous powers are not for display, but are the mere accompaniments of certain aspects of a life devoted to communion with the divine.

Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that it is possible for Catholics to be totally unable to distinguish the divine from the diabolic in a number of instances. Take the case of Magdalena de la Cruz, who was born in 1487 and died in 1560. Writing about 1545, Francisco de Enzinas, or Dryander as he is often called, the translator of the New Testament into Spanish, and at one time a Professor of Greek at Cambridge, says something about her in his memoirs. She was so religious, he declares, that her piety excited discussion and comment throughout the whole of Spain. Whatever she said was treated as an oracle: whatever she did seemed to have a divine origin. Her influence and example led several scions of noble families to the cloister; whilst Cardinals, Inquisitors and even the Empress Isabel herself, were eager to show her honour and ask her advice. As to her ecstasies and raptures they were known far beyond the limits of the monastery at Córdova, where she wore the Franciscan habit and held the position of Abbess. Sometimes on feast-days it was said that she was to be seen rapt and floating in the air some three or possibly four feet above the ground. She declared that she had conceived and brought forth the infant Jesus, who had actually played with her and she with him. She was clairvoyant, and knew the sins

of the novices before they had confessed them to her; and on other occasions she told priests that they were celebrating Mass in a state of mortal sin. She materialized cherries when they were out of season, and transformed rotten ones into fresh ones merely by washing them. Again, when she dropped eggs on the ground they did not break, which was thought to be a miracle in itself.

In 1543 the saintly Abbess fell sick and seemed likely to die. Her confession, however, was not that which might have been expected. Seized by convulsions, she poured forth a story which reduced her audience to a state of horrified immobility, and which was subsequently investigated by the authorities down to the last detail.

According to Magdalena she had been controlled by a demon since she was about five years old. It was this evil spirit who had taught her how to feign sanctity and ecstasies; how to appear to refrain from all food, and how to simulate the wounds of Jesus Christ upon her own body. When she was twelve she made a pact with this demon, who was called Balban. He appeared to her in various forms. Sometimes it was a bull; at other times a Negro. On still other occasions Balban put on the semblance of an angel, or even arrived as St. Francis or St. Jerome. Another of her attendant demons was called Patonio, and it was these who whispered the secrets of the lives of penitents in her ears, and who enabled her to perform the miracles which had been observed as occurring during her raptures.

Having made her confession, Magdalena did not die but, the facts having been investigated, she was sent to another convent under strict discipline and there she died in 1560 at Andujar.

It might have been thought by those unversed in the political intrigues and jealousies of the various monastic orders of the Roman Catholic Church that the frauds of Magdalena de la Cruz, if such they were, might have been unveiled before she was, seemingly, on the point of departing this life. It might well be asked what would have happened if she had suddenly been killed in an accident, or had been let drop from a great height by Balban

or Patonio when one or other of them had raised her from the ground during one of her diabolic raptures. It was not always that exposure came at what was supposed to be a death-bed repentance. At times the frauds could scarcely be concealed. Take the case of Maria de la Visitacion, whose miracles were long the talk of many in Portugal, where she was living at the Convent of the Anunciada in Lisbon towards the year 1584. Born about four years before Magdalena's death, she had a rather similar childhood, although it does not seem that she pleaded any extreme diabolic interference with her personal affairs. Hard soap and hot water sufficed to remove her stigmata, since they were due to a less severe device than the caustic which San Maria Patrocinio employed over two hundred years later. When she was asked to explain the brilliance which illuminated her face during her raptures, or the methods she used to simulate her levitations, her answers were direct and to the point. Thus in order to light up her face she used a chafing-dish in which a small flame was burning, the light from which was reflected on to her face by means of a simple looking-glass. Similarly her elevation from the ground, when in supposed ecstasy in her cell, was easily managed. All she had to do was to put on high-soled shoes,[1] or if these proved insufficient, to stand upon pieces of wood with which she had provided herself for just such an effect. Indeed, it was as simple as that.

If the modern reader, who is not committed to any theological beliefs regarding divine and diabolic mysticism, runs through the lives of these queer servants of God, he cannot fail to be absorbed by the amazing mixture to be found therein. Here there is quite clearly to be found psychosis and neurosis, hysteria and hallucination, sly opportunism and downright imposture. But apart from all these factors, which doubtless sometimes played their part, there were others of a type which has led so many of these wonder-workers to become beatified and canonized by the Church to which they dedicated so much of their lives. With many of them the physical

[1] These *chapins*, as they were called, sometimes had cork or wooden soles a foot high.

phenomena, which accompanied their raptures, were neither prayed for nor encouraged. Rarely does it seem that ecstasies like those of St. Joseph of Copertino were used to provide visitors with thrills, as quite clearly seems to have been the case when the Saint was told to meet the Admiral of Castile and his retinue ; or when Dominic of Jesus-Mary was said to have floated in the air before Philip II of Spain and some members of his court in 1601. More usually are such wonders reserved for close associates ; although in the case of some of the Catholic saints it can hardly be doubted that the phenomena were utilized for purposes of publicity in order to spread abroad the fame of the monastery housing the ecstatic, thus gaining financial and other advantages.

With regard to Joseph of Copertino we do not know enough to obtain any clear picture of his psychological make-up. Certainly the accounts of his childhood, lack of education and later mental development suggest that he was not far from what to-day we should call a state of feeble-mindedness ; [1] and from the physical point of view he can hardly be considered a healthy person. When the Custos at Grottella heard of his austerities, he went to see him one day in his cell. " What are you doing standing there like a young pig," he asked Joseph, " lift up your habit." At this command Joseph was confused, since to obey meant that he had to reveal his hair-shirt, so he asked the Custos to excuse him. " Ah," he replied, " you are not going to obey ? Then through holy obedience to my wishes I order you to undress." Joseph could now hardly refuse to comply, so he took off his monastic habit, appearing only in his hair-shirt. But the Guardian now told him to take this off also so as to strip completely. It was then seen the state to which Joseph had reduced himself. He was wearing chains and a metal plate, and his body was macerated and afflicted with sores. Thereupon the Superior forbade Joseph to wear these instruments of torture, and the chain, to which bits of flesh were attached, was taken away, together with the iron plate

[1] Bishop Bonaventura Claver said that he was *idiota*, meaning completely untaught.

which had been pressed against the bleeding and festering surface of some sore spot on the Saint's body. It was hardly likely that the sores would heal properly considering Joseph's diet. As Bernino says, it was nothing less than one long fast. For five years he did not touch bread, his meals, as has already been said, consisting of herbs, a few dried fruits or baked beans without salt, over which he sprinkled his bitter powder, which is said to have resembled pepper in colour, and which was once apparently mistaken for such by some religious belonging to the monastery. Before Mass, which he celebrated every morning, Joseph appeared pale and weak, but after having communicated he became ruddy of face and lively in body.

From these accounts it could hardly be maintained that Joseph was a healthy person ; and the records of his dreams and hallucinations do not suggest that his mortifications and penances were particularly successful in their object.

As to his levitations and other apparent miracles what is there to be said ? The evidence is available and can either be accepted or rejected. Whatever view the orthodox Roman Catholic may take of the levitation of the Saints, he must, it would seem, hold *some* view as to the explanation of the purely physical problem involved. It is true that some Catholic authorities on mysticism make a few suggestions as to how the body is raised, and what sustains it when suspended. But these ideas are not supported, as far as I am aware, by any experimental procedure which could be applied in the circumstances. The majority of Catholic writers are content to regard the levitations of the Saints as " miracles," which are certainly opposed to what we know of natural laws. As to the levitation of mediums and demoniacs, the general Catholic view appears to be that it is due to diabolic intervention, whatever that may mean.

From the scientific, as opposed to the theological point of view, the position is equally unsatisfactory. Although the levitation of mediums has been reported for many years, there has been no serious and competent investigation of the occurrence ; and with the

increasing rarity of the phenomenon it does not seem very likely that the opportunity will present itself in the near future. Saints do not seem to fly as they used to do ; and at the moment of writing I do not know of a single medium who can claim to present this manifestation under even moderately satisfactory conditions. Certainly there have been few at any time who could in any way equal the levitations and aerial flights of that venerable Servant of God, Saint Joseph of Copertino.

CHAPTER TWO

JAMES ALLEN: THE MAN WHO WAS NOT

A FEW years before the beginning of the nineteenth century a bedstead maker, one John Naylor, was living in rather poor circumstances in London, in Mint Street, Borough. Although he could ill afford the luxury of children, his quiver was not without them, and when little Abigail arrived he regarded her rather as a later source of income than as a welcome addition to the family, especially as her mother soon afterwards died to join Him who had sent her the unwanted babe.

In spite of the poverty of the household in which she grew up, young Abigail seemed to thrive; and in due course fulfilled at least some of her father's hopes, for she entered domestic service, and, being both cheerful and industrious, found a good job as a housemaid with a Mr. Ward, who lived at 6 Camberwell Terrace.

Mr. Ward's prosperous household was very different from the one she had left. Abigail was not the only member of the domestic staff, neither was it composed entirely of women. The master kept horses, and consequently employed a groom and farrier, who at the time of Abigail's engagement was the smart young James Allen, who had to come to Mr. Ward from the house of an alderman with whom he had previously been working.

Eighteen years of age, with a clear ruddy complexion, Allen possessed all the manners and graces of the accomplished horseman; and the steeds for which he cared were noted far and wide for their general appearance of well-being, their proudly arched necks and their sleek and glossy skins. Indeed, as might have been expected, the young groom was very popular, and was just such a one on whom many a girl would cast covetous, if not amorous, eyes. Although not tall (he was but five feet six inches) Allen presented an elegant appearance in his fawn-coloured coat

British Museum.

"James Allen presented an elegant appearance." (See p. 38)

Plate II

with its silver lace about the collar, his prim hat with its somewhat jaunty cockade, and his tightly fitting breeches and highly polished boots. If the truth must be told, the girls made little pretence of not desiring him, and to earn an approving smile from the handsome young man was to excite envy and possibly malice in the servants' hall. Abigail and the cook competed for his favours, and when the contest was decided by the victory of the former, the latter vented her spleen and vexation in no uncertain terms. Indeed, the domestic peace was so far ruffled that calm could not be restored. The cook saw to it that young Abigail should pay well for her success, and her methods of doing so made it impossible for the young girl to remain longer in the same household. She gave in her notice, and luckily soon secured another position in Margate. James, furnished with the best of good characters, left also and soon obtained another job.

It must have been with some trepidation, although doubtless mingled with joy, that Abigail received a letter from James some six months later, begging her to come to London so that they could get married as soon as possible. When she arrived, in December 1807, she was met by James, who told her that he had arranged for the wedding to take place at the Church of St. Giles, Camberwell, and that the ceremony was to be performed that very month. Abigail was enchanted. At last she was going to be settled with the man whom she had wanted ever since she had set eyes on him. By an alliance with one so young, so handsome, and at the same time so industrious and efficient, her own happiness was assured. By his proposal to her, James had proved not only his love for her, but also his appreciation of her own good qualities.

On the 13th of December 1807, " James Allen, Batchelor, and Abigail Naylor, Spinster," became man and wife according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church. The happy pair (as the newspapers would have described them) had agreed that the very limited time that Abigail could spare from her situation in Margate was to be passed in the house of a mutual friend in Gray's Inn Lane.

On their arrival, however, misfortune awaited them. To their great annoyance they found that some mistake had been made in the dates, and that no accommodation had been provided for them. They had, therefore, to seek lodging elsewhere, and were successful in finding it in a tavern in the same street, presided over by the sign of an hospitable Bull.

Their ill-luck, however, was not to end with their disappointment over the mistake their friend had made about the rooms. Hardly had they retired when James was taken ill with a violent stomach-ache and digestive trouble, which he put down to having eaten something which had disagreed with him. Moreover, Abigail, having either forgotten in her excitement or miscalculated her days, was dismayed to discover that her condition demanded the postponement of that consummation to their love to which she had for so long looked forward. Her leave of absence from Margate could not be extended, and thus she returned to her post as virginal as when she had left it. It is true that she vowed eternal troth to her spouse, but there is little doubt that she deeply regretted that her fortress had not yet been stormed and taken by one with whom she would have so willingly contested it.

After his wife's departure, James looked around for a new job. At last he found one in the house of a gentleman at Blackheath, and when he was finally settled he wrote to Abigail telling her that, when it became feasible, he would arrange to meet her so that their married life might begin. Weeks went by, however, and she heard nothing more. What must have been her consternation when she received a letter from James saying that she must not leave her situation on any account as he was on the point of sailing for the East Indies. Moreover, he had given her no address to which she could write, and inquiries by her friends in London had proved fruitless. It seemed possible that James had passed out of her life.

Months went by and nothing was heard of James Allen. Abigail had given up any hopes of seeing him again. She was a deserted wife. She was more than that. She was deserted before she had

had the opportunity to enjoy those fruits of her marriage which she had so long desired.

One day in July of the following year she received a shock. A letter arrived from James, her " loving husband till death " as he described himself, and in it he begged her to give notice immediately, asked her forgiveness for his disappearance, and told her to come to London when her period of service had expired, so that they could both at last enjoy the home that he had prepared.

It was on 12th August 1808 that Mrs. Allen arrived in London. She was shocked at the change that had come over her husband. Instead of the fine young man whom she had left, he now presented himself in the shape of a rough-looking cowman in the service of Mr. Ford, a dairyman in Bermondsey. Although he was now poor and apparently no longer able to keep up the same smart appearance as formerly, James had acquired some tolerable lodgings in Swan Lane, Rotherhithe, to which Abigail accompanied him when she arrived in the city from the coast.

Having finally settled in her new home, Abigail looked forward to a period of happiness and contentment. But she was again doomed to disappointment. No longer was James the debonair young buck she had once known, upright and gay with sprightly mien and affable smile. Experience of the world seemed to have hardened him. He no longer seemed to be attracted by Abigail, whose presence sometimes seemed actually distasteful to him. It was clear to his wife that James was ill ; and she forgave him all, whilst swallowing her own chagrin and acute discontent. The beginning of a life together scarcely seemed to be auspicious.

However bad and inattentive a husband James may have been, his capacity for business could not be denied. It was not long before he left the service of the dairy and his position as cowman, and took a job down in the docks. He worked as a pitch-boiler both for Peter Mistieres and Brandram and Co. of 17 Size Lane, Queen Street. The work was heavy, but the pay was tolerable and perquisites were not infrequent. At about this time the pair were living at 52 Albion Street, Rotherhithe, and with James's

wages and the extras he brought in they managed pretty well on about two pounds a week. He was popular at the docks, but, although he both smoked and chewed tobacco, his avoidance of alcohol caused some comment among his friends and companions, who were accustomed to foregather in the taverns along the water-front.

It was not long before Allen left his job at the docks and took another at the Board of Ordnance, from which he soon passed to yet another in a chemical factory in the Commercial Road. He speedily became a general favourite in the works, and the job was so congenial that he remained in it for about two and a half years. Regular employment and good food had brought back the colour to his cheeks and the sparkle to his eyes, and his youthful appearance made some of the more knowing hands raise their eyebrows, suspecting that he was a pansy, or as they used to say in those days, a " molly." One day there was a little trouble at the factory : one of the bolder workmen, wishing to test his theory, assaulted James, who, however, resisted with such energy and cried for help so loudly that the attempt failed, and his assailant sneaked off in ignominy.

One incident of this sort was enough for James. He resolved to leave his work in the chemical factory and return to the docks, whilst at the same time he determined to become the tenant of a small country inn, which Abigail could manage and thus increase the family budget by their united efforts. Having consulted the usual advertising channels they found what they wanted ; and so in 1816 James found himself the tenant of the Sun Inn, in Baldock, Hertfordshire. Nothing could have suited Abigail better. Here she was able to prove her industry, frugality and thrift. Business prospered, for the villagers liked both the inn and its tenants, and in about eighteen months they had saved some seventy or eighty pounds.

Again, however, ill-luck awaited them. One day the inn was entered by burglars, and all their hard-earned savings were stolen. They could not pay their rent and were sold up, and it was not

long before they were back in Rotherhithe. James soon found a good job. He was engaged by a firm of shipbuilders and did all the work required of him, climbing the rigging, attending to the sails and even going to the yard-arm when necessary. This exhausting work took much of his strength, and in order to fortify himself he began to drink porter, although he rarely exceeded a pint a day. His nature, too, was changing. He was no longer the gay companion and happy-go-lucky fellow of earlier days. He was becoming moody, suspicious and gloomy. Indeed, Abigail used to think that he preferred even the cat to herself, for every day, as he went to and from work, he used to collect scraps of food which had to be prepared and given to the animal when James got home.

One day Abigail, who had been to Greenwich on business, found on her return home that the house in which she and James had been lodging was shut up and apparently deserted. Inquiries at the firm where James had been employed elicited the information that he had left some time previously, a fact of which Abigail had been kept in ignorance. She had no idea what she ought to do. Acting on the advice of her friends, and with their help, the door of the house was forced, and it became immediately apparent that James had decamped, taking everything of value with him. His wife, however, was not the person to let an event of this kind destroy her confidence and initiative. She soon turned her deft fingers to a new trade, and became a sewing-hand, making bonnets and muslin capes, an occupation in which her previous experience with the needle gave her a tolerable skill.

After an absence of over a fortnight James suddenly turned up ; but this time Abigail had had enough of this kind of life, and she tried to turn him out of the room with her large pair of scissors. He grappled with her, and did his best to pull the scissors from her hands, but the excitement proved too much for him, and he fainted away. When he revived, Abigail's anger had subsided ; and after he had told her that he now had plenty of money, she received him back into favour.

Their former mode of life was now resumed. James got a position with R. H. and J. Nash, the barge builders in Upper Fore Street, Lambeth, and he soon became as popular as ever, since all his old charm came back once he was in a well-paid and congenial occupation. His reputation as a smart workman spread ; and it was not long before another firm of shipwrights, Messrs. Closs and Kauf, offered him a job at a higher wage than that he was then receiving. He at once accepted it, and remained with the same firm for seven years.

James was never very strong, and the work in the yards was hard and exacting. Even whilst he was still with Nash he had had to ask for some months off, and his illness during this time had caused Abigail grave anxiety. She had nursed him devotedly, and his needs and treatment had been attended to by three doctors, including the official physician attached to the Benefit Society to which James paid his dues.

Although he was happy in the job which he had taken over after leaving the Nash yards, James was never one to stay in the same position indefinitely. He moved on, and this time took work with the firm of Thomas Crisp and Co., the shipbuilders, mast and blockmakers, at Dock Head. Here again he was successful : his work in the docks had so strengthened his muscles that he was often employed on some of the most trying jobs, such as carrying men out to ships lying off the quays, and wading in thick and clinging mud on the river banks.

In January 1829 the couple were living on the first floor of a house in East Lane, Rotherhithe. James was in steady employment, although now on the wrong side of forty : his wife was but a few years younger. The routine of their life seemed firmly established. Neither knew that disaster was just round the corner.

One day James and another labourer, William Shrieve, were working in a sawpit out in Crisp's yards. A huge fir log was being cut, James working at it from below and Shrieve from above. Through some miscalculation a heavy piece fell into the pit, and James was immediately struck down by it. Medical aid

was instantly summoned, but the unfortunate man was beyond all help. He was at once taken to St. Thomas's Hospital, but died on the way. Abigail was informed as soon as was possible ; and later the staff at the hospital had to let her know that her husband was dead when he arrived. But they had to tell her something else. James Allen was a woman.

As can well be imagined, the case excited, as the newspapers of the day expressed it, " an unusual ferment in the gossiping world." The inquest, which was held by Thomas Shelton, the London coroner, was sensational. William Shrieve deposed that, on 12th January 1829, he had been working with the deceased in a sawpit in Mill Street when a piece of the fir log fell on Allen's head : and in this statement he was supported by the medical testimony, which was to the effect that the skull had been fractured in several places. It was stated that the body was that of a well nourished woman, with no abnormality of any kind. The upper part of the body was, however, found to be swathed in tight bandages ; and it was revealed at the inquest by one Jane Daley that Abigail had once confided to her that she did not think that her husband was what she called " a proper man."

Although it was clear that there was a general desire to probe further into the mysterious circumstances of Allen's life, the coroner kept to the business in hand, and a verdict of accidental death was returned.

The matter, however, was not allowed to end there. On 17th January 1829 the funeral took place, which was conducted by Mr. Butler, an undertaker from Dock Head. An immense crowd attended. The body was deposited in a vault in a private burial ground at St. John's, Bermondsey ; and precautions were taken to prevent the malign activities of the resurrection men. Abigail was, of course, present, and seemed in deep distress. She was, indeed, in trouble, for rumours had been spread abroad that she herself was really a man, and that the whole affair was a hoax in execrable taste. People shouted at her when she went out : her house was beset by gaping sightseers, who hoped by peering

through cracks in doors or windows to confirm or deny the suspicions that were rife. It was even said that the Good Samaritan Benefit Society had refused to assist her, but this was officially denied. Finally, in order to dispel the rumours and gain peace of mind for herself, Abigail went to a friendly magistrate, Mr. G. R. Minshull of Bow Street, and there she signed the following affidavit :

> I, Abigail Allen, residing at No. 32 East Lane, Rotherhithe, do hereby make oath I was married to a person named James Allen, at St. Giles's Church, Camberwell, on the 13th of December, 1807, and that I resided with him as his wife, and that during that period I was entirely ignorant of the fact of the said James Allen being a female, until that circumstance was communicated to me by the woman who undressed the body after death.
>
> (Signed) ABIGAIL ALLEN.

Gradually the gossip died away. Abigail was only just forty. She had still time to find another mate, but whether she did so or not I cannot say. Diligent search in the yellowing and chipping leaves of the London and provincial Press has so far yielded no further news of her. Somewhere, perhaps, there is a notice to the effect that Abigail Allen (or was it Naylor ?) was married, this time we hope to " a proper man." However that may be, she was not likely to forget her life with that oddest of odd transvestites,[1] James Allen, the man who was not.

What was the mystery behind the life and activities of James Allen ? We shall never know. Her case presents features of great interest to the student of transvestism, but this is not the place to discuss them. Her life had none of the glamour that had filled the careers of so many of the famous female transvestites of history, and was, generally speaking, rather drab and humdrum, very different from the lives of those of her kind who, in the past, had donned male clothing and fought in the wars. Very often, however, these people have had physical peculiarities which sometimes made their sex difficult to determine. For example, there was Elvira de Céspedes in the sixteenth century, who first of all was

[1] A *transvestite* is a technical term for a man wearing woman's clothes or vice versa.

taken for a woman, married and had a child. Later, however, she seemed to become more masculine : she began to dress as a man, and conducted numerous amorous exploits which caused much talk and many rumours. She proposed to a girl, but her sex was questioned and an inquiry instituted. The Vicar of Madrid declared that she was a man ; but the denunciations against her were so insistent that the Inquisition heard of it, and made an independent examination. The result was that she was declared a female, and it was also stated that her career was clearly due to demonic influence. She was given two hundred lashes and sentenced to serve in a hospital for some ten years. We are not told, I think, what the patients thought about it.

The same miserable uncertainty dogged the life of Anne Grandjean, who lived in the first half of the eighteenth century. She began by being called a girl, then a boy, and then back to a girl again. Finally she did not know what she was. All she did know was that she preferred women to men in spite of what all her friends were saying about her. In the end it was decreed that she was a woman, and nothing that Anne could say or do made any difference.

In some cases it is not easy to decide what reliance is to be placed upon the tales of daring and heroism that cluster around these queer characters. Take Mary Moders as an example. She was said to have had the most incredible career in the seventeenth century, and was sometimes called " the Female Hector, or the German Lady turned Monsieur." She was a rogue and a cheat, and passed herself off in all manner of disguises, one of her " notable pranks and cunning deceits," as a tract about her puts it, being to announce, during one of her change-overs to female dress, that she was the daughter of a great German prince, and that her real name was Maria de Vulva.

Mary Ann Talbot was another adventuress, this time at the end of the eighteenth century. She dressed as a man, called herself John Taylor, and acted as a drummer, a cabin-boy and a sailor. But her secret was never entirely hidden, since it appears that she

had originally donned male attire in order to elope with her lover, and that when the latter had been killed she had continued the disguise as a matter of convenience.

Catalina de Erauso, who was born at the end of the sixteenth century, seems never to have doubted that she ought to have been a man. Well set-up, she had marked feminine characteristics, but she was successful in hiding them ; and her career as a man led her into the wildest adventures both military and otherwise. Like St. Joseph of Copertino (see p. 13) she was received by Pope Urban VIII, who is said to have given her some sensible advice and did not insist on her changing back into female garb. In the account of her exploits, as written by herself, she says very little about any love affairs she may have had. Indeed, it would seem that she never had any with any man, but rather preferred to indulge in trifling flirtations with other women, who, unaware of her sex, did not disdain her attentions. Twice it appears did she get into trouble on this account. On one occasion she was turned out of her job, as her employer caught her tickling the ankles of his sister ; on another, her own brother (whom she later killed) thought that she had designs on his mistress, which was not difficult to understand considering that he had not the remotest idea that his fellow-soldier was a woman and least of all his own sister. Catalina must have been a rollicking and buoyant kind of person, as quick with her tongue as with her rapier, and certainly not one whom, in those days, it was wise to contradict too flatly. Of all the female transvestites in history she was, perhaps, the wildest and the most turbulent.

Then there was Maximiliana von Leithorst, who died in Wiener Neustadt on 29th August 1748. After her birth (which was illegitimate) her mother took the veil, and the child, left to the none too tender mercies of a hard world, resolved as early as her fourteenth year to renounce her sex and live as a man. She donned male attire and betook herself to Regensburg, passing under the name of Baron von Leithorst. In Regensburg she became very friendly with an elderly but unmarried Countess von Welz, who

possessed a large fortune with which she performed many charitable works. This lady so arranged matters in favour of her protégé that Maximiliana was accepted as a cadet in a Lothringian regiment, and with this unit she served seven years, taking part in the Turkish campaign. Her courage was so striking and her success so marked that she hoped that she would reach the rank of officer ; and her pleasant appearance was such that she received many amourous proposals from a number of female admirers. In order more effectually to conceal her sex she became engaged to a young lady, but her plans went somewhat awry for she became ill and had a hard struggle to conceal her condition from the army surgeon. It seems that she was an unruly patient as the chief surgeon himself paid her a visit, and she was forced to divulge her secret to him, begging him to respect it and not to expose her and put her to shame before her regiment. He advised her to leave military service, which she did, having attained her coveted goal of officer rank.

On leaving the army she continued to wear men's clothes and even at times the uniform of her former regiment, renouncing it only when she approached the Lord's Table. After some time, however, misfortune overtook her. She contracted cancer of the breast, which caused her not only physical suffering of an extreme kind, but a mental conflict of great intensity. She bore her sufferings with an exemplary patience, but her condition was hopeless. She died at the early age of forty-four.

In 1728 a curious case came to light in Malmö in Sweden. The daughter of a peasant had, it seems, run away from her parents : seven years afterwards it was discovered that she had been living as a man, and had joined an artillery unit, acting as a kind of handyman without any of her comrades having the least idea that she was not one of themselves. She then married the daughter of another farmer, but somehow the story got around that she was a woman in man's clothes, and the couple fled to Norway, after which history seems to be silent.

Then there was Hannah Snell, who was born in Worcester in

1723, ten years after the equally famous Phoebe Hessel, and who, when she was scarcely ten years of age, declared that she would be a soldier. She relented somewhat when she met a Dutch sailor who took her fancy and whom she afterwards married. He soon deserted her, and after his disappearance she put on a man's clothes, called herself James Gray, and enlisted in the army where she had a number of surprising adventures. After a time she deserted and enlisted as a marine, going off to the East Indies on a sloop-of-war, and proving herself very useful. Moreover, she joined in various warlike operations, covering herself with glory, but unfortunately she got wounded in the groin. Refusing any medical assistance, she extracted the bullet herself and, according to report, actually recovered. Returning to England she resumed female attire, and told the story of her military exploits which, it is said, resulted in her being given a pension during the remainder of her life, which came to an end in 1779.

The desire that some women have to dress as men is not always associated with physical as well as with mental abnormalities. Many such examples are still being recorded in the Press. For example, in August 1916, a foreman, for whom an employer appealed at a tribunal on the ground of indispensability, was found to be a woman. In April 1932 it was discovered that a woman in Glasgow had been working as a man in a local factory. She had married another woman, and in the register of the Sheriff Court had described herself as "a widower." On examination it was revealed that, like James Allen, she was a normal, healthy woman as regards all her physical characteristics. In July of the same year a young man was charged with theft at Teddington. No one seems to have had the slightest suspicion that this smart young fellow was a girl. Admiral Smith-Dorrien thought that he was quite a delightful fellow, and christened him "Jack Tar." He smoked, played a good game of billiards, belonged to a men's club and kept company with a local young woman. The following month another case came into prominence, which has some striking points of resemblance with that of James Allen. At Astor Magna,

in Gloucestershire, there died a woman who for upwards of twenty years had been known as a man. She had worked as a timber-haulier and on a coal wharf, smoked a clay pipe, and completely deceived the physician who attended her during an illness which lasted fifteen months.

In 1943 it was disclosed in Chicago that a popular child photographer, who was married to the daughter of an Akron physician, was really a woman who had been posing as a man for eleven years. Before entering the photographic business she had had various jobs, such as a truck driver, a gang boss and the proprietor of a construction company. When she married, it was some months before her secret was discovered by her wife, and then the pair decided they would remain together, as at that time they were operating the business as a joint concern. Trouble only arose when the Akron physician suspected that something was wrong when he was refused admission to his daughter, who was about to have a baby, the said infant having been bought by the crafty pair on the instalment system for one dollar down. Somehow I can scarcely imagine Abigail and James Allen going so far as that.

CHAPTER THREE

BERBIGUIER : BOTTLER OF SPIRITS

AMONG the terrors of the unknown, which have for so many centuries haunted mankind, the fear of demons is, perhaps, one of the most awful and the most shocking. The whole tragedy of witchcraft was bound up with it : theories of possession and obsession have the belief as their central core. Satan and his angels hovered over the world holding a kind of standing commission from God, who thus was able to authorize them to exercise their diabolic practices upon the souls and bodies of suffering humanity.

When I was a child I was instructed in the demonology of the Christian religion by a priest, who was disturbed to discover that at that time I had not realized the *number* of demons who were operating in the world. I had not read, for example, the Rev. Joseph Young's *Demonology* (Edinburgh, 1856), where it is said that their number may exceed " not only the aggregate of one generation, but the countless myriads of all the generations of the human family." The good man then proceeded to inform me that Satan and his devilish crew, being neither omnipotent nor omnipresent, had, as it were, to divide up their work and direct their energies into the most appropriate channels. Thus Satan himself concentrated upon the saints, since they fell into sin only under the most diabolic and subtle provocation. The ordinary person was attended by devils of quite a low category. I was assured that mine were mere beginners, so easy was it to lead me astray.

Whatever may be thought of these ideas, it seems to me that the believing Christian, whether he belongs to the Roman Catholic Church or not, can scarcely dismiss the subject as a superstition that has no place in the modern world. The famous Bull of Pope Innocent VIII, which was issued in Rome in 1484, can hardly

fail to indicate what he thought was happening in Europe ; and there is no doubt that his pronouncement did much to forward the persecution of the witches by whose evil machinations the produce of the earth was blasted, foul diseases inflicted upon men and animals, and even more unpleasant effects produced through the abandonment of both men and women to the power of evil. How far the Bull is one which must be literally believed is a matter to be left to the professional theologians, who have, I suspect, often wrangled about it. The Protestant is no whit better off than his Catholic brother, for the belief in demons was part of the Christian faith, and Catholic and Protestant alike had to conform to it or be considered suspect. Even that learned nonconformist divine, Richard Gilpin (1625-1700), who held also a medical degree, published a long work on Satan's temptations, called *Demonologia Sacra*, in which he shows quite clearly how the devilish designs of the Prince of Darkness are plainly described for all to read in the pages of Holy Scripture. Similarly, the position was quite plainly set forth in 1931 by that eminent schoolmaster and divine, the Rev. Hon. Edward Lyttelton, of Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, whose knowledge of young people must be considerable since he has been Headmaster of both Haileybury and Eton, not to speak of being a member of a Consultative Committee to the Board of Education. He says that no dogma exists which it is more impossible to disprove than the existence and activity of evil spirits, adding that it is the subconscious region to which Satan has access and that no more favourable battlefield could be chosen than the bedroom.[1] Some eleven years later, another authority on demons, Mr. Charles S. Lewis, and this time from Magdalen College, Oxford, gave us the results of his inquiries in *The Screwtape Letters*, a satire in which we are treated to the exploits and methods of Wormwood, Screwtape, Glubose, Slubgab, Toadpipe and Slumtrimpet, although how far Mr. Lewis believes in these entities I am not prepared to guess.

Perhaps one of the most curious modern productions dealing in

[1] *Whither ?* (London, 1931), p. 102.

part with the domestic economy of Hell is that contributed by the author of a book published as late as 1944 in Colorado Springs. This volume purports to give an approved version of how the worlds were made, the Almighty having given the author His direct sanction through " His miraculous change of the wording of the sound tracks of public motion pictures," a procedure which, I confess, I do not clearly understand. In the formation of the infernal regions it is said that God subdivided Hell into small rooms and corridors, but two sections were not so divided, these being Procyon Hell and Alphard Hell. Satan lives in the first, but Alphard Hell is vacant. Oxygen is supplied to these rooms by the Almighty, who made " a large invisible steel tank provided with a threaded invisible steel plug," together with the necessary pipes. Satan, however, escaped from Procyon Hell " into Jayess," and then started " slowly east along the nearly elliptical corridor." This move was, however, frustrated by " the Angel Karl, Whose Me was in Alphecca Heaven." This is all rather involved ; and I cannot help thinking that not a few experts in demonology would be better advised to think twice before recording their theories in books.

However that may be, and apart altogether from these somewhat abstruse theories, we have clearly to bear in mind that the problem above all others that has occupied the minds of demonologists is how to get rid of the devils and prevent them from exercising their unholy arts and fascinations. Exorcisms have long been considered efficacious, although Mr. Lewis seems to favour jeering and mocking, since he quotes both Luther and Thomas More to this effect. The chief difficulty would seem to have been to *control* the demon once it was expelled, since it was well known that once a person had had a demon driven out of him he was in danger of attacks by the same devil, sometimes in company with others, and thus the last state of the sufferer was worse than the first. For, having been driven out, the demon was said to wander about in dry places, roaring like a lion and seeking whom he might devour. This partiality for dry places and seeming hydrophobia on the

part of demons may, perhaps, be connected with the story of the Gadarene swine, or with other tales where demons are cast into the sea. The fact that demons could enter into animals (who, for their part, could hardly be suspected of entering into any diabolical compact with even the least of Satan's myrmidons) long caused much heart-searching among learned theologians and ecclesiastical scholars. For centuries animals were tried for their misdeeds in ecclesiastical courts, and even moles, leeches and insects were hailed before the law to answer for their crimes. Indeed, in the fourteenth century, one poor old sow was led off to punishment dressed up in vest, drawers and a pair of gloves ; at other times caterpillars had to be dealt with severely by the priests. But the problem of disposal of the demons had still to be solved. If a method could be discovered whereby they could be shut up, or, even better, sealed in containers, then their activities might be successfully curtailed.

Of all the magicians who learnt how to control the spirits Solomon was the greatest, since it was God Himself who had made the jinn subject unto him. When he wanted work to be done it was the jinn who did it for him ; when he wanted to visit far-off lands it was the jinn who carried him thither. Moreover, it was Solomon who shut up demons in a bottle, and he was also credited with enclosing them in sealed urns and burying them deep in the ground. Not until the eighteenth century was another to use this method on a large scale and, by thus catching and bottling the evil spirits, to save France from many and dire calamities. To those among us, therefore, who are troubled by the attacks of Satan's host, let me recommend a study of the life and work of Alexis Vincent Charles Berbiguier, the Scourge of Demons, who knew more about the devil than most of us, and was actually the recipient of infernal correspondence, signed on one occasion by His Excellency, the secretary, Mr. Pinchichi Pinchi.

Some sixteen miles from Avignon, in the department of Vaucluse, stands the manufacturing town of Carpentras, and it was here towards 1764 (or 1776 as some authorities state) that Berbiguier was born. He was cousin to Benoît T. Berbiguier, the musician.

It seems that hardly anything is known of his early life. His mother was either unable or unwilling to feed him herself, and he was sent out to nurse ; his health was seriously affected, and for the first nine years of his life he was partially crippled, the medical men consulted being inclined to give him up as incurable, a fact that the young patient did not fail to remember. It seems that it was during this period of his life that Berbiguier began to suspect some kind of persecution, a delusion that was apparently increased by a law-suit in which his family was engaged and by the inability of the doctors both in Carpentras and Avignon to do anything to improve his physical condition. Berbiguier's ideas of persecution early began to crystallize around the theory that his troubles were only indirectly due to poor nursing or inefficient medical attention : to him something more was clearly necessary in order to explain his misfortunes and continued ill-health. Hence, the belief that demons were responsible came early to Berbiguier, although we have no record that he ever attended a school where the headmaster had taught his pupils that it was in their bedrooms that the devils most often preferred to wanton.

Whatever may have been the cause of Berbiguier's imaginings, once the idea had taken root it began to spread at an increasingly alarming rate. Towards the end of the century he moved from Carpentras to Avignon ; and it seems that there he was foolish enough to attend a kind of séance at which a girl, Mansotte by name, officiated as seer. Tarot cards were produced, and Berbiguier allowed himself for some reason to be blindfolded during the course of the sitting. Whatever his motive in attending in Mansotte's parlour, the effects were catastrophic. That night he was awakened by noises resembling the roaring of wild beasts. He immediately got up to investigate, but found nothing, although further sleep was disturbed by raps on the head of his bed and other vague and unexplained noises. Berbiguier was seriously troubled and somewhat alarmed. He could not account for the sounds, and when he got up next morning he felt bruised and sore as if he had been beaten all over. Since his uncle was Canon of

Sainte Opportune in Paris and he himself was profoundly religious and reared in a Christian atmosphere, he probably knew what Holy Scripture said about devils and what the Church taught about them. He thus began to suspect that the demoniacal host might have been responsible for the infernal racket that had disturbed his slumbers. Was it not possible, perhaps, that he had heard how such uproar had disturbed St. Hilarion, and how St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi was sometimes scarcely able to repeat the Divine Office amidst the din ? Moreover, did not demons cruelly whip St. Frances of Rome, and create such a noise that others came hastening into her room to see what was going on ? Hence, when his landlady tried to soothe him and to attempt to give a normal explanation of what was, to him, so obviously a super-normal visitation, Berbiguier would have none of it. Was it possible, he asked himself, that she herself was possessed ? Was it possible even that she herself was responsible in some obscure way for the queer raps and sounds that had made his sleep impossible ?

The following night was quieter, but it was not long before Berbiguier was favoured as regards his sight as well as his hearing. In other words (and with all due respect to those who may differ from me), I suspect that visual hallucinations followed the earlier auditory ones. At all events, he began to see the shapes of both men and animals. It did not seem odd to him that devils came in the shapes of animals, since he knew that on a certain occasion a herd of pigs had been thus afflicted, and the lives of the Saints are full of records of such visitations. Subsequently he proved this to his own satisfaction, for a devil entered into the body of one of his own acquaintances, who thereupon appeared before him in the metamorphosis of a fine porker.

Lights now began to make their appearance. It is true that other people did not see them, but that was doubtless because they were insufficiently attuned to the vibrations of the spiritual world. It was now obvious to Berbiguier that the devils were after him. That the choice had fallen upon him was indeed an honour ; and

when Jesus Christ Himself appeared before him in a heavenly vision his cup of joy was full to overflowing. It was he, Charles Berbiguier, who had been selected for the task of destroying the evil ones. He must set about his work without further delay. He had found his vocation.

It was some years, however, before Berbiguier was to find himself completely immersed in his life's work of demon catching. For some time he attempted to carry on a fairly normal existence in Avignon, taking various small jobs such as a clerk in a lottery office. He is also said to have been treated in a hospital where the medical staff held views as to the nature of his visions that differed sharply from those held by the seer himself. Their efforts on his behalf, however, proved unavailing; indeed, other phenomena took place to add to Berbiguier's already extensive series. Apparitions made themselves seen, and a guitar was twanged in his bedroom when nobody was near the instrument. A demon clearly was at work.

The efforts of the doctors merely served to strengthen and confirm Berbiguier's theories. Demons often came in human shape: their powers of metamorphosis were unlimited. He went off to another fortune-teller for a consultation, but the results were not encouraging and the sitting was a failure. Mediums were clearly themselves possessed, and here was another instance in which one had been sent to plague him.

In 1816 Berbiguier went to Paris. It seems that even then he had a lingering suspicion that just possibly his diagnosis might be wrong. So he went off to consult the famous alienist, Dr. Philippe Pinel, who was a pioneer in the treatment of the insane, recommending kindness instead of a harsh treatment, and who, about this time was a leading light of the Bicêtre Hospital in the French capital. In accordance with the prevailing ideas Pinel advised a course of soothing baths (an odd remedy enough, it seemed to the patient); but a priest to whom Berbiguier also resorted, advised attendance at Divine Service four times a day.

The results of the advice that Berbiguier received were not particularly happy. He became more and more introspective, remaining alone brooding in his room for hours at a time. Visions began to appear in his mirror: noisome smells affected him when at his devotions: his possessions were mysteriously broken; and his pet squirrel, Coco, was injured. Had Berbiguier been acquainted with the sufferings of the Saints he would have found nothing unique in these events. Devils often appeared to them in frightful forms, both human and bestial and sometimes acted as if they were about to spring at them. St. Frances of Rome, whom we have already mentioned, had to endure the foulest odours. On one occasion, her biographer states, the demons applied a decomposed corpse to her face, and it was only after repeated washings that the smell could be removed from her clothes. Similarly the Blessed Margaret Mary had her things taken from her hands by devils and smashed on the floor. To Berbiguier all was now clear. The demons, or *farfadets*, as he called them, were massing against him Mansotte, Pinel and the rest were leading the attack.

One day when out walking the sky became overcast and the blackness of a large cloud excited attention in the street. Berbiguier stopped, and began to explain to those around him that the cloud was the work of magicians and demons, those *excrémens de la terre, exécrables émissaires des puissances infernales,* as he called them.

The next stage in Berbiguier's development was when he began to write letters to his persecutors. This correspondence is sometimes well worded and persuasively expressed. He explains to his enemies that they are what he calls "*farfadisés,*" or under the influence of demons; and his experience has led him to believe that doctors are often thus afflicted and women also.

As regards the latter, an experience of his own led him to suppose that the fair sex was peculiarly susceptible to demonic influence. One day, when attending a social gathering, he was explaining to a lady present how busy he was in fighting the demons. In reply she told him that it would be much better if he attended to women rather than to demons, as, she added,

tapping his thigh, they were more accommodating! Berbiguier was furious. It was at once obvious that not only was the woman herself possessed, but that a demon was actually in her finger. Did not the *farfadets* wait upon girls in their bedrooms in order to possess and enjoy them, and then leave them to brave the wrath of their parents who were not sufficiently instructed to realize the supernatural nature of their daughters' condition, indoctrinated as they were with ancient prejudices? And did these naughty girls always object?

Ah! combien de pauvres têtes
Voudraient, je le parierais,
Avoir dans leur couchette
De pareils farfadets.
Farfadets,
A jamais,
Ici je démasque
Vos mauvais
Projets,
Et vos excès
Et leur succès.

There is some evidence that about this time Berbiguier became the victim of practical jokers who played upon his ideas and whose pranks confirmed many of his wildest theories. Certain letters he received were clearly faked by a band of young rascals; but they went beyond themselves one day when they seized Berbiguier's pet, the squirrel Coco, and pushed him between the mattress and the sheet of the bed so that the little animal was crushed to death accidentally. This trick on the part of the devils Berbiguier never forgot or forgave, but determined to pursue his vocation with an eagerness which verged on fanaticism. Anti-demonic broths were concocted; the hearts of oxen adorned with pins were to be seen in his room; and in the window stood a wooden vessel—the *Baquet Revelateur*, as he called it—in which he was able to see the demons at their work, thus using the water as others have used bowls of ink or solid balls of glass or crystal. Thousands of demons invaded his room in the form of fleas and lice. It seemed that they liked tobacco, and, indeed, Berbiguier found that it was useful for catching them, as when he threw it about the room they

"The Scourge of the Demons." **(See p. 61)**

(Frontispiece to Les Farfadets, Paris, 1821.)

Plate III

would devour it and, stupefied thereby, fall easy victims to his brush which swept them into bottles, where they would later awaken to grin and gibber at their conqueror.

Je vous tiens, je vous tiens
Dans la bouteille,
A Merveille,
Farfadets, magiciens :
Enfin je vous y tiens.

Every morning his bed resembled nothing less than a pin-cushion. Even his clothes were similarly adorned, but the uninitiated did not realize that every pin was firmly fixed in the body of a squirming goblin. Berbiguier had, in truth, become the Scourge of the Demons.

One of his friends made up a poem about him which told how " Scourge limped when he was young, suffered when he had grown up, and saw old age approach without his torment being lessened. Everywhere does poor Scourge complain that he is the victim of the devils in the street, at church, at table, near fire or near water." After dilating upon how he kills the swarming horde, the poet goes on to remind ladies that they owe a debt of gratitude to Scourge for sewing up the devils in his shirt, as otherwise they might find their way elsewhere. " His successes cannot be calculated," the poem ends : " in oil, and more rarely in water, can Scourge be seen frying a hundred thousand devils."

It was about this time that Berbiguier determined to write an account of his experiences, and for this purpose he moved to 24 Rue Guénégaud, at the corner of the Rue Mazarine, partly in order to be near a printer, Gueffier by name, who lived seven doors down the street, and partly to be near his old haunts, as some years before it seems that he had lived at 54 Rue Mazarine.

It was in Gueffier's office that Berbiguier's great work [1] was printed. A veritable encyclopedia of demonology, it appeared in 1821, in three volumes, and the frontispiece (see Plate III) shows the author in his favourite rôle as the " Fleau des Farfadets " (Scourge of Demons). At the four corners of the plate are the

[1] *Les Farfadets, ou tous les démons ne sont pas de l'autre monde.*

signs and symbols of his craft. To the right at the upper corner is the heart of an ox adorned with the indispensable pins. To the left are two pieces of sulphur, placed cross-wise. Beneath, some aromatic plants are shown, together with packets of pins. Coco, the poor, faithful Coco, murdered by devils, sits beneath the portrait of his master. Another plate shows Berbiguier seated at his own fireside. The unfortunate Dr. Pinel, hopelessly "*farfadisé*," stands in the corner of the room bearing a trident. On the table, before which the Scourge is seated, are herbs, pins and a few bottles containing the captured demons. He is looking at them with a provocative smile, since they can no longer do him any harm. Etienne Prieur, once his friend but now transformed into a fat pig, is vomiting on the floor and spewing out a victim. The same animal is shown elsewhere, his hide bristling with pins, complaining to the Arch Fiend of the treatment he has received from the hands of the Scourge.

In another lithograph the author is shown refusing the proposal of Rhotomago, who with other demons has entered his room and suggests that Berbiguier should join them instead of resisting them. With his right hand the Scourge holds a manuscript surmounted by a cross : with the other he wards off Rhotomago, who is carrying a long trident. But they are too frightened to do much, for there on the long dresser is a bottle, and in it are thousands of devils who have been caught by Berbiguier. Elsewhere the Scourge is shown in his bedroom burning his aromatic plants. In the background is the bed, a huge curtained affair, at the end of which stands a large cauldron on a low commode. In the foreground Berbiguier stands at the table, which is piled high with plants, some of which are already burning in a small brazier to the left ; on the floor at his feet are two bottles, filled, we may be sure, with the day's captures. In still another plate Berbiguier is shown in bed at night. The room is lighted by a lamp on a small table at the head of the bed, and many demons are about. One sits on his bed gibbering at him : others flutter round the curtains or crawl on the floor. Pins are stuck into parts of the bed clothes,

and fifteen bottles stand grouped on the floor ready to receive the victims the Scourge has already impaled upon the bed.

The work itself is divided into various sections. The preface, which has been attributed to the French doctor, chemist and politician, François Vincent Raspail, gives a sketch of the subject-matter to be treated. Although the general scheme and set-up of the book is obviously due to Berbiguier, it is thought by some bibliographers that the material was put into shape and prepared for publication by Raspail and J. B. Pascal Brunel, a lawyer who practised in Carpentras. As to the dedication, it is typical of the author. It reads in part as follows :

" To all the Emperors, Kings, Princes, and Sovereigns of the four quarters of the globe ! Fathers of Peoples, who on earth represent the God of Peace and Consolation who art in Heaven ! Unite your efforts with mine in order to destroy the influence of the Demons, the Sorcerers and the *Farfadets*, who lay waste the finest and most habitable regions of your States."

The passage is signed with these words :

" The very humble and very obedient subject and servant, Berbiguier de Terre-Neuve du Thym." [1]

The general preface to the book contains a list of authorities who lend the weight of their support to the proposition that men can be given over to evil spirits. Among these we find the writers of Leviticus, Exodus, Deuteronomy, and even St. Peter and many other less inspired writers. With regard to his own torments, the following passage is typical. He writes :

" I have suffered much, and am still suffering. For twenty years demons, sorcerers and *farfadets* have not allowed me a moment's rest : everywhere they pursue me : in the town and country, in church and at home, and even in my bed. My head is sound, and no defect mars the good condition of my body. I am made in the image of our Saviour. Why, then, have I been chosen as the principal victim ? "

He then goes on to explain how the devils have their earthly representatives. Thus Philippe Pinel and the other doctors at the Salpêtrière are closely allied to Satan, and his former friend,

[1] This title was chosen by Berbiguier as he hoped eventually to secure a small plot of land on which he could cultivate thyme and other aromatic plants, which he used in his conjurations and magical ceremonies.

Baptiste Prieur of Moulins, represents Pan himself. Some come disguised as fleas or lice : each takes the form best suited to him : when thus transformed they are able to enter the body through the natural orifices.

Berbiguier's condition was now beginning to excite the serious attention of the few friends that remained to him. It was naturally suggested that he suffered from monomania, an idea that Berbiguier ridiculed as absurd. Is anyone who is devoted or attached to one particular object a monomaniac ? he asked. Are children who prefer to play rather than to go to school monomaniacs ? The real monomaniacs are those who put forward these preposterous ideas. For example, take the case of the lady who said she had a canary in her head. Berbiguier advised trepanning to let the devil out, and a cure was effected, although it appears that the surgeon, aware of Berbiguier's influence over the patient, did not really operate on the skull but used the method of suggestion.

Towards the end of his life Berbiguier became more and more queer. Weak, dirty and unkempt, with his back humped and neck twisted, the old man wandered through the streets, his chin on his chest and talking only to those who first addressed him. The tale he had to tell was always the same. It concerned the thousands of demons he had killed and bottled that morning, and how his laborious work had fatigued him. " Look," he would say, " at how the *farfadets* have twisted my neck, and look again at that cloud up there which presages evil for France. It is due to the *farfadets* ! " Then he would slowly make his way to a hill outside the town from which a verdant landscape was displayed before him. " Look at the crops," he would murmur : " I have saved them from the depredations of the *farfadets*. But for me they would have been smitten." So day by day, becoming weaker and weaker, he hobbled about, till at last he found himself obliged to enter the doors of the hospital at Carpentras, there to become a patient until death overtook him on 3rd December 1851. The Scourge of Demons and Bottler of Spirits was dead, his services to

humanity unrecognized but not forgotten. May he rest in peace at last.

It is unlikely, I think, that many of my readers will dispute the view that Berbiguier was a person who suffered from delusions. It is true that the basis of his belief must, to a certain extent, be shared by all who profess and call themselves Christians, but his manner of dealing with the demons strongly suggests that his attitude towards them differed somewhat from that of Canon Lyttelton or Mr. C. S. Lewis. Berbiguier both caught and bottled his *farfadets*, although, unless we are to make the unlikely supposition that he suffered from an almost continuous series of hallucinations, they were apparently usually invisible to him. It seems true that he did occasionally have visions of some of his demons gibbering in their bottles, but his hallucinations do not seem to have disturbed his daily life to any great extent. To call him, as Erdan does, a " dangerous imbecile " is nonsense. He seems to have been entirely harmless ; and was never considered mad enough to be permanently confined in an institution for the insane.

I do not think that it is known for certain what was the original and primary stimulus that first set the train of Berbiguier's delusions in motion. He seems to have been a ripe subject for symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia to appear. He was brooding, suspicious, resentful and extremely sensitive. Moreover, his delusions were due not only to his own mental processes but to the active support given to them by the deeds of others. There can be little doubt that the pranks played upon him had their share in building up his delusional system, and his ideas of persecution had their counterpart in his notions of grandeur. For was it not to him, Berbiguier, that had been entrusted the supreme task of exterminating the *farfadets* ? Was he not, in short, the Scourge of Demons ?

Unfortunately we know very little of his early life. His childhood was painful, and his lameness may have contributed to his feelings of inferiority. It is also not at all clear how far he was affected by any homosexual tendencies, although there is some slight evidence that he viewed the intimate society of women with

pronounced disfavour. It is true that he protested that he had always been both honest and respectful where women were concerned, and he had even discussed the possibility of marriage with some paragon of virtue. Nevertheless he attributed much of his suffering to female devils—*farfadettes* as he called them—and his torments were accentuated under the influence of the female planets. However that may be, his morbid fancies on the performances of the *farfadets* in bedrooms suggests sexual interests of an unhealthy type, although, as has been said, similar features, sometimes of the most extreme kind, are found in the writings of nearly all demonologists.

With regard to possible homosexual tendencies, I have not been able to discover from his book any evidence which could be called in any way conclusive. Berbiguier's case seems to fall well within the classic four-stage description of V. Magnan, the French nineteenth-century psychiatrist. Here we have (1) the preliminary stage, in which the subject adopts an attitude of brooding and subjective analysis ; (2) the stage where ideas of persecution begin to develop ; (3) the gradual change of personality structure, in which the patient entertains ideas of grandeur, as where Berbiguier, after saying that Christ was sent by God to save man from sin, declared that in the same way he was destined to destroy the enemies of the Most High ; and (4) the final stage, in which symptoms of fatigue and general deterioration usually make their appearance.

The failure of the medical treatment he received was naturally contributory to the growth of his delusional pattern. To him the measures proposed seemed totally inapplicable, and suggested strongly that the physicians themselves were in the power of demons, who, as he expressed it, " are not all of the other world." It was thus that there developed within him a complete system of thought which revolved endlessly around the central core of his doctrine, namely, the existence of the *farfadets* and his duty to exterminate them. It was to this purpose that he dedicated his life and directed all his energies. Few such characters have left us the story of their quest in such a form and in such detail. Maybe

we owe the publication of his book to the help which Raspail and Brunel gave him in putting it together, but whoever may have been responsible, the world is not the poorer through its publication. Had other queer human characters left their life histories in a similar way, we might know more than we do about borderland mental phenomena, and their relation to orthodox religious beliefs. Rarely, however, do such individuals attain the singleness of aim and purpose achieved by Charles Vincent Alexis Berbiguier, de Terre-Neuve du Thym, the Scourge of the Demons.

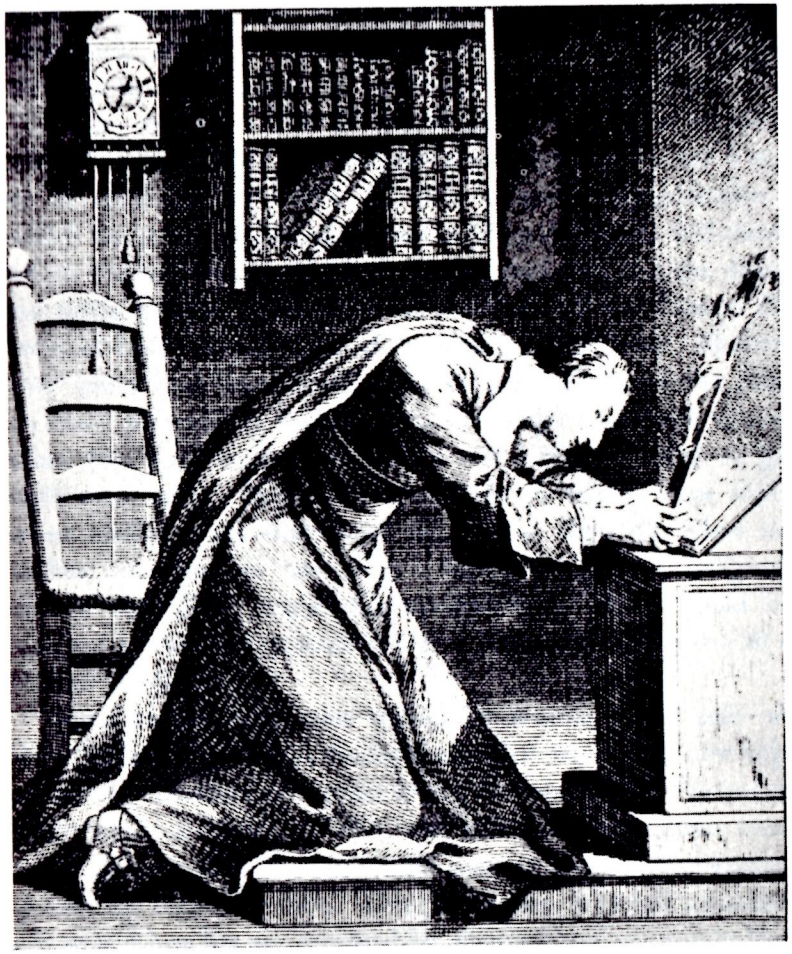
CHAPTER FOUR

THE DEACON OF PARIS: DEAD BUT STILL ACTIVE

If I were asked in what place the greatest collection of human oddities had ever gathered together, I should not hesitate in my reply. I should direct my inquirer to the garden at the northern end of the Avenue des Gobelins in Paris. For that garden, now presided over by the statue of "Haymaking" by Barrau, was formerly a cemetery, and it was in that cemetery that a certain François de Pâris, the revered deacon of Paris, was buried just behind the high altar of the Church of St. Médard in May 1727.

Pâris was born on 3rd June 1690. He was a noted Jansenist, that is to say, a follower of that school in the Roman Catholic Church which arose from the teaching of Cornelius Jansen, and which was bitterly opposed by the Jesuits who regarded it as a heresy that denied the freedom of the will and the possibility of resisting divine grace. Like so many other holy men Pâris indulged in numerous austerities (see Plate IV), and it seems quite possible that thereby he considerably shortened his life. However that may be, he died in 1727, and on the very day the body was buried a miraculous cure was said to have been effected, which was but the prelude to some others of an even more remarkable kind, and to scenes in the churchyard which frankly beggar description. Were it not for the immense mass of contemporary documents and descriptive pieces it would seem that what occurred at St. Médard could not by any stretch of the imagination be considered as having actually happened, but must be put down to the ravings of a lunatic with the most lively imagination and the most skilful pen when it came to describing the bizarre, the horrible and the disgusting.

Let us therefore pay a visit to the cemetery and see what is



"Like so many other holy men Pâris indulged in numerous austerities." (See p. 68)

(After Carré de Montgeron.)

Plate IV

going on. Among the participants in the scenes there being enacted we may find some more than usually startling examples of human curiosities, although nothing that the imagination is likely to conceive can equal what will confront our bewildered eyes.

Before making a tour of the cemetery it will be as well to remind ourselves that the company assembled there is not a circus or an exhibition of freaks. It is a religious demonstration, in which the power of Almighty God is being displayed, and through which the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear and the diseased are made healthy. The cures at the tomb of the Deacon Pâris seem at times to put those of Lourdes in the shade. Moreover, they could have been investigated by anybody ; and the attacks on their authenticity were as bitter as might have been expected when two rival bodies like Jesuits and Jansenists came to grips with each other. Indeed, it is difficult to refrain from smiling when reading these envenomed documents, especially when some violent anti-Jansenist lets forth a howl of righteous indignation over a particularly unpleasant manifestation, which would have received his warm approbation had it been reported in one of the lives of the Saints.

Some of the cures were indeed remarkable. Not only were those healed who were suffering from what we should now regard as nervous disorders of various kinds, but also those who had met with serious accidents, or who were afflicted with hideous cancers and malignant growths. In certain cases it was not even necessary to visit the tomb in person. One young man, who had accidentally run an awl into his eye, regained his sight without coming to Paris ; but in the majority of cases personal attendance at the tomb was desirable. Among the dozens of incredible cases was that of Mlle. Coirin, who had, it was claimed, a cancer of the breast which had reached an advanced stage. She had the best medical advice, as some of her relations were officers in the royal household, but she was considered incurable as much of the gland had already been eaten away, and the odour was such that she was almost unapproachable. Not only was it reported that she was cured at

the tomb, but that the whole of her breast was restored, and appeared as before without even a scar. Numbers of physicians gave their testimony, and the case is just one example of the kind of cure that was said to take place at St. Médard, in which it would seem that suggestion of the type familiar to psychotherapists can hardly be invoked as a satisfactory explanation, although Charcot does not seem to have been impressed by the case.

From the contemporary records it would seem that conversion to Jansenism was often accompanied by queer phenomena that are difficult to associate with a change of faith. For example, there was the case of M. Fontaine, a functionary at the court of Louis XV. The seeds of his conversion had begun to germinate in 1732, and had taken the peculiar form of weakening the muscles of the legs so that at times they would not support his body. Next year, however, the situation changed abruptly. M. Fontaine had been invited to a dinner party at which a goodly company had assembled. Suddenly he felt the most uncontrollable desire to turn round on one foot. Unable to resist, he began to rotate at great speed, and the faster he went the more astonished the guests became, and their bewilderment increased when he asked for a devotional book to be given to him. They soon found him a volume of Pasquier Quesnel's anathematized *Réflexions Morales,* which he proceeded to read aloud to the company whilst still revolving at high speed. This lasted for about an hour, when he slowed down, and finally came to a standstill. However, it was not for long. For six months, and regularly twice a day, at nine in the morning and three in the afternoon, M. Fontaine had one of his convulsive rotating fits, each of which lasted for an hour or even more. Whilst he was spinning round on one foot, the other leg was describing a circle, only being gently lowered now and then to the ground in order to give the whirling motion an increased momentum. Moreover, the speed attained by this human top was not inconsiderable, sixty turns a minute being counted by some careful observers of his gyrations.

Apart from his daily whirlings M. Fontaine exhibited other

manifestations, and his austerities were such that they almost deprived him of life. Among other unpleasant acts which he forced himself to perform was that of gargling with very strong vinegar, which took the skin off his mouth, but which he continued day and night for about eighteen days. The Jansenists were clearly not going to be outdone by other people. They would, indeed, go one better. Let us see to what extravagances their decision led them.

In the case of M. Fontaine it will have been noticed that one of the most peculiar features of his religious exercises was the convulsive nature of his rotations. These convulsions were the most prominent feature of the phenomena exhibited by those frequenting the tomb of the Deacon of Paris in the cemetery of St. Médard. The men, and above all, the women, were seized by the most extraordinary convulsive movements. They revolved at high speeds like M. Fontaine : they lay on the ground and spun round and round : they stood on their heads and on their hands : they bent their bodies in the shape of arcs : they adopted postures at times unseemly and positively indecent. In the early days of the outbreak, this excited much unfavourable comment by those opposed to the whole of this remarkable visitation. It is probable that there was some justification for their strictures, since the most elaborate precautions were later taken to prevent any criticism on this score. It seems that there were always present at the cemetery persons who were charged with the task of looking after the *convulsionnaires,* as they were called, and arranging matters for them when they were seized by their involuntary movements, or wished to demonstrate their powers. Thus in the case of the women a special dress was enforced. Beneath the outer dress was worn a long sheet, which extended from neck to feet. Petticoat and dress reached the ground, and sometimes these were fastened round the feet so that by no possibility were their legs visible, even when they were spinning round on the ground or turning head over heels. When this additional precaution had not been taken, one observer declares that Divine intervention was apparent, as the dresses remained as

if glued to their feet. He recalls the fact, so abundantly illustrated in ecclesiastical history, that although the Almighty permitted young women to be possessed by devils and turned upside down in the air, He was careful to preserve their modesty by so controlling their garments that they remained as if sewn to their legs. However that may be, it is clear that care was taken to avoid this kind of criticism ; although some of the manifestations at the tomb of the Deacon seem to me to be open to much more unfavourable comment than those in relation to which so much care and thought had been expended.

Let us now follow our guide into the cemetery, and as he is well known to the people they will also permit him to let us peep into some of the houses round the cemetery, where certain of the more extraordinary manifestations are taking place.

" I must first of all show you," says the guide, " the general arrangements which have been made for the religious exercises which you are about to witness. You must remember that in this revival, God Almighty is showing His power in many ways. Not only is He healing the sick and making the blind see, but also He is rendering human bodies immune to pain and distaste, so that suffering and disgust are turned to pleasure and delight."

Just as he had completed this introductory speech we entered the cemetery. The first thing that we saw was a concourse of children including some girls and women up to about twenty-five years of age. Many seemed to be lame : some were obviously suffering from serious diseases, and others were undergoing treatment at the hands of the assistants. This treatment was of a very peculiar kind. The young people were being hit about the body with heavy hammers, solid pieces of wood and iron pestles. Some of these instruments weighed up to thirty pounds, and they were being vigorously applied to the chests, sides, backs and hips of the women. Others were having their breasts gripped by tongs and then twisted ; whilst still others were demanding that their bellies be struck with the greatest violence by sharply pointed swords.

It seems that we showed some distress at these sights, as our

guide appeared amused and, as we walked away, said : " If you take so small a thing as this to heart we shall not be able to continue our walk. There are much worse things to come. I think we are lucky, for if I am not much mistaken I think that this is the day when we shall be able to see Mlle. Gabrielle Moler, and maybe in addition the Human Salamander, the Sucker, and the Eater of Ordure."

At these words we looked at each other, but said nothing. What horrors had we let ourselves in for ? What was Gabrielle's speciality, and were we to be present at exercises which could only have come out of a madman's nightmare ?

Suddenly our guide began to whisper in an excited tone. " Look," he said, " I thought so. The Sucker is at work. Come and watch this divine prodigy."

As we made our way to the corner indicated by our guide, he took the opportunity to explain to us how the *convulsionnaires* dressed the festering ulcers and gangrenous sores of patients who had been brought to the cemetery for healing. Two methods were adopted. In the first case, prayers were said and relics of Deacon Pâris were applied to the wounds : in the second, the ulcers and cancerous surfaces were licked and sucked by the women, who appeared to thrive on it.

He had hardly finished this explanation when we arrived at the spot where one of the suckers was at work. As we pushed our way through the crowd, our guide added a word to help us appreciate what we were about to see. " The suckers," he said, " do not hesitate even before the most disgusting sores. They lick them clean, drawing out the pus with their tongues and swallowing it. Moreover, they wash the bandages which have been used to bind up the ulcers, and then drink the water. But come, you shall see for yourselves."

By this time we had made our way to the front, and had a clear view of what was going on. A little girl had been carried in and laid at the feet of one of the *convulsionnaires*. The child was pale, emaciated and seemed near to death. Hardly had the *convulsionnaire*

seen her when the eyes of the holy woman were filled with joy, for through her intuition she knew that the child was suffering from her leg, which was rotten with the effects of necrosis due to a scrofulous affection. Telling those around her what was the matter with the child, she thanked God that it was permitted her to treat the patient. " Is it not just, O God," she cried out in a transport of joy : " is it not just that being members one of another we should share each other's burdens ? No, indeed, my God, I do not fear to take upon myself a part of the poison which is consuming this child, and which has already turned one of her limbs into a putrefying mass ! Ought I not to be happy that Thou hast deigned to use me in this merciful task ? "

She then laid hold of the child's leg and quickly unrolled the bandages which had been wrapped round it. Finally, she removed the bottom layer, which was sticky with blood and pus. The leg seemed covered with ulcers, some of which were so deep that the bone could be seen within. The odour was insupportable, and we had to cover our noses with our pocket handkerchiefs.

When the *convulsionnaire* had removed all the bandages even she grew pale with disgust and could not prevent herself from recoiling with horror. She trembled and shuddered when she thought that it was her duty to lick these sores. Indeed she seemed for a moment uncertain whether she could bring herself to obey the divine prompting. Her eyes filled with tears : her very soul seemed troubled ; and all her movements indicated the struggle which was proceeding within her. At last she raised her eyes to Heaven and cried out : " Oh, my Saviour, come to my help. Thy grace is all powerful, and Thou seest the extent of my weakness ! I bless Thee for having destined me to treat this young girl, who is so worthy of compassion, but at the sight of her sores the ardour, which at first animated me, has suddenly cooled. I feel that my heart is failing me, and that my courage has died away. If Thou hast ordered me to do something for which I have so much repugnance, then at least givest Thou me the strength to carry it out."

At this moment the face of the *convulsionnaire* regained its

natural colour : a calm seemed to have taken the place of her previous agitation. She pressed her mouth against the child's leg, but immediately withdrew it. She was not yet entire mistress of herself, and had still to raise her eyes to Heaven for renewed strength. Finally, as if to overcome the repugnance which she was still experiencing, she buried her mouth within one of the largest ulcers and began to suck it. Having once started, she appeared no longer to feel the same repulsion : the Lord was pleased to remove her weakness : the law of the flesh was opposed to the law of the spirit, and it was only by prayer that the healer was enabled to overcome her repugnance and execute the necessary treatment.[1]

" Well," said our guide, as we moved away, " what did you think of that ? Is not that a good example of how divine grace enables us to do what otherwise would be impossible ? But we have here a better example than that. I see a crowd assembling over there and, if I am not much mistaken, I think I see the well-known figure of the famous Parisian lawyer, M. le Paige, who is making a special study of this case."

" Is this Mlle. Gabrielle Moler," I inquired, " of whom you spoke to us when we were coming to the cemetery ? " " No," he replied, " it is not. I thought that before I introduced you to her you ought to become somewhat more hardened. But you had better get out your handkerchiefs again. This case is not pleasant to the nose. Look, there she is, the Eater of Ordure ! "

We turned our heads in the direction our guide had indicated, and there we saw a young girl of about eighteen or nineteen years of age. It seems that she had been a *convulsionnaire* for about a year, and before starting her speciality had been almost over fastidious as regards cleanliness, so much so indeed that she refused even to eat a piece of bread if it had been touched by another person. It all began when she felt that she was destined for the most extreme tests ; and as the feeling grew, she began to fast

[1] With this may be compared the somewhat similar conduct of the Angelic Youth, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, when nursing the sick (see *Acta Sanctorum*, June, IV, 966).

and live only on bread and water. Later, however, she stopped even this meagre fare, and insisted for nine days on only having a spoonful of ox bile once a day. The following month she began to eat human excrement, one reason being, according to her own account, that she had violent pain in her right side, accompanied by cracking noises, which seemed as if some of her ribs had been broken.

With this preliminary explanation we approached the young lady, and were glad when a man bustled up and introduced himself. He was M. le Paige, of whom our guide had spoken, and he was glad to let us know the full details of the case. From what he told us, it appeared that for twenty-one days her sole diet had been excrement and urine, to the amount of about a pound a day. This was known to be true, for M. le Paige had been careful to weigh her ration before she consumed it. Every day she insisted on the composition of her repast being changed. Sometimes she had it diluted : sometimes it was boiled. M. le Paige told us he had measured out these revolting mixtures, and found they were about a pint as a general rule. Later her taste underwent a change. To the excrement and urine she added other materials such as liquid from a mixen, soot from the chimney, nail parings and other ingredients, the loathly details of which M. le Paige was careful to describe in full. Every day some fresh horror was added to her list. " Never have I seen a more horrible torture," the lawyer said, " even for the spectators it was bad enough." But she thrived on it. She had a lily-rose complexion and seemed in vigorous health, and her deportment was both agile and gay. After twenty-one days of these oddest of odd meals she was fatter, stronger, more healthy and ruddier than she was before.

But there was something even more strange about her, and the lawyer from Paris had no doubt about the facts. After finishing one of her meals she said that her mouth felt very good, just as if she had had a cup of tea with milk in it. One day, when she had eaten her fill, she made a sign to some of the spectators, among whom was M. le Paige himself. It seemed that she was going to

vomit, but far from it. Out of her mouth came a full half glass of fresh milk ! The lawyer saw that here was a matter deserving of inquiry. So he tasted the milk, and took some home in a bottle, where he observed it from day to day. There was no doubt that it was real milk, just the same good milk, added M. le Paige, as is partaken of by the family cat.

It was this miraculous transformation of excrement into milk which put the seal of sanctity on the exercises of the Eater of Ordure. For not only did God design this test and horrible penance for the purpose of demonstrating His power, but He further illustrated His divine omnipotence by changing the stinking mixture which she took into her mouth, and letting it come out again transformed into sweet-smelling and creamy milk.

Having taken leave of M. le Paige, our guide told us that he had good news for us. The lawyer had told him that Gabrielle Moler was about, and, if we were lucky, we should be able to see some of the most remarkable tests of endurance to which a human being had ever submitted. " But you must not take it to heart," he added : " Gabrielle is the girl who feels no pain,[1] any more than does our human salamander whom we may see being grilled over a hot brazier."

As we made our way to where it was reported that Mlle. Moler was undergoing her tests, we took the opportunity to have one further look at some of the *convulsionnaires* who were engaged in their spiritual exercises. Some of the girls were rolling on the ground : others were jumping in the air and being caught as they fell upon cushions and mattresses. Others were twisting their heads this way and that, rolling their eyes, extending their tongues, protruding their bellies and holding their breath. Some again were crying and whistling, whilst others were barking like dogs and crowing like cocks. Whilst performing these antics they were tumbling over one another, turnin somersaults and extending themselves on the ground as if nailed to crosses. Others were acting the part of prophetesses, exhibiting clairvoyance and confessing

[1] See Plate V, *a*.

their patients. Still others were being rolled around wrapped up in sheets, and some of them were lying on their faces being whipped, pummelled and struck with hammers.

We should have liked to tarry a little to see some more of what was going on, but our guide said that we must hurry as otherwise we might miss Mlle. Moler, whose exhibition was the most curious in the whole assembly.

This young girl had started being a *convulsionnaire* at the age of about twelve, and for three years she had been subject to the influences around her. From her earliest years she had been noted for her extreme piety, and since she had come to St. Médard her holiness had much increased. Dozens of people had seen her and confirmed the stories of the amazing manifestations which centred upon her. Magistrates, prominent ecclesiastics, and even the Chaplain in Ordinary to the King had attended her displays, and all testified to the wonders that they themselves had personally witnessed. Everything she did was purely with the aim of pleasing the Almighty ; and to those who believed in her it was obvious that, as one authority put it, " it was the Author of Virtues who animated her, who inspired her and who guided her." During her ordeals her face was illuminated with so pure and chaste an expression, that one might imagine that one was gazing into the face of one who was beholding the very countenance of God Himself.

We were now approaching the place where Gabrielle had installed herself, and very soon we saw the young lady, and it was clear that she was undergoing the most unpleasant ordeal.

She was stretched on the ground on her back (cf. Plate VI), and four assistants were pushing the points of four rods into the pit of her belly. They had penetrated her clothes, and it seemed as if they had gone in up to almost three inches. Then the points of two of these rods were rammed under her chin, and the pressure was so great that her head was forced backwards so that her neck was bent in the form of an arc. When the rods were withdrawn there was no sign on her skin at the places where they had been applied.

The next thing she did was to put the point of one of these rods against her throat, just beneath the Adam's apple, and while one assistant held this rod, another applied a similar rod to the back of the neck and then both of them pushed the rods with all their might. When this exercise was finished, it was noticed that not even the slightest mark was visible in front or at the back, neither did Gabrielle show the least signs of suffering any inconvenience.

Four sharp-edged shovels were next brought forward. Gabrielle had had these specially made for her. Two of them had the edges cut in a straight line, whilst in the two others the blades were cut in a curved shape.

She began the demonstration by putting the curved-edged shovels just above and below one of her breasts, and the other two blades at either side so that the breast was, as it were, enclosed by the four cutting edges. Four of the assistants then pushed all four blades together with all the force that they could muster, but the breast might have been made of iron for all the effect that their efforts had. When this was over, Gabrielle invited four of the spectators to get to work on the other breast. After the demonstration, a committee of ladies took Gabrielle aside to examine her breasts ; and on their return they announced that Gabrielle's bosom was as hard as a stone, and thus had resisted the onslaught to which it had been subjected.

Mlle. Moler then again extended herself on her back, and placed the cutting edge of one of the shovels against her throat. One of the assistants was then asked to press down with all his might. There was no result, as the stony hardness which her bosom had exhibited had now spread to her throat, so that all she felt was an agreeable and pleasant sensation.

For the next test Gabrielle knelt down and had two stools put on either side of her. A couple of assistants then stood on these stools, and applied the straight edges of two of the shovels to her head. In order to increase the pressure they got two of the spectators to support them whilst they rested their entire weight on the

shovels. When Gabrielle showed no sign of being in any way incommoded by what they did, they changed their tactics and applied the shovels to her shoulders so as to get a better purchase. In order to demonstrate her contempt for the weakness of her persecutors, Gabrielle raised her shoulders up and down, as much as to say that she did not know that anything was being applied to them.

The next ordeal again took place with Gabrielle on her back. A big iron pestle was brought forward, three feet long and weighing forty-eight pounds. With this instrument her belly was pounded, the pestle sometimes being raised two feet in the air and then allowed to drop. At every blow her body suffered a rebound just as if it were a block of wood or some other object of a like nature. Nevertheless, the exercise was so pleasing to Mlle. Moler that she insisted on it being done no less than ninety times in quick succession.

She next asked for a good hammering. A heavy iron mallet was produced, and with this she received about one hundred blows on her belly. But even then she was not satisfied. Another big iron pestle was brought in, this time with a pointed end. Standing with her back against a wall, she asked the assistants to give her some thirty or forty blows on the belly; and although they were exerting all their strength she kept on crying out for more. Her dress and camisole were both torn by the point of the pestle, but curiously enough there was not the slightest rent in her shift. This was regarded with wonder and admiration, and one writer says that it was doubtless due to the fact that God wished to spare this extremely modest young lady from the mortification that she would have suffered if any man present had caught sight of a portion of her skin.

A remarkable piece of apparatus was then brought forward. This was a heavy stone weighing sixty pounds, to which had been attached a T-shaped handle to facilitate manipulation. For this test she again lay on the ground on her back; and an assistant raised the stone about a foot and a half above her body and then

"Gabrielle is the girl who feels no pain." (See p. 77)

"Gabrielle asked for a good hammering." (See p. 80)

(After Carré de Montgeron.) Plate V

"A big iron pestle was brought in, this time with a pointed end." (See p. 80)

(After Carré de Montgeron.)

Plate VI

"They said she used to lay her head in the fire." (See p. 81)

(After Palingh, 't Afgerukt Momaansight der Tooverye, t'Amsterdam, 1725.)

Plate VII

let it drop on her chest and belly, or held it above her and then brought it down with all his strength. After he had done this twenty or thirty times he had to rest a few moments before recommencing, but if he was too tired to continue, the insatiable Gabrielle used to get another to do it for him. Sometimes, they said, she used to lie on her face and had the stone dropped on her back, so that she was so flattened out that her nose seemed to have disappeared altogether. However, when she got up all was well : there was not the slightest sign of bruising and she had felt no pain.

Although we had really seen enough of this kind of thing, our guide said that we must stay a few moments as he had just heard that Gabrielle was going to show the fire-test. It was possible, he told us, that on our way out we might have the good fortune to run up against Maria Sonnet, the Human Salamander, and then we might be able to compare her performance with that of Gabrielle and decide which we liked the better.

Whilst our guide was thus talking to us, a big fire was being kindled on a made-up hearth, and when it was burning fiercely Gabrielle knelt down in front of it. Two men who were standing at either end of the hearth then took her by the hands, whilst a third man who was standing behind her held the ends of a cord which encircled her body. Then she bent over towards the fire and put her head into it and sometimes even rested it on the burning firebrands. It is true that the three men who controlled her soon pulled her away from the fire, but hardly had she withdrawn her head than she plunged it in again, sometimes, we were assured, repeating the process a hundred times. On other occasions they said that she used to lay her head in the fire (cf. Plate VII) for a good quarter of an hour without getting up ; and now and then when her head was in the fire she did not draw it away farther than about two inches. In spite of these tests, however, her hair, eyelashes and eyebrows showed no sign of burning.

When she wanted to show something different the guide said she used to lie down by the fire and put her face five or six inches away from the flames. Here it remained for a longer time than

it would take to cook a piece of meat. To add to the effect she used to take out a piece of burning coal, munch it up and swallow it. It was noticed on these occasions that her clothes, although farther from the fire than her head, smelt as if they had been singed, and were so hot that it was impossible to rest the hand upon them.

It was also noticed that when Gabrielle wore a bonnet or hat when she plunged her head in the fire, then the top or other part of the headgear would be burnt; and one of the spectators said that he had proved to his own satisfaction the state of the fire, since he was able to cook some apples when these were hung round the neck of either Gabrielle or another who was undergoing the test.

Having seen the fire-test with Gabrielle Moler we were not anxious to see Maria Sonnet; and as it seemed that she was not undergoing the ordeal that day the guide told us very briefly what happened. He said that when Maria decided to undergo her tests in the fire many preparations had to be made. Accounts differed as to the precise procedure, but the general picture was clear enough. A small cabinet was set up, rather similar perhaps to a bathing-tent, and in front of this a small curtain was erected for additional security. Maria, accompanied by a small committee of women, then entered the tent, although it would seem that sometimes her mother only went in with her to help her in the preparations. For these she took off her outer dress, remaining only in her corset, petticoat and stockings. Coming out of the tent she immediately began to call for the iron stools which were used in the demonstration. These were at once brought forward by a couple of men, who placed them in the required position. It seems that a kind of fire-place had been arranged, and it was at either end of this fire-place that the stools were placed, so that any object laid across them would be immediately over the fire which had been lighted beneath. The stools having been placed in position, the assistants now brought up two pieces of wood which were put on the top of the two stools, so that the head and feet of Maria might be more firmly and comfortably placed.

When everything was in position Maria was enveloped in a kind of sheet and lay down across the stools so that her body was immediately over the fire, which had been stoked up to a great heat by being supplied with large and small chumps and blocks of wood. Here she lay as if asleep whilst the flames played around her body; and now and then she would remain for perhaps four periods of nine minutes each, whilst the heat was sufficient to roast a piece of mutton.

Another of her fire-tests was of an even more striking character. A brazier used to be brought up in which a bright fire was burning. Maria would then sit down in front of it and thrust her two feet, together with shoes and stockings, into the middle of the blazing mass. In a few moments the shoes caught fire, and the soles were quickly reduced to ashes. On one occasion a spectator, who was keenly interested in the phenomenon and who wished to investigate a little further, examined the soles of her stockings when she had withdrawn her feet from the fire. On touching one of them the material immediately crumbled away in ash leaving a portion of her bare foot visible and apparently unburnt. The result of this test completely puzzled the spectator who had made it and who had been present on a number of previous occasions when Maria was showing off her powers. How was it, he asks, that in one test the fire did not burn the linen sheet in which Maria was wrapped, and in the other it did what was expected, namely, consume to ashes the shoes and stockings worn at the time? In attempting to answer this riddle, he confessed that it was beyond him. The only solution which would appear to be reasonable to him was that here was a case in which the Almighty God was demonstrating His power to suspend those laws which on normal occasions He permits to hold their sway over the world of Nature.

Owing to the sensation and controversy caused by the events in the cemetery of St. Médard, it was closed in 1732 by order of the authorities. The number of the *convulsionnaires* was therefore somewhat reduced, although tests were still applied to certain of them in private houses both in Paris and elsewhere. Many lingered on

until at least 1759, in which year the famous French savant, Charles Marie La Condamine (1701-74), managed to be present at a test which, in many ways, surpassed in horror even those which were common during the heyday of the movement, namely, from 1727 till 1731. As is well known, La Condamine was a man of inordinate curiosity, with an intense desire to probe into the unusual and the unknown ; and his sceptical attitude was so ill concealed that he at last found it very difficult to gain entrance to the more spectacular of the demonstrations. By skilful arrangement, however, he was successful in attending incognito one of the meetings at which Sister Françoise, a *convulsionnaire* of long standing, was undergoing the test of crucifixion. Fortunately he kept notes of the proceedings, and these have been printed in the literary and philosophical correspondence of Grimm, Diderot, etc., thus supplying us with what is probably the most vivid contemporary account that we possess.

When La Condamine arrived at the lodgings at the back of a poor house in a crowded Parisian district where Françoise lived, he found about twenty people assembled, among them being an ecclesiastic of some prominence. The priest in charge of the meeting was Father Cottu, who unfortunately at once recognized La Condamine, but after some discussion he permitted him to remain.

Françoise was on her knees in the centre of the room, clothed in a long smock of rough coarse cloth, which hung below her feet. She was already in a kind of ecstasy, and was repeatedly kissing a little crucifix which had, so it was said, been in contact with a relic of the Deacon of Paris. Father Cottu and a lay assistant were walking round her and striking her on the chest, sides and back with a bundle of heavy iron chains weighing some eight to ten pounds. Then they struck her with two big blocks of wood some sixty times in succession, this phase of the exhibition being ended by the director walking over her several times, although La Condamine noticed that only the sole and never the heel of his foot was applied to her body.

The actual crucifixion then followed. Françoise was laid upon a wooden cross, about six and a half feet in length and two inches thick, to which she was tied both at her waist and about her ankles. Having bathed her left hand with water which had touched a little cross of the Deacon, the director then nailed the palm of her hand to the cross with four or five smart blows from a hammer, using a square nail two and a half inches long. After an interval of two minutes the same procedure was followed with the right hand. Although Françoise seemed to be suffering she made no sound, but the pain she endured was reflected in the expression of her face. This was of particular interest to La Condamine, for it had been widely reported that the *convulsionnaires* who underwent these tests suffered no pain during their application.

It was now half an hour since the hands of Françoise had been nailed to the cross, and the director had not yet begun to nail her feet. For this operation her feet were placed on a light support which was attached to the base of the cross by some brackets. Square nails, more than three inches long, were then driven through her feet ; and the upper part of the cross was raised some three or four feet above the ground supported by four of the spectators. Finally, the upper part was allowed to rest on the seat of a chair, whilst the bottom remained on the ground.

After some time the cross was again raised and leant up against the wall ; but a little later it was taken down and laid on the floor. Parts of the Psalms and the Gospel according to St. John were then recited.

The tests, however, were not yet finished. Around the head of Françoise was now placed a circlet of steel furnished with sharp points ; and after the cross had again been raised and put against the wall, some swords were produced and the points of these were pressed against her breast. La Condamine noticed how some of them actually bent under the pressure applied, but he also remarked that Françoise was wearing some folded thick material beneath her dress which might have been effective in preventing any serious wounds from being inflicted.

Nearly three hours had elapsed since Françoise had had her hands nailed to the cross ; and now these nails were removed with a pair of pliers. Although the pain she experienced made her grind her teeth and tremble, she uttered no sound, and the blood which flowed from the holes in her hands was washed away with clean water. Her feet, however, had still to be unfastened ; but before this was done a further test had to be endured. A double-edged knife attached to a stick about two or three feet long was produced, and it was with this blade that her side was to be pierced. Part of her dress having been unfastened and a portion of her flesh laid bare, she rubbed the place to be pierced with a little cross connected with the Deacon of Paris. Then she held the point in position, and the priest drove it in to a depth of perhaps a quarter of an inch. Only a little blood flowed from the wound, although it had been reported that on occasions several pints had been lost.

The exhausted Françoise then asked for something to drink, so they gave her vinegar mixed with cinders, which she swallowed after having made many signs of the cross.

More than three hours and a half had now gone by since she had been crucified : the time was getting late, and so it was decided to withdraw the nails from her feet. After this had been done, one of the spectators examined the wood in which the points had entered. The hole made by one of the nails was nearly half an inch in depth. The crucifixion was over.

Even on her death-bed Françoise was not left in peace.[1] Father Cottu was convinced that, in order to cure her, it was necessary to give her a good hammering, but he was prevented from doing so by the physician who had been summoned. " What are you doing ? " the doctor asked the pious director, when he saw the usual apparatus being prepared. " I am going to soothe and cure

[1] The pious zeal of those who operated upon the *convulsionnaires* was well exemplified by the action of M. Louis Adrien Le Paige, mentioned above, who investigated the case of the Eater of Ordure. Eight days before the birth of his child he administered a sound hammering to his wife. She died a week after her delivery, " very happily," according to the indefatigable Father Cottu.

her," the priest replied. " Cure her ! " the doctor gasped. " Yes, monsieur," responded the director, " this has already been done in this way and with success." " We know nothing of this kind of treatment in the medical faculty," said the physician, " and we are not going to have anything to do with it here." " Well," replied the priest, " you will have to answer for her death."

Whilst they were thus arguing Françoise was at her last gasp. The doctor hastened to her side. " God be praised," she murmured, " it is finished. This is the great and final convulsion." [1]

The crucifixion of Françoise was far from being the only one with which France was made familiar in the eighteenth century. Some thirty years later amazing events were reported as taking place at the little village of Fareins, not far from Lyon, where the brothers Bonjour were adopting a religious attitude and sanctioning certain odd practices which caused grave concern to the ecclesiastical authorities.

This is not the place to describe the cult which was very popular among the Fareinists, as they were called. It is a curious chapter in Jansenist history, but as much of the material is still unprinted little attention has been paid to it outside France. Yet it contains elements of great interest to the student of the growth and development of human fanaticism ; and the crucifixion of Etiennette Thomasson was but one of the events which brought an unenviable notoriety to the little community at Fareins.

Etiennette was a peasant girl of poor intelligence but who, in spite of her limitations, was an enthusiastic supporter of the brothers Bonjour. Her father worked in a local vineyard, but she herself was incapable of even the more simple domestic tasks ; and the fits to which she was subject made any sustained employment impossible. To those who believed in her sacred mission Etiennette and her friend, Marguerite Bernard, were simple, pious souls, whose peculiarities were regarded as signs of divine favour. Nevertheless few of them could have been altogether prepared for the singular

[1] For another vivid account of a similar crucifixion see Baron Carl H. von Gleichen's *Souvenirs* (Paris, 1868), pp. 184 ff.

proof of Mlle. Thomasson's virtue which was about to be demonstrated.

It was on 12th October 1787 that about a dozen people assembled in the little church at Fareins to witness the crucifixion of Etiennette. Standing upright and with her back to a wall, she extended her arms on either side with her hands in the proper position for receiving the nails. These were about four and a half inches long and were quickly driven through her hands into the wall. Some difficulty was experienced with her feet, since the nails could not be driven into the slab of stone on which she was standing, so they were riveted beneath her feet once they had penetrated the flesh.

For the space of three minutes Etiennette remained nailed to the wall ; and when the nails were withdrawn the bleeding holes indicated the extent of her suffering. Some accounts state that soon after the removal of the nails Etiennette returned to work, but this has been questioned, and on the face of it it seems very unlikely in view of the soreness resulting from the perforations.[1] However that may be, the scandal could hardly be concealed, and an inquiry was ordered. Much evidence was accumulated and depositions taken. Etiennette's crucifixion passed into history, and it was not until 22nd April 1791 that she herself died and the fanatics of Fareins were slowly forgotten.

Looking back at the events recorded in the preceding pages it might seem to some of my readers that they could not possibly have ever really happened, but must be regarded rather as the product of a diseased imagination.[2] Such an attitude would be a profound mistake. Were the reader to glance through my files, in which is stored enough material for many books on the history of human stupidity and fanaticism, he would soon realize that the

[1] In the famous case of Matteo Lovat, who crucified himself on 9th July 1805, the wounds were completely cured in the first week of August. Instances of auto-crucifixion do not seem to be common. One was said to have taken place in Turin in 1910, another in Berlin in 1927, and one of the most recent, which was more in the nature of an exhibition for gain, was reported in 1943.

[2] The literature on the *convulsionnaires* is very extensive. In the early part of the nineteenth century one French library was said to possess a collection of the smaller and fugitive pieces which filled thirteen quarto volumes.

convulsionnaires of St. Médard were merely presenting phenomena which could easily be compared with similar manifestations occurring elsewhere. What is much more surprising is the lack of any real scientific interest in the events at the cemetery. Those who discussed the matter at all did so mainly from the theological point of view ; for what was important to them were the rival claims of Jesuit and Jansenist. It is true that the philosopher David Hume found himself in considerable difficulties when it came to dealing with the matter. Speaking of the events at St. Médard he says that " surely never was a greater number of miracles ascribed to one person," and goes on to say that many of them " were immediately proved on the spot, before judges of unquestioned integrity, attested by witnesses of credit and distinction." Moreover, he points out how the Jesuits would have been only too pleased to refute or detect them had they been able to do so. But to David Hume they all must have been deceived by what he calls " these impostures," because if they were not so deceived the events were miracles, and miracles are absolutely impossible. It does not seem to have occurred to this philosopher that he might be wrong in calling them miracles. By assuming that they were, and by believing at the same time that miracles were impossible, he cut the ground from under his own feet. He does not seem to have realized that they might have been phenomena to which sufficient attention had not been paid and so were as yet unexplained. His treatment of the famous story of Marguerite Pascal's cure at Port Royal through contact with a holy relic is on the same lines. To him the material bearing on the case is " despicable " : the event to which it relates could not have happened, because, if it did, it was a miracle, and miracles do not happen. It was thus that investigation was impeded and progress hampered.

The same story could be told all down the ages and is still being repeated to-day. Phenomena of this kind are often too mixed to fall easily into one specific branch of science. An objective point of view is difficult, since many people are already committed to beliefs and opinions which make any such detached attitude

impossible. Roman Catholics will possibly ascribe such phenomena as due to diabolic possession, spiritualists to the action of discarnate entities, and medical men to the mysterious operation of "hysteria" or "suggestion." Such opinions lead us nowhere except to confusion.

It was, perhaps, for this very reason that one of the leaders of British medicine once proposed to the author that a small committee possessing the necessary qualifications be set up which could hold itself in readiness to investigate and report upon queer and unusual events which were of interest from the medical, psychological or social points of view. Such a committee has never been formed, although it is, in my opinion, long overdue. The convulsions and cures at St. Médard were not simply a medical or a theological problem. They possessed profound psychological and social implications, apart altogether from the element of the supernormal which, at times, even the most sceptical contemporary writers found it difficult to avoid considering. Never perhaps was suggestion, or even what might be called sympathetic contagion, more amply demonstrated on such a large scale and for so long a period of time. It is, perhaps, under conditions allied to these that human beings rise to the highest peaks of ecstasy and love, or sink to the lowest depths of depravity and hate. Certainly the activity of the Deacon of Paris after his death was manifested in queer and unexpected ways. Perhaps in these sophisticated times we can pay the best tribute to his memory by trying to understand them with an open mind and without prejudice.

CHAPTER FIVE

D. D. HOME: SORCERER OF KINGS

AMONG the mysterious and puzzling personalities of the nineteenth century there can be little doubt that the famous medium, D. D. Home, was one of the most odd and the most interesting. Much is known about him, for both he and his wife wrote books, but wherever he went the atmosphere of mystery which surrounded him made it difficult to know the real man; and the controversy which he aroused during his life has, as is the case with so many queer characters, not passed with time, but even to-day is sometimes more acrimonious than it was when he was still alive, moving in high society and entertaining imperial courts.

Daniel Dunglass Home was born in Scotland on 20th March 1833. His father, William Home, was, it seems, the illegitimate son of Alexander, tenth Earl of Home, who died in 1841. The legitimacy of Daniel Home himself does not appear to be in doubt, although there is some reason to suppose that he was extremely sensitive on the matter. His parents were married on 19th February 1830 by the Rev. John Somerville, and the marriage certificate was certified by the Rev. J. E. Craig and Dr. Barclay in 1858.

We know little about his very early years, but it seems that he was taken to America when he was about nine, accompanying his uncle and aunt who wished to emigrate. At the time that he arrived in America what spiritualists call "modern spiritualism" had not yet begun. The Fox sisters had not yet started to produce their famous rappings at Hydesville; yet the time was ripe for a spiritual revival of some sort, and the intense interest in animal magnetism, mesmerism, and what was called "electro-biology," suggested what form the revival would take once it began.

A short time after the occurrence of the Rochester knockings,

through which the Fox sisters had initiated the coming of the new revelation, Home himself became the centre of similar disturbances, and furniture began to glide about the rooms without any physical agency being observed. By 1851 Home was established as a medium with a reputation, and from that time until his death in 1886, with a few intervals, phenomena continued to occur in his presence. Before he left America most of the manifestations associated with him had been reported, including complete levitations and the appearance of armless hands which dissolved or melted away when seized for the purpose of inspection or examination.

In March 1855 Home sailed for England and put up at Cox's Hotel in Jermyn Street, London, whence his fame rapidly spread, and he began to give séances to an ever-increasing number of inquirers and curiosity seekers. It was during this period that he met Mr. and Mrs. Robert Browning and the literary and artistic circles in which they moved. During his second and third visits to England, which lasted with an interval till the end of 1861, he again met many distinguished people, and several accounts of his sittings have been preserved in the memoirs, letters and diaries of the period. Between his first and second visits he went to Florence, and there met the literary and artistic circle which gathered in the salons and studios of Seymour Kirkup, T. A. Trollope and Hiram Powers.

The years 1856 and 1857 saw Home in France, and it was in these years that he gave the famous series of séances in the Tuileries in Paris when many of the entourage of Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie attended the demonstrations which formed one of the principal diversions of the brilliant court of the Second Empire. In 1865 he was in England again ; and from 1867 until 1869 he gave the remarkable series of sittings which were recorded by Lord Dunraven and which were reprinted by the Society for Psychical Research in 1924. It was in Paris that Lord Dunraven first met Home, and some years later the interest in the remarkable phenomena that occurred in his presence ripened into personal friendship. For nearly two years the pair were constantly together,

and it was during this time that Lord Dunraven was able to observe Home as few were able to do. It was he who was present when the odd phenomena associated with the medium occurred under all sorts of conditions—in daylight, at regular séances or just anywhere and at any time, day or night.

As far as is known Lord Dunraven never wavered in his belief that the physical manifestations around D. D. Home were genuinely supernormal, that is to say, due to unexplained causes and not in any sense connected with trickery or deceit of any kind. Certainly it would seem that he had unequalled opportunity for discovering evidence of such trickery, since he lived with Home for days at a time, slept in the same room with him and even in the same bed, and was present at numbers of séances at which phenomena occurred which have hardly, if ever, been recorded as happening with any other medium working under the same conditions. Objects moved without being touched ; raps were heard and lights seen ; the medium was both levitated and elongated ; phantom forms appeared and curious sounds like muffled voices were heard together with the chirping of birds and the whirring made by their wings.

In 1868 London society was most intrigued by the equity case against Home which was brought by Mrs. Lyon, a wealthy widow, in which it was alleged that through undue influence Home had persuaded her to make over to him a large sum of money. Soon afterwards Home went to Russia, followed by Switzerland, Italy and France, where more séances were held, and in June 1886 he died and was buried in St. Germain.

Such in brief outline are the main periods in the life of D. D. Home. Apart from special occasions when such phenomena as full-form phantoms, levitations, handling live coals and the elongation of the medium's body were reported, Home's séances followed a general pattern which does not seem to have undergone any radical change since he first began to sit regularly. Mr. Frank Podmore, one of Home's most acute critics, once stated with an inaccuracy which was exceedingly unusual with him that the number of persons who sat with Home did not exceed thirty,

whereas the fact is that three hundred would, in my opinion, be almost an underestimate. However that may be, the phenomena presented fell into four main types. The sitters were usually gathered round a table which was often of the heavy round type on a central pillar with claw feet. Very often the gas was left on or the room lighted with candles. The hands of the company were placed on the table, although it does not seem that a chain of hands was common in Home's séances. After a time a trembling of the table was observed and this movement was often reported as occurring to the sitters' chairs or even to the room itself. It was aptly described by one sitter, if my recollection serves me, as a sensation similar to one which might be imagined if her chair had become possessed of a beating heart. The frame appeared to throb as if endowed with some strange kind of internal vitality. Raps were then usually heard and communication was established between the sitters and the alleged controlling entities. Table movements followed, often accompanied by complete levitation, and then, when conditions were favourable, the room was darkened to show the spirit-hands. After these had appeared, rung bells, and possibly played a few notes on an accordion, the sitting closed.

Of all the phenomena produced by D. D. Home the spirit-hands have received most of the criticism levelled against him both during his lifetime and in later years. I shall have something to say later about this problem, but in the meantime I would refer the reader to Count Perovsky-Petrovo-Solovovo's brilliant analysis of the question in Vol. XXI of the Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, which is, in my view, one of the most important and penetrating studies ever made on the question of hallucination as a factor in the study of the physical phenomena of spiritualism.

It would not be profitable in this place to deal in any way fully either with the life of D. D. Home or with the phenomena with which his name is associated. Materials for such a study are ample, and a number of writers have dealt with them from varying points of view. Neither do I propose here to discuss the evidence

for the genuineness or otherwise of the physical phenomena reported, but to concentrate upon three mysteries, which have for long intrigued students of the medium, and to which no satisfactory answers have hitherto been given. In dealing with these matters it is possible that more light may be thrown upon Home and his sorcery ; and by an indirect approach a better appreciation of how the problem was treated by contemporary opinion may be reached than by a detailed criticism of what, after all, are largely reports and notes by untrained observers who regarded the séances as demonstrations rather than as experiments.

During the course of his life and travels in various European countries Home met numbers of people living in the higher social scale, some of whom regarded him with favour and others with aversion. In their memoirs and diaries a vivid picture of the period is presented, and it is in these pages that we can see how Home was regarded from the personal point of view apart altogether from his reputation as a sorcerer. A cloud of mystery was always hanging about him ; and among those who regarded him with horror and dislike was the poet, Robert Browning, and others in his circle. Moreover, when Home visited France in 1857 a mystery developed around his sudden departure ; and in the equity case of 1868 mentioned above controversy raged as to the precise rights and wrongs of this tangled affair.

These, then, are the three questions regarding D. D. Home to which I would draw the reader's attention and which I hope to answer in the following pages. Stated in brief they are :

1. How exactly were Home and his phenomena regarded by such people as Mr. and Mrs. Browning, T. A. Trollope, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and other people of the period whose opinions are entitled to respect ? Moreover, why was Home's name anathema to Robert Browning, and did he, when Home first arrived in England, know or suspect the existence of what Mrs. Browning later called " the mystery of iniquity " which everybody raved about but nobody would specify ?

2. What happened during Home's visit to the Tuileries in 1857, and why did he suddenly leave France amid a cloud of suspicion and rumour ?
3. What was it that really motivated Mrs. Jane Lyon in wishing to adopt D. D. Home as her son and in settling on him a comfortable income for life ?

Before discussing the opinions of prominent personalities of the period it will be well to try to sketch the position of the people generally as regards what we have been accustomed to call spiritualistic phenomena. It must be remembered that the situation then was very different from what it is to-day. Interest in mesmerism was gradually extending to table-turning and table-rapping, the latter phenomenon easily lending itself to messages and communications from the supposed spirits which were thought to control both the table movements and the raps. Control conditions as we know them to-day were unknown : the sittings in many cases were demonstrations, and the cloths which often covered the tables, coupled with the ample crinolines worn by the ladies, formed an effective shield when one was required. The mania for the supernatural filtered through to all ranks of society. An instructive picture of the period was given by Louis Blanc, the celebrated French journalist, critic and historian, who wrote an account of his impressions from 1861 to 1870.

Blanc was, I suppose, what one would call a rationalist, and he devotes two chapters in his diary to a consideration of the love of the marvellous and of the growth of superstition in England. He begins his reflections by drawing attention to a similar love of the marvellous in eighteenth-century France. He recalls the exploits of Count Saint Germain who claimed to be immortal and to have known Jesus and François I[er]. Then there was Cagliostro with his alchemy, his miracles of healing and his evocation of spectres. Yet at the same time Helvetius was compiling his books on the existence of the soul, Diderot was discussing the relations between mind and matter, and Augustin Roux was trying to disprove the existence of a Deity through the chemical analysis of

the human body. Even Baron Holbach himself, that sceptic of sceptics, was so credulous when the supernatural was in question that he grew red in the face whenever people began to throw doubt upon the truth of some particularly foolish story.

Passing on to conditions in England, Louis Blanc says that there was no doubt that a similar craving for marvels and belief in the impossible, which led directly to a cult of the ridiculous, had developed in England. If Mr. Home, he writes, had not much to complain about during his residence in France, certainly he could congratulate himself on the situation in England. In a number of drawing-rooms he had but to appear to have his power over the invisible world saluted, and like Caesar himself he could say : I came, I saw, I conquered. " I should astonish you," Blanc goes on to say, " if I were to name the intelligences which he has brought beneath his sway and the souls which he has conquered by making the spirits cause tables to turn, jump, stamp and dance, in knotting handkerchiefs beneath the aforesaid tables and suspending them in the air, in pushing sofas from one end of the room to another, and in teasing the sitters by causing their knees and calves to be pinched." How was it possible, Blanc inquires, to escape from an epidemic which had become fashionable ? What courage was needed to stand up against fashion !

Continuing his discussion Blanc says that in the England of his day you could count by the thousand fortune-tellers of both sexes, readers of cards, rural and urban astrologers, sorcerers and prophets, and he adds to this statement by declaring that business was excellent " so considerable is the number of their dupes." From his own personal knowledge, he writes, there existed in London an incredible number of unsavoury dens where old women as ugly, decrepit, dirty and dubious as business permits all told Milady the exact moment when she would see her husband again or Miss So-and-So that she could dry her eyes as she was still loved and that the quarrel would not last. " Would you believe," he goes on, " that in London exists a number of dark dens," all of them situated in lonely parts of the city, to which duchesses, countesses,

society ladies and others stealthily crept to have their fortunes told by these witches in rags ?

Whilst society was thus amusing itself Blanc narrates how the Ghost Club was advertising for a haunted house. What its members wanted, says Blanc, were phantoms, phantoms to be taken seriously and not those fabricated by Mr. Home, " whose spectres have faces the colour of which comes off in the wash."

Louis Blanc's own critical powers are illustrated by his vivid account of a séance with the Davenport Brothers, mediums whom he regarded as charlatans, but nowhere do I find any detailed account of his sittings with Home, who had met him on more than one occasion. When the Lyon-Home trial came off in 1868 he wrote satirically of the beliefs of the faithful before the decision was announced. " Vice-Chancellor Giffard's table will rise into the air in an ecstatic manner," he says, " his wig will rise from his head with terror ; Mrs. Lyon will be confounded and the truth avenged. The believers have no doubts as to the result. Have you ? "

It is almost certain that, as has been said, Louis Blanc met Home at the series of séances which were held by Mrs. Milner Gibson in her palatial residence off Hyde Park. Mrs. Gibson, whose husband was President of the Board of Trade, was an early supporter of the exponents of mesmerism and spiritualism, and Home soon became her special pet and social lion. Nothing can give a better idea of how sittings were conducted in those days than a brief account of the Gibson séances as revealed in diaries and letters. Invitations were sent out by Mrs. Gibson for these gatherings, and a distinguished company used to assemble in her salon. Charles Dickens was there, and many foreign persons of social rank and political distinction. Robert Browning had nothing to do with them. He classed Mrs. Gibson and her friends as so much " vermin " ; and in one of his letters to Isabella Blagden regrets the fact that he had to dine that evening at the house of a lady of rank who believed implicitly in a medium who brought showers of bouquets from heaven, a place which, he said, was

probably beneath her own petticoats which, he imagined, were not searched previous to the performance. After the company had partaken of a substantial buffet supper, a move was made to the séance room where Home seated himself at the large table in his accustomed place. Phenomena soon began ; furniture moved about, and the room was sometimes darkened to show the spirit-hands. Other spontaneous phenomena were also reported. On one occasion Mrs. Milner Gibson's stomacher was said to have been suddenly inflated, and Mrs. Gibson explained the manifestation by declaring it was her spirit-child.

In spite of the marvels which were so often occurring in the darkened drawing-room, the physical as well as the spiritual needs of the sitters had to be satisfied ; and on summer evenings during the séances liveried footmen glided in and out bearing trays of iced drinks, whilst Mrs. Gibson was making frenzied attempts to communicate with her daughter who had passed beyond the veil.

Among the more sceptical of the female observers was the famous Mrs. Eliza Lynn Linton, who in spite of her usual purring and caressing manner, knew how to bite and scratch through her versatile pen. She used to attend the Milner Gibson sittings, and says she was quite prepared to believe in their genuineness, but never saw anything that might not have been done by a trick, neither there nor elsewhere. In one of her novels she describes the séances at Mrs. Gibson's house, and writes satirically of the conditions and the way the medium was supposed to have been levitated to the ceiling. She sums up her conclusions by stating that she could fill a volume with her experiences, her suspicions and her silent detections of imposture. She says she never saw anything whatever that might not have been done by trick and collusion and, be it noted, she had seen nearly all the mediums. Investigation, she says, was not allowed, nor were the most elementary precautions taken against imposture ; and she adds that the amount " of patent falsehood swallowed open-mouthed has been to me a sorry text on which to preach a eulogium on our enlightenment."

Another social celebrity was Henrietta Mary Ada Ward, the wife of the painter. Mrs. Ward knew most of the literary characters of the time, and we owe to her two pieces of information regarding Home which have, I think, been forgotten. In her memoirs she says that a lady used to help Home during the séances and "act as medium." She does not describe what part this assistant played, but declares that she used to drink "two glasses of port and two of some other beverage before she began her work." On one occasion, she adds, her husband was present at a demonstration by Home when Lord Lytton and Mr. S. C. Hall were there, and on that occasion mysterious voices played a great part in the proceedings. Mr. Ward said that these direct voice phenomena, as we call them to-day, puzzled him a good deal, although he attributed them to skilful trickery on the part of the medium.

Mrs. Ward herself does not seem to have witnessed many phenomena with Home. On one occasion she arrived at the house of Mr. S. C. Hall to find him in a state of ecstasy. "You've just missed dear Daniel," Mr. Hall exclaimed: "he floated in triumph in through the window, round the house, and out again, and I don't doubt the day will come when he will float round St. Paul's."

It may well be that some of my readers will, perhaps rightly, put this down to over-emphasis or more than usual exaggeration on the part of the enthusiastic Mr. Samuel Carter Hall. Before doing so, however, let me add something which may tend to modify this opinion.

One of the best contemporary exponents of what to-day we call *reportage* was the Rev. C. M. Davies, who contributed articles to the magazines and who in 1875 wrote a book about the queer sects of London. Two years previously he had written an article for the magazine *Belgravia* which he had entitled, "Something like a Séance." For five minutes, he says, he saw D. D. Home float round Mr. S. C. Hall's drawing-room whilst he handled him above and below.

We can estimate Mr. Davies' credulity or otherwise by his criticism of other mediums, notably Florence Cook, and her sittings

with Sir William Crookes at which Katie King appeared. This young lady was supposed to be a materialized spirit produced through the agency of the medium, Miss Cook, and Sir William Crookes testified to the marvellous phenomena he himself witnessed in the presence of this girl—"a trim little lady of sweet sixteen"—as a friend of Mr. Davies called her. Whatever Sir William Crookes may have seen or thought, it is clear that Mr. Davies did not think much of her; and the report of one of his colleagues, which he published in full, indicates that the latter also believed Miss Cook to be a clever fraud and Sir William's attitude prejudiced and scarcely becoming to a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Another sitter at S. C. Hall's circle in Brompton was John Bright, the economist. In his diary he records the fact that at one séance a bell was taken from the hands of two of the party and transferred across the circle, being finally laid on the lap of the lady sitting next to him. He thought this curious and could not explain it, all hands being on the table at the time. What is to be remarked in Bright's account is that he does not say if the transference of the bell was over or under the table, neither does he mention the amount of light. I have a feeling, which may or may not be justified, that the passage was under the table, and that the use of Home's feet might be thought to be responsible for its transference.

It must be remembered that in those days levitation both of medium and sitters was not uncommon. The woman physician, Dr. Harriet Clisby, was levitated along with Home in her own lodgings. One old lady was so pleased that she told all her friends she had now become a floater. One slightly deaf gentleman, to whom she imparted this surprising information, was shocked. "Poor Lady P.," he told his cronies, "since she has taken up spiritualism she has imagined herself turned into a Yarmouth bloater!"

The attitude of the Brownings was strangely mixed. Mrs. Browning was clearly that type of simple, good-hearted and sincere human being who wanted to think well of people and hated to

imagine that she was the victim of imposture. The same year that the Brownings met Home on his first visit to England Lady Ritchie met Mrs. Browning. " She is great upon mysticism," wrote Lady Ritchie in her *Journal*, " and listens with a solemn, eager manner to any nonsense people like to tell her upon that subject," or as she herself put it " to every goblin story." There is little doubt that there were serious differences of opinion between the pair. H. F. Chorley, the musical critic on *The Athenaeum*, says that Mrs. Browning took questions of mesmerism and clairvoyance terribly to heart, and that to stories of these marvels she lent an ear as credulous as her trust was sincere and her heart high-minded.

It is from the voluminous Browning correspondence that the best idea can be gleaned on the attitude of the family on the subject of the spirit manifestations. Prior to meeting D. D. Home there is little evidence known to me that Robert Browning had any very decided antipathy either to the mediums or to their phenomena. Writing to her sister in August 1853 from Italy, Mrs. Browning says that Robert wanted the spirits to communicate with him, and that the fact that he could get no results provoked him to incredulity. The year after, she tells her sister how she had met a medium for automatic writing—" one of the frankest, bluntest, nicest little creatures that ever took my fancy." The lady was certainly frank. She told Mrs. Browning that one night an exquisitely formed little spirit, some three feet high, came running and dancing up to her close up to her knees, but when she stooped towards it, it vanished. This tale reminds me of Miss Anna Blackwell's story of a dozen or more spirits of handsome young men whom she saw in her dressing-room. However that may be, Mrs. Browning thought she would tell her small son about the little spirit. She turned to him and asked if he would not have liked to have seen the little spirit. " ' Oh yes,' said he, ' velly mush ! A little pretty spillet lite lat ! but ' (holding his head on one side in an attitude of consideration) ' I sint if a velly large angel tame, I be lather aflaid.' ' Afraid,' I cried, ' why

should you be afraid ? You are not afraid of the spirits who write.' ' No, not a bit—but then I don't *see* them, dear Mama.' "

During their stay in Florence in 1855 the Brownings met Seymour Kirkup, a besotted and rather piteous old man who lived surrounded by mediums and phenomena and who seemed to believe almost anything. He was friendly with D. D. Home, whom he characterised as " weak and ignorant," but was much more wrapped up with his own medium, his spirit-child and the phantom of Dante who once brought a live lamb from Pisa, presumably to tempt the appetite of the old man, who lived on asses' milk and bread served three times a day.

It was in 1855 that the Brownings saw Home at the famous séance at Mr. Rymer's house in Ealing. In a letter to her sister Henrietta, dated 17th August 1855, Mrs. Browning described what happened. " We were touched by the invisible," she says, " heard the music and raps, saw the table moved, and had sight of the hands. Also, at the request of the medium, the spiritual hands took from the table a garland which lay there, and placed it upon my head. The particular hand which did this was of the largest human size, as white as snow, and very beautiful. It was as near to me as this hand I write with, and I saw it as distinctly. I was perfectly calm ! not troubled in any way, and felt convinced in my own mind that *no spirit belonging to me* was present on the occasion. The hands which appeared at a distance from me I put up my glass to look at—proving that it was not a mere mental impression, and that they were subject to the usual laws of vision. These hands seemed to Robert and me to come from under the table, but Mr. Lytton saw them rise out of the *wood of the table*—also he tells me . . . that he saw a spiritual (so called) arm elongate itself as much as two yards across the table and then float away to the windows, where it disappeared. Robert and I did not touch the hands. Mr. Lytton and Sir Edward *both did*. The feel was warm and human—rather warmer in fact than is common with a man's hand. The music was beautiful."

A long account of this sitting was written out by Robert

Browning in 1855 and was first printed in the United States in 1933. He says that he could not account for the vibrations and movements of the table, but he makes no mention of what he afterwards used to say about the spirit-hands being attached, as he thought, to Home's feet. Indeed, he says that one hand crawled, as it were, up Mr. Home's shoulder, a phenomenon that I do not seem to remember being often recorded. Anyway, such a movement would hardly be capable of explanation on the theory of the use of Home's feet put forward by Browning and others.

It was a day or so after this séance that Home and Rymer called on the Brownings, and Robert Browning told Home that if he were not out of the door in half a minute he would fling him down the stairs. As to the phenomena, Browning told his friends that he had never before seen so impudent a piece of imposture. Although Mrs. Browning says that neither her husband nor herself touched the hands, Nathaniel Hawthorne says that, from what he had heard, both had seen and touched these unearthly objects, and that Robert Browning said that he thought they were artificial and fixed to Home's feet as he extended these under the table. Whatever may have been the truth, what is certain is that Robert Browning conceived a hatred for Home which almost amounted to mania. He used to pace up and down the room, stamp on the floor in a frenzy, turn pale at the very mention of the man whom the artist, R. Lehmann, called " that spirit-rapping scoundrel Home," write to Isa Blagden calling him " this dung-ball," and made Mrs. Browning fearful that he would assault him if they happened to meet in some public thoroughfare. Although as the years went by Browning grew calmer, Mrs. Browning was still saying in 1857 that her Robert, although tamer, was still gunpowder where the name Home was concerned, although writing to Mrs. Kinney in January 1871 we find him indulging in more violent language than ever, and saying that he might be silly enough to soil his shoe by kicking Home, and inveighing against those who shut their eyes and open their arms to " bestiality incarnate."

It was in March 1856 that Lord Normanby's brother called on

the Brownings in Paris and told them the mystery about Home, that " mystery of iniquity " as Mrs. Browning put in a letter to her sister, " which everybody raved about and nobody distinctly specified." The news that Home himself was in Paris filled Mrs. Browning with horror. Indeed, she looked so scared that Mr. Browning promised he would be as meek as a maid and pretend not to see the medium if they should happen to pass in the street. By this time Mrs. Browning herself had come to the conclusion that Home was of a very unreliable nature, " weak as a reed and more vulgar," as she put it in a letter written in Paris in June 1856, for, as she later expressed it, the foolish young man had succeeded in making himself universally disagreeable, although most people agreed that his phenomena were above Nature.

At that time, Lord and Lady Normanby used to invite Home to their house in Paris, and on one occasion Count Cottrell turned his back on Home at one of their receptions, saying that he was a worthless fellow, but at the same time relating tales of what he had seen at Home's séances, such as a beautiful arm veiled in white coming out of the ground, the hand taking a sheet of paper and pencil and writing words which were seen by all. His wife was favoured to an even greater extent. She had her dead baby on her knees for a quarter of an hour, and the Count was permitted to hold its hand and drew his own fingers down each of its separated fingers.

It was at that time that Mrs. Browning declared that her husband had had a shock. It seems that he had gone to visit a sceptical friend who used to talk to him about the absurdity of holding such delusions. When he arrived he found his friend's house in a state of commotion. A séance had been held : Home's legs and arms had been tied, but the spirit-hands came and untied the knots. Unknown to the medium a man was smuggled under the table, but the phenomena took place just the same. Finally the whole room shook as if in an earthquake. Indeed, so great was the movement that the whole circle was earthquake-sick, if I may be permitted the expression.

give a hint of what was in his mind when he was describing the supporters of the medium in *Mr. Sludge*.

> " T's these hysterics, hybrid half and halfs,
> Equivocal, worthless vermin yield the fire."

Now, if Browning knew of these stories about Home, it would explain his attitude and the fury he felt at Mrs. Browning supporting the medium. Moreover, this feature in Home's character would also account for the numerous veiled references to weakness, vulgarity and lack of sincerity which were so often levelled against him. Let us illustrate further by considering what the Trollopes thought of Home.

Mrs. Trollope and her eldest son, Thomas Adolphus, were in Florence in October 1856. They had invited Home and Mr. Rymer, at whose house Browning had seen the medium, to stay with them, and the two remained as the guests of the Trollopes for one month. Although Browning said that he thought Trollope was a goose, despite his general good sense, it seems that the Trollope family were genuinely puzzled by Home and wished to be scrupulously fair and just to him.

As to Home's character, Trollope says that, in the ordinary affairs of life, the medium was scarcely what could be called an honourable or true man, and that to a greater or less degree he was in the habit of adding to, or assisting, the manifestations of his *mental* mediumship (*i.e.* clairvoyance, messages from the dead, etc.). On the other hand, Trollope was convinced that the majority of the *physical* phenomena were genuine. For exhibiting the spirit-hands the room was darkened. Trollope says that to him they looked like long kid gloves stuffed with some substance, although he adds that he is far from asserting that they were such. It ought, perhaps, to be added that twenty-four years previously Trollope declared that he had never seen the hands at any time.

Generally speaking, Trollope was both doubtful and perplexed. He says that he was not left with the conviction that his guest was an altogether trustworthy and sincere man. On the other hand, he was not fully persuaded of the reverse. He declares that

he saw nothing which appeared to him to compel the conclusion that some agency unknown to the ascertained and recognized laws of Nature was at work. But he did hear many communications made in Home's presence which seemed to him wholly inexplicable by any theory which he could bring to bear upon them.

It will be seen by these remarks that there is really little sound evidence for the attacks made upon Home some five years later in such journals as *Punch*, *The Mask* and *Once a Week*.

Take *Punch*, the editor of which was bent on exposing what he considered to be the " Spiritual ' Hume '-Bugs." In a poem published on 18th August 1860 headed " Home, Great Home ! " the first two verses read :

> Through humbugs and fallacies though we may roam,
> Be they never so artful, there's no case like Home.
> With a lift from the spirits he'll rise in the air
> (Though, as lights are put out first, we can't see him there).
> Home, Home, great Home—
> There's no case like Home !
>
> Of itself his Accordion to play will begin,
> (If you won't look too hard at the works hid within ;)
> Spirit-hands, at his bidding, will come, touch, and go
> (But you mustn't peep under the table, you know).
> Home, Home, great Home—
> There's no case like Home ! [1]

Similarly, in *The Mask* for June 1868, under the title of " Fly away, Home," the author suggests that the medium " cannot do his stuff " outside his own premises. " One fact is patent to every one," the article concludes, " he does not court investigation ; for his health is never up to the mark necessary when a séance is demanded for that purpose." Lest it be thought that all humorists despised the medium and his work, let me hasten to add the testimony of Arthur William Beckett, the famous Victorian writer who, with his brother Gilbert, lived at one time in Hanover Square over the rooms that Home himself occupied. His words are, I think, very enlightening. " Home," he writes, " was not half a bad fellow as I knew him." The rest is silence, but Beckett's

[1] Reprinted by permission of the proprietors of *Punch*.

opinion was not one which, in my opinion, can be lightly brushed aside. He must have known a great deal about his curious neighbour, in spite of the fact that he jestingly says that he never met any furniture walking about by itself on the landings or on the stairs. John Bigelow, the American journalist and diplomatist, on the other hand, seems to have heard much about the medium which can only be called derogatory. He recalls the fact that Charles Dickens called Home a ruffian and a scoundrel ; and it is well known that one reason why Dickens declined to make any personal inquiry was because the conditions under which such inquiries took place were, to quote his own words, " preposterously wanting in the commonest securities against deceit or mistakes." Another reason was because Dickens maintained that people lied so boldly about what actually took place and what impression was actually made at the time. Writing to T. A. Trollope he said that he thought Home was a scoundrel, and in another letter written in 1860 declared that even if the medium " were demonstrated as humbug in every microscopic cell of his skin and globule of his blood, the disciples would still believe and worship." He thought Home's book on incidents in his life an " odious " publication, and in one of his articles hints at Home's influence over young men.

Bigelow recalls how on one occasion Trollope told Dickens how Home, when at Florence with him, used to walk up and down in front of the house and within earshot. One day, deciding to make a small test, Trollope said to his wife that it was just so many years this night since our dear so-and-so was drowned. That evening the spirit of the person mentioned came through with the information about being drowned, but the facts were completely different. When Bigelow reminded Dickens that Sir Edward Lytton believed in Home, he replied that that was so, but it must be remembered that Lytton was deaf and hated to be reminded of it. " Do you hear these raps ? " Dickens would say, mimicking Home. " Oh, yes per-fect-ly," replied Lytton. At this the table was convulsed with laughter.

In many ways there was a curious resemblance between Mrs. Browning and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In both, mysticism exerted a strange kind of fascination : both felt it useless to try to influence Robert Browning, whom Rossetti describes as shaking his mane with rage and occasionally foaming at the mouth.

It was as late as 1865 that Rossetti first began to interest himself in spiritualism, and the famous mesmerist, Bergheim, used to give exhibitions in a tent set up in the garden. It is not certain if Rossetti ever saw Home : Violet Hunt says he did, but no mention of him having done so has, I think, yet appeared in his published papers. This is somewhat strange, as his brother records the fact that he used to go to all the private séances to which he was invited. He was much intrigued on one occasion when the Master of Lindsay told him that he had seen Home rise up to the top of a lofty room in which they happened to be. As he rose above his head Lindsay tried to pull him down by holding on to his foot, but he still kept on going up leaving his shoe in Lindsay's hand. This fact cannot fail to suggest to the more suspicious that Home may have been wearing his elastic-sided jemimas which some think facilitated rapid insertions and withdrawals for sharp work beneath the table.

John Ruskin was another of the personalities of the time who saw Home. He used to attend the séances at Broadlands, the house of the Cowper-Temples, where every effort was apparently made to convert him. " I'm as giddy as if I had been thrown off Strasburg steeple and stopped in the air," he writes, " but thing after thing of this kind is being brought to me."

Before I pass on to consider fresh evidence on Home's famous levitation in Ashley Place, I want to try to sum up the position as regards how Home's phenomena were considered in England during the period 1855 to 1870.

We have seen how, generally speaking, the séances were considered much more as diversions in social gatherings rather than experiments which, in any sense of the word, could be called scientific. Here I am, of course, referring to the sittings that

Home gave in the big London and country houses and not to the series of experiments with which the name of Sir William Crookes is associated. But there are one or two remarks which were made by people of the period which rather suggest that Home's phenomena did not differ in any startling degree from that taking place with other mediums. For example, there is no doubt that the Davenport Brothers (who were almost certainly fraudulent) puzzled a great many people of the period; and John Delaware Lewis, who was a critic of some reputation, declared that the manifestations which he witnessed with the notorious Mrs. Marshall fell very little short of what has been described by an eye-witness as having been accomplished by Mr. Home. When we remember that the article to which Mr. Lewis was referring was the sensational one in *The Cornhill Magazine* (Aug., 1860) by Robert Bell, called "Stranger Than Fiction," it is obvious that he must have been very much impressed by what Mrs. Marshall had to show him.

One of the most interesting critical essays on his experiences in spiritualism was that given by Viscount Amberley (Bertrand Russell's father) in *The Fortnightly Review* for 1874. The Viscount was well known for his critical but moderate views, and what he has to say might well have been written by any student of the physical phenomena to-day. Indeed, I find him using an expression which I myself have employed on more than one occasion when mentioning the difficulties with which investigators are confronted. "Spiritual manifestations are, in fact, like wills-of-the-wisp," he writes, "which elude the pursuer the more provokingly the more he chases them. He is always told that the most marvellous phenomena happened yesterday, or in another room, or under other conditions, or with a circle differently composed, or else the medium was in better health; but to-day, in this room, under these conditions, with this circle, they persistently refuse to show themselves." It does not seem that Viscount Amberley came to these conclusions without trying to get personal experience of the facts. For example, when in New York in 1867 he had a sitting with that clever medium, Charles H. Foster, who specialized in

Plate X

"It is clear that Amberley thought Foster a fraud." (See p. 113)
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billet-reading and skin-writing and who had stayed with Bulwer at Knebworth. It is clear that Amberley thought Foster a fraud, although he does not seem to have understood how the tricks were done, and it is noteworthy that some years earlier *Punch* had satirized Foster in an amusing drawing (see Plate X).

Before proceeding to discuss the most remarkable of all D. D. Home's alleged levitations I want to mention another incident which is not only highly disturbing in itself but which also may throw a flood of light on the way some of Home's sittings were conducted, and on the nature of the marvellous phenomena sometimes said to occur at them.

In Mrs. Home's book on *The Gift of D. D. Home* (London, 1890), a letter from a Mrs. Gambier is printed on p. 172, in which the writer exhibits her faith in, and friendship for, the medium. Now Mrs. Gambier was one of those who attended Mrs. Milner Gibson's social séances which I have already described. The Gambiers lived in a haunted house, and Home used to visit them and hold séances, converting not only Mrs. Gambier and her daughters but apparently influencing the whole family to some degree. I have not succeeded in tracing any detailed accounts of these sittings. But one of Mrs. Gambier's sons has left a note on the kind of thing that went on. If we can credit his remarks they are frankly very revealing. He says no greater charlatan ever breathed than D. D. Home, and he finds it difficult to believe why his father did not kick the medium out of the house. The conditions at the sittings were, he says, " ridiculous, transparent fraud, resting merely on Home's word, a hopelessly rotten security." For example, Home made them all sit down in pitch darkness and bound them by a promise not to move. Then, after a minute or two, he would turn up the light and point out that a heavy china vase had changed its place from the chimney-piece to the top of the piano, while he himself was supposed to have been sitting holding one of the sitter's hands all the time.

On another occasion he put Mrs. Gambier in touch with some of her children who had died in India, and a number of incidents

and details were given. Mr. Gambier, senior, became suspicious and discovered that Mrs. Milner Gibson had told Home all about it "down to the most minute particulars." When he tackled Home the medium denied that Mrs. Gibson had ever said a word to him about it.

However we may regard these accounts (and scepticism should not be reserved solely for favourable records), it does not seem likely that these conditions were only to be observed at the home of the Gambiers. If this was the kind of thing that went on how many startling movements at a distance might be explained! How much that many of us have pictured as taking place in full light might really have occurred in inky darkness. Here was an example of conversion leading to belief in everything, whatever the conditions. It is a common condition with many spiritualists, once they believe in the bona-fides of any particular medium.

I now pass to the famous Ashley Place levitation. Those who have read Lord Dunraven's account will remember that Home is alleged to have passed out of the window of one room and in at another. An account is given of the premises, and it is stated that the rooms were on the third floor, and that between the window at which Home went out and that at which he came in the wall receded six inches.

There has always been some controversy as to where this alleged levitation took place, but there seems no doubt that before Lord Dunraven's death the fact that it was supposed to have occurred at No. 9 Ashley Place was confirmed. What does not seem to have been remembered was the fact that Sir Francis C. Burnand was extremely interested in D. D. Home and attended a sitting with him, and on the conclusion of the meeting cross-examined the medium closely on a number of topics. This is not the place to describe this conversation, for I must pass on to his statement that Lord Dunraven himself wrote out an account of the levitation in Ashley Place which Burnand declares in his book of recollections that he still had in his archives. Not only does he quote from this

account of Lord Dunraven, but he actually includes a diagram to illustrate the narrative, although unfortunately he does not say whether this diagram was drawn by Lord Dunraven or by himself from Lord Dunraven's account.

According to this story the levitation took place on the *first* floor of the building, and not the *third* as in the other versions. Moreover, Lord Dunraven describes the two windows as *facing one another*, each being on opposite sides of a triangle. Now if this be the case the whole phenomenon takes on a very different complexion. The distance between the two windows may have been something over seven feet; but it must be realized that the picture of the levitation and the passing from window to window must be quite different in this account from that of the classical version. But there is something much more serious to add to our difficulties. I cannot discover that any windows in the least like those described by Lord Dunraven in his letter to Sir Frances Burnand exist at 9 Ashley Place, and overlook the street. The premises do not appear to have been much altered since the date of the incident, and I am unable in any way to account not only for the discrepancy between the position of the windows, but also for the fact that in one account Lord Dunraven says that it was on the third floor, whilst in another that it was on the first. The case therefore remains not only one of the most troublesome mysteries in the life of D. D. Home, but one to which further difficulties have been added by the discovery of the additional version which was said to have been received by Sir Francis Burnand.

We will now pass to a brief consideration of the famous Tuileries sittings at the court of Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie. I am not going to discuss the story of the alleged exposure of D. D. Home when it was said that his foot was slipped out of his shoe and was used for purposes for which it was not intended. Count Perovsky-Petrovo-Solovovo has analysed this incident with his usual acuteness in both the *Proceedings* and *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research, and I have little to add in the way of confirmatory evidence or otherwise in spite of ransacking

many diaries and memoirs to which the Count has not referred in his published analyses.[1]

What I propose to do here is rather to discuss the mystery of Home's sudden departure from France, which was suspected by some to have been connected with the alleged exposure, but which I have reason to suppose was caused by something quite different. Before dealing with this phase, however, let us take a short glance at some of the records preserved in the memoirs and letters of the Empress herself and some of the other more important personalities in Napoleon's Court.

The general impression that Home seems to have made was that of a wonder-worker whose performances were far superior to those which were often given before the Emperor and his friends. It has not, I think, been often remembered that the Davenport Brothers were in Paris at one time, and that it is said that they were exposed by Alfred de Caston, who at that time was writing a number of books, one of which is entitled *Marchands de Miracles*. In this book Caston deals with D. D. Home, but in such a reserved and cautious manner that I cannot think that he ever could have seen him personally, although this is very odd considering his influence in Court circles. Anyway, he expresses complete disbelief in the stories about the medium, but does not attempt anywhere, as far as I have been able to discover, to describe the methods by which he thought Home produced his miraculous effects.

Turning to the Empress herself we have some interesting material in the volumes containing some of her private letters which were published in Paris in 1935. In February 1857, for example, she writes to her sister saying that that very evening she was going to see an extraordinary man who makes phantoms appear, and she adds that it goes without saying that she does not want to see them for it would make her too much afraid. In March of the same year she again writes to her sister, saying that she has seen the medium and nothing in the whole world could give her any idea of what she and her friends had experienced.

[1] See *Proc.* S.P.R., 1909, XXI, 436-482, and *Journal* S.P.R., XV, 274 ff.

"D. D. Home: Sorcerer of Kings." (See p. 117)
(Reproduced by permission of the Council of the Society for Psychical Research.)

Plate IX

" I will first of all tell you," she writes, " that Mr. Hume is a thin, pale man, twenty-one years of age, very awkward and with something strange about his looks." When he was asked what they were going to see, he said that he did not know anything about it for he was merely an instrument. The séance began, she says, by a trembling of the table, which made one think of putting one's hands on the back of a dog which had suddenly been affected by terror. While this was going on Mr. Home had only one hand on the table, and at the last sitting the most extraordinary things happened. The table was a very big one, and one of the sitters was holding a bell in one hand whilst she had another bell and the Emperor an accordion. After each of them had asked for something to happen the two bells were taken away from them by invisible hands and her's was put into the hand of General Espinasse, who was sitting at the end of the table opposite the medium and who was so incredulous and taken aback that they really thought he was going to be ill. The Emperor's accordion then played some charming tunes all by itself, and a stool which was at the end of the room came up to her as if pushed by some unknown force, but what she found passed all belief was what happened after that. Not wishing to see the spirit-hands she had put a cloth on the table when suddenly the Emperor said to her " Look at what's pushing the cloth towards me." Hume said that they could touch it ; and as a matter of fact it was a hand which was pressing that of the Emperor. General Espinasse actually saw it, and said that it was a small, childish hand and she got up in order to have a look, feeling when she returned to her seat that her dress had been pulled and the cushion on her chair had been seized by a hand. A moment afterwards the cloth was pushed to her side of the table and a man's hand pressed hers. She also wanted to press it in her turn, but when she tried to do so there was nothing to press. At the end of the letter the Empress says that she must see Home again and perhaps other things would then happen.

There is no doubt that these phenomena excited enormous

interest throughout Paris. We owe to the Marchioness Taisey-Chatenoy a long account of the general conditions under which the sittings were held. She says that one must have lived in the period to have any idea of the mania which affected society when it came to a question of table-turning. Tables revolved in the attic as well as in the palace ; amongst workmen as well as amongst courtiers. They even took on a personal aspect. The Empress's table was called " Josephine," and it had its moods which were sometimes gay but sometimes naughty, while at times its language was difficult to understand. It is in Madame Chatenoy's records that we find a detailed description of the hand-chain as sometimes used in Home's séances. Those of my readers who are interested in following up the details of her narrative will find them recorded in her book on the Court of Napoleon III.[1]

In spite of the impression that Home was making, a general feeling was abroad among more sober and less emotional observers that all was not as it should be, and that certain of the phenomena were due to adroit trickery. For example, Madame Baroche, the wife of one of Napoleon III's principal ministers, says in her book of recollections that there were some people who took him seriously, but the majority thought that he was a clever charlatan. He liked only to work in the dark, she says, and he was very adroit at eliminating people who had too sharp eyes and, above all, he avoided straining himself too much, giving the pretext that the spirits had taken a few days off. At his command tables rose in the air without any sign of a cord, bells moved about by themselves and described circles, whilst an accordion travelled about from knee to knee whilst playing by itself. I cannot refrain from adding one story told by Madame Baroche which has not, I think, yet found its proper place among the many tales of practical jokes which were played on D. D. Home during the Tuileries sittings. At one of the séances a lady felt a spirit-hand pressing her leg. She uttered a scream and later told her friends that she had lost sleep on account of it. " Sleep in peace," said

[1] *A la Cour de Napoléon III*, 2e éd. (Paris, 1891).

M. de Pierre to her, " I was the spirit : mine was the hand." How often did that kind of thing happen ? We have no means of telling, but it is worth remembering.

As Madame Baroche put it, Home was often regarded as a charlatan, and the writer who conceals himself under the name of " Ferdinand Bac " actually calls him a prince of charlatans. In his account of the medium he gives a revealing record of the simplicity and ignorance of some of the exalted personages in Napoleon's Court. Thus Pauline de Metternich would mix him up with David Hume, and used to tell her friends about " that Hume : he is that Scot who wrote a book about suicide and about the immorality (*sic !*) of the soul." Prosper Mérimée, who had the greatest objection to anything to do with the occult, thought Home was a poor performer and, like Louis Blanc, looked back to the days when Cagliostro was performing his miracles in eighteenth-century France. However, he concluded, this impostor fascinated the Imperial Court.

Perhaps it may be of interest very briefly to quote the opinions of three distinguished diplomatic figures who were living at the period and constantly came in contact with Frenchmen who were in touch with the goings on at the Court. Thus Earl Cowley, who wrote a book on his experiences at the Paris Embassy during the Second Empire, wrote to Lord Clarendon about April 1857 asking him whether he had ever heard " of a certain charlatan by name Hume " who was half English and half American and who had a complete hold over both the Emperor and the Empress. Even at that time it appears that Home was producing phenomena which could only be regarded with much suspicion. The story was going round that the Emperor asked the medium to bring the spirits of the first Empress and of Louis Philippe, and, having been told that they were present in the room, declared that he could see neither of them. Home asked him to wait a moment and their presence would be felt. Soon afterwards, Earl Cowley declares, the Emperor received a violent kick from behind, although it could not be ascertained which of his predecessors had applied it.

Seriously speaking, Cowley continued, it was impossible to conceive how such a man could so easily be gulled, and as he sometimes saw the medium alone the police were becoming seriously alarmed.

Similarly, Count Hübner, the Austrian Ambassador, says that when at the Tuileries the celebrated medium was making the heads of quite reasonable people turn as well as the tables. The ladies of the Court, he declared, were simply running after this impostor, whose appearance was both insignificant and stupid. This impression of the medium was not that received by Sir Horace Rumbold who saw him during the season at Baden in 1856. Rumbold says that one face in the throng of people could not be forgotten. It was that of Home with his " weird haunted look " ; and he further records the fact that it was about that time that what he calls the medium's startling impostures were beginning to attract public notice. This note on Home's appearance reminds me of what Archbishop Robert Seton said when he saw the medium wrapped in contemplation in St. Peter's in Rome. " I never saw a face of such mental agony," he writes : " it gave me the idea of a soul in conflict. . . ." Regarding Home's supposed tricks Octave Aubry said that sceptics were beginning to assert that the phantom hand was simply the medium's foot which he had adroitly withdrawn from his shoe. Another account of what was supposed to have happened was that given by Viscount Beaumont-Vassy, who published his recollections of the Second Empire in 1874. He declares that Home was conducting himself at the Tuileries with consummate impudence. It is said, he writes, that altogether apart from his other tricks he had the audacity to propose to the Emperor that he should touch the inert hand of Queen Hortense under the table, and when Napoleon accepted, he did not think twice before sliding his foot out of its patent leather shoe and presenting it to be touched by the Emperor. In this way, he goes on, Home had passed all permitted limits not only from the point of view of manners in general, but even also, people say, in matters of honesty and the police had given orders for his expulsion.

It is here that mention is made of some of the reasons which were alleged to have been responsible for the sudden disappearance of the medium from France. The whole episode has been glossed over by Mrs. Home in her *Life* of the medium, and contemporary records merely give vague suggestions and rumours. That these rumours were persistent and troublesome we know from Home himself, since he deals with them in one of his own books, but the real truth about the expulsion does not seem to have been recorded anywhere with absolute certainty. I have reason to think that there was more than one cause ; and it is recorded in a number of places that he was considered by some to have been a German spy, although I do not think that there is any truth whatever in the assertion. What is much more important is a passage in the memoirs of Count M. R. Horace de Salviac de Viel-Castel, a man of biting and sarcastic wit, who declares that Home was accused not only of robbery but also of unnatural practices and that he was thrown into the prison at Mazas, a story heard also in Paris by the 1st Earl of Lytton, who took a sort of malignant pleasure in it. Viel-Castel also declares that it was well known that Home was having an affair with Ernest Baroche, and that the thing had been talked about throughout Paris. By a stroke of luck I have been able to run this story to earth in the diary of young Baroche's own mother, from whose memoirs I have already quoted. She says that what happened was simply that Ernest Baroche went to stay with Home at his apartment in order that Baroche might be able to observe some of the more startling and spontaneous phenomena. According to Madame Baroche, what Ernest saw confirmed him in his belief that Home was merely a consummate charlatan, but who possessed to a high degree powers of magnetism and a form of fascination. How far this story accounts for the rumour to which Viel-Castel alludes I am not prepared to say, but I suspect that there is more in it than at first sight appears. " Ferdinand Bac " gives a startling series of statements regarding what occurred. He says that in 1858 a whole series of denunciations began pouring into police quarters in Paris. First of all these were anonymous

and gave precise details about petty thefts of money by Home at the Tuileries. Other accusations were of a more delicate type ; and the most flagrant crimes against manners were attributed to Home, all of which were completely in accord with what we have heard about the supposed mystery of iniquity. " Bac " says that the rumour of this immense scandal filled the Court with consternation. When Home was questioned by the police he showed himself so fully acquainted with the scandalous secrets of the Court that an exposure would have covered the Imperial House with the laughter of the entire world. Home was put into the prison of Mazas ; and whilst there did not hesitate to give names, addresses and facts which literally terrified the police in their turn. A public trial had to be avoided at all costs. He was, therefore, quietly escorted to the frontier.

In commenting upon this scandal I ought, perhaps, to say that I do not think that the evidence is in any way sufficient to establish its authenticity. The truth, I suspect, lies in a somewhat different direction. Prior to Home's visit to France a fearful homosexual scandal was uncovered in Napoleon's Court. I am unable to discover any precise details of this since every effort was made to hush it up, but an account of it was given verbally to Mr. H. S. Ashbee, who prints it in one of his privately issued volumes. When Home arrived in Paris it seems to be probable that his reputation would have preceded him and that he would have been immediately approached by those persons who thought that he was one of them. Home was essentially of a weak nature, and it may well be that he allowed himself to be put into a compromising position without realizing the importance of what he was doing. Moreover, his close connection with the Imperial Family made the possibility of a further scandal even more dangerous, and thus it was that he was asked to leave France without any formal charge being preferred against him. Not only was it a case of morals : it was also a case of the influence that he had on the Emperor in relation to his prophecies, of which his statement that the Prince Imperial would not come to the throne was not the least important.

Thus the history of Home's departure from France can be said, I think, to have little, if any, connection with the alleged exposure. A further fact to support my interpretation is certain evidence which I have unearthed which suggests that, after Home's departure, table-turning circles were continued by some members of the Court as a cloak behind which the most undesirable practices were carried on, and which led to a minor scandal which has not been forgotten.

We will now pass on to a consideration of the sensational legal case, which so intrigued London society in 1868. There is little doubt that both the case itself and its result were used by the enemies of Home to cast discredit upon him and to pretend that the dishonesty and lack of sincerity of the medium were amply proved.

I have some reasons for thinking, however, that these views were mistaken, and I have often been somewhat surprised that so many modern writers have accepted them, until I realized that their prejudices as regards alleged psychic phenomena were probably responsible for their lack of critical caution when dealing with the matter.

In order to put the case into a more true perspective let us begin by again asking the question previously put at the beginning of this chapter. What was it that really motivated Mrs. Jane Lyon in wishing to adopt D. D. Home as her son and in settling on him a comfortable income for life ?

The story of the Lyon-Home case in 1868 is briefly this. Mrs. Lyon, a widow aged 75, within a few days after first seeing Home, was induced, from her belief that she was fulfilling the wishes of her deceased husband, conveyed to her through the mediumship of Home, to adopt him as her son and transfer £24,000 to him ; to make a will in his favour ; afterwards to give him a further sum of £6,000 ; and also to settle upon him, subject to her life interest, the reversion of £30,000, the gifts being made without consideration and without power of revocation.

It was held by the court that the relation proved to have existed

between Mrs. Lyon and Home implied the exercise of dominion and influence by the medium over Mrs. Lyon's mind ; and consequently, that as Home had failed to prove that these voluntary gifts were the pure, voluntary, well-understood acts of Mrs. Lyon's mind, they must be set aside.

Now, although it is clear that Mrs. Lyon's action was, to a certain extent at least, influenced by the messages which were said to proceed from her late husband, there is abundant evidence to show that Mrs. Lyon was influenced by other motives, and that little attempt to show this was made at the time and, as far as I know, has never been honestly faced. To start at the beginning we must inquire who Mrs. Lyon was before she was married. Jane Lyon was formerly Jane Gibson, the illegitimate daughter of one Matthew Gibson, a Newcastle tradesman, who later became a farmer. As was customary at that time her relations ignored her, and she grew up, as was then so commonly the case, with severe mental conflicts and neurotic difficulties. Part of her conflict was resolved when she married Charles Lyon. It is not, I think, generally understood who Charles Lyon was. I must confess that I under-estimated his importance till I came across a tale of how Dean Henry George Liddell—the famous Liddell of Liddell and Scott's *Greek Lexicon*—had invited Robert Browning to Oxford in 1868, and there poured into his ear what he called the rascality of Home, which naturally much pleased the poet. This emotional excitement on the part of the Dean of Christ Church seemed to me very odd ; but the reason was soon found when I discovered that he had married Charles Lyon's sister who, according to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, was the niece of the 8th Earl of Strathmore, but who, as a matter of fact, was his granddaughter. Charles Lyon was, therefore, the grandson of the 8th Earl, brother-in-law of Dean Liddell, and a relation of the present Queen of England.

The result of Miss Gibson's marriage to Charles Lyon was that the pair were practically boycotted by his family, although the honeymoon was spent in a cottage near Glamis Castle. Mr. Lyon did not care for the behaviour of his relations, neither did his wife.

When he died in 1859 he left the greater part of his wealth to Jane, who did not know what to do with it as her tastes and manner of life were exceedingly simple.

I have already said that Jane Lyon suffered severe conflict on account of her birth. I now submit for consideration the idea that she was determined to pay out her husband's relatives for their slighting behaviour towards her because she was unable to mix among people living in the higher social scales. Consumed by this passion Jane Lyon saw her golden opportunity in D. D. Home. Here was a sorcerer of kings, a man who had received gifts and favours from royal personages and their followers, and who could produce manifestations which were regarded with awe by the highest in the land. Were she able to link up with Home the dream of her life would come true. She would then tread the soft carpets of a king's palace and gain free and welcome entrance to Imperial Courts.

Thus, in his testimony, Home mentioned that her interest in his aristocratic connections was greater than in his spiritualistic activities for, as she herself is reported to have said, Home's gift would bring people to him " and that is what I want. I shall like to see your friends, and nothing will spite my husband's family more than to see me among great folks."

Here, then, was the motivating force behind Mrs. Lyon's desire for association with D. D. Home. To spite the haughty Lyon family with whom her husband had broken and which had regarded her with contemptuous indifference was to fulfil one of the dearest wishes of her heart, and for this money was no object. She had few to whom she could leave it. By giving it to Home she would satisfy her craving for revenge, move in the high social circles in which she had always longed to be received, and in addition secure for herself a comfortable ending to her rapidly declining years. The influences which determined her action were not the spiritual influences exercised through the medium, although they played their part : they were the driving forces behind her obsession which had derived its power from the conflict within her.

I would suggest, therefore, that Home was almost entirely guiltless in the affair of Lyon *v.* Home. We do not know why Mrs. Lyon changed her mind. Possibly she was approached by others interested in the disposal of her wealth : possibly she realized that the state of Home's health was such that his movements in high society were likely to become increasingly circumscribed. Whatever may have been the precise reason Mrs. Lyon showed herself in full possession of her faculties when under cross-examination. She was a hard-headed woman and knew what she wanted. She was far from being the half-witted and crack-brained old lady that she has been painted. What finally swayed her was probably the conviction that what she wanted was not to be got in the way she had planned. For that she would have paid much ; but she was a woman who wanted to receive full value for her money. Revenge would have been sweet, but she had miscalculated the means by which she would obtain it. To D. D. Home such a plan would not, I think, have been understood. His conflict was of a different order in which money played but a small part. Even to Mrs. Lyon it was but a means to an end. And when that end was almost within her grasp, nay, when it actually *was* in her grasp, she realized that it was melting away just like those spirit-hands through the uncanny behaviour of which she had hoped to achieve it. Jane Lyon died an unhappy and embittered woman.

I have now attempted to answer the questions to which I directed the reader's attention at the beginning of this chapter. Let us see if we can sum up as briefly as possible the lessons which can be learned in the course of the discussion.

It may be thought by some that this account of certain aspects in the life of Home are anecdotes which are unworthy of serious consideration. But I suspect that there are some who will realize how carefully I have chosen the points to be considered and the reasons why I have dealt with them. D. D. Home belongs to history. He was one of the most interesting and curious characters of his period, and even the *Dictionary of National Biography* recognizes

his importance. For us his character and the nature of his phenomena cannot fail to be of importance.

In the case of D. D. Home we have seen how his phenomena were regarded at the time. Was he merely a clever exponent of trickery in advance of his time, or had he in fact powers the nature of which we know little or nothing ? I shall not attempt to answer this question even if I were able to do so. But it might, perhaps, help some to make up their minds if I drew their attention to three modern cases of great importance. I refer to the mediumship of the late Maria Silbert, Carlos Mirabelli and Mrs. X of Massachusetts.

Those who have studied the evidence for the alleged spirit-hands of D. D. Home cannot fail to have been struck by their strong resemblance to those displayed by Maria Silbert. The touches beneath the table and the manipulation of objects placed there by the sitters are almost precisely similar to those presented by the Austrian medium. Belief in her reached the same fantastic heights as that with D. D. Home. Phantoms accompanied her on moonlight walks ; she passed through solid doors ; an automobile travelled mile upon mile, up hill and down dale, with no motive power except that supplied by the old lady's mediumship. We know now how Mrs. Silbert used her feet beneath the table, and how skilled her toes were in using a metal stylus for engraving on metal. Many of her other methods are also known, the secrets of which will, I hope, never be published. Her similarity to Home in many respects was startling. Was Home, so to speak, a Maria Silbert born before his time ? Possibly. In the case of Mirabelli in South America the same problem was presented. Phenomena even more astounding than those with Home were reported with him. Many professional people of standing were said to have testified to these marvels, but unfortunately confirmatory evidence is lacking to a surprising and even suspicious degree.

It is, however, the case in Massachusetts that is of the greatest interest.[1] Here the most incredible phenomena were reported.

[1] Full reports of this case have not yet been published so I am preserving the anonymity of the medium.

Music as if by a full orchestra filled the séance room : full-form phantoms stood between the curtains of the cabinet presenting chalices out of which the sitters drank : materialized but invisible dogs lay on the laps of favoured visitors and were fondled by them. With Home it was Sophia Cottrell's baby which lay on her lap : with Mrs. X it was a dog. In both cases the sitters were certain of their facts. What were those facts ? I cannot say what they may have been with D. D. Home, but I know what they were when I went to Massachusetts. There were no phenomena whatever. Whilst the sitters listened to the exquisite music, I heard nothing, not even the strains of a distant radio. No materialized dog settled on my hands as I sat waiting. No phantom stood in the cabinet to hold out a chalice to me. The medium was, I think, an honest woman. If incredible phenomena were being built up around her by a process of suggestion and hallucination on the grand scale, then that was not her fault, but her good fortune. The evidence suggests that there were scarcely any phenomena with her beyond those supplied by the imagination of the sitters. Was anything like this going on with D. D. Home ? Much of the evidence suggests it, although I would not go so far as to say that it was certain. You may doubt the facts in the case of Mrs. X of Massachusetts. All I can do is to borrow if I may, and in another connection, what Mrs. Browning said to her sister about the Güldenstubbé writings : " Smile Arabel—but such things are so indeed."

CHAPTER SIX

ANGEL ANNA : THE WOMAN WHO FAILED

It was in the year 1774 that Harrodsburg was founded in Kentucky. Although the earliest settlement in the Blue Grass State, it never attained the size and opulence of a large American city. Standing some fifty kilometres south of Frankfort, the capital, Harrodsburg continued to remain a small town, noted for its mineral waters and the beauty of its buildings.

During the nineteenth century German immigration to the United States, especially between the years 1846 and 1854, reached a peak ; and it may well be that some of the newcomers settled in Harrodsburg. At any rate it seems that, in 1849, a musician calling himself " Professor " John C. F. R. Salomon and claiming to be a political refugee was living there, and it is possible that his wife, Eliza, was of Spanish extraction. However that may be, on 9th February 1849 a daughter, Editha, was born to them, although her first name does not appear to be known with absolute certainty. Little has been recorded of her childhood. She went to school both in New York City and in Brooklyn, and was noted for her insubordination and wild pranks.

During the next twenty years hardly anything is known of her life and movements. It is said that she gave lectures both in New York City and elsewhere, proclaiming herself to be the daughter of Marie Dolores Eliza Rosanna Gilbert, better known as " Lola Montez " (1818-61), the dancer and one time mistress of Ludwig I of Bavaria. It is possible that she had read a good deal about this adventuress, and had made the determination to follow in her footsteps, although it does not seem that she went about it in a way that might be thought to ensure success.

It was in June 1870 that she came into collision with another remarkable woman, the famous Victoria Claflin Woodhull Martin,

as she afterwards became, who, two years later, was to be nominated by the Equal Rights Party as candidate for President of the United States.

At that time Victoria Woodhull and her sister Tennessee Claflin, " the bewitching brokers " as they were called, had an office in New York City, and one day Victoria Woodhull was surprised to hear that an affidavit, dated 22nd June 1870, had been filed, stating that Editha Gilbert Montez had, on 26th May 1870, deposited a diamond ring valued at $4000 and $2000 in Treasury notes with her for safe keeping, and that the said Victoria Woodhull now refused to give them up. The case came into court and excited a good deal of interest at the time. Editha appeared wearing a grey dress, a waterproof cloak and a straw hat of a type commonly worn by men of the period. She said that she had called at the office, where she had found Mrs Woodhull and her friend Colonel Blood, before 26th May when she had handed over her property for safe custody. It appeared that at the meeting Editha had hinted that she herself would like to become a female broker, and that Mrs. Woodhull soon saw that she was a woman with a brain which only needed exercising. On the other hand, her sister, Tennessee, said that Editha would do well enough if she were a good clairvoyant, an opinion doubtless founded on the experience of the Claflin sisters when they were travelling mediums, and suggestive of the fact that Editha herself had had a try at the same game.

In giving her evidence Mrs. Woodhull said that Editha had called upon her saying that she was the daughter of Lola Montez, that she had no money, and that if she could not obtain some relief she would throw herself in the river or go on the streets, a sure way of attracting the sympathy of Mrs. Woodhull, who thereupon gave her $5. Editha then told her that she was thinking of giving some lectures at the Steinway Hall in New York, and Mrs Woodhull told her that if she were honest she would find plenty of friends, but if she were a fraud she would soon find numerous enemies.

During the course of the hearing it came out that Mrs. Woodhull was not the only person whom Editha had approached with her

story of distress. Ivan C. Michels testified that she had called on him saying that she was a writer, and giving the name of Claudia D'Arvie on one occasion and of Blanche Solomons on another.

The evidence having been heard, the case was dismissed ; and Editha was handed over to the care of the Commissioner of Public Charities and Correction in order to await a medical examination to ascertain whether or not she was of sound mind, as it had been disclosed that she had duped a number of philanthropic ladies who had interested themselves in her case.

When Editha was removed from the court it seems that she was taken for observation to a mental institution on Blackwell's Island, in the East River, off New York City. There she came into contact with a certain Paul Noel Messant, who was much attracted to her, and whom she married on 5th February of the following year. One child, Alice, was apparently born to them, but Mr. Messant died in 1872 and his wife was again thrown upon her own resources.

After the death of her husband Editha seems to have been left in much perplexity as to her future. She was not a woman, however, to be frightened by the prospects of poverty or loneliness. Of immense energy, initiative, daring and cunning, it seems that, as Victoria Woodhull and Tennessee had suggested, she decided to become a spiritualistic medium, a profession in which her artful knavery and capacity for brazen imposture might find full scope. She soon found a manager for the business, John W. Randolph by name, and then proceeded to travel round the country giving demonstrations, lectures and doubtless numbers of private séances.

By 1884 Editha Gilbert Montez, or Angel Anna as she was often called by devoted admirers, was firmly established. Five years earlier she had contracted an alliance with Joseph H. Diss Debar, a surveyor and many years her senior, who was connected with problems of immigration, and who had published in 1870 at Parkersburg *The West Virginia handbook and immigrants' guide*. His hobby was painting ; and although his powers as an artist were somewhat limited, it may well be that his capacity in this direction

suggested to Anna the mediumistic speciality for which she was to become widely known. This part of her performance consisted in the production of " spirit-pictures " on blank cards, a phenomenon which was very popular in those days, and one which was part of the repertoire of the famous rapping medium, Margaret Fox, who, in 1870, produced a picture purporting to be by Raphael, although those who were privileged to see the result seemed to think that, as the record kindly puts it, " a more perfect production was expected."

In the case of Angel Anna the procedure was somewhat as follows. A small, plain, white square of cardboard was handed to one of the members of the circle for examination. After having been told to mark it, he was instructed to put it on the top of his head so that the edge of the card rested on it with the marked face in front. Anna then proceeded to hold some of the sitters' hands, indulge in one or two squirms, and then tell the lady or gentleman in charge of the card to look at it. There on the unmarked side of the card was a fresh little painting which would clearly have taken an artist an hour or more to execute. It was obvious to the sitters that this medium had remarkable powers, and so the stories about her grew more and more fantastic as time went on.

One day Angel Anna was disporting herself in the sea. She was getting enormously fat as if afflicted by some disease, and with her prominent eyebrows and low retreating forehead, she must have presented a strange appearance bobbing up and down in the waves. It so happened that one of her devotees was standing on the beach, and seeing the chance of a really convincing test, he took a blank card from his pocket and suggested to the bathing belle that she might use her psychic influence to produce a picture on it whilst he held it in his hand. His wish was gratified : a pretty picture soon adorned the surface of the card which formerly had been blank, and all doubts were cast away. Angel Anna had arrived !

As the years went by, Mrs. Diss Debar, *alias* Editha Gilbert

Montez, prospered in her business, but she was not contented with the small and insignificant clientele which importuned her for sittings. Her net was cast for bigger fish ; and soon she had landed one from whom she expected some handsome returns. This was no other than Mr. Luther R. Marsh, the famous New York lawyer, who had a fine house at 166 Madison Avenue. He was one of the many professional and business men in the United States whose credulity and gullibility over spiritualism were only equalled by their sagacity and acuteness in legal and commercial matters. Marsh rather fancied himself as an art critic and connoisseur, and since the death of his wife had turned to spiritualism for consolation. Angel Anna's specialities were just suited to him. The pictures produced through her mediumship thrilled him ; and doubtless additional attractions were forthcoming if suitable arrangements could be made. Thus it was not long before his house was used by the medium and " General " Diss Debar, as he was called, and transformed into a Temple of Truth where sittings were given and further dupes secured. Visitors to the establishment, who had known the house in the days when Mr. and Mrs. Marsh used to receive their guests there, were somewhat surprised to find Anna reclining upon a silken covered sofa, and arrayed in the gowns and jewels which the lawyer's wife was accustomed to wear in earlier days.

The pictures produced by the medium varied in size. Some of them, as, for example, a fine portrait of the Emperor Claudius, were as big as 50 by 72 inches ; others were smaller and handier to hold in the hand and admire. It was said that now and then the images used to " blush out on a virgin canvas " in full sunlight, and occasionally and on very special terms a favoured sitter would be allowed to see the " precipitation " actually taking place as he held the canvas in front of a mirror. The paint was fresh and wet and it took several days to dry. Many of the greatest artists were accustomed to make use of the mediumship of Angel Anna. She was the vehicle through which such painters as Michelangelo, Murillo, Raphael and Rembrandt demonstrated

their mastery of the brush. Not all of the pictures, however, were produced the same way. Mr. Diss Debar obviously could not keep pace with the demand, especially where larger pictures had to be produced. So recourse was had to ready-made examples, and it was said that some thirty-nine of the productions had been stolen from a picture dealer.

Even now, however, Angel Anna was not content. She was always reaching out for fresh conquests and new adventures in which her striking abilities might find freer and more untrammelled scope. Lawyer Marsh had to be bled still further, and the next stage was to persuade him to transfer his house in Madison Avenue " to Mrs. Diss Debar and her heirs for ever." Accordingly, this was done ; but the sense of elation on the part of Anna which greeted the signing of the deed was not to last for long. Mr. Marsh became suspicious : his friends implored him to realize what was going on : other sitters were not so blind as he was, and Anna, like all successful fraudulent mediums, was occasionally careless. For example, one day, when she was presenting the picture test, a sitter saw the plain card being exchanged for one on which a picture had already been painted ; and sceptical people could not help wondering if " General " Debar would not finally get tired of working away in his room upstairs painting cards for use in the séances which were going on all the time. At any rate the day arrived when Marsh saw fit to withdraw the transfer of his house, and the result was that the case came into the courts. It created a sensation.

On 11th April 1888 Anna was arrested, and the " portly swindler," as the Press described her, made much of the blaze of publicity which surrounded the personalities who formed the centre of the drama. At the hearing on 16th April much was heard about the mysterious death of a certain Mr. Loewenherz, with whom, it appeared, Angel Anna had at one time lived ; and on 20th April the famous conjurer, Mr. Carl Hertz, was called as a witness [1] to explain how Anna's tricks were done. On that day Mrs Debar

[1] See his *A Modern Mystery Merchant* (London, 1924).

"But the eyes of her!" (See p. 135)

was in her element. She swept to her seat in court like a dance queen entering the ballroom; and the impression she made was such that on 22nd April the American Press had much to say about her. As to "The Diss Debar," said one paper, "her face is shaky with fat—but the eyes of her! They are bright as crystals and she works them indefatigably. . . . They say whatever she pleases." Certainly, Angel Anna's eyes, like those of Victoria Woodhull, were one of her strong points. As one reporter expressed it, they "sparkled like a telephone wire in a thunderstorm."

On 30th April she herself gave evidence in her defence. Asked her name by Mr. Justice Kilbreth, she replied that she scarcely knew what it was, a retort which was met with smiling incredulity. At a later sitting of the court she was more expansive, and explained how she was under the direction of a Council of ten august personages in the spirit world, among them being Cicero, Homer and Socrates. If Victoria Woodhull had had Demosthenes as a spirit guide, perhaps she was thinking that she would have ten such unseen helpers. It was through clairaudience, she said, that they established communication with her. She herself possessed clairvoyant vision.

On 15th June the jury retired to consider the verdict. They were eleven to one for a conviction, the recalcitrant juryman being an Englishman, Galbraith by name, who was apparently a believer in the genuineness of the phenomena presented by the medium. The next day agreement was reached, and a verdict of guilty with a recommendation to mercy was brought in. Sentence was pronounced on 18th June, and Angel Anna realized that she might have to spend six months in a penitentiary on Blackwell's Island.

Whilst in custody awaiting sentence she was an exemplary prisoner. Full of consideration and sympathy, she used to distribute money to the many vagrants and poor persons who were apprehended during her stay. To them at least she was still an angel.

In spite of everything that had been brought out at the trial Mr. Marsh preserved his faith, and continued what he doubtless

called his spiritualistic "investigations." In 1903 another case was heard in the courts, in which it appeared that Marsh had transferred some insurance policies whilst acting on instructions from the spirit world. The judge found that the medium concerned was a thief and a fraud, and the transference was set aside as invalid.

The years that immediately followed Mrs. Debar's release from jail were not particularly eventful. Rumour and scandal were rife, and the spiritualists were not at all pleased that the Luther-Marsh case had received so much publicity. The fact that it was said that Anna disclaimed the title of "spiritualist" made believers especially spiteful. It was said that "while there is no doubt in the minds of all well-meaning spiritualists" that she was not all she should have been as a representative of spiritualism, "yet her very adventurous nature and want of principle has so stirred the public at large that it has reacted for good on our own people, and brought them out in reply, both in the papers and public meetings, against our accusers and her own." It certainly seemed a poor consolation; and an English spiritualist paper, whilst still maintaining that without doubt she was "an extraordinary medium," declared, however, that she was of the Blavatsky type, *minus* intellect, and that she was "nothing that implies the recognition of principles," a hasty and somewhat unfair delineation.

In 1895, report has it that Anna married a Colonel William McGowan, who, curiously enough, like Mr. Messant, died the year after his marriage; and two years later she met a young man, Jackson by name, who was to exercise a profound influence on her life and future destiny.

Frank Dutton Jackson, who for some years had lived in San Francisco and in Oakland, California, was the son of a superintendent of the S. and J. W. McNair estates, which were situated in the Golden State. After leaving home he entered the grain business in Chicago, but soon left to study at a Presbyterian college, from which it seemed that he hoped to enter the Ministry. Later on he went to Florida for eighteen months to plan a fruitarian

colony, buying 7000 acres in Lee County. At the time that he first met Anna (who was then nearly fifty) he must have been about thirty-two or thirty-three years old.

We do not know what it was that brought the strange couple together. Jackson was somewhat frail and of slight build, whilst his partner was exceedingly stout, and probably weighed nearly twenty stone. However that may be, their marriage was solemnized in New Orleans on 13th November 1898. In the marriage certificate Jackson was described as a native of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and Anna was called Widow McGowan, Princess Editha Loleta, Baroness Rosenthal, Countess of Landsfeld, a native of Florence, Italy, daughter of Ludwig I, King of Bavaria, and Lola Montez, Countess of Landsfeld.

The reception was held at the home of Jessie H. Massie in New Orleans; and the pair took up their residence at the house of Mrs. Mack, at 531 First Street, a tumble-down, dilapidated and neglected piece of property in the same city.

It was not long before Mr. and Mrs. Jackson began to operate in New Orleans in apparently the same way that Anna had done before her marriage. Their work was equally divided: Anna undertook the "phenomenal" side of the business, whilst Jackson probably provided the talk and uplifting spiritual addresses, for which his study at the Presbyterian college had probably well fitted him. But in 1899 they were in trouble again. It appears that Frank and Anna had moved out to Bucktown in Jefferson Parish, and that the neighbours, when they realized that the visitors were the notorious mediums, had strongly objected. Apart from their activities in the field of occultism, it was said that Anna used to stop small children on their way to school and persuade them to come into the house by offering them pieces of candy. The parents did not know what went on and were inclined to be suspicious. At any rate complaints were made, and on 6th May 1899 the Deputy Sheriff gave orders that they were to be ejected, which was promptly done amid loud protests from Anna, who demanded her rights as an American citizen. Indeed, so great

was the outcry that the next day they were both arrested, and the Press duly recorded the seizure of the " notorious confidence woman and medium," and of her " dapper, little blonde-haired husband," or as one paper unkindly put it, " the fat fake and her little man."

In due course Anna, with bizarre trimmings to her hat and frock, appeared in court and was charged with being a " dangerous and suspicious character " ; whilst the police hinted that, had the proper complaints been forthcoming, they would have acted before in order to check the numerous swindles of which they were cognizant.

Having heard the case Recorder Grandjean gave them the alternative of leaving the parish within forty-eight hours or of going to prison for thirty days.

The Jacksons immediately got busy settling up their affairs. But even then they had to ask for an extension of the time limit, which was granted, but they overstayed their time and were again arrested on 16th May, this time being charged with fortune-telling.

Anna appeared in court arrayed in a flowing gown, which made her look more like a priestess of some strange cult than a defendant in a serious legal action, where swindling was the principal charge. Her appearance, however, did little to mitigate her sentence ; and the pair were fined $25 or thirty days. They went to prison.

It is, I think, uncertain whether the authorities would have been able, had they wished, to prefer against the couple other charges of a much more serious nature than that of mere fortune-telling. Strange stories were going about that the Order of the Crystal Star, which Anna was running, was an organization in which the cult of spiritualism was mixed up with other activities in which Jackson played a prominent part, and in which women " patients " were the willing or unwilling victims. Perhaps from the legal point of view it was impossible to convict them. The women may all have been of age, and were so deeply involved that their own complicity would have been difficult to disprove. At that time New Orleans was a wide-open town, and its fame was

spread all over the United States. Brothels of every type flourished, and the erotic shows and " circuses " were largely patronized. More private and exclusive shows were probably also in demand ; and when these were mixed up with pseudo-religious observances an added spice was given to the performances. At any rate no action was taken by the police, and this side of the pair's activities received no publicity in the newspapers, even though it was whispered that the asylum contained female inmates who had lost their reason on account of the experiences they had gone through in Anna's dimly lighted and mysterious parlours.

When Mrs. Jackson and her husband came out of prison their minds were made up. They would no longer stay in a country where they were hounded about from place to place, but shake the dust of America off their feet and go to England, where plenty of dupes were to be found, judging from the pages of the occult Press. Thus, towards the end of the year, and provided with money from some unknown source, they sailed for England, and after having visited Paris, they returned to London, where they remained but for a short time. In Paris they apparently got into touch with a Mr. Liddell MacGregor Mathers, who ran an esoteric society called the Order of the Golden Dawn. Anna went to see Mr. Mathers, and gave him some remarkable demonstrations of her mediumistic powers in the realm of clairvoyance and in the super-normal acquisition of knowledge. He was apparently somewhat impressed by her, but as usual she paid him out for his confidence by walking off with some of his property, including some books of ritual of the Order of the Golden Dawn.

It seems that at one time the pair were running an outfit of a rather similar nature under the title of the Koreshan Unity, which Anna claimed to have founded in 1866, but later this was changed to that of the Theocratic Unity, the ritual of which being very similar, if not identical with that of the Order of the Golden Dawn, and which may have been derived from the material stolen from Mr. Mathers. The founder of the " Koreshan Ecclesia," or Church Triumphant (which must not be confused with the Church

Triumphant of G. J. Schweinfurth), was Cyrus Teed, the basis of the cult being love of one's neighbour. Three divisions are to be distinguished—the Church, the College and the Society Arch-Triumphant. Communal life is ordained, and celibacy is essential. Six houses were held in common by the Order in Chicago about 1893, but later the Order disintegrated and the members dispersed.

After a short time in Paris the Jacksons returned to London, and thence on 12th April 1900 they took ship to South Africa, where they arrived towards the beginning of May.

Soon after their arrival, readers of the Cape Town Press began to notice advertisements appearing in the newspapers in which it was stated that a College of Occult Science had been opened at 95 Bree Street, where the Swami Viva Ananda (who also, it seems, was sometimes called Madame Helena), assisted by a qualified lady doctor, Mary Adams, and a Mr. Theodore Horos gave advice and treatment to those searching for the truth and seeking occult knowledge and spiritual healing. From ten in the morning till eight in the evening the rooms were open for scientific palmistry, advice on all private matters, spirit writings, massage and magnetic movements. Madame Helena, "the world's most marvellous seeress and clairvoyant," who claimed to have been educated among the Mahatmas and to be in communion with the spirit world, was daily in attendance, giving lectures and challenging full and frank inquiry. The "religion of charity" was preached; and Madame's "imposing presence" soon brought the believers in, a dozen or more pupils enrolling for the course.

After having completed their studies the pupils of the Swami were given a certificate of proficiency, which stated that the holder was authorized to "treat and teach all the subtle occult laws," which embraced such abstruse subjects as "anthropo-magneto-electro-psychopathy, osteopathy and massage." This document had the added attraction that it was personally signed by the "Hierophant and Grand Llama, the High Priestess and Swami, Sapientia Doctoribus." Angel Anna's spiritual star was clearly in the ascendant.

Every feature, however, of Anna's horoscope was not propitious. The college prospered, but everyone interested in such matters was not wholly satisfied. Rumours were apt to spread in such communities as those in Cape Town, and stories that at first were innocent enough tended to become exaggerated and take mysterious and sinister forms. Perhaps Anna's magnetic eyes were not quite sufficient to support the claims of occult learning: perhaps the touches of Jackson's small soft hands were not wholly devoted to the healing powers of remedial massage. However that may be, the pair began to think that it was time to move again. Late in September 1900 they had made their decision; and on 16th October they once more set sail for England.

On their arrival they spent some time in travelling to various places, making contacts with others engaged in similar enterprises, and deciding how and where to set up headquarters and begin operations. In Brighton they soon got into touch with a strange missionary sect led by a Mr. James William Wood, a photographer and a man of Canadian origin, whose society had then its centre in Carlton Terrace, Portslade, in a house rejoicing in the name of "Arregosobah," This organization attracted a number of harmless dupes, who masqueraded under assumed names and apparently were quite content to serve their leader, Mr. Wood, who was known as King Solomon. He was ably assisted by a female admirer, who was sometimes called "Mother" and sometimes the "Universal Empress"; whilst others acted in minor capacities and bore the names of "Sisters," such as, for example, a certain Mrs. Sarah Adams, who was known as Sister Miriam or Zobeya.

There seems little doubt that Angel Anna and Frank Jackson, *alias* Theodore Horos, were received with respect by Mr. Wood, who soon realized that here was a pair who moved on higher levels than those to which he could ever attain. For their part the Jacksons may have seen possibilities in certain aspects of the teaching of the Wood sect; and the thought of being another "King Solomon" in a very different rôle may at this stage have first entered the head of the versatile Theodore, whose experiences in

New Orleans might be thus transformed into something more in keeping with the less exotic atmosphere of murky London.

In the course of their travels the Jacksons lectured on various esoteric subjects in the towns they visited, thus paying their expenses ; and August 1901 found them speaking in Birkenhead where they were kindly given hospitality by Mrs. Adams, the wife of a master mariner and the " Sister Miriam," whom they had met the previous April at the house of Mr. Wood in Portslade, and who at one time had held the position of a police court missionary.

By this time Anna had decided what the next move was to be, and for a start they proposed to Mrs. Adams that her two children, Daisy, aged 16, and Clifford, aged 14, should come with them to London, where the Jacksons would see that their education was continued, and where Daisy could complete her studies in shorthand, typing, music and painting. Mrs. Adams readily agreed ; and towards the end of August they all arrived in London.

In the meantime the Jacksons had not been idle. During the previous months advertisements had been appearing in the matrimonial columns of such papers as *The People* and *The Western Morning News*. For instance, in the former paper such an advertisement was printed in the issue of 14th July. It read :

> " Foreign gentleman, 35, educated, attractive, independent, desires communication lady of means, view matrimony.—T. H., Box 749, ' People,' Arundel Street, Strand."

Or again the advertiser described himself as a gentleman of 30, " handsome, independent, refined, highly educated " and of course, " of exemplary habits." A box number was added, and those replying were carefully sifted before any appointments were made.

How many replies were received will never be known. It is certain that they ran into hundreds, and it may well be that even this is an underestimate. Such a chance was too good to be passed over by the hordes of sex-starved, overworked and lonely English women, to whom the lure of a wealthy, refined and highly educated foreign gentleman proved irresistible. Let us see what kind of

women were chosen and what was the rôle that they were called upon to play.

Evelyn Maud (" Vera ") Croysdale, a single woman living in Hull, was twenty-three when she saw the advertisement in June. Having replied and received an answer she came to London and went to Durand Gardens, in Clapham, where the Jacksons were then living. Anna received her affectionately, kissed her and showed her a picture in which the Angel was portrayed reclining negligently on the back of a live tiger in an Oriental setting. Soon after, Jackson came in, apologizing for having missed her at the station and, after having kissed her warmly, explained that Anna was his mother and that Miss Croysdale was to stay with them for a few days. This she did, only later returning to Hull for her few possessions and then moving with the Jacksons to a new address. It was here that Miss Croysdale became a member of the new organization formed by Frank and Anna, of which the details might never have been disclosed had she not been relieved of some of her money and jewellery by her strange hosts. Her virtue might be required of her as her own contribution to the latest cult, but the acquisition of her possessions was not to be tolerated. There is no reason whatever to suppose that Evelyn Croysdale was in any way a vicious or immoral woman. She believed in the Jacksons, and her education was not sufficient for her to understand what was going on. She was the victim of circumstances over which she had but little control. But when it was clear that her new friends did not mean to return her things, then she had good cause for complaint. So complain she did, and the ponderous machinery of the law began to be set in motion. Little did she know that she was about to ring up the curtain on what *The Lancet* afterwards described as " one of the most remarkable " cases ever tried in the criminal courts. The hand of justice was surely but slowly descending upon Angel Anna.

When the Jacksons had finally decided to leave off travelling about the country and to settle down in London, they had explored the various openings which seemed best suited to their purpose.

London seemed likely to be as full of dupes as Cape Town ; and the idea of reviving a college of some sort still attracted them. They therefore looked about for suitable premises, and finally found what they wanted in Gower Street, in the house where now that highly respectable paper, *The Spectator*, has its offices. At that time the place was a boarding-house kept by a Mrs. Bell Lewis, who was herself something of a spiritual healer to whom cures of persons addicted to alcohol were credited.

It was in July 1901 that a certain " Mr. Adams " called on her, and engaged " an office for his mother " at a pound a week. The prospectus of the college was soon prepared ; and shortly afterwards London's occult fraternity was interested to learn that at 99 Gower Street, London, W.C., there was a " College of Life and Occult Sciences." Here were to be learnt and practised " mental and magnetic therapeutics, psychology, clairvoyance, clairaudiance (*sic*), mediumship, materialization, thaumaturgic power and Divine healing." Courses of lectures were to be delivered by an expert called Theosopho Provost, and these varied from six to twelve shillings a course, although on Sundays at 7 p.m. the address was free to the public. Classes were held in which such subjects were taught as the science of life, the human aura, dietetics and the destiny of man. Every week, moreover, there were special classes for " spiritual unfoldment," and the development of thaumaturgic power, and after each lecture students were enrolled and patients and resident novices were received. Mrs. Lewis acted as a mental therapeutist and as registrar ; but the chief posts were reserved for Theosopho Provost, *alias* Theodore Horos, and the Swami Viva Ananda, who was also called Ellora, and who of course was Angel Anna herself. Among the staff was Dr. Mary Adams, who had already worked for the earlier outfit in Cape Town, and Rose Evelyn, a magnetic healer, together with an odd person named Henry S. Bosanquet, who acted as business manager. The prospectus closed with this weighty announcement : " Man is an aggression (*sic*) of atoms, held together by vibratory law, and all vibrations are controlled by thought. Pause and learn the law."

How well Angel Anna knew the jargon beloved by the devotees of the Higher Teaching !

When Frank and Anna realized that the complaint of Evelyn Croysdale might prove serious, they hastily left London and took refuge with Mrs Sarah Adams, who had befriended them when they were lecturing in Birkenhead, and where they were both arrested on a warrant dated 20th September. They were therefore brought back to London ; and on 26th September 1901 the case against them was opened at the Marylebone Police Court before Mr. Curtis Bennett. Appearing under the names of Theodore and Laura Horos, they were described as lecturers, of " the Limes," 109 Park Road, Regents Park, and were charged with conspiring by " false pretences and subtle devices " to cheat and defraud one Vera Croysdale of her jewellery and money. Inspector John Kane, who was in charge of the case, asked for a remand, saying that it appeared that they were husband and wife, that their real name was Jackson, that Mrs. Jackson had a criminal record as a convicted thief, swindler and fortune-teller, and that Mr. Jackson was a confidence trick swindler.

The case excited some interest on account of the extraordinary get-up adopted by the prisoners. Angel Anna wore a large velvet hat and a kind of dust-coat, beneath which she sported a low-cut and loosely fitting garment resembling a surplice. She wore cream-coloured kid gloves, and carried a large scent bottle. Horos was dressed almost entirely in fawn-coloured clothes, including a frock coat and a fawn bowler hat.

The second hearing took place on 3rd October. Anna asked for a trial by jury, declaring that the evidence was false, contrary to common sense, and wholly out of place, being prejudiced and harmful to the interests of herself and her husband. After hearing some more evidence a remand was again agreed to by the magistrate.

By this time some of the brighter London reporters had scented a first-rate sensation, and readers of the Press were intrigued to hear of a " staggering story " in preparation, extraordinary charges and " mental science revelations."

On resuming the hearing of the case on 10th October those present in court were electrified by an expansion of the charges against the couple. In addition to the charge of obtaining money and jewellery from Miss Croysdale, two further charges were now brought forward. One concerned the alleged procurement for immoral purposes of three young women, to wit, Vera Croysdale, Olga Rowson and Laura Faulkner ; whilst the other was a charge under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, in which it was alleged that Daisy Adams had been raped by Horos in extremely odd and bizarre circumstances. It was then disclosed that the watchwords of the Order of Theocratic Unity or Purity League were poverty, chastity and obedience, and that a diet of fruit, nuts and distilled water was advocated, all alcohol being forbidden. More surprising still was the allegation that Angel Anna had actually personally assisted at the rape of Daisy, who had been taught that her submission was in the nature of a religious rite on which her salvation depended.

Miss Croysdale was then called to give evidence. She told the story of how she first contacted Horos, and said that when they went to Gower Street he had taught her the details of the religion practised there, and explained how submission and secrecy were part of the sacred rites.

It may be convenient at this point to collect together what information is easily accessible concerning the inner working of the Order, and how the women collected by the Jacksons by means of the matrimonial advertisements were prevailed upon, not only to act as novices and priestesses of the new religion, but also as concubines to Horos acting in the rôle of Theosopho Provost.

When we consider the nature of the advertisements sent out by Horos it seems odd at first that he should have chosen as he did from the many applicants. Anyway, he seemed a shrewd judge of character, since not only did the various women show a singular devotion to him and Anna, as will appear later, but it is quite clear that they must have known that the matrimonial side of the transaction was not genuine, and that what was being asked of

them was quite different from that which they had been led to expect. Certainly the oath which was required of them before they were allowed knowledge of the mysteries was sufficiently awe-inspiring to any simple-minded person who believed in the occult powers claimed by Angel Anna and her clever husband. The novice was required to repeat the following words : " I (here followed the full name of the novice), in the presence of the Lord of the Universe, and of this Hall of Neophytes of the Order of the Golden Dawn in the Outer, regularly assembled, under warrant from the G. H. Chiefs of the Second Order, do of my own free will and accordingly and hereon most solemnly pledge myself to keep secret this Order, its Name, the Names of its members, and the proceedings which take place at its Meetings from all and every person in the whole world, who is outside the pale of the Order . . . under the penalty . . . of being expelled from the Order, as a wilfully perjured wretch, and unfit for the society of all upright and true persons ; and, in addition, under the awful penalty of voluntarily submitting myself to a deadly and hostile current of will, set in motion by the Chiefs of the Order, by which I should fall slain or paralysed without visible weapon, as if blasted by the lightning flash. . . . So help me, Lord of the Universe and my own Higher Soul."

The oath having been duly administered, the initiation ceremonies soon followed. Two adjoining rooms were set aside for this purpose. In one of them a throne had been erected at one end, and an altar backed by five lamps stood at the other. At one side were seats for the candidates ; and in the centre was another seat flanked by pillar lamps. Horos himself sat on the throne, whilst opposite to him in the outer room and looking through the double doors was the Swami, Anna, seated upon a second throne. The novices were led through the double doors to the left of Anna, round the lamps in front of Horos, and then out of the main room in front of Anna. Both Horos and his wife were arrayed in fantastic robes ; and on the altar was a red cross, a vessel for mixing wine and water, occult signs and lamps. The candidates, whilst passing

round the main room, were blindfolded and were led by a rope passed round their bodies. Thrice had they to walk round the room : purificatory acts were undertaken, and the oath repeated. When the blindfold was removed each novice found herself standing with a sword poised above her head. Benediction was then pronounced and the initiation was over.

Now and then still more secret ceremonies were carried out in which the phallic element predominated, and in which Horos apparently made use of those artificial aids which are credited to the individuals personifying the devil in the Witches' Sabbaths of bygone times.

On 11th October the hearing of the case was resumed at the police court. Anna, arrayed this time in a light blue robe with bishop's sleeves of baggy white lawn, and wearing in addition a black-hooded cape with fringed black bands, announced that she was conducting the defence, but she had to be reminded that this might be so as regarding herself but not as regarding her partner. It was revealed that Daisy Adams had signed the oath and that she had been told that Horos was Christ Himself who had again come down from Heaven, and that by submitting herself to him she would " bring forth the birth of the Motherhood of God." In telling her story, which created a sensation, she said that she had unwillingly submitted, with Anna in the same room actively assisting at the ceremony.

The next hearing furnished a series of fresh thrills for the crowded court, and provided an interesting commentary upon the psychology of the women serving at the amazing altars of Gower Street. It appeared from evidence given on a previous occasion that Miss Croysdale had taken a short holiday in Somerset during her stay with the Jacksons, and whilst there had addressed an affectionate letter to Angel Anna, whom she called her " own dearest Swami," and ended by signing herself " Your loving daughter." In explanation of this she said that she had gone away in order to release herself from the power that the Jacksons had obtained over her, a theory which, on the face of it, did not sound

very convincing. She was thereupon submitted to a series of searching questions from Anna, who asked her to explain by what marvellous thoughts she was able to absent herself from her hypnotic keepers. In reply Vera said that by absenting herself she hoped to release herself from the power exercised over her, but when asked to explain hypnotic suggestion she gave no reply. Moreover, she was also unable to define either hypnotism or " the power," to which the Angel tartly replied, " Perhaps the learned Apostle Matthew for the prosecution can," a sally which Mr. Charles Mathews smilingly acknowledged.

On 16th October the case was enlivened by the recall of Miss Olga Rowson, who had joined the society through one of the matrimonial advertisements that she had seen in July. She was twenty-six years of age, unmarried and in domestic service in Bayswater. She met Horos by arrangement, and they then went out to tea, and during the meal Horos flattered her and attempted to fondle her. Later they went to Durand Gardens, where she no longer attempted to resist, feeling, as she told the court, " quite helpless." This circumstance, however, did not deter her from joining the group in Gower Street, where Horos, Swami and herself all slept in one bed with results which, it was stated, could not be described in print.

In spite of these incidents, Miss Rowson did not appear to be in any way disgusted or put off by the life at the headquarters of the Order of the Golden Dawn in the Outer. It is true that, for a short time, she returned to her situation in Bayswater, but was soon back, and her feelings for both Horos and Swami were well exemplified in her letters. Calling Horos " dearest Theo " and Anna " dearest Mother," she thanked them for all the kindness shown to her. " It seems to have put quite a new life into me," she added, " and I can honestly say that I never felt so happy and comfortable in my life as I did during the past week. Give my kindest regards to all, and accept my love and kisses, and believe me to remain ever your affectionate daughter, Olga." In another letter to Horos she described herself as his " ever loving and devoted

Olga " ; and Anna can scarcely be blamed when the letter was read out in court for announcing dramatically, " A remarkable letter from a seduced woman ! "

It was through the evidence of Olga Rowson that light is thrown on how Anna and her partner got money out of the women who joined them. Olga had, apparently, a little hard-earned cash which she had saved, and lent Anna sixty pounds of it, whilst Horos accompanied her to the Post Office to withdraw another fifty from her account. Explaining these transactions, she declared that she believed that she was engaged to Horos, and that was the reason why she handed over her money and jewellery to him.

At the end of the day's hearing a hostile demonstration took place inside the court, and Horos, losing control of himself, shouted out, " Just keep quiet, you reptiles." The prisoners were then hastily removed, and the crowd scattered to talk over the results of the day's hearings.

At the next sitting of the court Daisy Pollex Adams, sixteen years old in March 1901, gave evidence in person. She was described as a dark little thing, bright and attractive, with her hair let down her back in thick curls, and wearing a dark blue jacket with polished buttons and a bright red Tam o' Shanter. She said that she arrived at Gower Street with her brother Clifford on 22nd August, and understood from what Horos told her that he was the Son of God. Daisy then related what had occurred, and said that she was initiated in the presence of Vera and others, taking part in the sacred mysteries on 27th August and remaining until 30th August. Finally she told the other women what had happened to her when alone with Horos and Anna.

In the discussion which followed these incredible revelations a letter from Daisy to Horos was produced, in which she used the same endearing terms as Olga Rowson had done. " I have been very sad at heart to think that I have wronged you so," she wrote ; " I love you better than myself and anybody in the world." Questioned as to why she should thus write to a man who had served her so ill, she declared that at that time she " believed he

was a good man." " Too late, Daisy, too late," interjected Anna in her most dramatic manner.

It was at this hearing that an amusing incident occurred. The Angel was at the top of her form, and during the day she noticed that Mr. Charles Mathews was now and then referring to her diary. She claimed that this was not in order, and the magistrate had to admit that she was right. " Then don't repeat it," Anna sharply retorted. " Behave yourself," replied the magistrate in his turn.

The following day Miss Laura Faulkner was called. Her father was a sanitary engineer, who was, she thought, much too strict with her, for she was then nineteen years of age. She had seen the advertisement in *The People* and had replied to it, and when in London she had met Horos, who flattered her, saying that her complexion was like strawberries and cream. It appeared that, from later accounts, she went to the theatre with Horos, who told her that he was the centre of the Divine Sphere, and that legal marriage was contrary to the rules of his Order. She submitted to him, however, and confessed to the court that his hands produced in her a " kind of dizzy, sleepy effect." It was only later that both Horos and Anna began to question her about her money and the social position of her parents.

The case had now reached a stage at which sensation followed sensation so rapidly that special arrangements had to be made to control the proceedings. On account of the nature and details of the charges, it was decided to exclude women altogether from the court ; and on 8th November the room was packed to suffocation, people sitting on the counsel's box, the solicitors' seats and even on the steps of the witness-box.

Among other witnesses was Dr. Samuel Lloyd, the police divisional surgeon to the Tottenham Court Road police station. He gave evidence on the subject of Daisy Adams ; and when he had finished, Angel Anna fastened her glittering eyes upon him. There then followed one of the most remarkable exhibitions ever seen in a police court. The court was stilled, and the people

watched as if fascinated by the scene. Question after question Anna fired at the doctor. The most minute anatomical and medical details were discussed, analysed and dissected. Even Dr. Lloyd himself was surprised at the wealth of knowledge displayed by this extraordinary woman, who declared that she never forgot anything, not even her clinical education, " although it was years ago." To her, Dr. Lloyd's theory was " pathologically so empirical and sweeping " that it deserved little credit. Finally she was silent, and amid a buzz of excited whispering the court closed.

It was on 24th November that the day arrived when Horos and Swami were to give evidence in person. Although the public had expected a major sensation it was not nearly so interesting as had been expected. Horos said that his real name was Frank Dutton Jackson, and that " it had been his privilege since he was ten years of age to be the adopted son of this most noble lady." They were married, he said, three years ago, and knowing that he was incapable of any marital duties " she, with saintly principle and heroic martyrdom " had consigned herself " a living immolation on the sacred altar of celibacy and chastity." As for himself he never claimed any divine powers or professed to be a divine personality.

Anna herself then gave evidence. She denied the story that she had ever served any sentence as a convicted thief, in which she was clearly referring to the report that she had once been an inmate of the Joliet State Penitentiary, Ill., in 1893, which Inspector Kane had mentioned when presenting photographs taken at the prison. She added that she had founded the Koreshan Unity in 1866, and gave further details of its teaching. Among other exhibits which were produced in court were some books on mesmerism, a letter to the pair from Mr. W. T. Stead, the famous spiritualist, in which the hope was expressed that " your civic Theosophic centre may be a pharos from which light may stream over a darkened continent," and some " candles " of odd appearance which might have been employed in certain of the phallic ceremonies at Gower Street. On account of the claim by Horos that the charges against

him were impossible by reason of his physical condition, it was agreed that a medical examination should be made by Dr. James Scott of Holloway Prison. The hearing was then adjourned.

When the case was resumed Dr. Scott was called to give evidence. He asserted that both he and the eminent London surgeon, Mr. Christopher Heath, had examined the male prisoner, and in their view there was nothing to indicate any physical incapacity, although it does not appear that they mentioned the possibility of impotence due to psychological causes. It was true, the doctor said, that the prisoner was not entirely normal, and had had an operation for hernia, but he was in no way incapable of committing the offences laid at his charge. After Dr. Mary Evelyn Adams, who had been on the staff of the College both at Cape Town and in London, had given her evidence the prisoners were both committed for trial at the Central Criminal Court.

The proceedings opened on 18th December before Mr. Justice Bigham, the Solicitor-General and others acting for the prosecution, and the prisoners, both of whom pleaded " Not Guilty," conducting their own defence. The crowds were so enormous that tickets for admission were issued only by the order of the Under-Sheriff, but even then it was not easy to control them.

Anna appeared in an amazing mauve gown wrapped round her like a toga. She surveyed the court as though from a box in a theatre, and both her appearance, bold demeanour and provocative glances did little to recommend her in the eyes of the jury. Daisy Adams again gave her evidence, and when cross-examined by Horos said that the reason why she did not leave was because she had no money to pay her fare home.

The next day, when Anna made her appearance in court in a new gown, the proceedings were enlivened by a duel between the Angel and the Solicitor-General, later Sir Edward Carson. Daisy had been recalled, and was giving evidence relating to the assault in which she maintained that Anna held one of her hands whilst she tried to resist with the other. During her cross-examination by Anna, the Solicitor-General rose in order to clarify a point, where-

upon she sharply rebuked him, telling him to sit down as she was conducting the defence.

On 20th December the court was packed. So intense was the interest in the case that the Home Secretary, the Rt. Hon. C. T. Ritchie, was himself present, and the police had some difficulty in controlling the crowds. Angel Anna appeared wearing a very voluminous robe of pure white satin, cut low round the neck and with flowing sleeves lined in heliotrope. Over her shoulders she wore a dazzling white scarf, and as she slowly raised her huge bulk into the dock she made a profound impression.

Dr. James Scott, assisted by Mr. Christopher Heath, then again gave evidence regarding Jackson's physical condition, and Dr. Herbert Dixon on that of Daisy Adams, and once again the public listened to an amazing display of pathological knowledge in its forensic application on the part of the prisoners. Having completed her cross-examination, Anna mockingly remarked, "I have finished, most Royal Academician ; you may go ! "

Jackson then entered the box to give evidence on his own behalf. He said that he owned some 7280 acres in the United States where he hoped to found a colony called Theocratic Unity, which was to be based upon the principles of Christ's life. He complained that the accusations levelled against him were the very things that their teachings condemned, and that the charges were due to a deep-laid conspiracy on the part of their enemies. When asked about the matrimonial advertisements he began to hedge and evade the issue under the pretence of protecting his friends, and when he stepped down from the box his case was in no way strengthened by his method of conducting it.

Anna then slowly made her way to the box to give her evidence. After a short survey of her life she declared that, although it was true that she possessed clairvoyant and healing powers, she was not a medium and never professed to be one. Finally she addressed to the jury a long appeal, couched in flowery language and full of lofty sentiments and persuasive nuances. "And now, gentlemen," she concluded, "I ask you now as we approach the anniversary of

"Angel Anna made a profound impression." (See p. 154)
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Plate XI

the day on which we celebrate the birth of our Saviour, I ask you in the name of the Lord Christ, to use His greatest gift to man, the human reason, and to remember we do not ask for mercy or the benefit of your doubt, but for justice."

When she had finished the members of the jury retired to consider their verdict, after having heard the summing up by Mr. Justice Bigham. They were soon back after an absence of less than ten minutes. The verdict was "Guilty." When asked if they had anything to say regarding the decision neither Anna nor Frank made any reply.

Sentence was then pronounced, and the court was stilled as Mr. Justice Bigham was speaking. Addressing Jackson he sentenced him to fifteen years penal servitude so that he would no longer "be able to practise his filthy acts upon the public." As to Anna, the judge said that he found it difficult to understand how she was able to associate herself with the acts of her partner, but that he had little doubt that she did do so. As she was older than her husband he would take that into consideration, but she would have to go to penal servitude for seven years.

Having heard the sentences the prisoners were quickly removed. Both were deadly pale, and Jackson allowed himself to be led from the dock without saying anything or making any attempt at remonstrance. Angel Anna murmured "Thank you, my Lord," as she swerved into the arms of the wardresses who led her down the steps, a bitter and sarcastic smile still playing about her lips. That night she spent, so it was said, in Holloway, before being taken later to the Female Convict Prison at Aylesbury. The drama was over. Another chapter had closed in Anna's life.

It was on Saturday morning, 11th August 1906, that Anna left Aylesbury. She had, it seems, obtained maximum remission of her sentence through her good behaviour, and few people who saw her leave would have guessed her previous history. Her hair was snow white, and she was dressed becomingly in a loose-fitting black costume, a long black cloak with purple satin scarf, and a neat black and purple bonnet. Her baggage was merely one box

and a canvas bundle. After having paid a visit to Scotland Yard, she went in a cab to a small hotel in Bloomsbury. Attempts to interview her failed. All that reporters could learn from those in a position to know was that Anna had, in many respects, become a reformed woman. The same year she sailed for the United States and disappeared.

Although the case was one of great interest from the point of view of the psychologist and the forensic physician it excited but little discussion in the medical and legal Press. The nature of the acts committed were such that *The Lancet* found the details " too revolting to relate " ; and it is clear that those not present at the various hearings had little idea from the printed reports in what precisely the charges consisted, and how the willingness of Jackson to be medically examined suggested that neither he nor his wife were fully aware of the legal implications of their conduct as laid down in the Offences against the Person Act, 1861. In the case of Anna, the writer in *The Lancet* stated that her claim to indulgence was visionary, since her past history was exceptional " in the variety and malignity of her crimes." As regards Mr. Justice Bigham's alleged leniency towards her, the journal declared that the reason may have been that he thought her mental condition was " hovering over the confines of sanity and lunacy," an opinion probably suggested by the fact that in 1870 she had been under observation in a mental institution in New York. Whatever may have been the state of her mind, the truth underlying the whole affair will probably never be known. Up to the time that she had met Jackson, Anna had, it appears, lived by her wits, duping numbers of people through her pretensions to supernormal powers, but never perhaps indulging in more serious forms of criminal activity. It is true that some suspicions seem to have been aroused as to the reason for the death of Mr. Loewenherz, and similarly the deaths of Messant and McGowan a year after their marriages to her may have been purely coincidental. Her attachment to Jackson seems to have been of a different order, although none the less strange for all that. It is, perhaps, more explicable from his point of view. Of slim build,

weak nature and abnormal habits, Jackson was clearly attracted by this enormous woman, not so much in all probability from any physical attraction that she might have possessed, but rather from what he took to be her strength of character, her tenacity, cunning, ruthlessness and indomitable spirit. On the other hand, it is possible that Anna saw in him a partner for her series of swindles and as one who possessed just those qualities that she herself lacked. She could hardly be expected to draw to her Colleges of Occult Science those ignorant, credulous and suggestible women who crowd the parlours of fortune-tellers, palmists and guides to the Higher Life. For this purpose Horos was invaluable, with his winning ways and his soft hands. After all, when all was said and done, the women remained in Gower Street after it must have been perfectly obvious that the matrimonial advertisements were nothing more than a blind. It has been urged that they were so frightened by the oaths of secrecy that they had taken and by the terrible penalties to be exacted should they fail that, once enmeshed, they found it impossible to escape. It seems to me, however, that this point of view, although having some degree of truth, especially as regards Daisy Adams, would be difficult to maintain in its entirety in view of the letters written to Swami and Horos when the women were out of the house. It seems more likely that they were so fascinated by the unusual novelty and strangeness of their surroundings, as compared with their previous drab existence, that they accepted the requirements of Theocratic Unity as an excuse with which partly to rationalize their own action.

In discussing the reasons for Angel Anna's failure to make good use of the faculties with which Nature had bestowed her, it is hardly possible not to compare her failure with the outstanding successes of Victoria (Claflin) Woodhull, with whom she came into conflict in 1870. Both seemed to start their early lives in circumstances so similar that the fact that the one ended as a convicted criminal and the other a wealthy, respected and honoured member of society, can hardly fail to be of interest to the student of heredity and abnormal psychology. It is true that Mrs. Woodhull had

powerful patrons like Commodore Vanderbilt and the help of an equally remarkable sister, Tennessee, who later became Lady Francis Cook. Moreover, her interests were far wider than those of Anna, and her intellectual powers were better co-ordinated. The first woman to be nominated candidate to the Presidency of the United States, Mrs. Victoria Woodhull was a leading feminist before she was forty: and her courage and enterprise were as striking to her contemporaries as they must be to people to-day. She moved from success to success. It was not long after she arrived in England from the United States at the time of the death of Vanderbilt that she married the wealthy banker, John Biddulph Martin, and to the end of her life she maintained her originality, her vivacity and her capacity for enjoyment. Edward VII, when Prince of Wales, was charmed by her, and his judgment where women were concerned was not lightly to be put aside. The Earl of Coventry found her delightful; and when the famous British Museum libel case came off in 1894 she had an ideal setting in which she could show off her power of repartee, skill and evasion when in difficulties. When she died in 1927 she left over £180,000; and when her daughter followed her in 1940 the fortune had risen to a net personalty of nearly £326,000. Her success was as sure and solid as Anna's failure was complete and ruinous. Was it merely the intervention of Vanderbilt that caused Victoria and Tennessee to abandon their tours as spirit mediums, and the latter to discard her very dubious rôle as a healer of cancer and a sales-woman of a miraculous "magnetio life elixir" (one teaspoonful three times a day)? In other words, would the two Claflin sisters have succeeded to the extent that they did had the old Commodore not installed them in New York and made them the city's bewitching brokers? And if Victoria had taken Anna into the office as she asked, might not her later history have been very different? Or to pursue our speculations further: is it possible that Anna was lost even before she collided with Victoria Woodhull? Had she some queer criminal kink which drove her inexorably and relentlessly towards the dock and penal servitude? Again, what

happened to her when she came out of the prison at Aylesbury? Where did she go, when she sailed for America in 1906, and did she ever rejoin Frank Dutton Jackson and start some fresh adventure under new aliases? Or was she at last convinced that society could not always be successfully preyed upon and its more innocent members bamboozled and fooled? In short, did her quiet and uneventful life in prison finally convince her that she, the Great Swami, the Princess Editha Loleta, the Wisest of Doctors, was just plain Anna, the woman who failed?

APPENDIX

THIS appendix is designed for the purpose of assisting those of my readers who may wish to acquaint themselves more fully with the original and other sources from which the facts outlined in the preceding pages are mainly derived.

Each of the principal characters in the six chapters has been chosen in order to illustrate some particularly troublesome and difficult problem, which has either been neglected by scientific men, or has been studied in such slight measure that our knowledge concerning it is meagre, crude and somewhat sketchy.

Thus, if he wish, the reader may extend his acquaintance with this gallery of human oddities, and perhaps be prevailed upon to consider them rather as examples illustrating some fascinating problems than merely as strange people, the account of whose doings served to pass away an idle hour.

Before listing the principal and secondary sources in each case, I have tried to point out how the story of the characters portrayed can be used as a starting-point from which to develop a technical discussion upon the problems involved. Thus the life of St. Joseph of Copertino not only brings up the whole question of miracles in its broadest sense, but also can be used to initiate debate upon the relation between belief in the miraculous and the cultural pattern of the people among whom the belief exists. Moreover, the case is of interest inasmuch as it offers a comparison between physical phenomena as reported among the saints, and those alleged to occur in the presence of spiritualistic mediums, whilst at the same time the whole question of the relation between psychic manifestations and trance, rapture and hallucination is brought into view.

Similarly, the story of the Deacon of Paris brings before the medical reader the problem of faith-healing, suggestion, and the loosening of conscious control of bodily movements. It is also an interesting study in the psychology of testimony, and in the effect of the clash between powerful rival interests on the accumulation of that testimony.

It is hoped, therefore, that these portraits may excite an increased interest among medical men, psychiatrists, sociologists

and psychical researchers, and thus further investigation into these obscure phenomena, the elucidation of which will do much to open up some of the darker corners of human activity, and thus promote a better understanding of how man can control his own destiny.

CHAPTER ONE

ST. JOSEPH OF COPERTINO: THE FRIAR WHO FLEW

THE life of St. Joseph of Copertino is not merely the story of a thaumaturgic monk: it is a story which compels the thoughtful reader to consider at least half a dozen problems which have hardly begun to be solved, and which are of the most extreme complexity and difficulty. For instance, among the questions which must arise in the mind of the student the following are, perhaps, the most insistent. Have human beings at any time and in any place risen into the air and remained suspended as if in defiance of the laws of gravity? If so, was St. Joseph of Copertino one of them? If not, how are we to account for the innumerable stories of such phenomena, reported as they have been at all times and from all parts of the world, and moreover attested not only by the ignorant and the lowly but also by the learned and the lordly? Again, how is it that the reports of these remarkable happenings seem nowadays to be fewer and fewer, not only as regards their occurrence in the presence of mediums, but also equally in the case of the holy men and women of various religions? Is it because the progress of science renders the exposure of such claims easier to carry out and so makes belief in them more difficult, or is it because this very progress has so transformed our ways of life and thought that, in some subtle manner, the production of such phenomena is thereby inhibited?

Now, if we assume that the stories of St. Joseph's levitations and aerial flights are not based even upon a modicum of fact, then we are compelled, I think, to suppose that the accounts of these events, both with him and with many others, are due to those sources of error common in such cases as, for example, exaggeration, malobservation, lying and downright fraud. For my own part I do not find it easy to believe that the Cardinals, Bishops, Superiors, monastic physicians and lay visitors were all lying or engaged in a system of deceit for the apparent purpose of bolstering up the reputation of a fraudulent friar or the Order to which he was attached. Indeed, it appears from the records that on more than

one occasion Joseph was not accepted at the value of his less experienced companions, but was submitted to rigorous examination by the superior authorities. On the other hand, I can imagine that these more educated witnesses were, perhaps, mistaken as to what they thought they saw, and later exaggerated the incidents to proportions which tended to make them bear but slight resemblance to what originally had happened. Moreover, there is no doubt that even the highest authorities in the Roman Catholic Church have been in the past, and in many cases apparently still are, committed to beliefs in events which, in my view at least, clearly never could have happened in the way described. Among these the wholly incredible flights of the Holy House at Nazareth to Loreto in Italy are historically important, although it is true that, since the appearance of U. Chevalier's *Notre-Dame de Lorette* (Paris, 1906), many Catholic scholars have become chary of openly expressing their belief in the reality of these incidents.

There can really be no doubt, I think, that hundreds of miracles ascribed to the Saints could never have taken place in the way described. For example, who could believe that St. Dunstan, Abbot of Glastonbury (925-988) changed the position of a church by pushing it; that St. James of Tarentaise (†429) lengthened a gutter by throwing holy water upon it; or that a woman's hair, having been cut off by an irate spouse, was suddenly and miraculously restored through the intercession of that great thaumaturge, St. Anthony of Padua (1195-1221)? Moreover, who in these days could credit the immense catalogue of miracles attributed to St. Francis of Paula (1416-1508) or to St. Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419), who actually was said to have received a paper from Heaven signed by the Holy Trinity?

Such tales abound in the life histories of religious persons, and they are not lacking in the case of St. Joseph of Copertino. The story of his clothes remaining dry during a storm can easily be paralleled by similar stories told of other saints like St. Dominic Guzman (1170-1221); and again the tale of the candle which, although burning, did not diminish in size, is reminiscent of legends of the same kind which are associated with the names of St. Eucher of Orleans in the eighth century, St. Hermann of Cologne in the thirteenth and St. Grande in the sixteenth.

There is no need, however, to go back to the thirteenth or even to the sixteenth century to discover records of marvels the investigation of which was quite easy if the Roman Catholic

authorities had shown any desire to make the necessary inquiries. For example, take the remarkable phenomena which, in 1866 to 1869, were said to occur round the Holy Bambino of Bari. This was a white waxen image of the Infant Jesus, and measured about a foot in length. It was kept in the rooms of the pious sisters, Maria and Martha Parlavecchia, who lived on the first floor of a small house in Bari in Italy. One of the rooms had been transformed into a small oratory to which pilgrims used to come to kneel near the image and observe the phenomena, which seem to have gone on the whole time. The Abbé Bruni was commissioned by Archbishop Francesco Pedicini of Bari to examine the claims which were being made on behalf of the Bambino, and an account of his findings was translated in the *Rosier de Marie* in 1871.

It appears that in 1866 the image began to perspire and even to sweat blood. Great drops were seen on the surface of the wax, and when one drop was removed another soon began to form in the same place. In 1868 this sweat was so abundant that the linen on which the image was laid was soaked with it, and big gobs of blood rose from the body of the image. Indeed, so much sweat oozed forth that it was bottled and, like the blood of St. Januarius, the amount increased in the phials till it filled them. In colour it was like pale straw and sometimes smelt vaguely of cinnamon.

The next thing that happened was that the Holy Bambino began to move by itself. Its eyes turned, and even when it was sealed beneath its glass cover, it was found to alter its position as it lay in its cradle. It began to sit up and move its fingers in order to grasp a little cross and a miniature flag, which had apparently materialized inside the case and which were both covered with blood.

Pieces of linen and paper placed beneath the image then began to be mysteriously impressed with the emblems of the Passion. Archdeacon Petruzelli sent another little image in a sealed case to keep company with the Holy Bambino. It was not long before it also showed the stigmata and began to sweat. The phenomena were infectious. But the Archbishop was not satisfied. In 1867 he sent a piece of linen within a double envelope and carefully sealed in a number of places. This was put into the cradle beneath the image, and next day it was found wet as if parts of it had been dipped in a solution of blood and water. What was even more mysterious was that the linen showed damp stains beneath those parts of the paper which were dry, whereas those parts of the

envelopes which were wet had had no effect whatever on the piece of linen lying just beneath them. On the linen itself, however, there was impressed a picture of two serpents fighting one another, although a sword was depicted as transfixing them both.

It is clear from the accounts of this case that the authorities made no serious attempt whatever to investigate the affair. In spite of bottles of " sweat " being collected, it does not seem that any analysis was made ; and in this case there was far less excuse than in that of the blood of St. Januarius where only a very small portion of the substance exists sealed up in an ampolla where it has remained for perhaps over two hundred years. It would seem that as long as the Holy Bambino collected pilgrims, strengthened the faith of the weak and demonstrated the glory of God nothing more was needed.

It may, therefore, be asked whether it be legitimate to lump all these fanciful stories into one mass and conclude that they belong to the realm of fiction and have no relation to reality. On the other hand, it might be urged that some abnormal manifestations did actually occur on certain occasions, and that these have acted as points round which other tales crystallized, as it were, until the genuine nucleus was hidden by the mass of fanciful and fraudulent accretions.

Whatever may be the truth of the matter it is abundantly clear that our knowledge of these things is far from adequate since we are still in doubt as to whether such a phenomenon as the levitation of the human body ever occurs without some form of artificial aid. Even if it could be shown that all such reports have no valid basis, then the fact of their wide dissemination in all parts of the world, both in ancient and modern times, would serve as an interesting foundation for a study of the psychology of legend and of human credulity in general.

Before passing on to mention the sources from which our knowledge of St. Joseph is derived, I ought, perhaps, to draw the reader's attention to another case of alleged aerial flight of an even more remarkable kind than that credited to the flying friar. Moreover, there are certain elements in this case which may suggest to some how these stories are built up and belief in them fostered and encouraged. I refer to the life of Marie Baourdie, whose biography by the Rev. D. Buzy was published in English in 1926. In this volume the ecstasies of this lady are described, and also the alleged power that she possessed of flying through the air and

alighting upon the tree tops in the convent garden. On several occasions she was found perched on the summit of a high lime tree, these ecstatic ascensions being noted as occurring some eight times in 1873 and 1874.

Now, from the meagre accounts preserved it would seem that Marie was never actually *seen* in the act of flying to the top of the trees or of flying down from them. The nearest approach to such a flight would seem to be the account of a lay sister, who declared that Marie got hold of a small branch "that a little bird would have bent" and from that moment "she was raised aloft." Moreover, when descending, she made use of the various branches, finally stepping on to a plank which had been apparently purposely placed for her convenience. As a matter of fact, one of the witnesses in the Process was quite candid in her account of what occurred on one occasion. When in the garden, Sister Marie suddenly told her to turn round, which she obediently did, only to find on again turning that her companion was already sitting on a small branch of a lime tree and singing like a bird.

These accounts compel us, I think, to suspect that Sister Marie was never levitated at all in the true sense of the term, but was merely remarkably active and agile in climbing trees, an activity which was probably accentuated and assisted by the dissociated state in which she passed many hours of her life. Indeed, on one occasion it is reported that she came out of her ecstasy when still up the tree, and only came down with great difficulty, like St. Joseph, when a ladder had to be fetched by the worthy Fr. Antonio. How different are these accounts from that recorded of the famous flying witch of Navarre, who, after sliding half-way down a tower like a lizard, flew into the air in the sight of all (see P. de Sandoval, *Hist. de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V* (Amberes, 1681), *Lib.* XVI, 15, Vol. I, 622). With this tale may be compared the story of the astonishing flight of the Franciscan monk, Juan de Jésus, of the Province of San Diego in the Canary Islands, an incident which seems to have escaped the notice of the learned Professor Olivier Leroy. It is described in chapter xviii. of A. Abreu's *Vida del Ven. Siervo de Deo N. Juan de Jésus* (Madrid, 1701), and as the author was a teacher in the Franciscan house of San Miguel de las Victorias in La Laguna, and an official of the Inquisition, he ought to have access to the original documents.

The principal and most authoritative sources for the life and works of St. Joseph of Copertino are the official Processes which

deal with his beatification and canonization, and which were issued from 1751 to 1766 by the Congregation of Rites. Some of the most important of these documents are: *Neritonen. Beatificationis et canonizationis Josephi a Cupertino Ord. Min. Nova positio super dubio an, et de quibus miraculis constet in casu, et ad effectum, de quo agitur?* (Romae, 1751); *Summarium additionale. Novae responsiones super eodem dubio*, etc. (Romae, 1751); *Positio super dubio an, et de quibus miraculis constet in casu . . .* (Romae, 1764); *Positio novissima super dubio an, et de quibus miraculis constet in casu, et ad effectum, de quo agitur?* (Romae, 1766). Copies are very rare, but a set stands at nrs. 4771 to 4840 in the great collection (H. 359) of Processes in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. With these may be compared the *Relazione della solenne Canonizazione dei Beati G. Canzio . . . G. da Copertino . . .* (Romae, 1767), and J. A. Mariotti's *Acta canonizationis sanctorum . . . Josephi a Cupertino* (Romae, 1769), especially pp. 31-41, 132-141, 171-173, 253-269, 285-289, 395-404, etc.

One of the most easily accessible sources is the compilation in the great *Acta Sanctorum* (see Sept., Vol. V, Antverpiae, 1755, 992-1060, or other ed.), although there are also biographies by individuals, some of whom in later years have drawn copiously from the Processes. R. Nuti published his *Vita del servo di Dio P. Giuseppe da Copertino* in Palermo in 1678, other editions in German and Latin being issued in Vienna in 1682, and in Brünn in 1695. Another important biography is that by Angelo Pastrovicchi, namely, *Compendio della vita . . . del B. Giuseppe di Copertino* (Romae, 1753), of which another edition was published in Osimo in 1804, and an abridged French translation by Denis in Paris in 1820. The Latin version is included in the *Acta Sanctorum*, and a German version, the *Leben des heiligen J. von Copertino*, was issued in Augsburg in 1843, being translated by M. Sintzel, the earliest German translation being apparently published in Cologne in 1753, of which a second edition with some changes appeared in 1768. An adaptation in English of Pastrovicchi's book was issued in 1918 in St. Louis, U.S.A., and edited by the Rev. F. S. Laing, but the material is somewhat abridged and therefore should be used with caution.

One of the best and most easily discoverable lives is that by Dominico Bernino, from whom I have largely drawn. It is fully documented by reference to the Processes, and various editions are known, being first published in Rome in 1722, and later in Venice in 1724, 1752 and 1768. In 1753 Agelli made an abridgment of Bernino's book under the title of *Vita del Beati Giuseppe di Copertino,*

for which see *A.S.*, Sept., V, 1051 ff., and cf. G. Mazzuchelli, *Gli scrittori d'Italia* (Brescia, 1753, etc.), II, Pt. 2, p. 1000.

Bernino's book was entitled *Vita del padre Fr. Giuseppe da Copertino de' Minori Conventuali*, and it was not until 1856 that an abridged French translation (*Vie de Saint Joseph de Cupertin*) was published, another appearing in 1899. A paraphrase and short abstract of the volume will be found in English in Fr. Léon de Clary's *Lives of the Saints and Blessed of the three Orders of Saint Francis* (Taunton, 1886), III, pp. 205-221, and a rather similar French abstract in P. Guérin's *Les Petits Bollandistes, Vies des Saints* (Paris, 1882), XI, pp. 219-236; whilst G. F. Daumer in his *Christina Mirabilis . . .* (Paderborn, 1864) mentions the Saint (p. 93), but without adding anything of importance. In 1851, G. I. Montanari published his *Vita e Miracoli di San Giuseppe da Copertino* in Fermo; and in 1898, F. Gattari issued his *Vita di S. Giuseppe da Copertino* in Osimo; whilst the latest biography is, if I mistake not, that by E. M. Franciosi (*Vita di S. Giuseppe da Copertino*), which was reviewed in the *Analecta Boll.*, 1927, XLV, p. 469, and which was published in Recanati in 1925. Finally, there are two biographies which have, I think, not yet been printed, namely, those by Vincenzo da Mercatello and Bernardo di Osimo.

Apart from special biographies of the Saint, some information, which has been derived mainly from them, can be obtained from various collections, such as Alban Butler's *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and other principal Saints* (London, 1814), Sept. 18, IX, pp. 243-247) and S. Baring-Gould's *The Lives of the Saints* (London, 1898), Sept., X, pp. 292-300, where an article containing some surprises will be found. Mr. Baring-Gould apparently regards the levitations as merely a series of high leaps, and declares that similar extraordinary leaps and dances are not infrequent at Protestant and Dissenting Revivals. Moreover, he says that he has seen these levitations at fairs and that they are "contrived by means of looking-glasses." A view taken from rather the opposite standpoint, and by my friend the late Father Herbert Thurston, S.J., will be found in the 1926-38 edition of Butler's *Lives of the Saints* (Sept., IX, pp. 239 ff.), with which may be compared the article in *The Month* for May 1919, pp. 321 ff. Further information will be found in the *Encyclopédie Théologique* (*Dict. Hagiographique, II*) and published in Paris in 1830; G. Moroni, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica* (Venezia, 1840-61), Vol. 31 (1845), pp. 210-211; J. P. Migne, *Dictionnaire de Mystique chrétienne* (Paris, 1858), 1537, etc.; J. E. Stadler and F. J. Heim, *Vollständiges Heiligen-Lexikon* (Augsburg, 1858-82), III, pp. 461-464; and J. Görres, *Die christliche Mystik* (French translation, *La Mystique divine, naturelle et diabolique*, Paris, 1854-55), in which many references to St. Joseph will be found, as, for example, in Vol. I, on pp. 136 ff., 173, 289, 293, 331, 353, and in Vol. II, on pp. 302 ff. and 339. The levitations are dealt with in Vol. II, ch. xxii.

Among more modern writers Norman Douglas has an amusing chapter on St. Joseph in his *Old Calabria* (London, 1917), pp. 71-86, with which may be compared his "A Pioneer of Aviation" in the *North American Review* for July, 1913, CXCVIII, pp. 101-107. Similarly, Olivier Leroy has some details with reprints of original sources in his *La Levitation* (Paris, 1928), which has been translated into English and published in London the same year; and L. Menzies has a few words on St. Joseph in his *The Saints of Italy* (London, 1924), pp. 258 ff.

The works of Pope Benedict XIV, which I have myself used, are the sixth edition of the *Opera Omnia* (Prati, 1839-47); and with these may be consulted with advantage N. Baudeau's *Analyse de l'ouvrage du Pope Benoît XIV* (Migne, *Theol. cursus compl.*, tom. 8, 851 ff.). On p. 928 will be found a discussion on the methods of obtaining evidence.

Details of the lives of some of the ecclesiastics who testified to the powers of St. Joseph, or who were associated with him at the time, will be found in the appropriate source books. Thus, for Antonio Bichi see P. Compagnoni's *Memorie . . . d'Osimo* (Roma, 1782-83), IV, pp. 281-320; the *Dictionnaire des Cardinaux* (J. P. Migne, *Encyclop. Théol.*, ser, III, 31, Paris, 1856), and L. Cardella's *Memorie storiche de'Cardinali della Santa Romana Chiesa* (Roma, 1792-97), VI, p. 306, and VII, p. 136. For Facchinetti, see Cardella, *op. cit.*, VII, p. 28, and for Cardinal Giulio Spinola, see *Dict. des Cardinaux*, 1540, and F. Ughelli, *Italia Sacra* (Romae, 1644-62), I, 832.97. For Bonaventura Claver, see Ughelli, *op. cit.*, VII, 144.46; and for Cardinal Francesco Rapaccioli, see *Dict. des Cardinaux*, 1441, and Ughelli, *op. cit.*, I, 765.62. Similarly, for Hyacinth Libelli, see J. H. Zedler, *Grosses Vollständiges Universal Lexicon*, 768, and J. Echard, *Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum . . .* (Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1719-21), II, 701A.

For the lay visitors to St. Joseph, see the various national biographical collections, such as the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, and for the tour of the Duc de Bouillon mentioned in the text, see

P. Duval's *Le voyage et la description d'Italie . . .* (Paris, 1656), and for the life of Isabella Clara, see *La Vie de Claire-Isabele, archiduchesse d'Inspruk . . .* ([Paris?] 1696), and cf. *A.S., op. cit.*, 1036. For the conversion of Blume, see A. Raess, *Die Convertiten seit der Reformation* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1866-80), VI, pp. 450-452, 558-571; and for the Admiral of Castile, see Zedler, *op. cit.*, 1569, and cf. L. Pastor's *Lives of the Popes*, Vol. 30 (London, 1940), pp. 58 ff. For Leopold of Tuscany, see *A.S., op. cit.*, 1034; *Dict. des Cardinaux*, 1232, and the *Enciclopedia Italiana* (Milano, 1929, etc.), V, pp. 797 ff.; X, p. 250A; XIII, p. 12C; XXII, p. 695 f.; XXIX, p. 43C.

For accounts of Copertino in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, see, among others, L. Tasselli, *Antichità di Leuca* (Lecce, 1693), where a short historical account of Copertino is given in *Lib.* II, p. 235, and where St. Joseph is mentioned in *Lib.* III, Cap. 23, p. 513; the curious book, *Zodiaco di Maria* (Napoli, 1715), by Serafino Montorio, where the reader will find mention of St. Joseph on p. 515; and finally, G. B. Pacichelli, *Il Regno di Napoli in prospettiva diviso in dodeci provincie . . .* 3 Pts. (Napoli, 1703), where the district in which Copertino is situated is described and its fertility emphasized, and where its famous thaumaturge is styled that " prodigy of Christian virtue " (Pt. 2, pp. 180-181).

For the case of Magdalena de la Cruz, see the manuscript in the British Museum (Egerton 357, *Catal. of the MSS. in the Spanish language*, 1875, I, p. 451), *Sucesso de Madalena de la Cruz, monja professa del Monasterio de Santa Isabel de los Angeles de la orden de Santa Clara, y natural de la villa de Aguilar, y su sentencia dada por el Santo Tribunal de la Inquisicion de Cordoba en 3 de Mayo de 1546*, of which a French translation will be found in Vol. II, pp. 462 ff. of C. L. A. Campan's *Mémoires de Francisco de Enzinas* (Bruxelles, 1862-3). Another manuscript, *Proçesso de Madalena de la Cruz*, is in the Bibliothèque Nationale (see *Bib. Nat., Catal. des manuscrits espagnols*, Paris, 1892, 354 (630), fol. 248-269, p. 242).

More easily accessible information will be found in the *Historia critica de la Inquisicion de España*, 2 vols. (Barcelona, 1870), by J. A. Llorente, Vol. I, Cap. XVI, Art. IV, pp. 333 ff.; L. F. Calmeil, *De la Folie*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1845), I, pp. 248-256, where it is said that Del Rio stated that Balban threw her up in the air and then let her fall down so as to injure her; and for earlier printed sources see, for example, J. Wier, *Histoire, disputes et discours des illusions et impostures . . .* 2 vols. (Paris, 1885), which is a reprint of the 1579

edition, and where Magdalena is mentioned in *Liv.* VI, c. 6, Vol. II, pp. 232 ff.; M. Del Rio, *Disquisitionum magicarum libri sex* (Moguntiae, 1612), *Lib.* II, *Quaest.* XVII, 185.2, C; *Lib.* IV, Sec. III, 509.1, B; and *Lib.* V, Sec. XVI, 784.2, D: and V. F. Torreblanca, *Daemonologia sive de magia naturali . . .* (Moguntiae, 1623), but especially the same writer's *Epitome delictorum, sive de magia . . .* (Lugduni, 1678), p. 187. For her levitation, see the *Acta Sanctorum*, Oct., Vol. VII, 569B, where we read that " in solemni pompa festorum dierum ad tres et amplius cubitos in sublime efferebatur."

For Maria de la Visitacion, see *Copia verdadera de la sentenzia que se pronunzio en Lisboa a siete dias del mes de Noviembre de 1588*, which will be found in *Reformistas antiguos españoles*, 1854, tom. VIII: *Les grands miracles et les tressainctes plaies advenuz à la R. Mère Prieure de monasteire de l'Anonciade* (Paris, 1586), which may have been the source for Cipriano de Valera's *Enjambre de los falsos milagros* (see *Los dos tratados*, etc., *Obras antiguas de los Españoles Reformados*, 1851, tom. VI, pp. 554-594, etc., which was also issued in an English version in London in 1600. If further information is still required, see the *Relatione del Miracolo delle Stimmate venute nuovamente ad una Monacha dell' Ordine di S. Domenico, in Portogallo, nella città di Lisbona* (Bologna, 1584), and L. de Paramo, *De origine et progressu officii Sanctae Inquisitionis . . . libri tres* (Matriti, 1589), pp. 233-234 and 302-304. Cf. also f. 124 of Egerton MS. 357 mentioned above.

CHAPTER TWO

JAMES ALLEN: THE MAN WHO WAS NOT

THE problem underlying the story of James Allen and the other women who have dressed as men is that which is generally known as transvestism, or cross-dressing. The reason why men sometimes wish to dress as women and women as men is an extremely complex one, and little serious work has been done on it either in England or in the United States. Many factors, some of them very mixed, are present, but generally speaking it may be said that in every persistent case there is considerable disorganization in the psychic and even possibly in the physical life of the individual concerned. In certain cases actual physical abnormalities are to be found in which the sex of the person involved is not wholly clear, the features of both being preserved in a certain, although always incomplete, degree. In other cases, which are more difficult to understand (such as that of James Allen herself), we find no evidence of any physical abnormality; and thus it is more probable that the basic factor is psychological, although even here it would be hazardous to assume that there was absolutely no physical element whatever present in the case.

Apart from these rather complicated examples there are, of course, numerous instances in which the sheer love of adventure and freedom has made women dress as men; and the use of slacks at the present time is a simple illustration of an approach towards men's traditional attire in which there are present few, if any, of those complex factors which enter in what may be called the practice of pure transvestism. In cases of the latter sort the transvestites themselves are sometimes homosexually inclined, although it must be remembered that not all homosexuals are transvestites and not all transvestites homosexuals. I well remember that in the house of a friend of mine whom I used to visit, and where all the occupants but one were homosexuals, half were transvestites when at home, although in carrying out their daily work all wore the clothes associated with their physical sex.

It can thus be seen that the problem is closely bound up with the problem of homosexuality in general. The most interesting

cases to explain fully are, perhaps, those like that of James Allen or James Barry, where a person with apparently no anatomical peculiarities of any sort takes on the garb of the opposite sex and succeeds in eluding discovery for a lifetime.

The principal source for the life and adventures of James Allen is the pamphlet published in London in 1829, and entitled *An authentic narrative of the extraordinary career of James Allen, the female husband.* Apart from this a good deal of information can be derived from the Press of the same year, among the newspapers consulted being *The Standard,* Jan. 15, 17; *The Times,* Jan. 15, 17, 19, 20 and 22; *The Morning Chronicle,* Jan. 15, 17; *The Weekly Dispatch,* Jan. 18; *Bell's Weekly Messenger,* Jan. 18, and *The Morning Herald,* Jan. 19. A note also appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for Jan. 12, 1829, Vol. XCIX, p. 92.

The standard work on transvestism is Magnus Hirschfeld's *Die Transvestiten* (Berlin, 1910-12), with which may be used "Eonism and other supplementary studies," by the late Havelock Ellis (*Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (New York, 1936), Vol. III, Pt. 2).

More popular accounts, which pay little attention to the scientific and medical aspects of the question, are O. P. Gilbert, *Women in Men's Guise* (London, 1932); M. West, "Women who have passed as Men" (*Munsey's Mag.*, New York, 1901, pp. 273-281); and C. J. Bulliet, *Venus Castina* (New York, 1933). With these may be consulted the more serious "L'interversion des habillements" (*Ann. méd. psychol.*, 1909, Sér. 9, IX, pp. 29-36), by P. Hospital; and "Transvestitismus und Staat am Ende des 18 u. am 19. Jahrhundert" (*Ztschr. f. Sexualwiss.*, 1928, XV, pp. 116-126), by H. Haustein. For a lighter touch, see the novel *2835 Mayfair* (London, 1907), by Frank Richardson.

For Elvira de Céspedes (or Elena y Eleno de Céspedes), see the MS. at Halle, quoted by H. C. Lea in his *History of the Inquisition in Spain* (New York, 1906-7), IV, pp. 187 ff., and cf. the *Catálogo de las causas contra la fe seguidas ante el Tribunal . . . de Toledo* (Madrid, 1903), p. 84.

A considerable amount of material has been devoted to Mary Moders, of which a representative selection is to be found in the British Museum, although some of the rarer tracts are missing, such as *The Female Hector, or the German Lady turned Monsieur* (London, 1663), and *The Lawyers Clarke Trappand by the Crafty Whore of Canterbury* (London, 1663), of which Hazlitt records a different title variant.

Mary Ann Talbot's life was written while she was still alive, and was originally published in Kirby's *Wonderful Museum*, in 1804, a fuller version being later issued in 1809. It was entitled *The Life and Surprising Adventures of Mary Ann Talbot in the name of John Taylor, a natural daughter of the Late Earl Talbot; comprehending an Account of her extraordinary Adventures in the character of Foot-boy, Drummer, Cabin-boy, and Sailor . . . Related by Herself.*

The case of Anne Grandjean excited a good deal of attention in 1765. In that year a *Mémoire pour Anne Grandjean* was published in Paris, and the *Réflexions sur les hermaphrodites, relativement à Anne Grandjean* was issued in Avignon and Lyon. Further details will be found in G. Arnaud de Ronsil's *Dissertation sur les Hermaphrodites* (Paris, 1766), of which the first edition was published in England in 1750, and in J. Reuter's *Beitrag zur Lehre von dem Hermaphrotismus* (Würzburg, 1885), in which the legal position is discussed in reference to the decree by the Parliament of Paris in 1765 that Anne was a woman. See also the Paris thesis by Georges Dailliez, entitled *Les Sujets de sexe douteux* (Lille, 1892), p. 95, for list of similar cases, and the *Répertoire universel et raisonné de jurisprudence . . .* 5e éd., revue par M. Merlin (Paris, 1827-8), VII, pp. 450-451, where the anatomical details will be found.

Similarly, the material concerning Catalina de Erauso is not scanty. See, for example, the *Enciclopedia universal ilustrada Europeo-Americana* (Barcelona, 1905, etc.), XX, p. 412; Didot's *Nouvelle biographie générale* (Paris, 1855-1866), XVI, 221; Michaud's *Biographie universelle* (Paris, 1843-66), XII, p. 540; the Italian *Biografia universale* (Venezia, 1822, etc.), Supp. LXXV, p. 384, and the *Revue encyclopédique*, 1829, XLIII, pp. 742-744. Individual biographies are the well-known *Historia de la monja Alferez . . . escrita por elle misma* (Paris, 1829), of which there are French translations in 1830 and 1894, and an English version by J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly in 1908.

The story of Maximiliana von Leithorst appeared in the *Vossische Zeitung* (Nr. 127 of 1749); and the case of the peasant girl in Malmö in Nr. 173 of the *Hamburgischer Correspondent* in 1728. With the latter story can be profitably compared the history of the village maiden who disguised herself as a man and married the daughter of her employer with whom she had become enamoured. It will be found in the rare *Arrest contre les chastrez. Auec deffence à ceux de contracter Mariage, comme estans trompeurs & affronteurs de filles et de femmes* (Paris, 1622).

Hannah Snell's history was published in 1750 by R. Walker, in two editions, in which the title pages differ slightly. The title of what may be the first edition reads *The Female Soldier; or, the surprising life and adventures of Hannah Snell, Born in the City of Worcester, who took upon herself the name of James Gray; and, being deserted by her husband, put on Men's Apparel, and Travelled to Coventry in quest of him, where she enlisted in Colonel Guise's Regiment, and marched with that regiment to Carlisle, in the Time of the Rebellion in Scotland; shewing what happened to her in that City and her Desertion from that Regiment. Also, A Full and True Account of her enlisting afterwards into Fraser's Regiment of Marines, then at Portsmouth: And her being draughted out of that Regiment, and sent on board the Swallow Sloop of War, one of Admiral Boscawens Squadron, THEN BOUND FOR THE EAST-INDIES. With the many vicissitudes of Fortune she met with during that expedition, particularly at the Siege of Pondicherry, where she received Twelve Wounds. Likewise, the surprising Accident by which she came to hear of the death of her faithless Husband whom she went in quest of. Together with an account of what happened to her in the Voyage to England, in the Eltham Man of War. The whole containing the most surprising incidents that have happened in any preceeding Age, wherein is laid open all her Adventures, in Mens Cloaths, for near five years, without her Sex being ever discovered.*

The story of Phoebe Hessel, that "jolly old fellow" as George IV called her, is to be found in a number of places dealing with such local characters. *The Dictionary of National Biography* accords her a place in Vol. XXVI, p. 298, and further details (including the inscription on her tomb in the Church of St. Nicholas, Brighton) will be found in *Notes and Queries*, Series I, VI, p. 170, and Series V, I, p. 222. With these may be compared the *Naval and Military Gazette* for 1853, p. 630; F. Harrison, *Notes on Sussex Churches*, 3rd ed. (Hove, 1911), p. 58; *The King's England: Sussex*, ed. by A. Mee (London, 1937), p. 60; O. Sitwell and M. Barton, *Brighton* (London, 1935), p. 251, and T. W. Hemsley, *St. Nicholas Church, Brighton* (Brighton, 1896), p. 38.

The case of the foreman who was called up for military service in 1916 will be found reported in the Press of that year, as, for example, in the *Daily News and Leader* for August 15. The story of the woman in Glasgow, who worked for several years in a local factory, will be found in the Press for April 1932, as, for instance, *The Daily Telegraph* of April 25 and the *Daily Herald* of April 26.

The Teddington case was reported in July 1932, for which see, among others, *The Daily Telegraph, Daily Herald, News Chronicle* and

Daily Sketch for July 30, 1932 ; whilst for the Aston Magna case, see the *Daily Herald* for August 29, 1932.

The Chicago case was reported in the American papers early in January 1943, the Chicago journals carrying an account on 3rd January, the day after the woman was arrested, and other papers, such as *The Courier-Journal* of Louisville, a few days later.

Many similar instances are on record, and a few of the earlier ones in which an alleged change of sex was established were collected by M. Pool and W. Turner in their *A Compleat History of the most remarkable providences* . . . (London, 1797), where a curious collection is included in chapter xiv, cases indeed which, as the authors aver, " appear incredible to Persons of but common Improvements." The case of " Mrs. Mary, alias Mr. George Hamilton," excited much interest in the eighteenth century (see *The Female Husband*) (London, 1746); and similarly, the case of Eliza Edwards (see *Authentic Account ! Second Edition ! Full report of the dissection* . . . (Duncombe, 1833) was famous at the time by reason of the medical disclosures (see *London Medical and Physical Journal*, Feb. 1833, p. 168).

The Caroline Winslow Hall case caused a sensation in the United States in October 1901, which probably equalled that of the famous Colonel Barker in England. It will be found reported in the British Press in, for example, the *Illustrated Police News* for Oct. 12, p. 11, and the *News of the World* for Oct. 6, p. 3.

Special clubs and resorts patronized by transvestites are known in nearly all large cities, as, for example, the two Eldorados in the Luthersrasse and at the corner of the Motz-and Kalkreuthstrasse in the Berlin of the 1930's ; and the Monbijou Club (in which all men were rigidly excluded) could be compared with the famous Lesbian clubs and cafés, such as the Violetta, the Olala (Ziethen-strasse), the Verona Diele, the Domino Bar and the famous Mikado on the Puttkamerstrasse.

Such resorts were known to many in the majority of the pre-war capitals in Europe, but few knew of the spectacular Negro trans-vestite drag dances which used to be held in Washington and elsewhere in the late nineteenth century, but which, on account of their nature, received but little attention in the Press.

In conclusion, it may be added that transvestism is not a phenomenon associated exclusively with modern Western culture, but is found in various parts of the world in different forms. This is not the place to discuss the matter, although I might refer the interested reader to J. Kleiweg de Zwaan, who dealt with the

exchange of clothing between men and women in the *Revue Anthropologique*, 1924, pp. 102-114, and to Rencurel's important account of the very curious Sarimbavy of Madagascar in the *Annales d'Hyg. et de Méd. colon.*, 1900, III, pp. 562-568. As far as I am aware the only source for correspondence and discussions among modern English transvestites are journals like *London Life*, where, for example, " Brother of the Shadow " contributed an article on " The Strange Lure of Transvestism " in the issue for 20th July 1940, pp. 18 ff., with which may be compared the same journal for 27th July 1940, pp. 68 ff., and 3rd August 1940, pp. 15 ff.

CHAPTER THREE

BERBIGUIER : BOTTLER OF SPIRITS

APART from its lighter, and perhaps from one point of view, its more amusing side, the story of Berbiguier is mainly of interest to the student of abnormal psychology and psychiatry, and above all, to the specialist in paranoid schizophrenia. The case presents a classic picture of the slow and progressive growth of a systematized delusional pattern, which finally became the central point round which all Berbiguier's interests and activities revolved. Although it can readily be seen that the foundations were being laid during his early years, it was not until later that the delusions began to develop and crystallize round a central nucleus of religious belief, which Berbiguier shared with hundreds of his countrymen.

The physical weakness which, on account of incidents in his childhood, influenced the whole of Berbiguier's life, was doubtless partially responsible for the compensatory pattern which formed an important part of the delusional system during its early development. Coupled with this arose the idea of how the exalted position, which he had been called upon to fill, was to be justified by acts of social significance. From catching the goblins which annoyed him personally, he proceeded to ensnare those which threatened the prosperity and security of France. His mission had thus a Divine sanction, and his entire life became organized round the central theme. The drive for self-expression succeeded in reaching a solution personally satisfying and since, through diverse psychological factors in the personality make-up, a " normal " solution could not be achieved, a kind of substitute was created, which fulfilled all the yearnings of the frustrated spirit, and which was supported by a complex of logical interpretations constructed upon invalid premises.

As has been briefly indicated in the text, it is not certain how far Berbiguier's delusional system was connected with any homosexual tendencies which he might be thought to have possessed. Freud's own views as to the relation between paranoia and homosexuality, in which the idea that the patient's guilty impulses are projected, as it were, on to the creatures persecuting him, are set

forth in, for example, volume three of the *Jahrbuch für Psychoanalyse* and need not be recapitulated here. It is merely sufficient to say that in Berbiguier's case there would seem some evidence to suggest the existence of this element in his life, and it should not therefore be neglected in any appraisal of the material at our disposal.

The literature relating to Berbiguier is somewhat meagre, and most of the original sources have already been given in the text. A translation of the Bull of Pope Innocent VIII will be found in M. Summers, *The Geography of Witchcraft* (London, 1927), pp. 533 ff., and reprinted in the same author's edition of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (London, 1928), pp. xliii-xlv. Short references to Berbiguier will be found in Michaud's *Biographie Universelle* (Paris 1843-66) ; Didot's *Nouvelle Biographie Universelle* (Paris, 1855-66) ; C. F. H. Barjavel's *Dictionnaire historique, biographique et bibliographique du département de Vaucluse* (Carpentras, 1841), I, pp. 172-174 ; and J. P. Migne's *Encyclopédie Théologique* (Paris, 1844-49), XLVIII, 1846, with which may be compared J. F. F. Champfleury [*i.e.* Jules Fleury], *Les Excentriques* (Paris, 1855), pp. 102-132, and A. Alkan, *Berbiguier : un halluciné et son livre Les " Farfadets "* (Paris, 1889). A. Erdan's reference to Berbiguier as a dangerous imbecile will be found in Vol. I, p. 106, of the second edition of his *La France Mystique* (Amsterdam, 1858).

For reference to the help given to Berbiguier in the production of *Les Farfadets*, see Philomneste *Junior* [*i.e.* P. G. Brunet], *Les Fous Littéraires* (Bruxelles, 1880), p. 18, with which cf. R. M. Reboul, *Anonymes . . . de la Provence* (Marseille, 1878), 262, p. 58.

With regard to Dr. Philippe Pinel a general account of his views will be found in his *Traité médico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale* (2^{e} éd., Paris, 1809), where on p. 85 will be found some remarks on dealing with a patient believing herself to be affected by demoniacal agencies.

In considering the case of Berbiguier the student may, perhaps, be excused if he ask himself why it is that the author of *Les Farfadets* is now considered to have been a victim of a form of paranoid schizophrenia and many of his predecessors sane men and women. For instance, take the case of Abbot Richalmus who directed the Cistercian house at Schoental (Speciosa Vallis) in Franconia in the thirteenth century. Here was a man who, when he closed his eyes, saw demons thick as dust about him. It is true that he did not make any close estimate of their numbers, which other authorities affirmed were 11,000,000,000,000 in one case and

44,635,569 in another. All he did was to note their effects on mankind and on himself. If a person had a well-formed nose, then a demon would endeavour to wrinkle it : if the lips were fashioned in pleasant curves, then the demons would do their best to deform them. Indeed, in one case, the good Abbot informs us, a demon spent twenty years in hanging on to one unfortunate lower lip in order to render it pendent and ill-favoured. Moreover, it was not always the fleas and the lice which left stinging reminders of their bites. It was the work of demons, who not only plagued mankind thus, but even went so far as to cause the inside to rumble, and worst of all, to bring on a desire to retch just after receiving the Blessed Sacrament. (See Richalmus, *Liber revelationum de insidiis et versutiis daemonum adversus homines.*) In B. Pez, *Thesaurus anec. noviss.*, Aug. Vind. et Graecii, 1721, I, Pt. 2, 373-472, and cf. Cap. XII, col. 396 ; Cap. XXIX, 416 ; and Cap. XLI, 421, etc. For a note on the Abbot, see C. de Visch, *Bibliotheca scriptorum Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* (Duaci, 1649), pp. 227, 288.)

It would seem, therefore, that Abbot Richalmus even went further than Berbiguier when it was a question of a detailed acquaintance with the population of Satan's invisible empire ; and it is noteworthy, perhaps, that the Abbot, the Scourge and Dr. Lyttelton all agree that the demons are wont to favour the bedroom as a fruitful field for their operations. Is it only the form in which Berbiguier's belief manifested itself that makes one suspect that he was not quite sane ? Was it because he thought that it were possible to bottle the demon rather than let it hang on to a person's lip for twenty years that his sanity was questioned ? Which, indeed, is the madder idea ? Perhaps, if one believes in demons at all, these ideas are bound to crop up and bother us. Perhaps Berbiguier was not mad after all. He may have been merely a little old-fashioned and more practical in dealing with the problem than the old Abbot of Schoental five hundred years previously.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DEACON OF PARIS : DEAD BUT STILL ACTIVE

To those who know anything of the hysterical epidemics associated with theomania, the choice that I have made of the convulsions at St. Médard will come as no surprise. It is true that the phenomena to be observed there were neither novel nor wholly unknown. These outbreaks of delirious frenzy had swept over parts of Europe for certain periods down the centuries ; but the nature and form of the manifestations had become much enriched through the influence of the belief in witchcraft, diabolism and demon possession. For example, in the eleventh century there were some curious epidemics in which people were seized by an uncontrollable desire to dance, jump and contort their bodies as they leapt into the air or rolled upon the ground, gnashing their teeth and foaming at the mouth. In the fourteenth century the number of such epidemics seemed to be accentuated ; and as the years went by and the influence of Satan was proclaimed from many a pulpit, the seizures appeared to increase in violence, and even the inmates of monasteries and nunneries became infected by the strange malady. From the Old World the epidemics spread, or rather, perhaps, made their appearance in the New ; and even in Boston people barked like dogs and mewed like cats just as their predecessors had done years before in the European religious houses.

Here and there the phenomena became more mixed. In addition to the convulsions and hysterical contractions of the limbs other odd phenomena were manifested. Immunity to pain was demonstrated ; the gifts of healing and apparent clairvoyance were shown ; and other divine (or diabolic) prodigies made even the most sceptical shake their heads.

Nowhere could such a striking variety be found in the eighteenth century as in the cemetery of St. Médard and in the back rooms of the surrounding houses. Here could be found nearly every phenomenon, which in these sophisticated days we are inclined to associate with faith healing, hysterical anæsthesia, spasms and convulsions, both tonic and clonic, clairvoyant faculties, and other manifestations which nowadays, as has been said, we are accustomed

to attribute to the effects of hypnotism, mass suggestion and even common fraud.

As has been indicated in the text the literature regarding St. Médard is enormous, and only the most useful sources can be mentioned here.

For a short account of the life of François de Pâris, see Didot's *Nouvelle Biographie Universelle* (Paris, 1855-66), XXXIX, 205 ff., and Michaud's *Biographie Universelle* (Paris, 1843-66), XXXII, pp. 137 ff., individual biographies being written by P. Boyer, B. Doyen and Barbeau de la Bruyère, and all published in 1731.

The principal source from which I have drawn most largely is the new edition of *La Verité des Miracles opérés par l'intercession de M. de Pâris* . . . (Cologne, 1745-47), by L. B. Carré de Montgeron, who, a sceptic in his early life, became converted through his personal investigation of the phenomena at the cemetery, and presented the first volume of his work to the king, who promptly threw him into prison. With fanatical persistency, however, he continued his labours; and two more volumes were published containing an enormous mass of observations, the testimony of eye-witnesses, and the reports of medical men who had themselves inquired into the alleged miraculous cures.

During the appearance of Carré de Montgeron's work the opponents of the movement were busy. In 1738 J. V. Bidal d'Asfeld brought out his *Vains efforts des mélangistes ou discernans dans l'œuvre des convulsions* . . . (much quoted by Carré de Montgeron); and the celebrated Benedictine, Lous Bernard de la Taste published an attack on the *convulsionnaires* in his *Lettres Théologiques* (Paris, 1740), although some may think that he somewhat weakened his case by his partiality for the theory of demonic possession.

Some attempt to invoke more natural causes was made in 1752 by Philippe Hecquet when he issued his *Le Naturalisme des Convulsions dans les maladies de l'épidemie convulsionnaire* . . . (Soleure, 1752); and he is one of the few authors who sensed the erotic significance of much underlying many of the phenomena, and above all, the flagellation (see pp. 35, 155 ff. and 69-70). It was also Hecquet who was the author of a book on Charlotte Laporte (*La Suceuse Convulsionnaire*), which was issued in 1736.

The case of Mlle. Coirin will be found in Carré de Montgeron, *op. cit.*, I, *Dem.* VII; that of the sucker in II, *Idée*, etc., 19 ff., and that of the Eater of Ordure in III, p. 100 of the same work. It need hardly be pointed out that scatophagy has a world-wide

distribution, being mentioned several times in Holy Writ (cf. Exek. iv. 12; 2 Kings xviii. 27; Isaiah xxxvi. 12); and the waste products of the human body and also that of animals have played a part both in religion and in folk medicine. On this subject see, for example, J. G. Bourke, *Scatologic Rites of all Nations* (Washington, 1891), and the same author's *Compilation of Notes and Memoranda bearing upon the use of human ordure and human urine in rites of a religious or semi-religious character among various nations* (Washington, 1888).

La Condamine's account of the crucifixion of Françoise will be found in the *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique*, by Grimm, Diderot, etc. (Paris, 1877, etc.), IV, p. 379, with which may be compared Du Doyer de Gastel's account (p. 388) and the *Conversations avec M. de la Barre* (p. 208).

The story of the crucifixion of Etiennette Thomasson will be found in A. Dubreuil's *Etude historique sur les Fareinistes*, 1775-1824 (Lyon, 1908), pp. 96 ff.; and for the Bonjour brothers, see Didot, *op. cit.*, VI, 604; Michaud, *op. cit.*, V, p. 14, and J. B. Glaire, *Dictionnaire universel des sciences ecclésiastiques* (Paris, 1868), I, p. 316. For further details on the Fareinists, see Philibert le Duc, *Curiosités historiques de l'Ain* (Bourg, 1877-8); C. Jarrin, *Le Fareinisme* (Bourg, 1881), and C. Perroud, who collected some of the documents in the *Annales de la Soc. d'emulation agric., lettres et arts de l'Ain* (Fascs. av, mai & juin, 1873). A note on the movement was also contributed by Bishop H. Grégoire in his *Histoire des Sectes religieuses* (Paris, 1828-45), VIII, pp. 168 ff.

For Hume's opinion on the phenomena at St. Médard, see his *Enquiries concerning the human understanding* (Oxford, 1902), pp. 125 and 344, with which may be compared the attack on the philosopher by John Douglas, later Bishop of Salisbury, who, in his "The Criterion; or, rules by which the true miracles recorded in the New Testament are distinguished from the spurious miracles of Pagans and Papists" (In: *Select Works* (Salisbury, 1820), pp. 383 ff.) points out the frauds and failures which accompanied the phenomena, together with the influence of natural curative factors, and is at pains to show that Hume himself was unnecessarily impressed with the evidence accumulated about them.

Finally, for those who are unable to consult Carré de Montgeron's work, of which the third volume is not easy to find, I may add that a useful summary of phenomena among the Jansenists is given by P. F. Mathieu, *Histoire des miracles et des convulsionnaires de*

St. Médard (Paris, 1864), and H. Blanc, *Le merveilleux dans le jansénisme . . .* (Paris, 1865), in which the Morzine epidemic is dealt with, together with an account of the convulsions as seen in Holland.

Further general sketches of the epidemics will be found in the various dictionaries, such as J. M. A. Vacant's *Dict. de théol. cath.* (Paris, 1909, etc.), III, 1756 ff. ; J. B. Jaugey, *Dict. apol. de la foi cath.* (Paris, 1889), 628-642, and a short list of contemporary material in the " Tables des Matières " of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* for 1734-1737 under the word *Ecrits*, and cf. the entry under *Miracles*. For the famous " Consultation sur les Convulsions," see *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, 1735, p. 50, and cf. the list of Jansenist books by D. Colonia (Anvers, 1752).

The appearance of the convulsions in the New World had as close a connexion with religion as it had in Europe. At the Protestant revival meetings, when hundreds used to attend the camps in order to listen to the ravings of salvation preachers, the convulsions and jerks were as violent as we have seen them elsewhere. Alexander Mackay, in his *The Western World* (London, 1849), Vol. III, pp. 267 ff., describes what took place, and ascribes the success of the peripatetic enthusiasts to the pervading boredom which required but to be lifted to put thousands in a frenzy. Again, T. C. Grattan, writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, mentions the periodic outbursts of revivals, in which could be seen people howling and yelling, passing into trances, ecstasies and convulsions, and contorting their features and limbs into grotesque shapes (*Civilized America* (London, 1859), Vol. II, pp. 341 ff.).

Similarly, Thomas L. Nichols, in his *Forty Years of American Life* (London, 1864), describes the nervous and hysterical women lying senseless on the ground, or rolling about in a frenzy of religious fervour. A dozen persons at once might be taken by the power, he says, and might soon be seen to fall into a state resembling that common in cataleptic seizures.

Perhaps one of the most striking revivals was that in Kentucky, when the resulting convulsions were popularly known as the " Kentucky Jerks." Robert Davidson, in his *History of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky*, describes the epidemic, as did R. McNemar in his *The Kentucky Revival* (Cincinnati, 1808). Those more sober individuals, who remained immune to the effects of the disorder, were troubled by the violence of the phenomena ; and semi-scientific

treatises began to appear, like Grant Powers' *Essay upon the influence of the imagination on the nervous system* (Andover, 1828), Felix Robertson's *An essay on chorea Sancti Viti* (Philadelphia, 1805), or papers on the bodily effects of religious excitement, one of which discussions was published in the first series of the *Princeton Theological Essays* in 1846.[1]

Further information can be sought in the works of such notable characters as Lorenzo Dow (1777-1834), the eccentric preacher, or C. G. Finney, who was chosen as one of the twenty portraits in David Bartlett's *Modern Agitators* (New York and Auburn, 1856).

The phenomena at the American revivals can be compared with those to be seen in England in the eighteenth century, which were so vividly described in the pages of *Wesley's Journal* (see Ed. N. Curnock, London, 1909, etc., IV, pp. 291, 295, 300, 344, 349, 359, 431, 434, 483, 485, etc.). The convulsive trembling was, it was picturesquely reported, like " a cloth in the wind " ; and the ranting of the preachers caused even young children to fall into convulsions, whilst Wesley himself was glad to see one woman, a noted sinner, rolling on the ground screaming and roaring.

A more modern approach and discussion of the subject can be seen in F. M. Davenport's *Primitive traits in religious revivals* (New York, 1905), which surveys the general field in the light of early twentieth-century psychology, although the omission of adequate bibliographical assistance weakens what might have been a useful introduction to the student.

This is not the place to enter into any discussion of the convulsive phenomena as they can be observed among peoples uninfluenced by the Christian conceptions of hell, damnation and the power of Satan. To those, however, who would care to follow up this matter a little more closely I would recommend consultation of A. Czaplicka's *Aboriginal Siberia* (Oxford, 1914), Pt. IV, Chap. xv, for a discussion of the so-called " Arctic Hysteria," with which may be compared V. Zenzinov's *The Road to Oblivion* (London, 1932), pp. 195, etc., and J. Crad's *Trailing through Siberia* (London, 1939). For Shamanism among the Chukchee, see W. Bogoras in the *Mem.*

[1] A more modern epidemic, in which the religious aspect seemed lacking, was that series of twitching phenomena which broke out at Bellevue, some fifty miles from New Orleans. In this case the seizures affected the pupils of a high school, but it does not appear that it ever presented a serious problem to the local medical authorities. (See E. A. Schuler and V. J. Parenton, " A recent epidemic of hysteria in a Louisiana high school," *Jour. of Soc. Psychol.*, 1943, VII, 221-235.)

Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., XI, XII; *Jesup North Pacific Exped.*, VII, Pts. 1-3, VIII, Pt. 1 (Leiden, New York, 1904-13), especially VII, 2, pp. 413-465. Finally, for an account of the famous Ghost Dance of some of the American Indians, see, *inter alia*, James Mooney, "The Ghost Dance Religion," in the *14th Ann. Rept. Amer. Bur. of Ethnology*, 1892-3, Pt. II, with which may be compared the more recent account of the 1870 Ghost Dance by C. Du Bois in *Anthropological Records*, 1939, III, Nr. 1, which deals with the dance in California; whilst for a general survey of related themes, see Weber's "Psychische Epidemien im Völkerleben" (*Korresp. Bl. d. deut. Gesellschaft f. Anthrop.*, 1906, pp. 74-75).

CHAPTER FIVE

D. D. HOME: SORCERER OF KINGS

THE problem underlying the life and work of D. D. Home can be briefly summed up by saying that it is the problem of miracles in its most acute form. Even the word miracle itself is subject to so many different interpretations that argument is often at cross purposes, since no agreed definition has been decided on before discussion begins.

There seems no doubt that the word *miraculum* in Latin is closely connected with the word *mirari* and its derivatives, which mean to wonder or to be astonished at, and thus the elements of marvel and surprise would seem to be essential ingredients in any attitude displayed by a person when confronted by an event which he could claim was miraculous or partaking of the nature of a miracle. Had the word been used in this rather simple manner (as is still often popularly done), much misunderstanding might have been avoided, and the arguments of philosophers reduced to a form less muddled than that which was inevitable as long as ambiguity was permitted to cloud the discussion.

It is, however, too late to attempt to impose a definite and unambiguous meaning to the word, and all that we can do is to try to understand what each writer himself means when using it, and then follow his arguments on the assumption that the meaning has not changed in the course of the debate.

There is one element in the general use of the word *miracle* which it is important to bear in mind. From the point of view of the theological writer a miracle is nearly always an act or event in which the divine or diabolic power is made manifest in a direct way, so that it might be said that an external interference with mind or matter is an essential feature if the word miracle is to be applied. Moreover, in many cases the purpose of the alleged miracle is also important, inasmuch as marvels unaccompanied by meaning, such as signs pointing to divine goodness, are to be classed merely as magical operations without inner or spiritual significance. It is true that some difficulty has been caused to Christians by these interpretations, which are clearly derived from ideas on the nature

of the miracles of Jesus, but, generally speaking, the miracles of the Saints can be divided roughly into the two types, although, of course, any miracle in the theological sense could be used as a means of illustrating the omnipotence of the Divine Being.

It is the belief that miracles are due to some kind of divine or diabolic interference with what are sometimes called the " Laws of Nature " that is partly at the root of the total disbelief in their occurrence, which is so widely spread in the Western world, and which is closely connected with the arguments for their impossibility as advanced by such thinkers in the past as Spinoza and David Hume, who was justly and very sensibly criticized by T. H. Huxley from the agnostic point of view.

Apart altogether from the miracles attributed to Christ, many of those assigned to the Saints are, as I have pointed out elsewhere, frankly incredible and, viewed from any but the purely legendary angle, somewhat ridiculous. Thus the common tale of hanging clothes up on sunbeams is as fantastic as the stories of babies crowing with delight in cauldrons of boiling water, and it would not be easy to find any sane person to-day who puts any credence in such fables.

On the other hand, especially since the rise of modern spiritualism, there have been many persons, who certainly were not classed as anything but sane among their contemporaries, who have themselves witnessed and testified to the reality of events which can justly be called miracles in the simple sense that what they saw or experienced caused them wonder and astonishment. It is true that many of these occurrences were due quite clearly to mal-observation, fraud and similar sources of error. The question remains, however, whether or not a residuum exists which is not open to any normal explanation known to us, and is therefore for the time being, inexplicable. That is the question which confronts us in the case of D. D. Home, the sorcerer of kings. Here was a man who was not immured in some religious house, surrounded by an atmosphere of sanctity and by companions wholly unversed in modern ways of thought. The phenomena said to occur in his presence were of a type familiar to all students of the subject, and many of them bore a startling resemblance to some of those reported with the Saints of the West and the Holy Men of the East. Yet all attempts to solve the mystery failed then, as they failed in the past. Yet, were a satisfactory solution to be arrived at, what a flood of light would be let into some of the darker fields of human

activity. Just as modern statistical work on the reality or otherwise of alleged telepathic phenomena has caused some workers in this field to revise their views on earlier experiments, so the verification of certain of the so-called physical phenomena might lead us to revise our present ideas on the nature of these occurrences, as reported down the ages and among all peoples.

In the main text I have tried to sketch in broad outline the general psychological atmosphere in which Home lived, and the kind of mentality common among the persons with whom he associated. Lights and shadows are both there, and it is for the reader to fill in, if he can, what lies behind them. D. D. Home presents an unsolved problem, which, as the years go by, seems no nearer solution than it did when that early fraud, Apollonius of Tyana, was puzzling people at the beginning of the Christian era.[1] As I have said in another place, " it is for inquirers in the future to determine how far our ancestors were the victims of delusion or merely theorists whose ideas were consistent with an age in which the scientific method was hardly conceived."

The literature relating to D. D. Home is very considerable, and in the text I have referred only to those sources directly related to the points under discussion. For convenience of reference I therefore append here an alphabetical list of sources, which can be easily consulted if verification of any of the statements made is desired, or if further information is required on any of the points raised during the course of the analysis.

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CHAPTER SIX

ANGEL ANNA: THE WOMAN WHO FAILED

Of all the criminal trials of recent times that of Laura and Theodore Horos contained the largest number of puzzling features and curious problems. Although we are not concerned here with the career of the male prisoner (whose personality and abnormal traits were, to say the least, exceedingly singular), that of Angel Anna herself provided enough material to furnish discussion of many points of absorbing interest. The kernel of the matter is, of course, the influence of the hereditary and environmental factors in Anna's criminal career. That heredity is of some importance few will dispute. If it be assumed, therefore, that a person's hereditary disposition favours anti-social action, then it is probable that home surroundings, education and later environment will be instrumental in directing the anti-social impulses into the particular kind of criminal activity to which their drive impels him. In the case of Anna, however, other factors have to be considered. We must remember that in her case there was the possibility of organic disease. Before she was forty her obesity was such that it pointed to some fault in her basal metabolism. The suggestion that she suffered simply from some form of pituitary dysfunction is, I think, dubious, as the little information we have on her physical appearance does not support what is commonly supposed to be usual in this condition. On the other hand, if we suppose that, in addition to some impairment of the pituitary function, other glandular syndromes were present, then her appearance would not be difficult to explain, and I have little doubt that her preference for the loose flowing gowns she wore was not due to any particular desire to appear eccentric, but rather was in order to hide as far as was possible what might have approached the more monstrous cases of hereditary generalized polysarcia. However that may be, the energy and intellectual acuteness of her mind bore no comparison with the slow moving and sluggish movements of her body. When sitting in the dock at the Central Criminal Court she was often observed with her eyes closed and as if asleep; but it was clear that she was following every word, as she became instantly alert

if any fresh fact emerged to which her attention had to be directed.

Unfortunately we know little of her life from the time that she left school to the time when she came into conflict with Victoria Woodhull. It seems certain that even at that time she was engaged in petty frauds, but her method of approaching the Claflin sisters showed how alive she was to the influence of suggestion when it could be used to further her own interests. Both the two female brokers were fanatical feminists far in advance of their time, and they spared no blushes in their treatment of the more delicate social issues. Tennessee was fulminating against secret vices and abortion as early as 1871; and as to prostitution, it was she who advocated the immediate formation of a Male Rescue Society, and one on a large scale. So when Anna hinted that it was to the streets that she would go were Victoria not to help her, how well she knew how to touch the soft spot in the heart of that hard-headed business woman. Her proposal, however, to join the Claflins was promptly turned down. And the decision to send her to Blackwell's Island for observation strongly suggests that there was something about her even at that time that the legal authorities thought was not quite normal. Maybe Victoria Woodhull thought so too, and possibly both sisters were not particularly anxious to add a third woman to an organization which got on well enough with two, supported as they were by such powerful male interests outside. For these interests were very good for the sisters, and well they knew it. Was not one of their parlours at the Hoffman House decorated, not only with a portrait of the great Cornelius Vanderbilt, but also with a glazed motto on which were the words, "Simply to Thy Cross I cling"? It is true that some of the "powdered counter-jumping dandies" that Tennessee professed to despise were probably muttering something about the precious metal of which the cross was made. But what did that matter if the spirits brought the gold? The old Commodore was a firm believer in spiritualism, for it seemed to bring the kind of results which counted. From rushing off to Staten Island to consult the famous Mrs. Tufts, he would hasten back to Woodhull, Claflin and Company, and Victoria would soon pass off into trance and tell him about the trend of the market and the movements of his stock. Thus, the inclusion of Anna on the staff had a double disadvantage. She was a woman and she was a medium. It certainly could not be risked.

Of Anna's life with Messant we know nothing, neither do we

know what happened to her child after her husband had died. The next stage, however, was crucial. Once she entered the fraudulent spirit medium business she was lost. Life was so easy : it was, as the Americans say, like taking candy out of a blind baby's mouth. Dupes, their pockets full of money, were everywhere waiting to be fooled ; and their deception was rendered all the easier through Anna's winning and persuasive manner and her glittering, magnetic eyes. The life was, however, unhealthy. Sitting day after day in darkened parlours was not good for Anna's figure, although her liking for sea bathing may partly have been due to her fear of her increasing corpulence.

The change in Anna's mode of life seems to have arrived with the coming of Jackson. In all probability the reasons for their attachment were mixed. Anna's maternal instinct may have been sharpened by this odd specimen of humanity so different from herself, whilst at the same time she doubtless saw his possibilities in business. Of what went on when they were operating in New Orleans we have no exact knowledge. The city teemed with dubious joints and night dives ; and it is not impossible that the Jacksons were running an establishment under the sign of the Crystal Star, which is more usually associated with a Crystal Palace or Hall of Mirrors.[1] The ejection from Bucktown, however, was the deciding factor in their leaving the United States ; and after South Africa became too hot for them the choice was between Paris and London. Language difficulties, possible complications with the French *milieu*, and the discovery that Paris preferred less mixed forms of certain enterprises probably contributed to their choice of London, and the fateful meeting with Wood and the Army of the Lord may have put into Jackson's head the idea of the novel form of racket that was afterwards unveiled in Gower Street.

William Wood's fantastic outfit had got into trouble in 1887. In September and October of that year there was rioting both in Maidstone and in Brighton, for rumour had it that immoral practices were going on behind the façade of King Solomon's

[1] For this side of New Orleans see H. Asbury, *The French Quarter* (London, 1937), and cf. " New Orleans cleans house " (*Collier's*, March 11, 1943, pp. 22 ff., for the state of the city to-day. A bibliographical attempt to deal with the famous Blue Book and other guides to the brothels of New Orleans was written by Semper Idem (*i.e.* C. F. Heartman) and printed privately in 1936 in Heartman's *Historical Series*, No. 50.

Temple with the connivance and possible assistance of the attendant ladies.

The ritual used by Wood was not unlike that which went on in Gower Street. In the hall, which was draped with crimson, King Solomon sat on a platform side by side with Queen Esther and surrounded by other distinguished persons. In front of the platform was a circular space railed off by a gilt fence, and it was here that the worshippers used to sing and dance, go into ecstasies and suffer convulsions, and then prophesy and utter exhortations. The community was self-supporting, but it was rumoured that several of the worshippers had been induced to give up money and jewellery which was pawned for what it would fetch.

Although there are, as has been said, points of resemblance between Wood's Society and the Order of the Golden Dawn in the Outer, there is no doubt that Anna's outfit possessed features of which Wood had never dreamt, and which he would not have been able to manage even if he had thought of them. Some of these (over which it is necessary to cast a veil) were clearly those to which the Judge was referring when giving sentence, and concerning which even *The Lancet* preferred to be silent. Whatever they may have been, Anna's attitude towards Jackson and his activities remains very difficult to understand. Did her polymorphous, perverse inclinations lead her to forms of a kind of mixoscopia, or was her affection for Jackson such that she could refuse him nothing ? Had a complete verbatim account of the various hearings been preserved, above all, the medical testimony and the resulting cross-examination, we might have been able to answer these questions in a more satisfactory manner. But no such record unfortunately exists. All we can do, therefore, is to speculate, to guess and to think of possibilities. But we must not jump to conclusions. Of all the women who have ever faced a British judge, Angel Anna was one of the oddest and the most intriguing. With that we must leave her.

The literature concerning Mrs. Jackson is very scanty. For the story of her life I have relied almost entirely upon the American and British Press, of which it is unnecessary to list either the titles or dates. In *Prisoner at the Bar* (London, 1943), A. L. Ellis has devoted a chapter to the trial at the Central Criminal Court, and J. Mulholland has something to say about her in his *Beware Familiar Spirits* (New York and London, 1938), pp. 251 ff. I have also had the advantage of consulting a few people who

still remember the case, and were in touch with legal circles at the time.

Details of the scandals connected with the Army of the Lord will be found in the local Press of the period; and some light on the mentality of Wood is thrown by his pamphlet, *All for Jehovah Jesus*, which is headed "Prince Salem Jesus: King Solomon Jesus," and which was issued in Brighton in 1886.

Finally, for those who are interested in the connexions between occultism and sexuality I would especially recommend as an introduction to the subject, E. Laurent and P. Nagour, *L'Occultisme et l'Amour* (Paris, 1902); H. Freimark, *Okkultismus u. Sexualität* (Leipzig, 1909); H. Freimark, *Das erotische Element im Okkultismus* (Pfullingen in Württemberg, 1922); G. Lomer, *Die Magie der Liebe* (Pfullingen in Württemberg, 1922; F. V. Schöffel, *Irrwege des Sexualtriebes und 6 Sinn* (Pfullingen in Württemberg, 1922); F. Behrendt, "Das mystische Erlebnis und seine Beziehung zur Erotik" (*Psychol. u. Med.*, 1926, II, pp. 47-64; and W. Greiser, *Weib und Mystik* (Leipzig, 1928).

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