CAN WE EXPLAIN THE POLTERGEIST?

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Is a poltergeist trying to communicate when it raps in walls?

How can stones, coins and other common objects suddenly appear from "nowhere"?

Is it true that some unusual people can set houses on fire through an influence from their bodies?

Dr. A. R. G. Owen attempts answers to these puzzles in a well-balanced, thoroughgoing, scrupulous examination of a large number of poltergeist cases.

WINNER OF THE 1963 PARAPSYCHOLOGY FOUNDATION AWARD FOR ORIGINAL TREATISES ON PARAPSYCHOLOGY

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The poltergeist as a phenomenon has fascinated human beings for many centuries. Dr. A. R. G. Owen contributes to psychic research what is probably the most minute and scrupulous examination of poltergeists ever published. First clearing the ground of cases that are or may be explainable by ground subsidence, mischief-making, or faulty observation, he proceeds to the extensive record of cases upheld by evidence ranging from fairly good to excellent.

He examines many obscure cases as well as famous ones such as "The Devil of Mascon" and "The Cock Lane Ghost." An entire chapter is given to the author's personal and detailed investigation of the case of little Virginia Campbell in Sauchie, Scotland, a case that is perhaps more thoroughly substantiated than any other of modern times.

The author examines a number of paranormal effects said to occur in some poltergeist outbreaks, and concludes that in a few cases, the pulling and levitation of the human body does occur. Examining the question of communication, Dr. Owen finds that in a small number of cases there is moderately good evidence for information conveyed by coded raps, and for poltergeist speech, but that evidence for poltergeist writing is weak, as is proof of paranormal origin of fires. Biting, pinching, and the complex problem of stigmatization in poltergeist cases are analyzed. The author then examines the abrupt materialization of commonplace solids in the air; the flight of such objects through the air and sometimes around corners; and their ability to "seep" through walls and

(continued on back flap)

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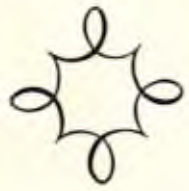
"The Real is Rational."—HEGEL



Can We Explain the Poltergeist?

by A. R. G. OWEN

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THE writer is very conscious of a general debt to all those who in recent decades have drawn attention to the scientific problem constituted by poltergeist phenomena, and who have brought a variety of fruitful approaches and critical methods to bear on this enigma. Any listing of such investigators would necessarily include Dr. E. J. Dingwall, the late Hereward Carrington, Dr. N. Fodor, Mrs. K. M. Goldney, Mr. T. H. Hall, Mr. G. W. Lambert, and the late Rev. Herbert Thurston. This series of names, though distinguished, is by no means exhaustive, and recognition of the work of many others, past and present, is to be found in the text.

I am very specially grateful to my friend Mr. Trevor H. Hall, who first interested me in poltergeists, encouraged this work throughout, and gave or lent to me a number of invaluable works of reference.

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Cambridge, England

A. R. G. OWEN

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Can We Explain the Poltergeist?

INTRODUCTION

The Poltergeist Problem

THE WORD "poltergeist," meaning a noise-spirit, was current in Germany in Reformation times, being used by Luther to describe a noisy racketing type of demon. It was Mrs. Catherine Crowe, however, who in the early nineteenth century first recognized poltergeist phenomena as constituting a particular type of disturbance, distinguishable from other types of hauntings or psychic phenomena. Connoisseurs of poltergeists may rightly judge her chapter, "The Poltergeist of the Germans," included in her book *The Night-Side of Nature* (1848), a classic of poltergeist literature. It is conveniently reprinted in Sitwell (1940). It was the basis established by Mrs. Crowe that made it possible to formulate the definition of poltergeist activity as employed by Andrew Lang and Frank Podmore.

The definition adopted in the present study is consistent with that acceptable to Lang and Podmore, and is as follows:

Poltergeist activity is the occurrence of one or both of the following, taking place in an apparently spontaneous but often sporadic way.

(a) Production of noises, e.g., tappings, sawings, bumpings.

(b) Movement of objects by no known physical means.

It will be seen that the definition as far as it goes raises numerous problems.

The first is that of genuine paranormality. Here we use "paranormal" as descriptive of phenomena not explicable by mechanisms at present known to science. As used, it is therefore inclusive of the

"supernatural" and of presently unknown "natural causes." Clearly, spurious poltergeist cases can result from a variety of causes, or a combination of causes. In Part I we follow the leads recently given by Dingwall, Goldney, Hall, and Lambert, and consider further the effects of trickery, bad observation, hallucination, and natural shiftings of houses due to decay or earth movement.

As a result of this sifting, numerous cases notable in the literature evanesce, though some prove surprisingly durable. In Part II we list cases that seem to be well attested and genuine, and include *in toto* the case that we were fortunate enough to be able to encounter personally. The writer finds it difficult to set aside the Sauchie case as being anything but genuine, unless very elaborate *ad hoc* assumptions are made. Such assumptions are inherently at least as implausible as the phenomena themselves.

The Sauchie and other cases tend to establish that poltergeist activity on the lines of the classic definition *does* occur. If this is conceded, a variety of new questions offer themselves for solution. We may ask whether there is such a thing as a "poltergeist" existing as an entity and capable of manifesting in independence of any human "focus" or center. If this is answered in the negative, a human "poltergeist focus" being always necessary, we may ask whether there is a poltergeist existing as a discarnate entity but requiring a human to act as a "medium" in order that it may manifest itself. This is the mediumistic theory of poltergeists.

There is yet a third possibility. It is the one favored by experienced investigators like Dr. Nandor Fodor. We may, on this theory, envisage the poltergeist activities as originating entirely in the person of the poltergeist focus. Such a hypothesis is perhaps more agreeable to modern ideas than notions involving an independent entity. However, this hypothesis itself has to be subdivided. Are the poltergeist activities carried out by some invisible emanation or "astral body" or roving "personality fragment" fissured off from the body or psyche of the poltergeist focus? Or, instead, does the mind, or brain, or nervous system of the focus act at a distance? Yet again we could inquire if the poltergeist focus exploits the powers of some universal transcendant entity, a "world soul" or universal physico-psychic substratum. We do not apologize for the fanciful nature of these hypotheses. Revolutionary facts require revolutionary solutions, and the latter cannot be attained without asking bold questions, as we do in Part IV, though the writer does not claim to give definitive answers.

There is a group of questions relating to the poltergeist focus. Is she or he a very exceptional human being? What are the conditions triggering off a poltergeist outbreak? Does the poltergeist originate in the conscious, the subconscious, or the unconscious mind? Or is it purely a physiological function? What is the relationship between the poltergeist girl or boy and the mental or physical medium? These are among the problems we attempt to review in Part IV, using such clues as are provided by the material. In Part III we try to ascertain what limits appear to be set by Nature on the powers of the poltergeist. If it can produce sounds, can it talk? Does its conversation imply an extramundane intelligence, or a human and perhaps a juvenile personality? If it can vibrate solids can it make them so hot that they ignite? Is it sinister, or benign, or neither–just a nuisance? If it is a component of the "medium's" personality, is it extroverted or introverted; does it evidence agression against the self or against the medium's fellow men?

We do not pretend to have answered these questions finally or even adequately in the present study. However, we feel we have done something serviceable merely in assembling and discussing them, and pointing out various theoretical consequences. We have tried to do this, not abstractly, but with reference to such actual evidence as is available. The case histories in the literature are not negligible in number; nevertheless the available material is none too ample in relation to the scope and difficulty of the questions we are led to ask. We have therefore ranged widely in time, and tried to treat each case cited entirely on its merits without prejudging it.

The reader will note that there is a slight difference in aim and consequently in treatment between the first half of this study (Parts I and II) and the second half (Parts III and IV). The former is concerned strictly with establishing the reality of some poltergeists. The latter takes this as settled and adopts as its themes the physical powers of the poltergeist, and its implications for physical, psychological, and psychic science.

♉ REFERENCES

Crowe, C.	1848	*The Night-Side of Nature.* Routledge, London.
Sitwell, S.	1940	*Poltergeists.* Faber, London.

NOTE

When cases are listed at the end of a chapter, they are usually designated by the name of either the central character or the householder, and the name of the town or village where located. When names are unknown some alternative indication is employed where possible. Occasionally a famous case will be denoted by its traditional title, e.g., "The Devil of Mascon."

Sometimes cross-references are given to chapters in this book.

Bibliographic consistency in references to books has not been striven for. The edition cited by the author is not in all cases the first edition, or necessarily the same edition as that cited elsewhere in this book.

PART I

Spurious Poltergeists and Perhaps Some Others

Natural Causes

It is found that natural causes such as hallucination, noises due to underground water, and structural instability of buildings can explain a proportion of poltergeist cases, but not all.

Weightlessness is unsatisfactory as an explanation of movements of objects.

Various miscellaneous phenomena such as the levitation of objects in the open air, or the movement of coffins in vaults when not ascribable to known natural causes are not easily assimilated to the sphere of poltergeist activity, and are best excluded from our terms of reference.

All Rank Knavery?

Investigators have always to be alert to the possibility of fraud and this is illustrated by accounts of twenty historical cases the majority of which are ascribable to trickery. However, in some of these cases the evidence is ambiguous, and a few may have been genuine, notably the Stockwell poltergeist.

Modern Trickery?

Fraud has been proved beyond all reasonable doubt in some modern cases such as Borley Rectory.

However a re-examination of several cases (occurring during the last hundred years) in which trickery has been accepted as an adequate explanation suggests that this may often be a facile but erroneous conclusion.

I

Natural Causes

PHASES OF POLTERGEIST RESEARCH

THE PERIOD subsequent to the publication of Catherine Crowe's trail-blazing work saw two important developments in the general field of occult studies. There was, on the one hand, the rise of spiritualism, which became firmly established in Europe and America during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The same period, however, also saw the emergence of psychical research, represented by its own organization and literature. By the end of the century there were two views current concerning the poltergeist. Frank Podmore (1896, 1902) was almost convinced that all poltergeist cases were due to trickery, or hallucination, or to bad observation combined with undisciplined imagination. Professor Barrett, however, had been an eyewitness of poltergeist happenings at Derrygonnelly in 1877, and in 1910 obtained very credit-worthy accounts of the haunting of John Randall at Enniscorthy. By 1911, therefore, he was able in his paper "Poltergeists, Old and New" to propose that some poltergeists at least are genuine, and to set out a number of important general observations regarding poltergeist phenomena. During this period Andrew Lang, without committing himself explicitly to a belief in poltergeists, nonetheless kept their flag flying by criticizing some of Podmore's conclusions as being too facile. Out of his immense stock of historical and anthropological learning he drew many suggestive examples of putative poltergeists (Lang, 1911).

In the postwar period serious study of poltergeists was kept alive by Father Herbert Thurston in his articles in *The Month*, which in 1953 were published posthumously as the very scholarly volume *Ghosts and Poltergeists*. Also Hereward Carrington in his "Historic Poltergeists" 1935 listed no less than 375 recorded cases, many of which could be regarded as genuine. About this time Borley Rectory was getting newspaper publicity, and in 1940 Harry Price published his account of it as *The Most Haunted House in England*. The list of manifestations, being quite comprehensive, included poltergeist disturbances, and when in 1945 Price published *Poltergeist Over England*, one chapter was entitled "Borley Rectory: A Century of Poltergeists." It is this latter book of Price's that has done most to popularize the name and the notion of a poltergeist, as it is written in a very lively and entertaining style. At the same time it has the unusual distinction of being almost medieval in character through being at one and the same time immensely scholarly and quite uncritical. Every kind of haunting or unusual occurrence, such as apparent teleportation or spontaneous combustion is brought in as exemplifying poltergeist activity. Sacheverell Sitwell is less eclectic in his useful book *Poltergeists* (1940), which consists of reprints of descriptions of classic cases. However, he too makes little distinction between poltergeist and other hauntings and includes the Hinton Ampner and Willington Mill cases, although in one of his introductory essays he hints at a possible distinction between these and true poltergeist disturbances. Without in any way belittling the usefulness of Price's and Sitwell's books, it would be fair to regard their main achievement as being the successful popularization of the poltergeist.

Whether causally or otherwise, the popular phase in poltergeist studies was the prelude to the new critical period of the 1950's. This decade saw the publication of Thurston's work in collected form, and also the important studies of Dr. Nandor Fodor (1958) and of Carrington and Fodor (1953) which considered particularly the psychological causes perhaps ultimately responsible for poltergeist phenomena. But there were also two other vital developments.

Dingwall, Goldney, and Hall carried out a new and very thorough investigation of the alleged haunting of Borley Rectory (1956). They proved beyond doubt that there was no basis at all for supposing any paranormal or supernatural agency to have been at work there at any time. Natural causes such as rats, loose and exposed bell wires, and general ricketiness of the building had provided

material for the imagination or fictive ability of inmates or neighbors to work on. In addition, a succession of inmates had had reason to elaborate descriptions of remarkable phenomena. The Smiths had the innocent motive of wanting a more modern and better built rectory. Harry Bull was a philanderer, as was Mrs. Foyster. Lastly there is some evidence that Harry Price was, at the least, willing to suspend disbelief and found the resultant publicity and journalistic success not unwelcome. The importance of these findings is not purely negative, i.e., merely adding one more case to the longish list of proved frauds. If true scientific discoveries are to result from the study of genuine poltergeist cases, then the ground has to be cleared by striking out the bogus happenings. Otherwise true poltergeist behavior cannot be accurately delineated, and scientific conclusions will be invalid, being based on a heterogeneous mixture of the false and the true. Dingwall and Hall similarly applied critical methods to two contemporary cases (1958), and Hall applied methods of historical criticism to two famous cases—the Wesley poltergeist (1960) and the Cock Lane ghost (1962).

A further notable stimulus to contemporary research on hauntings was provided in 1955 by the publication of Lambert's paper "Poltergeists: A Physical Theory." In this and later studies Mr. Lambert referred the alleged hauntings of houses primarily to sounds and vibrations caused by the movements of underground water. We shall discuss this, somewhat briefly, in the next section. It will appear that Mr. Lambert has perhaps wrongly extended his theory as an explanation of typical poltergeist cases. Nonetheless his work has provided an important stimulus to poltergeist research, and insofar as it is a theory of auditory hauntings is likely to prove of great utility in discriminating between poltergeist infestation and other types of haunting.

☿ THE LAMBERT THEORY AND ITS EXTENSIONS

Lambert (1955) suggested that noises and vibrations of buildings are often caused by water moving in subterranean rivers or sewers. Under special conditions of high tide, blocking of outlets by silting up, or excessive rainfall, these underground channels contain water, or even compressed air, at high pressure. This may result in the "jacking up" and subsequent relapse of a building, with resultant "cracking" or other noises. In a series of papers he has collected data tending to show correlation between auditory haunting

and (a) proximity to tidal regions, (b) winter rather than summer, (c) rainfall, (d) local geology, particularly provenance of limestone, (e) the state of the tides.

This theory is clearly an admirable one, and we may expect to find cases in which it is vindicated. Such a case is the Ousedale haunt reported by Dingwall and Hall (1958), where the house showed physical signs of structural movement. There was an old sewer beneath it. There were marked correlations with tide and weather.

Mr. Lambert envisaged that other earth movements, such as earthquake shocks, could be productive of mysterious noises, and Dingwall and Hall (1958, p. 105) gave as examples two supposedly haunted houses in Yorkshire where mine workings had caused visible damage to the structure, and an allegedly haunted church in Essex which had become unsafe due to sea erosion. As early as 1892 when the case of Ballechin House was under investigation, the famous seismologist John Milne pointed out in a letter to Miss Freer that Ballechin was situated near one of the most unstable parts of Great Britain, 465 shocks being recorded between 1852 and 1890. In the particularly bad year of 1844 twelve shocks were recorded at Comrie, about twenty miles away, and Lady Moncrieff, living at Comrie Hall, had constantly heard rumbling and moanings (Dingwall and Hall, 1958, p. 17).

These examples will be sufficient to show that the Lambert theory, in the broadest sense as inclusive of earth movements of all kinds, very plausibly explains a large fraction of auditory hauntings. Dingwall and Hall, however, point out that in some cases it is difficult to refer *all* the sounds heard by witnesses to causes of this kind. For example, noises described as footsteps sounding as if they were moving round the room, as observed in various haunted houses, are not easy to understand on the geophysical hypothesis. It may be that they are hallucinatory, consequent on the nervous excitement occasioned by prior experiences, but this has not been proved. The geophysical theory may therefore be accepted as accounting for many auditory hauntings but not for all. It remains an open question whether some of these hauntings are not of paranormal origin.

Although put forward originally as a theory of poltergeists, Lambert's hypothesis is more successful as a theory of auditory hauntings. To account for typical poltergeist effects Lambert argues on the following lines (1956). A sudden movement of the fabric of a house may "jar" a clock and cause it to stop. Underground hydraulic pressure tilts the floor slowly, until it suddenly returns to its former level on release of the pressure. If this cycle is repeated a heavy piece of furniture will advance over the floor in a series of "steps." Chairs having an uneven weight distribution are particularly likely to travel in this way. If the floor is vibrating up and down it will cause chairs to jump up and down. Cause may be mistaken for effect, i.e., the vibration of the floor may be ascribed to the blows on it of the jumping chair. When a whole house is tilted and dropped back into position some of the walls are tilted from the vertical and then return to it suddenly. If the displacement is large enough, articles will fall from shelves or mantlepiece. If the house has a wooden frame this will be elastic and articles may be "thrown" into the room from opposite directions. Tilting of the floors will cause old-fashioned bedsteads to run around on their casters. Sudden descent of the floor causes the bed momentarily to drop away from the mattress so that the tucked-in edges of the bedclothes fall out. A few more shakes of the floor and the sleeper has lost his bedcovers.

Mr. Lambert also has suggestions to make in regard to other poltergeist phenomena. The wavering and undulating flight of objects when not hallucinatory is "undoubtedly due to the *observer* moving up and down with the floor on which he is standing" (1955). When people feel themselves pushed by an invisible power towards some part of the room, it is the room that is moving towards them, and they invent the invisible power to account for lurches for which they know they are not responsible. This latter may be a good point, as Lambert quotes with effect from Oliver Gidding, a reporter present at 546 Marshall Street, Portland, Oregon, the scene of the Elwin March poltergeist case: ". . . there was a creaking and a groaning sound with which the house seemed to be filled. I have been considerably at sea, and it reminded me of the creaking and groaning to be heard in a gale if one sits in the after cabin of a ship. I imagined at the time the house was pitching like a ship, but I am convinced that this was imagination, for I did not notice [it] later while still wondering at the assemblage of sea noises, apart from the crashing it was said was the result of the furniture and utensils coming in contact." We are at liberty to wonder which was correct—Oliver Gidding's first thought that the house was pitching, or his subsequent rejection of this notion. However, in the Portland case Lambert can adduce as further support for his explanation the fact that the phenomena were observed at five different addresses in the town, indicating a fairly widespread disturbance, and the tram lines outside

the house had sustained damage, presumably caused by earth movement.

Generally, however, we may feel very doubtful as to the applicability of this theory to other than a very few alleged classical poltergeist cases. At Sauchie in 1960 there was not a trace of evidence to suggest that movements of walls and floors had occurred at any time or coincidentally with the phenomena. The disturbances followed a single person, Virginia Campbell, to three places in the locality and occurred only in her presence. As Dingwall and Hall point out, in many cases reliable witnesses report the gentle deposition of objects after they have traveled many feet, and this is quite inconsistent with their performing a normal ballistic trajectory, which they are required to do after launching on Lambert's theory. They would agree (p. 19, n.) that during earthquakes small objects may be moved on flat surfaces by the vibratory motion, and household furniture may be upset. However they say (p. 105) that movements of buildings, however caused, seem invariably in their experience to produce visible signs of damage that are easily recognized. Moreover, even when the noises are loud and visible damage to the structure is extensive, the effect upon loose objects in the house appears to be very slight and is limited to those small events that could reasonably be expected to be caused by vibration, e.g., the shaking of a bed, the jangling of crockery and the upsetting of a small bottle on a dressing table. "We have found no evidence to show that the propulsion of household objects through the air, stones falling from above and other complex manifestations associated with poltergeists occur in houses affected by subsidence. Our experience leads us to suspect that *if* the movement of a house could be sufficiently violent to cause spectacular manifestations of this sort, the building would almost certainly fall into ruins during the outbreak." This conclusion has been discussed with confirmatory results by Cornell and Gould (1961).

☿ WEIGHTLESSNESS

In the report on the Sauchie poltergeist we shall examine a theory put forward by Mr. Eric Frank Russell, one of the leading modern science-fiction writers. He wonders if levitation of objects and their undulating flight as seen in poltergeist cases is to be explained by a temporary loss of weight due to some unknown physical cause. We consider the kind of motion that would result

for a body that lost weight but retained its mass and find rather poor agreement with that observed at Sauchie. It is also difficult to see how weightlessness can cause the varied poltergeist noises. The attractive simplicity of the theory is in fact deceptive, as it would require a radical and wholesale revision of the laws of physics. The weight of a material body is a consequence of the gravitational attraction of the earth. This gravitational force is a result of the fact that the body possesses mass (Sciama, 1960). Only two ways in which it could lose weight offer themselves for consideration. The first way would be by temporary loss of mass. This is almost unthinkable because the body's mass is merely the total mass of the elementary particles—neutrons, protons, and electrons—of which it is composed. All the physical and optical properties of the body are consequences of the laws of motion of the elementary particles within its constituent atoms. If the elementary particles lost their mass they would also lose their inertia and all their laws of motion would be changed in a fundamental way. Loss of mass is therefore completely incompatible with the body's continued existence in recognizable form. The other method of abolishing weight is to interpose an antigravity screen between it and the earth's surface. This is not easy as such a screen has to be made out of *antimatter*, i.e., from substance of negative mass, and this does not exist terrestrially.

☿ COSMIC POLTERGEISTS

Russell particularly invoked the weightlessness theory to explain the kind of phenomenon to be found in the pages of Charles Fort (1941). For example (Fort, p. 461), in July, 1880, two citizens of East Kent, Ontario, were in a field, and heard a loud report. They saw stones shooting upward from a field. They examined the region affected, which was about sixteen feet across, but found nothing suggestive of an explanation. It is said there had been no whirlwind or anything else to provide a cause.

On Easter Sunday 1879 at Signy-le Pettit in the Ardennes the slate roof of a conspicuous, isolated house suddenly shot into the air and then fell to the ground. Nothing in the surroundings was disturbed, and there had been not a trace of wind (Fort, p. 461).

Two witnesses testified to a curious happening on May 22, 1886, in the garden of the College Bar-sur-Aube on a cloudless day with only a feeble wind blowing (Fort, p. 463). A window frame (weight sixty kilograms), some baskets, and some ashes, all lying

close together, suddenly rose from the ground to a height of about forty feet. There they remained suspended several minutes, and then relapsed to their starting point. Nothing else was disturbed and the witnesses said they felt no air disturbance.

Fort (p. 570) gives two more stories of stones seen rising from the ground, in Spain and in New York State, and (pp. 568-570) gives the clothesline stories quoted by Harry Price (1945). These are typified by the Liverpool story of May 11, 1842 in which there being "not a breath of air, clothes suddenly shot up from clothes-lines strung out on a common." It was said that smoke from chimneys indicated that above ground there was a southward wind, but the clothes moved away northward.

Charles Fort was interested in such phenomena as examples of the *lusus naturae*, nature's lapse. A great part of his four magnificent volumes is concerned with the showers of peculiar objects—stones, nails, fish, live animals, etc.—reported on so many occasions in so many parts of the world. He was skeptical of meteorological explanations and toyed with the notions of "'space currents" teleporting objects about the earth or even to and from other and perhaps invisible worlds. When he was not employing this idea he dallied with the concept that there are no immutable laws of nature, but instead numerous lapses and breakdowns of regularity. He was not interested in the poltergeist as we use the term. Even when narrating good poltergeist cases he tended to deprecate the classical notion of poltergeist medium or poltergeist focus. However, his attitude is by no means consistent. (He would not himself take this as a criticism, affecting to believe that it was unwise to expect complete consistency either from nature or from a theorist.) Thus he feels able to elaborate the hypothesis of people being endowed with the "wild talents," clairvoyance, telepathy, telekinesis and fire-kindling ability. However, he does not apply this theory to the kind of occurrences cited, which he tends to classify as exemplifying his "teleportation currents," or as illustrating nature's fickleness.

Harry Price takes the clothes line cases from Fort but ignores the somewhat more impressive happening at Bar-sur-Aube. Unlike Fort he ascribes the flight of the washing to the work of poltergeists. We cannot gainsay this opinion. Clearly, however, it is a completely arbitrary one based on mere similarity. These, and the other Fortean levitations, are certainly odd phenomena if they have been correctly reported. But there seems to be no evidence available to allow them to be classified with any confidence as poltergeist happenings. It

may be that if full and accurate details were available they could be ascribed to meteorological causes. I have a newspaper report of July, 1960, describing how a small boy in a playground at Bestwood, Nottingham, was lifted off the ground and carried a distance of several yards. Admittedly there was a whirlwind—a microtornado. But it was severely localized and completely unexpected, the day being fine and very hot. "The temperature, which had been 77 degrees, suddenly seemed to fall. There was a loud roar and the children saw a dark column stretching from the ground high into the sky rushing towards them. Most ran away but John stayed. He was not hurt. (*Daily Express*)."

♄ THE UNQUIET GRAVE

THE responsibility for posing the question "Do Poltergeists Invade the Tomb?" (as it has been put by Thurston, 1953) is Andrew Lang's (1907). Writing with a somewhat light touch, he discussed four reported cases of heavy coffins found displaced within a securely fastened vault. Two of the cases may fairly convincingly be explained as the result of flotation of the coffins when the vault has been flooded with water. One of them is described in a letter to the *London Magazine* (July, 1760), which says that the French's family vault at Stanton in Suffolk was opened on three occasions during a period of nine years and each time several leaden coffins in wooden cases were found displaced. An editorial comment ascribes the phenomenon to water, although no sign of it appeared when the vault was opened. In 1867 Mr. F. A. Paley, a well-known classical scholar, wrote to *Notes and Queries* to describe similar occurrences in a vault at Greatford, near Stamford, in the Fenland, where coffins were found at least twice to have been displaced. Paley enclosed a letter from a local lady confirming the fact and concluding by saying: "We had no doubt from the situation and nature of the soil, that it had been full of water during some flood which floated the coffins."

The fact that coffins can float is confirmed by examples quoted by Gould (1928), such as the leaden coffin found floating at sea (mentioned in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1751), and those floating in the vault beneath Edgware Parish church. Also, water is from time to time found in or around coffins at exhumation. Fort (p. 973) mentions the coffin of Frances Burke of Dunkirk, New York, as beng found full of water at her exhumation. He brings this in with reference to the supposed teleportation of water, but this would seem

to be an unnecessary assumption. Lee (1885) quotes from Lipscombe (1847) the tradition that Lady Dormer's coffin was found floating in a vault two-thirds full of water at Quainton. The seepage of water into coffins has occasionally been a point of argument in murder trials. I recollect reading of at least one case in which it has been argued that the arsenic present in tissues of the decedent results from conveyance from the surrounding soil.

Returning to Andrew Lang's cases we find that the whole argument for paranormal mobility of coffins rests on the Barbados case concerning the vault of the Chase family (Thurston, 1953; Price, 1945), of which the earlier published account is in Alexander's *Transatlantic Sketches* (1833). As there are several extensive accounts available we need remark on it only briefly. When opened in 1812 the three coffins in the vault were found in a confused state, having been apparently tossed from their places. A little later it was opened again and the four coffins were now found much displaced. It was opened again in 1816 and 1819. Each time the same confusion was found. Andrew Lang's brother-in-law, Mr. Alleyne, resident in Barbados, unearthed an autograph report by the Hon. Nathan Lucas describing subsequent events. Thurston (1953) is satisfied that the essentials of this report are given in the *Barbados Diocesan History*. After the opening in 1819, the governor, Lord Combermere, had the floor and walls sounded, the coffins set in their places, and the floor covered with white sand. The vault was carefully cemented up and sealed by the governor in several places. After being sealed for nine months, Lord Combermere allowed the vault to be opened in the presence of himself, the Hon. Nathan Lucas, and many thousand spectators. The seals and cement were all intact. The masons had difficulty in removing the door slab, for a large lead coffin was resting against it on the inside. Apparently it had been moved into this position with no mark made on the sandy floor. The other coffins were scattered about. There were no marks of water on the floor.

It appears that the vault was hewn out of the solid rock, had only one opening, and was a hundred feet above sea level. A sketch showing the distribution of the coffins as found in 1820 suggests that flotation was not responsible, as one coffin was standing on its head, and some coffins were lying on top of others. Barbadian natives have been blamed but no actual evidence to support this has ever been put forward. Thus there are grounds for supposing that a genuine mystery happened in Barbados.

Andrew Lang's last case was derived by him as sole source from

Dale Owen (1881), who said he heard it in Paris in 1859 from Fräulein von Guldenstubbe, the daughter of the baron who presided over the enquiry, and obtained confirmation from her brother. The disturbed vault was in a cemetery and near the main road in Ahrensburg, on the Baltic island of Oesel, belonging to Estonia. On one occasion horses were agitated by a loud crash coming from the tomb. When opened in 1844 for an interment of one of the Buxhowden family, the coffins were found scattered, some superposed on others. No other confirmation of this story has ever come to light, though Andrew Lang engaged in correspondence to that end. Some of the dates for openings of the vault as given by Dale Owen, coincide except for year with those of the openings of the Barbados vault. Hence Lang called it a bi-located story. Lang wondered if Guldenstubbe merely retold the Barbados story in a Baltic setting, but on balance inclined to believe not. It is possible that the Guldenstubbe story is genuine and Dale Owen, having some notes of the Barbados story, is responsible for a muddle. However, the matter of the dates tends to diminish the evidential value of this story, which is clearly far worse attested than the Barbados one.

In 1945 the *Journal of the Barbados Museum* (May) reported another case of disturbed coffins but I have not yet looked into this matter. Borley Rectory as the haunted house "with the mostest" naturally had coffin trouble in its vicinity, some of the coffins at Borley Church (according to Price, 1945) being found to have been paranormally moved from their prescribed positions. I find no mention of this by Dingwall, Goldney and Hall (1956) and doubt if much is to be learned from an attempt to investigate it. Lee (1885) also tells a vivid story of a disturbed vault in Lincolnshire that may derive from some factual basis.

We thus have only one case to theorize about. It seems only necessary to say that the Barbados case is indeed a mystery but there is no special reason to class it with poltergeist activity. Indeed, to do so might be a real error. It seems more prudent therefore to rank coffin movements as possibly paranormal events, not yet proved to have any close connection with the poltergeist problem.

For completeness we should note that Russell (1957) has postulated the *ad hoc* assumption that there is an unknown physical force that on rare occasions moves pieces of lead about. He seems to put this forward in addition to his weightlessness theory. We need not be concerned to discuss it here, beyond making the obvious comment that in view of the immense quantities of lead used in roofing, in

industry, and in automobile batteries, it is surprising that levitation of lead, if possible, has not been more frequently observed.

SUBJECTIVE POLTERGEISTS

CLEARLY any case in which the experiences are entirely restricted to a single person, there being no other witness, is extremely difficult to evaluate. The same problem occurs when one person testifies strongly to an experience and is supported more pusillanimously by a relative or associate. We may always suspect that the latter is swayed by loyalty, the need for "backing up" his friend or relation, or is to some extent the victim of suggestibility. Examples of various situations of this indeterminate kind are easy to find.

In Myers' collection of cases (1891) he records Gurney's interview with Miss H. Power who describes how, having been made angry by being given a book "which greatly jarred on her religious faith," she was lying on a sofa. At some remove her handbag, which she had laid down in the center of an armchair, was flung with great force under the table, making a considerable noise as it fell. At the same time loud raps came in different places on the wall. A drawing board, standing on edge in an empty space between the two sides of a writing table, slid out on its edge into the room and fell over, about a yard from the writing table. This might have been quite an interesting case had other witnesses been available. As it is, having little other knowledge of the kind of person Miss Power really was, we cannot know if it was objective, a hallucination, a hoax on her part (she volunteered the information in a letter to Gurney), or a fantasy cooked up in her memory.

In a case at Longnor, Buxton, in 1961 an unfortunate man, Mr. Wood, in ill health, recently bereaved of his mother who had lived with him in his old cottage, heard noises in his house. The rector was called in, and there was some newspaper publicity. I was told by the Rector that he believes the noises were either subjective or ordinary sounds, whose significance was exaggerated by Mr. Wood's state of anxiety and depression. The interesting feature of this simple case is that Mr. Wood's cousin, who comes in daily to help him with domestic chores, says that she too has heard some strange noises but is not very specific about it. She also is a rather nervous sort of person, and it may well be that out of loyalty she is backing her cousin up.

The haunting of Frances and Elizabeth Dixon as described in the *Arminian Magazine* (1786) is a case that might have been

interesting had it been possible to separate objective and subjective elements. These honest and pious spinsters, aged about forty (Fanny, i.e., Frances) and thirty, were tormented from 1776 to 1785. They heard the sound of persons walking to and fro in the house, and an unaccountable breathing, snorting and puffing, also the sound of pistols going off, five or six at a time. Their cat and dog were frightened. The cat cried and struggled with an invisible agent, by whom she was thrown many times on Fanny, often scratching her face terribly. Various apparitions were seen, including a little dog and an old man's head. Many stones were thrown at them continually, one of them wounding Fanny on the side of the head. Their clothes were often cut. Their spinning, the source of their livelihood, was hindered by cutting off the yarn, breakage and abstraction of parts of their spinning wheels, and by their being pelted with objects thrown about in the house. Fire was scattered about—presumably burning peats from the hearth. Once Fanny's apron ignited spontaneously. Frequently an invisible hand gripped Fanny's clothes and pulled her to the floor.

At night they heard a ticking noise. Little scraping things seemed to be running over them both above and beneath the bedclothes, and often nipped them to make them sore. Things of the size of lap dogs seemed to leap down upon them in bed. Superficially this is a poltergeist case with some of the rarer type of "manifestations" additionally present. But on the meager evidence available it can be interpreted naturalistically in several ways. Even if hereditary insanity of both sisters is set aside we may note that their life could well have been hard, gloomy, and frustrating. Also it is likely that at least one of them was at menopause. Their tactile sensations when abed and the lap dogs could well be of the nature of sexual fantasies. Fanny was the more persecuted. Perhaps Elizabeth, smoldering with some cloisterlike resentment of her elder sister, was consciously or unconsciously her tormenter. Alternatively Fanny was delusional, a sufferer from a persecution mania which she herself justified by being her own tormentor. On the evidence we have no warrant for definitely rejecting this case as subjective, but likewise it cannot be taken as substantiated. Even so, like Miss Power's case, it is not evidentially valueless for certain purposes of reasoning. We shall find occasion to question the hypothesis that the poltergeist center is always a juvenile. Even if all *proven* cases indicated this, the occurrence of cases involving older women, if not capable of definitive rejection, would still be of considerable logical importance.

The same points may be made in respect of the haunting of

Simon Oakley as narrated by Price (1945), following Mr. H. O. Evennett (1929). We can readily sympathize with Dr. Oakley as a Cambridge professor arrested for debt and jailed in the Castle in 1718. He had been working with extreme intensity to the detriment of his health. His uncanny experiences are described in his letters written from prison. He felt something heaving up his bed. Three boards (presumably loose floor boards) flew into the next room and back. A chair seemed to move towards him. He heard an explosive noise, a jarring noise, and sounds of jumping, thumping, and threshing. There was tapping at the bed's head, and he heard whistles and bells, But we cannot be sure of the objective reality of these sounds and events, for although when his daughter visited him she "confessed unaccountable noises" she also "wishes they were louder." Thus she may have been humouring her sick father. In a later letter he reported the sounds of the rending of timber, rappings, "rubbing down a table," "whisking about," stamping like a wooden-legged man, and a "hollow inarticulate" noise, but says, "Nobody heard him but myself last night." Soon afterward he was released, and returned to his family at Swavesey near Cambridge. In a letter from Swavesey he narrates how he and his second daughter heard a great noise above stairs. They found no dog or cat in the house and ascertained that the maid was out on an errand. He also narrates the investigations that he made while in Cambridge Castle to see if any of the other prisoners had been playing tricks. He found the chief suspect asleep. From his examination of the topography Oakley concluded that it was not physically possible for the prisoners to produce the effects. Clearly there is a strong presumption that in this case the experiences were subjective, though certainty is not possible.

The inexplicable reception of a blow by an invisible agent is not an altogether uncommon experience. Sometimes it occurs in conjuction with visual apparitions. Dr. Henry More in a letter reprinted in Glanvil (1681) gives an amusing story concerning an elderly country gentleman of his acquaintance, a magistrate and something of a philosopher. This gentleman had attempted by magical ceremonies to raise spirits but with no success. However, one day, with this not in his mind at all, "while his servant was pulling off his boots in the hall, some invisible hand gave him such a clap upon his Back, that it made all ring again." He went out into the yard to look for the spirit that he supposed had invited him to converse, but found none. More adds that "this stroke, albeit he thought it afterwards . . . a mere delusion; yet not long before his death it had more force with him than all the philosophical arguments I could use to him." More serious examples are available, but clearly when they occur as isolated events we cannot make theoretical use of them, as their objective nature cannot be established. This is not to say that all subjective events are necessarily of natural origin. Logically we can distinguish between the hallucinatory and the apparitional. There could well be experiences which are private to one individual, and therefore describable as subjective, but have an external paranormal cause. The fact that a case has to be removed from the list of proved objective happenings is not necessarily to deny that it is of paranormal causation.

One further type of subjectivity should be mentioned for completeness, though it is obvious and common enough. The moving around of small objects in the household between being deposited in their right place (as we think) and being next required is so universal and persistent a nuisance that one physicist of my acquaintance declares that matter is only "conserved in the average." This is presumably due not to teleportation on the sly but to errors and lapses of memory, and unconscious action of a very ordinary kind.

ISOLATED EVENTS

The foregoing has been concerned with the difficulty of excluding subjectivity as an explanation in the absence of a sufficient number of witnesses. But in some of the experiences cited the evidential problem might have been eased had the event not been isolated, but one of a series. The unique and isolated happening is practically not amenable to analysis, except perhaps when a group of parallel cases can be assembled in bulk. We conclude this chapter with a charming little story that Baxter (1691) got from Mr. Mun, the rector of Stockerson, Leicestershire, through the intermediacy of the Rev. Thomas Woodcocke. Mr. Mun's daughter was married to Mr. Beecham, rector of Branston in Rutland, "in whose House it was frequently observed, that a Tobacco-pipe would move itself from off a Shelf at one end of the Room to another Shelf at the other end of the Room, without any Hand. Mr. Mun visiting his Son-in-Law, took a Pipe of Tobacco in that Room, and looked for some such Motion; but a great Bible, instead of a Pipe, moved itself off from a Desk at the lower end of the Room and cast itself into his lap. Whereupon he opened the Bible at Gen. 3:15 saying, "Come Satan, I'll show thee thy Doom: The Seed of the Woman shall break the Serpent's Head. Avoid Satan."

CONCLUSIONS

GEOPHYSICAL movements undoubtedly produce many effects of hauntings. However, they cannot reasonably be accepted as explicative of the types of motion of objects observed in many well attested poltergeist cases. It is not clear whether every type of sound heard in some haunted houses is explicable in these terms.

The weightlessness theory of Mr. E. F. Russell, besides being inadequate to explain the type of movement seen in poltergeist cases, is open to grave objection as conflicting with fundamental principles of physics.

Attempts to include various outdoor levitations and teleportations under poltergeist activity do not appear to be warranted on the evidence assembled at present.

The same applies to movements of coffins when not explicable by water or earthquakes.

Cases with only one witness must always fall under the suspicion of being subjective. There is no doubt that some cases are entirely subjective. This is not to deny that a few of these may be paranormally caused.

Isolated events are difficult or impossible to evaluate.

CASES CITED

	Date	*Reference**
Branston Rectory	*ca.* 1665	Baxter
Wesley household, Epworth	1716	Hall
Simon Oakley, Cambridge	1718	Price
The Cock Lane ghost, London	1760	Hall
Vault, Stanton-all-Saints	1760	Thurston
Mrs. Ricketts, Hinton Ampner	1765	Sitwell, D. and H.
Dixon sisters, Newry	1776	*Arm. Mag.*
Marbleton, New York	1815	Fort, D. and H.
Chase vault, Barbados	1820	Thurston, Price
Procter, Willington Mill	1835	Sitwell, Price
Clothes line, Liverpool	1842	Fort, Price
Clothes line, Cupar	1842	Fort, Price

Vault, Ahrensburg	1844	Thurston
Comrie Hall, Scotland	1844	D. and H.
Vault, Greatford	*ca.* 1867	Thurston
Cottage, Derrygonnelly	1877	Barrett
Signy-le-Pettit, Ardennes	1879	Fort
East Kent, Ontario	1880	Fort
Miss H. Power, London	1883	Myers
Collège Bar-sur-Aube	1886	Fort
Balleehin House, Scotland	1892	D. and H.
Elwin March, Portland, Oregon	1909	Barrett
John Randall, Enniscorthy	1910	Barrett
Mesa Redanda, Spain	1910	Fort, D. and H.
Clothes line, Islip	1919	Fort, Price
Borley Rectory	1930	D. G. and H.
Vault, Barbados	1945	Price
The Ousedale haunt	1956	D. and H.
Virginia Campbell, Sauchie	1960	Chap. 5
Wood, Buxton	1961	

* Some obvious abbreviations are employed.

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In references throughout, the following abbreviations are used:

J.A.S.P.R.—Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research
J.S.P.R.—Journal of the Society for Psychical Research (Britain)
P.S.P.R.—Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research (Britain)
Ann. Psychical Sci.—Annals of Psychical Science (British ed. of *Annales des Sciences Psychiques*)
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All Rank Knavery?

The great Reginald Scot in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) delivered himself of the following opinion:

> I could recite a great Number of Tales, how Men have even forsaken their Houses, because of Apparitions and Noises; and all has been by meer and rank Knavery; and wheresoever you shall hear that there are the Night Season such rumbling and fearful Noises, be you assured, that it is flat Knavery, performed by some that seem most to complain, and are least suspected; and hereof there is a very Art, which for some respects I will not discover. The Devil seeks daily, as well as nightly whom he may Devour, and can do his Feats as well by Day as by Night, or else he is a Young Devil, or a very Burglar.

Here Scot expresses once and for all, and as pungently as can be, that attitude of thoroughgoing skepticism to hauntings of all kinds maintained by many later writers, his preferred explanation being deceit and trickery. It was to this uncompromising skepticism that he owed the greatness of his achievement in exposing the baselessness of the witchcraft delusion. He brought a skeptical and sarcastically mocking attitude to bear on a host of witchcraft cases with devastating results. It was natural therefore that he should regard most occult phenomena in the same light. All psychic researchers will not agree

with Scot's blanket rejection of all hauntings, but will probably concur with the opinion that for the age in which he lived it was a fault on the right side. And indeed at the time that he wrote a number of frauds had been publicly exposed.

It may therefore be instructive in minor degree, and at least entertaining, to give a résumé of some of the more noted frauds perpetrated before and after the publication of Scot's *Discoverie*. Some of these affairs include items that were fraudulently arranged but were found again in later poltergeist cases or in spiritualist séances.

Religion being a prime concern of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is not surprising that the best-known early cases should have been pious frauds. The efficacy of a good haunting in bringing the spiritually delinquent back to a healthy fear of God and to the True Religion, Protestant or Catholic as the case may be, had been noted. For instance, Guazzo (ed. Summers, 1929) describes a poltergeist haunting of a priest's house in Würzburg in 1583. Things were hurled violently to the floor, torches blown out, horrible things seen and hurled. Another priest sent to the house as a spiritual bodyguard had a salver thrown at him, but bravely performed an exorcism and called the household to penance, especially exhorting the servants to throw aside heresy. Such measures are not always effective in laying poltergeists, but on this occasion they were. Whether genuine or fraudulent, the haunting was regarded in Catholic circles as having done some good, for apparently the servants were reclaimed from their Protestant inclinations. As regards proven frauds in the sphere of religion, the historical record is somewhat impartial in its distribution of blame between the sects. We find Catholics hoodwinking Catholics, and on other occasions fooling Protestants. Anglicans hoaxed both Catholics and Presbyterians.

♄ THE DOMINICANS OF BERN

LUDWIG LAVATER, Minister of Tigurine in the Commonwealth of Bern, was a Calvinist, and wrote a book (1572) *Of Ghosts and Spirits Walking by Night*. The work is of some technical theological interest, being concerned essentially with the nature and origin of the ghosts of the dead. This is more of a problem for Protestants than for Catholics, as there is no Purgatory in the Protestant scheme of things. Though Lavater accepted the possibility of apparitions of the dead, he had limited superstition and considerable skepticism. He is aware of subjective hallucination as opposed to true apparition:

"True it is, that many men do falsely persuade themselves that they do hear or see ghosts for that which they imagine they see or hear, proceedeth either of melancholy, madness, weakness of the senses, fear, or of some other perturbation; or else when they see or hear beasts, vapours, or some other natural things, then they vainly suppose, they have seen sights I wot not what, as hereafter I will show particularly by many and notable examples."

Lavater is also alive to the existence of pranksters:

"Many times, pleasant and merrie young men, disguise themselves like unto Devils, or else shroud themselves in white sheets . . . young men merrily disposed, when they travel by the way, coming to their Inne at night, tie ropes to the bed side, or to the coverlet of garments, or else hide themselves under the bed. . . ."

He goes on to recount "a famous history" of four monks of the order of Dominicans at Bern about 1509 who deceived a novice who had lately joined their monastery, one John Jetzer, "a plain fellow." There was at this time great contention between the Dominicans and the Franciscans regarding the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. The Dominicans found it convenient to supplement argument with a miracle. The unsophisticated John seemed to be an apt recipient for a revelation, so they proceeded with a preliminary softening up by way of poltergeist phenomena. "They tried him by throwing stones into his chamber by night, making a great noise, and feigning themselves to be Spirits." The Superior himself donned a white sheet for the occasion. At length the poor tailor was visited by St. Barbara herself with the message that he would soon be honored by the appearance of the Virgin Mary, who would communicate to him the answer to certain cardinal questions in theology. And in due course this august event took place. The monks at this stage should have been content to leave well-enough alone, but instead their zeal outran their discretion as John, though clearly slow-witted, was not quite moronic. "After all this, another of them appeared telling him many things; but the Friar knowing him by his voice, began to suspect and mislike the whole matter, and with violence thrust him from him. The next night the Prior appeared unto him saying that he was Mary of whom he had been in doubt. . . . The Friar knowing the Prior's voice, caught a knife and wounded him." The affair became a scandal and ended sadly for the four monks, who were condemned to the stake by the Senate of Bern (see also Defoe, 1735). Lavater has given the Protestant version of the story. As shown in Dingwall's masterly study, Lavater's account omits many subtleties and complexities in the case, though it is correct in essentials.

THE GHOST IN THE CHURCH ROOF

In another tale, which he quotes from Sleidan, Lavater now makes the Franciscans the villains. In 1534 the Franciscans at Orléans believed that the provost of the city had swindled them out of a substantial bequest for funeral rites that they should have had from his deceased wife. They arranged therefore that news should be brought "from the other side" making it clear that the lady was damned forever. Perhaps this was done entirely for spite, but perhaps also in the hope that some conscience money might yet be offered to mitigate the lady's plight. They placed a young novice over the arch of the church and instructed him to make a great rumbling noise when they came for midnight prayers. "Out of hand the Monks began to conjure and charm but he answereth nothing, then being required to give a sign whether he were a dumb Spirit or no, he begins to rumble or stir again; which thing they took as a certain sign."

The next night various citizens came by special invitation. The novice had been provided "with a little piece of board to strike on." At midnight therefore the spirit rumbled, and when questioned communicated by rappings and rumblings that it was not lawful for him to speak. Fortunately it was able to agree to answer questions affirmatively by two raps, and negatively by three, and in due course revealed itself as the troubled spirit of the provost's wife. At the instance of the provost the Bishop sent in due course his Ecclesiastical Judge, who took his business sufficiently seriously to demand to be taken up into the top of the vault to see the ghost for himself. This being refused, the provost took the matter to the king, who sent down a special commission of Paris aldermen. Eventually the Franciscan ringleaders were arraigned and condemned to death. They were luckier than their predecessors in Bern, the sentence never being confirmed for fear that the exposure would be helpful to the cause of the Lutherans then being persecuted. Catholic sympathizers kept the monks well fed and clothed in jail and they were eventually released.

Noël Taillepied writing in 1588 from a Catholic point of view declared of this story that Sleidan "had made a bouncing lie of it." His own book A *Treatise of Ghosts* was written as a refutation of Lavater's but is intellectually much inferior to it. But it is only fair to say that according to Lang (1896) a different version of the story, given by Lenglet Du Fresnoy (1751), is extant, in which the monks appear more as deceived than as deceivers.

Lavater gives three more accounts of impersonations of ghosts but these are distinctly less interesting than the two we have selected.

THE WALL SPIRIT

The London wall spirit of 1554 (see "References: Wall Spirit") illustrates, for a change, Protestant knavery, perpetrated during the Catholic ascendancy at the accession of Mary I. Elizabeth Croft (or Crofte), described as an idle wench of eighteen, was concealed by her Protestant patrons in a cavity in the thick wall of a house in Aldersgate Street. Speaking through "a whistle or trumpet" she uttered denunciations of the Catholic faith, of King Philip, and of the queen herself. The voice sounded so hollow and loud that large crowds collected. ("What a piteous noyse, like a spirit in a wal, doth he make.") Confederates mingling with the crowd spread the rumor that the locutions were divinely inspired. The Lord Mayor had some difficulty in exposing the fraud until at last he decided to break down the wall. The girl was discovered and confessed that she had been led into it by certain sectaries, especially Drake, a servant of Sir Anthony Knyvell, who had supplied the "whistle." Elizabeth was sent to Newgate and made to read a public confession on a scaffold by St. Paul's Cross and ask forgiveness of the queen. Mary dealt with her mildly and she was soon released. The interest of the case lies in the modernity of the instrument used to propagate the "direct voice." The "whistle" was doubtless a simple hollow wooden tube anticipating by some 300 years the cardboard tube used in some spiritualist circles in the 1870's (Hall, 1962).

The case is slightly reminiscent of the anecdote told by Le Loyer (1605) of the servant having his eye on his deceased master's fortune, who broke down a wall or terrace near the bedside of his widowed mistress. He put a reed through and spoke by night as the soul of her late husband. The spirit advised her "for her profit" to take the servant as husband. The device succeeded and indeed had quite a happy ending, for he became a good husband, and died one of the richest citizens of Angers, his wealth being proverbial in Anjou.

THE DEMONS OF THE ANDES

From its earliest days the Church has set great store by the conversion of chiefs and princes. Correspondingly, it has in the past expected resistance not only from the heathen priesthoods but also

from the heathen gods themselves, the latter being in the medieval Christian view Satan himself or lesser devils. Cieza de Leon tells an interesting story of manifestations alleged to have happened in 1549 at the baptism of a Peruvian youth Tamaraqunga, the brother of a chief. Andrew Lang mentions this case in his commentary on Kirk's *Secret Commonwealth* (ed. 1893) and inclines to believe that there was some genuine poltergeist activity. However the account, conveniently reprinted in Guazzo (1608), is sufficiently ambiguous to make us wonder whether the actual phenomena, as opposed to exaggerated Christian accounts, were not merely staged by the Inca priests to discourage Tamaraqunga's defection.

It appears that having decided to go to Anzerma to receive baptism, the youth was in an extremely nervous state, verging on hysteria. The devils, visible only to the proselyte, appeared to him as Andean condors and in other hideous shapes. At one point he had a choking seizure ascribed to the demons throttling him. The local Christians also reported that he was hurled about and indeed carried about in the air in their presence. One of them claimed that although the devils were visible to the chief alone he saw stones falling from the air and heard whistling. At length they took the road to Anzerma accompanied by 300 friendly Indians who were nonetheless too timid to walk close to Tamaraqunga. On the way the party was ambushed not by devils alone but by a gang of Peruvian zealots who tried to kidnap the lad. The Christians tied him by ropes to their own girdles. However, he was still frequently thrown to the ground en route. Arrived at a house in Anzerma they all heard whistling and shouting and the Indian war cry "Hie! Hie!" Whistling and groaning followed the party into the church where Tamaraqunga was "visibly snatched into the air." This was at night. Next morning Mass was performed and all disturbances suddenly ceased, apparently forever.

It is likely that the substratum of truth to be found in this report is capable of simple naturalistic interpretation. Tamaraqunga may have writhed and leaped about in a hysterical state of tension, and the Peruvian zealots may have provided the whistling, shouting and groaning, and from cover have lobbed stones at him. But the narrative is vague at all critical points and certainty is not possible.

❧ HAUNTED IRISH CASTLES

Lenihan (1866; see also Seymour, 1913) quotes a letter of August 13, 1640, telling of rollicking disturbances in a castle in Limerick belonging to Lord Castleconnell. This was almost on the eve of the rising of the Wild Irish in 1641, a rebellion joined eventually by the Catholic Irish of the Pale. It was a period in which religious dissensions and resentment of the native Irish against the English were coming to a boiling point. The phenomena mentioned in the letter doubtless started as crude jokes played by the Irish to take a rise out of their Anglo-Irish masters. The letter reports: "for news we have the strangest that ever was heard of, inchantments in the Lord of Castleconnell's Castle, four miles from Limerick, several sorts of noise, sometimes of drums and trumpets, sometimes of curious musique with heavenly voices, then fearful screeches and such outcries that the neighbours near cannot sleep. Priests have adventured to be there, but have been cruelly beaten for their pains, and carried away they knew not how, some two miles and some four miles. Moreover were seen in the like manner, after they appear to the view of the neighbours, infinite number of armed men on foot as well as on horseback. . . ." There were other visions seen in County Limerick, and these may be ascribed to the increased sensibility caused by the tensions of the period.

Ghosts and poltergeists have not often been impressed into the armed forces. But it seems that at least once during the Irish Rebellion they served as irregulars, Irish warfare being terrifyingly unconventional. In the winter of 1643-1644 the small government garrison put into Ballymarter Castle were plagued by poltergeists "like creatures in white shirts" who pulled the clothes off their beds and otherwise annoyed them, till one of them, going into the cellar, found "Gibbaloney the great divell himself sitting at the barrel's head with a candle in his hand taking tobacco," after which there was no more staying at Ballymarter (Wedgewood, 1958). The castle became that ruin now known as Quintin Castle, about fifty yards from the cliffs of Quintin Bay in County Down.

❧ THE JUST DEVIL OF WOODSTOCK

Blenheim Palace at Woodstock, a few miles from Oxford, was presented by a grateful nation to John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough, but perhaps is nowadays more famous as the place where Winston Churchill "made two very important decisions: to be born and to marry." But the visiting public are probably unaware of the long history of the estate as a royal manor and site of the old Palace of Woodstock built by Henry II and extended by later mon-

archs. The old mansion, pulled down in 1651, was on the opposite side of the River Glyme from Blenheim Palace and is about 300 yards from an ancient spring, Fair Rosamond's Well. The fair Rosamond was Rosamond Clifford, daughter of Walter, Lord Clifford, an ancestor of "fell Clifford" of Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, and is said to have been at the age of fifteen one of the mistresses of Henry II, there being much legendary accretion to the story. The Old Manor was captured by Parliamentary troops in the Civil War, and after the death of Charles I on the scaffold, like other royal property it was disposed of by Parliament. In 1649 a commission was sent to arrange the sale. According to Anthony à Wood (1692, Vol. II, col. 119), the commissioners were: "Cockaine, Hart, Unton Croke, Careless, and Roe, captains: Richard Croke, the lawyer, afterwards Recorder of Oxford; and Browne, the surveyor." They completed their work but were hindered by a particularly boisterous poltergeist. There is ample reason to believe that the poltergeist cloaked the identity of waggish Cavaliers, but although the case has not been listed by Lambert as being of geological origin, there is plenty of water in the vicinity and it may be worth while to give some account of the case and of its documentation.

No serious report on this case was published before 1660. It is unlikely that it is a complete fiction, because Aubrey (1696) gives the text of a letter from Mr. John Lydall of Trinity College, Oxford, dated March 11, 1649. Lydall is mentioned in Wood's *Fasti Oxon.* (Vol. II, col. 741, 1692) and in Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy* (p. 133, 1714; Marshall, 1873). He said that he had from "Mr. W. Hawes (who now lives with Sir William Fleetwood in the Park) that the Committee . . . were frighted with strange apparitions; and that the four Surveyors . . . were pelted out of their chambers by stones thrown in at the windows, that their candles were continually put out as fast as they lighted them; and that one with his sword drawn to defend a candle, was with his own scabbard in the meantime well cudgelled; so that for the blow, or for fear, he fell sick, and the others were forced to remove; some of them to Sir William Fleetwood's House."

Wood (1692, Vol. II, col. 118) says that a poem of unknown authorship, *The Woodstock Scuffle etc.* was published in 1649. This is correct; the pamphlet is in the British Museum, and was reprinted by Sir Walter Scott in the 1832 and later editions of his novel *Woodstock*. Intended as humorous satire on the Parliamentarians, it narrates the haunting of the commissioners by a ghostly hound, and the heaving up of their beds and bedclothes. It records also the flying

about of candles, some of which burned with a blue flame, the throwing about of the firewood, and loud noises that racked the nerves of the commissioners, and tells of the burning of their book of valuations.

So far as the verses go they are in agreement with the principal account of the affair written by the Rev. Thomas Widows. Wood (1692, Vol. II, col. 118) says that Widows, born in 1612, was the brother of Giles Widows, a noted preacher and Rector of Carfax, Oxford. In 1640 Thomas was the master of the Collegiate School at Gloucester but soon after was "outed for his loyalty" (to the king) and became Minister of Woodstock (i.e., Rector of Bladon) and schoolmaster there, as the district was in Royalist hands. He died in 1655, but left a record in diary form of the occurrences at the Old Manor. Wood says that "After his death 'twas printed, in Dec. 1660, and had the year 1649 put in the title, as if it had been then printed." Here he is referring to the edition of which there is now a copy at Harvard (Cordeaux and Merry, 1955). There was another printing dated 1660, London, represented by the copies at the Bodleian, Oxford, and the British Museum. This latter, conveniently, were also reprinted as Appendix II to the introduction of *Woodstock* (Scott, 1832 and later editions).

The booklet consists of the relevant entries from Widows' diary, preceded by a statement giving the surnames of the commissioners (in agreement with Wood) and listing as others present their three servants, their ordinary-keeper (possibly a sort of quarter master in charge of provisions or other supplies) and others, and the gatekeeper with the wife and servants. "Besides many more, who each night heard the noise; as Sir Gerrard Fleetwood and his lady, with his family; Mr. Hyams, with his family, and several others who lodged in the outer courts; and during the three last nights the inhabitants of Woodstock town, and other neighbour villages. And there were many more, both divines and others, who came out of the country, and from Oxford, to see the glass and stones, and other stuff, the devil had brought, wherewith to beat out the Commissioners; the marks upon some walls remain, and many, this to testifie."

A preface follows that is obviously of Cavalier authorship. It rejoices in the restoration of 'our native King' Charles II, and deliverance from "the tyrannical times of that detestable usurper, Oliver Cromwell." The unknown editor claims that the narrative shows that the devil himself disliked the doings of the Parliamentarians, warning their commissioners at Woodstock, "with dreadful noises, to drive them from their work." He is clearly writing with tongue in his cheek,

suggesting that the devil was in this instance on the side of the angels. He explains that during the Commonwealth it would have been unsafe to publish the narrative, and goes on to specify its origin. "And now as to the penman of this narrative, know that he was a divine, and at the time of those things acted, . . . the minister and schoolmaster of Woodstock; a person learned and discreet, not byassed with factious humour, his name Widows, who each day put in writing what he heard from their mouthes (and such things as they told to have befallen them the night before), therein keeping to their own words; and never thinking that what he had writ should happen to be made publick, gave it no better dress to set it forth. And because to do it now shall not be construed to change the story, the reader hath it here accordingly exposed." Widows' diary narrative covers the period Oct. 16 to 31, 1649, with an entry for each day. Wood remarks: "This book is very impartially written, and therefore worth the reading by all especially the many Atheists of this age." Widows abstains from all commentary and gives no indication of any opinion of his own relative to the disturbances. Though a Royalist and presumably an obedient Anglican in his religion, he may well have shared the superstitious attitudes of many Presbyterians and Independents and have believed in the reality of the haunting. Equally, he may have known or suspected a plot but not chosen to have put down his knowledge or suspicions in his day-to-day record of what he had been told.

Widows' diary, supplemented by information from one of the commissioners (probably Richard Croke, Recorder of Oxford), was the basis of Dr. Robert Plot's account (1677) in his *Natural History of Oxfordshire*. Plot says he "was prevailed upon at last to make the relation public (though I must confess I have no esteem for such kind of stories, many of them no question being performed by combination). . . ." He concludes his relation by noting that, though tricks have often been played in affairs of this kind, many of these things are not reconcilable with juggling; such as (1) loud noises beyond the power of men to make, (2) tearing and breaking of the beds, (3) throwing about of the fire, (4) the hoof treading out the candle, (5) the striving for the sword and the blow the man received from the pommel of it.

Plot's narrative was reprinted practically without change by Sinclair (1685). Nothing further was written about the case until a century after the event, when "Moralist," the writer of what we should now call a "column" in the *British Magazine*, published an exposé in the issue of April, 1747 under the title "The Genuine History of the Good Devil of Woodstock. . . ." Moralist said that some original papers

had lately come into his hands under the name of "Authentic Memoirs of the Memorable Joseph Collins of Oxford, commonly known by the name of Funny Joe, and now intended for the press." In addition Moralist said that attached to the "Memoirs of Joe Collins" was an account drawn up and signed by the commissioners themselves. Suspending judgment as to whether this supposed document existed and was authentic we may note some of the entries, and compare them with Widows' narrative.

The item for *October 13* records the arrival and accommodation of the commissioners in the manor house in terms fairly similar to those in the Widows, Plot, and Sinclair accounts. (But the latter refer it to October 16.)

Under *October 16* we find that while the commissioners were sitting for despatch of business a large black dog bounded in and gnawed the cords under the bed. Giles Sharp, their secretary, eventually found that a plate of meat hidden under the bed by a servant had been untouched. He persuaded them that it was a phantom dog. (Widows gives this under October 17 as occurring in the night.)

On *October 17*, as they were sitting at dinner, they heard someone walking about in the upper room and later firewood thrown about there. Sharp getting the key, they went up and found the door locked but the room in confusion. "In the night following the same day the said Giles and two others of the commissioners' servants" had their beds heaved up, and declared their bones were sore with the jolting. (Widows puts both the events under October 18 and has them happening in the night. In addition, the bed-heaving is done by a phantom that breathes with a hideous sound.)

For *October 19* we read that when they were all in bed the candles were blown out with a sulphurous smell, and many trenchers of wood were hurled about, one of the men being hit. (Widows has the phantom walking about clanging a brass warming pan. He refers the trenchers to *October 20*, saying Captain Hart was hit by them.)

Under *October 20* we have the candles put out as before, while the bed curtains were drawn to and fro with violence. Eight great pewter dishes and three dozen trenchers were thrown at the beds. They heard firewood thrown down on the floor by their bedsides but in the morning it was all back in the pantry, though according to Giles had "a different arranging." (Widows, as mentioned above, has three dozen trenchers flying about the room as under his entry for *October 20*.)

October 21. "The keeper of their ordinary and his bitch lay

with them; this night they had no disturbance." (Widows has a figure "of mighty proportion" knocking and entering the bedchamber that stomped about "shaking the floor at every step, and then drew the bed curtains up and down, and shook the beds." Eight pewter dishes were bowled about the room and over the servants in the truckle beds. "As they supposed, clefts of the King's Oak did roll about the room.")

October 22. "The candles were put out. They had the bitch with them again, but were not by that protected; the bitch set up a very piteous cry." Bedclothes were pulled off and bricks thrown around. (Widows says: "Hath missed of being set down, the officers imployed in their work farther off, came not that day to Woodstock.")

For October 23 there is no entry. (Under October 24, Widows says: "They lodged all abroad.")

At this point it is convenient to pause to examine the degree of concordance between the account ascribed to the commissioners and that given by Widows. It will be seen that they are quite reconcilable if we suppose that in the commissioners' account an item for, say, October 17 refers to happenings on the night following that day. This would inevitably be the mode of dating used by actual participants in the drama. We may suppose also that Widows would enter in his diary under October 18 what he had been told on that day and which referred therefore to the preceding night, that of October 17. The discrepancy as regards content is also easily resolved if we suppose that somewhat exaggerated reports circulated in the little town. We do not have to take literally the statement by Widows' editor that he heard the story from the commissioners' own mouths. The "Memoirs of Joe Collins," from which Moralist purports to quote, claim that the secretary Giles Sharp was none other than Collins under an alias, who contrived to introduce two other friends as fellow servants. If this is true, then it is certain that Collins and his associates would themselves take care to spread marvelous and exaggerated reports in the village.

Returning to the report ascribed to the commissioners, we find under October 24 that candles were put out and more firewood tumbled about but removed by morning. Under October 25 we have extinction of candles, pulling of bed curtains, a terrible crack like thunder, and "one of the servants running to see if his masters were not killed, found on his return three dozen of trenchers laid smoothly upon his bed under the quilt. (Widows puts down all these

events of October 24 and 25 as under October 25. At this stage, it would seem, he has now decided to date events according to the night when they occurred rather than on the day they were reported.)

On the night of October 26 broken glass fell all about in the room and was found strewn on the floor in the morning, the windows being intact. (Widows concurs and also says that Richard Crook, the lawyer, declared in Woodstock that he would not lodge another night at the manor for a fee of £500.)

There are no entries for October 27 and 28. (Widows reports more stones on the twenty-seventh, and a comic fracas between Captains Crook and Cockaine on the twenty-eighth, in which each mistook the other for a spirit. This may have been fabricated by Widows' informants. On the other hand, the commissioners may have omitted it from their narrative as making them seem too ridiculous.)

On October 29, "something walked majestically through the room and opened and shut the window, great stones were thrown violently into the room . . . and about a quarter after one a noise was heard as of forty cannon discharged together . . . throughout the country for sixteen miles around." Giles Sharp snatched "up a sword that had well nigh killed one of their honours, taking him for the spirit as he came in his shirt into the room." (Widows says that the keeper and bitch lodged with them so that they had no disturbance. Perhaps his dating has relapsed and he is really referring to October 28, for which there is no entry in the other narrative.)

For October 30 the accounts are in fair agreement. A massive phantom again stomped around, brandishing a warming pan, and there was a good pelting with glass, stones, and horses' bones.

There is also fairly good agreement for the night that is put down as November 1 in the commissioners' account and as October 31 in Widows' narrative. Clearly someone made a mistake in the date. Taking the commissioners' account, we find that they kept a great fire lighted and many candles. At midnight "A noise like a cannon burst was heard in the room, and burning billets tossed all around," but put out by the ever efficient Giles and his assistants. An hour later the candles were extinguished, with more big bangs. Pails full of stinking green water were thrown on their honors in bed, also stones. The windows were now really broken, also the curtains and bedsteads. The whole neighborhood was alarmed with the noises, "nay the very rabbit-stealers . . . were so frightened . . .

that they fled . . . and left their ferrets behind them" (near Rosamund's Well, says Widows).

One of the commissioners asked the spirit what it wanted. Things went quiet for a while and then revived. "One of the servants lighted a large candle, and set it in the doorway between the two chambers, to see what passed, and as he watched it he plainly saw a hoof striking the candlestick into the middle of the room . . . The same person was so bold as to draw a sword, but he had scarce got it out when he perceived another invisible had hold of it too, and at length prevailing struck him . . . with the pummel, that he fell down for dead." Twenty more bangs followed, each "like a broadside of a ship of war." At this point awakened neighbors came in and the rest of the night was spent in prayers and psalm-singing punctuated by bangs.

This was the climax and conclusion of the whole affair, attained not inappropriately on or about Halloween. Widows says the party spent the next night in the rooms over the gatehouse, and then removed to Ewelme (presumably to Sir William Fleetwood's, as Lydall says), coming back a fortnight after. On this visit they lodged "not in any of those rooms where they had laid before." No details are provided of such hauntings as they now experienced, though Widows hints that they were not left unvisited by the devil. He ends by remarking that diverse persons subsequently slept in the manor without the least disturbance.

Moralist, having given the supposed statement of the commissioners, now gives the gist of the Joe Collins memoirs. He says:

> To see however, how great men are sometimes deceived, we may recur to this our tract, where among other things there is one entitled "The secret history of the good devil of Woodstock," in which we find it under the author's own hand, that he, Joseph Collins, commonly called Funny Joe, was himself this very devil; that he hired himself as a servant to the Commissioners under the feigned name of Giles Sharp, and by the help of two friends, an unknown trap-door in the ceiling of the bedchamber, and a pound of cannon gunpowder, played all these amazing tricks by himself, and his fellow servants whom he had introduced on purpose to assist him, had lifted up their own beds.
>
> The candles were contrived by a common trick of gunpowder put in them to put themselves out by a certain time.

> The dog who began the farce was, as he swore, no dog, but truly a bitch who had the day before whelped in that room and made all this disturbance in seeking for her puppies; and which when she had served his purpose, he let out and then looked for. The story of the hoof and sword himself alone was witness to, and was never suspected as to the truth of them though mere fictions. By the trap-door his friends let down stones, faggots, glass, water, etc. which they either left there or drew up again as best suited with him; and by this way let themselves in and out without opening the doors and going through the keyholes; and all the noise he declares he made by placing quantities of white gun powder over pieces of burning charcoal on plates of tin, which as they melted went off with that violent explosion.
>
> One thing there was beyond all these he tells us, which was also what drew them from the house in reality, though they never owned it. This was they had formed a reserve of part of the premises to themselves, and hid their mutual agreement, which they had drawn up in writing, under the earth in a pot in a corner of the room in which they usually dined, in which an orange tree grew; where in the midst of their dinner one day this earth of itself took fire and burned violently with a blue flame, filling the room with a strong sulphurous stench, and this he also professes was his own doing, by a secret mixture he had placed there the day before.
>
> I am very happy in having an opportunity of setting history right about these remarkable events; and would not have the reader disbelieve my author's accounts of them, from his naming either white gunpowder going off when melted, or his making the earth about the plot take fire of its own accord, since, however improbable these accounts may appear to some readers, and whatever secrets they might be in Joe's time, they are well known now in chemistry. As to the last, there needs only to mix an equal quantity of iron filings, finely powdered, and powder of pure brimstone, and make them into a paste with fair water. This paste when it has lain together about 26 hours, will of itself take fire, and burn all the sulphur away, with a blue flame and great stink. For the others, what he calls white gunpowder, is plainly the thundering powder called *pulvis fulminans* by our chemists. It is made only of three parts of saltpetre, two parts of pearl ashes, or salt of tartar, and one part of

flower of brimstone, mixed together to a fine powder; a small quantity of this held on the point of a knife over a candle will not go off till it melts, and then give a report like a pistol; and this he might easily dispose of in large quantities, so as to make it go off of itself, while he was with his masters.

As Lang (1893) justly remarks, there is no proof of the existence of Joe Collins or of the authenticity of the two documents that Moralist claims to quote. There is no Joseph Collins listed as an alumnus of Oxford University, or for that matter of Cambridge. But he need not have been in the university. Wood's *Atheniae Oxonienses* gives a James Collins who later had fame as an applied scientist. He sounds like a serious fellow, and moreover was at sea till 1647 or 1648.

The alleged statement of the commissioners is not seriously discrepant with Widows' narrative. We have already plausibly reconciled both the content and the dating. Naturally we must ask whether it is a simple adaptation of Widows' account made by Moralist or some other hack. If so it is an exceedingly clever one, as the language throughout, even when describing the same events, often differs materially. If the adapter deliberately introduced the dating discrepancies it was a brilliant but perhaps oversubtle stroke. We know from Widows that Croke the lawyer believed, or gave out that he believed, in the reality of the haunting. It is likely that as Recorder of Oxford he was Plot's informant. Hence he at least of the commissioners could well have agreed that Giles Sharp (who doubtless suggested it) draw up a narrative, and he at least may have signed it.

Lang objects that nowhere in the Widows or Plot narratives is Giles Sharp named, or a secretary listed as one of the party. However Sharp (or Collins) might have taken employment as a mere clerk and so, with his two friends have been listed as three servants. In those informal days even more than now a bright person's job would tend to be what he made of it, and he may have soon become a "Figaro" or general factotum to the committee.

There is nothing at all improbable in a young Cavalier in 1649 needing to take casual employment. Many young men were at a loose end after the disbandment of the Royalist forces consequent on their defeats. Nor is it unlikely that he should try to turn it to Royalist advantage. In the period of the Rump and the Commonwealth there was no end to Royalist plots of varying seriousness.

It is also quite consistent with conditions after 1660 that the joker might need to keep his identity secret. It has been said that the Restoration restored nothing. Presbyterians, Independents, and other Parliamentarians were still entrenched in all parts of the country, enjoyed property acquired during the Rebellion, and occupied valuable posts and positions of patronage. Collins may well have needed that his identity as the Devil of Woodstock remain anonymous.

We shall now, of course, never have proof of Collins' real existence, though I incline to the view that Moralist's documents were genuine. Someone took the trouble to put out *The Woodstock Scuffle* as a lampoon in 1649. Again someone humorous and satirical in 1660 wrote the preface to Widows' pamphlet. Perhaps Joe Collins was both of these anonymous authors. My own guess is that he and his accomplices were among the Royalists who held Woodstock Manor against Parliamentary forces until the very end of the First Civil War in the spring of 1646. Perhaps he had intended to study at Oxford, but may have done like Anthony Wood's elder brother, who "left his gown at the towns-end and ran to Edgehill" (Wedgewood, 1958).

By way of epilogue it may be of interest to note the literary sequel to the doings of the Merry Devil. Dr. W. F. Mavor in his *Description of Blenheim* (twelfth edition, undated) referred to the haunting of the commissioners by the Merry Devil, also known as the Just Devil, who was in fact the Royalist Joe Collins. He cites no authority and presumably had it directly or indirectly from Moralist's article. J. N. Brewer (1813) repeats this, and since he acknowledges his general indebtedness to Dr. Mavor presumably took it from Mavor's guide to Blenheim.

In 1827 William Hone included in his *Every-Day Book* a transcript of Moralist's article of 1747, saying that his attention had been drawn to it by a correspondent calling himself by the pen name of Onophiltatos.

In 1826 Scott furnished his new novel *Woodstock* with a preface in his usual style in which he acknowledges his indebtness to the manuscripts of "that eminent antiquary, the Rev. J. A. Rochecliffe, D.D." who is in fact, like Crystal Croftangry of Scott's *Chronicles of the Canongate*, completely fictive and apocryphal. Scott quotes the imaginary Rochecliffe as an authority for some of the assumptions woven into the plot of *Woodstock*—secret passages and Rosamond's labyrinth. He also refers to Dr. Plot's account of the

under the door. The room that was haunted was low-ceilinged, with a cellar beneath, and Mr. and Mrs. Austin slept there at nights. "They pretended to be mightily fearfull" and admitted curious visitors. "But the third week now coming on, on Monday night, about two o'clock . . . it made a great hollow noise and jingled money, and broke the windows by flinging little stones at them, and raised a stink of brimstone and frightened several old women that watched. . . ."

By the next night there "was above three score people flocking about the door," and three Bachelors of St. Johns;—Hall, Harrap, and Millard. " 'Come,' says one of them 'fetch us a good pitcher of ale, and tobacco and pipes, and we'll sit up and see this spirit.' 'With all our hearts' said three or four more: so they sent for the ale, and, as they went in, the people exclaimed 'Oh, you wicked wretches, will you have the divel to fetch you?' " Mr. and Mrs. Austin protested against the invasion of their bedroom, "but they cared not, but sat singing and drinking . . . till morning, but neither heard nor saw anything."

The night following, Mr. Walker, the minister of the Round Church nearby, took a party to pray in the house. Prayers were interrupted by a great bellowing voice, and a pot of paint was flung in, just missing Mr. Walker's head and smashing the window. It came from the yard at the back and must have been part of Mr. Austin's stock in trade, he being a painter. At this a crowd of about a hundred outside the door, hearing the crash, ran away. All stayed quiet now until Sunday night, when six shillings were thrown into the room with great noise and jingling. Five of the younger Fellows of St. John's now took a hand: Kenyon, Hope, Hedleton, and two others, also supported by Sir Francis Leicester, a young Fellow-Commoner. They "made an agreement amongst themselves to go thither exactly when the disturber was playing his pranks, and to shoot off their pistols towards any place where the noise was heard. So having by Monday night by one of their spys had information that the disturber was heard, they all went, and rushing together into the room talked high and charged their pistols before the people's faces that were there, and protested they would discharge them towards the place where any noise was heard, saying that it was a shame that a rogue and a villaine should make any noise in a town and disturb the whole neighbourhood with his knavish tricks, etc." The threat was efficacious, as "the divelish disturber . . . at this thought it best to be packing."

The same evening "there being a great number of people at the door, there chanced to come by Mr. Newton, fellow of Trinity College: a very learned man, and perceiving our fellows to have gone in, and seeing several scholars about the door, 'Oh ye fools', says he, 'will you never have any wit, know ye not that all such things are meer cheats and impostures? Fy, fy! go home, for shame' and so he left them scorning to go in."

It is interesting to have on record Newton's general rejection of "all such things." From one point of view it might be predictable as the attitude we might expect from the prince of mathematicians, the pioneer of dynamics and optics, the founder of celestial mechanics. But in fact we have no basis *a priori* for postulating skepticism to the occult in the austerely religious Newton. Supreme in natural philosophy, he had a second side to his elusive nature. On the plot of grass at Trinity Great Gate he kept a workshop in which he labored for years at alchemy, being suspected by the other Fellows of dabbling in black arts. He was occupied extensively too in the back reaches of theology, being particularly concerned with the numerology of apocalyptic prophecy, as in the Book of Revelation (Owen, 1963).

Our loyalty to Cambridge has brought us down from the higher plane of religion and politics to the level of student pranks. If we needed to consider the Wesley poltergeist flourishing in the following century it would take us back again to religious and political enmities. As, however, the happenings at Epworth have been very fully considered by Hall (1960) we can pass on to instances of private motive and domestic malice.

THE YOUNG LADIES OF SALAMANCA

Lavater besides alluding to the pranks of "pleasant and merry young men" goes on to say that "harlots and whoremongers, have practised their wickedness a long season under this cloak and pretence, persuading their family that walking Spirits haunt the house, lest they should be taken with deed doing, and that they might enjoy their desired love. Many times such bugges [i.e., bogles or bogies] have been caught by the magistrates, and put to open shame. Thus likewise some have many times robbed their neighbours in the night time, who supposing they heard the noise of walking Spirits, never went to drive these away."

It is a pity that more of the impostures unmasked by magis-

trates have not been put on record. This passage from Lavater is, however, interesting, as it shows that even four or five centuries ago, skepticism was not infrequent and the skeptics were well aware of theft and promiscuity as adequate motives for pretended hauntings. The Spanish writer Torquemada was author of *The Flower Garden* (1573), a book of travelers' tales and wonders which in English translation became *The Spanish Mandeville*. Here he tells the story of a poltergeist haunting of a house in Salamanca about 1570, which in particular is interesting as it shows the promptitude with which the citizenry of those times could think the worst of their neighbors' morals. The tale in question has to be taken lightly in view of the strictures made on its author by the curate in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. In Part I, Chapter VI, we find the curate and the barber in the library engaged in selecting the more fanciful romances for the bonfire in the courtyard. Coming upon *Don Olivante de Laura*, the curate remarks that it is by the same author as *The Flower Garden* and "to be frank with you I cannot make out which of the two is the more truthful, or rather the less mendacious. I can only say that for its arrant nonsense it shall go into the yard."

Be that as it is may, here is the Salamanca story as quoted by Guazzo (1608) in Summers' translation (1929):

> At Salamanca there was a matron whose house was popularly said to be haunted by stone-throwing. The Mayor of the city was incited by this rumour to test for himself whether the persistent report concerning the house was true, or whether it was not rather invented by the servants in order to cover up some naughty pranks of theirs; for there were among them two young girls of no mean beauty, and it was suspected that the whole of the story had been fabricated in order to facilitate their meetings with their lovers. . . .
>
> [But investigation failed to support this facile conclusion.] The Mayor went to the house at the time when the stoning was said to be most frequent, and there went with him no less than twenty of the townsmen, some of whom he sent with a light to search the upper part of the house to see who it was who threw stones at the servants. They searched diligently everywhere, and came back and said they had found nothing at all alarming. He then decided to examine the cellars, to which some steps led down from the dining-room, and to spend some time in a further search in that direction. And lo! Hardly had they reached the place before there was a great noise, and stones began to be hurled at them and swept them off their legs, but without harming them.
>
> So they were sent again to see where this shower of stones came from: and although they found no one in the place, the shower of stones kept falling. This went far to confirm the opinion which many had formed, that the phenomena were all due to the devil's work and magic; and this belief they more stoutly maintained as the stones kept falling about their heads. Some of them then rushed from the house in terror; but one of them feeling bolder at a safe distance, took up and carefully noticed the appearance of one particular stone and threw it into the house, saying "If this came from you, O devil, throw the same stone back at me!" And when this was at once done, there was no more room for doubt that the house was haunted by demons as the matron had said.

This amusing description has a lifelike ring to it, suggesting some substratum of fact. Standing on its own it is, of course, a tall story but, as considered elsewhere, it is quite typical of a whole class of stories relating to indoor stone-throwing, and it might well have happened as described, the young ladies' morals being "diabolically" vindicated.

THWARTED PASSIONS

FRUSTRATED desires may have been the motive for the "clodding" of Alexander Christie's house at Botarie as recorded under February 28, 1644, in the *Presbytery Book of Strathbogie*. One Patrick Malcolme was accused of having caused the house by sorcery to be pelted with clods of turf or peat for twenty nights following. The report speaks also of "fearful trouble raised in that house" but gives no details. Christie deponed that Malcolme, who appears to have been a laborer, came and "lodged in his house, quher [where] he urged his servant woman, Margaret Barbour, to misconduct herself with him (as the woman declared), and required her left shoe and he should cause her to follow him, quhilk [which] the woman refusing, the clodding began, and continued till the shoe was removed." It is reasonable to assume that the disgruntled Patrick may have worked off his feelings by nightly heaving of clods at the Christie residence. But, of course, this is only a supposition based on probabilities.

A grimmer tale appears in the *Dublin University Magazine*

over the initials A. M. H. (1845). The narrative purports to be "*From some family papers,*" and to have been written by a justice of the peace present at the Leicester Winter Assizes in 1679. On the second day of the Assizes a woman, Margaret Hubert, "of very comely and modest demeanour" was charged with having by witchcraft inflicted various torments upon John Burt and his household, more especially his daughter Alice. The accused Margaret was about thirty years of age, being in the second year of her widowhood; her husband had been a gentleman of repute who left her a substantial household and estate. John Burt, a cordwainer, some seventy years of age, deposed that violent knockings were heard, bedclothes pulled off beds, linen off their bodies, chests and trunks opened and things strewn about. Alice became afflicted with fits, during which she vomited stones, stubble, and other strange things and cried out against Dame Margaret. The counsel for the accused denied any supernatural agency and declared there was no proof that the accused was responsible. The jury convicted however and she was sentenced to death. The only implausibility in the story comes in at this point. We read that she was burned after watching two other women die at the stake. Ewen (1933), commenting on the story as a whole, says that except for the alleged burning there is nothing improbable in the story. The name Hubbert or Hubbard is common in Leicestershire.

The unknown narrator goes on to say that in the spring following, 1680, he visited his friend Sir John Tallboys at the Grange, about twenty miles from his own home. While he was there the local minister, Mr. Gresham, sent for Sir John to come as a justice of the peace to take the confession of a dying man, Walter Philipson, a stranger to the district. As Sir John had gout, our narrator went in his stead and took down Philipson's deposition in his diary. The man confessed that he had been violently enamoured of Margaret, "she being a fair widow, and having a good estate." Rejected and forbidden her presence, he took up again with Alice Burt, his former paramour, "a bold, bad girl." He "spirited this lost creature" to "help him" in various devices for alarming her father's family, and they, in those credulous times, easily believed that it was the work of some enemy who had "joined with the devil." Alice had discovered his love for the widow, and "womanly jealousy made her hate her rival," and overstep the limits Philipson had set to the plan.

Philipson said that he was consternated by the sentence. After two days' indecision he rode to London and confessed to the trial

Judge and obtained a letter to the sheriff to take pending delivery of the reprieve. He arrived at the scene of execution but could not force his way through the crowd in time to stop it. This is not improbable: such crowds were normal at executions. The narrator, presumably on Sir John Tallboys' authority, had the constables take Philipson to Leicester but he died on the journey. The case was brought before a special commission. Philipson's body was hanged in chains, John Burt was discharged as a dupe, but Alice was hanged. The narrator says there is a commemorative marble in Margaret's parish church. If this is the case it would confirm this horrible story, which takes plausibility from the fact that so many of the characters are named persons, and forfeits credence mainly in respect to the alleged burnings. However, Margaret might have been legally burned if additionally she had been convicted of murdering her husband, the crime of *petty treason*. Burning was often preceded humanely by strangling or hanging, as in the case of the execution noted by Lord Tennyson's grandmother in 1760.

ASTONISHING TRANSACTIONS AT STOCKWELL

Sir Walter Scott (ed. 1884) accepted the Stockwell case of 1772 as explicable in terms of amorous intrigue. In this he was following William Hone (1826), who published an exposé of the affair in his *Every-Day Book*. Hone said in 1826 that the affair was still remembered by many persons. He had conversed several times with one lady who firmly believed it to be a case of "witchcraft because she had been eye-witness to the animation of the inanimate crockery and furniture, which she said could not have been effected by human means—it was impossible." Hone, however, had "derived a solution of these 'impossibilities' from the late Mr. J. B.——, at his residence in South-hampton Street, Camberwell, towards the close of the year 1817. Mr. B—— said, all London was in an uproar about the 'Stockwell Ghost' for a long time, and it would have made more noise than the Cock-Lane Ghost, if it had lasted longer, but attention to it gradually died away, and most people believed it was supernatural."

The only description published of the case itself is the pamphlet of 1772 entitled *An Authentic, Candid, and Circumstantial Narrative, of the Astonishing Transactions at Stockwell*, etc. Harry Price (1945) reprints it in full, Catharine Crowe (1845) gave extracts (reprinted in Sitwell, 1940), and Andrew Lang gave a précis (1896). Stockwell was then a pleasant hamlet between Vauxhall and Brixton. The events

took place in the house of old Mrs. Golding of Stockwell parish, "a gentlewoman of unblemished character and reputation," who ten days before had engaged as a maid a girl about 20 years old, Ann Robinson. At 10 A.M. on Monday, January 6, Mrs. Golding heard a smashing of china and glasses in the back kitchen. Fetched by the maid, Mrs. Golding went there and plates began to fall from a dresser "while she was there and nobody near them!" A clock tumbled down, and a lantern, a pan of salt beef cracked, and a carpenter, Mr. Rowlidge, who had come in with several other interested visitors, anticipating Mr. Lambert by two centuries, suggested that a recent addition of a room upstairs had shaken the foundation of the house. To this the pamphlet says: "But no such thing happened as the reader will find, for whatever was the cause, that cause ceased almost as soon as Mrs. Golding and her maid left any place, and followed them wherever they went." They removed to Mr. Gresham's next door, and then about 2 P.M. to Rush Common, where the old lady's niece, Mrs. Pain, lived. At each place there was considerable jumping, dancing, flying, and smashing of domestic objects. It was so bad at 5 A.M. Tuesday that Mrs. Golding and Ann "went over the way to Richard Fowler's," but here a candlestick and a lantern were dashed down and a basket of coals tumbled over. Mrs. Golding resolved to return to her own house and did so accompanied by Ann and Mr. Pain. The residual furniture started to misbehave until Ann left the house to fetch Mrs. Pain. All disturbance stopped. This time forever, for when Ann returned with Mrs. Pain "she was immediately discharged . . . this was between six and seven o'clock on Tuesday morning."

The report concluded with the statement: "The above narrative is absolutely and strictly true, in witness whereof we have set our hands this eleventh day of January 1772. Mary Golding, John Pain, Mary Pain, Richard Fowler, Sarah Fowler, Mary Martin. The original copy of this narrative, signed as above, with the parties own hands, is in the hands of J. Marks, Bookseller, in St. Martin's Lane, to satisfy any person who chuses to apply to him for the inspection of the same."

The *Narrative* describes Mr. Pain as a farmer at Brixton Causeway, the Pains having several children and being well known and respected in the parish. It describes the Fowlers as living at the Brick-Pound and as honest, industrious and sober. Mary Martin was an elderly servant of Mr. Pain, having lived two years with them and previously four years with Mrs. Golding.

We do not know who composed the text. It may have been Mrs. Golding herself, or a hack employed by Marks taking a statement from the old lady. The probabilities are that the document was authentic and represented the evidence of fairly responsible witnesses set down within four days of the happenings. As we have noted, they associated the happenings in each house with the presence of Ann. But nowhere in the document is anything said to imply that any particular occurrence could have been done by Ann as a trick. They were, however, extremely puzzled by Ann's demeanor:

> "At all the times of action, Mrs. Golding's servant was walking backwards and forwards, either in the kitchen or parlour, or wherever some of the family happened to be. Nor could they get her to sit down five minutes together, except at one time for about half an hour towards the morning, when the family were at prayers in the parlour; then all was quiet: but in the midst of the greatest confusion, she was as much composed as at any other time, and with uncommon coolness of temper advised her mistress not to be alarmed or uneasy, as she said these things could not be helped. Thus she argued as if they were common occurrences which must happen in every family.
>
> This advice surprised and startled her mistress, almost as much as the circumstances that occasioned it. For how can we suppose that a girl of about twenty years old (an age when female timidity is too often assisted by superstition) could remain in the midst of such calamitous circumstances (except they proceeded from causes best known to herself) and not be struck with some terror as every other person who was present. These reflections led Mr. Pain, and at the end of the transactions, likewise Mrs. Golding, to think that she was not altogether so unconcerned as she appeared to be. But hitherto, the whole remains mysterious and unravelled."

Commentators on the Stockwell transactions who have blamed Ann Robinson have done so on the basis of (a) her lack of concern; (b) the association between the phenomena and her physical presence; (c) her supposed confession. Quoting further from William Hone:

> Mr. B——, in continuation, observed, that some years after it happened, he became acquainted with this very Ann Robinson,

without knowing for a long time that she had been the servant-maid to Mrs. Golding. He learned it by accident, and told her what he had heard. She admitted it was true, and in due season, he says he got all the story out. She had fixed long horse-hair to some of the crockery, and put wires under others; on pulling these, the "movables" of course fell. Mrs. Golding was terribly frightened, and so were all who saw anything tumble. Ann Robinson herself, dextrously threw many of the things down, which the persons present, when they turned round and saw them in motion or broken, attributed to unseen agency. These spectators were all too much alarmed by their own dread of infernal power to examine anything. They kept at an awful distance, and sometimes would not look at the utensils, lest they might face fresh horrors; of these tempting opportunities she availed herself. She put the eggs in motion, and after one only fell down, threw the other at the cat. Their terrors at the time, and their subsequent conversations magnified many of the circumstances beyond the facts. She took advantage of absences to loosen the hams and bacon, and attach them by the skins; in short, she effected all the mischief. She caused the water in the pail to appear as if it boiled, by slipping in a paper, of chemical powders as she passed, and afterwards it bubbled. "Indeed," said Mr. B—— "there was a love story connected with the case, and when I have time, I will write out the whole, as I got it by degrees from the woman herself. When she saw the effect of her first feats, she was tempted to exercise the dexterity beyond her original purpose for mere amusement. She was astonished at the astonishment she caused, and so went on from one thing to another; and being quick in her motions and shrewd, she puzzled all the simple old people, and nearly frightened them to death." Mr. B—— chuckled mightily over his recollections; he was fond of a practical joke, and enjoyed the tricks of Ann Robinson with all his heart. By his acuteness, curiosity and love of drollery, he drew from her the entire confession, and "as the matter was all over years ago, and no more harm could be done" said Mr. B—— "I never talked about it much for her sake; but of this I can assure you, that the only magic in the thing was her dexterity and people's simplicity." Mr. B—— promised to put the whole down on paper, but he was ailing and infirm, and accident prevented the writer from caring much for a "full,

true and particular account," which he could have had at any time, till Mr. Brayfield's death rendered it unattainable.

Mackay (1852), naming Hone as having published an explanation of the case, refers to Mr. Brayfield as the *Rev.* Mr. Brayfield but gives no warrant for so doing. As if quoting Hone he says: "Anne, it appears, was anxious to have a clear house, to carry on an intrigue with her lover and resorted to this trick to effect her purpose." This statement I take to be the construction put by Mackay on Brayfield's remark that "there was a love story connected with the case." Mackay was a "slap-happy" writer and typically makes no distinction between what was actually said and his inferences therefrom. We can agree that Brayfield's reference to a love story plausibly bears the interpretation put on it by Mackay, and it is not easy to suggest a plausible alternative. It may have been Ann's expectation that Mrs. Golding would flee to relatives and leave her to hold the fort. The *Narrative* gives only one indication of this. On the Monday Mrs. Golding ran into Mr. Gresham's house next door, where she fainted. "In the interim, Mr. Rowlidge, and other persons were removing Mrs. Golding's effects from her house, for fear of the consequences he had prognosticated. At this time it was quiet; Mrs. Golding's maid remaining in her house, was gone up stairs, and when called upon several times to come down, for fear of the dangerous situation she was thought to be in, she answered very coolly, and after some time came down as deliberately, without any seeming fearful apprehensions." All this would seem to prove merely that Ann was not afraid to be in the house by herself. Nowhere in the narrative does it record her as volunteering to sleep in the house by herself while Mrs. Golding lodged elsewhere. On Mackay's interpretation it would be necessary for her to do this "to get a clear house." Again, if Brayfield merely meant to imply that she needed a few nocturnal noises, ascribable to a haunting, as cover for comings and goings by night, why should such an apparently cool customer make the blunder of starting a pandemonium at ten o'clock in the morning?

Ann's confession to Brayfield is therefore not quite so convincing as could be desired. It is a pity that Hone could not coax him into writing down the whole story, if in fact he had the story and it was a true confession. We may note that it was Brayfield who told Ann that he had identified her as Mrs. Golding's erstwhile maid. She admitted it, but it does not appear that she was very forthcoming with her tale. "In due season, he says he got all the story out. . . . By his acuteness,

curiosity and love of drollery, he drew from her the entire confession." This suggests that Brayfield may have "led" his witness. Having found that he was amused by the affair, she may have humored him by letting the confession take such form as suited his fancy. Thus there is no evidence that the confession was genuine.

At the age of twenty Ann was a little on the old side to be a poltergeist focus, but still she might have been one. Her coolness, and her remark that these things could not be helped "as if they were common occurrences which must happen in every family," are both capable of an innocent explanation. Ann is merely specified in the *Narrative* as being Mrs. Golding's maid. There is no mention of her having a home and relatives in the district. This makes it likely that in fact she had come from some distance away. It is credible therefore that she had been previously the center of some disturbances, and like other girls to which this happens, had accommodated herself to their occurrence. While Ann's "confession" is undeniably consistent with the case as recorded, it is, I think, rather less conclusive a solution of the affair than Hone, Scott, or Mackay regarded it.

❧ THE COCK LANE GHOST

Our discussion in the last section tends if anything to the rehabilitation of the Stockwell poltergeist, the case in favor of its genuineness being about as strong as that for its more famous contemporary, the Cock Lane ghost. The latter owes its fame to the fact that occurring in the City it attracted the attention of the intelligensia of London. Unlike the bulk of the population, who retained a good deal of the superstitions of former ages, the intelligentsia, like many of the aristocracy, were steeped in skepticism. Consequently the Cock Lane ghost has gone down in history as a fraud instigated by Parsons, who suffered the pillory. However, Hall (1962) has critically re-examined the case against Parsons, and as a result the Cock Lane ghost is on the way to being rehabilitated after two centuries.

❧ SMUGGLERS AND THE LIKE

Sir Walter Scott was a thoroughgoing skeptic where poltergeists were concerned. Speaking of the Stockwell case, he says (1830):

> Many such impositions have been detected, and many others have been successfully concealed, but to know what has been discovered in many instances gives us the assurance of the ruling cause in all. I remember a scene of this kind attempted to be got up near Edinburgh, but detected at once by the sheriff's officer, a sort of persons whose habits of incredulity and suspicious observation render them very dangerous spectators on such occasions. The late excellent Mr. Walker gave me a curious account of an imposture of this kind (at Dunnottar, The Mearns) practised by a young country girl, who was surprisingly quick at throwing stones, turf, and other missiles, with such dexterity that it was for a long time impossible to ascertain her agency in the disturbances of which she was the sole cause.

Scott goes on to reject most if not all cases of haunting, and exemplifies by that of Hinton Ampner. Unaware of the letter from Earl St. Vincent (then Captain Jervis) to Mr. Ricketts (Sitwell, 1940), he doubted the authenticity of the report that Jervis had put himself on record as to the reality of the haunting. He suggests first that Jervis may have been superstitious, being a sailor, and second that Jervis without himself being convinced may have thought it advisable for Mrs. Ricketts to leave the house, "though he might believe that poachers and smugglers were the worst ghosts by whom it was disturbed."

Scott would therefore have looked to smuggling as the likely explanation of the poltergeist that in 1810 infested the house and shop that Mr. John Chave rented from Mr. Tally at Sampford Peverell, near Tiverton, Devonshire. The Rev. Caleb Colton of Tiverton, hearing of the disturbances, came over to investigate and put a letter into the *Tiverton Courier* for August 18. He deposed that for six nights he had observed with an unprejudiced mind, and after minute investigation found the phenomena unaccountable. One night he had sealed every door and cavity and things had been as active as ever but the seals were found unbroken in the morning (Baring-Gould, 1908). Mr. Colton did not furnish many details of the haunting, but put them in a second letter of September 14. For about four months the inmates heard loud noises in every room. If also they went upstairs and stamped on the floor, they would be answered by knocks that would follow them as they walked about the rooms. Next, the maids sleeping in their bed would be beaten during the night, with bruises and swellings. Mr. Colton said he had stood (in the dark) by their bed, and heard the blows rained on them. He quotes

testimony of Mr. Chave of Mere (unrelated to John Chave) that, hearing the maids shrieking, he rushed into the room and saw, by bright moonlight, that every curtain of the bed was agitated at the same time. When candles were brought, one curtain was found torn against the grain of the weave. Mr. Colton says that he himself often heard the bed curtains agitated violently (apparently in the dark). He noticed that after one such occurrence the maids were found bathed in perspiration. He testifies that on one occasion a heavy Greek Testament placed on the bed was flung across the room.

Besides the letters, the Rev. Colton also published a pamphlet, *Sampford Ghost. A Plain and Authentic Narrative*, etc. (Reg. Col. Soc. Tiverton, 1810), which was answered by Mr. Marriott, the editor of the *Courier*, in *Sampford Ghost!!! A Full Account of the Conspiracy*, etc. (Taunton, 1810). In reply Colton produced two more pamphlets (*Sampford Ghost. Stubborn facts against Vague Assertions*, etc. (Reg. Col. Soc. Tiverton, 1810) and *Sampford Ghost. Facts Attested*, etc. (London, n.d.) None of these booklets are available to me and for further information I am relying on Baring-Gould (1908) and Harper (1924). The maids represented themselves as too frightened to sleep alone and were moved into Mr. and Mrs. Chave's own room. Two witnesses (one the governor of the county jail) alleged that they put a sword with a huge folio Bible on it at the foot of the bed and sat in the room. Sword and Bible were both flung through the air. A Mr. Taylor, hearing female shrieks, came in and saw the sword poised in the air before clattering to the floor. It is reasonable to guess that even if more details of these events were available, the narratives would not be of great evidential value.

Mr. Marriott's pamphlet alleging conspiracy is said to have been prompted by Mr. Tally, the landlord, who was much annoyed at the probable depreciation of the value of his house, and suspected that Chave wished to acquire it cheaply. Marriott also suggested that Chave was avenging a quarrel he had already had with Tally concerning a bill. The servants were in the conspiracy, according to Marriott. He pointed out that there were marks on the ceiling below the floors that seemed to be struck. The marks were just those that would be made by the end of a mop stick.

Colton's reply admitted the marks on the ceiling but said that they were the results of experiments in which the ceilings had been struck with mop handles in an unsuccessful attempt to reproduce the kind of sounds heard. He denied the quarrel over the bill, and argued

that to give the house a bad name was against Mr. Chave's interest as injuring his business.

Despite Mr. Colton's reasoning it seems very plausible that the affair was mostly trickery involving the servants, of which there were no less than six (Martha, Ann, Sally, two Marys, and a Mrs. Pitts) but less certainly involving Mr. Chave. The trade of a village grocer at that period would be very constant. The haunting indeed might have been, if anything, *good* for business, and arguments based on commercial detriment tend to cut both ways. Harper suggests a different explanation not centering on Mr. Chave. He quotes a letter sent him by the Rev. Phillip C. Rossiter of Sampford Peverell to the effect that the "Ghost House" still existed in 1924 at the far Northwest of the village, occupied by a grocery and bakery business; "... the man now living there tells me that some of the walls are double with a passage between and of course this made disguise and retreat much more easy. Mrs. Chave was alive when we came here many years ago in 1874 but she could not explain anything: only relate what took place. My own idea is, the noises were caused by smugglers; for when I was at Beer in 1876 . . . I used to visit a very old smuggler and he told me many tales of the days of smuggling: how they used to land the spirits on very dark nights, and if pursued by the Revenue Officers take them inland, on pack-horses. I asked how far they took their load, and he—not knowing in the least where I came from—said 'Sometimes we took them as far as Sampford Peverell, and hid some of them in the old tree in the Churchyard.'"

Harper confirms that there is still an old elm tree in the churchyard, which is of great size and perfectly hollow with no entrance except from the top of the trunk. If the smugglers did take some of their spirits to the vicinity of the Old Ghost House they would wish to frighten any potential Nosey Parkers. Some support is lent to Harper's speculation by a statement in Colton's first letter to the *Courier*. He says that for some time previously the house was regarded as haunted. An apprentice saw a female apparition, and passers-by saw strange lights in the windows by night. Harper says that in 1810 the rector at Sampford was the brother of the Rector of Seaton, adjoining Beer. He wonders if they helped the smugglers, as did many parsons and gentry, including even some of the justices of the peace. If smugglers had anything to do with the disturbances within the household it was (presumably) by suborning some of the maids. John Chave could have been aware that someone was trying to drive him out, but may have thought he could turn it to his own advantage.

THE BADENOCH HUSSIES

We include the following anecdote purely for its charm and entertainment. Campbell (1902) says that about 1850 Badenoch in the Highlands was esteemed a great place for witchcraft and things uncanny. A Badenoch woman married a man of Benskeid and went there to live with him, bringing her own servants from Badenoch. For a year the home of the newlyweds was supernaturally harried. No one could be sure that an article left to itself would stay put; furniture moved of itself, turnips and peat were thrown about the kitchen, candles blown out and bedclothes whipped off. Some of the more astounding transactions were evidenced by a visitor from Rannoch. He heard the spinning wheel trundle downstairs and saw it collapse in pieces on the floor of the sitting-room. As he stood one day in the byre, turnips came flying at him as if they had been hurled through the wall. As for the poor bridegroom, he languished in spirit until one day things came to breaking point. As he stood on the hearthstone warming his back by the fire, the hearthstone began to move. "A Badenoch dark hussy was at the time standing by, with her elbow rested on the kitchen dresser and her chin on her hand. He observed her smiling, and it struck him she was at the bottom of all this bedevilment. He turned her and all the rest of the Badenoch servants away and no further disturbance took place."

It is not for us to say whether or not the bedevilment was genuine. If a fraud it would seem to have stemmed from the home-sickness of the little Badenoch witches.

CONCLUSIONS

A little research brings to light many frauds perpetrated in past times. Poltergeists clatter, rap, speak in the direct voice, and hurl about a most varied assortment of objects.

The motives of fraud have been extremely various, ranging from religious and political principle, through cupidity and passion, down to the desire for innocent foolery.

While the majority of the cases mentioned were undoubtedly frauds, we have taken the opportunity to discuss a few in which corrupt motives readily offer themselves for consideration, but do not in the event get convincing proof.

The reactions of witnesses and bystanders to occult phenomena

even in ages of heightened religious belief and of superstition have been most variable. All periods are represented by the gullible, the incredulous, and the moderately skeptical.

CASES CITED

	Date	*Reference*
Angers	——	le Loyer
Dominicans, Bern	1509	Lavater, Defoe
Franciscans, Orléans	1534	Lavater, Sleidan
Tamaraqunga, Peru	1549	Cieza, Guazzo
Wall spirit, London	1554	Stow, etc.
Salamanca	1570	Guazzo
Priest's house, Würzburg	1583	Guazzo
Castleconnell, Limerick	1640	Seymour
Quintin Castle, County Down	1643	Wedgewood
Alex Christie, Strathbogie	1644	Presbytery Book
Royal manor, Woodstock	1649	Moralist, Widows, etc.
Alice Burt, Leicester	1679	A. M. H., Ewen
Volantine Austin, Cambridge	1693	De la Pryme
Wesley home, Epworth	1716	Hall
Cock Lane, London	1762	Hall
Mrs. Ricketts, Hinton Ampner	1765	Sitwell, Scott
Ann Robinson, Stockwell	1772	Sitwell, Price, Hone
Dunnottar, Scotland	1800	Scott
John Chave, Sampford Peverell	1810	Harper, Baring-Gould
Benskeid, Blair Athol	*ca.* 1850	Campbell

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Modern Trickery?

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INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter we encountered a number of frauds grave or gay, as well as some ambiguous cases. The modern period has had its exposés also, ranging from the deflation of the Borley case with all its ramified complications to the simple situation revealed by Dr. Dingwall's investigation of the homely pranks of two bored but lively youngsters in two cottage homes in Argyllshire. This latter is quoted very appositely by Dingwall and Hall (1958) as illustrative of a large body of cases, liable to occur in all historical eras. As they say, if such a case is inflated by gossip and in the press and not investigated competently, then it is likely to be added to the files as another unsolved poltergeist case. Hall's study of the case of Bealing's bells (1961) likewise reveals the doubtfulness of bell-ringing cases in general, and so casts grave doubt on the series of episodes of this kind reported by Dale Owen (1871).

In their study of the York Museum ghost Dingwall and Hall showed very interestingly how a combination of circumstances can sometimes lead to adult trickery. The caretaker of the museum had a hallucinatory experience in which he saw the apparition of an old man walk through the library. Having revealed this experience he became afraid for his job should he become regarded as nervous and unreliable. To arrange that others should have a paranormal experience he staged a simple trick in which by means of a thread a book was made to jump from its place on the shelf.

The interest of the York and the Borley cases, like that of the episodes discussed in the last chapter, lies in part in the variety and unpredictableness of human motives that they reveal. They should therefore serve as adequate warning that it is never safe to postulate absence of motive for fraud without some attempt to size up the people concerned and the kind of situation they are in. This point would seem by now to have been adequately made and the rest of the chapter will be devoted to the question of juvenile trickery, which occupies an important place in the history of poltergeist criticism.

♄ JUVENILE TRICKERY

LIKE their motives, people's reactions to the unusual are by no means predictable. Some, like Mr. Rowlidge at Stockwell, look to a natural cause, however improbable. Others, having relics of primitive superstition or a proclivity to occult beliefs, run to meet the supernatural more than halfway. Some judiciously suspend judgment, the remainder tend to look for a trickster. This reaction is neatly illustrated by the innkeeper in one of H. G. Wells's most famous short stories. When "The man who could work miracles" inadvertently makes the kerosene lamp turn upside down but go on burning normally, the prudent licensee ejects him as a prankster and disturber of the peace. Even when evidence is at hand that natural causes may be at work the tendency to look for trickery is strong, as in the case of the Dibbesdorf knockings (Dingwell and Hall, 1958) where excavations disclosed an underground spring. But this line of investigation was discontinued in favor of the pursuit of a theory of trickery. Often enough this is justified even when trickery cannot be proved. When the phenomena are such as to be inexplicable by natural causes (e.g., throwings), and there is no direct and convincing evidence that they are paranormal, then, if there are enough people about with opportunity, trickery is logically preferable as a solution, even if adequate motives cannot be established. Thus that shrewd critic Father Thurston was satisfied that the poltergeist happenings at Eland Road, Battersea, were very probably contrived by two of the younger members of the family acting in collusion but without the knowledge of the rest. They had got the idea as the result of a spell of skylarking on the part of people outside the house who threw coals and other missiles over the garden wall. This had thoroughly frightened an elderly invalid whose continued presence

in the house was not desired by all of his younger relatives. The only serious argument put up by Harry Price (1954) against this interpretation is that the family would not willingly damage "the home that had sheltered them for 25 years." But in fact the damage that he lists is not very impressive. If originally the tricksters were two of the younger members they may not have been very sentimental about crockery, a chest of drawers, or even the old hatstand. The paterfamilias appears to have enjoyed the case in retrospect, writing a graphic account of it in *Two Worlds* in which there figure some additional phenomena not told to Price at the time of his investigation.

Poltergeist phenomena being childish in character, it is natural enough to look to children and juveniles as the cause, supposedly normal. If children are in fact sometimes innocent centers of poltergeist activity this is all too likely to be obscured unless systematic observations are made. Thus, in a case at Crawley in 1944 investigated by Price, the phenomena centered around the son Alan, aged twelve, but continued when he was watched and his hands tied up with tape. Charles Fort (1941, p. 873) quotes newspaper reports of the Lynch case of 1873. After some slashing of clothes, typical poltergeist levitations of eggs, teacups, etc. took place, centering around a boy aged six, but continued when he was tied in a chair. In Mrs. Bradley's home at Peoria, Illinois, the housemaid Margaret Corvell was the first suspect (Fort, p. 865). Her hands were therefore held. A loud crash was heard and a piano moved. In the manse occupied by the Rev. G. C. Thrasher at Buchanan, Virginia, in 1870 there were three little boys less than twelve years of age, who were exonerated because the locomotion of objects often occurred when they were under observation or in another room (Thurston, 1953). The minister and his wife kept a close watch on the young servant, Anna Pring, but entirely exonerated her also, as did Major Paxton, a local resident who, with others, had kept up continuous observation both inside and outside the house.

At Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1874 Mary Spiegel, a Polish servant girl aged fourteen, was undoubtedly the center of remarkable activity, the flight of objects taking place only in her presence. She worked in a house run by Mr. and Mrs. Giddings as a hostel for employees of the Wisconsin Leather Company. Mr. William Allen, a partner, and a Dr. Meacham and a Dr. Gray said that they had personally satisfied themselves that no human agency was possible in what had taken place under their own observation. Dr. Meacham

was particularly impressed by one episode. The excited girl had been set to sweep up the debris from the pantry floor. Dr. Meacham was sharply scrutinizing her and commanded a full view of the pantry and the girl. A little china dish "came sailing out on an even keel." It landed on the floor, where it slid a distance and was unbroken. Another kind of evidence told against any postulated normal human agency. For example, Mrs. Giddings testified that missiles traversed curved aerial paths under her continuous observation (Thurston, 1953).

These cases in which children are suspected have, however, been left indeterminate. Employers have not always been inclined to analyze or investigate and, without signifying whether the lassies are suspect of common trickery or of bewitchment, have "handed them their cards." It is for instance something of a tragedy that the maid at Askerwell Rectory was discharged when in 1919 she seemed to be the center of poltergeist disturbances, including the fall of large pieces of rock from the ceiling! (*The Times*, September 6.) At her next place, the house caught fire! In this dislike to taking any chances, modern employers are no different from the "aged Godly Minister, [and] . . . his son . . . then ordained his assistant" of whom the Duke of Lauderdale told Baxter (1691) in a letter. There was great racketing and rumbling for several weeks and tricks with clothes and household linen. "Never was there voice nor apparition, but one thing was remarkable: (You must know, that it is ordinary in Scotland to have a half Cannon Bullet in the chimney-corner, on which they break their great Coals). A merry Maid in the House, being accustomed to the rumblings and so her fear gone, told her fellow Maid-Servant, That if the Devil troubled them that Night, she would brain him, so she took the Half-Cannon Bullet into Bed. The Noise did not fail to awake her nor did she fail in her design, but took up the great Bullet, and with a threatning, threw it as she thought on the Floor, but the Bullet was never more seen: The Minister turned her away for meddling and talking to it."

OFFICIAL INVESTIGATIONS

Policemen and other legal officers, confronted with poltergeist doings and expected to get results, have on several occasions looked to juveniles as the most likely mischief-makers. According to Mackay (1956), on December 5, 1838, the inmates of Baldarroch farmhouse at Banchory, Aberdeenshire, were alarmed by sticks, pebbles and

clods flying about their yard and premises. This went on for five days, after which domestic utensils started to whirl from room to room and tremendous knocks sounded on doors and roof. A considerable number of spectators came from the surrounding district.

> The lid of a mustard pot was put into a cupboard by a servant-girl in the presence of scores of people, and in a few minutes afterwards came bouncing down the chimney to the consternation of everybody. After a fortnight's continuance of the noises the whole trick was discovered. The two servant lasses were strictly examined, and then committed to prison. It appeared that they were alone at the bottom of the whole affair, and that the extraordinary alarm and credulity of their master and mistress in the first instance, and of the neighbours and country people afterwards, made their task comparatively easy. A little common dexterity was all they had used; and, being themselves unsuspected they spread the alarm by the wonderful stories they invented. It was they who loosened the bricks in the chimneys, and placed the dishes in such a manner on the shelves that they fell on the slightest motion. . . . They were no sooner secured in the county jail than the noises ceased, and most people were convinced that human agency alone had worked all that wonder.

However, as Mackay says, this did not satisfy everybody.

Howitt (1865) gave an account of a case occurring at Orton, Westmorland, in 1849. Thurston (1953) pieced the story together from items in the *Westmorland Gazette* of that year. Mr. and Mrs. William Gibson, two small children and a maidservant, age thirteen, occupied an old country house. On April 17 and 18 the family was, they said, harrassed with knockings on walls and doors, and flights of objects. Mr. Bousfield, a neighbor, visited the house and became convinced of the reality of the haunting. The family therefore removed to his home. Returning on April 19, they were visited by Mrs. Gibson's brother, Mr. Bland, who witnessed some phenomena, and took them all away to stay with him at Bybach, about a mile away. Some phenomena are supposed to have happened there in the presence only of the children when Mrs. Gibson and the servant had gone back to the Orton house. They all returned to the house again on April 24, when the commotion recommenced. And it was now observed that when the children entered the house the disturb-

ance was always the worst. This is very interesting, for neither child was more than three years old. It is difficult, therefore, to suppose them capable of outwitting anyone except infants of similar age. Moreover, if one of these children was a poltergeist center, he or she would be about the youngest example ever discovered.

No doubt because of their extreme youth these infants had not come under suspicion, and attention was directed to the maid. The *Gazette* of April 28 said: "We are informed that the ghost has been laid by a policeman Mr. Slee. The said officer from Penrith elicited from the maid that she, with the connivance of the 'missus', had been the contriver of all the 'dobbie' work, their motive being a dislike to the house, which is at present very old and ramshackle."

Thurston comments that there seems no doubt that the maid did, when taken apart and interrogated by two police officers, make some sort of confession. But, so far as Thurston could discover from the newspapers, the only definite act to which she pleaded guilty was that of knocking on the wall in a way which led people to suppose that the "dobbie" was doing it. Afterwards she maintained that she was intimidated by the exhibition of a pair of handcuffs and a jackknife. The police indignantly asserted that they had been as gentle as possible with her. Be that as it may, there are difficulties in accepting the maid's confession as an adequate explanation. Besides the correlation with the children rather than with her, as already noted, there is the difficulty that writers to both the *Westmorland Gazette* and the *Kendal Mercury* assert that phenomena continued after the police constable's visit to Orton, when presumably the case should have collapsed. One correspondent pertinently asks: "If it were a hoax to get the house rebuilt why did Dobbie accompany the family to Bybeck and carry on its freaks there for two successive days?"

A prosecution arising out of events on a farm near Bridgewater was reported (oddly enough) in the *Glasgow News*, May 29, 1878 (Price, 1945). A hayrick blazed as a policeman was passing. As a maid, Ann Kidner, aged twelve, was near it, she came under suspicion. Entering the farmhouse, the constable heard loud raps and saw dishes and loaves of bread wandering about the kitchen. He arrested Ann, but the case was dismissed by the magistrates for lack of evidence. Further cases of girls suspected of fire-raising and police difficulties with the evidence, as narrated by the ironic pen of Charles Fort, will be found in Chapter 7.

We are indebted to Father Thurston for deriving an account of the Resau case from the original German sources. The manifestations commenced at the house of Karl Bottcher, a farmer, who had living with him as a help a lad of fifteen, Karl Wolter, a relative of his. Bottcher testified in court that they had been troubled by knocking at night; utensils, potatoes, and turnips had been thrown about, also stones and cow dung. He was convinced that young Karl was not responsible, though he admitted that he was always close by when things happened. Bottcher affirmed that Wolter had nothing to gain by producing them. A more important witness was the pastor, Dr. Muller, as his testimony tended to rule out ordinary human agency. As with Mary Spiegel, objects were seen by the pastor to take wavering and unnatural trajectories. A baking dish sailed horizontally from the stove, lightly grazed the back of his neck, and then stopped and fell at his feet. A tin funnel came drifting across the room as if it was a leaf blown about by a high wind. A ham bone with meat on it floated towards him out of the open door of a cupboard. In a later trial resulting from an appeal Muller was supported by similar testimony from other witnesses. The first trial arose from the fact that when young Karl was sawing wood in the yard one day some of the windows in the house of a neighbor, Herr Neumann, were broken. The aggrieved Neumann brought a charge of willful damage against young Karl, and a further charge of public mischief for counterfeiting the activities of a so-called *Spuk*. The court consisted of a judge and two assessors. The accused was represented by a barrister retained by some Berlin spiritualists. Evidence was called to show that Wolter when at school had been a good marksman. "With very little apparent movement he nearly always hit his mark [with a ball]." No witness had actually caught Wolter throwing stones, but he had always been near any disturbance. The president declared that the court must take its stand entirely on the grounds of enlightened science, and absolutely refuse to entertain the idea that a poltergeist or other force can play the part of a *Spuk*.

Sometimes the police are less successful in assigning guilt. In Bellport, Long Island, New York, in 1893, stones were thrown at the house and sweetshop of Mr. Mack. The police arrested several "street gamins" but had to release them for lack of evidence. The newspaper attributed the persecution to the hostility of other shopkeepers, Mr. Mack being a commercial intruder, as he had converted the ground floor into a sweetshop (Fort, p. 937). In Klerpsdorf, South Africa, in 1921, a detective was put to solve a "mysterious stone-throwing by invisible agencies." Two houses in North Street, occupied by Mr. Joseph and Mr. Minaar, had been at the receiving

end of the bombardment. The detective arrested two Negroes, who were tried upon the testimony of two boys of their own race. But these witnesses contradicted one another, and it was brought out that they were lying. "They alleged," says Charles Fort, "that the logical detective had promised them five shillings to substantiate his syllogisms."

One of Barrett's cases (1911) ended with a prosecution. He quotes the paper of Mr. Warndorfer (1907), a member of the Society for Psychical Research living at Baden, near Vienna. The then research officer of the S.P.R. (Miss Johnson) had recommended Mr. Warndorfer as an unusually cool-headed and competent observer, very intelligent and open-minded, and prepared to give an impartial account of anything he witnessed. In July, 1906, having heard press reports of disturbances in a blacksmith's shop, he visited the smith, Herr Zimmerl, there. Zimmerl had two apprentices and described how tools, bits of iron, etc., had been flung about. One of the apprentices had been hit by one of these missiles. He had watched the boys but detected no tricks. Warndorfer made several visits and witnessed many of the occurrences. On one occasion he saw more than twelve objects thrown about and "was perfectly certain none of the persons present could have thrown them." One was thrown when he happened to be alone in the shop. He never saw the objects actually fly, but heard them fall; some dropped close to him, and three struck him on the head. He specified five events that he witnessed in daylight and said of them, "The chances of mal-observation were very small indeed." For example, a small glazed picture that he had seen hanging on the wall a few minutes before "came fluttering through the air to the middle of the shop, where it fell on the floor, but did not break; in fact, it moved like a sheet of paper." At the time he was standing about a yard and a half in front of the picture, nobody being near it, nor in that part of the shop through which it moved. He did not see it leave its place, but saw it when it was about two yards from where it alighted. He thought "it would be very difficult though not impossible to throw or drop such a picture without its breaking." Disturbances continued for two months. One of the lads, around whom the events seemed to cluster, was taken to the police court and fined, though he denied all guilt, and there was no direct evidence of his having thrown anything. The boys were dismissed and the disturbances ceased, but Warndorfer thought this proved nothing.

Charles Fort (pp. 564-565), drawing on the *Rand Daily Mail* (May, 1922) tells us that Mr. Neaves, having for several months endured showers of stones on his house, finally complained to the police. Five constables, sent to the place after dark, took up positions round the house and straightaway a stone crashed on the roof. The phenomena were thought to be associated with the housemaid, Sara, a Hottentot girl. She was sent into the garden and stones fell vertically around her. Falling vertically, they gave no indication of their point of origin. The house was isolated except for outhouses. These were searched but nothing was found. Police Inspector Cummings ordered all members of the household and the newspaper men to stay in the house under inspection. Outside were constables and all around were open fields, with no means of concealment. Stones fell on the roof. Watched by the police, Sara went to the well. A large stone fell near her. Another fell on the roof when she ran back to the house. "It is said that everything that could be done was done, and that the police cordon was complete. More stones fell. Convinced that in some way the girl was implicated, the Inspector tied her hands. A stone fell on the roof." Fort says that according to the press everything was subsequently explained. "A 'civilian' concealed in one of the outhouses had been caught throwing a stone. If so, whoever wrote this account did not mention the name of the culprit, and it is not said that the police made any trouble for him for having made them work. Then everything was explained again. It was said that the girl had been taken to the police station, where she had confessed. It is understood that Sara admits being a party to all the stone-throwing, and has implicated two other children, and a grown native." Fort notes that this statement is shorn of all relevant detail regarding the precautions taken and how the tricksters were supposed to have circumvented them. It may be worth mentioning that this happened near Johannesburg.

It is interesting to be able to record a case in which for once the worm turned, and court proceedings were instituted by the accused. She was a girl of fifteen, Mabel Louiza Phillippo, employed as a maid by the Rector of Swanton Novers in Norfolk, the Rev. Hugh Guy. Commencing August 30, 1919, the case received great press publicity and Charles Fort assembled relevant extracts. It was said that liquids (water, oil and methylated spirit) ran out of the walls and ceilings. From one point oil came at a quart every ten minutes. By September 2, fifty gallons of oil had been collected in receptacles placed under various appearing-points, and the Rector had moved out, taking his furniture. In case it is thought that these *Daily Express* reports were

totally exaggerated, there is confirmatory evidence contained in a telegram from the Rev. Guy to the *Express*, published by them and never disowned by him. "Expert engineer arriving Monday. Drippings ascribed to exudations on 8 Aug. of petrol, methylated spirits and paraffin. House evacuated; vapour dangerous: every room affected: downpour rather than dripping—Guy." The reference to exudation appears to have the status of a provisional theory. The statement that the advent of liquid was a "downpour" is obviously very important confirmation of the basic truth of the *Express* account, even though the quantities may have been exaggerated. But there is further confirmation to be found in other press reports. The London *Daily News* published reports from an architect, a geologist, and a chemist telling of observations of profuse flows. The Norwich newspapers said that the foreman of an oil company, called in as a consultant, had caught two gallons of oil in four hours from one of the appearing-points. John N. Maskelyne, the famous stage illusionist, visited but could offer no explanation. According to the *Daily Mail* of September 8, "barrels of liquid had appeared during the time of his observations." The *Daily Mail*, September 3, gives two photographs, apparently never impugned as fakes, showing large drops of oil clearly visible dripping from two different ceilings.

The first of the showers had occurred in the maid's room. Ceilings were bored and ripped off but no explanation was found. However, the London *Times* of September 9 announced that the Norfolk mystery was solved. It was said by Mr. Oswald Williams, the "illusionist," and his wife that they had concealed themselves in the now vacated house, having cut off the water supply and set a trap for any rival illusionist by putting out various glasses and pails of water, which they had marked for identification by salting. They said that they had seen Mabel Louiza come in and throw up the water in one of the glasses to splash on the ceiling, and then cry out that another shower had occurred. They rushed out of concealment and accused her. As Mr. Williams said, "She admitted she had done it, and finally she broke down and made a clean breast of it." The case, however, was by no means closed. According to the *Times*, September 17, the girl, when interviewed by a representative of a Norwich newspaper, denied that she had confessed or played any tricks, or that the Williamses had been in hiding. She said she had gone to the house *with* them. A wet spot had appeared upon a ceiling. They had wrongfully accused her of throwing it there. The *Daily News* of September 10 said further that, according to her statement, she was at no time alone

in the kitchen. She insisted she was the victim of a trick and that great pressure was put upon her to admit that she had thrown salted water to the ceiling. "I was told that I would be given one minute to say I had done it, or go to prison. I said that I didn't do it."

Charles Fort says no details of the "pressure" were published in the London press but the *Norfolk News* of November 8 reports a hearing at Holt Petty Sessions. Mabel Louiza complained that Mrs. Williams had struck her repeatedly on the face. Her mother testified that when she arrived at the rectory to fetch her daughter, the latter's first words were that she had been beaten. The case was, however, dismissed. The Rev. Guy wrote to the *Times*, who published his letter on September 13. He said that he had tasted the water on the ceiling and had tasted salt in it, and so thought the girl had thrown it. But he admitted that the girl had *not* confessed. Speaking of the apportation in general, he now said that it would have taken only a small quantity of liquid to have created the mess. Charles Fort was puzzled by the discrepancy between this last statement and the press reports, previously uncontradicted by the rector, and indeed supported by his description of the advent of liquid as a "downpour." He therefore wrote to the rector by registered letter asking him to explain, but got no reply. We can sympathize with poor Mr. Guy, perplexed and harrassed by events, but nonetheless are left with the impression that in this affair he may not have been consistently a Mr. Valiant-for-Truth.

Like Mr. Lambert, Charles Fort was a champion of the oppressed nineteenth-century serving-maid, to whom (not unnaturally) attention often was directed when mystery was afoot. We can appreciate that there is some justice in the acid remark he appends to the Lampeter case of February, 1904. Wales at that time was in the grip of one of the most wildly hysterical religious revivals of modern times, and perhaps it is not surprising that many strange sights and sounds were experienced. In the home of Mr. Howell mysterious knockings were heard and a crowd gathered outside. This may or may not have been a genuine poltergeist case. However it was investigated by a Professor Harris and the Bishop of Swansea, without result. There were youngsters in the house but they did not confess. Fort says that Mr. Howell had "standing in the community." "Its the housemaid or shop girl, with parents who presumably havn't much 'standing' who is knocked about, or gently slugged, or perhaps only slapped who confesses or who is said to have confessed." At risk of repetition it is worth saying that two points of theoretical im-

portance are involved. Obviously the genuineness of a real poltergeist case is obscured whenever it is wrongly accepted that the girl in question has produced the effects by trickery. Second, the concentration of attention on the maid as prime subject may tend to obscure the fact that the real poltergeist center is some other individual. Consequently even among cases accepted as genuine, there may be an erroneous excess of ones in which the center is a pubescent girl.

❧ PODMORE AND THE POLTERGEISTS

FRANK PODMORE was one of the greatest figures in nineteenth-century psychic research, and when other reputations are declining, his is likely to remain untarnished. And I think rightly. Possibly more than anyone else, in an era of fraud and revived superstition he maintained and applied standards of rigorous criticism, and laid down important evidential conditions. The study of poltergeists constituted only a minor part of his work. It is represented chiefly by a rather short chapter in *Modern Spiritualism* (1902) and by his paper "Poltergeists" (1896). In *Modern Spiritualism* he dealt entirely with older cases which on the whole, it is true to say, were not very promising material from which to get decisive results. The paper on poltergeists reviews eleven cases picked more or less at random from the files of the Society for Psychical Research. It would not be surprising for a large proportion of a random sample of cases to be capable of explanation by normal means or to be ambiguous in their indications of paranormality. This is more obvious to us now than it was seventy years ago, a great many more cases having in the meantime been collected and critically examined. Despite Podmore's authority as a critic we need not therefore regard his negative findings as decisive on the question of the reality of poltergeists. He himself would certainly make no such claim. However, as this paper is one of the classics of the subject and evoked some interesting comment from Andrew Lang, it is well worth considering in brief.

Holding over cases I (Worksop), II (Wem), V (Bramford), VII (Durweston), and VIII (Ham) for the time being, we find that in the remaining six cases Podmore's verdict that evidence of paranormality is lacking, is a fairly convincing one. In case III (Arundel) investigators could hear scratching only if outside the girl's bedroom. When they muffled her hands the sounds were correspondingly muffled. Other manifestations reported by the family could, it appears, have been contrived by the girl herself without the connivance of the others. Case IV took place at Ballybricken in Waterford. The boy

Johnny and his mother were not at all perturbed by the "unearthly noises," but the father was of a nervous disposition and took them seriously. There was no evidence that the phenomena ever occurred beyond the reach of Johnny.

The scene of Case VI was a sub-post office in a town near London. Such an office is in all respects like an ordinary shop, the postmistress living with the family on the premises, and a candy, grocery, or stationery business is usually run concurrently with the post office. The premises were occupied by the postmistress, her niece, Ellen (age sixteen) and her elderly mother, who died shortly after the manifestations started. These manifestations were minor affairs—upsetting of flower vases, misplacing of objects—none happening in the presence of witnesses. The same kind of thing happened more annoyingly after the arrival of an elderly friend and a little boy, and increased still more after a servant named Alice (age twenty-three) joined the household. Alice used to get white marks on her back at a place she could not reach with her own fingers. Later Alice and Ellen both claimed that locks of hair were being mysteriously cut off their heads. The case was investigated by Colonel Taylor. He found Ellen to be very intelligent but a cripple from infancy, using scissors in an imperfect and awkward manner. She limped and could not move quickly or silently. Ellen gave him a signed statement generally corroborating her aunt's account, and denying that she had any part in the events. But she narrated a variety of experiences in which she had seen apparitions. Testimony of other witnesses concerning the marking of Alice's back were indefinite as to the whereabouts of Ellen at the relevant times. It is not possible to quarrel with the conclusion that all the disturbances could have been done by Ellen, aided occasionally by Alice, or Jane, another servant, or the little boy.

Case IX was recounted to Podmore by a Mrs. B. who lived in an old house in a provincial town with her family, and also a widow, Mrs. D., and her children. These were C. D., a young lady of twenty, and E. D., a lad of fifteen. Mrs. B. and the young people had learned from planchette sittings in the evenings that the house was occupied by four spirits belonging to a wicked marquis, a wicked monk, a lay desperado and a virtuous and beautiful young lady, who had met violent deaths at one another's hands. As proofs of their presence various minor physical phenomena occurred. It is hardly necessary to say more. Podmore went down to the house. Young E. D. practically volunteered a confession. This would seem to be one of those confessions we can accept without reservation.

The next case (X) concerned a different Mr. and Mrs. B.,

their daughter Alice, age twelve, and a Miss K., presumably a governess or companion. Alice was tall and pale. In the medical jargon of those days she had "outgrown her strength." She lay down for an hour or two each afternoon on medical advice. She impressed Podmore as very intelligent, energetic, and clever beyond her years. Things were found upset in Alice's bedroom and there was some fresh blood on the floor. Mrs. B., kissing Alice goodnight, felt a hand laid on her back. A chair was moved in Mrs. B.'s room, Alice being the only other person present. Mrs. B., Alice, and Miss K. saw a picture slowly move about four inches in position on the wall. Some other events need not be described. Podmore said, correctly, that apart from the picture everything else that required explanation *could* have been done by Alice. He suggested a string for the picture. Alternatively, the motion of the picture could have been imaginary. This is not in the circumstances a purely *ad hoc* explanation. Mrs. B. and Miss K., but mostly Mrs. B., reported a variety of visual and auditory experiences, which in the absence of other evidence have to be regarded as nonobjective.

The last of the six cases (XI) was trivial, being entirely a matter of things being found out of position. There is no reason to doubt the explanation suggested by the evidence, that the tricks were done by the grown-up son of the family and a young lady who visited the house.

Of the remaining five cases, that of Durweston (VII) is sufficiently interesting to be specially discussed later (Chapter 10). Here we need only note that Podmore felt difficulty in dismissing it. It was explicable by normal means only if trickery by the two children was involved, and this was impossible without the connivance of a lady, Mrs. Best, who was a Nonconformist, and looked upon by all her fellow villagers as a thoroughly respectable woman. The sequel of the outbreak was most detrimental to her interests, since she lost a lucrative lodger, the girl Alice, who had been with her for four years.

The Wem case (II) approximates to the classical form, the manifestations being of the type surrounding Anna Pring and Mary Spiegel. At the farmhouse where Emma Davies worked as a nursemaid things leaped about, usually when she was in the vicinity. Such witnesses' statements as were collected by Mr. F. S. Hughes, the investigator, were sufficiently imprecise as to leave it an open question whether or not Emma contrived the happenings by normal means. The case in fact ended with an exposure and a confession, in this wise. Emma was dismissed from her employment and sent to her

home five miles away, where there were more disturbances. So Dr. Corke lodged her at his consulting rooms at Wem, where she was closely watched by Miss Turner (described by Mr. Hughes as about thirty, a practical, shrewd person, not at all excitable). The only disturbances while at Wem were simple tricks Emma might have done herself. On her fourth day at Wem, she and a servant were outside, Emma having her back to the house, and unaware that she was observed. But Miss Turner was in an upper room at the back of the house and saw she had a half brick in her hand behind her back. This she threw to a distance and screamed to attract the attention of the servant who, turning round, was alarmed to see the brick in the air. Emma, realizing that she had been seen by Miss Turner, applied to return home. The next morning Miss Turner asked her if she had been playing tricks, and the girl confessed she had, and went through some of the performances (very skilfully, according to Miss Turner). She repeated them less competently later in the day, in the additional presence of the doctor and two London reporters. However, the girl always denied that she had produced the phenomena at Wood's Farm. Hughes summarized the position very impartially, to the effect that if "there are cases on record in which trickery and genuine preternatural phenomena are combined, this case might with some degree of probability, be included amongst them."

In fact it is a very reasonable hypothesis that there are such cases. We might postulate a priori the following sequence of events as a likely one. (a) A juvenile becomes temporarily the center of genuine poltergeist activity. (b) This becomes exciting in itself and also brings the boy or girl gratifyingly into the limelight. (c) The temptation to perpetuate the situation both for self-importance and for the sheer fun of it becomes irresistible. Two other cases of Podmore's suggest just this.

In Case IV, Ellen Parker, age eleven, was apparently the center of many disturbances in a cottage at Bramford. The evidence for these rests entirely on the evidence of her mother, who favorably impressed the investigator with her honesty and intelligence. But a police constable said that he had seen Ellen tapping the window while believing herself unobserved. Her brother Cornelius (age ten) also gave the reply "Yes" to the schoolmaster when he asked him if he had produced the noises. (This must be one of the most concise confessions on record.) Ellen went to stay with an aunt, Mrs. Jeffery, at Stowmarket. Her husband sent a letter to the *East Anglian Daily Times* in which he said: "The child came to my house on 26 Nov.

Nothing happened till the Wednesday night following, when raps came at my front door. No one was there. Closing the front door as soon as I got in, raps came inside the house till the child went to bed, sleeping with her grandmother. As the child went upstairs, raps followed her, and went on in the room." He describes similar episodes. It may be that Ellen knew how to make raps by clicking her knee joints, as Podmore suggests is possible (1902), but equally this could be a case in which genuine phenomena occurring sporadically alternate with attempts to keep the pot boiling by means of simple tricks.

The Ham case (VIII) is interesting as it is among those on which Podmore based one of his views regarding evidence. He pointed out in his paper that in some cases the phenomena witnessed by the less literate witnesses are more marvelous than those reported by more literate and better-educated people. No doubt there is a tendency in this direction, but there are some points worth making. If the poltergeist disturbance is genuine but of short duration, then usually the genuine phenomena will be dying out by the time the literate observers get to the scene. A discrepancy of the kind envisaged does not therefore necessarily impugn the competence of the earlier and less scientific witnesses. Similarly, the detection of trickery at a late stage does not necessarily mean that the earlier observers were being fooled. The case centered on Polly Turner, "a little dwarfed black-haired girl, turning 12" as she is described by one of the investigators, Mr. Westlake, upon whom Podmore placed reliance. Writing from Ham, a little village near Hungerford, Berkshire, he said that it was "one of those baffling cases where the thing won't work, or only inconclusively in the presence of strangers. . . . Nevertheless I think it to be genuine from the 101 indications one gathers when talking with the folks round their hearth—the primitive *seance*." On the same day, a few hours later, Mr. Westlake wrote to say: "The Ham Ghost is a humbug *now* whatever it may have been. I made friends with the cats, and their mistress, poor child, gave me a private sitting of some 2 or 3 hours, in the course of which she moved between 40 and 50 objects when she thought I wasn't looking (her plan being to watch me till I looked away.) However, I saw her in contact with objects with every degree of distinctness, and on seven (at least) occasions by simple devices I had a clear view of her hands in contact with the objects and saw them quickly moved. . . . She . . . has only lately learned to walk, pale . . . and eyes, very sharp, and watches one like a cat a mouse. Her mother is said never to leave

the house or to allow the child to do so. But it is curious that a little child should succeed in deceiving a whole country side. . . ." A week later Mr. E. N. Bennett of Hertford College, Oxford, went down to Ham and reported some movements of objects with the comment, that "whenever they occurred the child was in very close proximity to the material objects affected. None of these movements were initiated when I was looking directly at the child and the furniture near her."

But with regard to the earlier events in the Turner's cottage we have the evidence of three witnesses who must, if words mean anything at all, be regarded also as literate. This is for the reason that they presented their testimony in letters. They were all written on February 14, 1895. Police Constable H. King wrote: "With reference to what I saw at Thomas Turner's cottage on Thursday, January 24th, I respectfully beg to inform you that about 11 p.m. in the date named above, I went into Turner's cottage. The first thing I saw was the armchair fall over on its side. After a few minutes I saw one of the kitchen chairs fall forwards. The next I saw a four-legged stool which was standing in the chimney corner that fell over on its side into the fire. No one was near enough to touch either when it fell. . . . Polly Turner was at this time with her father the other side of the house by the oven. . . ." Mr. J. Rolfe wrote giving details of various fallings of chairs, stool and the oven lid. He says the chairs and stool "went over with great force when no one was near them. No one could throw them over so swift. Polly was never close enough to have done. Her father or her brother was nursing her most of the time. The other people were never near enough to throw the things over as they were standing round by the table."

Mr. James Kavanagh, writing from the schoolhouse (presumably he was the schoolmaster), wrote that "Having heard so many reports of table and chairs turning over, I determined to visit, and so satisfy my curiosity. About a fortnight ago, I went to the house at 4:30 p.m. and stood at place marked K. Nothing occurred for about 10 minutes when I heard the stool under the table turn over. The boy Turner replaced it. In a few minutes it toppled over. A third time it did the same, and each time towards the door. In a short time I observed the chair (marked in plan) turn over, likewise towards the door. The chair was fully 5 or 6 feet from me. I am confident no one moved it. I examined the chair well to see if there was any trickery, as I have always been averse to anything of the sort." Besides those three letters given in full by Podmore, he quotes

from a Mr. Martin describing the fall of chairs: "I am quite sure the child did not touch them, they seemed to fall as she passed them. In fairness to Podmore it should be said that in his general discussion of the cases he does not characterize the earlier Ham evidence as being that of the imperfectly educated, but as he implies generally that often the more marvelous occurrences are only to be found in the statements of the less educated witnesses, he is perhaps open to criticism for not dealing explicitly with the status of the testimony in the Ham Case.

With regard to Case I, Worksop, he made two points. The witnesses were imperfectly educated. Also, their testimony was not given until some weeks after the event. The events happened in February, 1883, the *Retford and Gainsborough Times* giving accounts of them on March 9. Podmore went down to Worksop on April 7 and interrogated seven principal eyewitnesses, most of them separately, and some others. The disturbances appeared to center on a girl, Eliza Rose (said by Podmore to be a child of an imbecile mother) and consisted in flights, fallings, and locomotions of objects. They happened in the house of Mr. Joe White, a horse dealer. In his 1896 paper Podmore includes verbatim his own report of April 11, 1883. He *had* said:

> With regard to the positions of the persons present, in relation to the objects moved, it may be stated generally that there was no possibility in most cases of the objects having been thrown by hand. It will be seen, on reference to the depositions of the witnesses which are appended, that the objects were frequently moved in a remote corner of the room, or even in an adjoining room. Moreover, the character of the movements, in many cases, was such as to preclude the possibility of the objects having been thrown . . . it seems to me a matter of very little significance that most of the educated people in Worksop believe White himself to have caused the disturbance . . . it is hard to conceive by what mechanical appliances, under the circumstances described, the movements could have been effected. . . . Lastly, to suppose that these various objects were all moved by mechanical contrivances argues incredible stupidity, amounting almost to imbecility on the part of all the persons present who were not in the plot. . . . Curass, Higgs, and Dr. Clyd, all independent observers, assured me that they examined some of the objects which had been moved, immediately after the occurrence, with the express intention of discovering, if possible, any clue to an explanation of the matter, but entirely failed to do so. These men were not over credulous; they certainly were not wanting in intelligence, and they were not, any of them prepossessed in favour of White. . . .

Thus Podmore in 1883 took Worksop as a well-attested case. In 1896 he said: "The concordant testimony of so many honest and fairly intelligent people certainly produced, as will have been seen from my report, a strong impression on my mind at the time. Nor do I see reason now to question my original estimate of their intelligence and good faith. If my verdict on the Worksop disturbances in 1896 differs from that which I gave in 1883, it is because many things have happened since, which have taught us to discount testimony in matters of this kind." He goes on to say that it will be seen that the value of these reports depends upon the assumption that the various witnesses, imperfectly educated and not skilled in accurate observation, correctly described what they saw, and on the assumption that after five weeks in which the case had been exposed to discussion they correctly remembered what they described. He goes on to suggest that Eliza Rose produced the manifestations by normal means.

Andrew Lang (1898) did not allow the matter to rest there. He secured the original newspaper reports and compared Constable Higgs's statement made before March 8 with that given to Podmore on April 10. There is in fact no substantial disagreement between them, a fact that is fatal to Podmore's hypothesis of lapse of memory as applied in this case. Lang, naturally, in his usual deft manner makes sport of Podmore's suggestion that Eliza Rose was able to contrive what Podmore in 1883 had thought impossible even with mechanical means. He also objects to Podmore's 1896 characterization of Rose as "halfwitted," no evidence to that effect having been gathered in 1883. Of course he reminds us of the logical difficulty of postulating brilliant deception in the presumed mentally defective.

♄ FURTHER REMARKS

Lang teased Podmore in 1903 in his paper on "The Poltergeist, Historically Considered," particularly over the Mompesson girls in the Tedworth case of 1662, and also raised the difficulty of historical repetition. This question is: why are classical phenomena reproduced

with such regularity by the "naughty little girls"? Do the girls "cram" Tidworth, Epworth, and Willington cases with a crowd of others, British and foreign? Do they study historical records, or have they become orally familiar? This is a good point, and in a general way tends to confirm the reality of some poltergeist phenomena. But I do not think it should be given overmuch weight. The study of testimony in case lore must remain decisive in a way that general principles cannot.

The later Podmore tended to supplement his theories of mal-observation, tricks of memory, and willful deception with an appeal to the possibility of hallucination. This appears to have been put forward more especially to deal with the alleged curving or hovering flight of objects. Andrew Lang is skeptical of this as an *ad hoc* hypothesis.

In 1911 Barrett published a collection of interesting cases. This historic paper will be quoted more extensively later. One of the lessons he drew is that phenomena, genuine on early evidence in cases involving children, frequently pass into fraudulent imitations—the point made above. He refers to Ham, and also to C. C. Massey's criticism of the Wem case, and more especially discusses the Elwin March case (Portland), drawing on Thacher's report (1910). A medical man, Dr. Ainley, testified that on October 28 he saw a telephone fall from a stand, the boy Elwin having come past it and then standing near it. Shortly afterward, no one being nearer than four feet, a chair rose up and then fell on the floor. An ex-military man testified that he saw two chairs rise up and tip over with no one within ten feet of them, and Elwin in the adjoining room. Mr. Casson saw cutlery rise up an inch or two, no one nearer than six feet and Elwin in another room. Elwin was removed to Dr. Gilbert's house, where Dr. Gilbert saw him deliberately move some objects, some time after the original disturbances and when nothing had lately occurred. Two witnesses who had originally condemned Elwin were discredited by Thacher's enquiries which yielded twenty witnesses in all whose testimony exculpated Elwin.

Nevertheless Dr. Gilbert obtained a confession from the boy. However, this was in the form of a qualified admission that he did do some of the earlier things. It was obtained after a severe cross-examination, the boy at first denying that he had anything to do with the manifestations. Barrett draws attention to the confessions of the witchcraft era, as showing that too much reliance must not be put on confessions—especially those of children. The present century has

taught us to treat confessions with some skepticism, even if they are not beaten out with a rubber hose. In the case of children the impetus to "confession" must vary from the desire to claim credit for hoodwinking adults, to primitive response to threats or to cajolement "just to own up, and make everybody happy again," or sheer weariness at being "kept on at." Occasionally, if the poltergeist phenomena were primarily genuine, a sense of guilt as being responsible (even unconsciously) may play a part. Often a confession is evidentially valueless, as in the case of Mrs. Bradley's maid mentioned above, who "confessed to everything . . . except what had occurred when her hands were tied." The cases cited of apparently genuine phenomena followed by pranks are almost numerous enough to suggest a classic pattern. One of the many interesting features of the Sauchie case is that it too, in a mild way, conforms to this pattern.

♄ CONCLUSIONS

Modern research continues to expose a variety of human motives that can and do lead to fraudulent poltergeist phenomena.

In a high proportion of past cases children and juveniles have been singled out as the presumptive cause of disturbances by trickery. Often this conclusion is correct. Occasionally, however, it has been negatived as the cause of *all* the phenomena by competent investigation, or by the nature of the phenomena themselves. In particular the abnormal trajectory of objects in flight when observed by reliable observers is a very effective diagnostic criterion. There are many cases, unfortunately not evidential, where the official explanation by juvenile trickery is contradicted by some of the evidence.

Trickery by juveniles if detected at the later stages of an enquiry is inconclusive as regards the genuineness of the earlier phenomena. Similarly, too much weight should not be given to juvenile confessions.

A review of Podmore's cases rehabilitates the Worksop case as genuine and well attested, and allows us with fair confidence to accept the Ham case.

CASES CITED

	Date	*Reference*
Cannon bullet, Edinburgh	*ca.* 1670	Baxter
Bealing's bells, Woodbridge	1834	Hall
Baldarroch, Banchory	1838	Mackay
Gibson home, Orton	1849	Thurston
Anna Pring, Buchanan	1870	Thurston
Lynch, Menomonie, Virginia	1873	Fort
Bradley, Peoria, Illinois	1874	Fort
Mary Spiegel, Milwaukee, Wisconsin	1874	Thurston
Shattocks farm, Bridgewater	1878	Fort, Price
Eliza Rose, Worksop	1883	Podmore, Lang
Emma Davies, Wem	1883	Podmore, Massey
Clark, Arundel	1884	Podmore
Ellen Parker, Bramford	1887	Podmore
Karl Wolter, Resau	1888	Thurston
Costello's Lane, Ballybricken	1892	Podmore
Ellen, post office	1893	Podmore
Mr. Mack, Bellport	1893	Fort
Podmore's Case IX	1894	Podmore
Polly Turner, Ham	1895	Podmore
Alice, Podmore's Case X	*ca.* 1896	Podmore
Podmore's Case XI	*ca.* 1896	Podmore
Howell home, Lampeter	1904	Fort
Zimmerl smithy, Vienna	1906	Barrett
Elwin March, Portland	1909	Barrett
Askerwell Rectory, Dorchester	1919	Fort
Mary Phillippo, Swanton	1919	Fort, Price
North Street, Klerpsdorf	1921	Fort
Dedaig, Argyllshire	1922	Dingwall and Hall
Neaves household, Roodeport	1922	Fort
Robinson home, Battersea	1928	Thurston, Price
Borley Rectory	1930	D. G. and H.
Alan, Crawley	1944	Price
York Museum ghost	1953	Dingwall and Hall
Virginia Campbell, Sauchie	1960	Chap. 5

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PART II

SUMMARY

Some Genuine Poltergeists

Evidential Cases?

Cases in which literate and respectable witnesses have supplied written accounts free from internal contradiction are not infrequent in poltergeist literature. It seems very unlikely that none of them should be worthy of credence. They indicate the existence of the classical poltergeist "who" makes noises and moves objects, and perhaps is capable of higher things.

The Sauchie Poltergeist

This case has the merits of being recent, and testified to by five witnesses of credit. They and others have supplied a great deal of valuable ancillary information that assists in characterizing the typical poltergeist case. The events in the case and its attendant circumstances appear to rule out natural causes, fraud, and "mass hallucination." Very opportunely, therefore, the Sauchie case tends to establish the reality of poltergeist disturbances of the classical type.

Further Questions

Though the reality of the classical poltergeist has been established by the Sauchie and earlier cases, questions of causation and the mode of operation are largely unanswered.

Also, we do not know if the limits of the poltergeist are those set by the classical type of case. It will therefore be desirable to ascertain these limits in so far as caselore can provide information. Such a study may provide useful information as to the nature of the poltergeist.

4

Evidential Cases?

INTRODUCTION

THE READER who penetrates any distance through the pages of this chapter may perhaps be led to complain, not without justice, that the title is misleading and that the writer's idea of what is evidential is not his. My excuse for collecting together a number of cases, some of which do not come up to the standards set by Frank Podmore, is much the same as that of the parsimonious housewife whose larder is not very well stocked with fresh meat, but believes correctly that there is good nutriment in yesterday's joint. To establish the fact that poltergeist activity does take place and is paranormal, a single case, if well evidenced, is sufficient. I regard the Sauchie case narrated in the next chapter as adequately evidenced and therefore sufficient. In one sense, therefore, one swallow makes a summer. However, it is necessary to establish the poltergeist case as a *type*, and this can be done only by taking cases en masse. Ideally we would desire to have about fifty twentieth-century cases with first-class evidence. This, however, is not possible, because of the infrequency with which cases occur that are genuine and well observed. Thus, even for the limited purpose of establishing the type, we are obliged to take note of cases that ideally we would prefer to set aside on grounds of antiquity or remoteness. A fortiori, therefore, such cases have to be kept in mind for the further purpose of examining variations on the type. It is not proposed, however, to abandon evidential standards altogether. We do not need at present to be put in the position of relying on Lang's argument, in which,

describing weakly attested cases as having individually but the strength of rushes, he suggests that a number of such cases have the not inconsiderable strength possessed by a bundle of rushes. Nor, I hope, shall we be exposed to Hall's pungent and justified criticism of Major Moor's collection of bell-ringing cases, namely, that Moor's reasoning was equivalent to the faulty argument of the leaking buckets: ". . . if one leaking bucket will not hold water, then ten will" (1961). The cases cited will be restricted to those in which at least one eyewitness statement by a known person has got into print. In some instances there may be a gap in time between the events and the setting down of the statement. It is not claimed, therefore, that the cases are of *equal* evidential value; merely that they are all of *some* evidential value, and that any serious study of the poltergeist must take account of them. Some well-known cases, such as the Phelps case and that of Esther Cox, will not appear in the present list because the evidence is somewhat indirect or not yet available to me. Other cases of some evidential value are discussed in other chapters. The present collection is intended to be typical but not exhaustive.

⊨ TWO CASES OF GLANVIL

THE period prior to the seventeenth century is the prehistory of our subject. Even when a firsthand narrative is available, as that of the experience of Nicholas Remy at Auch in 1563, it is too lacking in detail to be of use. Only towards the latter half of the seventeenth century did the study of ghosts and poltergeists begin to be viewed in a scientific spirit and detailed narratives make their appearance. The case of the Devil of Mascon, occurring in 1612, is hardly an exception insofar as printed publication is concerned, the French original of the story first appearing in 1653, though there is evidence that a manuscript account was drawn up shortly after the events happened. It is an exceptionally interesting case, in which classical poltergeist phenomena were attended by speech. It will therefore be discussed in Chapter 10. Joseph Glanvil in the 1660's started a collection of cases intended to be factual evidence as to the existence of the supernatural. It is a very heterogeneous collection, including stories of apparitions of people as diverse as one James Haddock and the Duke of Buckingham, a number of witchcraft cases, and several cases that we now recognize as being clearly of classical poltergeist type. Of these I select two as involving firsthand testimony, clearly presented.

The case of the Demon Drummer of Tidworth has been much discussed in print and is a complex one on any view, doubtless involving much admixture of fraud, and loose description. However, we have Glanvil's own account of what he witnessed in 1662. I quote this in the next chapter. All I would wish to say here is that Glanvil's description, though brief, is perfectly clear. He was skeptical and took precautions against being tricked. I believe that he was not hoodwinked and *did* hear objective paranormal scratchings, a panting sound, and did feel the bed rise paranormally, and saw actual motions of a linen bag. Even if this were all that could be rescued from the Tidworth case, it would be of value. There is, however, firsthand evidence from Mr. Mompesson, the householder and magistrate, as to other disturbances. We extract one point of interest from his testimony. He sent all the children to neighbors except the eldest one, a girl of ten. The persecution stayed with her in her bedroom. This suggests that in this case, as in many others, a unique individual was identifiable as the focus of the upheaval.

Almost contemporary with the Tidworth phenomena, a disturbance took place in 1661 in the house of Mr. Paschal, an apothecary, in Soper Lane (now Queen St.) in Cheapside. The only narrative is by a son of the house, Mr. Andrew Paschal, described by the editor of *Saducismus Triumphatus* as formerly a Fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge, who presumably communicated it to Dr. Henry More, who added it to Glanvil's collection. The disturbances lasted for three nights. Andrew Paschal himself witnessed nothing on the first night, but on the two nights following he and his brother sat up until summoned to the scene of the happenings. This was the room occupied by one of their sisters and "a young maiden gentlewoman, her bed-fellow (who seemed to be principally concerned)." When the two men went into the bedroom holding a candle, all became quiet, but resumed whenever they went out.

> . . . at last it came to that boldness that it would make the same disturbance while the candle was in the chamber, if but a little shaded by the door, so that we could sometimes see the clothes pulled and tugged. And we frequently saw it heave and lift up the clothes upon the bed towards the foot, in a little hill or rising which my brother and I often clapped our hands on, perceiving it to move, and withall to make a little clacking noise, which cannot . . . be expressed in writing. . . . The shoes were laid up upon the bed's tester [i.e., on the top quilt] to prevent the

clattering which was made with them the night before. And whilst we were standing talking in the chamber, as I was some distance from the bed, one of the shoes flew off and hit me lightly on the head, my hat being on . . . a mantle about her . . . was pulled at as if it would have been plucked from her. Whereupon . . . I was asked to hold fast upon the mantle about her, which not withstanding upon removal of the candle, was tugged hard again, which I very sensibly perceived.

As tried with Virginia Campbell 300 years later, "The gentlewoman resolved now to change her chamber, to try if the disturbance would follow. She did (on the third night) my sister still accompanying her. . . . A while after they were in bed in this other chamber, there was a clattering heard at the door; later, the same noise under the bed: the same heaving of the clothes, and the same whispering as before. But towards midnight, that thing which came into the bed before, came now so often with such ungrateful skippings up and down upon her that she often shrieked. . . . It seemed cold and very smooth as she related, and would commonly come in at her feet, and run all up on her side to her shoulder. Once she desired me to clap my hand upon her back near her shoulder blade, as feeling it just then come up thither. I did so on a sudden, and there seemed a cold blast or puff of wind blow upon my hand just as I clapped it on her." The whole narrative is conveniently reprinted in Price (1945). The centering of the phenomena on the young gentlewoman, who may have been a girl in her teens, creates a strong presumption that she herself was the focus.

❧ LITHOBOLIA

Increase Mather and his son Cotton recorded several stories of poltergeists occurring in New England, but none of them are based on the eyewitness testimony of educated persons. One seventeenth-century American story, however, though not very well told, has claim to our consideration because it was written by Richard Chamberlain, the Secretary of the Province of New Hampshire, who describes his own experiences while lodging at the house of George Walton at Great Island. He entitled his pamphlet *Lithobolia, or the Stone-throwing Devil*. It was published in London in 1698 over his initials, R. C. It is reprinted in the *Historical Magazine* (1861) and extracts are given by Thurston (1953). Chamberlain says that the

incident "has confirmed myself and others in the opinion that there are such things as witches and the effects of witchcraft, or at least the mischievous actions of evil spirits, which some of us do little give credit to, as in the case of witches, utterly rejecting both their operations and their beings." This suggests that Chamberlain had previously been something of a skeptic but like Glanvil, and possibly Remy, he was influenced by a paranormal experience of his own. In his narrative he gives dates for most of the events, specifying correctly in each case the day of the week. Thus he was writing from diary notes made at the time, 1682, and not from his recollections sixteen years later in 1698.

At 10 P.M. of a Sunday night in 1682 stones were thrown against the top and sides of the house. At length everyone came down to the garden and looked out "narrowly" but "could make no discovery," although it was a bright moonlit night. Stones coming thick and fast, including "pretty great ones," they went inside and were very puzzled at stones continuing to assail them. The circumstances are not clearly stated, but it seems as if stones were coming in through the front door. However, "another and myself observed two little stones in a short space successively to fall on the floor, coming as from the ceiling close by us, and we concluded it must necessarily be done by means extraordinary and praeternatural."

For August 2 he notes: "At night as I, with others, were in the kitchen, many more [stones] came in, and one great stone that lay on a spinning wheel to keep it steady, was thrown to the other side of the room." With reference to another occasion Chamberlain says he made a memorandum to the effect: "These persons underwritten do hereby attest the truth of their being eye-witnesses of at least half a score of stones that evening thrown invisibly into the field, and in the entry of the house, hall and one of the chambers of George Walton's." The signatories were the Governor of West Jersey and seven others, most of whom have been identified by Alden (1862) and by Thurston.

Chamberlain's narrative mainly concerns the stone-throwing. He does not record himself as often observing conventional poltergeist movement of objects, but several times reports such occurrences as happening in rooms where he was present with others, or as happening when he was looking in another direction.

Increase Mather gave an account of the case in 1683, saying he had the facts "from a worthy hand." He says "on 11 June 1682,

being the Lord's Day, at night showers of stones were thrown both against the sides and roof of the house of George Walton. Some of the people went abroad . . . and stones came thick about them, sometimes falling down by them, sometimes touching them without any hurt done to them; though they seemed to come with great force, yet did no more but softly touch them; stones flying about the room, the doors being shut; the glass windows shattered to pieces by stones that seemed to come not from without but within, the lead of the glass casements, window bars etc. being driven forcibly outwards and so standing bent." This goes beyond Chamberlain's narrative essentially only in respect of the glass being broken from within. Chamberlain bears witness to the lightness of impact of the stones. Referring to Monday night, June 26, one of the severest, he says: "Then, as if I had been the designed object for that time, most of the stones that came (the smaller I mean) hit me (sometimes pretty hard) to the number of above twenty . . . and whether I removed, sat or walked, I had them, and great ones sometimes, lighting gently on me, and in hand and lap as I sat, and falling to the ground and sometimes thumping against the wall, as near as could be to me, without touching me. . . . And for variety there were sometimes three great distinct knocks, . . . as with a great maul, reiterated divers times." The family comprised both children and maids. As Chamberlain implies in the piece just quoted, the principal target for attack tended to vary. For what it is worth, Mather says: "The stones were most frequent where the master of the house was, whether in the field or barn, etc."

Robbins (1959), who lumps all poltergeist cases of this era together with witchcraft cases as nonsense, offers his own explanation of the stone-throwing. He says that after two years of Chamberlain's administration the public affairs of New Hampshire were in confusion and he was highly unpopular. Robbins thus supposes that this was a simple case of stone-throwing by some of Chamberlain's critics. However, a reading of Chamberlain's text is quite irreconcilable with this hypothesis unless we suppose him to have been not merely a bungler but either a plain liar or a person capable to an extraordinary degree of being imposed on.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POLTERGEISTS

The best-known eighteenth-century cases are those of Cock Lane and Stockwell, and the Wesley poltergeist. The former two have been considered in Part I, and the latter has recently been reassessed by Hall (1960). We are indebted to Thurston (1953) for the case of the Giles children at Bristol in 1761. The narrative of the case left by Henry Durbin appears to be a splendid piece of reporting, satisfying even by modern standards. The case is, however, such an extraordinary one that its aspects will be discussed separately in Chapters 8 and 11. There remain, however, three German cases to which only Thurston has drawn attention.

B. F. Gerstmann and his son F. B. Gerstmann were physicians of good standing at Dortmund and wrote several medical dissertations that are still extant. In 1714 the son published a detailed account of disturbances occurring in their house in 1713. His account is confirmed by a separate narrative published by Mr. Starmann, a Lutheran minister. Stones were thrown at the house from May 5, 1713, onwards. A watch was set but no mischief makers were detected. The stones could not be seen in passage through the air but were only visible on reaching their objective. There were other missiles—brick ends, slates, old iron, and potsherds. After eight days the bombardment became less vigorous, but was maintained intermittently. Missiles seemed to penetrate the house mysteriously, as apparatus in the laboratory was frequently shattered, sometimes in the very act of being removed to cupboards for safety. The Gerstmanns believed objects to be frequently moved while temporarily unobserved. Vocal abuse and malediction directed at the unseen and silent "tormentor" seemed to provoke prompt retaliation by intensified manifestations. At the very last (June 2, 1713) a voice was heard announcing in German: "The end, today the end of mischief and stench." These loud cries, the origin of which could not be traced, were repeated several times. Thurston supposes that the youngest son, aged twelve, may perhaps have been the "medium."

The Lutheran pastor Jeremias Heinisch published in 1723 a very full account of the haunting of his parsonage at Gröben in 1718. Showers of stones for a long time rained upon the roof of a cowshed, but no damage was done to property except for window-breaking when stones began to assail the house itself. Even then, consideration seemed to be shown to obviate injury to the inmates and observers. If people stood by a window then the stones, after breaking through the panes, fell perpendicularly to the ground close to the walls as if they were spent and some force checked them. If the observers moved far back near the opposite wall, then the stones would penetrate right into the middle of the room. Stones also flew from inside the room into the open air, but always fell short of them. Heinisch, writing mainly for the benefit of his ecclesiastical

superiors, comments on the curved path of many of the missiles, which sailed round corners in a semicircle contrary to the laws of motion. On one occasion a large stone seemed to be falling perpendicularly and with great velocity right on the minister's head. But it turned aside in full career. Besides this general considerateness, special forbearance was shown during the confinement of the pastor's wife and peace reigned for three days after the baby's birth. This is exactly parallel with a similar recess at Tidworth.

Dr. Schuppart, of Giessen, was a professor of theology and much respected by contemporaries. The poltergeist invasion of his home was unusual in lasting for six years and apparently involved biting and scratching of any exposed skin of his. He gave a rather full account of the persecution in a formal statement made on solemn oath before a Lutheran theological academy. He declared that his study window was repeatedly smashed, and stones weighing several pounds were aimed at him but seemed designed to miss him by a hair's breadth (Horst, 1823).

❧ A STYRIAN HAUNTING

THE earliest nineteenth-century poltergeist worth noting from the present point of view flourished in 1818 at Munchhoff in Styria, one of the lands of the vampire. The case, as transmitted to us by von Goerres (1840), is, however, very typical of poltergeist hauntings, and resembles that at Groben, although the report of a police inquiry available to von Goerres deprecated the exaggerated rumors and the superstition to which such affairs gave occasion. Thurston describes von Goerres as an earnest Catholic savant and politician, uncritical as a historian but always regarded as absolutely sincere. Thurston thinks he may be trusted to reproduce information without exaggeration, and to be too experienced in men and affairs to be imposed upon by a charlatan. The details he published were taken from the written statement of an eyewitness. This was H. J. Aschauer, whom Thurston describes as a competent teacher of mathematical physics, later professor at Gratz. According to von Goerres the police report corroborated in all essentials the testimony of Aschauer, and recommended that a scientific investigation be made. Three professors at Gratz nominated for this duty refused to act, just as did the savants of Harvard fifty years later when invited by Mr. Willis to investigate Mary Carrick.

The haunting commenced in October at the house of Aschauer's son-in-law Obergemeiner, which was bombarded by stones afternoons

and evenings only. In a few days knockings were heard at the front and back doors, without the dog barking, as he would have done had a stranger approached. Obergemeiner put a circle of about thirty neighbors round the house and got them gradually to close in, allowing no one to pass through the cordon. Meanwhile he and a friend, Koppbauer, assembled all the household in one room and searched the rest of the house. While this was being done stones began to strike the kitchen windows. Koppbauer put his head out and a big stone broke a pane of that same window. He had seen nothing move within his field of view and concluded it was a trick by someone inside the room, but Obergemeiner assured him that they had nothing to do with it. It seemed that the stones were coming from inside, though no one present could tell how, and they continued to fly at intervals until the evening. A crowd of sixty people had gathered round the house by 8 A.M. next morning to see the stone-throwing. From observation Obergemeiner and his friends became convinced that the missiles (including washing soda and bulky stones) came from under the settle which ran along part of the wall on the same side of the room as the windows. They flew out from under the settle and doubled back in a semicircular arc, which von Goerres illustrates with a diagram.

The foregoing is derived only from what Obergemeiner told Aschauer, and the reader may prefer to reject it. However, Aschauer went to stay at the house towards the end of October. As a physicist he was keenly interested to see a big iron spoon suddenly leave the shelf on which it lay and come straight at Koppbauer's head, who said he felt only a slight touch before it dropped vertically at his feet. Aschauer also saw a big copper soup tureen fly off the shelf and whizz past his head with a draught such as to blow his hair about. A tray laden with loaves and a bread rasp floated gently across the room. He declared himself prepared to aver these facts on a solemn oath and that it was absolutely impossible that anyone present could have had a hand in them. Aschauer and three others performed an experiment in which only three objects were left in the kitchen. They sat in a semicircle, each one holding a candle, and could see plainly that no one was touching the saucepan. As they watched, it gently tilted up and discharged its contents on the floor "just as if a careful dairymaid was very deliberately emptying one of her milkpails."

The principal impediment to accepting this case unreservedly lies in the fact that Aschauer did not write down his statement until fourteen months after the events. This is offset to some extent

by von Goerres' statement that the police inquiry corroborated his narrative in regard to essentials.

♑ ANGÉLIQUE COTTIN: AN ANOMALOUS CASE

THE reader may raise an eyebrow at the notion that one of these poltergeist cases can be "more anomalous" than another. However, Angélique's case has some unique features. The anomaly does not lie in the fact that at a late stage she resorted to trickery, for as we saw in Chapter 3, far from being anomalous, this is quite common. What is peculiar in this case is that traction or propulsion of objects in Angélique's vicinity occurred usually only at very short range or with actual contact with her body or clothing. It was this that led Podmore (1902) to reject her summarily, as it is easy to suppose that her effects were produced by deft and vigorous voluntary movements. This was the finding of the commission set up by the French Academy of Science. There seems no doubt that by the time she was studied by the commission any paranormal powers she may have once possessed had faded away, and to justify herself she had resort to such tricks as overthrowing tables with her knee and jerking backwards the chair she sat in (Flammarion, 1907). There seems, however, to be more than this in the earlier phases of Angélique's history.

Her reputation for strange powers dated from January 15, 1846, when in her home near La Perriere, objects touched by her, or by her clothing, seemed forcibly repelled, and on her mere approach household utensils and pieces of furniture were seen to move and vibrate. She was thirteen years old, "light and robust, but extremely apathetic in temperament and in morals" (Flammarion, 1907). Dr. Tanchou collected from various persons formal reports of what they had seen. The phenomena to which they testify are more striking than those witnessed by Tanchou himself, who first saw her on February 12, 1846, in Paris, where she had been brought for investigation. It could be that the earlier observers had been taken in to some extent. Equally it is possible that the manifestations had been declining in vigor since their onset. Dr. Tanchou's notes were read to the Academy on February 17 by Arago, a physicist of lasting fame. Tanchou says that he saw the young "electric" girl twice. We shall extract only a few items from his notes:

> A chair which I was holding as hard as I could with my foot and both hands was forcibly wrenched from me the moment she sat down in it . . . A dining table of moderate size, though rather heavy, was more than once displaced by the mere touch of her dress. . . . A large and heavy sofa upon which I was seated was pushed with great force against the wall the moment the girl came to seat herself by me. A chair was held fast upon the floor by strong men and I was seated on it in such a way as to occupy only the half of the seat. It was forcibly wrenched away from under me as soon as the young girl sat down on the other half. One curious thing is that every time the chair is lifted it seems to cling to Angelica's dress. It follows her for an instant before it becomes detached.

At the observatory, Arago, in the presence of three colleagues, Mathieu, Laugier, and Goujon, witnessed the following phenomena, which he and they thought to be paranormal, or at least to be due not to trickery but to a manifestation of some electric or other force. A paper laid on a table near the edge was strongly attracted when Angélique's hand was brought near. A table "drew back from her when she grazed it with her apron. Several times when she sat down on a chair, it was thrown violently back against the wall." This was the feat she accomplished as a trick before the commission that examined her later, and some of the laboratory assistants learned to do it, though less brilliantly than Angélique. However, in Arago's investigation, he and his colleagues tried to hold the chair down and failed.

In Tanchou's notes previously quoted he reports several interesting observations. "Two little elder-pith balls suspended by a silken thread are set in motion, attracted to each other and sometimes repelled." This occurred when they were brought near her, presumably in order to explore the electric field which they supposed she was generating. Such pith balls, when they acquire a charge, indicate the fact by repelling one another if both charges are of the same sign. In that era electricity was a novel force, and there was a natural tendency to refer mysterious happenings to its supposed functioning, or alternatively to magnetism as the phenomenon complementary to it. Sometimes Tanchou speaks of "psychic force." Clearly the "ordinary" poltergeist force could affect electromagnetic test apparatus and thus give a spurious detection of an electromagnetic field. This ambiguity runs through all the evidence regarding Angélique. We need not assume that electric forces

were present. Similarly we cannot say with certainty that they were not included in the manifestations. The notion that electric forces were involved gained support from observations of Tanchou that anticipated some of Willis's in the case of Mary Carrick. Tanchou said that when she was insulated from the floor ("isolated from the common reservoir of electric or magnetic power," i.e., the earth) by the floor being waxed, or by having her feet on oiled silk, a plate of glass, or a chair, there were no phenomena.

Angélique's pulse was frequently irregular and her pulse rate varied from 105 to 120. The manifestations were not present throughout the day, being at their best in the evening, which suggested to Tanchou that her supper (at 6 P.M.) had some effect. The following is very extraordinary, an observation unique to this case. The "emanations of psychic force," disclosed by the motion of pith-balls and a little paper wheel, came only from the front left part of the body, especially the wrist and elbow. The left arm was at a higher temperature, giving off a gentle heat. It trembled and was continually disturbed by unusual contractions and quiverings. It appeared that the polgergeist manifestations occurred in waves accompanied by a "paroxysm." In a paroxysm she said she had an intense pricking or stinging in the wrist or elbow, so painful as to cause her to leap up and run to "escape the pain." It was at these times that when her clothes chanced to touch furniture it was overturned. During the paroxysm she could touch nothing with her left hand without throwing it from her as if it burned her. It will be seen that some of this depends on the girl's own testimony, and the mode of occurrence of the manifestations was such that trickery could easily be imputed. We depend entirely on Dr. Tanchou's competence in observing the corroborative facts concerning her fevered arm, and the genuiness of the effects on the pith balls, furniture, etc. One last remark of his is very interesting. He says that the "electric emanations" seemed to move by waves intermittently through various parts of the front of her body and were "certainly accompanied by an aeriform current which gives the sensation of cold. I plainly felt upon my hand a quick puff of air." This is rather like Mr. Paschal's experience.

THE CIDEVILLE CASE

THIS case has been extensively written about and will be discussed further in Chapter 10, as it is one of the *pieces de résistance* with regard to communication with the poltergeist. The evidence is mostly contained in the transcript of a civil court action in 1851

by Thorel, a shepherd, against the Abbé Tinel, Curé of Cideville, for assault and defamation of character. The abbé said he struck in self-defense and had merely alluded to the fact that Thorel had claimed the ability to cause the mysterious disturbances that had occurred in Tinel's parsonage. As a result most of the hearing was occupied with evidence concerning the disturbances themselves (Lang, 1904). The house contained two boys—pupils of the abbé, Gustave, twelve, Bunel, fourteen years old—and an old maidservant. There is nothing to indicate with any precision who the "medium" was. As Thurston (1953) remarks, the proceedings seemed very confused, the witnesses being allowed to ramble on and produce hearsay evidence. However, there is clear testimony from neighbors and visitors of good standing who can be regarded as disinterested parties. M. Leroux, the curé of a neighboring village, swore that he saw a hammer "leave the shelf where it lay and fall in the middle of the room without making more noise than if a hand had gently laid it down." Mme de Saint-Victor, a local chatelaine, said, "Yesterday again I saw a candlestick leave the chimney-piece in the kitchen and hit my femme-de-chambre in the back. . . ." There is a good deal more unequivocal testimony of this kind.

THE JANDACHENKO CASE (1853)

THE most striking feature of this case, fire-raising, is discussed in a later chapter. It seems proper to note it here because our knowledge of it is derived from an official enquiry in which various witnesses gave their firsthand testimony. Captain Jandachenko and his wife occupied a small house together with two maids who slept in. There were some indications that the disturbances centered around the maid Ephimia, but this cannot be asserted with confidence (Thurston, 1953). At the hearings, depositions were made by the captain and his wife, the maids, some neighbors, various priests, and official visitors. Apart from the fires, it appears that a great many objects were thrown about paranormally. The attachment of the phenomena to a person or persons rather than to a place is nicely illustrated in this case. To escape the persecution the captain took another house, but the disturbances were as lively as before.

THREE CLASSIC CASES

THE years 1868-1874 saw three cases any of which might be regarded as conforming to the classical poltergeist type, with phe-

nomena that the observers associated with a maidservant in the afflicted house, whom they eventually exonerated from the suspicion of having caused the manifestations by normal means. Some details have already been given (in Chapter 3) of the haunting of the Thrasher household. Suspicion attached first to the three little boys, all less than twelve years old, and then to the servant, Anna Pring, who also was exonerated. There seems not to be sufficient evidence to decide whether the "medium" was Anna or one of the boys. Nothing is said to suggest that Anna was abnormal in physical or mental condition. The Rev. Thrasher moved to Tennessee to escape the troublesome "visitant." It appears that there they were at peace, but this proves nothing, as in fact things became quiet a week before the family moved (Thurston, 1953).

In the case of Mary Spiegel, also mentioned above, there was not the least doubt that she was intimately concerned in the phenomena, which occurred only in her immediate presence. She was exonerated from blame by the unnatural ballistics of the moving objects and by careful observations. Unlike some poltergeist individuals who show no trace of physical or mental ill health, poor Mary was a pitiable little figure. She was Polish, and her immigrant father treated her so brutally that she lived in a perpetual state of nervous apprehension. Charged with having caused the disturbances, and dismissed (though with reluctance), she was driven by the scolding of her parents to attempt suicide by drowning. According to the press she was then taken into the home of a Milwaukee physician (Thurston, 1953).

The "*Atlantic Monthly* case"—so called because the householder, Mr. H. A. Willis, described it in an article in the magazine of that name for August, 1868—concerned an Irish girl, age eighteen, who went to live as a servant with the Willis family soon after her arrival in America (Barrett, 1911). There was frequent bell-ringing, and loud and startling raps on the walls, doors, and windows of any room where Mary Carrick was working. These were also heard in her bedroom when she was apparently fast asleep. After objects had moved in her presence Willis opened a careful daily record of events. He attests that he saw a table suddenly lifted when no one was near enough to touch it. On another occasion he saw a heavy stone slab (weight, forty-eight pounds) fly up while he was carefully watching the girl, who was wringing out the washing.

The case had some unusual features. As mentioned above, knockings occurred while Mary was asleep. Members of the family

standing at her bedside often saw her start in her sleep and scream in terror. Willis thought he had evidence that she was clairvoyant. She was ignorant and superstitious. She developed a serious attack of hysteria. This was supposed to be the result of the disturbances, but clearly it is hard to distinguish between cause and effect. Noises and phenomena ceased while she was away for three weeks in a mental hospital. They were not resumed on her return but she developed sleepwalking.

It was characteristic of that period to look to electricity or magnetism for explanation of mysterious effects. Willis therefore kept a weather record, expecting better phenomena on dry, clear days. But this correlation not being observed he abandoned the electrical hypothesis. Curiously enough, he found that when Mary's bed stood on glass insulators nothing happened, but noises returned whenever they were removed. Barrett (1911) ascribes this to the effect of suggestion on the girl or on her "unseen tormentors."

❧ FOUR CASES

Before considering Barrett's cases it is worth noting four poltergeists occurring in the late nineteenth century. It is hoped that as a result of our labors in Chapter 3, Podmore's cases involving Eliza Rose at Worksop in 1883 and Polly Turner at Ham in 1895 may be regarded as rehabilitated, and appropriate to list amongst well-attested cases. It is a fair presumption that Eliza was the "medium" at Worksop, and there seems no doubt of the close association of the Ham phenomena with Polly. Nothing is known of Eliza, not even her age. Podmore implied that she may have been of low mentality, but no evidence for this is adduced. Polly was lame and had an unfortunate upbringing, as previously described. She was academically backward, but mental inadequacy is not proven.

Unfortunately I have no details of the Ylöjärvi case in Finland, 1885, (Schrenck-Notzing, 1929), but Thurston was impressed by the testimony of witnesses before a legal tribunal obtained by painstaking examination, and Thurston's good opinion is a powerful recommendation. He (p. 201, n. 4) regarded the evidence concerning the wavering path of the missiles as being of exceptional interest. The Resau case (1888), involving knockings, movings of furniture, and flight of light missiles, has already been discussed. There was a close association with the presence of fifteen-year-old

Karl Wolter, who appears to have been perfectly normal and healthy, so far as can be ascertained.

BARRETT'S CASES

It is convenient to take together out of chronological order three of the cases investigated personally by Sir William Barrett, F.R.S., and one other, because in 1911 he drew together the subject of poltergeists more definitively than any previous writer and set out some stimulating conclusions. The Enniscorthy case (1910), centering on a young man, John Randall, and involving rappings and traction of John's self, bed, and bedding is described in Chapter 8.

The Derrygonnelly case of 1877 is equally famous. When Barrett visited the lonely cottage near the "huge limestone cliffs of Knockmore" he found a recently widowed farmer, one son, and eldest daughter, Maggie, age twenty, and three younger ones, the youngest being ten years old. The disturbances seemed to center on Maggie and to be inhibited by light. However, Barrett "trained" the poltergeist to be less bashful. On one of his evenings at the cottage, the three younger girls had gone to bed, but Maggie, still dressed, was lying down on the bed so that her hands and feet could be observed. Rappings having commenced and Barrett's friend, Mr. Plunkett, being sent outside to see that no one tapped on the walls from outside, Barrett, taking the lamp, advanced into the bedroom with the boy and his father by his side. The noises died down but "got used to the light" and recommenced from walls, ceiling, etc., in the bedroom. Maggie was motionless and the other girls asleep. "The closest scrutiny failed to detect any movement on the part of those present that could account for the noises, which were accompanied by a scratching or tearing sound."

Barrett seems not to have himself observed any movement of objects, although according to the farmer this had occurred in earlier phases of the case. Yet Barrett seems to have been privileged to view an apport. "Suddenly a large pebble fell in my presence on to the bed; no one had moved to dislodge it even if it had been placed for the purpose." Much, however, cannot be made of this isolated instance. It is, for example, not beyond doubt that it might have been inside the house and have made a "normal" poltergeist flight without teleportation. This case is also celebrated for Barrett's telepathic communication with the agency at work. Barrett asked the farmer if it would respond by a given number of raps.

He said that it did answer questions but just as often with lies as truth. Barrett says "Then I mentally asked it, no word being spoken, to knock a certain number of times, and it did so. To avoid any error or delusion on my part, I put my hands in the side pockets of my overcoat and asked it to knock the number of fingers I had open. It correctly did so. Then with a different number of fingers open each time, the experiment was repeated four times in succession, and four times I obtained absolutely the correct number of raps."

A year previously Barrett had been fortunate enough to be called in to investigate a case occurring quite near to his own house at Kingstown, County Dublin (Barrett, 1917). He calls the householder Mr. C., an English solicitor who had rented a house for the summer. Mr. and Mrs. C. were not spiritualists and were annoyed when the sound of blows, etc., was heard in the vicinity of their ten-year-old daughter Florrie, whom Barrett describes as intelligent and straightforward. He went there at 10 A.M. of a bright, sunny morning, and arranged a sitting with Florrie and her parents round a large uncovered dining table, hands and feet being clearly visible. Florrie's were closely watched and completely still when the noises were heard. These were a sort of rubbing, then blows on the table and chair backs, and also as if small nails were being knocked into the floor. This became louder when they sang a cheerful song. The sounds beat time and changed into rhythmical scratching. The table vibrated rhythmically without tangible or visible cause. On other occasions knocks with vibration were got in a table that Florrie was not touching, only she and Barrett being present. "I sometimes got other people to come in while the knocks were going on in order to see if my hallucination theory had any foundation, but everyone heard them." In the presence of Florrie he got knocks at appropriate letters of the ABC repeated aloud. In this way they had intelligent communication with "a little boy, named Walter Hussey." The answers were merry and unimportant, the invisible intelligence corresponding to that of a child, also the spelling." Barrett investigated for several weeks. He also observed paranormal motion of the heavy table, with no one touching it, about ten inches into the air where it stayed for several seconds. He was interested in it as his first experience of physical phenomena, and because it was beyond the child's physical power.

The remaining case we wish to quote was not investigated personally by Barrett. In 1911 three young railway telegraph clerks opened up a "tower" at Dale, Georgia, and experienced various wild

levitations of objects. Bright, Davies, and Clark therefore ran away and in due course were interviewed by T. Hart Raines, M.D., who thought that they were respectable and veracious, corroborative of one another's testimony, and certain they were not hallucinated. Visiting the "tower," he found that the articles they said had been damaged were indeed so, apparently as the result of superhuman force. He found no possibility of their having been tricked.

☿ TURIN

As if to show that the twentieth century was to be no more free of poltergeists than less scientific eras, the city of Turin furnished two cases in its opening years. The first is celebrated by being testified to by Lombroso, the founder of criminology, and is also amusing. On November 21, 1900, he called incognito at a wine-shop at 6 Via Brava, having heard of disturbances in the cellar. The proprietor told him that they had really taken place but fortunately Professor Lombroso had come and all had ceased. Later they admitted this was a tale to keep off sightseers. In the cellar Lambroso put six lighted candles. He saw numerous bottles leave the shelves on which they were standing and go to the ground "without a shock as if they had been carried." To guard against trickery he had touched (and minutely examined by the light of a candle) all full bottles on the shelves and ascertained there was no thread or wire. An accountant, Pierre Merine, also deposed that in the cellar he had seen both empty and full bottles cracking, then breaking, and the fragments continuing to crumble. As described, this is not the mere explosion of bottles due to fermentation. By elimination, Lombroso decided that the phenomena were produced by the mediumship of the potboy. The boy was abnormal in no respect (Lombroso, 1906, 1909).

On May 10, 1901, *La Stampa*, an important Turin newspaper, published a brief account of disturbances in two small rooms occupied by Juvenal Menardi, his wife and children. The next day it published the result of a visit to the premises by one of its reporters. He found the floor of the rooms almost covered with fragments of pottery and glass, the family having apparently evacuated the "suite." He took a statement from "a good old woman," Mrs. Teresa Francesetti, who had been present at the onset of the phenomena. A small table was repeatedly and unaccountably upset. She was amazed to see a china dish fall from the chimney piece and smash on the floor. She got up to see what was happening but a bottle jumped up and broke on the floor. Another witness, a neighbor, Miss Kreifemberg, described the scene when a constable, the concierge, Mr. Menardi, and the parish curate had arrived. The abbé blessed the rooms and then they all knelt for prayers. When the prayers were finished, the priest put some holy water into a glass, and stood it on the table, where there was a small statue of the Virgin. Suddenly the statue fell on the floor and was broken, and the glass of holy water went to join it. Vandalistic phenomena then continued without interruption (Flammarion, 1924).

The lack of respect to objects of sanctity has been observed in numerous cases. Sometimes exorcism or services of intercession have apparently brought cases to an end. In many instances it is followed by a temporary cessation only. Sometimes, it is said, prayers, rites, and sacred objects seem to provoke the "poltergeist" to anger or ribaldry.

☿ THE CITY OF LONDON POLTERGEIST

We are indebted to Thurston for printing a description of poltergeist doings in some business premises in the City section of London in 1901. The manuscript was communicated to Thurston at some time prior to 1932 by Father Charles Beauclerk, S.J., who had had it in his possession for many years, the author being Mr. Lister Drummond, who died in 1916. The narrative is endorsed, "By me, Lister Drummond, 27 June, 1901." Thus his statement must have been first composed within four months of the events described, which were in January and February of 1901. At that time he was a practicing barrister, becoming a Metropolitan Police Magistrate in 1916. Thurston (1953) quotes tributes to him by two of his friends representing his character in the highest terms and there can be no doubt of the entire trustworthiness of his testimony.

On January 28 Drummond went with Mr. Keane to the affected offices. At "going-home-time," when the clerks had left, they put a bottle of oil, two marble disks (the halves of a paperweight), and some other small objects on a tray. The tray was put in a cupboard sealed with red tape so that it could be opened wide enough to look in but not wide enough for an arm to reach in to take anything out. The cupboard was then locked. On January 30 Drummond went to the office in response to a postcard from Mr. Steward. He was told

that on January 29 one of the disks had come down in front of his desk, apparently from the ceiling. Looking into the cupboard, which was still sealed, they saw that all the articles were scattered about the shelf except the disks, which were gone. They closed the cupboard again until Drummond's arrival on January 30, when he and Keane broke the seals. Drummond says: "The cupboard was entirely empty, tray, the articles it originally contained, bottle of oil and 'disks' had disappeared."

This suggests the phenomenon of teleportation and the reader may well feel that, since the evidence for it depends on its being impossible for any inmate of the office to circumvent the precautions taken, the matter is left unproved. However, there were some more ordinary poltergeist manifestations directly witnessed by Drummond. Writing of February 8 he says: "Went to office in the afternoon. Empty tobacco tins were flying about and a 1 lb. weight was thrown down in the passage leading from the clerk's room to boardroom. I watched carefully, but could detect no sign of the clerks, who were all present, having anything to do with the disturbance. . . . I saw a tin kettle, used by the clerks for boiling water for their tea, go across the room. It could hardly be said to be thrown, as I could see its passage through the air. It described the following figure [a curved line is drawn in the manuscript]."

We must understand the last remark as meaning that the motion was visible in detail, i.e., it was falling with unnatural slowness, so that, having a correspondingly slow horizontal speed, its path could be followed by the eye. I see no reason why this testimony should not be accepted, so that this is recognizably a poltergeist case. There is nothing told us by which any individual in the office can be distinguished as being the "medium." Besides Steward and Keane, four other clerks or company officials are named. We do not know if any juvenile, such as an office boy, was present.

Thurston discussed the case with Mr. W. M. Keane in 1932. He confirmed Drummond's account of the affair. Other evidence in the case is provided indirectly by Mr. Steward. Drummond's narrative includes the full text of a letter sent him by Steward on February 3, 1901. He confirms the episode of the "escape" of the disk from the sealed cupboard, and describes showers of the most varied missiles descending as if from the ceiling or from the top of a large safe—gas pipes, nuts, screws, stones, pieces of quartz, copper coins, old nails, etc. They were mystified as to how this miscellany had got into the room.

In 1932 Keane told Thurston that he had heard from Steward that the manifestations had gone on for some time afterwards and developed in a new direction. The "spook" began to communicate by *raps* with the clerks. They asked questions and got answers often characterized by an inexplicable knowledge of matters beyond the cognizance of anyone present. For example, they were told that Mr. Keane was at Lourdes. This was correct but, as Keane told Thurston, he had slipped off there without telling anyone, even his mother. As in some other alleged cases of poltergeist communication, the "spook" was frequently abusive and obscene. Aspersion with holy water was followed by a temporary cessation but later things were worse than ever. We may if we wish choose only to accept Drummond's testimony of what he actually saw, but it is worth remarking that every one of the more fantastic items alleged in this case has been asserted in other cases.

❧ "KARIN"

ONE of the most interesting of all cases was written up in or before 1905 by Hjalmar Wijk of Gothenburg, who described the researches he made in conjunction with Dr. Paul Bjerre into the cause of violent rappings on the floor and walls of a country villa in the south of Sweden. These commenced in the spring of 1904. It had been observed that they occurred in the proximity only of "Karin" (Mrs. N.), who lived there with her husband, an Inspector of Forests, a maidservant, and a German forester, Herr B.

Karin was twenty-seven years old, delicately formed, with a certain childishness in her appearance and ways, and a frank and confident manner immediately reflecting "all the different emotions of her soul." She seemed thoroughly sound in constitution. Her father was hale and hearty until three years before his death "from paralysis." Her mother, still living, was completely healthy, as was her younger brother. Karin was married in 1897, but there were no children. She appears to have been originally very "bright and gladsome," and in 1906 still retained some of this quality, though somewhat subdued as the result of her experiences since 1898.

Prior to that year she had enjoyed peace and happiness, and showed no nervous symptoms. In 1898 her "illness" began in the form of fainting fits, (with tremors) several times a day so that she was in bed for some weeks, after which they occurred less frequently. In the spring of 1899 the attacks were prognosticated by

a violent and unconquerable feeling of anxiety, which ceased the instant the tremors commenced. These began in the arms and occasionally extended to the rest of the body. The fits lasted from thirty to sixty minutes, ceased abruptly and were followed by intense lassitude. During an attack, Karin often lay in paroxysms of tears or laughter, but seemed incapable of voluntary speech or motion, and apparently with veiled consciousness, though afterwards she had some recollection of what had gone on around her. At the outset the attacks seem to have been occasioned by her being in some state or other of strong emotion, but as the violence and frequency of the attacks fell off this correlation became less apparent. By 1904 the seizures occurred only at intervals of one or two months and Wijk and Bjerre observed only one weak attack during their stay at the villa.

In 1904 she showed symptoms of nervousness and some depression. Wijk says she showed from time to time somatic symptoms of hysteria (unspecified by him), but her temperament and character showed no hysterical features. She was free from the tendency to intrigue or dissimulation often observed in hysterical patients. She had no tendency to mysticism despite her own occult experiences, which date from 1901. Then she followed the example of friends in attempting "psychography." Sitting blindfolded and holding a glass (presumably a wineglass) in her hand, she would sit in front of a written alphabet. In due course arm tremors would commence and the glass would consequently indicate specific letters. No striking information was communicated, the "messages" from deceased relatives being quite conventional. However, in the spring of 1903 she began to get messages from a new personage, "Piscator," who gradually monopolized the line of communication. "He" was ribald, impudent, violent, and irritable. He overwhelmed Karin with declarations of love and finally was regarded by Karin as a torment. *She* believed the messages to be spelled out by her own subconscious imagination. She came therefore to regard him as an odious "worse Ego." Wijke concurs that "Piscator" gave "the impression of being a mere creation of Karin's subconscious fancy."

Karin and her husband first occupied the villa on April 18, 1904. According to Wijk the building had a certain aspect of desolation, and had long had a bad reputation in the neighborhood for weird lights and strange noises. Between May 9 and July 4 knockings were heard by Karin, Mr. N., and the servant girl. Mr. N. made

some investigation, and it was concluded they were paranormal and local to Karin. They stayed in town till September 12. On their return to the villa there was mild knocking, petering out in October. Wijke and Bjerre arrived on November 2. A few raps and loud knocks had been heard on November 1 after Karin had been put in a state of temporary anxiety by receipt of a telegram. The investigators compared the statements made by the various witnesses with regard to the knockings and found good agreement with one another and with their own later experience.

It appears therefore with some certainty that between the ninth and the end of May the disturbance took a regular form. When Karin had gone to bed but not to sleep, three loud knocks were heard in the vicinity of the bed. At the end of May Mr. N. and Karin experimented each night on retiring. They asked to hear the raps a certain number of times or in a certain part of the room. Sometimes the command was obeyed, sometimes it was ineffectual, and occasionally the opposite to what was asked took place. After this the rappings became more irregular and variable in intensity and number, varying from hammer blows to gentle patterings. At last they took the form of a merry drumming like that of "Piscator's" glass. Henceforward they treated the "visitant" as being "Piscator" and by coded raps got answers to verbal questions. "Piscator's" behavior was as capricious and irritable as in the psychography. At the beginning light inhibited the disturbances, but later sensitiveness to light was lessened, though the knocks were never strong in full daylight. Karin was not able by exercise of her conscious will regularly to stop or start the knockings. But they often occurred if she had a strong wish to hear them. The occurrence of the rappings was always accompanied by vague sensations felt by Karin. Also, Karin often had a vague feeling of an invisible being in the room, particularly marked before and during the course of the rappings. She often fancied she heard a pattering noise or gliding of a boot over the floor. Mr. N. claimed also to have heard these sounds when with Karen. After September 12 the rappings were preceded by Karin's having an anxious feeling similar to that which preceded her seizures. It disappeared, except for a restlessness together with a chilliness of the hands, on commencement of the rappings. Her consciousness was not appreciably diminished during the spells of rapping.

As if for the benefit of the investigators, strong knockings that they confirmed as objective and paranormal occurred as soon

as they had taken up residence. On November 5 Wijk and Bjerre commenced the experiments they had planned without communicating them to anyone else. In the afternoon Karin was successfully put by Dr. Bjerre into a deep hypnosis. In this state her answers came slowly and listlessly, with no trace of any keen mental activity or of play of the imagination. Bjerre tried "to find his bearings in the sphere of her subconscious imagination, but without success." She remembered nothing about how the rappings first began or about the existence of "Piscator." When asked if she could see Piscator she said he was far away. She said hesitatingly that she could not see him, only an old woman dressed in gray. At a second hypnosis that evening Bjerre suggested that she ask "Piscator" to come at 11 P.M. and give three raps. At ten Karin and her husband went to bed and the doctors sat up to listen. Exactly at eleven their conversation was interrupted by three loud raps from the bedroom. The triplet was repeated three separate times. Experiments of this kind were repeated successfully, knocking at various times of day as ordered. Karin herself appeared to be quite genuinely unaware that the instructions had been given.

There is much else of interest in Wijk's account but all that we can give space to now is his account of one of the later hypnoses. Bjerre asked if "Piscator" could come at once, make four raps and then go away. Karin is "seized with anguish." She whispers "I cannot" and "he won't," and it appears as if the rapport with the hypnotizer is about to be broken. Karin is therefore calmed (with some difficulty) and awakened by degrees to minimize action. Wijk says that this was the closest the two personalities Karin and "Piscator" ever came in the hypnotic state. Apart from this one instance it was never "Piscator" ostensibly speaking and acting in the hypnotic trance but always Karin, "Piscator" being spoken of in the third person. Wijk noted this as a feature distinguishing Karin's hypnosis from the mediumistic trance in which it is the control who speaks. In later seances Bjerre applied himself to "curing" the poltergeist phenomena and to eradicating psychological effects of the experiments themselves. Thereafter the phenomena appear to have been feebler, but recommenced in January, 1905, when Karin and her husband were living in town.

Karin's case is exceptional in having come under psychiatric observation. According to Freud (1914) Bjerre was the first Swedish psychiatrist to adopt the psycho-analytic method, having previously used hypnosis in psycho-therapy.

THE YEAR 1907

CURIOUSLY, no less than four cases, all well attested, are reported for 1907. Such a concentration may excite suspicion that they could not all be true. However, they were scattered over England, France, Austria, and Iceland, and were rather different in character. I think they have to be taken as good cases. My rough impression is that a poltergeist case gets reported at the rate of about one a year. The chance that there will be as many as four in one particular year is therefore given by an elementary calculation as about 1½ per cent, i.e., three in 200, which is quite appreciable when records extending over a century or so are available. Two of the cases in this *annus mirabilis* are discussed in other chapters. The Zimmerl case, observed by Warndorfer, involved apprentices in a smithy and the phenomena consisted entirely in the flight of objects. The Iceland case, involving a young man, was characterized by his being violently pulled about, but furniture and crockery made wild movements. It is discussed in Chapter 8.

Mr. A. H. George kept a stationery shop at 20 Butte Street, South Kensington, which was unaccountably disturbed in August, 1907 (*Weekly Dispatch*, August 18; Fort, p. 990). George swore an affidavit before a notary that he and his assistant, a boy of seventeen, saw books and piles of stationery slide unaccountably from the shelves. Everything they replaced fell again. Two lamps in the window fell over. Packages of note paper flew around, striking them both. No vibration of the building was felt. Mr. S. G. Adams, an antique dealer at 23 Butte Street, swore an affidavit testifying that he had seen heavy packages of notepaper flying around, and that one of them had hit him.

Flammarion (1924, p. 236) summarizes an account sent privately to him of the doings of an *esprit frappeur* in a house occupied by a Mme Massot at Grenoble. The owner of the house, M. de Beylie, ex-president of the chamber of commerce, investigated in the presence of Central Commissioner Pelatant and Police Inspector Berger. Constables were stationed on the roof, in neighboring rooms, and in the street. The persons present "surrounded" the wall upon which the raps usually came. The raps seemed to be struck from both sides at once, but were produced only in the presence of Alice Cocat, niece of Mme Massot. There was no question of fraud, as the girl was watched by those present as the raps were sounding.

The wall was only four inches thick and had been inspected by police, professors, and all. Alice had been engaged for five years to a nephew of Mme Massot, age twenty-five, an electrician. Apparently the raps gave information in code, for the account says: "His description tallies with that furnished by the mysterious rapper. As the raps are not considered as emanating from the spirit of a deceased but a living person, they are probably only a function of the faculties of Mlle. Alice."

❧ "HANNIE" AND FRIEDA

COMING to more modern cases, that of Eleanore Zugun is discussed in Part III from two points of vew. It was preceded by a few years by the Kogelnik case of 1922. Curiously enough, this started in a vampire land, Carinthia, in November, 1921, when an orgy of destruction and terrifying noises centered, it is said, around Hannie, a maidservant in an inn at Liederbruche. Naval Commander Kogelnik and his wife, interested in psychic research, took her into their domestic service in London. The phenomena were of that kind that does, it seems, occur in some poltergeist cases but that are difficult to confirm as paranormal. Objects were frequently thrown, but as Kogelnik writes: "Neither did I on any subsequent occasion see how things were thrown, because the phenomena always happened at unexpected moments, and I have never yet outwitted the mysterious agent, though I have done my best to that end, and have never relinquished my attitude of suspicion for a moment. I finally received the impression that my thoughts were in some way guessed beforehand and that a superior intelligence was at work in the production of the phenomena and was able to make a fool of me."

This impression has been received by observers in other poltergeist cases. Other explanations (also paranormal) may be offered as alternatives to the thought-reading postulated by the commander, and will be discussed in Part III. However, regardless of the interpretation, he convinced himself that the things were not being thrown by trickery. The following extract exemplifies his reasoning and also the apparent response of the poltergeist to suggestion. He replaced a small iron box on the shelf and asked the poltergeist to throw it again so that he might see how it was done. Then: "I waited for five minutes . . . , and suddenly a smart 'bang' and the fragments of a porcelain cup were on the kitchen floor! This cup was kept on the same shelf as the iron box. Who could have thrown

it? Not Hannie, for she was seated at the window under my eye, at no more than four yards distance. Or myself. I must ask this preposterous question, for there was no one else in the room. Between 5 and 6 P.M. on 6 May it would hardly be dark, and there were no shutters to the large window. So I must suppose an Invisible Third."

As in many other poltergeist affairs, Kogelnik reports the mysterious disappearance of things (sometimes surreptitious and sometimes visibly flying away) that could not be found by searching but would suddenly come crashing or whizzing through the air. For example, they saw a door key fly away before their eyes; Kogelnik's inkstand had been missing for a fortnight and reappeared with a loud crash at his wife's feet while she was sweeping. "After this cleaning was stopped, and as my wife saw an ax disappearing before her eyes, she quitted the room. All this happened between 10 and 12 noon, and the light was good for exact observation."

This may seem to be a tall story but on account of its resemblance to phenomena reported elsewhere and elsewhen, I would not confidently reject it. In comparison with Hannie's, the effects produced by Frieda Weissl in 1929 seem trivial, and the most natural thing in the world. (It is amusing to reflect how one's standards of what is natural and what is surprising become modified by a course of poltergeist lore). But though the manifestations witnessed by members of the Austrian Society for Psychical Research were less pronounced than those that took place in the girl's own attic in Eggenburg, they are evidential, occurring in the presence of Baron von Winterstein, Professor Dorfler and others (von Winterstein, 1930). They saw small objects fly spontaneously through the air in daylight and keys jump from their keyholes, and heard imitative noises, particularly the clicking of a typewriter. People, including Freida herself, were slightly wetted with sprinkled water. These phenomena happened at Gratz and at Vienna under conditions that allowed the investigators to keep close watch on her.

❧ THE POONA POLTERGEIST

WE would be inclined to associate Poona in 1929 with colonels, polo, and the Bombay Yacht Club rather than with poltergeists. However, there is quite good evidence that one was frolicking there in that year. The case is noted in Chapter 9 as one of the rare occasions in modern times when a credible witness has described a levitation. This was of the poltergeist focus Damodar Bapat—called

Ketkar, as he had been adopted by Dr. S. V. Ketkar, a well-known Marathi historian and encyclopedist, and his wife, a German lady (Thurston, 1953). His father, a Brahman like Dr. Ketkar, had died shortly after the child's birth. His mother had committed suicide. We are told that she was troubled by strange visions or delusions. Mrs. Ketkar was, like her husband, a scholar, and the translator of Winternitz's *History of Indian Literature*. Written testimony concerning the disturbances has been furnished by two witnesses. Later we quote from the letter sent by J. D. Jenkins to the *Spectator* in 1934. He was a medical man called in to give his professional opinion of the case, and in his letter he drew on diary notes made at the time.

> The next day I called again accompanied by some friends, a police officer and an irascible old Major (who had settled the whole problem by the simple process of calling me a liar when I related to him the happenings of the day before). On this day even more remarkable and unaccountable phenomena occurred. . . . It was broad daylight (2 p.m.), a small table, apparently untouched by anyone, came hobbling across the room. . . . It came directly towards . . . the Major, imprisoning him in the armchair. . . . That evening . . . the salt-cellar began to do 'the Charleston' . . . before our eyes. The whole contents of the table were cleared by unseen hands.

Other extracts from Dr. Jenkins' experiences were published in *The Times of India* and *The Statesman*.

In the early months of 1929 Father Thurston was sent a typed copy of notes made by Miss H. Kohn, Mrs. Ketkar's sister residing with them at Poona, who was a teacher of European languages at Deccan College, Bombay University. The notes referred mainly to events she had eyewitnessed. "The events were always recorded immediately after their occurrence." Shortly after, Father Thurston met her in London, and she impressed him as an exceptionally intelligent and level-headed observer. Her narrative was printed in 1930 with introductory remarks by Harry Price.

Miss Kohn does not disguise the fact that Damodar (eight years old in 1928) was suspected by many of slyly producing the disturbances himself, and that sometimes appearances pointed that way. However, if her descriptions are accurate some startling phenomena happened without his guilty participation. For example: "8 July, 1928. A small glass jar . . . , which stood . . . in the closed cupboard in the dining room, was hurled forcibly from that room into my bedroom at the moment when Damodar in my presence was undressing for bed. In order to land where it did the jar must have turned a corner."

"24 June, 1928 . . . an aspirin bottle which had stood on a shelf in the dining room was suddenly hurled in my direction by 'an invisible hand' with such tremendous force that I involuntarily screamed, anticipating a violent crash. However, the bottle fell gently by my feet, without breaking; only the metal stopper was dented. At the moment when this happened, my nephew (Damodar) was standing quietly near me."

The family was plagued by repeated and unexplained disappearances of objects, including boot polish and food, which when looked for in their usual places were found to be missing. Sometimes these would be returned, flying into the room from outside or as if originating at some point within the room. For example (July 22, 1928), "the missing tin of polish came from mid-air from some point beyond Damodar and landed at my feet. It . . . came through the air swiftly; yet the aim . . . was so sure that the object stopped dead still the very instant it reached my foot." The next morning the tin was again missing, but when Miss Kohn called out "shoe-polish, please," it came to her as gently as before. Paper money was taken from locked receptacles, and sometimes its value was returned in small change. "On several occasions in broad daylight we now saw coins fall among us from above. This was always while the boy was in the house. . . . At first we could not always see the coins in mid-air, but merely saw them fall, being startled by the contact of the coin with the floor. Soon, however, we were able to observe more closely, and actually saw the money appear in the air. Generally the coins were one-piece or two-annas. In some cases these seemed to be coins which were missing from our purses; and other cases we could not account for the coins. In every instance it was most obvious that the boy was not himself doing the mischief."

♄ BOMBARDMENT IN MAURITIUS

Apart from the Sauchie case there are a few well-attested cases subsequent to 1929 that the reader may be well content to forego for the time being, as they exhibit no feature absent from the hauntings already listed and can affect the question of the reality of the poltergeist only quantitatively and not qualitatively. We shall therefore conclude the present conspectus with a case from the island of Mauritius. The householder of the bungalow in the Rue

Touraine, Port Louis, that was assailed, happened to be Mr. Cappy Ricks, a well-known author, who sent an account to the *Forum* of Johannesburg (Carrington and Fodor). His narrative is clear and direct and seems convincing. Besides his wife, baby, and a cook there was the children's *naneine*, a small Creole girl about eleven years old. On September 21, 1937, about eighty stones fell on the roof and in the courtyard of the house. It was noticed that some of the stones were of a kind not common to the locality. A second attack began next morning and continued all day. Two or more of the police stayed at hand all day, one of them hiding in a tree, from which a commanding view was obtained. Some stones fell in the house, although doors and windows were closed. This continued the next day, and Mrs. Ricks, the baby, cook, and *naneine* tried various other places of refuge. Eventually they were lodged in a hotel, stones having followed them elsewhere.

Ricks says that at the hotel "only three stones fell from noon onwards." This may have been because the *naneine* must have left about then to go back to the courtyard of the bungalow, where Ricks said he found her when "At midday I returned to the house." He goes on:

> I told her to make a pot of tea, and as she crossed the veranda to enter the house I saw a large stone rise of its own accord from the side of the steps to a height of about five feet and make straight for her. . . . Later, when she was laying the study table . . . a stone rose over the veranda rail and flew into the house between the partially open swing doors. It was travelling straight at my stomach, and as I stopped to catch it in its flight, it swerved some forty degrees right and fell on the table. . . . I spent the night in the house alone with nothing to disturb my rest, but at the usual time in the morning of the fourth day the missiles came as before, inside the house and on the veranda. Though I did not then know it—doors and windows being closed—the *naneine* was at her usual morning task in the court yard and had been for some time. In an hour and a half, with doors and windows still closed, fourteen stones, up to five pounds in weight, an unripe melon, and a quantity of reglisse seeds, a product of the mountains and not of the town, fell in the dining room and adjoining bedroom.

Ricks's observations all supported the idea that the *naneine* was at the root of it. On her dismissal next day all disturbance ceased.

BARRETT'S CONCLUSIONS AND OUR OWN

PROFFESSOR BARRETT came to nine separate conclusions as the result of his own studies (1911). Conclusions (2) and (3), in which he follows Andrew Lang in supposing that poltergeist doings have contributed to fetishism, animism, and folklore, need not concern us here. Conclusion (1) is *that fraud and hallucination are inadequate to explain all alleged cases*, and is one that the reader may desire further discussion of than the writer wishes to give here. In Chapter 3 we dealt with many of the tests for absence of fraud, e.g., the unnatural ballistics of objects, and it will be noted that they may be successfully applied to a large fraction of the twenty-six cases sketched above. This of course in turn depends on the truthfulness of the witnesses, who in fact number considerably more than thirty-six known persons of respectability. It is incredible that (to put the case at its weakest) more than a few should be unveracious. Also, in cases of more than one witness we are, I think, led to postulate collective hallucination as the only explanation alternative to the objectivity of the phenomena. Collective hallucination is, however, a phemenon of entirely hypothetical status. In addition it can be said, I think with safety, that cases suggestive of mass hallucination are usually found to have a quite different type of subject matter, involving apparitions and the like. Admittedly, phenomena consisting entirely of noises, and which therefore in principle could be collective auditory hallucinations, constitute something of a borderline category. However, it will be seen that very few of the thirty-six cases are characterized by noises only. Those that are seem to be sufficiently well evidenced and described to establish the objectivity of the sounds.

Coming then to Barrett's Conclusion (5), that "*the disturbances are usually though not invariably associated with a child or young person of either sex, and appear to be attached to a particular place as well as to a particular person; some animate as well as inanimate* point d'appui *seems to be essential*," we see that he makes several distinct points whose validity may be examined in the light of our thirty-six cases. In eight cases the data available to me are insufficient to designate any one individual as the center of the disorders. But in about twenty-five cases the activities were definitely

associated with one person or with one of a clearly designated pair of children. Considering that many of the earlier observers were not aware what they should be looking for, and that sometimes (as at the Dale "tower") the duration was brief so that correlation between persons and phenomena could not be established, this is a very high score. In two cases (Mascon and Liptsey) there were some indications tending to associate the maidservant with the phenomenon. Consequently, it is very reasonable to suppose that all the cases were actually of the same nature and had a human poltergeist focus. In the twenty-five cases where the focus was ascertainable, the age ranged from eight years (Damodar Ketkar) to twenty-seven years (the young matron, Karin). Thus we can agree that the focus is usually a child or a "young person," if we interpret the latter description somewhat elastically. As regards sex, we have an obvious preponderance of girls, in agreement with the notion that has become popular since Barrett's day. The actual proportion of girls is, however, by no means as high as one might have supposed. In twenty-nine cases where there is some indication of the "medium," we have eighteen girls to eleven boys; i.e., more than 35 per cent are male. Needless to say, a simple calculation shows that the ratio of girls to boys does not differ significantly from equality—a result that may surprise the reader as much as it surprises the writer. I certainly expect that an analytical list of certified poltergeist cases will continue to show about a two-to-one majority of girls but would doubt whether this predominance will be much increased.

The question of "place" is slightly more awkward. In an appreciable fraction of the thirty-six cases the irrelevance of the environment was directly tested either by the family's moving, or the disturbances following the "medium" to another abode. In another set of cases the association of the medium and the phenomena showed itself in their correlated wanderings within the house. Barrett's conclusion that the place mattered appears to have been based on the fortuitous circumstances in the small sample of cases he quoted in his 1911 paper. Thus Randall's experiences, those at the Dale "tower," Elwin March's powers, and those of Mary Carrick ceased, perhaps merely coincidentally, when the young people left their former environment. With the ampler evidence available to us today it would seem to be entirely reasonable to drop the notion of the place having any casual influence *per se*. It is not required by the evidence, and the principle of economy of thought urges us to dispense with the hypothesis. This is not to deny that the whole

milieu may play an etiological role, as part of the whole nexus of causes affecting the poltergeist focus. Nor do we deny that "haunted places" exist. But their study would seem to be a separate department of psychical research.

We can readily agree to Barrett's Conclusions (6) and (7), to the effect that *the phenomena are sporadic and temporary, their duration varying from a few days to several months, disappearing as suddenly as they came; and that they produce annoyance, and sometimes, though rarely, injury.*

Barrett's remaining conclusions relate to: (4) *the apparent functioning of intelligence*, (8) *the apparent inhibition of phenomena by suggestion*, and (9) the *close connection* (Barrett's term) *of poltergeist disturbances with the physical phenomena of spiritism.* These we shall leave aside until this part has been supplemented by the material of Parts III and IV.

CLASSIFICATION OF POLTERGEIST PHENOMENA

The thirty-six cases were taken for consideration on two grounds only: (a) characterization by occurrence of sounds or movements of objects; (b) testimony of named witnesses, preferably persons of standing. Otherwise no selection was exercised. Other uniformities have been revealed a posteriori. These are:

(i) attachment to a person rather than a place
(ii) limited duration (with some exceptions)
(iii) nuisance rather than malevolence (with some exceptions).

I think it may convincingly be maintained that this collection adequately establishes a *type.*

At the same time it reveals quite profound variations on the type. In science, departures from uniformity are liable to be quite as significant as the uniformity itself. It is a duty therefore to extract as much information as we can from these departures. Some classification of phenomena is therefore desirable, provided it is done in moderation, and not to get that purely illusory sense of progress that is apt to result from mere "naming of names." It seems reasonable to me to employ a simple two-way classification of phenomena as *lower* or *higher* in relation to two distinct features—the psychological and the physical.

Lower phenomena therefore, in the sense of both psychology and physics, are the unpurposive making of noises, and movement of objects. When we say unpurposive we mean, of course, lacking

in ostensible purpose. (The whole thing may be ultimately purposive, e.g., releasing some pent-up emotions of the poltergeist focus, but the happenings are not meaningful *per se* in the sense that the written word BEWARE is). Such readers as are only moderately skeptical may be convinced of the reality of the lower phenomena, but be inclined to resist acceptance of the higher ones. Here it seems worth while pointing out that our cases were not selected for credibility *as judged from their content* but without reference to their detailed content and only on the criteria (a) and (b) above. While I would not wish to join with the sage who advised every thinking man to believe nine impossible things every day before breakfast, I would stress the virtue of logical consistency. If in one and the same case there are alleged, with equally circumstantial descriptions, exceptional phenomena together with phenomena which in the absence from the report of the exceptional phenomena we would accept as well evidenced, then we are under some obligation to accept the reality of the exceptional phenomena as well. More briefly: if A and B are both alleged and equally well described, and A would be acceptable without B, then B is acceptable. I.e., we are not really free in scientific conscience to pick and choose as we please.

By *higher physical phenomena* I mean only apparent teleportation: the apparent coming into existence of matter within the experience of the observer, or its vanishing (for example, Miss Kohn's rupees or Mrs. Kogelnik's ax). Such a restrictive classification may at first sight seem odd. However, if we admit movement and vibration of material by the "poltergeist force," it follows very plausibly that from the physical point of view, even orderly sounds such as speech or music merely represent a species of vibration. Similarly, thermal agitation is hardly distinct from sonic vibration. Thus fire-raising and communication *qua* physical phenomena may presumably be classed as lower phenomena.

The *psychologically higher phenomena* include all those where intelligence is manifested. It might be thought that cases in which this happens are rare. It is true that in a minority of cases only are speech, coded raps, and writing alleged. However, even rather simple cases frequently demonstrate controlled ballistics of missiles. Observers have been particularly impressed by the swerving of projectiles to avoid hitting humans, as long ago as 1682 and as recently as 1937. It could be objected that this is not the result of intelligent behavior by the poltergeist or by the unconscious of the poltergeist medium. Conceivably the brain, mind, or other component of the endangered

individual could itself switch on a countervailing influence that steers the projectile. This is a very difficult hypothesis, however. Often the imperiled person is not consciously aware of the missile until it grazes his head or drops innocently at his feet. We have either to assume that he himself has an unconscious clairvoyant perception that rings an alarm signal in him and switches on the "counterforce" or that an onlooker who sees the episode unconsciously intervenes in the same way. If these "counterforces" are, however, so readily available it is a puzzle why they do not move the missiles at farther range. A further objection is the apparent fact that missiles navigate themselves very sensibly, going round corners, steering through quite narow openings, etc. This makes it look as if they are often under control during a large portion of their flight. We might suppose that there is an automatic system analogous to the sonic radar of bats by which projectiles avoid all collisions. However, this guess would seem to be negatived by the observation that equally often the projectiles crash and smash, and the only objects that seem to be effectively prohibited targets are human beings. Thus it seems that we cannot accept the genuineness of the lower phenomena without accepting, in some degree, higher phenomena as well.

A table may be useful:

	HIGHER PSYCHOLOGICAL	LOWER PSYCHOLOGICAL
Higher physical	Teleportation with controlled ballistics	Teleportation
Lower physical	Controlled ballistics Coded raps Speech Writing	Movement Sound Heating

CONCLUSIONS

THIRTY-SIX cases have been chosen as having at least one witness of credit, and showing either noises or object movement. These cases suffice to establish the reality of the classic poltergeist haunting, though they are not claimed to be all of equal evidential value.

In addition they confirm the theory of a poltergeist focus. In this sample girls as poltergeist "media" preponderate over boys in the ratio two to one, which, however, does not differ significantly from equality. Ages range from eight to twenty-seven years.

A provisional classification of poltergeist phenomena is arrived at, based on the putative presence or absence of the two features teleportation and intelligent behavior.

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	Date	*Reference*
The Devil of Mascon	1612	Thurston
Paschal home, London	1661	Price
The Demon Drummer of Tidworth	1662	Price
Walton, Great Island	1682	Thurston
Gerstmann, Dortmund	1713	Thurston
Heinisch, Gröben	1718	Thurston
Dr. Schuppart, Giessen	*ca.* 1750	Thurston
Giles girls, Bristol	1761	Thurston
Obergemeiner, Munchhoff	1818	Thurston
Angelique Cottin, La Perriere	1846	Flammarion
Cideville parsonage	1850	Mirville, etc.
Jandachenko, Liptsey	1853	Leaf, Thurston
Mary Carrick, Boston	1868	Willis, Barrett
Anna Pring, Buchanan	1870	Thurston
Mary Spiegel, Milwaukee	1875	Thurston
Florrie C., Kingstown	1876	Barrett, Flammarion
Maggie, Derrygonnelly	1877	Barrett
Eliza Rose, Worksop	1883	Podmore
Ylöjärvi, Finland	1885	Schrenk-Notzing
Karl Wolter, Resau	1888	Thurston
Polly Turner, Ham	1895	Podmore
Fumero home, Turin	1900	Flammarion
Menardi home, Turin	1901	Flammarion
City of London	1901	Thurston
Karin, Sweden	1904	Wijk
Alice Cocat, Grenoble	1907	Flammarion
George's shop, Kensington	1907	Fort
Indridason, Reykjavik	1907	Thurston
Zimmerl, Vienna	1907	Barrett
John Randall, Enniscorthy	1910	Barrett

Dale "tower," Georgia	1911	Barrett
Kogelnik, London	1922	Thurston
Eleonore Zugun, London	1926	Price
Damodar Ketkar, Poona	1929	Thurston
Frieda Weissl, Vienna	1929	Thurston
Ricks home, Mauritius	1937	Carrington and Fodor

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The Sauchie Poltergeist

INTRODUCTION

This report is given in full as written in the spring of 1961, and it is to this period that statements in the present tense refer.

About mid-December, 1960, I learned of the Sauchie, Scotland, case from press cuttings kindly lent me by Mr. Trevor H. Hall, J.P. It appeared that abundant supposed poltergeist activity occurred between November 22 and December 2, being centered on an eleven-year-old child, Virginia Campbell. The newspaper had reported statements by a number of witnesses of standing in the local community, which though guarded were definite. This encouraged me to believe that some of the happenings might have been genuinely paranormal. This impression was somewhat confirmed as the result of enquiries by letter and telephone. It also appeared likely that if I visited the locality, at least some of the witnesses would be prepared to supply detailed accounts of their experiences. It seemed best to allow time for the passage of Christmas, New Year's Day, and the school holidays. I therefore arranged to stay in Alloa from the evening of Friday, January 13, until Monday, January 16. To my great good fortune I was able to interview no less than five responsible persons who had each witnessed some unusual phenomena and had observed it critically, namely:

The Rev. T. W. Lund (M.A., B.D.), Minister of Sauchie

(Church of Scotland), resident at Manse of Sauchie, Sauchie Main Street.

Dr. W. H. Nisbet (M.B., Ch.B.), physician, resident at Hilden, Stirling Street, Tillicoultry.

Dr. William Logan (M.B., Ch.B.), physician, resident at Beechwood, Dollar Road, Tillicoultry, in practice with Dr. Nisbet.

Mrs. Sheila Logan (M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H.), Dr. Logan's wife, and herself a qualified physician.

Miss Margaret Stewart, resident at 61 Jamieson Gardens, Tillicoultry, a fully qualified teacher on the staff of Sauchie Primary School.

Decisive importance attached to the testimony of these witnesses for reasons that will indeed be obvious. By nature of their vocations they may be expected to have well trained and disciplined minds, and their probity may be taken as axiomatic. Again, they are independent witnesses, free of family ties with the disturbed household. I was received in turn most hospitably in their several homes and they all very kindly devoted a considerable amount of time to giving me detailed narratives of what they themselves had seen and heard. Those of Mr. Lund relate only to happenings in the Campbell home. Those of Dr. Nisbet and Dr. Logan describe happenings both in the Campbell home and in another house at Dollar. Miss Stewart describes occurrences in the classroom at Sauchie School. The headmaster of Sauchie School, Mr. Peter Hill, M.A., witnessed no phenomena but he kindly contributed a statement supplying a great deal of useful ancillary information.

While I was in the district I also called at the Campbell home, the most frequent scene of poltergeist doings, and saw Virginia and other *dramatis personae*, and obtained a certain amount of useful information from Virginia's brother and sister-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Campbell.

Without my anticipating conclusions in detail, it is convenient to say at the outset that the evidence presented is to my mind conclusive proof of the objective reality of two types of poltergeist phenomena: production of noises (tappings, knockings, sawings, bumpings); movement of objects by paranormal means.

It may also be convenient if I explain the topographical layout of the locality. Sauchie in the present context is the built-up area marked on Bartholomew's Map (45) as New Sauchie, and to be distinguished from the hamlets shown on the map as Sauchie and

Old Sauchie. As a result of modern building developments it forms a single built-up area with Alloa, being part of the Alloa coalfield. Besides coal mining there are a variety of local industries. Sauchie Manse, Sauchie Primary School and the Campbell home are all within fairly short walking distance of one another. Alloa is a famous old town, which is among other things a port, being at the limit of navigation of the River Forth. Tillicoultry is about three miles north of Sauchie. Dollar is about 5½ miles to the Northwest.

BACKGROUND TO THE CASE

Virginia Campbell is eleven years old and the youngest child of elderly parents, Mr. James Campbell and Mrs. Annie Campbell (age fifty-six). They are citizens of Eire, all their children having been born there. Virginia's life was spent in County Donegal, her father having worked a farm or croft at or near Moville. Her upbringing was extremely quiet and lonely, the other children having all grown up and left home. Most of them appear at various times to have come over to settle in England or Scotland. The only regular companions that Virginia had at Moville other than her parents were her pet dog Toby and one friend, a little girl, Anna.

Virginia's brother, Mr Thomas Campbell (age about thirty), has been living for some years in Sauchie, employed in coal mining. Recently her father decided to dispose of his holding at Moville, perhaps with a view to settling in Scotland. In the autumn of 1960, therefore, Virginia and her mother came to stay with Mr. Thomas Campbell and his wife, Mrs. Isabella Campbell, at their home, 19 Park Crescent, Sauchie, while her father stayed on in Donegal, presumably to complete business in connection with the holding. Virginia's mother then took employment at a boarding house attached to the well-known school, Dollar Academy. This is at Dollar, some miles from Sauchie, so that her mother had to reside there. Meanwhile Virginia is living at 19 Park Crescent with her brother and sister-in-law and their two children (Virginia's niece and nephew), Margaret (age nine) and Derek (age six). At nights she shared a double bed with Margaret.

In mid-October, 1960, Virginia started to attend Sauchie Primary School. Mr. Hill, the headmaster, records that when Mrs. Campbell brought her to school for enrollment they both created a curious impression on him. Mrs. Campbell "offered no more information other than was necessary and her voice seemed to come

unwillingly from behind the mask of her face." Again, "they gave the impression of people who had lived for a long time in a remote and isolated place, whose reality was a blend of their immediate environment and the boundless vision of the mind." Being older than Margaret, Virginia was placed in a higher class. At first she was extremely shy, and her teacher, Miss Margaret Stewart, found it difficult to establish real communication with her. This is ascribed not only to her shyness but also to the language difficulty, there being a difference in speech between Donegal and Clackmannanshire. Apart from this, Miss Stewart found her a completely normal little girl. In the course of time Miss Stewart was able to form a more detailed picture of Virginia's personality. It is an attractive one. Undoubtedly she missed her father very much. However, despite her shyness, she makes durable friendships easily. She is somewhat above normal intelligence. A test estimated her I.Q. as 111, but for obvious reasons this figure is probably too low. She is becoming interested in and more proficient at academic subjects. By March, 1961, much of her shyness had worn off and she was very much more forthcoming. Virginia is very creative with her hands. She has a typical girl's interests, is uninhibited in physical activities and is fond of dancing. Outwardly she is always placid and unemotional. She is obedient, has a mature outlook and discharges responsible tasks well. She is on good terms with her classmates.

Virginia is a big girl for her age. With the rest of the family at Park Crescent she has been under Dr. Nisbet's medical care. Her health is good, as she has needed no treatment except a routine polio injection. There is no sign of any fundamental psychological abnormality. Thus, generally speaking, her physical and mental health are basically sound. However, it may be of significance that at present she is going through a period of extremely rapid physical development and maturation. Puberty in the full sense has not arrived but she is going through a very rapid pubescence. It may also be of significance that on occasions during the poltergeist disturbances she did give some indication of mental or emotional turmoil. At times she talked in her sleep, showing signs of both upset and aggressiveness. But when account is taken of all the factors, this cannot in itself be taken as evidence of basic mental ill health.

The principal poltergeist happenings took place between November 22 and December 1, and are summarized in the next section. Various happenings which are less well attested or difficult to interpret as normal or paranormal are listed in a separate section.

I visited the Campbell house at 19 Park Crescent. It is a very

comfortable, well appointed and well kept home. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Campbell, who bear an excellent local reputation, seemed to me to be very respectable, sensible, and intelligent people. The three children came back from Sunday school while I was there. As far as I could see the family relationships between all five seemed normal and happy. By this time (mid-January, 1961) Virginia seemed to have accommodated herself to the existence of the poltergeist, and even to have pride and interest in it or "him," because she had christened him "Wee Hughie."

DIARY OF THE MAIN EVENTS

I HAVE selected from the witnesses' statements those events which convinced them as being paranormal. In some cases I have indicated in brief their reasons for so concluding. The statements themselves, later given in full, go into the question of proof much more amply, as well as providing a great deal of subsidiary information that may well be relevant both to interpretation of this case and the evaluation of poltergeist cases generally. I have also included an account of Virginia's "trances."

Tuesday, November 22. When Virginia and Margaret went to bed a "thunking" noise, like a bouncing ball, was heard in the bedroom, and then on the stairs and in the living room when they came down. As with all subsequent manifestations it ceased entirely when Virginia went to sleep.

Wednesday, November 23. Virginia was kept home from school. At teatime Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Campbell were in the living room. Virginia was sitting in an armchair next to a sideboard. They saw the sideboard move out five inches from the wall and then move back again. Virginia was not touching it.

That evening when Virginia was in bed but not asleep loud knocks, audible all over the house, were heard by the family and several neighbors and by the Rev. Mr. Lund, who was called in about midnight. He found the knocking to come from the bed head in circumstances that proved it was not being struck or shaken by Virginia or by anyone else. Mr. Lund gripped the bed head and felt it vibrating during the knocking.

Mr. Lund saw a large linen chest (twenty-seven inches long, seventeen inches high and fourteen inches wide, and full of bed linen) rock and raise itself slightly, travel a distance of eighteen inches over the linoleum and then move back.

When at length it was suggested that Margaret go back into

the double bed with Virginia there was a burst of violent and peremptory knocking.

Thursday, November 24. Virginia stayed home again from school.

In the evening Mr. Lund saw Virginia's pillow rotated from its normal position horizontally through 60°. Her head was on the pillow but it seemed quite impossible that she could do this herself. He also heard some knockings and saw rockings of the linen chest.

Dr. Nisbet heard knockings and a sawing noise. He saw a peculiar rippling or puckering motion pass over the surface of the pillow. Virginia's head was on the pillow but he saw no way in which she could produce this effect.

Friday, November 25. Virginia stayed home again in the morning but was taken to school in the afternoon. During a period of silent reading, Miss Stewart saw Virginia trying to hold down the lid of her desk, which raised itself steeply on its hinge two or three times. Miss Stewart was able to see that Virginia was not raising it herself by movement of her limbs.

A little later on, the desk behind Virginia, which was temporarily unoccupied, was seen by Miss Stewart to rise slowly about an inch off the floor. It then settled down gently a little out of its original position. Miss Stewart went straight over to it and verified that no strings, levers, or anything else had been in operation.

In the evening Dr. Nisbet kept watch in Virginia's bedroom before she went to sleep. He heard spells of knocking, even when Virginia was lying motionless on the bed without bedclothes.

From time to time he saw the linen chest, which was standing in isolation, move distances of about a foot. Once the lid opened and shut several times in succession.

He observed horizontal rotations of the pillow through as much as 90°. As with the pillow on the Thursday, a curious ripple would pass over the bedclothes from time to time. It could be described as a "puckering," as if due to traction by an invisible agency.

Saturday, November 26. Dr. Logan sat in the bedroom. He saw a slight puckering of the coverlet and a rotary motion of the pillow towards Virginia's body.

Sunday, November 27. In the morning Dr. Logan took his dog to 19 Park Crescent. Virginia was much taken with him and said he reminded her of her dog Toby.

No paranormal phenomena are reported for that evening. But there was one event of great interest. When Virginia went to bed she

went into a "trance." She talked in her sleep, calling for her friend Anna and for Toby, both left behind in Ireland. At 11:30 Mr. Lund called. Virgina was then up but went back to bed and fell asleep but called for Toby. She was given a teddy bear. She flung it away, crying out vehemently and striking out violently with her hands. They decided to leave the room and she fell into a normal sleep.

Monday, November 28. Virginia went to school in the morning. About 10:15 the class was working a problem paper. Virginia came up to Miss Stewart's desk (a table four feet long by two feet wide) for help. She stood to the left of Miss Stewart's chair and somewhat away from the table with her hands clasped behind her back. While Miss Stewart was sketching out the solution to the problem, a blackboard pointer lying on top of the desk started to vibrate and moved on top of the desk until it reached the edge and fell off. Miss Stewart put her hand on the desk and felt it vibrating. The desk was moving. The right-hand end traveled away so that the desk swung round. In the afternoon Virginia was taken to stay with a relative at Dollar. Dr. Nisbet visited her there in the evening. Loud knockings were audible all over the house.

Tuesday, November 29. Dr. Logan and his wife, Dr. Sheila Logan, visited Virginia at Dollar in the evening. They heard several outbreaks of knocking. These varied from gentle tappings to violent agitated raps, these later occurring when they were about to leave. The sounds appeared to come from the vicinity of Virginia. Mrs. Logan had previously been skeptical about the reported manifestations but satisfied herself that the noises came from within the room, but were not caused by the activity of anyone in it.

As soon as they got home to Tillicoultry, Dr. Logan was summoned by telephone back to Dollar as Virginia was now in another "trance." He found her talking in a loud and unnatural voice, calling for Toby and Anna, and throwing herself about the bed. Her eyes were closed but she heard and answered questions. Her replies indicated a lack of normal inhibition as if repressed thoughts were emerging. She awoke after ten minutes in a normal state of mind and asked for a cup of tea.

Wednesday, November 30. Virginia returned to Sauchie. The family reported that there were no phenomena that night.

Thursday, December 1. Dr. Nisbet and Dr. Logan set up a movie camera in Virginia's bedroom, as well as arrangements for sound recording, before she came up to bed at 9 P.M. From then until 10:30 there were continual noises (ranging from barely per-

ceptible tappings to agitated knocks), and occasional rippling of the bedclothes. Between 10:30 and 11 a considerable amount of hysterical talking by Virginia was recorded, in which she showed the same lack of inhibition as she had previously in her "trances."

At 11 P.M. the Rev. Mr. Lund and three other ministers arrived to conduct a service of intercession (*not* of exorcism). During the service (11:15 to 11:30) there were some knockings.

A variety of noises were recorded between 11.30 and 12:15. Three examples were later rerecorded by the BBC and used in a regional sound broadcast feature program called "Scope," which gave a brief review of the case. These noises were: (a) a series of loud peremptory knocks; (b) a harsh rasping, sawing noise; (c) a scream from Virginia when the lid of the linen box went up. (When I visited him on January 13, 1961, Dr. Logan kindly replayed for me a recording of the whole item from the broadcast. Both the knocks and the sawing were very loud and harsh.)

Subsequent to December 1, the phenomena appear to have been less pronounced and troublesome. The Rev. Mr. Lund and the doctors thought it best that publicity should die out and therefore, very reasonably, announced that a "cure" had been effected, or at least nearly so. It would seem that genuine phenomena either ceased or occurred with diminished frequency and violence. In any case little that is evidential has been reported since December 1. Such happenings as I have been informed of have been summarized in the next section. One occurrence I do regard as well attested because it is reported by Miss Stewart. Also, it may be of significance because it took place about two lunar months after the very disturbed Friday, November 25:

Monday, January 23, 1961. Virginia placed a bowl of bulbs on Miss Stewart's desk in the classroom. It moved across the top of the desk in a manner similar to the pointer on November 28, fifty-six days before.

LESS WELL-ATTESTED EVENTS

IT seems worth while listing these occurrences reported to me, which are of doubtful status. That is; it is not possible on the facts available to assess whether they actually occurred or not, or if they did occur whether they are paranormal or not. Where the source of information is not given explicitly it may be found in one or other of the narratives.

November 24. When Virginia stood in front of the wardrobe

it knocked back at her. (It was not made clear to Mr. Lund whether the wardrobe functioned spontaneously or only in response to overtures by Virginia).

November 28. When Virginia was sent out of the classroom the door banged open as soon as she had shut it. This was reported in the press as "doors that refused to close." Miss Stewart's observation did not permit her to assess the cause.

About December 2, while Mr. Hill, the headmaster, was in the house Virginia went upstairs and a minute later three resounding thwacks were heard that sounded to Mr. Hill "like kicks on a door built on the lines of a decrepit tea-chest."

About this time, while Virginia's father was staying in the house, he reported that an apple had floated out of a fruit bowl and that his shaving brush had flown round the bathroom.

December 4. A small vase that was usually on top of the sewing machine was found bent (as by impact) upon the rug.

December 5. A large china dog was found uninjured on the floor out of its usual position on top of a piece of furniture.

Subsequent to this, tricks were played on the girls when in bed. Virginia's pajama trousers were pulled off or her nightdress rolled up. A store of sweets disappeared over a period of some days. The children blame "Wee Hughie."

Minor troubles persisted through January, February, and March of 1961. There are some knockings on the bed at night, and once the sound of someone walking across the bedroom floor. Often the girls are poked on the body or legs while lying in bed. Also they are "nipped" or pinched, and this happened also to a visitor in the house. Once colored writing appeared on their faces but vanished by the time Mrs. Campbell came into the room. Twice the stoppers of their hot water bottles came undone. Once Mrs. Campbell saw Virginia's lips turn a very bright red three times in succession.

REALITY OF THE PHENOMENA

IT will be seen from the diary of the main events that the five witnesses believe themselves to have heard certain sounds and seen certain movements of objects. It is just possible in principle to suppose that one person could be the victim of illusion or hallucination. It is, however, beyond all possibility that five responsible persons should be so deceived at various occasions over a period of two weeks. Thus we must conclude that they heard actual noises and saw actual

motions of real objects. Also, where their narratives overlap the descriptions are similar, even if there is occasional difference in emphasis. Thus the occurrences not only happened but happened much as in the way described. As regards the sounds, these conclusions are further substantiated by the evidence of the tape recorder.

The reality of the observations being established, we need, of course, to consider possible normal explanations, i.e., in terms of known physical or human agencies. Since, as we have seen, trickery has been found applicable in some well-known cases, some writers have shown a tendency to explain all cases of poltergeist-haunted children by a "naughty little girl" theory. As the Campbell household comprises three children, it is worth noting that the Rev. Mr. Lund, the three physicians, and Miss Stewart all took account of the possibility of trickery, and excluded it on the basis of the evidence, as appears in more detail later. Miss Stewart carefully noted whether it was possible for Virginia to have moved either Miss Stewart's desk or her own desk lid, and immediately searched for any mechanism by which the desk behind Virginia could have been levitated. Dr. Nisbet and Dr. Logan were both convinced that the rippling or puckering of the bedcovers was not consistent with elevation from below by Virginia's hands. Dr. Nisbet's observations of the puckering of the surface of the pillow seems inexplicable as the result of action by Virginia. Movements of the whole pillow seen by Mr. Lund, by Dr. Nisbet, and Dr. Logan on various occasions cannot credibly be supposed to derive from movements of Virginia's head, neck or shoulders. Again, Mr. Lund saw the linen chest move when Virginia's feet were well tucked in, she was supine in the bed, and no one else was near it. Dr. Nisbet's observations of the movement of the linen chest and its lid were under similar conditions and equally exclude trickery. Knockings were heard when Virginia was lying on top of the bed without bedclothes and seen to be motionless. In any case the Rev. Lund, Dr. Nisbet, and Dr. and Mrs. Logan all became quite satisfied that the tapping, knocking, and sawing noises, often very loud, could not be explained by shaking of the bed. Dr. Logan experimented in production of sawing noises, he told me, by drawing a fingernail over various surfaces such as bed sheets or carpets. He succeeded in producing a rasping noise but much weaker in intensity and somewhat different in tone and quality from the sawing noise as heard and recorded. All observers agree that the sounds appeared to originate in the room where Virginia was and were not consistent with their fraudulent production outside the room. To sum up, it seems evident that the

physical phenomena observed by the key witnesses are incompatible with trickery by Virginia, or by other children or adults.

This conclusion, of course, only applies to the phenomena observed by these witnesses and guarantees nothing about the authenticity of the various events listed as *less* well attested. Here it is impossible to exclude trickery on the part of the children as a possible (though unproved) explanation, or flights of the imagination by Virginia's father. However, this logical necessity does not in any way weaken the conclusions drawn concerning the genuine paranormality of the main occurrences. Indeed, the juxtaposition of two entirely different types of evidence as regards credit-worthiness is one of the interesting features of the case. Had all the evidence been of this status this case would have been inconclusive like so many past cases. This observation may well be of value in the assessment of old cases. In opposition to Gresham's law, bad evidence should not necessarily drive out good.

Besides the "naughty little girl" theory, a second unified theory of poltergeists is the one put forward by Mr. G. W. Lambert; in Chapter 1 we examined his suggestion that earth movements due to subsidence, underground water, or to tidal action cause movements of the structure of buildings, and therefore noises and possibly movements of objects inside the buildings. In his paper on Scottish haunts and poltergeists (1959), Mr. Lambert draws attention to a group of alleged poltergeist cases (Group II in his classification) occurring in a limestone region. The boundary of this region as indicated by Mr. Lambert would appear to pass through Dollar and Kincardine-on-Forth, thus just missing the Alloa coalfield (consisting geologically of coal seams and millstone grit). In principle the Alloa coalfield would appear to be fairly propitious for cases of the Lambert type in view of the possibility of subsidence due to mining operations and underground water in old workings. However, it seems clear that this explanation of the phenomena actually evidenced is quite inapplicable. We can agree with Mr. Hall's remark (Dingwall and Hall, 1958), "Our experience leads us to suspect that if the movement of a house could be sufficiently violent to cause spectacular manifestations of this sort, the building would almost certainly fall into ruins during the outbreak." According to my own observation, Sauchie School and 19 Park Crescent and the surrounding properties show no sign of slipping, foundering, or cracking. To clinch the matter, I enquired of the Road Surveyor and Water Engineer, Mr. J. D. A. Ross, who kindly supplied the relevant information given at the end of the

chapter. It will be seen from this that there are no signs of ground movement, and also that there was little if any actual working in the vicinity of the housing estate. Last, it is incredible that ground movements should occur in Park Crescent, at the school, and at Dollar, coincident only with Virginia's presence. This case is therefore not explicable by this mechanism.

One more theory deserves to be considered, if only briefly. It postulates a cause that in the strict sense is paranormal. As we have seen, Mr. E. F. Russell (1957) has suggested that levitations and flights of objects may result from their temporary acquisition of a state of weightlessness. This is a very radical assumption from the point of view of physical theory. For one thing, it conflicts with the general theory of relativity in which weight is strictly proportional to mass and also with present ideas about the interaction of the fundamental particles of physics (Gamow, 1961). A body that is weightless but retains its mass will tend to be flung away from the rotating earth like a drop of water from a spinning umbrella. In British latitudes it will, from this cause, tend to rise upwards but also to drift southwards. It will also tend to rise upwards as a result of the upthrust of the air that it displaces, i.e., tend to "float" up in the literal sense of the word. In addition it will be pushed about to some extent by any atmospheric draughts that happen to be in the room. Without examining the instances in detail it will be seen that these motions do not accord particularly well with those described. For example, the linen chest as viewed by Mr. Lund rose a little off the floor, traveled eighteen inches horizontally and then moved back. Again, it is not easy to see how this supplies an explanation for knockings that must result from vibrations of auditory frequencies set up in the air itself or in solids.

To sum up: the poltergeist phenomena were real and not due to trickery, ground tremors, or induced weightlessness.

❧ MODUS OPERANDI

STARTING from the postulate that "the real is rational" we can, I think, to some extent delimit the mode of operation of the agency effecting the manifestations, and need not merely relegate it to the general category of "supernatural" or "paranormal." In attempting this delineation we will find it important to record the general impressions received by key observers. The Rev. Mr. Lund remarked that to witness the events was indeed "awe-inspiring" but not a

"frightening" experience. In this connection it is interesting to recall that (as described in his narrative) the lay witnesses, by contrast, were inclined to show alarm at the more lively occurrences, but tended later to take their cue from the robust attitude of their spiritual and medical advisers, and be put in heart again. Dr. Logan independently noted that the occurrences were not frightening, at least to the more intellectually sophisticated observers. Miss Stewart did not find the movements of furniture alarming per se, her initial concern being merely in relation to the possibility of the experience being hallucinatory, or in relation to possible panic and talk among the school children. This cumulative testimony is, it seems to me, of some significance. If anything it certainly tends to suggest that no malign psychic influence was producing direct effects of fear or depression in the minds of the bystanders.

As regards causation, the happenings seemed to the Rev. Mr. Lund as being, on balance, more consistent with the functioning of a force or forces originating in Virginia than with the operation of a discarnate entity. Dr. Logan and Miss Stewart, independently of one another and of Mr. Lund, both very definitely put forward the same interpretation.

On the evidence this finding is much to be preferred to any other. The association between occurrences and the near presence of Virginia is complete. "It" therefore was fairly closely linked to Virginia's physical presence. There is no evidence of any disembodied entity functioning. Economy of hypothesis thus suggests that as the result of a peculiar condition at the relevant times in Virginia's body or mind certain unknown physical forces operated on matter in the vicinity. This is the best provisional conclusion.

We are quite in ignorance of the nature of these forces or how they were applied to cause motion of bodies, i.e., translated into mechanical force. They appear to have produced noises by setting up vibrations in solid. This is evidenced by the striking fact that the Rev. Mr. Lund held the bedhead and felt it vibrating strongly in correspondence with the knockings.

The supply of energy required for the manifestations is clearly within the physiological capacity of a healthy girl of eleven. The amount of energy and the rate of working do not exceed those developed physiologically by Virginia when running upstairs or employed with a skipping-rope. However, it is quite conceivable that in fact she supplied no appreciable amount of energy. For instance, the energy might have been supplied from the potential energy of some

unknown force field in the space around. Virginia's contribution may, mechanically speaking, have been merely to trigger off the operation of this field force at certain points.

☌ CAUSATION

THERE are historical parallels to the Sauchie case in which the manifestations are centered on a young girl often at the age of pubescence. It is agreed that Virginia is developing rapidly. It is readily conceivable that in some cases of rapid pubescence, the physiological condition is itself sufficient to set up the poltergeist forces or the triggering force hypothecated in the last section.

Even so it remains a mystery why pubescent girls are not more frequently poltergeist centers. The additional factor may be purely physiological and biochemical. On the other hand it may be psychological. In the present case it is agreed that Virginia's intelligence and basic mental health are at least normal. However, there is good reason to suppose that on transplantation to Sauchie she sustained some emotional upset. From our knowledge of the household at 19 Park Crescent we can be sure that she suffered no genuine discomfort or unkindness. Even so the change of home constituted quite an upheaval for her. In effect she lost her father, her mother, her dog, her only intimate friend, and her familiar surroundings. From the status of an only child she became one of three. She had to share a bed with Margaret. With the best will in the world on all sides this can be acutely distressing, especially for a girl in her stage of development. The vehemence of the poltergeist when it was proposed that Margaret return to the bed may be significant.

Virginia's "trances," in which she showed both disturbance of mind and unwonted aggressiveness, could be merely indicative of the effect of distress caused to her by the poltergeist. But this is on the whole unlikely because the complaints she made in the trances were not about being persecuted by the poltergeist but about quite different and personal things, nostalgia for her life in Ireland. Prima facie therefore, the trances provide evidence of emotional upset.

It is plausible, therefore, but not certain that emotional disturbance is one of the factors required in addition to rapid pubescence.

It is tempting to equate Virginia's trances with those of the "physical medium." However, it is difficult to set up this equation with much confidence. There is no evidence to say how closely it did resemble a mediumistic trance. Again, curiously enough, there

were no phenomena during the trances. This parallels their absence when Virginia was asleep. We can, of course, somewhat speculatively hazard the guess that trances and poltergeist outbreaks were in fact substitutes for one another. That is; each successfully gave an outlet to repressed emotion and relaxed internal tension.

We can also speculate that the poltergeist activities, besides possibly fulfilling other roles, were in part subconsciously motivated as attention-seeking devices. Looked at in retrospect it would seem that on balance they have been more a source of satisfaction than distress to her. Certainly they made her a local celebrity, and people's kindness and prudence shielded her from hostile reactions. Occasionally the outbreaks seem explicitly to have functioned in an attention-seeking way, as when the knocks became vehement when Dr. and Mrs. Logan were about to leave her at Dollar. In the end Dr. Logan had to go back to her, because the knockings were replaced by a "trance."

Virginia's case is indeed replete with suggestive possibilities. Firm conclusions cannot of course be drawn. But correlation with other cases might well provide some useful steps towards an acceptable theory of poltergeist genesis.

☌ SOME HISTORICAL COMPARISONS

IN the "Scope" broadcast one of the commentators on the Sauchie case remarked on the coincidence that the notorious Christian Shaw of Bargarran was born at Sauchie. In 1696, being about eleven years old, she was the victim of alleged witchcraft. She was seized with convulsions and regurgitated eggshells, bones, feathers, etc. She was unable to see people actually present but conversed with the specters of the witches whom she accused of tormenting her. As a result of her denunciations some five persons were hanged and then burned on the Gallow Green of Paisley. It was alleged that during her afflictions she was on occasion levitated and flew across the room (Grant, 1698). Sir John Dalyell (1834) notes that no detail of the facts is preserved, Grant's booklet being merely a compilation of hearsay evidence. There is thus no real evidence that Christian was other than an imposter or the victim of hysterical delusions.

There are, however, not a few cases in the literature with points of genuine resemblance to the Sauchie visitation. According to Catherine Crowe (1848), in 1835 Captain Molesworth, who had an ailing daughter Jane (aged twelve or thirteen) rented a house at

Trinity, near Edinburgh, from a Mr. Webster, who resided in the adjoining one. Soon the family was persecuted by a variety of noises (footfalls, knockings, scratchings, rustlings) and beds were occasionally heaved up. No delinquent was ever found, though sheriff's officers, masons, justices, and army officers from Leith helped the investigation. Jane was suspected, particularly by Mr. Webster, but even when she was tied up in a bag it was to no purpose. Captain Molesworth, having made holes in the walls and pulled out floorboards, was sued for damages by Mr. Webster. About this time Jane died. We have no information about the nature of her chronic illness or the ultimate cause of death.

Mary Jobson of Sunderland, whose case was recorded by Dr. W. Reid Clanny, F. R. S. (1841), had a chronic illness at the age of thirteen. She had pain and pressure in the back of the head, dimness of sight, abdominal swelling, anesthesia of areas of her skin, and convulsions. At last she became blind, deaf, and dumb. She was treated by bleeding, purges, and putting on of blisters. One day when it was proposed to apply a fresh blister, knockings were heard from the bed-head. A voice also spoke from the region of the bed-head, saying that the doctor could do no good and the cure would be effected by a miracle. It is admitted that the voice might have been that of the child, but it was said to be entirely different in tone and manner from her own. When they insisted on applying the blister the knocks became so violent that they took it off and the noise ceased. Subsequently there were a variety of manifestations (including the throwing of water) that are probably not evidential. Strangely enough, however, after eight months of illness, Mary suddenly had a total recovery and continued well. The case is admittedly not evidential but it is noteworthy that Dr. Clanny, who was Senior Physician of the Sunderland Infirmary, maintained his faith in it (Howitt, 1863). Insofar as we can rely on the data they are very suggestive. The variety and type of symptoms and the completeness of the cure suggest that the illness was entirely psychosomatic, with a catatonic phase of complete withdrawal, pointing to an unbearable psychological conflict. The knockings that appeared so vehemently to resist the application of the blister may indeed have been purposive. Mary may well have been "fed-up" with the treatment. This parallels the apparent rejection of Margaret as bedfellow by Virginia's knockings. Virginia's changed voice and manner in her trances parallel the strange voice if we accept that the latter was in fact Mary's.

When Mr. Lund told me that when he first went up to Virginia's bedroom he found about eight people there, I was reminded

irresistibly of the gatherings in 1760 around the bed of Elizabeth Parsons, then eleven years old and the center of the celebrated Cock Lane case. As we have seen, the poltergeist produced raps, knockings, and scratchings and was therefore known to the somewhat insensitive London society of that period as "Scratching Fanny." This was in allusion to the deceased Fanny Kent, whose ghost it was supposed to be. The case was eventually dismissed as a fraud on the part of Elizabeth's father and others, who were convicted at Guildhall of conspiracy. Parsons was put in the pillory but met with sympathy from the commonalty, who threw him money instead of rubbish. The arguments that in the past have been used to impute corrupt motivation to Parsons have recently been critically re-examined by Hall (1962), who shows that they may be quite fallacious. Unlike Jane Molesworth and Mary Jobson, but like Virginia Campbell, Elizabeth Parsons was not physically sick. We have no information as to her possible mental and emotional state.

There are some striking parallels between the occurrences at Sauchie and the better attested events at Mr. Mompesson's house at Tidworth, mentioned in the previous chapter. According to Mr. Mompesson, besides simulating (to some extent at least) the notes of a drum, the Demon Drummer also generated a variety of sounds such as the pattering of peas falling on the floor, the shoeing of horses, and scratching under the bedsteads "as if with Iron Talons." It is worth recalling that when Mr. Mompesson lodged out his other children but took the girl, aged ten, to sleep in his own room, the noises stayed with her, happening every night as soon as she was in bed. The other children suffered only a little tweaking and pinching that may not have been paranormal. The girl of ten may therefore have been the focus of the poltergeist activity. Nothing is said about the state of her health, which presumably was sound.

In 1666 the Rev. Joseph Glanvil, F. R. S., published an account of the case and included a description of his own firsthand experiences at Tidworth in January, 1663. The children went to bed, and about 8 P.M. a maid came down to say that the disturbances had begun. Mr. Glanvil went up with Mr. Mompesson and another gentleman. He found two modest little girls in bed, between seven and eleven years old. A strange scratching seemed to come from behind the bolster, being quite as loud as any noise one could make by scratching on the bolster with fingernails. The girls' hands were

> ". . . out over the Cloaths, and they could not contribute to the noise that was behind their heads. They had got used to it, and

> . . . seemed not to be much affrighted. . . . I searched under and behind the Bed, turning up the cloaths to the Bed-cords, grasp't the Bolster, sounded the Wall behind, and made all the search that possible I could to find if there was any trick, contrivance or common cause of it, the like did my friend but we could discover nothing. . . . After it had scratcht about half an hour or more it went into the midst of the Bed under the children, and there seemed to pant like a Dog. I put my hand upon the place, and felt the Bed bearing up against it. . . . I looked under and everywhere about, to see if there were any Dog or Cat, . . . but found nothing." Glanvil also says, interestingly enough: "I certainly know for my own part, that during the whole time of my being in the Room, and in the House, I was under no more affrightment than I am, while I write this Relation."

We may note that 300 years later in Sauchie, Mr. Lund, Dr. Nisbet and Dr. Logan took much the same precautions as Glanvil against being tricked or misled. Dr. Logan also experimented in the production of scratching noises by drawing a fingernail over fabric. The investigators were not frightened by the phenomena, and in both cases the girls tended to accommodate themselves to the disturbances and be "not much affrighted." At Sauchie there was no panting or heaving up of mattresses, but there were movements of the pillow and ripplings of the bedclothes. In this connection we may note a supplement added by Glanvil just before his death in 1680, and published posthumously in 1681 (Glanvil, 1681).

> "During the panting, I chanced to see as it had been something (which I thought was a Rat or Mouse) moving in a Linnen Bag, that hung up against another Bed that was in the Room. I stept and caught it by the upper end with one Hand, with which I held it, and drew it through the other, but found nothing at all in it. There was no body near to shake the Bag, or if there had, no one could have made such a motion, which seemed to be from within, as if a Living Creature had moved in it. This passage I mention not in the former Editions, because it depended upon my single Testimony, and might be subject to more Evasions than the other I related; but having told it to divers Learned and Inquisitive Men, who thought it not altogether inconsiderable, I have now added it here."

Despite the difficulties involved in the appreciation of ancient testimony, the interest of these historical parallels to the Sauchie case may well be thought by "divers Learned and Inquisitive Men" to be not altogether inconsiderable.

☙ TESTIMONY AND AUXILIARY INFORMATION

THE main evidence for the reality of the paranormal phenomena is contained in the narratives of the Rev. Mr. Lund, Dr. Nisbet, Dr. Logan, and Miss Stewart. The first three of these observers witnessed rather similar phenomena at Park Crescent or at Dollar. Where their narratives overlap they confirm one another, except possibly in emphasis. Miss Stewart's experiences occurred in isolation from those of the other three witnesses and *ipso facto* is not capable of corroboration in the same way. However, she impressed me as an entirely reliable witness, and this opinion is fully endorsed by Mr. Hill's recommendation as given in his narrative. In addition, Mr. Hill fully confirms the accuracy of Miss Stewart's recollection as to the times at which the classroom occurrences took place, and when she reported them to him. I regard her evidence therefore to be as well corroborated as in the nature of the case it could possibly be.

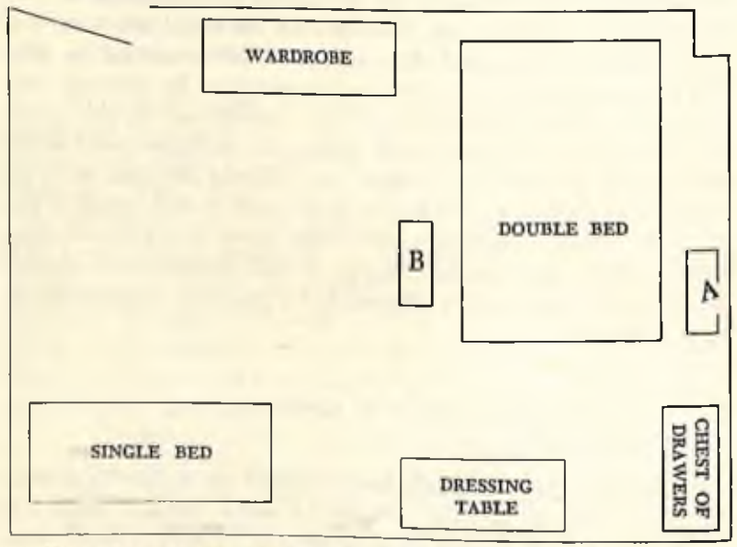
The principal narratives as a whole show careful observation, critical faculty, and objective description with freedom from preconceived notions and signs of suggestibility. I therefore accept them as fully evidential.

☙ NARRATIVE OF THE REV. T. W. LUND, M.A., B.D., MINISTER OF SAUCHIE

THE Rev. Mr. Lund very kindly received me at Sauchie Manse on the morning of Saturday, January 14, 1961. He had made detailed notes in diary form of his experiences at 19 Park Crescent, and constructed a verbal narrative from them. I took this down in note form and later sent it to him for approval as a third-person narrative. I received his final approval of the statement, now given here, on February 10, 1961.

Prior to Wednesday, November 23, 1960, the Rev. Mr. Lund had never been in the Campbell's home at 19 Park Crescent as they are not "Church people" in the usual sense of that word, though Virginia attends the Sunday school, probably being taken there by Margaret and Derek. However, about midnight on Wednesday, November 23, Mr. Hoey, a neighbor of the Campbells, came to the

manse and reported strange knockings in a bedroom in the Campbell house. These knockings had started on the previous night, Tuesday, November 22, Virginia and Margaret being in the same bed, this having been their sleeping arrangement ever since Virginia's arrival from Ireland. The girls, though kept together, were moved into a different bedroom but the knockings continued, appearing to come from the head of their bed. Mr. Lund told Mr. Hoey that this would seem to be an instance of a known phenomenon, namely, poltergeist activity. He showed Mr. Hoey the article on psychical research in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (fourteenth edition, 1938) and read out some relevant passages from it.



PLAN (SCHEMATIC ONLY, AND NOT TO SCALE) OF VIRGINIA'S BEDROOM AT 19 PARK CRESCENT, SAUCHIE

A and B, positions of the linen chest on various occasions

About 12:20 (now Thursday morning, November 24) the Rev. Mr. Lund went to the house with Mr. Hoey. On entering at the front door he heard loud knockings in progress. Going upstairs he found Virginia awake, but not greatly excited, in the double bed (*see plan*). About eight people (family and neighbors) were already present in the room. The loud knocking noise continued and appeared to emanate from the bed-head. Mr. Lund moved Virginia down in the bed so that she could not strike or push the bed-head with her head, and he also verified that her feet were well tucked in under the bed-clothes, and held in by them. The knocking continued. During the knocking Mr. Lund held the bed-head. He felt it vibrating in unison with the noises. The bed-head was at no time in contact with the wall, so that its motion did not result from vibration communicated from the wall.

A large linen chest over two feet long, about one and a half feet high, and over a foot wide, and full of stored bed linen, was standing on the linoleum at a distance of about one and a half feet from the bed (position A of plan). Mr. Hoey had told the Rev. Mr. Lund that this had been seen to move. Mr. Lund was standing near the head of the bed when he himself saw the box go through a lateral rocking motion together with a spasmodic and uneven rising from the floor (these motions being of small amplitude). It next moved longitudinally (i.e., in the direction of its own length) with a jerky kind of motion through a distance of about eighteen inches and back again. Mr. Lund then went round to the box and put a hand on top of it. Its residual motion then stopped altogether.

At this point it appeared to Mr. Lund that Virginia was now showings signs of becoming keyed up to a possibly prehysterical state and that the other adults present were themselves getting "rattled." He therefore thought it wise to lower the tension by adopting a light tone, and diverted some remarks of friendly banter to Virginia on the lines that it must be her boy-friend knocking, and perhaps she should knock back at him. This intervention having had the desired calming effect all round, Mr. Lund, assisted by Mr. Hoey, lifted the linen chest out onto the landing. Its weight was substantial, needing the two of them to handle it comfortably, and Mr. Lund estimates it as being at least fifty pounds.

Mr. Lund then suggested that Margaret go back to bed with Virginia. As soon as he had said this, violent knocking broke out from the bed-head. When Margaret got into the bed with Virginia the knocking became very imperative indeed, as if ferociously resentful of Margaret's proximity. Mr. Lund therefore suggested that Margaret return to the single bed (*see plan*). All knocking stopped when Virginia fell asleep.

Next morning, Thursday, November 24, the Rev. Mr. Lund telephoned Dr. Nisbet, who said he would not have believed it had he had it from any less a person than Mr. Lund. It was arranged that on that evening Mr. Lund, Dr. Nisbet, Dr. Gordon (of the neigh-

boring village of Menstrie) and the Rev. G. J. A. Manson, minister of Menstrie, should go together to the house. On arriving, Mr. Lund was the first to go up. He found Virginia in the single bed. Her relatives reported knockings and movements of the pillow that had occurred that night. The Rev. Mr. Lund himself saw one of these pillow movements. Virginia's head was on the corner of the pillow whose length was initially in the normal position at right angles to her body. The pillow was then rotated through an angle of sixty degrees of arc towards her body so that it finished up making an angle of thirty degrees with Virginia's length. This and earlier events were now causing Virginia to get slightly "worked up."

After this Dr. Nisbet, Dr. Gordon, and the Rev. Manson came up and Virginia was put in the double bed. Dr. Gordon got Virginia to lie on top of the bedclothes in her pajamas. No phenomena occurred, so Dr. Gordon and Mr. Manson eventually left. Some knockings were now heard. Mr. Lund saw once again the small lateral rockings of the linen chest. The family told Mr. Lund that on this evening when Virginia had been standing in front of the wardrobe it "knocked back at her."

Virginia had been kept home from school on the Wednesday and the Thursday. On Friday, November 25, Mrs. Isabella Campbell took her to school in time for the afternoon session. Mr. Lund visited the family just after Virginia got home. He asked her how she was. She said "All right, but something funny happened when I was at school. When Miss Stewart was standing near my desk the lid of another desk went up." At this visit Mr. Lund was told by the family of various happenings in the house on that and preceding days: vases had moved, an apple rose and floated out of a dish, a pedal-operated sewing machine worked apparently of itself. Mr. Lund left and did not return to the house that night, as it had been agreed that Dr. Nisbet should sit with Virginia.

On Saturday, November 26, the Rev. Mr. Lund had tea with Mr. Peter Hill, headmaster of Sauchie Primary School. Mr. Hill, as described in his own narrative, had heard of the disturbances, but not from Mr. Lund. He said, "You don't tell me that you have been investigating anything strange," and told Mr. Lund about the classroom episode that Miss Stewart had reported to him on Friday afternoon.

About 11:30 P.M. on Sunday, November 27, Mr. Lund called again at the house. The family told him that after Virginia went to bed she had gone into a "trance." She talked while apparently asleep

and called for her dog Toby, left behind in Donegal, and also for Annie, a little girl who had been her one close friend in Ireland. She was now downstairs again and had tea with Mr. Lund and the family. Then, at Mr. Lund's suggestion she went back to bed. Soon she fell into an apparent slumber in which she called again for Toby. They gave her a teddy bear, which she cuddled for a short while until she found a button on it. She then cried out, "This is not Toby," flung the teddy bear away and struck out with her hands at Mr. Lund and others. Her eyes were closed throughout, but the manner of both cries and blows was vehement. Mr. Lund thought she was getting hysterical. He said she would be better without an audience. They all left the room and soon she was asleep.

On the advice of Dr. Nisbet, Virginia was taken to Dollar (about five and a half miles away) on Monday, November 28, to stay with a relative over Monday and Tuesday nights. She returned to Sauchie on Wednesday (November 30). Meanwhile, on the Tuesday the Rev. Mr. Lund and Dr. Nisbet went to Edinburgh to consult the Rev. Horace Walker, the Secretary of the Home Board of the Church of Scotland. On his recommendation they arranged that the Rev. J. W. Stevenson and the Rev. Murdo Ewan MacDonald should come with them to the house on Thursday night. Both are eminent ministers of the Church of Scotland and have experience of cases of hauntings and disturbed houses. It was thought that a short service of intercession would be of value, if only in providing some comfort to the family. The proposed service was not intended to take the form of a rite of exorcism, it not being the practice of the Church of Scotland to attempt exorcism as such. On Thursday, December 1, the Rev. Mr. Lund learned from the family that there were no phenomena on Wednesday night, although there had been knockings at Dollar on both Monday and Tuesday. Mr. Lund then thought the disturbances might be at an end and consulted Dr. Nisbet as to whether they should go through with the proposed service. Dr. Nisbet thought that on balance it would be better to continue as planned, since otherwise the family might feel disappointment. Therefore at 11 P.M. Mr. Lund went to the house accompanied by the Rev. J. W. Stevenson, the Rev. Murdo Ewan MacDonald, and the latter's assistant, the Rev. Shaw. Dr. Nisbet and Dr. Logan had arrived earlier at the house, bringing recording apparatus. There were no phenomena between 11 and 11:15. The service of prayer was held from 11:15 to 11:30. Some subdued knockings and scrapings were heard during the service. At 11:30 Mr. Lund and his col-

leagues all left the room. Downstairs there was considerable excitement and confusion, Virginia's father, Mr. James Campbell, having arrived unexpectedly from Donegal.

Mr. Lund called again at the house next day, Friday, December 2. No further phenomena were reported. He next visited on Monday, December 5. The family said that on the evening of Sunday, December 4, a small vase moved from the top of the sewing machine to the rug. They said also that on Monday, December 5, a china dog (about two feet long) had "jumped down." On a later visit they reported knockings, movements of vases, and drawers flying in and out. Mr. Lund was not able to assess the reality of the phenomena subsequent to December 1.

❧ NARRATIVE OF DR. W. H. NISBET, M.B., CH.B.

I VISITED Dr. Nisbet at his house, Hilden (Stirling Street, Tillicoultry), on the afternoon of Saturday, January 14. He very kindly gave me a verbal narration of events as he had seen them, based on diary notes that he had kept. I took the story down in note form which I later reduced to a third-person narrative, and sent to Dr. Nisbet for his approval, receiving it back by January 26 without material alteration. The narrative is as follows.

Dr. Nisbet has been physician to Mr. Thomas Campbell's family for some years, and there is nothing of note in their medical history. After Virginia came to Sauchie in October she too came under his medical care but needed no treatment (other than routine polio injection), being in good health.

On Thursday, November 24, Dr. Nisbet was consulted by the Rev. Mr. Lund and, as narrated by Mr. Lund, went to the house that night. He heard noises including, at one stage, a sawing noise. At least once he saw a peculiar motion of the surface of the pillow on which Virginia's head was resting. This motion could be described broadly as a wave or ripple traveling over the surface. Possibly it more resembled the result of traction of part of the surface by an invisible agency.

It was agreed that on Friday night (November 25) Dr. Nisbet should keep watch in the bedroom. Disturbances happened in what appeared to be a cycle of happenings. An interval of quiet lasting some minutes would be followed by movements of pillow and bedclothes. Then a spell of knocking would take place, to be followed by movements of the linen chest and then a period of quiescence. The cycle would then be repeated. The order of events was fairly regular, even though there might have been some variation in the durations of the intervals and the spells of activity. From time to time during spells of knocking Dr. Nisbet had Virginia's hands out of the bedcovers, or had the bedclothes off altogether, so that it was evident that she was not causing the knocks by movement of her body or limbs. The pillow movements that he observed consisted of rotations of Virginia's pillow through as much as 90° from the normal position until it was lying next to her and parallel to her body. The motion of the bedclothes took the form of a wave or ripple passing over them, perhaps better described as a "puckering," as if due to traction by an invisible agency. In one of the movements of the linen chest, it traveled from its initial location A by the wall (*see plan*) through a distance of about one foot over the linoleum until one corner of it was in contact with the bed, the chest stopping with its length obliquely inclined to the bed edge. At one stage when, according to his previous experience of the cycle, movements of the linen chest might be expected Dr. Nisbet took it to location *B* (*see plan*) so that it stood on a bedside rug. Soon he saw the lid open and close several times.

On Monday, November 28, Dr. Nisbet visited Virginia at her relative's house at Dollar. Here there was very loud knocking, which Dr. Nisbet found to be audible all over the house, as experienced also by Dr. and Mrs. Logan when they visited at Dollar on Tuesday, November 29.

On Thursday, December 1, the intercession service as described in the Rev. Mr. Lund's narrative was conducted at 19 Park Crescent at 11:15 P.M. At 7:30 P.M., however, Dr. Logan and Dr. Nisbet went to the house and set up a microphone attached to a tape recorder and a movie camera with floodlights in the girl's bedroom prior to her coming upstairs and going to bed in the normal way at 9 P.M. From then until 10:30 there was continuous activity in the form of sounds (ranging in amplitude from hardly perceptible tappings to violent knocks, "agitated and demanding") and the rippling or puckering movements of the bedcovers, which occurred from time to time. The linen chest was not in the room but was brought back on Dr. Nisbet's instructions at 10:30, and placed behind the bed in its original position A. The tape recorder was switched on intermittently from 9 to 10:30, and continuously from 10:30 to 11. The movie camera was used in an attempt to

photograph the motion of the bedcovers. This attempt unfortunately failed, because the ripplings of the covers were of very short duration, and had ceased by the time the floodlights and camera had been switched on. At 11 P.M. when the four ministers arrived at the house the recorder was switched off. From then until 11:15 there were no phenomena. Between 11:15 and 11:30 during the service there were many knockings, a considerable number being loud ones.

Subsequent to the service there was a general upset in the household, for when the ministers went downstairs, Virginia's father arrived unexpectedly with two "friends" of doubtful status who proved on interrogation to be newspaper reporters who had brought him from Ireland. To facilitate their reluctant removal from the scene Dr. Nisbet had to go out with them in their car to guide them to one of the neighboring townships.

❧ NARRATIVE OF DR. WILLIAM LOGAN, M.B., CH.B.

I VISITED Dr. and Mrs. Logan at their house, Beechwood (Dollar Road, Tillicoultry), on the evening of Friday, January 13, when they both told me of the case as they had experienced it, and kindly played me a recording of the B.B.C. "Scope" broadcast. Dr. Logan later kindly wrote me a narrative of his experiences, which I received on January 29, and reproduce here.

I visited Virginia at Park Crescent on the evening of Saturday, 26th November. On my arrival the child was in bed beside her little cousin Margaret. I suggested that she should change over to the other bed and sat by to watch for any unusual events. Very little actually happened while I was there. A slight puckering of the coverlet occurred and movement of the pillows—this latter appeared to be rotatory towards Virginia.

The next morning (Sunday, 27th November) I called again and took my dog, having read that animals are supposed to have "supersensory" powers and wishing to observe his reactions on meeting Virginia. She was greatly taken with him, saying that he made her think of her own dog Toby, whom she had left behind in Donegal and of whom she was very fond. The Rev. Lund had described the incidents of Sunday night involving Virginia's alleged "trance" and her vehement talking while apparently asleep. The main point of interest as far as I can see is that the presence of the dog on Sunday morning appears to have triggered off a series of suppressed emotions in the child. For it was only on that day that she expressed for the first time (and particularly during her "hysterical" attack in the evening) her previously suppressed longings and desires for her dog and her former playmate. These were subsequently repeated with great emotion on succeeding nights, I myself witnessing a recurrence of the episode two nights later on Tuesday at Dollar.

Accompanied by my wife, Mrs. Sheila Logan (M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H.), I went to see Virginia at Dollar on Tuesday night, 29th November. During our visit my wife and I heard several outbreaks of "knocking." These varied from gentle tappings to violent agitated raps which occurred just as we were about to leave the room. We differed in opinion as to the exact location of the sounds but we both agreed that they appeared to come from the vicinity of Virginia. My wife, who had previously been extremely skeptical about the reported manifestations, was satisfied that the sounds came from within the room but were not due to the activity of anyone inside the room.

Ultimately we left but shortly after we reached our home, the telephone rang and I was told that Virginia was having another of her trances in which she appeared to babble in a hysterical fashion. About five minutes after getting this message I arrived at Dollar to find Virginia in bed with her eyes shut talking in a loud (and for her, unnatural) voice. She kept reiterating that her dog Toby was "the best in the world" and demanded that both her dog and Anna (her childhood friend) be brought to her immediately. During this episode she threw herself around the bed and disarranged the bedclothes considerably. She appeared to be able to hear questions put to her and some of her replies indicated that any inhibitory control normally exercised by the higher centers appeared to be absent, almost as if she had been hypnotized and thoughts normally repressed were being spilled out. After about ten or twelve minutes of this she appeared to awake, rubbed her eyes, and asked for a cup of tea. This she had and shortly afterwards fell into a deep sound sleep.

On Thursday, 1st December, the intercession service as described in the Rev. Lund's narrative was held at 19 Park Crescent, Sauchie, at 11:15 P.M. Dr. Nisbet and I went there, however, at 7:30 P.M. We set up my tape recorder in the bedroom next door to the girl's bedroom. The microphone was led in by cable to the girl's bedroom. In the room we set up a movie camera with floodlights. Virginia came to bed about 9 P.M. and the tape recorder was switched on intermittently until 10:30 P.M. Sounds ranging from

hardly perceptible tappings to violent knocks, agitated and demanding, were heard and recorded on the tape. Also we saw occasional rippling or puckering movements of the bedcovers, and attempted to record them by taking movie shots. Between 10:30 and 11 P.M. the tape recorder was on continuously and a considerable amount of hysterical talking by Virginia was recorded in which her lack of inhibition was manifest. For example, she demanded at one point to speak with Dr. Nisbet. On being asked why she wanted him, Virginia replied, "I want him and that's enough!" The recorder was switched off at 11 P.M. when the ministers arrived. During the service, 11:15 to 11:30 P.M., there were some knockings, a few being fairly loud.

I remained at the house until 12:15 A.M., though not in continuous attendance on Virginia. The tape recorder had been switched on again at 11:30 P.M. and was kept on until 12:15. A variety of noises was recorded, some of which were included in the B.B.C. "Scope" broadcast made later. Three examples were taken: (a) a series of loud peremptory knocks; (b) a harsh rasping "sawing noise"; and (c) Virginia screaming out "Oh! Mummy!" This last scream occurred when I had left the room momentarily to adjust the tape recorder. On hearing the scream I immediately went back into the bedroom and found the linen chest open (in position *B*, in front of the bed), the lid having been raised and left standing vertical on its hinge. (This is a possible position of equilibrium in which the lid can rest if put into that position.) Virginia explained that she had seen the lid go up. She seemed genuinely frightened. I doubt whether there would have been time for Virginia to have raised the lid and then got back into bed in the position in which I found her. I restored the lid of the linen chest to its original position of normal closure and reassured the child, who soon settled down. During the period (twenty-thirty minutes) that followed before she finally fell asleep her pillow was "thrown" on the floor on two or three occasions. The child denied having any part to play in it but it has to be noted that this phenomenon only took place when no one was in the room.

♄ NARRATIVE OF MISS MARGARET STEWART

I VISITED Miss Stewart at her home at 61 Jamieson Gardens, Tillicoultry, on the afternoon of Sunday, January 15, when she kindly gave me an extremely lucid verbal account of the events she had experienced in chronological order of occurrence. I took this down in note form which I later converted into a continuous third-person narrative, and sent to Miss Stewart for her approval. I received it back on January 31. No material amendment or addition was made by Miss Stewart, except to mention the phenomenon of January 23, when a bowl of bulbs moved across her desk. Miss Stewart's narrative is as follows.

Virginia Campbell joined Miss Stewart's class at Sauchie Primary School in mid-October. She is slightly older than the other children in the class. She will be eligible next year to take the Scottish Education Control Tests, which will decide the type of Secondary Education most appropriate for her. At first she was very very shy. Miss Stewart found it difficult to establish true communication or rapport with her. Miss Stewart ascribes this to her shyness and to the language difficulty. Virginia grew up in isolated rural surroundings in County Donegal and consequently found it difficult to understand, or be understood by, her classmates and Miss Stewart. Otherwise Miss Stewart found her a completely normal little girl.

Virginia was absent from school on Wednesday, November 23, Thursday, November 24, and the morning of Friday, November 25, the reason being unknown to Miss Stewart, who had heard no tales of disturbances at the house. Just before the commencement of the afternoon session on Friday, she was brought in to Miss Stewart by Mrs. Isabella Campbell, who, to explain Virginia's absence, told a completely incoherent account of things rattling, falling, etc. When she saw that Miss Stewart was unable to follow her she said that Mr. Hill, the headmaster, knew all about it. After Mrs. Campbell's departure and before the opening of the afternoon session, Miss Stewart spoke to Mr. Hill, who said that the child had a poltergeist. Miss Stewart happens not to have read much literature dealing with the alleged supernatural or occult, and had not to her recollection heard the term "poltergeist" used before. This information therefore conveyed nothing to her and she thought it might perhaps be some obscure but mild ailment.

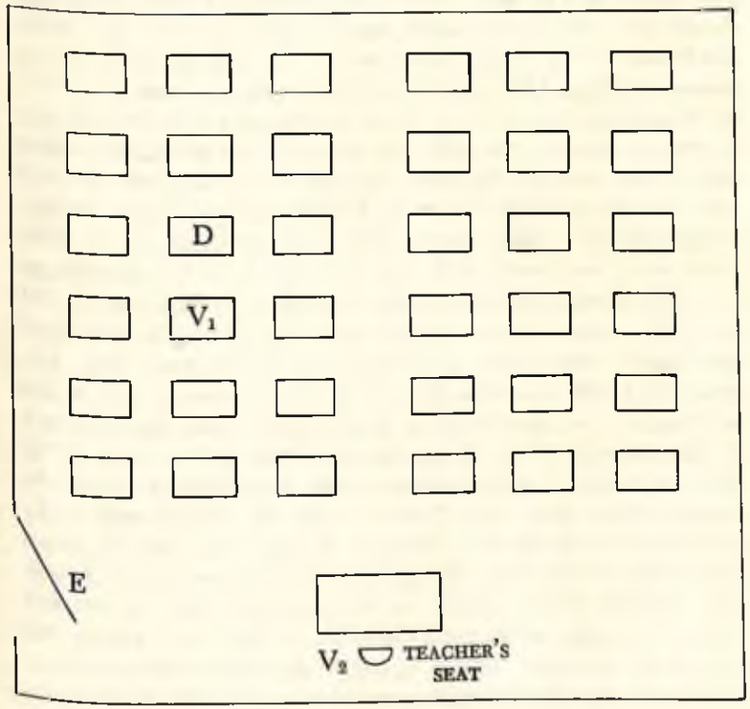
Until 2:30 P.M. the class was occupied with recorder practice. This was followed by the customary Friday period of silent reading when at any one time most of the children will be sitting at their own desks reading books, while one or two children will be at the library box kept in the classroom, having permission to be there

in order to change their books. Miss Stewart was sitting at her own desk correcting written work, but also keeping one eye on the class, her surveillance being rarely relaxed for any appreciable lapse of time. During one of her *coups d'oeil*, her attention was arrested by her noticing that the lid of Virginia's desk (V_1 on plan) moving slowly up and down. In all it went up and down at least three times. In each motion it turned on its hinge from its normal rest position (inclined at a few degrees below the horizontal) to an inclination of about 45° or 50° of arc above the horizontal. Miss Stewart's first thought was that Virginia was opening her desk to look for something. Had this been the case it would have been an occasion for enquiry or reprimand, for if Virginia had been reading her book she would not legitimately have required anything from the desk. If she had been opening the desk to get her book that would imply that she had hitherto been occupied illegitimately. However, Miss Stewart now saw that Virginia had her two hands both laid palm downwards on the top of the desk lid as if trying to keep it down. She therefore looked to see if Virginia was raising the lid with her knees. However, Virginia had both feet squarely on the floor, her legs and knees being in the normal sitting position, so that Miss Stewart was forced to the conclusion that neither Virginia's hands nor her knees were in operation. Miss Stewart stared silently at Virginia but did not go over to her or make any remark. Virginia stared silently back at Miss Stewart. None of the other children appeared to have noticed anything, a fact readily explicable by their occupation with their own books.

Prior to this Miss Stewart had had no experience of anything inexplicable (even apparently) by normal means. She is without superstition and had always given little credence to alleged supernatural happenings. She had always enjoyed good physical and mental health and has never seen or heard anything that would appear to have been hallucinatory. Also, as we have seen, she had not appreciated the significance of the term "poltergeist" used by Mr. Hill. She was therefore at a complete loss to account rationally for what she had seen. She first did enquire of herself whether she had in fact had an hallucination. There being no reason in her history to encourage this supposition, an explanation for such an hallucination could, she thought, be found only in the fact that her father and mother had both had grave physical illness in the preceding two months. She had therefore a considerable burden of nursing at home in addition to her teaching duties. In principle therefore an hallucination might

be an effect of fatigue, physical strain, and anxiety. However, she had had no other indications that the strain was more than she could support, and on reflection she regained confidence in her own observation and deduction. Though she felt a sense of extreme bafflement and mystification, she felt that her faculties were not in fact betraying her and the occurrence, though a mystery, was an objective happening.

About a quarter of an hour later the child at the desk (D of plan) immediately behind Virginia called out for permission to change her library book. Permission received, she got up and left



Plan (schematic only, and not to scale) of Miss Stewart's classroom at Sauchie Primary School

V_1 *Virginia's desk (top, 33 by 18 inches)*
D *Unoccupied desk*
V_2 *Virginia's position on Monday, November 28*
E *Door*

her desk. A little after this Miss Stewart happened to look over again in that direction and saw this desk slowly moving bodily upwards, the chair (a separate piece of furniture) staying put. The desk rose only about one inch. It then settled down again on the floor, having moved slightly horizontally so that it ended up a little out of position. It was sufficiently displaced for the row of desks to be a little out of their usual alignment. The desk had moved out of line to the right but not forwards or backwards along the row. (Miss Stewart's desk faces east southeast; thus the desk had moved in the direction east southwest.) At this occurrence Miss Stewart immediately got up and "rushed" to the desk, looking for strings or any other mechanism which would reveal the event as a trick. She found nothing at all of this nature. As no child appeared to have noticed anything, Miss Stewart decided on the spot that the matter was best covered up as far as the class was concerned. She felt that a word to Virginia was called for in order to explain her coming over to that part of the room and, affecting composure, she said "Are you feeling better, Virginia?" Virginia replied "There's nothing wrong with me." Miss Stewart then went forthwith to Mr. Hill, asked him if she looked well, and told him of her two experiences.

On Monday, November 28, Virginia (who had not yet left for Dollar) came to school again. About 10:15 A.M. the class were individually working the problem paper of the term tests. Virginia had a difficulty with the setting out on paper of one of the problems and, as usual when a pupil requires help, she came out to Miss Stewart's desk. Miss Stewart, sitting in her chair at her desk, proceeded to sketch out on paper what Virginia should do. Virginia stood beside Miss Stewart to the left (in the position V_2 on plan) looking at Miss Stewart's writing, and had her hands clasped behind her back, this being a frequent mannerism of hers. Miss Stewart's desk is actually a table, four feet long and two feet wide, and is quite solidly built. On it lay the blackboard pointer and some books, all being initially at rest in apparently stable positions. While Miss Stewart was writing and speaking the pointer started to vibrate and move, staying in contact with the top of the desk until eventually it reached the edge and fell onto the floor. While the pointer was moving on top of the desk Miss Stewart placed her hand flat on the desk top and felt a distinct vibration in it. The desk as a whole also moved somewhat round so that when the movement stopped Miss Stewart was no longer sitting at the middle of the near side nor any longer near enough to be able comfortably to lean

over it for writing. Thus the motion, besides comprising a possible translation, also involved a rotation. This rotation was counterclockwise (i.e., in the positive sense with respect to the upward vertical), the right-hand end of the desk having retreated from her. Miss Stewart looked at Virginia and found her still standing with her hands clasped behind her. The child started to cry and said "Please, Miss, I'm not trying it" (her exact words). Miss Stewart said, "It's all right, help me to straighten the desk up." Her chief concern was to prevent panic or excitement in the class and undue notice being taken of Virginia. She expected that in the coming play interval they would be hearing stories relating to Virginia. This episode itself appears to have gone unnoted by the class, presumably because of being busy with the problem paper.

After the play interval Miss Stewart sent Virginia on an errand that would take her some time. As she went out of the door (E of plan) she shut it but it immediately banged open again and had to be shut by two boys (James Murrary and John Gardner). Miss Stewart remarked to the class that there must be a strong wind. This was an excuse for the children's benefit, so as not to increase their fears.

The reason for sending Virginia out was that Miss Stewart could have a talk with the other children without embarrassing her. She asked them to behave sensibly with regard to any stories they might hear concerning Virginia, and not to tease Virginia or talk about it outside the school or with other children. She asked them to be kind to Virginia and help her to elude interrogation by strangers. They responded to this very well indeed, and treated Virginia very considerately. Further, when a few days later newspaper reporters took to "dogging" Virginia to and from school, they formed a "bodyguard" that successfully insulated Virginia from them. The amiable response of the children is of interest as it shows the lack of malice towards Virginia from her classmates.

Miss Stewart, speaking generally about Virginia, said that she missed her father very much. She doubted, however, if Virginia suffered from any feeling of inability to make friends, as she appeared to make friends easily, in spite of her shyness and the language barrier. She rapidly made an especial friend of one little girl, Elizabeth Brown, and this friendship has persisted. In view of recent experience with her, Miss Stewart feels she is somewhat above normal intelligence. This is confirmed by a recent measurement of her I.Q., which came out as 111, probably an underestimate. She is likely to

show further academic improvement, though it is not expected that she will attain so high as Group A standard in the Scottish Education Control Tests. (These tests correspond in a broad way to the English Eleven Plus Examination. Group A and B standards qualify for entry to senior secondary school education as opposed to junior secondary, so that Group A pupils take a course that in England would be described as of grammar school level.) She is being retained for another year at Sauchie Primary School because she is showing signs of becoming more interested in her academic work, possibly as a result of the breakdown of the language barrier. Until recently she had been not very interested in the academic subjects, but was very creative with her hands. She has a typical girl's interest in girl's activities and in clothes. In physical activities she is uninhibited and delights in dancing. Miss Stewart would describe Virginia's nature as very phelgmatic. She is not "temperamental" or argumentative, and displays remarkably little emotion. She is very honest. Miss Stewart finds her easy to discipline, and thinks this results from her being very mature in outlook. Presumably related to this maturity is the fact that Virginia likes responsibility and carries it easily, responsible tasks being carried out reliably and efficiently. Physically she is now going through extremely rapid development, being either at puberty or on the eve of puberty.

On only one occasion subsequent to November 28 did anything unusual happen at school. On Monday, January 23, Virginia returned a bowl of bulbs which she had looked after over the Christmas holidays. As she placed the bowl on Miss Stewart's desk, it moved across the top of the desk in a manner similar to the pointer on November 28. Miss Stewart took especial care to record the date, as she found it noteworthy that the time interval between this event and the earlier one was fifty-six days. This is just about two lunar months, a very suggestive figure, if the phenomena are related to physiological happenings associated with a quasi-menstrual cycle occurring as a result of exceptionally rapid pubescence.

Writing on March 20, Miss Stewart says that Virginia is now much more forthcoming than before and seems to be under no sense of strain.

♄ NARRATIVE OF MR. P. H. HILL, M.A., HEADMASTER OF SAUCHIE SCHOOL

During my visit to Sauchie time did not permit for me to visit the headmaster, Mr. Hill, though he had very kindly indicated to

Miss Stewart that he would be willing to discuss the case with me. I wrote to him during February and on March 9 he kindly sent me the following account of the case insofar as he came professionally into contact with it.

If it is going to be of any assistance to you, I shall certainly let you have all the information I can regarding the abnormal happenings to Virginia Campbell. But I must make it clear that I rely almost wholly on memory, having, with one exception, made no notes on the subject, and thus my conception of events may be slightly influenced by subsequent happenings. However, I shall try to be as exact as possible. My own attitude to the affair should be explained first. After becoming aware of the seemingly abnormal state of affairs, and on thinking over the possible effects on the pupils of the school, I decided to stay "on the sidelines" so that I might combat any possible hysteria among the pupils by pleading ignorance and showing a certain amount of doubt. This attitude was fully justified in dealing with classes and the national press.

Now to the story. On the morning of 22nd or 23rd November, at 9 A.M. the school janitor asked me if I believed in ghosts. After telling him that I neither believed nor disbelieved in them, I asked why he wanted to know. He informed me then about the reported happenings at Virginia's home. This piece of information I tucked away and gave no further thought to it until the afternoon of Friday, 25th November. At the beginning of the afternoon session Miss Stewart came to my office to report that Virginia, after an absence, had returned to school escorted by an adult woman. This woman had stated to Miss Stewart that I knew the reason for the absence. I presume the woman thought that I had heard the rumors. In a light vein I told Miss Stewart that there seemed to be something happening at 19 Park Crescent and that there must be a poltergeist loose there. Miss Stewart's attitude conveyed mystification and incredulity, and I feel that she left me firmly convinced that I was "pulling her leg."

The next episode occurred that afternoon at interval time, 3:05 P.M. to 3:15 P.M. On my lighthearted request as to whether anything had happened, she seemed reluctant to say anything before the rest of the staff, but at length stated that the lid of one of the desks in her classroom had lifted three times and that a temporarily unoccupied desk had moved. As a result of the scathing comment that this aroused from certain members of the staff, discussion was cut short. Later Miss Stewart informed me that the only two people

who seemed to be aware of anything out of the common were herself and Virginia. With the rumors and the reported happenings in the classroom very much in mind I hied myself to the Assistant Director of Education to let him know of the apprehension I felt regarding possible repercussions on the school life. I need hardly say that by the end of the interview the atmosphere was by no means grave, as the situation was not without its amusing aspects.

On the afternoon of Saturday, 26th November, Mr. Lund had tea with me and my wife, and, in the course of conversation I mentioned that rumor said that he had had considerable nocturnal activity during the week. After some hesitation, and only after I mentioned Virginia's name, did he tell me of his visits to 19 Park Crescent. It was now my turn to be brought up short. He told me of his talk to Virginia on Friday evening, when she informed him of the classroom incident; the lid of the desk moving and another desk moving, "and Miss Stewart staring at it." Thus I had two reports of the incident. I had made no mention of it to Mr. Lund before he told me. The obvious conclusion for me was that the incident, for both people concerned, had actually taken place. Another incident reported to me by Miss Stewart was the difficulty in closing the classroom door. I cannot recall whether Mr. Lund had this recounted to him by Virginia.

The following week I came to an arrangement with Miss Stewart that, should anything else happen, she was to send a pupil to me for a rubber or pencil. Unfortunately, on the occasion that she did do this, I was not in my office. I understand that items on her desk had moved.

Sauchie was now national "news" and during the week following 25th November, my home and the school were the happy (and not so happy) hunting grounds for reporters and photographers from far and near. Here is an extract from the one record I made, dated 2nd December, 1960. "The children in the school, especially in the main building, have been seriously upset emotionally this week by the attention paid to them by reporters and photographers from the national press. These reporters etc. have been investigating reported supernatural happenings to Virginia Campbell, a pupil in this school. There seems to be no doubt that some abnormal condition is present." This is the only note that I made during the period.

It was about then that I visited the Campbell's house for the first time, as I had heard that there was a possibility that the parent might transfer Virginia to a school outside the district. Mrs. Campbell, Jr., invited me into the living room where there were Mrs. Campbell, Sr., Mrs. Campbell, Jr., and her husband, and Virginia. Having cleared up the matter of Virginia's transfer, which was not to take place, the talk switched to the "happenings." My ill-disguised curiosity brought an offer of a possible demonstration of what had been taking place. Virginia went upstairs and within a very short time (about a minute) three resounding thwacks almost brought me to my feet. With about a second between each, they sounded like vigorous kicks on a door built on the lines of a decrepit tea-box. Virginia now reappeared, and the verdict of the company was "That's it." Unsatisfied, I asked if I might accompany Virginia upstairs again. This request was granted and together we reascended. According to the girl it was the bathroom door which had provided the sounding board. We waited; and waited; and in the end I left, unsatisfied and unconvinced. The evidence was not such that I could accept.

By way of relevant comment on some of the people concerned in the events, I may first say that Miss Stewart is a teacher with several years' experience in this school. She is musically gifted and of mature outlook. She gives the impression that she has both feet well planted on the ground. I do think that she would resist any suggestion, and I am convinced that she would not manufacture evidence of any kind. She is too intellectually honest to do that. As regards Virginia and her mother, it may be of interest to record that when Mrs. Campbell brought Virginia to the school to enroll her, she and her daughter created a curious impression on me. She offered no information other than was necessary and her voice seemed to come unwillingly from behind the mask of her face. Again they gave the impression of people who had lived for a long time in a remote and isolated place, where reality was a blend of their immediate environment and the boundless vision of the mind. After some time here, Virginia was given an intelligence test. For what it is worth, the quotient arrived at was 111. This figure is open to considerable doubt. She had language difficulty; she was emotionally upset, and her previous history probably made the test and scoring invalid.

❧ INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY MR. AND MRS. THOMAS CAMPBELL

I VISITED 19 Park Crescent on Sunday morning (January 15). The house stands on a hillside, and is in perfect structural condition,

like all the buildings that I saw in the vicinity. Only Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Campbell were at home, the three children being at Sunday school, and Virginia's mother being away. They said it was fortunate that this was so, as she would not have allowed discussion with me. Throughout the case she had found all publicity extremely distressing. They too had disliked the notoriety but were willing to give information to anyone, such as myself, coming with the recommendation of Dr. Nisbet. They impressed me as very respectable people, straightforward and intelligent. The house was well furnished, in very good order, and it clearly was a very comfortable home. Mrs. Campbell kindly showed me the bedroom used by Margaret and Virginia and allowed me to make a sketch plan of it. My own plan agreed well with the rough plans given me by Mr. Lund and Dr. Nesbit. Mrs. Campbell also kindly put a tape measure to the linen chest and found its dimensions to be twenty-seven inches long, fourteen inches wide and seventeen inches high.

Mr. and Mrs. Campbell said too much had happened for them to be able to give any complete and sequential account of them. However, they gave me two specific descriptions of happenings. I regard these as evidential because they are eyewitness accounts, even though the evidence of family witnesses cannot in general be accorded the same status as that of independent observers.

Mrs. Campbell described the onset of the troubles on the evening of Tuesday, November 22. Soon after retiring Virginia and Margaret called out that there was a noise in their room. This complaint was not taken very seriously. But not long after, they started to come downstairs. The noise was now evident, as it followed them down the stairs and into the living room. Mrs. Campbell confirms this and describes it as a "thunking" noise not unlike the bouncing of a rubber ball. When at length they were put back in bed the noise continued, still inexplicably, only ceasing when Virginia fell asleep.

The next day Wednesday, November 23, Mr. Campbell had gone to work very early and came home by teatime. He and Mrs. Campbell were in the living room with Virginia, who was sitting in an armchair next to a sideboard. They both saw the sideboard slowly move out a distance of about five inches from the wall and then move back again. Virginia was not touching it. They showed me the sideboard and it was evident to me that even an adult applying

a hand to one end could not make it travel out bodily as it had done. At most one end could have been swung out, the other end staying close to the wall.

These events and the subsequent happenings as described in the other statements by witnesses, were believed by Mr. and Mrs. Campbell to be objective and inexplicable by normal means. In addition they mentioned various other unexplained happenings. However, they put these forward with some reserve. Either they said explicitly that they were not themselves eyewitnesses, or alternatively said that they were not fully convinced of the paranormality of them. For instance, while Mr. James Campbell, Virginia's father, stayed with them after coming from Ireland, he alleged that he had seen an apple float out of a fruit bowl, and also had seen his shaving brush fly round the bathroom. A large ornamental china dog had been found lying on the rug, its usual position being on top of a piece of furniture. They showed me a small metal vase whose base had been bent, apparently by impact. This was normally kept on top of the sewing machine but was found on the floor in its present damaged condition. Without saying so, in so many words, they seemed to me to imply that these happenings might well have occurred as a children's prank.

They said that the children had found the phenomena frightening at first, and the publicity distressing. However, by now they had got over their fear of the poltergeist. Virginia now took it very lightly and spoke of it quite affectionately as "Wee Hughie." The girls still reported tricks played on them in bed. Virginia's nightdress was said to have been rolled up. On another occasion her pajama trousers were pulled off. Mrs. Campbell said that a store of sweets kept upstairs for the children had disappeared piecemeal over a period of days, although the children had strict instructions not to help themselves. As no one would own up, the blame is put on Wee Hughie.

While I was at the house Virginia came back from Sunday school with Margaret and Derek. She seemed in excellent health; an attractive and cheerful child; rather tall for her age.

I wrote in February to Mr. and Mrs. Campbell to inquire whether everything was quiet. They wrote back to say that there had been knockings in the bed-head at nights. One night there was a noise like someone walking across the bedroom floor. Often Virginia and Margaret are poked on the body and legs by "something"

when lying in bed. The girls also said at least once that writing in various colors appears on their faces. But it disappears by the time Mr. and Mrs. Campbell come into the bedroom. Twice the bed has been soaked, as a result of a loosening of the stoppers of hot water bottles, even though they are tightly screwed up when put in the bed. In March they wrote to say that Virginia and others have been "nipped." A visitor to the house who is supposed to know nothing about this complained that she was "pinched and pulled about." The only phenomenon for which Mr. and Mrs. Campbell claim direct personal observation appears to be an episode when Mrs. Campbell saw Virginia's lips go a very bright red three times.

GEOLOGICAL INFORMATION

I WROTE to the Surveyor's Department at Alloa to inquire as to the occurrence of subsidence, underground water, etc., in the locality. Mr. J. D. A. Ross, A.M.I.Mun.E., Road Surveyor and Water Engineer to the County Council of Clackmannan very kindly replied to me on February 15, saying:

> I am in receipt of your letter of 11th instant, and note that you have been making a study of the "knockings" that occurred in a house in Park Crescent, Sauchie.
>
> I have made some inquiries to assist you in your research and the information you require is as follows:
>
> (a) The date of occupation of No. 19 Park Crescent, was 29th December, 1952.
>
> (b) According to mineral information there have been some very old workings in the vicinity, but the overlying ground has now fully consolidated, and to the best of our knowledge is free from subsidence, vibration, or ground movement. The houses, themselves, have shown no signs of cracking, as would be expected from differential movement of the ground.
>
> (c) There are, as far as is known, no underground streams but any cavities left following the extraction of minerals will be waterlogged. These workings were at a depth of approximately 450 ft. to 480 ft., below ground level. The Abbeycraig Fault is situated a short distance to the north of this housing scheme, and this limited the extraction of minerals.

CONCLUSIONS

IN my opinion the Sauchie case must be regarded as establishing beyond all reasonable doubt the objective reality of some poltergeist phenomena.

These phenomena in the past have been regarded as characterizing the poltergeist: sounds (tappings, knockings, scratchings, thumpings); movements of objects.

As said to be typical of a large class of alleged poltergeist cases, the phenomena are indissolubly connected with the presence of a young girl.

It is a suggestive fact that the child is pubescent and going through a period of very rapid physical development.

It may be significant that as a result of changed circumstances she has been going through a period of reorientation and emotional strain, though her basic physical and mental health and intelligence appear to be at least of normal standard.

There is no evidence indicating the separate existence of "the poltergeist" as a discarnate entity. The phenomena are consistent with production by forces emanating from the child or else resident in space and "triggered off" by some influence emanating from her.

It is not clear from the evidence whether the happenings constitute a parallel to the alleged physical phenomena of mediumship.

Both bad and good evidence may occur even with a case that is basically genuine. It may therefore be profitable to re-examine previous cases even when the descriptions of them are marred by the presence of equivocal material.

CASES CITED

	Date	*Reference*
Mompesson, Tidworth	1662	Glanvil, Price
Shaw, Bargarran	1696	Grant, Dalyell
Cock Lane, London	1760	Hall

Mary Jobson, Sunderland	1840	Clanny
Jane Molesworth, Leith	1846	Crowe

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Crowe, C.	1848	*The Night-Side of Nature.* Routledge, London.
Dalyell, Sir John G.	1834	*The Darker Superstitions of Scotland.* Waugh and Innes, Edinburgh.
Dingwall, E. G. and Hall, T. H.	1958	*Four Modern Ghosts.* Duckworth, London.
Gamow, G.	1961	"Gravity." *Scientific American*, 204, March.
Glanvil, J.	1681	*Saducismus Triumphatus.* Pr. Joseph Collins and S. Lownds, London.
Grant, F.	1698	*The True Narrative of the Sufferings and Relief of a Young Girl*, etc. Pr. James Watson, Edinburgh.
Hall, T. H.	1962	"The Cock Lane Ghost." *Internat. Parapsychol.*, 4, winter.
Howitt, W.	1863	*The History of the Supernatural.* Longmans, London.
Lambert, G. W.	1959	"Scottish Haunts and Poltergeists." *P.S.P.R.*, 40, September, pp. 108-124.
Russell, E. F.	1957	*Great World Mysteries.* Dobson, London.

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☙

Further Questions

☙ The testimony of the witnesses in the Sauchie case has led me to accept as a fact that there *do* occur genuine poltergeist hauntings of "classical" type. In a classical case sounds are produced or objects set into motion, or as at Sauchie both occur. In the Sauchie case there was a recognizable human center who in some paranormal way was associated with the happenings. This is also a feature of many other well attested cases. It may be an invariable feature of genuine poltergeist activity. There is a strong presumption that the human "center" is always necessary for the manifestations to take place. But the data available are not completely decisive on this point. It was interesting therefore to find that in the one case with which I had close contact, there was conformity with classical cases not only in respect of the phenomena themselves but also in the presence of a poltergeist center. The necessity of a human poltergeist focus being present would appear therefore to be a good working hypothesis. Its truth is strongly indicated but not, as yet, fully proved. Further consideration of this point will be deferred to Part IV, where we shall find that the discussion in Part III, though engaged in with other immediate aims, will have shed some light on it.

For clarity we chose in Part I to define "poltergeist activity" in terms of the somewhat limited classical scheme of noises and movements of objects. But there is much in the poltergeist literature concerning other mysterious happenings. We could, if we wished, take the view that the presence of these happenings in the reports

of the cases merely tend to discredit those reports. This is to postulate that the more fantastic occurrences are impossible, and therefore that the witnesses who reported them are unreliable, being influenced by corrupt motives, or by undue suggestibility, or were hopelessly bad observers or dupes of tricksters. If this postulate were correct our only course would be to reject all these difficult cases out of hand, and then conclude that poltergeist abilities are limited to the classical forms. However, this would be to argue in a circle. It is unscientific to exclude any phenomena as being impossible *by definition*. I have, therefore, even at the risk of seeming naïve, assembled some of the better reports containing marvelous happenings. The object in Part III, where this is done, is to consider these reports dispassionately and without prejudgment of the issues. I must confess that at the outset I had little hope of any solid result from this study, and, indeed, Part III abounds in purely negative conclusions. However, as the work proceeded I became impressed *malgré moi* with some of the findings which certain cases strongly indicated. I feel, therefore, that this study has in fact been of use. It has left me fairly convinced that on occasion poltergeists do manifest a wider range of activities than the purely classical phenomena.

The range of activity is important on account of its theoretical implications. If a poltergeist can vibrate the constituent molecules of a solid so that it becomes hot and ignites, this is interesting but does not tell us much more about the poltergeist than we knew before. However, if a poltergeist can *communicate*, this tells us a great deal. At the least there is intelligence at work somewhere in the affair. The content of the poltergeists' messages or conversation becomes important, as this can indicate whether the intelligence resembles that of child, man, or superman. This can help us to discriminate between the mediumistic theory and the hypothesis of the unconscious mind.

Furthermore, we can inquire as to the emotional attitudes of the poltergeist as evidenced by "its" actions. Does it attack people or merely banter them? For this reason we have looked carefully at the evidence regarding traction of the human body, biting, pinching, and the like. Are poltergeist mediums ever levitated, as D. D. Home and St. Joseph of Copertino are supposed to have been? This has been discussed at what may seem inordinate length precisely because of the interest that naturally attaches to comparison between the physical phenomena of mediumship and mysticism and those of the poltergeist.

The phenomena listed in the foregoing paragraphs may be difficult to credit. But if once we allow the possibility of the paranormal moving of objects, as classical poltergeist cases require us to do, then there is no further barrier that logically excludes the possibility of more complex activities of the same nature. For example, if the poltergeist can make sounds, then it only needs intelligence to make these sounds take the form of speech. The additional intelligence required admittedly poses a problem for us but it is a problem of "poltergeist psychology" and not one of "poltergeist physics."

New problems of poltergeist physics would arise if we were led to admit the reality of apportation and teleportation of objects by poltergeists. Cases that hint at something of this sort are discussed in Chapter 12. These phenomena, if genuine, involve the creation, or dematerialization and subsequent rematerialization of matter, or other difficult physical hypotheses. Such hypotheses introduce an altogether higher dimension of difficulty into poltergeist physics. The alternatives to acceptance of such recondite theories would seem to be a new theory of hallucination, or suspension of judgment as to the reliability of the evidence for these strange happenings.

In Part IV we attempt to use the results of Parts II and III in a theoretical discussion that aims at arriving by inductive reasoning at a characterization of that theory or those theories of poltergeists most acceptable on the evidence available at the present time.

PART III

SUMMARY | *Chapter 7*

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Powers and Limitations of the Poltergeist

Fire-Raising

A few cases hint at fire-raising as a poltergeist activity but the evidence is inadequate to prove the paranormality of the phenomenon.

Traction of the Human Body

Only a few cases testify unequivocally to the pulling about of humans by poltergeist forces, but these cases are evidentially fairly good ones.

Levitation

As with traction (from which it is not readily distinguishable) levitation is credibly reported in a very few cases.

Chapter 10

Communication

A few cases that are moderately well evidenced report meaningful communication by coded raps. In two of these cases paranormal cognition by the agency at work was alleged.

In a few cases writing of one kind or another was said to occur but in most, if not all, of them the evidence for paranormality is unconvincing.

Talking poltergeists with complex and interesting "personalities" are alleged in several tolerably well evidenced cases.

Chapter 11

Biting, Pinching, and Stigmatization

Two cases provide good evidence of the paranormal appearance of bite marks on the skin of poltergeist "mediums" with concomitant physical pain.

Chapter 12

Apportation and Teleportation

The abrupt arrival of objects of an ordinary mundane kind is reported in a surprisingly large number of cases. Sometimes observers describe themselves as mystified by the apparent "materialization" of these objects as if out of thin air.

7

Fire-Raising

In many old stories poltergeist phenomena or "cloddings" or stone-throwing are followed by the burning down of a house. Such stories have, of course, only the status of anecdote and cannot be evidential or more than slightly suggestive. However, there are a number of cases of somewhat better standing that suggest that the ignition of material is an activity of the classical poltergeist. In my own interpretation of the Sauchie poltergeist (following what is only my own strongly naturalistic bias) I came down heavily on the side of a relatively materialistic hypothesis. I assumed that the "medium" Virginia Campbell in some way operated on objects by the local application of a physical force not known to existing science. Such a force produces sound by vibration of the air or of solids. It could be imagined that the same force could raise the temperature of a solid by producing an increase in the molecular agitation within it. When hot enough in the presence of air it would ignite. It needs to be stressed that all this is hypothesis. However, the argument may be of utility in suggesting how fire-raising *could* be included in the normal repertoire of the classical poltergeist.

AMHERST

The only account of the "Great Amherst Mystery" that I have consulted is the rather popular one by Walter Hubbell (1888), reprinted in Sitwell (1940). This case, if genuine, is of classical

type, involving a variety of sounds, levitations of objects, and movements of pillows and bedclothes. The case is complicated by the mysterious "swelling" of Esther Cox, age about nineteen, which is reminiscent of witchcraft cases, and presumably indicates either hysteria or imposture. It is also embarrassingly rich in extraordinary phenomena. On one occasion "eight or ten lighted matches fell on the bed and about the room, out of the air, but were all extinguished before anything could be set on fire by them" (Hubbell, 1888). If genuine, this would seem to be an instance of *apportation*, and from that point of view the "fact" of the matches being lighted would be incidental. Another awkward particular in the account was when "the distinct sound as of some person writing on the wall with a metallic instrument was heard. All looked at the wall whence the sound of writing came, when, to their great astonishment, there could be plainly read these words 'Esther Cox, you are mine to kill,' . . . as if it had been written with a dull instrument, probably a large iron spike." In the absence of direct firsthand evidence we must naturally view with suspicion a poltergeist of such exceptional versatility. However, if anything at Amherst were genuine, so might be the fire-raising incident, which Hubbell describes in fair detail. On the same night as the fall of the lighted matches, Esther was in bed, and in the bedroom were Dr. Caritte, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Teed, and Jennie and William Cox. By now the family could converse with the "power," questions being answered by knocks (one, two, and three respectively for negation, doubt, and affirmation). "Daniel asked if the house would really be set on fire, and the reply was 'Yes.' And a fire was started in about five minutes in the following manner. The invisible ghost that had spoken to Esther took a dress belonging to her that was hanging on a nail in the wall near the door and, after rolling it up and placing it under the bed before their eyes, but so quickly that they could not prevent the action, set it on fire." Hubbell's informant as to this episode appears to have been in the household Daniel Teed. Whether the accuracy of the account was vouched for also by Dr. Caritte he does not say. Acceptance of the fact is not therefore very incumbent upon us.

According to Mrs. Teed, about three days later, while churning in the kitchen, she looked into the dining room where Esther had been sitting for an hour or more, previous to which she had been in the kitchen. The cellar door opened into the dining room and Mrs. Teed noticed smoke coming out of it. Taking a bucket of water, she rushed down into the cellar and found some shavings blazing

fiercely. The evidence for this as a paranormal fire clearly depends on the reliability of Mrs. Teed's account of the whereabouts of the various members of the family at the relevant time.

☙ OLD CASES

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY cases are not very helpful. In the Brightling case, *circa* 1660, "dust, dirt and several things" were thrown, a part of one end of their house fired; they rake it down, it flashes somewhat like gunpowder; as they stopped it there, it began in another place, and thence to another till the whole house was burnt down" (Baxter, 1691). The whole account is too vague to indicate the real origin of the fire, though we may suspect that real gunpowder was employed by some agent or agency. Again, in the Ringcroft case, the account of the fires is completely devoid of detail, merely saying: On the 27th, it set the House on fire seven times; and on the 28th . . . it continued setting fire to the House, from Sun-rising to Sun-setting: and as it was quenched in one part, it was instantly set on fire in another." (Sinclair, 1685).

☙ SOME FORTEAN CASES

THERE is little firsthand evidence available from witnesses of mysterious fires. However, Charles Fort (1941) collected a dozen or more newspaper reports giving accounts in varying detail. Some of them are of negligible value. For instance, *Lloyds Weekly News*, July 30, and *Wandsworth Borough News*, July 21, writing some time after the event, say merely that on May 1, 1911, unaccountable fires broke out in the house of Mr. J. A. Harvey, 356 York Road, Wandsworth, and that preceding one of the fires there were three explosions of unknown origin. Slightly more interest attaches to the report in the London *Daily Mail* of a thirteen-year-old boy in Budapest in whose presence furniture moved. Since about his twelfth birthday fires had often broken out when he was nearby. Alarmed neighbors had therefore caused him and his mother to leave their home. The report added that when he slept, flames flickered over him and singed his pillow. This is reminiscent of the story of Lily White (taken by Fort from the *New York Times* of August 25, 1929), a Negro girl of Liberta, Antigua, B.W.I. who was said (slightly ambiguously) to flame while walking in the street. At home her clothes, it is said, often burst into flames and burned, as did the

bedsheets when she was between them. She herself was apparently unharmed. In these two stories, even if true, no classical poltergeist phenomena are mentioned, the only link with poltergeist cases being the youth of the victims.

According to the *Quebec Daily News* of October 6, 1880, in the Hudson Hotel for two weeks furniture had been given to disorderly conduct, the beds being especially excitable. This superficially suggests a poltergeist. The fire-raising activity, however, was not very striking. We are told merely that a fire broke out in a stall in the stable. It was quenched but followed by another. The stable was burned down despite the sprinkling of holy water by a priest. A more suggestive case centered on a boy twelve years old, Willie Brough, in 1886. According to the San Francisco *Bulletin* (about October 14), his parents had cast him off, believing him to be possessed by a devil, but a farmer had taken him in, and had sent him to school. "On the first day, there were five fires in the school [at Turlock, Madison Company, California], one in the center of the ceiling, one in the teacher's desk, one in her wardrobe, and two on the wall. The boy discovered all of them, and cried from fright. The trustees met and expelled him that night." (See also the *New York Herald*, October 16, 1886.) Here the point of interest is the ignition of the ceiling and wall, which would seem difficult to do by trickery. There is no information suggesting poltergeist phenomena of the ordinary kind. The *New York World* of August 8, 1887, in its account of the Hoyt case does not mention ceilings and walls but the report is interesting as far as it goes. Mr. R. C. Hoyt and his wife, and four children of their own and two nieces, all lived in a house in Victoria Street, Woodstock, New Brunswick. All within a few hours forty separate fires broke out, which did not extend to their surroundings, because they were immediately put out, or (says Charles Fort) because of some unknown limitation. The press report says, for what it is worth, "The fires can be traced to no human agency, and even the most skeptical are staggered. Now a curtain, high up and out of reach, would burst into flames, then a bed quilt in another room: a basket of clothes on a stool, a child's dress, hanging on a hook." The New York *Sun* of February 2, 1932, gave a very similar description of events in the home of Mr. C. H. Williamson of Bladenboro, North Carolina. "Fires which apparently spring from nowhere, consuming the household effects of C. H. Williamson, have placed this community in a state of excitement, and continue to burn. Saturday a window shade and curtain burned in the Williamson home. Since then fire has burst out in five rooms.

Five window shades, bed coverings, tablecloths, and other effects have suddenly burst into flames, under the noses of the watchers. Williamson's daughter stood in the middle of the floor, with no fire near. Suddenly her dress ignited. That was too much and household goods were removed from the house."

In three other cases quoted by Fort the newspapers gave rather ampler details and all three are interesting. The oldest case occurred in the home of Mr. Moulton in Bedford, and Charles Fort pieces together the story from various issues of the *Bedford Times* and *Bedford Mercury*. On August 12, 1856, Moulton went on a business trip to Ireland, leaving at home Mrs. Moulton and the housemaid, Anne Fennimore. In order to fumigate the house, the latter burned some sulphur in an earthenware jar that stood upon the floor. The burning sulphur overflowed and set the floor alight. This fire was put out, not having extended from that one room. About an hour later a mattress was found burning in another room, and was followed by a series of isolated fires. Moulton was sent for and returned on August 16. The next day there started a succession of about forty fires in curtains, in closets, and in bureau drawers. Neighbors and policemen came in and, it is said, were soon fearful for their safety. Objects around them flamed, and also their handkerchiefs. No one was harmed but it appears there was an official investigation, which took the unusual form of a coroner's inquest. Witnesses told of such occurrences as picking up a pillow and having it burst into flames as it was put down. Moulton had insured neither house nor contents, and nothing suggesting arson was found. Two physicians gave the opinion that flammable sulphurous fumes had spread through the house. The jury refused to accept this "explanation," because chairs and sofas ignited after they had been set out in the yard. The verdict was that the original fire from the burning sulphur was accidental, but that there was no evidence to establish the cause of the later ones.

The next case occurred in the farmhouse at Thorah, near Toronto, occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Dawson and their adopted daughter, an orphan English girl of fourteen, Jennie Bramwell, and is interesting as illustrating the ignition of walls and ceilings, and as being relevant to the "naughty little girl theory" of poltergeists. According to the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, December 19, 1891, the girl went into a "trance" and exclaimed "Look at that!" She was pointing to the ceiling, which was afire. Next day many fires broke out, another starting up as soon as the last was extinguished. While Mrs. Dawson and Jennie were sitting facing a wall the wallpaper

blazed, Jennie's dress blazed and Mrs. Dawson's hands were burned in putting it out. Fires broke out at intervals for a week. On one occasion a kitten flamed. The *Toronto Globe* of November 9 gave an account by a reporter who had visited the farm. He described the wallpaper as having charred patches, which looked as if a lighted lamp had been held there. All furniture had been moved into the yard. As the presumed cause of the fires, Jennie had been returned to the orphanage, and the phenomenon was now over. The reporter postulated trickery and described Jennie as "a half-witted girl who had walked about setting things alight." He saw the kitten and said it had a few hairs on its back slightly singed. In order to resolve the chief difficulty—the ignition of walls and ceiling—he asked Mrs. Dawson if the girl had any knowledge of chemistry. According to him Mrs. Dawson replied to the effect that the child was "well-versed in the rudiments of science." (We may doubt if those were her exact words.) The reporter inquired in the town and was told that Jennie was "an incorrigible little thief." According to the local pharmacists she had often been sent there on errands. By way of comment in this case we may note that the reality of the fires on the walls was accepted by the reporter, who also apparently accepted Mrs. Dawson as a credible witness. We may grant that there exist chemical substances which when exposed to the air for a certain time will spontaneously ignite, but may incline to think that their assembly requires more than a knowledge of "the rudiments of science." Again it is difficult to see how a child of fourteen possessing the rudiments of science can also be described as "half-witted." It would also be slightly odd if a child capable of the brilliant feat of igniting a succession of fires without detection would also be so crude in the matter of petty larceny as to gain the reputation of being "an incorrigible little thief." Seemingly, to make the *Toronto Globe* reporter's explanation adequate we need to postulate two personalities for Jennie, one of them a moron and the other rather bright. This is very much an *ad hoc* hypothesis.

Four years later press reports give a fascinating picture of the puzzlement and inconsistency of officials when faced with the problem of the fires in Adam Colwell's frame house, 84 Guernsey Street, Greenpoint, Brooklyn, New York. According to the *New York Herald* of January 6, 1895, Colwell said that on the afternoon of January 4 an empty parlor stove was overturned and four pictures fell from the walls. He was out but his wife and stepdaughter Rhoda, age sixteen, were at home. Just after Colwell returned they found a bed on fire.

A policeman, named Daly, was called to put it out and stayed in the house. He saw wallpaper ignite near the shoulder of Willie, Colwell's son. Detective Sergeant Dunn arrived. There were more fires and eventually the house burned down and the Colwells lost everything they had. Captain Rhoades of the police department said, "The people we arrested had nothing to do with the strange fires. The more I look into it, the deeper the mystery. So far I can attribute it to no cause other than a supernatural agency. Why, the fires broke out under the very noses of the men I sent to investigate." Sergeant Dunn declared, "There were things that happened before my eyes that I did not believe were possible." The fire marshal stated, "It might be thought that the child Rhoda started two of the fires, but she cannot be guilty of the others, as she was being questioned when some of them began. I do not want to be quoted as a believer in the supernatural, but I have no explanation to offer as to the cause of the fires or of the throwing around of the furniture."

It is not clear who had been arrested by Captain Rhoades and then exonerated by his statement to the press. However, before long he looked for a culprit again and found one in Rhoda. According to the *New York Herald* of January 7, a Mr. J. L. Hope of Flushing, Long Island, had told the captain that Rhoda had been a housemaid in his employ, and between November 19 and December 19 four mysterious fires had broken out in his home. Captain Rhoades then taxed Rhoda with her guilt. "She was frightened and advised to tell the truth." She "sobbed" that she had started the fires, because she did not like the neighborhood. She had knocked the pictures from the walls, while her stepmother was in another part of the house and had dropped matches into the beds and kept up her trickeries while the police, detectives and firemen were in the house. There is no record of any police investigation of the fires at Flushing. However, the police captain was content to let the blame for all the conflagrations fall on Rhoda, though no proceedings were instituted against her. He merely gave her "some good advice." The press report gives no hint of what explanation, if any, was put forward for the alleged burning of the wallpaper. To this extent, therefore, the official diagnosis of trickery is not a fully satisfying one.

THREE WELL-KNOWN CASES

In his book *Ghosts and Poltergeists* (1953), Father Henry Thurston quotes extensively from the account drawn up by Mr.

A. S. T. Pillay, describing disturbances in two houses occupied by his family in March, 1920. Mr. Pillay was a submagistrate of the town of Nidamangalam in a Tamil district of southern India. He was reputed an honorable and conscientious Catholic and was well known to the bishop and clergy of the locality. The disturbances attracted attention locally and were commented upon by certain Hindu journals published in Tamil. As a result Lieutenant Colonel O'Gorman invited Mr. Pillay to write his own account in English. The case was rich in apparent poltergeist phenomena. Sounds appear to have been absent but numerous levitations and throwings are alleged, also smearing of dirt and ashes, and writings on walls. In addition there were a number of mysterious burnings. Unfortunately there appear to be no eyewitnesses of actual ignition. For example, on March 3 some clothes caught fire while lying in a bundle in an upstairs room occupied by a baby in a cradle, and were discovered burning after the child had cried out in fright. "The fire was extinguished by water and the wet half-burnt clothes placed on the chair. Half an hour later when the females went to upstairs, again the wet clothes and the chair were burning. Thinking that the fire was due to some carelessness of my daughter who had an occasion to light a chimney in the upstairs, she was given a good beating." By "lighting the chimney" Mr. Pillay means lighting a fire in the grate. The next day a garment hanging up to dry and a curtain in the kitchen both caught fire. It is not clear whether anyone actually saw it happening. On March 6 the family moved to another house. After the evening meal Mr. Pillay went into the garden. On his way back he saw that "two broomsticks placed over the cupboard in the northern verandah were burning." Other fires that were started resulted from burning firewood flung from the hearth by the demon presumed to be at work.

Dr. Leaf (1897) has given a summary of the evidence presented before a civil court in Kharkov in 1856, relative to disturbances in the home of a cavalry commander, Captain Jandachenko (see also Thurston, 1953). The depositions were published in Russian in 1895 by Aksakoff, and also in a German translation of his book. The captain and his wife and two maids occupied a four-room house at Liptsey as an official residence. Three soldiers assisted the maids with the household chores. It is not clear whether they slept in. Despite the ministrations of the local clergy an outbreak of levitations and throwings of objects that commenced on January 4 continued till January 8, when it took a new turn. "The bed in the room of the captain and his wife caught fire in the presence of both. When extinguished it immediately blazed out in a fresh place. The family moved out for a few days but after their return the throwings were resumed. Some peasants were brought into the house to watch but on the afternoon of January 23 the roof ignited and was burned off. An inquiry held by the head of the district police on February 4 and 5 found nothing to direct suspicion against any individual. The manifestation ceased, however, for some months, but the captain took another house. On July 23 pillow-throwing and overturning of jars of water were experienced, and a guard of peasants was set round the building. The poltergeist phenomena became more violent and on July 25 at 8 A.M. the thatched roof was suddenly seen to be on fire. At 3 P.M. smoke came out of a shed adjoining the house. A soldier crawled in and dragged out a hay mattress that was extensively smoldering. At 5 P.M. the whole roof of that wing of the house burst into flames, the house and four neighboring cottages being burned down. In an official inquiry lasting five days most of the villagers were examined as well as the household. No conclusion was arrived at. As the result of the prodding from above the final enquiry was made three years later at Kharkov. The evidence given appears to have been a repetition of that given previously and again no ground of suspicion was found against anyone. By way of comment on this case, we feel that only doubtful weight can be given to firings of thatch or straw, however mysterious. However, the evidence concerning the ignition of the captain's bed is not dissimilar to the kind of happenings in Charles Fort's cases.

In the Dagg case of 1889 at Clarendon, Quebec Province, Canada, phenomena were many and various, according to the report drawn up by Mr. Percy Woodcock (Thurston, 1953) and subscribed by Mr. and Mrs. Dagg and fifteen other witnesses (all described by Woodcock as responsible people living in the district). We may note the item: "That fires have broken out spontaneously throughout the house, as many as eight occurring in one day, six being in the house and two outside: that the window curtains were burned whilst on the windows, this happening in broad daylight, whilst the family and neighbours were in the house."

♄ INJURY BY FIRE

IT was alleged that at Binbrook Farm, Lincolnshire, in 1905 objects fell from shelves or were thrown about or were mysteriously transported. The evidence concerning fires is not impressive. Accord-

ing to a letter from a schoolteacher in the village a blanket was found burning in a room that had no fireplace (Fort, 1941). The *South and North Lincolnshire News* of January 28 gives a statement by the farmer concerning the servant girl whom he had taken from the workhouse. One day he came into the kitchen, which had a small fire in the grate, behind a guard. The girl was at the other end of the room sweeping the floor. The back of her dress was afire. She was badly burned. According to the farmer and to newspaper reporters who interviewed her in the hospital, she adhered to the belief that she had not been close to the fire, and was in the middle of the room when her clothes ignited. Were it not for the report of poltergeist happenings it is unlikely that this case would have been listed. If the fire was paranormal it constitutes an exception to the rule that poltergeist phenomena rarely cause severe injury to persons. This rule has been inferred by many writers on the subject and does seem, broadly speaking, to apply. Leaving aside the wholly exceptional case of Lily White (which in view of the meagerness of the report available must in any case be regarded with great reserve), Charles Fort's cases and some of the others quoted incline to support the notion that "poltergeist fires" tend to occur at places and times such that injury to persons, though not property, is minimized. Fort, indeed, goes rather further and suggests that mysterious fires, once started, suffer paranormal limitation that tends to localize the outbreak. In support he quotes the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* of October 2, 1889, describing a series of restricted fires in the farmhouse near Findley, Ohio, occupied by Samuel Miller. Two beds burst into flames on different occasions. Each burned down to a heap of ashes but set nothing else alight, not even scorching the floor underneath. On another day, we are informed, a chest containing clothes flamed and was consumed without setting anything else afire. However, this evidence is rather lightweight, and no doubt it will be agreed that the evidence as a whole relating to paranormal restriction of fires is of the slenderest nature.

Charles Fort quotes various cases in which people are mysteriously burned. Most of these show no factors in common with poltergeist cases. There is one exception, a case narrated in the *Annual Register* for 1820. A girl aged ten, Elizabeth Barnes, a servant in the household of John Wright, a linen draper, of Foley Place, Marylebone, was accused by him in court of having set fire repeatedly and "by some extraordinary means" to the clothing of Wright's mother, so that the burns had endangered her life. Happenings commenced

on January 5, when an unexplained fire broke out. On January 7 Mrs. Wright and the girl were sitting by the kitchen hearth. Mrs. Wright got up from her chair and was walking away when she found her clothes afire. On January 12, when in the kitchen with the girl, but about eight feet away from the hearth, where "a very small fire" was burning, her clothes suddenly flamed. The next day only a moment after the girl had left Mrs. Wright in the kitchen, John Wright heard screams and ran in to find her in flames once more. He then accused Elizabeth, but his mother expressed her belief that the girl was innocent and that "something supernatural" was assailing her. Mrs. Wright's daughter now came to guard her mother. But Mrs. Wright went again into the kitchen, where the girl was, and "by some unknown means she caught fire." This time she was dreadfully burned and put to bed. When she was asleep John Wright and his sister left the room and were immediately brought back by her screams, finding her surrounded by flames. The girl was turned out and outbreaks ceased. She was therefore arrested on the complaint of the Wrights. The magistrate said he had no doubt of her guilt but could not convict until Mrs. Wright should recover sufficiently to testify. This is a striking case, though naturally we could do with yet more detail. If the girl was a paranormal fire-raiser then the fires took the unusual form of an attack on a victim. This is not completely inconsistent with classical poltergeist activity. Though generally only minor harm is done to humans, there are cases that suggest great malevolence. If Fodor's theory is correct (Carrington and Fodor, 1953) and poltergeist happenings result from the dissociation of the personality of a human focus, then in a proportion of cases the secondary personality may go beyond mischief to malevolence.

SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION

Charles Fort was rather taken with the idea of pyromaniac attacks on people by unknown agents or agencies. He therefore lists a number of cases that are rather of the type known to forensic medicine as "spontaneous combustion" or "preternatural combustibility." Readers of Dickens will recollect the dramatic juncture in *Bleak House* when Guppy and Weevle, calling on Mr. Krook, find only "a small burnt patch of flooring" and "the cinder of a small charred and broken log of wood sprinkled with white ashes." The latter proves to be Mr. Krook, who has been taken by "the same death eternally —inborn, inbred, engendered in the corrupted humours of the vicious

body itself, and that only–Spontaneous Combustion, and none other of all the deaths that can be died." Fort cites a number of cases where a body has been found lying on a bed or on the floor, the body itself being burnt in some degree but the bed or floor being at most slightly charred or scorched. Sometimes the clothing is extensively burnt but sometimes it is only scorched. Consulting Dixon Mann on *Forensic Medicine and Toxicology*" (1902), we are told (p. 269):

> There is no evidence whatever to justify the use of the word "spontaneous" but there can be no doubt that an extraordinarily high degree of combustibility occurs in rare instances to which the term preternatural combustibility would more correctly apply. The peculiarity of the phenomenon consists in the fact that bodies which acquire this unnatural combustibility burn without the aid of heat derived from the combustion of combustible matter other than that affected by the tissues themselves; the wooden floor on which such a body consumes is merely charred over the area that is in contact with it . . . in preternatural combustibility some exceptional change takes place, by which products of higher combustibility are developed than those which normally exist in the human body. . . . Preternatural combustibility is evidently due to the formation in the body of some substance which is capable of burning alone when once ignited, not in a smouldering way, but with a luminous flame, as is proved by several cases in which flames were seen to proceed from bodies thus burning. . . . It seems probable, that . . . inflammable gases are found in the abdomen, either during life or from abnormal changes which commence immediately after death: that the gas is accidentally ignited and that its combustion raises the temperature of the short tissues, especially the fat, so high that they become carbonised, and give off gases of an inflammable nature which also take fire.

Without our going into technical discussion, the above quotation may be sufficient to show that mysterious burning of the person, particularly the elderly, is not regarded by medical science as being inexplicable within the framework of physiological knowledge. Consequently we may feel under no compulsion to regard such cases as being paranormal. This conclusion is reinforced by a reading of the cases cited by Fort and by Price (1945), which relate to solitary adults and appear not to involve poltergeist manifestations or the presence of juveniles.

FIRE MAGIC

Before attempting to summarize and draw conclusions from the present survey it is of interest to revert to the case of Lily White. If the story could be substantiated in its main features it would be important as indicating not merely fire-raising ability but also immunity to burning. As a phenomenon this is indeed highly unlikely a priori, but in strict logic it is, if anything, only slightly more unreasonable to postulate refrigeration by a paranormal force than it is to postulate heating up by such a force. The immunity of Lily White as implied by the story so far as it goes is not a completely isolated happening. The immunity of fire-walkers has been discussed from time to time. Again, one of the feats ascribed to D. D. Home was the conferring of immunity to red-hot coals upon himself and upon observers at some of his séances. Frank Podmore (1902) in his discussion of some of Home's performances felt that the evidence was "insufficient to substantiate the . . . preternormal power over material nature claimed for Home." And it seemed possible to Podmore that Home supplemented the devices of the conjurer by a remarkable skill in manipulating or exploiting the suggestibility of his audience. Even so, out of all Home's achievements, it was the resistance to heat that Podmore found the most difficult to explain: ". . . the least readily explicable and the best attested of all the phenomena presented by Home. The evidence for the fire-ordeal is abundant; it is in some cases of high quality; and, from the nature of the experiment, the illumination of the room was generally more adequate than in the case of the levitations and elongations." Father Thurston in his scholarly work, *Physical Phenomena of Mysticism* (1951), considers Home's fire ordeal and compares it with the similar feats of other mystics, and the discussion is by no means unimpressive. This fascinating field of enquiry is, of course, outside our present terms of reference, and the slender evidence provided by the Lily White case is quite insufficient to justify its adjunction to poltergeist studies, except insofar as we may look for parallels between poltergeist activities and the feats of mediums or mystics.

CONCLUSIONS

Returning to our main theme, we can readily agree that the material we have drawn upon has in the strict sense little evidential value. Any conclusions that are drawn from it will be, therefore, neces-

sarily of a purely provisional and personal nature, resulting from the general impression this juxtaposition of cases makes on the individual reader's mind. Speaking for myself, therefore, I find it suggestive to the point that I am led to hazard four provisional conclusions:

Fire-raising is not a usual activity of the classical poltergeist.

The classical poltergeist occasionally raises fires in addition to moving objects.

Some cases of fire-raising occurring without classical poltergeist activity may be due to a classical poltergeist with a human center that specializes in fire-raising as the only activity.

The fires that are raised are ordinary combustions even if their origin is paranormal.

In addition, by way of recapitulation I can add the fairly firm conclusion:

Strange cases of burning of the human body are allied to "spontaneous combustion," which on the evidence has no connection with poltergeist activity.

CASES CITED

	Date	*Reference*
Cruttenden, Brightling	*ca.* 1660	Baxter
Mackie, Ringcroft	1695	Sinclair
Elizabeth Barnes, Marylebone	1820	Fort
Jandachenko, Liptsey	1856	Thurston, Leaf
Moulton, Bedford	1856	Fort
Esther Cox, Amherst	1878	Hubbell, Sitwell
Hudson Hotel, Hudson	1880	Fort
Willie Brough, Turlock	1886	Fort
Hoyt, New Brunswick	1887	Fort
Dagg, Clarendon	1889	Thurston, Fort
Miller, Findley	1889	Fort

Jennie Bramwell, Thorah	1891	Fort
Colwell, Brooklyn	1895	Fort
White, Binbrook	1905	Fort
Harvey, Wandsworth	1911	Fort
Pillay, Nidamangalam	1920	Thurston
Budapest	1921	Fort
Lily White, Liberta	1929	Fort
Williamson, Bladenboro	1932	Fort
Virginia Campbell, Sauchie	1960	Chap. 5.

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8

Traction of the Human Body

IN PRINCIPLE there seems to be no objection *a priori* to the argument that the poltergeist force, being able to move inanimate objects, should be able also to move the human body. It may therefore be worth while to take a look at such references to traction or levitation as may be found in the literature of ghosts or poltergeists. We first consider traction, i.e., cases where it is alleged that people have been pulled or pushed about.

NIGHTMARE AND SOMNABULISM

THERE are many stories, whose status is chiefly anecdotal, in which people are dragged or tossed out of bed. These are of no great significance, being readily explicable as the result of involuntary movement by the victims themselves, occasioned by restlessness, nightmare, or somnabulism. The Roman Emperor Otho, on the night after he had ordered the death of his predecessor Galba, was reputed to have been tossed out of bed by Galba's ghost. But Suetonius (ed. 1957) says: "Otho is said to have been haunted that night by Galba's ghost in a terrible nightmare; the servants who ran in when he screamed for help found him lying on the bedroom floor." Presumably the ghost came in a dream at the urging of Otho's conscience.

Richard Bovet of South Petherton, Somerset, in 1684 published *Pandaemonium or the Devil's Cloyster*, a book dedicated to Dr.

Henry More and written in obvious imitation of the *Saducismus Triumphatus* of Joseph Glanvil, whom Bovet deeply admired. The treatise consists of a discourse on demonology, followed by "A collection of several Authentick Relations of Strange Apparitions of Daemons and Spectres . . . ," intended as a parallel to Glanvil's "Collection of Modern Relations." He includes an interesting story told him by Mrs. Wood, the mistress of a country house at Kitsford, Devonshire. One night a footman was allowed to go to bed early as he complained of a pain in his head. Some hours later when going to their rooms the company passed by his door, which was open, and "out of it issued a steam which by the light of the candles appeared like a thick fog." On looking in they saw "the poor young man lying speechless on the bed, his eyes were staring very wide and fixed on one side of the room, his hands were clutched, his hair erected, and his whole body in a violent sweat. The bed-clothes were flung around the room and his shirt drawn off his Body, and cast into one side of the room." In about half an hour he was recomposed and said that on coming to bed he was unable to sleep because of the pain in his head. Two very beautiful young women came in "whose presence enlightened the place," as if it had been day, though there was no candle near it . . . "they endeavored to come into the bed to him . . . which he resisted with all the power he could and striking at them several times with his fists could feel nothing but empty shadows, yet they were so strong that they drew all the bedclothes off him . . ." and "stripped him of his shirt . . . he had no power to speak or call for aid."

In this account the fog or steam is puzzling, but may be without occult significance. Otherwise the footman's experiences are quite compatible with those of nightmare in the technical sense as used by modern psychologists, being a particularly disturbing dream accompanied by sweating, palpitation, and a sense of paralysis or suffocation. It is ascribed to the welling up of repressed erotic desires. The content of the footman's dream is certainly compatible with this explanation (Robbins, 1959).

Richard Baxter in *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits* (1691) recounts a curious anecdote narrated to him by an unnamed acquaintance. In 1664 this man lodged at an inn at Culmstock, and went to bed in the normal way. Just before midnight he awoke, finding himself laid out on the floor at some distance from the bed beside a table, the bedclothes and his own wearing apparel laid on top of him, the latter being just in the same order as he had laid them

out when going to bed. But he had nothing at all under him, "by which he got an extreme cold, and besides his leg and arm next the table were sorely bruised." This would seem to be a case of somnabulism, though he told Baxter "He was never out of his bed in his sleep before or since; and soon after he came to understand that the chamber was reputed to be haunted."

EPILEPSY

In the era when belief in witchcraft was still strong, many instances in which people were thrown down or flung about are doubtless correctly explained as the results of epilepsy. This seems to apply to the case of the Dutch lieutenant at Woodbridge. This story is narrated in Glanvil's "Collection of Modern Relations" as an experience of Mr. Broom, the Minister of Woodbridge, Suffolk. The lieutenant had been captured at the Battle of the Texel and was a prisoner at large in Woodbridge. He had told Mr. Broom that he frequently saw ghosts. Walking with Mr. Broom in the town one morning he said he saw a ghost advancing towards them and that they must give way to it. "Mr. Brown believing all to be a fiction took hold of his arm, kept him by force in the way. But . . . there came such a force against him that he was flung into the middle of the street." He lay like a dead man but was revived eventually by chafing and "pouring strong-water down his throat." All this sounds very much like some variety of epileptic seizure. The causes of epilepsy are various, but the fits or fainting spells are preceded by a rapid discharge of intense nervous energy through the nervous system. Very commonly before consciousness is lost, the patient experiences elaborate hallucinations. The interest that the story had for Glanvil, of course, lay in the ghost. It appears that Broom had some reason for believing that the apparition that appeared only to the lieutenant was veridical. It was that of a local tailor seen walking with a very characteristic gait. He had had tuberculosis for a long time but died suddenly, "as punctually as it could be guessed at the very time when the ghost appeared" (Glanvil, 1681).

THE AGE OF WITCHCRAFT

In many cases of supposed witchcraft the "bewitched" children or juveniles appeared to be flung about as by invisible forces. In most of such cases there was nothing else reported of the kind that we should

now describe as poltergeist activity, though there were usually convulsions, swellings, vomiting of pins and the like. Consequently some contemporary writers and all modern writers have diagnosed these occurrences as being due to epilepsy, hysteria, or imposture compounded in various proportions. The matter has been extensively written on, and there is no doubt of the correctness of this finding as applied to the vast majority of cases (Scott, 1884; Kittredge, 1929; Podmore, 1902; Ewen, 1933; Robbins, 1959). This is the only reasonable interpretation in cases free from other poltergeist disturbances. However, cases in which classical poltergeist activity is alleged deserve to be treated on their own merits and not to be summarily rejected as typical of the era of the witch fever.

The argument in support of this attitude is twofold. If some modern poltergeists are genuinely paranormal, then some ancient ones are likely to be genuine and paranormal. Second, it is a striking fact that out of the thousands of witchcraft accusations in the late Middle Ages and the Reformation period, only a very small number (which can be counted in tens) contain allegations regarding moving objects or dismal sounds. Out of the 470 English cases listed by Ewen (1933), only five involve poltergeist phenomena. This is borne out by the data relating to peripheral places such as Ireland, Norway, and New England, which in fact remained almost totally immune to the fever of witch persecution. In Ireland, Dame Alice Kyteler was accused of sorcery and witch rites in 1324; two witches and a "blackamoor" were tried for sorcery and necromancy at Kilkenny in 1578; there were two cases involving sorcery or divination in the early seventeenth century. Otherwise we have only three cases, all of which involved alleged poltergeist phenomena: the haunting of Lord Castleconnell's castle near Limerick in 1640; the trial of Florence Newton in 1661; and the Island Magee case of 1710 (Seymour, 1913). In Norway the beliefs in sorcery and demons and in forms of folk magic were strong but less than two dozen witch trials took place. The only poltergeist cases were reported in the eighteenth century. There was a haunting of a house in Andenaes in 1722-1723, with strange noises and kitchen upsets; the haunting of a parsonage in Vaagen in 1726, and knockings on the walls of a fisherman's house in Hellesø about 1730 (Robbins, 1959, quoting Baetzmann, 1865). Despite the notoreity of the Salem outbreak, otherwise New England has a very clean record in regard to witch prosecutions, as American writers (Kittredge, Murdock) have been at pains to make clear. Our thesis is again substantiated by finding that out of about a dozen cases of

witchcraft and demonianism at least three are of poltergeist type, e.g., the haunting of William Morse's house at Newbury, the disturbances at Salmon Falls, and the stone-throwing in New Hampshire.

It seems clear, therefore, on assembling comparative figures as between countries, that poltergeist happenings are no part of the general scheme of the witch superstitions. The absolute frequency with which they get into the record is, per head of the population, not significantly different between countries. The frequency of witch persecutions is, however, markedly variable, for reasons that have been historically ascertained by Notestein, Kittredge, Robbins, and others and that relate to the varying systems of religious, political, and municipal organization obtaining in different territories. The main body of witch superstitions was itself highly determined in character. This was because it derived from primitive sorcery and magic, which in its aim was entirely concerned with health or domestic economy, or necromancy. From time immemorial the business of witches and sorcerers has been to assist or impair the health of persons, crops, or livestock. Also, until the Age of Reason, folk belief tended to regard ill health of people and animals, failure of bakings or brewings, as due to the operations of ill will, often aided by magic rites. In countries where ecclesiastical or state legislation provided heavy penalties for witchcraft (explicitly as *witchcraft* rather rather than for *felony by witchcraft*) and where witchcraft prosecutions were under the control (and to the financial profit) of local officials instead of the Inquisition or the central government, these folk beliefs were aroused into vehement action. The origin of most cases can be found in the occurrence of illness in a family, genuine with epileptics, paralytics, and tuberculosis patients, or feigned by juvenile impostors. The residue of cases results from disease of cattle, chickens, or crops, or failures of the yeasts in the bakery or brewhouse. Primitive science, whose thinking was all in terms of magic, tended to look for a human malevolent, but this went to tragic lengths only in countries where the legislative machinery of church or state miseducated the public and encouraged the fury.

It may be asked why such obvious annoyances as clodding, throwing of pots and pans, and bumpings in the night were not also regarded as nuisances caused by sorcery and so did not become built in as standard elements of the witch belief instead of rare ones? I think there can be only one intellectually satisfying explanation. We are forced to the conclusion that since prehistoric times such disturbances have been relatively infrequent, either as the result of persistent

pranksters or as paranormal occurrences. Perhaps this conclusion should be weakened to refer only to disturbances that are really annoying to the afflicted family. The milder pranks of the poltergeist not striking at health or economic welfare might well have been ascribed to the children, or the "brownies," or house spirits of folklore, discussed elsewhere (Owen, 1964). Only those causing serious alarm would make the record. We may argue that had the frequency of the serious poltergeist upheavals been higher than at present, these then would have been assimilated at an early date to the ills which flesh is heir to, and have been incorporated in the list of typical witchcraft phenomena. Sickness and nervous disorder have always been extremely frequent and there is no difficulty in explaining the obsession of witch lore with them.

The foregoing argument has, admittedly, been involved. I feel, however, that it is difficult to put any other interpretation on the statistical facts than the one attempted here. It appears, therefore, that serious poltergeist activity, genuine or fraudulent, has in most places and times occurred with about the same absolute frequency, which is a low one. It is not a standard part of witch belief, and the older cases deserve, therefore, to be treated on their merits.

Of the Norwegian cases mentioned, the one in the parsonage of Vaagen in Nordland ostensibly involves traction of a fourteen-year-old boy. He was the center of the disturbances from February to Easter, 1726. Unfortunately Baetzmann's book (1865) is not available to me, and we have to rely on the derivative account given by Robbins (1959), which is very brief and lacking in detail. Probably Baetzmann's account is not more extensive, but I have in mind that Robbins is a violent skeptic who does not try to distinguish between the possibly different validity of poltergeist stories and standard witchcraft narratives, and I am not entirely confident that he may not have innocently compressed narratives with the effect of throwing away some meaningful detail. Of the boy, Robbins says, "He said that he heard Danish and Latin whispered in his ear, that water was poured on him during the night, and that sometimes he was dragged across the yard. The boy showed abnormal strength, and often people had to lie on top of him to hold him down. After eight weeks, the parson's threats brought the trouble to a stop." Clearly this is not very helpful. The whisperings and waterings depend only on the boy's own testimony. Similarly, we cannot tell whether his dragging across the yard was feigned, or a subjective experience, or actual and paranormal. The abnormal strength and the difficulty in holding him

down are sometimes characteristic of epileptic or hysterical fits. The apparent cure after eight weeks suggests a state of hysteria or imposture rather than chronic epilepsy. As regards imposture, we might expect this to be rather less likely in eighteenth-century Norway than in seventeenth-century England. In England some early cases like that of the Throckmorton children at Warboys, Huntingdonshire, in 1589 gained wide and immediate publicity through the circulation of broadsheet ballads and pamphlets. As a result the signs of bewitchment became well known. There is no doubt that this disseminated knowledge inspired many impostures by children and adults. We may doubt whether any comparable amount of material was available in Norway in 1726 or earlier.

In 1684, while still pastor of the North Church at Boston, the celebrated American Puritan, Increase Mather, published *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*. His purpose was similar to that of Glanvil, with whom he regularly corresponded after returning in 1661 from a noncomformist ministry in England. He sought to demonstrate "the real existence of apparitions, spirits and witches" and convert skeptics to a belief in the supernatural and thus in the truth of religion. He has long been regarded as a credulous witch hunter, probably on account of the more superstitious view of his son, Cotton Mather. But modern scholars from Harvard, where Increase graduated in 1656, and was president from 1685 to 1701, have largely rehabilitated him. He was not a man of unlimited credulity like Richard Baxter. He was also well alive to the possibility of there being natural explanations for many supposed marvels. Murdock (1925) holds that he "deserves a place, not with superstitious divines, but on the same plane with Glanvil and Dr. Henry More, who were serious students in 'psychical research' and seekers for empirical proof of what had hitherto been forced upon men's minds by authority alone." Holmes (1927) remarks: "Increase Mather's attitude to the witch episode was very clearly the exact opposite of that which many popular historians have hitherto represented it to have been." Mather's later book, *Cases of Conscience concerning Evil Spirits* (1693), has been called by Murdock "The most outspoken, and almost certainly the earliest, public utterance issued in New England in opposition to the practice of the [Witch] Court." And Holmes has said: "If this work had been widely read and thoroughly needed, the witch panic, that broke out eight years after its publication, would never have occurred."

These tributes to Increase Mather will be of more use to us in the next section when we consider what he had to say of the New Hampshire stone-throwing. The only one of his cases that is relevant in the present connection is the disturbance in the house of William Morse at Newbury, Massachusetts, in 1679. A little boy, John Stiles, the grandson of William Morse, was the chief sufferer. He was flung about with such violence that it was feared that his brains would be dashed out. A man tried to hold him down in a chair, but the boy was being constantly raised up and then thrust forcibly down, while the chair kept moving about the room, apparently of its own accord. When the chair finally became stationary, the boy was taken out of it by an invisible agency and thrown across the floor to within a few feet of the fire. Besides this, considerable movement and flights of chairs, keys, and other objects were reported. For each of his stories Mather was "well assured it is according to truth." In spite of this we cannot be quite confident of the data or of their paranormal interpretation, because of the absence of a circumstantial firsthand report. It is clearly possible that none of the activity resulted from a genuine poltergeist. Again, it is not impossible that the boy was the center of true poltergeist doings, but nonetheless was also an epileptic or hysteric, able to move his chair with his feet. He was also said to have fits in which "he barked like a dog and clucked like a hen . . . his tongue likewise hung out of his mouth."

Before we leave this period it is entertaining to consider the following item from the *Memorialls* (1818) of the Rev. Robert Law, Minister of Kirkpatrick, Scotland. He tells us that the Lord President Stair had a daughter who, "being married, the night she was bride in, was taken from her bridegroom and harled [dragged] through the house and soon afterwards died." We are given to understand that the traction was by spirits or by the Auld Hornie himself. This case would be interesting if true, but unfortunately is completely legendary, though the first Viscount Stair, (Sir James Dalrymple), jurist and President of the Court of Session, and his daughter, and the bridegroom are historic enough. In this story we have a very nice instance of the growth of a myth. The original nucleus of fact on which fiction accreted is given by Agnew (1893), by Sir Walter Scott in his introduction to *The Bride of Lammermuir*, and by Crockett in *The Scot Originals* (1932). Sir James Dalrymple, like his son, Sir John Dalrymple, was implicated in the events leading to the massacre of Glencoe in 1692, having come

over with William of Orange from exile during the reign of James II, but prior to that he had a distinguished career as professor of logic in Glasgow College, and at the bar. He was made a Lord of Session in 1661. In 1643 he married Margaret Ross, the heiress of Balneil, and they maintained as vacation residence a house at Carscreugh, near Glenluce of eerie fame. In May, 1669, his eldest daughter, Janet Dalrymple, signed a contract of marriage with David Dunbar of nearby Baldoon. Some time previously her troth had been pledged to Lord Rutherford, an impoverished peer considerably her senior. But on August 12 she was married in Glenluce Church to young Baldoon. A large bridal party was entertained at Carscreugh till the 24th, when she was escorted by a gay cavalcade to Baldoon. However, she fell ill and died suddenly on September 12.

The community was startled and sympathetic. There was no whisper of scandal until (nearly a generation after) local gossip hinted that the bridegroom stabbed his bride while in a fit of insanity. This is, however, quite contrary to the contemporary account given in verse by the then minister of Kirkenner, Andrew Symson (1823). However, the popular story, once launched, underwent a further transformation. In the final version wild and piercing cries from the nuptial chamber were heard on the wedding night. Eventually the bridesmen opened up and found the bridegroom lying across the threshold bleeding from a fatal wound. The bride was found dabbled with blood sitting in the chimney corner "mopping and mowing," saying only, "Tak up your bonny bridegroom." The story received one further refinement in a lampoon, *Satyre on the Familie of Stairs*. In these scurrilous verses, William Dunlop, who was a bitter enemy of the Stairs, intimated that the violence was done to the bridegroom by the foul fiend to whom the lady had resigned her soul should she break the troth given to her first lover.

❧ DURBIN'S CASE

It will be readily agreed that our results thus far are entirely insignificant. We now come, however, to three remarkable cases. Two are modern, but the third falls in a period between the age of superstition and that of fully developed skepticism. Similarly, the case itself is a very difficult one to interpret. For reasons that will be made clear it is easy neither to accept fully nor reject decisively. The sole account is that contained in a pamphlet by Mr. Henry Durbin published at Bristol in 1800 and entitled A *narrative of some extraordinary things that happened to Mr. Richard Giles's Children*. Long extracts from the pamphlet have been conveniently reprinted by Thurston (1953). He also reproduces paragraphs from the preface written by a friend of Mr. Durbin, who speaks of Mr. Durbin's "inviolable attachment to truth, his unblemished uprightness . . . his probity in the concerns of his calling, and his genuine and unaffected piety to God. . . . When he first heard of the strange transactions at Lawford's Gate, he went, through a principle of critical curiosity, to detect and expose what he deemed to be imposture." However, his researches in the event went on for some months and convinced him that fraud was out of the question.

The happenings concerned Molly and Dobby, the daughters of the landlord of the Lamb Inn, described as being outside of Lawford's Gate, Bristol. This is presumably in the vicinity of the present Lawford Street, near the Old Market. Mr. Durbin's observations commenced on December 18, 1761, and we may ask why he published nothing on the case during his lifetime. His posthumous editor tells us in the preface that "Mr. Durbin was firmly persuaded the whole business was the effect of supernatural agency; and as such he fully believed it to his dying day." Though urged to publish in his lifetime, he did not do so, because "the present is an age of infidelity; men scoff at spiritual things; if they believe not Moses and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles, they will not of course believe my feeble testimony concerning a work which it may be their interest to discredit. When I first engaged in the examination of this business, I was abused in the public papers for what was termed my credulity. Should I publish the Narrative, the same abuse would be revived, and I wish to live and die in peace with all men. It will doubtless be published after my death, and the matter will then speak for itself."

Coming to the actual narrative, we find that each occurrence is dated, which gives us confidence that the account was drawn up from notes made at the time. Each event is carefully described in some detail, particularly when Mr. Durbin is narrating his own first-hand observations. For example, the following description of a poltergeist throwing is as precise as any to be found in modern literature. "On the chest of drawers stood a wine-glass which I saw glitter in the sun, and was astonished to see it rise from the drawers without hands. It rose gradually about a foot perpendicularly from the drawers; then the glass seemed to stand, and thereupon inclined backwards, as if a hand had held it; it was then flung with violence

about five feet and struck the nurse on the hip a hard blow." He goes on to define the locations of all persons in the room at the time.

If the methodical nature of Mr. Durbin's records and the definiteness and objectivity of his descriptions are sufficient to give us confidence in the accuracy of his narrative, then perhaps we shall be prepared also to accept the following description as being an objective account of a genuine case of traction:

> I went again (19 Feb.) and found there Messrs. ——. The children had been pulled out of bed several times, as it were by the neck, in their sight. The children lay on their back, and I saw very strong gentlemen hold each child under their arms as they lay on their back: they soon cried out they were pulled by the legs. Major D—— held Molly with all his might, and put his knee against her bedstead, but cried he could not hold her, the force was so great that he thought three hundredweight pulled against him. They were both pulled to the foot of the bed and the Major fell on the bed. The children were then pulled up again, and the Major for a *certain* experiment (for he did not believe that there was anything supernatural in the affair) tried again about ten times. I saw the children as often pulled to the bed's foot, and both the Major and the other gentlemen pulled after them, though they held them with all their strength, the children crying with pain. They felt hands pull them by their legs, and I saw black and blue marks on the small of their legs, as if hands had done it. I held Dobby myself, under the arms, as she lay on her back, but I found my strength nothing to the force which pulled against me, and she was pulled to the bed's foot and then it stopped.

Here we have Mr. Durbin's firsthand testimony. It might in principle be possible for the children and the major together to enact a feigned tug-of-war. But it is harder to see how, supposing his description to be accurate, Mr. Durbin could have been deceived.

I have already put myself on record as favoring a somewhat physical theory of poltergeist action. This admittedly has little rational basis beyond personal prejudice and the desire not to multiply hypotheses. I must confess to being thoroughly disturbed by the apparently anthropomorphic functioning of the "poltergeist." As narrated, the girls "felt hands pull them by the legs," and Mr. Durbin claims to have seen "black and blue marks as if hands had done it."

One difficulty in this case has already been discussed—the lapse of time between the events and the publication of the account. This is offset to some extent by the circumstantial style and diary form of the narrative, and the evidence that the reputed author was a real person of known character, being in fact the uncle of Sir John Durbin, an alderman of the City, who was knighted in 1800, the year of publication (Thurston, 1953). The other difficulty comes from the strain which the other happenings in the case put on our prior belief. As will be seen in a later section, when we consider poltergeists reputed to bite and pinch, the Giles' girls were alleged by Durbin to be persecuted by pinchings and bitings and even cuttings of the flesh occurring beneath Durbin's very eyes. Admittedly this strains credulity. All of Mr. Durbin's descriptions are, however, of the same impressive quality, and it does not appear to be open to us to pick and choose the phenomena we like. The case must, I feel, be accepted or rejected as a whole. We are left in the predicament, therefore, that neither course is easy. It is very hard to set Mr. Durbin aside as a witness, but we are obliged to be cautious in accepting the phenomena unless corroborated by other cases nearer our time.

ENNISCORTHY

The well-known occurrences in the house of Mr. and Mrs. Redmond, Court Street, Enniscorthy, Wexford, Ireland, were reported by Professor Barrett (1911) in his article "Poltergeists, Old and New." On August 4, 1910 he received by letter a firsthand account by Mr. N. J. Murphy of happenings on July 29, 1910. This account was subscribed by Mr. Owen Devereux, a second eyewitness. Mr. Murphy described himself as a journalist representing the *Enniscorthy Guardian*, and Mr. Devereux as being of the Devereux Cycle Works, Enniscorthy. Mr. Murphy's narrative is very clearly and pertinently written, and he would seem to be a witness of education and judgment. When Professor Barrett visited Enniscorthy some weeks later, he formed a good impression of Mr. Devereux, describing him as owning a cycle shop, being a skilled mechanic, and an excellent witness. He had a long interview with John Randall, the poltergeist victim, a carpenter eighteen years old. He found him an intelligent, straightforward youth. The Anglican rector of the parish knew Ran-

dall well and testified that he was steady and well conducted, thoroughly truthful and trustworthy, and that any particulars he gave about the "haunting" could be relied on. Randall supplied Professor Barrett with a long statement that corroborated that of Mr. Murphy and Mr. Devereux.

Randall, being a native of Killurin, lodged at the Redmonds' house, sharing a bedroom with another young carpenter, George Sinnott. They had separate beds. As Mr. Murphy had got wind of disturbances earlier in July, on the twenty-ninth he and Mr. Devereux kept watch in the bedroom, having first made a close inspection of the entire room. About 11:20 the boys were in bed and the light was extinguished. It was a clear starlit night. There was no blind and the outlines of the beds and their occupants could be clearly seen. At 11:30 a rapping started at the rate of about fifty a minute, speeding up to about 120 a minute and getting louder. At 11:35 it stopped. Randall complained that the clothes were sliding off his bed. Devereux struck a match and he and Murphy saw that they were drawn off and also going back under the bed as if blown by a strong breeze. However, the air was perfectly still. A further search for strings or wires was made by candlelight but without result.

They made up Randall's bed and he retired once more, the candle being put out. After about ten minutes the rapping recommenced and increased in vehemence before it stopped. "Randall's voice again broke the silence. 'They are going again.' . . . I said 'Hold them and do not let them go: you only imagine they are going.' He said 'I cannot hold them, . . . I am going with them; there is something pushing me from inside. I am going, I am going, I'm gone.' My companion struck a light just in time to see Randall slide from the bed, the sheet under him, and the sheets blanket and coverlet over him. . . . He lay on his back on the floor. The movement of his coming out of bed was gentle and regular. There did not appear to be any jerking motion. Whilst he lay on the floor, Randall's face was bathed in perspiration, which rolled off him in great drops. He was much agitated and trembled in every limb. His terribly frightened condition, especially the beads of perspiration on his face, precludes any supposition that he was privy to any human agency being employed to effect the manifestations." Nothing further happened that night except a rapping at the middle of the room lasting for fifteen minutes. It was then past dawn and quite light.

In his own statement Randall described repeated knockings during July, the taking of the pillow from under his head, and the bed turning up on one side so as to throw them out of it (he was then sharing it with Sinnott). "When the bed rose up, it fell back without any noise." Describing the events of July 29, he said: "We were not long in bed when I felt myself being taken from the bed, but could feel no hands, nor could I resist going. All I could say was 'I'm going, I'm going; they're at me.' I lay on the floor in a terrible state, and hardly able to speak. The perspiration was pouring through me. . . . I never believed in ghosts until that, and I think it would convince the bravest man in Ireland."

Even if we should have reservations about Professor Barrett's critical acumen, it seems very difficult, in view of the very clear and definitive nature of the witnesses' statement made soon after the event, to reject this case as other than a good one. If Mr. Murphy's observations were accurate, it would seem indeed that Randall himself as well as his bedding was dragged or propelled. The gentle descent to the floor would seem to preclude the possibility that Randall, unknown to himself, was working his body out of bed by involuntary muscular action.

Randall's own subjective impression as conveyed in the exclamation ascribed to him by Mr. Murphy is extremely interesting: ". . . there is something pushing me from inside." The sensation appears to have been quite different from that which according to Durbin was experienced by the Giles girls, and involved local external applications of force.

❧ THE ICELAND CASE

The experiences of Indridi Indridason, though more violent, parallel those of John Randall. There was apparently no rapping, but a good deal of typical poltergeist throwing of domestic articles. The case is described by the Rev. Haraldur Nielsson (1923), Professor of Theology in the University of Iceland, and extracts from Professor Nielsson's paper are given by Thurston (1953). The latter says that he was informed by a Catholic priest who was a native of Iceland that he had known Professor Nielsson and respected him as a man whose word might always be relied on. The paper of 1923 relates events that took place in 1907. But it was based on an account drawn up by Nielsson at the time in the minute book of the Icelandic Psychical Research Society. The account was subscribed by Mr. Kvaran (president and archivist of the society), Mr. Thorlaksson

(Senior Clerk in the Ministries of Industry and Commerce), and two other gentlemen. These all were present, like Mr. Nielsson, at various of the scenes of activity around Indridason, and testify that the statements in the minute book are exact records of fact. As Father Thurston comments, it is exceedingly difficult to believe that they can all have been hallucinated.

Indridason, though little more than a boy, is described as a professional medium. He lived in terror of a real or imagined entity whom he called "Jon" and whom he identified with the soul of a recent suicide. In séances "Jon" was represented as hostile and vindictive. After one such séance Mr. Oddgeirsson agreed to share Indridi's bedroom, while Mr. Kvaran spent the night in the next room. According to the paper of 1923:

> During the night the medium shouts that he is being dragged out of bed and is very terror-stricken. He implores Mr. Oddgeirsson to hold his hand. Mr. Oddgeirsson takes his hand, pulling with all his might, but cannot hold him. The medium is lifted above that end of the bed against which his head had been lying and he is pulled down on the floor, sustaining injuries to his back from the bedstead. At the same moment a pair of boots which were under Mr. Oddgeirsson's bed, were thrown at the lamp, breaking both the glass and the shade. The medium is now dragged head foremost through the door and along the floor in the outer room, in spite of his clutching with all his might at everything he could catch hold of, besides Mr. Kvaran and Mr. Oddgeirsson pulling at his legs. Mr. Kvaran and Mr. Oddgeirsson at last succeeded in getting under his shoulders, which they had great difficulty in lifting. They managed, however, to drag him into bed, but they could not make him stand upon his feet.

Two nights later Mr. Thorlaksson and Mr. Oddgeirsson slept in Indridason's room. Ewers and other crockery were thrown about and smashed. The two observers threw themselves on the medium and exerted all their strength but only with the greatest difficulty could prevent him from being dragged out of bed. While this was happening "the table which was standing between the beds was lifted and came down on Mr. Oddgeirsson's back."

After this attack it was decided that they would all leave the house. Indridason was left alone in the bedroom to get dressed.

When partly dressed he shouted for help. Mr. Thorlaksson rushed in and saw the medium "balancing in the air with his feet towards the window." (I do not find this description at all clear and it is regrettable that more detail is not given.) However, according to Mr. Thorlaksson's testimony he took hold of Indridason, pulled him down to the bed and kept him there. Then he felt that both of them were being lifted up, and he called for help. Mr. Oddgeirsson came into the bedroom (avoiding en route a chair that hurled itself at him) and put his weight on the medium's knees, Mr. Thorlaksson being on the medium's chest. Concurrently candlesticks flew in from another room, and the bolster flew out of its place under Indridason's pillow.

It appears that the disturbances, though violent, were of short duration, and correspondingly before long, "Jon" became less sinister and indeed mildly benignant.

Like Father Thurston, I too feel that this case is to be credited. It is exceptionally interesting. It is not unique, because it appears to have anticipated on a grander scale the happenings to John Randall at Enniscorthy. The cases agree in the victims being young men rather than girls. They agree also in that the victims each experienced a sense of being pulled irresistibly, and were terrified. Were it not for the awkward refusal of the Durbin case to allow itself easily to be pushed into the limbo of rejection, we might indeed be tempted to generalize that traction of the poltergeist medium is a very rare happening and confined to males. This, however, is a temptation to be resisted as an impermissible extrapolation from the meager supply of instances.

❧ MISCELLANEOUS CASES

Apart from these three notable cases, the literature is singularly barren of good examples of traction. There are a number of instances in connection with alleged poltergeists in which people have made rather vague claims of being pushed or pulled about, without giving any convincing detail.

Someone seems to have been dragged or pushed by the Corpus Christi ghost at Cambridge (Price, 1945) but there was such a melee of students present at the time that even had it been a poltergeist and not a ghost the case would not have been very helpful.

Mr. and Mrs. T. B. Compston, apparently a respectable couple from Leeds, took a room in the Victoria Hotel at Bristol on December

11, 1873, and later were found in the street in a state of terror. They said that a chasm appeared in the floor and Mr. Compston was in danger of being dragged into it (Fort, 1941; Price, 1945). They appeared not to have been drinking, and charges of disorderly conduct were dismissed. It would appear to be a case *sui generis* and we would not wish to follow Price in associating it with poltergeists. Charles Fort saw it as possibly being an instance of incipient teleportation. Perhaps it was an hallucination of Mr. Compston's. His good lady may merely have backed him up for solidarity, or have been infected by his state of terror and so been a fit subject for suggestion.

For completeness, however, we should mention a stone-throwing case occurring at the hamlet of Les Clavaux, near Livet, in France, as reported in the *Courier de l'Isère* of Tuesday, January 3, 1843, and quoted in the London *Times* of January 13, 1843. Two girls, each fourteen years old, Marie Genevoix and Marguerite Pinel, were going along the road picking up leaves, when they experienced a shower of stones, which fell with uncanny slowness. The children fetched their parents, and stones fell again with unnatural slowness. Another phenomenon was alleged; an upward current into which the children were dragged, as if into a vortex (Fort, 1941). There appears to have been some substance to this case, for in a footnote, Father J. H. Crehan, the editor of Father Thurston's *Ghosts and Poltergeists*, says (p. 135) that Father Thurston had obtained the account of the case from the Académie Delphinale of Grenoble. From this it appears that other people with the children were hit by the stones (which at least makes them less hallucinatory). Also, M. Micha-Bonnardon, the mayor of Vizille, left a written account of the happening, which was witnessed by the priest, the doctor, the schoolmaster, two legal officials and many others. It is a pity that Father Thurston did not discuss the case in writing, for then we might have been able to assess the evidence for the traction of the children.

☿ CONCLUSIONS

Our survey shows that traction of humans rarely occurs either in isolation or accompanying other poltergeist manifestations.

There is no obvious reason for this limitation on poltergeist activities.

There are two cases that if not first-class are not bad evidentially, and a third case that is difficult to set aside.

In the Reykjavik and the Enniscorthy cases, it would seem that the victim was also the poltergeist focus.

In the Durbin case two children were attacked. If this case is genuine it raises the question whether both or only one were poltergeist centers.

☿ CASES CITED

	Date	*Reference*
Emperor Otho, Rome	69	Suetonius
Baxter's friend, Culmstock	1664	Baxter
Janet Dalrymple, Carscreugh	1669	Agnew, Scott
Dutch lieutenant, Woodbridge	1673	Glanvil
Footman, Kitsford	*ca.* 1679	Bovet
John Styles, Newbury, Mass.	1679	Mather
Parsonage, Vaagen	1726	Robbins, Baetzmann
Giles children, Bristol	1761	Durbin, Thurston
Children, Les Clavaux	1843	Thurston
Compston, Bristol	1873	Price
Corpus Christi, Cambridge	1904	Price
Indridason, Reykjavik	1907	Thurston

☿ CASES CITED WITHOUT DISCUSSION

Castleconnell	1640	Seymour
Mary Longdon, Youghal	1661	Seymour
Salmon Falls, Maine	1682	Robbins, Mather Walton, Great Island 1682 Chap. 4
Haltwhistle, Island Magee	1710	Seymour
Parsonage, Andenaes	1722	Robbins, Baetzmann
Fisherman's house, Hellesø	1730	Robbins, Baetzmann

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Levitation

☿ INTRODUCTION

The Iceland case was suggestive of levitation as well as of traction. Indeed, this is not very surprising in principle, as, looked at from the point of view of mechanics, there is little difference between them, being merely a question of the direction of the applied force. Thus any distinction we choose to make between traction and levitation may be entirely an artificial one. In any event we shall find also that, insofar as poltergeist cases are concerned, the distinction is an idle one, for it turns out, on examining the literature, that with the possible exception of the Iceland and Poona ones, there are no good modern poltergeist cases that involve levitation of humans. Nonetheless levitation as a supposed phenomenon has always been of interest to students of the occult, whereas poltergeist tractions have been given less attention. It is on this basis that I have chosen to distinguish between them.

Levitation has long been regarded by adherents of many Eastern religious as a gift resulting from holiness. There are unfortunately no well authenticated cases of magicians or mystics attaining to it in the presence of good witnesses. Thus, as far as evidence goes, Oriental levitation is on the same footing as the Indian rope trick. Consequently some students of Oriental religion such as Hocart have, very reasonably, construed the belief in levitation as a mythological element derived somewhat indirectly from very archaic religious con-

cepts. If we consider Hindu Brahmanism, we find it to be the result of a very long evolution of Vedic religion, involving compromises with indigenous rites of the Indian peninsula, and accommodation to the reforming puritanism of Buddhism. The characteristic feature of Brahmanism is, however, the elevation of the priestly Brahmanic caste over the ruling caste of warrior nobles. Generally speaking, in most early forms of religion kings are closely associated with gods, being either regarded as incarnations of gods, or as the representatives of gods, being "prophets, priests and kings." Thus the elevation of Brahmans above royalty is historically the elevation of priests above gods. Bussell (1918) has credibly indicated how this might happen, particularly in Asia with its tradition of Shamanism. Primitive magico-religious rites are not always for nourishing or propitiating divinity. Instead they are often for conjuration of the gods, in the same way as the sorcerer conjures spirits or *jinn* to do his bidding. That is, they are magical ceremonies for compelling the gods to certain actions. In this way, after the lapse of some millenia the idea is established that the Shaman or the Brahman is the master of the gods. The priestly caste becomes more aristocratic than the aristocracy. The old president of the gods is displaced to give way to the priestly god, Brahma. A Western example is, of course, Wotan, who displaced the Northern Jupiter, Tyr, the god of Tuesday (Branston, 1953).

Many of the older gods had or acquired solar attributes, and it is characteristic of the sun that it is suspended in the air. Hocart (1927) argues:

> The power of remaining suspended in the air was thus one of the signs of godhead. Since men can become gods we are not surprised to find Indian saints possessed of this power in a high degree. In fact it became so characteristic a miracle of saints that in Sinhalese the word *iddhi* which originally meant supernatural power in general has become restricted to levitation, and from the word *arahat* (a saint) they have formed a verb which means "to pass instantaneously from one place to another. . . ." Certainly the analogy between the suspension of the sun in the firmament and of a man in mid-air did occur to some minds in the Indian world; for the Tibetans believed that if a man pushed over . . . a cliff invoked the power of Avalokitesvara he would "remain suspended in the air like the sun."

On the whole I find Hocart's reasoning (supported by that of

Bussell) an adequate explanation of the belief in levitation. It makes this belief a piece of folklore resulting from transformed mythology. Satisfying as this conclusion may be, with all the probabilities in its favor, we cannot in strict logic discard the possibility that the belief may have been fed and sustained by occasional genuine levitations of austere mystics. It is not in question that it may have been strengthened by supposed levitations that may have resulted from honest illusion. Leroy (1928) illustrates this point by reference to a Catholic contemplative, St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi. According to Capari, when she was rapt she would answer very loudly to those who talked to her. She was heard to whisper to herself, "They cannot hear me down there, they are too far off." Similarly, the belief may have been nourished by leaping or shaking by the nervously or emotionally affected. To take another Western example (Thurston, 1951), the confessor of the Venerable Anthony Margil said that after the consecration of a Mass, Father Margil flushed deeply and trembled so violently that he seemed to be struggling to prevent himself from rising in the air. There are in fact so many ways in which an erroneous belief in levitation could have arisen that we would hardly consider the retention of actual levitations even as an abstract logical possibility were it not for the fact that there is equally a tradition attached to Western mystics.

We may pass over the performances of such wonder-workers as Simon Magus or Appollonius of Tyana as being inaccessible to critical analysis, and also neglect elements of folklore such as the transvection of witches (a subject that has been much discussed; cf. Murray, 1957, or Robbins, 1959). What remains may be classified under three headings: (a) levitations ascribed to Catholic mystics; (b) stories involving witchcraft or possession and the like; (c) feats claimed by mediums such as D. D. Home or Stainton Moses. This final class is, in principle, very interesting in view of the resemblances between poltergeist activities and the physical phenomena of mediumship. However, it will not be discussed here as it falls somewhat outside our present terms of reference and some considerable research might be necessary before attempting a verdict as to the genuineness of these mediumistic achievements.

Again, I do not feel confident to register a final verdict on the levitations reported of many Catholic ascetics. However, it seems worthy of remark that the evidence is by no means as insubstantial as one might suppose. Since the time of Luther a cold eye has been cast on Catholic miracles by Protestants, freethinkers, and by educated

Catholics. This attitude is probably completely justified in respect to the veneration of saintly relics, and to the largely mythical accounts of the lives of most of the earlier saints. If levitation were ascribed to all saints, then we might confidently reject it as invariably fictive. However, this is not the case. According to Leroy (1928), levitation is very rare, having been reported of only sixty out of 14,000 saints. Again, not all these cases belong to the mythical period. Hence there would seem to be at least a prima facie case for treating levitation stories individually on their merits. Study of this kind was initiated by Andrew Lang (1896) with special reference to Joseph of Copertino, and then lay fallow till 1919, when Father Thurston published an article in which he critically examined a number of cases, and which is substantially to be found in his book *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism* (1951). In 1928 Leroy, under the title of *Levitation*, published another scholarly study in which he enunciated well conceived critical tests for application to levitation stories. The locality, date, and time of day should be available, the witnesses named, the details abundant and vivid, the story independent of the levitator's subjective experiences, and the depositions close in point of time to the events they claim to report.

These tests are in fact the ones employed by Father Thurston, and would thoroughly recommend themselves to Frank Podmore. It is with some genuine surprise, therefore, that I record the fact that several of the levitation cases (outstandingly that of Joseph of Copertino, but others also) come through the tests rather well. There is in addition other valid reasoning that tends to support the genuineness of these happenings. The levitating mystics seem in their lifetimes to have found their feats more of an embarrassment than a source of satisfaction. Like Joseph of Copertino they often met with hostile suspicion from the Church and their colleagues. Without hazarding a final judgment, I feel, therefore, that something more than a *prima facie* case has been made out for the reality of some saintly levitations (cf. Dingwall, 1947).

It may be questioned whether this finding, even if true, would have any relevance to the metaphysics of poltergeists or of physical mediumship. For instance, it might be maintained that these occurrences take place entirely in the sphere of religion and are of the status of divine miracles. Therefore it could be argued that it is useless to discuss them in parallel with secular happenings, however remarkable, as there is no basis for comparison. Another point of view is the traditional one of Catholic theology. "Miracles" of this

kind are effected by God, but occult phenomena are the work of Satan. They parody the works of God but as a rule are less striking because of the limitations on the power of their author. Leroy inclines rather to accept this orthodox viewpoint when at the end of his survey he attempts interpretation. But Father Thurston, whose sincerity as a Catholic cannot be disputed, was not convinced of the correctness of the dichotomy between religious and secular miracles. He says (1951): "Without venturing to reject this explanation outright, I find certain difficulties, too complex to summarize here, which suggest that it would be wise to suspend our judgment." He goes on to mention secular phenomena such as the levitation of objects and spiritistic or materialistic theories put forward to explain them, and concludes: "... but it seems to me that in the present state of our knowledge we cannot even decide whether the effects do or do not transcend the possible range of what may be called the psycho-physical forces of nature."

Father Thurston is similarly inclined to suspend judgment on the other types of physical phenomena in mystics such as stigmatization, immunity to fire, etc. In his opinion the time has not yet come when it is possible to distinguish between the supernatural as found in or out of a religious context, or to distinguish the supernatural from the natural. He would presumably approve the noncommital use of the term "paranormal" to cover all "miracles" regardless of context. I myself am inclined to attach considerable weight to the judgments of a man both as devout and as critical as Father Thurston, and so exceptionally well informed about both poltergeist and saintly phenomena. I suggest, therefore, that the latter needs to be kept in mind as possibly relevant to discussions of physical phenomena in the secular field.

♄ LEVITATIONS IN ALLEGED WITCHCRAFT, POSSESSION, OR POLTERGEIST CASES

Among good poltergeist cases there are practically no instances of clear-cut levitation, with the exception of Indridi Indridason, whose tendency to rise seems to have been merely one aspect of a general pulling about. There are some cases in which objects have levitated and apparently carried people up with them. In the case of Emma Davies at Wem, the village schoolmistress, Miss Maddox, gave a signed statement on November 17, 1883, relating to her visit to the scene of operations of November 3: "There were about

20 people standing and sitting about the room when Miss Maddox entered. The first thing Miss Maddox saw was the chair on which the girl sat wriggling about, and once rising a foot from the ground, the girl having no point of contact with the ground at the time. She was writhing about and in a state of nervous excitement." Mr. F. S. Hughes, to whom this statement was given, tended to discount it, as did Frank Podmore (1896). We need not consider their criticisms here, because in any case it was Miss Maddox's impression that it was primarily the chair that levitated rather than Emma herself. In the Mary Carrick case (Barrett, 1911) the narrator, Mr. H. A. Willis (1868), said that he, assisted by other persons, tried unsuccessfully to hold down a table that was being lifted up while a child was sitting on it. Cases of direct lifting of the human body are, however, conspicuous by their absence from modern poltergeist annals. It is only by searching among older narratives that anything of this kind is found, and it must be admitted that the evidence as a whole is rather less than convincing. One or two cases, however, raise interesting questions, so that a brief review may not be entirely valueless.

Alleged flights through the air to and from witches' conventions may be set on one side as fictive, though it is with some regret that we part from Old Stranguidge, who had been carried upon a black hog to a diabolical supper in the house of one Lendall of Cambridge. On the way he tore his breeches on the weathercock of Shelford steeple. We owe this information to a young woman committed to Cambridge Castle and examined by Dr. Ralph Cudworth and Dr. Henry More (1653; Ewen, 1933).

Turning, therefore, to cases of possession and "bewitchment," in some instances we can reliably assume that there were not actual suspensions, but merely exceptional agility and saltation of the "possessed" persons. Thus Weyer in *De Praestigiis Daemonum* tells of the bewitched nuns of Hoorn in Brabant who climbed trees like cats, were invisibly pinched and beaten, and levitated several feet in the air (Robbins, 1959). We may accept the tree-climbing, but suppose the reports of levitations to have been greatly exaggerated, like those of Mark Twain's death. The tree-climbing is paralleled by a more modern case, that of a "hystero-demonopathic epidemic" at Morzines in Haute Savoie that started in 1857 by two girls being taken with strange fits (Leroy, 1928). Eventually twenty-seven persons were infected with the malady, and in 1860 the affair was investigated by the General Inspector of Lunacy. In 1858 the village

had been visited by the celebrated "magnetist" Lafontaine. He observed that the young girls climbed up trees with amazing swiftness and could leap from tree to tree at heights of more than a hundred feet. However, if the fit subsided when they were aloft they were often at a loss how to climb down.

Likewise, with only an occasional reservation, we can dismiss as fabrications or exaggerated misreporting the statements made about most bewitched children. The Goodwin children of Boston, Massachusetts, for example, could fly like geese, being carried with an incredible swiftness through the air, having only their toes now and then upon the ground (Burr, 1959). All writers, however, subsequent to Cotton Mather (1689), have regarded the Goodwins as complete frauds and imitators of the Warboys children. The same was doubtless true of the four children of Mr. Meredith of Bristol, who were said by "a lady of the neighborhood" to "hang about the walls, and ceiling of the room, like flies, or spiders" (Bovet, 1684). At the trial of Elizabeth Horner at Exeter Assizes in 1696 for bewitching Sarah and Mary Bovett, their mother deposes that Sarah walked up a wall nine meet high, four or five times backwards and forwards, her face and fore part of her body parallel to the ceiling, saying at the time that Bett Horner carried her up (Brand, 1877; Ewen, 1933). These particulars are taken from a letter of Archdeacon Blackborne, who attended the trial, and from whom we learn also that the judge was very incredulous, and disinclined to believe that the child walked up the wall. We need not be surprised at the judge's skepticism. He was no other than Sir John Holt, Lord Chief Justice, an ardent supporter of civil and religious liberty, and perhaps more than any other man responsible for the decline of witch persecution in England.

Bett Horner was more fortunate in her judge and jury than Jane Brooks back in 1658 at Shepton Mallett, Somerset. Her "victim," Richard Jones, "a sprightly youth about 12 years old," suffered from pain and paralytic fits. On February 25, being at the house of one Richard Isles, he went out into the garden between two and three in the afternoon. Mrs. Isles followed him, and was "within two yards when she saw him rise up from the ground before her, and so mounted higher and higher till he passed in the air over the garden wall, and was carried so above ground more than 30 yards, falling at last at one Jordan's door, where he was found dead for a time. But coming to himself told Jordan, that Jane Brooks had taken him up . . . and carried him. . . . The boy at several other times was gone

on the sudden, and upon search after him found in another room as dead, and at sometimes strangely hanging above the ground, his hands being flat against a great Beam in the top of the room, and all his body two or three foot from the ground. There he hath hung a quarter of an hour together, and being afterwards come to himself, he told those that found him that Jane Brooks had carried him to that place and held him there. Nine people at a time saw the boy so strangely hanging by the Beam" (Glanvil, 1681). This would be a very striking case were it not known that outright perjury by juveniles was not a rare feature of witch trials. In regard to Mrs. Isles, we might suppose she had merely seen sprightly young Richard leap over her garden wall, and by a willing suspension of unbelief found his version of the flight acceptable. Again, the Isles may have been moved by malice against Jane Brooks and have been active in encouraging and abetting young Richard. The allegation that he was suspended from the beam with his hands flat against it may well have been a piece of significant refinement introduced at some stage.

Two Scottish imposters were also levitators. According to Robert Chambers (1861), in 1720 the third son of Lord Torpichen, encouraged by a knavish tutor, represented himself as possessed and bewitched, laying the blame on certain old ladies in Calder, a village neighboring his father's mansion. He is said to have flown over his bed, but it appears that even at the time he was regarded as an impostor, as the crown counsel refused to prosecute the witches, and his relatives decided to send him to sea. He is said to have tried his fits while on board, but naval discipline proved to be more than a match for his cunning. Eventually he became a good sailor, showed gallantry against the pirates of Angria, and finally was drowned in a storm (Scott, 1884).

Christian Shaw of Bargarran was much more successful than young Torpichen, perhaps because her exploits took place a generation earlier, when the witch fever, though dying in England, was still intense in Scotland, having perhaps been exacerbated by knowledge of the Salem trials in New England, and by the effect of Baxter's book of 1691. In August, 1696, she suffered pains and saw spectral tormenters in the same way as the Salem girls, and vomited the usual pins, bones, feathers, and cinders. She was also said to fly over her bed, to have floated through a room in the presence of several ministers. On one occasion a minister trying to bring her from the cellar felt as though someone were pulling her back out of his arms. It is

possible, of course, that though an impostor she may nonetheless have been the center of some genuine paranormal activity. However, there is no evidence to support this. According to Stevenson, writing in his edition of George Sinclair's *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (ed. 1871), particulars of the affair were collected by John MacGilchrist, the town clerk of Glasgow, and written up in a pamphlet by Francis Grant, advocate (afterwards a Lord of Session, with the title of Lord Cullen), published in 1698. Sir John Dalyell gives a concise verdict on the whole matter. He says that no detail of the facts is preserved, Grant's booklet being merely a compilation of hearsay evidence. On the other hand, there is no doubt that Christian was at best a hysterical liar and at worst a plain liar. Exactly as did the Salem girls, she claimed to be tormented by the specters of local persons. As the result of her evidence, no less than twenty-four persons were investigated and at least five of these condemned, strangled, and burned at Paisley (Arnot, 1785). As regards Christian's vomitings, an interesting suggestion was made by Mitchell and Dickie (1839), who visited the Shaw house and discovered a tiny hole in the wall of Christian's room, normally hidden by the bed. Supposing her to have had an accomplice, pins, stones, etc., could easily have been transmitted through the hole to the bed where she lay. The prosecution at the trial drew attention to the fact that the articles came from her mouth "so dry, that they appeared not to have come out of her stomach" (Grant, 1698). We may note that in 1702 at the trial of Richard Hathaway for imposture it was the dryness of the pins supposed to come from his mouth that led to his pockets being searched and found well stuffed with pins (Hole, 1945).

Margaret Rule was a seventeen-year-old who was carried out shrieking from Cotton Mather's church in Boston on September 10, 1693. She had spastic fits and produced pins, and acquired blue marks from invisible pinching. She levitated, it was said, from bed to ceiling and mention was made of some poltergeist phenomena such as the teleportation of Mather's book of sermons into the street, and the movement of a small object, of nature unspecified, on her bed. However, the details are so vague that we must perforce bracket her with the Bargarran lassie. Robert Calef, a Boston merchant and skeptic, wrote a satirical tract, *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (1700), in which he drew attention to Margaret's lack of aversion to crowds of as many as forty spectators, who came to her bedroom to watch Mather's exorcisms, and to her preference for the company of men.

Among Glanvil's "Modern Relations" (1681) is an account of the trial at Cork Assizes in 1661 of Florence Newton for bewitching Mary Longdon, a servant girl in the house of John Pyne, a tradesman of Youghal. It was drawn up from notes supplied to Glanvil by the presiding judge, Sir William Ashton. In its procedure the trial was like a normal trial for felony. Witnesses were presented and sworn, there was no torture of the defendant and no confession. Mary Longdon testified that having spoken sharply to Florence Newton, and then some days later, having been offered a reconciliation with the latter, she started to see the apparition of an old man and the specter of "Goody Newton." Next she had fits and trances in which she was hard to hold down, and in which she vomited the usual commodities. In this period very many small stones would follow her about, hitting her on the head, shoulders and arms, and then fall to the ground, vanishing. "She and several others would see them both fall upon her, and on the ground, but could never take them, save only some few, which she and her Master caught in their hands. Amongst which one that had a hole in it she tied (as she was advised) with a leather thong to her purse, but it was vanished immediately. . . . That sometimes she should be removed out of her bed into another room, sometimes she should be carried to the top of the house and laid on a board betwixt two Sollar Beams, sometimes put into a Chest, sometimes under a parcel of wool, sometimes between two feather-beds, and sometimes between the Bed and the Mat in her Master's chamber in the daytime."

This testimony would not by itself impress us to any degree, as it is all commonplace stuff except for the small stones, which are curiously reminiscent of other stone-throwings. However, her master, John Pyne, and his brother Nicholas Pyne, testified to the same effect as did Mary. John, being sworn, said he had seen the stones come as if they were thrown at her, others as if they had dropped on her, and that he had seen very great quantities of them, and that they would, after they had hit her, fall on the ground, and then vanish, so that none of them could be found. "And further, that the Maid once caught one of them, and he himself another, and one of them with a hole in it, she tied to her purse, but it vanished in a little time, but the knot of the leather that tied it remained unaltered. . . . That sometimes the Maid would be reading in a Bible, and on a sudden he hath seen the Bible struck out of her hand into the middle of the room, and she immediately cast into a violent fit. That in the fits he hath seen two Bibles laid on her breast, and in the twinkling of an eye they would be cast between the two beds the Maid lay upon, sometime thrown into the middle of the room, and that Nicholas Pyne held the Bible in the Maid's hands so fast, that it being snatched away two of the leaves were torn." He confirmed that in many fits the girl was snatched away into various odd places, including the small deal board that lay between two sollar beams, [horizontal crossbeams at ceiling level and beneath the sollar, i.e. the loft]. However, his account as presented, like Mary's, does not necessarily imply that she was actually seen en route to the loft or elsewhere. Thus we have no real evidence of levitation or teleportation. Nicholas Pyne's evidence is reported only briefly. "And as to the stone falling . . . the Maid's fits, her removal into the chest . . . , on the top of the deal board, . . . concerning the Bibles and their remove, his holding one of them in the Maid's hands till two leaves were torn . . . he agreeth perfectly throughout with John Pyne as before."

It still remains to ask whether, the levitation apart, any of the phenomena were genuine. Seymour (1913) says that John Pyne served as bailiff of Youghal in 1664. He would appear therefore to be (at least) moderately respectable. If his evidence is acceptable, then the case would appear to be a mixture of fraud (the pins, etc.) and classic poltergeist activity. We would have no difficulty in accepting the throwing about of the Bibles. However, there *are* the stones. The story of the vanishing stones is not entirely out of line with other stone-throwing stories (considered later), where we have apparent appearance *ex nihilo* and sometimes subsequent vanishing. We cannot summarily reject it. However, there are other hypotheses that would account for the evidence. It is possible that Mary invented the stone story and supported it with a few pieces of sleight-of-hand. John Pyne may then have been exaggerating what he himself saw. Having seen one such stone, he may have given a general and unwarranted endorsement to Mary's stories. Again, since in psychic research we often have occasion to be thoroughly uncharitable, we necessarily must take note of a simple possibility. Young Mary may have had some kind of hold on John Pyne. Such might be the case if John, and for that matter Nicholas too, had misconducted themselves with her. Admittedly they might have been Puritans, as implied by Hayman in his *Guide to Youghal* (Seymour, 1913). However, it is not impossible that Puritans should occasionally yield to those temptations of whose presence they were so intensely aware. Again, a threat by Mary to make a false accusation

of immorality might have been effective even if the poor gentlemen were innocent. It remains, however, puzzling, on these hypotheses, as to where Mary got the idea for her tales of the stones, and it may be that we are misjudging John and Nicholas.

❧ THE LEVITATING BUTLER

Among the observers at Florence Newton's trial was Mr. Greatrix, i.e., Valentine Greatrakes. This was the same Mr. Greatrix to whom principally we owe the story of the butler who levitated at the Earl of Orrery's house near Cork. Greatrakes was in the Parliamentary Army until 1656, when he became a country magistrate. At the Restoration he lost office and took up a life of contemplation. In 1662 he was seized by the notion that he could cure the king's evil by the touch of his hands. He kept the matter quiet for some time, but at last was persuaded by his wife to try his power on a boy in the neighborhood. With prayer and laying on of hands the boy was healed in a month. Gradually Greatrakes' fame spread, until patients came to him from various parts of England and Ireland, and he became known as the "celebrated stroker." Some contemporaries had a poor opinion of him. After his death Increase Mather referred to him as "the late miracle-monger or Mirabilian stroaker in Ireland" and accused him of trying to cure the ague by the use of that "hobgoblin word, Abracadabra." But this does not agree at all with Seymour's account of him. He always used the set form of words: "God Almighty heal thee for His Mercy's sake." He refused praise and asked for it to be rendered to God. Usually he took no fees and refused cases manifestly incurable. We can, I think, have confidence in him as a serious man of high character, rather than a fraud who would tell a good story to earn his board and lodging.

In 1665 he received an invitation to Ragley in Warwickshire to cure Lady Conway of her migraine. He stayed there about three weeks and told the story of the butler at Orrery. Among his audience were Dr. Henry More, Mrs. Foxcroft, and Lady Roydon. The latter (according to Glanvil, 1681) enquired afterwards from the Earl of Orrery, who confirmed the whole tale except for "inessential passages." The actual text of the story as printed in *Saducismus Triumphatus* (Glanvil, 1681) appears to have been supplied to Dr. More by our Mr. Broom of Woodbridge, who also told it to Glanvil, but it is implied by Glanvil that it agrees with More's recollection of the tale as rendered by Greatrakes. The Earl of Orrery concerned

would appear to be Roger Boyle, Lord Broghill (brother of the celebrated Robert Boyle), who was made a parliamentary general by Cromwell and confirmed in his earldom at the restoration. Now for the tale of the butler.

It appears that the butler of one of the earl's neighbors suffered from fits, in which he fell down unconscious. One day he was sent over to the earl's to borrow a pack of cards. On his return to his master's house he fell down senseless. When recovered he said that he had come on a company dining at a table set up in the field. He was invited to dine and dance with them but one of the company, speaking in a whisper, advised him to have nothing to do with them. When he refused to join them, they vanished, table and all.

> The night following, there comes one of this company (who later proved to be the ghost of a dead man) to his bedside, and tells him, that if he offered to stir out of doors the next day, he would be carried away. Hereupon he kept within, but towards the Evening . . . he adventured one foot over the threshold, several standing by. Which he had no sooner done, but they espied a Rope cast about his middle, and the poor man was hurried away with great swiftness, they following after him as fast as they could, but could not overtake him. At length they espied a horseman coming towards them, and made signs to him to stop the man, whom he saw coming near him, and both ends of the Rope but no body drawing. When they met, he laid hold on one end of the Rope and immediately had a smart blow given him over his arm with the other end. But by this means the Man was stopped, and the horseman brought back with him.
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> The Earl of Orrery, hearing of these strange passages, sent to the master to desire him to send this man to his house which he accordingly did. And the morning following, or quickly after, he told the Earl that his Spectre had been with him again, and assured him that that day he should most certainly be carried away. . . . Upon this he was kept in a large room with a considerable number of persons to guard him, among whom was the famous stroker Mr. Greatrix, who was a neighbour. . . .
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> Till part of the afternoon was spent all was quiet, but at length he was perceived to rise from the ground, whereupon Mr. Greatrix and another lusty man clapt their arms over his shoulders, one of them before him, and the other behind, and

> weighed him down with all their strength. But he was forcibly taken up from them, and they were too weak to keep their hold, and for a considerable time he was carried in the Air to and fro over their heads, several of the company still running under him to prevent his receiving hurt if he should fall. At length he fell and was caught before he came to ground and by that means had no hurt.

This was the last physical phenomenon involving the butler. He said later that he was visited by the specter, who offered him a medicine to cure him of the "two sorts of sad fits" with which he was troubled. Presumably one sort was his chronic affliction and the other his levitating attacks. The specter declared himself the ghost of an ungodly man. He advised the butler to be more active in prayer, but promised that he should not be carried away again.

It is moderately easy to explain in normal terms the case as reported, though not entirely easy. The company dining in the field, and including a dead man friendly to the human, belong to the ordinary stuff of folklore, and are completely typical of it. We may suppose the butler's first encounter with the fairies to have been a dream coincident with the coming on of his epileptiform seizure. The episode with the rope does not come directly from Greatrakes. The description he gave was naturally hearsay, and based on that given by the footmen, gardeners, and grooms, who presumably formed the butler's entourage that evening. We may doubt that occult powers would need the assistance of a rope. The whole account therefore suggests a practical joke in which a rope was smartly slipped round the butler's middle and hauled at by fellows concealed behind shrubs, and reported to Greatrakes with some exaggeration by humorous Irish stable lads.

The description of what happened on the next afternoon when Greatrakes was present is not so easy to set aside, supposing it is as Greatrakes told it. If, however, it is the version resulting from a commonplace description after being, perhaps, unwittingly improved in its circuitous transmission to Glanvil's pages, it is understandable. The original version would presumably have the butler at the onset of a fit leaping into the air, rather than rising as interpreted by Greatrakes. If in his seizure he developed great muscular effort, as is common, Greatrakes and the other "lusty man" might have great difficulty in controlling his movements. Their other assistants may have entered into the spirit of the thing and done some tossing and lifting of the poor man while affecting to be struggling to keep him down. This is clearly the most plausible interpretation. It does not impugn the honesty of Greatrakes, but merely his credulity and ability to be misled. As unfortunately we have no manuscript from him directly we must admit the possibility of his original tale having been improved. Without this admission the case is difficult, as the words are rather definite: "for a considerable time he was carried in the Air to and fro over their heads. . . . At length he fell and was caught before he came to the ground. . . ."

THE DEMON OF SPREYTON

Francis Fry at the age of twenty-one was a servant of Mr. Philip Furze at Spreyton, in Devon, and in 1682 was persecuted by the demon. Like old Stranguidge he made an aerial flight, and left his periwig hanging on top of a tree as if to prove it. Needless to say, we have no record left by eyewitnesses. The poor young man suffered from fits, and it was after one of these that he described himself as having been "picked up by the skirt of his doublet and carried a height into the air." In addition to this experience Fry had many visions of persons who claimed to be deceased relatives of his employer. Together with Anne Longdon, another servant of the household, Fry appears to have been the center of some poltergeist activity, genuine or faked. Though the case makes entertaining reading it is not in any way a good one, the only evidence being hearsay. Our prime informant is the then Rector of Barnstable, who had been a contemporary at Queen's College, Cambridge, of the Rev. Andrew Pascal, Rector of Chedzoy, in Somerset. On May 3, 1683, the Rector of Barnstable sent a letter to Mr. Pascal describing the events of the previous winter in the Furze household. Mr. Pascal forwarded it to John Aubrey, who published it in his *Miscellanies* (1696) under the heading "Transportation by an Invisible Powere." The Rector of Barnstable makes it clear in his letter that he was not able to investigate the facts very closely. He says: "Indeed Sir you may wonder that I have not visited that house, and the poor afflicted people, especially since I was so near, and passed by the very door; but besides that, they have called to their assistance none but Non-conforming Ministers. I was not qualified to be welcome there, having given Mr. Furze a great deal of trouble the last year about a Conventicle in his house, where one of this parish was the preacher. But I am very well assured of the truth of what I have written. . . ." Bovet in his *Pandaemonium* (1684) gives an account which is word for word the same as that of the Rector of Barnstable, except for the

misspelling of Fry as Fey, and for a number of interpolations that tend to make the tale more marvelous. Bovet lists as his informants the Rector of Barnstable, a T. C., Esq., who lived near Spreyton, and is otherwise unspecified. Andrew Pascal is almost certainly the Pascal of the Soper Lane narrative.

☿ THE CASE OF FRANÇOISE FONTAINE

None of the foregoing cases has been very impressive as evidence for levitation inspired by poltergeists or otherwise. However, there is one remaining case that deserves mention although it is very old. Leroy (1928) quotes from an official report of proceedings for exorcism of a possessed girl, Françoise Fontaine, at Louviers. The document is: "Original d'un procès-verbal, fait pour délivrer une fille possédée par le malin esprit à Louviers où il y a de grandes preuves d'une véritable possession de démon" (MS No. 24122, Fonds français).

The clerical witnesses told of repeated flights through the air. In the presence of Provost Morel, his clerk, and other persons, Françoise was "lifted into the air upright about two feet and then, having fallen back flat to the ground was dragged thus through the room." Later, as the provost read out the Gospel of St. John, the girl, who was stretched on the ground, was raised three or four feet and carried horizontally towards the provost. The povost and his staff retired to the door leading out of the courtroom in which they were and into an office. The girl, floating on her back, followed them to this door, which they went through and shut and locked against her. There were still people in the courtroom who said that the girl's body, still floating horizontally, came back through the court into the passageway. These observers fled from both court and passageway and locked the street door against her. Sometime later, when presumably nerves were calmer, the office door and street door were both opened and Françoise was found lying in the passageway.

Subsequently on various occasions, such as when they were trying to administer communion to her or trying to shave her head, she would be snatched up in the air and carried through it. The efforts of several men were needed to catch her and bring her down. It was noted that the agency at work was inconsistent in its concern for her modesty. Sometimes her skirts were displaced, and sometimes they were miraculously kept in position.

Though this document was written in the age of credulity and superstition, it goes far beyond comparable accounts in its circumstantiality and definiteness. Again, the description of the rather comic events in the courtroom has a certain ring of truth. We may doubt whether officials would wish to see themselves on record in an official document as having behaved in a rather ludicrous and cowardly way unless the account was true. If Indridi Indridason could be dragged over the floor and held down with difficulty in 1907, the same might have been true of Françoise Fontaine 300 years before. Again, it is logically satisfying to suppose, as on the evidence we may, that this kind of "persecution" is, when it rarely happens, not a dignified elevation but part of a wild tugging and dragging about.

☿ MODERN CASES

Modern cases of levitation are conspicuous by their rarity. This is quite consistent with the poor showing the older alleged cases have made. This finding perhaps justifies the time spent on these antique episodes, which admittedly have produced little positive result.

The *Cambrian Daily Leader* of July 7, 1887, reported a happening alleged to have occurred in the household of the Rev. David Phillips at Swansea. It would be pleasing to find another poltergeist in Wales, as they appear to have shunned the Principality since the twelfth-century outbreaks in Pembrokeshire, recorded by Giraldus Cambrensis. However, the report is not very encouraging. It appeared that a woman of Mr. Phillips' household had been transported over a wall and towards a brook, where she arrived in a "semi-conscious" condition. It was her belief that an apparition had carried her. Mr. Phillips and his son asserted that this transportation had occurred (Fort, 1941). We may permit ourselves to doubt that even if we could dig out more details, anything paranormal would come to light.

We may likewise pass over the Blerotti case (Fort, 1941). According to the London *Daily Mail*, May 1, 1907, Madame Blerotti, her brother, her son, and the concierge of the building where they had an apartment, all testified that when they entered the apartment they had an urge to walk on their hands. Even if this report is not a hoax the case would seem to be one *sui generis*, and no connection with poltergeists is at all apparent.

However, the modern record is not entirely blank. Thurston (1953) quotes a letter from a medical man, Mr. J. D. Jenkins, which appeared on March 3, 1934 in the *Spectator*. Dr. Jenkins had been invited by Dr. and Mrs. Ketkar to give an opinion on the Poona

poltergeist, a set of disturbances focusing, as we have seen, on their adopted child, Damodar. The substance of the letter is:

> I carefully investigated a remarkable case here in Poona a few years ago. My friend Dr. S. V. Ketkar and his German wife, both persons of culture . . . suffered terribly for many years. . . . Briefly I may say that when I first visited the house . . . the testimony of various witnesses convinced me that it was impossible to attribute all the amazing disturbances to their son, a lad of eight, around whom these activities seemed to gather. I placed the lad (stark naked) on a small bed, felt his pulse, and told him to "lie down quietly." I then closed the door and windows and sat down on a chair in a corner of the room. I looked at my watch; it was exactly 1:30 p.m. I put a sheet over him. In about fifteen minutes I saw the bedclothes pulled off the bed on which the lad was lying, the bed was pulled into the middle of the room, and the lad actually lifted off the bed and deposited gently on the floor. The lad could feel the arm of an unseen person at work. A bottle of ink that was on the table by the window was flung towards me, and so was a glass paper-weight which narrowly missed my head. . . . I was astounded, and told the parents that I found that mal-observation, illusion, etc. could not (as I had previously suggested) account for all this.

We may feel anxious at the fact that Dr. Jenkin's letter described happenings of "a few years ago." However, he says later that he kept a day-to-day diary of events from June, 1928, to June, 1930. Damodar's levitation occurred in the presence only of Dr. Jenkins. However, there was another educated witness, Mrs. Ketkar's sister, Miss H. Kohn, who was residing with the family, and who corresponded with Father Thurston. He regarded her as a sound witness, and in his analysis of the case (1953) he concludes the poltergeist phenomena to have been genuine and in the main inexplicable as tricks by the boy. As Dr. Jenkins receives general corroboration from Miss Kohn, I see no reason why his account of Damodar being lifted out of bed should not be accepted. It was admittedly hardly a levitation, but seems certainly to have been a much gentler version of what happened to Randall or to Indridason.

❧ CONCLUSIONS

Outside the fields of religious mysticism and professional mediumship there is very little evidence for levitation in association with poltergeist activity or otherwise.

Such cases as suggest the lifting of the human body tend to assimilate the phenomenon more to the tractions of Randall and Indridason than to the levitations ascribed to mystics.

Traction of humans (horizontally or vertically) occurs in poltergeist cases, but only extremely rarely.

❧ CASES CITED

	Date	*Reference*
Nuns at Hoorn, Brabant	*ca.* 1560	Robbins
Françoise Fontaine, Louviers	1950	Leroy
Old Stranguidge, Cambridge	*ca.* 1650	More, Ewen
Richard Jones, Shepton Mallet	1658	Glanvil
Mary Longdon, Youghal	1661	Glanvil, Seymour
Butler at Orrery	*ca.* 1662	Glanvil
Meredith children, Bristol	1675	Bovet
Francis Fry, Spreyton	1682	Aubrey, Bovet
Goodwin children	1688	Burr, Robbins
Margaret Rule, Boston	1693	Mather, Calef
Bovett children, Exeter	1696	Brand, Ewen
Christian Shaw, Bargarran	1696	Grant, Arnot, etc.
Torpichen, Calder	1720	Chambers, Scott
Girls of Morzines	1857	Leroy
Mary Carrick, Boston	1867	Barrett, Willis
Emma Davies, Wem	1883	Podmore
Phillips, Swansea	1887	Fort
Blerotti, Paris	1907	Fort
Damodar Ketkar, Poona	1928	Thurston

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10

Communication

THE DIRECT VOICE

If poltergeists can produce noises by causing solids to vibrate, is there any reason why in principle they should not be able to produce a modulated sound? The only a priori objection would seem to reside in the complexity of the vibrations required. "Shrieks," wails, or ululations might presumably be possible without requiring a directing intelligence. Speech, however, would seem to predicate the operation of an intelligence of some order, high or low according to the amount of meaning in the words said. Cases in which the poltergeist talks, if evidential, would not merely be remarkable in themselves but also very informative as to the "personality" and intelligence of the agency at work. Thus they could provide a pointer towards a correct interpretation of the poltergeist. In particular, such cases might allow us to discriminate between two thories of the poltergeist: (a) an independent entity as implied by the mediumistic hypothesis; (b) a manifestation of a secondary personality or unconscious self of the poltergeist forces.

Also, the direct voice of the poltergeist furnishes an interesting parallel to the "direct voice" of physical mediumship. No well authenticated case of the latter appears to be on record, and it is well known that in most instances the spirit voice has to be ascribed to fraud. For instance, in the 1870's, as shown by court proceedings (Hall, 1962) some London mediums spoke through a cardboard tube, the

descendant of Elizabeth Croft's "whistle." However, it would be wrong to postulate that the mediumistic direct voice is impossible, and for this reason alone analogous poltergeist cases, if they can be authenticated, would be interesting.

ANECDOTAL CASES

There are some anecdotes of medieval and Reformation times that unfortunately are not very helpful, because of an insufficiency of detail that prevents us from ruling out the possibility of fraud. However, they are worth mentioning in brief, for a reason that will appear in the sequel.

According to the *Annales Fuldenses* some dwellers at Kembden, near Bingen on the Rhine, were persecuted in 858 by thundering noises and showers of stones, as well as mere rappings. In addition, a human voice was heard that mocked the people present, and claimed to reveal their secret misdeeds. One principal offender was thus accused of an intrigue, and his possessions were eventually destroyed in a mysterious conflagration that terminated the affair. All exorcisms proved ineffectual in banishing the supposed demon (Thurston, 1953; Pertz, 1826).

Giraldus Cambrensis in his *Journey through Wales* (ed. 1908) mentions a doublet of cases (which according to the *Annals of Margan* happened about 1184). He says that in William Not's house, invisible spirits threw lumps of dirt with the apparent intention of deriding rather than doing injury, and tore up garments. Similar things happened in Stephen Wiriet's house, but here "the spirit used to talk to men, and when people bandied words with it, as many did in mockery, it taxed them with all the things they had ever done in their lives which they were least willing should be known or spoken about." Giraldus was interested in the fact that no holy rites had any effect on the demons. He concluded that sacraments are meant to protect against real harm and not against mere mischief. Pembrokeshire at this time had not long been conquered and settled by Flemings under Norman leadership, and may well have been a forcing-bed for all manner of racial and religious animosities. So that, even excluding private motives, native Welsh might have had incentives for mocking the foreigners. We need not be impressed by the preternatural knowledge displayed by the spirit. A medieval household was probably even worse for keeping secrets than a modern country village. Thus, there is no reason for accepting the paranor-

mality of this case. However, for what it is worth, it is strikingly parallel to the Bingen poltergeist.

Remy, writing in 1595, and quoting an "Epistle" of Erasmus, mentions the Swiss town of Schiltach, which was entirely burned down in 1533. The fire was blamed on a poltergeist. The inhabitants told the Mayor of Fribourg (eight miles away) that an innkeeper heard a whistling in his hostelry and searched in the upstairs rooms. The whistle was repeated from a higher room. The innkeeper ascended but still found no one. Next the whistle was heard downstairs, coming out of the top of the chimney nook. The host now thought it might be a demon and called two priests, who performed an exorcism. The invisible presence now spoke, declaring himself a demon. When asked his business, he said he wished to burn the town to ashes. "When they threatened him with holy things, he said he cared nothing for their threats, since one of them was a whore-monger and both of them were thieves. A little later he raised up into the air a young woman with whom he had been intimate for fourteen years (although all this time she had regularly confessed herself and received the Eucharist) and set her on the chimney-pot; gave her a jar and told her to turn it up. She did this; and within an hour the whole town was burned down." The story clearly reached Erasmus in a rather extravagant form. The township was probably entirely wooden and may have burned by accident. The alleged corruption of the young woman is a typical item of Continental witchcraft stories. The tale, however, could have had some substratum of fact. Possibly there was a poltergeist centered on a girl at the inn. If it was an emanation of her own personality, its accusation of her is perfectly credible as representing her own sexual fantasies. The levitation and the jar are probably embroidery of the narrative.

I have not troubled to include the Dagworth case of 1190 among this collection of anecdotes as it is replete with folklore elements and may be more profitably discussed elsewhere.

THE DEVIL OF MASCON

THE most interesting of talking poltergeists flourished in the year 1612. Despite the antiquity of the case I am inclined to agree with Father Herbert Thurston (1953) that its evidential value is far from negligible. The haunting took place in the parsonage at Macon in Burgundy occupied by a Calvinist minister, Francis Perreaud, who came of an old family of landed proprietors, his grandfather having

been converted personally to Calvinism by Calvin himself. It appears that his own account of the haunting was in existence as a manuscript prior to 1644, but the French edition was not published till 1653. The gap of thirty years between the events and the first mention of the manuscript is of course serious. However, Peter Du Moulin, the author of the English edition of 1658, says in his preface very definitely that the account was drawn up shortly after the events it narrates.

Du Moulin's translation was made at the special instance of no less a person than Robert Boyle—"father of chemistry and son of the Earl of Cork." He was the younger brother of Lord Broghill, that Earl of Orrery concerned in the case of the levitating butler, and is most famous for the discovery of Boyle's law in physics. From its founding he was the most venerated member of the Royal Society. In the words of the Royal Society tercentenary volume essay, his "stature both as a man and a scientist looms larger with the passage of time." "Few men have ever more fully combined the service of science and religion; few scientists have established more human and cosmopolitan contacts with their fellow men. Author of 43 books, friend and benefactor of all with whom he came in contact, transparently good, universally studious, he represents more adequately than any other the range and quality of the new age" (Raven, 1961). While wholly wedded to the cause of Protestantism, he was a sincere Christian. While we may assume that he was a man of genuinely scientific temper, deserving his prodigious reputation, it is fair to ask whether he combined enlightened skepticism about the workings of nature in general with a residual credulity about the supernatural. I think it is true to say in answer to this that his attitude to the superstitions of the time was entirely parallel to his scientific outlook in natural philosophy. He took a scientific interest in the supernatural. Lang (1896) tells us that he collected anecdotes about the second sight which are not given in his *Collected Works*. His letters show him to be a rather chary believer in witchcraft and possession. For this reason, his lack of dogmatism and his mild skepticism, he has been quoted on both sides in the old controversy as to whether the witchcraft beliefs of the seventeenth century were sustained more by Anglicans and Royalists than by Puritans and Parliamentarians (Davis, 1947). Indeed, Boyle occupies a rather central position in respect of supernatural beliefs, political loyalties, and religious attitude, being an Anglican with Puritan leanings.

He resided in the Calvinistic atmosphere of Geneva for nearly

Wales, in the Rhineland, and at Schiltach, the visitant delighted in malicious gossip, telling scandalous anecdotes about the lives of the townspeople. We cannot tell with certainty from the narrative whether any truly secret information was accurately revealed in this way.

SEVENTEENTH- AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CASES

FEW cases in the next two centuries were sufficiently well evidenced to be helpful. The Gerstmann case of 1713 is possibly an exception, but vocal manifestations were restricted to the very end of the case. Loud cries, the origin of which could not be traced, were repeated several times, the words being "*Beschluss; Heute Beschluss; schlechten Beschluss; Stinck Beschluss.*" ("The end; today the end; the end of evil; the end of foul smells.") There is a curious resemblance here to the much less reliable case of the boy John Styles at Newbury in 1679. This is said to have terminated with the vocal announcement "We knock and demonstrate no more." From Baetzmann (1865), Robbins (1959) takes two anecdotes of happenings in Bergen. The data as given by Robbins are very sparse, and it is not easy to divine what actually happened. It is said that in 1687 a "ghost" purporting to be that of the child of a certain young woman, accused her of having murdered it some fourteen years previously. She is said to have confessed when the ghost led her and the court to the scene of the crime. The woman was executed but the ghost stayed on and talked with the governor, who asked it to demonstrate how terrible it could sound. It let out a tremendous roar, but the governor being unimpressed it replied that that was the best it could do. It went on to demand aquavit and food. It threatened the household and then acted like a poltergeist by throwing clay and rocks down the chimney. The principal of the Bergen High School is said to have left a detailed account of a parallel case in 1701. He himself maintained it was a hoax but said many people believed in it, and that the accused person confessed.

Three cases with much in common are alleged to have happened in the wild and Whiggish province of Galloway. Those of Glenluce (1654) and Ringcroft (1695) have been well known since Catherine Crowe made mention of them in *The Night-Side of Nature*. At Ringcroft the "ghost" made only one utterance, consisting of ejaculations—"Ouch," etc. However, the visitant in the house of the weaver Gilbert Campbell was loquacious in the extreme in addition to the usual poltergeist naughtiness. The evidence available is not particularly good. Certainly we cannot decisively reject the interpretation put on it by Robbins (1959), who ascribes the whole thing to trickery by Thomas Campbell, the fourteen-year-old son, assisted by the younger children. Similarly, the details concerning the "Ghost of the Galdenoch" (Agnew, 1893) are too sketchy to be useful. The same can be said of the folk tale—relating to the "Bocan," or boggle, that haunted Donald Ban, a Jacobite veteran of the Forty Five—recounted very entertainingly by Andrew Lang (1899).

Much more definite is the story of the Devil of Hjalta-Stad reprinted by Lang (1899) from Arnason's *Icelandic Folklore*. The Sheriff Hans Wium wrote an account of his experiences in a letter to Bishop Haldorr Brynjolfsson in the autumn of 1750:

> As soon as we reached the front of the house there was heard in the door an iron voice saying: "So Hans from Eyrar is come now and wishes to talk with me, the —— idiot." Compared with other names that he gave me this might be considered flattering. . . . He threw at us both stones and pieces of wood, as well as other things, and broke two windows in the minister's room. He spoke so close to us that he seemed to be just at our side. . . . I have little liking to write about his ongoings, which were all disgraceful and shameful, in accordance with the nature of the actor. He repeated the *Pater Noster* . . . said that the devils held service in hell, and told what texts . . . they had. . . . I asked him whether the devils agreed well with each other. He answered in a kind of sobbing voice. "It is painful to know that they never have peace." I bade him say something to me in German, and said to him "Lass uns Teusc redre" [sic], but he answered as if he had misunderstood me. . . .
>
> Next morning he came in again, and began to waken up people; he named each one by name, not forgetting to add some nickname, and asking whether so-and-so was awake. When he saw they were all awake, he said he was going to play with the door now, and with that he threw the door off its hinges with a sudden jerk, and sent it far in upon the floor. The strangest thing was that when he threw anything it went down at once, and then went back to its place again, so it was evident that he either went inside it or moved about with it.

It will be seen that there was a general resemblance between

the personality of this "devil" and that of Mascon. Both represent boisterous and irreverent buffoonery. The sheriff evidently felt puzzled about the nature of the entity for he says: ". . . This enemy came like a devil, departed as such, and behaved himself as such while he was present, nor would it befit anyone but the devil to declare all that he said." Very tantalizingly, he adds: "At the same time it must be added that I am not quite convinced that it was a spirit, but my opinions on this I cannot give here for lack of time."

An attempt was made in the journal *Huld* (1893) to explain the vocal effects as caused by a young man who had learned ventriloquism abroad. But this does not help with the physical phenomena. Jon Espolin (1821) is critical of the sheriff's letter but gives substantially the same account of the spirit's proceedings.

☿ THE BELL "WITCH"

Dr. Fodor (Carrington and Fodor, 1953) has given us a fascinating analysis of the case centering on Betsy Bell at the Bell farmstead in Robertson County, Tennessee. The head of the family was John Bell, who had nine children. The first written chronicle of the haunting was penned by Richard Williams Bell, one of the sons, in 1846, no less than thirty years after the commencement of the phenomena, which started when he was only six, and finished when he was ten. It was first published by Ingram in 1894 in a pamphlet with a rather sensational title. Ingram had been acquainted with the story from early childhood, knew the surviving members of the family and interviewed all the witnesses he could find. There is reference in print to the story in 1849, when the *Saturday Evening Post* made charges of fraud against Betsy. With reference to our dependence on the accuracy of the data provided by Richard Williams Bell, Dr. Fodor makes the good point that in 1846 he could not have been acquainted with spiritualistic phenomenology, and the chronicles of witchcraft were poorer in descriptions of phenomena than the story he himself recounted. Dr. C. B. Bell published a record of the case in 1934. He was the grandson of John Bell, Jr., Betsy's brother (twenty-four years old when the haunting first began). Dr. C. B. Bell at the age of nineteen had himself received a firsthand account of the witch's activities from Betsy Bell, then eighty-three. Dr. C. B. Bell's father, Dr. Joel Bell, had assured him of the truth of Richard Williams Bell's narrative. I think we can believe in the truth of the narrative with regard to essentials, but may expect it to fail us at certain critical points.

The disturbances began in 1817, with knocks and scratchings, and whipping off of bedclothes. Noises grew in volume as the months went by. They moved from room to room. After about a year they were violent enough to shake the house. "It troubled Elizabeth more than anyone else"—that is, Betsy, apparently a girl in her teens. At this stage sounds as of gulping, choking, strangling, and smacking of the lips were heard. A neighbor, Mr. James Johnson, found that when the agency was spoken to it responded by starting or stopping activity. Hence the evening séances of family and visitors persevered in efforts to make the "witch" talk. ". . . and finally it commenced whistling when spoken to, in a low, broken sound, as if trying to speak in a whistling voice, and in this way it progressed, developing until the whistling sound was changed to a weak, faltering whisper, uttering indistinct words. The voice, however, gradually gained strength in articulating, and soon the utterances became distinct in a low whisper, so as to be understood in the absence of any other noise. . . . The talking was heard in lighted rooms as in the dark, and finally in the day at any hour" (Bell, 1934).

Betsy being accused of ventriloquism, John Bell Jr., suggested a test to a visiting doctor, who put "his hand over Betsy's mouth at the time when the voice was heard, and soon satisfied himself that she was in no way connected with these sounds."

The voice made the same inconsistent claims to identity as did the Devil of Mascon. "I am a spirit . . . once very happy, but has been disturbed. . . ." "I am a spirit from everywhere, Heaven, Hell, . . . Earth . . . have been created millions of years." It also declared itself to be the spirit of an Indian whose bones had been scattered, also to be the witch belonging to Old Kate Batts, an eccentric person in the locality It introduced its "family," four spirits speaking in very different voices. They all spoke obscenely and sometimes as if drunk. It is said that the "witch" could accurately imitate anyone's voice, being a remarkable mimic. It quoted the Bible accurately, imitating the pastors' voices.

It is said that it gave evidence of clairvoyant powers, describing minutely to the visitors all occurrences, however minute, that they had experienced on their journey to the farmhouse. Like the Devil of Mascon it revealed misdeeds, to the mystification of the onlookers.

It denied contemptuously that it was a spirit of the dead or that communication with the dead was possible.

It never appeared in apparitional form, though some of the children occasionally saw "queer animals" outdoors. Many people claimed to "feel" the "witch." If it was friendly they felt "a soft

and velvety hand like a woman's slipping into their palm." If it was angry they experienced blows by the "hands."

Betsy herself was violently tormented with slaps, pulling of hair, pinching and bruising, etc. Otherwise the "witch" tended to follow Betsy's own attitude to people. Those she liked were treated well; those she disliked were abused or tormented.

Quite apart from the poltergeist persecution of Betsy was another affliction. From the time that the voice learned to speak, Betsy became subject to fainting spells followed by prostration, shortness of breath, and smothering sensations. She would be entirely exhausted and lifeless, losing her breath and falling unconscious between gasps. These spells lasted about thirty minutes, after which she recovered rapidly. They came on at regular hours in the evening. As soon as they passed off the voice began to speak, having been totally silent during the fit itself.

There is much else of interest alleged, such as apportation, but we will confine ourselves here to the feature most peculiar to this case. From its first manifestation the voice declared that it would worry the father, John Bell, and at last kill him. At no time did it give any reason why it hated him. Dr. Fodor suggests that the poltergeist was in some sense an offshoot of Betsy's personality. Whether or not Betsy had a conscious resentment of her father, the reason for the hatred remained secret in her conscious or unconscious mind. The "witch" expressed her hostility but not the reason for it. It seems that John Bell suffered some physical annoyance from the poltergeist. However, this seems less important than the apparent fact that he developed a form of psychosomatic illness, coming on about the same time as the emergence of the voice. He acquired a tic that grew to the proportions of a hysterical attack, stopping him from eating or talking for one or two days. All the time the witch continued to abuse and curse him. At last he took to his bed and declined. On December 19, 1820, he was found in a deep stupor, and died next day. The "witch" sang rowdy songs at the funeral but did not long survive him, the manifestations eventually dying out. On the day of John Bell's coma, his medicine was found to be missing from the cupboard and replaced by a vial of dark liquid, which killed a cat it was administered to. The "witch" claimed to have given John Bell the poison during the previous night. Fodor suggests that the poison, being quick acting, must have been administered during the breakfast interval of December 19, and that the "witch" lied to shield members of the family.

Dr. Fodor fits one other piece of information into the pattern

of interpretation. The "witch" had apparently done all it could to break off Betsy's engagement to Joshua Gardner, and in the end was successful although, according to all accounts, the couple were ideally suited. Dr. Fodor interprets the whole affair as follows. Betsy had a deep-seated fear and hatred of her father, perhaps unconscious. Possibly it originated in a sexual assault from him in childhood. The "witch" was a manifestation of her unconscious self, and achieved Betsy's unconscious purpose to kill John Bell. However, through the "witch," Betsy also inflicted punishment on herself and by way of expiation forced herself into resigning her marriage to Joshua. Dr. Fodor interprets John Bell's illness as psychosomatic. The inhibition of the power of speech suggests that Bell had a guilty secret, perhaps the hypothecated assault on the infant Betsy. These hypotheses seem to me to be quite tenable, and not implausible.

SOMETHING NASTY IN THE WOODSHED

The Dagg case has already been mentioned in connection with fire-raising. The family consisted of George Dagg and his wife, his daughter Mary (age 4), Johnny (age 2), and an adopted orphan girl, Dinah (age 11). Whenever Dinah was away the disturbances ceased. Previous to the haunting she had been robust and rosy-cheeked. Percy Woodcock's report describes her as having become thin and pale. The disturbances started on September 15, 1889, and Woodcock stayed at the house from November 15 to 17. He made notes of the testimony of family and neighbors and became convinced that the phenomena said to have occurred were authentic. These included a gruff voice that at first was heard by Dinah alone but became generally audible. On November 16 Mr. Woodcock took Dinah to an open shed at the back of the house, where she said she had seen something. Dinah said, "Are you there, Mister?" To Mr. Woodcock's intense astonishment, "a deep gruff voice, as of an old man, seemingly within 4 or 5 feet from him, instantly replied in language which cannot be repeated here." When Woodcock asked who it was, it said, "I am the devil. I'll have you in my clutches."

Conversational wrangling ensued with the presence, who used foul language (later mitigated at the request of Mr. Woodcock and Mr. Dagg). The account insists that the gruff voice could not have been Dinah's, which was exceptionally high-pitched, and that there was no possible place of concealment for anyone else. "It" wrote some words (of its own choice) on a piece of paper at Mr. Woodcock's request.

When asked why it had been troubling them, and had thrown a stone at Mary and had set the place afire, "it" said it was done "just for fun," it had not meant to hurt Mary, and had arranged the fires to be always in the daytime where they could be seen, and that it was sorry. It promised that on the next night (Sunday) it would say goodbye and leave the house for good. When the time came the voice was on its good behavior, but answered questions and made comments on people as they entered the room. Some remarks were humorous and apparently displayed intimate knowledge of the private lives of the questioners. The voice claimed, "I am not the person who used the filthy language. I am an angel from Heaven sent . . . to drive away that fellow." However, as time went on the spook relaxed, and getting entangled in some of his answers, lost his temper and said many things out of harmony with his supposed heavenly origin. In any event, he stayed till 3 A.M., changing character once more, and singing hymns in a beautiful flutelike voice. He said he had adopted the gruff tone previously to protect Dinah from being accused of it.

❧ THE LEBÈGUE HAUNTING

Camille Flammarion, the French astronomer and psychic investigator, gives (1924) a letter from Dr. Encausse describing the voice in the Lebègue household at Valence-en-Brie in 1896. The account is more sketchy than we would wish. The disturbance started with a gruff voice, very loud and uttering coarse abuse, heard by a young maidservant in the cellar. It is said to have made such an uproar that a dozen neighbors came in and confirmed the fact. In the days following the voice continued but spread itself over the house until it could be heard not only in the cellar but at the front door, in the kitchen, and on the first floor. Encausse says it seemed to come from the ground, but was so loud and broke out in so many places that trickery seemed out of the question. There appear to have been some poltergeist phenomena, but the account is insufficient for the poltergeist medium to be identified reliably, though some interest attaches to this question (cf. Chapter 17).

❧ TWENTIETH-CENTURY CASES

The better known of the two modern cases is that of the talking mongoose, who was investigated by Dr. Fodor, and also by

Harry Price and Mr. R. S. Lambert. None of them heard the voice or experienced any other manifestations that were impressive in other than the mildest degree. Price and Lambert, without being dogmatic about it, tended to think of the affair as being something of a pleasant family fantasy evolved over the years. Dr. Fodor found that the family evidence was consistent and sustained by the testimony of other witnesses, and felt that the reality of Gef's voice had to be accepted. According to the family, Gef was in the likeness of a small furry animal, able to talk, who identified himself as a mongoose. He had a considerable fund of general knowledge; some of it apparently acquired telepathically or clairvoyantly. He was good-natured. His poltergeist tricks were amusing rather than annoying. Occasionally he appeared in visible form. Dr. Fodor regarded "him" as akin to the poltergeist but not a poltergeist in the usual sense. He suggested that he was a derivative not of the child in the family but of the unconscious mind of the farmer, Mr. Irving.

The Saragossa ghost earned considerable newspaper fame in 1934, and Dr. Fodor (Carrington and Fodor, 1953) has given a number of extracts from the press. The trouble started one morning when Maria Pascuela, the kitchen maid (age sixteen) was lighting the kitchen range. She nearly fell over backwards when a voice came out of the chimney (i.e., the flue pipe) and greeted her effusively. Her mistress, Mme Palazon, was also startled out of her wits (*Evening Standard*, December 5). An architect and some workmen were called in. They searched the building from roof to cellar, but without finding a possible hiding place for the joker. Finally the architect said, "Measure the chimney pipe." "You need not trouble, the diameter is just 6 inches," said the ghost politely. It was (*Times*, November 24). It appears that the flue served eight other flats in the house, which in principle admits of the possibility that some trickster was using it as a speaking tube. However, according to the press, the police investigated thoroughly and failed to find a means by which trickery could be effective, or any indication that it was being attempted. When Maria and the family were sent away, the manifestation ceased. Unfortunately there is no information as to whether any phenomena accompanied them in their absence. We are told, however, that the voice spoke again on their return. Maria "was examined by medical experts" (*Morning Post*, November 28). On December 3 the Civil Governor of Saragossa announced that Maria was "an unconscious ventriloquist" (*Times*, December 6). The investigating magistrate told the press that on two occasions he

had locked himself in the kitchen with Maria and two outside witnesses, while police were posted to prevent anyone from approaching the flue or its connections. The voice was then heard. Maria, he said, was quite unaware that she was pronouncing any words—the mystery was due to a "psychic phenomenon produced only in certain circumstances" (*Times*, December 6). The *Times* went on to say that the hostile attitude of the subject and her family is impeding medical investigation of what now seems no longer a joke but a remarkable case for study by neuropathologists.

It is hard to resist the conclusion that the legal and medical investigators regarded the case as akin to poltergeist mediumship. Though all conventional poltergeist effects were absent, the pattern agrees quite well with the other direct-voice poltergeist cases we have considered. It is reasonable to suppose that poltergeist effects are potentially manifold, and that in some cases some of the phenomena are suppressed. Thus one would expect a small fraction of cases to be represented by a single type of phenomenon which might be rappings only, object-moving only, voice only, or fire-raising only. In this case the "ghost" seems to have been less ribald and abusive than his predecessors at Mascon and elsewhere, but "he" did show many of their qualities. Though affable he was humorous. He functioned in full daylight. It is said that he showed extraordinary knowledge of the names and the affairs of visitors to the séances in the kitchen.

♄ GENERAL REMARKS

The writer regrets that he cannot find in the literature any cases of direct-voice speech less remote in space and time than the ones outlined above. The evidence, however, is good enough to suggest, at least, that about twice in every century, groups of people have been sincerely puzzled by this phenomenon, have looked for trickery and failed to find it, and have engaged in numerous séances with the agency. The voice has been almost invariably associated with some poltergeist phenomena, and in most cases an individual has been fairly clearly indicated as the center of the affair.

There are curious similarities with what is alleged of direct-voice mediumship. Sometimes the voice varies in tone and quality, and claims accordingly to represent different "spirits." In the Dagg case the agency vacillated between claiming to be a different spirit and claiming merely to be using a different speech form.

There are important differences between the spontaneous "poltergeist voices" and those of the orthodox séance room. The former are not at all inhibited by light. The latter usually purport to occur while the medium is in a state of "trance." But, as with other poltergeist phenomena, the poltergeist direct-voice "medium" usually has no trances. If he or she does, the voice does not speak during the trance. It would be premature to draw any conclusions, but these results as far as they go are suggestive of the conclusion that much direct-voice mediumship has been a fraudulent imitation of genuine spontaneous phenomena. This, however, is not to say that there may not occasionally have been genuine direct-voice mediumship, with the trance as an actual, or psychological, necessity for the medium to be able to "switch on" the "fluence."

Such parallels as there are between the spontaneous direct-voice and the mediumistic one, tend to point to the conclusion that the supposedly different "spirit controls" of the direct-voice medium are not really distinct but are merely different *personae* assumed by the same agency, which may or may not be a component of the personality of the medium himself.

The cases of poltergeist voices recounted hint at the acquisition of knowledge paranormally by the agency in question, but the data available do not amount to proof and this question must remain unsolved.

♄ RAPPING

Intelligent response by rapping to questions and instructions has been alleged in many poltergeist cases. We shall not attempt an exhaustive examination but merely cite some examples. Allied to this is the presumptive degree of intelligence shown in beating in time to the tune of songs or music. This allegation goes back at least to the time of the Tidworth case. It was said that the raps played the tune of the ditty "Cuckolds and Roundheads," and others besides, but when asked for certain tunes the agency got them wrong. Several witnesses in the Cideville hearing said that if asked to drum a particular tune the agency rapped in such a way that the tune was quite clearly indicated, though the ghostly repertoire was not extensive. For example, it gave a good rendering of "Stabat Mater" but failed with the waltz from *William Tell*; but when someone hummed the latter, it was heard practicing it during the day (Thurston).

I have insufficient details for the account of communication in the Durbin case to be useful. It was said that clergymen came and

got correct answers to questions in Latin and Greek, not by raps but by a curious scratching noise. This, if anything, suggests that the agency was getting its knowledge telepathically from the minds of the interrogators themselves; a more likely hypothesis than that the knowledge was available in the mind of the medium (presumably Molly Giles, age 13).

The next case of intelligent and perhaps telepathic communication is again the Cideville case. Many witnesses seemed sure of the responsiveness of the agency, but the most celebrated communications were made to the investigator, the Marquis de Mirville. He came forty-two miles, slept at the parsonage, and conducted a private séance alone with the boys while the curé was away taking Mass. He asked for one rap to indicate affirmation, and two for negation. He asked how many letters there were in his name, and got eight raps, the last more emphatic than the others, as if to indicate that it *was* the last. Similarly, he got correct enumerations for each of his Christian names. More impressively (from the point of view of paranormal knowledge), he got five raps for the name of his eldest child, Aline, and nine raps, immediately corrected to seven, for his youngest, Blanche. Asking for his age, the marquis had to interrupt the raps, as they were coming too fast to count. They were repeated more slowly and stopped appropriately at the forty-eighth, which was accentuated. Similarly, the agency accurately counted out the number of months, and the number of odd days to the marquis' birthday. When he requested the number of letters in the village where he lived, ten raps were given. "Now I live at Gomerville, a name often written incorrectly with two *m*'s, but the mistake was here avoided."

In 1869 a Mr. Andrew Glendinning of Ivy Bank, Port Glasgow, on the Clyde, wrote to the Committee on Spiritualism of the London Dialectical Society saying that he understood that they received written communications bearing on their enquiry. He enclosed a statement relative to disturbances which had occurred in April, 1864, in a house in Scott's Lane, Port Glasgow, occupied by a gardener, Hugh McCardle, and his family. The statement was subscribed by Mr. Glendinning over the date October 15, 1866, to the effect that it was an abridgement of letters written by him shortly after the occurrences. It was further subscribed, as of October 16, 1866, by James McDonald, police sergeant, and by James Fegan, a grocer, who assisted Glendinning in his investigation, as being "exactly correct." Knockings came from a point in the bedroom floor. A minute

examination was made to preclude fraud. When they tore up a piece of the flooring, the sounds shifted position slightly and sounded as if coming from the edge of the hole that had been made. They tried by knocking on various places to produce similar sounds, but without success. The knocks seemed to beat to the air "There's nae luck about the house," but when "Kelvingrove" or "Scots Wha Hae" were whistled, they imitated, taking up each refrain at the second line. Questions were asked and answered by knocks (three for affirmation, 1 for negation). The account did not say explicitly if the answers were correct but this may be inferred. They were often given before the question was quite finished. "We asked some questions in a low tone—quite a whisper—our position being such that no one could see our lips moving, so as to guess the nature of our questions, but it made no difference to the knocks." If there was a poltergeist medium in the building then it seems as if he or she could have knowledge of the question only telepathically. No individual was indicated by the observations as poltergeist center. The children are said to have been in bed and asleep.

Derrygonnelly in 1877 was *par excellence* the case in which intelligent conversation was linked with apparent telepathy. Barrett (1911) says that he asked the farmer

> if it would respond to a given number of raps, and he said it would. This it did in my presence. Then I mentally asked it, no word being spoken, to knock a certain number of times and it did so. To avoid any error or delusion on my part, I put my hands in the side pockets of my overcoat and asked it to knock the number of fingers I had open. It correctly did so. Then, with a different number of fingers open each time, the experiment was repeated four times in succession, and four times I obtained absolutely the correct number of raps. The doctrine of chances shows that casual coincidence is here practically out of the question, and the interesting fact remains that some telepathic rapport between the unseen agent and ourselves appears to exist, on this occasion at any rate.

The odds against this result occurring by chance would appear to be of the order 1,032 to one. While we require higher odds in modern quantitative experiments, in Barrett's time he would be well justified in accepting them as adequately telling against chance as an explanation. His finding has been criticized on a different ground. It

has been suggested that if the knocks came somewhat irregularly Barrett may have stopped counting whenever the requisite number had been given, and have neglected any odd knocks coming in between the asking of his mental questions. This is difficult to gainsay at this point of time.

We conclude by mentioning once again two cases of "straight" conversation by rapping without apparent telepathy or clairvoyance. At Kingstown in 1876, Barrett witnessed movements of a heavy table in the vicinity of ten-year-old Florrie. Communication was established by repeating the alphabet aloud, when the agency would rap at the appropriate letter. He gave his name as Walter Hussey and purported to be a little boy. Florrie's mother said that Florrie talked to him by this method when lying abed at night. The content and spelling of "Walter's" answers corresponded exactly to those expected in a child of Florrie's age. In the case of Alice Cocat at Grenoble in 1907 we are not told the method of conversation by raps —whether alphabetical or *yes, no*. The description of the "*frappeur*" as disclosed by his answers closely resembled that of Alice's fiancé (Flammarion).

♄ WRITING

A LITERATE poltergeist is quite as interesting as a vocal one but seems to be slightly more of a *rara avis*. Ideally we would like to hear an eyewitness declare that he saw the pen, pencil, or stylus raise itself in the air and visibly write out its message. Improbable as it seems, there is one case where a witness has described just this. This occurred, as we noted briefly above, in the shed outside the Dagg house. Mr. Percy Woodcock, accompanied by George Dagg and the adopted daughter Dinah (who appears to have been the poltergeist focus) challenged the spirit to write something, because he had heard of writings having been found about the house. Putting a sheet of paper and a pencil on a bench in the shed, he saw the pencil stand up and move along the surface. As soon as the pencil dropped, he stepped over, and examining the paper said, "I asked you to write something decent." To this the voice replied in an angry tone, "I'll steal your pencil," and immediately the pencil rose from the bench and was thrown violently across the shed. In no other case, it seems, has anyone claimed to witness the act of writing.

The Phelps family at Stratford, Connecticut, in 1850 alleged that scraps of paper carrying writing suddenly occurred in unexpected

places. Some of them were bogus letters couched in facetious terms and signed with the names of neighboring ministers. The Rev. Dr. Phelps averred that, when writing alone in his study he had for a minute turned his back to the table, and on resuming his task found written, in large letters still wet, on the sheet before him: "Very nice paper and very nice ink for the devil" (Thurston).

The family at Ringcroft in Galloway in 1695 (Sinclair, 1685) alleged that a paper with some incoherent words written in blood or some other red substance was found, but this is not at all evidential.

In two cases writing on the wall was reported. In the Amherst mystery, centered on Esther Cox in 1878, according to Hubbell, the company heard the sound as of writing on the wall with a blunt instrument. Looking round, they saw the completed message: "Esther Cox, You are mine to kill." They had on various occasions communicated by raps with the spirit, which announced its intention of destroying the house by fire. In the case reported by Mr. Pillay, an Indian submagistrate, who claimed to have been persecuted by a fire-raising spirit, writings in Tamil were found on walls. Typical inscriptions were: "My name is Rajamadan [chief mischief-maker in the Hindu pantheon]." "Don't you know that I am the king?" "Sir, you rogue, are you so very strong-headed. The inmates of this house have done nothing against me. I will not leave them unless they become Hindus." Mr. Pillay also recounts that when half asleep he saw a female figure at the entrance to his room. Discussing it with his wife, she suggested it might be their deceased daughter Lourdes Mary Ammal. A minute later he went to the bathroom and found on the wall in Tamil: "My beloved Mamma. I am in the dark place. If I had been in heaven would I have left you in this condition?" [signed] Lourdes Mary. This is interesting as being one of the few instances in which the phenomena have suggested a connection with the dead (a point to be discussed later). We are under no obligation to accept anything in this case as paranormal. It is interesting, however, to note that there is an inconsistency in the personality presented by the agency at work. At times the voice at Mascon purported to be that of a deceased person. In the Dagg house the voice did not claim to be a spirit of the dead, but was inconsistent, sometimes purporting to be a devil and at other times an angel.

The Durweston case was one of Podmore's cases (1896) which we have held over from Chapter 3. According to the *Western Gazzette* of January 11, 1895, Mrs. Best— a most respectable woman— became puzzled by faint knocking and scratching in her cottage ad-

joining that of Mr. Newman, gamekeeper on Lord Portman's estate. The sounds increased in amplitude until Mr. Newman next door could hear them. They became hammer blows (according to one witness, the village blacksmith). Also, stones came through the bedroom windows, smashing them, and then turning round and going out again through the windows. Mr. Westlake of the S.P.R. went down and about January 23 took down statements of approximately twenty witnesses. Only those of Mr. Newman and of the rector, Mr. Anderson, were given by Podmore. This seems a pity, for though Podmore said that the evidence for the supernatural was not very strong, the impression received by a modern reader is that the case was really quite a good one.

Mr. Newman said that at about 10 A.M. on Tuesday, December 18, he was sent for and went to Mrs. Best's, and had the two children (orphans who boarded there—Annie and Iwerne) all the time in the same room with him. He saw beads and a toy whistle strike the window. "I was looking at the door opening into the garden, it was wide open, leaving a space of 15 inches between it and the inner wall, when I saw coming from behind the door, a quantity of little shells. They came round the door from a height of about 5 feet. . . . They came very slowly. . . . With the shells came two thimbles. They came so slowly, that in the ordinary way they would have dropped long before they reached me . . . and fell down slantwise (*not* as if suddenly dropped)." There is much more of interest, but I think the typical poltergeist nature of the case is sufficiently illustrated by one last quotation. "A boot came then in from outside the door . . . moving along a foot above the ground. . . . I think the boot moved about as slow as the others, but cannot quite remember. It finally fell softly."

It is a pity that the evidence about the writing is not as clear and definite. The Rev. Anderson wrote an account on January 25 of events of that same night. The agency was communicated with by raps and asked to write on a slate. The séance took place in a bedroom in Newman's cottage at 2:15 A.M. The slate was put on the window sill some four feet from the bed, on which lay Iwerne and Annie asleep with Mrs. Best between them. The others put out the light and left the room, in response to instructions by raps from the agency, which promised to give four raps when the writing was finished. Mr. Anderson went down to the bottom of the stairs,

with the bedroom door left open. He said that he could hear every sound. After fifteen seconds they could hear the pencil scratching on the slate. Four raps came and Mrs. Best cried "Come." Mr. Anderson was in the room instantly but the slate showed only meaningless scratches. The experiment was repeated three times, and on each occasion Mr. Anderson posted himself nearer to the door. He says the silence was deathlike—he was so close he could almost hear Mrs. Best breathe. On the slate they found the first time a beautiful free-hand curve; the second time, the symbols M and I; the last time, O GARDEN O. Apparently only Annie could write. The genuineness of this writing depends on two assumptions. Was Mr. Anderson correct in his beliefs that he would have heard anyone getting to and from the window sill and that there was no time to get back to the bed? Was Mrs. Best perfectly honest? Mr. Anderson described her "as an earnest Christian woman who bears perhaps the highest character in the village."

Various witnesses testified that among the marks that they saw spontaneously appear on the face and arms of Eleanore Zugun (whose case is more fully discussed in the next chapter) were some approximating to letters of the alphabet. Thus Mr. Clephan Palmer, present with a team of observers (Seton-Carr, Hardwicke, Blair) said that what seemed like attempts at B and O appeared in addition to teeth marks (Price, 1945). On a later occasion, in the presence of a notable team of observers, Countesss Wassilko-Serecki put Eleonore into light hypnosis and suggested the letter G appear on her right forearm ten minutes after she came round. "Some faint marks appeared after a few minutes, but it required some imagination to construe them into the suggested letter." According to the countess, forms sometimes crudely resembling DRACU (the devil) had appeared in the earlier stages of the case, but we are not in a position to judge whether the resemblance was close or only fanciful.

CONCLUSIONS

THERE is quite an amount of evidence of intelligent communication by the agency in poltergeist cases. It is very much a matter of individual preference whether it is acceptable or not. However, there is sufficient good evidence to make the contrary assumption, that the poltergeist agency *never* communicates intelligently, a doubtful one.

Similarly, there are definite indications that sometimes the

agency has knowledge paranormally acquired. The indications do not amount to proof, but are too definite for the possibility to be rigorously set aside.

The most convincing feature of poltergeist communication is the great similarity of personality revealed in the different cases. The "presence" is consistently humorous or abusive. It is also "consistently" inconsistent in the *persona* it puts forward. Sometimes it masquerades as a demon, sometimes as an angel, sometimes as a departed spirit, but at no time does it convince of the correctness of the assumed identity. This consistency between cases greatly strengthens the belief that the cases reported are in fact genuine. When account is taken also of the resemblance of the "notions" of the poltergeist to the ideas of its own era, these cases bring considerable support to the theory that the poltergeist is an offshoot from the personality of a poltergeist focus.

CASES CITED: DIRECT VOICE

	Date	*Reference*
Kembden, Bingen	858	Pertz
Not, Pembrokeshire	1184	Giraldus
Inn, Schiltach	1533	Remy
The Devil of Mascon	1612	Thurston
Thomas Campbell, Glenluce	1654	Sinclair
John Styles, Newbury	1679	Mather
Bergen	1687	Robbins
Andrew Mackie, Ringcroft	1695	Sinclair
Bergen	1701	Robbins
Galdenoch, Leswalt	*ca.* 1705	Agnew
Gerstmann, Dortmund	1713	Thurston
The Devil of Hjalta-Stad	*ca.* 1750	Lang
Donald Ban, Lochaber	*ca.* 1750	Lang
The Bell "witch," Tennessee	1817	C. and F.
Dagg farmstead, Clarendon	1889	Thurston, Fort
Lebègue, Valence-en-Brie	1896	Flammarion
Talking mongoose, Dalby	1932	Price, C. and F.
Maria Pascuela, Saragossa	1934	D. and F.

CASES CITED: RAPPING

	Date	*Reference*
Mompesson, Tidworth	1662	Price
Giles children, Bristol	1761	Thurston
Cideville parsonage	1850	Thurston
McCardle, Port Glasgow	1864	Flammarion
Florrie C., Kingstown	1876	Barrett
Maggie, Derrygonnelly	1877	Barrett
Alice Cocat, Grenoble	1907	Flammarion

CASES CITED: WRITING

	Date	*Reference*
Andrew Mackie, Ringcroft	1695	Sinclair
Phelps, Stratford, Conn.	1850	Thurston
Esther Cox, Amherst	1878	Hubbell, Sitwell
Dagg, Clarendon	1889	Thurston
Best, Durweston	1895	Podmore
Pillay, Nidamangalam	1920	Thurston
Eleonore Zugun	1926	Price

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II

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Biting, Pinching, and Stigmatization

The poltergeist is considered to be in the main harmless to people. This seems to be true of the majority of cases characterized by pranks that are annoying but do not involve the infliction of pain. However, in the chapter on traction we noted a few cases that could be construed as attacks on certain individuals. It may therefore be useful to look for other poltergeist phenomena with the same sinister quality. It is obviously of some theoretical importance if it is the fact that poltergeists can sometimes act viciously. Again, it is important from the point of view of poltergeist physics to know all the forms that poltergeist phenomena can take. This chapter is therefore devoted to rare cases that appear to be evidential of biting and pinching attacks. There are numerous cases in which the accounts say incidentally that someone was "nipped," "pinched," or "pulled," but are so unspecific as to be useless evidentially or for interpretation. The evidence therefore is in effect contained entirely in the four cases discussed by Thurston (1953), and two of these are not very helpful. Andrew Lang (1896) cites the case of a lady at Toulouse who was plagued in 1853 by a persistent set of annoyances. On one occasion believing that she sensed an uncanny presence, she threw some holy water under a chair. "Her thumb was bitten and marks of teeth left upon it. Presently her shoulder was bitten, whether on a place she could reach with her teeth or not, we are not informed." The comment is Lang's. He had quoted the account, said to be firsthand, printed by Benezet in *Les Tables Tournantes.*

Thurston remarks (1953, p. 17, n. 1), "Not many people, it seems to me, would be able to bite their shoulder with their teeth." Be that as it may, we must join with Lang in regretting the absence of circumstantial detail.

Another case quoted by Thurston is that of Dr. Schuppart of Giessen, who "seems to have been a professor of theology of the highest character." His persecution occurred about 1725, and a record was provided by him in the form of a solemn sworn statement made before a Lutheran theological academy. He declared that every pane in his study window was repeatedly smashed, stones from six to ten pounds in weight were aimed at him but seemed designedly to miss him by a hair's breadth, his wife was struck with blows that resounded all through the house but that nevertheless inflicted relatively little pain. In particular he said: "Often I have been for four weeks together without taking off my clothes. It has struck me in the face, it has pricked me with pins, it has even bitten me so that both rows of teeth could be distinguished. The two big fangs stood out plainly and they were as sharp as pins" (Horst, 1823). Here he means the marks of teeth and fangs. It appears that he was only attacked on exposed portions of skin, for we can only thus understand the necessity of sleeping in his clothes, presumably to avoid being attacked while undressing. There is an interesting contrast here with the case of Eleonore Zugun, who was sometimes attacked through her clothes.

♄ THE DURBIN CASE

The disturbances at Lawford's Gate, Bristol, in 1761 have already been discussed in part in connection with the dragging about of the two little girls Molly and Dobby. We noted that there was some warrant for accepting Mr. Durbin's account of what he himself had witnessed as being evidential. We may note also that as Durbin's editor tells us, "Mr. Durbin was not the sole examiner in this business. Several clergymen of learning and piety, and gentlemen of considerable abilities some of whom were professed Deists, searched into these matters also; and Mr. Durbin had often been heard to say, that they were fully convinced that there could be no imposture in the case." Thurston adds, "Probably the Deists of Bristol at the close of the eighteenth century, who presumably knew nothing of poltergeist literature, would have been harder to convince than the average reader of the present time who has at least met with such

stories in the newspapers." Deism, we may note, emerged during the seventeenth century and became influential in the eighteenth century. It held that God, having created the world, interfered no more in its concerns. It maintained the sufficiency of reason and rejected revelation. Consequently exponents of Deism tended to an extreme skepticism in matters supernatural. As we have seen, Durbin feared mockery if he published during his lifetime.

Durbin himself saw some objects execute typical poltergeist movements and even if we do not rely on what he reports at second hand, the case is clearly delineated as a poltergeist case with very powerful and varied manifestations. As regards the attacks on the children, Durbin recounts, of January 2, 1762: "There was a loud knocking against the table and I saw a chair move in which Molly sat so far as almost to throw her down. Dobby cried that the hand was about her sister's throat, and I saw the flesh at the side of her throat pushed in, whitish as if done with fingers, though I saw none. . . . Soon after Molly was struck twice on the head and we all heard it."

On January 6, "seven of us being there in the room, Molly said she was bit in the arm. . . . We saw their arms bitten about twenty times. . . . Their arms were put out of bed, and they lay on their backs. They could not do it themselves, as we were looking at them the whole time. We examined the bites and found on them the impression of eighteen or twenty teeth, with saliva . . . all over them, in the shape of a mouth. We found it clammy like spittle and it smelt rank."

On January 7, "I was there with three gentlemen, when Molly and Dobby were in bed; it again began beating and scratching. . . . Their backs and shoulders were bit while they lay on them, which put it out of doubt they did not do it themselves. I heard the slaps on Molly's breast; I could hear the slaps of a hand very loud, but I could not see anything that did it. . . . Their hands being out of bed, I took a petticoat and covered over their hands and arms with it, and held it down close on them to defend them if possible; but they cried out that they were bitten worse than before under my hand. I pulled off the petticoat, and we saw fresh bites with the spittle in several places, though we covered them so closely. Dobby was bitten most and with deeper impressions than Molly. The impression of the teeth on their arms formed an oval, which measured two inches in length."

Besides these vexations and being pricked with actual pins the

children were also cut, as with a blunt knife, which marked but did not always pierce the skin.

"The 9 February I dined there with the Commissioners of the Turnpikes. Two gentlemen were accidentally holding Molly's hands, and a fresh cut came on one of her arms . . . the skin not jagged but smooth, as if cut with a penknife."

Mr. Durbin's descriptions are admirably careful and detailed, and he was clearly alive to and took precautions against the possibility of fraud. It would seem therefore that his testimony has to be accepted or rejected as a whole. Astonishing as the phenomena were, we are not in the position of being able cheerfully to reject them, for if we did so we should be equally embarrassed by the testimony in the Eleonore Zugun case, which is almost contemporary.

ELEONORE ZUGUN

Eleonore was born at Talpa, Rumania, in 1913. According to Countess Wassilko-Serecki (1926, 1927) her parents were peasants. At the age of twelve she went to live with grandparents at another village. As the house was bombarded with stones, and some domestic articles fell about inside, she was sent home as possessed by Dracu, the devil. A good deal of movement, fracture, and levitation of domestic articles ensued. We are also told that stones, wet and round and similar to those found in the neighboring river, were thrown at the house. One was marked with a cross by the priest and thrown back into the stream, but a little later on it was flung again into the house. This episode, similar in some respects to that at Salamanca, is often quoted but does not seem to be evidential. A Mass and a pilgrimage to a local shrine being ineffective, Eleonore was sent to Gorovei Convent where Masses, exorcisms, and psychiatric investigation failed to halt the disturbances. Considerable press controversy followed. Some newspapers declared the affair was a fraud, and others said the phenomena were genuine. Eleonore, meanwhile, was held in the local asylum. Fritz Gunewald, a German engineer and psychic research worker, by resolute enquiry convinced himself of the genuineness of the phenomena and proposed to bring the girl to Berlin for study, but unfortunately he died suddenly. However, Countess Wassilko-Serecki brought her to Vienna, where the phenomena were studied by Professor Thirring. At his invitation Harry Price came to continue the investigation and observed some typical poltergeist movements of objects (Price, 1933, 1945). Eleonore was therefore brought by the countess to London for further study in

Price's laboratory, and it was there that repeated biting and "stigmatization" was evidenced (Price, 1927, 1945). Some of the witnesses were newspaper reporters, and there were extensive press reports, which for the first time popularized the term "poltergeist."

The marks were of several varieties: teeth marks, long scratches, oval or ring-shaped, etc. The teeth marks were similar to those that would have been made by Eleonore's own teeth (except for the actual number of teeth indentations) and found only on her arms and hands (accessible to her own mouth). The scratches and other marks were also restricted to her chest, arms and hands. She was never caught making marks, some of which must have been very painful. Price's testimony is supported by that of several independent witnesses. For example, the representative of the *Morning Post*, speaking of October 3, wrote: "Soon after I entered the room a mark was noticed rapidly growing on the girl's arm. As I watched it it grew into a number of cruel-looking weals which might have been inflicted by a whip or a thin cane. I am satisfied that neither the girl nor anyone else could have inflicted any such blow. Within a few minutes the marks had disappeared. . . ." Very similar descriptions of other scratchings were given in individual statements by Captain Neil Gow, Colonel W. W. Hardwick, Captain H. W. Seton-Karr, and Mr. E. Clephan Palmer, and there seems no room for doubt as to the actuality and paranormality of the phenomenon.

The process of formation of the marks is interesting. Of the teeth marks Price says (1945) that they "were first visible as red indentations—the white surround gradually becoming red at the same time as the indentations became white, rising in a thick ridge above the level of the flesh. The ridge became quite white in the course of a few minutes, and rapidly disappeared."

DISCUSSION

Price and others, writing of Eleonore, have tended to use the term "stigmatization," thus tending to beg the question in respect of the identity of poltergeist markings and the stigmatization of religious ecstatics. The latter subject has been very ably reviewed by Thurston (1951). His survey suggests that in not a few cases the stigmatization of nuns is indeed a mysterious phenomenon not explicable by self-inflicted wounding, or by known physiological processes. He reserves judgment as to whether or not it is due to supernatural agency, but is at pains to point out that it is not necessarily different in origin from skin markings obtained in hysteria or under

hypnotic suggestion (Janet, Rybolkin). Further, he suggests that the state of religious stigmatics may be akin in some respects to clinical hysteria, though not necessarily identical with it. It would be easy therefore to surmise that the poltergeist stigmatizations and the religious ones both have their genesis in a psychological condition. This line of argument thus tends to support the theory that the poltergeist is a manifestation of some subliminal component of the mind of the poltergeist focus. This is argued by Mr. G. E. Browne quoted in Price (1945).

However, while it may well be true that the underlying cause of both types of stigmatization is essentially the same, it seems overfacile to suppose that the *mechanism* is the same in both cases. It is not easy to decide from the visible form of the poltergeist type of phenomenon whether it results from some internal "streaming" and self-compression of the living tissues or as the result of externally applied force. The latter would seem in a poltergeist case to be slightly the more plausible, for such forces have already been seen to act on objects other than the body of the poltergeist focus. This mechanism is in fact demanded by Durbin's case unless we postulate that both girls, Molly (age 13) and Dobby (age 8), were equally poltergeist foci operating by poltergeist forces on external objects and by internal physiological mechanisms on their own tissue. A priori, it would seem slightly more likely that only one of them was the poltergeist center and operated by externally applied "force" on the skin of herself and her sister. If this be granted it would suggest that perhaps the immediate mechanism of stigmatization is different in the religious and the poltergeist cases. Some indication that this may be so is supplied by the difference in the speeds of the two processes and in their effects. Both at Bristol in 1761 and in London in 1926 the poltergeist stigmatizations were established very rapidly. In cases of religious stigmatization however (Thurston, 1951) the formation of the wounds is comparatively slow, prolonged over days, weeks or months, and the wounds are correspondingly more profound. This is not to say that the ultimate causes of the phenomena are not the same or similar, but merely to stress that the same ultimate cause may operate through rather different mechanisms.

♄ CONCLUSIONS

The evidence for poltergeist biting, wounding, or stigmatization rests on a very small number of cases but two of these are well-evidenced. The phenomenon is therefore real but extremely rare.

Though the parallel with religious stigmatization is obvious, the two types of stigmatization differ in speed and degree of effect. Though the ultimate causes may be related or similar it is far from clear that the mechanisms are the same. It may therefore be that poltergeist markings do not result from internal physiological changes in the tissues but from external forces of the same kind as those that move objects.

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Giles children, Bristol	1761	Thurston
Madame L., Toulouse	1853	Lang, Benezet
Eleonore Zugun, London	1926	Price

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12

Apportation and Teleportation

But where the senses fail us reason must step in.—GALILEO

THE FOREGOING chapters of this part have been concerned with poltergeist activities of the type that we have suggested could be regarded as physically of the lower sort. The production of heat or sound and the movement of bodies may in the absence of more detailed knowledge be regarded as being, *physically* speaking, of the same kind. All consist essentially in the movement of portions of solids or fluids and can therefore, from the physical point of view, be described as resulting from the application of a "force." When we say this we are not presuming to describe this force or to assign an origin for it. However, from the point of view of physics a force is acting. No less a force than that of gravitation was first introduced into dynamical science in this formal way by Newton. He regretted the necessity for postulating what he and his contemporaries regarded as an "occult" force, and in the *Principia* he apologized at some length for this innovation. Gravitational attraction was an "occult" force for seventeenth-century scientists for precisely the same reason as the poltergeist force is an occult force for us today. They could picture no convincing mechanism by which a force of attraction could be exercised across the void separating two material bodies. The observed motion of terrestrial bodies in flight or in falling to the ground, and the orbits of planets and comets could, however, be explained in terms of the gravitational attraction. Although the

occult nature of this force was repugnant to Newton himself as well as to his contemporaries, its introduction was a scientific necessity if observed motions were not to remain irrational and indigestible facts (Hesse, 1961).

In Chapter 7 we found some slight evidence of poltergeist fire-raising, with some meager indication of intelligence at work in the sense that serious harm to persons was usually avoided. In Chapters 8 and 9 our interest was not at all in the physics of human traction and levitation, and not particularly in signs of intelligence shown. Interest lay in comparison with parallel phenomena in other fields and also in the emotional attitudes shown by the poltergeist. Some of the interest of the biting and scratching attacks considered in Chapter 11 lay again in the question of "attitude." Otherwise we wished to compare and contrast the phenomena with those of religious or hysterical stigmatization, and to see if the *modus operandi* was necessarily the same. We inclined to the view that on the evidence poltergeist stigmatization is not due to an internal physiological process but is produced by externally applied force, presumably the same occult physical force. In Chapter 10, on the other hand, we took for granted the capability of using this force to make sounds by vibrating either the air itself or solid objects, and were interested only in the degree of intelligence, type of personality and capacity for paranormal knowledge demonstrated by the "visitant." In Chapter 7, we also pointed out that "simpler" cases also demonstrated, apparently, some degree of intelligence—for this is the most direct and least artificial interpretation of the seemingly controlled ballistics of missiles in flight.

When reviewing good cases of the last 300 years we noted that several of them, accepted *in toto*, required us to admit the possibility of seeming apportation and teleportation. This phenomenon stands apart from the other physical happenings as being of a different kind. Ignition by friction, propelling of objects, production of sounds are all things of the same kind as those we can do with our own hands or with appliances. Admittedly, the poltergeist does them by manipulation through an obscure force. But that apart, the actions are in themselves physically possible. Teleportation, if true, is, however, a horse of a different color. It cannot be done at all by any known means. The *a priori* barrier to its acceptance as a genuine phenomenon is thus far higher than that to acceptance of the other poltergeist phenomena. However, there is some evidence, not atrociously bad, in its favor. What then are we to do?

One course that has been taken in the past, e.g., by Frank

Podmore in discussing the Grottendieck case (1906), is to refer the apparent teleportations to hallucination. This solution, however, is not as easy as it looks. One *a priori* objection to it is that it is puzzling why such an arbitrary and meaningless appearance (*per se*) should be hallucinated. For instance, observers have several times reported that missiles only came into view two feet away: or that on carefully looking for the point of origin they found that they seemed to come from a point six feet above the ground, or from a point a few inches below the ceiling. It seems reasonable to the writer to suppose that if a person is going to have the hallucinatory experience of being pelted with missiles, then it is likely that the hallucination will be complete, and have a specious rationality about it. If the missiles are (erroneously) seen to come, why not see the thrower as well, in the form of an aboriginal, a phantom slingshooter, or what not? The puzzling thing is the lacuna in the hallucination. The contrary tendency in cases of poltergeist movement of objects has in fact been noted by writers on the subject. Occasionally, it appears, the mind supplies the phantom hand that beats on the bed-head, presumably in an effort to fill the gap in the chain of cause and effect. Again, the objects which appear *ex nihilo* are very commonplace: pebbles, stones, old iron, rusty nails, etc. People are never shot at by phantom arrows, cannon balls, angels' feathers, etc., though washing soda and string beans have been reported. Furthermore, the hallucinatory theory seems in many instances to require collective or mass hallucinations. In addition, Andrew Lang (1906) has pointed out that we would need an explanation of why this hallucination is so widespread in space and time. Last, it is worth mentioning that Podmore applied the explanation by hallucination not merely to apparent teleportation but also to the curvilinear and undulating flight of poltergeist missiles. If we do not accept hallucination as the explanation of poltergeist ballistics, is it logical to accept it for poltergeist teleportation?

Without attempting to convince the reader of the reality of teleportation phenomena, I shall nonetheless discuss some of the evidence for it in poltergeist cases. The object of this exercise will be to simplify ideas. If in due time we are led to accept the genuineness of teleportation, then it is worth knowing how much we shall need to believe about it. That is, how big is the camel that we shall have to swallow? In this way we may be able to simplify the problem and reduce it to its essentials. For this purpose, I shall not try to be exhaustive but only cite the literature where it is illuminating.

(However, I believe that nearly all relevant cases are in fact mentioned.)

We first may ask whether there is any need to make a distinction between teleportation and apportation. An *apport* is something mysteriously brought to the spot. Either it was specially created *de novo* or it is an object previously existing, in which case it was merely *teleported* to the site of observations. Now, in all the best-evidenced cases the objects appear to be perfectly ordinary ones—pebbles, or pieces of rock, old iron, etc. Sometimes they are recognized as objects previously seen in the vicinity. In Mauritius in 1937 Mr. Ricks several times threw out a large stone with a hole in it, but it mysteriously fell again inside his closed room. Other articles that appeared inside his house were not all from the immediate locality, e.g., the *réglisse* seeds, but they seemed to be perfectly ordinary botanical specimens, as did the melons. From this and other examples it would seem that we have no need to retain apportation as a phenomenon distinct from teleportation.

♄ INVISIBLE TRAJECTORIES?

In several stone-throwing cases observers have tried unsuccessfully to see the whole trajectory of flight of the missiles, in order to determine the point of origin. Often they do not commit themselves to an estimate of the range at which the stones, etc., became visible, but from the descriptions one gets the impression (even when this is not stated explicitly) that they come into view when at most a few feet away. This mystification was experienced by the observers at George Walton's in New Hampshire in 1682, as described in Chapter 4. At the Heinisch parsonage in 1718, the stones fell vertically on the roof of a cowshed in the first instance. Vertical descent also puzzled the police and others at Roodeport in 1922 (Chapter 3). In 1713 brick ends, slates, old iron, and potsherds struck Dr. Gerstmann's house at Dortmund, being visible at impact only (Thurston, 1953).

One receives the same impression from other cases where officials have been unable to solve mysterious bombardments. For example (Charles Fort, p. 557), according to the *Times* of April 26 and May 1, 1821, the inhabitants of Truro were amused, astonished, or rattled, "according to nerve and judgment," by stones arriving from an unfindable source upon a house in Carlow Street. The mayor visited and investigated, assisted by soldiers set round the

house, but found nothing. A similar thing happened to the houses at 56 and 58 Reverdey Road, Bermondsey, in 1872. The point of origin of the stones and other missiles was undetectable in spite of a strong force of policemen being posted in the neighborhood (Fort, p. 175; *Times*, April 27). According to the *Daily Mail* of August 19, 1920, forty policemen watched Mr. T. H. Gaskin's house, London, from various points of vantage but could not observe the point of origin of the stones showering on it. Flammarion (1924) quotes two Parisian cases, the bombardment of a coal merchant's in the Rue des Grès in 1849 and that of a flat in the Rue des Noyers in 1860. In 1849 a police inspector kept a night and day watch. People were posted on the roofs of neighboring houses and police dogs in neighboring yards. The only hypothesis that could be formulated was the supposition that the missiles came from a great height. In this case, like those of Truro, Bermondsey, and Mr. Gaskin, there is nothing in the record indicating any other similarity to a poltergeist case, whereas the Walton, Heinisch, and Gerstmann cases had all the characteristics of a poltergeist haunting. It would therefore be permissible to argue that in this group of bombardments we may be concerned with a different phenomenon altogether. Charles Fort tends to take this line and suggests that the point of origin was undetected because nobody thought to look straight upwards. He prefers, on the whole, not to think in terms of poltergeists but rather of his "space-currents" teleporting objects in and out of the stratosphere. He adduces many cases of mysterious falls of living material, inanimate objects, and water, occurring in the open in small well-defined areas. In most of these examples other information that might assimilate them to poltergeist phenomena is lacking. Hence it would be prudent to reserve judgment about them and admit there may be phenomena of this sort, possibly explicable in meteorological terms, that are as yet unexplained. However, there are cases that do seem to fit into the poltergeist picture.

Thus the flat in the Rue des Noyers, 1860, was penetrated by the lumps of coal and scorched wood that came in through the broken windows. It is said that they particularly attacked the young servant girl. Similarly, in cases that occur purely in the open, there are sometimes peculiar features suggestive of the poltergeist. At Clavaux, Livet, the falls of stones followed the two young girls in their perambulations. Also, they fell with "uncanny slowness." We have already mentioned the mysterious traction alleged to be felt by the girls and experienced by their parents, who had to hold them back. Laval, the Protestant pastor of St. Michel-de-Chabrillanoux, writing to Flammarion in 1922, told him of a farmer, R., living on a property 440 yards from the nearest house. His house was struck with stones for three months in 1921. It appears, however, that the target was R. and not the building, for they followed him in the fields. "The stones arrived without one being able to tell how." Laval testified that he saw two stones fall in the farmyard. They "fell slowly, and gave one the impression of falling from a height of about 6 feet only. This was often remarked." One Elizabeth Burridge testified at Southwark Assizes in 1682 (at the trial of Joan Butts of Ewell for witchcraft) that on her going out of her master's house in the evening, stones were cast at herself and her mistress unaccountably "*from every side.*" Next day an andiron flew over their heads, and other objects moved from their places (Ewen, 1933). This suggests that the stones were part of a poltergeist haunting, perhaps of the girl herself.

When showers outside a building tend to be attached to a person, and that individual is also assailed indoors, as was Germaine Maire, a servant girl of eighteen years (Flammarion, p. 221), there can be little doubt that the affair is to be classified as a poltergeist case. When this kind of association has not been specifically mentioned some bombardments of houses nevertheless assimilate themselves to poltergeist cases because of the unnatural ballistics of the missiles. The coal merchant in the Rue des Grès in 1849 showed the Marquis de Mirville (1863) a roomful of long flat tiles, which he said had negotiated the slits in the shutters. Reverting to St. Michel-de-Chabrillanoux, we may note Laval's testimony that a series of apples apparently arrived from outside in a horizontal direction with considerable speed but accurately navigated themselves through a small hole in the window shutter. Similar accuracy of aim was alleged at Marcinelle (Flammarion, 1924).

The cases cited are ones in which the observers have been unable to locate the point of origin of the projectiles. They suggest therefore that the complete trajectory is in fact unobservable. In principle this could be because there is a complete trajectory but the missile is invisible over the early part of it. Alternatively, the complete trajectory is nonexistent and the missile in some sense "originates" fairly near to its target. Before discussing these possibilities we would like to ascertain if any observers have reported anything more defi-

nite than the fact of their general mystification as to point of origin. As noted above, the Heinisch family were definite that things striking the house became visible only at the moment of impact. The Rev. Laval at St. Michel-de-Chabrillanoux testified that the stones seemed to fall from a height of six feet above the ground. With respect to the apples that came into the house through a small hole in the shutter, he says that he was standing outside looking at that window. "I heard something strike the shutter but saw nothing." This was at seven o'clock in full daylight. The apples therefore appear to have originated or became visible just at the shutter itself. Here it is appropriate to quote Dr. Pietro Gatti's account of the bombardment of a thirteen-year-old girl, Maddalena Rimassa, at Genoa about 1865. She was the constant butt of projectiles, coming apparently from outside the house, coming through the windows or the now empty window frames. She was struck, particularly on the head but without bruising or pain (even from a half brick on the forehead). Gatti was also told that it was quite impossible to determine where the missiles came from, because they never became visible before they crossed the window sill (Thurston). In 1928 Thurston received a very interesting story from a Jesuit Father at Bratislava, who had obtained it from a Slovak parish priest. On August 11, 1927, a young man and a boy of thirteen got up from fishing in a stream in the foothills of the Tatra mountains when they were alarmed by stones falling around them. Then they seemed to encounter a continuous shower of stones that came into view when they were only about a foot away and did not strike with any great violence.

We have now marshaled almost all the evidence available, such as it is, concerning the flight of uncanny stones outside, or going into houses from the outside. In principle we are at liberty to consider the explanation by invisibility. First let us suppose that the missile, while continuing to exist as "itself," acquires *objective* physical invisibility. As readers of *The Invisible Man* will recollect, the hero of H. G. Wells's romance explains to us carefully that objective invisibility is possible only if the substance has exactly the same optical refractive index as the air around it. Otherwise it will reflect some light and be capable of being seen, even if in a somewhat "ghostly" or diaphanous way. But the optical properties of a body are intimately linked to its chemical structure and it is difficult to conceive how it could suffer an arbitrary change in its refractive index without undergoing a deep-seated physical transformation. The assumption of objective physical invisibility is therefore a very difficult hypothesis. It might seem superficially to avoid the making of more radical physical assumptions. But this simplicity is deceptive. Objective invisibility implies either a radical physical change in the object (of which there is in any case no evidence) or a change in one feature only, the concomitant other physical changes being (so to speak) vetoed by some occult *force majeure*. As with the weightlessness theory of poltergeist movement, the postulate leads us to predicate inconsistent physical changes or alternately an arbitrary and quite *ad hoc* type of transcendent supernaturalism. As explained in the next chapter, this latter is a desperate step that we would take only with extreme reluctance. At this stage in the development of parapsychology it would, I think, be premature to abandon the chosen motto that "The real is rational."

Another possibility is that of *subjective* invisibility. We could suppose that the poltergeist influence or the poltergeist medium in some way produces what we might call a negative hallucination, i.e., that the mind of the observer is acted upon so that he does not consciously see the projectile even when it should be physically visible. This is not inconceivable, but is rather an hypothesis *ad hoc*. It argues a remarkable degree of control of people's minds. While there is no *logical* objection to this postulate, as there is to objective invisibility, the writer feels it to be inherently implausible—though he is very willing to concede that this is very much a matter of personal choice and perhaps prejudice. It must be admitted also that in some poltergeist cases the observers have reported that very often object movements are initiated when they are not looking, as if the agency was aware of the direction in which their attention was turned, and contrived that the phenomena should always take them unawares. Conceivably this too could have been arranged by a paranormally induced lack of perception by the observers. The notion that the objects were not seen because they were invisible is not one that has, however, recommended itself to them. They have tended to prefer the explanation that the movements have happened when they have chanced to be looking elsewhere, or that the agency has had sufficient knowledge of their movements deliberately to produce the phenomenon when it was not expected.

A third kind of invisibility conceivably could arise if the missiles were originally traveling as fast as bullets, and came into view only when they were paranormally slowed down a few feet from the observer. If this were the case we should expect reports of a whining sound similar to that made by a bullet. In addition, we would expect

the missiles to be reported as being *hot* more frequently than seems to be the case. It is true that a good deal has been made of the fact that poltergeist missiles have been said on occasion to be hot or warm. But the number of instances that can be cited is not large. The Rev. Perreaud said that in the last days of the haunting of his parsonage at Mascon, the devil threw stones about the house from morning to evening, some of them weighing two or three pounds. One day Mr. Tornus came and whistled at the devil, who replied by whistling "in the same tone and threw a stone at him." Tornus marked it with a coal and flung it into the back yard, "but the devil threw it up to him again; and that it was the same stone he knew, by the mark of the coal. Tornus taking up that stone found it very hot, and said he believed it had been in hell since he had handled it first." Thurston thought it worth while to point out that the statement concerning the heat of the stone comes to us only on Tornus' authority and not that of the minister. It is hard to suppose that had the other numerous stones been hot this would not have been noted by Perreaud. According to Charles Fort (pp. 562-564), warm stones fell on September 4, 1886, near the *News and Courier* building at Charleston, South Carolina, at 2:30 in the morning. In a repetition at 1:30 P.M. the stones were said to be seen coming straight down from a point overhead. It is by no means clear that these falls were a poltergeist phenomenon. Possibly they were natural happenings. It appears that an earthquake occurred on August 31 and continued shocks led to the town being practically deserted by September 4.

There seem to be practically no other cases in which the stones have been said to be warm. The responsibility for the notion that this is so would appear therefore to rest principally on the well-known Grottendieck case (Fielding, 1906). Mr. W. F. Grottendieck, a geologist surveying in Sumatra, was sleeping in a one-story building one night in September, 1903. He was awakened by small stones falling on or near him. They originated apparently on the inside of the roof, which consisted of large leaves arranged so as to overlap one another. He described them as falling with unnatural slowness. When he tried to catch them they seemed to change their direction. They seemed to be coming through the roof but he could find no gaps or holes in it. There was nothing noteworthy about the stones themselves except that they were warmer than they would have been under ordinary circumstances. Frank Podmore suggested that the experience might have been a hallucinatory element or have contained some element of illusion, Mr. Grottendieck being possibly in some abnormal condition, perhaps as a result of fatigue. Without feeling obliged to accept Podmore's interpretation, we nonetheless do not propose to set great reliance on this case. It is interesting as suggesting that poltergeist stones may sometimes be unnaturally warm. Indeed, it is principally on this case that this notion relies. However, if the case were accepted as evidential it would be irrelevant to the theory that missiles came at high speed, because if so there would certainly have been a "bullet hole" in the roof and this was not found.

Clearly any evidence of objects' apparently originating in closed rooms operates decisively against the "bullet" theory of the invisibility of missiles unless we are prepared to sacrifice the principle of economy of hypotheses; i.e., we must either sacrifice the "bullet" theory or we must postulate two separate mechanisms for observable effects of the same kind. Similarly, testimony regarding the origin of objects in closed rooms tends to militate strongly against theories of invisibility of the missiles, either subjective or objective. The evidence as to teleportation into closed spaces is no worse than that relating to external bombardment and in fact is rather better. If it is true we must either assume that such teleportation does happen, or postulate that the seemingly teleported objects in fact smuggle themselves in while in a state of invisibility (objective or subjective) and later regain visibility. Occasionally the evidence tends to negate this possibility, but this is not often the case and it remains open as a logically conceivable possibility.

CLOSED ROOMS: OLD CASES

THE oldest reference to missiles appearing within doors is in Cyprian's life of St. Caesarius of Arles, which appears authentically to have been written not long after the saint's death. Caesarius was called in to lay a demon that was harrassing the deacon Helpidius—a physician to King Theodoric. In particular, Helpidius was frequently bombarded by showers of stones within his own house. During the Middle Ages there are a number of other references to stone-throwing but none which definitely state it to have occurred in a closed room. For this we have to wait for more than 1,000 years. Writing in 1595, Nicholas Remy says in his *Demonolatry:*

> I remember also that, when the pestilence was raging at

> Toulouse in the year 1563, I was in Auch and was spending the night gaming with my friend Abel of the Cathedral of that city (being of the age and having the leisure for such pastimes), when all of us who were gaming in the room were not slightly molested by a wanton Demon for this sort. Stones were hurled hither and thither, but fell to the ground without hurting anyone; yet there was nothing in the chamber but the gaming-board, a table and chairs, none of which could have concealed any mechanism for producing such results. . . . From this it follows also . . . that it is impossible without great error to doubt that there are spirits which concern themselves with the affairs of men, wishing them either good or ill, either benefiting or obstructing them, either encouraging or betraying them.

At the time of this episode Remy was thirty-three years of age. It is unfortunate that the only record he transmitted to posterity appeared in his treatise thirty-two years later. However, it is very interesting to have a firsthand statement from a highly educated man like Remy, a lawyer from a family of lawyers. It may be objected that any statement is valueless from a man who later showed himself to be a credulous believer in all the witchcraft superstitions. But this was much later. In 1591 he became Attorney General of Lorraine and supported witchcraft prosecutions with a Radamanthine severity, overriding local magistrates too lenient with witches. Exemplifying the paradoxes of the age, he was no monster in private life but a mild-mannered book lover. His witchcraft beliefs were taken in detail from Bodin, who in fact taught at the University of Toulouse. It may be that while studying law there Remy became influenced by Bodin's views. However, it does not follow from this that Remy was necessarily a bad observer in an experience of his own. Indeed, it might be the case that he was confirmed in a belief in the supernatural generally, precisely on account of this inexplicable occurrence, as we may suppose may have been the case with Joseph Glanvil, whose career as a writer on witchcraft and psychic research began with his experience at Tidworth in 1662. It is also worth noticing *en passant* that a belief in witchcraft was not implied by other supernatural beliefs, nor did it necessarily imply acceptance of other branches of demonology. It was not possible to predict just which beliefs a man of the sixteenth or seventeenth century might have. Cornelius Agrippa denied witchcraft, as did his pupil Weir, but had an elaborate hierarchical system of spirits. Scot mocked at witchcraft but not at all spirits and hauntings. Webster was a skeptic regarding witchcraft

but deeply interested in ghosts and apparitions. On the other hand, lawyers in the age of witchcraft could denounce some supernatural beliefs as gross and backward superstitions. Thus Le Loyer (1586) gives the hearing of an appeal against a court judgment, the court having allowed the lease of a haunted house to be set aside. Maître René Chopin for the owner of the property laughed at the bare idea of noisy spirits, urged that ghosts were a superstition of the common people, and that the earlier court decision was scandalous as encouraging vulgar credulity.

The next case of this sort is told us by Baxter (1691) and is unfortunately not quite at first hand. He says that in 1646 he was convalescing from an illness "at Kirkby Mallory in Leicestershire, where I lay weak three weeks in March, in which time, the Neighbours went to see a House in Lutterworth, reported to be haunted: Multitudes flocked to see it, and affirmed, that at a certain hour of the day, stones were thrown at those that were present, which hit them, but hurt them not: And that what ever time anyone would whistle, it was answered by a whistle in the Room: And no search could discover any Fraud: What became of it after, I heard not; but it continued believed commonly by the hearers, these three weeks that I staid in that Country." The account is far from unambiguous but from mention of the "Room" it may be guessed that the stones were appearing indoors.

We have already (Chapter 4) described the bombardments at George Walton's in New Hampshire in 1682. It will be recollected that the inmates came into the lobby, having been unable to detect the point of origin of the stones coming at them from outdoors. "Whilst we stood amazed one of the maids imagined she saw them come from the hall next to that we were in. Where searching (and in the cellar down out of the hall) and finding nobody, another and myself observed two little stones in a short space successively to fall on the floor, coming as from the ceiling close by us, and we concluded it must necessarily be done by means extraordinary and prenatural."

Pastor Heinisch, recounting his experiences in his parsonage in 1718, as noted previously, says that besides stones entering the house by breaking the windows or coming through the empty frames there were also stones flying in the contrary direction from inside the room into the open air. This is very interesting but it is not clear that the stones originated *ex nihilo* inside the room. They could have been stones that had just flown in in the "ordinary" poltergeist manner. The Obergemeiner case is no more informative on this point. Obergemeiner and Koppbauer put a cordon round the house, seques-

tered the rest of the family in the kitchen and searched the house thoroughly. Stones began to strike the kitchen windows. Koppbauer put his head out of one of them to see where the missiles came from. Suddenly a big stone broke a pane of the very window he was looking out of. As he had seen nothing move he was convinced that the stone had come from inside and had been thrown by one of the people in the kitchen, but Obergemeiner assured him they had nothing to do with it. Further stones came against the windows from inside. When the same thing happened next day they found that the stones flew out from under a settle running along the wall containing the windows, and described a closed path. Under the settle was a pile of a substance used as washing soda. It seems that this material had no business to be there. I suppose it was usually kept outside in the yard or in a washhouse, which would certainly be separate from the kitchen, and very likely an external building with separate entrance from outside the house. It is attractive to suppose that the soda was teleported into the kitchen but there is no real evidence to this effect.

We have already quoted extensively from Mr. Durbin's testimony as to the things he saw at the Lamb Inn at Bristol in 1761 and 1762. It will be recollected that he saw bite marks form on the arms of Molly and Dobby, and also found the marks wet with what seemed to be spittle. On another occasion Mr. Durbin mentions: "I stopped a little to talk with Molly and saw a dab of spittle fall on her forehead; it was smoaking, as if just spit out of her mouth, and ran down her face." This makes it look as if the substance may have been teleported from somewhere, though it is arguable that it might have traveled through the air in droplet or vapor form and then have condensed at some point above the girl's forehead. The same explanation could be applied, but less convincingly, to the result of one of the experiments which Durbin describes: "We bid Molly put her arms out of bed, and we put the petticoat on them to prevent, if possible, the cuts, but could not hinder it. As we looked on, she cried out her arm was rubbed with nasty stuff; Mr—— took off the [petti-] coat, and saw about a teacupful of spittle rubbed over her arm, all in a lather. We were certain she could not put her hand to her mouth."

Durbin also gives some suggestive though inconclusive evidence regarding the locomotion of pins on February 15, 1762:

> As I had many reflections thrown on me in the public papers, I was determined to try an experiment, in order to have a certain fact to convince the world, if possible. I made Molly sit down in a chair in the middle of the parlour; I took a large pin and marked it at the top with a pair of scissors; I put her hands across, and bid her not to move. I desired the above gentlemen to watch her narrowly; none were in the room beside ourselves. I then put the marked pin in her pincushion in which the other pin was; I put the pincushion that hung at her side into her pocket-hole and pulled her clothes over it. As I moved one hand (my watch being in the other to see the time) she cried out she felt somewhat at her pin-cushion, and directly was pricked in the neck (her hands being still across). The identical pin I had marked was run through the neck of her shift, and stuck in her skin, crooked very curiously. It was not a minute from the time I put the pin in to her being pricked in the neck. Those two gentlemen were witnesses of the fact. We then marked four other pins, and I put them in her pincushion singly, as before; and all of them were crooked and stuck in her neck. I examined the pincushion (after we took every pin out of her neck) and found the pins gone from the pincushion.

Admirable as Mr. Durbin's description is, it still does not prove that the pins were teleported. The observations are not inconsistent with the pins slithering between the various cloth surfaces of Molly's clothes. Also, since they are thin objects we might suppose they could, under the poltergeist force, be passed right through the material and so travel up between her petticoat or dress and her slip. Alternatively, they could come out of the pincushion and her pocket, travel round the folds of her dress, which Durbin had laid to obstruct the aperture of the pocket, and thus travel up outside her dress to her neck. If so, it is curious that the observers did not see any of them *en route*, but we could suppose that they moved very quickly, or as a last resort postulate invisibility.

Narratives of the Bell "witch" haunting in the early nineteenth century tell us that Betsy Bell was brought fresh fruit by apparent apportation but the accounts do not seem sufficiently circumstantial to be helpful.

The Swanland case given by Myers (1891) is a wonderfully vivid, lifelike, and homely narrative given by Mr. Bristow, who related (unfortunately about forty years after) the haunting of the carpenter's shop where he served as an apprentice. Little cuttings of wood, such as naturally are found in profusion on the benches and floor of a

woodworker's shed, would do animated dances or take the typical undulating and curved flights of poltergeist missiles, always in broad daylight, over a period of six weeks. Bristow told Myers:

> One of the strangest peculiarities of the manifestations consisted in this, that the pieces of wood cut by us and fallen on the ground worked their way into the corners of the shop, from where they raised themselves to the ceiling in some *mysterious and invisible manner*. None of the workmen, none of the visitors, who flocked there in great numbers during the six weeks of these manifestations, ever saw a single piece in the act of rising. And yet the pieces of wood, in spite of our vigilance, quickly found their way up in order to fall on us from a place where nothing existed a moment before. By degrees we got used to the thing, and the movements of the pieces of wood, which seemed to be alive and in some cases even intelligent, no longer surprised us and hardly attracted our attention.

In a letter to Myers, Bristow wrote:

> Nobody ever saw a missile at the time it started. One would have said that they could not be perceived until they had travelled at least six inches from their starting-point . . . the missiles only moved when nobody was looking and when they were least expected. Now and again one of us would watch a piece of wood closely for a good number of minutes and the piece would not budge, but if the observer stopped looking at it, this same piece would jump on us. . . . We were never able to make sure whether the pieces began their flight invisibly, or whether, on the contrary, they profited by a moments distraction on our part.

Myers, who interviewed Bristow personally, formed a high opinion of him. One old man living in the locality confirmed in general that great stir had been caused in the district by the haunting of the workshop, and said that he had seen some pieces of wood in their uncanny flight. But this was the total extent of verification that Myers could find. Even if we accept the narrative as an accurate account of the events, it does not help us to a conclusion in choosing among the three explanations—invisibility, teleportation, and slyness based on awareness of the direction of the observers' attention.

LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY CASES

The last decades of this period yield a number of reports of mysterious falls and flows of material inside buildings. The concentration of cases in this epoch is itself slightly suspicious, and tends to suggest that some of the accounts or the events themselves were imitative. However, it may be worth while to list them here in case some investigator is conveniently placed for following up in detail the newspaper reports (culled mostly by Charles Fort) on which they are based. In some instances the details are too meager to provoke much interest, but others suggest that competent observers underwent some degree of genuine mystification.

The *Chorley Standard* (February 15, 1873) reported (Fort, p. 570) that a fortnight previous, streams of water started falling as if from the ceilings in Bank House, Eccleston, Lancashire, occupied by two elderly ladies and their niece. "Probably the most singular feature of the affair is that ceilings were apparently quite dry." Workmen called to the house were unable to explain. Crowds of neighbors came in to watch the showers.

In the *Toronto Globe* of September 9, 1880, a correspondent wrote that he had interviewed a Mr. Manser on his farm near Wellesley, Ontario. As he approached the farmhouse he saw that all windows were boarded up and was told that since July they had broken of themselves, no missiles being seen. He was told also of falls of water in the rooms, having apparently passed through the walls without a trace of passage. It came from certain appearing-points in the air in the presence of crowds of visitors, in such amounts that the furniture had to be taken out. Fort (p. 559) says more details were given in the *Halifax Citizen* of September 13.

According to Fort (p. 914) the *Religio-Philosophical Journal* of March 6, 1880, quoted the *Cincinnati Enquirer* to the effect that a committee had been formed in Lebanon, Ohio, to investigate showers of birdshot falling from the ceiling of John W. Lingo's hardware store. It confirmed the phenomenon in the form of slowly falling volleys of shot, not of the size sold in the store, appearing from no detectable point of origin.

Fort gives references to three reports apparently so brief as to be of little use. The *New York Sun* (December 22, 1889) mentioned falls of stones in the sickroom of a dying man at Jordan, New York, apparently back in 1883. (Fort, p. 935). The *St. Louis Globe Demo-*

crat (January 27, 1888) gave a story of large stones that were appearing and falling slowly in closed rooms in Mr. P. C. Martin's house, Caldwell County, North Carolina (Fort, p. 567). The *Madras Mail* of March 5 of the same year mentioned pieces of brick that fell in a school room at Pondichéry, India.

Though they belong to the following century we may note four other cases of which only brief statements are available. The *Port of Spain Mirror*, and the *Gazette* reported in 1905 that Mrs. Lorelhai's boarding house was pelted with stones (Fort, p. 936). Neighbors were suspected but inside the house objects were said to be thrown about and chairs unaccountably fell over or were levitated. A doctor who had been visiting a sick girl there was quoted as saying he had seen some of the phenomena. It was reported also that stones fell from unseen points of origin in the rooms. In 1907 the *Derry Journal* and the *Coleraine Constitution* said they had sent reporters to investigate alleged breakage of windows by stones in daylight in the presence of neighbors at Mr. McLaughlin's house at Magilligan, County Derry (Fort, p. 575). The family included the householder's sister, niece, and maidservant (age unspecified). It appears that Mr. McLaughlin had swept his chimney and that the phenomena began immediately afterwards. There were flows of soot from undetectable sources in the rooms, and from room to room, independent of draughts, and sometimes moving against draughts. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Rev. H. P. Bryan of Askerwell Rectory, Dorchester, reported in the *Times* (September 6, 1919) poltergeist disturbances centering on a young maidservant in his employ. Immense pieces of rock, it was said, fell from the ceiling. She was discharged but at her next place the house caught fire. Bishop Weston's case happened in the same period (Maynard Smith, 1926). The bishop was called to lay a spirit attacking a house occupied by a man and his wife. Earth clods of undetected origin bombarded the building, and some of them were said to fall inside. The bishop averred that, standing inside the house, he saw a lump of mud appear on the ceiling. No window was open. The door was open but according to the bishop the point of appearance could not be hit by anyone throwing from outside.

Among those nineteenth-century cases of which ampler descriptions are available, an episode occurs rather of the kind we are looking for, in the account of the haunting of the chateau in Calvados (Sitwell, Flammarion), which Lambert tentatively places near the Normandy coast in the neighborhood of Bayeux. We note the statement put in a letter in 1893 by the *abbé* who at the time of most violent disturbance, 1875-1876, was the resident tutor to the son of the house. He says: "You have seen from the diary that medals of St. Benoit, indulgenced crosses, and Lourdes medals had been put on all the doors. These medals and crosses amounted to a good-sized package. You have also seen that on the following night a tremendous noise occurred and that next day medals and crosses had disappeared so that nothing could be found, though they and the doors were very numerous." The diary to which the *abbé* refers is that of the householder (known only as Monsieur X.) but according to M. J. Morice, it was kept in note form at the time of the happenings. The priest continues: "But two or three days afterwards Madame X was writing some lines on her knees by a little desk when suddenly an immense packet of medals and crosses fell in front of her on the desk. It might have been about 10:30 A.M. . . . They were all the medals placed on the doors except those of Lourdes."

It will be seen that unfortunately, even if we ignored the interval of seventeen years from the event, and the fact of reliance on what Madame told the family, there is no positive statement that the room did not have an open door through which someone might have deftly lobbed the package.

Returning once more with Professor Barrett to Derrygonnelly in 1877, we note that he had been told by the family that, among other disturbances, stones had fallen (it would seem indoors). In Chapter 4 we have described his observations in the bedroom. He also says (1911): "Suddenly a large pebble fell in my presence on to the bed; no one had moved to dislodge it even if it had been placed for the purpose." Barrett's phrasing suggests that he did not suppose the pebble to have necessarily come in mysteriously from outside the house. It would seem that he envisaged the possibility that it was incorporated in the surface of the inside walls, or had been lying about somewhere in the room.

A year later in 1878 things were happening at Amherst around Esther Cox. We omitted in Chapter 7 to note that Hereward Carrington interviewed some surviving witnesses and obtained some degree of confirmation of Walter Hubbell's popular account published in 1888. For what it is worth, Hubbell says that on one occasion "eight or ten lighted matches fell on the bed and about the room, out of the air, but were all extinguished before anything could be set on fire."

The Dagg case of 1889 has already attracted our attention three times in respect of alleged speech, writing, and fire-raising. A Mr. Arthur Smart, a resident in the neighborhood, made a statement

relative to apparent teleportation to *Light* (November, 1890), which journal described him as being a most trustworthy witness—a fact which there is now little prospect of fully verifying. *Light* stated:

> He sat in front of a little cupboard at a distance of not more than 4 or 5 feet and directly facing it. There he saw Mrs. Dagg put in two pans full of bread which she had just taken from the oven. After doing so she took a pail and went out to milk, while he continued to sit facing the cupboard. In about 10 minutes Mrs. Dagg on coming in with her milk found one of the pans full of bread in the back kitchen, and, on her expressing her surprise, he opened the cupboard and found only one there. This, he said, was the first thing which fairly staggered his unbelief.

It appears that when Mr. Dagg was out at his farm work, Mr. Smart was asked to sit in the house, as the family feared to stay alone. *Light* tells us that on one of these occasions while they were sitting round the stove—

> A match was heard falling on the floor which was uncarpeted, then another and another, and this continued till the floor of the room was pretty well covered. Mr. Smart watched with all possible care to see if he could see the matches leaving the safe [a tiny cupboard out of children's reach] which hung against the wall, but failed to see them, nor could he see them fall until within a few inches of the floor. After the shower was over he examined the safe and found it empty. He then proceeded to gather up the matches and got enough to fill the safe.

These are quite good clear statements and if we felt we could put full reliance on them they would contribute to a proof that teleportation as opposed to mere invisibility happens, at least on some occasions.

The testimony of the gamekeeper at Durweston in 1894 has already been given. He said that he saw small objects, including shells, come out from within a space between an opened door and the wall. The narrative tends to imply that they could not have been lying there in the ordinary way before emergence, but does not specify this definitely. This case is therefore not diagnostic for teleportation.

Three years later the *Madras Times* of May 7, 1897, gave an

account of "A Haunted Young Lady at Ooty," which had been contributed by the newspaper's Ooty correspondent. In April two girls, Gracie and Floralina, had in a moment of folly visited a Catholic cemetery and danced on the grave of a recent suicide. It would seem from this, and the fact that later a native exorcist was called in, that despite their names, neither girl was Christian nor European. Shortly after they fell into a state reminiscent of "possessed" girls in earlier centuries. Their eyes were wild; they tore their clothes; went into frenzies and were held down with difficulty. However, Gracie got married and Floralina stayed home to become the focus of poltergeist doings, stones bombarding the house from April 20 onward. The correspondent of the *Madras Times* visited Floralina on April 25 and found her calm and quiet. However, he later got an account of subsequent disturbances from a local eyewitness. This person (unnamed) said that on April 27 he went to the house with a friend and a policeman, and

> to our great astonishment, saw glasses broken into a 1000 pieces and almost reduced to powder by large stones which seemed thrown with great force. What astonished us most was the breaking of the glasses, which could not have been accomplished by stones thrown from outside. While stones were being thrown, Miss Floralina told us, a large stone had fallen from the ceiling, grazing her head. . . . On Wednesday, April 28, . . . we then saw stones thrown at glasses, and glasses falling on their own account. This excited our curiosity still more. Miss Floralina complained of being tired, and wanted to retire to her room. While she was going a piece of granite of medium thickness fell and broke a glass quite close to her with great force. [It is not quite clear whether the "glasses" referred to are window-panes or, as implied in the last sentence, drinking-glasses].

Besides the stones, which our witness evidently believed originated indoors, a general bombardment of the windows continued from outside. As regards the indoor missiles, the descriptions of their advent are unfortunately vaguer than we would like. A Mr. G. Burby of Ootaczmond forwarded to the *Madras Times* a letter from Mr. James T. Kelly, the Superintendent of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, testifying of the accuracy of the report given in the paper. "I was an eye witness of the phenomena, and though I looked for

the cause with much care I could find none." A Mr. W. M. Barthell wrote to say that he did not believe a word of spiritualism but had been at the cottage. "Windows were broken on every hand, without a human agent. I stayed there for more than an hour, but discovered nothing" (Flammarion). It seems fair to conclude that Floralina's haunting was a genuine poltergeist one and suggestive of teleportation, the evidence however being indecisive on this point.

CITY OF LONDON

EVIDENCE suggestive of teleportation in Lister Drummond's narrative of the City of London poltergeist has already been given in Chapter 4. A tray with various small objects on it was put in a cupboard that was tied with red tape so that it could be opened wide enough to look in and inspect its contents but not wide enough for it to be possible to take anything out of it. They locked the cupboard and all left the office. The next afternoon one of the objects (a "disc") fell down in front of Mr. Steward's desk, apparently from the ceiling. They inspected the cupboard. The articles were off the tray and scattered about the cupboard shelf. The cupboard was sealed up again until the seals were broken next day by Mr. Drummond and Mr. Keane. It was now entirely empty, the tray and all having gone. The tray did not appear for a few more days, when it was found on top of some document boxes high up near the ceiling of another room belonging to the suite of offices. It may be that Steward and Keane had allowed themselves to be hoaxed by some junior member of their staff. Conceivably they could have combined to hoax Mr. Drummond. However, the ordinary poltergeist throwings in the case appear not to have been hoaxes, as we have already quoted Mr. Drummond's own testimony that he saw things flying about, in unnatural trajectories, and could detect no sign of the clerks', who were all present, having anything to do with it (Thurston).

THREE CASES

FLAMMARION extracts an account of happenings associated with a boy of eleven living at the village of Molignon from the *Gazette de Lausanne* of May 1, 1914. The boy was taken with convulsive seizures in April. "At the same time, sand and stones were thrown in the room . . . when he was in bed, he felt himself violently pulled, and was hit in the face with stones."

Conventional poltergeist object-movements and breakages also took place. We have no direct statements by witnesses. The account is based generally on what was told to the correspondent of the *Gazette* when he visited the house. He said he spoke with the boy and his father; and "with his mother, whose eye is still sore from the handful of sand which was thrown in her face in the closed kitchen. All told me in the most natural manner the facts I have related." This is the only definite reference to any of the throwings of sand and stones occurring in a closed room, though earlier it was said he was hit in the face with stones while in bed. Generally one would expect people if genuinely afflicted in their way to have taken the precaution of closing the window if it has not been broken by external bombardment.

We have already reproduced at length in Chapter 3 the gist of most that is available concerning the peculiar case of Mr. Guy's rectory at Swanton Novers in 1919. Considerable mystification seems genuinely to have been caused by mysterious dripping of oils and water from the ceilings. In this it resembles the reports of water at Eccleston in 1873, and at Wellesley in 1880.

I have my doubts about the authenticity of all the phenomena in the Christo case of 1919. In October Mr. Herman Christo, a first-year law student, expelled from Coimbra University for religious dissent and armed revolt (!), had rented a villa for himself, his young wife, baby, and two maids. All that I think need concern us in the story of the haunting (Flammarion, 1924) is the statement by Christo that one night after he and his wife had been disturbed he ran back to their room and found his child's cradle empty. The servants "from afar, having heard the firing [of Christo's gun] howled like dogs at the moon." He heard the baby wailing downstairs, and went down and found it with its swaddling clothes taken off, placed on its back in the middle of a marble table. Christo says: "This last conjuring trick, this baby taken from one storey to another without our being able to guess how it passed the staircase —or the walls—it could not be explained, could not be tolerated." Unfortunately Christo says nothing as to the doors of the various rooms being locked, and even if the happening were more evidential its significance would be ambiguous.

THE KOGELNIK CASE

WE have already narrated some of the happenings surrounding "Hannie" at Commander Kogelnik's house in London in 1922

(Chapter 4). According to the commander during the period of the disturbance, which included miscellaneous throwings of objects (and interestingly enough, traction of Mr. Kogelnik's bed while the presumed "medium" Hannie was asleep), objects were frequently "found missing," and their discovery resisted diligent search. Sometimes these reappeared with dramatic suddenness in such a way as to suggest that they had come apparently *ex nihilo*. But unfortunately there seems to have been no direct observation of a sudden appearance in empty space. For a fortnight Commander Kogelnik had been unable to find an inkstand that normally stood on his desk. All search for it had been in vain. "Whilst my wife was up under the roof, suddenly there was a whistling sound from the further end of the large space where no one had been standing. Then came a crash, and the inkstand fell at my wife's feet, shivered to fragments, the ink it had contained running about over the floor."

If objects are in fact teleported or taken into a limbo state of invisibility, then we should expect to come on some cases in which an observer sees a body in the act of vanishing. Oddly enough, there seems to be only one instance of this in the literature. It occurs further in the passage already quoted concerning Mrs. Kogelnik's experiences in the loft: "After this the work of cleaning stopped, and as my wife saw an axe disappearing before her eyes, she quitted the room. All this happened between 10 and 12 noon, and the light was good for observation" (Kogelnik, 1922).

Here the "vanishing" of the ax in a literal use of the word has to be inferred from the phraseology used. Mrs. Kogelnik was apparently not understood by the commander to mean merely that she had seen the ax flying away. It is a pity that, supposing "sudden disappearance" really to have happened, the description provided is not more definite and detailed.

THE TATRA CASE

This case, which has been mentioned earlier, is interesting as being one of the few modern cases in which stones have been reported indoors. The man and boy pursued by stones outdoors took shelter in a tavern, "but the stones pursued them there, and the pair were promptly ejected on the ground that they must be possessed by the devil. When they reached home . . . stones seemed to fall from the ceiling. In one of the rooms the father made a collection of curious pebbles and geological specimens. These now started flying from one room to another and dropped on the ground. The next day a piece of coal in the kitchen sailed out and broke a glass panel in the door. In the afternoon a pack of playing cards flew up from the table and scattered among the visitors who were present. Finally on the third day some pieces of money dropped from nowhere—between ten and twenty coins in all—and there was also a twenty-kronen note. It was afterwards discovered that this money belonged to one of the people in the house. The stones which fell were of a type common in the district. It is stated that the 13 year old boy had taken part as a medium in various seances in other parts of the country; but these particular manifestations were new and had only occurred in this, his native village."

Despite the comparative modernity of this story, communicated in 1928 (in a letter written in Latin) by a Jesuit Father in Bratislava to Father Thurston (1953), we naturally regret the remoteness and indirectness of the testimony. Its points of resemblance to equally remote cases (e.g., New Hampshire, 1682, and Poona, 1928) are, however, striking. Thurston remarks that the Slovak parish priest, the original informant, is not likely to have been acquainted with poltergeist literature.

ELEONORE ZUGUN

Harry Price remarked (1945) that he was unable to decide which of the two classes of Eleonore's phenomena, the telekinetic or stigmatic, was the more convincing. In the preceding chapter we have quoted various eyewitnesses of the "stigmatization" and it would seem that there is sufficient testimony to accept its genuineness. "Ordinary" poltergeist phenomena do not interest us in the present context, and we need merely look at alleged teleportation. Two episodes deserve consideration.

Mr. E. Clephan Palmer writing in the *Daily News* (October 2, 1926) said that on October 1, while Eleonore was stooping over a clockwork cat on the floor, he saw a white enameled L-shaped piece of metal drop from the ceiling, striking Price's shoulder, and then fall to the floor. Price says (1945, p. 261) "I distinctly saw the letter strike the girl's head and then fall upon the floor." The letter was one of the kind used on the magnetic notice board in the lobby on the ground floor. Going down immediately, they found every letter in place. Checking the unused letters, they found only one—the L—missing from the box in which they were kept. This box was secured

by two fasteners and kept in a closed cupboard in the library. Price says a typist and an assistant were in the library when the letter fell in the laboratory, and that only one other person (out at the time) knew where the letters were kept. He says there is not the slightest evidence that anyone was cheating, but that not being under stringent test conditions, the L incident could not be hailed as a phenomenon.

On October 11 Price had the stock of metallic letters checked over. The letters C and W were missing, and searched for without success. Now, Dr. R. J. Tillyard, F.R.S., chief entomologist to the Australian government, had taken an interest in Eleonore's phenomena and from time to time had visited Price's laboratory. The evidence as to the supposed teleportation of the C letter is contained in Dr. Tillyard's written statement printed in Price (1945). On October 22 he met Julian Huxley and Dr. Church at King's College. During a demonstration of the method used by Tillyard to tie the thumbs of the medium Harry Evans it became necessary to cut a piece of string, and he felt in his left-hand overcoat pocket for his knife, which was kept in a little leather case. He took out the case and then replaced it because Huxley cut the string with his own knife. He had no further occasion to take out the knife case until 8:45 that evening. Somewhat after 5 P.M. he walked from Imperial College to Price's laboratory to say goodbye to Eleonore and the countess, as they were leaving London on October 24. He hung up his greatcoat downstairs and went upstairs, where he found both Eleonore and the countess and wished them well. He came down again, put on his greatcoat and took a tube train from South Kensington station to Victoria, where he dined, and boarded the train for Rochester. About 8:45 he started to read an autographed copy of *Essays of a Biologist* given to him by Huxley. Some of the pages being uncut, he reached into the pocket of the greatcoat for the knife. "Then a curious feeling came over me. The knife did not feel like my knife at all. I drew it out and found firmly attached to the metal half-ring of the leather case enclosing it a white metallic 'C' which effectively closed the case [acting like a small clamp]. I realised at once that it was the 'C' which had been lost 11 days before from the notice board of 16 Queensberry Place, and the loss of which had been generally attributed to 'Dracu.'"

It will be seen that evidentially this is quite unimpressive. We need not suppose that Eleonore or the countess had opportunity to have access to the greatcoat while it was hanging up downstairs. But it is perfectly possible for one of the three employees to have had the C secreted since October 11 and to have nipped smartly to the cloakroom on seeing Tillyard come in. Admittedly, Tillyard says he was upstairs only about two or three minutes, but this might have been sufficient.

POONA

In the Poona case we have no corroboration of Miss Kohn's testimony concerning seeming teleportation, only the general corroboration provided by Dr. J. D. Jenkins' account of the other poltergeist phenomena in the Ketkar household. Additionally we have Professor Winternitz's commendation of the intelligence and scholarship of Dr. and Mrs. Ketkar, and the fact that Miss Kohn as a College teacher of languages can be presumed in some degree intelligent and responsible. We also have Thurston's assessment of her, formed as a result of some actual interviews, as an exceptionally intelligent and level-headed observer. Consequently we cannot lightly set aside her description of the fall of coins.

"On several occasions in broad daylight we now saw coins fall among us from above. This was always while the boy was in the house. . . . At first we could not always see the coins in mid-air, but merely saw them fall, being startled by the contact of the coin with the floor. Soon, however, we were able to observe more closely, and actually saw the money appear in the air. Generally the coins were one-piece or two-annas. In some cases these seemed to be coins which were missing from our purses; in other cases we could not account for the coins. In every instance it was most obvious that the boy was not himself doing the mischief."

This is certainly the most definite statement on record concerning apparent materialization *ex nihilo* in full light, though several others from different places and times approximate it. Even if we accepted it as amounting to proof of the fact, it does not enable us to distinguish between invisibility and teleportation.

MAURITIUS

In Mr. Ricks's description of the happenings at his bungalow we may recall that he alleges that stones seemed to fall from near the ceiling. Identified stones that which had previously been thrown out made their way in again, the doors and windows being shut. If we had corroboration this would be decisive in respect of mysterious

entry. Unfortunately it all depends on Ricks's statement alone. Granting the mysterious entry, it is still doubtful whether even a microscopic examination of the text would preclude absolutely the possibility that a stone thrown out did not invisibly sneak in, in the brief period while the door was still open. However, Ricks, I think, did say that he watched one particular stone (by now an old friend) carefully, and it was still there when he had closed up again.

MRS. FORBES

The case of Mrs. Forbes, discussed from many points of view by Dr. Nandor Fodor (1958, and Carrington and Fodor, 1953) remains, I think, unresolved. Dr. Fodor became convinced that in the séances she resorted to fraud, at least on some occasions. He felt that he had to reserve judgment as to the status of all the phenomena (including apports) surrounding her. However, the case is now certain to remain indeterminate and will not be useful in the present context.

VALUE OF THE EVIDENCE

It is clear from a perusal of the testimony and case reports that none of it amounts to scientific proof of the phenomenon of apparent materialization. However, the number of cases is not inconsiderable. This is particularly apparent when we compare it with the exiguousness of material relating to other types of phenomena, for instance levitation. In addition, there would seem to be some significance in the similarity of the testimony. Quite unrelated witnesses describe themselves as mystified in a similar way. In a substantial number of cases the objects are described as coming into view at a certain definite point, thirty centimeters away, or in midair, or a little below the ceiling. If they are merely telling a tall story, or reporting a hallucination, we might expect variations. For instance, the body, like the Cheshire cat in *Alice in Wonderland*, might for a time appear in shadowy or wraithlike form, or it might appear as a point and gradually expand. Again, it is always said that the objects are quite common or garden things. Their everyday nature never seems to be transformed into anything less prosaic or other-worldly. These remarks, of course, in no way contribute to strict proof but from a common-sense point of view they distinctly increase the plausibility of the accounts regarded *en bloc*.

There are two distinct attitudes possible in scientic study. Their applicability varies with the context. The context itself varies with the stage that research is in. Sometimes we are concerned merely with distinguishing between what is proved and what is not proved. Here we have to use a technique of acceptance or rejection. On this criterion a case must be one or the other. If not acceptable it has to be rejected without ceremony. From time to time we have employed ruthless rejection of alleged poltergeist cases.

However, scientific work is not made up entirely of acceptance and rejection. There is always a phase of study in which many things are suggested but clearly not proved. Thus in all research (even of the most humdrum variety) there is a large group of data in the nonproven category but such as to constitute a *prima facie* case for the truth of certain phenomena. Since a *prima facie* case exists, these data cannot be summarily rejected. The only truly scientific attitude is to keep them "on the table" rather than "under the table." Often such data constitute something of a nuisance. This has been well expressed by the remark: "There is nothing so upsetting as coming on another confounded discovery [disrupting some tidy scheme of thought]."

The writer therefore is inclined to suggest that the correct procedure with the evidence regarding teleportation and the like is to retain it as constituting a *prima facie* case, not yet proven.

The use of nonproven material can be positive. For example, it may serve as a warning that over-elementary theories may later be disproved. In this and other ways it may guide thought.

EXPLANATIONS?

Having decided to classify our information in the "nonproven" pigeonhole, we realize that little harm can result from disciplined speculation about the possible implications of the supposed phenomenon, provided the provisional nature of the basic premise is kept in view.

We rejected apportation as a phenomenon distinct from teleportation because the ordinary nature of the apported objects argued against their special creation. Similarly, we may argue on several grounds against the hypothesis that teleported objects have been dematerialized and then rematerialized. In some cases identified objects have been transported, and to suppose they have been annihilated and reconstituted exactly as before is a somewhat artificial postulate

as well as an *ad hoc* one. That is to say, economy of thought requires us to postulate actual physical continuity where there is apparent physical continuity.

The foregoing argument would not apply if the transference from one location to another were in fact instantaneous, for then no question of continuity or of conservation would arise. However, farfetched as the concept of instantaneous teleportation may be, it is logically superior to the assumption of annihilation and re-creation. However, one would adopt it only in the last resort. It is in any case an unanalyzable concept. We are quite devoid of notions or even language with which to discuss it. In addition, if we choose to restrict ourselves to theories that do not conflict with established physical laws, then instantaneous transmission becomes a very difficult notion, for it contradicts the somewhat well-founded physical law that neither matter nor energy can travel faster than light. It does not seem profitable in our present state of knowledge to spend further time considering whether or not this law constitutes a complete prohibition to instantaneous transmission by means as yet unknown to physics.

If no teleportation does in fact occur and the observations are to be explained in terms of subjective invisibility, no physical problem survives for discussion, the question then becoming one of paranormal psychology. The writer is unconvinced by subjective invisibility as an explanation of the testimony collected, and thinks it worth while to consider physical alternatives.

♄ HIGHER SPACE

The explanation of the feats ascribed to physical mediumship by invoking the fourth dimension is not at all novel. Indeed, it is quite a "chestnut." Our good Dr. Henry More was perhaps the first to suggest (back in the seventeenth century) that "spirits" were four-dimensional entities. In the nineteenth century it became quite a commonplace of spiritualist discourse, the notion of higher spaces having percolated through from the world of mathematics, where it developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Our space of ordinary everyday experience is, of course, three dimensional. This is most easily described by saying that a two-dimensional surface, such as the surface of a sphere, divides space into two disconnected parts—the inside and the outside. A one-dimensional curve, such as the earth's equator, divides the surface into two parts, and a single point on the curve divides that. Alternatively, the threefold freedom

of movement (which is what is meant by three-dimensionality) of space is shown by the fact that the position of a point in a room can be specified completely by giving three measurements, i.e., its distances from the floor and two adjoining walls. Using algebra, however, we can work out the properties that space would have if there were fourfold freedom of movement. In this way higher space may be said to exist in an abstract sense as a self-consistent (i.e., not logically contradictory) product of the imagination. This concept is an invaluable aid to mathematical problem-solving in many fields.

But this is abstract mathematical space; what of the real space of our daily lives? The writer, like others, finds it confusing to use the same word "space" to allude to spaces that can be imagined as well as to the domain formed by matter and its "stamping ground," and it is convenient therefore to refer to the latter (real space or physical space) as the "physical continuum." This continuum is ordinary matter and the region ordinarily accessible to it—ordinary space. This latter is not, it would appear, an inert emptiness but replete with its own physical activity and physical properties. For instance, besides being the carrier of light and other radiations, it spontaneously produces its own radiation field. The real existence of this *vacuum fluctuation* (as it is called) is shown by a measurable effect on the magnetic moment of an electron. Even more surprisingly, empty space has to be regarded as a kind of sea of electrons in an inert state (negative energy)—lying "doggo," as it were. The reality of these electrons is demonstrated also by a measurable effect on the magnetic moment of an ordinary electron, and more strikingly by the occasional casting up of one of the dormant electrons into a state of positive energy when it is observable as an ordinary electron, as may be achieved by high-energy radiation. Besides demonstrating the oddness of the physical world, these curious facts tend to act as an aid to thought by showing that physical space may conveniently be considered substantial, possessing structure as well as mere extent. For purposes of mapping out the physical continuum we can use any mathematical space we like (within certain reasonable limits). And it is this which is meant by the statement sometimes made in cosmology that "space is curved" or "space is flat"—i.e., we can if we wish, for simplicity of description of the shape of the physical continuum, imagine it immersed in a (purely mathematical) space of higher dimension. But this is a mere conceptual artifice. As far as all discoveries in physics have gone thus far the intrinsic dimensionality of space is three and only three.

However, there appears to be no logical necessity for the physi-

cal continuum to be so limited. That it is, seems to have the status of an empirical fact only. It remains, therefore, a purely open question whether or not there is an *actual* space of higher dimension not usually accessible to matter or energy, but which physical objects could in principle get into. If so there is presumably some force which holds the physical continuum together and stops things from leaking away into other compartments of higher space (cf. Chapter 18).

The existence of higher space is clearly a convenient postulate for explaining apparent materializations and dematerializations. In the nineteenth century it was invoked as an explanation of the knot-untying feats of Henry Slade and other mediums. All knots can be unlooped if moved into the fourth dimension. Clearly no room is closed if an object can take a trajectory in higher space. It will (to boot) appear or disappear instantaneously. Curiously, nineteenth-century enthusiasts like Hinton and others looked only to mediumistic feats as providing evidence of the fourth dimension. Poltergeist cases, had they been aware of them, would have been perhaps more suggestive and probably more convincing.

I think it is fair to say that the postulate of higher space, if offered as an explanation of poltergeist "materializations" of missiles, has no *a priori* objection against it. On the other hand, there seems to be no evidence from other scientific fields in its favor. Ernst Mach, writing in the midnineteenth century, put a footnote in his *Science of Mechanics* concerning the dimensionality of space. (Mach is now a great name in science, on account of "Mach's principle," which is now a cornerstone of cosmology, but not regarded highly in his own time.) He poured scorn on the citing of mediumistic probes of the fourth dimension, but curiously enough he opened by saying that if we had proof of higher dimensionality by the entry of bodies into our space we should presumably have to accept it.

PARASPACE

THERE remains, however, an alternative explanation. It has something in common mathematically with the postulate of higher space but is really very different. It will be recollected that we chose to reject the hypothesis of objective invisibility on the ground that we refused to permit of an inconsistent modification of physical properties. The same objection does not apply to something we could conceive of as a general change of state in which the body stays unaltered in all its parts and their mutual relations but becomes entirely unreactive with ordinary matter. In this state we might suppose it able to pass through space occupied by unconverted matter, and to be invisible. The reader may feel this suggestion is rather equivalent to resurrecting the notion of the "astral plane." This is not necessarily an objection to it. In the history of natural philosophy many discarded concepts have been succeeded, long after they have been dead and buried, by new concepts having something in common with them, but an entirely different "atmosphere" and interrelation with other concepts.

REMARK

THE speculation in which we have indulged concerning conceivable teleportation mechanisms may well be judged premature. The discussion may have been useful, however, as indicating that the apparent materialization of objects in poltergeist cases need not be a "materialization" at all. On the other hand the various mechanisms postulated are all somewhat improbable *a priori*. Consequently the evidence for such phenomena does put a great strain on our credibility in a way that other poltergeist phenomena do not. Thus things are left somewhat nicely balanced between the suggestiveness of a not inconsiderable body of evidence and a serious barrier of a priori improbability. To resolve this impasse what is really needed is a contemporary case with good witnesses, ideal test conditions, and mechanical recording.

CONCLUSIONS

A SURPRISINGLY high proportion of situations recognizable as poltergeist cases are characterized by missiles whose point of origin either cannot be detected or is said to be at a point in midair. They are rarely hot.

The missiles are perfectly ordinary objects, sometimes identified ones, and on this basis we reject the notion of creation and of dematerialization and rematerialization.

Subjective invisibility is a logically admissible explanation but there is no real evidence in favor of it.

There are only a few cases that distinguish between objective invisibility and teleportation.

Logical analysis suggests three possible mechanisms for teleportation: (a) instantaneous transfer (to which there remain some objections); (b) transfer through higher space; (c) acquisition of a state nonreactive with ordinary matter.

All explanations are somewhat implausible *a priori*. The evidence is suggestive but not conclusive. The whole subject merits being "kept on the table."

☿ CASES CITED: OUTDOORS

	Date	*Reference*
Elizabeth Burridge, Ewell	1682	Ewen
Walton, Great Island	1682	Thurston
Gerstmann, Dortmund	1713	Thurston
Heinisch, Gröben	1718	Thurston
Carlow St., Truro	1821	Fort
Les Clavaux, Livet	1843	Thurston
Rue des Grès, Paris	1849	Flammarion
Rue des Noyers, Paris	1860	Flammarion
Maddalena Rimassa, Genoa	1865	Thurston, Gatti
Reverdey Road, London	1872	Fort
Germaine Maire, Nancy	1910	Flammarion
Van Zanten, Marcinelle	1913	Flammarion
Gaskin home, London	1920	Fort
St. Michel-de-Chabrillanoux	1921	Flammarion
Sara, Roodeport	1922	Fort
Tatra, Slovakia	1927	Thurston
Ricks, Mauritius	1937	C. and F.

☿ CASES CITED: HOT STONES

	Date	*Reference*
The Devil of Mascon	1612	Thurston
Charleston	1886	Fort
Grottendieck, Sumatra	1903	Fielding, Sitwell

☿ CASES CITED: INDOORS

	Date	*Reference*
Helpidius	530	Thurston
Nicholas Remy, Auch	1563	Remy
Lutterworth	1646	Baxter
Walton, Great Island	1682	Thurston
Heinisch, Gröben	1718	Thurston
Giles children, Bristol	1762	Thurston
Obergemeiner, Münchhoff	1818	Thurston
Elizabeth Bell	1818	C. and F.
Bristow, Swanland	1849	Myers
Bank House, Eccleston	1873	Fort
Chateau, Calvados	1875	Sitwell
Maggie, Derrygonnelly	1877	Barrett
Esther Cox, Amherst	1878	Sitwell

Lingo, Lebanon, Ohio	1880	Fort
Manser, Wellesley, Ontario	1880	Fort
Jordan, New York	1883	Fort
Pondicherry	1888	Fort
Martin, Caldwell County, North Carolina	1888	Fort
Dagg, Clarendon	1889	Thurston
Best, Durweston	1894	Podmore
Floralina, Madras	1897	Flammarion
City of London	1901	Thurston
Lorelhai, Port of Spain	1905	Fort
McLaughlin, Magilligan	1907	Fort
Molignon, Rhone	1914	Flammarion
Askerwell Rectory	1919	Fort
Mary Phillips, Swanton	1919	Fort
Christo, Coimbra	1919	Flammarion
Kogelnik, London	1922	Thurston
Eleonore Zugun, London	1926	Price
		Thurston
Damodar Ketkar, Poona	1928	Thurston
Ricks, Mauritius	1937	C. and F.
Mrs. Forbes, Thornton Heath	1938	Fodor

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Mirville, Marquis de	1863	*Les Esprits et Leurs Manifestations Varieux*. De Surcy, Paris.
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PART IV

Interpretation

SUMMARY | *Chapter 13*

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Logical Presuppositions in Occult Studies

Various mutually exclusive possible approaches to the "supernatural" are discussed. The viewpoint adopted for evaluation of poltergeist happenings is that of *regular naturalism*, which seeks to explain phenomena in terms of regular and lawful processes which operate in conjunction with, and without nullifying, known laws of nature.

The Mediumistic Theory

No cogent evidence is found in the body of poltergeist cases reviewed in this book to give especial support to the assumption that in *this* type of "haunting" any role is played by a discarnate entity or "spirit" other than at most an extension of the personality of the "medium" herself.

Biological Factors in Causation

Consideration of the data suggests that poltergeist activity is a "psychic" phenomenon in the sense of being associated with the higher human brain centers when these are *not* fully inhibited by sleep, nor deranged by epileptiform discharge, nor imperfectly developed as in mental defect.

The association with adolescence may be psychological rather than directly physiological.

Chapter 16

Psychoneurotic Conditions in Poltergeist Cases

With a single exception, overt psychosis is absent from poltergeist cases but psychoneurotic conditions are reported with a relative incidence distinctly higher than that in the general population. Observers in past cases have rarely explicitly recognized these conditions but have occasionally given descriptions of physical and behavioral signs that make possible unmistakable retrospective diagnoses of anxiety, hysteria, etc. This increases our confidence in their accounts of the poltergeist phenomena themselves.

It is suggested that anxiety is often an important precipitating factor, giving rise to abnormal cerebral activity, which in turn facilitates the release of paranormal powers.

It is tempting also to regard the physical phenomena as themselves being sometimes a "conversion symptom," and perhaps also a device yielding "secondary neurotic gain," by attention-seeking or otherwise.

Chapter 17

Poltergeist Phenomena and Physical Mediumship

A small amount of material (from sources *outside* the conventional séance room) is assembled suggesting that mature adults are, very rarely, the centers of physical phenomena analogous to the poltergeist hauntings of juveniles.

Further support is got for the hypothesis that neurosis, anxiety, or emotion is often an important etiological factor.

Chapter 18

Physical Problems

Concepts of physical action as available in modern theoretical physics are analyzed with reference to their applicability to the physical phenomena in poltergeist cases.

None of the ectoplasmic mechanisms of spiritualism appear relevant to poltergeist phenomena.

"Astral body" or "psychon" theories do not appear to be logically excluded. This is also true of "action at a distance" theories and concepts of an *anima mundi*.

The difficulties of alleged teleportation phenomena are examined.

Chapter 19

Retrospect and Prospect

Some of the questions set out and conclusions drawn in this study are briefly reviewed and evaluated.

Guiding principles for investigating poltergeist cases are suggested.

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Logical Presuppositions in Occult Studies

Any explanation offered for observed phenomena involves some general assumptions or postulates. These underlying assumptions are not always stated explicitly but will be implicit in what is said, even when they are possibly unconscious presuppositions in the thought of the theorist. Consequently it may be worth while to state briefly what types of prior attitude can be taken up by the student of occult phenomena. There are, it would seem, just four main types of general theory within the framework of which one can attempt to organize one's ideas.

First, there are two types of what may be called *supernaturalism.*

The term "supernaturalism" is, I think, a proper description for a point of view that conceives of physical laws being not merely counteracted but temporarily suspended, abrogated, or overruled by occult intervention. We might hypothecate that supernaturalism does occur, but occurs with certain regularities in its behavior. This sort of supernaturalism might be described as orderly or *regular supernaturalism*. On the other hand, there is no logical objection to the possibility that supernaturalism operates irregularly and capriciously, so that no laws in its behavior are in principle discoverable. This kind of supernaturalism could be called *capricious supernaturalism.* It is clear that it is hard to distinguish between this kind of supernaturalism and the "miracle." Occasionally writers have used the

term "miracle" out of a religious context in order to describe something contrary to the laws of nature—though often they have merely used the word for the sake of emphasis to indicate something *apparently* contrary to nature's laws, i.e., as a vivid name for a paranormal phenomenon.

The majority of serious workers in parapsychology have undoubtedly long ceased to look for explanations in the realm of capricious supernaturalism. And I think it is likely that they have not consciously entertained the idea even of regular supernaturalism, in which existing laws of nature are set aside by a *force majeure*. In fact, the term "paranormal," though deliberately and rightly "neutral" in flavor, tends to be used in a context of thought that could be described as "naturalism." That is, we look to an explanation of paranormal phenomena through forces or entities—perhaps "psychic" or "mental" in character—existing side by side with, or even in organic unity with, the known world of physical objects and forces. The "naturalist" conception I think usually tacitly assumes that these occult forces (or perhaps entities) do not suspend the known laws of nature but act in conjunction with them, according to regular laws. These laws are admittedly as yet unknown but we do not suppose them to be in principle nonexistent or unknowable. Thus I think that a majority of psychic research workers (if their subject matter presented them with the necessity of facing the question) would come down on the side of *regular naturalism* as the best working hypothesis in occult studies. Or at least they would feel that it was premature to abandon this standpoint at the present time. This question has rarely presented itself acutely. In the field of mental phenomena—telepathy, clairvoyance, etc.—the question of conformity to known physical laws rarely appears; precisely because the subject matter is mental happenings. In poltergeist studies, however, we are concerned largely with the dynamics of material objects and I think that even at a low level of interpretation "naturalism" becomes an issue. Once or twice in the present study I have had occasion consciously to apply the principle of regular naturalism, and it is only for this reason that I have become aware that, if used, it needs to be honestly stated.

I think one could add a fourth member to the list of possible theoretical standpoints. One could suppose that "psychic forces" are consistent in their action with physical laws but are irregular or capricious, i.e., obey no laws themselves. This point of view has

actually been put forward in respect to telepathy, clairvoyance, and other mental phenomena. It is a perfectly arguable and logical position. In practice I feel, however, that it is not easy to distinguish from capricious supernaturalism. Also, it may be agreed by many that there is danger in the assumption that laws are not there to be found, and that such a point of view tends to retard research. I have therefore chosen "regular naturalism" as my philosophical position *pro tempore* in dealing with problems of interpretation of poltergeist phenomena. I am not sure whether it plays any important part in the theoretical discussion in the remaining chapters. However, it may often have come in implicitly, possibly at times without my being consciously aware of it.

Naturally, any restrictive hypothesis must eventually show up as a restriction on the kind of theories of poltergeist action and origin. It is conceivably the case that all such explicitly restricted theories will fail in the light of that further empirical knowledge that we hope will be forthcoming in the next decades. If so, this will show that they failed as being foredoomed by the initial restriction built in. But, as said above, the time is not yet. Indeed, without some initial restriction the admissable license in theory-building would be so extensive that it is difficult to see how verifiable results could be obtained. When there is too much initial license in axioms, it is hard to see how theory and fantasy can be distinguished.

One further viewpoint is worthy of mention. Charles Fort appears to be its only representative. In his *Books* he occasionally suggests that the "laws of nature" are not true and binding laws but involve some element of indeterminacy. Such a postulate ought, it seems, to be classified as *capricious naturalism*, because simultaneously with putting forward this suggestion, Fort explicitly rejects the "supernatural" as a category of existence. I think it will be agreed that if we expel capricious supernaturalism from our methodology then capricious naturalism has to be rejected *a fortiori*.

It remains to add that in postulating regular laws for paranormal phenomena it is not implied that these laws are necessarily *deterministic* in the sense of classical physics. As in modern physics, or for that matter in biology, we have to conceive of happenings which are indeed lawful but subject to laws which are of a *probabilistic* rather than a deterministic kind. In short, the laws determine not the events themselves but their probabilities.

CONCLUSION

THE only viewpoint that seems useful at the present time is that of *regular naturalism*. This regards the universe as a unity in which known physical forces and entities act in a constant and regular way, and seeks to explain paranormal happenings as the result of additional "forces" and entities regarded as functioning in a regular, lawful manner, their effects being superimposed on those of known forces without suspending or overruling the latter. Classical determinism is not postulated.

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The Mediumistic Theory

OUR ARRANGEMENT of the discussion is such as to suggest that there are only two logical possibilities for explanation of the poltergeist: (a) a disembodied entity that in some way needs a human "medium" in order to be capable of manifesting its activity (this is the *mediumistic theory*); (b) that the activity of the so-called poltergeist is in reality merely the activity of the poltergeist focus, or the activity of some component of the latter's personality. (This may be termed the *subconscious-personality theory*, because the activity seems to be involuntary.)

Clearly there are more logical possibilities than these available. The simplest is that the "poltergeist" really does exist as a freely functioning entity in no way dependent on a human medium as an instrument for manifestation. The objection to this assumption is not on logical grounds but purely as an empirical matter. The earliest records show association of activities with a particular individual—not invariably, it is true, but very commonly. Most, if not all, modern cases do show this association, which suggests it is always there if looked for. Consequently (as most serious writers have done) we may postulate this dependence on a poltergeist focus as a constant feature.

There are, of course, "hybrid" theories that may be formulated retaining elements of both theory (a) and theory (b). We shall encounter these *en passant*. However, it is convenient to conduct discussion in terms of the two main possibilities.

First, it seems worth saying that there are no facts that adjudicate decisively between the two theories. All that we can do is to look impartially at indications pointing in one or the other direction. This amounts to accumulating "plausibility" for the rival hypotheses.

It is possible that were it not for the development of spiritualism subsequent to Catherine Crowe's first exploratory essay on the poltergeist, the mediumistic theory of poltergeists might never have been formulated. As it was, the notion of a spirit manifesting itself through the intermediacy of a human "medium" became well established by the time that Barrett, Flammarion, and others took an interest in poltergeist cases. Consequently, even though Barrett and Flammarion were both well aware that the mediumistic theory was not demanded by the facts, the use of the word "medium" had been so well established that it was used in discussion of poltergeists despite the fact that it was a "question-begging" term. And the term is still useful today provided that the context in which it is employed makes clear to what extent the usage relates or not to a spiritistic hypothesis.

In the most definite form of the mediumistic theory the agency postulated is regarded as a disembodied entity possessed of intelligence and purpose and perhaps also individual personality. This notion is of course extremely ancient, going back well into preclassical times, and is widely current today among primitive peoples, and among more civilized peoples who have retained religions of a more primitive type. The antiquity, primitiveness, and obvious anthropomorphism of an idea does not necessarily discredit it, or necessarily invalidate its applicability (in a logically purer form) if required by contemporary evidence. However, if it is the case that a notion can be equated to a primitive form, it inevitably arouses the suspicion that it is being unwarrantably imported *a priori* into our assessment of the facts.

Less extreme forms of mediumistic theory could be advanced, and no doubt have been. For instance, we might suppose there are entities of very low intelligence and undifferentiated personality that disport themselves on occasion. Such presumably would be the "elementals" referred to by Madam Acartney in Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit*, and which figure entertainingly in some less orthodox ghost stories. Entities of this class have particularly been invoked to explain the apparently unintelligent antics of the poltergeist. In popular use

the term "poltergeist" is used to indicate a being precisely of this type.

Finally, there are concepts of a hybrid nature such as the hypothesis adumbrated by Professor Barrett (1911, p. 411). He says:

> But the scientific use of the imagination is necessary alike in meteorological and bizarre physical phenomena, such as poltergeists. The obvious question arises, Why in the latter is a human radiant center necessary? In inorganic nature we find in the behaviour of saturated solutions of salts a state of unstable equilibrium such that a particle of solid matter dropped into the quiescent liquid will suddenly create a molecular disturbance which spreads throughout the solution, causing solid crystals to appear and aggregate; a general commotion results for a short time, until the whole becomes a solid mass of crystals. Here we see the effect of a *nucleus* upon a previously quiescent state of things. . . . We may term the child, or other living person in poltergeist phenomena, the *nucleus*, which is the determining factor. We ourselves and the whole world may be but nucleated cells in a vaster living organism, of which we can form no conception.

Barrett has an interesting idea here which I would formulate as follows. There is an undifferentiated psychic substratum to things. Occasionally an irregularity in the substratum, constituted by an unusual psychic state in a person, acts as a point of "condensation." As a result of this process of condensation, differentiation takes place in the psychic substratum and shows itself as an entity with some psychic life of its own. On this theory the "poltergeist" is a psychic reality, is not coterminous with the personality of the medium and has a temporary life of its own. This too is a mediumistic theory, but differs from the more traditional ones in that it does not postulate a permanent existence or identity for the "visitant." As it has some advantages, it will be a theory useful to keep in mind, and for convenience I will call it the "psychic-crystallization theory." (*En passant* we may note that Barrett did not continue to argue consistently along these lines. He went on to talk in a more traditionalist vein, saying, "But evolution in animate and inanimate nature is unlikely to be confined to the visible universe. Living creatures of different types and varied intelligence may exist in the unseen as

in the seen. Possibly these poltergeist phenomena may be due to some of these, perhaps mischievous or rudimentary, intelligences in the unseen: I do not know why we should imagine there are no fools or naughty children in the spiritual world; possibly they are as numerous there as here.") It will be noted that with very slight changes the "psychic condensation" theory would pass over into being a subconscious-personality theory. We might imagine that an unusual personality state allows the augmentation of the normal personality as the result of fusion with it of previously undifferentiated psychic elements available in the "substratum," if the latter be supposed to exist. One further modification takes us completely out of the sphere of mediumistic theories, and brings us to the subconscious-personality theory. In this no augmentation of the "medium's" personality is contemplated. We simply suppose that the poltergeist manifestations are merely functions of the medium's ordinary constitution.

We have now assembled a complete spectrum of mediumistic theories stretching from the conventional spiritistic notion at one extreme to the subconscious-personality concept at the other. It may be convenient to list these variants, adding some further comments.

1. The agency is a nonmaterial intelligent being existing independently of the medium.

It has been suggested that in poltergeist phenomena such beings are trying to communicate. This hypothesis attributes the low information content of the happenings to the inefficiency of the means of communication available to the would-be communicators.

2. The agency is as above but has little or no intelligence, as (so it is said) is implied by the meaningless nature of its activities. Its manifestation would therefore seem to represent a phase of parasitic existence.

3. In the "psychic-crystallization" theory, the poltergeist has some degree of independent existence, but it is only a temporary one, the entity being an artifact comprised of elements differentiated from a previously undifferentiated psychic substratum.

4. There is no agency other than the "medium" herself.

It will be seen that there are practically no observational criteria by which Theories 3 and 4 can be distinguished from one another or from minor variants of 3. Indeed, it is difficult to foresee a time when they would become separable. We shall therefore class the psychic-crystallization theory as a variant of the subconscious-personality hypothesis, and at present will merely concern ourselves with the mediumistic theory proper in its two forms (intellectual and nonintellectual visitants).

☌ THE CONSIDERATENESS OF POLTERGEISTS

It has been noted that poltergeists are never lethal and rarely if at all inflict grievous bodily harm. This is still true of the cases where malice is plainly evident, as with the Giles children, Eleonore Zugun, and Schuppart, and even of the Bell "witch" case if we discount the suggestion that the poltergeist poisoned John Bell.

Cases of minor physical injury are rare, suggesting that they arise accidentally or by failure of the poltergeist to achieve complete physical control of the missiles. This militates very strongly against the "elemental" theory of the poltergeist. The agency ultimately regulating events cannot be very far below the human level in reason or morality.

Occasionally especial sensitivity to human needs has been shown and remarked by observers. The poltergeists at Tidworth and at Gröben both declared a truce during the confinements of the materfamilias, respectively Mrs. Mompesson and Frau Heinish. (The least artificial interpretation is that the poltergeist reacted with the same concern as that of one of the children for its mother, which is a strong pointer to the notion that the poltergeist was in fact a manifestation of the living child's powers.) Even on a spiritist interpretation this argues for intelligence and sensibility.

☌ THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE POLTERGEIST

Let us examine the suggestion that the poltergeist is a spirit trying to get a message through but is limited in its capability and all it can do is to fling things about. (Here we are thinking of communication in a literal fashion and not as psychological communication in the sense in which an action can be interpreted as a cry for help or as symbolic of an emotion.) This is a very curious suggestion because there is some evidence that quite frequently the poltergeist has a remarkable degree of apparently intelligent control of the flying objects. It seems therefore inconceivable that when the supposedly intelligent communicator has such refined practical ability it cannot employ it to transmit its message. The logical conclusion is surely that there is no message.

A reasonable objection may be made that we are treating the body of poltergeist cases as a homogeneous one. It might be claimed that there are low-level spirits with the skill, sensibility, and frolicsomeness of a pet dog but with no message or thought to communicate, and also a different class of spirits with something to say. We can only answer this by considering the group of talking and rapping poltergeists, which are the only candidates for entry into this latter category.

♄ THE TALKING POLTERGEISTS

Here the striking thing is the inconsistency of the visitant. It undergoes changes of voice, and assumes different personalities. Occasionally it promises to reform or claims to be a good spirit who has chased away the bad one, but tends to forget itself and backslides. It might be possible to interpret this as what is alleged to happen in some mediumistic séances. The different "controls" (thought of as distinct entities) struggle for possession of the medium, jostling one another aside, and jump their places in the queue. But this is a trifle forced. When we read of the reformation of the visitant to the Dagg household, and his gradual and inadvertent backsliding into his original buffoonery we can hardly suppose any distinction of identity really existed. Though the "visitants" at Mascon, and Hjaltastad, and the Bell "witch" claimed various identities, their hearers appear to have persisted in regarding them as merely different roles put on by a single "devil." To the modern mind the various disguises sound like fictional characters, the mere play of a human-like imagination. This conclusion is reinforced by the content of what the poltergeists say. It is always strictly contemporary in flavor. (This is not conclusive. It could be explained by saying that the visitants were the souls of persons recently dead. If so, the visitants' other behavior has been inconsistent with this hypothesis.)

Rapping spirits communicating in code have usually claimed no identity. "Walter Hussey" is an exception who conversed on a childlike level of discourse with little Florrie at Kingstown. Barrett found nothing to indicate the past or present existence of a real child of that name, and regarded Walter as a creation of Florrie's own imagination. The rappings that occurred in the presence of Alice Cocat at Grenoble purported to be messages to her from her fiancé. This suggests that the communications may have come paranormally and unconsciously from the young man. The investigating officials, however, seemed to think that most plausibly the manifestations derived from Alice herself. "As the raps are not considered as emanating from the spirit of a deceased but a living person, they are probably only a function of the faculties of Mlle. Alice."

♄ APPARITIONS

Much weight cannot be given to the appearance of apparitions in poltergeist cases. They are very rare and have usually been seen only by children. The Giles girls (as Thurston says), "responding no doubt to the folk beliefs still widely prevalent in 1762, were inclined to romance about a woman dressed in a dirty chef's hat with a torn ragged gown, and attributed to her a prominent part in the troubles which had befallen them."

The morning after the final departure of the Dagg poltergeist, the three children came running into the house crying out that they had seen a beautiful man, dressed in white, with ribbons and pretty things all over his clothes, with a lovely face and white hair, and a lovely gold thing on his head with stars in it. He lifted up Mary and Johnny, who was allowed to play on the "music-thing" he had with him. Dinah said that he told them that Woodcock thought him not to be an angel, but he would show them he was. According to Dinah he then went up to heaven, ascending in the air in a kind of fire which seemed to blaze up from his feet and surround him until he disappeared (Thurston, p. 167). No account of questioning could shake the childrens' stories. Thurston does not think the experience was invented either by Percy Woodcock or by Dinah, and suggests that it is best explained by a telepathic influence affecting simultaneously the susceptible mental faculties of the children, enabling them to visualize a scene existing only in their own imagination.

At Ringcroft in 1695 some of the witnesses said they saw a dark shape in the barn. A child's hand was seen by the minister when kneeling at prayer. This may have been the hand of a living child. The phenomena described were abundant and various and real ones may have been mixed with fun and frolics.

The Haltwhistle case at Island Magee in 1710 is not a good one. The old lady, soon to die, kept losing her possessions, which were found tucked away in obscure places. In the second phase a maid and a child said they had seen the apparition of a boy throwing things in from the yard. There were no poltergeist phenomena

in the third phase, when a newly engaged servant girl complained of witchcraft persecution of the classic type, leading to one of Ireland's few trials for witchcraft. Little can be made of the alleged apparition. The same has to be said of the assertion that a black boy appeared in John Styles's house at Newbury, Massachusetts, in 1679.

The younger boy at Cideville declared himself to be haunted by a specter wearing a blouse, and gave evidence to that effect in the court proceedings brought by Thorel, the shepherd against the *abbé*. On one occasion when out walking with the *abbé* he met Thorel, he identified him as the specter. Thus even if the hallucination was genuine it showed no association with a dead person, or with a "spirit" of any kind.

It will be noted that usually the apparitions appearing in poltergeist cases show themselves only to children, and this seems to be practically a rule. Thus it was young Damodar at Poona who saw the only phantoms. Too much should not be made of John Bell seeing a peculiar animal—like a dog and yet not—sitting in the corn, for perhaps it was a hare (or some North American equivalent). His children Betsy and Drewry saw another strange creature, and oddly-behaving rabbits. The Bell "witch" claimed their shapes as its own.

Floralina at Ooty claimed to see two women without heads. Since, as we shall see, Floralina was either epileptic, hysteric or schizophrenic, it would be rash to suppose that this bizarre apparition was other than a subjective hallucination.

According to Thurston (1953), quoting from *The West Indian* (September, 1933, January, 1934) a cottage at Lowther Lane, Grenada, B.W.I., was bombarded by stones falling on the roof mysteriously as if from a great height but yet showing no rebound, much to the puzzlement of the police who climbed on the roof to investigate. Excelia Mark, the occupant, said that stones seemed to fall only when her granddaughter Ivy (age fifteen but looking only about eleven) was present. As for Ivy, she testified that she saw a man dressed in white (sometimes accompanied by other white figures) inside and outside of the house. She pointed them out to other people on several occasions, but they all said they saw nothing. This was confirmed by the grandmother.

The seeing of phantoms is rare in poltergeist cases but it does occur, and in at least four of the cases cited, the observer has been the person indicated by other evidence as being the poltergeist "medium." This is a slight pointer to the existence of an independent entity causative of the disturbances. Thus Thurston (p. 142) appropriately remarks on the "possible sensitiveness of a psychically endowed child or young person whose mediumistic faculty seems to be the starting-place of the disturbance." But we can also agree with him when he says, "On the other hand, the lively imagination of children under the acute stimulus of strange occurrences may conjure up a mental picture of which their more staid elders are quite incapable. Some of the recent alleged visions of Our Lady may perhaps be accounted for in this way without our imputing conscious deception." On this supposition, apparitions in poltergeist cases are not indicative of the existence of an independent entity. In only one case does this explanation fail to satisfy completely. On our returning to the angelic vision seen by Dinah and Mary Dagg, it seems that on questioning, both girls told the same story. If it were true that they really gave independent testimony we would have to assume with Thurston (p. 168) that "some telepathic influence affected simultaneously the susceptible mental faculties of the children, enabling them to visualize a scene which existed only in their own imagination. Fancy and reality lie nearer together in the mind of the child than in that of the adult, and, even in the case of adults, they commingle strangely in our dreams." Thurston then asks, "But what could be the source of this telepathic influence?" A naturalistic interpretation would find this in the mind of Dinah herself, and ascribe to it the paranormal knowledge concerning the private lives of the visiting sightseers, which was apparently possessed by the voice that haunted the farmstead. Thurston is "more inclined to look for the impulse . . . in a spirit world, angelic, demonic, and possibly nondescript . . . than to identify it with any terrestrial agent." But as Thurston would no doubt be the first to admit, the evidence is quite insufficient to overthrow a nonspiritistic explanation. In Chapter 16 we shall note a different interpretation of the apparitions as psychologically meaningful.

☽ PARALLELS WITH CONVENTIONAL MEDIUMSHIP

Since spiritualistic circles say that mental and physical mediumship demonstrate the existence and activity of discarnate spirits, and since it is from these circles that the theory of spirit causation of poltergeist phenomena has come, it is clear that close resemblance between the conditions favorable for the two sets of physical phenomena would constitute something of an argument in favor of

the mediumistic hypothesis, though by no means a conclusive one. Conversely, a general discordance between the conditions required in the two cases would tend to point away from the mediumistic explanation. In making the comparison we shall of course be aware that all cases of alleged physical mediumship are not completely parallel. We shall restrict ourselves therefore to the generality of mediumship practice in which certain elements, e.g., darkness, trance, a sympathetic circle of sitters, and perhaps ectoplasm are conventionally present. It may well be objected that this is an unfair comparison, the majority of the phenomena derived in conventional séances being fraudulent, and we should look therefore to the less conventional cases. However, it is conventional spiritualism that has been principally responsible for the development of the mediumistic hypothesis, and the proposed comparison would seem therefore to be perfectly relevant.

Tactile sensations have been reported by witnesses in not a few poltergeist cases but nothing resembling ectoplasm with its elasto-viscous properties and supposed connection with the medium's body has *ever* been observed or claimed.

Some poltergeist outbreaks have had their origin in darkness but *very* few have required darkness as a necessary condition throughout. The great majority of phenomena have been reported as occurring in full light, or under conditions of good illumination. In a few cases, such as at Derrygonnelly or in the Paschal home at Soper Lane, the poltergeist is photophobic but gets "trained" to function in the light.

In conventional mediumship it is usually considered important that the circle of sitters should be sympathetic and not hostile to the enterprise. It can hardly be claimed that this is a typical feature of poltergeist outbreaks, which frequently generate anger, irritation, and general disgruntlement in the unwilling audience.

There remains the interesting question as to whether anything parallel to the mediumistic trance is present in poltergeist cases. Strangely enough, cases in which physical phenomena occurred during a "trance" are almost nonexistent. Almost the sole allusion of this sort in the literature appears to be that referring to Jennie Bramwell who (according to the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* of December 10, 1891) went into a "trance" and exclaimed "Look at that!" —pointing to the ceiling, which was on fire. It is true that a number of poltergeist mediums have gone into "trances," dizzy spells, or hysterical attacks, but oddly enough these seem not to have coincided

in point of time with the poltergeist phenomena, except very occasionally. Additionally, it needs to be said that the attacks bear little resemblance to the conventional idea of the mediumistic trance. Thus Esther Cox "swelled visibly" at the onset of her haunting at Amherst. Suddenly there was a loud report like a clap of thunder. Then three more terrific reports shook the room—and Esther instantly "deflated," and sank into a state of calm repose. As the haunting took its course there were more swellings but they do not seem to have synchronized entirely with all the manifold happenings. Insofar as we can rely on the account of Mary Longdon's "bewitchment," her fits were fairly well correlated with the phenomena, though John Pine gave evidence that the maid would be reading her Bible, and it would be snatched from her, and *then* she would be cast into a violent fit. The levitations of Françoise Fontaine read as if they took place while she was in a state of "possession," but there is no helpful detail.

The cases at Ooty in 1897 and at Molignon in 1914 seem to be the only modern ones in which seizures have been noticed. Grace and Floralina at Ooty after their visit to the cemetery developed hysterical symptoms quite comparable with those of the possessed nuns of Loudun and other medieval and reformation cases. They tore their clothes, rolled on the ground, neglected their appearance and sometimes broke into fury. Later Floralina had attacks of faintness, spells of rigidity and catalepsy, or alternatively tended to throw herself about. Missiles arrived plentifully during these attacks; however, numerous phenomena took place also during her lucid intervals. At Molignon a boy of eleven years was suddenly seized by "nervous crises." He was convulsed, hit out with arms and legs, rolled his eyes, jumped, shouted, and fell down flat. At the same time, sand and stones were thrown in the room, objects rolled off the table, and a glass of wine broken in the hand of a visiting relative. The child seems to have remained in his "possessed" condition from Sunday until Monday evening, when the attacks and the accompanying phenomena both ceased entirely. The phenomena about Mary Jobson seem to have happened only while she was speechless, deaf, and blind. Her state of consciousness is uncertain.

It will be recollected that Betsy Bell, in Tennessee, was at one stage of the Bell "witch" haunting subject to regularly daily fainting spells. It is interesting to note, however, that the development of phenomena was by now well advanced, "talking being heard in lighted rooms." Dr. Fodor remarks that "Betsy's fainting spells closely

agree with the symptoms spiritualistic mediums exhibit at the onset of trance." Be that as it may, the coincidence between the phenomena and the spells is by no means as exact as that which would be expected in conventional mediumship. "The spells came on at regular hours in the evening, just at the time the Witch usually appeared, and immediately after the spells passed off the mysterious voice commenced talking, but never uttered a word during the time of prostration." As to the spells themselves, they were characterized by shortness of breath and smothering sensations. She panted "as if for life," became exhausted and lifeless, losing her breath for nearly a minute between gasps, and was made unconscious. They lasted for about thirty-five minutes, passing off suddenly, leaving her perfectly restored after a few minutes.

Hysterical attacks subsequent to the development of the phenomena were reported in the case of Mary Carrick, who was sent temporarily on that account to a mental hospital. The phenomena failed to start up again on her return, but she herself developed somnambulism, dressing herself and going downstairs to do her housework by night. Somnambulism as well as neurasthenia and perpetual nervous apprehension was reported of Mary Spiegel, the center of daytime disturbances at Milwaukee.

Dr. Boucher, reporting on the case of Germaine Maire (originally described in a letter to the Paris *Journal* as "an affable village girl of 18 summers") said: "It did not take me long to discover the unwilling intermediary of these phenomena. It was the servant, a girl of about 20, who showed all the symptoms of lack of nervous balance required to make an excellent medium. Extraordinarily impressionable, it often had happened since her childhood that she suddenly stopped and remained as if hypnotized, hearing and seeing nothing, so that it was necessary to sprinkle her with water to make her normal again." Passing over Boucher's somewhat facile specification of the requirements for mediumship, which seem about on a par with saying that nervousness is adequate for the production of Beethoven's symphonies, we certainly find this interesting. However, many of the phenomena occurred when Germaine was walking about at her domestic duties and presumably not in a catatonic state.

Angélique Cottin had "paroxysms" in which she had intense pricking and stinging in her left arm, so painful as to cause her to leap and run to "escape the pain." This is according to her own testimony, and presumably she was in a normal state of consciousness.

Karin had frequent fainting fits in 1898, as described in Chapter 4, during which her consciousness seemed veiled. However, by the time of the poltergeist rappings they occurred only at intervals of a month or more, and the investigators Wijk and Bjerre observed only one weak attack during their stay.

Virginia Campbell's "trances" were discussed in Chapter 5, where we noted the lack of correlation with the phemonena.

We have now accumulated all or almost all the instances in which anything resembling a trance has been reported of a poltergeist "medium." In the great majority of cases no "turns" or fits of any kind have been mentioned. This suggests that while they may have occurred in some fraction of these cases, this fraction is small. It is generally true, therefore, that poltergeist mediums need not be in a state of trance for production of physical effects. In saying this we do not suggest that the nervous condition of the mediums in the cases cited is irrelevant to the poltergeist manifestations. The data, however, do clearly indicate that the relationship between trance and phenomena is not the same as it is supposed to be in orthodox spiritualist theory. Hence no support for the spiritistic hypothesis is to be found in this quarter.

In a few, but very few cases, does the poltergeist medium appear to have been recognized otherwise as possessing mediumistic abilities. Only three cases present themselves under this head. Gisele de Germyn was described by her husband as an excellent medium. Indridi Indridason was a professional medium. The boy pursued by stones in the Tatra district of Czechoslovakia in 1927, though only thirteen years old, had taken part as a medium in various séances in other parts of the country. Incidentally, we may note that neither he nor Indridi were alleged to be in any state of trance during the poltergeist manifestations.

Occasionally a somewhat remote connection has been noted or alleged between the presumed poltergeist medium and matters psychic. The Bressan maidservant at Macon was reputed to be a witch and the child of parents suspected of witchcraft. But this might have been wisdom after the event on the part of gossips. In a bell-ringing case at Douai in 1907, attended by heavy footsteps, extinction of lighted lamps, and shiftings of furniture, the household consisted of M. and Mme D., five children, and a servant about sixteen. The girl's father had a reputation as a wizard and apparently made an incantation to drive the evil spirits from the house. The girl left (whether voluntarily or under dismissal is unknown) and disturbances ceased. The account of the case is not very impressive

and things may have been contrived by the girl (Flammarion, p. 218). The shepherd Thorel at Cideville claimed to be a wizard but we need not take this very seriously. Damodar Ketkar at Poona was an orphan. His mother, who had been troubled by strange visions, had committed suicide. The boy himself during the haunting occasionally saw strange shapes, as already considered above.

♄ THE SPIRITS OF THE DEAD

The mediumistic hypothesis would be greatly strengthened if in numerous poltergeist cases there were significant associations with the dead. By inference we would tend to ascribe the manifestations to the agency of dead persons and it would logically follow that some psychic component of the deceased survived death and functioned somehow in collaboration with the "medium." In this connection it is interesting to note that Bozzano in his survey of 532 cases of haunting (1919) separated them summarily into 158 poltergeist cases, and 374 belonging to the category of "haunting by the dead." Clearly, therefore, Bozzano thought that the distinction between the two categories was obvious and well-marked, associations with the dead being in the main conspicuously absent in poltergeist cases. Looking in an unprejudiced way at our own material confirms Bozzano's conclusion. The cases in which any connection with deceased persons is suggested by contemporary witnesses form only a small fraction of the total, and even in these cases the proposed connection is usually rather speculative and unconvincing.

Francis Fry, the epileptic, at Mr. Furze's house in 1682 claimed to have been visited by the ghost of the deceased Mr. Furze, Senior, who wished him to take certain money which his sister should have had from the estate. The communication appears not to be veridical, as when Fry arrived at the lady's house she was annoyed and disclaimed any financial entitlement.

Reverting to the harrassment of the Blands in the "Dobby house" at Orton in 1849, we may note that Mr. Bland's uncle Robert Gibson, the previous occupant, was found mysteriously dead in a fishpond. But no aspect of the manifestations seemed to relate meaningfully to the deceased. Some years later, visiting railwaymen claimed to have seen an egg levitate (Thurston, p. 113), the implication being that it was the house that was haunted. Against this we may note as before that local residents were impressed by the disturbances being spread over two houses, following the young children to Bybach, two miles away, and so indicating attachment to persons rather than to a place.

Since the life expectation of most buildings exceeds the human span, it is never difficult to find some death associated with a house. Consequently, even when dramatic features are present, the connection between the decedent and subsequent phenomena may well be purely coincidental. The Chateux du T. in Calvados was no venerable castle, as it was built in 1835 to replace an old chateau, 150 yards away from the new site, considered to be past restoration. Monsier de X., the diarist of the disturbances there, inherited the new chateau in 1867 when it was no more than thirty-two years old. However, a Mme Le N. de V. (presumably a local resident) in a letter to Dr. Dariex (Flammarion, p. 114) was able to say, "The former owner is said to have died in final impenitence, and was supposed to revisit her castle." As no supporting detail is furnished we are at liberty to suppose that the visitations by the unshriven *revenant* are local myth elaborated *after* the Calvados disturbances in order to supply an explanation.

It is reasonable to suppose that strange happenings can stir up a tender conscience. Even if there is no real connection between a disturbance and the desires of the deceased, a purely coincidental haunting may be received as an accusation by those who have feelings of guilt (rational or irrational). In the Swanland case of 1849, "Numerous visitors were profoundly impressed by the manifestations, but the one who was most struck was Mr. John Gray for a particular reason." His brother had died insolvent, leaving a son (also named John Gray) who was taken into the woodwork shop as an apprentice, but who died of consumption at the age of twenty-two in January of 1849. It was rumored that the uncle had failed to pay £100 still owing to the creditors, and that the boy's dying wish had been that it be paid. John Gray, Senior, had failed to do it. According to Mr. Bristow's recollection (when telling the story to Myers forty years after) he was seized with excessive fear when the manifestations broke out. "His behavior was that of a man petrified with terror, and I felt sure that he had made personal observations on his own account of which he did not speak. One day we heard that he had paid his brother's creditors: the manifestations *stopped immediately*." We are in no position to say that the happenings were not the doings of the deceased youth, but equally a somewhat fortuitous confrontation of a poltergeist haunting and an uneasy conscience cannot be ruled out. There is, however,

a slight suggestion that in one respect the case did not conform to a completely typical poltergeist pattern. Bristow, writing in 1891, said, "There was no connection between the manifestations and the people concerned." According to his recollection, the phenomena never ceased, though each of the several workmen was absent at some time or other. The long interval, however, between the occurrences and their committal to writing compels reserve in drawing conclusions.

Miss Floralina and Miss Grace danced on Christian graves at Ooty in 1897 and were apparently punished by the symptoms of "possession" and poltergeist disturbance. But it would be quite unreasonable to attribute their calamity to the outraged spirits of the dead. The original wild conduct in the cemetery is quite likely to have been itself an early sign of oncoming hysteria.

The very interesting case of St. Michel-de-Chabrillanoux had a presumed connection with the dead. The farmer R., persecuted by stones, had a father of unsound mind in his old age. He disappeared and after an interval his body was found in a bog. Acting on the advice of a local doctor, R. had him buried hurriedly without assistance of a priest, in order to avoid legal complications. The parish priest and some of his congregation later interpreted the occult phenomena as censure on R. for having deprived his father of the consolations of religion.

Indridi Indridason, it will be recollected, was a medium who had various controls. One of these became especially invasive. His name was "Jon" and he identified himself with the soul of a recent suicide, and induced terror in Indridi at séances. Later Jon, like the visitant to the Dagg farmstead, became a reformed character. There is nothing, however, in the communications supposedly received from "Jon" to show that he had any existence outside of some layer of Indridi's mind.

The unfortunate Pillays of Nidamangalam apparently suffered an unpleasant persecution in which dirt was smeared about, fires were started, and abusive messages inscribed on the walls, which disclosed a Hindu personality. The eldest daughter prayed for help to the deceased child Lourdes Mary Ammal. At 3 A.M. next morning Mr. Pillay saw a figure that replied in Tamil, "Why, Father!" In a bathroom, Mr. Pillay found the inscription: "My beloved Mamma. I am in the dark place. If I had been in heaven would I have left you in this condition? (signed) Lourdes Mary," the writing now resembling that of the deceased daughter. This is a particularly Catholic form of supposed communication from the dead, paralleled

by many similar messages purporting to come from souls in Purgatory. Spirits in heaven partake of some at least of the attributes of saints, including the ability to intercede on behalf of those still on earth. Only those in Purgatory are able to return. But the message and apparition are, of course, far from conclusive of the presence either of the spirit of Lourdes Mary or of the mischief-maker, the self-styled Rajamadan. Both manifestations, even if paranormal, are explicable as proceeding from the functioning of one or other of the living members of the family.

Edmond Bourdain sent to Flammarion (p. 226) an account of disturbances in his childhood home near Amboise in 1865. His father was a farrier, of robust health, a republican, an atheist, a freethinker, a critic, and a great talker. He chaffed the religious people of every sort, as well as those who believed in sorcery and popular superstitions. One night he was wakened by a noise on the stairs—a noise curiously similar to that heard by Mrs. Campbell at Sauchie a century later. It seemed that a ball descended two flights of stairs, step by step, with great regularity. The noise was repeated on several successive nights, and then invaded the bedroom in which Edmond's parents slept. The furniture cracked, the crockery danced, and they were rocked in their bed. M. Bourdain was very distressed and concealed the affair for a while, until at a fair at Amboise he told the story to a group of fellow blacksmiths. He was received with ridicule except by one of them, who declared that this was a case of haunting by the spirits of the dead, and then introduced Bourdain into a spiritualist circle. At the séances he was told that his house had been chosen for manifestations in order to lead him, and especially young Edmond, aged twelve, to the knowledge of spiritualistic truth. He was assured that the object had been gained, and the manifestations would soon cease. This prediction was realized; the noises diminished in force and came to an end. Had the outbreak continued we may suppose that the controls at the séances would have furnished some very plausible explanation.

In orthodox religious circles, as we have seen already, a disturbance is quite frequently attributed to the concern of the deceased for the religious welfare of the family. Pedro Serie, a zoologist at the Buenos Aires Museum, sent to Flammarion (p. 212) an account of happenings to José Amadei, a carpenter at the museum, who is described as a serious and intelligent man. The phenomena took place in 1903 but for fear of ridicule Amadei kept silent until 1921. He took up residence in 1903, with his wife, mother, three children

(under five), and a servant (age seventeen) in a small house. He learned that in 1902 the house had been unsuccessfully investigated by the police apropos of nocturnal and other noises, but he discounted the reality of any such haunting. However, a new haunting soon broke out. Noises and blows were heard on walls, doors, windows, tables, and chairs. Doors were shaken violently. Bedclothes were pulled off, candles extinguished, linen thrown out of cupboards, crockery removed from the dresser, but deposited without breaking. Amadei kept watch, inside and out, armed with a revolver, but revealed no practical joker. At last someone noted that the baby's cradle was always immune, and proposed that its grandfather (Amadei's father, deceased twenty-nine years!), who had been very pious, wished the child to be baptized. This was done and brought the disturbances promptly to an end. In this case there is some redundance of explanation. Was it a haunted house, or was it grandfather? These hypotheses are mutually exclusive. On a nonspiritistic explanation it could be supposed that the reputation of the house contributed by suggestion to a poltergeist outbreak. The cessation consequent on the baptism could have been coincidental or again have resulted from suggestion. This latter assumption is not entirely ad hoc. The performance of a religious rite appears often to cause at least temporary cessation of hostilities, most readily explicable as due to suggestion operating on the poltergeist focus.

☿ HAUNTINGS FOLLOWING A RECENT DEATH

The presumption that the spirits of the dead are present is most reasonable in the case of a recent bereavement. No doubt numerous cases of this kind could be assembled. We shall not attempt to evaluate critically the examples that we cite, but merely bring them forward out of fairness to the mediumistic theory, for such cases often have some affinity with poltergeist disturbances, and may perhaps be essentially the same as poltergeist cases.

Mlle Adèle Vaillant, a member of the Astronomical Society of France, informed Flammarion (p. 211) of happenings in her family home at Fanquevilliers subsequent on the death of her Uncle Edward, an advocate, in 1881. He had taken some interest in spiritualism, and had expressed a desire to manifest himself after death if he could. In due course there were sharp raps struck regularly in threes, shakings, scratchings, grindings of the door lock and movements of the key, which was thrown on the ground. This

occurred in windless conditions and precautions taken to ascertain that no animal or practical joker was concerned with it. The young sons in the family declared that it was the soul of their uncle asking for a Mass at Fanquevilliers. Mlle Vaillant also passed on several tales of the same nature—somewhat anecdotal, it must be admitted. One related to a widowed resident in Fampoux, who had commenced fulfilling his promise to her to have a requisite number of Masses said for her. However, distracted by a second marriage he had neglected to continue. Crockery began to dance noisily every night, and peace did not return until his obligation was discharged.

Cases of this kind are numerous and interesting but do not amount to proof of intervention by the dead. We can equally well attribute them to the unconscious production of physical phenomena by the living. We have, of course, to postulate some causal connection between the fact of bereavement and the functioning of the living person. However, more than one kind of emotional disturbance can be engendered by bereavement—sorrow, anxiety, and even feelings of unconscious guilt.

This interpretation is the same as that put forward by Dr. W. de Germyn (p. 441) for the physical phenomena associated with his wife Gisele, described as an excellent medium. Gisele attributed the happenings to the spirit of her dead mother.

> The noises produced in the house continuing from time to time, I took occasion one night, when Gisele was asleep, and I was awakened by sounds imitating pans and furniture being upset, to convert her ordinary sleep into hypnosis. She repeated, with many hesitations and searches, what she had already told me when she was impersonating her mother. I then ordered her to remember the next day on waking up all she had told me when she slept, to have a mass said for the repose of a soul in torment, and to pray that we might be delivered from her presence. I do not know whether Gisele had the mass said or not, but I know that since that time no more sounds have been heard.
>
> The sounds attributed by Gisele to the spirit of a dead person were evidently produced unconsciously by herself. There is a medium in every haunted house. Ours was decidedly haunted. Often the covering was pulled off my bed, and invisible hands touched me through the bedclothes. On one occasion, when I was awake and sitting on my bed, I felt a hand which seized

> one of mine and pressed it strongly. I sometimes distinctly heard somebody coming up the stairs, reach the door of our room, and try to open it. The furniture seemed to move and be upset, without any visible effect. These were imitative sounds, but of wonderful perfection. I believe the subconsciousness of Gisele was led by the desire to convert me to Spiritualism. My incredulity made her suffer. And she had, to attain her purpose, used this absurd means derived from popular beliefs. (Flammarion, p. 291)

There are interesting parallels, including the use of hypnotism, with Karin's case. Without pursuing these here, we need to note merely that we are under no necessity to accept Dr. de Germyn's explanation, but that nonetheless it is a perfectly plausible one.

It seems, in fact, that with physical phenomena and hauntings in general there is only one possible criterion capable of distinguishing decisively between the hypotheses of unconscious functioning of the living, on the one hand, and the intervention of the dead on the other. This criterion is the same as required in mental mediumship and is the communication of veridical knowledge not in the possession of any living person.

♄ CONSULTATION OF THE DEAD

As the point we have just made is important, though well known in psychic research, it may be worth while to consider a type of case illustrating the same problem. These are cases in which the living take the initiative in communicating with the dead, and get what appears to be an answer in the form of a physical phenomenon. Such cases are difficult to classify. They do not fit into the conventional scheme of the spiritualist séance. No acknowledged medium is present. The happenings are apparently not spontaneous like poltergeist phenomena. However, by way of the physical happenings they tend to assimilate themselves to poltergeist doings. It is possible that a search of the literature would reveal numerous episodes of this type. However, we will consider three examples only.

About 1894, "M.H.," a materialist convinced that death is the end of everything, was sitting by the bed on which his brother-in-law was lying some hours after his death. He too had shared M.H.'s materialist opinions. The door was half open and there was one candle burning. M.H. placed his hand on the dead man's forehead, saying, "Albert, can you tell me, is there survival or not?" Immediately the door slammed and the candle went out. M.H. relit the candle and experimented with the door, marking its position with chalk, ascertaining that it had no tendency to shut of its own accord. He also verified the absence of draughts, all doors and windows of the adjoining rooms being shut. He then repeated his question to the dead man, and the door immediately banged to as at first. His sister enquired crossly as to why he had banged the door. Next day he checked on the presence of the chalk marks. He took these two facts as indicative of his not having been hallucinated or of having dreamed the whole experience (Flammarion, p. 292).

Oscar Belgeonne, Secretary to the Court of Summary Jurisdiction in Antwerp, submitted the following experience of 1912 nine years after. When in the legal service he was offered a lucrative post with a private firm. In doubt he discussed it with his sisters at home in the kitchen. He remarked that had their father been alive he would have given good advice. They fell silent and then he said again "Should I accept?" Suddenly the towel began to swing on its screw as on a pivot, to the right and the left, all in one piece, not as if moved by a draught, but without a fold stirring, as if it were rigid and someone had, by light friction on the loop with his fingers, given it a pendulous motion to the right and left. Belgeonne took this as the answer, No. He took this advice, which in fact proved correct, as the firm went out of business during or after the war. (Flammarion, p. 270).

The third case is a famous one concerning Dr. Xavier Dariex, editor of the *Annals of Psychic Science*, whose account of it was sent by Richet to Myers (1891). Following on some experiments in table-turning, Dr. Dariex's servant, "an honest Bretonne," said that in the night she had heard muffled footsteps and little raps proceeding from his study, the room next to her bedroom. Consulting the table, Dariex was told that the sounds were produced by Mme D. Being skeptical as to the reality of spirits and spirit communications, Dariex asked for "her" to turn over a chair, and kept one specially placed in the study for this to be done. There was no result that night, but the night after two chairs were moved over onto their sides. This was repeated two more nights in the locked study, the Bretonne servant having heard raps and loud knocks through the wall. Dr. Dariex then carried out an experiment in conjunction with several friends who all lived within walking distance of his flat (as may be verified from a map of Paris). They were: two doctors, a pharmacist, and a surveyor. For ten consecutive days they met at night and morning and locked and sealed the study with the seal

of Morin, the pharmacist. Care was taken on leaving the room, prior to fastening the door, to see that no one had opportunity to slip back and overturn a chair. Similar precautions were taken when opening up in the mornings. On the third and tenth mornings two chairs were found overturned and moved. The account signed by the witnesses suggests that the experiment was carefully and conscientiously done. Seven or eight places were sealed, and Morin took the seal away overnight. The forms and positions of the seals were carefully noted. If for the sake of argument we accept the paranormality of the occurrence, the question remains whether this was an intervention by the dead or a functioning by one of the two possible candidates for role of "medium," the Bretonne woman or Dr. Dariex himself.

❧ CONCLUSIONS

THE majority of poltergeist cases have no features supporting the hypothesis that the phenomena derive from an entity distinct from the poltergeist "medium" herself.

There are an appreciable number of cases with special features suggestive of an outside influence but none of them are decisive. No case points unambiguously to the intervention of a discarnate entity.

In most poltergeist cases there are no features parallel to conventional mediumship. In a few cases there are some parallels but these are by no means precise.

Some temporary hauntings approximate to poltergeist disturbances as regards the type of phenomena, but are themselves not decisive as evidence of intervention by the dead.

❧ CASES CITED

Considerateness	*Date*	*Chapter reference*
Mompesson, Tidworth	1662	5
Heinisch, Gröben	1718	4, 12

Schuppart, Giessen	1750	11
Giles girls, Bristol	1761	8, 11, 12
Betsy Bell, Tennessee	1817	10
Eleonore Zugun, London	1926	4, 11, 12

Talking and rapping	*Date*	*Chapter reference*
Devil of Mascon	1612	10, 12
Devil of Hjalta-stad	*ca.* 1750	10
Betsy Bell, Tennessee	1817	10
Florrie C., Kingstown	1876	4
Dinah Dagg, Clarendon	1889	7, 10, 12
Alice Cocat, Grenoble	1907	4

Apparitions	*Date*	*Chapter reference*
Mackie, Ringcroft	1695	7, 10
Styles, Newbury, Massachusetts	1679	8
Haltwhistle, Island Magee	1710	Seymour
Giles girls, Bristol	1761	8, 11,12
Betsy Bell, Tennessee	1817	10
Cideville parsonage	1850	4, 10
Floralina Ooty	1897	12, 15
Damodar Ketkar, Poona	1929	4, 9, 12
Ivy Mark, Grenada, B. W. I.	1934	Thurston

Darkness	*Date*	*Chapter reference*
Paschal home, London	1661	4
Maggie, Derrygonelly	1877	4, 16, 18

Trance and other physical states	*Dates*	*Chapter reference*
Françoise Fontaine, Louviers	1650	9
Mary Longdon Youghal	1661	9
Betsy Bell, Tennessee	1817	10
Mary Jobson, Sunderland	1840	5
Angélique Cottin, Paris	1846	4
Mary Carrick, Boston	1868	4, 9
Mary Spiegel, Milwaukee	1876	3, 4
Esther Cox, Amherst	1878	7, 10, 12
Jennie Bramwell, Thorah	1891	7
Floralina, Ooty	1897	12
Karin, Sweden	1904	4
Germaine Maire, Nancy	1910	12, 15
Molignon	1914	12
Virginia Campbell, Sauchie	1960	5

Associations with the occult	*Date*	*Chapter reference*
Devil of Mascon	1612	10, 12

Cideville parsonage	1850	4, 10
Gisele de Germyn	*ca.* 1900	de Germyn
D. home, Douai	1907	Flammarion
Indridason, Iceland	1907	8
Tatra, Slovakia	1927	12
Damodar Ketkar, Poona	1928	4, 9, 12

Associations with the dead	*Date*	*Chapter reference*
Francis Fry, Spreyton	1682	9
Bland home, Orton	1849	3
Workshop, Swanland	1849	12
Bourdain, Amboise	1865	Flammarion
Chateau, Calvados	1867	Flammarion
Fampoux	1870	Flammarion
Vaillant, Fanquevilliers	1881	Flammarion
Dariex, Paris	1889	Myers
M. H.	1894	Flammarion
Floralina, Ooty	1897	12
Gisele de Germyn	*ca.* 1900	de Germyn
Amadei, Buenos Aires	1903	Flammarion
Indridason, Iceland	1907	8
Belgeonne, Antwerp	1912	Flammarion
Pillay, Nidamangalam	1920	7, 10
St. Michel-de-Chabrillanoux	1921	12

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15

☿

Biological Factors in Causation

☙ POLTERGEIST ACTIVITY AS A HUMAN FUNCTION

IF it be agreed that the case for the mediumistic hypothesis is unconvincing, then we are led to accept the working hypothesis that poltergeist activity is primarily a function of the living poltergeist focus. This simplifies matters to the extent that we do not have to postulate the existence of disembodied entities, or to speculate about their purposes. However, matters in some ways become more difficult, for the explanation of the "poltergeist syndrome" is by no means easy or straightforward, and facile solutions are to be avoided.

The problems that arise when interpretation is attempted may be illustrated from the conventional association of the phenomena with sex and age. As we have seen, poltergeist mediums tend to be between ten and twenty years of age, with a concentration near the epoch in which puberty may be expected to occur. Consequently many writers have hypothecated a direct relation with sexual maturation. Thus Carrington (1930) says "An energy seems to be radiated from the body in such cases, which induces these phenomena, when the sexual energies are blossoming into maturity within the body. It would almost seem as if these energies instead of taking their normal course, . . . were externalised beyond the limits of the body. The spontaneous outburst of these phenomena seems to be associated with the awakening of the sex-energies at that time—

which find this curious method of externalisation." Carrington is riding a metaphor. The "sex-energy" is only part of the total physiological energy of the organism. All that we can say is that some of the physiological activity of the body is now going into hormonal and glandular change, and some new tissue differentiation. The pubertal spurt in body size is thought by some students to be illusory. When it occurs it is ascribed to "catching up" to the average by children previously suffering from malnutrition or anorexia or the like. Admittedly the metabolic rate, though less than that in the child, is still high and, allowing for the greater size of the adolescent, the total energy production may possibly exceed that achieved in an adult. However, if the argument of "energetic overflow" were valid we would expect to find a correlation of poltergeist activity with general vitality, and also with puberty in animals as well as in humans.

The last point may seem frivolous or indeed naïve. Nevertheless it is often the naïve questions that have the really informative answers. No one has ever found cause to recognize an animal as a poltergeist focus. The explanation would seem to be that it is a fact that poltergeist manifestations are essentially a purely human function. In due course we shall attempt to interpret this fact, but for the time being, we shall continue to consider the "energetic" and "vitality" aspects of the problem.

♄ THE SOURCE OF ENERGY IN POLTERGEIST MANIFESTATIONS

THE source of the energy needed for the mechanical work done in poltergeist actions is, of course, an interesting problem. But it is not a pressing problem insofar as its solution would shed light on causative factors. As remarked in Chapter 5, when we discussed the Sauchie case, the amounts of energy required are not large in relation to the physiological supply normally available even in a small child. A four-stone child raising itself through five feet in ten seconds by running up a short flight of stairs does 280 foot-pounds of work and is developing power at the rate of twenty-eight foot-pounds per second. If paranormally the child raised a four-stone weight through five feet in ten seconds (and this would be quite a spectacular feat for the average poltergeist), the energy and power supply would be just the same as those provided physiologically in running upstairs. Thus ordinary sources of physiological energy are

quite adequate even for the most striking achievements in poltergeist mechanics, and there is no need to look to superabundant vitality as a necessary factor. If, in the example given, it were the case that the energy came from the "medium," it is clear that the degree of exhaustion or muscular fatigue would be hardly noticeable. Walking up about seven steps in ten seconds is only a mild and leisurely effort to the average child or adolescent. The fact that lifting a fifty-six-pound weight through five feet in the ordinary way is a strenuous and difficult task is irrelevant to the argument. The sense of effort would arise from the circumstances that the child would have to apply mechanical force through its arms and take considerable muscular strain on its shoulders and back. This need not apply in poltergeist action any more than it does in raising oneself by the use of one's legs.

Harry Price (1945) prints an essay on the energetics of poltergeists written by a physicist, Mr. A. J. B. Robertson. Robertson draws a parallel with the physical phenomena of mediumship, and considers three possible energy sources. "In numerous cases it has been noticed that phenomena are produced most vigorously when the child is lying or sleeping in bed. The conditions may then be rather favourable for the removal of energy from the child by the Poltergeist, the child under these conditions approaches more closely the state of a medium when in trance." Regarding this we may note that though *not* invariably the case, the period prior to sleep (as at Sauchie) is often the one with the best manifestations. From the material collected in this study it appears, however, that sleep itself is inhibitory of the phenomena, except very rarely (as with Mary Carrick). Robertson, in fact, recognizes the flimsiness of the argument, for he goes on to say ". . . a consideration of the actual magnitude of the energy changes involved in Poltergeist phenomena shows that any correspondingly increased metabolic rate would be difficult to detect, unless the efficiency with which the Poltergeist can transform energy is very low." Thus he agrees substantially with our own conclusion. The additional point concerning a possible low efficiency of conversion is a good one and merits attention. It would be confirmed if in cases involving large movements of heavy objects (e.g., the stone slab in Mary Carrick's case) exhaustion and fatigue had been observed in the "medium." So far as the evidence goes in this and other cases it is not helpful to the hypothesis, either on account of lack of observation, or because when anything is said concerning the medium it is usually to the effect that her condition appears physiologically

normal. Thus the assumption of energy withdrawal from the medium would seem to be at present undecidable. Additionally, it may be said that it is not (as things now stand) an essential assumption, because the energy required may, for all we know to the contrary, be drawn from an external source.

HEALTH AND VITALITY IN POLTERGEIST MEDIUMS

We see that we are under no necessity to correlate poltergeist activity with superfluous vitality. Nonetheless the physical condition of the medium is of great interest in connection with this and other organic hypotheses. Cases where the health and development are presumably less than average (relative to the age of the medium) tell against the superabundant-energy hypothesis, though admittedly to only a slight degree, and we shall first look for examples of this kind.

Jane Molesworth would appear genuinely to have suffered from organic illness for she died not long after the knockings. Except for some *adult* cases, which we will discuss separately, this seems to be the only typical poltergeist case with unambiguous signs of organic disease as opposed to organ defect, or physical backwardness. We make this statement advisedly and despite the fact that a number of cases showed physical signs of disturbance. Mary Carrick and Mary Spiegel both were somnambulist, the former hysterical, the latter suicidal. Mary Jobson had temporary blindness and deafness. Esther Cox, Betsy Bell, and "Karin" all suffered from peculiar "spells" with various physical effects. These signs or symptoms are of the greatest interest and we shall attempt their evaluation in the next chapter. For the moment suffice it to say that in view of the intermittent nature of the conditions and their general similarity to well-known psychoneurotic disturbances, they would appear to be psychogenic in origin and unrelated to organic illness. Similarly, cases of convulsion or fits like those of Mary Longdon, Françoise Fontaine, Floralina, and the child at Molignon are susceptible of explanation in terms of hysteria. However, some case is necessary before this explanation is preferred to that of genuine idiopathic epileptiform seizure, and the alternatives will be discussed below. Epilepsy involves considerable nervous discharge and it might be argued that in such seizures conditions are favorable for a "radiation" of "force."

Clearly, however, this cannot serve as a *general* explanation of poltergeist cases, for the majority show no reference to actual epileptiform fits or to any history of them in the medium. Lombroso's

wineshop case gives some support to the notion that the depression of vitality in organic illness tends to inhibit phenomena. It will be recollected that the manifestations ceased when the potboy was sent away, and that there was other sound evidence connecting him paranormally with them. Lombroso says: "He showed no abnormal peculiarity. The intensity of the phenomena bears some relation to his physical state. For some days, when he was ill, the noises were less loud" (Flammarion, p. 235). Little can be learned from the case witnessed by Mr. Paolo Palisano in Sicily in June, 1910, when he saw stones falling slowly without causing any damage, and says that one of them, near a place where the young deaf and dumb daughter of a peasant was sitting, detached itself from the wall, and, after describing a slow semicircle in the air, deposited itself in the hand of a friend (*Giornale de Sicilia*, June 7, 1910; Flammarion, p. 277). Even if the girl were clearly identified as the medium, nothing can be inferred from her deaf-mutism as to her general state of health.

As regards physical development, few of the more convincing poltergeist cases indicate that the medium was in any way physically backward or exceptionally advanced. We will assemble such scattered remarks as can be found in the literature. "Karin" was described as being of a delicate constitution, though organically sound, and as having something childlike in her face and her whole being. We may suppose from this that she was small and slender rather than buxom or curvaceous, but we cannot legitimately deduce that she was physiologically, anatomically, or sexually immature. Ivy Mark, the apparent center of the West Indian disturbance, was described in the earlier press report as being eleven years old. Later the press reported the acting magistrate's investigation of the fire that burned down the house. Her grandmother, Excelia Mark, testified that Ivy was fifteen, and Ivy herself deposed to the truth of this, which suggests that Ivy was small and underdeveloped for her age. Angélique Cottin (age thirteen) was described as "light and robust." Tanchou in the report already quoted says that she was very strong and carried herself well. He adds that she was not yet nubile and that he had ascertained from her mother that nothing relating to onset of menstruation had yet occurred. But there are no grounds here for imputing developmental backwardness. We are indebted to de Rochas (1896) for the report made by Maxwell, the acting procurator general of La Correze, on the case at Objat centering on the maid Marie Pascarel, described as sixteen or seventeen years of age (Flammarion, p. 118). The case appears to be a good one and we may therefore note Maxwell's

description of Marie as "intelligent and self-confident (*hardie*), with easy manners, though no reproach can be made against her respectability. Physically she is rather thin, and appears delicate. At the time of the occurrences she had not arrived at a state of puberty." Other remarks are interesting but will be considered later. We might summarize the burthen of the present paragraph as follows. Slender physique and late development seem not to be typical of poltergeist mediums, but equally seem to be no impediment to manifestations.

Leaving aside the overtly psychoneurotic cases, little has been noted concerning the health of poltergeist girls and boys. From this we must conclude that as a group they are not obviously distinguishable from the average for their age either for diminished or superior health and vitality. This provisional conclusion is not negatived by the health and advanced physical development of Virginia Campbell nor by Price's description of Eleonore Zugun. He found her to be an intelligent, well-developed, bright girl with a sunny disposition. Her health seems to have remained unimpaired at least till age twenty-three, when Price learned that she had a flourishing hairdressing business in Rumania.

❧ PHYSICAL OR MENTAL DEFECT

PHYSICAL defect could be relevant to the present topic. Contrary to some writers' expectations, physically defective children are not exceptionally numerous among genuine poltergeist mediums. Polly Turner at Ham in 1895 is one of the few instances that come to mind. She was described as "a little dwarfed black-haired girl, turning twelve. She had only lately learned to walk, was pale, with long black hair and eyes, very sharp." According to Mr. Westlake, she "watched one like a cat a mouse. Her mother is said never to leave the house or allow the child to do so."

A lady named de Bellecour (pseudonym) sent Flammarion (p. 197) a description of occurrences at the family home at Montmorency in 1912. They had a housemaid and also a small helper described as a "degenerate child, daughter of alcoholic parents, and just undergoing physical development." She became timid and nervous and told fantastic stories, contorting her face (which was emaciated, with dark-rimmed eyes). She and the housemaid devoured cheap novels and indulged in lurid fantasy, and claimed that demons knocked on the windows and walls. This was not taken seriously until the gardener, the secretary, and Mlle de Bellecour herself had seen

movements of objects, and heard raps. The child and the housemaid were both dismissed and disturbances ceased. Unfortunately we cannot distinguish which was the medium. We need not attach too much importance to the description of the child as "degenerate." This may have meant only that she was small and thin, perhaps in consequence of malnutrition and neglect. The effects of alcoholism on heredity are negligible, but the effect on environment is pronounced. A considerable degree of physiological normality must be conceded to the child for we are told that she grew into womanhood and became the mother of a family. Her youthful preoccupation with fantasy casts no aspersion on her innate intelligence.

If we glance through the data available we see that the intelligence of the poltergeist mediums has frequently been mentioned. We cannot claim that they are all of superior intelligence, and indeed have no wish to do so. However, the general impression is that as a group they are of average intelligence, and a proportion were notably "bright" and at least above average. Psychological disturbance (as with Mary Spiegel) is not *per se* indicative of moronism or mental deficiency. Mary Carrick was ignorant, superstitious, and emotionally disturbed, but none of this is indicative. Polly Turner's dwarfism and late achievement of walking are not in themselves diagnostic of mental status. Mr. Bennett, of Hertford College, Oxford, said that she "seems to combine with a defective intelligence a considerable amount of cunning." Quite apart from the inherent contradiction in such a combination we need not take this Oxford verdict overseriously. Forms of dwarfism such as achondroplasia are compatible with full innate intelligence or the potentiality of it. That Polly's mother, doubtless from oversensitiveness, had inflicted on her the cruelty of perpetual confinement and social, educational, and ideological backwardness is not surprising, but still this would not add up to mental deficiency.

The idea that defect is a concomitant of genuine poltergeist activity is entertained in some quarters. For instance, Salter (1961) says: "Where the person is neither mentally, nor physically subnormal, the phenomena are in my view always fraudulent and designed to further some plan." This is a curious derivative from, as well as a reversal of, the Podmore thesis. Podmore concluded that inferiority and unhappiness resulting from mental or physical defect or illness generated a motive for compensatory outlet by playing poltergeist tricks. Occasionally, as with Eliza Rose at Workshop, he was led to strain the facts and impute mental defect without seeking

evidence for this. A similar reaction was noted in the case of Jennie Bramwell.

Our own conclusion is that poltergeist activities are in the main confined to mediums of at least average intellectual attainment. But the possibility that psychological motivation enters into the etiology of the paranormal happenings is by no means excluded.

The fact that we have had to reserve as many as ten cases for special discussion as having indications of psychoneurotic or convulsive disorders is undoubtedly of great significance as pointing to the importance of psychological factors. Nonetheless there is no firm indication of abnormal physical health or mental defect as especially predisposing characteristics. It would seem to be true of the majority of poltergeist mediums that to the eye of the lay observer at least "there is nothing special about them." The report of Paul Chaplain, an engineer, on disturbances in the Sénéchal ménage, at Beuvry, Belgium, is quite typical. He says "The Sénéchal people never observed any special state about the girl [the servant, aged 15]. She plied her avocations quite normally" (Flammarion, p. 217).

♄ THE UNIQUENESS OF MAN

MAN, it would appear, is unique among living animals as a producer of poltergeist activity. It is difficult to suppose that this uniqueness is not related to his uniqueness as a biological species. This uniqueness is not manifested anatomically or physiologically in any degree except in regard to the nervous system. In this respect man is in a class by himself, divided, even from other living primates, by an extremely wide margin. In behavior the margin is equally wide. The chimpanzee at least shares the human attributes of self-consciousness, social behavior, and reason—if only to an elementary level. But even he is separated from us in the degree of development of these attributes by a gulf of astronomical magnitude. It seems certain that man's behavioral attainment is in some real sense a concomitant of the elaboration of the central nervous system.

The central nervous system contains the brain and spinal cord. The major divisions of the brain itself may be listed as the *brain stem*, the *cerebellum*, and the *cerebral hemispheres*. All three consist of varying proportions of gray matter and white matter. The gray matter is composed largely of nerve cells and nerve fibers lacking a white myelin sheath. The white matter contains a higher proportion of myelinated fibers and other processes derived from nerve cells. The structures of most interest to us in the present context are the cerebral

hemispheres themselves, and the *diencephalon* (or *interbrain*). The diencephalon is one of the three principal components of the brain stem, which are the *hindbrain* (*rhombencephalon*), the *interbrain* (*diencephalon*) and the *midbrain* (*mesencephalon*). From the evolutionary point of view the most interesting of the organs contained in the diencephalon is the *thalamus*.

The cerebral hemispheres have a surface composed of gray matter—the celebrated *cerebral cortex*. The interior consists of white matter together with masses of gray matter—the basal ganglia. Although the thalamus is part of the diencephalon it is sometimes included with the cerebral hemispheres as constituting with them the *forebrain*. This is not altogether unreasonable, because the diencephalon and the hemispheres are both derived in prenatal embryonic development from the same tissue (the *prosencephalon*). Also there is a close functional cooperation between the thalamus and the cerebral cortex. The two organs appear to have evolved together in the course of mammalian evolution.

To quote a neurologist (Gardner, 1948):

> Human behavior is related to neurological structure and function just as is its counterpart in lower forms. Its infinite complexity is correlated with increasing development of the forebrain, particularly the cerebral cortex. Here reside the mechanisms governing language formation and use, emotional reactions and intelligence.
>
> . . . The end products of behaviour are the responses of effector organs, that is muscles and glands. These are actuated by relatively fixed neurological and chemical mechanisms. Variability in behavior in terms of effector responses is a matter of degrees and numbers of such responses, and this on the whole results from central nervous system action, with higher nervous levels exercising much wider and more labile control. Indeed, one may say, that variability in behaviour is related to principally non-specific regions of the forebrain, the striking development of which in evolutionary processes contrasts with the relative lack of change in areas of more specific function. Modification of behaviour by environmental factors is also possible because of the tremendous capacity of the human brain for development and growth after it assumes its functions as a conducting mechanism. We learn from experience because of the inherent plasticity of the brain. (P. 255)

As the synoptic type of nervous system appears in higher

> groups of animals, behaviour becomes more complex and more modifiable. In ascending the vertebrate scale, "intelligent behaviour" becomes more and more pronounced, attaining its highest development in man. This is correlated with the appearance of labile areas which have a large capacity for growth and differentiation even after they have started to function. (P. 256)

In the Primates neurons increase in length and size through foetal life and childhood. Marked changes in numbers and arrangement of dendritic processes take place. It may be supposed therefore that nerve connections within the central nervous system can enter into new link-ups or alter their sensitivity to field excitations.

The primitive cortex found in reptiles has survived in mammals as the *archipallium* but evolution has added the *neocortex*, which increasingly overshadows the archipallium with ascent of the mammalian evolutionary scale. The motor and sensory areas of the neocortex are of considerable size in primates. These areas are no bigger in man. Yet the brain of man is by far the larger in consequence of yet a further evolutionary step. This is the great extension of the *association areas*, which are intimately connected with each other and with the motor and sensory regions. It is the association areas that are related to the intellectual functions that constitute such an important component in the uniqueness of man. They constitute most of the cerebral surface.

One portion of the thalamus has stayed relatively unchanged in the evolutionary process. Another portion, which serves as a relay station for the sensory and motor areas of the cortex, has evolved in parallel with these areas. However, the bulk of the thalamus is relatively new phylogenetically and is therefore called the *neothalamus*. It has no nerve fibers coming into it from lower centers in the nervous system. Instead it is connected to the cortical association areas. All the connections between the thalamus and cortex are reciprocal–a thalamic area that sends fibers to a certain cortical area also receives fibers from it. The conclusion is inescapable that cortex and thalamus function together. It has been shown experimentally that spontaneous activity of the thalamus accompanies that of the cortex. The functions of the thalamus are difficult to analyze. Because of its higher development in man, data from lower animals cannot be transferred. Also, there is a characteristic reaction of the thalamus to cortical injury. Cortical lesions are

always followed within a few months by death of some portion of the thalamus. This makes it difficult to analyze the separate functions of the thalamus and the cortex.

The thalamus can be distinguished from a different organ (situated below it), the *hypothalamus*, which receives a tremendous inflow from all the afferent (i.e., sensory) pathways. Also, a large number of efferent (i.e., motor) fibers radiate from it. The hypothalamus is concerned in many physiological activities in glandular functioning, and in the physical expression of emotion—so much so that it has sometimes been called the seat of emotion. But this is somewhat misleading. Patients suffering from hypothalamic lesions sometimes fail to show the usual physical signs accompanying emotions such as anger or fear but nevertheless experience normal subjective feelings of this kind. Conversely, irritative lesions of the hypothalamus can cause the physical symptoms to be manifested even when they are absent from the psyche. The only conclusion is that the hypothalamus mediates or relays physical responses while other parts of the brain are involved in emotional experience.

It appears that the most important components of the nervous system in regard to mental and emotional processes are in fact the association areas which, as we have seen, are connected with the neothalamus by innumerable fibers. Mental and emotional events are extremely complex and cannot be broken down into a series of definite, separate performances. No separate specific functions can be assigned to specific parts of the association cortex, which appears to function rather as a whole. It is likely that the various parts of the association areas do function differently, but they cannot be regarded as each functioning in an isolated manner. Among the mental processes carried out by the cerebral cortex is *symbolization*, particularly speech in its aspect as symbolization, in which aspect it is closely related to internal symbolization, i.e., thinking. Learning and conditioned responses, which form an essential element in our practical and social life, in our emotional reactions, and in thought itself, seem not to depend on the motor and sensory cortex alone but to depend additionally and essentially on the association cortex. It appears also that some of the association areas (particularly the frontal ones) perform the role of inhibiting lower organs of the brain from reflex and biologically purposeless activity. Thus removal of the frontal areas in animals causes a maintained state of muscular activity such as walking. An interesting

aspect of the association cortex is the flexibility in the role of different areas. A habit pattern may be formed in the frontal lobes and then shifted elsewhere for long-term retention. This is shown by lesions of the frontal lobes that destroy capacity for recent memory and new learning, but leave the results of earlier training unimpaired. Another function of the association areas can be regarded as one of purposive leadership and discipline. With frontal damage distractibility may be so pronounced that the individual can be deviated from any line of activity by extraneous stimuli.

Besides being neurologically unique, man is unique in possessing a highly developed "psyche." As we have just seen, the connection does not appear to be accidental, because the evolution of the brain has been precisely in the direction necessary for the manifestation of the complex and ample human psyche. Here the word is employed in the relatively noncommittal sense in which it is used in analytical psychology, as the sum total of sensations, emotions, drives, and thoughts. The psyche is clearly not the same as the brain, though from the stricter materialistic point of view it is in origin a function of the brain. Even in a materialist view it is legitimate to speak of the psyche as having to a certain extent a dynamic of its own. We find it convenient here to adopt (using a terminology in accordance with the spirit of Chapter 13) a "naturalistic" view. The psyche is *in origin* a function of the brain and tends to be conditioned by the physiological state of the nervous system. However, the state of the psyche is itself capable of reacting upon the body and the state of the brain. Thus in suicide the psyche abruptly terminates the operation of the brain. In hysteria, anxiety states, and psychosomatic illness it operates on the physiological condition of the body and thus on the neuronic state of the brain. There is no difficulty in regarding a function of an organism as itself acting on the organism so that in effect some aspects of the organism are themselves functions of the original function. In this formulation body and psyche are partners constituting a dynamic unity, neither partner being negligible in determining the destiny of the total system. Such a view is not logically incompatible with various additional possibilities, as follows:

1. Some component pre-existing the body is incorporated in the psyche.

2. Some component that is not in origin a function of the body becomes incorporated or partially integrated into the psyche during life.

3. Some component of the psyche survives the body. This component may or may not have arisen by Mode 1 or Mode 2.

At this stage of the present enquiry we are not called upon to consider empirical evidence regarding such possibilities, though questions concerning them are a legitimate part of parapsychology.

If we concede that in essence the uniqueness of man is represented by his unique nervous system, and by his uniquely elaborate psyche, and are prepared to agree that on the evidence available poltergeist and allied physical phenomena are also peculiar to man, a simple conclusion follows. While purely physiological conditions may indeed be necessary, there are also essential factors for paranormal physical activity that are found only in man. It is therefore very likely that these factors are either neurological or psychological, or both.

♉ HYPNOTISM

Cases of complete or partial "cure" of poltergeistery by hypnotic suggestion are rare, being just three in number. However, the occurrence of such "cures" is of some theoretical importance as tending to show that there is no purely organic cause of the physical mediumship condition. Superficially the course of the typical poltergeist case is analogous to that of an infection. The symptoms increase to a maximum, then decline and eventually stop completely. This is broadly analogous to a fever caused by an invasive virus. The body in time produces an intracellular antibody that kills the parasite and usually confers long-lasting immunity. The more long drawn out and fitful course of some poltergeist cases is paralleled by some infections such as glandular fever. A theory of this kind is already doubtful on account of the patent immunity of animals to supposed infections of this kind. But there are other organic theories such as those suggesting neurological lesions that in time heal themselves, or glandular imbalance affecting uniquely human neurological structures, which are not susceptible to this argument. The finding that in some cases hypnosis provides a cure is rather far-reaching in its bearing on the problem, because it is a cure by essentially psychological means. Thus it tends to show that even neurological factors are not paramount in the etiology of poltergeist activity. That is, the dominant element is psychological, and is the psyche rather than in the brain structure per se.

Karin's treatment under hypnotism has been described al-

ready. Not only was a partial cure effected but to some extent the actual manifestations themselves were controlled by psychologically operating commands. We noted in the last chapter how de Germyn claimed to have stopped the auditory haunting of his ménage by converting Gisele's sleep into hypnosis and then applying suggestion. The Sauerbrey case at Hopfgarten near Weimar in 1921 will be narrated in Chapter 17, where we consider adult poltergeist mediums. Here the patient was treated by suggestion by a mental specialist. She declared herself free from previous obsessional beliefs and the phenomena all ceased.

♑ EPILEPTIFORM SEIZURES

As already stated, there is little or no evidence associating poltergeist activity with epileptic seizures. This is of some interest because all types of seizure involve uncontrollable discharges from the cerebral cortex. This abnormal increase in excitability is not limited to the motor areas, because there may be epileptic fits of a sensory type. Instead of having muscular convulsions the patient may experience peculiar sensations, such as itching or disagreeable odors. Such signs often form a part of the "aura," a set of premonitory sensations heralding the approach of a major seizure. As we suggested above, it is attractively simple to suppose that the erratic movements of objects in poltergeist attacks might result from the "storm" in the brain of an epileptic. We will therefore see briefly if there are any correlations of this sort to be found in our assembled caselore.

Germaine Maire was described by a correspondent in the Paris *Journal* (April 16, 1910) as "an affable village girl of 18 summers." The Nancy Psychical Research Society published a report by Dr. Boucher (Flammarion, p. 222) already quoted: "It did not take me long to discover the unwilling intermediary of these phenomena. It was the servant, a girl of about 20, who showed all the symptoms of lack of nervous balance required to make an excellent medium. Extraordinarily impressionable, it often had happened since her childhood that she suddenly stopped and remained as if hypnotised, hearing and seeing nothing, so that it was necessary to sprinkle her with water to make her normal again." Dr. Boucher may have been correct in identifying Germaine's "absences" with hypnoid states identical with or resembling the mediumistic trance. But as far as the description goes it would

equally well fit the *petit mal* (*epilepsy minor*). In *petit mal* the only clinical phenomenon may be a loss of consciousness lasting in most cases between five and thirty seconds. The sufferer may be unaware of his lapse. In some cases the blackout is accompanied by twitches or jerks or falling. But in many instances these signs are imperceptible or lacking. This kind of seizure often goes undetected (especially in children who are thought to be daydreaming). As in a case recorded by Lennox (1960) the affected person may continue walking during a thirty-five-second absence. Sometimes no external influence will interrupt the fit, but some patients are "awakened" by a sudden noise or other sharp stimulus. It will be seen that *petit mal* attacks, though occurring with the appropriate frequency to explain Germaine's idiosyncrasy, are too short in duration. However, the protracted nature of Germaine's absences are quite explicable (so far as the data go) as petit mal attacks followed by *postepileptic automatism*. "In this condition the patient has an attack of *petit mal* which perhaps passes unnoticed; he then, without conscious volition, resumes what he was doing at the time, more or less efficiently, or proceeds to perform some unusual or inappropriate act, of which he has no recollection after regaining consciousness. Such a condition is sometimes called 'masked' or 'larval' epilepsy. Attacks of automatism may replace the ordinary epilepsy, and are classed as '*psychomotor epilepsy*.' Epileptic automatism is usually brief in duration, a few hours at most. Other cases of amnesia, accompanied by prolonged ambulatory automatism lasting for days or weeks, are generally of the nature of fugues and are generally of psychogenic origin" (Purves-Stewart and Worster-Drought, p. 170).

We suggested earlier that Mary Longdon's fits might have been hysterical ones. The possibility remains that she exemplified epileptic automatism, taking herself in a state of psychomotor automatism to the various curious places in which she was found. Such spells of automatism are apt to follow the postconvulsive coma of the *grand mal* type of epilepsy (Noyes and Kolb, p. 273). If Mary's fits were epileptic, then they must have been at times grand mal seizures, for we read that she had fits and trances in which she was difficult to hold down. However, during these turns she vomited the pins and other commodities typical of seventeenth-century witchcraft cases, which seems on the one hand suggestive of hysterical imposture of the classical kind, and on the other is almost irreconcilable with the "tonic" phase of *grand mal*. Thus, if genuine

elements are to be postulated in Mary Longdon's condition, it would appear that they appertain to hysteria and allied fuguelike states.

The major epileptic convulsion (the *grand mal*), like petit mal, is characterized by cortical discharges (though the electroencephalogram pattern is different) but the outward expression is far more dramatic. The seizure usually follows a very characteristic pattern.

The loss of consciousness is sudden and complete. The patient falls at once. This is due to the onset of a tonic spasm involving all the voluntary muscles of the body. The muscles of the chest and larynx often contract simultaneously and the expulsion of air causes the peculiar epileptic cry. Consciousness may be retained long enough for the patient to feel the spasm come on and hear his own cry but usually he cannot mitigate the fall and serious injury often ensues. Nothing of the episode is remembered afterwards. The muscles now pass into a state of complete tonic rigidity for a few seconds on account of cerebral anemia. The tonic stage is succeeded by the clonic spasm. There is jerking of the limbs, short, forceful, and rapid, and of the jaw, tongue and larynx, with danger of tongue-biting. The jerks occur at longer intervals but maintain or even increase their violence. The cyanosis of the tonic phase passes off and the patient regains his color. After some minutes the body becomes flaccid and passes into the coma, which usually lasts for about ten minutes. When the coma proper is terminated, unconsciousness may still persist for some time, or the patient may stay in a heavy sleep. When he comes to he may show clouded consciousness or exhibit automatism. The major epileptic convulsion has neural discharge in the brain as its immediate cause. However, it appears that persons without a chronic predisposition, especially children and juveniles, can have the fit triggered off by any of a variety of precipitating factors external to the nervous system. These include allergies, glandular, circulatory, or degenerative conditions, and also numerous infections.

The difficulty in reliable diagnosis of epilepsy in old accounts is that the condition can be mimicked by the fits and convulsions of major hysteria. The complete form of the major hysterical attack, named *grande hystérie* by Charcot, is exceedingly rare and appears to be dying out, probably as a result of social and cultural changes since the nineteenth century. However, when interpreting older cases we need to have in mind the warning that "in exceptional

cases the hysterical convulsion may approximate in pattern to that seen in idiopathic epilepsy. . . . Diagnosis can only be made by a full consideration of the early syndrome pattern presented and must scarcely even in these cases be determined by mere second-hand observation and never from a description of the paroxysm alone given by a non-medical onlooker" (Moody, p. 91). With this caveat in mind we will note the features of the complete classical convulsive hysteria, bearing also in mind that the complete form is very rare and gaps in the sequence or reversal of order frequently occur.

The hysterical fit is often preceded by headache, depression or exaltation, subjective visual disturbances (flashes, colored lights), subjective auditory sensations of all kinds, continuous screaming, laughing, or weeping; also, the globus hystericus—a choking sensation. When the patient slumps or falls, it is in a convenient place, without injury and often with dramatic accompaniments. When a *pseudoepileptiform* stage supervenes, there is a strong voluntary contraction of the muscles with great rigidity, clenched fists, and closed eyes. Generalized tremor of the limbs as a whole follows. Violent purposive movements occur, such as rolling-about of the body, kicking, biting, scratching, pulling of the hair, and banging of the head and legs. If there is a *posturing* stage the subject assumes grotesque postures, such as arcing the back, or the crucifixion position. Screaming, shouting, and talking may continue throughout or become arrested in their phase. There may be a *pseudoemotional* stage in which the subject assumes a role consistent with the ruling emotional mood, his attitudes and appearance expressing fear, ecstasy, anger, or affection as the case may be. There may be some clouding of consciousness, and some temporary incoherence of speech. The fit may conclude with a terminal stage of *pseudodelirium* in which the subject shows some disorientation, but commences to realize his whereabouts and returns rapidly to normality. In hysteria there is no true postconvulsive coma, and recovery from the seizure is sudden and complete, without physical exhaustion (as in grand mal) or (as a rule) automatisms. Other signs distinguishing *grande hystérie* from *grand mal* are the absence of serious injury by falling, absence of tongue-biting, cyanosis, or micturition.

The difficulties of retrospective diagnosis between hysteria and epilepsy are, however, augmented by the existence not only of psychomotor epilepsy but also the class of ailments called *myoclonia* and allied to epilepsy. These conditions involve involuntary

muscle movements of an abrupt lightninglike character, usually of the neck, arms, or shoulders, but sometimes widespread, involving trunk muscles and even the legs. More often than not the patient is also susceptible to *petit* or *grand mal*. When fits of these three kinds occur in quick succession a very confused clinical picture may result. Lennox (p. 128) describes a case (Merle McBride) where myoclonic jerks, *petit mal* status, and *grand mal* sometimes came on one another's heels to form a conglomerate seizure. One of the few modern poltergeist cases suggesting epilepsy in the form of myoclonia or of violent psychomotor activity is that of the eleven-year-old boy at Molignon in 1914. "Under an unknown influence the boy was convulsed, hit out with arms and legs, rolled his eyes, jumped, shouted and fell down flat. . . . When he was in bed, he felt himself violently pulled, and was hit in the face with stones, etc. The lad was taken to St. Anne's chapel, but this made it worse, and the crises became so violent that two men had difficulty in holding the child, and at one moment he was thrown violently on the ground and drawn along the floor." But as far as this description takes us it is clearly consistent with a pseudoepileptiform phase of hysteria, which can, like other phases, occur detached from the full sequence of *grande hystérie* (Moody, p. 88).

Similarly, Floralina's case fails to conform closely to epilepsy. We read ((Flammarion, p. 297) that after their exploit at the cemetery, "They were agitated, looked at everybody with wild eyes, and became so strange that it was thought better to confine them to the house. They tore their clothes and if women came near them and endeavoured to make them quiet they simply sent them rolling on the ground. On the other hand, they would give way to men, either because they were stronger or for another reason. The days passed and these singular girls, perpetually tormented, let their hair hang uncombed and in disorder, and sometimes broke into fury." Later Miss Grace left home to get married and Floralina became calm, quiet, and lucid except for intermittent attacks. These attacks took various forms. Sometimes she "fainted." Thus, "Soon afterwards her brother came to tell us that she had fainted on her bed. Entering her room, we found her not breathing, speechless and stiff. With much trouble she was brought to. Some minutes later she fell into a worse trance. But eventually she recovered her senses. The next day,

> We asked the young lady how she felt, and she said: "The shades of the evening are falling; a sensation of cold pervades my whole body, and my hair stands on end. I am very tired. . . ." She sat down on a chair in a corner of the room, and after she had resumed her ordinary gaiety she fell quietly into a trance, and then became so wild and strong that five men could not keep her quiet. . . . Some minutes afterwards she rose from the chair with such force that some of us who held her were thrown over sideways. She remained standing, and nearly upset all who held her. Using all our force and with great efforts we got her to sit down again. She sat down, her whole body stiff as a piece of wood. . . . She got up again, and gave us a lot of trouble. She wanted to go out. She was forcibly taken to her room and put to bed. She kicked everybody all round, and used her hands with such violence that several of us were afraid to go near her. The exorciser, "entered the room, and as he approached the bed, the girl, who had her eyes closed all the time, opened them and looked at him in a terrible manner. She made an effort to rush at him." The exorciser burned paper under her nose, and after some time she felt quite well. . . . Talking about her misfortunes, she said every night she could see two women without heads.

Floralina's condition cannot, I think, be very plausibly ascribed to epilepsy in any form. It would appear therefore to be psychoneurotic or psychotic. Here the difficulty in paleodiagnosis is accentuated by the well-known problem of distinguishing between hysteria and schizophrenia. Neglect of personal appearance is typical of the catatonic phases of schizophrenias, but not in general of hysterical subjects. However, Grace and Floralina let their hair "hang uncombed and in disorder" as part of the wild initial period and *that* attack was conceivably of a hysterical kind. The fact that two girls were involved in the same kind of behavior is in itself a strong indication of hysterical causation, because suggestion and imitation are potent influences in contagious release of hysterical tendencies. If Floralina's condition be accepted as hysterical, her catatonic episodes fall into place as "hysterical fainting" or "stupor." It will be noticed that usually they succeeded in rousing her from the fits and there is evidence that consciousness was never far away. This establishes a pattern quite typical of the hysterical faint, which differs in particular from epilepsy in there being no true loss of consciousness. The exorciser seems successfully to have used suggestion and this too tends to be a diagnostic sign favoring hysteria. The stiffness reminiscent of schizophrenic catatonia is also found in

hysterical trances. On balance therefore the writer would think that hysteria is the most likely explanation of Floralina's state. However, catatonic schizophrenia cannot be ruled out as an alternative explanation. Catatonia is commonly found in typical and benign cases of schizophrenia. The catatonic form is the one often assumed in cases which are largely determined by psychological and emotional elements. The states that may arise in catatonia include negativism, short unpredictable paroxysms of impulsiveness, aggressiveness, or violence. Other possibilities are: general impulsive excitement (usually episodic), bizarre attitudes and gaits, or rigid immobility. The subject may sink suddenly into catatonic stupor. In this there is semi- or complete stupor when the patient may stand or sit immobile for long periods. She appears totally apathetic but seems usually to be aware of everything that goes on around her.

However, it will be seen from this discussion that data connecting poltergeist outbreaks with anything in the nature of epilepsy are meager. Thus poltergeistery is not associated with any overt peculiarity of a purely neurological kind. So far as this takes us it points towards psychological events rather than to brain structure as precipitating factors in causation.

♑ SLEEP

In almost all the cases quoted no phenomena have happened when the principal character in the drama is asleep. This is a most striking fact that would appear to be of considerable significance, though what it chiefly signifies is not easy to guess. The biological function of sleep is by no means understood. It may be described as a recurrent physiological variety of spontaneous unconsciousness from which the individual can be raised by moderate stimuli such as shaking or noise. Sensory perception is blunted. The sleepy individual, though not unconscious, is apathetic and is somewhat disoriented in time and space. Consciousness may be defined as awareness of our surroundings. Recent studies tend to confirm the older view that consciousness is a function of the cerebral cortex, there being no definite evidence of consciousness in man from activity of other structures in the absence of cortical activity. In view of the fact that unconsciousness can be caused by lesions of the hypothalamus, however, the activity of the cerebral cortex with which consciousness is associated is evidently maintained in some autonomic manner by the activity of certain hypothalamic nuclei. The activity of the cortex in maintaining consciousness also

seems to depend on the receipt of sensory impulses, because unconsciousness can be caused by interruption of sensory tracts in the brain stem. (It has been suggested that this kind of unconsciousness results because all awareness of the body is abolished, and some awareness of the body is essential for consciousness.)

Sleep differs from the deeper degree of unconsciousness found in physiologically caused stupor, as resulting from toxins or mechanical brain compression. *Coma* is a still deeper degree of unconsciousness, in which even the most violent stimuli will not rouse the patient, many of whose normal automatic reflexes are lost. However, even in coma the cerebral hemispheres still function to some extent.

When a person falls into a normal sleep, critical reactivity to external events diminishes, followed by loss of conscious recognition of stimuli that would ordinarily attract attention, whether external or from within the sleeper's own organism. This has been described as a transient dissolution of the ego—a dispersal of the elements constituting personality—together with a temporary abolition of the critical and discriminatory faculties of the cortex. Voluntary movements cease, nearly all of the voluntary muscles losing their tone and becoming relaxed. Various reflexes are diminished or lost. Other reflexes appear, however (e.g., reflexes of spinal automatism), which are signs of withdrawal of cortical control. Other features of sleep (contracted pupils, slow heart beat and diminished blood pressure) are due to increased activity of hypothalamic centers of the autonomic nervous system. Sleep attains its maximum intensity at different rates in different people. Also, the intermediate stage between waking and sleeping varies with the person. In some sleepers it approximates to a hypnogogic state, and many normal individuals are apt in this phase to have hypnogogic visual hallucinations.

Dreams occur at a somewhat deeper stage of sleep. The sleeper is unconscious of his surroundings, but, being deprived of the faculty of comparison with his environment, his psychical centers (presumably in the not *totally* inert cortex), influenced by uncontrolled emotional reactions and visceral reflexes, produce a series of fantastic mental pictures. Dreams can perhaps be regarded as manifestations of capricious excitation of the cerebral cortex acting in an imperfectly coordinated way. Since psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams shows association of ideas to be a very important factor in linking together the various dream episodes we may suppose that portions of the association cortex are involved. Many of the higher faculties of the cortex are in abeyance, as is shown by the primitive logic of the dream, and by the tendency

for normally repressed emotion to find expression in it. It has been suggested that the neothalamus plays a part in dream formation, acting as telephone switchboard temporarily activating portions of the cortex, while the cortex as a whole is not a going concern but merely "ticking over" or "idling" (Hadfield, p. 117; also Grey Walter, television feature).

There is no agreement as to the essential causes of sleep, or as to a fundamental cause for it. Cerebral anemia is an important accessory factor in natural sleep, and is always present. It is a causative tendency in sleep after a heavy meal or after heavy physical or mental labor. But muscular fatigue is not a necessary antecedent to sleep, and the toxins produced by exertion do not seem to be the essential cause. Some observers have therefore ascribed sleep to "hypnotoxins." Some experiments on animals suggest such toxins result from cerebral metabolism. Another factor to which importance is ascribed is the withdrawal of stimuli from the cortex, tending to diminish cortical activity. In Pavlov's theory of sleep the cortical inhibition is not a mere concomitant of sleep but plays a vital role therein. In sleep cortical inhibition becomes almost total and also invades some of the centers in the midbrain.

Insofar as sleep is understood, it seems true to say therefore that cortical inactivity, though incomplete, is the essential and characteristic feature both neurologically and psychologically. If, therefore, poltergeist activity depends on the medium's not being asleep, this suggests rather strongly that the manifestations depend to some extent on activity of the cortex. And also, it would seem, it is a more coordinated and integrated activity than that in dreams. In speaking of the cortex we cannot distinguish between the cortex and the neothalamus regarded as a combined system.

The observation that things rarely happen when the poltergeist medium is asleep is a very common one and is typified by the remark made in the van Zanten case at Marcinelle, which was characterized by preternatural accuracy of aiming of missiles: "The phenomena appeared to have some connection with her [the servant, age fifteen] for they hardly ever began until she was up" (Flammarion, p. 280). In a number of cases phenomena tend to cluster or occur with greatest force when, like "Karin," the poltergeist center has "gone to bed but not to sleep." We shall try to assess the significance of this in a later paragraph. For the moment we can draw the inference that poltergeist activity is determined more especially by neurological-psychological factors than by purely physiological or metabolic ones. If the latter

were sufficient prerequisites, then the state of cortical-neothalamic activity could not invariably be of significance.

There is no contradiction between the fact that poltergeist phenomena occur when the medium is conscious, and the apparent fact that usually she is *unconscious* (except inferentially) that she is producing them. Psychiatry has amply demonstrated that even when fully awake we can be quite unconscious of the action of the autonomic nervous system in setting up the physical symptoms of anxiety states, and totally unaware of the function of the central nervous system in causing paralysis of limbs, as in conversion hysteria. Similarly, psychic affects such as a consciously held phobia, or a compulsion, have completely cryptic mental origins so far as the patient himself is concerned. Since Freud, the mechanisms of unconscious errors, forgetting, or social lapses have become well known. The reason for the production of physical phenomena being unconscious is, of course, a different question. It may not be of great significance. After all, we cannot consciously regulate most of our bodily processes—e.g., conversion of sugar to glucose, or release of adrenalin, but yet we contrive it unconsciously, like Moliere's *bourgeois gentilhomme* who had successfully talked prose all his life. On the other hand, it may be unconscious for psychological reasons, the knowledge of how it is done being prevented from rising into consciousness.

It might seem that Mary Carrick provides an exception to the rule that sleep inhibits poltergeistery. As we know, there were loud raps on the walls and windows of any room in which she was working. But they were also heard in her bedroom while she was apparently fast asleep. However, we must recollect that Mary was a somnambulist. She would get up and come down in the night and do housework while apparently asleep. Now, somnambulism is often regarded as the working out of an actual dream experienced by the sleeper. This is not possible in ordinary healthy sleep, for ordinarily the psychomotor centers are inhibited, together with the bulk of the cortex. Hence at the least the sleep of the somnambulist is incomplete. Most psychiatrists go rather further than this. Somnambulism is the nocturnal equivalent of the hysterical fugue. It is held that the subject is unaware of the abnormality of her state and actions, but is not fully unconscious during the episode—although afterwards she may not remember it. With some patients it is found that the sleepwalking experience may be recalled if interrogation is made soon afterwards. Somnambulism depends on an unresolved conflict and is a corporeal counterpart of fantasy. Due regard is paid by the sleepwalker to circumstances and objects met

with on tour. It is only when carrying out activities relating to her fantasy that she may behave unusually. The subject is fully aware of other objects and occurrences which happen around him, but which are without significance for the particular drama he is enacting. Mary Carrick's somnambulism suggests therefore that her apparent slumber when attended by poltergeist knockings was not a normal sleep state. This is supported by Willis' statement that members of the family standing at her bedside often saw her start in her sleep and scream in terror.

It will be recalled that de Germyn described phenomena produced about the house by his wife Gisele when abed and asleep. We are at liberty to postulate that such episodes were not in normal complete sleep states, but approximated to the mediumistic trance. The writer is not familiar with special features of the genuine mediumistic trance, and therefore as a working hypothesis takes it as being closely akin to the hypnotic trance. If so, the fact that a "trance" is necessary for physical phenomena in some (if not all) cases of genuine mediumship, is not discordant with our present thesis that extensive cortical inhibition is inhibitory of such phenomena. For, to quote neurologists (Purves-Stewart and Worster-Drought):

> The hypnotic trance is a condition analogous to sleep but clearly differentiated from it. Hypnosis is a normal psychological phenomenon, consisting in a temporarily artificial dissociation of personality, or re-personalization, together with temporarily increased suggestibility. It is induced by suggestion, especially by the aid of repeated monotonous stimuli. . . . The hypnotized person, however, does not really sleep. He accepts the suggestion that he is sleepy; he believes that he sleeps and behaves accordingly. Moreover, in hypnosis the voluntary muscles remain tense and the tendon reflexes persist, unlike the hypotonia and diminution of tendon reflexes during ordinary sleep. During the stage of deep hypnosis, certain elements of the patient's personality become temporarily inhabited and dissociated from his field of awareness, so that the hypnotized patient may have amnesia for whole epochs of his past life, or even have temporary loss of his habitual sentiments, instincts, and beliefs which may become replaced by those of an earlier epoch of life, the latter being reintegrated, for the time, into the hypnotic personality. Meanwhile, various sensory and motor functions may be temporarily lost . . . according to the suggestions of the hypnotist. Moreover, memories of past experiences either forgotten or perhaps only subconsciously experienced, are sometimes integrated into the new hypnotic personality. In lighter stages of hypnosis, which closely resemble the normal condition of abstraction, absent-mindedness, or reverie, the patient's attention is focussed on a limited number of objects, viz. the hypnotist and his suggestions or the bodily sensations of sleep. During this stage the patient's suggestibility is temporarily exaggerated, so that curious bodily postures may be induced by suggestion.

It will be seen that hypnotic, hypnoid, or hypnogogic states in general are characterized by some inhibition of mental function, but this is always incomplete. In addition, it is selective and highly variable according to the depth of the trance and the totality of attendant circumstances. The range of hypnoid states is very great, extending from deep hypnosis to mere drowsiness and failure of attention. Our supposition is that the genuine mediumistic trance is a hypnoid state producible artificially by autosuggestion. The degree of inhibition or dissociation may be presumed to vary within wide limits according to the personality and circumstances of the medium.

The writer is not in a position to hazard an opinion as to whether the trance is a necessary requisite for genuine physical mediumship. Insofar as poltergeist mediumship is the same thing, our poltergeist studies suggest that the trance may not be an absolute requirement. However, there are a number of cases that point somewhat in the opposite direction and indicate that while a pronounced trance condition is not a necessity, a "pretrance" state is in fact favorable, and conducive to manifestations. Many of the happenings at Tidworth in 1662 tended to cluster around dawn and dusk, when the children were in bed but probably not asleep. The events of which we have the more circumstantial and detailed accounts—the rappings and scratchings in the bedrooms—happened when the eleven-year-old girl had been put to bed but was awake. The young gentlewoman at Soper Lane in the preceding year became a focus of activity only at night when she was in bed, though as we recollect, the disturbances stopped her from sleeping. "Scratching Fanny" at Cock Lane visited Elizabeth Parsons' bedside only in the evenings. The persecutions of John Randall and of Indridi Indridason came to them when they retired for the night. Activity was most intense around both Maggie at Derrygonnelly and Virginia Campbell under similar circumstances, though in neither instance was it invariably absent in the daytime. Florrie C. at Kings-

town produced plenty of daytime phenomena, but her conversations at bedtime with "Walter Hussey," who discoursed by raps, seem to have been a very regular feature of her case.

It was this kind of correlation that led Barrett (1911) to suggest that a mood of relaxation or diminished attention (of the kind we have described as a pretrance state), though not certainly essential, is especially conducive to the phenomena. We cannot build a great deal on this argument, because it is far from clear what is the essential feature in the medium's condition. It is well known that the period before sleep is one in which the personality is most subject to invasion by anxiety, despondency, and uncertainty, and this is especially so in children and adolescents. Fatigue, reactions from the stresses of the day, relative isolation and solitude all can play their part in conducing to a welling up of repressed fears or emotions. Again, the activity and mental and physical engagement with daytime tasks and environment ceases. Consequently the preference for this part of the daily cycle may not really be connected with the approximation to the pretrance state but may be explicable in completely normal psychological terms. However, it may be that here we are hair-splitting. Even on the basis of the "psychological" explanation just given, we can argue that daytime concentration on external affairs involves a cortical inhibition of certain emotional and instinctual responses. Withdrawal to the bedroom weakens this inhibition by the cortex. Thus the situation in its essentials is not really different from that achieved more overtly in a "trance state." In each case diminution of function of some of the brain centers takes place, with consequent expression of others whose activity is either muted or masked by the centers engaged in practical or extroverted activities under daytime conditions. Thus, in principle, the same state can be achieved internally, though the outward forms of trance are absent. In the case of Angélique Cottin, it was noted that the manifestations tended to follow on her evening meal.

Close correlations between the degree of extroverted attention (or the lack of it) and the occurrence of phenomena do not appear to have been established in poltergeist observations available to date. The writer has no confident expectation that they would be found even if looked for with an adequate diagnostic and observational technique. Dr. Tanchou (see de Rochas, p. 436) interestingly remarked that Angélique Cottin's phenomena were related to her degree of attention. He says, "It is when she thinks of nothing or when one distracts her, that the phenomenon is the most sudden and intense." Harry Price (1945, p. 270) said that his experiences fully confirmed that Eleonore

Zugun's stigmata appeared most often when the girl was quiescent. But I would not like to accept this as a very sound observation, for he merely adds it as a kind of footnote to a theory put forward at the time by Mr. G. E. Browne. The latter suggested that Eleonore's secondary personality bit Eleonore when *it* was bored. Browne predicted that there would be no biting when Eleonore was kept amused, for then the secondary was also amused. Enjoying the play, it would enter into it and itself develop telekinetic phenomena. Price subscribes to this and says the telekinetic phenomena occurred more frequently when the girl was in motion. The present writer has no great confidence either in Browne's simple theory or in the validity of Price's confirmatory observation.

♄ CORRELATIONS WITH HORMONAL CHANGES

Attempts have been made to correlate poltergeist outbreaks with menstrual events. Thus Price says that as soon as the menses started Eleonore's phenomena completely ceased. A rather doubtful twenty-eight-day cycle was noted in the Sauchie case. The "power" at Amherst was always at its strongest every twenty-eight days, according to Hubbell (p. 80), which Price correlates with menses, and Lambert with the moon and the tides. No correlations of this sort, even when observationally valid, are easy to interpret, because, as many writers have noted, it is not easy to distinguish between physiological and psychological aspects of adolescence. As we have implied above, the significance of adolescent poltergeistery may lie in its relation to psychological factors as the ultimate precipitating ones.

> With adolescence new manifestations in the continuity of personality development appear almost automatically with the biological maturation of that period. Childhood experiences and the background of family relationships continue, however, to promote or interfere with personality development. There is an intensification of drive for self-sufficiency and independence which should be accompanied by growing vocational aptitudes and interests and by a sense of personal and social responsibility. The adolescent stands midway, nevertheless, between dependence and independence and therefore may experience difficulty in meeting the new problems of the latter. Frequently his emotional reactions are an expression of his emancipatory strivings. At puberty there are developmental changes in endo-

> crine activities which are reflected in alterations of feeling and action. . . . Intellectual growth which has developed simultaneously with biological growth reaches its maturity in middle or late adolescence. With the biological process of maturation, a corresponding emotional, psychological development should take place. Late adolescence, however, is usually characterized by a self-conscious, idealistic, cynical, or romantic attitude. Each developmental period carries with it varying drives and defenses against these drives. In some instances the defenses may have an unfortunate effect on later personality development. (Noyes and Kolb)

❧ THE SCALE OF MAGNITUDE OF POLTERGEIST EFFECTS

It is an odd and curious fact that the magnitude of the mechanical actions of the poltergeist is never much different from that which an adult man could achieve with his own unaided muscular strength. That is, the order of magnitude of poltergeist effects as actually exercised is limited. We are quite in the dark as to what factors exercise this limitation. There appear to be four rival explanations.

The energy may be supplied physiologically by the medium. As we have seen, there is no evidence especially for or against this. On this hypothesis the limitation would be the capacity of the medium for physical exhaustion.

If, however, the source of the energy is paranormal, the medium's role being merely one of "triggering," the concordance of scale with that of human capacity appears as a curious limitation or as a curious coincidence. There is no necessity for different natural forces to be of the same intrinsic order of magnitude. The electrical force between a proton and an electron exceeds the gravitational force between them by an astronomical factor.

This leads us to ask whether the limitation is not inherent but psychological. For instance the subconscious personality may be able to employ only ideas of possibility derived from the conscious one. Consequently the scale of its paranormal effects tends automatically to accord with the magnitude of human effort as normally exerted. On this hypothesis the only thing lacking is the faith that moves mountains and not the ability.

The fourth explanation supposes there is no inherent limitation, but relates such limitation as there is in practice to the considerateness and noncriminality of poltergeists. The desire not to do serious harm

will be sufficient to stop the roof from being pulled down Samsonlike upon the heads of the inmates, in the same way as, apparently, it prevents the mistress of the household from being transfixed by the carving knife. This, to the writer, appears the most convincing explanation, but it should be stressed that we are somewhat clueless in this matter. We are without present prospect of determining whether the poltergeist energy is a minor curiosity, or instead like Aladdin's lamp conceals within it a power greater than all the forces of nature.

❧ THE EVOLUTIONARY STATUS OF PARANORMAL POWERS

It has long been debated whether the telekinetic and other paranormal abilities represent new and emerging evolutionary trends, or if instead they are in essence archaic features and survivals of powers once adaptive in human or prehuman life. Earlier objections to the notion that such powers are adaptive have been voiced by such writers as Bozzano and are on two or more grounds. If they are adaptive then why are they not widespread, having already been established by evolution in past ages? If it is argued that they have been evolved and lost, then why should powers adaptive in the wild fail to be adaptive in cultural societies? These are fair questions. Bozzano answers them both in a somewhat heroic way by denying that paranormal abilities are adaptive. His argument (which is not a very clear one) assumes the full range of telepathic, clairvoyant, and precognitive powers as being possible, and consists in maintaining that social, family, and practical life as we know them would be impossible if such powers were widespread. The writer is inclined to think that the problem arises from a mistake. The error is to suppose that natural selection can do anything whatsoever. In fact natural selection can act effectively only when the characteristic in question is in some degree inheritable.

The extreme rarity of telekinetic power tells us that in practice it is never inherited. This is reasonable even if we suppose that inherited constitutional elements enter into it. If, however, it is a function depending on a very large number of conditions that have to be present in fortuitous combination, then in practice it will no more be transmissable than is the genius of a Beethoven. In other words, the underlying gene complex will not hold together long enough for natural selection even to make a start at "fixing it."

A further argument can reasonably be employed here. The apparent facts that a poltergeist medium may not or cannot be non-human, or asleep, is not a mental defective, and can be "cured" by hypnotism or suggestion, strongly suggest in combination that an essential feature is the fairly complete functioning of the unique human cerebral cortex (if we look at the matter in a materialistic way) or the equally unique human psyche with its elaborate psychology. If these are essential prerequisites then natural selection has not had all the abysses of geological time in which to work on paranormal faculties. Instead it has been working on a feebly inherited character for less than 30,000 generations. Indeed, the period may be much less if it should be the case that the essential brain structure is that of *Homo sapiens*, a comparative latecomer. Thus, the writer is inclined to think that paranormal powers are evolutionarily almost stationary, but there may be slight progress at work, dating at most from the Pleistocene and possibly only the Holocene.

♄ FURTHER PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter we have maintained a biological outlook on the poltergeist problem. Arguments of more than one kind lead us to ascribe considerable weight to psychological factors as precipitating causes of poltergeistery. In the next chapter we consider more especially those dozen or so cases in which evidence is recorded indicating psychological disturbance in the poltergeist medium. We shall find that anxiety and its psycho-neurotic derivative states appear convincingly as a precipitating cause in this set of cases. However, we shall not be able to argue from such cases that psychoneurotic disturbance is invariably necessary. Such a conclusion must therefore remain doubtful for the time being.

♄ CONCLUSIONS

Since animals, it appears, are not centers of poltergeist activity, the characteristic cause of such activity must lie in the uniquely human higher brain centers (the thalamocortical system) or correspondingly in the elaborate human psyche.

The fact that sleep is inhibitory suggests that involvement of these higher centers is essential.

Involvement of the higher centers is not contradicted by the apparent fact that the poltergeist medium is (it appears) unconscious of her causative role, and how it is exercised, nor by the trance as conducive to mediumship.

The efficacy of hypnosis or suggestion in effecting a cure or modifying the phenomena themselves is indicative of psychological causation rather than neurological structure as being decisive.

Poltergeist activity appears unrelated to epileptic conditions *per se* and this too supports psychogenic determination.

The connections with adolescence, sexual development, and menstruation may be psychological rather than physiological.

Poltergeist activity is unrelated to physical or mental defect.

The source of energy in poltergeist phenomena remains obscure.

The scale of magnitude of poltergeist effects may be determined inherently or by psychological attitudes in the psyche of the poltergeist medium.

Paranormal powers may be evolutionary almost stationary.

♄ CASES CITED

Energy Sources	*Date*	*Reference*
Mary Carrick, Boston	1867	4, 9
Virginia Campbell, Sauchie	1960	5

Health and Vitality	*Date*	*Reference*
Jane Molesworth, Leith	1835	5
Angélique Cottin, Paris	1846	4
Marie Pascarel, Objat	1895	de Rochas
Karin, Sweden	1904	4
Fumero, Turin	1907	4
Palisano, Sicily	1910	Flammarion
Eleonore Zugun, London	1926	11, 12, Price
Ivy Mark, Grenada	1934	Thurston
Virginia Campbell, Sauchie	1960	5

Physical or Mental Defect	*Date*	*Reference*
Eliza Rose, Worksop	1883	3

Jennie Bramwell, Thorah	1891	7
Polly Turner, Ham	1895	3
Sénéchal, Beuvry	1907	Flammarion
de Bellecour, Montmorency	1912	Flammarion

Psychoneurotic or Convulsive	*Date*	*Reference*
Françoise Fontaine, Louviers	1650	9
Mary Longdon, Youghal	1661	9
Betsy Bell, Tennessee	1817	10, 12
Mary Jobson, Monkwearmouth	1840	5
Mary Carrick, Boston	1867	4, 9
Mary Spiegel, Milwaukee	1870	3, 4
Esther Cox, Amherst	1878	7, 10, 12
Floralina, Ooty	1897	12
Karin, Sweden	1904	4
Molignon	1914	12

Hypnotism	*Date*	*Reference*
Karin, Sweden	1904	4
Gisele de Germyn	*ca.* 1920	14
Sauerbrey, Hopfgarten	1921	17

Epilepsy	*Date*	*Reference*
Mary Longdon, Youghal	1661	9
Floralina, Ooty	1897	12
Germaine Marie, Nancy	1910	12
Molignon	1914	12

Sleep	*Date*	*Reference*
Paschal home, London	1661	4
Mompesson, Tidworth	1662	5
Elizabeth Parsons, London	1760	5
Angélique Cottin, Paris	1846	4, de Rochas
Mary Carrick, Boston	1867	4, 9
Florrie C., Kingstown	1876	4
Maggie, Derrygonnelly	1877	4, 10
Karin, Sweden	1904	4
Indridi Indridason, Reykjavik	1907	8
John Randall, Enniscorthy	1910	8
van Zanten, Marcinelle	1913	12
Gisele de Germyn	*ca.* 1920	14
Eleonore Zugun, London	1926	11, 12
Virginia Campbell, Sauchie	1960	5

Menses	*Date*	*Reference*
Esther Cox, Amherst	1878	7, 10, 12
Eleonore Zugun, London	1926	11, 12
Virginia Campbell, Sauchie	1960	5

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Psychoneurotic Conditions in Poltergeist Cases

INTRODUCTION

INSANITY and mental defect appear to be unrepresented in the material we have assembled. But in a considerable group of cases features have been explicitly recorded that are suggestive of one or other of the benign behavior disorders, i.e., *psychoneuroses*. The proportion of such cases is small in relation to the total mass of poltergeist cases. But it seems greatly to exceed the incidence of overt neurotic conditions in the general population. The excess becomes yet more striking when we restrict ourselves to cases characterized by more detailed and circumstantial reportage. This is sufficient to suggest that neurotic conditions are indeed among the factors that especially conduce to poltergeist manifestation, and have in fact often actually played a significant part in causation.

SEX AND AGE

IF it be a fact that neurosis sometimes acts as a precipitating factor, then we are taken some way towards explaining the greater incidence of poltergeistery in girls, who appear (roughly speaking) to have a 2:1 majority. Sex ratios as high as 20:1 have been quoted for the incidence of hysterias, and 5:1 for minor hysterical complaints (Billings, p. 122). However, a recent finding gives the incidence of neurotic conditions in general as being about twice as high in women as in men. Oddly enough, this agrees well with our rough finding concerning the incidence of poltergeistery. No sound inference can be based on a mere statistical coincidence, however pat. For example, the sex-ratio for *diabetes mellitus* is about the same, but we would not dare to postulate this condition as relevant to mediumship. But this is because there is no reported incidence of diabetes among poltergeist mediums. The occurrence of neurosis is, however, as we shall see, frequent. Consequently it is very plausible to argue that the sex ratio is largely, if not entirely, ascribable to the relative frequency of neurotic conditions, and thus to psychological differences between the sexes.

The age of onset of psychoneuroses is generally between adolescence and the epoch thirty-five to forty years old. Psychiatrists understand this as being related to the fact that by middle age people tend to have elaborated adequate defenses against neurotic anxieties. If then they succumb to mental disorganization it is likely to take the form of a malignant psychosis, rather than a mere neurosis. Psychoneurosis as a precipitating factor takes us some way to explaining the age distribution of poltergeistery, but it leaves unexplained the comparative dearth of poltergeist cases with mediums more than twenty years old. We might suppose that psychoneurotic outbreaks in juveniles differ in some essential feature from corresponding conditions in adults. This, of course, is not in itself an unreasonable notion. Juvenile outbreaks occur more facilely and tend to be less chronic in nature. Otherwise we could postulate that the inherent capacity for physical mediumship tends on the whole to diminish with age, perhaps on account of biochemical, metabolic or physiological changes, or perhaps by a loss of brain tissue. The latter point by itself, however, is not a very adequate explanation of the dearth of cases in the age group twenty to thirty.

PSYCHONEUROTIC DISORDERS

THE somewhat fearsome term "psychoneurotic" covers a variety of conditions—some of them very mild and episodic. Clinicians have not found it possible to recognize with any confidence constitutional or inherited determinants in their etiology. Indeed, character traits and responses of the same kind as found in psychoneurotic patients occur in normal individuals. Under stress normal individuals are liable to attacks of rage, panic, near-hysteria, fuguelike states, or

automatism. Consequently it is believed that for the most part it is the individual's upbringing and emotional life history that predisposes him to development of neuroses, rather than a poor congenital endowment. The essence of a psychoneurotic state is that it is a reaction (basically to an *anxiety*), carried out not by the sophisticated conscious mind but largely unconsciously by the nervous system (central or autonomic, as the case may be). There is nothing very mysterious about the nervous system's acting unconsciously. The reaction is essentially a primitive one. The individual reacts with biological rather than intellectual responses. This is because the organism deals with the problem by adopting the kind of response it would have used as a small child in the era before speech and thought patterns of the adult-conscious kind were fully established. Thus in an anxiety attack, the autonomic system releases adrenalin, and increases the pulse and respiration rate. These, are in fact, the biological responses of an animal, or a small child to fear. They are adaptive responses in a primitive situation because they put the body into the optimum condition for successful flight from danger, or for turning to fight an aggressor.

There are several distinct major types of neurotic reaction. According to some clinicians they are found in pure forms, mixed types being less frequent. Other authorities disclaim the reality of pure "types" as sharply defined disease entities. Thus Noyes and Kolb say:

> Rather should the psychoneuroses be regarded as a series of varying types of reaction brought about by multiple causative factors which vary from case to case. The more carefully the reactions of the neurotic are examined the more frequently it will be found that there are no sharply defined lines among the various types of neurosis. . . . Frequently the neurotic will, in varying degrees, show hysterical, obsessional, anxiety and even psychosomatic manifestations. Clinically a given case will often show such a confusion of symptoms that its definite assignment to a certain type may be difficult or arbitrary. Overt anxiety, for example, although the most conspicuous and characteristic symptom in anxiety states, is frequently an important picture in other forms. (P. 494)

Subject to the caveat that "pure" states are not likely to be found, we shall in this chapter attempt to assign various poltergeist

mediums according to their case histories to one of the broadly classified conditions listed by the American Psychiatric Association according to its standard nomenclature as:

1. Anxiety reaction
2. Dissociative reaction
3. Conversion reaction
4. Phobic reaction
5. Obsessive compulsive reaction
6. Depressive reaction

We shall find that the first three classes are well represented, and class six hardly at all. We shall find cases suggestive of types four and five, but without these being clearly indicated as established conditions. However, the writer has found it a heartening experience, because the task of retrospective diagnosis has proved to be by no means as uncertain as might have been expected. This serves, incidentally, to give us increased confidence in the basic trustworthiness of the case histories themselves.

ANXIETY AND HYPERVENTILATION

Quoting Noyes and Kolb once more (p. 496) we find:

> Of the immediate causes for the development of the psychoneurosis it may be said that they are frequently to be found in the necessity to repress, distort or displace emotions of hostility or rage, or the drives of sexuality and dependency as they emerge and conflict with order and peace in the patient's personality. These and similar factors, often of a conflict-producing nature, create *anxiety* which is the commonest and most important source of psychoneurotic disorders. Anxiety, engendered by a too severe and exacting super-ego but perhaps stimulated by an external situation, mobilizes the defenses of the personality. . . . The manner in which the patient adapts to this anxiety . . . and tries to mobilize the defenses of the personality . . . determines the type of the psychoneurotic reaction. If the anxiety felt and expressed directly, is "free-floating," and is not confined to definite situations or objects, the neurosis is spoken of as an anxiety state or anxiety neurosis.

When the diffuse anxiety is not too painful, it may be controlled through certain personality traits, e.g., by living up to self-imposed high standards. If the anxiety becomes more disturbing it may be expressed as any of a variety of symptoms such as chronic fatigue or restlessness. In addition to a chronic state of tension and mild anxiety, the patient may be subject to anxiety attacks lasting from a few moments to an hour. These attacks are characterized not only by subjective feelings of panic but also by any of a variety of physiological symptoms resulting from overstimulated action by the autonomic nervous system. Let us now revisit Elizabeth Bell in Tennessee about 1817. It will be recollected that she had daily "fainting spells," at regular hours in the evening. She experienced shortness of breath and smothering sensations. She panted "as if for life." She lay back exhausted and lifeless, losing her breath for nearly a minute between gasps, and rendered unconscious. A fit of this sort would last about thirty-five minutes, passing off suddenly, and soon she would feel perfectly restored. A few minutes later the "witch" would start to speak and for this reason the unconscious spell has been compared to the mediumistic trance (Carrington and Fodor). Betsy's condition, however, was no trance but undoubtedly an instance of the *hyperventilation syndrome*, a very common form taken by acute-anxiety attacks. It may be induced by any condition producing fear and not uncommonly occurs in the course of other personality disturbances when anxiety becomes manifest.

> The sufferer usually does not recognise that she is overbreathing. The increase and the depth and rapidity of respiration may be so slight that they go unobserved. . . . These respiratory disturbances if sufficiently prolonged, lead to reduction in the alveolar air and in the arterial blood CO_2 tension with a fall in the blood bicarbonate. Consequently many physiological systems are altered. The acid-base equilibrium is disturbed, . . . circulatory changes . . . and neuromuscular and EEG alterations ensue. The initial subjective feelings resulting from overbreathing are light-headedness or giddiness. If overbreathing continues, the individual has the sensation that she is about to faint. . . . There then follows a sensation of air hunger or shortness of breath and feelings of pressure in the thorax. . . . With mounting anxiety over presumed lack of air, many consciously increase the depth and rate of breathing, thereby exacerbating the initial cause of the subjective symptoms. . . . If overbreathing persists over a sufficiently prolonged period, disturbance of awareness may result associated with vasomotor collapse, rapid, irregular and weak pulse, pallor, and ending, in many instances, in loss of consciousness, or in convulsions.

Here I have quoted again from Noyes and Kolb, who go on to say that under psychiatric investigation the hyperventilating patient is frequently able to define well the situations in which the attacks occur and provide excellent descriptions of disturbing interpersonal contacts with avowal of unbearable feelings of hostility, resentment, or sexuality.

The psychosomatic symptom typified by the hyperventilation syndrone is not at all the same as a symptom in conversion hysteria. In the latter, anxiety is done away with as far as consciousness is concerned by being *converted* into a paralysis, or a paroxysm, or a hysterical faint or the like. The conversion symptom is a substitute for subjectively experienced anxiety, and usually has some symbolic meaning in itself. A psychosomatic symptom is not a conversion of the anxiety. It is merely a disturbed physiological response of an organ under the control of the autonomic nervous system to psychological stress and tension acting through that system. Anxiety attacks are therefore not conversions or substitutes for subjective anxiety but merely manifestations of that anxiety. Correspondingly, the neurological basis for conversion symptoms is entirely different, being in the operation of the central nervous system itself.

We may note that at about the time that the "witch" began to speak, Betsy had come round from her anxiety attack, was composed, and presumably now free (at least for a time) from her conscious anxiety. It is tempting therefore to regard the "witch" phenomenon as itself rather like a *conversion* reaction. If some poltergeist phenomena are indeed analogous to hysterical conversions then they admit the possibility of going much further than the usual bodily symptom in making explicit the subject matter of the underlying anxiety and conflict. It is agreed by psychiatrists that the bodily conversion symptom is symbolic. When the poltergeist manifestation is elaborate and versatile then there is considerably more scope for expression of inward meaning. We have already given Dr. Fodor's interpretation. It is possible that enlightened guesswork might suggest alternative explanations of the content of the Bell "witch's" doings, but the particular psychiatric complex

involved does not seem to us to be of especial importance. I think, however, it has been useful and important to recognize in Betsy the overt signs of an anxiety state concomitant with the psychic conflict ascribed to her, in a purely inferential way, by Dr. Fodor.

DISSOCIATIVE REACTIONS

Dissociative reactions were formerly classed with hysteria, with which they have a certain amount in common. Thus *diurnal fugues*, typified by the man who leaves home and wanders about the country with "loss of memory," were called *hysterical ambulatory fugues* to distinguish them from epileptic automatisms. We can find no examples of diurnal fugues or amnesiac states in the poltergeist literature. Though, as pointed out by Dr. Dingwall (1945), conditions of this kind, which approximate to dual personality, may be important as explicative of such cases as the haunting of the curé d'Ars.

Closely allied to fugues and somnambulisms are *twilight states*. These are dream states or states of semisleep similar to those found in epilepsy and narcolepsy in which there is mental confusion followed by an amnesic phase with or without automatism. Twilight states are short-lived and happen at any time of the day. They are often preceded by anxiety, and presumably are engendered by this anxiety. Commonly they form a prelude to a hysterical condition. Conceivably Germaine Maire's "absences" may have been of this kind and not petit mal automatisms. Unfortunately we have no record of her suffering any anxiety preludes to her "absences." Nor do we know whether she later had a history of hysteria. It is interesting to wonder if in her case incipient hysteria may have been "converted" into the poltergeist outbreak, but this remains pure speculation. Some twilight states are clearly not easily distinguishable from one of the forms of *fantasy* state. Leaving aside the progressively malignant type found in the psychoses, we may note the three forms of fantasy reaction common in adolescence, as given by Moody (p. 96):

> 1. The simplest form is a mere wandering of the mind from topic to topic without logical connection.
> 2. The second form is a deliberate weaving of desirable imaginative situations in which the subject is temporarily engrossed but never really out of touch with his surroundings.
> 3. In the third form reality is more or less foregone for the pleasure of experiencing fantasy situations, and for a short time the outside world may be completely shut out, but there is no barrier to a voluntary return to it.

The last form may relate to Germaine Maire's case. The second form is close to a normal activity of childhood not at all uncommon in adolescence. We are reminded of the orgy of fantasy indulged in by the little helper at Montmorency, aided by the housemaid. Psychiatrists tell us that fantasy may fit in with the inferiority feelings of a subject with hysterical tendencies. Fantasy in the noninsane is supported by the desire for release from painful brooding on the facts of life or is a substitute for the unraveling of some conflict. The underlying psychopathology is often easily ascertainable in those cases that later give rise to a hysterical reaction. Sometimes fantasy may itself play a part in the production of a hysterical state, fantasy being strongly suggestive along the line of its own operation (Moody, p. 97).

Somnambulism may be regarded as a nocturnal form of fugue and has been discussed in the preceding chapter in connection with Mary Carrick and Mary Spiegel. In each case it provides prima facie evidence of emotional disturbance. The former became "hysterical" during the haunting and had to be sent to an asylum. We may suppose that she had classic attacks of "hysterics"—weeping and laughter, perhaps with screaming, akin to hysteria major. Such attacks can occur in conjunction with diffused anxiety, the condition as a whole being classified as anxiety neurosis with some hysterical symptoms, as "anxiety hysteria," or as a mixed neurosis (anxiety with hysteria), according to taste. In Mary Spiegel's case supplementary confirmation of her emotional state is provided by her suicide attempt.

In Mary Carrick's case yet another dissociative phase was exhibited. It will be recollected that during some of the nocturnal haunting she was in a troubled "sleep," in which she cried out agitatedly. We interpreted this (quite properly, I believe) not as a normal sleep state but as a condition approximating in some degree to the partially conscious somnambulist one.

At this stage it is convenient to reassess Virginia's "trances" at Sauchie. It will be recollected that on the Sunday the Rev. Lund was told that Virginia had gone into a "trance" at bedtime—talking in her sleep and crying out for her dog Toby and for Annie. Then, at Mr. Lund's suggestion, she went back to bed, falling soon into an

apparent slumber. She called out for Toby. When they palmed off a teddy bear on her she was contented for a time and then rejected it violently and struck out at Mr. Lund and the rest. "Her eyes were closed throughout, but the manner of both cries and blows was vehement. Mr. Lund thought she was getting hysterical." Very shrewdly he said that "she would be better without an audience." *Exeunt omnes*, and soon she was normally asleep. It will be noted that, except for her getting up and walking about, Virginia's "trance" state was hardly to be distinguished from full somnambulism. She clearly had almost complete motor and sensory function. Dr. Logan's account of a similar event on the following Tuesday will bear repetition. Recalled to Dollar he found Virginia

> in bed with her eyes shut talking in a loud (and for her, unnatural) voice. She kept re-iterating that her dog Toby was "the best in the world" and demanded that both her dog and Anna . . . be brought to her immediately. . . . She threw herself around the bed and disarranged the bedclothes considerably. She appeared to be able to hear questions put to her and some of her replies indicated that any inhibitory control normally exercised by the higher centres appeared to be absent, almost as if she had been hypnotised and thoughts normally repressed were being spilled out. After about 10 or 12 minutes of this she appeared to wake, rubbed her eyes, and asked for a cup of tea. This she had, and shortly afterwards fell into a deep sound sleep.

It is a matter of indifference (since only the comparatively academic question of classification is involved) whether we categorize these unconscious states as semisomnambulistic or as *delirious twilight states*. Conditions of this latter type "consist of dream states accompanied by more or less confusion, dramatic posturings and activities and an excessive flow of speech appearing nonsensical, but in which occur references to strongly affective experiences. Dissociative delirium often represents the dreamlike realization of a wish or the dramatic reliving in fantasy of an affectively traumatic experience" (Noyes and Kolb, p. 502). Such states are sometimes episodes in cases with other hysterical symptoms. "In the delirium of hysteria the patient talks irrelevantly to the circumstances and surroundings at hand, but the narrative itself will be found to relate to a previous emotional disturbance of a very disturbing nature, and in itself the story may be more or less coherent. The subject while in this state is unaware of whereabouts or identity and cannot afterwards recall anything about it" (Moody, p. 102).

Virginia's state on the evening of the intercession service seems not to have been even nominally one of sleep. The child seems, however, to have been in a hysterical delirium at least between 10:30 and 11 P.M. when "the tape-recorder was on continuously and a considerable amount of hysterical talking by Virginia was recorded in which her lack of inhibition was manifest. For example, she demanded at one point to speak with Dr. Nisbet. On being asked why, . . . Virginia replied 'I want him and that's enough!' " The personality revealed in this and in the preceding state differs markedly from Virginia's workaday one. It will be recollected that her teacher, Miss Stewart, would describe Virginia's nature as very phlegmatic. She is not temperamental or argumentative and displays remarkably little emotion. Her "trances" therefore represent periods of *hysterical autonomy*, i.e., "isolated behaviour episodes, out of keeping with her prior behaviour organization, and developing as a reaction to tension caused by need or anxiety" (Cameron, p. 350).

☿ CONVERSION REACTION: HYSTERICAL AUTONOMY

VARIOUS of the fits, unconscious spells and deliriums already encountered are of the kind classified as *conversion hysteria* symptoms, in which autonomy of a personality facet is shown in the way defined above. This class of conversion symptoms is a very wide one, ranging from *grande hystérie* down to minor tics or simple emotional outbursts. The attacks suffered by Françoise Fontaine, by Mary Youghal, by the boy at Molignon, and by Floralina are certainly explicable (insofar as our information goes) as conversion reactions. If schizophrenia is excluded in Floralina's case and epilepsy in the others, then on the basis of such facts as are available we are obliged to ascribe them to hysteria. The Molignon case is the one in which the case for epilepsy can best be put. Even here it is quite possible for hysteria to be involved. Hysteria can bring on an epileptic attack in predisposed subjects. Conversely, an epileptic seizure can be followed by a state of pure hysteria. With regard to Grace and Floralina, we have already made the point that hysteria is notably contagious. The only other condition in which *folie à deux* is common is paranoia, which does not seem to be indicated here.

It is not easy to diagnose Esther Cox's "swelling" fits as

described in Hubbell's account. Hereward Carrington interviewed Esther and a number of surviving witnesses in the year 1907. He concluded that Hubbell's account is substantially true, though exaggerated (Carrington, 1913). Hubbell tells us that on the second night of the disturbances, scuttling noises came from under the bed, and a cardboard box full of scraps for patchwork jumped up and down. The next night at 10:15 Esther jumped out of bed, crying that she was dying. We are told that her hair stood on end, her face was livid, her eyes starting from their sockets. She was swelling visibly—arms, legs, trunk, hands. Suddenly four loud reports sounded like thunder claps. Esther instantly "deflated" and sank into a state of calm repose. Further episodes of swelling, thunderclaps and deflation occurred during the course of the haunting. The only rational explanation of the supposed swelling of arms and legs is that this item is an exaggeration superimposed on what may have been actual —a distension of Esther's abdomen and stomach. This can be achieved in the hysterical phenomenon called *aerophagy*, by gulping or sucking movements of the pharynx. Purves-Stewart and Worster-Drought cite the instance of a young schoolboy who could distend his abdomen by air-swallowing so that his waistcoat could not be buttoned (p. 715). *Hysterical meteorism* is frequently met with in wartime, and in peacetime in female hysterics. The patient develops abdominal distension to a grotesque extent. This always disappears on administration of a general anaesthetic, the whole swelling collapsing like a pricked bubble (p. 716).

With regard to Karin, we have already Wijk and Bjerre's diagnosis of hysteria. They were writing at a time when such a diagnosis could be reliably made. We may also confirm it for ourselves from the details of Karin's illness. She had overt anxiety as well as conversion symptoms. At her worst period, in 1898, she would have anxiety attacks several times a day. A violent and unconquerable feeling of anxiety would lay hold of her. It would cease when her arms (and sometimes the rest of her body) started to tremble. The tremor and its sequel were clearly the result of "conversion" of the anxiety. During the fit (lasting thirty to sixty minutes) Karin would lie in paroxysms of tears or laughter, but seemed incapable of voluntary speech or motion and had clouding of consciousness. By 1904 the attacks occurred only weakly and rarely. Wijk says she showed no hysterical character traits, but some somatic hysterical symptoms (unfortunately not specified) as well as nervousness and depression.

Returning to Angélique Cottin, we still find her—as ever—

anomalous. It will be recollected that when Dr. Tanchou had her under observation her *left* arm was at a higher temperature than the rest of her, and gave off a gentle heat. It trembled and was continually disturbed by unusual contractions and quiverings. The poltergeist manifestations occurred in conjunction with paroxyms. In a paroxysm (she said) she had an intense pricking or stinging in the wrist and elbow, so painful as to cause her to leap up and run to "escape the pain." Localized clonic spasms of all kinds can occur in hysteria, and the quivering and tremor may have been of this kind. Violent jerks too can be hysterical. Thus a hysterical patient had rapid and violent flexion-extension movements of the left elbow (appearing whenever a thunderstorm occurred!). It is possible for pain to be hysterical, and to be localized in some particular spot. In *hyperaesthesia* some regions of the skin become hypersensitive to stimuli. Any stimulus applied to such trigger areas is likely to cause a sudden reaction in the form of emotion, or of a hysterical fit or a muscular contracture. These zones are rarely found on the limbs, so that Angélique's case would tend to be exceptional, but in right-handed individuals they tend to be found on the *left* side of the body, which accords with Tanchou's observation. *Dysaesthesia* can also occur, and is characterized by "spurious" sensations described by the patient as pins and needles, itching, pricking, or stabbing, or as being like electric shocks. It will be seen therefore that we can reconcile Angélique's condition to a conversion hysteria, if we are prepared to postulate a somewhat complex syndrome.

♄ CONVERSION REACTION: HYSTERICAL INACTIVATION

Only one putative poltergeist case—that of Mary Jobson—appears to exhibit hysterical suppression of function. In an earlier chapter we described her condition—somewhat loosely—as catatonic. However, the constellation of symptoms seems indicative of hysteria rather than schizophrenia. We are told of the autonomy reactions, viz.: abdominal swelling, convulsions, and areas of anaesthesia (i.e., local insensitivity to pain). Taken together these are quite diagnostic of conversion hysteria, as is the occipital headache from which Mary also suffered. Her blindness and deaf-mutism, passing off as quickly as they came, are perfectly typical of hysterical inactivation. No single feature of her illness is unusual but she was so replete with varied symptoms that the case, even in its medical aspects, must have been puzzling to the physicians of the day.

NIGHTMARES

We have now exhausted the cases in which psychoneurotic disturbances are evidenced by recognizable physical or behavioral signs. Interpretation of cases without such definite signs is likely to be hazardous, and is essentially speculative. However, there are sometimes features present that are very suggestive of psychological processes, and the attempt to evaluate them by means of enlightened guesswork may not be entirely wrongheaded.

When on the night of July 29, 1910, John Randall was pulled out of bed, the bedcovers first started to move and he called out, "I cannot hold them, . . . I am going with them; there is something pushing me from inside. I am going, . . . I'm gone." While he lay on the floor, immediately afterwards, his face was bathed with perspiration. He trembled in every limb, was terribly frightened, and hardly able to speak. His condition was in fact very like that of a person awaking from a nightmare or terrifying dream, who is subject to emotional distress, palpitation, disordered respiration, sweating and tremor. In the ordinary nightmare the patient experiences fear, and the concomitant physical signs of fear, as the result of being presented in the dream with a terrifying situation. Thus Hadfield (p. 178) defines nightmares as "anxiety dreams of such intensity that they completely overwhelm the personality; that they give rise to exaggerated bodily sensations of palpitation, sweating, and suffocation, which are indeed the natural accompaniments of intense fear." Both dreams and nightmares are reproductions of unsolved problems. But in the nightmare the conflict is so severe and the terror so great that while there is a reproduction of the problem, the emotional tension causes such a state of distress that we wake up in terror. It is for this reason that many psychoanalysts believe that the nightmare offers a rather direct means of discovering the real problem that troubles the individual's life.

Had John Randall not been pulled out of bed in reality but only had dreamed it, nothing would have been thought of it. The episode would have been written off as a nightmare. The experience, though frightening, would have been unreal and classed as a figment of his his own dream imagination. It is tempting therefore to hypothecate that in this episode John Randall was still the author of his misfortunes. Instead of his unconscious mind generating a fictional attack on him during sleep, it generated an actual one (poltergeist-wise) on

him in a presleep state. On this assumption the episode becomes an enacted nightmare, and was a product of anxiety. It is not for us to ascertain the particular source of anxiety in John Randall's make-up. Following Hadfield (p. 180) in taking a broad view of nightmares, we recognize three types:

1. Those derived from objective experiences of a terrifying nature in childhood or in adult life, e.g., birth trauma, confinement in a narrow space, being left alone, sensations of violent illness or accident, and so on.
2. Those derived from fear of our own impulses, whether sexual or aggressive, either of which can be objectified as terrifying monsters.
3. Those which are the objectification of disordered organic feelings and emotions, which are personalized as crabs, spiders, vampires and the rest.

The first class can be simple reproductions of the original fear situation, without having any very subtle symbolic significance. Randall's experience of being carried off might indeed relate only to some simple childhood situation in which the infant reacted with a fear of abduction. On the other hand, it could very well relate to the welling up of repressed instincts. Randall was a lad probably away from home for the first time, and the conditions would be particularly appropriate for the development of anxiety as to a possible falling into sin of various kinds. Indeed, Randall's words are possibly significant. He felt he was being "pushed from inside." Again, he felt he was being "carried away." These are both very suggestive metaphors, and tend to favor the notion that Randall was reacting to the danger of being overwhelmed by sexual, homosexual, or aggressive instincts. It is said that the majority of the "night terrors" of the child are of this moral nature. This cause is often subtlely entwined with the reliving of early traumatic experiences so that the two modes of origin are not always distinct. Randall's separation from his home could contribute by a sense of loneliness.

OBSESSIONAL ANXIETY

Sometimes anxiety instead of being diffuse, as in anxiety neurosis, or unconscious, as in pure conversion hysteria, becomes attached to a single object. In a *phobia* fear is generated by a particular situation,

e.g., heights, or confined spaces, to a degree disproportionate to the actual objective danger. The situation in fact merely becomes a sort of shorthand symbol representing a repressed impulse whose eruption into consciousness is feared. *Obsessional thoughts,* often of a fearful nature, are not very dissimilar from phobias and usually represent exactly the same mechanism as that at work in a phobia. Thus Indridi Indridason's terror of the control personality "Jon" is of the greatest interest. Indridi, it will be remembered, though only a youth was apparently functioning as a professional medium. For some time "Jon" as a control personality had been more and more intrusive at séances. "He" claimed to be the soul of a recent suicide, and was threatening and vindictive. Indridi developed a chronic state of terror of "Jon," so much so that he was afraid to sleep alone at night. And it was this that fortunately resulted in Oddgeirsson and Kvaran being witnesses to Indridi's nightmarish poltergeist experiences. Indridi's preoccupation with "Jon" has some of the earmarks of an obsession. If "Jon" was purely a production of Indridi's mind, then as a "suicide" he would seem to symbolize something. Perhaps "Jon" represented self-destructive impulses. Instead he may have represented impulses whose eruption was feared as destructive to the personality. We should not expect to be able to interpret the attacks on Indridi in an unambiguous way. They could symbolize being "carried away," or be themselves flight reactions operated by paranormal means. Again, it is possible that, as we must suppose is true in many poltergeist cases, symbolism in the phenomena themselves is developed to only a rudimentary degree.

☙ VAMPIRES AND THE LIKE

Eleonore Zugun seems to have suffered little overt anxiety and we are therefore at liberty to guess that her poltergeist outbreak represented a complete conversion of anxiety. We can legitimately attempt this interpretation because of the aggressive nature of the haunting. We owe one psychoanalytic interpretation to Harry Price. He says that the bites and scratches may reasonably be taken to represent the vampire Dracu, the traditional "bogeyman" at Eleonore's birthplace. In this interpretation Dracu is the punitive superego, punishing illegitimate impulses, which latter might in fact be merely the normal stirrings of sexual instinct. Hadfield (p. 196) gives alternative derivations of the vampire figure in nightmares and concludes: "The monsters and vampires are the projection and personalization of our

emotions of fear, rage, or sex, and sometimes of our organic sensations and feelings."

☙ MANIAS

We can likewise ask whether poltergeist fire-raising is a substitute for the compulsive antisocial act of arson, as in pyromania. In particular we may wonder if Jennie Bramwell's "trance" was not hysterical. And generally we can speculate as to the possible function of a poltergeist outbreak. However, as yet we have only been able to do this at all convincingly for a few cases in which the content has seemed especially clear in its symbolic import.

Speech being the most explicit form of communication, we might expect that psychological attitudes would be most clearly revealed in the case of talking poltergeists. Here a curious connection with *manic-depressive psychosis* seems to be revealed. A manic-depressive patient may be in a phase of depression or in a phase of mania. In some patients bouts of one kind follow one another or bouts of the opposite kind, often with intermediate periods of normalcy. The type of personality found in patients prior to the onset of the illness is extroverted, socially expressed, and labile in mood. The premorbid personality is happy, active, alert, witty, and confident. In *hypomania* (the subacute form of *mania*) the subject becomes noticeably self-confident, overalert, gay and witty, and unstable in mood and character. He shows extreme restlessness and insomnia, also euphoria, and apparent elation, but there is usually no true happiness, and the elation would seem to be superficial and to be masking feelings of anxiety and hostility. Speech is rapid, even to the point of pseudo-incoherence, but is actually connected and lucid. The patient cannot stop talking and passes very rapidly from one topic to another, following association of ideas. He shows exaggeration, punning, and wit, often with overt obscenity. In *acute mania* there may be singing and shouting. All statements are made with extreme overconfidence. Criticism is resented; the patient's manner is overbearing and the opinions of others are brusquely set aside. Violent swings of mood occur. In the acute phase the patient is extremely irritable, excitable, and aggressive. He has delusions of wealth, grandeur, and persecution. These conditions are somewhat commoner in females. The manic phase is usually preceded by a short depression. The condition usually comes to clinical attention between early adulthood and middle life. There is a strong genetical element, but this amounts to an inherited predisposition.

The writer is impressed by a strong family resemblance between the attitudes of the manic patient and those of the Devils of Mascon and Hjalta-stad, the visitant to the Dagg farmstead, and the Bell "witch." We may therefore hazard the guess that in such cases the manic reaction does not invade the conscious personality of the patient herself or himself but obtains expression externally, the conscious personality being unimpaired. The personality of the merry servant maid at Mascon would appear to have been extrovert, and it is tempting to suppose that she, Dinah Dagg, and Betsy Bell were cyclothymic personalities. In a general way this guess of ours fits in with the thesis that anxiety is an important factor conducive to poltergeistery. The nervous etiology of manic-depressive states is far from being understood but it is generally accepted that the mania is a form taken by an anxiety reaction to an incipient depression. The depression is thought to originate by punitive repression of hostility feelings directed at other members of the family. The repression is occasioned by the ambivalent conflict between the demands of hostility as opposed to the requirements of duty, affection, or dependence. Anxiety can be detected below the superficial elation of the maniac; hostility also is near to the surface. Additionally there is often a thinly disguised paranoiac element.

❧ SCHIZOPHRENIA

The connection with manic-depressive conditions is, admittedly, somewhat speculative and inferential. *Overt* psychosis are notably absent from poltergeist records. As already suggested, this could be due to the hypotheticated age factor. If so, we might expect poltergeist activity to occur rarely in a psychotic who is not in too senior an age-group. Great interest attaches therefore to the so-called "Poltergeist Man," age 32, with a schizophrenic or like condition reported by Dr. Williams (1963), whose case will be discussed in Chapter 17.

❧ APPARITIONS

In Chapter 14 we noted that over-much weight need not be given to some of the apparitions alleged in poltergeist cases. This would seem to be so in the Ringcroft, Styles, Haltwhistle, Bell and Cideville affairs. In the residual cases the apparitions if not fictive, as possibly in the Bristol, Dagg, Poona, and West Indian cases, could

reasonably be interpreted as subjective hallucinations and referred to the emotional state of the poltergeist focus. The headless women seen by Floralina are indeed suggestive of mental pathology.

❧ ANXIETY AS A RELEASE MECHANISM

ANXIETY has now been identified in a sizable group of poltergeist cases. When done from available descriptions of physical signs, the diagnosis has been reliable. Less confidence has to be placed on inference from apparent psychological content alone, when unsupported by physical symptoms. However the reader may agree that that anxiety is very plausibly indicated. Thus we can confirm Dr. Dingwall's opinion (1945) that "conflict" is often at the base of poltergeist outbreaks, and agree that many instances support Dingwall and Langdon-Davies (1956) when they say that in a poltergeist case we have "a human being in trouble."

We cannot assert that anxiety is in all cases essential to the release of poltergeist activity. The most we can say is that *frequently* it is a precipitating factor. This finding by itself goes a long way towards explaining the high incidence in adolescents and the excess of juvenile girl mediums. It is not unreasonable to ascribe far-reaching neurological results to anxiety. When the normal person is in a state of nervous apprehension the beta rhythm appears in the brain, and in anxiety neurotics it markedly predominates (Arnold). There is another neurological fact that is highly suggestive. A patient with lesions of Area 44 of the cerebral cortex suffers from verbal aphasia. He has difficulty in speaking or writing, though he knows what he wants to say and may understand what is said to him. Yet, under the stress of emotional situations he may speak fluently, in some cases almost as well as before the injury. But the aphasia returns as soon as the emotion subsides (Gardner, 1948).

In some poltergeist cases no evidence is cited such as to indicate an overt anxiety condition. Thus we cannot claim that anxiety is always essential for the release of "mediumistic" powers. However we need to recollect that few of our poltergeist subjects have come under the skilled eye of a psychiatrist, and it seems likely that a qualified many cases where it escaped the notice of laymen. . . . Thus it is almost certainly the case that the most obvious neuroses such as fugues, deliria and hysterias are over-represented in the present sample of diagnoses, and that a variety of milder nervous conditions would have been recognized in old cases had competent psychological observa-

tion been possible. And we might guess that sometimes, even when neuroses are absent, the mediumistic activity fulfils an emotional need. Thus Florrie C. at Kingstown was "intelligent and straightforward," but her little communicator, "Walter Hussey," may have fulfilled the desire of an only child for companionship.

In most of the more reliable poltergeist cases there are no verbal "communications" either by voice or coded raps. The limited skills of the poltergeist therefore do not very readily admit of psychological interpretation. Poltergeist "humor" has often been noted but its status in the hierarchy of wit is necessarily at the lowest level—that of the practical joke. Perhaps it can be understood as aggressive action of a mild kind. The victim is put in a comic situation and made ridiculous in some degree. To this extent we may perhaps understand the pranks of the poltergeist as rebellion by the poltergeist medium, so often the foster or stepchild, the servant girl from a far place, or the misunderstood adolescent, isolated and resentful. Like neurosis itself, the practical joke represents regression to the small-boy level of behavior. Some of the more unpleasant phenomena—jokes in bad taste, such as the flinging or smearing of dirt—possibly represent neurotic regression to yet more infantile levels.

We may also note Karin's case as having one feature of patent significance. Her "communicator," "Piscator," represented (she said) her own worse nature. He played the role of an embarrasingly aggressive and bold courtier. We are reminded of the medieval *incubus* or demon lover who assailed the virtue of both matrons and virgins. As the author has noted elsewhere (Owen, 1964), the incubus—clearly a projection of sexual urges or anxieties—was occasionally accompanied by poltergeist doings.

The "secondary gain" obtained by the neurotic subject from the existence of the neurosis itself should not be overlooked. Like many neurotic symptoms, poltergeist phenomena are often seemingly "attention-seeking." By diminishing isolation and sense of exclusion and unimportance the haunting itself may (as perhaps with little Virginia Campbell) attract attention and sympathy, and so, removing its own cause, be self-curing.

The foregoing remarks are of the kind which come rather deviously to mind when one attempts interpretation at a somewhat superficial level. However, even if it be the case that poltergeist outbreaks are analogous to hysterical conversion symptoms, then any one who has worked through case histories of neuroses (e.g. Freud, 1948) with their varied and complex mechanisms of repression, displacement, substitution, projection and symbolization, will be suspicious of over-facile solutions to the problem of poltergeistery as psychologically functional. We might hope that in course of time a few specially favorable cases will prove amenable to psychoanalytic study, allowing the detailed etiology of the neurosis or "quasi-neurosis" to be correlated with such symbolic meaning as may be found in the physical manifestations. My own belief is that, if and when this program can be carried out, it will be found that poltergeist phenomena exhibit no uniform symbolic meaning the same for all cases, but have a significance varying according to the psyche and life situation of the "medium." This, of course, is not to say that cases will not group themselves into certain broad classes with similarities of "style" and psychological content.

♑ CONCLUSIONS

About twenty poltergeist cases, many of which are of the better attested sort, give clear evidence of a neurotic or anxiety state in the medium.

This suggests that, in addition to some innate capacity for physical mediumship, anxiety operates as a precipitating factor or release mechanism.

Some neurological facts render this conclusion not implausible.

Some cases suggest that the poltergeist phenomena themselves function as a conversion symptom.

Sometimes we can fairly infer a certain psychological content to the manifestations that occur as projections of inward urges or tensions.

Usually, however, the manifestations are at such a low level that it is difficult to recognize any psychological content other than that of the practical joke that seeks to equalize the status of prankster and victim.

However, a further unconscious motive may be found in the attention-seeking nature of some outbreaks, which, like neurosis, thereby yield "secondary gain."

Although the association between neurosis and poltergeistery may well be incomplete, it goes far to explain the preponderance of girl mediums, and in part explains the relative frequency among adolescents.

CASES CITED

Anxiety Reaction	*Date*	*Reference*
Betsy Bell, Tennessee	1817	16
Dissociative Reactions	*Date*	*Reference*
Germaine Maire, Nancy	1910	14, 15, 18
Montmorency	1912	15
Mary Carrick, Boston	1868	4, 15
Mary Spiegel, Milwaukee	1870	3, 4, 15
Virginia Campbell, Sauchie	1960	5, 15
Conversion Hysteria: Autonomy	*Date*	*Reference*
Françoise Fontaine, Louvier	1650	9, 15
Mary Longdon, Youghal	1661	15
Angélique Cottin, Paris	1846	4, 15
Esther Cox, Amherst	1878	13, 16, 18
Jennie Bramwell, Thorah	1891	7, 14
Floralina, Ooty	1897	15, 18
Karin, Sweden	1904	4, 15
Molignon	1914	12, 15
Conversion Hysteria: Inactivation	*Date*	*Reference*
Mary Jobson, Sunderland	1840	5
Phobia and Obsession	*Date*	*Reference*
Indridi Indridason, Reykjavik	1907	8
John Randall, Enniscorthy	1910	7
Eleonore Zugun, London	1926	11, 12
Mania	*Date*	*Reference*
The Devil of Mascon	1612	10
The Devil of Hjalta-Stad	*ca.* 1750	10
The Bell "witch"	1817	10, 12
Dagg, Clarendon	1889	10
Schizophrenia	*Date*	*Reference*
Poltergeist Man, London	1950	Williams
Emotional need	*Date*	*Reference*
Florrie C., Kingstown	1876	4

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17

Poltergeist Phenomena and Physical Mediumship

ADULT PHYSICAL MEDIUMSHIP

THE MAJORITY of poltergeist cases are characterized by physical effects only. But an appreciable proportion of cases show effects—telepathy and perhaps clairvoyance—akin to mental mediumship. We therefore wonder if all paranormal phenomena are not different manifestations of a "mediumistic ability" with which a few people are endowed. The peculiarity that most "poltergeist mediums" are between ten and twenty years of age does suggest that the mediumistic faculty is likely to disappear with age, or at least undergo diminution. But this is uncertain and it is arguable that youth is not essential and rather that it is the stresses of youth that conduce to paranormal activity. We therefore should look for cases of spontaneous activity involving physical effects centering on presumptive "mediums" of more mature age.

In so doing we should be prepared for some differences of "style." In fact, we find a broad spectrum of types of case stretching from the rowdy poltergeist to more solemn phenomena such as apparent communication with the dead or dying. Some cases of this latter kind have already been discussed in Chapter 14, "The Mediumistic Theory."

We should note also that among the set of cases in Chapter 4,

which were taken as being reliably witnessed, there were a few that need not have been classified as examples of the poltergeist. Thus little Florrie C. at Kingstown, investigated by Professor Barrett, was the center of rather regular and orderly phenomena, more resembling those of an adult physical medium. The child was intelligent and straightforward and presumably quite mentally and physically healthy. At daylight séances, there would be table movements and intelligent conversation answered by coded knockings in the vicinity. Alice Cocat's was similar.

Looking for cases of adult mediumship arising spontaneously outside the realms of regular spiritualism or "professional" mediumship, we are naturally reminded of the Karin case. This was notable for the "advanced age" of the "medium"— twenty-seven years. In addition, the case was of long duration in comparison with the general run of poltergeist outbreaks, and the phenomena restrained and relatively orderly. It would appear to constitute something of a "missing link" between adult mediumship and sporadic juvenile poltergeistery.

It would have been interesting to know what happened to Florrie C. when she grew up, but this is not told us by Professor Barrett. However, writing in *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, he tells us of an adult medium, "a lady who lived with the family of her cousin, a leading photographer in Dublin, . . . Miss L., . . . neither a paid nor a professional medium, and I was greatly indebted to Mr. and Miss L. for giving me every opportunity to investigate the phenomena, often at considerable inconvenience to themselves." None of the sittings were in darkness. When held in the evenings there was sufficient gaslight to enable Barrett to read small print, and "of course to see any movement on the part of those present."

> Whilst the hands and feet of all were clearly visible and no one touching the table it sidled about in an uneasy manner. It was . . . four-legged . . . , some 4 foot square and heavy. In obedience to my request, first the two legs nearest me, and then the two hinder legs rose 8 to 10 inches completely off the ground and thus remained a few moments; not a person touched the table the whole time. I withdrew my chair further, and the table then moved towards me—Mr. and Miss L. not touching the table at all,—finally the table came up to the armchair in which I sat and imprisoned me in my seat. When thus under my very nose the table rose repeatedly, and enabled me to be

> perfectly sure, by evidence of touch, that it was quite off the ground and that no human being had any part in this or the other movements.
>
> A sitting was held in Barrett's own house at Kingstown, he says,
>
> . . . with plenty of daylight enabling me to see everything in the room. After a short time raps, varying from faint ticks to loud percussive sounds, were heard, not muffled sounds as would be made by the feet in the carpeted room, but clear and distinct, and not the slightest movement of the hands or feet of any of the three present could be seen. Suddenly, the tips of our fingers only being on the table, the heavy loo-table, [sic; loo-table, a kind of round table for card games, marketed under this name, so-called after the game of loo], at which we sat, began a series of prancing movements; so violently did the claws of the table strike the floor that I had to stop the performance fearing for the safety of the chandelier in the room below.

Making some experiments in raising the table by manual efforts, Barrett found that the leaping movement of the table could only be achieved by a person using both hands and all his strength. In its prancings the table spelled out messages in the usual way. Barrett comments that the communications were "just such as the medium, who was a Methodist would have given, serious and pious platitudes." Thus he did not in this instance look further than Miss L.'s own personality as prime agent in the activities.

Unfortunately Barrett's account is in some respects of only anecdotal status, because it rests on his unsupported testimony, and he revealed little corroborative fact, the name of the medium and even the date of the investigation being suppressed. Otherwise, one feels, this case could have been of decisive evidential value for the reality of physical phenomena. His account is in other respects a good one, and has the ring of truth. Its acceptance implies that there are rare persons, otherwise "normal" human beings, who have the capacity of physical mediumship more or less at call. That is to say, it can be "switched on" without very special conditions being required. Notable features are the absence of darkness and the lack of any very marked form of "trance." For this seems to be implied by Barrett's account, and we may suppose that only some degree of relaxation or withdrawal of attention was required on the part of Miss L. In these respects Miss L.'s mediumship approximates to that of the poltergeist juveniles, and it may be that this is the basic pattern of genuine physical mediumship. The similarity of the auditory phenomena, ranging from faint ticks to loud bangs, to those in poltergeist cases is notable. Again, the content of the communications appeared to be fairly mundane, with the presumption that it reflected the medium's own intellect. Interestingly enough, however, at one of the sittings mental phenomena were experienced. "Loud raps," which quite startled Barrett, "were given at the table at which we sat, and when I asked the unseen visitor to rap the number of fingers I held open, my hand being out of sight and the opened fingers unseen by anyone, the correct number was rapped out and this was done twice. Knocks came in answer to my request, when we all removed our hands and withdrew a short distance from the table."

Cases of nonprofessional mediumship performed in the light in the presence of sagacious observers are unfortunately extremely rare. This suggests that long-term ability of this kind is itself an extremely rare endowment. It has to be presumed that usually the mediumistic capacity, if present, is submerged and needs some additional mental or emotional activity to evoke it. Study of juvenile poltergeist mediums has certainly suggested (Chapter 16, Psychoneurotic Conditions in Poltergeist Cases) that anxiety in one or other of its many forms is frequently if not invariably present. Strikingly enough, when we collect the relatively few cases of physical phenomena associated with adults, most of them seem to have some special feature which may perhaps have operated as one of the precipitating factors.

Thus, readverting to the case of Miss H. Power (1883), communicated to Gurney, who passed her account on to Myers, we recall that the phenomena occurred at the moment when she "felt most angry" at a book by "M. A. (Oxon.)" which jarred on her religious faith. A woman's handbag was hurled through the air, and loud raps came in different places on the wall. A servant came up to investigate the origin of the sounds, and then "shortly after, a drawing board which stood in an empty space between the two sides of a writing table, slid out on its thin edge into the room and then fell over, about a yard from the writing-table." The case, admittedly, rests entirely on one person's memory, but it could be true. If so, it would seem to be a rather nice example of a flash of physical mediumship in an adult, and taking a "poltergeist" form.

ILLNESS

It is curious that when the few cases of poltergeist outbreaks involving an adult as presumptive medium are listed, it is found that a large proportion involve the illness of the individual in question. We may pass over various cases listed by Charles Fort where the invalid is a child or described as a "girl," as being instances of juvenile poltergeistery, and another in which several members of the family are described as being taken ill. The Dixon sisters at Newry in 1776 are also not very fit for our purpose, though they might be interesting, if better attested, as exemplifying adult mediumship consequent on *involutional melancholia* possibly associated with menopause. There are a few cases, however, where poltergeist phenomena centered on an invalid.

Taking the worst-evidenced cases first, we may note the one taken by Charles Fort from the *Religio-Philosophical Journal* for July, 1882. The occupant of the back parlor was ill in a boarding house in Brooklyn, New York City, kept by a Mrs. William Swift. Raps were heard. So far so good, but the case takes on an odd complexion when we learn also that a floating, vaporous body shaped like a football appeared several times, and its effect on the invalid was like an electric shock. It is difficult to assimilate this information to anything else in psychic research. More orthodox were the happenings at Church Street, New Haven, reported in the *New York Times* the next year. Objects flew about and tramping sounds were heard. A woman was ill in the house, and while mixing up her medicine in a cup the spoon flew away, to the sound of "*Hey, diddle, diddle.*" An unfindable bullet made a hole in a window pane.

In 1890 the home of Mr. Pidduck of Clapham in London was, according to the London *Echo*, the object of unexplained stone-throwing that smashed several windows. The daughter of the house was dying at the time. Unfortunately we do not know her age. Nor can we assess the genuineness of the phenomena. However, in 1920 forty policemen watched the house of Mr. Gaskin at Grove Road, London. It is said they were posted at various points of vantage, but could not detect an origin for the continuing showers of stones. Mr. Gaskin was ill at the time, but this may have been fortuitous, for we do not know if there were not other occupants of the house, including a possibly juvenile medium. That same year a fairly well attested case happened at Aberdeen, but it clearly centered on an invalid boy.

However, there is extant a short account of a haunting happening near Peterhead, in Aberdeenshire, in 1825, nearly a century before. We are told by Smith (p. 934) that a James Wylie tenanted a croft on Braehead of Auchtydonald and was much respected by his neighbors. No other inmate of the cottage is mentioned. Also, Wylie died soon after the cessation of the haunting. The suggestion is that he was the poltergeist medium but we are in doubt as to his state of health. Unfortunately Smith did not write out his account till fifty years after the event, so that he may have had the story merely by verbal tradition. However, he gives a first-person narrative as if by one of Wylie's neighbors. This may be genuine and have been written down originally nearer the time, possibly by a local minister or schoolmaster. "One night," says the anonymous witness, "I went there with four other men, and a woman devoid of fear." At the dread hour of midnight strange unearthly sounds were heard within and around the house. Wylie was tormented in his bed by plucking off of the bedclothes. The fearless woman stationed herself at the bedside challenging the "spirit" to whip off the blankets while she held them down. But she was soon routed by a pail of water which capered through the house and emptied itself around her. Soon every movable thing in the house was in motion, and peat clods were flying in all directions. "After a time the commotion settled . . . we had an opportunity of searching the house, in the expectation of finding some one as the cause of the uproar, but we found none." Eventually after some weeks of disturbance, Wylie left the place, known henceforward as "Boodiebrae" ["hobgoblin hill"] and he died soon after.

We have already mentioned the exceptionally interesting Lebègue haunting at Valence-en-Brie in 1896 (Chapter 10). It will be recalled that a deep gruff voice, of great volume, uttered coarse abuse and mystified the family as to its origin. M. Lebègue, the householder, "made considerable borings and excavations in his cellar to make sure there were no electric wires, or acoustic apparatus of any kind." The voice was so loud and broke out in so many different places that trickery seemed impossible. In addition there were movements of furniture, though here Dr. Encausse's account is more sketchy than we should wish. The phenomena started when Lebègue was away in Paris. The household consisted of M. Lebègue, two children, two maidservants and an invalid woman who seems to have been Lebègue's mother, "Mme. Lebègue senior," but here the account is irritatingly indeterminate. However, at the end of the first day of the haunting the servants left the house, and so dismissed themselves from the affair. Next

the children were successively and separately sent away, but the phenomena continued. The sick woman was then taken to another house, and the phenomena followed her there. The bed was pushed about and almost turned upside down. Encausse says that there were many witnesses to the facts. If he is to be relied on, the facts as stated would seem to indicate the invalid as the medium. According to Encausse, "the mystifications . . . soon finished off the poor helpless invalid."

There is one case that seems almost decisive for the present investigation. In 1921 poltergeist activity centered round Frau Sauerbrey, the second wife of a clockmaker in the village of Hopfgarten, near Weimar in Germany. She had a daughter of her own, Frieda Pappe (who was old enough to give evidence in a court case arising out of circumstances associated with the happenings) and so can be reckoned to be an adult medium. Frau Sauerbrey in 1921 was confined to bed with a chronic malady from which she suffered. On February 10 the home was visited by the clockmaker's son, Otto Sauerbrey, age 21, who lived in a neighboring village and was an amateur of various occult sciences. Staying over to February 12, he attempted to treat her condition. It is not clear whether in fact he used hypnotism and "mesmeric passes" or merely tried suggestion and "laying on of hands." However, the treatment was of limited efficacy, for after he had left, the invalid complained of pains in the head. On February 17 she had hallucinations in which she saw the eyes of her stepson fixed constantly upon her. That night raps were heard on the walls, table, door, and ceiling of her bedroom, continuing until morning.

Some days later the raps started again. In addition, chairs and table and a cup moved without contact. We are told that these phenomena happened by electric light but were more pronounced in the dark. On February 24 the police were called in and the commissary brought eight men and posted them strategically throughout the house. But similar phenomena took place in their presence and were recorded in the commissary's report. The police made experiments, putting a stool and various objects out of reach of the patient (about six feet away), and saw them move without anyone touching them and in a direction away from the patient. In the later proceedings the police did not give evidence but their report was quoted to the effect that they were convinced of the genuineness of the phenomena and certain that they were not produced by the invalid in any normal way. The legal proceedings took the form of a prosecution of Otto Sauerbrey for negligently causing harm to the patient by his "treatments." At the inquiry Frieda Pappe, a neighbor Walter Degenkolbe, and

Herr Sauerbrey all gave evidence affirming the reality of the various phenomena, and Frieda Pappe described and corroborated some of the police observations. Frau Sauerbrey's physician gave medical evidence as to her condition that exonerated Otto from responsibility, and incidentally testified that the knockings of February 12 were physically beyond her capacity. The poor woman herself was not available to testify, having died on March 27. A psychiatrist had arrived from Weimar and had treated the patient by suggestion, apparently curing her of her hallucinations and sense of oppression. She declared that she was "delivered." Unfortunately she died a month later from the progression of her physical malady. Interestingly enough, the phenomena ceased entirely after the psychiatrist's visit. Perhaps Frau Sauerbrey's emotional condition was the precipitating factor rather than her physical state.

❧ TWO RELIGIOUS MYSTICS

In previous chapters we have noted the peculiar phenomena that sometimes appear to have been attached to persons living lives of religious contemplation. Thus the levitations of Saint Joseph of Copertino appear to be well attested, as has been remarked by both Dr. Dingwall and Father Thurston, as well as by Leroy. Father Thurston in the course of a long life of profound scholarship made also many careful studies of stigmatization and related phenomena. Indeed, he became an authority both on the phenomenon of stigmatization and on religious mysticism, true and "false." His biographer, Father Crehan, remarks that he was consulted on various occasions by the ecclesiastical authorities in cases of stigmatization. In one of these the woman made a happy marriage and the stigmata ceased forthwith. In his writings on the subject Father Thurston expressed the view that in many cases the stigmata were genuine phenomena—not self-inflicted wounds—and not ascribable to physiological processes as yet known to medicine. On the other hand, he expressed the definite opinion that in many cases, indeed in perhaps the majority of cases, the phenomena could not be cited as evidences of Divine Grace. That is to say, they are the result of natural causes, albeit of an unknown kind. Furthermore, he related the phenomena to the state of mind of the *stigmatizé*, and suggested that certain temperaments with a habit of brooding on religious topics tend to induce this and other paranormal phenomena. Stigmatization and other inexplicable happenings have to be regarded as manifestations of psycho-physical forces. Thus there is a rather far-

reaching parallelism between many religious "miracles" in this class and the phenomena of physical mediumship and poltergeist hauntings.

In this Father Thurston was to some extent anticipated by Andrew Lang, who pointed out that odd happenings are narrated of some of the early saints—occurrences that do not seem in themselves to have any sacred significance. Thus Saint Dunstan would be levitated, bed and all, and be attacked poltergeistwise by showers of small stones. As Lang observes, these are not especially saintly miracles. From a medieval point of view, the bombardment would not be a difficulty because it would be explicable as an assault by demons or devils jealous of Dunstan's virtue. This explanation is, however, hardly acceptable to us today. We have therefore either to assume that such episodes were written in by hagiographers as illustrative of the kind of thing a saint would have to contend with, or to accept that these were real poltergeistlike hauntings.

Such ancient and dubious material can at the most be merely suggestive. However, some profit can be got by considering two cases collected by the indefatigable Father Thurston. In each of these cases poltergeist phenomena are described as centering on a person of deep religious feeling or at least of obsessive religiosity. The most important of these cases is, admittedly, very old but was rather extensively written up by a Dominican Father, Peter of Dacia. (Here "Dacia" means Scandinavia.) Thurston says that no one who reads through his statement and letters will doubt his absolute sincerity. He seems also to have been an intelligent and able man, his talent having been recognized early by his superiors, who sent him to study at Cologne and then at Paris. He was later appointed an ecclesiastical professor in Sweden. In December, 1267, he went to Stommeln, near Cologne, to assist in the care of a sick penitent. Calling on John, the parish priest, he met Christina, a woman aged twenty-five, like Karin a borderline case for age classification. She was now residing at John's house with his mother and sister. Her earlier history is contained in an account compiled by John. It was one of intense, indeed extravagant, religious devotion. At the age of ten she plighted her troth to Christ to be his spouse forever. At thirteen she ran away to Cologne to join a company of Béguines and there led a life of extreme austerity, starvation, and mortification. She longed to receive some stigma or token that would keep Christ's sufferings continually before her mind. Interestingly enough, devotion alternated with losses of faith, and she had numerous visionary experiences—some tending to reaffirm her faith and others tending to destroy it. Thurston says that it seems impossible to believe

that this part of the account represents anything more than the strange hallucinations of a hysterical subject who was on the verge of losing her reason. But he is inclined to believe some of the other details in her story, which are analogous to poltergeist assaults. Thus she would be beaten, have her pillow or bedclothes pulled away, or a stone put under her head by the "demon."

When Father Peter first visited Stommeln she was going through one of these periods of tribulation. As the friars entered the room she was hurled backwards as by an invisible hand. On this occasion she received stigmatic wounds in the presence of Peter and others but, as Thurston says, there was nothing that on the evidence presented might not have been engineered by a hysterical subject who had secreted a couple of nails about her person, and was consciously or subconsciously bent on producing a sensation. On Peter's next visit, in February, 1268, he found Christina in a state of ecstasy. That is to say, she was outwardly in a condition of cataleptic rigidity in which no sign of movement or even of breathing could be detected. After four hours she recovered very gradually. During the year 1268 she had visionary experiences and other raptures and much stigmatization. The evidence for this latter appears to be good.

But the exceptional interest of Christina's case lies not in the stigmatization itself but its occurrence in parallel with poltergeist doings of the most outrageous kind. The best-attested manifestations of this sort, witnessed by Peter of Dacia, took place in the winter of 1268-69. Christina and those who visited her were bespattered again and again with indescribable filth. "The details are quite unquotable, but Peter does not spare his readers and he is almost aggravatingly precise as to times, people, places, and the nature of the outrage" (Thurston, 1955). The first such assault that Peter saw was directed against a Benedictine monk, just outside the room in which Christina was lying. "The whole company were inside the house. The filth came from empty space. They saw nothing of its passage through the air." On another visit Peter tells us that he was three times subjected to the same indignity. Ultimately all the clothing of the inmates of the house and visitors was ruined, although Christina herself was most frequently the object of attack.

Peter left Cologne after Easter, 1269, for more than a year at Paris. Letters written him by John on Christina's behalf recount much continued persecution of a poltergeist type. It was said that stones were thrown at Christina, also that the "devil" brought in a skull which flew about the room; and many other events were described.

There is some independent corroboration of the skull and the stone-throwing incidents in a letter from Father Maurice, one of the Dominican community at Cologne. Father Peter returned to Stommeln in the summer of 1270 for a flying visit of farewell before departing for his native Sweden. The parting with Christina was a very tender one because a genuine though blameless attachment appears to have been established between her and Peter, who seems to have had misgivings about having unintentionally centered her affections upon himself. He might well have had grave ground for concern on the plausible assumption (made by Thurston) that Christina was hysterical and temperamentally unbalanced, though doubtless a harmless and genuinely likable person.

Until 1287 Peter received, through Father John, Christina's account of very extravagant experiences. According to Thurston "one can only regard them as the hallucinations of a brain which, for the time being at least, was completely unhinged." For example, we may cite the obsession that hosts of demons were engaged in an assault upon her, e.g., 40,050 devils on Christmas Eve, 1283. For most of her stories there is no corroboration from other sources, and Thurston very reasonably concludes that they are descriptions of a somewhat repetitive and horrible nightmare. Nightly the devils carry her away naked to some lonely spot and hack her to pieces, but she is miraculously restored and brought home by angels, or by Jesus or the Virgin Mary. On two occasions she was found outdoors and apparently insensible in the early morning, as is known by independent evidence. But this suggests somnambulistic fugue, supporting the diagnosis of hysteria.

Thurston's other case combining stigmatization and poltergeistery concerned Dominica Clara Moes of Luxembourg. In introducing her history Thurston remarks that since the beginning of the nineteenth century almost all well-known cases of stigmatization have occurred outside convent walls. He thought that this is to be explained by the fairly stringent investigation that, in modern times more than formerly, is made into the health and temperament of postulants seeking admission into convents. This is done to avoid the great burden upon the physique and nerves of the community which a hysterical or invalid member would impose. In addition, even when admission has been attained, abnormal mystical tendencies are repressed by the discipline of the community and by general opinion within it which suspects extravagance and overenthusiasm.

Dominica Clara was born in 1833, and according to her own written account of her life was, from her earliest years, favored with a variety of beatific visions, including frequent appearances of her guardian angel, who would take her miraculously on various journeys. There is no doubt of Clara's high character and sincerity, and we have to accept these events as delusional. For some years she suffered from an eye disease, being at one time completely blind for a period of six weeks. However, at the age of twelve a "miraculous cure" was effected at a pilgrimage to the "Holy Coat" of Trier. In 1858, when she was twenty-six, she fell sick of another mysterious illness and was in bed for two years. Perhaps it is significant that she herself explained her breakdown as the result of a visionary experience in which she saw her deceased brother in purgatory and undertook to aid his release by taking his sufferings upon herself. Her brother had been a priest at Siebenbrunnen and he had died unexpectedly while she had been acting as his housekeeper. It is certainly very interesting to encounter what may be reasonably supposed to be an instance of conversion hysteria in which the patient in some sense accepts responsibility for her own condition. It was during this illness that in March, 1860, her stigmata first appeared.

A year later she and a friend, Anna Engels, took the first steps in founding a new religious community, taking a dilapidated building in a suburb of Luxembourg. Their venture was ultimately successful and was recognized by the Catholic authorities. There is a great deal of reliable testimony as to the austerity, charity, sincerity and high character of Dominica Clara, the Mother Foundress, and Thurston very definitely exonerates her from any charge of hypocrisy or self-glorification. Nonetheless her autobiographic statement made in later years recounts many visionary experiences during her convent life, and of the same kind as those of her childhood. Thurston regards many of these as undoubtedly "myths belonging to a sort of dream life." There seems, however, to be considerable testimony from others as to the reality of her repeated stigmatic wounds and bleeding. And, what is of great interest to us, poltergeist phenomena attended her from time to time. Some of these occurrences were of the evidentially inconclusive kind to which we are now accustomed. Small objects used to disappear mysteriously but turn up again later in an equally strange way, no matter what precautions she took against their loss. Apparitions of demons came to her at night, but these subjective phenomena were accompanied by noises and physical assaults on her which may have been objective.

However, there is independent evidence of real physical phe-

nomena. Anna Engels described how big stones were thrown towards Clara's bed with such force that pieces of mortar were shaken out of the walls. On one occasion a stone ricochetted onto Anna's foot. One night when Anna was sleeping in Clara's cell the stone-throwing terminated eventually but "with a noise as if a scuttle or a wheelbarrow full of stones had been emptied on to the floor; and next morning we found a heap of stones close beside her bed." At other times crockery was broken and dirty water thrown over Clara, drenching her mattress.

☙ A HAUNTED HERETIC

Anna Comnena, the literary daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I, wrote his biography, *The Alexiad*. Criticized by Gibbon as being in an affected style, it is nonetheless a great historical work, and we know Anna to have been conscientious and critical when gathering data. Her account, therefore, of the haunting of Basil the monk at Constantinople about A.D. 1100 is not entirely worthless and at least is interesting in the present context. Basil was of Bulgarian origin and became a monk in Macedonia. Having learned the Bogomil heresy in his homeland, he deserted his monastery and came to Constantinople to popularize the Bogomil doctrines, which, broadly speaking, were Gnostic or Manichean. For the Bogomils, therefore, the God of the orthodox Christians was not the supreme and good Deity but more of the nature of a Lucifer. Correspondingly, the orthodox regarded the Bogomils as worshiping the devil, and rightly or wrongly they alluded to the God of the Bogomils as Satanael. As a result of Basil's preaching, the Bogomil church flourished in Constantinople, and various nobles attended its congregations. Alexius therefore pretended to be a semiconvert and invited Basil to the palace to give instruction in the Bogomil tenets. The monk's exposition was recorded by a secretary concealed behind an arras together with the highest dignitaries of Church and state. When Basil had said enough to convict himself of heresy many times over, the curtain was drawn aside and he was placed under arrest. From time to time the emperor sent for him and exhorted him to recant, but to no avail, and Basil was eventually burned impenitent. His followers, by a device of the emperor, were allowed to choose death by an ordinary stake or by one in the form of the cross, and those who chose the latter were reprieved.

In the early stages of Basil's detention, he was comfortably

situated in "a little house which had recently been prepared for him . . . fairly close to the royal palace," and he seems to have been free to walk in at least the adjoining part of the imperial garden. One evening, says Anna Comnena, when the monk retired to his little house "the stars above were shining in the clear air, and the moon was lighting up that evening, following the Synod. When the monk entered his cell about midnight, stones were automatically thrown, like hail, against his cell, and yet no hand threw them, nor was there any man to be seen stoning this devil's abbot. It was probably a burst of anger of Satanaël's attendant demons who were enraged and annoyed because he had betrayed their [secrets] to the Emperor. . . . A man called Parasceviotes who had been appointed guard over that infatuated old man to prevent his having intercourse with others and infecting them with his mischief, swore most solemnly that he had heard the clatter of the stones as they were thrown on the ground and on the tiles, and that he had seen the stones coming in successive showers but had not caught a glimpse anywhere of anyone throwing the stones." We may be grateful to the Princess Anna for recording the illumination available to the witness, and for telling us that the monk was old. The case is difficult as resting on one witness only, but presumably he was a fairly responsible person, either a member of the palace guard, or an imperial "policeman" or civil servant. It is unthinkable that anyone within the palace precincts should have chosen to bombard the hut. It is of course conceivable that a catapult was being aimed from outside the grounds, but a slightly far-fetched notion considering Byzantine discipline and imperial authority and dignity.

Geophysical psychic research workers may prick up their ears when Anna goes on to say: "This throwing of stones was followed by a sudden earthquake which had shaken the ground, and the tiles of the roof had rattled." This may well have been a genuine earth tremor, as can occur in both Greece and Turkey, but we note that it followed the bombardment instead of preceding or being simultaneous with it. Additionally we may note that stone-throwing has always been a difficult phenomenon to explain by geophysical hypotheses. Parasceviotes himself in his testimony distinguished between his own reliability at the onset of the bombardment and his later state of mind. He "as he asserted was quite unafraid before he suspected it was the work of demons, but when he noticed that the stones seemed to be poured down like rain from above, and that the old heresiarch had slunk inside and had shut himself in, he at-

tributed the work to demons, and was not able to [. . .] whatever was happening." Here the parenthesis indicates a gap in the text. Presumably the witness meant to say that he was not in a fit state of mind to make reliable observations. If anything, this honest admission makes us regard him as trustworthy in respect of the first phase of the bombardment.

Basil was notedly an ascetic. We know him to have been a martyr for his faith. His case, though not evidential, is at least suggestive to the effect that poltergeist phenomena may attend on suitable adults when they are in an appropriate state of tension.

THE POLTERGEIST MAN

The writer had despaired of finding evidence of an adult and contemporary poltergeist medium, when his attention was drawn by the Editors of the *International Journal of Parapsychology* to the case of "Roger" (*pseudonym*), "The Poltergeist Man" as published recently by Dr. Mary Williams (1963), a practising analytical psychologist of the Jungian school. About 1950 "Roger" was aged 32, unhappy in his employment and his marriage, and consorting with girl-friends, one of whom took him to spiritualist séances. In time he came to experience various uncanny affects at ordinary times. Besides "spooky feelings," sensations of cold and of hands groping at his face and hair, he would awaken at night terror-stricken and, as if under compulsion, get up and read the book of Genesis. Then, for several days he suffered a delusion reminiscent of that of Dr. Schreber (Freud, 1948). Despite some remission he was referred to a psychiatrist who diagnosed *schizophrenia*. On other advice he was sent to Dr. Williams for analytical treatment on Jungian lines. At the first treatment objective poltergeist phenomena occurred. "The raps . . . were heard by both of us simultaneously," writes Dr. Williams. "They were very loud and sharp, like something hard cracking. They were not constant or rhythmical but apparently random." Dr. Williams had the impression that the raps were functional in the sense of hiding psychoanalytical resistance by tending to interrupt communication between the patient and herself. Shortly after, a cupboard door in front of the analyst and the patient opened itself slowly and silently. It had never done so before, and after the session Dr. Williams examined the door carefully, but was unable to induce it to move or even creak, other than by normal manual opening. In later sessions raps occurred sporadically but unacompanied by other physical phenomena, except that in the

third session the patient appeared to feel the poltergeist pulling at his head, forcing him to turn it. His head jerked round several times and I could see his neck muscles straining as if resisting a powerful force.

This last will remind us of Indridison, but when we recollect the flexures which hysterical patients can inflict upon themselves, we see that it cannot be unambiguously claimed as paranormal and external to the patient. However, the rappings and the door movement are convincing enough, and it must be concluded that in Roger we have an instance of spontaneous poltergeist mediumship in a male of age 32, a discovery which fully confirms the line of thought of the present chapter.

Great interest attaches to the patient's dreams. In one dream Roger experienced his head being shaken for him by the "poltergeist." On another occasion he dreamt that he saw himself asleep in the same room as a woman, to whom he felt himself to be in the relation of a son. There was a thundering on the door. "An invisible entity rushed in and milled around, overturning all the furniture." He awoke, sweating (like John Randall at Enniscorthy). In numerous dreams Roger suffered a variety of "poltergeist-like" attacks. Eventually these attacks were replaced in his dreams by a succession of female figures. Dr. Williams therefore variously interprets the poltergeist when operative in dreams as a succubus-type projection, and as a Jungian "shadow" representing both aggressive and sexual urges which would tend (except for repression) to express themselves in sadistic acts. We are naturally reminded of Karin's Incubus-figure, Piscator, "her own worse ego."

To find an association, even in a single instance, between poltergeistery, and a major mental disorder such as incipient schizophrenia, is most interesting. In this connection Dr. Williams reminds us of Dr. Fodor's theory set out in his paper of 1948, in which he definitely commits himself to the view that poltergeist phenomena are signs of disorder of schizophrenic, though temporary, character, and are "alarm signals designed to alert the individual to the danger of a complete schizophrenic retreat." They "convey a message in signs and symbols, as any symptom would, which must be attended to." (C. F. Layard's view of the curative nature of poltergeistery, 1944). Here I would like to remind the reader of my caveat at the end of Chapter 16, in which I sugested that poltergeistery might be an expression of any of a variety of different mental conditions. Consequently, while Dr. Fodor's correlation of poltergeist outbreaks with incipient or potential schizophrenia demands respect, I am inclined to believe it an over-specific generalization. It may be that Dr. Fodor is swayed by the especial

interest which a particular type of poltergeist case has had for him. Thus in 1948, he characterizes the poltergeist as follows: "The activity of the poltergeist is nothing to boast about. It is anti-social, it vents violent hatred, it causes destruction and pain, and it inflicts self-castigation. Only by a failure of repression can such attitudes see the light of day." As regards the general run of relatively mild mannered poltergeists, this dictum is clearly an exaggeration. It may be readily admitted that many earlier neurotic episodes, particularly hysterias, are indeed preludes to later schizophrenia. However, these conditions are only schizophrenic in an extremely broad sense, namely as representing the functioning of autonomous psychic complexes and to that extent representing a degree of dissociation. I adhere therefore to the view expressed earlier, that were a body of poltergeist cases to be unravelled by psychoanalysis, then many different neurotic etiologies would be made manifest.

None-the-less a schizophrenic case like "Roger's" is of immense interest if only as the sole proven exception to the rule that poltergeist mediums are not overtly psychotic. As implied earlier, the age factor (that we are forced to postulate), may do much to explain this absence. But I have a strong presentiment that the truer explanation lies in essential psychological difference between neurosis and psychosis. My guess is (and it is indeed only a guess), that a clue is to be found in Freud's treatment of the problem (1948), where he suggests that the essential difference between the two classes of mental ailments is to be found in the attitude to external reality. Poltergiest phenomena are objective happenings in the external world, and would seem therefore to be more appropriate to those conditions—the neuroses—in which *libido* is not withdrawn from the external world.

☿ A POLTERGEIST TO ORDER!

A discussion of physical mediumship without reference to the most famous Wizard since Michael Scott would be unthinkable. Much has been written about Daniel Dunglass Home, but it cannot be said we are near to understanding the nature of his powers, or being sure of the objective character of all the feats ascribed to him. However, the following episode may not be generally known as it was very recently communicated by a distant relative of Home, namely, Mr. Hector Gordon McNeill of Peterborough, Northamptonshire. Mr. McNeill is the grandson of a cousin of Home and his interest in the great medium was recently revived by seeing an illustration of Home "hovering near the ceiling." the caption also disclosed a fact of which Mr. McNeill had been unaware, the supposed relationship of Home to the Earls of Home, and thus to the present British Prime Minister. In a letter to the *Sunday Express*, of March 29, 1964, Mr. McNeill recalls a story told by his grandfather concerning an extraordinary feat performed by Home at Currie in Midlothian, at some date (unspecified) when Home was already famous for his mediumship.

One day Home and Mr. McNeill's grandfather called on a mutual friend at Red Row, Kinauld, near Currie, who complained that his tenant next door refused to pay his rent. Home undertook to get him out, and appeared to go into a trance. "A few minutes later there was the mightiest commotion next door. The recalcitrant tenant rushed out on the road shouting holy murder. The house was haunted, he declared. Chair and tables were moving about the room. Poker and tongs were dancing in front of the fireplace. He wasn't going to stay there another hour." When he came to, Home expressed himself as gratified to have been able to oblige a friend. His face was bathed in perspiration.

☿ DEATH CRISES

Physical phenomena—rappings, scratchings, breakings of picture cords, fracture of glass, etc.—have long been associated in popular lore with the occurrence of death or the prediction of death. A very large number of anecdotes have found their way into the literature of psychic research. I am informed also that "death raps"—occurring sometime before the demise of the patient—are heard on occasion in hospital wards. Thus there is a suggestion, which cannot be set aside, that the approach of death, or at least critical illness, does (though rarely) induce physical mediumship either in the patient himself or in some person emotionally involved. This is certainly not contradicted by the even more numerous reports of mental phenomena accompanying deaths of friends and relatives. The essential difficulty with physical phenomena correlated with the event of death does not lie so much in their evidential status as in their brief and episodic nature. Their interpretation is attended with all the difficulties of the isolated event. Very often the event is such that it could be ascribed to natural causes operating coincidentally with the dramatic familial event.

There are two ways in which the value of a case may be enhanced: when the physical phenomenon has no normal explanation that is at all credible; when there is simultaneously a mental psychic phenomenon by which information is paranormally transmitted.

An example of the first type was among the cases of spontaneous physical phenomena collected by Myers. It depends on letters from the Rev. E. T. Vaughan and Mrs. Vaughan, sent in 1884, describing an event of 1881. Praying at the bedside of a sick parishioner, Mr. Wilson, the vicar and Mrs. Wilson, the invalid's wife, "distinctly saw a small table which stood about a yard from the foot of the bed, rise two or three inches from the ground, and fall back so loudly that the man, who was lying with eyes closed, started up and asked, with some terror, what had occasioned it . . . in the room below my wife, a sister of the woman's, and an aged uncle were sitting. . . ." They "thought we had thrown down something in the bedroom." There was no one else in the house. The man died about a week later. Myers commented that this was a brief and simple incident, but particularly hard to explain by ordinary causes—such as an earthquake or a mistaken memory. Mr. Lambert has since sought to explain it as the result of earth movement but there is no evidence available to corroborate this hypothesis.

The second type is exemplified by a letter sent to Flammarion in 1922 by one Auguste Pautré, a printing compositor. "I was working at 20, Rue Turgot. Opposite me a girl of seventeen was working, Ida Schaub. One day at midday, this girl, about to leave the works, was powdering her face with the aid of a small mirror she was holding in her hands at the level of her eyes. Being free-spoken with her, as with all those in the shop, I chaffed her about her powder and her coquetry, and was looking at her, when the mirror broke into a thousand pieces in her hand, without her making any movement. 'Oh, my mother!' she exclaimed. On going home to the Rue Trézel, half an hour's walk, she found her mother lying across the floor dead. She had succumbed to apoplexy and was still warm." Here it is arguable that glass may very occasionally fracture or explode from natural causes on account of stresses formed in the original cooling during manufacture. It is arguable too that such a fracture may have been encouraged by unconscious pressure by Ida's fingers, caused by a surge of emotion. Since, however, it appears with some plausibility that Ida did get a mental communication from her mother, explanation by coincidence is distinctly less convincing than it otherwise would have been.

In cases of this kind, of either type, because the event is an isolated one we necessarily have no evidence of a diagnostic kind enabling us to distinguish among three possibilities:

1. Physical mediumship by the sick or dying person
2. Physical mediumship by a relative triggered off by conscious or unconscious emotion resulting either from rational apprehension of a fatal outcome, or from a message received paranormally and registered consciously or unconsciously
3. Action by a surviving component of the personality of the deceased.

♄ CONCLUSIONS

We have gathered together testimony relating to somewhat diverse instances of physical mediumship in people of various ages. Taken by itself this set of cases (with the possible exception of the Poltergeist Man) would probably be deemed insufficient to prove the fact of physical mediumship. However, some of the cases have much in common with poltergeist cases, just as some of the examples of poltergeists cited previously approximate more to what we might call physical mediumship. As no doubt exists of the validity of many instances of poltergeistery, it is reasonable to require a smaller burden of proof for the paranormality of this latter group of cases. The material given here is, therefore, in the writer's opinion, sufficient to suggest very strongly that physical mediumship of diverse kinds does occur outside the age range found in poltergeistery. However, the small number of cases to be found suggests that its incidence may be fifty or even a hundred times less than among juveniles.

This survey therefore suggests that poltergeistery and physical mediumship are essentially manifestations of the same thing.

So far as they go, our present cases suggest that mental states are often precipitating factors. Nonetheless, as with juvenile poltergeist mediums, there are cases in which no indication of hysteria or other neurosis has been noted.

CASES CITED

Juvenile	*Date*	*Reference*
Florie C., Kingstown	1876	4

Adult	*Date*	*Reference*
Miss Power, London	1883	4
Miss L., Dublin	*ca.* 1890	Barrett
Karin, Sweden	1904	4
Poltergeist Man, London	1950	Williams

Illness	*Date*	*Reference*
Dixon sisters, Newry	1776	1
Wylie, Braehead	1825	Smith
Swift, Brooklyn	1882	Fort
Church St., New Haven	1883	Fort
Pidduck, Clapham	1890	Price
Lebègue, Valence-en-Brie	1896	10
Gaskin, London	1920	12
Sauerbrey, Hopfgarten	1921	Thurston, Flammarion

Religious Mystics	*Date*	*Reference*
Basil, Constantinople	*ca.* 1100	Comnena
Christina, Stommeln	1268	Thurston, 1953
Dominica Clara, Luxembourg	1870	Thurston, 1953

D. D. Home	*Date*	*Reference*
Red Row, Kinauld	*ca.* 1880	McNeill

Death Crises	*Date*	*Reference*
Wilson, King's Langley	1881	Myers
Ida Schaub, Paris	*ca.* 1922	Flammarion

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18

Physical Problems

Do you think that the nature of the soul can be sufficiently known if we do not know the nature of the universe?

SCHOPENHAUER

INTRODUCTION

THE existence of a poltergeist "force" that moves objects seems to be established. It is correct to use the term "force" in the sense employed in physics, for when a body is moved this implies a force equal to its mass multiplied by its acceleration. Admittedly this is a purely phenomenological description. However, so long as we maintain the standpoint of *regular naturalism* as laid down in Chapter 13, we are obliged to think of this force in real physical terms and cannot elude the question by taking refuge in supernaturalism. It is only at this stage that we come face to face with our interpretive principle of regular naturalism, but in fact it has been implicit in all our previous discussion, and was implied as soon as we started to look for physiological and psychological regularities in poltergeist cases considered as a mass of biological material. The recognition of a phenomenological force of course takes us no way at all towards understanding of how it is applied or how it originates. It is easy enough to postulate all kinds of mechanisms involving hypothetical entities, but at the present time there seems little prospect of empirical verification. Consequently the writer will limit himself to

sketching the broad features of a few *types* of theory that could be put up as conceivably explicative of the poltergeist force. We shall encounter en route, as by-products, a few points that the writer thinks are of interest in parapsychology generally.

Theories may be classified in the following broad way:

1. *Action at a distance.* The poltergeist medium acts directly on the distant object without there being any intermediary field or mechanism in the intervening space between herself and the object that is moved.

This is equivalent logically to "nonlocalization" of effect, a notion already put forward in parapsychology to explain mental phenomena such as telepathy.

2. *Higher Space.* If action at a distance were to be demonstrated as a phenomonological fact, then we might seek to explain it as being only *apparent*, and assume that there exists some kind of higher space in which the physical universe of ordinary experience is immersed or embedded like the surface of a sheet of paper. On such a theory influence would pass to the medium by some route "outside" ordinary physical space so that, as viewed by us, no connection between cause and effect would be detectable.

3. *Field theories.* There is a physical "field" of a kind new to science, mediating between the medium and the object.

4. *Anthropomorphic theories.* Two kinds of hypothesis suggest themselves.

(a) There are protrusions from the body of the medium such as "ectoplasmic pseudopods," or "psychic cantilevers," or more subtle energetic structures.

(b) Some detached entity is capable of wandering freely and conducting mechanical operations, e.g., the "astral body," or the "psychon" of Nandor Fodor, or the "spirit" of the mediumistic hypothesis.

ACTION AT A DISTANCE

THE postulate that one body can act directly on another body without being in contact with it or propagating its influence across the intervening space has appeared from time to time in physics, but has always met with grave suspicion. This is because action at

a distance violates all our prejudices drawn from ordinary experience. In the prescientific era of thought only one form of physical action is conceivable—*action by contact*—analyzable into pressure (or suction, which is again explicable by pressure) exerted by one material body on another. Thus seventeenth-century philosophers and scientists sought to explain the propagation of both light and gravity as due to pressure vibration transmitted by an ether. The ether was thought of as a medium filling the whole of space. Supposed to be a subtle form of matter, the hypothetical ether thus explained remote influences as being in fact mediated by action by contact. Newton, however, thought that no model of a vibrating ether could explain all the properties of light, and tended to prefer the view that light itself consisted of streams of particles. This again was a form of action by contact, light producing its characteristic effects by impact of the light particles (analogous to a hail of bullets). Newton also tried out a variety of ether theories of gravitation and found them all wanting. But he also disliked the idea that "gravity is innate and acts without a medium" (Bentley, 1838). At the end of his life Newton believed that gravitational force was the result of direct action by God alone (Owen, 1963). In our own era Newton's problems have disappeared. Light, heat, and radio waves are all manifestations of the electromagnetic field, and are discussed within the terms of the field concept, which is the modern substitute for action by contact. Similarly, the development of the relativity theory has shown that gravity is not transmitted instantaneously but is best regarded as an influence conveyed through the intervening space between the gravitating bodies. Gravitational action is propagated with the speed of light and is considered as the operation of a field. All physics, even atomic theory, is now dominated by the field concept and the notion of action at a distance no longer finds a place in it. (The concept, however, has been employed tentatively as an escape from some atomic field theory anomalies; cf. Hesse.)

In a physical field the influence between two interacting bodies is conveyed by the intervening space, takes a finite time in propagation, and is accompanied by actual transfer of energy from the one body to the other. This energy flows through the intervening space. As noted in Chapter 15, we have no clue as to whence comes the energy expended in poltergeist movements of objects. Only a few cases report the "cold air currents" as experienced at Soper Lane, and support Mr. A. J. B. Robertson's suggestion that energy might be supplied by refrigeration of the atmosphere. And there is little

data competent unambiguously to indicate that the medium herself is the source of the energy, though indeed this could well be the case. If the energy were in fact supplied by the medium and it flowed through the intervening space, then it would militate strongly against any action-at-a-distance theory and support action-by-contact, whether by field or otherwise. We might, of course, postulate that the energy disappears from ordinary physical space to return mysteriously at the point of application. This would seem to argue that it goes by some route in higher space. If higher space accessible to matter or energy existed, then it might afford the possibility of action at a distance together with actual energy transfer. To this extent action-at-a-distance theories are not readily distinguishable from those invoking hyperspace. If energy is conveyed through ordinary space, then inevitably we are concerned with a contact theory. If energy is transmitted via hyperspace, then events are phenomenologically indistinguishable from action at a distance with energy transfer. However, we would expect the transmission of energy, even through higher space, to take a finite time and not to occur instantaneously. Thus the explanation by hyperspace really approximates again to a field or contact theory and differs from the classical conception of action-at-a-distance.

In the original classical conception, action at a distance was assumed to be instantaneous. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any noncontact theory in which the action would be transmitted at a finite velocity. In the first place, we would naturally inquire as to the reason for the time lag. Unless energy is flowing, and the influence is being conveyed from point to point as by contact, the delay between cause and effect seems mysterious and pointless. In addition, it is difficult even to formulate the very notion of noninstantaneous action at a distance. For if we suppose that the action takes time to propagate itself from one body to another, then contradictions result if we suppose the interacting bodies to be in motion relative to each other. These contradictions can be resolved only at the expense of great artificiality or by reverting to a contact theory and renouncing the idea of action-at-a-distance. Thus among theories of this genre we are left with *instantaneous* action at a distance.

If there is transfer of energy, then even classical physics prohibits it from being done instantaneously. This is because energy flow is equivalent to momentum, and infinite velocity implies infinite momentum and therefore the operation of infinite force But instantaneous action is still conceivable in classical physics if we think

of it as merely the transmission of a "message" to the relevant point of space without actual energy propagation. The "message" then triggers off the release of energy locally at the point of application. However, this argument ignores special relativity. Einstein (1907) gave a discussion purporting to show that nothing in the nature of a signal or a communication can travel faster than light, which has a finite velocity (Pauli, 1958). The argument is based on the physical fact that a moving observer reckons time differently from one at rest. According to the time reckoning of the stationary observer, time passes more slowly for the moving observer. The relationship is, however, completely reciprocal. The moving observer thinks that it is the clock of the stationary observer that is going slowly. And indeed it is a matter merely of arbitrary convention which of the two we choose to think of as being at rest, it being here that the notion of relativity comes in. Let us suppose, if possible, that our stationary observer witnesses an action transmitted from a point *A* to a point *B* with a speed greater than that of light. In his system of time reckoning the effect at *B* will *not precede* the cause at *A*, and nothing is amiss. However, according to the time reckoning of *some* moving observers the cause at A will be calculated to have come *after* the effect at *B*. That is to say, in certain frames of reference *causality* will have broken down.

Dr. Mary Hesse (1961) in reviewing this problem wisely says, "These arguments cannot, of course, legislate for the world." Nonetheless the Einstein argument is a formidable one and would seem at first sight to preclude the possibility of instantaneous propagation of actions. However, the teeth of the argument can be drawn if we are prepared to be slightly adventurous. In the first place, it is easy to verify that cause and effect are never reversed in their time order in the *subjective* experience of our moving observer. He always actually *sees* the effect after he sees the cause. It is only when he calculates their times of occurrence in his time reckoning that he notes a causal anomaly. Thus we can get out of our dilemma provided we suppose only there is *some* unique absolute frame of reference in which cause always precedes effect. This hypothesis is moderately daring because, as Dr. Hesse says (p. 237), "If it [instantaneous propagation in one frame of reference] were postulated, . . . it would pick out one inertial frame uniquely, and this is contrary to the spirit if not the letter of the principle of relativity." This is true enough, but is cogent only within the context of the *special* theory of relativity. This theory was historically but a prelude to the *general* theory

of relativity. The latter theory aimed at embodying Mach's principle, which derived from criticism leveled at the Newtonian concept of absolute space. In Newtonian physics, force is required to accelerate a body. The magnitude of the force is proportional to the body's acceleration relative to space. But if space is a mere nothing, acceleration relative to space is meaningless. Mach (1893) therefore suggested that what is relevant is the acceleration relative to the rest of the matter in the whole universe. In Einstein's general relativity, the Newtonian inertial force required to accelerate it is a result of the gravitational attraction of the whole universe upon the body (Sciama, 1959). Thus at any point in the universe there is a unique standard of rest. An observer is "at rest" in this sense if the average motion of the rest of the universe is zero relative to him. Such an observer is called a "fundamental observer." His time reckoning provides an absolute system for dating events.

Thus cosmological considerations to some extent nullify the original viewpoint of relativity, and reintroduce more absolute notions of simultaneity and time. Indeed it is almost axiomatic that this should be so. As soon as we attempt to speak of the universe as a whole, and think of it as having a history, we inevitably postulate a *cosmic time*. Such a cosmic time enters into all modern cosmological theories, no matter how different in detail they may be. In all such theories the cosmic time is in a real sense a universal time. It is the time measured by a "fundamental observer" (Bondi, 1952). This definition of time is "operational." It is possible in principle for an observer to verify that he is a "fundamental" one. For if he is not, then the universe will look different to him according to the direction in which he is looking; i.e., the more distant galaxies in the direction in which he is traveling will look brighter and more violet in color than those he is leaving behind him. Any two fundamental observers in different places are in motion relative to one another. This seems slightly paradoxical, but is a consequence of the "expansion of the universe," i.e., the mutual recession of the galaxies. However, all fundamental observers keep the same time, which may therefore be called cosmic time, their clocks, physiological processes, and mental experiences proceeding at the same rate.

If there is such a phenomenon as instantaneous action-at-a-distance in which effect is simultaneous with cause, then it is definable only in cosmic time, for only in cosmic time is it possible to define "simultaneity." All other attempts to define "simultaneity" with reference to instantaneous action shipwreck themselves on the

"intervention paradox." The paradox arises as follows. If an observer reckons a certain effect to precede a cause, then by instantaneously transmitted action he can annihilate the cause and so prevent the effect he has already observed. This is a real absurdity and cannot be tolerated. It arises, however, only on assumptions that admit of there being more than one frame of reference (appropriate to instantaneous action) at a given point in space. If, however, there is only one unique frame (at any point) in which simultaneity can be defined then the intervention paradox cannot arise. Because then there is no means by which our "precognitive" observer can actually *know* about the effect before he learns about the cause. The time of happening calculated for the effect in his time reckoning is indeed prior to the cause. But this is only an inferred time that he cannot assign to it until after (in his subjective experience) he has learned about *both* cause and effect. True it is that he may be puzzled by the paradox that when all his calculations are complete he finds that in his time reckoning a cause *followed* its effect. If he discovers, however, that when he recalculates everything in terms of cosmic time then causal anomalies disappear, he will, no doubt, be pacified and deduce as a fact the occurrence of instantaneous action in the cosmic time reckoning.

It would seem therefore that there is no unpassable *logical* barrier excluding action-at-a-distance as an a priori impossibility. Even so, a considerable weight of implausibility attaches to the notion, unless support comes from atomic theory (as yet only a minor possibility).

♄ NONLOCALIZATION, OMNIPRESENCE AND THE WORLD SOUL

Our discussion of action-at-a-distance, though perhaps not very relevant to poltergeist phenomena, is yet of some slight interest in relation to a variety of occult theories. Thus the notion of *nonlocalization* has been used in an attempt to explain telepathy. Tyrrell and Whately Carington argued on the following lines, in which may be discerned some faint echoes of Descartes. A mental experience (e.g., visualization of the ace of spades) is not a *thing*, i.e., not a physical object. This experience, or *sensum*, not being a thing, has no location. Hence, so the argument goes, it is nonlocalized. Not being in any particular place, it is potentially everywhere. The term "psychon" was used to denote such a nonlocalized sensum or mental experience. The argument is, of course, logically incomplete because instead of

reasoning "A sensum is not a thing and is therefore not in any particular place, and so is everywhere," we could equally well argue "A sensum, not being a thing, is not anywhere and so is nowhere." This line of reasoning is, of course, very like that applied by Dr. Henry More and his Cambridge Platonist friends to Descartes' principle that mind, being entirely different from matter, has no extension (Koyre, 1957). They mocked at Descartes as being a "nullibist" who in effect excluded mind from the universe by allotting it no place to occupy.

We may note that nonlocalization may be adequately re-expressed in terms of action. A condition in one mind may, we could suppose, induce a condition in another mind, thus explaining telepathy, or indeed induce a physical condition in space so as to apply a force to a material body there. Conversely, an influence that can act instantaneously everywhere can be regarded as being everywhere or *omnipresent*. Thus ubiquity, nonlocalization and instantaneous action-at-a-distance are notions almost equivalent to one another and perhaps completely so.

It is always tempting to refer the more mysterious alleged paranormal happenings such as clairvoyance, physical phenomena, and even precognition to a psychic substratum pervading the universe. This notion has a venerable ancestry comprising the pneuma of the Stoics, the world soul of the Neoplatonists, revived as the anima mundi or pervasive spirit of nature by the Cambridge Platonists, and passing into Newton's thought (Owen, 1963). For Newton it was an emanation of God and the mediator of gravity, thus operated by the omnipresent Deity who "being in all places, is more able . . . by his will to move the bodies" (Newton, 1718, Query 28). In due time the anima mundi faded out of scientific thought but reappears in latter-day theosophy and many varieties of mysticism, and is occasionally adduced as explicative of paranormal phenomena encountered in psychic research. Whether or not such a psychic substratum, if existent, can be equated with the fundamental being of the universe need not concern us now. Were it to exist it would certainly be a most convenient *deus ex machina* for effecting a variety of occult happenings. Occasionally ordinary individual minds, perhaps through heightened cerebral activity, would form links with it, and in mental phenomena draw on its treasury of knowledge. Perhaps its repositories of power would be tapped for production of physical phenomena. We have set aside the question as to whether this substratum is a candidate for the throne of Deity but we might ask, *en passant*, in

what sense it could be a Universal Mind. To mediate physical phenomena it need have no apperception or consciousness. But if it had *some* mental being we might ask whether mental events are transmitted instantaneously through its nexus, or whether (as in the human brain) time elapses in the conveyance of thoughts and affects. Only in the first case could the consciousness of the substratum rise to the stature of a universal psyche living in cosmic time.

The varied considerations of this and the preceding section may have a peculiar effect on the reader, as indeed they do on the writer, for it may seem that we have been mixing oil and water—science and fantasy—and have been moving in a curious realm blended of theosophy and science fiction. Still, this is the common lot of the psychic research worker whenever he attempts to see some pattern behind those phenomena that seem to him to be real. Indeed, there are many things in orthodox physics that give much trouble to those physicists who still believe that the task of science is to enable not merely the prediction of reality but its understanding also. I may quote an example quite apposite to the present discussion. Omnipresence or action-at-a-distance (instantaneous or at a velocity beyond that of light) has, it would seem, necessarily to be equivalent to a message theory without flow of energy, as this latter can be done only at a speed less than that of light. No energy may be carried in the overfast message itself. This may seem bizarre, but there are well-known examples of something similar in relation to the electromagnetic field. Message waves in a wave-guide (a metal pipe) go faster than light but are themselves not physically observable. The pattern that superimposed message waves form is observable and travels at a sub-light velocity, which is in fact the velocity of energy-flow. Similarly, in radio propagation above the earth, message waves travel in the ionosphere at super-light speeds. Their excess velocity leads predictably to a bending of the wireless waves that the message waves are "guiding." Although the message waves are not themselves physically detectable the bending of the radio waves is not merely observable but is of the utmost practical importance, being the basis of all world radio communication.

The ontological status of these unobservable message waves is perplexing in the extreme. Are they in any sense *real*, or mere mathematical fictions? Do they belong to the category of *interphenomena* in the sense of Reichenbach (1956)? In quantum physics mathematicians can predict events but cannot "fill in" what happens between events in any rational way. "Interphenomena" are the fictive

mathematical descriptions of what happens between events. Like the message waves, it is hard to ascribe ontological reality to the interphenomena that often involve causal anomalies not unlike the ones discussed above. With this word the writer will leave the matter here. Doubtless many of his speculations will ultimately be proved to be nonsense in the sense of not being found in reality. However, our defence can well be that of the Red Queen. "But I've heard nonsense, compared to which that would be as sensible as a dictionary."

♑ FIELD THEORIES

Many of the characteristics of a field theory have already been mentioned. The notion of a "field" of force derives entirely from physics, where field theories have a deserved prestige, representing a great variety of physical happenings. Hence the word "field" is sometimes used in psychic research. Usually nothing more is achieved than the setting up of a somewhat vague analogy. Consequently the practice of referring to psychic fields as if they were proved realities has been criticized by Ducasse (1961) and by Broad (1962) on the ground that there is no evidence that such fields exist. This is a salutory warning but not an absolute prohibition. We may still inquire whether the observed phenomena would be compatible with a *real* physical force field (though perhaps one with "psychic" connections). If this appears implausible we are still free to ask if the phenomena are describable in terms of something *analogous* to known physical fields but different in some important details. The field concept in physics was itself evolved in this way. Physicists thought of the ether as analogous to an elastic solid. Pursued to its logical conclusion this analogy led to the concept of the electromagnetic field. At this stage it became plain that the electromagnetic properties of space were real and not to be explained as those of some material substance filling space. But the preliminary phase of reasoning by analogy was amply justified by its results and was rarely misleading.

Action by contact can be achieved by sending a "messenger" or "agent." If this is supposed not to happen, and the possibility of higher space be discounted, then the postulate that action-at-a-distance is impossible *a priori* leads directly to a field theory. For it is implied that interaction takes place only between neighboring points of space, i.e., by contact. We must envisage a continuous chain of cause and effect extending across the space between the

interacting bodies. As put by Landau and Lifschitz (1959, p. 41), "The interaction of particles can be described with the help of the concept of a field of force. Namely, instead of saying that one particle acts on another, we may say that the particle creates a field round itself; a certain force then acts on every particle located in this field."

The concept of a field is a very vivid and graphic one. Some philosophers feel it is unnecessary. For example, Törnebaum (1952, p. 254) says we can regard the field merely as a convenient description of the causal relationship between the two bodies. But this would be an extreme logical positivist view and it is just as positively logical to regard the field as "real." Some concession to the logical positivist viewpoint is made by Landau and Lifschitz when they concede that "In classical mechanics, the field is merely a mode of description of the physical phenomena—the interaction of particles." But they go on to say:

> In the theory of relativity, because of the finite velocity of propagation of interactions, the situation is changed fundamentally. The forces acting on a particle at a given moment are not determined by the positions at that same moment. A change in position of one of the particles influences other particles only after the lapse of a certain time interval. This means that the field itself acquires physical reality. We cannot speak of a direct interaction of particles located at a distance from one another. Interactions can occur at any one moment only between neighbouring points in space (contact transformation). Therefore we must speak of the interaction of one particle with the field, and of the subsequent interaction of the field with the second particle.

What has been said will be sufficient to convey the "feeling" of the physicist's field concept. The essential characteristics of a field are as follows. Every point of space is in a certain "state." A body is acted on only by forces derived from its immediate vicinity. Lastly, energy flows through the field at a certain definite speed. If therefore a field theory is to be applicable to poltergeist phenomena, we must imagine that the space round the medium is activated or in some way excited. When a body moves, it is in response to the "state" of space in its immediate neighborhood. The mechanical work done in moving the body is furnished by a flow of energy from the medium

across the intervening space to the object in question. Unless a warrant can be found for each of these three statements the use of the term "field" may be grossly at fault. The writer would be the last person to deny the possible existence of such a field, because, if certain other possibilities are excluded, a field concept obtrudes itself upon us. But certain prime difficulties remain. The "poltergeist force" differs from electromagnetic forces in that it seems independent of the material composing the body on which it acts, which may be a book, a blanket, or any other object. In this respect it resembles gravitation. On the other hand, it is selective in a way in which the gravitational field is not. Two pebbles may be side by side, and one taken and the other left. Thus there is a rather refined localization of the region of application of the force. It is true that physics provides many examples of devices for focusing and even ranging but these can be very complicated. Thus it is the selectivity of the poltergeist force that militates against a field explanation.

♄ ANTHROPOMORPHIC THEORIES

THE remaining type of "contact" theory assumes that there is a "something" detached from the medium, either wholly or in part, that is relatively free to wander and that moves objects by direct contact with them. This "entity" may conceivably be in origin distinct from any component of medium, a "spirit," an "elemental," or a hybrid resulting from Barrett's crystallization process (Chapter 14). From the point of view of physical credibility it is immaterial whether the entity is "spirit" or an emanation of the medium. Despite the antiquity and wide provenance of the term "astral body" the only writer to invoke it as explicative of poltergeist phenomena was C. E. Birdsall (1905) discussing the Karin case. He says, "Any person gifted . . . with psychic sight, could have seen the form issue from, usually, the left side of the subject, and watch it make the raps. . . ." This is the anthropomorphic type of theory in a nutshell. Leaving aside the "psychic sight" and the issuing from the left side and so on, it is a reasonable attempt at an explanation via action by contact. So far so good, but Birdsall fails to have the courage of his convictions and changes his line of thought. He says, "the raps become audible by repercussion on the inner hearing of the auditors, and are supposed to be the same as are made by physical concussion. We should remember that no matter how loud the sound and violent the blows there is never any evidence on the physical objects of having been

struck, this is presumptive proof that the sound is not produced by violent contact of physical bodies." Thus Birdsall implies that poltergeist sounds are subjective, which (he fails to notice) removes the necessity for the astral Karin to prowl around clouting the walls. The portable tape recorder had not been invented in 1904. The present writer takes the view that, as at Sauchie, poltergeist sounds are real and not telepathic illusions.

Indeed, Birdsall's original line of argument is quite sensible, especially if rephrased in a way free from traditional occult notions. (These notions are not *necessarily* incorrect. They merely represent a richness of assumption unnecessary for our immediate purpose.) The hypothesis can be re-enunciated as follows:

1. The medium is ultimately the cause of the phenomena.
2. These phenomena occur at places out of physical contact with her body.
3. Therefore some component of her total constitution must be temporarily detachable and is capable of operating physically on matter.

In this form the theory cannot be rejected out of hand. Its merit is that it allows for the selectively localized, and specific, action of the poltergeist in "choosing" some objects and neglecting others. The hypothesis approximates to Fodor's theory of "psychons," by which he means detached or detachable personality elements (Carrington and Fodor, 1958). The term "psychon" and its mobility were suggested by the nonlocalization theory of *sensa* as outlined above. Dr. Fodor was concerned not only with the mechanics of poltergeist action but with the etiology of the poltergeist condition in the medium. Relying on the psychological term "dissociation," he postulated that emotional stress causes a portion of the personality to be "split off." Thus Fodor thinks of the "psychon" as detached in two completely distinct senses: (a) an autonomous complex in the unconscious psyche; (b) an energetic system externalized in space and capable of localized action.

How such a detached "system" can act on matter is, of course, a conundrum. This was the point at which Birdsall boggled. He jibbed at the old problem of an "immaterial" thing affecting material objects. This age-old question is always something of an embarrassment, and has been "solved" from time to time by way of solutions that eventually prove as embarrassing as the original problem itself.

In the present century our ideas as to the materiality of matter are not so firm as they were, and we are often forced to regard it as a manifestation of an energetic field. Thus it is less ridiculous than in former centuries to postulate the existence of energetic systems that, not being matter, can yet exert mechanical force.

♑ CANTILEVERS AND ECTOPLASM

Nothing remotely resembling "ectoplasm" has ever been reported in poltergeist cases. Thus even if the existence of the ectoplasm of the séance room were an established fact (which is scarcely the case), to invoke "ectoplasmic pseudopods" and the like as explaining poltergeist phenomena would be a somewhat arbitrary and ill-justified step.

Similarly, "psychic cantilevers" cannot be quoted as a known mechanism. This term was introduced by Dr. Crawford, a lecturer in mechanical engineering at Belfast. In his books he describes rappings and object-levitations achieved by the mediumship of Miss Kathleen Goligher at family séances that he attended. Crawford's first explanation was in terms of a kind of "solid beam" extending from the body of the medium to the object moved. Though an engineering conception initially, Crawford early decided that the "cantilever" was actually constituted by "lines or tubes of force." This nomenclature is taken from Faraday. It is of course conceivable that a force field could take this elongated shape and, extending from the person of the medium, execute poltergeist movements of objects. Evidence in poltergeist cases does not, however, square with Crawford's experience, for there are no reports of invisible "beams" observable by tactile sense. It should be remarked that the fine modernism of his own notion was not in fact retained by Crawford. His tubes of force became more and more material. In the end (by 1921) the identification with ectoplasm was complete. Its photographs bear a superficial resemblance to muslin curtain material.

♑ HIGHER SPACE

As we have implied earlier, the postulate that connections between the medium and the object operate through higher space in fact leaves many questions in much the same state as before. We still have to ask if the linkage in higher space is mediated by contact, or by "messages," and so on. There is of course no objection to

supposing that the mediumistic action takes place by connection of some kind, and then for convenience "mapping" these connections in a three-dimensional mathematical space. But this mathematical space would remain a mere abstraction or conceptual artifice and would not necessarily correspond to any physical realm existing additionally to the ordinary physical space of our direct experience. Dr. J. R. Smythies' "perceptual space" would appear to be of this conceptual status only (1951). But traditional explanation of paranormal phenomena by means of the fourth dimension, etc., postulates the existence of an additional *physical* space lying outside the ordinary physical continuum but accessible to some form of energy if not to matter. Many attempts have been made, and all of them fruitless, to discover if there is a *logical* or mathematical reason for space to be restricted to three dimensions (Jammer, 1954). Correspondingly, no *disproof* of the possibility of higher physical space has been found.

The apparent completion of the physical continuum at the third dimension thus appears to be a purely empirical fact. Attempts have been made to find a *physical* reason compelling this fact, but these have no cogency. The position is different with the *evidence* that the physical continuum is truly only one of three dimensions. Gravitational and all other fields propagate themselves according to the inverse-square law. If space were four-dimensional, then, other things being equal, this law would be an inverse-cube one. This being not the case, we are obliged to suppose that if our observable physical continuum were a three-dimensional "skin" immersed in a higher space then one of two possibilities must also obtain. The first solution would be to suppose that there is some force that holds energy (and therefore matter) in the skin and stops it from leaking away. This is not unreasonable in itself; we have the analogy of a soap film, where the surface tension renders it stable and stops it from disintegrating. Energy or matter could then presumably be moved out of the film by the operation of a "force" in a direction perpendicular to every direction in ordinary space. Such a direction and such a force would be undetectable by ordinary observation except insofar as its existence could be inferred from its effects. The air of fantasy in these speculations is somewhat offset by the fact that one school of mathematical physicists seriously consider space as being a film of this sort, bent and cross-connected in a higher space in which it is immersed (Wheeler, 1962). As yet this view lacks full cogency, not only because it still is an incomplete system of physics, but also because we cannot tell whether the higher space is to be regarded

as possessing reality or whether it is a mere mathematical fiction and conceptual aid. The other solution to the "leakage problem" presented by the "skin" or "film" theory would be to suppose that all ordinary matter and energy are inevitably confined to the skin. In such a case the postulated hyperspace would have some reality as a realm accessible to extraordinary "energies" of some kind. But clearly it would tend to approximate itself once more to a purely conceptual "mapping" of psychic connections.

Reichenbach (1958) takes as the crucial empirical evidence for the three-dimensionality of the physical continuum the fact that all known types of physical action are by contact. But in the present context this is to beg the very question at issue. Otherwise his argument is essentially the same as the one already given, that if space were less confined there would be leakage of matter out of those parts usually seen. This reiterates Mach's argument, quoted in Chapter 12, to the effect that the appearance and disappearance of objects would be the best evidence of a higher dimensionality of space. In the "steady-state" cosmology of Hoyle, Bondi, and Gold (Bondi, 1952; Sciama, 1959), it is postulated that the expansion of the universe is kept going by continuous "creation" of matter. According to this theory, additional matter is continually appearing in small quantities as if from nowhere. This is thought of as creation but clearly, so long as no plausible physical mechanism is put forward to explain it, we are at liberty to regard the supposedly "created" matter as filtering in from higher space. The reader will recollect our dilemma concerning evidence of apportation and teleportation in poltergeist cases. It is not weighty enough to allow us to declare that here is the testimony that Mach would have required. However, the evidence does not seem so flimsy that it can be immediately jettisoned. Indeed, to use a phrase once employed with respect to a different matter, it "sticks like a bone in the throat."

But grave objections exist to supposing that a material body can, as it were, be "parked" just outside ordinary space like a buoy tied to a boat and hauled in again when required. What temperature would it acquire in its ultramundane milieu? Poltergeist apports are said to arrive neither with the heat of the infernal regions nor with the freezing cold of outer space. When a body is outside the "world skin" is it subject to gravity? This question is exceptionally serious because, according to Mach's principle, the protons and electrons composing the matter of the body owe their inertia to the gravitational force of the whole universe. We would have to suppose that

if the body is not to dissolve in atomic chaos, gravitational forces (if no others) act outside the "skin." It is possible to get round this objection, but only at the expense of piling on various *ad hoc* hypotheses, wearisome and unconvincing. Furthermore, as soon as these arbitrary hypotheses are adjoined, the original hypothesis begins to loose its simplicity and even to change its character. For instance, it would become hardly distinguishable from the "paraspace" hypothesis of Chapter 12. This at first sight is not a bad assumption, but to be satisfactory we should have to suppose that the "apport" retained its gravitational relation with the universe, and the normal nuclear and electrical forces between its own protons and electrons, but yet became optically and electrically inert with respect to ordinary matter. This would, doubtless, render it invisible and able to "leak" through stone walls, but the assumption of an uncoordinated change in its physical reactivities is highly distasteful for a variety of reasons. Our real trouble in this kind of discussion is that we are chasing arbitrary ideas without empirical checks. As Lewis Carroll, a great connoisseur of abstract ideas, pointed out in fun, when we are hunting the Snark we must beware it does not turn into a Boojum.

☿ SUMMARY

THE notion of physical action is analyzed from various points of view, but present data allow of no conclusions as to the mode of operation by which poltergeist effects are produced.

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Retrospect and Prospect

THE reader who has persisted thus far has presumably, like the writer, become persuaded of the reality of *some* paranormal phenomena in *some* poltergeist cases. Otherwise much of the discussion in the second half of this book will seem but mere "bombination in a vacuum," an attempt to make bricks without straw, or indeed without clay. Even so, the skeptical reader may have found something of interest in this study. Were all poltergeist phenomena to consist merely of practical jokes, some enigmas would yet remain. Not least would be the peculiar connection with anxiety or hysteria. The association of poltergeist practical jokes with adolescent girls rather than with prepubertal boys (in the "Dennis the Menace" age group) would also be puzzling and demand psychological explanation. Thus the material assembled here may be of genuine interest to the student of human motivation.

Some readers, however, will, like myself, have found the testimony in the Sauchie case to be convincing. They will feel that economy of thought requires us to accept that the observers there correctly described what they thought they saw, and did in fact see what they thought they saw. In this, of course, I have an advantage over the reader in that I was able to interview the Sauchie observers. I was thereby enabled to assess for myself their reliability as witnesses and as *rapporteurs*, which seemed to me to be excellent. In an existential question when the reality of some postulated phenomenon is under discussion, then one swallow does in fact make a summer. That is to say, the investigator's attitude to other cases is certainly altered

in the light of the one proven case. I have therefore proceeded on the assumption that in a statistical review of the material any significant regularities will tend to show themselves. This is not to say that some bad cases will not be mixed in with the good. However, anyone who has worked with biological material will know that errors tend to cancel out if only there are enough data. Life insurance is run entirely successfully on this principle, and we are all familiar with the story of the stockbroker who based the acquisition of a comfortable fortune on the unpretentious policy of buying stock only on cloudy days and never selling it unless the sun was shining.

Some readers may be disappointed with some of the conclusions drawn in this study. For instance, the data assembled here do little to support the notion of a poltergeist as an independent entity distinct from an extension of the medium's personality. In *this* collection of cases it does seem that the poltergeist is no *geist* but merely a phenomenon. This conclusion may be wrong, but it is the only one to which we may say honestly that the evidence points. However, it would be quite wrong to suppose that the category of hauntings is *necessarily* represented entirely by classical poltergeist disturbances. Had we chosen material for study on other criteria than the ones adopted here it is possible that a different realm of phenomena would have come into view. At one stage the writer contemplated an attempt to distinguish between haunted houses and poltergeist outbreaks but abandoned it as likely to lead to an all too extensive study! Bozzano (1919) proposed a distinction between the *mediumistic person* and the *mediumistic place*. The former would appear to be typified by our poltergeist "center," juvenile or adult. The latter is the haunted house. There are a number of cases suggesting that suitably "sensitive" persons may have paranormal experiences in such places. When paranormal cognition of past events is proven to have taken place, it is strongly suggestive of something "spiritistic" in at least some degree, even if only to the extent postulated in "mental trace" theories (cf. Garrett, 1952, 1953).

Dr. Nandor Fodor has recently kindly drawn my attention to a puzzling case that he investigated in California. Here a poltergeist outbreak attended a fourteen-year-old girl, Patricia Koehl, living with her relatives in a log cabin in the San Bernardino Mountains. There was some evidence suggesting that the cabin had a reputation as a haunted house prior to its occupation by Patricia's family. Be that as it may, it is reported that the haunting in the form of slow falls of stones continued *after* the family had left and the cabin was

occupied by another group. Dr. Fodor is reported as having suggested that "the house is haunted, and that the entrance of the adolescent girl into this charged atmosphere precipitated the poltergeist-like phenomena . . . the activity was so strong that a potential for further activity remained even after Patty and her family had gone. This residual potential then was vitalized by the new tenants, the young ex-college boys." I have no opinion as to the likelihood of an elaborate process of this kind. But we do well to reject no possibility, because it is not for us to legislate for the universe or to say in advance how many things should be in heaven and earth.

However, the march of science in any field of knowledge is always piecemeal. Known territory has to be secured, worked over, and consolidated before we can attempt to bring new regions under control. Thus it may suffice for the time being to acquire insight into one field of psychic phenomena that seems reasonably well defined, with a consistent pattern underlying all its superficial variations. Classic poltergeist cases do, in my opinion, constitute such a well defined group of marked kinship. The inferences that we may draw from them do not, I think, carry us much further towards a solution of the age-old questions regarding the existence of a world beyond appearances, of spiritual beings, personal survival, or dualism of mind and matter. But poltergeist happenings are nonetheless "marvelous in our eyes." They confront us with problems of a thrilling degree of challenge. At the least they show us that there are physical forces at present unknown to science. The connection with emotion and unconscious mental states indicates that the underlying mechanism is in some sense "psychic" or "psychophysical." I use these terms in only a phenomenological and descriptive sense, but I think they are employed legitimately, because the method of argument I have tried to employ throughout is that of the descriptive and classificatory sciences. The mode of thought is thus analogous to biology in earlier centuries in its preexperimental stage or clinical psychiatry in our own era.

We may inquire as to the possibility of carrying the psychophysical study of poltergeists to a higher scientific level. The prospects are unfortunately not very good. First, we encounter the same difficulty as is found in all medical research. Study has to be almost entirely observational. One cannot do experiments with drugs or hypnotism on the poltergeist "focus," as this would usually not be medically ethical. With a consenting adult like Karin this might be possible, though extreme care in selection of the experimental "probe" remains an absolute injunction. Furthermore, scientific enthusiasm never in any circumstances justifies departure from the overriding necessity that is the basis of all medical and psychiatric practice. Any treatment of the patient must be either quite neutral or have a reasonable chance of ameliorating the subject's condition. These ethical rules apply *a fortiori* in the likely case of the "medium" being a child and therefore particularly liable to sustain emotional harm. There are, of course, a variety of innocuous procedures that could be very informative. These include determination of brain rhythms by electroencephalogram or by the stroboscopic method. Such methods of study are in the strict sense purely observational and no question of medical ethics *per se* is involved, provided always that full medical supervision and assent is explicitly sought and obtained. Even so, psychological imponderables enter into the matter, and tact is necessary lest additional elements be intruded into the psychological situation. If the psychological isolation so often experienced by the adolescent is an etiological factor in the poltergeist outbreak, then to be treated (seemingly) as a "freak" may be unhelpful to the subject.

Whatever the conditions conducing to a poltergeist outbreak may be, they are extremely rare. One's chances of encountering a poltergeist at work is but one in millions. However, some of my readers may sooner or later come on a current case with phenomena still active. If one knows the afflicted family, the best thing to do is to advise them that it is a natural and harmless happening, and nothing to be gravely alarmed at or ashamed of. Much publicity should naturally be shunned for the sake of the poltergeist "medium." But scientific investigation tactfully carried out, in conformity with the ethical principles mentioned above, is highly desirable in principle and is often in fact a good way to soothe and comfort the disturbed household. As the Sauchie case shows, an excellent combination is that of family doctors, parish clergy, and schoolteachers, keeping in contact with accredited representatives of reputable psychic research societies or neurological and psychological institutes. Insofar as causation is of interest, much valuable information can be obtained by simple means even without an electroencephalograph. Intelligence and personality traits can be "profiled" using a small battery of standard tests. Often this can be done by school authorities, and it may be convenient to test the "medium" as one of a group of classmates, on the principle that a leaf is easily hidden in a forest. Additionally, laymen's descriptions of character, temperament, and behavioral characteristics are potentially invaluable.

If the poltergeist phenomena themselves can be mechanically

recorded, the evidential value of the case is thereby strengthened. Such records arm the investigator with a defense against the critic who thinks the phenomena may not be paranormal but rather an appearance resulting from bad observation, illusion, or hallucination (collective or otherwise). However, it should be remembered that the production of mechanical records does not *of itself* make a case any more evidential, because the reliability of even a cinematographic or electronic document is no greater than the known integrity of the investigator who offers it in evidence. The skeptical critic is always free to wonder if it is a fake. In most branches of science the reliance placed on quoted experimental results does not rest immediately on the supposed integrity and competence of the scientist. It is guaranteed, however, by the fact that experimental material is plentiful, so that many laboratories can repeat the experiments. Thus dishonest or slovenly work cannot long survive, so that it becomes axiomatic that the majority of savants are honest and competent. But genuinely paranormal phenomena are rare, so that it is natural that everything should be doubted. Hence in the last resort evidential value rests entirely on the integrity and intelligence of the inevitably rather small number of witnesses. Mechanical records are therefore no substitute for testimony. Our estimate of the character, shrewdness, and disinterestedness of the observers is therefore the ultimate arbiter for acceptance or rejection of the reality of a phenomenon.

Much importance attaches to the statements of witnesses, not only in relation to the paranormality of the phenomena, but also in forming a detailed picture of the whole nexus of attendant circumstances. Very simple observations that can be made may well be very informative. Do the phenomena take place only in the dark? If so, what is the effect of subdued light? Are the affected objects directly in view of the poltergeist "medium," or are there solid barriers in the way? These are questions that in a favorable case the investigator can study himself. But often when an investigation is made the case has already gone "cold." The investigator should therefore try to get the maximum of information from his witnesses, provided always he does not "lead" them and, by suggestion, elicit a crop of false "memories." For this reason the witness with diary notes is to be reckoned more precious than rubies or fine gold. While mechanical recording only slightly increases the *evidential* value of a case, it can immensely amplify its *informative* value. These valuations are by no means identical. Existential problems concerning reality of a phenomenon are one thing, understanding and interpretation are quite another. The cine camera has a shrewder eye than man, and

its records of the actual course of a poltergeist flight rendered in slow motion might tell us something of poltergeist physics.

There is little record in the annals of poltergeistery of the subjective experiences of the "medium." Karin alone declared that she had a strange feeling while poltergeist raps were being performed. We do not know how direct the connection was between the "feeling" and the physical happening. The sensation may have been a mere emotional *affect* concomitant with the poltergeist functioning, but the point is interesting and represents one of the many blank places in our poltergeist knowledge. When possible (and this will not often be so) it may be advantageous to try to "draw out" the medium concerning her subjective impressions. Information might result also from making suggestions to the medium. For example, one could ask her whether she thinks the knocking will move to a certain spot, or if the poltergeist will communicate by raps, or beat time to a tune. A very simple question which as yet has hardly been answered is whether the "poltergeist" can do *two* things at *exactly* the same time. It would be most interesting to answer this by observation. If it is not so answered, little harm can result from putting the proposition to the medium. However, the same caveat applies as before to interrogation of the medium and invitations to "perform." Tact, consideration, and psychological insight must prevail. A child is not a showpiece or an experimental animal but, to repeat the words of Dingwall and Langdon-Davies, a human being in trouble. By all means let our attitude be scientific but let us remember that science rightly comes always second to humanity and civilization.

Turning to general questions, we may recall the occasional hints of telepathy or clairvoyance occurring in poltergeist cases. It is tempting to wonder if all paranormal abilities are not manifestations of the same underlying cause. But the data assembled here do little to answer this speculation. Certainly they suggest a connection. Yet the connection may not be a very direct one, because in the words of Lord Bacon, the subtlety of nature exceeds the subtlety of argumentation. But if telepathy is akin to physical mediumship, then like the latter its "release" may be associated with emotion, sometimes if not invariably. We may legitimately inquire therefore the extent to which the fitful and erratic nature of experimental results on telepathy is explicable in terms of emotion and its influence on cerebral activity.

The circumstances attendant on poltergeist mediumship contrast markedly with those prevailing in the séance rooms of nine-

teenth-century physical mediumship. Poltergeist activities seem not to require darkness, sympathetic observers, nor the manifest entrancement of the medium. Poltergeist effects seem not to be operated by ectoplasmic protrusions. It is true that there is some suggestion of apportation, but "materialization" of human forms is entirely absent. Poltergeist disturbances seem to have occurred from time immemorial and continue into our own day. The physical mediumship of the conventional séance room came into being during the last century and seems now to be no more. It may be the case that sporadic poltergeist mediumship is the norm and type of all genuine physical mediumship. But there may be rare individuals with a greater and more constant capacity for physical phenomena. If so, they are doubtless extremely rare. Occasionally, perhaps, sporadic experiences have set a young person on the vocation of mediumship, but the powers have soon waned, thus giving encouragement to fraud.

Turning to the future, we would say that there seems to be little prospect of harnessing or training the mysterious and fitful poltergeist abilities to function at will. The time is not yet when Man's powers will be enhanced by direct dominion of the mind over distant matter. It is plausible to suppose that the forces potentially present are comparable in magnitude with normal biological ones. But this we do not know, and indeed, as within the atom, titanic energies may be latent for exploitation. And should this be so, it may be best for them to remain a riddle enwrapped in a mystery until such time as Man's sociological genius (if such he has) shall elevate him from his present rank of Sorcerer's Apprentice.

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(*continued from front flap*)

ceilings in a way unexplainable by the most advanced scientific knowledge.

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Dr. A. R. G. Owen was research fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge University from 1948 to 1952, and university lecturer in genetics at Cambridge University from 1952 to the present. He is the author of many scientific papers in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, *Nature*, *Heredity*, *Biometrika*, and *Sankhya*.

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