

REVIEWS

THE AMERICAN SEANCES WITH EUSAPIA PALLADINO. By Hereward Carrington. New York, Garrett Publications, 1954. 273 pp. \$3.75.

Students of the phenomena of mediumship and of Eusapia Palladino in particular will welcome the detailed report and stenographic notes of the sittings which Eusapia Palladino gave in the United States in 1909-10. Eusapia had been detected cheating by a group of S.P.R. investigators in 1895 and was then, in accordance with the usual practice of the Society, dropped by the Society. But for years a number of investigators on the Continent testified to the genuineness of the phenomena witnessed at her seances and in 1908 the S.P.R. arranged for the Hon. Everard Feilding, Mr W. W. Baggally and Mr Hereward Carrington to hold a further series of sittings with her in Naples. Their report (*Proc. S.P.R.*, xxiii, 1909, 306-569) was unanimous in stating that they were convinced of the genuineness of at least some of the phenomena. Two of the three were conjurors, Baggally and Carrington, well acquainted with the trickery which Eusapia was known to employ from time to time.

In his introduction to the report on the American sittings Carrington states of his past experiences with mediums: 'Every medium producing fraudulent physical phenomena investigated by me had been detected *in one sitting*—with the exception of Keeler whose cleverness necessitated a second sitting. . . . I was present at ten sittings in Naples, without being enabled to detect any system of trickery which would account for the facts.' (p. 6).

Carrington took the precaution of sending to all prospective sitters before Palladino's arrival in America a circular letter giving details of her frauds which had been detected, and giving also specific instructions as to the methods of control which should prevent trickery on the part of the medium.

The American sittings took place a year after the Naples sittings. Carrington attended some thirty additional sittings there and speaking of the phenomena that he witnessed says: 'I became more and more convinced of the reality of these facts—so that, at the present time, not a shadow of doubt remains in my mind as to the reality of the greater number of them.' (p. 6).

The seance room at which twenty-one sittings were held was on the third floor of an office building in New York. The windows were bolted on the inside and fitted with burglar alarms. The door was locked and bolted from the inside. On some occasions, not all, Eusapia was searched before the sitting. On no occasion was anything suspicious found concealed either about her person

or in her clothing. An extract from the stenographer's reports will give an idea of some of the more striking phenomena :

SEANCE XV.

10.24. The small table falls out of the cabinet. E. insists that someone get under the table and hold her feet. One of the sitters does so. The small table moves. The tambourine sounds. The small table rises and rests on the shoulder of the left controller. It moves several times. No one is touching it. The controllers say that they have both E.'s hands.

10.26. E. gets very angry at something and cries out loudly. The small table falls with a crash. The curtain blows out. Mr C. asks if he may put the small table back in the cabinet. E. says, 'Not you, but someone else.' Mr J. puts the small table back. He no sooner places it on the floor, however, than it is thrown out again violently. It follows him right out of the cabinet. He puts it in again, with the same result. It seems as if pushed with great force by something within. It does this three times. Mr J. says that it seems as if the table were set on air cushions. It seems impossible to make it touch the floor. He finally makes it stay in the cabinet (p. 121).

Compare with this a statement by Carrington that on one occasion 'Eusapia asked me to enter the cabinet and hold the small table within it. It was light enough for me to see that nothing was opposite me, even though the curtains were more or less closed : yet some invisible being or force was strong enough to throw both the table and myself out of the cabinet completely—landing on the floor outside.' (p. 272).

Carrington discusses in some detail articles which appeared in the American Press and elsewhere by sitters 'exposing' the fraudulent methods of Eusapia. Thus Dr Stanley L. Krebs has stated in the *S.P.R. Journal* (June 1910) that he saw the right hand of the medium untying the robe which fastened her left wrist to the wrist of the left-hand controller (Seance xxii, p. 169). The shorthand report of the sitting only reports that the left hand controller (Mr T.) reported that he was holding Eusapia's left hand at the time, but Carrington (p. 247) states (a) that the untying of the ropes took a considerable time (this is borne out by the shorthand notes that give references to untying at 12.08, 12.13, 12.16 and 12.31); (b) that during this time he was repeatedly urging controllers 'to verify the fact that they were actually holding the medium's right and left hands, that they were not dummy hands and that they trace the hands which they were holding to the shoulder'—which they stated they did.

Two extracts from the short hand report may be added :

12.16. . . . Between the left controller and E. a white hand comes up. It seems to come up from under the table, and shows a forearm in a

black sleeve, with a white frill round the wrist. [E.'s dress had no frill.] It is a very small hand and quite white. It is seen by all and remains visible for at least five seconds. The rope is untied.

12.31. Mr F. says, 'The rope on my arm is being untied.' A few seconds later 'The rope is pulled off my arm now.' He says, 'Her hand is on mine all the time.' Mr T. says, 'Her hand has never left mine.'

Carrington doubts the reliability of Dr Krebs's report.

Eusapia gave a series of four sittings in one of the physical laboratories of Columbia University. These were arranged by Professor D. S. Miller, Professor of Philosophy. It was a great pity that it proved impossible, owing to the refusal of Professor Miller, for some experiments planned by Professor R. W. Wood, Professor A. Trowbridge and Mr Carrington (including the use of X-rays and electrical contacts) to be carried out. The Committee's verdict was that there was 'No evidence of Supernormal Powers, but much Evidence of Trickery' (p. 242). That report was signed by Professor R. W. Wood among others, but on the appearance of articles in *Collier's* claiming to expose Eusapia he wrote to the *New York Times* referring to other earlier seances that he had attended to say :

Although I signed the statement of the investigating committee that no conclusive evidence was obtained of the supernormal powers of Palladino, I cannot accept the so-called 'exposure' of her methods of raising the table published in *Collier's*. I have myself been under the table, in a brightly lighted room, during its levitation to a height of fully two feet, and passed my hand between the legs of the table and the skirts of Madame Palladino. At one sitting (not an official one) I held the right hand of the medium during some very remarkable levitations. The room was brightly lighted, and both legs of the table were easily seen to be clear of the medium's feet and knees. . . . In addition I passed my hand under the feet of the table nearest the medium. If it is a trick, it is a much cleverer one than that described by Professor Jastrow (pp. 243-4).

Such a statement from so keenly critical and able an observer as Professor R. W. Wood must give all critics pause and may be used in support of Carrington's final conclusion 'that we repeatedly witnessed, in Eusapia Palladino's seances, genuine physical phenomena of an extraordinary character which (if duly appreciated) would throw an entirely new light upon biology, psychology, and the whole structure of mechanistic science.' (p. 273).

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GHOSTS OVER ENGLAND. By R. Thurston Hopkins. London, Meridian Books, 1953. 193 pp. Illus. 16s.

It is strange of the author to have chosen this title only a few