

Houdini Speaks at Los Angeles Seance

Reported by ASSOCIATE EDITOR

THE passing of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has evoked world-wide tributes to the genius which created Sherlock Holmes, and universal acknowledgment of the sincerity that characterized the most engaging champion of Spiritualism in modern times. Brilliant journalists and paragraphers have discussed his belief in spirit communication; and while the skepticism most of them profess has often enough been facetious, in no instance to our knowledge has it been unkind.

The newspaper prominence given the question of survival has been the greatest since the news dispatches early in 1929 carried the story of how a young, unknown medium in New York City, by the name of Arthur Ford, had obtained the long-sought coded message which Houdini promised, if possible, to send to his widow. That episode, strange to say, occasioned the most bitter controversy in all the years of psychical research. The echoes even yet have not ceased. For powerful interests—ecclesiastical and professional—have combined to becloud the evidence and discredit the medium. Gradually, however, the true facts are becoming known, and time is vindicating the man who met the vehemence of assault with dignified silence.

Friends whose loyalty to Arthur Ford remained unshaken from the first will be interested in a remarkable confirmation of the genuineness of the Houdini message, received through the mediumship of Mrs. Anna Wickland of Los Angeles, April 8, 1930.

Mrs. Wickland is one of the most celebrated mediums in America. She and her distinguished husband, Dr. Carl A. Wickland, author of "Thirty Years Among the Dead," are known to students of psychical research everywhere. Their noble work in the field of obsession has aroused the admiration of thousands. The associate editor has been an intimate student of that work for the last three years. It is his privilege to be a member of the small group composing the "concentration circle" which meets twice a month in the rooms of the National Psychological Institute, alternating with the fortnightly seances that are open to the public.

It was at a meeting of this private group, on the date

above mentioned, that the agitated spirit of Houdini established what would appear to be his first contact with a mortal sensitive since he gave his now famous message through Arthur Ford. Those present, beside Dr. and Mrs. Wickland, were: Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Moomaw, of Altadena; Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Moss, of Glendale; Mr. Fred Rafferty, of Santa Ana; Mr. and Mrs. O. D. Goerz, Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Goerz, Mrs. Nelle M. Watts and the associate editor, all of Los Angeles. All are investigators of many years' experience, and intimately familiar with the phases of Mrs. Wickland's mediumship.

During the social moments while the members of the circle were arriving conversation had turned to the Houdini case, for Mr. Ford was just beginning his first engagement on the Pacific coast, at the People's Spiritualist church in Los Angeles. None present had ever met or heard him. Whether or not the message from Houdini was genuine, none possessed sufficient data for an opinion. In no slightest sense could anyone have been called a "partisan" of Mr. Ford, although each was sympathetic and expressed an intention to hear him.

At the meetings of the group a "concentration" period of approximately half an hour precedes Mrs. Wickland's entrancement, after which Dr. Peebles and other discarnate intelligences give instruction, and earthbound or obsessing entities are then brought in for help. On this evening the usual period was interrupted suddenly when Mrs. Wickland went into trance only a few minutes after the lights were

turned off. Instantly all were aware that a very powerful entity was in control. The Swedish accent of the medium became almost undiscernible—a detail remarked by all as singularly striking. The voice was unmistakable in its masculinity.

The agitation of the spirit was very great. "I am in prison!" was his first utterance. Asked for an explanation he declared, "The walls that hold me are made by antagonistic thoughts!" His language and manner gave evidence of such unusual mentality that all sensed the identity of the spirit. Any lingering doubt was gone a few moments later when he told us that he was Houdini.



Dr. and Mrs. Carl A. Wickland

Once before he had contacted this medium. During a visit to Europe in the summer of 1927 the Wicklands had been guests in the English home of Sir Arthur and Lady Doyle. In a seance which Mrs. Wickland held there Houdini had manifested. He remembered it now. But he was then a bewildered spirit, for he found things on the other side very different from what he had believed.

"I was so bewildered," he said, "that everything which belonged to memory was forgotten for quite a long time. Then things began to come clear and I remembered the things I had promised to do. I tried to get in touch with different mediums but I could not recall the code. *Then I found a marvelous young man and suddenly I remembered it. My wife acknowledged the test; and now at last I was happy, for the door was open and I could reach her. But suddenly the door was shut—and it has been closed ever since!*"

At this point he began to express remorse over what had been his treatment of mediums in his lifetime. His distress finally became so great that Dr. Wickland had to stop him and ask that he calm himself, for he was endangering the medium of whose body he was in control. After some moments of visible effort he grew quieter, and then continued: "There is one medium whom I treated

cruelly. I mean 'Margery.'" (Mrs. Crandon, of Boston.) "How I made her suffer! Once I almost cost her life. Won't you tell her how bitterly I repent it now?"

Here a former member of the circle, who had passed to the invisible world two months before, and who had been a fellow guest with the Wicklands at the Doyle home when he had previously manifested, evidently attracted his attention. A gifted soul on earth she has proved herself a shining spirit, indeed, as a loyal helper on the other side. A conversation of some length followed between the two spirits. Soon a group gathered to give him welcome and help. His tone and manner became happier. Finally he relinquished control to accompany his new friends in the spirit world.

The control had lasted fully thirty minutes. Only those who know the beautiful sincerity of Mrs. Wickland in her normal daily life, and the utter unselfishness of her mediumship (never has she asked or accepted any fee whatsoever from those attending either her public or her private seances), can realize the thrill that made this contact with the spirit of Houdini an unforgettable experience. Never can we forget, either, the emphasis of his reference to that "*marvelous young man*" whom we all later learned to love.

Thoughts and Impressions of Interesting People

Interviewed by THE EDITOR

A Brilliant Visitor

ONE of the most charming and distinguished visitors to Southern California this summer is Mrs. Alfred Stead, of London—daughter-in-law of the late W. T. Stead, and secretary to Sir Oliver Lodge. She is accompanied by her two beautiful, typically-English daughters.

Coming immediately in the wake of such famous Spiritualists as Horace Leaf, F.R.G.S. and Rev. Arthur Ford, A.M., Mrs. Stead brings an equal brilliancy of intellect. A Spiritualist of scientific affiliation she is all that one would expect the secretary of Sir Oliver Lodge to be. In the realms of philosophy and science she discusses the most profound subjects with a fascinating fluency that is very impressive.

Because her visit here is strictly for rest she is declining formal interviews. But as the guest of honor at an informal luncheon given by the editor at the Elks Temple we had a coveted opportunity to study this unusual woman.

She discussed very frankly and at considerable length the work of the psychical research societies in England and America, expressing surprise that the American society had not contributed any more to an adequate interpretation of the facts of psychic phenomena than the British society has done. The same reasons which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle stated in his resignation from the British Society of Psychical Research apply with equal force to the American Society. Though the latter has spent years investigating phenomena, under the most

rigid test conditions, accumulating incontrovertible evidence of external agency in the cases investigated, still only a few members have been candid enough to admit the Spiritualistic implications of the facts established. Foremost among the names of these illustrious few is that of Hyslop.

Horace Leaf, reporting his American experiences, credits the Cincinnati chapter of the American Society, of which John Henry Remmers is treasurer, with being the most sympathetic toward Spiritualism. He states that the national organization has little influence with individual chapters—a fact which is most revealing.

Mrs. Stead believes that the best proof of the naturalness of our phenomena will be achieved by the patient and conscientious researches of such scientists as Sir Oliver Lodge.

Sir Oliver and Raymond

Speaking of the great man to whom she is secretary her tones were almost reverent. That he is far greater personally than the world suspects is the conviction of all who know him best. She denied authentically that he was first attracted to Spiritualism by the loss of his son, Raymond, in the great war, in 1914.

It was back in 1902 when Oliver Lodge and Arthur Conan Doyle were both journeying to Buckingham Palace in London to be knighted, that they made the mutual discovery of their belief in Spiritualism—a discovery which filled them with such excitement and enthusiasm that, afterwards they confessed, they almost forgot the pur-

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