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PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON
APPARITIONS AND HAUNTED HOUSES.

THIS committee has entered upon its task with the purpose of collecting and criticising stories that may prove to be current concerning the topics committed to its charge, and with the intention of engaging in any other practicable investigations that may seem to be required by the nature of these topics. A brief statement of the spirit in which the committee intends to work may prove useful at this point. In the first place, no immediate or in any wise sensational results can be guaranteed, or need be demanded in this research. The committee feels its work to be auxiliary to that of other committees, and will have done well if it shall make a careful and critical record of a considerable number of characteristic narratives, and a proper examination of the discoverable evidences for the truth of these narratives. In the second place, should the committee receive, in answer to the accompanying circular, evidences of the occurrence of so-called apparitions, and evidences also of the attainment of such information through these apparitions as was capable of objective verification by the persons concerned, and should these evidences in any case successfully bear a rigid historical scrutiny, the committee would then feel itself prepared to examine whether thought-transference, or some like hypothetical or verifiable process, could be used to give a natural explanation for the occurrences in question. In the third place, wherever the stories that reach us prove to be incapable of such verification, they may still be very useful from many points of view. Stories of apparitions, honestly and precisely told, are, even as mere stories, valuable evidences of current beliefs, of current tendencies to explain or to interpret strange experiences, and of the whole popular temperament. The committee wishes, for instance, to know whether narratives of apparitions are as frequently to be found among Americans as the English society has discovered them to be found among Englishmen, whether age, sex, occupation, or other conditions affect their frequency, and what character they usually assume in this day and country. The far-reaching interest of similar investigations in other branches of descriptive psychology leads the committee to hope that the present research, if long enough continued, may lead, if to nothing more marvellous, then at least to a little better comprehension of the psychology of the American people.

But, yet further, as to the spirit in which they work, all the members

of the committee earnestly and especially desire to avoid *a priori* assumptions and unscientific prejudices of every sort, and to receive and examine in a spirit of cautious frankness whatever information may be put into their hands. They seriously request the active co-operation of the members of the society in securing them answers to the accompanying circular; since without many answers, and full ones at that, little can be done to accomplish any of the objects with which the committee has been formed.

In its work thus far, the committee has actually received a considerable number of interesting and valuable replies to its circular, but is not as yet prepared to make any final report of any definite or general results of its investigation.

JOSIAH ROYCE, *Chairman.*

CIRCULAR No. 6.

COMMITTEE ON APPARITIONS AND HAUNTED HOUSES.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION.

THE undersigned, constituting the Committee appointed by the Society for Psychical Research for the investigation of Apparitions and Haunted Houses, issue the present circular to invite communications from persons who may be able to help them in an examination of the phenomena that fall within their province.

I. They particularly desire information regarding supposed cases of APPARITIONS OF ABSENT OR DECEASED PERSONS. It is well known that, from time to time, there are related or published accounts of people who are said to have seen, as present, persons who were at the time actually either absent or dead. As a proof of the genuineness of these appearances, the accounts frequently add that the persons who have had these experiences have learned, through them, about some otherwise unknown facts, afterwards verified; such, for instance, as death or illness or some other calamity which has actually happened, at or near the time of the apparition itself, to the distant person whose appearance is narrated. Other proofs of the reality and significance of the supposed apparitions are sometimes narrated.

The Committee wishes to collect accounts, from trustworthy sources, of all such alleged occurrences, as well as accounts of other similar personal experiences which may have been striking enough for the persons concerned to remember, or perhaps record. Such accounts the Committee proposes to collate and examine, with a view

to drawing such conclusions from them as may seem proper and warranted. In order that the results, if any are reached, may have value, the Committee, while not wishing to exclude any information likely to be useful, will be especially glad to hear directly from the persons themselves who have had the experiences in question, with such further information as will enable the Committee to verify the accounts given, whether by the accounts of other witnesses, by the use of documents, or by means of other collateral testimony. Persons who have information bearing on the matters before the Committee may find the following questions useful guides in stating their evidence. Such answers as can be furnished, in any case, should be given as explicitly as possible, in the communications addressed to the Committee.

QUESTIONS.

1. To whom and when did the experience in question occur? What was his (or her) age, nationality, and occupation; and what was his (or her) state of health or of mind at the time of the apparition? At what hour of the day did it appear, and at what place?

2. Had the narrator of the experience in question ever had hallucinations, or seen apparitions before, or has such an occurrence ever happened since? If so, describe these other experiences, giving their time and place, and compare or contrast them with the one in question.

3. Does the narrator believe in ghosts? Or has he, before this experience, believed in apparitions of any sort, as probable sources of knowledge about absent or dead persons?

4. To what senses did the apparition appeal? If it appeared clearly to the eye, describe the color, the form, place, apparent distance, size, clearness, the length of time of endurance, and all other remembered qualities of the object seen. Was it "as large as life," i. e., as large as the person or thing supposed to have been seen would naturally have appeared? Were the other objects present at the time (such as the real wall, or a real table or chair) visible through it? Did it stand still, or move about? Did it remain clear, or come and go? Could it be touched? Was it seen in the darkness, or in the light? If the experience in question was not something seen, but something heard or felt, describe it as clearly as possible, and in a similarly definite manner, laying stress on whatever may show exactly what was experienced.

5. If the apparition seemed to give warning, or other knowledge, of any future or distant fact, did the narrator relate the incident to any one, or give notice of the warning conveyed, *before* he was able

to verify the facts supposed to have been revealed? Did he *record* these facts before he verified them, or before he could verify them? If so, is the record now extant, or can it be placed for examination in the hands of the Committee? What other persons have heard of this apparition? How soon did they hear of it? Can they now be communicated with? What are their addresses? If possible, transmit their accounts at the same time with the narrative of the one who actually experienced the apparition in question. If two or more had the experience in common, their names and separate narratives should be given. If this is not possible, give their names and addresses.

These questions are not meant to cover all the ground in every case, but only to indicate the information desired by the Committee, and the most helpful sorts of information. In dealing with all these accounts, the Committee will be governed by no pre-conceived theory or prejudice. They wish simply to hear and examine the facts, and to draw therefrom whatever conclusions may prove to be warranted by the evidence. To this end they invite friendly co-operation from all well-disposed persons.

Correspondents may feel assured that their communications will be treated as thoroughly confidential by the Committee when specially requested so to treat them.

II. The Committee may be able to devote a somewhat limited time to the personal examination of the phenomena connected with so-called haunted houses, and will be glad to hear of such phenomena from persons in the vicinity of this city. The fullest details are requested from all who may offer information on this topic.

Communications may be addressed to any member of the Committee.

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