

A Modern Witch?



Mr. Hereward Carrington.

By Hereward Carrington

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Hereward Carrington, the Authority on Psychic Phenomena, Explains How the Claims of Mrs. Darling, Recently Charged with Witchery in New Jersey, Resemble the Ancient Beliefs in Magic and Black Art



"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."
—Exodus, Chapter xxii, vs. 18.

DO witches continue to exist? We are accustomed to think of witches as being out of date—imaginary beings who existed two or three hundred years ago in the minds of the credulous and superstitious public.

It may come as a shock therefore to learn that our laws against witchcraft still exist in several States, and that only the other day Mrs. Sadie S. Darling, of Newark, N. J., was arrested under the statute covering witchcraft—that is, she was virtually accused of being a witch.

Mrs. Darling, who is a medium and pastor of the First Progressive Spiritual Church, No. 57 Halsey street, Newark, when arrested under the Witchcraft Law for "pretending to exercise or use conjuration, occult and crafty sciences" to mislead or defraud ignorant persons, said:

"If I am a witch why don't they hang or burn me as they did in the old days? They are threatening to fine me \$50. Am I a witch? Do people continue to believe in witchcraft? Our laws seem to show that they do."

Mrs. Darling herself does not consider that she is a witch by any means, but only a medium, having remarkable psychic powers. Her particular gift or phase is "psychometry"—that is, the ability to handle certain objects belonging to different people, and from these objects receive impressions relative to themselves and their lives or to "spirits" about them. For instance, she asserts she can handle a lock of hair, and by feeling it tell the disposition of the person from whose head it was cut, his present troubles and difficulties, what has happened to him in the near past and what is likely to happen to him in the near future. She also has other psychic powers, but claims that all of these are used for good and helpful purposes, which are exactly contrary to the harmful practices of the older witchcraft.

The "Basis of Truth" in the Old Witchcraft.

It is true there is a certain connection between the newer and the older witchcraft. Apart from its follies and the purely imaginary incidents connected in the superstitious minds of those days with witchcraft practices, there doubtless existed a substratum or basis of real psychic facts upon which the witchcraft practices were founded. Witchcraft had its facts as well as its follies. Where there is so much smoke, there must be some fire. A brief comparison of the newer and the older forms will, however, make clear the difference between them.

In those days witches were supposed to possess extraordinary powers for evil to bewitch women and children, and even cows and flocks, by casting an evil eye upon them or throwing a spell over them. This power was supposed to be derived from the devil himself. Their powers were all for evil.

Once every year a grand meeting of witches and wizards was held, called a Sabbath. This was held a night before the first of May on the top of some lonely mountain at a place where four roads meet. The witches were supposed to go to the Sabbath riding on broomsticks or sometimes on great goats which carried them with lightning speed to their destination.

Here is a description of what took place at one of these Sabbaths from a contemporary account:

"When all the wizards and witches arrive at the place of rendezvous, the infernal ceremonies begin. Satan, having assumed his favorite shape of a large goat, with a face in front and another in his haunches, takes a seat upon the throne, and all present in succession pay their respects to him. This done he appoints a master of ceremonies with whom he makes a personal examination of all the witches to see whether they have the secret mark upon them by which they were stamped as the devil's own. This mark is always invisible to him.

"This done they all begin to sing and dance in a most furious manner, until someone arrives who is anxious to be admitted into the society. Satan then questions them all as to their past year's work, and if they have not been still enough, they are flogged with thorns and scourges until covered with blood and unable to sit or stand. They are then accused by the Dance of Devils.

Modern Science and Psychic Phenomena.

In the remarkable motion picture serial, "THE MYSTERIES OF MYRA," which is now running at the leading motion picture theatres, Mr. Hereward Carrington and Mr. Charles Goddard have worked out on legitimate and scientific lines a study of what modern science is striving to accomplish in the direction of penetrating the unexplained phenomena of premonitions, prophetic dreams, visions and communications with the spirit world, and the mysteries of life after death.

This photograph shows Miss Jean Sothorn as "Myra Maynard" in a psychic trance writing a "spirit message." Her hand is being guided by Mr. Estabrook, who is, in the role of "Doctor Alden," a scientific investigator of occult mysteries.

of speech. After a while they again disappear into the ground. They are then served with a banquet at which all manner of disgusting things are served and greedily devoured by the demons and witches. Dancing and all manner of orgies finish the night, until the cock crows when all disappear and the Sabbath is ended.

There you have an idea of the medieval belief in witches, silly enough much of it appears to us, but we must remember that in those days the devil was a very real personage to the majority of people who implicitly believed in his reality and constant interference in the affairs of men.

In our days if we are to consider seriously at all any of these facts and try to discover what truth there may be amid all this superstition and ignorance, we should probably come to believe that there are certain genuine facts which probably occurred, among which we may mention the following:



"The Witch's Sabbath,"—From the Famous Old Middle Age Wooden Print.

considered witches were very similar to men and women who to-day we would call mediums, that is beings possessed of out-of-the-way or extraordinary powers of some kind.

Again, one of the commonest forms of bewitchment, as we have said, was by means of the evil eye and casting a spell upon a person. This was doubtless some form of hypnotic or mesmeric influence with which we are now familiar, but which, of course, appeared uncanny before these powers were known to exist. Upon such powers depend, to a large extent, the faith of the African natives and their voodoo doctors, rainmakers, witch doctors and similar wonder makers in this day.

One of the best known means of bewitchment was by employing a wax figure resembling the figure over whom a spell was to be cast, and this figure was stuck full of pins or slowly roasted over a fire until the person it represented died some sort of death. We may have various interpretations of this. In the first place, if the person who was being bewitched knew of the attempt being made against him and actually believed in witchcraft, his own nervous fears and imagination would probably in many cases bring the expected results to pass.

Again telepathic influences may have helped direct action between mind and mind reacting on the body. Further, some recent scientific experiments by Colonel Albert H. Rowan, of Paris, tend to prove something of the sort. Possibly he has obtained what he calls phenomena of "watermarking of sensibility," that is he has apparently detached by various means the astral or etheric body from an extracted subject, removed it some distance from the physical body and then slightly injured in various ways this double.

For instance, he would prick his hand or left ear, etc., with a needle and the subject seated six or eight feet distant, would feel the pricks on her own physical body at precisely the moments and on the spots they were made upon the technically known as "repercussion," the pain or injury reacted on the physical body while the astral or etheric body was injured.

These phenomena justify in a curious way the old witchcraft belief that injury done to the "astral body" would react upon the physical body of the witch at a distance. For instance, it was believed in those days that witches had the power

Don't Let Your Hands Show How Old You Are

THE first signs of age appear in the hands. The hands are the great test-tell-tale of age. "Your age is in your own hands."

The hands, being used more than any other part of the body, age first. That is the reason a woman who does manual labor has older hands than has a woman of the leisure class.

Aging hands are starved hands. The skin becomes dry and withered like a faded rose leaf. When a woman has passed the thirty year milestone she should give special attention to keeping the hands well fed. The backs of the hands need the greater part of the nutriment, for it is there that the wrinkles of age first manifest themselves. At least once a day cold cream should be rubbed freely into them or they should be well soaked in olive oil.

To prevent the yellowing effect of olive oil two drops of tincture of benzoin in every teaspoonful of olive oil used will be efficacious for tincture of benzoin is a bleaching agent. For the same purpose a half dozen drops of lemon juice in a teaspoonful of olive oil may be used.

Another reason for the withered appearance of the hands that are growing old is that soap has been used in cleansing them. Soap contains lye and lye dries the skin. To keep the hands youthful in appearance shave soap or use it very moderately. The best substitute for it is almond meal.

If soap is used let it be the simplest and purest.

Hands are overworked. We give them too much work to do by making meaningless gestures. Don't gesticulate much. But when you do let every gesture mean something. Let the gestures be free and large, from the shoulders, not from the elbows.

A sign of the aging hand is enlargement of the knuckles. This can be minimized by gentle downward strokes of the fingers, always with cold cream.

The skin of the hands, like that of the face, withers because of inadequate circulation. Renew the circulation by exercises of the hands. Twist the hands round and round, upon the wrists. Grip them as though they were heavy weights from the shoulders. Raise and lower them rapidly from the wrist.

The hands of old and young are apt to be spread by work. That result was once counteracted by women anxious to preserve their beauty by placing rubber bands around the knuckles. But this, impeding circulation as it does, is now understood to be harmful.



Burning a Witch at the Stake, by Albert Keller.

The old Puritan laws under which witches were burned at the stake in Salem, Massachusetts, several generations ago, are still on the Statute Books of the State of New Jersey, although in modified form and without the death penalty.

the witches, invariably rubbed their bodies with a sort of pasty ointment called the "witches' unguent." This was doubtless an ointment of some kind, and, absorbed through the skin, had the power of inducing a sort of a drug sleep or delirium in which they experienced visions or dreams of all kinds, which were colored by the beliefs or traditions of the time. The natural or rational explanation of most of these witchcraft phenomena is thus afforded by science, but it will be seen that there was after all some basis of fact for the belief in witchcraft in that day, and that it was not all pure imagination or imposture as many believe. The facts were unusual and have only been explained rationally by further scientific inquiry.

There is a great similarity between the older witchcraft phenomena and the present day psychical facts. Neither of them can be explained by their own generation, but probably will be by the advances of science. Witchcraft appeared mysterious to the people living 300 years ago; occult and psychical phenomena appear mysterious to us still. The world progresses, but the air of mystery still hangs about these mysterious manifestations, which have been recorded in all ages of the world's history.

Modern Psychical Science and Its Purposes.

Modern psychic science, while it thus has certain points of resemblance to the older witchcraft, yet differs from it in certain essential details. In the first place the object is no longer evil—to bewitch or destroy someone else. In fact, helpful advice is nearly always sought and given. The methods of inquiry are now scientifically based on medical and psychological lines. Mediums, so called, are men and women possessing peculiar powers, unthought as a rule, and they should no longer be persecuted as witches, but rather be developed along the right lines, so that their peculiar powers, whatever they are, may be scientifically understood and explained and turned to the advantage of humanity.

This is the object which should be kept in view by all those whose duty it is to investigate and prosecute so called mediums of psychics when it cannot be proved that they are using their powers to harm others or to cheat them out of their worldly goods and possessions.