

# HUMAN ENIGMAS OF THE PAST

Who Have Mystified the Brains and Rulers of the World—Mysterious Count of St. Germain, Who Convinced Courtiers of Louis XV. That He Knew Nero and Dante—Similar Hold on the Aristocrats of Europe by Cagliostro in the Eighteenth Century and D. D. Home in the Nineteenth—Mystery of Mme. Blavatsky and Mrs. Piper—Enter Now Eusapia Paladino.

[By John Elfreth Watkins.]

Eusapia Paladino, the Italian peasant who now has New York by the ears, who converted Lombroso, the student of criminals and impostors, and who is now to be judged at our bar of science, before such skeptics as Hugo Munsterberg and such prestidigitators as Kellar—this "Eusapia, the despair of science," is but the latest exhibit in a considerable catalogue of enigmatical personages who from time to time have blazed forth with meteoric suddenness to awe and mystify a goodly portion of the thinking world.

The list extends as far back beyond the birth of Christ as we come after that event, or to that personage, the unpronounceable name, "Tchatchach," who, according to a papyrus in the British Museum, held his seances before King Khufu, of Egypt, in which performances he hypnotized lions and, so it is set forth, restored decapitated men to life by binding on their fallen heads.

Into the glare of the court of Louis XV. and of Pompadour, in 1748, fell suddenly, as if from the skies, a fascinating stranger in middle life, but wonderfully well preserved, very handsome and very brilliant, calling himself the Count of St. Germain. Such was his magnetism and power to dominate men and women that he was required neither to prove his title nor to account for his source of revenue. Having gained the confidence of the nobles and royal personages of the time, he let it be known that he had been born in the third century before Christ, and that he had prolonged his years for two millenniums through his discovery of the elixir of life. He chatted of Nero and Dante, and what led him to believe his claims was his accurate knowledge of all history, ancient and medieval, as well as modern, also his ability to converse fluently in every language whatever in which he was addressed.

To prove the potency of his elixir he said to a young girl, a daughter of 16, who became immediately transformed into a young man of 16. He was rumored to possess the secret of manufacturing gold, and he had given his name, and thus those who yielded to his charm accounted for his ready supply of money and the blaze of diamonds that always adorned his person. He was impossible to leave, any estate or other source of his revenue as it was to prove him a gambler, swindler or spy. Mme. de Pompadour endeavored to catch him napping, and when once in this spirit she asked him to describe Francis I., who had lived two centuries before, he replied: "A good fellow, but too impulsive. I had given him wise advice, but he would not listen to me." Pompadour believed St. Germain to be really over a century old, for an old lady, Mme. de Tercy, whose husband had been ambassador to Venice, had told her that she remembered this same man of mystery at the Venetian court more than half a century before he did now in Paris. And just as he appeared to have drifted from court to court before his appearance in Paris, so he continued to continue to appear in the latter part of the eighteenth century he became the favorite companion of the Landgrave Charles of Hesse.

There followed the close of his career almost as mysteriously as it began. His birth, for although his death in Schleswig, Holstein, was announced in 1780, Grosley, an eminent savant of the British Royal Society, stated that he saw the "count" in a French prison during the reign of terror, while Lord Lytton in 1880 met a character, who appeared to be his double, if not he himself, and there have since been intimations that he was the mysterious "Major Fraser," who at the court of Louis Napoleon, in about 1855, was playing much the same role as had St. Germain at that of Louis IX.—whose birth and nationalities were as enigmatical as was the supply of his phreatic purse and used to intimate that he lived with Nero and knew Dante personally. Still others have hinted that the mysterious Russian, who more recently penetrated into the forbidden kingdom of Tibet, and there became the adviser of the Dalai Lama, was the same Count of St. Germain, still defying the last visitor.

While in Germany St. Germain met and initiated into Freemasonry one who was destined to succeed him in the salons and courts of Europe as the world's chief mystery man. This was none other than that human enigma "Count Alessandro di Cagliostro."

A hush fell upon the gayeties of the court of Louis XVI. November 29, 1780, when Count Cagliostro, the lion of Paris society, gravely announced that on that day and at the moment named Queen Antoinette's mother, the Empress Maria Theresa, had died in Vienna. Now, there was no telegraph or telephone at that time, and the fleetest messenger could make Paris from Vienna in no less than five days. Of course, the vast majority of courtiers merely thought that Cagliostro had taken big chances on a bold guess, and they sniffed dubiously. Then, early in December, a messenger appeared with a dispatch from the queen, and Paris stood agape to note that the count's grim prophecy had been fulfilled to the hour of the day.

Ambassadors, nobles, princes were now ready to believe some of the most extravagant claims concerning Cagliostro—that he could manufacture gold; that he could summon even kings from their graves; that he had rejuvenated the youth of his wife, who was really a very old woman with a son of 50; that he was of divine origin and could make himself invisible at will. It was thought also that he had lived for centuries—that he was, in fact, the Wandering Jew.

Heaved Europe with his hypnotic feats and by his healing of the poor, from whom he would accept no payment. He instituted a sort of Masonic cult, into which he drew thousands of initiates, many of them women. He travelled with the entourage of a prince, showered money upon charities, assumed a majestic manner which forbade familiarity.

Once, when someone made so bold as to ask, "Who are you?" he replied, "I Am He Who Is." As in the case of St. Germain, no one could learn whence he had come or whence he had obtained his title. But whereas St. Germain spoke all languages equally well, Cagliostro spoke them "equally badly." The Prince Cardinal de Rohan declared that he had seen the count in the third century before Christ, and that he had prolonged his years for two millenniums through his discovery of the elixir of life. He chatted of Nero and Dante, and what led him to believe his claims was his accurate knowledge of all history, ancient and medieval, as well as modern, also his ability to converse fluently in every language whatever in which he was addressed.

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and up in again through another. The Earl of Dunraven also took him up, and declared that he had sometimes seen him elongate and shorten his body at will or cause a closed piano to play by simply placing his fingers upon the lid. At Florence in 1855 he said to have caused a grand piano and a noblewoman who was playing it to float in the air while the playing continued. A Polish count next took Home to Naples, whence he went to Rome, there joining the Catholic Church, after being abjured by the Pope to abandon spirit seances forever. By 1858 he had established a social position so high as to marry a Russian countess, and he assumed the role of an unwilling, and never gave public seances, never produced her phenomena before other scientific investigators. She later returned from London, where she had submitted to a long course of examination before the Society for Psychical Research.

And Eusapia Paladino steps into the centre of the stage, wearing what woman has flitted from man—the mantle of the great Heiraphant.

But public confidence in Home somewhat abated when one Jane Lyons sued him for \$155,000 which he claimed to have obtained from her communications from her husband, who had died when a bottle of phosphorus was found at one of his seances. Nevertheless, some of his phenomena were indeed by that celebrated seer, Prof. (now Sir) William Crookes, whom Home started upon the high road to spiritualism. Crookes submitted the medium to severe laboratory tests against him, and in a secure cage of an accordion, which Home, from a distance, caused to play. The great chemist also arranged at one end of his laboratory a sort of "pneumatic" recording point which marked down the pressure exerted. Home stood at the other end of the laboratory, and by exerting what Crookes admitted to be only his "psychic force" caused the platform of the scale to bear down and record a considerable pressure.

This man of mystery married in 1871, other Russian lady, and in 1871, after which he fell into a slow consumption, which caused his death in 1886. What was the mystery of his "psychic force," and was it a "force," or was it a "medium," or was it the result of ingenious fraudulent phenomena not yet detected by men of science?

A cloud of incense smoke arising from the Syrian desert, on a night in 1870, assumed the shape of an old man with a long, white beard. "I am Hiero, one of the priests of a temple erected to the goddess Isis, upon this spot," quoth the grim specter. "This monument was the altar. Behold!"

Thereupon—so the story goes—"a phantasmagoric vision of a gigantic temple appeared, supported by ponderous columns, and a great city was seen covering the distant plain, but all soon faded into thin air."

Two caravans had met in the desert. One had contained the alleged performer of this miracle, the modern woman, who had become a world-wide fame in the role of the Great Unknown. Like Home, the Master of the Mediums, this sphinx boasted of a childhood spent with abnormal occurrences. She was born in Southern Russia, and the piled-up coffins of victims of the awful cholera epidemic of 1831, and while the church she snatched her in the dream she snatched a lighted taper and set fire to the flowing robes of the priest. Then, early in her childhood it was discovered that while asleep she would give answers to questions asked by persons who would take her hand. This would she reveal the hidden place of lost property, and impart other mediumistic information.

This uncanny child was Helena Petrovna Hahn, daughter of Gen. Alexis Hahn, a noble Russian. When she was 7, her mother's death sent her to live with her grandfather, the governor of Saratov, and here her governess, discovered that she went into trances, scaring the old governor into gooseflesh. Then at the age of 17 she married General Count Blavatsky, a gentleman of 70, from whose shadow she separated after a brief period of domestic happiness. Next she attempted to penetrate the forbidden boundaries of Tibet, but was turned back by a fatal fever. After wandering in India and elsewhere in the Orient, she now returned to Russia, where at the gloomy and gruesome chateau of one of the princes she frightened the nocturnal guests with weird demonstrations of table-tippings, spirit rappings, thought readings and levitations.

Again returning to the Orient, she visited Egypt, Syria, and finally America, where she was exploited as a spirit medium under the alleged control of "John King," a dead priest, who had been a member of the Egyptian Free Masonry for the regeneration of mankind, so Mme. Blavatsky, in 1875, established the famous Theosophical Society.

A masked man entered a modest cottage on the outskirts of Boston one day shortly after the death of Blavatsky. He entered a room where an unconscious woman sat with her head buried in a pillow, her hand clutching a pencil, resting upon a pad of paper. The hand commenced to write messages to the masked man—messages alleged to be from his relatives beyond the grave. This mysterious visitor returned again and again, being announced as "Mr. Smith." At length he became convinced that information written to him by the unconscious woman was such that no living person but himself could possibly know, and much to the astonishment of the scientific world he announced his belief in the power of the living to contact the dead. This man was Dr. James H. Hyslop, professor of logic and ethics in Columbia University, New York, and the mysterious woman who had converted him was a modest and retiring New England housewife, Mrs. Leonore Piper. The announcement at once elevated her to the vacant pedestal of the Sphinx. Unlike her predecessors, she assumed the role unwillingly, and never gave public seances, never produced her phenomena before other scientific investigators. She later returned from London, where she had submitted to a long course of examination before the Society for Psychical Research.

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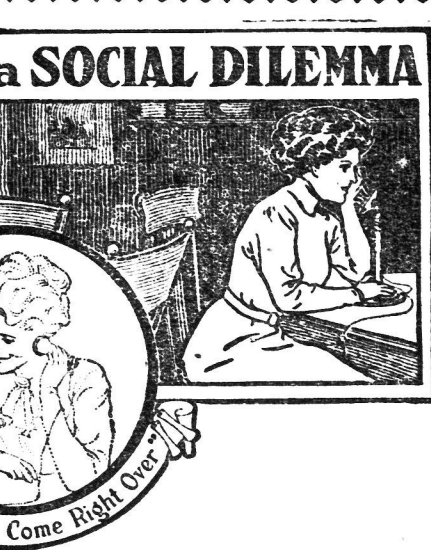
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A Charming Personality and a Man of Cool, Even Judgment.

There must be few men under the British flag in whom the name of the man is more happily incarnated by birth, position, and personality than it is in the Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux, postmaster-general of Canada, who is at present in London, conferring with Mr. Sydney Buxton on matters connected with the improvement of the postal and telegraphic communications between the Dominion and the mother country.

By his descent from a French family which left Rouen 300 years ago to settle in Canada, Mr. Lemieux stands as a reminder of the long run, the fact that the British Empire owes its greatness not to the expansive instincts of the home nation alone, but to the same power that raised Rome from a city-state to the dominance of the world—the power of incorporating and welding into its own structure all that is best and hardest in the peoples that have come within its widening boundaries.

Man of Grand Conception.

By position Mr. Lemieux indicates the method in which the Empire will be rendered stronger yet in years to come. A statesman of the young Canadian nation, he has come here to discuss with the Government of the mother country the best means of multiplying and strengthening the bonds of affection that bind the two nations together, as a prudent son might come to a wise father for friendly advice and counsel.

And, lastly, in his personality Mr. Lemieux stands as a type of the man who made the Empire great. Forceful, alert, a man in whom grand conceptions and a power of rapid organization are allied to a cool, even judgment, and the gift of a charming personality, he is a man who is worthy to fulfill the high duty of helping to guide the early days of a nation that stands yet only upon the threshold of its destiny.

"Among the matters that have brought me over here," he said, "is the project of establishing an 'all-red' service of fast steamers between this

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