

REPORTS FROM THE DEAD

by Doctor R. De Witt Miller



The author of "Forgotten Mysteries" presents some amazing and unbiased facts in answer to the question: what is this thing called DYING?

HARD-DRIVEN snow hurtled across the streets of Philadelphia as night obliterated the washed-out daylight.

Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, then America's foremost neurologist, had retired early. A busy day had made bed seem irresistible. Sleep was just snapping the last thread of consciousness when his doorbell rang violently.

Struggling back to full consciousness, Dr. Mitchell answered the ring. Standing in the whirling snow was a little girl, dressed in a cheap, thin frock. About her shoulders was a ragged shawl.

"My mother is very sick," she said earnestly. "Won't you come, please?"

Dr. Mitchell explained that he had already retired for the night. He asked if the girl's family had no regular physician. The girl's only answer was: "Won't *you* come, please?"

Deep in Dr. Mitchell's mind a memory of the Hippocratic oath stirred restively. He asked the girl to step inside. The girl said nothing more, but when the doctor had put on his greatcoat, she indicated that he was to follow her.

They walked a few blocks through the whirling snow and entered a middle-class house. There the doctor found a woman

desperately ill of pneumonia. Strangely enough, the girl did not follow him into the sick room.

For a few minutes the doctor was busy caring for the woman. When he had finished, he complimented her on the intelligence and persistence of her daughter.

“But my daughter died a month ago,” the woman cried feebly. “Her clothes are in that cupboard.”

Opening the cupboard, Dr. Mitchell found the identical dress and ragged shawl which the girl had been wearing. The clothes were warm.

They could not possibly have been out in the night.

That is the story. It is a true story—unless you want to presume that Dr. Mitchell, president of the Association of American Physicians and of the American Neurological Association, told a tall tale for no reason.

And behind that story—and thousands of others like it—stands the world’s oldest question: *what is this thing called dying?*

FIRST OF ALL, it must be admitted that there is no final answer. There is no single case, no one chain of research, which can be said finally to prove whether death is, or is not, the end.

Still, there are many significant clues. Some of the most outstanding of these are described here—insofar as possible without a comment. If a decision either way seems hard, it may be helpful to remember that this is one question which can mystify no man forever. Each of us must some day find the answer.

One thing more - there is no use to c r u c i f y any of the f o l l o w i n g material on the cross of fraud. All cases in which fraud was even remotely possible have been in-

tentionally eliminated. No turbaned mystics, no blackout seances, no cash-money-on-the-barrel-head mediums appear in the following data. Such professional miracle workers have been the abomination of the human races since it climbed out of the trees.

THE FIRST ORDERLY investigation of life after death was begun in 1882 by the British Society for Psychical Research.

The records of this society contain tens of thousands of cases, falling into certain general classes. The most startling of these is the "deathbed vision." There are thousands of apparently reliable cases in which a phantom double of a person was seen at the exact instant of the person's death. Often the phantom was seen by some one thousands of miles from the death scene.

During the decade of the 'twenties, a new, interesting contribution to the problem of life after death was supplied by a British military engineer, J. W. Dunne. He sought to prove that all human beings sometimes dream of events before they happen. He based his case on a large number of dreams, some of which were his own. The following is typical:

Camped with the Mounted Infantry in 1902, Dunne dreamed that he was on an island. Suddenly he realized that the island was about to explode. Desperately he tried to induce the French authorities to evacuate the populace, stating that unless they did, 40,000 persons would be killed. But his warning went unheeded, and the explosion followed.

Some days after the dream, Dunne read a

newspaper describing the explosion of Mt. Pelée on the French island of Martinique. The disaster had occurred *after* Dunne's dream. Although repeatedly warned, the French authorities had refused to evacuate the populace from the island. As a result, 40,000 persons had been killed, exactly as in Dunne's dream.

Dunne collected thousands of similar cases. He concluded that if the human spirit could escape from the time plane of the body, it would be absurd to presume they were the same. Therefore, death of the body would not necessarily mean death of the spirit.

It was at this time that the researchers at Duke University first saw the light of day. There, instead of trying to cover too much territory, the workers began by settling the dispute about telepathy. Thousands of experiments in which the participants tried to receive by mental telepathy the symbols on special cards, settled the telepathy argument once and forever—five years of attempts to find a hole in the experiments have left the case behind telepathy even stronger, if anything.

AFTER establishing telepathy as a fact, the psychologists at Duke picked up the lead left by Dunne.

They devised a number of experiments in which participants tried to call the order of a deck of cards, *before the deck was shuffled*. If scores *above* chance should be consistently recorded, it would go a long way toward proving that knowledge of future

events was possible.

The latest reports of this experimentation, made public from Duke early in 1941, indicate very strong evidence in favor of such a faculty.

Obviously, the investigations at Duke have established the fact that there is something in a human personality that is not quite of this world, something that can violate the known laws of matter. After the Duke research, it will be very difficult to maintain again that a man's brain and his soul are the same.

BUT THAT still does not prove that a human personality survives the death of the body. To prove this, positive evidence will be needed. Although it is not generally known, the workers at Duke have for some years been considering such evidence. The most thoroughly investigated case concerns Dr. John F. Thomas, psychologist at the University.

After the death of his wife, Dr. Thomas decided to conduct an elaborate experiment to discover whether a personality which—through certain psychics—represented itself as Mrs. Thomas, could give him supernormal information.

As an extra precaution against fraud, or telepathy from his own mind, Thomas arranged for the majority of sittings with psychics to be conducted in England while

For six years the investigation went on. All of the points discussed by the personality claiming to be Mrs. Thomas were graphed

and charted. They were classified under headings of *correct, incorrect, inconclusive, unverifiable*. Thousands of different points were classified.

There are endless references—to a ball game they attended, to the color and design of a rug they once owned, to occurrences in Mrs. Thomas' early life of which Dr. Thomas himself had never heard, to the names and personalities of men and women they had met, to a book Thomas had been reading the day before the sitting.

The number of correct statements was better than seventy per cent!

Another worker in the same field was also faced with a case that concerned his own life. He was Dr. Hereward Carrington, particularly well-known for his exposures of fraudulent mediums.

One day he was seated at his desk when he had an irresistible urge to phone a certain young woman. He did so, and was informed that the girl had died the day before. Immediately a series of strange occurrences began.

First there were a number of loud knocks which could not be traced to any normal cause. Then Dr. Carrington, together with several persons who visited him, had an overwhelming feeling that someone was standing in one corner of a certain room.

Lastly a key on the piano in the next room was struck several times. There was no one in the room. No pet animals were in the apartment. He concluded:

“Apparently some invisible entity had endeavoured to attract my attention, and when it succeeded in doing so, it had taken its departure. But I can’t be sure.”

And that is how the problem of life after death stands today. There is some strong evidence that dying is not the end. But the final answer has not been given.

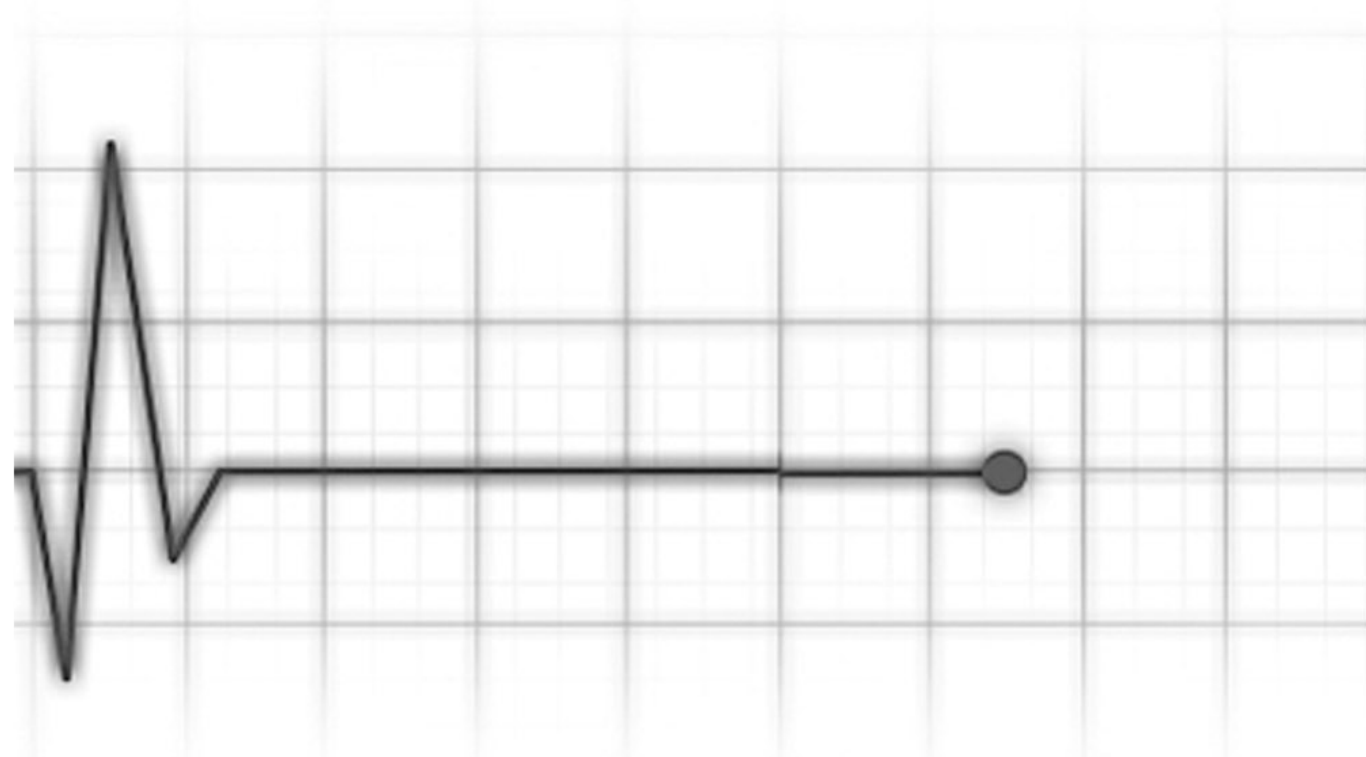
Some day you are bound to discover whether you were right.

R. DeWitt Miller has been actively interested in psychic and mysterious phenomena for the past ten years and has assembled a vast file of cases along with a library of unusual volumes dealing with this and allied subjects. For two years he has conducted the much-discussed Forgotten Mysteries feature in Coronet. Both the 31-year-old Miller and his wife are able photographers as well as writers.

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