

APPENDIX A

experiments of these kinds which they had carried out in response to an appeal by Gurney. Some of the results were highly significant. Cf. *Phantasms* I, pp. 33-4, and II, pp. 653-4 (where the very striking results obtained by the Misses Wingfield are recorded). In most of these cases, however, the experimenters themselves seem to have been both agents and percipients, and were no doubt in the same room during the experiments.

APPENDIX B: CRITICS OF MRS. PIPER

Writers who confine their attention to accounts of Mrs. Piper's off-days can make a black case against her. See e.g. Tuckett, *op. cit.*, pp. 321-95, and E. Clodd, *The Question: if a Man Die Shall he Live again?* London, 1917, pp. 190-214. Mrs. Piper's 'confession' has also proved popular with keen disbelievers; 'confession' was simply the heading given by a newspaper to an account of an interview with her in which she said that she herself was uncertain as to the nature of her 'controls' (see *J.S.P.R.* X (1901), pp. 192-3, 150-2). A good many of the fallacious stories about Mrs. Piper put forward by rationalist critics are strung conveniently together in C. E. M. Hansel's *E.S.P.: A Scientific Evaluation*, New York, 1966, pp. 224-7. I will quote some passages, inserting my own comments in square brackets. It is only fair to Professor Hansel to add that he has been misled by one wholly unreliable source (E. Clodd, *Rationalist P.A. Annual*, London, 1921, pp. 40-2) filtered through another wholly unreliable source (J. F. Rinn, *Searchlight on Psychological Research*, London, 1954, pp. 122-31).

After some remarks (p. 223) on 'the standard procedures of fake mediums' (all of which are inapplicable to Mrs. Piper), Professor Hansel goes on (p. 225):

'She was also able to describe the location of a tin box containing some of Pellew's private papers, which had been missing since his death. Eventually Hodgson, who up to then had been sceptical about the whole affair, was so impressed by this accumulation of evidence that he announced his conversion to spiritualism. [It was certainly not the tin box case—for which see *P.S.P.R.* XIII (1898), pp. 202-3—which particularly impressed Hodgson. His conversion to belief in paranormality of the phenomena was slow, and preceded by several years his conversion, likewise slow, to belief in the agency of departed persons.] Then, after his death in 1906 [1905], he became Mrs. Piper's control [one of them], only to be eventually ousted by the spirits of such celebrities as George Eliot and Julius Caesar [they in fact appeared almost ten years *before* Hodgson's death].

'Despite the voluminous reports and the eminence of the investigators, it is clear that the case for Mrs. Piper's extrasensory powers rests mainly on the G.P. Series.' [This, I hope, is disproved even by the tiny portions of the evidence which I have been able to quote or refer to.]

After some remarks about Phinuit's deficiencies, Hansel goes on (p. 226):

'The validity of this investigation is weakened by two points that are overlooked by writers sympathetic to the demonstration of psychic phenomena. First, it was never thought necessary to check G.P.'s statements about his earthly life. [This is nonsense. See *P.S.P.R.* XIII, pp. 295-335; it might also be pointed out that what was so convincing to many sitters was that 'G.P.' exhibited detailed knowledge of the concerns of Pellew's *friends*.] This was largely due to the tone of the reports submitted by Hodgson to the Society for Psychical Research. In them it was repeatedly implied that Pellew's parents supported the statements made by G.P. and that they were occasionally present in person at the séances. [Records of the seances which they attended are still in existence. Mrs. Pellew's answers to questions are frequently given *P.S.P.R.* XIII, pp. 295-335; but so far as I know the only expressions of opinion concerning the G.P. communicator attributed to her or her husband are those quoted from their own letters on p. 304. They are favourable.] Later, the Pellew family, which had pointedly remained aloof from the excitement and publicity about G.P., flatly denied that any material reported from Mrs. Piper's séances had any connection with George Pellew. [See the preceding comment, and also the comment on C. E. Pellew's statement below.] His mother, when refusing an invitation from Hodgson to join the American Society for Psychical Research, referred to G.P.'s communications as 'utter drivel and inanity.' [But Mrs. Pellew *did* join the S.P.R., as can be seen from its published membership lists; and she remained a member for at least ten years.]

'George's brother, C. E. Pellew, Professor of Literature [Chemistry] at Columbia . . . stated that the famous tin box was in fact empty [Hodgson also states this quite clearly *P.S.P.R.* XIII, p. 303] and that the papers referred to by G.P. had been in the possession of a friend for many years. He referred scornfully to the "absolute unreliability of the believers in the Mrs. Piper cult." He wrote in a letter to a friend (Edward Clodd), "I was finally persuaded to see Mrs. Piper, and found her a bright, shrewd, ill-educated, commonplace woman who answered glibly enough questions where guessing

was easy, or where she might have obtained previous information. But whenever I asked anything that would be known only to George himself, she was either silent or entirely wrong." [This is *not* Professor Pellew's opinion of Mrs. Piper, but that of John Fiske, a noted philosopher and historian, who had had some sittings with her. Fiske is referred to in the papers on Mrs. Piper under the pseudonym of 'Marte', and his unsuccessful sittings are quoted at length in various places. I gave an excerpt from one of them above, pp. 259-60. Clodd alleges (Rinn, p. 127) that Hodgson claimed that Fiske had been completely convinced by G.P.'s answering some questions concerning his (G.P.'s) ancestors, who had been prominent in the Revolutionary wars. However, Hodgson quotes the sitting concerned in full (*P.S.P.R.* XIII, pp. 419-21); he makes Fiske's negative attitude quite plain and explicitly states (p. 422) that he does not himself regard the communications as having evidential value.]