

The Mysterious Visitor

By Jessie Adelaide Middleton

The following perfectly true story has been kindly sent me by the lady who relates it, and who was one of the chief actors in it. I agree with her explanation of it, which I think adds to the interest of the whole affair.

“The following incidents occurred on the evening of Easter Monday, that is, March 28, 1910. Mrs. L—, whom I had not known for very long, had kindly invited me to spend Easter with her, and I was leaving on the following day, having spent four days there. During that time, knowing that the subjects interested me, she had spoken frequently about theosophy and psychology, but certainly not more on this particular day than on any other.

“On Monday evening we were a little late for dinner, and when we (Mrs. L—, her husband and myself) at last sat down it was almost 7.45. Three or four minutes later a bell rang. The sound struck me particularly, for it was much deeper and more rumbling than the ordinary electric bell, so much so that just for a second I wondered if it could have been the dog growling. But it was not in the room, the dining-room door was shut, and so loud and distinct a sound could not possibly have come from the dog sleeping in the hall. After a minute Mrs. L— got up and went out to the door, returning some moments later, having stopped on her way back to soothe the dog, which was barking furiously. She said nothing at the time, but when she and I were sitting in the drawing-room after dinner, she told me that Miss H— had come and had given her a note, but that she had not rung the bell, although we had both heard it so distinctly.

“After speaking of this for a few minutes we dismissed the subject, and for twenty minutes we sat and talked on quite different topics, without, I think, once making mention of Miss H—. Then at about 8.40 the bell, which we had heard at dinner, rang again, quite clearly and distinctly, and once more Mrs. L— went to the door, this time she left the drawing-room door open, and I heard her cross the hall, open the front door, and then speak to somebody outside. It would have been, I think, impossible to distinguish any words, even if I had thought of trying to do so, but it was easy to tell from the tone of Mrs. L—’s voice that she was asking a *question*. Then, rather to my surprise (for you will remember that it was barely an hour since she had called, seen Mrs. L— and left a note), I heard Miss H— make some short reply. I knew at once who it was, because, having seen Miss H— once or twice during my visit, I had had the opportunity of noticing her habit of speaking rather slowly, and her curiously quiet and low voice.

“Thinking about it afterwards, it seemed, as far as I could judge, that Mrs. L— said about fifteen or possibly twenty words in the form of a question, to which Miss H— replied in certainly less than half-a-dozen words; that, at least, was the impression it gave me.

“When Mrs. L— came in again (she was absent perhaps two and a half minutes roughly speaking), she told me that Miss H— had been again, but that she could not remember anything of the conversation beyond the fact that they had spoken to each other! Miss H— could not have rung the bell, for she had not reached the front door, and the maid, when questioned, said that there had been no bell. The impression was so strong in our

minds that we had spoken of it for some minutes before Mrs. L— suggested that it might be illusory—which it was!

“Later she suggested the following explanation of Miss H—’s apparition. It seemed that on the outside of the note, which you will remember to have been brought while we were dining, was a line postponing an appointment which had previously been made for the following day. This Mrs. L— had not noticed, and suggested that Miss H— might have returned to make it clear to her. This, however, does not seem to me a very likely explanation, for, from Miss H—’s voice, it was very clear that she was replying to, and not making, a statement, and as she evidently had the power to communicate with her hearer she could surely have impressed upon her what she wished.

“The fact of my having heard what I have just related, I attribute entirely to the strength of Mrs. L—’s psychical perceptions, which, I suppose, might easily affect one who came into contact with her.”