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David Duguid (1832 – 1907) Psychic Artist

David Duguid of Glasgow, was a non-professional medium and was chiefly famous for his automatic and direct drawings. David also produced a whole scale of séance room phenomena and manifestations. He produced raps; the movement of objects without contact, heavy musical boxes sailed around the darkened séance room. Invisible hands wound them up when they ran down, direct voices were heard, usually in husky whispers and then sometimes in thunderous tones. The medium was levitated, placed on the table in his chair to which he was bound. A coat was put on him without disturbing the ties that held to the chair. Objects were brought out from closed rooms, psychic lights were seen and phantom hands touched sitters. Delicious perfumes were produced and according to the testimony of Thomas S. Garriock, quoted in E.T. Bennett's 'Direct Phenomena of Spiritualism' *"On one occasion Mr. Duguid put his hand into the blazing stove, took out a large piece of coal and walked around the room with it for five minutes"*.

The beginning of Duguid's marvels, date back from 1866 when, out of curiosity, he partook in some table-sitting experiments at the house of H. Nisbet, a publisher of Glasgow. At one of these sittings he felt his arm shake and a cold current ran down his spine. When Nisbet's daughter, who was an automatic writer, placed her right hand on his left it at once began to move and drew rough sketches of vases and flowers, and then the section of an archway. After this incident he commenced sitting in his own home for automatic painting. In trance, with his eyes shut, he obtained some promising results. The influence that manifested itself felt hampered by his absolute lack of artistic education. At his suggestion, Duguid took some lessons at a Government School of Arts for four months. Later the influence suggested that after his usual work on large pictures Duguid should draw or paint on little cards in the presence of on-lookers. In a period of 8 – 10 minutes he would turn out complete pictures. In total darkness they came, independent of his hands, and in as short a time as 35 seconds. They were tiny and sometimes so fine in execution that their merit was

enhanced if viewed under a magnifying glass. Now and then many of these little oil paintings were found on a single card. The noise of the brushes and paper, prepared in light, was heard well above the table. When finished everything was dropped and invariably the paper was found with painted side uppermost, wet and sticky, as a rule these little paintings were freely distributed among the sitters. To ensure control, the medium was often held or tied. When the light was put on, the bindings were often found exchanged. If the medium was to tightly bound, he was liberated in a few seconds in the darkness and the ligatures were quietly dropped into the lap of one of the sitters. On several occasions the little cards were found missing. As soon as the darkness was restored they were heard to drop on the table from above. To prevent exchange, the cards were usually signed at the back with the initials of the sitters. Later, a better method of identification was employed; a corner of the card was torn off and presented to the sitter before the painting began.

In August 1878, Frank Podmore attended a sitting at which this method of control was already employed. Describing how he placed the fragments of the cards securely in his pocket and how the medium was fastened with silk handkerchiefs, with adhesive paper on the ends, he wrote in *Modern Spiritualism* (a spiritualist paper of the time),

“After a quarter of an hour the lights were turned up and two small oil paintings, one circular about the size of a penny, the other oval and slightly larger, were found on the two cards. The colours were still moist and the fragments in my pocket fitted the torn corners of the cards. The two pictures, which lie before me as I write, represent respectively a small stream dashing over rocks and a mountain lake with its shores bathed in a sunset glow. The paintings, though obviously executed with some haste, were hardly as one can imagine to have been done in such a short interval and in almost complete darkness. For many years I was quite at a loss to understand how the feat could have been accomplished by normal means. The explanation, to which I have no doubt to be correct, is an extremely simple one. Duguid would not suffer profane hands to touch the cards; and when he had torn off the corner of a card, he no doubt dropped into the sitters hand, not the piece torn from the blank card on the table, but a piece previously torn from a card on which a picture had already been painted.”

The explanation of Podmore is ingenious, but, considering the lapse of years is a bit tardy, as obviously by then he had forgotten how carefully he had watched the medium's hands during the preliminaries'

David Duguid's mediumship was first brought to the attention of the public through a series of articles printed in the *“North British Daily Mail* and entitled 'A few nights with the Glasgow Spiritualists'. Shortly after this The Psychological Society of Edinburgh formed a sub-committee and investigated Duguid. This committee filed a report that stated that they had witnessed eleven distinctly

different forms of manifestation which they could not normally explain. Painting and drawing was among the phenomena observed. Hebrew, Latin, Greek and German scripts were produced, sometimes as a folded sheet of paper enclosed in a sealed envelope. It was by this method, that the frontispiece of three volumes of 'Oxley's *Angelic Revelations*' were illustrated. "*The plain paper,*" said Thomas Power, quoted by Bennet, "*was put into an envelope.*

The three gentlemen placed their fingers on the sealed envelope and turned off the gas. In three minutes the gas was turned on, the envelope cut open and the drawing was found in its complete state."

Duguid's Controls

The First control who worked with Duguid did not disclose his identity for a long time. He called himself Marcus Baker. Finally he promised a copy of one of his masterpieces. The medium worked for four days four hours at a time, on a large painting. It was initialed J.R. and from Cassell's *Art Treasures Exhibition* it was recognised as "*The Waterfall*" by Jacob Ruisdale. The copy, however, was not exact some figures were omitted. The control, on being questioned, said that these figures were added later by Bergheim. On consulting Ruisdale's biography this was found to be true.

The second of Duguid's painting controls also claimed a famous name, that of Jan Van Steen. Apparently neither of them had taken the trouble always to produce original compositions. Great inconvenience arose from this for the medium, after the arrival on the scene in August, 1869, of Hafed, the third of Duguid's famous guides.

From the book which Hafed dictated through his medium in the trance state, which took 46 sittings between 1870-71, it appears that he lived 1900 years ago as a warrior prince of Persia. At an early age he fought against an invading Arabian army, was later admitted to the order of the Magi and was ultimately chosen Arch Magus. He described the creed and social life of ancient Persia, Tyre, Greece, Egypt, Judaea, Babylon and many other long perished civilizations which he studied in travels. The climax of his story was reached when he revealed that he conducted the expedition of the three wise men to Judaea to the cradle of Jesus. He was summoned by his guardian spirit to go on the journey with two of his brother Magi and take rich gifts to the Babe. He describes the youthful years of Jesus which are not chronicled in any of the Gospels. According to his story, he travelled with Jesus in Persia, India and many other countries and marveled at the miracles the young child performed. After the martyrdom of Jesus he became a Christian himself, met Paul in Athens, preached the gospel in Venice and Alexandria and finally perished at the age of one hundred years in the arena at Rome.

The influence of Hafed brought about a striking change in the medium. He appeared awe-struck and bent forward with hands clasped in the attitude of

deepest reverence. The book as taken down in notes by Nisbet, was published in 1876 by James Burn in London and Nisbet in Glasgow under the title *Hafed, Prince of Persia; his experiences in Earth Life, being spirit communications being recited through Mr. David Duguid, the Glasgow Trance Speaking Medium, with an Appendix, containing communications from Spirit Artists Ruisdale and Steen, illustrated by Facsimiles of forty-five Drawings and Writings, the direct work of the Spirits.* The book is reported as being one of the best romances produced in Trance. Its style is surprisingly good. However trouble arose over the illustrations and the first addition of the book had to be withdrawn as some of the sketches were discovered to be copies from Cassell's Family Bible.

The Cassell incident did much harm to Duguid's reputation. But the greatest blow came in his late years. On 1st April, 1905, at the age of 73, and after nearly two thousand seances, he was caught in deliberate fraud in Manchester. He brought the Spirit Paintings read-made to the séance room and attempted to change them for the blank cards which the sitters provided. On being forcibly searched, the original cards were found in his trousers. The spiritualists were stunned by the exposure and offered the explanation that, as is often the case, Duguid's powers must have lapsed and he was prompted by vanity to substitute spurious phenomena for the genuine. Two years after his exposure Duguid died. He was not to lie still for long and became the trance control to Mrs. Roberts Johnson, of Stockton-on-Tees, a powerful direct voice medium.

Credits: Nandor Fodor – Encyclopedia of Psychic Science