

The Minister and Mrs. Piper

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In his 1902 book, *Can Telepathy Explain?*, Dr. Minot J. Savage, a popular Unitarian minister and author, tells of several sittings he had with Leonora Piper, the famous Boston medium, before she had become famous. "At this time, she went into a trance, but talked instead of writing," Savage recalled, referring to the fact that in her early days of mediumship she was primarily a trance-voice medium while in later years information usually came through her by means of automatic writing while in a trance state.

Savage's father was the first person to come through. He had died in Maine at age 90. "He had never lived in Boston, nor, indeed, had he visited there for a great many years, so that there was no possibility that Mrs. Piper should ever have seen him and no likelihood of her having known anything him," Savage continued the story. "She (or Phinuit, her spirit control speaking through her vocal cords) described him at once with accuracy, pointing out certain peculiarities which the ordinary observer, even if he had seen him, would not have been likely to notice."

Mrs. Piper then said that "he calls you Judson." Savage considered this quite evidential as his father had called him Judson, his middle name, when he was a boy. "In all my boyhood all the members of the family except my father and my half-brother had always called me Minot," he explained in the book, going on to point out that after he (Minot) had become an adult his father began calling him Minot.

"Here is somebody else besides your father," Savage further recalled Mrs. Piper saying. "It is your brother, no your half-brother, and he says his name is John." Mrs. Piper (or Phinuit) then

went on to accurately describe John and tell the method of his death. Savage pointed out that this brother was not consciously on his mind and he was not expecting to hear from him.



Leonora Piper

On one occasion, Savage's daughter visited Mrs. Piper anonymously. A friend made the appointment for her under an assumed name. As a test, the friend gave her three locks of hair. [My daughter] knew nothing about them, not even as to whether they had been cut from heads of people living or dead," Savage related. After Mrs. Piper had gone into the trance state, the locks of hair were placed in her hand one at a time. Mrs. Piper (or Phinuit) gave the name of the friend, the names of the three people whose hair she held, and told whether they were living or dead. The daughter took notes and then verified that Mrs. Piper had been correct in every case.

On a much later visit to Mrs. Piper, Savage was told that his son, who had died at age 31 three years earlier, was present. "Papa, I want you go at once to my room." Savage recalled his

son communicating with a great deal of earnestness. "Look in my drawer and you will find a lot of loose papers. Among them are some which I would like you to take and destroy at once." The son had lived with a personal friend in Boston and his personal effects remained there. Savage went to his son's room and searched the drawer, gathering up all the loose papers. "There were things there which he had jotted down and trusted to the privacy of his drawer which he would not have made public for the world," Savage ended the story, commenting that he would not violate his son's privacy by disclosing the contents of the papers.

As reported by Savage and further recorded in the records of the American branch of the Society for Psychical Research, the Rev. W. H. Savage, Minot's brother, and a friend of Harvard Professor William James, who had "discovered" Piper, sat with Piper on Dec. 28, 1888. Phinuit told him that somebody named Robert West was there and wanted to send a message to Minot. The message was in the form of an apology for something West had written about the brother "in advance." W. H. Savage did not understand the message but passed it on to Minot, who understood it and explained that West was editor of a publication called *The Advance* and had criticized his work in an editorial. During the sitting, W. H. Savage asked for a description of West. An accurate description was given along with the information that West had died of hemorrhage of the kidneys, a fact unknown to Savage but later verified.

In a sitting by W. H. Savage two weeks later, West again communicated, stating that his body was buried at Alton, Ill. and giving the wording on his tombstone, "Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Savage was unaware of either of these facts, but later confirmed them as true.

"Now the striking thing about this lies in the fact that my brother was not thinking of this matter and cared nothing about it," Minot Savage ended the story, here again feeling that this

ruled out mental telepathy on the part of the medium.

"There was no reason for the [apology] unless it be found in simply human feeling on his [West's] part that he had discovered that he had been guilty of an injustice, and wished, as far as possible, to make reparation, and this for peace of his own mind."

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