

**JAP HERRON; A NOVEL WRITTEN
FROM THE OUIJA BOARD; WITH
AN INTRODUCTION, THE
COMING OF JAP HERRON**

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Jap Herron; a novel written from the ouija board; with an introduction, The coming of Jap Herron by Emily Grant Hutchings

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EMILY GRANT HUTCHINGS

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A DRAWING FROM LIFE
BY JOHN CECIL CLAY

JAP HERRON

A NOVEL WRITTEN FROM
THE OUIJA BOARD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
THE COMING OF JAP HERRON

Mark Twain



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THE COMING OF "JAP HERRON"

ON the afternoon of the second Thursday in March, 1915, I responded to an invitation to the regular meeting of a small psychical research society. There was to be a lecture on cosmic relations, and the hostess for the afternoon, whom I had met twice socially, thought I might be interested, my name having appeared in connection with a recently detailed series of psychic experiments. To all those present, with the exception of the hostess, I was a total stranger. I learned, with some surprise, that these men and women had been meeting, with an occasional break of a few months, for more than five years. The record of these meetings filled several type-written volumes.

When word came that the lecturer was unavoidably detained, the hostess requested Mrs. Lola V. Hays to entertain the members and guests by a demonstration of her ability to transmit spirit messages by means of a planchette and a lettered board. The apparatus was familiar to me; but the outcome of that afternoon's experience revealed a new use for the transmission

board. After several messages, more or less personal, had been spelled out, the pointer of the planchette traced the words:

"Samuel L. Clemens, lazy Sam." There was a long pause, and then: "Well, why don't some of you say something?"

I was born in Hannibal, and my pulses quickened. I wanted to put a host of questions to the greatest humorist and the greatest philosopher of modern times; but I was an outsider, unacquainted with the usages of the club, and I remained silent while the planchette continued:

"Say, folks, don't knock my memoirs too hard. They were written when Mark Twain was dead to all sense of decency. When brains are soft, the method should be anæsthesia."

Not one of those present had read Mark Twain's memoirs, and the plaint fell upon barren soil. The arrival of the lecturer prevented further confession from the unseen communicant; but I was so deeply impressed that I begged my hostess to permit me to come again. For my benefit a meeting was arranged at which there was no lecturer, and I was asked to sit for the first time with Mrs. Hays.

In my former psychic investigation, it had been my habit to pronounce the letters as the pointer of the planchette indicated them, and Mrs. Hays urged me to render the same service when I sat with her, because

she never permitted herself to look at the board, fearing that her own mind would interfere with the transmission. Scarcely had our finger-tips touched the planchette when it darted to the letters which spelled the words:

"I tried to write a romance once, and the little wife laughed at it. I still think it is good stuff and I want it written. The plot is simple. You'd best skeletonize the plot. Solly Jenks, Hiram Wall—young men. Time, before the Civil War."

Then the outline of a typical Mark Twain story came in short, explosive sentences. It was entitled, "Up the Furrow to Fortune." A brief account of its coming seems vital to the more sustained work which was destined to follow it. I was not present at the next regular meeting of the society; but at its close I was summoned to the telephone and informed that Mark Twain had come again and had said that "the Hannibal girl" was the one for whom he and Mrs. Hays had been waiting. When they asked him what he meant, the planchette made reply:

"Consult your record for 1911."

One of the early volumes of the society's record was brought forth, and a curious fact that all the members of the society had forgotten was unearthed. About a year after his passing out, Mr. Clemens had told Mrs. Hays that he had carried with him much valuable literary material which he yearned to send back, and

4 THE COMING OF "JAP HERRON"

that he would transmit stories through her, if she could find just the right person to sit with her at the transmission board. Although she experimented with each member of the club, and with several of her friends who were sympathetic though not avowed investigators, he was not satisfied with any of them. Then she gave up the attempt and dismissed it from her mind. A twenty-minute test with me seemed to convince him that in me he had found the negative side of the mysterious human mechanism for which he had been waiting.

The work of transmitting that first story was attended with the greatest difficulty. No less than three distinct styles of diction, accompanied by correspondingly distinct motion in the planchette under our fingers, were thrust into the record. At first we were at a loss to understand these intrusions. That they were intrusions there could be no doubt. In each case there was a sharp deviation from the plot of the story, as it had been given to us in the synopsis. After one of these experiences, which resulted in the introduction of a paragraph that was rather clever but not at all pertinent, Mark regained control with the impatiently traced words:

"Every scribe here wants a pencil on earth."

Not until the middle of summer did we achieve that sureness of touch which now enables us to recognize, intuitively, the presence of the one scribe whose