

## PART THREE

### SECOND-HAND DIVINING

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At the request of the President of the British Society of Dowsters (to whom the Society owes so much), I am going to endeavour to write an account of an afternoon spent with the Abbé Bouly of Hardehot, and some of the amusing and surprising things he told me of his work, as one of France's leading diviners.

I was staying with the President of the French Diviner's Society at the time, the Vicomte Henry de France, in his beautiful old château on the Somme (which I fear has probably been destroyed) and he motored me over to see the Abbé Bouly.

I found a jovial and kindly old man, only too ready to talk of his great hobby, divining, in all its branches; as, besides being a water diviner of repute, he was a mineral diviner, and the best known diagnostician of human diseases in the divining fraternity. So successful had he been in the latter, that major operations had been performed by doctors in France on his diagnosis.

I started by the usual question asked by all diviners, when meeting a fellow craftsman for the first time: "What method do you use to find water?" The Abbé considered this for a moment and then made the surprising reply, "*I see it.*" He went on to explain that on arrival at the locality where he was to find water, he would first *look* on the ground as far as his eye could see, while slowly turning himself round. "Where there are streams of underground water," he said, "I see streams of silver running on the surface. If it is a big underground stream I see a big silver stream or if it is a small underground stream I see a small silver stream. If the underground stream is fast or slow my silver stream runs fast or slow likewise. Then I pick out the biggest silver stream and walk up to it and work on it in the ordinary way. It is a very convenient method and saves me much time."

It took me some seconds to digest this surprising statement (little dreaming that there were still more surprising things to come!) and then I said, "Yes, but you can't do that unless you put your eyes out of focus" (an expression which I found extremely difficult to translate into French!).

This he admitted was the case, although, he said, until then, the fact had not struck him.

After that he went on to tell me of a curious form of divining which he used, and which I can only call "Second-Hand Divining."

He said (in very bad English, of which he was extremely proud, and which he mixed up indiscriminately with his usual French) that he had been sent for by a mining company to do

some work on a gold-mine, which was situated on a steep hill and where the known gold-veins were petering out.

"I arrive at the place, Mademoiselle," he continued, "and the weather, it is very hot, and I am old and very fat, as you see; so I say to the Engineer of the mine who is with me, 'It is you who will mount the mountain and make the divining inspection, and it is I who will stay down here quietly at the bottom!'"

This, not unnaturally, called forth an indignant protest from the Engineer, to the effect that he was not a "diviner" and that he knew nothing at all about it, and that he had no intention of going up the mountain to do the diviner's work for him!

However, the Abbé was very firm with him and made him stand in front of him while he rubbed his thick whalebone rod up and down his coat. This was done to thoroughly establish his "rapport" (or contact) with the Engineer.

He then continued in his funny English: "Next, I instal myself with comfort on a large rock, and I point my rod at the middle of the back of the Engineer, and I say to him, '*En avant*'—and as he goes up the mountain I call, 'more to the right,' or, 'now a little to the left,' as my rod informs me by the way she pulls in my hands, and then, '*Voilà, ça y est.*'"

He then went on to say that when the Engineer returned he had to admit that he (the Abbé) was right when he called out at each vein known to the Company, so he had marked all the other spots when the Abbé had shouted, as if he was right on the known veins, it was only logical to suppose he was right on the unknown ones.

I heard afterwards that the Abbé had been correct in all his findings, but at the time I must admit that I frankly couldn't believe it, as I thought it was too fantastic; so I found myself making polite little sounds like one would make to someone who was a little deranged mentally and who one did not wish to upset!!

When I got back into the car I am afraid I said to the Vicomte "*Ça c'est une bonne blague Monsieur*" (in other words, That is a very tall story!).

To my amazement the Vicomte was extremely annoyed—not to say angry—whether at my very inelegant slang or at, what he might have considered, my aspersions on the statement of our recent jovial host, I don't know. Anyway, he took up the cudgels for him and assured me that above all things the Abbé was "*un homme sérieux*" and would not say anything that was not strictly true. As the word "*sérieux*" in French apparently includes integrity and reliability as well as being serious-minded, it was intended to be a high tribute.

The Vicomte finished by saying tersely, "Anyway, if he can do it, you can, Mademoiselle," and would not listen when I indignantly assured him that I could certainly do nothing of the sort!

On arrival at the château he immediately insisted on taking me out into the wood at the back of this lovely old mansion. The Château d'Arry is built, like so many of the French châteaux, at the edge of a wood, through which paths from the château radiate out, like rays from a sun. We walked to the end of one of these long paths, each armed with a pendulum. The Vicomte is (or perhaps I must say "was," as nothing has been heard of this charming old Frenchman since the occupation of France) one of the greatest exponents of the pendulum for divining, and always used it and no other tool.

I was instructed to take his radiation from his left hand. This is done by holding the pendulum still over the left hand. In a very short time the pendulum picks up its momentum and starts to gyrate; sometimes in a clockwise direction, and sometimes in a counterclock. The former is generally obtained from women, and the latter from men.

I next rubbed my pendulum on the sleeve of his coat, and then holding it in my right hand (on a short string) I kept it oscillating while I held my left arm and hand stretched out and my first finger pointing at the middle of his back.

The Vicomte started to walk slowly away from me up the path, with his pendulum held in front of him and carefully hidden from me, to "check my findings" as he put it. I remained stationary where I was at the end of the path.

I am afraid I watched him go with rather a superior smile, as I was convinced that there would be no reactions on me and no "findings" to check.

My surprise can be better imagined than described when my pendulum started to gather momentum and then to gyrate violently, just exactly as it did when I was approaching and crossing a stream in the ordinary way! So I called out to the Vicomte that he was crossing a stream at that moment, and he just raised his hand and called back, "*Oui, ça y est,*" and went on, and as long as I could see him I found it worked.

He must have crossed at least four streams between me and the Château. The same procedure was followed the next day far out in the country, on a path leading through the peaceful fields of France, then yellow with ripe wheat, with a carpet of blue cornflowers and red poppies underneath. Each time the Vicomte crossed a stream my pendulum reacted just when his did. There could be no doubt about it.

I still don't know whether I was more pleased or annoyed that it worked for me so easily and accurately, after all I had said! But I do know that if anyone reads this and says, "What absolute nonsense" he will have my sincere sympathy! However, I should advise him to try it out for himself quietly, before he commits himself too far, and no matter how adverse he may be to believing it, I can only assure him that it really *does* work!