

The Books In the Iron Box

The Survival Files — Case 52 — ESS = 243.7

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During the autumn of 1918, the Reverend Charles Drayton Thomas and his trusted but skeptical friend, Mr. G.F. Bird, devised and implemented the following procedure in an effort to make the typical book test even more convincing.¹

At Bird's request, an obliging bookseller gathered a dozen old volumes without looking at the titles, wrapped them in paper, and sent them to him. Taking the parcel into a dark room, Bird removed the wrappings and placed the books into an iron box. After closing and sealing the box, he deposited it in Thomas' study. The test, then, was to determine if the spirits working through the medium Gladys Osborne Leonard could sense any of the content of books when no one involved even knew what books were being used.

As is detailed in the following spirit statements and verifications quoted from Thomas' narrative,² the test was clearly successful:

UNDER THE TITLE OF THE SECOND BOOK FROM THE LEFT THERE SEEM TO BE SEVERAL HORIZONTAL LINES, NOT ONE MERELY, BUT SEVERAL.

This book was *The Poetical Works of Crabbe*. While none of the other [books in the box] had more than four horizontal lines beneath the title, this book had nine separate lines and also a number of scrolls making lines of sorts. Here was a definite statement which proved entirely accurate.

ON ONE OF THE FLY-LEAVES [All of these remarks refer to the same book.] IS A MARK LOOKING LIKE A LITTLE IMPERFECTION.

The above book had two fly-leaves, and on the first of these was evidence of rough treatment, two conspicuous creasings in the paper and some dark crayon marks. None of the other books had any imperfection on the fly-leaf.

ON TITLE PAGE IS A WORD SUGGESTING WOOD OR BOARDS.

This suggestion was not contained in a word, but in a picture depicting a rough seat formed of three boards fixed beneath a tree, while close by there lay a fallen tree. Both wood and boards were therefore in some sense indicated on the title page. My communicator had more than once remarked that he found it difficult to tell whether his impressions came from words or pictures.

¹ For more on book tests, see Case #11 and the related material on pages 85-87 of [The Survival Files](#).

² Taken from [Some New Evidence for Human Survival](#) by Charles Drayton Thomas, 1922, pages 70-73. Reprint by Kessinger Publishing.

AT BOTTOM OF PAGE 5 HE THOUGHT HE SAW A WORD LIKE “DEVELOPMENT.”³

Less than two inches from the bottom was the word “developed.”

PAGE 96, NEAR THE TOP, GAVE THE FEELING OF EATING AND DRINKING. THIS WAS VERY STRONG, AND HE WOULD LIKE IN DUE COURSE TO HEAR IF HE IS CORRECT IN THIS.

He was quite correct. One inch from the top of the ninety-sixth page the following passage commenced:

*These Roman souls, like Rome's great sons, are known
To live in cells on labours of their own.
Thus Milo, could we see the noble chief,
Feeds, for his country's good, on legs of beef;
Camillus copies deeds for sordid pay,
Yet fights the public battles twice a day.
E'en now the godlike Brutus views his score
Scroll'd on the bar-board swinging by the door;
Where, tippling punch, grave Cato's self you'll see,
And Amor Patriae vending smuggled tea.*

It will be admitted that tippling punch and feeding on beef sufficiently verifies the test. Here, then, were five correspondences from one book. This cannot be explained by chance, for the probabilities against such a series of coincidences are enormous.

Thomas concludes this case by pointing out that it indicates “my communicator's success in obtaining and transmitting information under circumstances leaving no room for telepathy from the sitter, the friend who assisted me, the bookseller who lent the books, or any other person on earth.”

In evaluating this case, we must consider that the titles of the books sealed in an iron box are just as hidden from view as the words on their inner pages. Thus, sensing the text cannot be a matter of reading the minds of those who have read the books, for there is no normal way to know who those readers might have been. Furthermore, even if the bookseller had glanced at the titles, he couldn't know which one Bird would place second from the left in the iron box.

ESS Score

The CS rating is “q”, CS = 178.

The WR rating is “f”, WR = 65.

The Information-Complexity rating is “n.” IC = 0.7

ESS = 178 + 65 + .7 = 243.7

END CASE 52

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³ These statements in the third person are made by Leonard's control, Fedra, rather than directly by the communicating spirit.