

PATIENCE WORTH. By CASPER S. YOST. Henry Holt & Co.

I HAVE so deep a debt of gratitude in my personal ledger to Mrs. Emily Grant Hutchings, that I can but be prejudiced most favorably with regard to anything with which she may be connected. I consequently take especial pains to discount the obligation, and I may be relied upon to say the worst of Patience Worth. It is, I think, beyond all question the most interesting of the records purporting to be the utterance of the stiff. There is an unquestionable personality in Patience Worth with perhaps no one beyond the scope of "subliminal Mrs. Curran" and the hypothesis is reasonable since Mrs. Curran is always at the board when Patience manifests. To me it seems a much simpler hypothesis to suppose that Patience is Mrs. Curran's sub-conscious memory of an Elizabethan incarnation than that Patience is wandering, unchanged for several centuries, about the astral plane, where things are so easily broken up. It is also quite feasible to imagine Patience as an elemental spirit. But undoubtedly her utterance is remarkably distinctive and coherent. It is almost entirely free from the worst of the disfigurements to which psychical researchers have acclimatized us, confound them.

The mention of psychical researchers has ruined my temper again. I am going to be nasty even to my dear Mrs. Hutchings. It is very easy to spoil a case by claiming too much. Jesus preferred would stand higher in the market to-day if some would-be clever press agent had not added ridiculous Pagan stories of the Virgin Birth, and so on, to the earlier and more plausible legend. And the most serious criticism of Patience Worth is the existence of that ridiculous novel by "Mark Twain." Patience Worth is not impossible, or even improbable. She makes mistakes. She commits anachronisms. But any difficulties are fairly easy to explain away. When it comes to Mark Twain, the case is altogether different. Anybody can sign checks, and the only question is as to whether the bank has money on deposit against that signature. But if I sign J. P. Morgan, I get a very peculiar laugh from the cashier. In all human probability they do not even trou-

ble to arrest the "poor nut." The action of Mark Twain's heirs in trying to suppress a book whose origin was most honestly stated makes them entirely ridiculous. But this reacts terribly on poor old Patience. It makes her look like a *ballon d'essai*. I do not think that there is any question of fraud, but I do see all kinds of openings for delusion, especially in the case of people who are hardly aware that there is such a thing as magical protection. It looks to me as if a playful elemental had taken advantage of Mrs. Hutchings' innocence of the Laws of Magick, and having seduced her with the honest trifle of Patience Worth had betrayed her in the deepest consequence of Samuel L. Clemens, may he rest in peace!

*p.p.* OUIJA BOARD.