Latent Powers, Latent Demand

A Look at the Mail-Order Occult in Anglo-American Culture 1895-1920

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The End of an Era

In April of 1881, the American medium Susan Willis Fletcher is sentenced to prison in England for fraud involving misappropriation of a lodger's assets.

In August of 1881, the *American Journal of Science* publishes (to-be Nobel laureate) Albert Michelson's "The Relative Motion of the Earth and the Luminiferous Ether."

In January of 1882, the English medium Alfred Firman, in an attempt to sustain himself financially, begins a self-exposure tour in England. *Confessions of a Medium*, written by Firman's partner William Chapman, for similar reasons, is published in April.

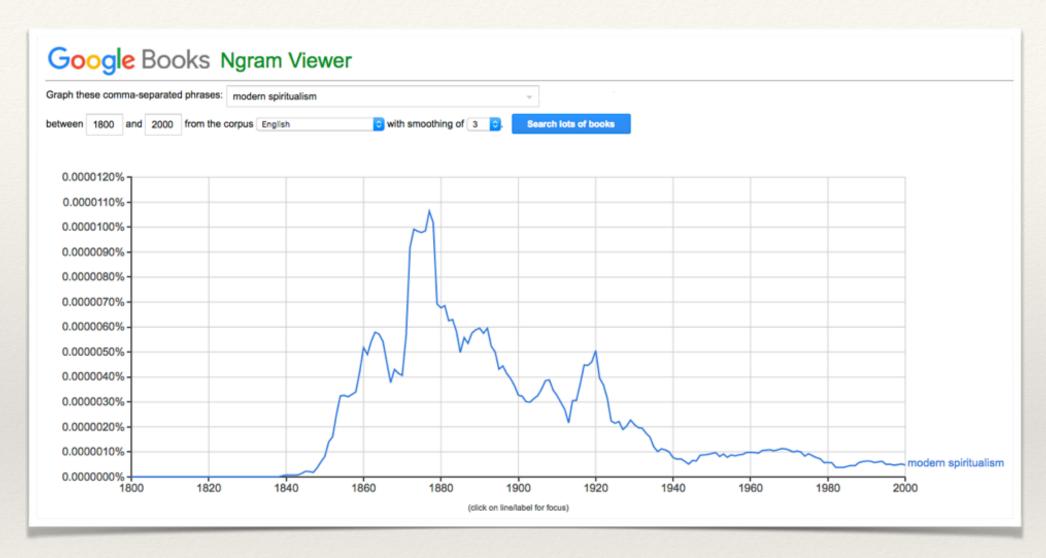
In June of 1882, the leadership of English Spiritualism circulates a *Declaration Against Promiscuous Seances*, following in theme and tone a similar declaration issued by a group of conservative American Spiritualists in April of 1882.

In July of 1882, the Society for Psychical Research publishes the first issue of its Proceedings, taking unto itself "...clairvoyance, and mesmerism, and the mass of obscure phenomena commonly known as Spiritualistic..."

In mid-1884, Hippolyte Bernheim published *De la Suggestion dans l'Etat Hypnotique et dans l'Etat de Veille*.

In September of 1884, the Coulomb-Blavatsky letters are published.

The End of an Era



Its physics bankrupted, its excesses detailed by the Press, its proofs rejected repeatedly by the Law, its theoretical objects appropriated and evacuated by Science, Spiritualism experiences a decline between 1878 and 1915, in Anglo-American culture.

The End of an Era a Flawed Business Model

[S]elfish Spiritualists... want to get all the benefit possible from Spiritualism, and are unwilling to render an equivalent therefor, and... are shocked if asked to make a sacrifice for the cause they claim to love.

A sacrifice! Yes, a sacrifice. Do not the honest mediums and speakers make sacrifices every day?

These so-called Spiritualists who talk so much about the public workers having such an easy time would not think of living on what the average Spiritualist lecturer and medium has to live on today.

There is no work in the world as hard to discharge, or as poorly paid, as that of a public worker in Spiritualism.

Milton Baker, Spiritualist lecturer, in The Sunflower (April 11, 1908)

Spiritualism failed to sustain itself in significant part because its **business model** — lecture circuits, journals, for-fee sittings — was [a] logistically expensive, [b] prone to **hyper-competition** and the consequent production of excesses, and [c] difficult to scale, particularly with **sparse markets**.

The work killed the workers, in too many cases: Foster and Slade, notably.

Its phenomenal excesses — especially full-form materialization, which ultimately wrecked the movement — can be tied, directly, to Spiritualism's flawed economics.

As can the numerous legal cases involving mediums and wills/inheritances, and other kinds of financial flimflam.

The Beginning of an Fra a New Business Model

J. ALBERT BLISS. HOW TO BECOME A ME DIUM IN YOUR OWN HOME. I WILL send you a 16-page Pamphlet, containing full inphases of mediumship, also a copy of The Riddle of the American Spiritual Sphinx. or the Lost Key Found, and a sample copy of "THE N. D. C. ANE AND TRUE KEY-STONE," for ONLY 15 CENS'M, in one or two-cent stainps. Address J. 15 ALBERT BLISS, No. 474A Broadway, Boston, Mass. Blackfoot's Magnetized Paper, to heal the sick, 10 cents per sheet, or 12 sheets for \$1,00. Developing Paper 15 cents per sheet. or 7 sheets

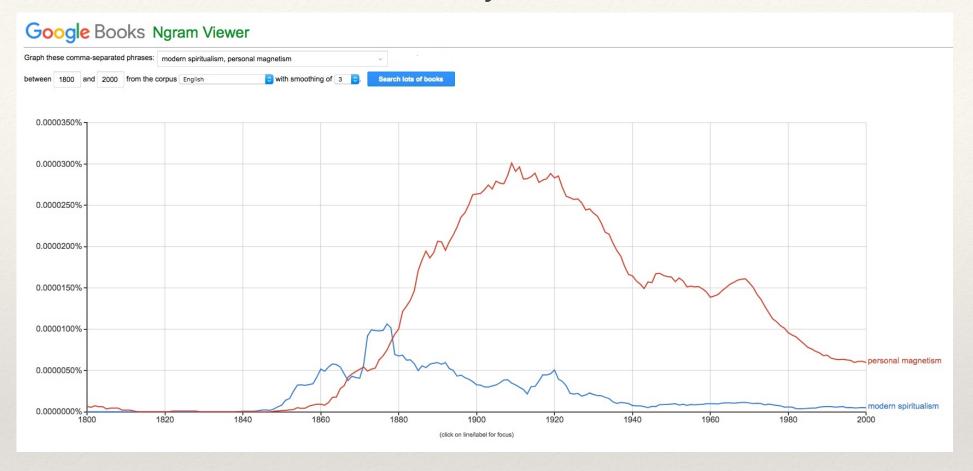
Banner of Light, January 1886

James A. Bliss (1847-1890), who did much to bring phenomenal Spiritualism into disrepute in the US in the early 1880s, pioneered (imperfectly) a new business model for the next generation of mages.

(As did "the spirit postmaster" J. V. Mansfield, and the by-letter psychometrists, before him)

Mediums are made, not born.

Market Dynamics



- c. 1830: Clairvoyants are born, and operators control them.
 - c. 1860: Mediums are born, and spirits perfect them.
- c. 1880: Adepts are made, by (human and ascended) masters, through long periods of intense (and expensive) training.
 - c. 1900: Power is (already latent) in you; you can develop it yourself (in ten easy lessons).

Latent Powers: Let Your (Sexy, Effective) Soul Out

JUST ARRIVED-PACIFIC COAST MEdiums, the Brockway family; seances on Tuesday and Friday evenings; materialization; independent music; trumpet speaking; pictures and writing under strict test conditions; private sittings daily; sealed questions answered by independent slate writing; magnetic healing and development of latent powers; mediumship a specialty; consultation free. Rooms, 4171/2 K street. my9-6t*

Sacramento Record-Union, May 13, 1895

Latent powers has been a feature of the occult markets since 1830.

Latent Powers: Let Your (Sexy, Effective) Soul Out

HYPNOTISM-Develop latent power; personal instructions by Professor Wilcox. Success assured. Call to-day. 98 West-ave.

MME. AUBREY, WONDERFUL TRANCE MEdium, natural clairvoyant; reduced prices, 25c, 50c; send lock of hair and 25c; addressed envelope; will send you full reading of your future life; answer any question. 12 N. State-st., Chicago.

IF YOU WISH TO DEVELOP YOUR LATENT power and learn the hidden secrets which bring success, or if in trouble of any nature, call on DR. BETIERO, 2134 Michigan-av. Consultation free, MRS. MILLER, CLAIRVOYANT, CARD READer, gift of second sight; positive and truthful information given on business, love, marriage, or family affairs; fee 50c. 189 Ontario-st., 2d flat.

HELEENE BARRY, TRANCE CARD READER. Ladies only. Hours 9 to 9. Charges 25 cts. 208 E. Superior-st., Flat E. second floor.

SCIENTIFIC PALMISTRY — CERTIFICATE from Count St. Germain and Ina Oxenford, London. MARY DAVIS, Suite 40, 90 Wabash-av.

PERSONAL—DO YOU DESIRE THE POWER of success and to learn how to develop the latent power within? The School of Egyptian Mystic Science teaches a complete course by mail, embracing occultism, hypnotism, magnet magnetic healing, and secret influence. This course contains the genuine Hindoo exercises as practiced by the Raja Yogi, giving secrets and information for quick development heretofore unknown to the Western world. Address P. O. Box 1218.

A NEW SCIENCE!

Most wonderful healing force on earth

Cures all forms of disease without drugs; Develops latent power; Insures Health, Happiness, Success. Lesson 10c. WILLIAM E. TOWNE, Holyoke, Mass.

CPIUM We cure the habit permanently, cheap, quick, without suffering or inconvenience. Describe your case. Address 8, G. ARMSTRONG, M.D., Berrien Springs. Mich.

FORTUNE'S SPECIFIC.

Or, GOLDEN IDEAS FOR THE AMBITIOUS YOUNG MAN AND YOUNG WOMAN. The secret springs to fortune and success; how to develop and use successfully the latent powers in every brain. Secrets for the rich, secrets for the poor, secrets for the young man and the maiden, secrets for all who want to know. All may learn to know the magic touch of Fortune, Love and Beauty. Neatly bound and sent to any address, prepaid, in sealed envelope, for \$1. Address

JUNIUS O. FRANCE,

Box 716, Pittsburgh, Pa.

BUSINESS PERSONAL—LET YOUR SOUL out Develop it. Make your latent power serve you well. Svengali controlled Trilby and made millions how to his power. It was hypnotism. You can learn it. Read and study and practice rules, secrets, principles, of hypnotism by the famous Davis. Typewritten copy, sealed, for \$1 cash. Metropolitan School of Hypnotism, 28 and 80 E. Georgia st., Indianapolis, Ind.

Latent powers has been a feature of the occult markets since 1830.

By the 1890s, it has been accorded the status of a natural law.

Latent Powers: Let Your (Sexy, Effective) Soul Out

TYPNOTISM-Develop latent power; per-

Elizabeth Jones is on her way across the US, to meet her future husband, William Towne, at the time these ads run, nationwide.

The two met through correspondence, initiated by Towne, about the purchase of ad space in Elizabeth's fledgling West Coast journal, *The Nautilus*.

Together, the Townes build a latent powers empire.

A PLEAS SOLD TO Most wonderful healing force on earth Cures all forms of disease without drugs; Develops latent power; Insures Health, Happiness, Success, Lesson 10c. WILLIAM E. TOWNE, Holyoke, Mass.

CPIUM | We cure the habit permanently, cheap, quick, without suffering or inconvenience. Describe your case. Address 8. G. ARMSTRONG, M.D., Berrien Springs. Mich.

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Beginning c. 1900, a group of practitioners Pat Deveney has called the Twilight Mages **productized** the concept.

Latent Powers & the Twilight Mages

The full battery of (latent) powers promised by any occult discipline: foresight, healing power, the control of self and others, sexual prowess, intellectual mastery, material wealth.

In a word (their word): **SUCCESS**.

The mechanisms: mind, magnetism, attraction, vibration.

Synonyms: practical psychology, personal magnetism, personal influence, soul development, self-mastery, self-unfoldment, self-attainment, suggestive therapeutics, mastery of fate, mental science, [Surname]isms galore.

All (as had always been the case) premised on: lack.

You can obtain what you perceive you lack.

Whatever you lack, your latent powers can produce it, if trained.

The Market in Latent Powers

THE COLLEGE OF PSYCHICAL SCIENCE AND UNFOLDMENT.

J. C. F. Grumbine, President.

Miss Loraine Follett, Sec'y and Treas., 1718 Genesee St., Syracuse, N. Y.

Board of Directors—Erastus C. Gaffield, L. W. Goode, Samuel L. Carr, Richard B. Gruelle, Dr. J. Swanson.

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SPECIAL NOTICE.

This school is the only one of its kind in the world, is conducted by J. C. F. GRUMBINE, the author and lecturer. It is devoted exclusively to the System of Philosophy, concerning Divinity, and is connected with the Order of the White Rose, branch of the Rosicrucians. The secrets and mysteries of Magic and Occultism are revealed; the mystic and potential powers of Divinity, such as Clairvoyance, Psychometry, Inspiration, Psychopathy, Ontology, Hypnotism, Telepathy and Illumination are made operative and

Teachings are arranged for out of town students and belong to the College Extension Department Realization is thus assured in the student's home. The following is the series:

TEACHINGS BY CORRESPONDENCE. THE SERIES BY MAIL.

FIRST.—PSYCHOMETRY. Sixteen lessons. Ten Experiments. Advanced Teachings. Three months' Course, followed by a Post-Course of Four Lessons. Price for

Teachings. Three months' Course. Price for Series..... 12.75 FIFTH.—ILLUMINATION. Twelve Lessons. No Experi-

ments. Advanced Teachings. Three months' Course.

None of these series are published in book form and can only be procured through the College of Psyschical Science.

For booklet and circulars, Percentage of Psychical Power, send a stamped, addressed envelope to J. C. F. GRUMBINE, 1718 West Genesee Street, Syracuse, N. Y.

Plenty of former Spiritualists migrated into this new market, carrying with them the elements of the Old Business Model: publications, lecture tours, private face-to-face individual and class instruction.

Vide: Emma Hardinge Britten, W. J. Colville, Jesse C. F. Grumbine, Cora (Scott Hatch Daniels Tappan) Richmond, Susan Willis (by then Augusta) Fletcher

They fared no better as Twilight Mages than they had as public Spiritualists. Many ended as mage-in-residence, in small sinecures: journals, societies, congregations, churches.

The New Occult Business Model (c. 1900)

Lessons, Readings & Devices

Backed by Authorities

And Institutions

Delivered Through the Mail

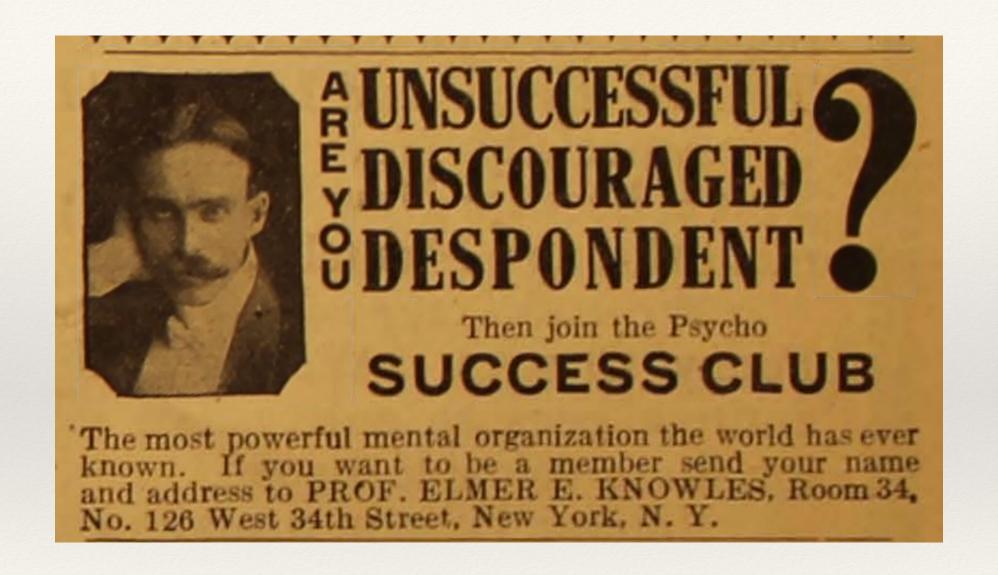
with Extensive Cross-Selling

Branding

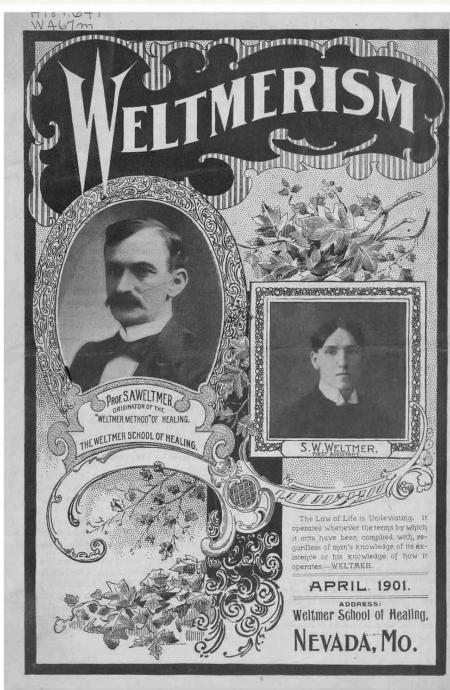
Lead Generation and Lead Nurturance

Managed by Sophisticated Commercial Organizations

The New Occult Business Model (c. 1900)



The New Occult Business Model (c. 1900)



1879: US mail reclassification act brings "legitimate" periodicals into the most preferential postal rate class. Ad content doubles in monthlies between 1880 and 1928; in weeklies, it increases by 27x (Kielbowicz, 1995)

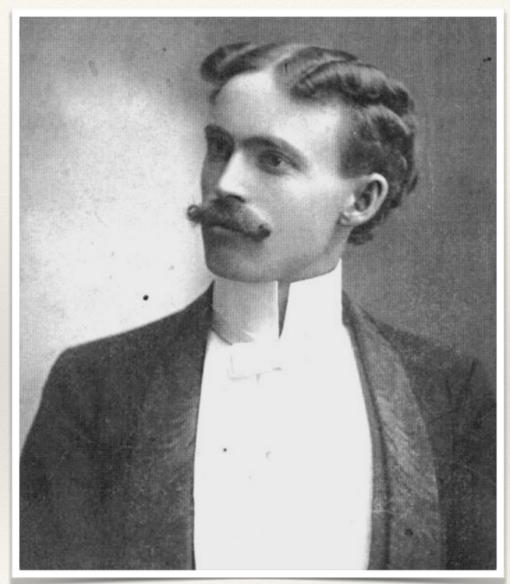
c. **1890**: advertising brokerage operations emerge as intermediaries, to enable advertisers to make national and international ad purchases across periodicals (and newspapers) without expertise

c. 1895 US postal inspectors begins aggressive suppression attempts, using an 1872 law designed to control lottery scams and "obscenity"

1902: American School of Magnetic Healing v. McAnulty (187 US 94)

Sidney Weltmer's Nevada, Missouri operation took in, at its peak, more than \$5000 a day in "absent healing" fees, and employed 70 full-time typists to manage the Weltmers' outgoing correspondence. The Nevada, MO post office's volume was larger than that of Springfield, MO — a city 10x Nevada's size.

Elmer Sidney Prather | Prof. E. E. Knowles (1872-1939)



"Elmer E. Knowles," c. 1900



Elmer Sidney Prather, c. 1920

Elmer Sidney Prather | Prof. E. E. Knowles (1872-1939)



Elmer Sidney Prather (1872-1939)



The Metropolitan Institute of Sciences was an institutional authority, that granted institutional authority.

D. S. T.s — Doctors of Suggestive Therapeutics — and their Schools and Institutes were plentiful, on the US occult landscape, after 1900.

1905: Enters the mail-order occult business in NYC, using Knowles as a cut-out, in partnership with F. T. McIntyre, whose interest in the Metropolitan Institute of Science he acquires c. 1907.

1908: Founds Modern Science Publishing Co. in 1908, with the astrologer (and serial murderer?) A. H. Postel, Reuben Swinburne Clymer and H. Spencer Lewis (later, head of AMORC); Abby Prather edits *Modern Miracles*, which publishes early RSC and Lewis material. The Prathers share an attorney with their main "rival," Ewing Virgil Neal (1868-1949), head of a Rochester, NY-based mail-order operation.

1909: After two fraud orders (both beaten) and an arrest for assault, the Prathers migrate to England, and set up international mail order operations in Kingsway and in Westminster Bridge Road: astrological readings, lessons in personal magnetism, hypnotic devices, scrying mirrors, beauty aids, dietary supplements (+\$100,000/year alone), New Thought lessons. US corporations remain in operation. A. H. Postel joins the Prathers in London.

1911: Former English employee attempts blackmail; the scope of the Prathers' operation revealed in the resulting UK court case. 100 clerks, each paid roughly one pound a week; German correspondence alone @ 5000 letters per week.

1913-1920: Adds international operation in the Hague, Brussels and Paris; new cut-outs (Professor Roxroy, Clay Burton Vance, C. Spargo)

c.1925: Moves to France, buys chateau, opens international country club

1939: leaves 64,000 pound estate in England, multi-million dollar (gross) estate, French country house and grounds, fleet of automobiles. etc.; Prather's US heirs divided \$530,000 USD in 1943 (7.5M 2017 dollars/5.7M 2017 pounds)

Free Character Readings to All Readers Who Write at Once

Professor Clay Burton Vance, the Famous Parisian Occult Scientist, Offers Free Advice About Your Business Changes, Occupation, Friends, Enemies, or What to Do to Achieve Success.

To foretell the past, present and fu-ture events of the lives of the great masses of people is no small task, yet there seems to be no one more anxious

ability than Prof. Vance. When asked what methods he employed in making his cal-culations, Prof. Vance replied:
"Just so sure
as the moon has enough ef-fect on the great bodies of great bodies of Water to make the tide ebb and flow, the position of the planets at the time of birth has a direct



have benefitted by this man's gavice. He tells you what you are capable of, and how you can be successful. He mentions your friends and enemies and describes the good and bad periods in your life. His description as to past, present and future events will astonish and help you. All he wants is your name twritten by yourself, your birthdate, and sex, to guide him in his work. Money is not necessary. Mention the name of this paper and get a Trial Reading free. If you want to take advantage of this special offer, and obtain a review of your life simply send your full name, address, the date month

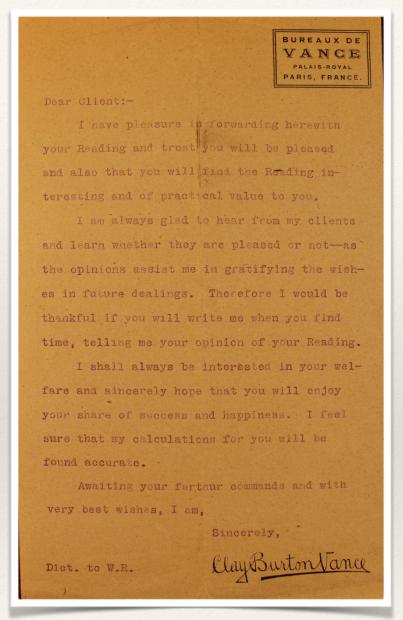


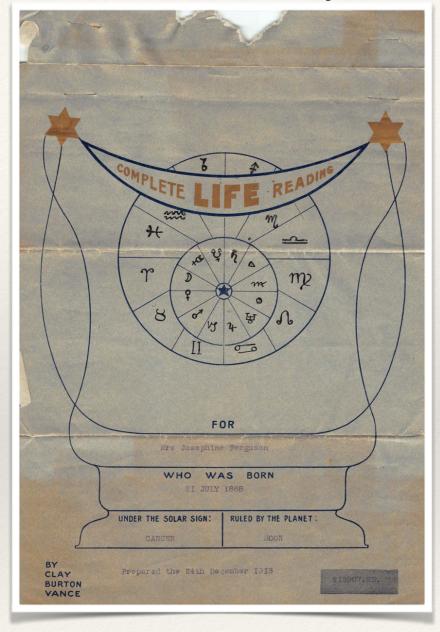
Clay Burton Vance was a Prather cut-out.

Like Professor Roxroy, C. Spargo, and (the once very real) A. H. Postel (who has by 1910 moved on, to run the London branch of the British Institute of Mental Science).

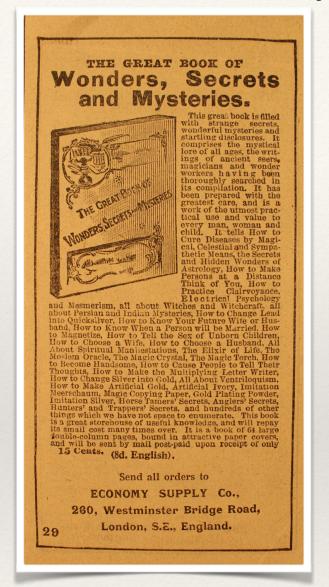
The USPS and others pursued these cut-outs, believing they were real persons. Some, to this day, believe that.

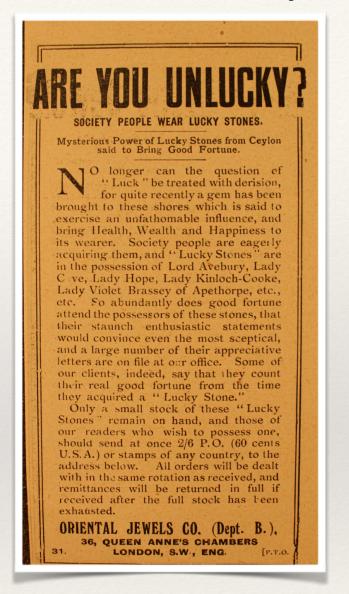
http://www.iapsop.com/lessons/1913_vance_complete.pdf



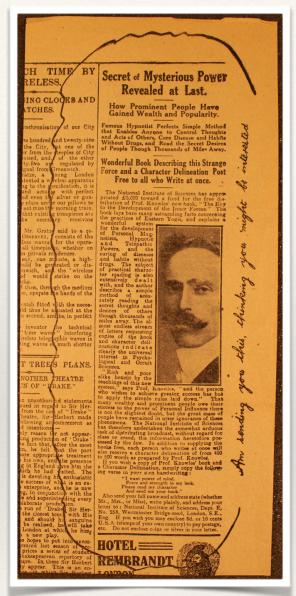


The "progressively detailed" readings scheme was pioneered by A. H. Postel and H. Spencer Lewis.





Cross-selling. Companies all Prather-controlled. Offers might include mix of occult and non-occult products and services, depending on the mage-in-charge (e.g., jiu-jitsu lessons, cartilage stretcher, eyesight restorer, **cosmetics**, nutritional supplements, occupational correspondence courses)



Exemplars exist in several languages

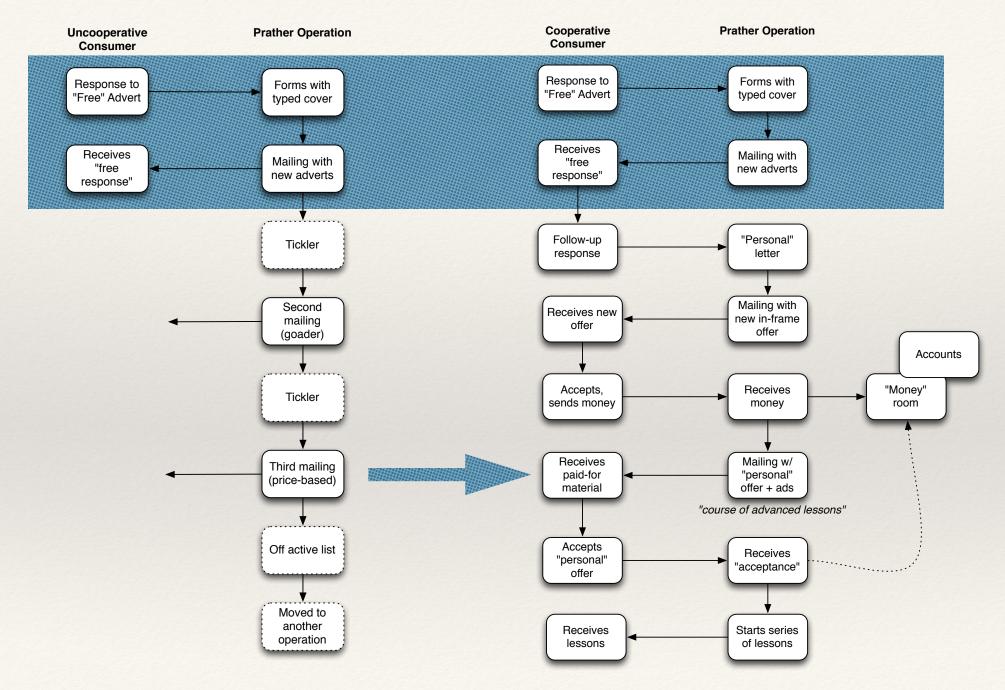


Abby Prather as demonstrator

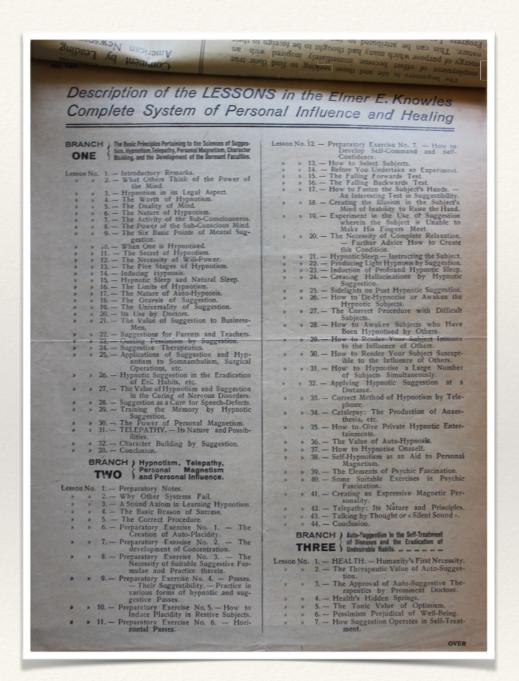
Perhaps you'd be interested in the work of my colleague....



Perhaps you'd be interested in the work of my colleague....



The Method: Elaborate Lesson Schemes



The Complete System of Personal Influence and Healing

Six Branches

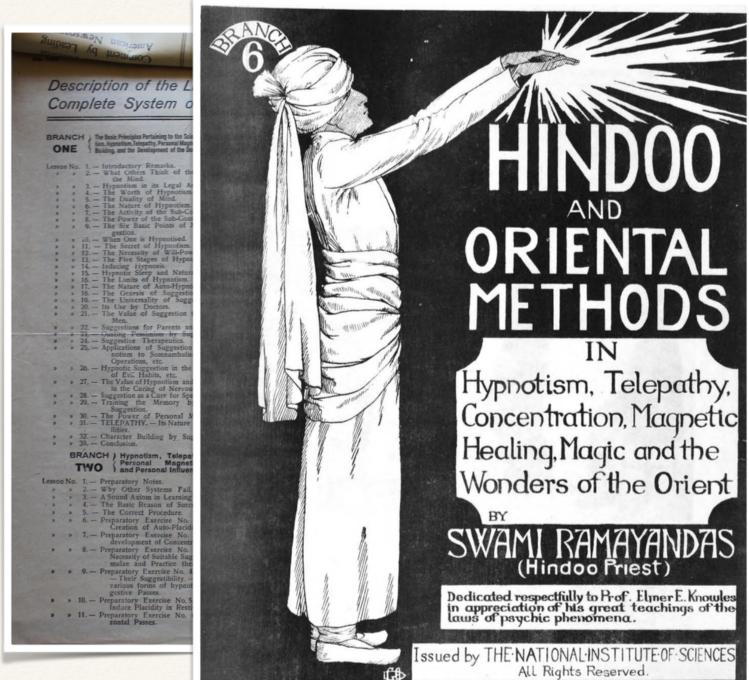
Basic Principles: 33 lessons
Hypnosis, Telepathy, Personal
Magnetism: 44 lessons
Auto-Suggestion/Self-Treatment: 20
lessons

Magnetic Healing: 29 lessons Character Reading (Physiognomy, Phrenology, Chirology): 26 lessons "Oriental Methods": 29 lessons

181 lessons

Science!
"No Connection with the Supernatural"

The Method: Elaborate Lesson Schemes



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Prof. R. E. Dutton (Lincoln, Ineurusku) offeren <u>200</u> lessons on Dullomsm (spirit magnetism) in 1902

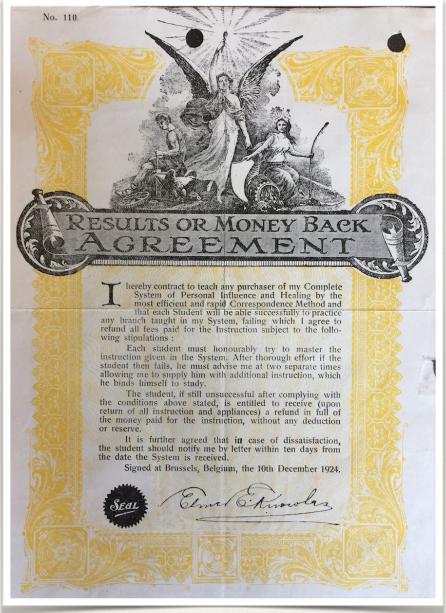
The Method: Testimonials



1915 — Postel as Prather's cut-out

Others — comely, articulate, in positions of authority — lacked what I lack, and found: success.

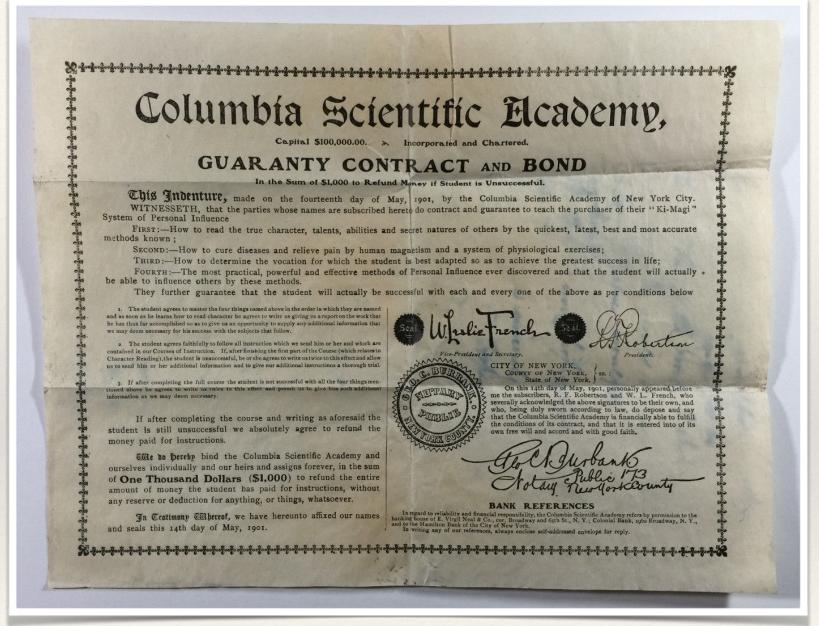
The Method: Money-Back Guarantees



From 1927 USPS fraud order file on Prather's Psychology Foundation

Safety for buyers. Prophylactic (to some extent) in case of postal inspection.

The Method: Money-Back Guarantees



The Columbia Scientific Academy was a prominent institution in the Segno-Neal-Clark-Adkin operation, selling the Ki-Magi System of Personal Influence.

Verisimilitude is key to belief, and commitment.

Lessons of the Twilight Mages

The occult <u>can</u> be made to pay.

Practical occultism sells.

(Tell me about me, teach me to be a more powerful, successful, me.)

Lack is lack. I need: personal magnetism, 2 inches of additional height, improved eyesight, stamina and vim, a girlfriend <u>and</u> a good job.

Institutional credentialing is key. Degree-granting institutes are the new guarantors.

Publications are for **demand creation**, not communication.

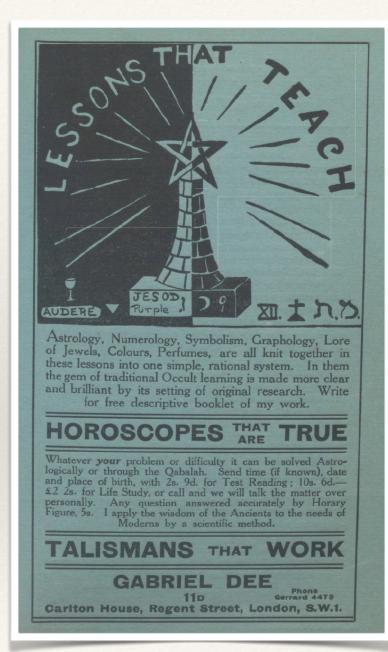
Cut-outs up front, clerks in the back room, brains on the golf course. Proprietorships don't work.

Use existing distribution networks, particularly for **sparse** markets.

Don't fight. Switch.

Operate in friendly geographies.

Execution tells the tale. Many Twilight Mages failed at mail-order occultism, failed to avoid the Law, or both.



Value, for money.

Coda: Open Secrets Replicate Themselves

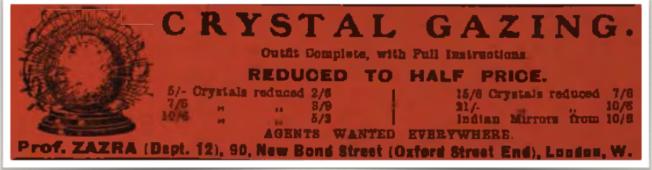
Beyond the Prathers, the Neal-Clark-Adkin syndicate and Sydney Blanshard Flower...

Professor Zazra









Arthur Edward Tapner | Arthur Drew-Clifton (1871-c1932)
Chief Mystic of the Hindoo School of Protection
English mail-order mage
1907-1912 (US, UK, Europe), 1920-c1930 (Africa, Asia)

Coda: Open Secrets Replicate Themselves

Beyond the Prathers, the Neal-Clark-Adkin syndicate and Sydney Blanshard Flower...

O Hashnu Hara

FROM THE

O HASHNU HARA

The Road to Success. 50 cents.

· Teaches the laws governing the practice of Auto-Suggestion.

Practical Hypnotism. 50 cents.

A Practical Manual clearly teaching eighteen different methods of inducing Mesmerism and Hypnotism.

Concentration and the Acquirement of Personal Magnetism. 1 dollar.

One of the most lucid, original and complete series of letters on the difficult subjects of Mental and Spiritual Concentration yet published.

Practical Psychometry: Its Value and How it is Mastered. 50 cents.

O Hashnu Hara's latest work. Published February, 1906.

Fruit and Nut Diet. Post free. 10 cents. Practical Hints upon a Natural Diet.

Business Success Through Mental Attraction 25 cents.

A Pocket Guide to the successful application of Suggestions and the Power of Mind to the Control of Financial Conditions, with practical Rules to ensure Business Success.

PLANETARY HOURS. ABSOLUTELY NEW INVENTION.

Dial or Wheel,_

Showing the Planets governing each hour of the day and night for every day of the week.

The time when to begin new work.

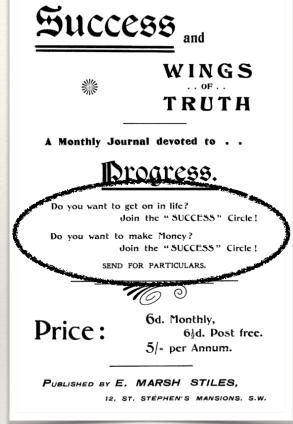
The effect **people** and **events** may be expected to take upon your life.

To gain SUCCESS take TIME by the forelock when TIME is inclined to SMILE on you!

Paper, price 1s. 6d. post free; mounted on cloth, 2s. 6d. post free.

Send year and date of birth and I will adjust the hours to suit your individual planetary influences.

O HASHNU HARA, 12, St. Stephen's Mansions, Westminster, S.W.



(Demand-Creation) Journals

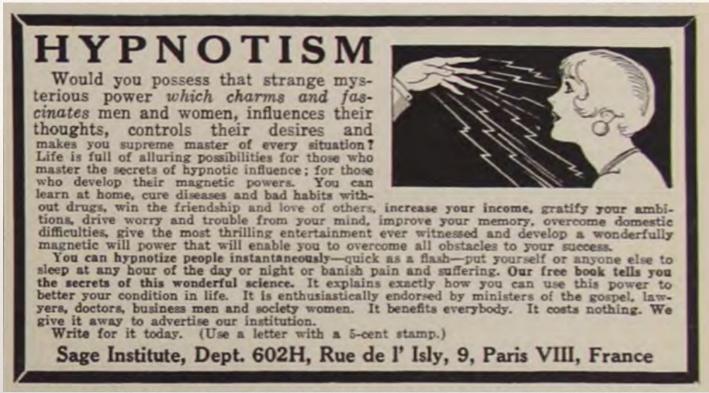
Lessons

Devices

Ethel Marsh(-)Stiles | O Hashnu Hara (1878-1956) English mail-order mage & super-connected occultist

Her works are still in circulation in 'New Age' networks

Coda: Open Secrets Replicate Themselves



Occult Digest, November 1927

Well before the close of 1927, Ewing Virgil Neal had become, in the eyes of the world, the head of the Tokalon cosmetics empire, catering for a particular kind of lack, worldwide.

But his cut-out, Xenophon Lamotte Sage, is alive, well, and selling mail-order lessons to all those who lacked mastery of the secrets of hypnotic influence.

We give it away to advertise our institution.



Swami Ramayandas wishes you: success.