

This necessity for attention was also observed by others than Dr. B. and Dr. H.

Dr. H. inquired of Bertha what she thought was making her bounce. Among other things she answered, "it might be a witch." When asked what a witch looks like, she said, "Hit's kinder like a shadder. It rides on a broom in the sky," and volunteered to show a picture of one. She jumped out of bed and displayed a small silhouette of a witch on a broom, one of the numerous figures on a page of her brother's first reader.

This intermission gave Dr. B. and others opportunity to examine the bed thoroughly. The bedspring is a dilapidated one of very weak coil construction with broken springs protruding and rubbing against the footboard. These wires had already made several deep scratches. When the mattress was agitated by hand, the springs squeaked all over and made scratching noises.

When Bertha was ordered by her father back to bed for further demonstrations, the room was badly crowded with approximately forty people. Dr. B. observed the reactions of visitors while Dr. H. talked with the family. Despite the efforts of the family to emphasize the supernatural nature of the evening's performance, only a minority of the visitors' comments indicated acceptance of the proffered explanation. The majority voiced skepticism, were cynical or amused.

### No Remedies Used

The mother while claiming to be anxious to get rid of the "booger," had not used any of the several local "remedies" against witchcraft except putting a Bible under the girl's pillow. This had no effect. They had not even resorted to prayer.

The grandmother and one of her sons, other than the father of the family, were irritated because of the presence of the many unbelievers in such a large crowd and claimed it inhibited Bertha. The father from time to time suggested that those who had seen ought to leave and make room for others.

After an hour a neighbor to whose home the child had been removed the previous evening for special trial to see if the "hant" would follow to other localities and who had found special reactions of it to music, entered with his guitar. Seated beside the bed, he played his instrument and exhorted Bertha to further manifestation of her "powers." We observed renewed vigor of movements in time with the plucking of the guitar. The father and his neighbor

called attention to squeakings which this time appeared to come from the head panels of the bed. Dr. B. found the squeakings ceased when he pressed firmly against the thin, loose panels and resumed when he released the boards.

### Conclusions

The above account of the Virginia "bewitched" child is complete enough for our present purpose. Many details were recorded but are not reported here. We entered the investigation with an elaborate plan of controls for accomplices, sleight of hand, and other possibilities. We were amazed at the simplicity of the entire performance and the obvious, natural explanation.

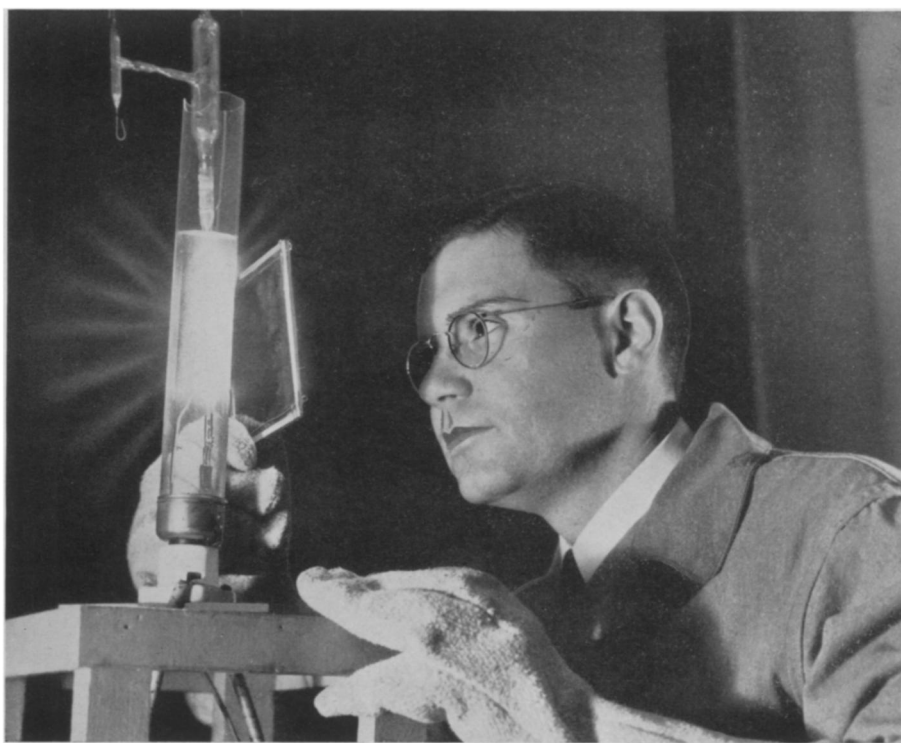
We have no doubt that the child makes conscious, deliberate contractions of the buttocks which explains the peculiar swaying of the mattress. The movements can be duplicated easily. The squeakings and scratching are the result of the dilapidated condition of the spring and bedstead. The moving of the chair with both feet on the rungs or braces was duplicated by Dr. B. in full sight of the family. The darkness of the room helps to conceal much.

The present phenomena indicate the

following probable trial-and-error development. Evidence points toward accidental discovery on the part of the child of the attention value of scratching the head of the bed and the pillow with her hand on the side of the bed away from her grandmother.

Later she discovered that patting and bouncing the bed is more effective and less likely to be detected. To show that the manifestations are yet in process of gradual development, we were told by the family of new special movements of the foot region "like rooting of a hog" and complaints that the "hant" is pulling her hair.

The evidence reported here and some further observations suggest striking analogy with the development of the celebrated Fox sisters of spiritualistic notoriety. The spread of the present nation-wide fascination by the case which has assumed headline proportions, is interesting. The first innocent pranks of Bertha found their way into the newspaper of a neighboring town in an article by a local contributor. This story was mentioned by several large papers in neighboring states. Reporters were sent for more information and the articles became longer and the headlines



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*Because it has a continuous spectrum like the sun and unlike other materials used in vapor lamps, tellurium vapor is the object of this inquisitive scientist's study. He is Dr. N. C. Beese of the Westinghouse Lamp Division at Bloomfield, N. J.*